



Volume 26, Issue 2 **The Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance**

Spring, 2022

MAY 21, 2022, RMHA BOARD MEETING AT HISTORIC BUCCLEUCH MANSION

The May 21, 2022, board meeting will be held at historic Buccleuch Mansion at Buccleuch Park, near George Street and College Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 at 10:00 a.m. followed by a house tour. This is the first time, since the mansion's restoration, that the RMHA has been invited to meet here. Accessible: the first floor only. Parking lot available. All individual and site members are invited to attend this meeting as it will be in place of our annual meeting which was previously cancelled. Officers and Directors will be elected.



Buccleuch Mansion was built in 1739 on the northeast end of New Brunswick (then part of Somerset County). It was constructed by Anthony White for his bride Elizabeth Morris, daughter of Royal Governor Lewis Morris. During the American Revolution, the mansion was occupied by British troops during their occupation of New Brunswick in 1776-1777. Signs of saber and musket marks from the occupation can be seen on Buccleuch's floors and bannisters today. It was visited by General George Washington and his officers during the special July 4th army maneuvers following the Battle of Monmouth in 1778.

This Georgian mansion is considered one of the city's finest examples of colonial architecture. Administered by the Jersey Blue Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, and contains some of its original furniture from the Colonial, Federal and Victorian era and early Parisian scenic wallpaper, fine Federal mantels, folk art and portraits. It is listed in the State and national registers of Historic Places.

The Revolutionary War Excelsior

By George Dawson

The Revolutionary War once again booms in the Raritan- Millstone guidebook region, with the conversion of the two-year coronavirus pandemic to endemic and the re-scheduling of the Battle of Monmouth re-enactment, the Rev War's largest (and longest: 13 hours!) battle of the American Revolution. The battle was fought in (and near) the tiny village of Monmouth Courthouse in Freehold (now Manalapan-Freehold) Township, about five miles from the upper Millstone River.

(Continued on page 3)

RARITAN-MILLSTONE HERITAGE ALLIANCE

PO Box 5583, Somerset, NJ 08875-5583

www.raritanmillstone.org

*An organization of individuals
Organizations, and sites working to promote
Preservation and understanding of the rich,
Eventful, and cultural heritage of significant
Historical,
Educational, environmental and cultural sites
Located in Central New Jersey.*

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The Board of Directors meets on the third or
Fourth Saturday of March, May, September,
November at designated historic and
Museum member sites in the region.

The Executive Committee

Meets in January and June

YOUR LINK TO THE PUBLIC:

The link is on a quarterly publication schedule. News
Of major upcoming events for possible placement in
The newsletter may be mailed, emailed, or faxed to the
Following address: Any questions, please contact:

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Michael Timpanaro, the Monmouth Battlefield State Park historical interpreter and senior on-premises state officer, has scheduled the once-annual (over 40 years) Battle of Monmouth re-enactment for Saturday-Sunday June 18-19, 2022, ending a two-year coronavirus-caused absence.

The Battle of Monmouth, the only Rev War battle involving the main contending armies led by commanders-in-chief George Washington and Henry Clinton, was actually fought on June 28, 1778. Officials, in the 46-year history of the relatively new state park, have always scheduled the battle's re-enactment 1-2 weeks before the actual battle, in hopes of avoiding a possible dearth of re-enactors around the Fourth of July.

The State Park's ORFO group (Officially Recognized Friends Organization), Friends of Monmouth Battlefield, has scheduled a series of programs and walking tours at the battlefield on Saturday-Sunday, June 25-26, 2-3 days before the battle's 244th anniversary (as the Friends group has done in the battle's pre-pandemic past). Such events are usually described as Living History undertakings.

The planned 2-day Monmouth Battlefield re-enactment follows by 6½ months an event at the other Rev-War State Park in the Raritan-Millstone guidebook region, the January 2 re-enactment of the Battle of Princeton, fought January 3, 245 years ago, in 1777 in Princeton. This author reported in the winter 2022 Link that the Battle of Princeton event attracted a huge crowd, more than 300 people (based on the counting of cars).

The 1777 Battle of Princeton was a follow-up to the crossing of the Delaware River by George Washington and his coalition of troop supporters on Christmas Day 1776 and the First and Second Battles of Trenton, bringing the Patriot Army back into battlefield position in New Jersey, after a long retreat to Pennsylvania. The Christmas 2021 Pennsylvania-organized Crossing of the Delaware event attracted a larger-than-huge crowd, more than 500 people.

Princeton Battlefield State Park is many decades older than Monmouth Battlefield State Park, but its battle was much smaller. Princeton Battlefield Society, the State Park's ORFO-like support group, reported that about 100 soldiers took part in the Jan. 2 re-enactment.

More **Revolutionary War** events are continuing this year.

George Washington's reorganized Continental Army moved down the Millstone River [*that is, moved downstream, NORTH*] to the Watchung Hills in northern Somerset County. The British moved back to garrisons in New Brunswick and New York, but did not return postings to Trenton or Princeton.

The Samuel Craig farmhouse, on the EAST end of Monmouth Battlefield, re-opens April 3, and will remain open for visitors on Sundays, 1 to 4 p.m until December. (This article is being written in late March.) The Craig house was closed during the first year of the pandemic, but was open last year July through November. The building was behind the British line during the battle and housed British wounded.

The Battle of Bound Brook (actually a skirmish, but an important one) will re-enact in South Bound Brook and Bound Brook, Somerset County on April 9-10 (Palm Sunday weekend). The British and Hessians entrenched in New Brunswick and Piscataway sought to small-scale replicate George Washington's Christmas attack on Trenton by a Palm Sunday attack on a Continental advanced force in Bound Brook. The British, however, did not replicate Washington's success, since the Continentals were able to move back.

Street battles will be fought near a bridge site over a Raritan River tributary in Bound Brook and on Main Street in South Bound Brook; and encampments will be held on the grounds of the Abraham Staats House in South Bound Brook. About 10-20 soldiers will be involved. Lectures will be held in the Staats House and in the nearby Van Horne House in Bridgewater.

Friends of Monmouth Battlefield conduct various walking and driving tour programs at Monmouth Battlefield State Park in April and May. Princeton Battlefield Society tour programs begin May 15 at Princeton Battlefield State Park.

The Continental Congress, in Philadelphia, approved a stars-and-bars design for an American flag and George Washington's Army organization on June 14, Flag Day. The American Army dates its formation to June 14, 1777.

The British, effectively harassed by New Jersey militia, evacuated New Brunswick at the end of June and

moved to evacuate New Jersey, but British commander William Howe suddenly counter-attacked, in the Battle of the Short Hills. Washington and the American Army escaped by pulling back into the Watchungs.

William Howe then leads a large contingent of British soldiers from his headquarters in New York City by sea around New Jersey and the Delmarva Peninsula into Chesapeake Bay, landing at the bay head, to attack the American-Continental capital in Philadelphia from Maryland and Pennsylvania. George Washington attempts to defend the Capital, but is pushed aside by the British Army at Brandywine and Germantown. Members of the Continental Congress escape capture, but the British take control of the city. The Americans camp north of the city at Valley Forge.

A northern American Army contingent led by Horatio Gates and Benedict Arnold, however, captures a British contingent commanded by John Burgoyne moving down from Canada at Saratoga, New York. Burgoyne's capture persuades France, the American-Continental's major supplier of war materiel, to physically join the war. Great Britain then calls William Howe back to England and instructs his second-in-command, Henry Clinton, to withdraw from Philadelphia back to New York.

Washington is determined to harass Clinton on his march overland to New York, and does so in late June 1778 at Monmouth Courthouse in Freehold Township, New Jersey, in a battle fought in what is now Freehold Borough and Freehold and Manalapan townships.

Princeton Battlefield Society reported the crowd attending the January 2 re-enactment of the 1777 Battle of Princeton as numbering more than 450 spectators from New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, Delaware and Maryland.

If the Revolutionary War enthusiasm shown over the Christmas-New Year's period of 2021-22 remains unabated through 2022, the attendance for a two-day re-enactment event with 300 or so soldiers for the much larger and longer Battle of Monmouth could exceed 1,000.



MONMOUTH BATTLEFIELD STATE PARK VISITOR INFORMATION

Monmouth Battlefield State Park, an 1,818-acre New Jersey state park is located on the border of Manalapan and Freehold Township, Monmouth County, NJ. The park preserves a rural, eighteenth-century landscape of orchards, fields, woods, and wetlands encompassing miles of trails for hiking and horseback riding and picnic areas. While the Park grounds have been open full time since May 2020 for hikers and recreation, the Park Visitor center reopened in April 2022. The Friends of Monmouth Battlefield gift shop is open on Sundays from 1-4 PM. According to the Monmouth Battlefield State Park office, the Visitor Center is currently only staffed five days a week (usually Wednesday through Sunday). When the Visitor Center is staffed, the museum is open to the public from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Bathrooms are available in the brick building (old Visitor Center) across from the Visitor center, daily from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM.

CRAIG HOUSE NEWS

The Craig House is located in Monmouth Battlefield State Park. During the battle, this 18th century farmhouse was the home of John and Ann Craig and their three children. It was used as a hospital by the British forces in June 1778. Recently several repairs have been made and the state is currently working on many exterior repairs and improvements. It is open for visitors on Sundays from 1-4 PM, through April 3 until December 4, 2022.

JOHNSON PARK ZOO TO CLOSE

The Johnson Park Animal Haven , Piscataway, as announced by the county park administrator, will close due to extensive flooding issues with most animals being moved to sanctuaries or taken to zoos in other county parks. About a dozen animals will be moved to a new facility to be built next to East Jersey Olde Town as part of “a new and historic animal husbandry program.” East Jersey Olde Town, also on River Road in Piscataway, is the county’s collection of historic structures from the 1700s and 1800s that offers exhibits, programs and living history.

REVOLUTIONARY WAR BATTLEFIELD FEDERAL GRANT

IN EDISON WILL COMPLETE THE BATTLE OF THE SHORT HILLS PARK

Middlesex County will receive \$1 million to acquire and preserve a northern section of the township and to add to the site of the June 1777 Battle of the Short Hills. British General Howe had hoped to draw George Washington and his forces out of the Watchung Mountains and onto the plain. With his headquarters at the Drake House, Plainfield, Washington, and his militia fought the Battle of the Short Hills in Woodbridge Township in the area that today has become parts of Metuchen, North Edison, into Scotch Plains and the Ash Swamp between June 25-27. This operation drove the British to quit New Jersey on June 30. This defeat by the Continental forces marked the start of the British campaign to capture Philadelphia in September.

METUCHEN COLONIAL CEMETERY

Preservation update

Metuchen's Colonial Cemetery is a local history treasure. In September of last year, the family of long-time Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance member Dr. William Ainslie made a significant donation to allow the Metuchen Historical Society to apply for a matching grant from Middlesex County to conduct ground penetrating radar at the site during the coming year. This work will hopefully determine the location of the early 18th century Meeting House at the site as well as any unmarked graves. The society plans to host an event this fall to present the findings.

MIDDLESEX COUNTY HISTORY DAY

Saturday, May 14, 2022

History lovers of all ages are invited for a site-wide celebration filled with demonstrations, displays, performances, and other family-friendly activities at East Jersey Old Town Village, 1050 River Road in Piscataway, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The local History tent will feature exhibits and displays from 20+ historical organizations. For more information, please call 732-745-3030, ext. 311.

MIDDLE PASSAGE PORT MARKER UNVEILED

The City of Perth Amboy has unveiled a marker at the Perth Amboy Marina on Front Street that honors the 2 million people who perished during – and the 10 million people who survived – the Middle Passage of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. This location in Perth Amboy was where enslaved Africans disembarked during the 17th and 18th centuries before being auctioned nearby. As New Jersey didn't charge a tariff on the enslaved cargo at that time, slavers were incentivized to use this port. In 2019, Perth Amboy was designated a "Site of Memory" by the UNESCO Slave Route Project.

THOMAS MUNDY PETERSON PARK OPENS IN PERTH AMBOY

Middlesex County opened its 19th and newest park along the Perth Amboy waterfront. Located at High Street between Washington Street and Buckingham Avenue, it is named in honor of Thomas Mundy Peterson (1824-1904). The park features include a synthetic-turf, multiuse field that can host soccer or football; a synthetic-turf field that is adjustable for softball and baseball; a waterfront walkway with views of the Arthur Kill Sound, interpretive signs exploring the history of the site and river; and park benches.

Peterson was the first African American to vote in the U.S.A. after the adoption of the 15th Amendment to the United States Constitution. Peterson also embarked on a lifetime of civic engagement and wore the medal he was awarded in commemoration of his vote proudly. He is interred in the historic churchyard of Perth Amboy's St. Peter's Episcopal Church. In 1998, the New Jersey Legislature passed a resolution that March 31 be known throughout the state as Thomas Mundy Peterson Day.

GEORGE WASHINGTON And the Flying Camp

By Donald Johnstone Peck

After sustaining Washington's Continental troop's siege of almost a year, on March 17, 1776, the British army boarded warships and transports in Boston harbor and set sail for the Royal Navy base at Halifax, Nova Scotia. His biographer, James Thomas Flexner, has called General George Washington The Indispensable Man. For twenty-four years (from his election as Commander-in-Chief until his death) Washington was the most conspicuous and influential man in the United States. Over a period of time Washington came to understand the conflict as a test of political endurance, and while he might lament missed opportunities, he played the fox more often than the lion. "Perseverance and spirit have done wonders in all ages," he wrote in August 1775. They would have to perform miracles now against the world's best-trained and best-equipped soldiery, for the Continentals had little else left in their arsenal.

Washington lost no time in moving from Boston to New York City with his wife Martha. Smallpox began to run wild through New York City. George himself was immune, but Martha was not. While they remained there for little over a month, Martha could not stay safely in New York. Prophetically, in May of 1776, from his headquarters in New York City, Washington predicted the British invasion of New Jersey for its bountiful food, wood for fuel and feed for animals. Washington now needed to move on again.

On May 21, Washington departed from New York City by ferry with Martha for Perth Amboy, New Jersey. There they spent the night of May 22 at the King's Arms Tavern, Perth Amboy foremost hostelry before and after the Revolution. Built before 1743, portions of the original two and one-half story building survived until 1969, when a fire destroyed its final incarnation, the Hotel Packer. During "public times," when the courts were in session, the tavern was the center of social, political and business activity. It stood on the north-west corner of Smith and High Streets. While at his King's Arms Tavern headquarters in Perth Amboy, Washington dispatched eight regiments from his already-meager force to protect the exposed coastline from Perth Amboy to Elizabethtown Point. These were regiments General Washington could have used with the main army to defend New York, but the Commander-in-Chief felt he had no choice in the matter. It was essential that he prevent a British strike into the New Jersey interior.

The Washingtons departed from Perth Amboy the next day for Philadelphia, arriving there in May 24 for the general to meet with the Continental Congress and Martha to meet with her doctor whom she allowed to infect her with a successful smallpox inoculation. By June 8, Washington was again in New York, leaving Martha behind to recover completely; she rejoined him by mid-month. Many years later, in 1896, the Danish community of Perth Amboy would gift a life-sized commanding terra cotta statue of George Washington at Market Square, the work of a local sculptor Nels Alling, to commemorate the visit of the first President of the United States of America. Washington Street and Washington Park in Perth Amboy are named in his honor.

In June 1776, at George Washington's urging, the Continental Congress voted to raise a mobile reserve. Militias were recruited to serve until December. Washington hastily organized a "Flying Camp" at Perth Amboy under brigadier general Hugh Mercer, after whom present-day Mercer County, New Jersey is named. With his regiment he marched to Perth Amboy and was headquartered with his officers including two alumni of the College of William and Mary, future president James Monroe and future chief justice John Marshall. Headquarters were established at the Proprietary House just after royal governor William Franklin was removed June 19, 1776.

RARITAN MILLSTONE HERITAGE ALLIANCE

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Thank you!

Visit our website: raritanmillstone.org

The Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance consists of committed individuals and organizations representing sites within the region of Raritan and Millstone systems. In an area that has continually contributed to the strength of the United States, we seek through our programs to promote, protect and preserve an understanding of our rich historical, cultural and educational heritage as we work to be a model for current and future generations by promoting the rich heritage of our American society.