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THE FRONT PORCH

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MOORESTOWN



+**H**5M+

House Tours and Gift Shop Hours:

2nd & 4th Sunday 1-3 PM Tuesdays 1-4 PM

Research Library Hours:

Tuesday 1-4 PM Second Sunday of each Month 1-3 PM

Address

Historical Society of Moorestown Smith-Cadbury Mansion 12 High St. P.O. Box 477 Moorestown, NJ 08057

Phone

856-235-0353

Web Site

moorestownhistory.org

E-mail

moorestownhistory@ comcast.net

Facebook

facebook.com/historical societyofmoorestown

Instagram

www.instagram.com/ moorestownhistory/

Published Quarterly by
The Historical Society
of Moorestown

View From the Porch

The first quarter of our 2024-2025 program year got off to a flying start on September 25th when the Historical Society, in conjunction with *Saving Historic Moorestown*, sponsored a Witness House tour throughout the town. Witness Houses are buildings that were standing at the time of the American Revolution and so were "witnesses" to the many events that took place in Moorestown during our nation's War of Independence. The house tour was designed by the two organizations to accomplish two primary goals — in addition to raising some much needed funds for both groups. First, to call residents' attention to the importance of protecting buildings that are historically important to the town. As I mentioned in the last newsletter, there are a number of such buildings that could be at risk of demolition and, based on the feedback we received from those who attended the tours, the event served to raise awareness of their plight.

The second goal of the event was to kick-off the town's celebration of the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution.

The Historical Society and the Township of Moorestown are partners with *RevolutionNJ*— a statewide organization whose goal is to help communities effectively tell true accounts of our history. A group made up of members of Township service organizations has begun meeting to plan out how we will celebrate this momentous occasion.

In all, over 500 people visited the homes on the tour, including the Smith-Cadbury Mansion, the home of Commodore Thomas Truxtun, the French-



Hollingshead home, the town's oldest, on Camden Ave., and the Cowperthwaite house on Kings Highway. See page 3 for more details about this event.

No sooner had the Trustees and volunteers come up for air than the annual Living History and Ghost Tours kicked off on Friday, October 11th. Under the leadership of Gary Ell and Julie Maravich, this year's event attracted nearly one thousand visitors, many of whom were not from Moorestown, making it a big lift to the town's economy as the attendees looked for places to eat and shop while waiting for their tours to begin.

Once again, this year, many volunteers participated to make the event a success. Some volunteers played the roles of the historic ghosts, while others helped with setup, clean-up, and registering attendees.

It does not appear that things are slowing down any time soon as we hit the winter months. On December 3rd, our New Jersey History Speaks lecture series will resume with a presentation by the team that is working on the West End Community Center Oral History Project (see page 2). On the following day, December 4th, Smith-Cadbury will be a stop on the 58th edition of the Cooks Tour. (See https://givetovirtua.org/partner-with-us/community-partners/cooks-tour-of-moorestown/)

This will be followed up by our annual Holiday Party on Friday, December 6th. Visit <u>www.moorestownhistory.org</u> for more information and be on the lookout for an invitation in your email.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Historical Society I would like to wish you all a happy holiday season.

Lenny Wagner, President (Lwagner559@comcast.net)

December 2024



The **New Jersey History** Speaks Lecture Series, hosted by the **Historical Society of Moorestown** and the **Moorestown Public Library** continues in 2024/2025. All lectures that are part of the New Jersey History Speaks series are free and open to the general public.

If you plan to attend one or all of the events, please contact the **Moorestown Public** Library at (856) 234-0333 to register.

Those who are not registered will be admitted to the event as space allows.

DECEMBER: The New Jersey History Speaks Lecture Series continues its 2024/2025 season on Tuesday December 3rd at the Moorestown Library (7:00 PM).

Remembering the West End Center Part II

Join us for an update and an engaging conversation about our West End Community Center Oral History Project. Attendees will hear directly from the project team about our progress preserving the history and legacy of the West End Community Center, which served as the social and cultural hub for Moorestown's once segregated West End neighborhood from 1944-1968. Learn about the new public resources we developed, including recordings of Black elders, and digitized original records.

Attendees are encouraged to bring any personal stories, photos, correspondence, and/or newspaper clippings about The West End Community Center. The Historical Society will have recording and

scanning equipment at the event to document any treasures you want to contribute to this important project. Materials can be scanned and returned immediately. The team is specifically seeking materials from the 1940s and early 1950s, but will gladly accept materials from any time period.

If you have questions, please contact The Historical Society of Moorestown at (856) 235-0353 or email moorestownhistory@comcast.net.





HSM Board Members Linda Vizi, Jill Weiss, Lenny Wagner, Stephanie Herz, and Nancy Chumney attend opening night of the play Our Town at Moorestown High School.

At left, in the display case, the mannequin is wearing the wedding dress of Catharine Kerlin Wilder—a Moorestown resident who was a

peace activist and teacher and worked at the League of Nations. She married Amos Wilder, the brother of Our Town playwright Thornton Wilder in Moorestown in 1935 (the Historical Society also has a signed copy of her memoirs, a complete set of her letters and correspondence, and the wedding registry—all donated by her family).

The Historical Society of Moorestown

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Snapshots from the Witness **House Tour:** ◆ **Gary Ell and** Julie Maravich "toast" beside the re-created Moore's Tavern on Main St. ◆ HSM President **Lenny Wagner under the** tent with tour-goers • The **Bank of Princeton sits at** what was the original site of Moore's Tavern ◆ Gary Ell talks to Cowperthwaite descendents ◆ Jeff Macechak in his Hessian Grenadier garb outside the **Hessian House on Main St.** (Photos: Julie Maravich)

Moore's Tavern on Main Street . . . As the town takes its name from this Tavern, it must have been an important place (it was the town's first tavern; built by Thomas Moore in 1734; demolished in 1878). I re-envisioned the tavern (see the photo, at left), and had it constructed from reclaimed wood. It was assembled at its original site – now the porch of The Bank of Princeton at Main and Union Streets.

Michael Gabriele; author of *The Colonial Taverns of New Jersey*, was on hand to

over 500 people checked-in for the

Michael Gabriele; author of *The Colonial Taverns of New Jersey*, was on hand to sell his book and explain the important role of taverns in the creation of our nation. In September 1777, in a nearby tavern – the Indian King Tavern in Haddonfield, NJ – the legislature unanimously resolved that New Jersey was now a state –

On a damp and overcast September day,

"Witness House Tour" at a re-created

no longer just a colony; that thereafter, the word "state" should be substituted for "colony" in all public writs and commissions.

At the tavern, tour-goers received a printed copy of a map showing the participating historic "Witness House" sites (some sites allowed entry; others were exterior grounds only). At each site they scanned a posted QR code to access historic photos, stories, and the history of the house. Sites included the oldest standing home in town, the French-Hollinshead House (c. 1695) on Camden Avenue where visitors walked the grounds and could examine a large oak case of metal detector finds discovered on site by Kevin Kramarski. The Cowperthwaite House (c. 1732) was said by the last local owner, a Cowperthwaite descendant, to have been constructed of ballast brick. The Hessian, Bispham, Richard Edwards, and Samuel Haines Houses are clustered on Main Street near Friends Meeting – stepping inside allowed visitors to be magically transported back to the earliest days of our nation. The Commodore Truxtun/ Bispham/ Walton House (c. 1730) on Marne Highway, across from Lockheed Martin,

is where Commodore Thomas Truxtun (1755-1822) – one of Moorestown's most notable residents – lived from 1812-1816. George Washington chose Captain Truxtun to supervise the construction of the Navy's ships. There have been six vessels named after Truxtun and the current *USS Truxtun* is a destroyer that carries the AEGIS Combat System (created by the Lockheed Martin Corporation in Moorestown). Truxtun also brought Benjamin Franklin home from Paris for the final time on a ship named *The London Packet* (when the ship arrived in Philadelphia, Franklin reportedly remarked that at just 38 days the journey was remarkably fast!). Truxtun mapped the Gulf Stream on that trip and is renowned for creating a standardized signal flag manual for the Navy (see page 8).

We were fortunate to have Jeff Macechak (Education Director at the Burlington County Historical Society) dress as an authentic Hessian Grenadier (see

page 7 for more about Hessian soldiers) and walk from location to location throughout the day. Hessian soldiers briefly occupied many of the participating homes in June

of 1778 including the **Smith-Cadbury Mansion** (c.1738) and the **Hessian House** (c.1735).

Friends Meeting offered authentic Colonial desserts from 5-7 PM. During Revolutionary times, local Quakers boycotted sugar as a protest against slave labor, so

these desserts were crafted following this rule (no sugar!). To lend even more authenticity to the day, harpist Laura Dishong played Colonial music.

All of Moorestown's Revolutionary sites are significant and we are extremely grateful to the homeowners who allowed us access to their homes. We also are tremendously grateful that they understand and appreciate the historic and cultural significance of their homes and are such wonderful custodians.

— Julie Maravich

HESSIAN HOUSE

BYJOSHUA BISPHAN



"Witness Houses" were standing during the American Revolution and thus bore witness to the events



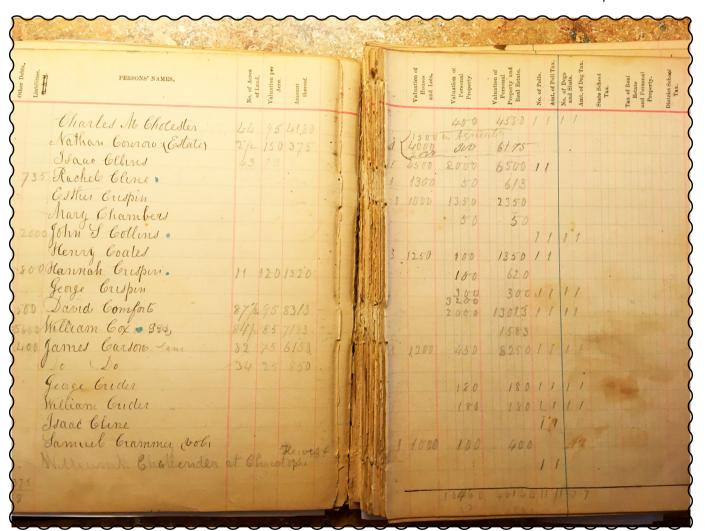
LIBRARY NEWS

Library volunteers have been working on three important scanning projects over the past few months. The documents pertaining to the West End Community Center have all been scanned and transcribed and are now being researched and organized.

Fragile tax record books from the years 1884-1886 are being scanned and digitized by an HSM volunteer at Town Hall. These documents will prove to be a valuable resource in our research on the people and places of 19th century Moorestown. These books tell us, for each resident, their voting status, number of acres, value per acre, number of houses and lots, value of personal property, liabilities, and number of dogs.

We've also scanned our copy of the oral history, *Moorestown: A Special Place, The Tommy Cannavo Story*. We learn all about Mr. Cannavo, an Italian immigrant, who came to Moorestown in 1914 and was a popular and well-loved barber for many decades. His amazing recall of the people and places of Moorestown gives us a clear picture of what our growing town was like through most of the 20th century. A link to his story can be found on our website under the Library & Archives tab (Read a Memory) (https://moorestownhistory.org/library/read-a-memory/).

— Stephanie Herz



ABOVE: Pages from the 1884 Moorestown Township Tax Record book. Esther Crispin's house and lot are valued at \$1000 and her personal property at \$1350. The total valuation of Isaac Collin's personal property and real estate is \$6500. Hannah Crispin has 11 acres of land and \$800 in liabilities. The total "Valuation of Personal Property and Real Estate" for the people listed on this page is \$46,144.11. (Photo: Stephanie Herz)

Our Library is a Busy Place!

BUSINESS CORNER

BUSINESS MEMBERSHIPS

Local businesses play an important role when they support the preservation of Moorestown's history. We welcome and thank our business members and we ask our members to patronize them.

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Your generous support helps to sustain the Society's commitment to preserving Moorestown's heritage for generations to come.

Again, thank you!

New Business memberships are always welcome! We'll feature your company's name on our website and in our award winning quarterly newsletter. For details, visit us at

http://moorestownhistory. org/membership/becomea-business-partner/

The Historical Society is a registered 501(c)(3)



ABOVE: Caption: "Women voting in New Jersey toward the close of the last century – from an old illustration" (Source: February 1877, Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly)

Never before in Moorestown was there such an election for School Trustee as that held last Tuesday evening, when Gilbert Altken was re-elected by eighty-six majority over George M. Wells, the ring candidate. The women took an active part in the canvass, and for the first time they exercised the right of suffrage, no less than seventy-five marching to the polls like veterans and casting their ballots almost solidly for Aitken. There were a number of amusing incidents during the unusual scene of women voting, and the irrepressible small boy had his say on several occasions, but everything passed off good-naturedly and the women feel very proud of their first victory at the ballot-box.

Moorestown Women & the VOTE

Property-owning women were allowed to vote in New Jersey from 1776 into the very early 1800s, *the only state in our new country where this was allowed*. In a poll list of voters from an 1807 Township of Chester election, at least 36 women voted — out of 260 total voters. They voted for Members for Council, General Assembly, Sheriff and Coroners for the County of Burlington on the 13th and 14th of October, 1807.

After the 1807 election, when it was noticed that growing numbers of New Jersey women were exercising their right, women's suffrage was repealed by the state as part of "electoral reform."

Eighty years later, in 1887, the state legislature granted women the right to vote, but only in rural school district elections. This right was again repealed in 1897 in an all-male general election. Thanks to the efforts of sometime Moorestown resident Alice Paul, author of the Equal Rights Amendment, and legions of like-minded women, the reluctant state legislature finally ratified the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. The 19th Amendment legally guarantees women the right to vote.

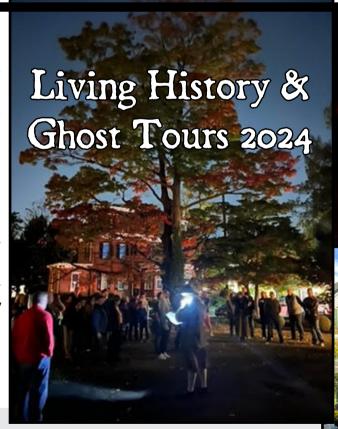
The article at left, from the March 25, 1888 *Philadelphia Times* illustrates the novelty and excitement generated during the short window of 19th century suffrage for the women of Moorestown.

— Stephanie Herz

ABOVE: "Never before in Moorestown was there such an election for School Trustee as that held last Tuesday evening ... The women took an active part in the canvass, and for the first time they exercised the right of suffrage, no less than seventy-five marching to the polls like veterans and casting their ballots almost solidly for Aitken ... everything passed off good-naturedly and the women feel very proud of their first victory at the ballot-box." (Source: March 25, 1888 Philadelphia Times)

Thanks to all who participated.

As HSM President Lenny Wagner said: "this year's event attracted nearly one thousand visitors, many of whom were not from Moorestown, making it a big lift to the town's economy as the attendees looked for places to eat and shop while waiting for their tours to begin."



Haunted Mansion? HSM has partnered with New Jersey Paranormal (https://www.newjerseyparanormal.com/) to study the Smith-Cadbury Mansion to determine who or what may haunt the premises. Come, see for yourself and draw your own conclusions! New Jersey Paranormal (a group based in New Jersey consisting of four members who research and investigate the existence of energy and spirits in the hereafter) will return for a public paranormal event on Saturday, February 22nd, from 7-11 PM.

Our October 2024 paranormal event sold out within minutes. Stay tuned. **Details to follow...**



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MEMBERSHIP NEWS



Hello Members!

We will be sending out a copy of *Tricentennial Reflections on Moorestown 1880-1912 Limited Ed. 1982* to our members who supported us this past year at the \$100 level. We hope you enjoy this photographic compilation of local houses, businesses, transportation, fire houses, schools, street scenes, people and churches!

A reminder that a colorful PDF of this newsletter is available at our website at moorestownhistory.org/newsletter/; go take a look!

We extend a warm welcome to our newest members:

Morwenna Allen
 Kristen Brake
 Cheryl Catanella
 Noreen Duffey
 Nicholas
 Finc
 Ed
 Rosalie Gabriel
 Sharon
 Bruce MacKenzie
 David Zatorski
 Kathy
 Schipper
 Becky Rossi Monroe
 Nancy
 Robert Kenny
 Shannon Elizabeth
 Collins
 James Tuvell
 Lisa Howard

Looking forward to sharing history with you soon!

Jill Weiss, Membership Chairperson moorestownhistory@comcast.net

From the Witness House Tour:
At the Hugh Hollinshead house on East
Main Street visitors learned about the
history of the house and could walk
the grounds. (Photo: Julie Maravich)





<u>HSM Welcomes New Trustees</u>: We are pleased to announce that <u>Kevin Kramarski</u> and <u>Billie Danielle Thomas</u> have joined our Board

We wrote about Kevin and his expertise in early American artifacts in our last newsletter. Ms. Thomas is dedicated to community advocacy and preserving local history. She has worked with such groups as the Moorestown Minority Civic Association, Low- and Moderate-Income Oversight Committee, Better Together Committee, and has coached soccer with Moorestown Recreation. A more than 30-year resident of Moorestown, she brings a background in educational program management, technical and grant writing, and public speaking. Her community engagement and her dedication to preserving and sharing local narratives make her a valued addition to the Historical Society Board.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2024/2025 BASIC MEMBERSHIP: RENEWAL NEW			
 Student (\$10) ☐ Individual/Family (\$35) DONOR LEVELS: ☐ Town Crier Fund (\$50) ☐ Tricentennial Reflections (\$100) ☐ Library Sponsor (\$250) ☐ Patron (\$500) ☐ Benefactor (\$1000) 			Visit our website, moorestownhistory.org for member benefits!
NAME(S): ADDRESS:			
DATE:	PHONE #:	E-MAIL:	

Make check payable to: Historical Society of Moorestown
Mail to: P.O. Box 477 Moorestown, NJ 08057

Or renew online at: moorestownhistory.org/membership

HELP WANTED:

Would you like to volunteer in a historic house museum surrounded by beautiful objects?

We always need people to help with events, exhibits, fund-raising, photography, and all manner of things! Put your talents and expertise to work helping preserve local history.

Contact us at 856-235-0353
Tuesdays 1-4, or at other times, leave a message.
E-mail us (a better option) at moorestownhistory@comcast.net

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Visit our Gift Shop during all Smith-Cadbury open hours or moorestownhistory.org (for a selection of our most popular items)

DECEMBER 2024

EXHIBITS: Vintage Purses from the HSM Textile Collection

- **3** *Smith-Cadbury* Library & tours, 1-4
- 3 NJ History Speaks Lecture Remembering the West End Center Part II, Moorestown Library, 7:00 PM
- **4 Cooks Tour** Includes Smith-Cadbury! 11 AM-6:45 PM
- 6 Smith-Cadbury Holiday Party 5-8 PM
- 8 Smith-Cadbury Library & tours, 1-3
- 10 Smith-Cadbury Library & tours, 1-4
- 17 Smith-Cadbury Library & tours, 1-4
- **22** *Smith-Cadbury* Fourth Sunday tours, 1-3
- 23 Closed for holiday break until January 7, 2025. Happy Holidays!

JANUARY 2025

EXHIBITS: Vintage Purses from the HSM Textile Collection

- 7 Smith-Cadbury Library & tours, 1-4
- 12 Smith-Cadbury Research Library & tours, 1-3
- **14** Smith-Cadbury Library & tours, 1-4
- 21 Smith-Cadbury Library & tours, 1-4
- **26** *Smith-Cadbury* Tours, 1-3
- 28 Smith-Cadbury Library & tours, 1-4



FEBRUARY 2025

EXHIBITS: Vintage Purses from the HSM Textile Collection

- 4 Smith-Cadbury Library & tours, 1-4
- 9 Smith-Cadbury Research Library & tours, 1-3
- **11** *Smith-Cadbury* Library & tours, 1-4
- **18** *Smith-Cadbury* Library & tours, 1-4
- **22** *Paranormal Event with New Jersey Paranormal* at *Smith-Cadbury*, 7-11 PM
- 23 Smith-Cadbury Library & tours, 1-3



Growing up in New Jersey, I learned about
Hessian soldiers who fought with the British
during the Revolutionary War. Most memorable
to me was the Battle of Trenton that took place
on December 26th, 1776 after General George
Washington and his troops famously crossed the icy
Delaware River, surprising the tired and hungover
Hessian soldiers who had been celebrating Christmas
far from home. In June of 1778, the Hessian soldiers
marched through Moorestown — right down Main
Street — with the British Army who were retreating
from Philadelphia to New York City.

The Declaration of Independence sought to formally separate the American colonies from the British King George III — so who were these *Hessians*?

The American Battlefield Trust website (<u>www.battlefields.org</u>) provides this information about the Hessian soldiers:

- "Great Britain hired 34,000 German soldiers, of which more than half, 18,000, were from the Principality of Hesse-Kassel, which resulted in all German soldiers being generalized as 'Hessians.' The remaining soldiers were from states such as Anhalt-Zerbst, Anspach-Beyreuth, Brunswick, Hannover, Hesse-Hanau, and Waldeck."
- "While the Americans often painted the Hessians as bloodthirsty mercenaries, in reality, many of the Hessians were forced into the army against their will [conscripted]. ... they were still in the army of their prince, who had decided to rent their services to a foreign power..."

Many of the Hessian soldiers stayed in the American colonies once the war ended:

- "Between 40 and 50 percent of the German troops did not return home. Many of these were casualties, but some chose to stay in the United States, drawn by the opportunity and freedom offered by the new nation."
- "Hessians captured at Trenton and other battles were sent to prisoner of war camps in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. The western parts of those states actually had a large German immigrant population already, and many Hessians ... found that they preferred life in the Americas. Away from

the harsh discipline of military life and with people who spoke a similar language and had a similar culture, many Hessians would desert and stay in America following the war. By the end of the war, tens of thousands of Hessians ended up staying in America."

"While the Hessians still live with us in popular culture, maybe their greatest legacy is the thousands of Americans who, perhaps unknowingly, are descended from these men who came across the ocean to help in subduing the Revolution and ended up becoming American citizens."

And the truth about the Battle of Trenton and the Hessians celebrating Christmas? "A brigade of Hessians under the command of Colonel Johann Rall was stationed at Trenton following the successful New York campaign. While overconfident and under prepared, contrary to popular belief Rall and his men were not drunk or hungover from a Christmas celebration when the fighting started on December 26. On that day nearly a hundred Hessians were killed or wounded, including Rall, and 900 were taken prisoner in a battle that ultimately changed the course of the war. The British blamed the Hessians for this ignominious defeat. It was here that the first stories of them being drunkards began to appear. The British attempted to blame this fluke on the idea that the Hessians were not as good soldiers, however, the Continentals then defeated the British at the Second Battle of Trenton and the Battle of Princeton."

— Lisa Knell

[Source: quoted text above from American Battlefield Trust www.battlefields.org; including www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/hessians-auxiliaries]

In 1809, an American soldier, John Greenwood, whose job was to look after the Hessian soldiers immediately after the battle, testified that "the story of the drunken Hessians was totally false: not one of them was drunk or had been drinking heavily." (Source: Fischer, David Hackett, 2006. Washington's Crossing. Oxford University Press. p. 426)

"The Germans were dazed and tired, but there is no truth to the legend claiming that they were helplessly drunk. They 'behaved very well,' Washington told Congress..." (Source: Lengel, Edward, 2005. General George Washington, a Military Life. New York: Random House Paperbacks. p. 186)

DRAWN BY THE OPPORTUNITY AND FREEDOM



HESSIAN GRENADIE

"'The looks of the Hessians who followed the (British) grenadiers were terrific, wrote a man, who as a boy had witnessed the grand army march into Philadelphia. 'Their brass caps, their moustachios. their countenances by nature morose, all impressed me, ...' (Source: Hartis, Timothy Neal, 2014. Ludwig Hirdes, A Hessian Solder Who Settled in America. Lulu.com. p. 70)

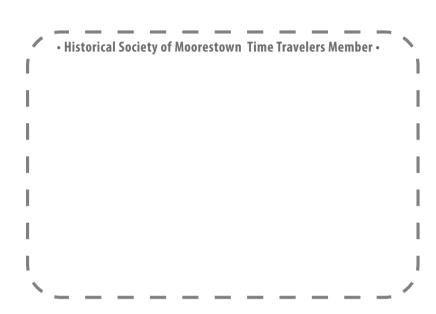
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CAPTAIN THOMAS TRUXTUN'S
"UNITED STATES FLEET" SIGNAL
BOOK DESIGNATED COMBINATIONS
OF RED, WHITE, BLUE, AND
YELLOW FLAGS TO TRANSMIT
INFORMATION. THE ONE PICTURED
ABOVE HAS A YELLOW PENNANT
AND A HALF WHITE/HALF RED
PENNANT AND WAS TO BE USED
"WHEN IN DISTRESS".

DECEMBER 2024



The flag signal pictured above is from the book:

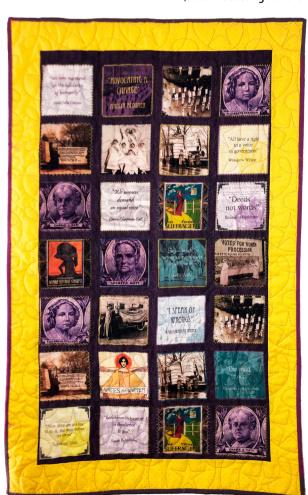
INSTRUCTIONS,
SIGNALS,
AND
EXPLANATIONS,
OFFERED FOR THE
UNITED STATES FLEET.
BY THOMAS TRUXTUN,
A CAPTAIN IN THE NAVY.

It was published in Baltimore in 1797 and is the earliest known signal book used by the US Navy. The flag combination for "When in distress", shown above, is from the book's Table of Signals. Truxtun lived in Moorestown from 1812-1816; his house was on September's "Witness House Tour".

[Source: https://www.history. navy.mil/research/library/ online-reading-room/titlelist-alphabetically/u/us-navyinstruction-for-the-destructionof-signal-books-1863/ truxtun-signal-book.html]

"SUFFS" QUILT

Made from "Vintage Suffragette Photos" by Linda Vizi and quilted by Martha Reilly. Two versions of the quilt in two different sizes are for sale in our Gift Shop at Smith-Cadbury: \$75 and \$100. Proceeds go to the Historical Society.





Currently on view at Smith-Cadbury

A handbag, though it may seem like an insignificant fashion accessory, can depict a snapshot of what everyday life was like for women across the centuries

