



## JACOBUS VANDERVEER HOUSE & MUSEUM

### Autumn and Winter 2021

#### Turning the Corner

Like many houses in New Jersey, Hurricane Ida filled the JVH basement with water which set us back a bit on our program plans as we set out to repair damage and get everything in working order. Combining Ida's fury with the reemergence of COVID, required us to regroup and adjust our plans for events just when we were getting back on track. As we shifted our focus to events that could be held predominantly outside, we were grateful for the favorable weather!

In October, we participated in the Somerset County Weekend Journey through the Past holding a two-day Fall Harvest Hoedown with demonstrations of colonial weaving and lacemaking, crafts, a raffle and microbrew pull as well as live music. And of course, tours of our house which included viewing of the new Dutch Kas.

The weather again cooperated with us on December 4th so that we could have a late afternoon community tree lighting, together with visits with Santa, caroling, and a gingerbread man decorating activity as well as a gift pull where everyone who participated received a present!

Given the unexpected challenges, we postponed the installation and reveal of the Pluckemin Cantonment Model which will be a highlight of our house as it will provide the opportunity for visitors to better learn about the first American Military Academy that was built in our community in the Pluckemin Hills. In 2022, our events will focus on introduction of this model.

#### Upcoming Events:

Field of Honor® will begin mid-May. Look for the 200 flags in our field. Flags can be dedicated to an active military member, veteran, first responder or in their memory. Details will be posted on our website.

The Cantonment Model will be first presented to the public during an exclusive event the 'JVH Reveal Party: Preview the Cantonment'. Event will be held on Thursday May 19th from 6-9 PM and will feature sampling of Colonial beverages, beer, wine, appetizers, and the opportunity to be one of the first to see

our Cantonment Model! The Model will have interactive features and an informational video. In addition, we will feature a brief introduction from a local historian and the model maker, Stephen Schwab, will be available to answer questions you may have about the construction of the model.

JVH was able to commission the creation of the Pluckemin Cantonment Model with a grant graciously provided to us by one of our Trustees, Yolanda Cillo. Yolanda is also one of our docents and together with our other docents will be at the event to answer any historical questions you may have about the model or JVH.

Tickets will soon be available on our website, please check back.

Continuing the introduction of our Model, we will have a second event on Armed Forces Day, Saturday May 21, 2022. This event will feature the White House Wind Symphony performing Patriotic and American music in front of our Field of Honor. In addition, we will have demonstrations of colonial era historic lacemaking and weaving and other crafts and activities.

JVH will be open so that visitors may view the Cantonment Model. There will be a \$10 charge for adults and children under 12 will be admitted free of charge. The outside events are free of charge.

#### **Sponsorships:**

The JVH is seeking corporate partners and individuals to sponsor our future events, including both the 'JVH Reveal Party: Preview the Cantonment' and the Armed Forces Day celebration. As we strive to create awareness of the importance of the Jacobus Vanderveer House in the victory of the American Revolutionary War, we remind you of the American tradition of generosity, asking for your partnership and support to continue our important work. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, the Friends of Jacobus Vanderveer House depends on donations and fundraising to enable us to run our programs and events, as well as to maintain and add to the historic collections within the house. Donations and sponsorships are tax deductible.

If you are interested in becoming a sponsor for either event, please email [info@jvanderveeerhouse.org](mailto:info@jvanderveeerhouse.org) or call us at (908) 396-6053.

#### **Linking Our Past to Our Present:**

Many of you know the history of the Pluckemin Cantonment but with the upcoming reveal of our Model, we wanted to share some of the history so that when you come to view this extraordinary model, you are attuned to the important features.

General Henry Knox, originally from Boston, educated himself about artillery (cannons and mortar) by reading the books he kept in his bookstore and through conversation with British officers who frequented the store. Washington first became aware of Knox during the siege of Boston in 1775. Later, he sent then-Colonel Knox to Fort Ticonderoga in New York State in December of 1775 to bring the cannons that Ethan Allen and the Vermont Green Mountain Boys together with Benedict Arnold, captured when they took possession of the fort. Knox brought the cannons—many of them near 2 tons in weight—300 miles to the high area overlooking Boston to drive out the British. The cannons were moved in the winter by cart and sled on rough trails, across rivers, and over the Berkshire Mountains—there were no turnpikes or bridges!

Promoted to Brigadier General shortly thereafter, Knox was put in charge of the artillery brigade and was with Washington throughout the war moving 18 cannons across the Delaware on Christmas Day 1776 to march on Trenton. In 1778-1779, General Knox used the Jacobus Vanderveer House as his headquarters. While he stayed at JVH, under orders from George Washington he built the 'Pluckemin Cantonment' also referred to as the 'Pluckemin Artillery Cantonment' or 'The Artillery Camp' which was completed in 1779. This Cantonment was the first Military Academy in the United States, built in the midst of the Revolutionary War, right here in the Pluckemin Hills. West Point opened as a Military Academy on July 4, 1802—over 23 years later.

Although better built than other encampment barracks, and later used as a hospital for injured and ill Continental troops, the Cantonment was not built to last and after the war was largely forgotten. There were records of the Cantonment including a drawing made by Continental Army Captain John Lillie which was preserved and is located at the Morristown National Historical Park. Records kept by Colonel Lamb's Artillery Regiment have provided some information about activities at the Cantonment. Interest in the Cantonment was generated in 1916 by Grant Schley of Pluckemin and Schley retained a German archeologist, Henry Schrabisch, who located the site of the Cantonment and identified some artifacts including lead shot, buttons, pottery, remains of ovens and fireplaces. When Mr. Schley died in 1917, Schrabisch's work was brought to an end with little retention of his records.

In 1957, Carl Prince wrote a master's thesis based on the larger story of the Continental Army at Middlebrook, and included a chapter on Pluckemin, but no active archaeological work appears to have taken place on the site at the time.

In the 1960s, Clifford Sekel discovered references to this site and initiated efforts to locate it. In 1976, he began work with an engineering firm and joined with John Seidel from the archeology department at Rutgers and an excavation of the site was begun in 1979. The excavation followed details from Lillie's 1779 line drawing of the Cantonment. Of the many artifacts that were found, perhaps the most interesting was a belt buckle decorated with a cannon and a thirteen star American Flag.

Captain Lillie's line drawing and other records have served as a guide for our model maker, Steve Schwab, to create the model for us. The line drawing is flat lacking depth and perspective. The model will help everyone envision how the Cantonment melded into the hillside.

Below is Captain Lillie's drawing with areas labeled to identify where the soldiers and officers stayed, which part was the Academy and what areas were used for storage.