



# Mr. Local History

184 W. Oak Street, Suite 101  
Basking Ridge, New Jersey 07920  
[www.mrlocalhistory.org](http://www.mrlocalhistory.org)  
A 501c3 non-profit organization  
[info@mrlocalhistory.org](mailto:info@mrlocalhistory.org)

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## President's Letter – 2019 Year in Review

2019 represented the first full year of service for Mr. Local History (referred to throughout as MLH) and the Mr. Local History Project. As I started out on my own, the organization has become a well-respected county-wide historic organization with a mission to preserve and promote local history with a social twist. With four founding trustees, the effort formalized and became a registered 501-C3 organization with the IRS and the state of New Jersey to operate as a tax deductible non-profit entity.

For our inaugural year, we nominated and approved our first Board of Trustees with a simple and straightforward structure:

- Brooks Betz – President
- Jill Betz – Vice President
- Meg Wastie – Secretary
- Paula Axt – Treasurer

The organization meets as needed, but at least on a quarterly basis to discuss programs, research, partnerships, finances, and all other business. Meetings are typically held at one of the trustee's homes or at a local business in the area.

## MLH Programs:

- Social Media and Web Promotions have been our number one priority as the organization was formed to “get history to the masses,” says Brooks Betz. “Our foundation is built on the ability to tell stories to the public to get them involved and to keep them interested in what we find.” The website ***mrlocalhistory.org*** is the primary launchpad for our outreach efforts and is supported via Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube channels, all of which provide the opportunity for the public to respond and share. A new Etsy gift shop was also launched in 2019.
- The MLH Somerset Hills Historic Cat's Meow Village Collection is a key founding program for MLH. The program was started when Brooks Betz was a trustee at the Historical Society of the Somerset Hills. After severing relations with that organization, Brooks worked with T3 Consortium, Inc. to continue to fund and operate the creation and production of the collectible wooden series. The series is designed by the Mr. Local History Project Team and produced by the Cat's Meow Company in Wooster, Ohio. In 2019, the organization launched the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> additions to the collection, including the 1871 Washington House, released on January 11, 2019, the 1912 Astor Estate (also known as the Bernards Township Town Hall), released on March 22, 2019, and the 1776 Widow White's Tavern in Basking Ridge, released on November 1, 2019.
- Hometown HiStories: A program to bring local residents together in an open forum to discuss fun and interesting topics about growing up in the area. A perfect opportunity for newer and



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younger residents to join in the discussion and ask questions about our local history. The program was held bi-monthly in 2019.

- The History Makers High School Historians program offers local teens the opportunity to work with MLH historians on projects ranging from research to working with children to volunteering at public events. Each year, MLH provides a deserving senior with a scholarship.

## Social and Community Events:

Tied to our mission, MLH held a number of events focused on engaging our communities in northern Somerset County, New Jersey. Our organization participated in the Somerset County "Festival of Trees" at the County Environmental Education center with a holiday tree dedicated to June Kennedy, former Bernards Township historian. Volunteers including local residents and the MLH "History Makers" high school volunteers partnered with the Basking Ridge Business Alliance and the Washington House to decorate a "Wishing Tree" and to decorate custom holiday cards for our veterans at the local VA hospital as well as for our soldiers abroad.

MLH also ran their #growlocalhistory project by packing over 500 free packets of locally grown sunflower seeds and distributing them to locals at various town farmers markets in the area. The objective was a fun and entertaining contest to post photos online as people's seeds grew.

## Named Accomplishments

- Bernards Twp. Police 100th Anniversary – April's Picture a Day
- #growlocalhistoryproject – Free sunflower seeds program
- Quarterly Mr. Local History Online Magazines
- Widow White's Tavern Somerset Hills Village Wooden Collectible
- Boudinot House/Ross Farm Cat's Meow Somerset Hills Village Wooden Collectible
- Astor Estate Cat's Meow Somerset Hills Village Wooden Collectible
- Project incorporated as a 501c3 Non-profit
- Small Business Saturday Participant
- Hometown HiStories Program Launch
- History Makers High School Historians Program Launch
- #givingTuesday participant
- Founder Brooks Betz appointed as official Bernards Township Historian
- Festival of Trees participant – June in December Tree at ECC
- Winter Market & Tree Lighting Card Coloring
- Township Poster for our USVA Veterans
- New Membership Campaign – Join our efforts with a membership.
- 2019 Year End Giving Campaign – Community Support for MLH Scholarship



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## Looking Ahead to 2020

While 2019 has been an organizing year, we look forward to 2020 to be a growth year as we take our vision and ideas to a broader audience. The founding structure is now in place and the group is energized to continue programs like Hometown HiStories, #Growlocalhistory, and online social programs.

Respectfully submitted:

Brooks H. Betz

Founder and President  
Mr. Local History Project