



Turkey Tracks

Newsletter of the *New Providence Historical Society*

Volume 55 No. 2

Issue #130

September 2022

Leave No Stone Unturned

By Maria DeLuca

For years, the New Providence Historical Society has been trying to locate a missing Union County historic marker. Just before Memorial Day weekend 2022, the current residents of 30 Fairmount Road, Scott and Jess Pocaro, made a fantastic discovery.

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New Providence
Book Festival

New Providence Book Festival

On **Saturday, September 17, 2022**, 9 AM to 3 PM, the Salt Box Museum will host on its grounds, the fourth annual New Providence Book Festival. Over 16 local authors, across various genres, will be on hand to discuss and sign their books. A free raffle ticket will be given for every book purchased. All are invited to come to this cultural event. Refreshments will be available at our bake sale. The Salt Box Museum will be open to all visitors free of charge. More information is available at www.NewProvidenceBookFestival.com. The rain date is September 24th.

Board of Trustees Letter

After a long, hot summer, we hope the temperatures will cool, but the New Providence Historical Society isn't slowing down.

Our next event on the grounds of the Salt Box Museum will be the New Providence Book Festival on September 17th, 9am to 3pm. Over 16 authors will be joining us. Some will do readings and talks. For more up-to-date information on the festival, visit www.NewProvidenceBookFestival.com. Again, we will have a bake sale and free tours of the Salt Box Museum.

The museum will open again for Union County's Four Centuries in a Weekend on October 15th & 16th. The Mason Room will also be open during Four Centuries Weekend, both days. In addition, John Sponauer will be leading cemetery tours at the New Providence Presbyterian Church on October 15, at 1:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. These tours have been quite popular. If you are interested in reserving a place on a tour, email npcemeterytours@gmail.com.

The Mason Room Archives, located at the back of the New Providence Memorial Library, is now open on the second Saturday of every month from 11am to 1pm. Everyone should feel free to stop by. The Mason Room will also be open both days during Four Centuries Weekend.

Our historic marker program continues with finalizing of the third marker, which will be placed on the property of the Salt Box Museum. Special thanks to Kerry Lee and Robert Keller for their hard work on this project.

The Salt Box Museum also received a new coat of paint, in June. Special thanks to New Providence contractor, Tamas Painting & Decorating, for making that happen.

As we return to normality, one need we have is for museum docents, people who can show guests around the Salt Box house and explain the exhibits. Training is easy with our docent guide. Elizabeth Ryan, who oversees Docent Training & Scheduling, is willing to help anyone interested in volunteering. We have a wonderful museum and would like to open it up more often. Anyone who has even a mild interest should reach out to us. Members interested in participating, can join our monthly Zoom meetings on the third Thursday of the month at 7 p.m.

If you'd like to volunteer, or just have questions, please give us a call at 908-665-1034.

New Providence Historical Society Board of Trustees



2022 / 2023 Calendar for Upcoming Society Events

September 17, 2022	Saturday	New Providence Book Festival, 9AM - 3PM
October 15-16, 2022	Saturday & Sunday	Four Centuries in a Weekend (Salt Box open both days.)
October 30, 2022	Sunday	New Providence Street Fair, 10AM - 4 PM

Other events may be added, so check our calendar at www.newprovidencehistorical.com.

“Leave No Stone Unturned” (Continued from Page 1)

The missing boulder with a bronze plaque attached, was found upside down across the street. The plaque was face down in the dirt!

Scott and Jess, along with their two young daughters, moved into 30 Fairmount Road about two years ago. “When we moved into our house, our elderly neighbor Edna Caporaso said, ‘Hey, this rock is yours,’” Scott explained. After Edna passed away November 2021, her niece Cheryl mentioned again that the rock at the end of their driveway at 27 Fairmount Road, belonged to the Pocaro’s house. She recalled a plaque was somehow part of it.

On May 24th, 2022, Scott finally returned the rock to its rightful position on his property with the help of his work crew and a backhoe. Once the rock was moved, the plaque previously hidden on the underside was now visible. Scott and Jess went through papers left by the previous owner to find out more about this historic WWII marker.

The marker tells the story of the WWII Civil Defense Aircraft Observation Station, Codename Chestnut, that stood on this ground from 1942-1945.

Scott is a New Providence High School graduate. His grandfather Frank Phillipi is one of the veterans honored with veteran banners around town. Feeling a strong connection to this local history, Scott posted his find on the New Providence NJ Community Forum Facebook page, where Maria DeLuca, Historical Society trustee & social Media Chair, discovered his post. Scott, Jess and Maria immediately connected to share information.

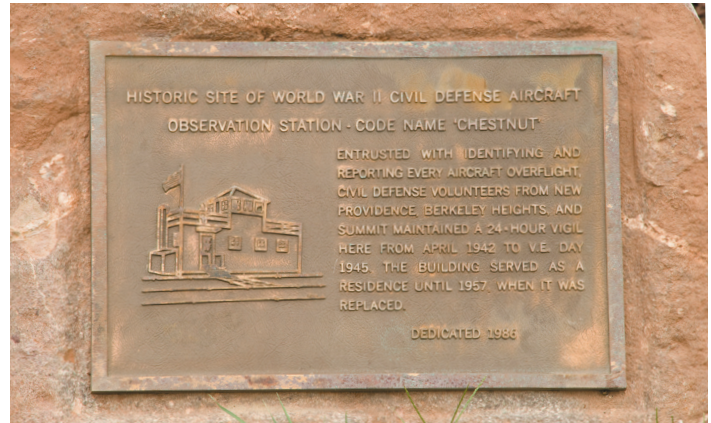
Over the previous year, Maria had made several social media posts, asking if anyone knew the whereabouts of this missing historical plaque. Codename Chestnut was even a “Turkey Tuesday Trivia” question last May. “I was so excited when I stumbled upon his post! I love the way the community came together so quickly. Now we can remember and honor all of those that were involved,” recalls Maria DeLuca.

Through more Facebook posts and emails, a connection was made with Elaine Caporaso Stringer, who grew up at 27 Fairmount Road. Her parents Joseph and Edna Caporaso had cared for the marker all of these years.

Elaine recalled the D’Annunzio family living in the observation tower across the street. Back then, the street was nothing but two rows of tire marks and grass in

between.

Elaine’s father Joseph was a proud member of the Army Air Force in World War II. He was a top turret gunner and flight engineer when his plane went down returning from a bombing mission in Europe. After parachuting out of the plane into mountains, he was captured by the Nazis and barely survived the rest of



the war in a Nazi prisoner of war camp.

Elaine recounted how when their neighbor said he was going to do away with the plaque, her father was appalled.

“When my father couldn’t find anyone at that time who would come to the plaque’s rescue, he said he would move it across the street for safe-keeping. However, the homeowner was concerned that someone would see it and make him put it back. So, he agreed not to destroy it and let my father have it on the condition that the plaque could not be seen. That’s how it came to be face down on the lawn across the street. My father’s hope was that one day it could be restored to its rightful place, but he became very ill and never did pursue it. I know he would be extremely pleased that the tower is finally being honored once again.”

About Codename Chestnut:

Before electronic sensors guarded the approaches to North America, before satellite warning systems peered down from space, before air defense aircraft carried identification equipment, the US had the Ground Observer Corps.

During World War II, the nation’s air warning system lay mainly in the hands of the corps, a US military adjunct composed almost entirely of volunteers intently studying wall charts and model airplanes to

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“Leave No Stone Unturned” (Continued from Page 3) memorize the characteristics of “ours” and “theirs.” (airforcemag.com) Volunteers from New Providence Borough, Summit, and New Providence Township (Berkeley Heights) maintained a 24-hour vigil at the Civil Defense Aircraft Observation Station in New Providence.

Volunteers, called “Aircraft Warning Service Observers,” were charged with spotting every plane overflight and noting the direction and number of aircraft. There was much concern over the Summit/New Providence fly zone as it is a three-minute flying time to NYC. These volunteers relied only on human eyes and ears.

They served around the clock from April 12th, 1942, to June 14th, 1945.

The tower had a direct telephone line to the central observation office for reports, a kitchenette, potbelly

stove, and an extra room suitable for bunks on the first floor. The tower was glassed on four sides with a door onto the catwalk. Compass bearings were painted with luminous paint along the catwalk perimeters. The borough also paid for a 500-ft gravel driveway, one streetlamp, and water and sewer connections.

On Sunday, October 19th, 1986 a plaque was unveiled at 30 Fairmount Road in a ceremony sponsored by the Union County Cultural and Heritage Programs Advisory Board in cooperation with the Historical Societies of New Providence and Summit.

Music was performed courtesy of the Westfield Fife & Drum Corps. New Providence Historian Frank Orleans designed the plaque and he told the story of the observation station. The owners of the property at the time of the ceremony, Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Fulton, granted a nine-foot easement to the borough for the marker.

Presbyterian Cemetery Tours Continue

During the pandemic, society activities were quite limited. So, society member John Sponauer came up with the idea of an open-air activity: cemetery tours at the historic New Providence Presbyterian Church. These 30-45 minute tours have turned out to be amazingly popular.

Many of those buried in the cemetery represent a range of New Providence citizens throughout history, beginning before the American Revolution.

John Sponauer will lead additional tours on Saturday, October 15th for Union County’s **Four Centuries in a Weekend** celebration.



If you are interested in signing up for a tour send an email to npcemeterytours@gmail.com.

- Saturday, October 15, 2022, 1:00 PM & 2:00 PM
- Saturday, November 6, 2022, 1:00 PM
- Saturday, November 13, 2022, 1:00 PM
- Saturday, November 20, 2022, 1:00 PM
- Saturday, December 4, 2022, 1:00 PM

Please show up at least 10 minutes before the tours

2022 Scholarship Recipient



The New Providence Historical Society is proud to announce the 2022 New Providence High School Senior Scholarship recipient is **Julianne O'Leary**. The scholarship was presented by Rick Anderson, Vice President of the Society, at New Providence High School, on Senior Awards Night on June 8th.

Julianne was selected by the Historical Society Scholarship Committee, for this award; based on her academic skills/achievements; awards she has received, as well as her work, volunteering, and extracurricular activities Julianne has taken part in, while in high school. With her passion in history and political science, Julianne will be attending the University of Virginia.

We congratulate Julianne on being the recipient of this years New Providence Historical Society Scholarship. We wish her much success in her future studies.

Member & Citizen News

Please welcome new society members: **Jennifer Blougouras, Perri Everton, Anshuman Jaiswal, Brewster Miner, Mark Ondris and Richard Wright.**

Patrick P. Anelli (92) passed away on Friday, June 24, 2022. Born in New Providence, Pat remained a lifelong resident. He was employed as an operating engineer for V.A. Spatz & Sons construction company in Berkeley Heights for many years and then Conti Construction Co. in Piscataway, retiring in 1991. Pat was a lifelong member of Our Lady of Peace Church and a member of the William Paca Club, where he served as chairman of the House Committee and as a trustee. He was the first chairman and a longtime member of the New Providence Historical Preservation Society Committee.



The Changing Face of New Providence

It's always good to see new businesses opening up:

BakeHouse by Joe Murphy opened up at 1253 Springfield Avenue, the former location of Noah's Bagels.

Tropical Smoothie Cafe opened up at 1271 Springfield Avenue.

Jersey Joe's Bagels & Deli opened in the Central Avenue Shopping Center

Lavender & Sage Boutique opened at 1312 Springfield Avenue.

New Providence Historical Society Officers & Committees

Vice President	Rick Anderson
Corresponding Secretary	Carol Smith
Treasurer	Kerry Lee
Displays	Maria DeLuca
Grounds & Property	Rick Anderson
Membership	Margaret Maurer
Website & <i>Turkey Tracks</i> editor	J.R. Bale
Social Media	Maria DeLuca
Recording Secretary	Audrey Keebler

Trustees

Rick Anderson, J.R. Bale, Maria DeLuca,
Robert Keller, Kerry Lee, Margaret Maurer,
Carol Smith, Sara Jane Vignali



Salt Box Museum Hours

1350 Springfield Avenue
March to November
First Sundays, 1-3 PM
Or by appointment
Telephone: 908-665-1034

Mason Room Hours

at the New Providence Library
Tuesdays 10 AM to Noon
Second Saturday on the month
11 AM to 1 PM
Telephone: 908-665-1034
Appointments available

Website:

newprovidencehistorical.com

Turkey Tracks is also
available in color on our
website in PDF form.

Facebook Page: facebook.com/NewProvidenceHistoricalSociety



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