



LEAGUE NEWS

The Magazine of the
League of Historical Societies of New Jersey

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Mission Statement: To promote preservation of the historical heritage of New Jersey by stimulating among member organizations the development of programs, projects, and publications that celebrate this heritage.

League Statement of Inclusion

The League of Historical Societies welcomes all organizations and individuals with an interest in New Jersey's state and local history. Our members include historical societies, historic preservation organizations, libraries, state and local historic sites, friends of parks and historic sites, county cultural and heritage commissions, county parks, state parks, national heritage areas, archival and genealogical groups, a large variety of museums, canal societies, railroad groups, DAR chapters, lighthouse societies, history roundtables, and musical organizations, as well as interested individuals. Even if your organization does not fit one of these categories, you are welcome to join us.

Saturday, June 20
Proprietary House, Perth Amboy,
Middlesex County
Registration and directions, p. 19-20

NJ Looks to 250th License Plates for Battlefield Preservation Funds

Bill would create special license plate to raise money for state's American Revolution war sites
By John Reitmeyer, Finance Writer, NJ Spotlight News

New Jersey motorists may soon have a new way to show pride in the role the state played in the American Revolution. State lawmakers are advancing bipartisan legislation that would create a "250th Anniversary Revolutionary War" license plate.

The push to create the special license plate comes as New Jersey this year is celebrating the U.S. Semiquincentennial. To obtain the plate, motorists would be charged an initial \$50 fee, according to the bill, followed by a \$10 annual renewal fee. The revenue from those fees would be used to help preserve sites linked to the American Revolution throughout the state, once the cost of issuing the plates themselves is covered, the bill says.

Historians have credited New Jersey with playing an important role in the nation's bid for independence, with some of the war's most critical battles taking place within the state's borders, along with Continental Army winter encampments. Yet New



(continued on page three)

SAVE THESE DATES FOR UPCOMING LEAGUE MEETINGS

June 20, 2026—Proprietary House, Perth Amboy, Middlesex County

November 14, 2026—Morristown and Morris Township Library, Morristown, Morris County

Spring 2027—Barnegat Light Historical Society, Barnegat Light, Ocean County

Summer 2027—Brook Arts Center, Bound Brook, Somerset County

Fall 2027—The Hermitage, Ho-Ho-Kus, Bergen County

Spring 2028—Sea Isle City Historical Society, Sea Isle City, Cape May County

We encourage your society to host a future League meeting. If you would like this opportunity to showcase your site, just contact Linda Barth, 908-240-0488, barthlinda123@aol.com, and she will put you in touch with the regional vice-president for your area. **We look forward to visiting YOUR town some day soon.**

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The following are valuable members of our board, but are not elected positions:

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In this issue:

NJ may have a 250th license plate, p. 1,3
Tunis Gulic Campbell, p. 4
Spotlight on Our Members, p. 5-6
NJ's Victory Towns, p. 7
Preserving Taylor's Mill, p. 8-9
Seaside Heights carousel, p.10-11
Your State Symbols, part III, p. 12
Job Marketplace, p. 13
Business Members, p. 14
Hale Publication Awards, p. 15
New Jersey Bookshelf, p. 16-18
Perth Amboy Central Region Meeting, p. 19-20

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

As I read various stories about the 250th anniversary of America's founding, I am always amazed at the personal sacrifice our founding fathers experienced while working to achieve our independence and the establishment of a new nation. The five members of the NJ delegation that signed the Declaration of Independence were perfect examples of this focus on ideology over personal gain that led to great hardship.

Abraham Clark had two sons who served in the Continental Army. They were both captured and brutally tortured. The British offered to spare their lives if he would recant his signing of the Declaration of Independence. He refused and fortunately, his sons were not killed. Clark died from sunstroke in 1794.

Richard Stockton was captured by Loyalists shortly after signing the Declaration. They turned Stockton over to the British who treated him badly in captivity. Although he was released after a year, his possessions had been stolen by Loyalists and his health significantly damaged. He resigned from Congress due to poor health and died in 1781.

Francis Hopkinson helped design the Great Seal of New Jersey with Pierre Eugene du Simitiere, one of the fourteen men who worked on the Great Seal of the United States. He was a recognized designer of the Flag of the United States. Hopkinson noted that he received no pay for the designs but instead wanted only "a Quarter Cask of the public Wine." Like other signers, economic realities may have caught up with Hopkinson since he was impeached as a judge for the U.S. District Court for the District of Pennsylvania in 1781 on allegations of accepting payment from litigants, accepting bribes in exchange for appointments, and trading in false certificates. After an impeachment, he was acquitted and remained in office. He died 1791.

John Hart was in danger around his farmland in Hopewell during the war years. Hart had to escape and hide in the Sourland Mountains because of his status as speaker of the Assembly. British and Hessian troops raided his farm, damaging his property. He died in 1779 of poor health before the war ended.

John Witherspoon's possessions and notes were lost when the British destroyed Nassau Hall at Princeton University (then called the College of New Jersey). After the war, he spent considerable amounts of time

(continued on page three)

DEADLINE: Submissions for the September issue of *League News* must be on the editor's desk no later than July 15, 2026. Please send all items to: Linda Barth, 214 North Bridge Street, Somerville, New Jersey 08876; barthlinda123@aol.com.
Material submitted electronically should be in WORD format. Photographs will be scanned and returned. Digital photographs should be submitted in .jpeg or .tif.



Jersey isn't often considered a top destination for American Revolution history buffs, in the same way as other locations, such as Boston and Philadelphia.

The proposal to create special license plates in New Jersey would give motorists a way to promote the state's revolutionary heritage, according to sponsors of the legislation, and to directly support and preserve it.

"Our state was the site of the ferocious battles that changed the tide of the war," said Assemblyman William Moen (D-Camden), a sponsor of the bill. "

"This (plate) would help fund and support the sites up and down the state," Moen said when the bill came up for review during a recent meeting of the Assembly's Tourism, Gaming and the Arts Committee.

New Jersey's Motor Vehicle Commission already offers more than a dozen special plates, including those that support cancer research, preservation of the state's Pine Barrens region, and Jersey Shore cleanup projects.

Special plates can also be personalized for an additional fee, according to the MVC.

"This license plate will serve as a symbol of pride for New Jersey drivers who travel past the battlegrounds and landmarks that earned us the title, 'Crossroads of the Revolution,' while preserving the history of our fight for independence." — Republican Assemblymen Rob Clifton and Alex Sauickie

The bill calling for the establishment of the 250th Anniversary Revolutionary War license plate would require the MVC's chief administrator, in consultation with New Jersey Historical Commission, to select a design for the plate, including "an emblem and color scheme."

If enacted into law, the legislation would also require the Department of the Treasury to create a special fund to deposit revenue generated from the fees paid by those obtaining the special plates, "less the amounts necessary to reimburse the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission for the administrative costs."

"Monies deposited in the fund shall be appropriated annually to support and preserve Revolutionary War sites throughout New Jersey," the bill says. "Interest or other income earned on monies deposited in the fund, and any monies which may be appropriated or otherwise become available for the purposes of the fund, shall be credited to and deposited in the fund."

After the bill cleared the Assembly committee in a unanimous vote, its two Republican sponsors, Assemblymen Rob Clifton and Alex Sauickie, said the plates should highlight the "outsized role" the state played in the American Revolution.

This is not the first effort to set aside funding to support American Revolution sites within the state's borders in preparation for America's 250th anniversary, which will be celebrated nationally on July 4th. Several years ago, then-Gov. Phil Murphy allocated \$25 million from New Jersey's share of COVID-19 pandemic relief aid to 10 locations considered important to the nation's founding, including battlefields in Freehold and Princeton.

Some of that funding was also set aside for Trenton's Old Barracks, a building located around the corner from the State House that dates to 1758 and was used to house soldiers during the American Revolution.

This story is made possible in part by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people.

The President's Corner (continued from page two)

and money repairing the building. He died in 1794.

Other signers of the Declaration of Independence also faced significant hardships and sacrifices. Five signers were captured by the British and tortured, leading to their deaths. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned, and many others lost their property. Two signers lost their sons in the Revolutionary War, and others had their sons captured. Many signers, including wealthy planter Carter Braxton, faced financial ruin after the war, selling their homes and properties to pay debts. Signers often had to flee their homes to avoid capture, feared imprisonment, and often experienced looting of their farms and houses.

It is hard to imagine our current state and federal politicians on the right and left, sacrificing their life, family, or property for the cause of independence and liberty. We are very lucky these five great New Jersey men were there at that time and sacrificed everything for the dream of America. I will think of them often this year as we celebrate the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

The Story of Tunis Gulic Campbell By Mary Swarbrick

Tunis Gulic Campbell was one of ten children born to John Campbell, a free person of color, in 1812, in Middlebrook, New Jersey, an unincorporated community in the Borough of Bound Brook. His mother's name is unknown. In 1817, when he was 5 years of age, a family friend helped place Campbell in an all-white Episcopal School in Babylon, NY to be trained as a missionary to Liberia under the auspices of the American Colonization Society. At age 18 he became an anti-colonization and abolitionist lecturer. He converted to Methodism and shuttled between New Jersey and New York preaching against slavery, colonization, alcohol, and prostitution, and in time, joined Frederick Douglas on speaking tours.

During the period from 1832 to 1845 he earned a living as a hotel steward in New York City and published a guide in 1848 regarding hotel management while working in Boston; *Hotel Keepers, Head Waiters, and Housekeepers' Guide* was the first manual written by an American about the supervision of first-class hotels.

In 1863, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton commissioned Campbell to aid in the settlement of freedmen in Port Royal, South Carolina.

By March 1865, he was an agent with the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands and supervised the resettlement of newly freed people on five Georgia Sea Islands: Ossabaw, Delaware, Colonels, St. Catherine's and Sapelo, promoting education, land ownership, economic opportunities, and political participation.

Campbell was a delegate during the Georgia State Constitutional Convention of 1867-1868 and served as Senator for the second Senatorial District in the Georgia Assembly, serving on two committees. He introduced 15 bills promoting civil rights for Black Georgians in equal education, integrated court juries, homestead exemptions, elimination of imprisonment for debt, full access to public facilities and fair voting procedures. In September, 1868, Campbell and 32 other black representatives were expelled from the General Assembly. Campbell was reinstated in 1871, but lost his bid in 1872, due to intimidation of black voters. He continued to serve as Justice of the Peace on St. Catherine's. He would be indicted on multiple trumped-up charges when he defended the rights of black sailors on ships docked in Darien, Georgia, and was convicted and sentenced to hard labor on a chain gang at a Georgia convict labor camp.

Following his imprisonment, then age 65, he moved to Washington, DC, and continued his political activism. He also published a memoir, *Sufferings of the Reverend T.G. Campbell and His Family in Georgia* (1877). He died in Cambridge, Boston on December 4, 1891.

A comprehensive analysis of Tunis Campbell's work and achievements is documented in *Freedom's Shore, Tunis Campbell and the Georgia Freedmen*, by Russell Duncan.



LETTERS, WE GET LETTERS...

Thank you for all you do to support and connect organizations across New Jersey.

Best regards,

Austin Myers, *Events & Communications Manager*, Naval Air Station Wildwood Aviation Museum

Brian Armstrong's memorial tribute to Randy Gabrielan (January issue) was an outstanding article. I worked with Randy for the past 20+ years, and your words of praise for Monmouth County's premier historian truly reflect his achievements and prominence. Well done!

— Glenn Cashion, Monmouth County Historical Commission; VP Monmouth County Historical Association.





SPOTLIGHT ON OUR MEMBERS

New Providence Historical Society

Founded in 1966, the society's first challenge was to find a suitable home. An 1800s farmhouse scheduled for demolition was offered as a donation on the condition the society members had to move it to a suitable location. Fortunately, the Borough agreed to permit the house to be moved across the main road to its present home on borough property. Springfield Avenue was closed for the move as residents lined the street to watch a home put on wheels and rolled across the street. That old house became the Salt Box Museum, and the volunteers transformed the farmhouse into what it is today. The first floor contains four showrooms, full of furniture and archival pieces. The two-room second floor is used as storage space. Under a protected shelter out back is a refurbished vintage hay wagon, once used on a farm in town.

The mission of the New Providence Historical Society is to educate the public about the local American experience through a generational perspective. We illuminate the past through student programs, museum tours, and archival access.

We accomplish our mission by managing and protecting two main resources, the SALT BOX MUSEUM (above) and the MASON ROOM ARCHIVES, housed at an addition to the New Providence Memorial Library. These resources are open regularly for visits, historical and genealogical research, individual and group tours and a chance to experience a 19th-century farmhouse full of historical artifacts. The museum is open the first Sunday of the month from 1:00-3:00 p.m. The Mason Room archives are open every Tuesday from 10:00 a.m.-noon, and the second Saturday of the month from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. We also partner with the Borough of New Providence, the NP School District and NP Presbyterian Church to present speakers, tours, graveyard tours, and other activities.

As an all-volunteer, member-funded organization, we are proud of the breadth and depth of our offerings. Please visit our website and Facebook page to learn more about our society's activities.



Here is a brief list of events and activities that showcase and celebrate our past, present and future:

January 2026: Lighting the 13 solar lanterns at Salt Box Museum Liberty Tree to honor the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the 60th anniversary of the NP Historical Society.

January 2026: Colonial Libations Tasting-Foods and Drinks from the 1700s held at the Salt Box Museum.

During 2026: Annual Classroom Visits/Tours of Salt Box Museum, by NP School District Students.

(continued on the next page)

April 2026: Annual Members Dinner and Speaker Rick Gefken's presentation on the Lenape People.

April 2026 Reverend Caldwell Day: Honoring the memory of a pivotal local patriot, the society is taking part in a town-wide charity day with special graveyard tours and open Mason Room hours.

May 2026: Free presentation on The Gilded Age of Carl H Schultz, the Mineral Water King and development of Murray Hill NJ.

Spring, Summer, Fall 2026: Graveyard Tours of NP Presbyterian Church, featuring Revolutionary War heroes and founding families at NP Presbyterian Church.

August 2026: Celebration of the society's 60th anniversary, on the grounds of the Salt Box.

October 2026: Union County's "Four Centuries in a Weekend" event, both Salt Box and Archive Room open for public tours.

October 2026: Fall program on a historical subject at DeCorso Community Center.

October 2026: Meet, greet, and learn about local history at the New Providence Pioneer Day Street Fair, Springfield Avenue.

Please visit our website <https://newprovidencehistorical.com> as well as our Facebook page @NewProvidenceHistoricalSociety for more events and specific dates. Please be aware that additional events are being offered throughout the year. Check us out, and come visit!

North Jersey Highlands Historical Society

Established in 1954 as the West Milford Historical Society, the society was restructured in 1963 as the North Jersey Highlands Historical Society to better reflect the broader interests of its growing membership. Since 1964, it has been a registered nonprofit 501(c)(3) and has proudly served as an Officially Recognized Friends Organization for the Ringwood Manor Historic District.

The mission of the society is to serve as a central organization to collect and preserve the material heritage of the northeastern Highlands region of New Jersey, with a particular interest in the Ringwood State Park and New Jersey's early iron industry, encouraging public and private awareness and understanding of the region's heritage.

The society hosts complimentary guest speaker events on local history, publishes historical books, and actively manages restoration programs at Ringwood Manor.

Current efforts include preservation of the cemetery and the site's oldest house, dating to the 1750s. Restoration work is funded in part through special events such as October's Enchanted Evening tours and this year's 50th anniversary of Victorian Christmas, a four-weekend event: Nov. 27-29, Dec. 4-6, 11-13, and 18-20 from 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.



In celebration of its 70th anniversary in 2024, the society published a commemorative journal titled "Iron in the Highlands," featuring select reprints from past issues of *The North Jersey Highlander* highlighting notable local ironworks sites throughout the Highlands.

Our programs are listed on the Ringwood Manor website, www.ringwoodmanor.org/north-jersey-highlands-historical-society, where visitors can explore upcoming programs and special events hosted by both or-

ganizations and access a complete list of publications issued by the society.

North Jersey Highlands Historical Society, P.O. Box 248, Ringwood, NJ 07456; NJHHS@hotmail.com

New Jersey's Victory Towns Prepare to Celebrate Their Roles in the March to Yorktown

By Bradford Fay

New Jersey has more “Victory Towns” than any of the nine states that witnessed the march of thousands of Continental Army troops and French allies headed to Yorktown, Virginia, to win the American Revolution in 1781.

Close to 200 modern municipalities can claim a piece of the trail taken from Newport, Rhode Island to Yorktown, and nearly 70 of them are in New Jersey. As part of 250th anniversary year celebrations, these towns have been invited to collaborate with the National Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route Association.

Participating Victory Towns receive research from the trail’s historian, Dr. Robert Selig, use of a Victory Town logo, and the option to have a handsome historic marker telling the town’s unique trail story. The first of these markers is expected to



Reenactor John Koopman as Washington on the Washington-Rochambeau trail in Franklin Township, followed by a local family.



The City of Passaic integrated the Victory Town logo in its New Year’s Eve festivities, including on the “piñata drop” at midnight.

go up in Manville in April. There’s also a Victory Towns online store with banners, shirts, pins, hats, and more.

Passaic City was the first to celebrate its Victory Town status, as part of its recent New Year’s Eve celebration. Several Victory towns—including Montgomery and Scotch Plains—have arranged for reenactors of General Washington and Rochambeau to participate in Independence Day events, while Franklin in Somerset County plans to reenact the march in late August. The City of Trenton’s housing authority is integrating the Victory Towns concept into its Choice Neighborhoods development and seeking funding for a monument to the Black and Brown soldiers who marched the trail. Other Victory Town participants include Princeton in Mercer County; Rocky Hill, and

Hillsborough in Somerset County; Summit in Union County; and Pompton Lakes, Ringwood, Wanaque, and Wayne in Passaic County.

Why did New Jersey have so many towns on the trail to Yorktown? The reason is that the Continental Army broke up into several lines of march so they could hide the size of troop movements from the British, who had expected their stronghold in New York to be the target of Washington’s final drive to victory. Indeed, Washington ordered the construction of large bake ovens in the Chatham/Summit area to make it appear that they were settling in for a long siege of New York. Only once reaching the Rocky Hill/Princeton area did they consolidate into one line of march. By that time, the British understood they were headed south, where they would ultimately force the surrender of Lord Cornwallis and win the American Revolution.

Is your town a Victory Town? Find out on the W3R-US website at w3r-us.org/victory-towns, where you can also visit the online Victory Towns store. You can also email victorytowns@w3r-us.org. W3R would be delighted to work with you and your elected leaders to honor your town’s history in the march to American independence.



Rhode Island Regiment reenactor Kevin Chapman wears a t-shirt that features himself and two other reenactors of color called “heroes of 1781,” available in the Victory Towns Online Store.

PRESERVATION BITES: From Endangered to Envisioned - Taylor’s Mill Moves Toward a New Future

By Kelly Ruffel

Images courtesy of Clark Caton Hintz

In 2023, Taylor’s Mill was named one of Preservation New Jersey’s Ten Most Endangered Historic Sites, a call to action that helped spark renewed momentum around one of New Jersey’s landmarks of the American Revolution.

Today, that momentum is paying off.

The Friends of Col. John Taylor’s Grist Mill have unveiled an ambitious proposal to rehabilitate the Taylor’s Mill Historic Site into a pedestrian-friendly recreational trail stop that blends preservation, interpretation, and



outdoor recreation. Concept images developed by Clark Caton Hintz, based on a preservation plan by Hunter Research Inc., envision a two-story steel “ghost” framework rising from the existing stone ruins. The structure would stabilize the historic mill while illustrating what it likely looked like during the American Revolution.

Inside, picnic tables would offer a place of rest for hikers using nearby township trails, alongside interpretive signage explaining the mill’s importance to both local and national history.

“This concept leverages everything we have going for us in Readington,” said Patricia Fisher-Olsen, President of Friends of Taylor’s Mill and Chair of the Readington Township Historic Preservation Commission. “We have history, we have open space, we have recreation. This is all three in one.”

The approach mirrors successful projects elsewhere, including the ghost structure at Benjamin Franklin’s House in Philadelphia and similar stabilization work at Rodgers House in Mercer County Park, both examples of how endangered ruins can be transformed into accessible, low-maintenance heritage destinations connected to public parks.

Several parcels surrounding the mill were acquired in 2025 and are now protected as part of the Taylor’s Mill National Historic District. The 26-acre site stretches along Rockaway Creek and includes the historic raceway that once powered the mill. Originally listed on the National Register in 1992, the district was expanded in 1997 to better reflect its historic landscape.

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The newly completed preservation plan outlines immediate and long-term recommendations for stabilizing and activating the site, a critical first step toward grant funding and sustainable stewardship.

Taylor's Mill is often called "the mill that fed Washington's troops." Historic documentation links flour produced here directly to requisitions from General George Washington. John Taylor himself served in the 4th Hunterdon Militia and fought in the Battle of Trenton. As the only remaining pre-Revolutionary grist mill in New Jersey, Taylor's Mill offers a rare, tangible connection to the founding of our nation.

Its inclusion on Preservation New Jersey's 2023 Ten Most Endangered list helped elevate awareness of both the site's fragility and its potential. Just two years later, Taylor's Mill is emerging as a powerful example of how advocacy, planning, and community partnerships can move a place from at-risk to revitalized.

As America approaches its 250th anniversary in 2026, the Friends of Taylor's Mill continue working to stabilize and interpret the site ensuring this extraordinary piece of history can be experienced by future generations.

<https://preservationnj.org/>



VISIT THE LEAGUE'S JOB MARKETPLACE WEBSITE

Check out **page thirteen** of this newsletter to learn about the League's new JOB MARKETPLACE.

Post your job openings or post your resume to find a history-related job close to home.

Just type in this url and start searching.

<https://www.lhsnj.org/job-marketplace>

PRESERVATION BITES: Carousels are Increasingly Rare, But this One in Seaside Heights is Now a National Landmark



There are many rides at the Seaside Heights boardwalk but the Floyd L. Moreland Carousel is also a work of art.

“Everyone who comes to see the carousel is happy,” said Joe Verderosa, president of the Seaside Heights Historical Society. “It’s just a joyful place.”

The sense of joy that surrounds the carousel has been heightened lately after it became the newest landmark to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places after a vote from the State Review Board in November. This is the culmination of a decadelong fight to save it. In 2014, Casino Pier—which owned an arcade along the boardwalk that housed the carousel—planned to auction off this landmark. But local residents rallied and the local government stepped in to acquire it.

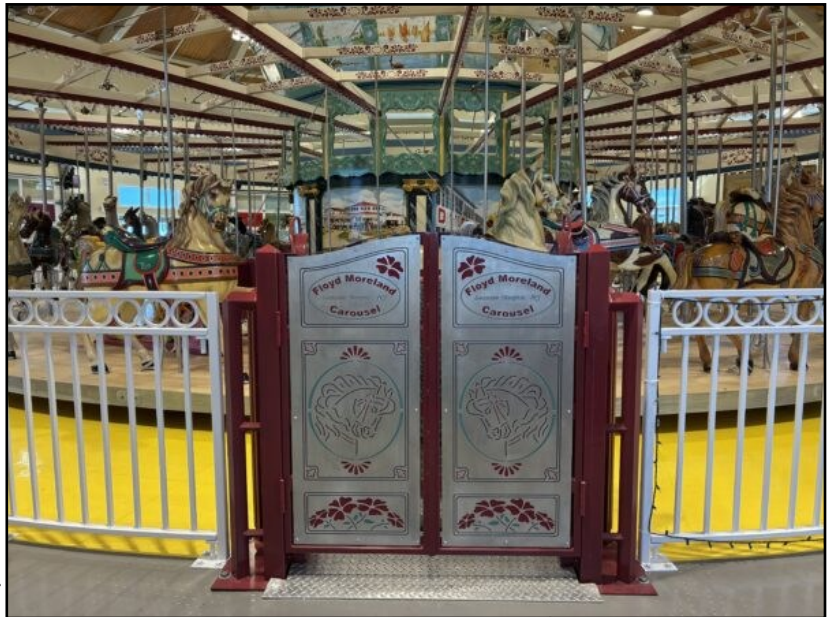
Around that time, Seaside Heights had experienced “back-to-back punches,” Verderosa said. Not only did the boardwalk get ravaged by Hurricane Sandy in 2012, but the next year, one of the piers caught fire, destroying one of the two carousels at the boardwalk. The only problem with the carousel is that it badly needed repairs—and not everyone has the expertise to fix a broken one. It was historian Barbara Fahs Charles, author of the State Register listing, who recommended that the carousel be shipped in pieces to the nation’s pre-eminent repairer Todd Goings, who runs a shop called Carousels & Carvings in Marion, Ohio.

The beauty of the carousel is striking following a \$2.5-million restoration completed in 2023. It is now housed inside the Carousel Pavilion at the north end of the boardwalk and the centerpiece of a local history museum that opened last year. The walls of the pavilion are lined with vintage postcards, photos, and newspaper articles of the boardwalk.

“I met my wife at this arcade,” Verderosa said, pointing to one of the postcards. “That’s where I worked in high school.”

The process of nominating the carousel for the National Register dug up interesting details about its history. The carousel was installed at the boardwalk in 1935, according to Charles. This was a time when the last makers of these types of machines had closed up shop. It was assembled with the parts of other carousels. One enduring mystery is that no one knows exactly who assembled it.

The inner paintings and the core mechanism came from W. F. Mangels Carousel Works in Coney Island. The 58 rideable animals—horses, donkeys, lions—were the work of various builders, including G.A. Dentzel Company and E. Joy Morris, both of whom had factories in Philadelphia.



The carousel wouldn’t be complete without the Wurlitzer organ, which originally operated with a paper
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piano roll.

“Philadelphia and Coney Island are the two premiere places that carousels were being made in the United States,” said Charles, who cofounded the National Carousel Association in 1973.

Until the 1970s, a visitor could find a vintage carousel at almost any shore town in New Jersey. The National Carousel Association keeps a census of all the carousels across the nation and Charles estimates having lost about half of all carousels since the census was first published in 1974. Sadly, New Jersey has seen one of the highest rates of loss. Unwanted carousels are dismantled and sold for their parts. Nowadays, there are only four left in the entire state and one of them in Ocean City is endangered, Charles said.

The staggering loss of these beautiful, intricate machines underscores the importance of saving the Floyd Moreland Carousel, which is named after the inaugural president of the Seaside Heights Historical Society who was instrumental in saving it.

“Fortunately, Dr. Moreland was here to enjoy the grand opening last year,” Vaz said. “I just wish he was still here to enjoy it a little more.”

Joe Verderosa (left), president of the Seaside Height Historical Society, and Christopher Vaz, Seaside Heights business administrator. Image courtesy of Darren Tobia.



New Jersey Black Heritage Trail Unveils Historical Marker Honoring Montclair’s YWCA

The New Jersey Historical Commission (NJHC) unveiled a New Jersey Black Heritage Trail historical marker at the Crane House & Historic YWCA at 110 Orange Road on Saturday, April 18th.

The marker commemorates the Montclair YWCA, founded in 1912 by seventeen women representing Black churches in Montclair, New Jersey. Established to serve and uplift Black women and girls during the 20th century, the Montclair YWCA provided a place of safety, refuge, and opportunity encouraging women to take pride in their heritage, pursue education, and emerge as leaders within their communities. The Montclair YWCA operated from the historic Crane House from 1920 to 1965, a period marked by significant growth and change within Montclair.

The New Jersey Black Heritage Trail is intended to be a living trail inviting visitors and passersby to engage with the sites’ art and history. Each historical marker will be 30x42 inches with black letters against a white background with gold trim. The markers will be mounted on a 7-foot pole. A square 6x6-inch aluminum plate will be attached to most marker poles with a QR code that leads visitors to the New Jersey Black Heritage Trail website. On select markers, including the Montclair YWCA, visitors will find a 5x10-inch aluminum plate with a Virtual Museum QR code. The New Jersey Black Heritage Trail Virtual Museum invites viewers to learn more about Black history and heritage sites in New Jersey through photographs, documents, and other related information. No application is required to access the Virtual Museum, but visitors will need to scan the QR code and follow the on-screen prompts to activate the experience.

As part of the legislation, the Historical Commission will work in cooperation with other state agencies, each of which has a unique role in implementing the project. This includes the Division of Travel and Tourism, New Jersey’s leading voice for promoting the importance of tourism as essential to the state’s economy, image, and overall quality of life; the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office, which is charged with preserving, protecting, and promoting the state’s historic resources; and the New Jersey Black Heritage Foundation, which prioritizes broadening and diversifying statewide participation in and appreciation for Black arts, history, and culture.

Do You Know Your State Symbols? Part III

Would you believe that New Jersey has over twenty state symbols? In this continuing series, we will introduce you to several of our symbols in each issue of the magazine. We will start with the earliest and perhaps most well-known and work our way up to the most recent. In the first installment, we introduced you to the state flag, bird, tree, and flower. In January we looked at the state insect, animal, fish, and dance.

Now let's look at two more state symbols.

New Jersey's state dinosaur is Hadrosaurus. A duckbilled dinosaur, *Hadrosaurus foulkii* roamed the forests and swamps along the bays of New Jersey's ancient seacoast. Today its bones are found in ancient marine deposits with fossil seashells. It was about twenty-five feet long, probably weighed 7 to 8 tons and stood about 10 feet tall. We think *Hadrosaurus* stood on its hind feet when running, but used its front feet to support its head while grazing. Its abundant blunt teeth confirm that *Hadrosaurus* was a vegetarian, a plant eater that could chew twigs and leaves. *Hadrosaurus* lived about 80 million years ago late in the Cretaceous Period.

Hadrosaurus is a famous dinosaur because it was the most complete dinosaur skeleton unearthed anywhere in the world when it was discovered and scientifically documented in 1858. It also became the first mounted dinosaur skeleton displayed anywhere in the world in 1868! *Hadrosaurus foulkii* became the official state dinosaur of New Jersey in 1991 after years of hard work by a teacher, Joyce Berry, and her fourth grade classes at Strawbridge Elementary School in Haddon Township. As a result of their efforts, New Jersey has a truly unique symbol of its prehistoric past.



The *A.J. Meerwald*, a 1928 oyster schooner, is used as a floating classroom for the Bayshore Center at Bivalve, New Jersey. The boat is 115' feet long and 70' feet tall with two masts and three sails. It sleeps about 24



comfortably and has bunks for crew and volunteers in the fo'c'sle (*Pronounced /folk-soul/sail*), main hold and the aft quarters. Our crew of 6-12 and the captain live aboard throughout the sailing season.

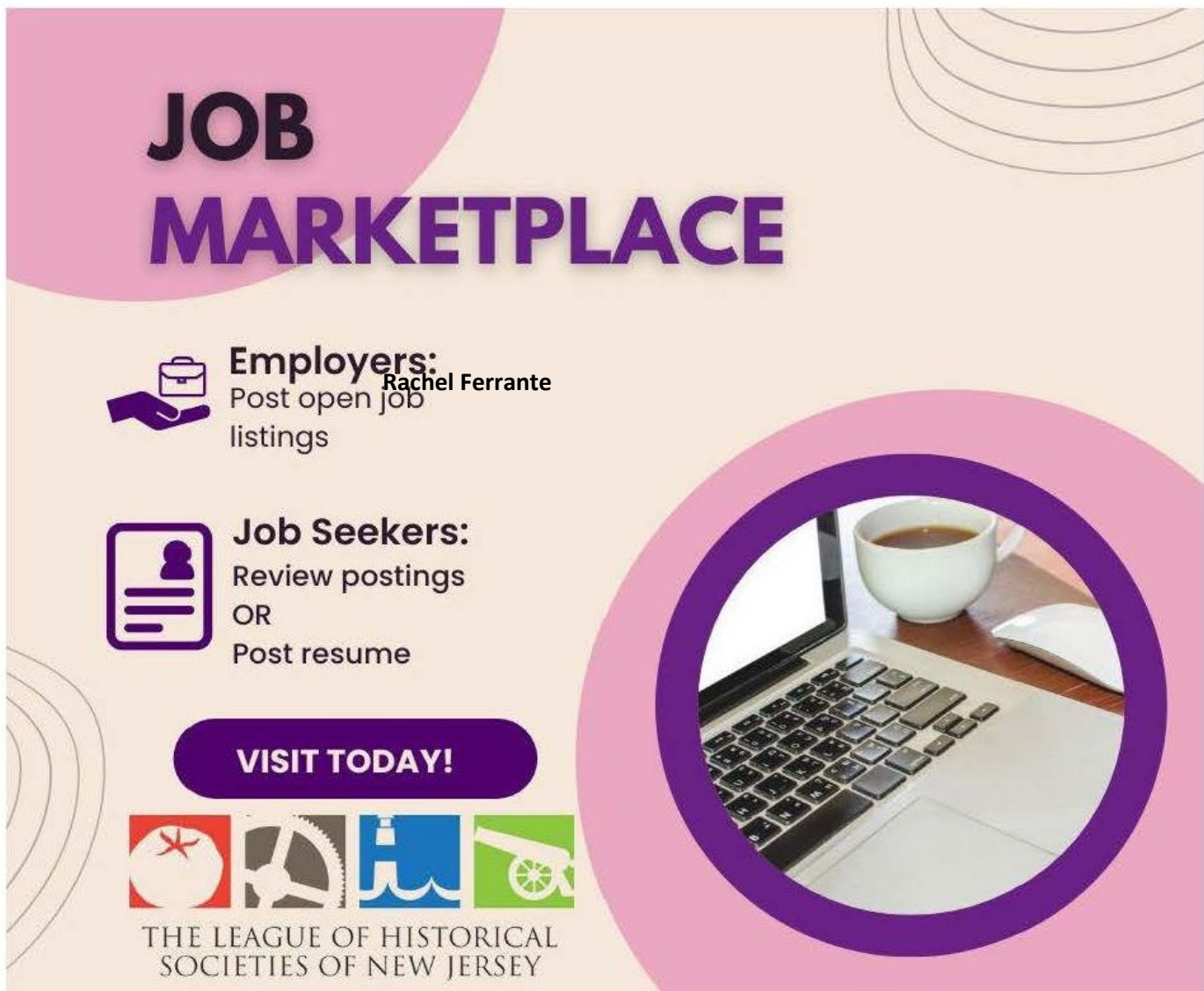
The *A.J. Meerwald* was designated as New Jersey's State Tall Ship on April 21, 1998. Augustus Joseph (AJ) Meerwald II was born in 1863. He followed in his father's footsteps of working the waters and became a sea captain in the oyster industry. He was a well-known member of the Board of Shellfisheries. Meerwald's two older boys, Augustus "Gus" and William "Bill," built an oyster schooner in 1928 and named it after their father to honor him. The *A.J. Meerwald* was launched

on August 31, 1928 and the oyster industry was at its peak in 1929. However, the Great Depression was hard on the Meerwald family, and they lost their boat to bankruptcy. The vessel sat inactive until World War II when it was converted into a Coast Guard fireboat and later returned to commercial use as the *Clyde A. Phillips*, serving in the oyster and clamming industries until the late 1970s. In 1986, it was donated to the nonprofit Bayshore Center in Bivalve, Cumberland County, where it was restored and renamed the *A.J. Meerwald*. Recognized for its historical significance, the ship was placed on the National Register of Historic Places and designated by Governor Christie Whitman in 1998 as **New Jersey's official tall ship**.


WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!


Beth Judah Temple
Leslie Brownwitt
Charles A. Smith Memorial Association
Ellen Codella
Linda Forgosh
Forgotten Warriors Vietnam Museum
Friends of Jockey Hollow
Millburn Short Hills Historical Society
Mullica Hill Library

Lisa Nanton
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Audrey Smith
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A circular inset image shows a laptop, a white coffee cup, and a mouse on a desk.

Check out the Job Marketplace on our website! You'll find this great new program under the Newsletters and Resources section.

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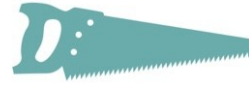


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We hope that you will patronize our business supporters. Please consider inviting retail or commercial businesses to become Business Members of the League of Historical Societies of New Jersey and support our mission of promoting the preservation of the historical heritage of New Jersey by stimulating among member organizations the development of programs, projects, and publications that celebrate this heritage.

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Criteria for the 2026 Kevin M. Hale Newsletter

The Hale Publication Awards are open to all societies who are current members of LHSNJ. All entries must have been published during the calendar year 2026. Only one issue of the newsletter per organization should be submitted for consideration. **Five copies of each entry are due no later than January 31, 2027.** They should be mailed to JB Vogt, Chair, Publications Committee, 6 Forty Oaks Road, Whitehouse Station, NJ 08889. Leave phone messages at 908-534-4600 or email jnvgt6@gmail.com with questions. A cover letter must accompany all submissions. The letter will include a contact email. The letter should state the frequency of publication and whether or not it is available online.

NEWSLETTER CRITERIA

Front Page:

Frequency of publication?

Front/back pages

Is it eye-catching?

Does it clearly identify the name of the group, the site, the date, the location?

Is there a web address given?

Contents:

Does it contain articles that add to our historic knowledge or understanding of a topic?

Does it encourage participation in the organization's activities? Does it encourage membership?

Does it contain articles about events that are current (or were at the time it was published)?

Does it review previous activities and successes?

Does it promote other heritage tourism? Does it promote other sites? Does the group partner with other sites?

Can it be viewed online?

Pictures:

Do they have historic or cultural value?

Are they clearly labeled and credited to the photographer?

Graphic quality—Are they eye-catching?

Contact Info:

Is it easy to contact the group or editor for more information? Is there an address, phone number, and/or email to contact?

It's easy to become a member of the League of Historical Societies of New Jersey!

Simply visit us at www.lhsnj.org and click on "Join the League." On the drop-down menu, choose your membership type and complete the form. Choose your method of payment and click "Submit."

If you would prefer a printed form, just contact Linda Barth at barthlinda123@aol.com or 908-240-0488, and she will mail a form to you.



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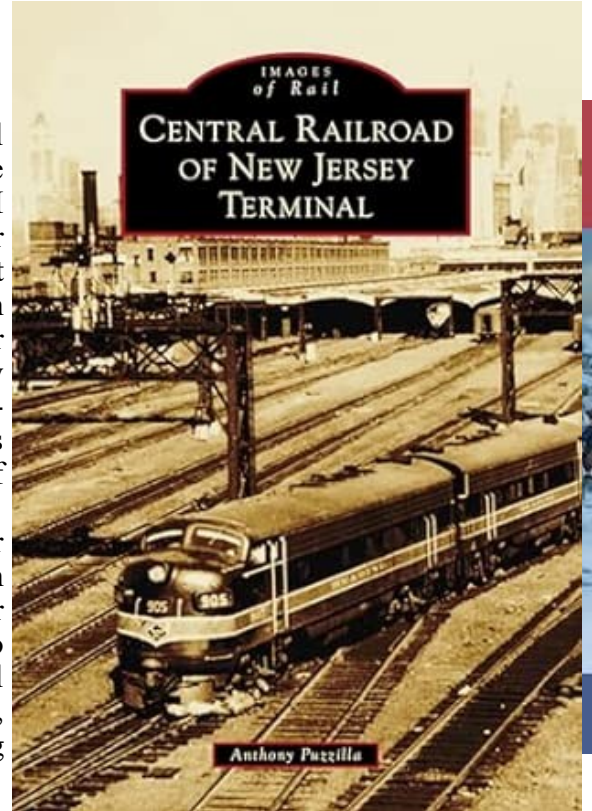
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Central Railroad of New Jersey Terminal
By Anthony Puzzilla

The historic Central Railroad of New Jersey (CRRNJ) Terminal operated for nearly 80 years from 1869 until 1967. It served as the main passenger terminal for the CRRNJ and its tenant Class I railroads serving the New York City metropolitan area. For approximately two-thirds of the 12–17 million new citizens that successfully passed through the Ellis Island Immigration Station between 1892 and 1954, the CRRNJ Terminal became their gateway to America. In addition, the terminal became the New York City origination/destination point for the CRRNJ and its tenant Class I railroads and their famous named trains. These trains were, and are still today, widely renowned in the annals of American railroading.

Anthony Puzzilla is a retired federal government employee after 43 years of service. He is now a full-time writer, as well as a railfan and model train lover. He is a member of the Jersey Central Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society, the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Historical Society, and the Reading Company Technical and Historical Society. This book contains memorable images, many from the author's own private photograph collection, showing the remarkable history of this notable railroad terminal.

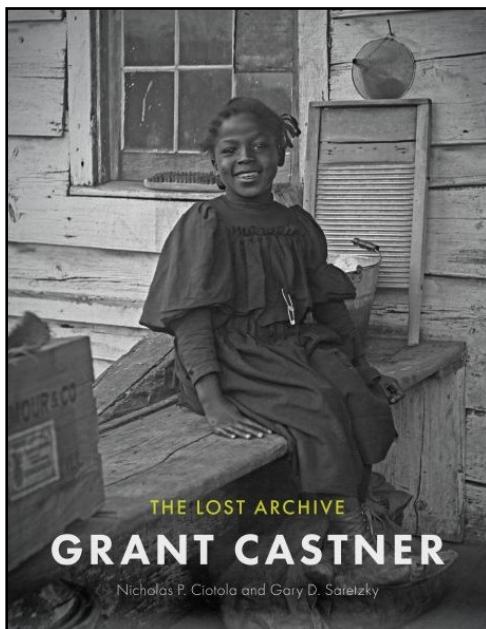


Grant Castner: The Lost Archive
By Nicholas P. Ciotola and Gary D. Saretzky

In July 2019, staff of the New Jersey State Museum visited a cramped and dusty storage locker in Hunterdon County. Inside was a treasure trove of more than one thousand glass plate negatives. Each negative preserved an image of New Jersey at the turn of the 20th century. They once belonged to a Trenton resident who had used the plates as tools for his chosen art form. His name was Grant Castner. His art was photography.

Castner's glass plate negatives are a visual record of New Jersey's social and cultural history. His many human subjects are rich and poor, young and old, Black and white. They are at work, at play, at home, and in the community. Castner also documented social change brought about by electricity, engineering, education, industry, and transportation. He captured the excitement of public amusements such as parades and fairs. He recorded the aftermath of floods, fires, and other disasters. Castner also had a fondness for the outdoors. He used his camera to reflect on the beauty and tranquility that he found in the natural landscapes of New Jersey.

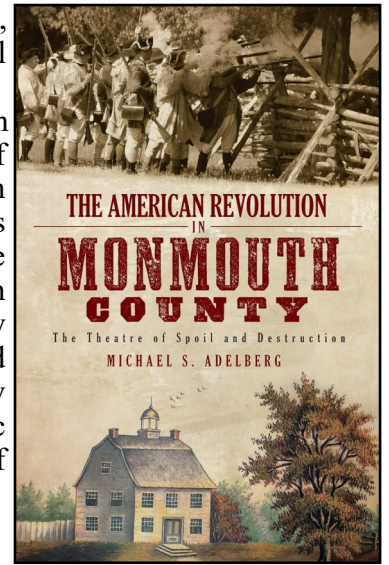
This book presents the collective work of Grant Castner, an amateur artist whose place in New Jersey history was, until now, completely unknown. His photographic negatives forever preserve pinpoint moments in the past. They are time machines to another era. Let this long lost archive transport you on a visual journey into a New Jersey of days gone by.



The American Revolution in Monmouth County The Theatre of Spoil and Destruction By Michael S. Adelberg

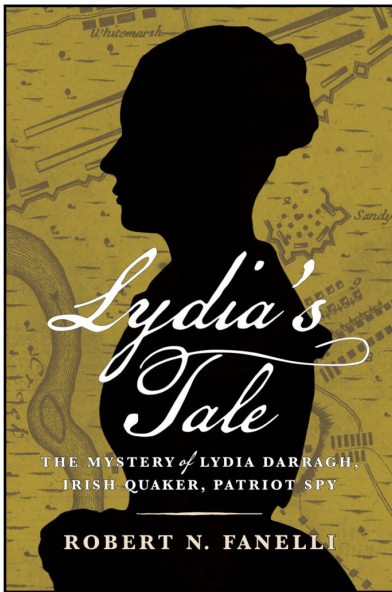
Michael S. Adelberg brings to life the struggles within Monmouth County, place that New Jersey governor William Livingston called “the theatre of spoil and destruction.”

Like much of New Jersey during the American Revolution, Monmouth County was contested territory in between the great armies. As the battles of Trenton, Princeton, and Bound Brook raged nearby, the people of Monmouth County fought their own internal revolution. Loyalist partisans led insurrections and raids that laid waste to entire neighborhoods. In 1778, General George Washington rallied his Continental army and fought the British within Monmouth’s borders, barely holding the field. Residents of Monmouth County joined the fight and then spent the following weeks caring for the wounded and burying the dead. The remaining war years brought more hardships, as they grappled with a local civil war charged with racial, religious, and economic undercurrents—a local civil war that continued long after the Battle of Yorktown supposedly ended hostilities.



Lydia’s Tale: The Mystery of Lydia Darragh, Irish Quaker, Patriot Spy By Robert N. Fanelli

Lydia Darragh is famed for eavesdropping on British General William Howe’s staff as they planned a surprise attack, then sneaking through the lines to give warning to American soldiers. Her actions are said to have saved George Washington’s army from a devastating ambush as it lay starving and freezing on the barren hills of Whitemarsh at the end of 1777. But did the secret she brought to the Patriots really prevent their defeat? Why would a professed pacifist choose to risk her life by intervening in military affairs? Who was the mysterious intelligence officer she met between the lines? Was her story even true?

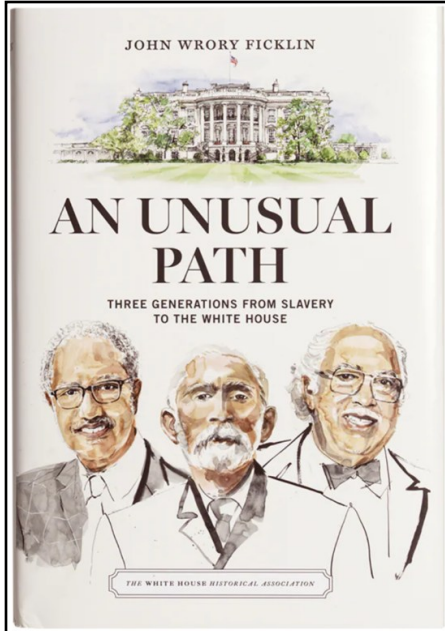


Lydia’s Tale: The Mystery of Lydia Darragh, Irish Quaker, Patriot Spy by Robert N. Fanelli uncovers a myriad of previously unknown records, knitting together for the first time the life and experiences of this remarkable heroine of the American Revolution who lived in the heart of Philadelphia. Behind her story we find an assertive woman who took an active hand in the affairs of her family and her community. Drawing on genealogical sources, legal documents, and other correspondence, the author reconstructs Lydia Darragh’s early life in Dublin, her livelihood in Pennsylvania, and how the Revolution shaped her and her children’s lives. Exploring the context of Lydia’s tale sheds light on the activities of women in Revolutionary Philadelphia, reveals the complex issues faced by pacifist Quakers in a time of war, and brings to light the contributions of Irish immigrants in securing America’s freedom.

The author’s careful research reveals little known details and corrects historians’ common misapprehensions about the Revolutionary period. Along the way, we meet often overlooked figures, including diarist Christopher Marshall and his family, the irascible Quaker recluse Bathsheba Bowers, and Blair McClenachan, the wealthy Patriot financier who also served his adopted country as a common soldier. Lydia Darragh is frequently included among that small group of women cited as Revolutionary heroines. This detailed microhistory demonstrates how legend can inform the study of history, describing how one woman’s personal reminiscence morphed into a piece of American mythology, now recovered in the historical context it deserves.

Editor's note: Although this is not a book about New Jersey, it sounded so interesting that I decided to include it in this issue.

An Unusual Path: Three Generations from Slavery to the White House By John Wroly Ficklin



The Ficklin family name has been associated with White House service for nearly a century. In fact, so many members of the Ficklin family once worked at the White House that the *Washington Post* quoted a butler who observed, “A Ficklin here, a Ficklin there, I see Ficklins everywhere.”

John Wroly Ficklin, who retired in 2015 after his own forty years of White House service, presents his family history with a heartwarming and inspiring new book, *An Unusual Path: Three Generations from Slavery to the White House* (White House Historical Association; on sale now).

The story begins with the author's grandfather James Strother Ficklin, who was born enslaved in about 1854 and conscripted to serve as a water boy to Confederate army troops quartering in rural Virginia. Following Emancipation, he worked as a houseman, laborer, and in coal mining before purchasing 37 acres of land in Virginia where he farmed, produced molasses, and raised ten children.

John Woodson Ficklin, the seventh of those ten children, and the author's father, moved to Washington, D.C., as a teenager and like many African American men at the time, found work as a butler in the city. His older brothers Sam and Charles began working as butlers at the White House during the Franklin D. Roosevelt presidency, and he soon joined them. Over the course of

forty-three years in service at the White House, John Woodson Ficklin was promoted to the esteemed positions of head butler and maître d' hotel.

In the book, John W. Ficklin recounts his realization of the prominence of his father's job as he watched his dad serve as an usher at the funeral for President John F. Kennedy. Growing up, he worked part-time for his father, as staff at White House State Dinners and social events. During one summer picnic on the South Lawn, while transporting ice to the service tents he was delighted to hear President Jimmy Carter sing “Salt Peanuts” with Dizzy Gillespie. The author continued his service with an extended summer job as a messenger where, among other tasks, he transported documents from the Nixon White House to the Watergate Special Prosecutor's office. Eventually John went on to become the longest serving member of the National Security staff, faithfully serving seven U.S. presidents. Until his retirement in 2015, there had been a Ficklin in the White House since 1939, serving with every president from FDR to Obama. In just two generations, the Ficklins rose from slavery to the White House doors and beyond.

From the author's unique perspective, *An Unusual Path* tells the story of three Ficklin men against a backdrop of American history. In her foreword for the book, Ambassador Susan E. Rice, notes “The Ficklins' ultimate legacy may be to remind us all of what America is capable of at its best...This family didn't just bear witness to history, their story *is* history.”

About the Author

The Honorable John W. Ficklin's career spanned eight administrations, culminating in President Barack Obama appointing him to the position of special assistant to the president for National Security Affairs.

**The League of Historical Societies of NJ - 2026 Summer Meeting Hosted by
Proprietary House Association at the Raritan Yacht Club, 160 Water Street,
Perth Amboy, NJ 08861**

9:00-9:30 a.m. Registration, Coffee and Continental Breakfast

9:30a.m. Welcome & Brief History of the Proprietary House -by Lisa Nanton, Proprietary House Association President

10-10:20 a.m. League of Historical Societies of NJ Business Meeting

10:20-10:45 a.m. Early History of the Raritan Yacht Club and the Cooper House—Mary Ellen Pavlovsky, \ Proprietary House Association Treasurer

10:45-11 a.m. Break

11-11:30 a.m. William and Benjamin Franklin - Irreconcilable Differences—Donald J. Peck, Author and Former President of Proprietary House Association

11:30 a.m.-Noon Perth Amboy During the Revolutionary War-John K. Dyke, City Historian and P.H. Association Member & Former Trustee

Noon-1:00 p.m. Lunch

1:00p.m. End of RYC Program - Local Tours:

Visit St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Proprietary House, Perth Amboy City Hall, Surveyor General's Office Museum, Market Square/City Hall Park, Ferry Slip Museum, Kearny Cottage Museum.

LOCAL ACCOMODATIONS:

Hampton Inn Woodbridge, 370 US-9 North, Woodbridge, 07095

Spring Hill Suites by Marriott, 1010 US-9 North, Woodbridge, 07095

APA Hotel Woodbridge, 120 S. Wood Avenue, Iselin, 08830

Delta Hotels Woodbridge, 515 US-I S, Iselin, 08830

If you have questions, please phone Lisa Nanton at 732-324-2361 or email nantonlisa@hotmail

To REGISTER and pay ONLINE, go to: <https://www.theproprietaryhouse.org/events> OR

To REGISTER by MAIL, please complete the FORM below and mail it with your check for \$30 (payable to Proprietary House Association) to Proprietary House Association, 149 Kearny Avenue, Perth Amboy, NJ, 08861

PLEASE REGISTER BY JUNE 6th

REGISTRATION FORM

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**The League of Historical Societies of NJ – 2026 Summer Meeting
At the Raritan Yacht Club, 160 Water Street, Perth Amboy
Saturday, June 20, 2026**

DIRECTIONS to the Raritan Yacht Club, 160 Water Street, Perth Amboy, 08861

FROM THE NORTH

From NJ Turnpike South - Take Exit 11 for US-9 toward Woodbridge

Follow signs for US-9/NJ-440 toward Woodbridge/Perth Amboy

Or

From Garden State Parkway South - Take Exit 129 for US-9/NJ-440/I-287/Woodbridge/Perth Amboy

Then, from both Turnpike & Garden State Parkway

Follow signs to North US-9/NJ-440 Woodbridge and merge onto King Georges Rd/NJ-184E

Stay on NJ-184E and follow signs for NJ-440N / Outerbridge Crossing / Staten Island

On NJ-440N, STAY IN THE RIGHT LANE

Take the High St/State St Exit / LAST EXIT IN NJ, toward Perth Amboy

Turn right onto High Street (winding under Outerbridge Crossing and through the Harbortown Complex)

Follow High Street around Market Square roundabout

Continue straight on High Street, which ends at Water Street

Turn left onto Water Street - Raritan Yacht Club is on the right.

FROM THE SOUTH & WEST

From NJ Turnpike North - Exit 10 for I-287N/NJ-440N toward Metuchen/Perth Amboy

Follow signs for NJ-440N/Perth Amboy/Outerbridge Crossing

Or

From I-287 South - I-287S becomes NJ-440N

Then, from both Turnpike North & I-287 South

On NJ-440N, STAY IN THE RIGHT LANE

Take the High St/State St Exit / LAST EXIT IN NJ, toward Perth Amboy

Turn right onto High Street (winding under Outerbridge Crossing and through the Harbortown Complex)

Follow High Street around Market Square roundabout

Continue straight on High Street which ends at Water Street

Turn left onto Water Street - Raritan Yacht Club is on the right

FROM THE SOUTH

From Garden State Parkway North - Exit 125 toward Sayreville / S Amboy

Use the right lane to take the ramp to Chevalier Ave and merge into NJ-35N

From NJ-35N - Turn right onto Smith Street - Turn right onto Herbert Street - Turn left onto Market Street

Follow Market Street to Market Square roundabout. - Turn right onto High Street

Continue straight on High Street, which ends at Water Street

Turn left onto Water Street - Raritan Yacht Club is on the right

