



# Turkey Tracks

Newsletter of the *New Providence Historical Society*

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## The Lenape / Munsee People

The Lenape/Munsee people lived along the Atlantic Coast for millennia before Europeans arrived. Their communal society shared natural resources and land. Europeans who arrived in what became New Jersey and New York during the 17th century, brought different cultural values such as individual property rights. Thousands of Lenape "Indians" died from diseases to which they had no immunities, reducing their population by perhaps 90% within a century. As the increasing number of colonists bargained for native "property," displacing the original inhabitants, conflicts arose. This presentation will show how Lenape people both resisted and accommodated Europeans, especially in New Jersey.



We will learn more at this year's **Annual Dinner**, when historian Rick Geffkin shares the events of this critical period in local American history. See Page 7 for reservation information for the Annual Dinner, as well as dues renewal information. The Annual Dinner will be at Vintage Tavern on Thursday, **April 9th**.



The **Salt Box Craft Fair** returns on **May 9, 2026**, 9am to 3pm.

Please join us for this exhibition and sale of high quality arts and crafts on the grounds of the Salt Box Museum. In addition to crafts, the event will include a bake sale, plant sale and free tours of the Salt Box Museum. Learn more on Page 3.

On **June 20, 2026**, the Society will host the **New Providence Flea Market**, with a wide array of venerable treasures. Learn more on Page 3.



**New Providence  
Flea Market**

# Board of Trustees Letter

Dear Society Members,

The cold weather has finally broken as we head into spring. (We hope we haven't spoken too soon.) But more importantly, it is our country's 250th anniversary and the New Providence Historical Society's 60th Anniversary.

To honor both celebrations, the society has created its own replica Liberty Tree on the grounds of the Salt Box Museum. This symbolic tree features 13 solar-powered flickering lanterns, each representing one of the original colonies. The society hopes its liberty tree will become a gathering place to learn about our town's history and the history of the American Revolution. We encourage all residents to hang similar lights on their properties, not only to commemorate our anniversaries but also to boost local spirit.



Recently, we've added a new entry to our roster of events, **Colonial Libation Nights** at the Salt Box Museum. These limited-attendance events feature the tasting of three Colonial-era beverages. We have had two very successful libation evenings so far. Stay tuned for announcements of future tastings.

On Thursday, **April 9th**, we have our **Annual Dinner** at the Vintage Tavern in Gillette. Our speaker will be historian Rick Geffkin, who will discuss the local Lenape and Munsee tribes and the early settlers. See sign-up details on page 7. April 14th will be Reverend Caldwell Day. See page 4, for details of events.

On Saturday, **May 9th**, we will once again hold the **Salt Box Craft Fair**, hosting artisans with a wide range of handmade arts and crafts. The museum will also be open for tours, while also holding a bake sale and a plant sale.

On Saturday, **June 20th**, we will have our annual **New Providence Flea Market**. Proceeds from these events support the maintenance of the Salt Box Museum and fund our New Providence High School scholarship program. We encourage any members interested in emptying their attics to rent a booth.

Yet to be scheduled are additional Graveyard Tours at the New Providence Presbyterian Church, conducted by our own John Sponauer. John is planning a special Revolutionary War cemetery tour. Dates to be announced soon.

We would like to give a special thanks to **Kerry Lee**, who has served the Society with distinction as a trustee and treasurer. Kerry and his wife Lori Ann have moved to Texas.

Volunteers are always needed and encouraged, especially docents to guide visitors at the museum. Currently, we have several positions to fill, specifically volunteers for the program planning committee, a public relations chair, an accessions chair, and a new treasurer. If you'd like to volunteer or just have questions, please give us a call at 908-665-1034.

Best regards,

***New Providence Historical Society Board of Trustees***

# 2026 Calendar for Upcoming Society Events

April 9, 2026	Thursday	Annual Dinner, 6 PM
April 18, 2026	Tuesday	Reverend Caldwell Day, 10 AM - 1 PM
May 9, 2026	Saturday	Salt Box Craft Fair, 9 AM - 3 PM
June 20, 2026	Saturday	New Providence Flea Market, 9 AM - 3 PM
September 26, 2026	Saturday	New Providence Book Festival, 9 AM - 3 PM

Other events may be added, so check our calendar at [www.newprovidencehistorical.com](http://www.newprovidencehistorical.com).

## Salt Box Craft Fair

The **Salt Box Craft Fair** returns on **May 9, 2026**, 9am to 3pm. Please join us for this exhibition and sale of high quality arts and crafts on the grounds of the Salt Box Museum at 1350 Springfield Avenue in New Providence. In addition to crafts, the society will have a bake sale and free tours of the Salt Box Museum. In addition, the Nw Providence Garden Club will be having its Annual Plant Sale. Craft vendor applications can be found on the website at [www.newprovidencehistorical.com/events/salt-box-fair](http://www.newprovidencehistorical.com/events/salt-box-fair).



## New Providence Flea Market

On **June 20, 2026**, the Society will host the **New Providence Flea Market**, with a wide array of venerable treasures. Vendor fee is \$25, but only \$15 for members. A vendor application can be found at [www.newprovidencehistorical.com/events/flea-market](http://www.newprovidencehistorical.com/events/flea-market).



# Reverend Caldwell Day - Charity Drive



New Providence is celebrating America's 250th birthday next year! As part of that celebration, we'd like to invite you to join our inaugural Reverend Caldwell Day event on **April 18, 2026**.

Reverend James Caldwell, better known as "The Fighting Parson," was a pillar of the American Revolution in New Jersey. When hostilities erupted in 1775, his fiery rhetoric at the Elizabethtown congregation inspired 31 officers and 52 enlisted men to take up arms. By 1776, Caldwell's own conviction led him to the front lines as the chaplain of the 3rd New Jersey Brigade.



Seeking safety for his family that November, he moved them to Turkey (modern-day New Providence), where he also acted as an intelligence scout. He attempted to warn General Charles Lee of British movements, but his letter arrived just a day before the General's capture at Basking Ridge. In 1777, Caldwell was appointed as Assistant Commissary General, securing food and forage for Washington's army. That year, he was responsible for moving "The Old Sow" cannon from Princeton to Hobart Hill in modern-day Summit (at the time it was part of Turkey). His reputation for grit was legendary; he was known to preach with loaded cavalry pistols resting on his pulpit while sentinels stood guard outside.

Tragedy struck in June 1780 during the Battle of Connecticut Farms when his wife, Hannah, was murdered by British troops—a scene memorialized today on the official Seal of Union County. Just weeks later, during the Battle of Springfield, Caldwell solidified his place in American lore. As his men ran out of musket wadding, he dashed into his church, grabbed Isaac Watts' hymnals, and threw them to the soldiers, famously shouting, "Give them Watts, boys!"

After Hannah's death at Connecticut Farms, he moved his nine children to Turkey (New Providence) to a small home where the Adams Shopping Center is now. In November of 1781, he left Turkey to go to Elizabethtown. While assisting a woman from the ship at the docks, he was fatally shot by an American sentry, James Morgan. It was an act many believed was a British-sponsored assassination. James was tried, hung and buried in Westfield. In the wake of his death, his children were cared for by Elias Boudinot and the Marquis de Lafayette. George Washington donated money for their care.

To honor the spirit of Reverend Caldwell, the town is engaging in a day of charity and donation on April 18th, from 10 AM to 1 PM at various locations around town. To learn more, go to <https://newprov.us/674/America-250-Committee>.



A display highlighting Reverend Caldwell was on exhibit in the New Providence Memorial Library during February.

# The Changing Face of New Providence

The bridge at the end of Passaic Street, which crosses into Chatham, was rebuilt by Union County and reopened in December.

**Sweet Touch NJ**, a new restaurant, opened at 1682 Springfield Avenue, on the corner of Central Avenue, next to Mr. Tankless.



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## Member & Citizen News

Please welcome new society members: **Barbara Betz, David Baumgarten, Ryan Bern, Jen Begasse, Rupa Kale, Mitchell, Colleen Erickson** and **Neel Tilak**.

**Tom Kelsey** (92) passed away on October 29, 2025. Born on Thanksgiving Day, November 24, 1932, in Montclair, NJ, Tom began his career in the insurance industry, joining Chubb & Son Insurance in New York in 1956. Tom was a big supporter of the New Providence Historical Society, including serving as a trustee and treasurer, before relocating from Murray Hill Square to New Hampshire.

**Carol Eileen Smith** (90) passed away on January 28, 2026. Born in 1935 in Summit, NJ, Carol worked for Ciba-Geigy in regulatory affairs, dealing with the FDA. She volunteered with Our Lady of Peace, the North Jersey Rose Society, and the Summit Symphony, where she served as president and librarian. Carol was a trustee of the New Providence Historical Society for many years. Her father, Howard, was the first president of the Society.



# X-Raying the New Providence Historical Society

While the New Providence Historical Society celebrates its 60th anniversary, it falls to the Board of Trustees to provide the stewardship that assures our society will see its 70th, 80th, 90th and 100th anniversaries as well. That means paying attention to the finances. In support of that mission, we' decided to share some of the Society's financial inner workings.

Maintaining the Mason Room, the Salt Box Museum and the Society's range of programs requires considerable funds. Below are a few of the approximate ongoing costs.



This Carrier furnace has served the Salt Box Museum since 1967, but will soon need to be replaced.

Property & Liability Insurance	\$4,700
Salt Box Museum Security System & Monitoring	\$400
Computer Maintenance & Cyber Security	\$1,200
New Providence High School Scholarship	\$500
Utilities	\$600
Annual Dinner	\$2,300
Operating Expenses (Supplies)	\$1,000
Annual NJ Historical Society dues	\$40
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$10,740</b>

The Historical Society is currently running at roughly a \$3000 annual deficit, which cannot be sustained much longer. In addition, there are periodic capital expenses. One likely expense is replacing the museum's furnace, which is the original from 1967. (They don't make them like that anymore.) 59 years is an amazing run, but it's not likely to last much longer.

As responsible trustees, it falls to us to rectify and manage this situation. While we are planning to intensify our fundraising and grant-seeking activities, society dues has not increased in decades. Reluctantly, we are raising dues slightly and adding two new categories of patronage.

Individual Dues:	\$20
Family Membership:	\$30
Business Sponsorship:	\$50
1966 Patron:	\$100
1720 Society Membership:	\$250

Members of the two new patron categories will also receive special perks.

While checks are always welcome, people may also send their dues or donations electronically at <https://givebutter.com/newprovidencehistoricalsociety>.



# Membership Renewal Application

Our annual dues run from April 1st to March 31st, our fiscal year. Please fill in your information and mail your check to the New Providence Historical Society, 377 Elkwood Avenue, New Providence, NJ 07974. This will enable us to keep our membership and mailing lists current. Lifetime Members may submit any change in address, phone, email, etc., using this form or via email to [newprovidencehistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:newprovidencehistoricalsociety@gmail.com). Be sure to include your preference for Mr., Mrs., Ms., or Mr. or Mrs. Membership dues provide the main income to support the Society's mission and activities, we rely on your renewal.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Memberships (Many corporations will match contributions.)

Individual \$20.00 \_\_\_\_\_ Family \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_ Business Sponsorship \$50.00 \_\_\_\_\_

"1720 Pioneer Society" \$250 \_\_\_\_\_ "1966 Patron" \$100 \_\_\_\_\_

I will volunteer to help:

Computer \_\_\_\_\_ Research \_\_\_\_\_ Museum \_\_\_\_\_ Craft Fair \_\_\_\_\_ Writing \_\_\_\_\_

Clerical \_\_\_\_\_ Grounds \_\_\_\_\_ Restoration \_\_\_\_\_ House Tours \_\_\_\_\_

## Reservations for 2026 Annual Dinner

**April 9, 2025, Hors d'oeuvre at 6 PM, Dinner at 7 PM, Cash Bar.**

**Vintage Tavern, 342 Valley Road, Gillette, NJ 07933**

Members are invited to bring a favorite dessert to share with those attending.

Number of reservations: \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$55.00 for NP Historical Society Annual Dinner

Donation to cover speaker fee \_\_\_\_\_ (Optional)

Amount of Check \$ \_\_\_\_\_.



Please make check payable to NP Historical Society.

Alternative payment method at <https://givebutter.com/newprovidencehistoricalsociety>.

Reservations should be received by **April 1, 2026**.

Send checks to:

New Providence Historical Society  
c/o New Providence Memorial Library  
377 Elkwood Avenue  
New Providence, NJ 07974

To answer any questions, feel free to call 908-665-1034.



**Proposed Trustees - Class of 2026: John Sponauer**

## New Providence Historical Society Officers & Committees

President	Rick Anderson
Vice President	Maria DeLuca
Treasurer	Vacant
Grounds & Property	Rick Anderson
Membership	John Sponauer
Website & <i>Turkey Tracks</i> editor	J.R. Bale
Social Media	Maria DeLuca
Recording Secretary	Audrey Keebler
Corresponding Secretary	Chris Tallone
Museum Docent Coordinator	Vacant
Display Coordinator	Maria DeLuca



## Salt Box Museum Hours

1350 Springfield Avenue  
First Sundays, 1-3 PM  
Or by appointment  
Telephone: 908-665-1034

## Mason Room Hours

at the New Providence Library  
Tuesday Mornings,  
10 AM to Noon  
Second Saturdays, 11AM - 1 PM  
Telephone: 908-665-1034  
Appointments available

## Website:

[NewProvidenceHistorical.com](http://NewProvidenceHistorical.com)

## Trustees

Rick Anderson, J.R. Bale, Maria DeLuca, Jeff Grob,  
Robert Keller, Kerry Lee, John Sponauer, Sara Jane Vignali

**Email:** [newprovidencehistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:newprovidencehistoricalsociety@gmail.com)

**Facebook Page:** [facebook.com/NewProvidenceHistoricalSociety](https://facebook.com/NewProvidenceHistoricalSociety)

*Turkey Tracks* is available in  
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Memorial Library  
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