



A GUIDE to PRESERVATION in ROCKY HILL, NEW JERSEY

THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This brochure has been prepared for the community as a user's guide to preservation in the Borough of Rocky Hill. It is intended to provide an overview of the process and requirements of building within the Historic District. We hope that you enjoy this publication and that it leads you to other resources in your preservation efforts. We also hope this guide makes clear the responsibilities of the property owner within the district. The guide merely provides a summary of preservation in Rocky Hill's Historic District; it remains the citizen's obligation to consult the ordinances of Rocky Hill for procedural or substantive requirements.

The Rocky Hill Planning Board is not an enforcement agency. The role of the Planning Board is to interpret and implement the historic preservation ordinances of the Borough. These ordinances evolve from, and should be consistent with, the Borough's Master Plan, which is the vision for the community's growth and evolution.

The Planning Board meets regularly on the second Tuesday of every month, 7:30 pm, at the Borough Hall, Montgomery Avenue, Rocky Hill, NJ. Its members are appointed by the Mayor and voluntarily serve their community. Any member of the community may directly contact the Board Chair or Board's Historic Preservation Committee members for additional input. The Borough Web site (www.rockyhill-nj.gov) may also be consulted for additional municipal and Planning Board information.

CONTACTING US

Borough of Rocky Hill Planning Board's Historic Preservation Sub-Committee



P.O. Box 188
Rocky Hill, New Jersey 08553
Tel (609) 924-7445
FAX (609) 924-2274
www.rockyhill-nj.gov

Somerset County Planning Board



20 Grove Street
P.O. Box 3000
Somerville, New Jersey 08876
Tel (908) 231-7021
FAX (908) 707-1749
<http://www.somerset.nj.us>

CREDITS

Project Coordinator: Susan Pikaart Bristol
Design: Lisa Aliprando, LOA Graphics
Photography: Rocky Hill Community Group:
Archives/Museum

PHOTO TOP OF THIS PANEL:

Lyric Hall, ca 1920
*Adaptive reuse of historic buildings preserves the past
and revitalizes communities.*

COVER PHOTO:

Streetscape Williamson & Griggs Store, ca 1880s
Every structure contributes to the story of Rocky Hill.

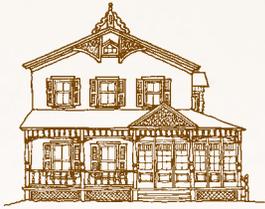
2004



prepared by
**THE BOROUGH OF ROCKY HILL
PLANNING BOARD** and the
**SOMERSET COUNTY PARTNERSHIP
GRANT PROGRAM**

THE ROCKY HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT

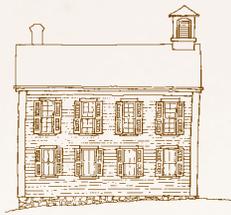
Rocky Hill, a 19th-century commercial and residential village, grew around a transportation crossroads. By the 1960s and 1970s this attribute threatened to overwhelm the community's traditional character with new bridges, interstate highways, and high-density development. Alarmed, the Rocky Hill Historical Committee of the Rocky Hill Community Group and the Borough Planning Board worked to document Rocky Hill's historic and cultural resources with the goal of listing the village on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. The town's Historic Preservation District (see map) was formally placed on the State Register on February 22, 1982 and on the National Register on July 26, 1982. This helped protect the town from federal and state building projects, but it did not secure the town's on-going preservation. With solid public support, Rocky Hill created its first local historic preservation ordinance in 1983.



ADVANTAGES OF PRESERVATION

The Historic District benefits Rocky Hill residents in several ways: it

provides assistance to the town when dealing with certain government-funded projects; it qualifies the community for numerous county, state, and federal grants; and it protects the village's small-town character. The District's accompanying preservation ordinances help guide maintenance and restoration efforts and encourage compatible future development. Moreover, well-preserved historic buildings boost property values, foster civic pride, and encourage a sense of place.



GUIDELINES HOMEOWNERS SHOULD KNOW

If your property lies within the Historic District (see map) and you plan physical changes, you may need formal approval. The Rocky Hill Planning Board approves applications for preservation plans based on specific guidelines, including the following:

HISTORIC BUILDINGS (BUILT BEFORE 1929):

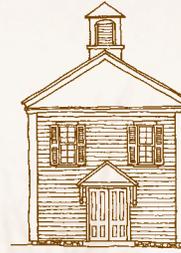
- Preserve or enhance a building's historical or architectural value and character
- Return a building to its historic appearance or one based on precedent
- Maintain, preserve, restore, or match existing materials, such as roofing and siding, using similar size, shape, and texture
- Keep original architectural details such as cornices, brackets, siding, windows, trim, doors, porches, balustrades, etc.
- Use windows with true or simulated divided lights, unobtrusive storm windows, and shutters that match the height and width of the windows
- Uses doors with a number of panels appropriate for the period

NON-HISTORIC BUILDINGS OR NEW CONSTRUCTION (BUILT AFTER 1929):

- Harmonize with existing historic structures, streetscapes, and the village environment
- Remain visually compatible with nearby buildings and features in terms of height, width, massing, orientation, roof shape, window dimensions, porches, wall and roof materials and textures, fences, landscaping, open space features, and the relationship of solids and voids on the main façade and elements visible from the street

DEMOLITION:

The planning board will grant a demolition permit only if a structure's condition is such that the cost of necessary restoration or repairs would preclude the owner from making any reasonable economic use of the property.



ROCKY HILL'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE

The State of New Jersey delegates its power over land use to local communities, which may enact zoning rules as spelled out in the state's Municipal Land Use Law (NJSA 40:55D-2J). One of the law's many goals is to "promote the conservation of historic sites and districts." Rocky Hill's historic preservation ordinance is a local law designed to preserve the integrity and authenticity of the town's historic resources and to insure their compatibility with new buildings.

SUCCESSFUL PRESERVATION PROJECTS:

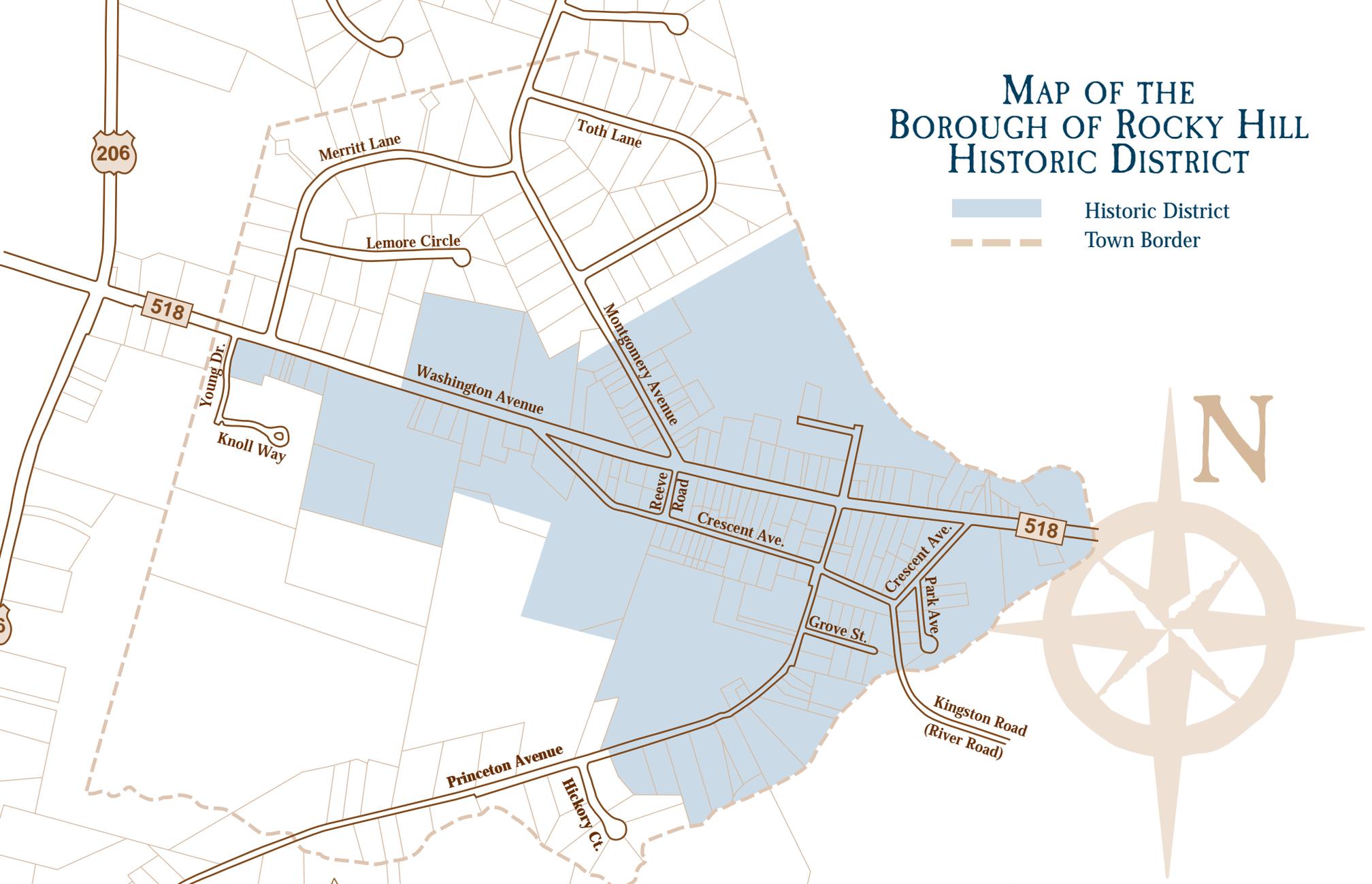
- Harmonize with existing structures and landscapes
- Maintain or enhance the District's ambiance, character, and appearance
- Preserve exterior architectural features, settings, and historic and architectural significance
- Maintain the scale of the surrounding buildings

Crescent Avenue with Church Parsonage and fence, ca 1910



MAP OF THE BOROUGH OF ROCKY HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT

-  Historic District
-  Town Border



APPLICATION PROCESS

All building projects in Rocky Hill require a zoning permit certifying that the proposed construction complies with current zoning. The historic preservation rules are part of the zoning permitting process. Please note, permit fees may apply for building projects.

1. Pick up a Preservation Plan Application from the Zoning Officer when you obtain your Zoning Permit Application. The Planning Board Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Historic Preservation Committee are available to offer assistance.
2. Complete and submit the Preservation Plan Application with all the necessary documentation and copies according to the directions provided. The property owner or the applicant's representative (architect, attorney, historian, etc.) may submit the packet.
3. Minor projects may only require approval of the Planning Board Chair. Major projects will require review by the full Planning Board in public session. The Planning Board may approve the application outright or subject to specific conditions.
4. Once the Planning Board approves the preservation plan in the form of a written memorandum, the Zoning Officer may move ahead with final approval of the Zoning Permit Application.
5. The applicant may proceed to the Construction Official, who reviews the plans for code compliance and issues the final permits for building to begin. During construction, the officials perform inspections to insure compliance. Only after all conditions are met, including the Historic Preservation Plan, will the Construction Official issue the final Certificate of Occupancy. Fines and penalties apply for non-compliance.



Rocky Hill Inn
ca 1875

Some changes to old buildings take on their own historic significance and are worthy of preservation.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do I need approval for routine maintenance, such as painting or minor carpentry? The town encourages routine repairs, which support preservation. Repainting your house or making ordinary repairs with in-kind replacement does not need approval.

Major repairs? Yes, if you plan to replace a roof, rebuild a porch, install new shutters, or carry out any other major repair or new construction you must submit a Preservation Plan Application. In many cases the Planning Board Chair can approve your request quickly for in-kind replacements, without a formal hearing.

Rocky Hill Inn
ca 1900



Paint colors? If you repaint your house, the color is a personal choice and not covered in the ordinance. Consult with members of the Preservation Committee for information on historic paint colors.

Synthetic doors, windows, and siding?

The Planning Board encourages neighbors to use historic materials like wood. However, aluminum or vinyl siding is acceptable with certain conditions (see "Guidelines Homeowners Should Know").

How long does it take to get an approval?

It depends on your project. Incomplete applications are the single greatest cause for delay. The board meets once a month, so plan ahead and submit early. Remember, many requests for repairs and replacements only need the Chair's OK and can be approved quickly.

RESOURCES FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Residents may find many of these resources in the Mary Jacobs Memorial Library.

REGULATIONS:

Municipal Land Use Law. New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection: Historic Preservation Office, n.d. (pamphlet).

Borough of Rocky Hill Master Plan. Historic Preservation Plan Section. Rocky Hill Planning Board. Adopted December 2002.

Rocky Hill Development Regulation Ordinance. On file in the office of the Zoning Officer, the Town Clerk's Office, and the Mary Jacobs Library, Rocky Hill, NJ.

Design Guidelines: Borough of Rocky Hill, New Jersey. Short and Ford, Architects, Princeton, NJ, 1989.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings. U.S. Department of the Interior: National Park Service: Historic Preservation Services, 1997.

REFERENCES:

Rocky Hill, New Jersey: Preserving a Nineteenth Century Village. Rocky Hill Community Group, 1981.

Jeanette K. Muser, *Rocky Hill, Kingston and Griggstown*. Arcadia Publications, 1998.

OTHER RESOURCES:

Rocky Hill Community Group: Archives/Museum. Historic Amy Garrett House, Rocky Hill, NJ.

New Jersey Historic Preservation Office. Division of Parks and Forestry, Trenton, NJ.

Preservation New Jersey. A private non-profit informational source for homeowners, municipalities, and other groups.

Historical Society of Princeton. Princeton, NJ.

HOW THE HISTORIC DISTRICT'S PRESERVATION PLAN APPLICATION FITS INTO THE GENERAL PERMITTING PROCESS

