

Watchung Historical Committee
Minutes of the April 20th, 2022 Meeting

Attendance: Chris Vander Fliet, Stephen Pote, Bob Mayers, John Malchow (via zoom), Tim Logan, David Scharf, Fred Hayeck. Christine Ead (Liaison)

Absent: Rick Stomber and Maureen Greenbaum

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

Motion was made (John Malchow) to approve the minutes from the February 16th 2022 Historical Meeting. Seconded (David Scharf). Minutes were unanimously approved.

Motion was made (Steve Pote) to approve the minutes from the March 16th Historical Meeting. Seconded (Chris Vander Fliet). Minutes were unanimously approved. One Abstention (John Malchow).

CHAIRPERSONS REPORT – C. Vander Fliet

Vander Fliet once again mentioned that the Memorial Day Opening and the October Weekend Journey Through the Past events at the Texier House Museum are two of the largest events we hold each year when the greatest number of people visit the Texier, and we will need coverage by all committee members, even if that coverage is staggered.

It was also officially announced by Vander Fliet that the Weekend Journey through the Past would be held on October 8th from 10 am to 5 pm and on October 9th, noon to 4 pm.

Bob Mayers will be doing a Book Signing for Open Houses on May 1st. Publicity for this event has been previously coordinated through the Borough and Facebook.

Vander Fliet mentioned that Operation Pride was to be held on Saturday April 23rd from 10 am to noon. He requested that volunteers from the Historical Committee come to support the event, even if it was for an hour. He also mentioned that following Operation Pride, the Environmental Commission was planting riparian zone saplings along the east side of Best Lake and that if anyone wanted to participate in the event that it would be held between 1pm and 3 pm.

Vander Fliet provided a quick update that the Garden Club members were still working on the Tiby Wotherspoon display at the Texier House and that they would be meeting to hang the display at the Texier House before Memorial Day. The date to install the display was not yet determined. Tiby Wotherspoon was a long-time resident and survivor of the General Slocum disaster off NY East River in 1904.

Vander Fliet asked the Historical members present at the meeting if he could share their email addresses with Somerset County cultural and Heritage Commission to keep them informed on events in the local community. Everyone at the meeting was open to having their emails shared.

Vander Fliet mentioned that he distributed the flyer from the Borough about the Mayors' Regatta. The event will be held on Saturday June 11th from 10am to 12 noon and is being sponsored by the Recreation Committee. He again mentioned that if anyone was interested that they should contact the Borough and form a team representing the Historical Committee.

Vander Fliet also mentioned that Maureen Greenbaum is updating the Borough website with revised monthly meeting start time (now 7pm).

Vander Fliet concluded his Report mentioning that a Booster Seat from O'Connors was donated by Allen Rosenberg.

VICE CHAIRPERSONS REPORT – J. Malchow

No Report. John mentioned that he would have a report at the next meeting.

LIAISON'S REPORT – C. Ead

Hometown Heroes Veterans Banner Discussion - Guidelines for Qualifying:

Vander Fliet mentioned again that he had met with Liaison Christine Ead in January of 2022, and promised to use time in the February and March historical meetings to discuss the guidelines for the Veterans Banner project (which were completed). Vander Fliet, on behalf of the committee, offered to Christine the committee's guidance.

While the project was rolled out by the Borough without a discussion, Christine commented that she had reviewed the Committee's documented minutes and appreciated the work by Steve, Chris, and the committee to create the guidelines established by the Committee. She understands that the program may not have all the same specifics, but in the initial year 43 veterans have been identified. She commented that there are 62 positions where banners can be hung. Banners will be double-sided, with a different veteran on either side. Pictures are being gathered for the first 43 veterans. Christine agreed that those soldiers who are currently active but who are not yet with the technical "veteran" status will still be able to participate in the program. If still active, their banner will read, e.g., 2022 – Active. Christine said she thought reservists should be included; a couple of Committee members disagreed.

Christine said Watchung's program mirrors the same program several neighboring towns use (Berkeley Heights, New Providence, Mountainside, and others). She has been working with Lisa Barfield (Clearpoint Designs) who works with these towns to create the banners.

Christine stated that if a person served our nation, and lived in Watchung now or in the past, or who works in town (e.g., several police officers are veterans), that they are eligible. She indicated that "less is more" on the banner: it will include name, branch of

service, and years during which they served. She indicated that a map would be created with a numbered list of veterans, and an assignment of where they are on the map. There was a concern about whether the map should be permanent or could change from year to year, giving the opportunity to change veteran banner locations. Christine explained that at this point it would be permanent.

Christine commented that the program is donation driven, so Borough residents will be encouraged to donate on behalf of individual veterans or on behalf of the program.

Christine commented that the banners (3'x4') will be using the same clips used to hold other seasonal or welcoming banners already in use throughout the year. It will be the case that the banners will be on display two weeks before until two weeks after both Memorial Day and Veterans Day.

Vander Fliet and Pote encouraged Christine to continue to reference the points made in the minutes, as well the guidelines offered for veteran banner eligibility. Christine again thanked the committee.

David Scharf discussed the online program "Fold3" which could aid in some of the research that was previously done with the program and by Olivia Volpe and Christine.

John Malchow asked again if the program would be privately funded through donations; Christine said that was the case. John asked if Public Works would be responsible for putting up and taking down the banners; Christine said yes. John again asked if the veterans would remain at the same location; Christine said yes. Christine said they would accept veterans names of those who served before Watchung was Watchung.

Outhouse Painting

Vander Fliet asked about the status of the painting of the Outhouse (requested by member Tim Logan) with the understanding that the Borough might still be waiting for money from FEMA to complete this work. Christine mentioned that the painting of the carriage house and outhouse were still in queue and that the Borough would be completing this task in the future. She agreed that the outhouse and carriage house should be done at the same time; the Borough is waiting for better weather, say at the end of May.

Insurance for Weekend Journey

Christine mentioned that the Borough had secured and paid for the required insurance for Somerset Countys Weekend Journey Through the Past. The application form had been filled out by Vander Fliet. Christine mentioned that voting to approve the insurance was on the Agenda for the Borough Council Meeting the following day (4/21/22). Christine confirmed that the insurance and application form would be submitted by the May 13th deadline.

The Historical Committee motioned (Pote) and seconded (Logan) to support Historical Committee's participation in Somerset County's Weekend Journey Through the Past.

PROJECTS/NEW BUSINESS

Legend of Watchung Mural Report Discussion:

Vander Fliet mentioned again that the restoration/preservation of the face of the mural was completed and that the final conservation that must be done to the mural will be completed once a location for the mural has been chosen.

There was general discussion on the report Vander Fliet created, which outlines information including the story of the mural, thoughts on historical value, pictures of what has been done to save the mural, donations previously made, future costs and needs, educational curriculum goals, and recommended next steps, including a specific recommendation on where the mural should be placed. Vander Fliet mentioned that once the report is reviewed and revised with any comments by this Committee, it would be presented to the Council; these next steps should be presented to the Council for requested action.

David Scharf raised the potential need for an Executive Summary for the report. He echoed that the report was very complete and well done as it stands, but that Borough Council could use the Executive Summary to use “at a glance” for what the Historical Committee is looking for from them. Steve Pote suggested a table of contents as well. Both suggestions were supported by the Committee.

Christine Ead said that the Historical Committee should reach out to the Valley View Middle School and the Board of Education to begin discussion if they are open to having the mural located at Valley View School. She felt that the discussions with the school should be concurrent with the Council discussions. Having read the Mural Report, Christine agrees that, along with the mural, there is a wealth of great information that can be used to educate the students and residents on the history of Watchung.

Vander Fliet made a motion to approve the document: ***The Legend of Watchung Sears Mural: Background, Preservation, Restoration Efforts Summary Report and Recommended Next Steps, dated April 2022**** under the conditions that the Overview and Purpose Section would be revised to provide a more detailed overview of the report, that a table of contents and page numbers would be added to the report, and that the Watchung Historical Committee would reach out to George Alexis, Superintendent of Watchung Borough School District, and then the Watchung Board of Education (Dorie Harvey) to begin discussions to see if Valley View School would be willing to accept the mural and showcase it in the auditorium of the school on the wall opposite the stage. With this approval from the Watchung Board of Education, we could then reach out to the Watchung Council for final approval. Motion was seconded (Fred Hayek).

Councilwoman Christine Ead is fine with this approach.

The Committee would like to identify a location by the end of May, and secure an approved site by the end of June. If Valley View Middle School is chosen, we would then

possibly be able to have it installed during the summer months. Once installed, its rededication will be an important Borough event.

Vander Fliet will set up a meeting with George Alexis to begin the process.

Other Business

Vander Fliet mentioned that the Historical Committee does not have any more “Images of America” book (by David Page) or Watchung Coverlets (a quilt with historical and prominent Watchung locations). He asked the Committee if we could spend a maximum of \$400 on the purchase of each of these items. The Committee discussed that the coverlets were not in stock for several years and there was concern over the public demand for the coverlets. The Committee felt that the purchase of the Images book at this time would be a more appropriate purchase even though the cost of the books versus the profit that would be made from them was not clear at the time. Vander Fliet mentioned that the Borough has an account with the publisher and can order the books for the Committee. Fred Hayek made a motion to spend a maximum of \$300.00 on new “Images of America” books so they can be in stock at the Texier House and they can be sold for future fundraising efforts, including potential future fundraising efforts. Seconded (Tim Logan). The committee unanimously approved the purchase of the books.

Vander Fliet further discussed that Maureen Greenbaum found a photo of Garfield Hunter Jones, artist of the Legend of Watchung mural. Vander Fliet mentioned that it was confirmed that “Imagn” (a division of Gannett and the USA Today Network) owned the right to the photo and that if we wanted to use the photo it would have to be purchased from “Imagn” for \$150.00. The photo would be used in the film project on the mural and the preservation efforts made by the committee. The photo could be used several times in the film, but only in the film on the mural. Vander Fliet made a motion to purchase the photo in the amount of \$150.00. Seconded (Fred Hayek). The committee unanimously approved the purchase.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:49 pm.

Submitted by: Stephen Pote (Secretary)

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday May 18th @ 7 pm.

Attachments:

- 1. The Legend of Watchung Sears Mural: Background, Preservation, Restoration Efforts Summary Report and Recommended Next Steps, dated April 2022*.***

*It should be noted that the report was finalized by the Historical Committee in May and the date of the report was changed from April 2022 to May 2022.

The Legend of Watchung Sears Mural

Background, Preservation, Restoration Efforts Summary Report, and Recommended Next Steps



Submitted by: The Watchung Historical Committee

May 2022

Table of Contents

Section 1: Background and History.....	2
Section 2: The Legend of Watchung.....	2
Section 3: Community Preservation Efforts.....	4
Section 4: Community Donations.....	5
Section 5: Estimated Installation Costs.....	6
Section 6: Criteria for home for the Legend of Watchung Mural.....	6
Section 7: Possible Locations for Installation.....	7
Section 8: Recommended Locations for Installation.....	7
Section 9: Similar Mural Conservation Projects.....	8
Section 10: Art Conserver, Jason Crafts.....	8
Section 11: Additional Documentation of Legend of Watchung Mural Removal Efforts.....	9
Section 12: General Mural Photos.....	9
Section 13: Conclusion and Next Steps.....	12
Section 14: Donations.....	12

Overview and Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to provide background history on the Legend of Watchung mural, outline community preservation efforts to date, provide possible restoration locations for the Legend of Watchung mural, and finally provide recommendations to the Borough Council on next steps and suggested involvement of the Borough Council and Historical Committee. This is presented to identify, pursue and reach an agreement on a home for the mural.

The Historical Committee provides in this report possible and recommended locations as a future home for the mural, but we ask the Borough Council to first consider and review the two recommended locations. The recommended location, specifically the Valley View Middle School Auditorium location, is favored by the Historical Committee. We believe the Valley View location allows for the easiest installation; of more importance, this location is an important gathering and learning center for the community and meets all of the criteria that are outlined in Section 6 of this report. We believe that Borough residents and students will greatly benefit. In order to help aid in the Borough Council's final decision of a future home for the mural, the Watchung Historical Committee will be meeting with the Superintendent of Watchung Borough Schools to discuss if the Board of Education would be open to accepting the mural and having it installed at Valley View Middle School.

To date, the removal and conservation of the mural has been made possible through donations and grants. No Borough funds have been spent to date, and we anticipate that the final installation costs will also be made possible through future fundraising efforts. The Watchung Borough Schools will not incur any costs for its installation.

Section 1: Background and History

“The Legend of Watchung” Mural (mural) is a 1965 oil painting on canvas that was previously displayed for 52 years at the former, and now demolished, Watchung Sears store that was located at the corner of Terrill Road and Route 22. The canvas was glued to a concrete wall and was located in the stairwell between the two levels of the Sears building.

The mural was painted by Garfield Hunter Jones (1925-1994), a nationally recognized artist who had been hired by Sears Roebuck to “humanize” the large commercial Sears department stores that were being built throughout the country. Jones was best known for his freelance work with Sears Roebuck.

“The Legend of Watchung” was also a pageant that was performed by the Watchung community, for the community in the Borough of Watchung behind where Borough Hall exists today. The pageant was performed several times between the years of 1911 and 1936 and utilized the natural Watchung Mountains and streams to tell the story and legend. The pageant had attracted actors and audiences near and far – some recorded audiences exceeded the population of Watchung at that time. Two original songs, the only two known songs original to Watchung, were written for the pageant.

While the origin of the concept for the mural is not exactly known, it is believed that the community of Watchung wanted to showcase the main characters that were part of the Legend of Watchung pageant. As the mural exists today, the pageant was created to help educate and preserve the special history of Watchung and its inhabitants during the mid to late 1600’s; this, at a special time as New Jersey celebrated its Tercentenary Anniversary in 1964. The Watchung community would resurrect once more the Legend of Watchung pageant in celebration of this state anniversary (it was the first time the pageant had been performed since 1936, and was never performed after 1964). The community may have suggested that a mural memorializing the Legend of Watchung pageant would be appropriate for the new Sears store that opened in November of 1965.

Section 2: The Legend of Watchung

It was a full moon that June night along the Stony Brook somewhere in the hills adjacent to what is now known as Somerset Street in Watchung. There was a notch in the first Watchung Mountain rising from the coastal plains. Somerset Street was once part of the Minisink Trail that extended to Perth Amboy used by the Leni Lenape Indians to make annual trips down to the coastal plains to fish and collect shells. The same trail was being used more frequently by the Dutch settlers venturing west for fertile lands in which to settle. The only sound that could be heard that June night was that of the rushing waters of Stony Brook rambling southeast towards the Green Brook.

Earlier that day, Captain Michelson was leading an expedition of Dutch settlers west and decided to set up camp for the night along the Stony Brook. Little did he know that a scout from a local Leni Lenape tribe, Deer Prong, had been following the Dutch settlers moving through the area.

The main encampment for the local Leni Lenape tribe was not far away – it was west of where Brookdale Road exists today. Michelson, knowing that he was traveling along the same trail used by the Leni Lenape tribes, had requested that a trusted comrade watch guard throughout the night.

Deer Prong waited patiently, hiding in the woods until the Dutch settled down for sleep. He decided he would approach the Dutch settlement via canoe rather than risk walking through the woods fearing the sound of crunching leaves and breaking branches.

The overnight Dutch comrade sensed a disturbance by the brook and his eye caught the shadow of a figure – Deer Prong had been spotted. The Dutch comrade fired a warning shot towards the figure, missing Deer Prong – but startling the Dutch encampment.

Captain Michelson arose, immediately ordering the Dutch settlers to flee up the first Watchung mountain for safety, fearing an ambush. Deer Prong was unsure he would survive the night following the Dutch settlers up the mountain so he left a note on a tree for Chief One Feather – leader of the local Leni Lenape tribe. The note reported what had just occurred.

Chief One Feather saw the note and proposed a plan to capture the Dutch settlers in fear for the safety of his tribe. It was decided that Deer Prong continue to follow the Dutch, and light a signal fire once the Dutch were located –this was to confirm the attack. After some time, the signal fire was lit, and Chief One Feather’s plan worked, successfully capturing all of the Dutch settlers. Back at the Leni Lenape encampment, Chief One Feather was looking at the group of the Dutch settler captives.

One of them had immediately caught his eye - it was Princess Wetumpka. He recognized Princess Wetumpka from his childhood – they were once lovers in a not-so-distant past. Princess Wetumpka joined the Dutch settlers in peace after an Indian tribe she previously was with had disbanded.

Princess Wetumpka at this point was a mix of emotions. She had been captured by someone she once cared so much for, and was at odds when she heard that her leader Captain Michelson was to be burned at the stake. She cared for Michelson - he had been kind to her over the years and she had learned to live at peace with the Dutch. She had no choice but to plea for mercy with Chief One Feather for the release of Michelson citing her experience that a peaceful relationship between the Dutch settler and Leni Lenape was possible.

Chief One Feather had a soft heart for Princess Wetumpka and decided to release Michelson and the rest of the settlers. One Feather also asked Princess Wetumpka for her hand in marriage and she accepted, fulfilling her childhood love. Legend has it that immediately following the release of Michelson, the Dutch and Leni Lenape Indians began discussions for a peace agreement between the two groups.

Land was divided up and the groups had co-habited in harmony with one another settling the land that would later become the Borough of Watchung.

The mural for years has represented both history and legend of Watchung, whose restoration helps to preserve the history of Watchung as a possible rich source of learning, thought and discussion.

(It is important to note that the story outlined in Section 2 is an adapted version of the Legend of Watchung from several pageant programs. The Watchung Historical Committee has never been able to track down any scripts from the pageant from when it was originally performed. The story may vary slightly from current documents, or any future documents that may be found).

Section 3: Community Preservation Efforts

After it was confirmed that the Watchung Sears would be demolished in 2016, the Watchung Historical Committee immediately started work on researching and interviewing art conservation companies. Diddy Addario was chairperson of the Committee at the time and led the Committee through this challenging endeavor. Local residents with art conservation experience also came forward. The company that would be chosen for the mural removal would first have to perform a feasibility study to see if removal of the mural was even possible. In 2016 and early 2017, it was still unclear if the Legend of Watchung mural was even painted on a canvas, and if that canvas existed, how the canvas was attached to the concrete wall. After much discussion between the Borough of Watchung and the Watchung Historical Committee, it was decided that Materials Conservation would best be suited for removal of the mural.

Following the feasibility study conducted by Materials Conservation, it was determined that the cost to remove, protect, transport, and store the mural would cost \$14,000. This estimate would come in just two months shy of the anticipated demolition date of the Sears building. The Watchung Historical Committee scrambled to put fundraising efforts into full swing. Much to the committee's surprise, Seritage, the future developer of the Sears property, would kick off fundraising efforts by donating \$5,000 dollars to the mural fundraising efforts.

There was no guarantee the required donations (\$14,000) could be raised in such a short period of time to remove the mural. A backup plan to preserve the mural was required and would come in the form of a high-quality photo of the mural. Local photographer Robert Gallucci would be commissioned by the Watchung Historical Committee to take the high-resolution photograph of the mural, and Gallucci immediately worked to digitally restore the image to what is believed to be its original state. In the case that the mural was damaged during removal or transportation, the high-resolution photo could be used to create a replica of the mural.

The Legend of Watchung mural was successfully removed from the Sears Building in mid-September of 2017 and transported to Philadelphia, PA to be stored in a climate-controlled environment.

In early January 2019, Materials Conservation glued a canvas to the back of the mural to provide additional reinforcement to the backing of the original canvas. This new canvas backing intentionally extended 6 to 8 inches beyond the edges of the canvas so it could be easily tacked to a wall. The hope was that future installation and removal of the mural, if required, would be much faster and more cost effective.

In April of 2019, the Watchung Historical Committee hosted a car show specifically focused on raising additional donations for the mural. In addition, Cinemark Theaters, constructed in the location of the

original Sears Car Service Center, installed a scaled down-high resolution photo of the mural on canvas in the lobby. The scaled down print of the mural was to remain as a permanent fixture at the theater.

In November of 2019 the Watchung Historical Committee applied for, and received a grant from the Somerset County Cultural Heritage Commission for \$1,740 dollars. This grant money was to be used specifically for the additional mural conservation efforts.

In December 2019, local resident Laurie Wood pitched the idea of an annual Watchung-themed holiday ornament program which continues today! A portion of the profits received from selling these ornaments in 2019 were used to support the mural conservation efforts.

Additional artists/conservers were researched in 2018 and 2019 to compare pricing for the final conserving of the mural. An artist by the name of Jason Crafts in Cape May, NJ was found, interviewed and would ultimately be commissioned to finish the mural restoration work.

Section 4: Community Donations

It is important to note that all funds used to save and conserve the Legend of Watchung mural have been made through generous private charitable donations as well as the grant (mentioned above). No Borough funds have been spent to date. While this is an amazing achievement, it is just as important to note and acknowledge the private donations that have been made in support of the Legend of Watchung mural.

- Approximately \$5,000 in private donations was donated through the Go Fund Me Account.
- Approximately \$4,300 in private donations was donated to the Watchung Community Foundation.
- The former Sears property developer, Seritage, donated \$5,000 dollars at the start of the fundraising event to support the mural removal.
- \$1,740 dollars was granted to the Watchung Historical Committee through the Somerset County Cultural Heritage Commission.

As of March of 2022, there is no money left in the “Save the Mural” account. All money for the Legend of Watchung mural installation still needs to be secured through additional fundraising. We are still seeking private donations, but cannot ask for additional money until a home for the mural is decided upon.

It is anticipated that the future fund-raising efforts (which will cover any final costs for installation of the mural) will be dedicated to a “Mural Installation Fund,” and will include:

1. A proactive solicitation campaign for private donations through local press and social media, personal contacts, or even grant requests.
2. Participation in public events to solicit donations and offer Watchung Historical Committee related items for sale (Books, Coverlets, Post Cards). Opportunities can include the Watchung Harvest Festival and the County-wide weekend “Journey through the Past”.

3. An opportunity for fundraising for the Mural Installation Fund can include book signings by Robert Mayers, a local author and member of the Watchung Historical Committee. Mayers will donate proceeds from his book “Historic Tales of Watchung” to the Watchung Historical Committee for these fundraising efforts.

Section 5: Estimated Installation Costs

While an accurate estimate for the Legend of Watchung mural installation cannot be provided until a location is decided upon, it is estimated that the installation will cost between \$3,000 to \$5,000 dollars.

Section 6: Criteria for home for The Legend of Watchung Mural

Criteria #1: It is strongly recommended that the future home for the mural be located in the Borough of Watchung. The mural was originally painted for Watchung and was located in the Borough of Watchung for many of years, and while residents of neighboring towns donated towards the save the mural efforts, the Historical Committee strongly believes its final home should be located in the Borough (See Section 7 for one exception to this rule).

Criteria #2: The location must have the space to accommodate the mural dimensions. The mural dimensions are approximately 10 feet in height by 12 feet in length. The 10-foot height dimension seems to be the most challenging to accommodate.

Criteria #3: The mural should be installed in a location that is relatively safe from vandalism and preferably in an area under video surveillance.

Criteria #4: The mural should be out of reach to the general public. The mural was elevated in the Sears store and should also be elevated in its new home.

Criteria #5: The location chosen does not have to be a permanent home. The Save the Mural efforts took place at the same time that significant discussions over a new Watchung library were also taking place. It was anticipated in 2017 that the new library would be the most appropriate home for the mural – many members of the community also shared this view at that time. It was thought that a wall in the library could be designed to accommodate the dimensions. Discussions about a new Watchung Library are ongoing and if this structure is built, the mural has been preserved in such a way that its removal and reinstallation into another building would be much easier.

Criteria#6: The location of the mural will provide opportunities for the Borough and its residents to both view the mural and learn about an important aspect of Watchung’s great history. The Valley View Middle School Auditorium offers this through its many public interactions with the Borough; the mural continues to be an inspiring source of education and discussion for the students and the greater public.

Section 7: Possible Locations for Installation

1. Valley View Middle School Auditorium
2. Borough Hall - Behind the Council dais
3. Cinemark Movie Theater
4. Watchung Police station - Court Room
5. Watchung Hills Regional High School (WHRHS) Auditorium/Theater

It should be noted that the above possible locations are listed in no particular order. The WHRHS Auditorium/Theater is the only exception to Section 6, Criteria #1.

Section 8: Recommended Locations for Installation

Recommendation #1: Valley View Middle School Auditorium

Valley View Middle School Auditorium for decades has been a rich gathering place for learning for middle school students. Valley View students were enthralled by a recent historical/patriotic program at the school; in 2019, the Veterans Day program - which on a number of occasions Valley View School has graciously hosted this special day - was held in the auditorium to honor Watchung Veteran Bob Mayers. Mayers spoke to an attentive student group which included the entire student body. Parents and teachers reported afterward that the event was well received and accepted by the students. There seems to be a keen interest and enthusiasm in local history shown by both the students and faculty at Valley View School.

Teachers from Valley View Middle School have invited Watchung Historical members to present programs on the Boroughs history. There have even been discussions by the faculty on creating a course on Watchung's History. The recently published book *Historic Tales of Watchung* by Robert Mayers could be used as the base text for this course.

The wall opposite the stage in the Valley View Middle School Auditorium has the space to allow for the installation of "The Legend of Watchung" mural. With the exception of moving one electrical conduit, the wall and space is free from any obstructions or modifications that would need to be made to clear the space for the installation. In addition, it would be out of reach from the general public providing some added protection. The room also serves as a gathering place for the community, and special events. It is our understanding that because of the acoustic ceiling in the room, the space is not used for recreational activities which could potentially damage the mural.

The Watchung Historical Committee has ongoing discussions about the development of a school program (with Valley View students) that would include tours of the Texier House Museum for classes once a year. We believe that if the mural is installed in the Valley View Middle School Auditorium, it would provide students with a constant connection to their past and rich history.

Additionally, it is interesting to note that Valley View Middle School stands on the site of an ancient Leni Lenape campground.

Recommendation #2: Borough Hall – Behind the Council dais

While the space at the Valley View Middle School auditorium is the Historical Committee's top recommended site for the mural, there is another favorable location, the Borough Hall Council Chambers. Centered behind the Mayor and Council dais, the mural could, with modifications to the finishes (see below) around the dais be installed. This installation, however, would be more costly than installation at the Valley View Middle School Auditorium. The mural, behind the Council dais, would become an immediate centerpiece of the town, where so many individuals come to hear and participate in town meetings and events.

Modifications to the finishes at Borough Hall include partial raising of the drop ceiling, removal of the chair rail/molding, and finding new homes for the paintings that currently reside behind the dais. One problem with this location is that the dais would block the couple feet of the mural once installed. It is possible that this bottom portion of the mural would have to also be enhanced with additional or different means for protecting.

Recommended Locations Conclusion:

The Watchung Historical Committee recommends that the future home of the mural, even if that home is temporary, be located at one of the two recommended locations outlined herein. The Committee has previously felt that the mural ultimately belongs in a new Library or Community Center, but cannot be installed until such time as a new Watchung Library or Community Center is completed. The restoration of the mural to date has been completed in such a way that it can more easily be removed and reinstalled in the future with great ease, if required.

Section 9: Similar Mural Conservation Projects

A mural of similar size to the Legend of Watchung mural was located in a Sears store in Hicksville, Long Island. This mural which depicted historic Long Island and local dignitaries was removed and reinstalled in an athletic center in the Town of Oyster Bay Long Island in 2018.

Section 10: Art Conserver, Jason Crafts

Jason Crafts has preserved the face of the Legend of Watchung mural and is waiting to perform the final conserving once a home for the mural is decided upon. Crafts has the availability to deliver the Legend of Watchung mural and expertise to install it. He plans to perform a preliminary investigation of the new home for the mural once it is chosen, and provide an accurate price for the mural delivery and installation. Crafts will not charge any storage fees for the mural at this time, but if a home is not decided upon until later this year, the Historical Committee will be charged a yearly storage fee.

Section 11: Additional Documentation of Legend of Watchung Mural Removal Efforts:

A film produced by Chris Vander Fliet and Kyle Finnegan can be available for private viewing at this time by request.

Section 12: General Mural Photos

Original Photo of the Mural (by Robert Gallucci):



Hypothetical Look of Restored Mural (by Robert Gallucci):



Removal at Sears (Photograph by Diddy Addario):



Mural Backing – Next two photos (Photograph by Materials Conservation):





Installation of Scaled Down Replica in Watchung Cinemark:



Section 13: Conclusion and Next Steps

We write this report to provide more than just a general background to the Legend of Watchung story which has been an exciting and thought-provoking part of this Borough's 96-year history. This story dates as far back as 1670 and has been part of the fabric of this valley. Extensive community preservation efforts have been made to preserve the mural so it can be enjoyed by future residents.

Timely concurrence by the Borough Council on this site selection is essential to begin dedicated fund raising and installation arrangements. We ask for a review of the Possible Locations outlined herein, but a more detailed and extensive review and consideration of the Recommended Locations for Installation. It was the responsibility of the Watchung Historical Committee to orchestrate the removal of the mural, fundraise for its restoration and conservation, and then provide the Borough Council recommended locations for its home. The ultimate home for the Legend of Watchung Mural must be decided by the Borough Council. At this time, the Watchung Historical Committee specifically recommends the following next steps take place:

1. The Committee is available for discussion and ready to answer questions regarding the mural and its installation at possible locations.
2. We ask that the Council seriously consider the Historical Committee's recommendations and make a decision during the May timeframe.
3. Historical Committee member(s) will accompany a Council representative to meet and discuss with those responsible for the potential site location being pursued. We seek approval from one of the recommended sites by the middle of June before the end of the academic year.
4. Once agreed upon with site owners, a schedule should be established for the mural's restoration.

After the mural is installed, we anticipate an unveiling ceremony will be held which will rededicate the mural and showcase the significant contributions made by the community to save it. We believe this will be a significant achievement by the Borough and its residents in community unity.

Please reach out to Christopher Vander Fliet or any of Watchung Historical Committee Members for additional details and look forward to your response and participation in establishing a home for this mural.

Section 14: Donations

Donations for the final installation efforts can be made to the Watchung Community Foundation, a 501(c)(3) a charitable tax-exempt organization, please designate 'Mural Restoration' in the memo line. You can send or deliver a check to Watchung Borough Hall, 15 Mountain Boulevard Watchung, NJ 07069.