

# Cultural Arts Center Comes Alive With Plays,



**LOCAL LANDMARK...**The Patricia M. Kuran Cultural Arts Center, formerly known as the Carriage House, has become the focal point of cultural activity in Fanwood.

as the Patricia M. Kuran Cultural Arts Center, and today the voices that echo throughout are those of poets, actors, writers and artists celebrating the arts.

The building, which faces Watson Road and is located on the grounds of Borough Hall, is a tribute to Fanwood history.

Even the foundation is strong, composed of brick and stone with board and batten siding. There are sliding barn doors and double-hinged doors that mirror the mood created by the Gothic Revival architecture inside the landmark building, notably the Italiante paneling.

The original property, including several auxiliary buildings, the Carriage House and a chicken coop, were located on the section of Watson Road now occupied by the Fanwood Rescue Squad Building. This building also served as a shelter for sheep and cows until the early 1960s. A smoke house was also at the rear of the main house.

For several years, the Carriage House functioned as a barn for horses and a storage building for carriages that transported travelers from the hotel to the train station.

Certain portions of the Carriage House building no longer exist, but the original architecture remains unaltered.

Although there is no information available as to the identity of the original owners of the

By **MICHELLE H. LePOIDEVIN**  
*Specially Written for Our Towns*

It was in the heat of the summer in the late 19th century when weary vacationers sought relaxation from the hubbub of New York City at a summer guest house/resort hotel known then as The Homestead.

Although that structure no longer exists, the building long known as the Carriage House still remains on the site.

Part of The Homestead property, the Carriage House, was re-named earlier this year

main building, there is evidence indicating that the building was erected in 1750 and was known as "The Russell House." As many as 50 guests could be accommodated in the rear wing of the building.

As time progressed, the structure became three stories high, with high ceilings, wide floor boards and ornate fireplaces.

Due to the "Fanwood Cut," which was the realignment of the train tracks in 1874-1875, new patrons found their way to the carriage house in search of lodging.

Purchased in 1890 by the Boucher family, which was comprised of two maiden sisters and a brother, the building was renamed "The Homestead." A dining room was added for entertainment of the guests and invited residents. Tennis courts and croquet areas were also newly featured.

In 1931, with all three members of the Boucher family now deceased, the property was purchased by the Slocum family. The new owners continued to alter and add on to the structure.

As a result, a great portion of the Homestead building was destroyed, including the rear wing and grand surrounding porches.

The Slocum family moved away in 1974, after which the property — including the home and Carriage House — was purchased by the Borough of Fanwood.

Originally, the plan was to turn the house into a new Borough Hall. But when it was found "unsuitable" for this purpose, the structure was demolished in 1978 and a modern municipal complex was built.

To date, the original, tree-lined circular driveway and the Carriage House remain on the grounds.

During the Great Depression, a community theater group, The Philathalians, began performing dramatic productions in a former bank in Fanwood, honing their acting skills and preserving the arts.

However, in 1982, the Philathalians planted their roots at the former Carriage House and has been performing there for audiences of 60 to 70 ever since.

That same love for theater will now continue into the next millennium, as The Philathalians continue to bring quality theater to



**CULTURAL EXPERIENCE...**The Chinese Music and Folk Dance Ensemble was among the groups which performed in a recent Multi-Cultural Festival at the Patricia M. Kuran Cultural Arts Center in Fanwood.



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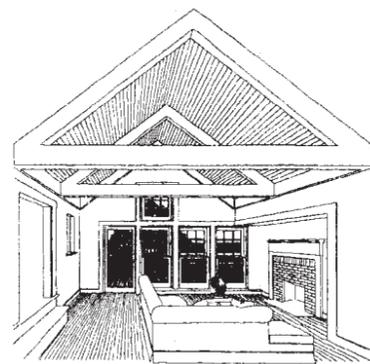
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