**FRIENDS OF MONMOUTH BATTLEFIELD**

**NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2021**

**REVISED SUMMER PLANS A SUCCESS**

The Covid-19 crisis is still adversely affecting FOMB activities, but not as seriously as a year ago.

Our popular walking and driving tours resumed in August 2020 and have continued as scheduled, weather permitting, with the exception of the January 1 tour, which was cancelled by the State. Our Sunday talks and lectures have been taking place as scheduled, though outside the Visitor Center because of Covid-19, until late this summer, when some lectures have been allowed inside with proper social distancing.

Our annual reenactment of the Battle of Monmouth had to be cancelled in both 2020 and 2021. This year, though, we were able to substitute two weekends of living history in honor of the battle. These occurred on June 19-20, when the reenactment would have taken place, and the next weekend, June 26-27, when we usually hold our “commemorative weekend.” During both weekends, several units of British and American troops gave demonstrations in their camps, including cannon demonstrations and musket drills for children. In addition, presentations on Molly Pitcher were given by Stacy Roth the first weekend and by David Martin the second weekend There were a few sutlers and historical exhibitors present. Walking tours were given each weekend.

Our special thanks to Park Historian Michael Timpanaro and his staff for assisting with the events, and to the following units that participated: 3rd NJ “Greys”, PA State Regiment (“Donegal Rifles”), von Prueschenk’s FeldJaeger Kompanie, 43rd Regiment of Foot, 1st New Jersey, 2nd New Jersey, German Regiment, Loyal American Regiment, and 22nd Regiment of Foot.

Approximately 1000 visitors enjoyed the two events on the two weekends. FOMB offered free admission with no parking donation requested, so we were without our major fundraiser for the second year in a row.

A special treat was arranged for Sunday, July 4. We arranged to have Mott‘s battery of artillery come and give a demonstration. They fired several rounds in honor of the Fourth of July. We were pleased to have over 200 visitors in attendance. In addition, the historic Craig House reopened after being closed for over a year. Thanks are owed to our docents Kathy and Eric Doherty, without whose help Craig House could not be open to the public.

FOMB activities are now pretty much back to normal, but with two exceptions. Dr. David Martin’s long running series of lectures on different aspects of the battle that have been held quarterly at the Monmouth County Library has not resumed yet. We will let you know when they are scheduled to resume. More significantly, the Park Visitor Center Museum is still not yet fully open (see next page and last page).

**PARK VISITOR CENTER STILL**

**NOT FULLY OPEN DUE TO COVID CRISIS**

We regret to inform you that the Park Visitor Center is still not fully open. It was closed to the public on March 16, 2020 and is open now only on a very limited basis. Park administrative offices have been open, but the museum has been closed. The public has been allowed into the building only occasionally for lectures or presentations in the auditorium, with appropriate distancing and masking.

Most significantly, our gift shop in the Visitor Center has been closed for a year and a half now. Many weekends we have been able to staff information and sales tables under the veranda outside the Visitor Center. Many thanks to traversed have helped in this regard. Hopefully our gift shop will be opened up by the end of the year, since it is an important source of income for us.

**SEE UPDATE ON LAST PAGE**

**MEMBERSHIP HITS NEW RECORD**

We are very pleased to report that our membership has hit a new record total of 136, breaking the old record of 132 set in 2017. All this in spite of the reduced programming due to the Covid crisis. The total includes 104 regular members and a record 32 life members. Thanks very much for your confidence and support! If you haven’t signed up or renewed for this year, forms are available later in this newsletter.

**DRIVING TOURS COVER ROUTES FROM CRANBURY**

For the first time, driving tours in June were extended to cover extended routes traversed by American troops on their way from Cranbury to the battle-field. Each June in recent years we have offered a tour of the American encampments at Gravel Hill and Englishtown the night before the battle (June 27/28); this year’s tour, organized by FOMB member George Dawson and held on June 13, began at the American encampment at Cranbury on June 26/27, two nights before the battle. After viewing the site of the historic Stites House in Cranbury, the tour followed the American march route to Monroe Township and Englishtown. The next Sunday, June 20, George conducted a new tour following General Lafayette’s extended march from Cranbury through Hightstown to the Clarksburg area and then back to Englishtown. Lafayette left Cranbury early on June 26, and, accompanied by Alexander Hamilton, located the British forces at Robbins’ Tavern, near Englishtown. From there he was quickly recalled by General Washington before the British army could pounce on his outnumbered command. Lafayette returned to Englishtown on June 27, in time to participate in the battle of Monmouth the next day. (See more on next page.)

**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS FOR FALL 2021**

**September 5, 2021 (Sun) Walking tour of the battlefield.**

**Meet at Visitor Center at 1:30 PM**

**September 11, 2020 (Sun) Program on the 14th New Jersey at the Battle of 3rd Winchester, and the death of Major Peter Vredenburg. Held at 2 PM in the Visitor Center Auditorium.**

**September 19, 2021 (Sun) Program on the role of the New Jersey Troops in the Battle of Monmouth. 2 PM in the Visitor Center auditorium.**

**October 3, 2021 (Sun) Walking tour of the battlefield.**

**Meet at Visitor Center at 1:30 PM**

**November 7, 2021 (Sun) Walking tour of the battlefield.**

**Meet at Visitor Center at 1:30 PM**

**December 5, 2021 (Sun) Walking tour of the battlefield.**

**Meet at Visitor Center at 1:30 PM**

**December 5, 2021 (Sun) Craig House closes for the season.**

**December 12, 2021 (Sun) Program on the 28th New Jersey at the battle of Fredericksburg. 2 PM in the Visitor Center Auditorium.**

**Note: Craig House open Sundays 1-4 PM until December 5.**

**ADDITIONAL NOTE ON ANNUAL MEETING**

We traditionally hold our annual meeting during the first week of December each year. The time, date, place and format of this year’s annual meeting have not been set yet. We will let you know by early November.

**CRAIG HOUSE REOPENS AFTER LONG HIATUS**

The historic Craig House reopened on July 4 after being closed due to the Covid crisis for a season and a half. It is open now every Sunday afternoon from 1-4 PM. We are very grateful to our FOMB docents Kathy and Eric Doherty, since without them the Craig House could not be open to the public due to lack of available State Park staff.

**MORE ON CRANBURY AND THE STITES HOUSE**

The house of physician Hezekiah Stites (1726–1796) stood atop a hill south of Cranbury Creek, at what is now 53 South Main Street in Cranbury, New Jersey. Lafayette made his headquarters in Stites’s house after arriving in Cranbury at about 9:30 p.m. on June 25, and George Washington did the same after arriving in Cranbury at about 9:00 a.m. on 26 June. Washington’s aide Robert Hanson Harrison paid $9 to Stites on 27 June, along with $1 “To a servt at Mrs. Watkins’s by the Genls ord; which induced me to send orders to the Marquise.”

Alexander Hamilton, who was assigned to accompany Lafayette as liaison officer, had ridden ahead of the detachment to gather intelligence. Hamilton wrote to Lafayette at “9 OClock” on June 25 from “Doctor Stile’s [Stites’] House Cranbury Town,” N.J.: “We find on our arrival here, that the intelligence received on the road is true—The enemy have all filed off from Allen Town on the Monmouth road. Their rear is said to be a mile Westward of Laurence Taylor’s Tavern, six miles from Allen Town. General Maxwell is at Hyde’s Town [Hightstown], abt three miles from this place…”

Washington wrote in his campaign report: “In the evening [June 25, 1778] the whole army marched from Kingston, where our baggage was left, with intention to preserve a proper distance for supporting the advanced corps, and arrived at Cranberry early the next morning [June 26]. The intense heat of the weather, and a heavy storm unluckily coming on, made it impossible to resume our march that day without great inconvenience and injury to the troops. Our advanced corps [under Lafayette], being differently circumstanced, moved from the position it had held the night before, and took post in the evening on the Monmouth Road about five miles from the enemy’s rear, in expectation of attacking them next morning on their march. The main body having remained at Cranberry, the advanced corps was found to be too remote, and too far on the right, to be supported in case of an attack either upon tor from the enemy, which induced me to send orders to the Marquis [Lafayette] to file off by hi left towards Englishtown, which he accordingly executed in the morning of the 27th.”

Dr. Stites’ house was torn down years ago. On the fence in front of the current house located there, there are now two plaques as follows, erected by the Cranbury Historical Preservation Society.

SITE OF HOUSE OF DR. HEZEKIAH STITES B. 1726 – D. 1796

ON JUNE 26, 1778, GEN. GEORGE WASHINGTON MET HERE WITH COL. ALEXANDER HAMILTON AND GEN. LAFAYETTE TO PLAN WHAT WOULD BECOME THE BATTLE OF MONMOUTH.

**TWO NEW BOOKS PUBLISHED ON THE BATTLE**

We are reporting two new books published recently concerning the battle.

We have not had time yet to read and digest them, so we are unable to judge them fully. We just thought you might want to know about them. They will be available in our Park gift shop when that opens up; for the meanwhile, you can of course get them from Amazon or elsewhere.

William R. Griffith IV has published a history of the battle and campaign called “A Handsome Flogging: The Battle of Monmouth, June 28 1778.” It was published by Savas Beattie in 2020. This 171 page study is formatted as a combination history and tour book. It has a fair number of maps and a lot of pictures. We cannot however, assess it without reading it first. Maybe we can give a review of it in a future newsletter. We must say, however, that we are not aware that the author consulted anyone from the Park staff or FOMB in preparing the book.

The second book we want to bring to your attention is “Colonel Hamilton and Colonel Burr: The Revolutionary War Lives of Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr,” by our old friend Arthur Lefkowitz. It was published by Stackpole Books in 2020. This 253 page book has a full chapter on Monmouth. Again, we cannot give a full evaluation of the book before reading it. We are able to point out, however, that we talked several times with the author when he was preparing it and gave him a personal tour of points on the battlefield connected with Burr and Hamilton.

**FOMB BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

(end of term in parentheses)

Caralee Bava-Grygo (2022) Freehold, NJ

Andrew Beagle (2021) South Plainfield, NJ

George Dawson (2022) New Brunswick, NJ

Eric Doherty (2022) Old Bridge, NJ

Kathy Doherty (2022) Old Bridge, NJ

Dr. David Martin (2021) East Windsor, NJ

Marilyn Miller (2021) Toms River, NJ

Fran Raleigh (2022) Colts Neck, NJ

Linda Spangle (2023) Manalapan, NJ

John Resto (2023) South Plainfield, NJ

Peter Wagner (2021) Englishtown, NJ

**OFFICERS (term ends December 2021)**

President David Martin

Vice President George Dawson

Secretary Frances Raleigh

Treasurer Kathleen Doherty

**Our website address is: www.friendsofmonmouth.org**

**2021 Membership Application**

The Revolution in New Jersey had profound meaning. To help keep the past alive, we ask for your commitment in Protecting, Preserving and Historically Interpreting Monmouth Battlefield State Park, a Registered National Historic landmark, and the sites associated with the Monmouth Campaign of 1778.

**Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Address \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**City \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**State \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

***CHECK ONE***

***New membership Renewal***

**CIRCLE LEVEL OF MEMBERSHIP**

**Individual $20 Family $30**

**Senior Individual $5 Senior Family $10**

**Patron $100 Lifetime $250**

***Membership benefits include free entry at all Friends’ events and a 10% discount at the Gift Shop.***

***The Friends rely on membership and donations for much of our general operating budget. If you would like to make a donation above the membership dues, we would deeply appreciate your thoughtfulness. The Friends is a 501(c)(3) not-for profit organization and your donation is fully tax-deductible. Thank you.***

**Donation included in the amount of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**FRIENDS OF MONMOUTH BATTLEFIELD, INC. Box 122, Tennent NJ 07763**

**ANNIVERSARY OF DEATH OF MAJ. PETER VREDENBURGH**

**IS 9/19/1864**

Peter Vredenburgh trained with the 14th New Jersey Infantry at Camp Vrendeburgh, which was named after his father, an important Freehold lawyer and judge, and was located within the current confines of Monmouth Battlefield State Park. His death at the battle of Opequon (3rd Winchester) on September 19, 1864 will be the subject of a talk by David Martin at the Park on Sunday, September 19, 2021, the 157th anniversary of his death.

Major Vredenburgh was born in Freehold in February 1837. Being the son of a Monmouth County Judge, he quite naturally chose law for a career, and was admitted to the bar in February 1859. On August 25, 1862, he accepted a commission as original Major of the 14th New Jersey Infantry. From January to June of 1863 he served as Provost Marshall of the City of Frederick, Maryland, where his regiment was on garrison duty. His administrative ability was again recognized when he was appointed Inspector General of the 3rd Division, 3rd Corps on September 5, 1864; he was then advanced to the post of Inspector General (IG) of the entire 3rd Corps on December 11, 1863. When the 3rd Corps was broken up on March 25, 1864, he became IG of the 3rd Division, 6th Corps (Ricketts’ Division), the unit to which the 14th New Jersey was assigned. Because he yearned for field command, Vredenburgh petitioned following the battle of Monocacy to be allowed to return to his regiment. His request was finally granted because the 14th sorely needed officers after its heavy casualties during the summer’s battles. On September 10, 1864, he took command of the regiment following the resignation of Lieutenant Colonel Caldwell K. Hall. He had commanded the regiment only a few days when he led it into action at the battle of Opequon on September 19, 1864. As he began to lead the regiment against an enemy battery, he turned to the men and said, “I’ll do all I can for you boys!” As he turned front again, he was hit in the throat by an unexploded 3-in shell and killed instantly. He was buried in Maplewood Cemetery in Freehold on September 30. His family never recovered from the loss.

Major Vredenburgh’s commander, Major General James B. Ricketts, wrote the following letter to the Major’s father, Judge Peter Vredenburgh, on January 6, 1868.

Dear Sir:

It affords me pleasure to speak of one who so nobly performed his duty on all occasions, but more especially throughout the eventful campaign under General Grant, while serving as Inspector on my staff. He was particularly distinguished at the battle of Cold Harbor, on the 1st of June, 1864, conducting a brigade into action and keeping me informed of its movements, and again at the battle of the Monocacy, during the desperate efforts of the division to impede Early’s advance on Washington, he conveyed my orders amidst a terrific fire, and always performed this service with such intelligence and coolness as to make his reports most valuable; here an especial act of gallantry and unselfish kindness deserves

**DEATH OF MAJOR PETER VREDENBURGH (cont.)**

attention. At great personal risk he went to a house exposed to the fire of the contending forces, reassuring the defenseless family, and assisted in securing their valuables, whilst shot and shell penetrated the walls. At this battle the Lieutenant Colonel of his regiment being wounded, and in the absence of the Colonel, with the true feeling of a soldier he asked to join his regiment, which he did, evincing zeal and ability in all the detail of his responsible command, and finally lost his life leading it at the battle of Winchester, September 19th, 1864. He was endeared to all by his genial temperament and great personal gallantry, and will long be remembered as a friend and companion in the bivouac amidst incessant operations.

**POEM TO MAJOR PETER VREDENBURGH, SEPTEMBER 19, 1864**

Once more the solemn shadows of the tomb

Come thronging up around life’s busy way,

And by the fireside of another home

Grief holds her sad and dreary court today,

For one is not! And fond affection weeps

O’er a low grave, where the young hero sleeps.

True patriot fire was glowing in his breast

When, answering his imperiled country’s cry,

He bade farewell to all he loved the best

And sought the field of strife – alas, to die!

Yet not before his valiant deeds had made

Bright laurels for him, which shall never fade.

His name shall live; and as the withered flowers

Which the rude gleaner’s hand flung aside

Leave their sweet fragrance in the garden bowers,

So in our hearts his memory shall abide,

Hallowed and precious; changeless as the light

That glitters on the coronet of night.

Then rest thee, brother, in thy lonely grave!

Not in the valley where thy comrades sleep,

But where thine own familiar flowers shall wave.

Where thine own kindred loving watch shall keep;

One gleam of comfort in those hours of gloom.

That they may watch and weep around thy tomb!

Saviour of all! Thy love alone can cheer

The saddened spirit, desolate and weak;

In all Thy loving tenderness, come near

To these lone hearts, in tones of pity speak,

And through the darkened pathway grief hath made,

Lead them to fairer joys that never fade.

**UPDATE ON VISITOR CENTER**

**NOW PARTIALLY OPEN**

The following update arrived after the newsletter went to press.

In July the Visitor Center started opening to show the Park’s ten minute background video at specific times in the theater. Starting this month the museum will also be open for limited times along with the scheduled showings of the video.

The Visitor Center will be open from Wednesday to Sunday (closed Monday and Tuesday). It will be staffed from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM.

The museum will be open on the following schedule on Wed to Sun:

10:00 – 11:00 AM

12:00 noon – 1:00 PM

2:00 – 3:00 PM

The movie will be shown at the following times:

11:00 AM

1:00 PM

3:00 PM

The Park remains open seven days a week.

The restrooms in the Old Visitor Center are open from 9:00 to 3:30 PM.

The restrooms at the playground are open from 9:30 AM to 4:00 PM.

Our gift shop in the Visitor Center is still closed.