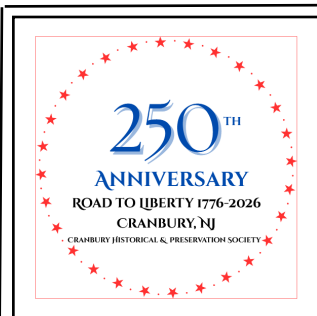
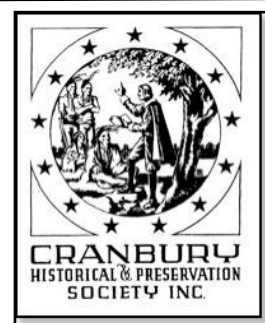




CRANBURY HISTORICAL & PRESERVATION SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



250th ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Special Edition - February 2026

<https://www.cranburyhistory.org/blog>

President's Message

The Cranbury Historical and Preservation Society (CHPS) was organized in 1967 and incorporated on November 17, 1970. The Society is committed to furthering the interest and knowledge of the history of Cranbury; the promotion, support and encouragement of the beautification of the land and buildings located in Cranbury; and the restoration and preservation of Cranbury's old and historic building sites.

CHPS operates the Cranbury Museum, located at 4 Park Place East; the Elizabeth M. Wagner History Center, 6 South Main Street; the Parsonage Barn, 3 Cranbury Neck Road and the 1713 East Jersey Cottage on Old Trenton Road in Millstone Park.

Cranbury Museum is open on Sundays, 1 - 4 pm. Docents are available to give tours and an exhibit is in place in the Perrine Wing. The History Center is open on Thursday, 10 am - 1 pm for research and sales. The Parsonage Barn is available for events and programs and has been used for concerts, yoga classes, art exhibits and weddings. The 1713 East Jersey Cottage is being restored. It will be dedicated on May 17 and may be open for tours later this year.

To celebrate the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution, the Cranbury Museum will have a special exhibit, and a Colonial Fair will be presented by the Cranbury Business Association and CHPS at the 1713 East Jersey Cottage on May 17. There will be a House Tour this fall and the Cranbury Wassail will be held in December.

In 1989 the Township of Cranbury passed an ordinance confirming the importance and significance of Historic Cranbury by establishing the Historic Preservation Advisory Committee (HPAC) to protect its irreplaceable resources. That committee is now the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). CHPS is a nonprofit organization, separate from HPC. Both organizations are dedicated to preserving Cranbury's unique history.

CHPS members receive mailed historic newsletters two times a year and are invited to attend the Annual Meeting with a program in January. If you are not already a member, please consider joining by visiting our website, www.cranburyhistory.org, or with the form provided in this newsletter. We look forward to seeing you at our events.

With thanks and best wishes,

Audrey Smith



The picture above by local artist Nadine Berkowsky depicts four historical buildings under CHPS care. From left to right: The Elizabeth M. Wagner History Center, the 1713 East Jersey Cottage, the Cranbury Museum, and the Parsonage Barn.

Revolutionary Surgeon: The Legacy of Dr. Charles McKnight (1750–1791)

By Karen Kelley

Born in Cranbury on October 10, 1750, Charles McKnight was the son of Elizabeth Stevens and Reverend Charles McKnight, first pastor of the Cranbury Presbyterian Church and a founder and trustee of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University.) Young Charles possibly lived on the farm at 73 Old Trenton Road, bought by his father in 1752. The McKnight family relocated when Pastor McKnight became the full-time pastor of Allentown Presbyterian Church in 1756.

During the American Revolution, the elder McKnight voiced strong opposition to the British in the pulpit and in the field. Pastor McKnight served as Chaplain at the Battle of Princeton on January 3, 1777, and was wounded by a British saber. While pastor at Mount Pleasant Church in Middletown Point (Matawan), the British burned down his church and arrested him. Pastor McKnight became ill when placed on the notorious British prison ship HMS *Jersey* in New York Harbor. He died on January 1, 1778, shortly after being released.

Young Charles attended the College of New Jersey, graduating in 1771. He then studied medicine under the renowned Dr. Shippen of Philadelphia. Before completing his studies, Charles joined the Continental Army in 1775. Initially based in Cambridge, McKnight moved to North Castle, New York with Washington's army before the Battle of White Plains began on October 28, 1776. After their defeat, Washington and his troops eventually retreated to New Jersey and Dr. McKnight was assigned to Fishkill, New York.

Along with Dr. Samuel Adams Jr., Dr. McKnight established a hospital in Fishkill for three hundred soldiers, who were ill with smallpox. In April 1777, Charles was appointed Surgeon General of the Flying Hospital, Middle Department. By 1780, he became Chief Physician, the highest medical position in the Middle Department. The Middle Department was a key administrative and operational district of the Continental Army comprising of the states of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland.

Dr. McKnight served with General George Washington during the cold, harsh winter at Jockey Hollow, New Jersey in 1779-80. The General and Charles became good friends through the war and later in 1790, Dr. McKnight treated President Washington for pneumonia.

After the war, Dr. McKnight moved to New York City and was appointed Professor of Surgery and Anatomy at Columbia College. Charles became a Trustee of Columbia and a Regent to the State University of New York. He married Mary Morin Scott (Litchfield), daughter of General John Morin Scott, famous Patriot, New York Secretary of State, and member of the Continental Congress. Mary and Charles had four daughters and one son, John M. Scott McKnight, who became an eminent physician.

Dr. McKnight maintained a steady surgical practice and held his Columbia professorship until his death at age 41. He died from pneumonia, the result of a war injury, on November 16, 1791. Dr. Charles McKnight was laid to rest at Trinity Churchyard in Lower Manhattan, at the corner of Wall Street and Broadway, beside his wife Mary and her father, General Scott—his legacy preserved among the architects of a new nation.



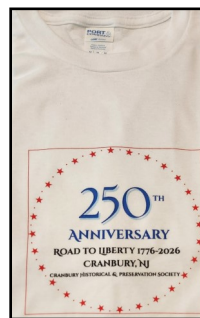
The Trephination Set owned by Dr. Charles McKnight, was made in London by William Hasledine Pepys.

Trephining, a surgical procedure that entailed boring a hole through the skull, was used for the treatment of head wounds during the Revolution. This set is now part of the Smithsonian Institution Collection.

Celebrate the 250th Anniversary with a Special Keepsake

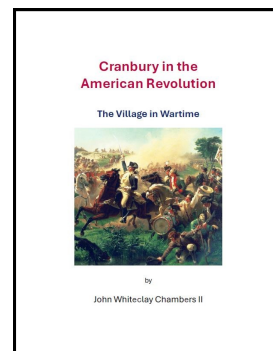


Cranbury's own Betsy Ross, Louise Palagyi, artist and CHPS member, designed this new flag to commemorate the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution. The flag was another project of the Society's 250th Anniversary committee and will fly at the Cranbury Museum, Elizabeth M. Wagner History Center, Parsonage Barn and the 1713 East Jersey Cottage. The Cranbury Historical & Preservation Society intends to present a commemorative flag to Cranbury Township, Cranbury School and Cranbury Library. Additional flags can be ordered through the History Center at www.cranburyhistory.org.



Be ready to celebrate the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution with your own tee shirt! Available at the History Center.

This newly published booklet by Dr. John Chambers about Cranbury and the American Revolution is available at the Cranbury History Center, and also at Happiness is Homemade and Bay Laurel Vintage, located on Main Street, Cranbury.



**The Elizabeth M. Wagner History is located at 6 South Main Street
and is open on Thursdays from 10 am to 1 pm.**

BECOME A CHPS MEMBER or RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY!

Your membership is greatly appreciated and makes possible the care and upkeep of the four properties for which CHPS is responsible.

CRANBURY HISTORICAL AND PRESERVATION SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____

_____ Individual - \$25 _____ Patron - \$50 _____ Other - \$ _____
_____ Family - \$30 _____ Benefactor - \$100
_____ Sponsor - \$40 _____ Corporate - \$150

Volunteer Opportunities

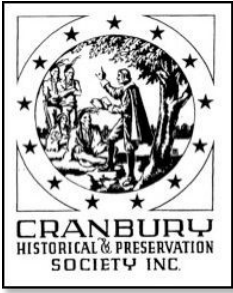
_____ Museum Docent _____ Museum Inspector _____ Museum Garden _____ History Center
_____ 1713 Cottage _____ Memorial Day Parade _____ Health and Wellness Fair _____ Educational Programs
_____ Fundraising Projects _____ Membership _____ House Tour _____ Walking Tours
_____ Wassail Tour _____ Other _____



Save time by paying your membership online—quick, secure, and hassle-free. Set up automatic reminders or recurring payments so you never miss a renewal. (While checking out, a donation to Zeffy is not required—simply select \$0 donation.)

Or mail completed form with check payable to Cranbury Historical & Preservation Society to:
CHPS Membership, 6 South Main Street, Cranbury, NJ 08512

CHPS is a non-profit, self-supporting organization. Contributions are deductible to the extent allowed by law. Matching gifts are a significant source of support for the Society. If you work for, or have retired from, a company that matches employee donations, please ask your personnel office for a matching gift form.



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**Cranbury Historical & Preservation Society
6 South Main Street**

Cranbury Museum
4 Park Place East
Open Sundays 1 pm to 4 pm & by appt.
Tel: 609-655-2611

Cranbury History Center
6 South Main Street
Open Thursdays 10 am to 12:30 pm & by appt.
Tel: 609-860-1889

Email: historycenter@comcast.net
Website: www.cranburyhistory.org
X: @cranburyhistory
Facebook: Cranbury Historical and Preservation Society
Instagram: Cranbury_1700s_house

250th Anniversary of the American Revolution Calendar - CHPS Upcoming Events

February 23	CHPS Annual General Meeting and <i>Five Signers of the Declaration of Independence Lecture by Earl Groendyke</i> at the Cranbury Library, 7 pm
January-June	<i>The Christmas Campaign - Ten Crucial Days Exhibit</i> at the Cranbury Museum Sundays, 1- 4 pm, excluding holiday weekends
March 8, 15	<i>Revolutionary Lives Traveling Exhibit</i> by Revolutionary NJ at the Cranbury Museum, 1 - 4 pm
May 17	<i>1713 East Jersey Cottage Dedication/Lecture by Dr. David Martin</i> <i>Colonial Fair</i> by Cranbury Business Association Both events at the 1713 East Jersey Cottage
May 25	<i>Memorial Day Parade</i>
July 15	<i>American Revolution Lecture by William L. Kidder</i> sponsored by CHPS and the Cranbury Public Library, 7 pm.
September	<i>Cranbury in the American Revolution Exhibit</i> at the Cranbury Museum
September 12	<i>Cranbury Day</i> - Stop by the CHPS Table
October	<i>Battle at Red Bank Lecture by Dr. Stuart Alexander</i> at the Cranbury Library, 7 pm <i>Cranbury House Tour</i> - details to follow
December 6	<i>Christmas Tea</i> at the Cranbury Museum, 1 - 4 pm
December 12	<i>Cranbury Wassail</i> - details to follow

Additional events are being planned. Follow the CHPS newsletter, website, Facebook or Instagram.