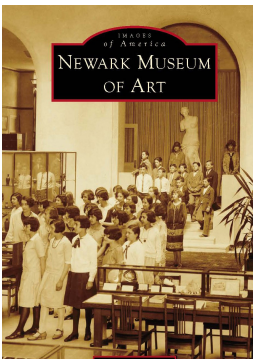


Please Join Us for Our Annual Meeting!

The Millburn-Short Hills Historical Society is very pleased to invite you to our Wednesday, June 17, 2026 program at 7:00 pm in the Williamsburg Room, 2nd floor, of the Millburn Free Public Library:

The Enduring Contributions and Importance of the Newark Museum of Art and Newark Public Library



“A city should adorn itself. It should not only keep its streets neat and clean, supply itself with good water and construct ample sewers, set up beautiful parks, build plenty of attractive schools, and wear always that air, hospitable to learning, wisdom, and art, which has distinguished the world’s best cities; it should take on certain indications of culture and refinement, such as libraries and museums.” – John Cotton Dana, second director of the Newark Public Library, 1902-1929, first director of the Newark Museum of Art, 1909-1929.

Learn how the Newark Museum of Art and Newark Public Library, the largest museum and library system in the State of New Jersey, exemplify a democratization of culture and refinement for the city and state, and how both public institutions continue to reach diverse audiences through innovative exhibitions, inspirational programs and outstanding services. Refreshments will be served.

Presenter: Author William A. Peniston, Ph.D., Librarian and Archivist Emeritus, The Newark Museum of Art (served as librarian and archivist at the Newark Museum of Art for 25 years from 1995 to 2021) and archival consultant for the Librarians Collection (the institution archives) at the Newark Public Library from 2013 to 2014. He holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of Rochester.



Millburn and America's 250th

Millburn's Historic Role

During the American Revolution, Millburn (then part of Springfield) became an important place because of its proximity to George Washington's encampment in Morristown. The Hobart Gap, a pass in the Watchung Mountains just west of Millburn, was one of the few routes through which the British could try to reach Washington's army. This made Millburn a target in 1780, when British and Hessian forces launched their last northern campaign of the war.

On June 23, 1780, Millburn was swept into the Battle of Springfield. British troops advanced from Elizabethtown through Connecticut Farms (now Union), crossing the Rahway River at the Vauxhall Bridge in an attempt to force their way through to Morristown. The American militia, supported by Continental Army troops, met them with determined resistance. Fighting spread across the countryside, with key clashes taking place in what is now the center of Millburn. Near the present-day Town Hall, the American forces successfully stopped the British advance. Defeated, the British retreated toward Staten Island.



John Ward Dunsmore, Battle of Springfield, N.J.
(Give'em Watts, Boys) 1780, 1908 Fraunces Tavern Museum, New York, NY

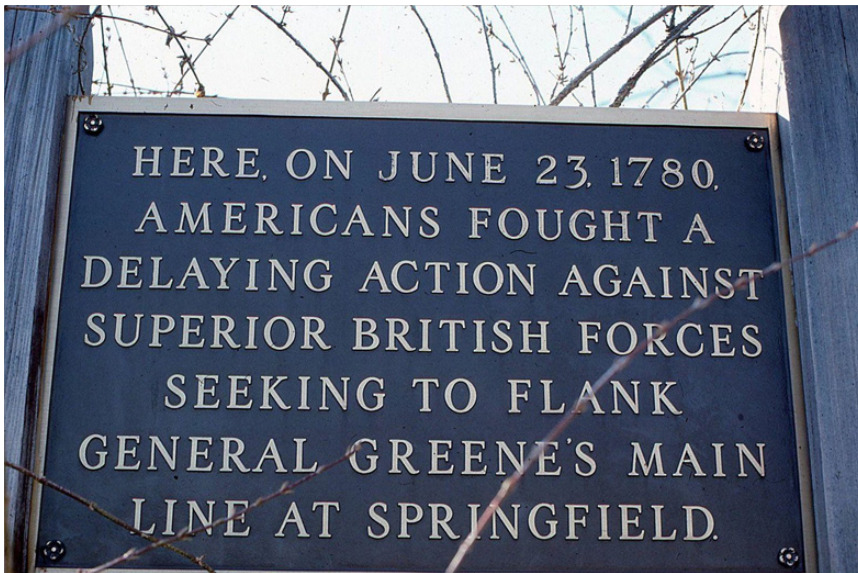
This victory was far more than local. The Battle of Springfield marked the last major engagement of the Revolutionary War fought in the northern colonies and was one of the few American triumphs. It ensured that Morristown, and Washington's army, remained secure, and it convinced the British that further northern campaigns would be fruitless. From that point forward, the war's decisive battles shifted southward. Millburn, though a small community at the time, played a key role in ending large-scale British efforts in New Jersey.

Where You Can Visit Today

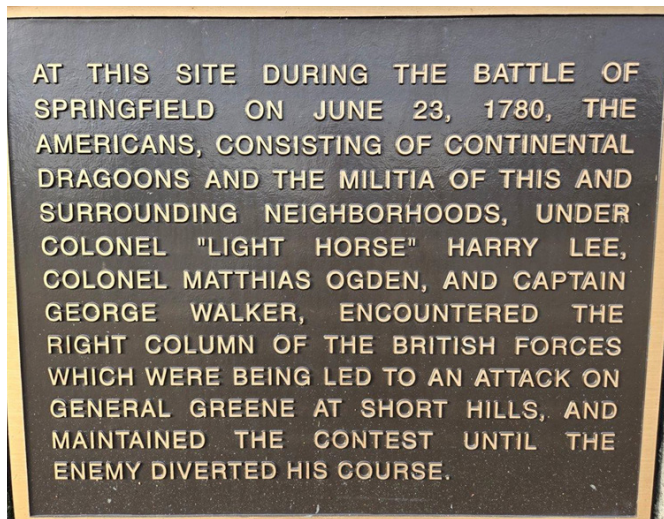
Millburn still carries visible reminders of its Revolutionary War history, allowing the community to connect directly with the events of 1780. At the site of the old Vauxhall Bridge, plaques mark where British troops tried to cross the Rahway River. In front of present-day Town Hall stands the "Last British Thrust" boulder, commemorating the spot where the militia finally halted the enemy's advance.

Along Millburn Avenue, the Hessian House, built in 1730, remains a living tie to the battle, long associated with Hessian mercenaries who deserted during the fighting. Washington Rock, in the South Mountain Reservation, offers the same commanding view that George Washington is believed to have used to observe British troop movements. And tucked away on White Oak Ridge Road, the Parsil Family Cemetery serves as a solemn reminder of local sacrifice, with the graves of Captain Thomas Parcel and Nicholas Parcell (early spellings varied), both dying after being wounded in fighting during the Revolution. Nicholas died under a chestnut tree at the family home on White Oak Ridge Road.

Millburn continues to honor this heritage through the Forgotten Victory Trail, a community project dedicated to telling the story of the Battle of Springfield. In Taylor Park, a kiosk was installed on June 22, 2025 to commemorate the 245th anniversary of the battle, providing visitors with context and insight into how Millburn helped secure America's independence. These sites allow residents and visitors alike to walk in the footsteps of history and understand how the township stood at a turning point of the Revolution.



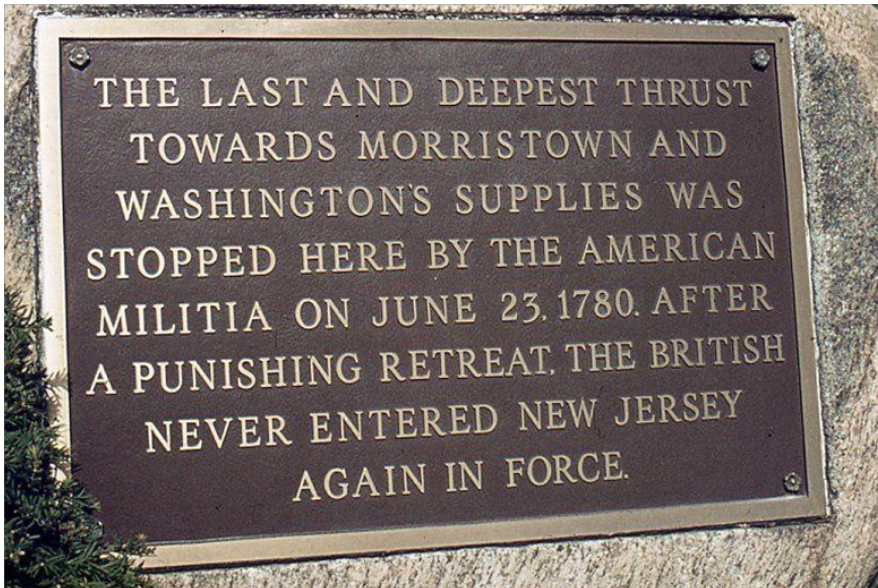
Plaque on the Vauxhall Bridge on Vauxhall Road at the border of Union and Millburn
Photo Courtesy of the Millburn-Short Hills Historical Society



Plaque at the corner of Millburn Avenue and Vauxhall Road



Hessian House - 155 Millburn Avenue
Photo Courtesy of the Millburn-Short Hills Historical Society



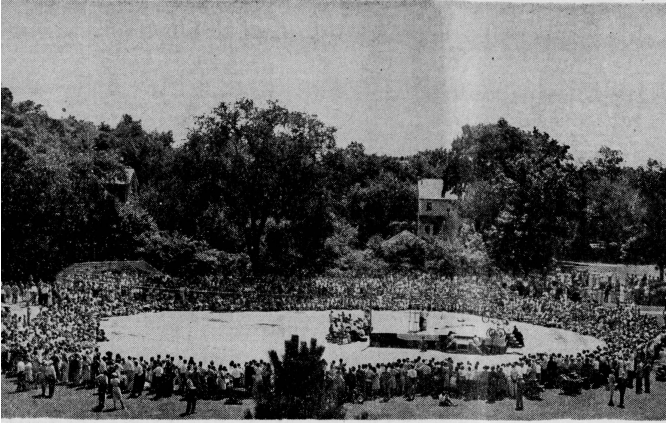
Plaque outside Town Hall, 375 Millburn Avenue, marking the “Last British Thrust”
Photo Courtesy of the Millburn-Short Hills Historical Society



*Forgotten Victory Trail Kiosk, Taylor Park
Photo Courtesy of Bob Gula*

Millburn's Fourth of July and Circus Legacy

by Olivia Hsu



July 4, 1947: The holiday baseball game in Taylor Park, which served as a circus arena in the morning and a baseball field in the afternoon.

Before the early 1930s, Millburn's Fourth of July events were planned by community-based and fraternal organizations and municipally funded. But over time, as Township budgets tightened due to the Great Depression, the planning gradually shifted to Millburn's chapter of the American Legion (Guy R. Bosworth Post) and, eventually, to an

independent official Fourth of July volunteer committee in 1933. This change helped keep the celebration alive by becoming crowd-funded without sole reliance on taxpayer funds.

Its initial members included local civic leaders, Millburn Recreation Department managers, and veterans who wanted to build community spirit during the Great Depression.



Ko-Ko-Mo the Clown entertaining children at Taylor Park as part of the Fourth of July Committee's festivities in 1985.

The Hoxie Bros. Circus (1946-1981)

The Hoxie Bros. Circus and Fourth of July Committee festivities were some of the most anticipated attractions every year. Over 10,000 people came early to see these fast-paced shows.

Their entertainment included clowns, magicians, trick cars,

and stunts featuring 18 trained dogs, 2 waltzing brown bears, ponies, chimps, and monkeys. They also enjoyed the Dobos Tri Troupe of Asian acrobats, comedians, Indian jugglers (The Marcus Troupe), Ferdinand the Bull, brass band unicyclists (The English Victorias), high-wire performers, and elephants. Performers traveled with touring shows and set up in Taylor Park, transforming the baseball field to hold shows.



Bonnie the Elephant of the Hoxie Bros. Circus.

Bonnie the Elephant

Bonnie, a 7,500-pound elephant, and the Hoxie Bros. Circus were July 4th favorites, drawing crowds from Millburn and nearby towns. Towns that also hired the Hoxie Bros. throughout the summer included Livingston, Morristown, Edison, Caldwell, Rockaway, Somerset, Hackettstown, Wayne, Lincoln Park, Point Pleasant, and more.

The Fourth of July Committee also organized athletic matches and relays. Other activities included merry-go-round and pony rides, baton twirling, playground parades, Colonial militia displays, band concerts, fireworks, and performances by Paper Mill Playhouse stars, including camels from a production of "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat."

By the early 1980s, however, rising costs, budgeting for youth recreation, and growing concern over animal welfare had brought the Millburn circus tradition to a close.

Millburn's 250th Celebration: Commemorative Tree Planting

There are 13 beautiful additions to Taylor Park!

On April 24, 2026 the Township planted 13 trees in Taylor Park at the corner of Whittingham Terrace and Ridgewood Road to commemorate the 13 original colonies. This wonderful tree planting was sponsored by The NJ Shade Tree Foundation, William J Porter Grant.

The trees representing the corresponding colonies are:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. American Linden: Massachusetts | 7. Tulip Poplar: Pennsylvania |
| 2. Sugar Maple: New Hampshire | 8. River Birch: Delaware |
| 3. Amelanchier (Service Berry): Rhode Island | 9. American Hornbeam: Maryland |
| 4. Flowering Dogwood: Connecticut | 10. Carolina Silverbell: Virginia |
| 5. Sycamore: New York | 11. Swamp White Oak: North Carolina |
| 6. Black Tupelo: New Jersey | 12. Hackberry: South Carolina |
| | 13. Horse Chestnut: Georgia |

Exciting News about the William Parsil Jr. House

The Historical Society is pleased to announce that the William Parsil Jr. House, located on the corner of Parsonage Hill and White Oak Ridge Roads, will be opened to the public



this year. The house, built in approximately 1825, is one of the oldest still standing in Millburn and was purchased by Millburn Township in 2013 to save it from being torn down. After more than ten years of renovations, the public will finally have the opportunity to step back in time and view many of the original details. Watch your inboxes for announcements regarding this opportunity to experience part of Millburn's rich history.

The Mill on Brookside Drive – From Paper Mill to Playhouse



The first mill on this site on Brookside Drive was constructed before the Revolution and burned in the early 1800s. The succession of owners of the rebuilt mill included Samuel Campbell, Abraham and Jonathan Parkhurst, Isreal D. Condit and eventually the Diamond Mill Paper Company, which produced colored tissue paper. In later years the mill was rebuilt of brick and enlarged.

*The Diamond Mill Paper Company
factory for sale in 1930
for less than \$30,000.*



In 1934 the property on Brookside Drive was purchased by a newly formed theatrical organization which later was called the Paper Mill Playhouse. Antoinette Q. Scudder was the patroness and Frank Carrington served as director until his death in 1975. This is an early view of the playhouse.

Historical Society Officers and Directors

PRESIDENT: Jeanne Weill

VICE PRESIDENT: Mara Epstein

TREASURER: Michelle Miller

CORRESPONDING SECRETARY: Sharon Petrucelli

RECORDING SECRETARY: Carrie Ross Faenza

DIRECTORS: Thomas Baio, Dorothy Kelly, Jacqueline Lieberberg,
Dianna Lipps, Ed Marks, Elisabeth Meyer, Oyin Owolabi,
Andrew Permison, David Sorkin.

PAST PRESIDENT, EX OFFICIO: Deborah Frank

The Society Welcomes Your Participation and Membership

The historical society is dedicated to the preservation of our community's heritage. If you would like to join the historical society or have not yet renewed your membership, please use this form to do so and send a check made payable to **Millburn-Short Hills Historical Society** at P.O. Box 243, Short Hills, N.J. 07078, with the form below. Or, go to mshhistsoc.org for zelle or paypal option.

If you would like to volunteer to help with any of the many activities in which the society is engaged, or if you would like to share your memories with the society, please contact us at info@mshhistsoc.org

Millburn-Short Hills Historical Society Membership Form

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Annual Dues

_____ \$15 (Senior/Student)

_____ \$25 (Individual)

_____ \$35 (Family)

_____ \$50 (Supporter)

_____ \$100 (Patron)

_____ \$250 (Sponsor)

_____ \$500 (Benefactor)

_____ \$_____ (Other)

ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTION \$ _____

_____ I would like to volunteer to help.

The Millburn-Short Hills Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and all contributions are tax-deductible as applied under IRS guidelines. Your cancelled check is your receipt.



Return Service Requested

A Message from our President

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the latest edition of the Thistle. I hope you will discover some interesting facts that will add to your knowledge and appreciation of the history of our town.

Happy Spring and happy reading!

Sincerely,

Jeanne