



Middlebrook Messenger

Vol. 1, No. 4

October 2025

friendsofbridgewaterhistory@gmail.com—www.friendsofbridgewaterhistory.org

Who we are: The mission of the Friends of Bridgewater History (FoBH) is to preserve and promote Bridgewater Township history. We meet quarterly on the first Tuesday of March, June, September and December at the Martinsville Community Center in Bridgewater Township, New Jersey, at 7:30 p.m.

Upcoming FoBH Meetings

Wednesday, October 22: Join us for a talk on “The History of Sunset Lake,” at the municipal building. See story below.

Sunday, November 9: 12:15 p.m. “Now and then...” The talk includes the changes to Martinsville and the history of Camp Cromwell/Northover Camp. Saint Martin’s Episcopal Church, 1350 Washington Valley Road, Bridgewater; 908-526-1350.

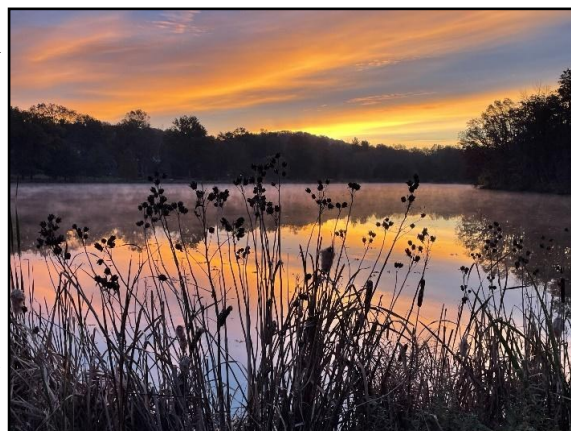
Friends of Bridgewater History meeting Tuesday, December 2, 2025 @ 7:30
Location: Martinsville Community Center, 1961 Washington Valley Road, Martinsville
Building is on top of the hill behind the Washington Valley Library. All are welcome!

The History of Sunset Lake

The Friends of Bridgewater History (FoBH) will present “The History of Sunset Lake” at the Bridgewater Municipal building at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday October 22, 2025.

Sunset Lake was the brainchild of Dr Rudolf “Doc” Meiners and his wife, Alice, after they purchased the Hoffman Farm in 1921. After living in the old farmhouse for several years, they envisioned creating a resort community revolving around a yet-to-be-created man-made lake.

(continued on page three)



“Early Morning Calling” by Leslie Thompson

Lane/Voorhees/Brokaw House Welcomed Many “Journey Through the Past” Visitors

On Saturday, October 11th, the Friends of Bridgewater History participated in the Somerset County Cultural and Heritage Commission’s annual event, *Journey Through the Past*, at the historic Lane/Voorhees/Brokaw house on Milltown Road in Bridgewater. The house is owned by Bridgewater Township, and FOBH is working with the township to restore the home to its former glory.



Although the weather did not cooperate, there was a steady stream of visitors to the site all day. The highlight of the day was the demonstration about how the early settlers



used plants to dye fabrics and create textiles. The demo was given by Stephanie Moench, Bridgewater Creative Arts Committee Chair. (photos, above and right.)



Friends member Jan Rohn, a descendant of William Lane, greets a visitor to the Lane/Voorhees/Brokaw house. Jan has been leading the effort to preserve the house and the Lane Cemetery, which is around the corner on Francis Drive.

The Lane/Voorhees/Brokaw house was built circa 1750 by William Lane. A fire destroyed much of the house in 1837, but the shell of the house remained, because it was made of brick. Court Voorhees rebuilt the interior of the house following the fire.

There are three sections of the house: the brick portion, built in the mid-1700s; the shed section likely built after 1837; and the addition on the west end of the house, built in the mid-1900s.

The roof and floor framing in the brick portion of the house dates back to post-1837. The sloping roof of the house is typical of Dutch-American homes built during the mid-1700s.

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The welcome table displayed information about the Friends of Bridgewater History organization and information about the *Journey Through the Past* from the County. The house in the background is the Lane/Voorhees/Brokaw house.

History of Sunset Lake (continued from page one)

Over the next several years they pieced together several adjacent land parcels totaling ~250 acres. The property contained the narrow valley where Chambers Brook flowed. The land was cleared; roads were cut through the mountainous section and laid in the northern flatter section and a 550' dam of ~30' peak height was constructed, creating a spillway for the lake.

The land was parceled into ¼-acre lots with deed restrictions stating that all lots around the newly formed lake were to be sold at no less than \$3000 (other lots were fully negotiable). Water was included via above ground pipes and a wooden water tower



“Sunset Lake,” November 2023, by Nicole Gillmore

Journey Through the Past (continued from page two)

The Lane/Voorhees/Brokaw house is listed on the State Register of Historic Places. It is a classic example of a pre-Revolutionary Dutch house. The floor plan is known as a double-pile, center hall plan. The house has a coursed rubble stone foundation with brick walls. The pattern of the brickwork is called Flemish bond.

The house is surrounded by preserved Open Space land. It is located along the North Branch of the Raritan River on the edge of the first terrace above the river's flood plain.

During the Revolutionary War, John Brokaw lost his life serving his country at the Battle of Germantown. Undocumented local tradition states that George Washington paid a condolence visit to Maria Brokaw at this house in the spring of 1779. Maria was the widow of John Brokaw, and she was William Lane's second wife.

If you missed visiting the Lane/Voorhees/Brokaw house this year, mark your calendar for next year's *Journey Through the Past* event on October 10-11, 2026.



Historical Alliance at the 4-H Fair

As our nation prepares for its 250th anniversary, the Historical Alliance showcased their information at a booth at the annual 4-H Fair in Bridgewater. Several of the organizations from the alliance participated: Friends of Bridgewater History (FoBH), Washington Campground Association (WCGA), Heritage Trail Association, and the Camp Middlebrook Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). The booth was sponsored by Bridgewater Township.

There were hundreds of visitors to the booth, with a lot of interest expressed in the activities of each organization. Be sure to mark your calendars for July 4, 2026 for the following events:



pictured: Michael Pappas, Jane Gandolfe,
Christine Rose and Matthew Moench



- annual reading by the WCGA of the Declaration of Independence at the Middlebrook Campground, and
- closing of the time capsule at Bridgewater Township's Administration building (Legacy 2026 program). There will be other activities throughout the year in preparation for the grand celebration. Visit the websites of each organization to find out where and when activities are scheduled.

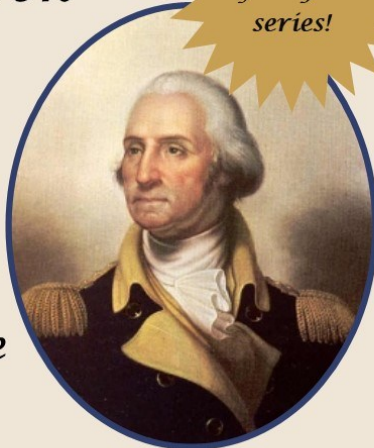
SAVE THE DATE!

The Legacy of Middlebrook

Saturday, March 21, 2026
9:00 am - 3:30 pm

*Raritan Valley
Community College
Conference Center, RVCC Drive
North Branch, NJ*

*The 4th of
a four-part
series!*



CALLING ALL HISTORIANS AND HISTORY BUFFS!

Revolutionary War Grave Markers Preserved at William Lane Cemetery

By Jan Rohn

Five Revolutionary War grave markers at the William Lane Cemetery in Bridgewater were recently preserved thanks to an Historic Preservation Grant which the Friends of Bridgewater History received from the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). The matching funds needed to apply for the grant were raised through generous contributions from several members of the Friends of Bridgewater History. The grant was sponsored by the Middletown Chapter, NSDAR.

The grave markers of William Lane, his first wife Jannetje Rappalyea, their sons Gilbert and Tunis, and son-in-law Hendrick Vroom were in need of repair. The work was performed by Jablonski Building Conservation. Three grave markers that were lying on the ground and a gravestone that was leaning severely were reset. The grave markers of William Lane and



The William Lane Cemetery before any work was done.

Jannetje Rappalyea were treated to prevent further delamination.

This summer, a lot of work has been going on in the cemetery and the grave marker of Rebecca Bertran (right) was recently unearthed. In the back row, there are three grave markers and then an opening where there is a flat piece. Now you can see a standing grave marker there.

The Lane-Voorhees-Brokaw House on Milltown Road was built by William Lane about 1750. The grounds (but not the house itself), was opened to the public during the weekend of the Somerset County Journey Through the Past on October 11-12.

The National Society Daughters of the American Revolution is a nonprofit, non-political volunteer women's service organization dedicated to promoting patriotism, preserving American history, and securing America's future through better education for children.

A dedication of the cemetery is tentatively planned for sometime in the future.



EVENTS YOU MAY WISH TO ATTEND



Wallace House & Old Dutch Parsonage STATE HISTORIC SITES, N.J.

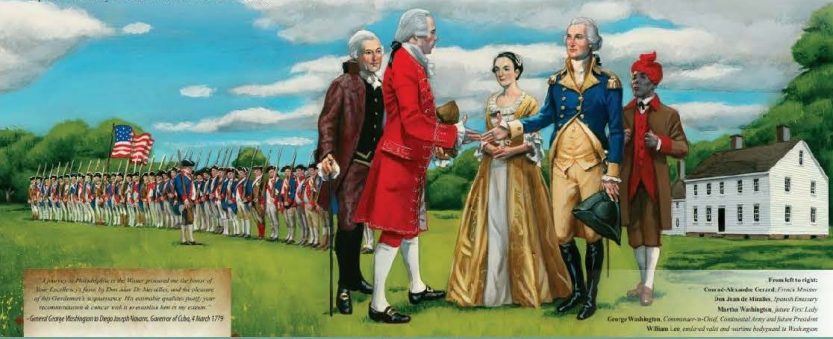
Don Juan de Miralles GEORGE WASHINGTON'S Spanish Friend & Ally in New Jersey

World Affairs at Wallace House

The boom of thirteen cannon rang out on May 1, 1779, to announce the arrival of Spanish emissary Don Juan de Miralles and French minister Monsieur Conrad-Alexandre Gerard to meet with General George Washington, headquartered here at the Wallace House. This meeting was the first official reception of foreign representatives by an American Commander-in-Chief.

Since 1775, the Spanish Crown had supported the United States in the Revolutionary War with loans and supplies. In June 1779, one month after Miralles' visit to the Wallace House, Spain declared war on Great Britain. By seizing British posts on the Mississippi River and in Florida, Spain allowed Washington to focus the Continental Army in the east.

Miralles continued to correspond with Washington until April 1780 when Miralles fell ill and died while visiting the Commander-in-Chief's headquarters at the Ford Mansion in Morristown, New Jersey.



From left to right:
Conrad-Alexandre Gerard, French Minister
Don Juan de Miralles, Spanish Emissary
Mortimer Washington, Junior First Lady
George Washington, Commander-in-Chief, Continental Army and future President
William (son of Conrad-Alexandre Gerard) and another individual in the background

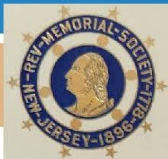
Wallace House and Surroundings by Morristown
Illustration by: Friends of the Wallace House

Sunday, November 2, 2025, 4 p.m.

Glenbrook Brewery, 95 Morris Street, Morristown, NJ 07960



@NJWallaceDutch



Wallace House & Old Dutch Parsonage Association



Día de Muertos Morristown



Wallace House & Old Dutch Parsonage

STATE HISTORIC SITES, N.J.

A Scots Musical Celebration *of the* Wallace House's 250TH BIRTHDAY



Sunday, November 16, 2025, 4 p.m.

St. John's Episcopal Church
158 W. High Street, Somerville, NJ 08876



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Made possible by



Wallace House & Old Dutch Parsonage Association

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