



Dedicated to the discovery, collection, and preservation of any material and stories which may help to document or illustrate the history and progress of Egg Harbor Township.



HISTORIC INFO ABOUT THE GREAT EGG HARBOR RIVER

Before the Revolutionary War, the Great Egg Harbor River, which runs along the southern edge of Egg Harbor Township, was a very active area filled with accomplished ship builders and sea captains. They knew the sailing hazards of the waterways and locations of navigable hidden coves for surprise attacks.

This knowledge allowed EHT seamen to become successful legal pirates "privateers" during the Revolutionary War.

When the Continental Congress realized the potential of local seaman in helping the war effort they passed a law on March 23, 1776 allowing "privateering."

In return for either stopping the British ships from proceeding inland or locating shipwrecks, the legal pirates were allowed to keep the loot.

It is suggested that privateers caused about \$18 million in damage to British shipping.

History in the Making

Spring 2026
GREATE EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

The African American Story of McKee City

GEHTHS Shared Stories of John McKee, Atlas Lane, Jennie Morris, & Lucy Harris-Jackson

February 21, 2026 - Egg Harbor Township, NJ.

In honor of Black History Month, GEHTHS board members shared information on four notable African Americans who lived in Egg Harbor Township. The presentation had been originally created for an Amistad Commission of New Jersey workshop.

Attendees learned about the very complex and conflicted life of Col. John McKee who went from being an indentured bricklayer to the wealthiest man of color in America by the time he died in 1902. In his much disputed will most of his money was left to the Catholic Church and only very little to his heirs. With the funds and land that he left to church, St. Catherine's Drexel



Trevor Melton of the New Jersey Department of Education, views the Col. John McKee tribute wall with the Parkers.

was founded and built in McKee City.

About 100 years after Col. McKee lived, an African



Janice Cambron shared that when Col. John McKee contracted Typhoid Fever, the white doctors in 1896 often would not treat people of color. However, the Nuns in Philadelphia nursed him back to health. Thus he, a Presbyterian, began to admire the Catholic Church and donated much of his wealth to them.

American and McKee City resident by the name of Atlas Lane made it his personal mission to improve the lives of McKee City residents. He created the Betterment Association to give the community a place to congregate for social events and recreation opportunities for the youth. He also lobbied for sidewalks, cable, bus stops, and other improvements in McKee City.

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Guest Speaker Events

An Evening of Everything Irish

Traditional Irish Dancing and Melodic Sounds of Bagpipes

March 12, 2026. Egg Harbor Twp. The Emerald Isle Academy of Dance amazed the audience with their incredible talents of Irish stepdance. From soft shoe leaps to hard shoe trebles and stamps, it is easy to see why they have won awards and are popular in the Philadelphia annual Saint Patrick's Day Parade. The Sandpipers Pipes and Drums of Atlantic County ended the program with a wonderful array of musical tunes including their incredible version of Amazing Grace. It starts out somber reflecting on the death of someone and builds to a celebratory song honoring and celebrating the life of the deceased.



Participating in Our Local Community



GEHTHS Board Member, Leah Drobol prepares new posters to be hung at the EHT Public Library on Swift Avenue. Visit the library to learn about the importance of early shipbuilding in Egg Harbor Twp.



GEHTHS Board Members Lynn Wood, Lee Portnoy, and Janice Cambron shared information about EHT's history during the "Lines on the Pines." (An annual event at Stockton University dedicated to ecology, culture and mysteries of the Pine Barrens.) They also learned more about EHT's history from an attendee whose family tree dates way back.



Learning from Oral History

Betsy Naylor DAR member (Daughters of the American Revolution)

Submitted by Lynn Wood who interviewed Betsy in her English Creek home... April of 2026

Elizabeth Ann Somers Naylor was born April 1, 1942 in Somers Point, NJ to Robert Somers and Loretta Brown.

"Betsy" showed me the paperwork proving her DAR lineage leading back several generations to Captain John Somers, Thomas Somers, William Boyce, and Jacob Endicott, all who served in the Revolutionary War. Betsy also filed for membership for her grandson Ryan (age 18) as a member of the SAR (Sons of the American Revolution).

After WWII, in 1945, the Somers family moved to Egg Harbor Township. Betsy and her sister Jane attended many of the small outlying schools: Scullville, Steelmanville, Bargaintown and graduated 8th grade from the Cardiff School. After graduating from Atlantic City High School in 1960, Betsy took a job at the new Prudential Building on New Rd. in Linwood. She also worked in Egg Harbor Township Schools.

She remembers when the population of EHT was only 600 in 1945. "It seemed that everybody knew everybody. Whenever there was a funeral, many would bring food and casseroles to the home of the grieving family."

She remembers playing outdoors when there was very little traffic, few houses and a lot of farm land. "Where the Scullville Firehouse and campground are today used to be a huge

Betsy shares a picture of her 8th grade graduation class from Cardiff School in 1956.



cornfield." She and her friends would find bottles and cash them in for money, then go to the candy store to get penny candy. When she attended Bargaintown School, the class would sometimes walk to the old Town Hall to watch movies. She remembers looking forward to getting the Sears and Roebuck catalog in the mail so she could pick out new clothes for school. One of her first jobs as a youngster was tending a vegetable stand with her sister on the corner of Somers Point Mays Landing Rd. and Lees Lane.

Her first car was a used, stick shift Studebaker. In 1964, Betsy married William J. Naylor Jr. who was an Army veteran. They have two sons, Mark William Naylor and James Matthew Naylor (Matt).

Betsy is saddened to see overdevelopment in the township and worries about pollution running into the Patcong Creek from the new houses being built. She has fond memories of her younger days when there was plenty of room to roam.

Have You Renewed Your Membership?

2026 Members – Thank You!

Life Memberships

Chris Barbo
Jerry Bell
Elizabeth Naylor
David Speer

Provider Membership

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Garden Memberships

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Paula Koiro

Family Memberships

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Charles & Jean Lawless
Zak & Melissa Landgraf,
William & Stephanie Loder
Dianne & Steve Nehmad
Lee & Rob Portnoy
Arlene & Gene Puggi
Tom Puggi
Scott & Patricia Warner

Individual Memberships

Janice Cale
Lou Della Barca
Thomas F Dougherty
Bonnie Flanagan
Joanne Fricano, Storybook Land
Kathy Fritz
Sally & Kirk Hastings
Dee Landgraf
Gina & Rich Lang
Sandy Large
Gloria Moyer
Joyce Poley
Michael Price
Mary Ann Robson
Mark Steelman
Lori Ward
Mary Ellen Weathers
Iris Weingarten
Lynn Wood
John H. Yates
Kathy Zeigenfus

Making History Come to Life

African American Story Continued from Front Page

In 1938, Jennie Morris, a wealthy African American undertaker from Philadelphia, created Morris Beach on what is now Jeffers Landing Road. It was a vacation haven for wealthy African Americans who were not welcome at many vacation destinations due to segregation.

The final African American discussed was Lucy Harris-Jackson. She was a woodworker and the last person formally designated as enslaved in South Jersey to be freed. She was emancipated in 1871 - eight years after the Emancipation Proclamation.

GEHTHS has plans to create a new tribute wall to Jennie Morris and Lucy Harris-Jackson similar to the one for Col. McKee and Atlas Lane. It will also hang in the MK Betterment Building.

The mission of the Amistad Commission is ensuring that African American history is fully integrated into all U.S. history and social studies courses in public schools.



Neysha Parker, who works closely with the Amistad Commission, explained the importance of making African American history a part of the New Jersey educational curriculum.



EHT teacher Janice Blaine, reviews the photo of Alva & Atlas Lane and the letter they received from then Governor Jim Florio congratulating them on the naming of Atlas Lane Road in their honor.

Davenport Elementary Celebrates 50th Anniversary

Pep rally featured high school students, Davenport staff and alumni. February 12, 2025. EHT, NJ. EHT High School cheerleaders and drumline helped lead a "Happy 50 Years" pep rally. Students from Pre-K through third grade sang happy birthday, participated in activities, and enjoyed guest readers.



GEHTHS Board Member and retired EHT educator and principal, Lou Della Barca shares C.J. Davenport memorabilia.



GEHTHS Board Member and retired EHT teacher Lynn Wood enjoys being a guest reader in honor of Davenport's 50th Celebration.

Sam Schoffer - The Jewish Chicken Farmer

Leo Schoffer, son of Sam and Sara Schoffer, shares how EHT gave his parents an opportunity for a new life after surviving the Holocaust.

Around 1950, Leo Schoffer's father, Sam, bought many acres of land in McKee City. (At the time, McKee City straddled Hamilton Twp and Egg Harbor Twp). Sam and his wife Sara were a part of the Holocaust survivors who immigrated to South Jersey after World War II. Many became chicken farmers because it provided both an income and food for their families with only a small investment. The newcomers felt welcomed in the area. Sam and the local Jewish farmers built and attended the Jewish Synagogue on English Creek Ave. The Schoffer's had chicken farms for many years then gradually discovered Real Estate opportunities.



Leo is standing at the Black Horse Pike Wawa in Hamilton Twp where part of his family's chicken farm was located.

As a family that believes in "giving it forward," they created the Sara and Sam Schoffer Holocaust Resource Center at Stockton University which preserves history and survivor's stories. Sam's parents were killed by Nazis in the war and Sam and Sara were part of the resistance movement.

Thank you to our Generous Supporters who support our mission to preserve historic materials, events, places and lifestyles related to Egg Harbor Township for present and future generations. Please join us as a sponsor or with a donation.

Mail: GEHTHS • 6647 West Jersey Ave. Egg Harbor Twp, NJ 08234 • Email: info@GEHTHSmuseum.org • Phone: 609-380-4524

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Funding has been made possible in part by the New Jersey Historical Commission, a division of Cultural Affairs within the Department of State, through funds administered by the Atlantic County Office of Cultural and Heritage Affairs.



Remembering Dave Clayton. We were saddened to learn of the passing of Dave Clayton. He was a wealth of information and an EHT icon. We featured Dave in our Fall 2025 Newsletter in our "Learning from Oral History" column. Thank you to Juanita Cullen and Fran and Brian Murphy for their generous donations to the GEHTHS in his memory.



GEHTHS Mission

The mission of the society is to collect and preserve historical materials exemplifying the events, places and lifestyles of the people of Egg Harbor Township, to encourage the study of history and genealogy, and to provide historical and genealogical information to our membership and the general public.

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GEHTHS Museum
and Research Library
6647 West Jersey Ave.
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NJ 08234

GEHTHSmuseum.org

609-380-4524

info@GEHTHSmuseum.org

Visit us:

**Museum: Sundays: 10am-Noon
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Library: Open by appointment

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Recognizing America's 250th!

Do You Know the History of New Jersey's State Flag?

New Jersey's state flag, while officially adopted in 1896, is deeply rooted in the Revolutionary War. Its distinctive buff (yellowish-tan) and "Jersey blue" colors were designated by George Washington in 1779 for New Jersey regiments.



Key Historical Details

Color Significance: The colors "buff" and "blue" were chosen by General Washington in 1779 to be used for the coats and uniforms of the New Jersey regiments.

Origin of Colors: The choice of buff was likely meant to honor the original Dutch settlers of New Jersey.

The Coat of Arms: Created in 1777 by artist Pierre Eugene du Simitiere, the seal features a shield with three plows (representing agriculture), a helmet (sovereignty), and a horse's head (strength).

Symbolism: The shield is supported by Liberty (holding a staff with a red cap) and Ceres, the Roman goddess of grain (holding a cornucopia).

Official Adoption: The flag was formally adopted on March 26, 1896, and later refined in 1928.

Motto and Date: A banner at the bottom reads "Liberty and Prosperity" and "1776," the year New Jersey adopted its first state constitution.

Although the flag was not officially adopted during the colonial period itself, the components—specifically the colors and the coat of arms—originated immediately following the declaration of independence in 1776–1777.



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ENGAGE THE PAST. SHAPE THE FUTURE.
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