

Community Happenings

Ross Farm Honors Flag Day, Fathers and Friends of the Community



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Published June 20, 2025 at 9:00 AM

BASKING RIDGE, NJ - While the Flag Day Celebration at Ross Farm was billed as a community gathering, the atmosphere felt far more familial than neighborly. Despite the cool and rainy conditions, dozens still flocked to the estate, filling the historic barn with conversation and laughter.

The holiday, celebrating the unification of America under one flag, also coincided with preparations for the nation's upcoming 250th anniversary, Father's Day Weekend, and the birthday of Jaye Barre, local impresario of theater and pivotal contributor to the first-ever events held at Ross Farm.

Together, these overlapping celebrations made the event not only a tribute to the nation but also a heartfelt appreciation of community fathers and the individuals who helped bring the day to life.

"I am really proud of what we've been able to do this June 14th, 2025. It sets the stage for many things to come around the 250th celebration of our country's founding. It's been a long time in the making. It's something we've really wanted to do, to really blow out Flag Day, cause flags have been part of our nonprofit, our friends group, for 20 years," David Becker, President of The Friends of the Boudinot-Southard-Ross Estate, said.

Despite unfavorable weather conditions, Becker described the collective effort to set up the hundreds of flags and elements of decor as "a beautiful thing in itself", an outlook that serves as a true testament to the heart and soul of Ross Farm.

In the town of Basking Ridge, there is historical significance at every corner, making all celebrations surrounding the early days of our nation even more special. The Flag Day event at Ross Farm was no different, being held on soil once owned by Elias Boudinot, one of our nation's founding fathers, and his wife, Hannah Boudinot. The Boudinots, prominent figures of the time, had very close ties to the Washingtons.

"We know Martha Washington spent quite a bit of time here when George was up in Morristown. She became good friends with Hannah Boudinot, and they wrote lots of nice letters together. Every time [George] Washington wrote [Elias] Boudinot, he always said, 'Give my love to Hannah and your daughter, Susan,'" Bruce McArthur, Ross Farm historian, said.

Being the first general to command forces under the American flag, George Washington's ties to Boudinot and Ross Farm only serve to enhance the impact of the day's celebration. After Washington was turned down by Boudinot to be a colonel and head of the spy network, there is some evidence that may point to Washington visiting the Ross Farm property in person to convince him.

"The letters all saying, 'Hey, I want to give you this role', are all addressed to Elias Boudinot, Basking Ridge, New Jersey. And Washington was up in Morristown at the time. So it's possible that he rode down here and made a personal appeal to Boudinot to take this job. Boudinot reconsidered and took it", McArthur continued.

"It was eight and a half years later when it finally ended. And who signed the Peace treaty with Great Britain? Elias Boudinot, as president of the Continental Congress. So, you know, there's real synchronicity there. The father of our country, and this particular underappreciated historical site," McArthur said.

Nearly two and a half centuries after Washington and Boudinot worked together under the then newly established stars and stripes, Flag Day finally arrived at Ross Farm, an event that was contemplated for many years.

"And the first year, when we did the History Weekend, we had Nick Sant Foster, the 'Flagman', put up flags on the driveway. There was an old fence. Now they fixed it up. There was a one-lane driveway, and flags everywhere, so it became like, 'Oh, we just love the flags all the time,'" Ned Nelson, member of Friends of Ross Farm, said in reflection on the first years hosting events at the Farm.

“Growing up, my father had served in World War II and the Korean War. So he was a huge proponent of Flag Day. June 14th was always ingrained in my mind, and we started talking about doing a Flag Day sometime. It was hard to do because it mostly fell on weekdays, and how are you going to get people out here on a weekday? And then, you know, last year, we started talking, I said, ‘Hey, Dave, it's on Saturday next year,’” Nelson said.

As Saturday, June 14th, came and went, this celebration, like all events at Ross Farm, proved to be a catalyst for bringing together a community to celebrate history, the town, music, and each other.

“I can absolutely speak for my other siblings. It's wonderful what they've done here. My parents always dreamed of this place being open and enjoyed, and they would be so pleased with how it all ended up,” Ben Ross, youngest son of Edmund and Margaret Ross, the last private owners of the land, said.