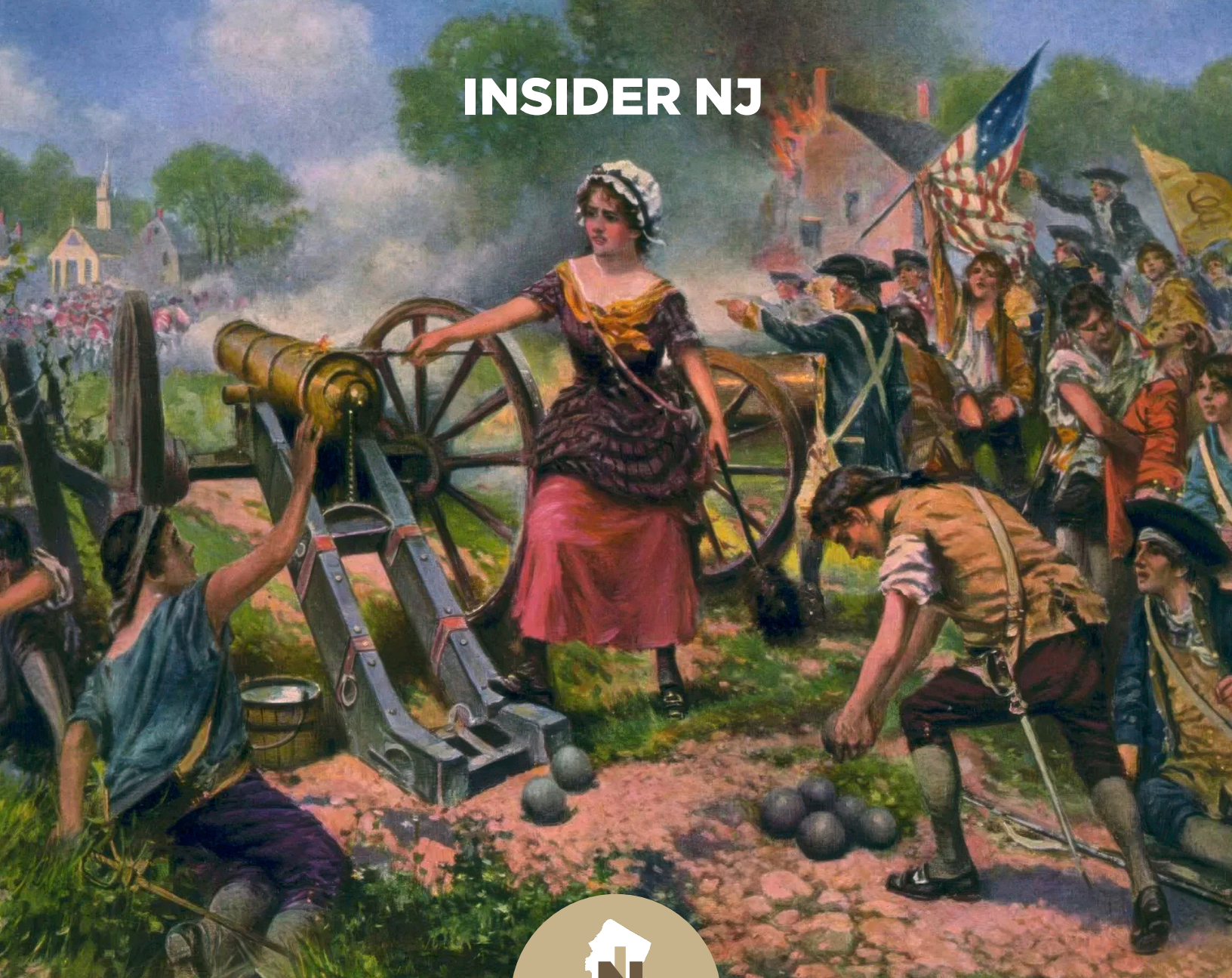


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# Introduction



*View upon the Road from New-Windsor, towards Morris Town. JERSEY.*

This is the debut of the New Jersey History and Heritage Spotlight, a new Insider NJ publication dedicated to New Jerseyans of all political affiliations and backgrounds. At a time when our country, but also our state, is intensely polarized, it is the opinion of this writer that one can easily become dismayed, wondering at the strength of the fabric of our society. With a 24-hour news cycle, and a media apparatus which is compelled to hold the attention of viewers and readers in order to be profitable, sometimes things can just seem bleak. And some things well and truly are bleak, and we forget about the countless non-newsworthy acts of kindness and constructive endeavors that hold the aforementioned fabric of our society together despite it all. The proliferation of social media has led to the general democratization of media content, and as a result, the saturation of “information” (and, unfortunately, both malicious and unintended misinformation) is all but inescapable. With the reality an increasingly anxious, smartphone-addicted population finds itself in, it becomes

more and more incumbent on individuals to be able to discern fact from fiction, truth from myth—or its snickering cousin: propaganda. Responsible and ethical journalists are and ought to be the stewards of the truth—“just the facts”—but with countless, often conflicting voices bombarding people through their screens, credibility often comes into question with doubts eroding what was once unquestionably understood as legitimate and reliable.

To combat the doubts and divisions which have been deeply sown into society—a phenomenon not unique to the 21st Century—New Jerseyans can and should look to their history and heritage as reminders of what binds us together. “E Pluribus Unum” or “Out of Many, One” was an early American recognition that our society is made up of many peoples (in many states), who, together, form one nation. The American experiment has weathered trying times, from foreign invasions, insurrection, civil war, domestic terror, world wars, and winning hard-

earned civil-and-economic rights. So often the gains won in the halls of government only followed after being fought for on the streets amid firehoses and police batons. Each gain made has contributed to the texture and color of the American identity, and the character of the nation has been forged in the fires of struggle, some symbolic, some literal.

Americans, and New Jerseyans in particular, are a proud people, and share in the bounties and privileges built by their ancestors with the knowledge that their progeny expect and deserve the same. As daunting as this may seem, New Jerseyans are united by their common history and heritage, only a fraction of which is touched upon in this publication. In short, this country may be facing trying times, but we have faced and overcome trying times before, and emerged stronger in the end.

There are a myriad of historical and cultural wonders in New Jersey waiting to be discovered and rediscovered by present and future generations. This publication does not pretend to be a comprehensive one, but merely highlights

a small sample of the rich legacy of the Garden State for our readers. Herein, the writer has tried to touch on a variety of subjects and entities which join New Jerseyans together as one people out of many. The Spotlight will look at preservation, commemoration, ecology, social, industrial, and political history covering northern, central, and southern New Jersey.

The American Revolution impacted New Jersey like few other states, known as the Crossroads of the Revolution, and with the approach of the 250th anniversary in 2025 and 2026, future New Jersey History and Heritage Spotlights will have a particular emphasis on the subject, in celebration of the country's biggest birthday since 1976. That being said, the Spotlight will remain inclusive of the broad and varied threads that have created the three-hundred-sixty year-old tapestry we call New Jersey.



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## An Eye to the Future, Commemorating the Past. The Bergen 250 with Vivian E. Davis, Bergen 250 Chair and History Education Coordinator

Our NJ History and Heritage Spotlight will look in greater depth at the broad expanse of Revolutionary War history in coming publications, as the Semiquincentennial approaches. However, New Jersey has been proactive about the 250th anniversary, allocating funds on the state and county level to prepare for America's great birthday and showcase our New Jersey history and legacy. Bergen County is one of the New Jersey counties leading the charge on this front, lining up programs and activities in advance—and such endeavors do not come easily and take time. What, exactly, is the goal of Bergen 250?

“The Bergen 250 initiative aims to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution through Bergen County’s diverse lens of people, places, and culture,” said Vivian Davis of the Bergen County Division of Cultural and Historic Affairs. “Bergen County played a pivotal role during the American Revolution. Its strategic location between New York City and Philadelphia as well as the Continental Army headquarters in Morristown made it a crucial area for both American and British forces. Troop movement was plentiful in the area, with diverse loyalty of its citizens and there was a strong loyalist and Patriot following in this county.”

Davis described some of the historic sites in the county, including but not limited to Historic Fort Lee, the site of the Baylor Massacre, and the march route to Yorktown, Virginia, through Mahwah. “These are just a few examples of the historic events that unfolded here in the county. This 250th anniversary provides an opportunity to reflect on the sacrifices and contributions of the individuals who fought for the freedoms we enjoy today, our democracy, including local residents, soldiers, and leaders who played a key role in the fight against British rule. So, in essence, by commemorating this pretty big milestone, we not only honor the heritage and legacy of Bergen County, but we celebrate New Jersey’s broader history as a state deeply intertwined with the founding of the country.”



Davis emphasized that the 250th is a teaching opportunity to foster education in American history. “This anniversary will serve as a reminder of that spirit of patriotism and courage that’s ingrained in New Jersey and in the nation. So, by honoring this anniversary, it ensures that future generations will continue to appreciate and are encouraged to teach others the lessons of the revolution and its lasting impact on New Jersey’s heritage.”



In terms of mechanics, then, what is Bergen 250 itself? In essence, it is an intra-governmental partnership with various private and public entities. “The Bergen County Division of Cultural and Historic Affairs jump started the 250th anniversary events about two years ago now, that was the birth of Bergen 250,” Davis said. “We have cultural as well as historical partners throughout the county. That includes places like Fort Lee Historic Park, the Bergen County Historical Society, other museums in the county as well as cultural and educational institutions. We’re working with Ramapo College, we’re starting to work with Bergen Community College, as well as the local, private, public and parochial schools.”

As New Jersey’s most populous county, Bergen has some of the richest examples of Garden State heritage. Bergen history includes its native Lenape peoples, the first Dutch settlements as part of New Netherland, later as a British colony criss-crossed by armies during the 1770s and 1780s in the nation’s struggle for independence. The Bergen 250 is well positioned to commemorate New Jersey’s heritage in the years to come.

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## The Struggle for Workers Rights Remembered and Celebrated in New Jersey – The American Labor Museum with Evelyn Hershey, Education Director

The American Labor Museum, also known as the Botto House, occupies an unassuming neighborhood in the small borough of Haledon in Passaic County. Once part of Manchester Township, this area, and its surrounds, orbited the City of Paterson as a place to work and shop. Additionally, Silk City, as it was known, was one of the cockpits of the struggle for a fairer and more equitable workplace. Among the looms and shuttles of the mills, workers poured their sweat out to provide for their families, contributing to New Jersey's prosperity, but also the country as a whole. The 19th and early 20th centuries were a time of rapid industrialization, and with the expansion of industry came the exploitation of the workers who manned and repaired the machines of America's progress. The hard-working people,

many of them immigrants, found it their duty to themselves and their posterity to ensure that their labors were fairly met by their employers. It was there, in Haledon, at the Botto House, where some of the most dramatic scenes in the history of the American labor movement played out in 1913.

It is worth noting that Paterson had seen workers' strikes before. Indeed, on July 3 of 1835, over 2,000 mill workers, many of whom were children, went on strike. Their goal? To reduce a 13 ½ hour work day to 11. While perhaps incomprehensible today, with few to no labor protections or curtailments on child workers, such horrific conditions and expectations of children were not unknown. The strike temporarily paralyzed the

city's industry. Employers refused to negotiate but broke up the strikes and declared a 12-hour workday as a concession.

Almost eighty years later, mill workers would again go on strike. Many of these workers were northern Italians from the area of Biella, a province nestled in the foothills of the Alps between Milan and Turin. The Botto family were among the Biellese workers, Evelyn Hershey said, at the forefront of the labor movement. Hershey is the Education Director at the museum and gave a tour of the Botto House with their intern, Julian Marlin.



To this day, the Botto surname is associated with businesses and industry in the Biella area.

The Botto House, she said, “Represents the activism and the organizational strength of the workers, the industry immigrants, who came to work in and build up the silk industry in Paterson, New Jersey. They found that collective action brought them the ability to build a middle class in this area. The photographs that are here, the artifacts of that Botto family home built in 1908 reflect the achievement of their union-building, of their collective action, and of their solidarity.” The walls of the museum are covered in photos and interpretive signs regarding the workers’

strike in 1913. Huge crowds had gathered on the street and speeches were delivered from the upstairs balcony. Local baker cooperatives provided food for the striking workers so that they could continue their demonstration, as they were without an income. But what sparked this and what were the mill workers hoping to achieve?

“The strike began over an increase in loom assignments at one of the 298 mills in Paterson in 1913,” Hershey explained. “The workers at Henry Doherty’s mill walked out, protesting imminent unemployment. There was a doubling of the loom assignments, so half of the weavers would be out of work. Henry Doherty had purchased new technology and was interested in implementing it and reducing his payroll. So, his weavers walked out at the end of January in 1913 to protect their jobs. The strike spread to other mills where there were other grievances—long working hours, unhygienic working conditions in dye shops, and child labor in the mills. There were many grievances. The workers determined that their main demand would be for an eight-hour day. It represented some control over their everyday life when they worked 10 hours a day, and half a day on Saturday. They were more prone to have accidents at work. It was long hours for children, and they had no leisure time. Their chants at their union meetings were ‘eight hours for work eight hours for rest eight hours for what we will.’ And of course the Bread and Roses strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts, took place in 1912, a year prior, and an eight hour day was won there with the assistance of organizers from the Industrial Workers of the World Union. The IWW sent organizers to Paterson the following year in 1913. These Paterson workers were looking to the victory of the Lawrence workers and thought they could win the same—and a voice in their workplace through a labor union.”

The Botto House was built the same year as Haledon was incorporated as its own borough from the remains of Manchester Township. Just a mile square, Haledon had been connected to Silk City over a century ago via a trolley, first laid down in 1872 and the trolley was drawn by horses. Later, it was electrified and commuters who worked in Paterson but lived in the suburbs had a convenient means of mass transit.

“Haledonites had elected a German immigrant William Brueckmann, who was married to a weaver, to be mayor and he was a Socialist and not the only elected Socialist official in the county,” Hershey said. “They all supported the strikers’ cause, so he permitted them to meet in his borough when meeting halls in Paterson were padlocked to the workers.”

Each Sunday, meetings were held at the Botto House with updates given to the workers on the progress of negotiations. The strike stretched from March until August of 1913. Donations came in to assist the unemployed workers, including money sent by Helen Keller.

Hershey said that mill owners employed Pinkertons and other private detectives to spy on the strikers and bring in scabs to work in the mills. Strikers in Paterson were also subjected to arrests for unlawful assembly during the tumultuous year of 1913.

The house itself was built with the working man and his family in mind. “Land promoters purchased large tracts of property in Haledon and began to sell off narrow lots to workers for \$100 to \$150,” Hershey said. “The Bottos bought five lots and had a large 12-room, Victorian style house but tenement style center hall with three rooms on either side that were like railroad

flats. They could rent rooms, or apartments. The family always lived on the first floor and rented two apartments on the second floor.”

Pietro and Maria Botto had made these housing arrangements to ensure that there were some affordable housing options for working families. “On Sundays, they sold meals to their fellow workers who lived in crowded housing in Paterson.” These workers could come and buy a simple meal from Maria Botto and her daughters, eat under the trees, play Bocce or a card game and relax on a Sunday.

“You can see their picket signs saying, ‘we are on strike for bread and butter’,” Hershey pointed to the museum’s many pictures. “They’re all wearing their Sunday best suits and hats and parading with an American flag.”


The strike of 1913 did not fundamentally end with the workers’ demands being fully satisfied. But mill owners were forced to take notice and an indelible imprint on the history of the American labor movement had been made in New Jersey, stretching from the leafy streets of Haledon to the mill-lined avenues of Paterson.

The American Labor Museum-The Botto House National Landmark is found at 83 Norwood Street, Haledon, New Jersey.



# THINK TANK WITH STEVE ADUBATO



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## The Iron Industry Takes Root in New Jersey – Long Pond Iron Works State Park with Nathan Bedford, Friends of Long Pond Ironworks Executive Committee

Nestled in the woods of Hewitt, Long Pond Iron Works State Park stands as a monument to early industry which shaped the fortunes of prominent families, but also impacted the destiny of the United States during the American Revolution. Today, visitors can walk among the ruins and preserved structures of what was once a thriving workers' village and iron works, or hike along the Hasenclever Trail, bypassing the Peters Mine Superfund site.

Self-guided trail maps and signs explain what visitors to Long Pond discover as they explore the park. The site's history reaches back to when New Jersey was a British colony.

Nathan Bedford has been a member of the Friends

of Long Pond Iron Works for twelve years and currently serves on its executive committee as secretary and events coordinator. "The historical significance of Long Pond Iron Works begins in the 1760s. It was founded by Peter Hasenclever as one of the furnaces and foundries for producing iron in the region. There were other foundries like Charlotteberg [so named for Charlotte, the Queen Consort to George III; a marker can be found in Kinnelon near the sign to Smoke Rise]. It was known as the American Iron Company, based in Ringwood, New Jersey. The claim to fame of Long Pond Iron Works, especially during the time of the Revolution, is that the iron master at the time was Robert Erskine, Surveyor-General for the Continental Army under George Washington. He provided a lot of maps of the

area, especially during the retreat from Fort Lee through northern New Jersey into Morristown. The Long Pond Ironworks also provided the iron ore necessary for cannonballs, cannons, and munitions. Most famously, Long Pond and Sterling Forest provided the iron for the famous great chain across the Hudson, near West Point.”

Bedford said that the iron works continued operating through most of the 19th Century, passing into the hands of the Cooper and Hewitt industrialist families. During the Civil War, the ironworks produced armaments to supply the Union Army, several of which are on display at nearby Ringwood Manor. In the mid-1870s, an attempt to expand production was undertaken, with a new water wheel installed. “They were also hoping to build another furnace to expand their production and try to keep up with the competition,” Bedford added. But as the 19th Century progressed, Carnegie Steel was putting too much pressure on them to remain a major competitor.



One of the great water wheels, visitors today will notice, is charred. This was due to a fire in the 20th Century that destroyed all the water wheels. One, however, was rebuilt anew, thanks to a generous grant, which was used to refurbish and preserve some of the structures in the 1990s. “It is basically like a before and after,” Bedford said. Lond Pond Iron Works, however, faces the same struggle so many historical sites do—trying to stave off the collapse of their buildings from degradation and encroaching nature. “As is often the case with a lot of historical societies and friend organizations that are in the venue of preservation, maintaining history and education for the public, our challenges have always been getting new volunteers, fresh blood, and finances—money.”

To try to continue to draw in public interest in the iron works, Bedford has worked via the Friends to set up several public programs. “As the event organizer for the past three years, I have been putting together a lot of the events which include the Civil War weekend, candle lantern tours, and inviting the West Milford Players local theater group to help us out with vignettes and performances.”

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Nevertheless, some of the buildings are in a state of ruin. Stabilization efforts are underway as far as resources allow while some structures have to be left to the inevitable advance of nature. “The issue that we’re running into is obviously money and bureaucratic procedure,” Bedford said, “and the state of those buildings has made them difficult to stabilize. We are working currently with the Passaic County Historical Commission and the New Jersey Historical Commission to stabilize the church. We did stabilize the steeple before it would have collapsed. That was through a grant through the New Jersey Historic Trust, thanks to Kerry O’Brien.”



Bedford described the operations to preserve Long Pond as an “interesting, relatively uphill” experience. “We’ve been working with the Passaic County Historical Commission. But what has stalled recently is the stabilization of the colonial furnace that was excavated in the 1960s or 1970s. They discovered that it is fully intact: a casting house, the crucible, everything about the colonial furnace is beautifully intact. But because of the lack of funding, we had to get it re-buried.”



New footbridges had been installed in the last few years, Bedford said, thanks to the contributions of a number of state and county agencies. “Throughout the whole time that they were working on the bridge they mapped out three trails around the superfund site. People can go from Long Pond to Ringwood Manor.”

The public and hikers can go through the park, and the Visitors Center and Ironworks Museum is open on most weekends, highlighting this ferrous gem of New Jersey with a legacy of contributing to the building of America’s industrial history and heritage.

Long Pond Ironworks is located at 1334 Greenwood Lake Turnpike, Hewitt, New Jersey.





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## Preserving the Pinelands – Recollections with William F. Harrison, Chair of Genova Burns' Environmental Law and Land Use & Approvals Practice Specialties

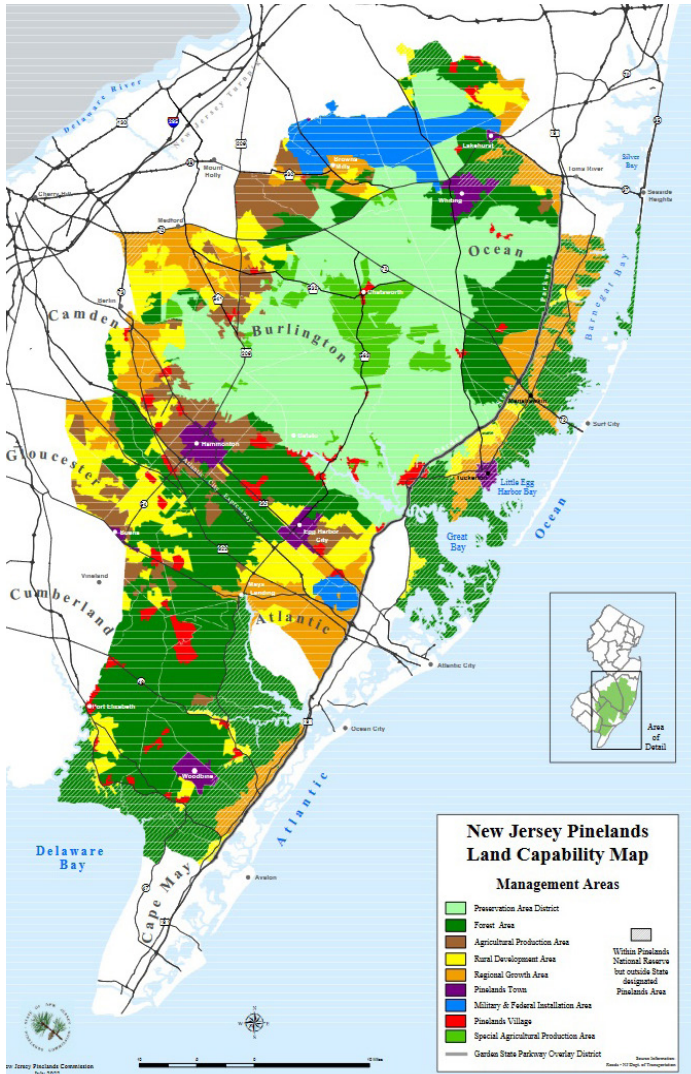
Every New Jerseyan knows that space is limited and extremely valuable in the Garden State, the most densely populated state in the union. Over-development has contributed to the overall congestion of the state while, simultaneously, a shortage of housing for the state's ever-growing population puts increasing demands on not just the real estate market, but the actual space in which development is to take place. Urban development, suburban sprawl, and the explosion of warehousing and self-storage have displaced New Jersey's wildlife and disrupted critical ecologies for the overall natural health of the state.

Seeing an opportunity which would prove extraordinarily insightful and prescient, the US

Congress established the Pinelands National Reserve via the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978. It is worth noting that not only did this preserve 1.1 million acres across seven counties, but it was also the first national reserve created in the United States.

The Pinelands National Reserve is no small park, either. Inclusive of some 56 municipalities in the state, "The reserve occupies 22% of New Jersey's land area and it is the largest body of open space on the Mid-Atlantic seaboard between Richmond and Boston," the New Jersey Pinelands Commission said. "The reserve is home to dozens of rare plant and animal species and the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer system, which contains an estimated 17 trillion gallons of

water. In 1979, New Jersey formed a partnership with the federal government to preserve, protect and enhance the natural and cultural resources of this special place.”



The Pinelands Commission maintains a Comprehensive Management Plan which is designed to protect the ecology of the pinelands and ensure that development takes place in a responsible manner.

“Part of the National Parks and Recreation Act that Congress passed,” William Harrison, Chair of Genova Burns’ Environmental Law and Land Use & Approvals Practice Specialties, told Insider NJ, “included a provision that

created the Pinelands National Reserve. They encouraged the state of New Jersey to enact a statute that would provide for the protection of the resources of the pinelands. In response to that, the governor issued an executive order which required that if any state permits were being issued in the Pinelands area, they would be subject to review by a committee that he created at existing state agencies, and then that led to the passage of the Pinelands Protection Act in June of 1979.”

Harrison said that the Pinelands Protection Act required the Pinelands Commission to adopt a plan for the pinelands area that would protect the resources, protect the agricultural uses, and allow development in areas adjacent to existing development. “The commission adopted and established a preservation area where limited development was to occur,” Harrison said. “The commission adopted the Comprehensive Management Plan in January of 1981. In the protection area, as directed by the legislature, very little development was allowed to occur.”

The protected areas were subdivided into different sections where, according to the Commission regulations, varying degrees of development—based on use and need—could take place. Other sections could not be touched at all. “The regional growth areas were where development could occur. The other part of the plan were the military and federal installation areas to deal with Fort Dix McGuire Lakehurst, and the federal aviation facility in Atlantic County.”

Lands which are subject to development seldom return to nature. Suburbs continue to swell up within their borders, and open space is a contentious matter. Land preservation has long-term implications, something understood

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at the time of the creation of the Pinelands Commission. It was not without resistance.

“Just based on the applications that we were getting,” Harrison explained, “particularly in the beginning of large developments, seeing where development had recently occurred at the periphery of the Pineland, it was clear that there would have been much more development in areas that were precluded under the Commission’s regulations.”

Harrison offered an example. “Early on in the Commission’s existence, one of the Atlantic City casinos had purchased a property in Atlantic County where they were proposing over 1,000 units to be built. That application was denied. That property is now a county park. That’s the type of thing we were able to do.”

Over 100,000 acres had been preserved, Harrison said, by the Commission. “You have extensive areas in the pinelands that are preserved permanently. This protects water quality, threatened or endangered species and not to an insignificant extent.”

At the time of the Commission’s inception, pushbacks came from a number of sources. Developers and casino were looking to expand but had hit a roadblock to their designs. “The casino referendum had passed in May of 1976,” Harrison said, “They were seeing that as a boon to economic development in Atlantic County and, suddenly, this state entity came into being. It was saying, ‘you’re not having as much development as you thought’ or ‘you have to be located closer to Atlantic City, rather than spreading it out.’” Harrison said that there was a curious consequence regarding regional growth. “We did allow relatively high densities in some

of the towns: 3.5 dwelling units per developable acre, which probably translate into around 2.7 units per acre, which is not very dense in normal city or inner-suburb terms. Some 15 years in, those towns started to complain that we had allowed too much development to occur, versus their original position that we were thwarting development that they wanted. But that was one of the ironies of life.”

At the time the Pinelands Commission was formed, the environmental movement in the US was still relatively young. The Environmental Protection Agency had only been established by President Richard Nixon in 1970—an issue close to the heart of Fair Lawn’s Bob Gordon, then a young Washington, DC, staffer, who would keep such issues as priorities throughout his career.



“The DEP was created in 1970,” Harrison said. “So, that was totally new in the state. The first effort to have some level of protection in the pinelands was based on water quality and regulating septic systems. There was a dramatic change from what the DEP felt comfortable doing in the late 70s compared to what ended up happening later when the Commission was adopting its regulations.”

New Jersey's governor at the time was Brendan Byrne, a Democrat, who served from 1974-1982. Harrison credited the governor's courage at the time, pushing the Pinelands Commission forward. "Governor Byrne expended a great deal of political capital to make this happen through the legislature and this was what he wanted. He made it happen and he deserves tremendous credit for it."

He explained some of the macro-scale benefits the Pinelands Commission has been able to secure. "It is preserving the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer and the 17 trillion gallons of water there, protecting its water quality. Because of the sandy soils, any pollutants basically go straight into the groundwater. You'll have a variety of species where either their southern limit is in the pinelands, or

their northern limit is the pinelands. There are a lot of unique flora and fauna in the pinelands. There are numerous threatened, endangered wildlife and plant species that only survive if their habitat is preserved. It's an ecosystem. There are large contiguous areas that are permanently preserved and will always be pinelands. We were not making a national park, we were not going and buying up the pinelands, but it was set up to enable the state to have a regulatory system that protected the resources, not only through land acquisition, but through regulations."

New Jersey's natural heritage, thanks to some capable visionaries half a century ago, has been preserved. The Commission overall demonstrates a plan neither thwarting development nor letting it run without responsible state stewardship.



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## New Jersey State Museum

Museums serve to preserve and interpret history, but sometimes museums make history in their own right. Such is the case for the New Jersey State Museum, established in 1895. It is among the oldest, if not the oldest, state museum in the United States, but was the first created with the idea of educating the general public.

The New Jersey State Museum began with geological history and expanded to include the state's Native American historical and cultural legacy as well. In 1929, the museum grew and was moved to the State House Annex. Its scope and collections continued to expand, and in 1964 the museum was moved again, to its current location not far from the State House.

Boasting collections spanning industry, arts, natural sciences, and social history, the museum also has a planetarium, staffed by astronomers. Additionally, rotating displays feature some of New Jersey's surviving Civil War battle flags preserved and on display. It is also home to the

state's 9/11 Collection Gallery, remembering the over-700 New Jerseyans who lost their lives in the terrorist attacks.

New Jersey's heritage is not the stuff of the dead past, but continues to thrive and be shared, with an eye towards building the future by understanding the past, thanks to this institution of which Garden State residents can be rightfully proud.

The New Jersey State Museum is found at 205 West State Street, Trenton, New Jersey.





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## Peter Mott House

South Jersey has a gem on the Black Heritage Trail, a 20 Minute drive from Philadelphia. In the first independently operated Black community north of the Mason Dixon line, Lawnside, New Jersey, is home to the Peter Mott House. This house, run by the Lawnside Historical Society, is a museum dedicated to educating visitors about the Underground Railroad, “the clandestine network to freedom for Black people escaping slavery in the 19th century.”

The Peter Mott House celebrates and interprets the work of its namesake and Elizabeth Mott, his wife. Peter had escaped from slavery and settled in Gloucester County around 1830. Camden County, where the house is today, was created in 1844 from parts of Gloucester. The exact date of Mott’s birth is unknown, but he

was believed to have been born within the first decade of the 19th Century. He married in 1833 and prospered in what was then known as Snow Hill. A landowner, he supervised Sunday school and worked as both a laborer and deacon at Mt. Pisgah, African Methodist Episcopal church. The Lawnside Historical Society said that due to the secretive nature of the Underground Railroad, specific documentation is hard to come by, but it is believed that Mott was helping fugitive slaves reach their freedom, as he had done for himself.

By the late 20th Century, the Peter Mott House was going to be demolished but Clarence Still, founding president of the Lawnside Historical Society, led the public charge to acquire and save the house, successfully. The 1990s saw the restoration of the house, which officially opened to the public in 2001.

While New Jersey had been gradually abolishing the institution of slavery during the 19th Century, it was, in fact, the last northern state to legally dismantle slavery in its entirety. In 2021, Noelle Lorraine Williams, Director of the African American History Program, New Jersey Historical Commission, wrote, “This year forty-seven states including New Jersey will observe Juneteenth (also known as Freedom Day or Emancipation Day) as a state holiday—a holiday that commemorates when enslaved Blacks in Galveston, Texas learned that they were, in fact, freed by President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation two and a half years earlier. The date was June 19, 1865. Juneteenth then is a holiday of celebration and a mournful remembrance of deep injustice and loss. It reveals the injustice of slavery and the

legal repression of African American freedom, extending beyond the nineteenth century. But we must remember that there were still enslaved Black men and women in New Jersey even after Juneteenth. Imagine, New Jersey’s death grip on slavery meant that until December 1865, six months after enslaved men, women, and children in Texas found out they were cheated of their freedom, approximately 16 African Americans were still technically enslaved in New Jersey.”

New Jersey celebrates Juneteenth on the third Friday of the month of June, ensuring a day off for state workers. The federal holiday of Juneteenth, however, is June 19.

The Peter Mott House is found at 26 Kings Court, Lawnside, New Jersey.

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Photo by Anthony Sattilaro



## Proprietary House Museum Royal Governor's Mansion

An 18th Century treasure settled in a residential area of Perth Amboy today, the Proprietary House Museum has benefitted from recent renovations, giving new life to one of the most dramatic political chapters of the American Revolution in New Jersey. Construction was completed in 1764 and the Proprietary House was the home of New Jersey's last royal governor—William

Franklin, estranged, illegitimate son of Benjamin Franklin, and ardently loyal to King George III.

As a teenager, Franklin served in the colonial army during the War of Austrian Succession, known as King George's War in the colonies from 1744-1748. The colonists and the British fought their long-time enemies, the French and their native allies. This French and Indian war, however, would not be the

conclusive one fought from 1754-1763. At the age of 22, William accompanied his father during his famous kite experiment to study electricity. In the 1750s, the Franklins went to England, with William staying on to study. In 1762, Franklin had been appointed royal governor for New Jersey by His Majesty, a position he would take to with alacrity, sworn in the next winter at the City Hall of Perth Amboy.

Franklin's term as royal governor was, overall, considered a success, and he enjoyed popularity modern governors would be envious of. His time was credited with infrastructure projects, agricultural relief, and the establishment of Rutgers University, known at the time as Queen's College.



William and Elizabeth Franklin moved into the Proprietary House in 1774, but their stay would not be long. In 1775, Benjamin Franklin tried to turn his son against his king, but without success. The Revolution reached New Jersey the next year, with the governor placed under house arrest by the rebel legislature. In June, Franklin was taken away from both the house and his wife, never to see either again.

Elizabeth Franklin moved to New York City, under British control, in 1777 but died soon after. William would be released in a prisoner exchange the next year and worked tirelessly to support the loyalist cause. When hope was lost, he moved once more to England, living out the rest of his days there until he died in 1813. He never reconciled with his famed father.

As for the Proprietary House, it was nearly destroyed by a fire in the 1780s but was repaired and added onto, serving as a hotel, private residence, and flop house during the 19th and early 20th Centuries. The Works Progress Administration documented the house and during the 1950s-1960s, a slow process was underway to try to preserve the historic house. It was not until 1966 that the Proprietary House Association was formed, and the site was acquired by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection.

The years had been hard on the Proprietary House and the volunteers worked ardently to save the deteriorating manse. Public enthusiasm for the American Revolution was high, however, during the Bicentennial years. According to the Proprietary House Association, with restoration work underway, the house was opened to the public on June 19, 1976, with a theatrical recreation of the arrest of Governor William Franklin, a tradition carried on ever since.

Today, the Proprietary House, with extensive restoration work complete, stands as a proud feature of Perth Amboy and New Jersey's history. It is the only original surviving royal governor's mansion from the thirteen British colonies and is open for public tours and tea events.

The Proprietary House is located at 149 Kearny Ave, Perth Amboy, New Jersey.





Pictured above:  
**Sean M. Spiller**, President (center)  
**Steve Beatty**, Vice President (left)  
**Petal Robertson**, Secretary-Treasurer (right)

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# Van Vliet's Visitations

## Macculloch Hall



InsiderNJ is a political publication, so if you should pop into Macculloch Hall, be sure to check out their collection on 19th Century political cartoonist, Thomas Nast. Nast is attributed with a number of familiar icons, including creating the donkey and elephant symbols adopted by the Democratic and Republican parties. Nast's "Garibaldi Sketchbook" also shows his work covering the Italian hero, Giuseppe Garibaldi, as an embedded war correspondent during the campaigns to unify Italy. It should be noted that Nast was also a man of his era, however, and his work reflects prevailing attitudes and perceptions of the time.

## Old Barracks



The Old Barracks is deserving of a feature in its own right for the Heritage Spotlight once the focus truly brings the Revolutionary War into view. A short walk from the New Jersey State House, the Old Barracks was built during the French and Indian War. During the American Revolution, it temporarily housed the German auxiliaries (colloquially known as Hessians) until their capture by George Washington on Christmas of 1776, the first major American victory of that fateful year.





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## Allaire Village



A living history village in Wall, Monmouth County, Allaire had to temporarily shut down for three weeks this summer due to funding issues. They are back in operation, however, with events scheduled for the balance of the season. Allaire Village is named for James Allaire, an early 19th Century metallurgist and industrialist who built the largest maritime engine workshop in the country at the time. Visitors will find themselves transported back to the 1830s as they tour the grounds.

## Cape May



Cape May can be a publication unto itself. Literally anywhere in Cape May is prime history and heritage material. Serious. Cape May is more than just a beach—although it is a fantastic treasure of the Jersey Shore. Victorian architecture is preserved and celebrated throughout, with its stately homes and beach-area hotels. If you go to Cape May, pay a visit to the Harriet Tubman Museum to learn about how she worked in Cape May in the 1850s while bringing fugitive slaves to freedom from the antebellum South. (A sizeable chunk of New Jersey actually below of the Mason-Dixon line—Little Egg Harbor and points south.) The Cape May Lighthouse, built in 1859; the

remains of the SS *Atlantus*, a concrete Liberty ship; Naval Air Station Wildwood Aviation Museum; the Emlen Physick Estate; and last, but certainly not least, Historic Cold Spring Village will keep anyone busy during a summer excursion to Cape May.

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## Ballantine House



Temporarily closed as of this writing, the Ballantine House is part of the Newark Museum of Art. A Gilded Age mansion showcasing some incredible New Jersey craftsmanship, visitors can check out their virtual tours until such time as they reopen—expected to be November 21. The 1885 mansion underwent a restoration project just after the COVID-era, bringing in New Jersey talent to make the mansion even more period-accurate to its time. Alongside features on Newark’s history, there are a number of art exhibits to be found in the Ballantine House, as one might expect being part of the Newark Museum of Art. Among

them is “Party Time: Reimagine America” by British artist Yinka Shonibare CBE RA, exploring late-Victorian scenes of celebration expressed through vivid and deliberately anachronistic mixed media.

## What About The Bottom Line?

New Jersey history and heritage is more than just about how we feel about ourselves. It also brings in tourist money! In 2022, then-New Jersey Historic Trust Executive Director Dorothy Guzzo had reported on a study commissioned by the Historic Trust, assembled by Tourism Economics. She said that “the economic impact of heritage tourism found that visitors to our historic sites accounted for over \$3.6 billion in spending, representing 7% of the entire tourism revenue in New Jersey. The heritage tourism industry supports nearly 50,000 jobs both directly and indirectly. This report substantiates what we all know intuitively - that our investment in historic resources produces a substantial economic return for New Jersey.”

It is worth noting that this was an assessment conducted not long after the major lockdowns and shutdowns of the COVID-era, a time which impacted all aspects of society, but particularly tourism, where travel and hospitality go hand in hand with attractions and educational venues.

New Jersey’s history and heritage span the centuries, into pre-recorded history. As the most densely populated state in the union, New Jersey is also home to every faith and background, where each has contributed in their own way to creating something unique. The state’s official government social media itself is famously sassy, exemplifying the “acts mean, is nice” character ascribed to the peanut-shaped state some 9 million call home. New Jersey is a place unlike any other with a history and heritage worthy of the brightest of spotlights.