

IN BERGEN'S ATTIC

Celebrating The Semiquincentennial 1776-2026

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

- BEVERLY HASHIMOTO



A five-foot high dirt plateau was packed down last August next to the Campbell Christie House, swallowing the driveway and a strip of the meadow to mark the footprint of the new museum. A week later the whole area was encircled by a chain link fence six feet high.

Experienced renovators know that melancholy mingles with excitement and anticipation. Gone was the long view of the Christie House across the meadow. Gone was the right outfield of our Vintage Baseball game and gone too was the Tavern garden that first drew me to volunteer at New Bridge.

But that mound of dirt rising from the lawn showed just where our museum will stand as it bore witness that this was really happening!

It bears repeating that members of the Society envisioned a museum on the site as soon as they purchased the parcel to buffer the Steuben House from the auto parts yard in the early '40's. Check our website to see earlier plans: Historic Buildings/ New Museum Building.

Concerted efforts to raise funds, begun in 2007, were hampered by two devastating storms requiring extensive conservation to the Collections (and not a little paperwork) and then Covid.

The Board of Trustees debated whether and how to proceed: a steady inflow of donations over the years was deeply reassuring, while at the same time cognizant that giving was still cautious, as members and the public both had long heard talk of a new building.

Despite knowing we didn't have enough money to complete it in one go, spiraling costs making the project ever more daunting, the Board felt confident that building in phases was the way to go.

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A YELLOW EARTH MOVER GRADING THE PROPERTY AND THE PHASE ONE CONCRETE SLAB MARKS THE MUSEUM'S FOOTPRINT SITS IN FRONT OF THE OUT HOUSE, GARDEN SHED AND OUT KITCHEN.



The Importance of Memorabilia

DECLAN REX

With America's Semiquincentennial upon us, and constant discussion of how to properly celebrate the occasion here at the BCHS, thoughts turn to the country's previous anniversary celebrations. For people over the age of fifty, the Bicentennial celebrations of 1976 are likely a strong memory. Every fifty year anniversary of the founding of the United States is celebrated with year-long festivities, commemoration, and the production of memorabilia. In what some might consider a surprise, the production of anniversary memorabilia goes all the way back to the earliest celebrations of our nation's history, and one particular example of this is now on display in the Steuben House at the HNBL.

Hanging in the dwelling room of the Steuben House is a Washington Memorial Quilt, made by Sarah Cooper Hill of Hackensack in 1876 for the Centennial. The quilt is five and a half feet wide and six and a half feet tall, and was assembled from cotton handkerchiefs purchased at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, the founding city of the Republic. Because the Exposition lasted for six months, Mrs. Hill was able to assemble it with enough time to return and display the quilt at the Exposition, as a show of pride in her work and patriotism for her country.

The centerpiece of the quilt are the George and Martha portraits. Both blocks were purchased at the Centennial, and can

be found on at least one other example of a quilt made up of the same blocks purchased at the Expo. Items such as these handkerchiefs were being sold at the Centennial, because it was just as focused on America's current status as an international player as it was with the country's history. These two blocks are vertically flanked by four panels, each are different pieces of memorabilia commemorating 'The Flags of All Nations' though the selections are limited to relatively large and important countries. Around the entire border of the flag are thirty-nine star American flags, except for the middle right, which is curiously decorated with the Continental Union flag, which was the flag in use by the fledgling American Republic at its founding in 1776. All of these panels

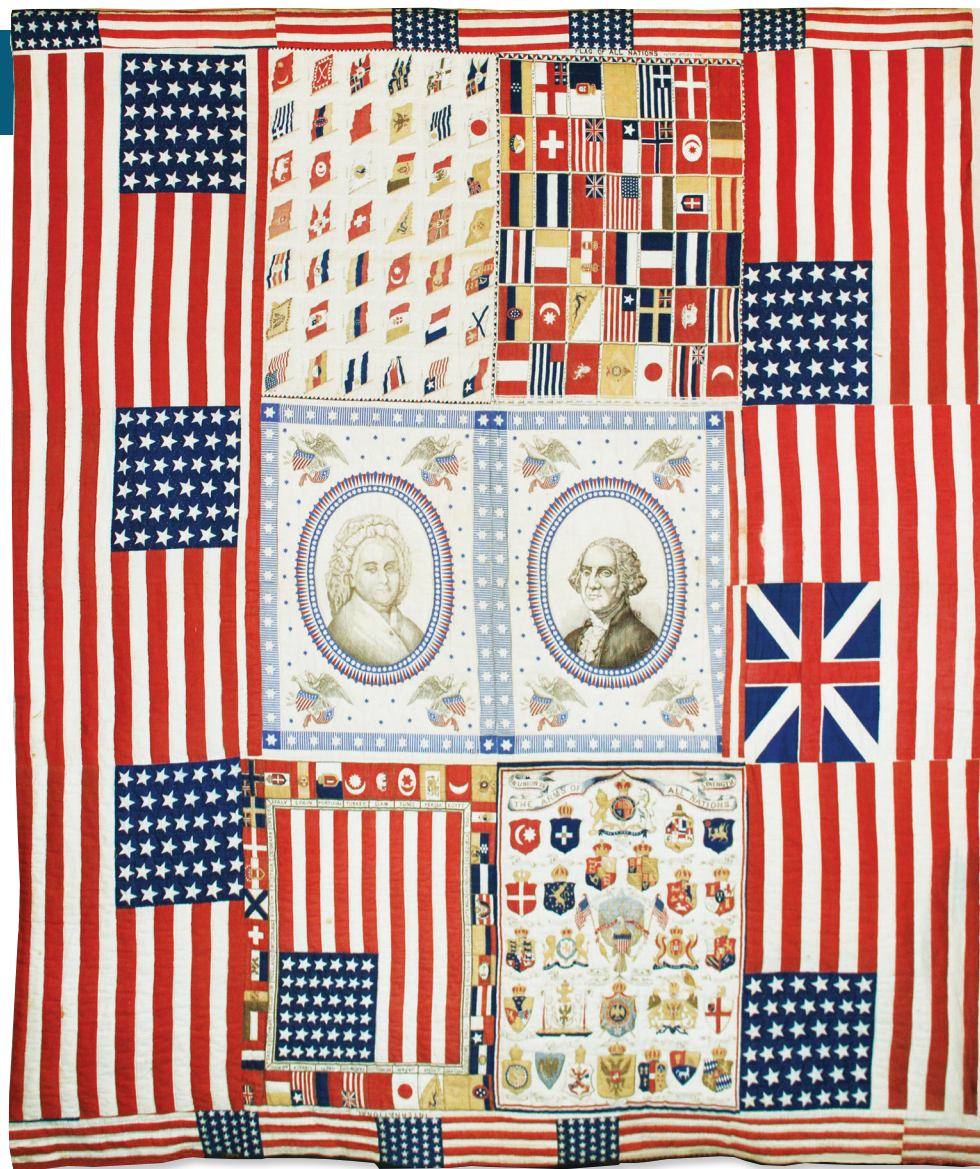
are in excellent condition, and the colors are notably vibrant.

The American Centennial was the first great celebration of the anniversary of the nation's founding. The Fourth of July had long been a prominent holiday, first being celebrated within ten years of 1776, but celebrations had never before been planned

for years prior and at such a scale as the Centennial Exposition. For the first time, the Revolutionary War had fallen out of living memory. The Civil War was fresh in the memory of almost everyone alive in 1876. All of this is to say that the country seemed to need a revitalization of patriotic spirit, and the Centennial Exposition served as this outlet. As was mentioned earlier, one of the most



A STERIO VISION SOUVENIR CARD OF THE CROWDS AT THE 1876 PHILADELPHIA CENTENIAL EXPOSITION, POSSIBLY OF OPENING DAY, MAY 10, 1876



important parts of the Exposition, alongside demonstrating American progress, might, and patriotism, was the proliferation of memorabilia. People were very interested in keeping and making tokens of historic events that they participated in. This quilt seemingly fulfilled Sarah Cooper Hill's desire to participate in patriotic celebrations, and we know her

family treasured it for decades because of its excellent preservation, with the only other surviving quilt like it being in much worse shape. The quilt is equally treasured by the BCHS, and, because of interest from the public, we have decided to keep it on display in the Steuben House for the 2026 Semiquincentennial.



Sacred Ground: Revolutionary Patriots of South Schraalenburgh Cemetery

ZANDRA NEIGOOT

For seven years, the community of Schraalenburgh existed in what historians call the “neutral ground”—the deadly no-man’s land between British-occupied New York City and American forces. Here, neighbor turned against neighbor, Tory raiders struck without warning, and ordinary citizens became soldiers to protect their families and church. Today, South Schraalenburgh Cemetery in Bergenfield preserves the graves of Revolutionary War patriots whose verified burials allow us to tell their stories. Through careful historical research matching DAR patriot records with cemetery documentation, these confirmed patriots represent the sacrifice of an entire community during America’s fight for independence.

Captain James Christie embodied this courage. For seven years, he led the Schraalenburgh Militia, “risking his life daily” to protect South Church members

though like most Hackensack Valley soldiers his men served as militia rather than Continental Army enlistees—a distinction that mattered greatly, as their farms and families faced daily threat of attack. His leadership proved so vital that after the war, the community chose him as principal church-master to build the new 1799 church—a position of honor reserved for the most trusted citizens. Christie’s grave stands as a reminder that in Bergen County, the Revolution was fought not in distant battlefields, but in defense of one’s own doorstep.

Samuel P. Demarest paid an even higher price. As Lieutenant Colonel Abraham Van Buskirk’s raiders came up Closter Road, Demarest stood in the doorway of his home and defied them. They seized him as a prisoner and applied a torch to his house. In the violence that followed, his son Cornelius was killed and his son Hendrick was wounded—saved only when one of the

household women rushed to his rescue and boldly protected him from further injury. As a miller who had provided wheat to the Continental Army, Demarest was a strategic target. The women of his household buried Cornelius near the farmhouse and watched helplessly as Samuel, along with neighbors Cornelius Tallman, Jacob Cole, George Van Buskirk, and Jeremiah Westervelt, were carried off to prison in New York. His story captures the brutal reality of Bergen County’s civil war, where

raiders were “some of our Closter and Tappan old neighbors.”

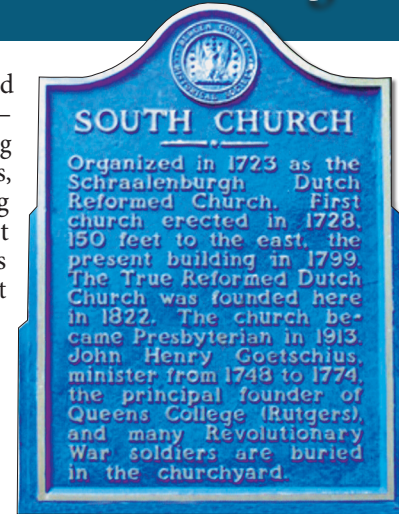
Women bore their own burdens of war. When Tory raiders swept through Schraalen-

burgh in 1778, they attacked with systematic cruelty—killing patriots, wounding defenders, taking prisoners, assaulting women, burning buildings, and stealing most possessions. Patriot wives like Evaetje Banta, who lost her husband Samuel to the Bergen Militia, and Elizabeth Demarest Campbell, who lost even her petticoats to raiders, represent countless women who maintained farms, protected children, and endured depredation while their men fought. Their sacrifices, though rarely marked with gravestones, were no less real.

Even spiritual leaders became refugees. Reverend Solomon Froeligh escaped British forces in Queens to serve as minister of South Church during the congregation’s most dangerous years. He preached, baptized, and buried the dead while raids continued around them. When he died in 1827, he was laid to rest among the congregation he had shepherd through war.

As we commemorate the 250th Anniversary of the Revolution, South Schraalenburgh Cemetery stands as sacred ground where verified burials connect us directly to those who endured seven years of occupation, raids, and divided loyalties. The preservation of these markers ensures that the stories of ordinary people’s extraordinary courage—told through rigorous historical documentation—endure for future generations.

The Polly Wyckoff–David Demarest Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution is honoring these patriots through a cemetery preservation project in collaboration with South Church. As part of the nation’s 250th anniversary celebration,

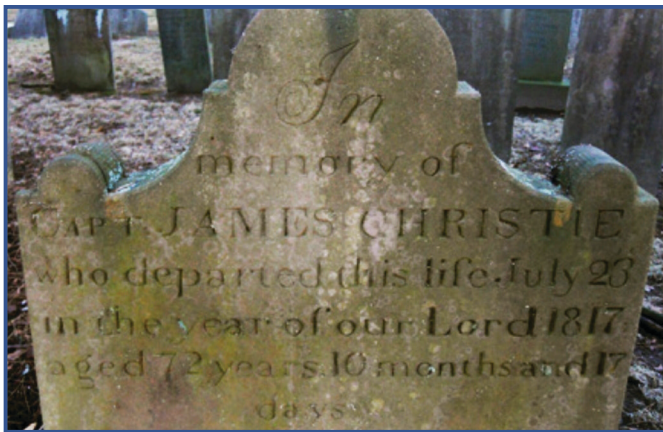


BERGEN COUNTY HISTORIC BLUE MARKER AT THE SOUTH CHURCH, BERGENFIELD, FOUNDED 1723, CURRENT BUILDING 1799. CAPTAIN JAMES CHRISTIE DEFENDED THE CONGREGATION AS MILITIA CAPTAIN DURING THE REVOLUTION AND SERVED AS PRINCIPAL CHURCHMASTER FOR THE 1799 CONSTRUCTION. PHOTO: SOUTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.



the chapter will host a Patriot Recognition Event later this year to formally commemorate the verified Revolutionary War patriots buried at this historic site. This project, coordinating with the chapter’s own Polly Wyckoff 100th anniversary celebration in May 2026, represents a commitment to preserving Bergen County’s Revolutionary War heritage for the next century. Through careful research, documentation, and community partnership, these stories of sacrifice—from Captain Christie’s militia leadership to Samuel Demarest’s defiance to the unnamed women who protected the wounded and buried the dead—will be permanently recognized and remembered.

ZANDRA NEIGOOT IS A BCHS MEMBER AND VICE REGENT OF THE POLLY WYCKOFF-DAVID DEMAREST CHAPTER, DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.



CAPTAIN JAMES CHRISTIE’S TOMBSTONE INSCRIPTION READS “IN MEMORY OF CAPT. JAMES CHRISTIE WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE JULY 23 IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1817 AGED 72 YEARS 10 MONTHS AND 17 DAYS”

from pillage and capture by former neighbors who had joined Tory raiding parties. His militia company served throughout the war, including at the Battle of Monmouth,

We approved a Two Phase plan: the first Phase in which the foundation would be laid with the funds and gifts we had on hand. And then as we continued to fund raise the actual structure would be built in Phase Two.

The Historical Society ceremoniously broke ground on a sunny October morning (see *In Bergen's Attic*, Fall-Winter 2025-2026).

Earth movers hunched silently, like giant yellow insects ready to pounce, waiting for the trucks to unload the helical piles.

Five weeks later, on November 10th, Phase One began in earnest. Day after day the decibels increased as workers drilled some 120 helical piles into the ground for a firm foundation in Bergen County's sandy soil. Digging unexpectedly through concrete and asphalt the work was paused for reevaluation. Further, some of the drilling was in spots that required the piles to be lengthened to go deep enough to "hit bottom".

Heavier machinery was brought in, truckloads of rubble were dug up and hauled away, as costs mounted. And we waited for an additional shipment of helical pile sections to arrive from Canada.

Additional cleanup performed, the piles were lengthened, conduits were placed for utilities and the concrete was poured for the building pad. And all this

was completed before the first snowfall, bringing Phase One to completion.

In the meantime, the board of trustees, [and] various committees [and our professional strategic adviser and fundraiser] had been further developing our fund raising plans: a BCHS Capital Campaign Advisory Council to be assembled, a new trustee appointed fund-raising chair, and the board prepared to hold more focused strategizing meetings, incorporating the museum into long range goals for the society.

If you have already donated to the museum, your gift is greatly appreciated. If you are able to make regular donations or a more substantial gift please do so to help us build this much needed addition to Historic New Bridge Landing. This year especially, this time of marking the 250th Anniversary of The American Revolution is the perfect moment to join in this effort. Tell your family, tell your friends. Share with them the opportunity to be a part of Bergen County history, and part of the nation's history.

Years from now, you, your children and grandchildren will remember the 250th, the Semiquincentennial, in part because you helped to build a history museum in Bergen County.



In Memoriam James "Jim" Dusenbery passed away on January 9, 2026. Jim was born in Teaneck and was a long time Bergen County resident living in New Milford. He worked with Grounds and Security at the Dwight Englewood School for many years until retiring 5 years ago. He was a longtime member of the Bergen Community College Horticulture Committee and volunteered as our Resident Blacksmith with the Bergen County Historical Society during Historic New Bridge Landing events. You would find him set up with his smithing equipment by the Westervelt-Thomas Barn, eagerly demonstrating and talking about the blacksmithing trade to visitors..



BCHS EVENTS

Pinkster
SUNDAY
MAY 17
1-4:30PM

*The Dutch Celebration of Spring
at Historic New Bridge Landing*

Watch the Tricorne Dance Ensemble perform maypole dances at 1:30 & 3:30, and 18th century dances through the day. Music by Ridley & Anne Enslow on the fiddle & hammered dulcimer. Children's maypole dance at 2:30 pm! Libation toasts by Muriel Roberts & will speak on 'The Transition of the Dutch Pinkster to an African-American Holiday' in the Steuben House. Steuben House displays Dutch paintings, Jersey Dutch artifacts & Rev. War artifacts from the BCHS Collections. Demarest House is open. Westervelt-Thomas Barn has broom making. Beth Harpell (*The Lost Art Lacers*) will demonstrate lace making and Victoria Bourghol will be spinning. Out Kitchen prepares Dutch recipes. Refreshments in the Tavern.

Come join the fun!

BCHS Membership Dues Update

The Annual BCHS Membership Dues will increase starting May 1, 2026. See the table below. This increase will be reflected in your next renewal after the implementation date. The decision to increase dues was made after careful consideration, as membership rates have remained unchanged for over a decade. BCHS is dedicated to providing high-quality programs and enriching experiences for our members and visitors. This increase will help sustain these efforts, supporting our priorities and organizational goals as we celebrate America's 250th Birthday and beyond.

Updated Membership Rates

Membership Category	Current Yearly Fee	Fee as of May 1, 2026
Individual	\$20	\$25
Household	\$30	\$50
Student	\$10	\$15
Contributing	\$50	\$65
Sustaining	\$100	\$125
Library or Historical Organization	\$20	\$25

Not receiving your BCHS email blasts?
IT COULD BE BECAUSE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS WAS ENTERED INCORRECTLY OR YOUR SERVER IS REJECTING THE EMAIL. PLEASE CONTACT US TO RECEIVE BCHS EVENT BLASTS at this email: CONTACTBCHS@BERGENCOUNTYHISTORY.ORG



The BCHS Library and Archives is pleased to announce it will begin offering regular weekly opening hours on **Tuesday afternoons from 2:00 to 5:00 pm**, starting on March 24. Additional access to the Library by appointment is still available by emailing us at the address below. The BCHS Library is located in The Ciarco Learning Center, 355 Main St., (at Main and Passaic), Hackensack, Room 124. Parking is in the back, enter the lot on Passaic Ave. (With a temporary closure on Passaic Ave., enter from the other side on Berry St.) The Library is hoping to expand its regular opening hours as we recruit additional volunteers. Visitors who wish to contact us in advance of a visit, send an email to theBCHSlibrary@gmail.com (and please allow sufficient time for a reply).

BERGEN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 55, RIVER EDGE, NJ 07661
BERGENCOUNTYHISTORY.ORG
DEBORAH POWELL & PATTY DAURIZIO
NEWSLETTER EDITOR & LAYOUT



BCHS Members 2026 Annual Dinner

Thursday ★ June 11 ★ 6 to 10PM

The Glen Rock Inn

222 ROCK RD., GLEN ROCK, NJ



★ The evening's speakers are:
Michelle Steidle -- *The 'Committee of 5' drafts the Declaration of Independance and Kathleen Walter -- The History of Glen Rock.*
★ The Installment of Officers and the BCBS Annual Awards presentation.

Make Your Reservation online by May 24.

Go to [BergenCountyHistory.org / Events/BCBS Annual Dinner](https://BergenCountyHistory.org/Events/BCBS%20Annual%20Dinner)

OR mail check, labeled BCBS Dinner to:
BCBS, PO Box 55, River Edge, NJ 07661

BUFFET MENU: STARTER: ASSORTED CHEESE & CRACKERS WITH FRESH FRUIT. SALAD: HOUSE GARDEN WITH SPRING MIX & WHITE BALSAMIC DRESSING. PASTA: VODKA SAUCE. VEGETABLE: MIXED MEDLEY. STARCH: ROASTED RED POTATOES. MAIN ENTREE: A CHOICE OF CHICKEN MARSALA, MARINATED STEAK, OR BROILED SALMON & LEMON BUTTER SAUCE ON A BED OF SPINACH. DESSERT: HOMEMADE APPLE CRISP. FOUNTAIN SODA, COFFEE & TEA CASH BAR SPECIAL NEEDS MAY ORDER FROM REGULAR MENU.

The Bergen County Historical Society gratefully acknowledge the following Leadership Donors for their generous support of our Capital Campaign to build The Museum at Historic New Bridge Landing.



Ida Astute
Branca Family Foundation
Regina Coyle
The Eastwick Foundation
Jeanette Fossati
The Gross Family Foundation
Gayle & Paul Gross
William C. Hanson
Lucy Heller
Janet & Bill King
Estate of Robert P. Knight

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