



NORTHERN YORK COUNTY HISTORICAL & PRESERVATION

Society

January 2026 Newsletter

"It is the great arrogance of the present to forget the intelligence of the past."

~ Ken Burns ~

As we stand on the threshold of a new year, our hearts turn to the future with anticipation and pride, especially as we approach the monumental milestone of America's 250th. This historic celebration reminds us of our nation's rich heritage, the enduring spirit that has shaped our country, and the promise for generations yet to come.

America 250 is more than a commemoration of our past—it is a call to look forward with hope. In these times of change and challenge, let us renew our belief in the core values that unite us: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. May hope for our country inspire us to create opportunities for all, to resolve the challenges we face, and to foster a society where every person has the opportunity to thrive.

Above all, let this new year be a time to commit ourselves to respecting all. Our strength lies in our diversity, in the many voices and stories that make up the American tapestry. By embracing each other with empathy and understanding, we can build bridges that bring us closer together. Let us honor one another—regardless of background, belief, or identity—and work together to create a more inclusive and compassionate nation.

As we celebrate America 250 and step into the new year, let us do so with hope in our hearts and respect in our actions. Together, we can ensure that the next chapter in our nation's journey is one of unity, progress, and enduring promise. Happy New Year to all!



250 years ago... on January 10th , Thomas Paine anonymously publishes his pamphlet 'Common Sense' in Philadelphia. This was a direct, forceful argument for American independence from Britain. It sold over 100,000 copies within a few months—a staggering number for the time—and reached people across the thirteen colonies. Paine's arguments resonated with a public that was increasingly frustrated with British policies and eager for change.



January Events

January 2nd; 7pm-10pm

Theme: Wassail Celebration at Dills Tavern



After months of Jingle Bells, enjoy the unique acoustic music of earlier days in America and Ireland, as well as original songs, as performed by **Susquehanna Travellers**. January is also when we seek the blessing of a bountiful harvest of the fruit trees at the tavern by Wassailing in the moonlight.

Come prepared by dressing warmly in brightly colored attire with hats adorned in a festive winter or orchard theme and bring noisemakers! At the end of the evening, we will make noise (including shooting a cannon) to scare away any evil spirits, and appeal to the good spirits by singing "Here We Come a Wassailing", at which time the Wassailing Queen will place toast in the trees.

Tavern Keeper, Murray Small, will be sharing a "Wassail" Tasting Program using a variety of cherry flavors in the Eichelberger Distillery for an additional \$10. Sign up for this tasting on-line or at the door. [Reserve a spot here!](#)



This event is exclusive to the 21+ crowd and advanced ticket sales are not available. Simply pay at the door when you arrive - \$10 for members and \$15 for nonmembers.



Pork and Sauerkraut Dinner

January 10th - Maple Shade Barn - 6:00pm

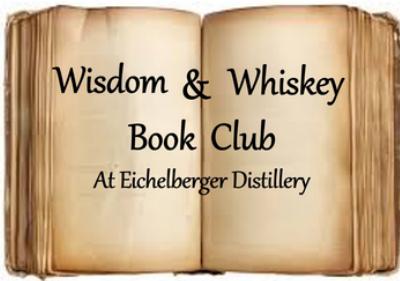


Welcome in the New Year with us in the German tradition. Look forward to our locally sourced pork & sauerkraut dinner for good health and good luck. The full menu includes pork & sauerkraut, mashed potatoes, corn, homemade apple sauce, hog maw, bread, jams, and cider fresh pressed from the apples in the Tavern orchard.

[Read more about it on our website by clicking here!](#)

Maple Shade Barn: 35 Greenbrier Lane, Dillsburg, PA 17019

January Events



Wisdom & Whiskey Book Club

**Wednesday, January 14th;
6:30-8 pm at the Eichelberger Distillery**

Participate in a thoughtful discussion of the book [The Pursuit of Liberty: How Hamilton vs. Jefferson Ignited the Lasting Battle Over Power in America](#) by Jeffrey Rosen.

Rosen explores the clashing visions of Hamilton and Jefferson over how to balance liberty and power in a debate that continues to define—and divide—our country today.

Our discussion schedule is as follows:

January 14th: Introduction / Chapters 1 & 2

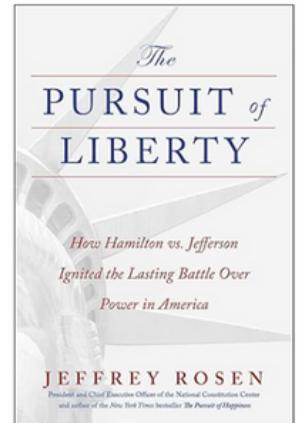
February 11th: Chapters 3 & 4

March 11th: Chapters 5 & 6

April 8th : Chapters 7 & 8

May 13th : Chapters 9 & 10 / Conclusion

This event is free and open to the public. You are welcome to bring a snack to share and we will have beverages.



Speaker Series: Col. Matthew Todd “Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan”

**Thursday, January 15th; 6:30-8 pm
at Maple Shade Barn**

Col. Matthew Todd is a volunteer speaker from USAWC and will be sharing a wide variety of experiences from combat to peacekeeping, both on a personal level and as a leader of troops at various echelons.



Maple Shade Barn:
35 Greenbrier Lane,
Dillsburg, PA 17019



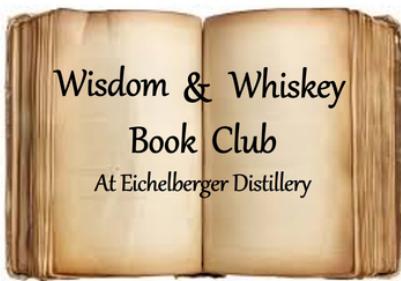
Upcoming February Events

First Friday at Dills Tavern

February 6th: 7pm-10pm

Theme: Pirates!

Shiver me timbers, it's that time again! Whether ye be a bucko, matey, knave or scallywag, we'll give quarter to ye at February's First Friday. Come dressed in your piratey best - if you dare! But ye best arrive early to secure your seat as our Pirate Theme night is always a hit. No hangin the jib allowed when music by **Forbes Road Frolic** is playing.



Wisdom & Whiskey Book Club

Wednesday, February 11th;
6:30-8 pm at the Eichelberger Distillery

Continuing our discussion (Chapters 3 & 4) of the book The Pursuit of Liberty: How Hamilton vs. Jefferson Ignited the Lasting Battle Over Power in America by Jeffrey Rosen.



Speaker Series: Randolph J. Harris

“The Underground Railroad”

Thursday, February 19th; 6:30-8 pm
at Maple Shade Barn



In honor of Black History Month, Mr. Randolph Harris will speak on the Underground Railroad in York and Lancaster counties. He will focus on Route 15 as it was a main thoroughfare for those trying to get north. His presentation will include slides and will last 1.5 hours.

Maple Shade Barn: 35 Greenbrier Lane, Dillsburg, PA 17019

Telling the Story of Northern York County

The Early Days of Resistance

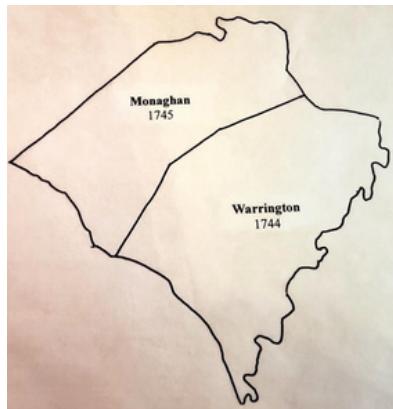
Independence Day may be July 4, 1776, but the events that led to independence began much earlier. Well before the start of the revolution, the colony of Pennsylvania was involved in the discussions and debate that took place across and within the colonies regarding the conflict between British rule and colonial rights.

For instance, John Dickinson, a well-known Pennsylvania figure for whom Dickinson College is named, wrote in opposition to the Stamp Act of 1765. In 1768, Dickinson penned “Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania.” Published in newspapers throughout the colonies, Dickinson articulated the arguments against the new import taxes brought about by the 1767 Townshend Act. The colonists began to boycott British goods and in 1770 Parliament repealed all the import duties except those on tea. While tensions abated for a time, the Tea Act of 1773, the resultant Boston Tea Party in December of 1773 and the subsequent punitive British response, brought about a call for a colonial conference, or “Continental Congress” to consider next steps.

LETTERS
FROM
A FARMER in Pennsylvania,



This First Continental Congress was held in Philadelphia in September and October of 1774. The Congress approved the formation of the “Continental Association” charged with the enforcement of a mercantile boycott of British goods, urged the colonies to organize central and local committees of Associators and called for a Second Continental Congress in the spring of 1775. The Pennsylvania Assembly promptly endorsed the actions of the Continental Congress, becoming the first colonial legislature to do so.



What part did Monaghan and Warrington Townships play in the years before the start of armed conflict? At the time, they were the only two townships in northern York County and the population of the townships was small. In 1775, Monaghan Township’s population was likely between 1,000 – 1,200 people, and Warrington Township’s was roughly 900 – 1,100 residents. In comparison, York County’s total population was around 25,000 – 30,000.

NYCHAPS Revolutionary War Project

Telling the Story of Northern York County cont.

Nevertheless, as townships in the County, each had representation on the County's Committee of Observation, which was formed at a "General Meeting of the Inhabitants" in December 1774 after the close of the First Continental Congress.

Each of Pennsylvania's counties set up a Committee responsible for enforcing the boycotts, monitoring merchant compliance, and discouraging Loyalist activity. In addition to the township representatives, members of the York County Committee included local and civic notables such as James Smith (signer of the Declaration of Independence), Henry Miller and Thomas Hartley who went on to Revolutionary War fame, Archibald McClean, famed surveyor of the Mason-Dixon line, and locally familiar names such as **Eichelberger** and **Dill**.

Committee member George Eichelberger was a prominent merchant in York Town, rather than Warrington or Monaghan Township, and was a quartermaster during the war years. He was part of the same extended German immigrant family that, in 1800, acquired Dill's Tavern in Dillsburg. As for the townships, Warrington Township's representative was William McClellan, a local farmer. According to land records and 1780 tax records, he owned almost 300 acres near Round Top Mountain. Monaghan's representative was James Dill (1720-1796), a Scots-Irish land owner and tavern keeper of a predecessor tavern to Dill's Tavern. He was one of six sons of the early Monaghan Township settler, landowner and justice of the peace, Captain Matthew Dill, Esq. who purchased 500 acres and settled in the township in the early 1740's.

As events continued to unfold in 1775, it became apparent that the colonists needed to prepare for a potential armed conflict with England, and Pennsylvania began to organize. Associator units were revived or newly organized with volunteers. Ultimately, fifty-three battalions of military "Associators" were formed in Pennsylvania. On June 30, 1775, Pennsylvania's Provincial Assembly gave official recognition to the Associators through the passage of legislation which recognized "the Association entered into by the good people of this Province for the Defense of their Lives, Liberty and Property." The Legislation also established a Committee on Safety, which had authority over Pennsylvania's military forces until the Militia Act of 1777.

The membership of this Committee was impressive and included such notables Benjamin Franklin (President of the Committee), John Dickinson, Anthony Wayne, William Thompson, Edward Biddle and Robert Morris. York County's Committee of Observation, which in November 1775 added John Nesbitt of Warrington Township to its ranks, continued to communicate and coordinate with the provincial Committee of Safety.

NYCHAPS Revolutionary War Project

Telling the Story of Northern York County cont.

In a report from September 14, 1775, York County's Committee reported militia strength of 3,349 Associators and battalion organization to the Pennsylvania's Committee on Safety. In forming the battalions, "great regard was had to the situation of the County and convenience of the inhabitants." A prior letter had indicated that Monaghan and Warrington townships would be part of the Fifth Battalion and as of July 28, 1775 the proposed officers for the York County Fifth Battalion included William Rankin as Lieutenant-Colonel, Matthew Dill, Esq. as Colonel, and Robert Stevenson and Gerhard Gress/Graff as Majors. While little has been located on Gerhard Gress, a Robert Stevenson does appear on the tax lists for Warrington Township.

Colonel Mattthew Dill (1726-1812) was another son of Captain Matthew Dill, the early settler of the Dillsburg area, then in Monaghan Township. Colonel Dill also served in the General Assembly in 1777-1779; in 1779, he was appointed sub-lieutenant of York County, to organize the county militia; and he was appointed one of several commissioners to seize the personal effects of Tories in York County. For his service, he was ultimately awarded grants of land in western Pennsylvania.

The Dill family contributed significantly to the early war efforts on behalf of Monaghan Township. Col. Matthew Dill's son John Dill was a Second Lieutenant in the York Company of Riflemen that marched to Boston in July 1775. His son James (1748-1777), was an officer in the Continental Army, and was killed near Chad's Ford at the Battle of Brandywine in September, 1777. A son of James Dill, the tavern keeper, reportedly died during the war while on the British prison ship "Jersey." Other members of the Dill family also served. While Colonel Matthew Dill is buried in the Lower Marsh Creek cemetery in Gettysburg, a marker commemorating his service exists in the Dillsburg cemetery.

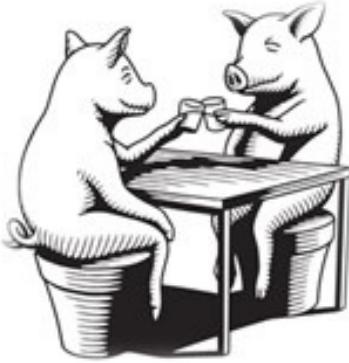


Did you know that NYCHAPS will be housing all our Revolutionary War Project articles on our website? We will be sharing information about Northern York County's involvement throughout the year in our newsletter, on our website, and in social media so you will not miss anything! [For the link to our Northern York County History Blog click here.](#)



The Impractical Distillers: Vol 2.1

What Does Distilling Have To Do With Agriculture?



At the Eichelberger Distillery we educate people about the role of distilling in the agricultural heritage of Northern York County during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Several years ago, we were asked by a local farmer involved in Dillsburg's annual Farmer's Fair; "what does distilling have to do with agriculture?" There was a hint of indignation in his tone. This shocking disconnect between agriculture of the past and modern times needed clarification.

Fermentation is a spontaneous event that occurs in nature without man's effort. But, concentrating the products of fermentation through distillation required creativity, ingenuity and centuries for man to improve the techniques of spirits production. In addition to creating a beverage with a higher alcohol content, it provided a way to use excess grain before it spoiled in storage. Barrels of whiskey are more easily stored and moved about compared to tons of grain. The final bonus was higher profit. As America entered the 19th century, many Pennsylvania farmers took advantage of abundant grain harvests and nearby markets and distilled their excess grain into whiskey. During this time Pennsylvania led the nation in spirits production.

A secondary market developed for the use of a byproduct - spent mash created during whiskey production. In *The Practical Distiller* published in 1808, Samuel McHarry, a Lancaster County author stated "the offals of distilleries and mills cannot be more advantageously appropriated than in raising hogs - they are prolific, arrive at maturity in a short time and are always in demand". A decade later another Pennsylvania author Harrison Hall, included a chapter in his distilling manual: "Of the advantages of feeding Swine or Cattle...". He found hogs to be a considerable item of profit in a distillery.



The Impractical Distillers cont.



A wonderful example of a period distillery building with an adjoining pig enclosure is found on the Shaeffer Farm in Shaefferstown, PA. Across the road from the stone farmhouse, once a 1770's distillery, is the stone pig pen. The distillers had to walk mere feet to dispose of spent mash waste into the hog troughs.

At the Eichelberger Distillery we continue the tradition of recycling mash to swine. Rowan Miller of Rowantree Farm in Mechanicsburg uses our spent mash as additional feed for her pigs. She also grows the rye we use for distillation on her 104 acre farm.

Rowan's practice of operating a farm in a holistic manner and willingness to grow grain in small quantities overlap our goals of experimenting and demonstrating historically accurate distillation practices.

For additional information on her farm see Healthy Soil at PA Rowantree Farm. Rowan grows the grain, we distill it into whiskey, and the pigs wait by the trough for a treat! According to Rowan, the pigs recognize the site and sound of Sam's truck delivering mash. They hurry to the trough when they see the truck coming down the driveway. The timeless cycle continues.

So, in conclusion Mr. Modern Day Farmer... distilling has a lot to do with agriculture! If you would like to see mashing or any other part of the historic distilling process, visit the Impractical Distillers at the Eichelberger Distillery.

The Impractical Distillers: Sam and Murray



"If this distillery offers poison for men, it offers in return the most delicate and the most succulent feed for pigs...[They] are so excessively bulky that they can hardly drag their big bellies on the ground."

- Julian Niemcewicz, 1798

The Garden Shed Vol 1.1

Why We Garden

by Gary Reneker, Garden Master



Anyone can be a gardener: Whether you have a large garden, only have space for a few planters, or grow everything indoors, you can be a gardener. The key limiting factor is direct sunlight, or sufficient artificial light.

Most vegetables, herbs, and flowers, need 6+ hours of direct sunlight every day. Many plants only need 4 to 5 hours of direct sunlight each day. A host of decorative plants prefer a shaded area with no more than 1 hour of direct sunlight per day. For indoor gardening using artificial lighting, you need to double those times for "full" and "partial" sunlight.

Save Money: With prices continuously rising most families need to save money however they can. Gardening is an often overlooked activity when people think of saving money. However, with a little effort, it can save on your budget. I have heard some people claim that gardening is expensive, and doesn't save money. If you buy all your transplants, fertilizers, and pesticides at garden centers it can get expensive. In future articles I will explain how to make many of those products at home naturally and cheaply. Those articles may be a bit longer, as some DIY products need more explanation.

Better quality food: Most foods found in supermarkets are grown by large agri-businesses. For lower costs and bigger profits they use synthetic fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides. Plants absorb all those materials and they become part of your diet. They sell their crops to large processors who often add chemicals to enhance flavor and color, plus preservatives. These also become part of your diet. Home gardeners do not need artificial soil additives or plant protection. When you grow plants using natural products the results are perfectly healthy produce. You can feel more secure about what you are feeding your family.

Self-satisfaction: Can you remember the good feeling you got from making a gift that someone really appreciated? That feeling comes from a release of serotonin and dopamine. Similarly, having your family enjoy the healthy vegetables you grew or a bouquet of flowers from your flower beds is always uplifting.

The Garden Shed cont.

Stress Relief: Stress locks up your body's immune systems, opening the door for illnesses to enter. It's caused by the release of cortisol and catecholamines, which include adrenaline and norepinephrine. Multiple studies have been conducted that indicate a good diet, proper sleep, and light exercise all enhance your immune systems by countering cortisol and catecholamines through the release of the hormones serotonin, dopamine and endorphins.

Important for our current discussion is that serotonin, dopamine and endorphins are also released through gardening activities. Therefore, gardening not only gets you out into the fresh air and provides healthier food, but also helps reduce the stress of a hard day at work, be it on the job site, in the office, or around the house if you're a homemaker.

Improve Your Property: A well decorated and maintained vegetable or flower garden not only makes your home more attractive, it actually raises the value of your property by what you invest in it. Well-designed and cared for beds of intermixed flowers, herbs and shrubs can turn a basic house into a neighborhood showpiece. Keep in mind the advice of Tom Christopher in The 20-Minute Gardener, "Your garden should reflect your lifestyle, not that of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor."

Meet Great People: Whether joining a garden club or just visiting the garden centers, you meet a lot of like-minded people. By learning from others, or sharing your knowledge, you make new friends and build good relationships.

Next month, I'll discuss what to do for your garden in these winter months.

For now just make some notes about last year's garden. What worked or failed? What do you want to add or change in this year's garden?

Historical Note: Early American gardens changed with the seasons primarily through their practical utility, providing different food, medicine, and household necessities year-round. Activities and plant availability were dictated by the weather, with intense planting and harvesting in warmer months and preservation and preparation dominating the colder ones.



Community Interests

2025 NYCHAPS Year in Review

Celebrating 41 Years of Preserving Local History!

Special thanks go to our Administrative team (Dara and Beth); Social Media strategist Sally Ricker; Bookkeeper Chris Taylor; NYCHAPS' distillery manager Sam McKinney; NYCHAPS' Board of Directors and Executive Committee; Committee chairs; Volunteers; Artisans, and our partners in the community, who have collectively dedicated thousands of hours to NYCHAPS.

Membership - monthly average of around 250 memberships (or 400-450 members), managed by volunteer James Nellis

Facebook / Social Media - 9000+ Facebook followers (1,400 new in 2025) 1.1 MILLION views across all content, over 55,000 visits to, and 15,000 interactions with the Dills Tavern Fb page so far this year.

Website - over 51,000 views, 6 thousand NYCHAPS website interactions this year, and new blog pages.

Events - Hosted over 158 Total events in 2025 (including 28 tavern tours and 100 distillery tours)

Visitors - Hundreds of distillery tour visitors, and a new record for tours of the historic site this year. With patrons for our annual events, speaker series and Farmers Markets, we hosted well over 21,000 visitors. In addition to hosting the traditional second grade field trip from the Northern schools and the annual History Camp, NYCHAPS also added multiple group and bus tours this year.

Archives - Added 9 accessions and approximately 200 items for a total of nearly 22,000 objects, documents and photos. Acquired a new Epson scanner and computer

Volunteers - Introduced Volgistics, a volunteer record keeping program, with the goal of building more community among our volunteers, both veteran and new, as well as capturing the non-event hours that may total more than event participation.

Distillery - The Eichelberger distillery continues to attract new visitors with historical tours, tasting programs and special events; and has added new rye products to compliment sales of Cherry Bounce. New programs at the distillery included the Wisdom and Whiskey, Women and Whiskey, and Wheels and Whiskey events!



Community Interests

2025 NYCHAPS Year in Review cont.

Colonial Garden – Included donations of over 283 of pounds of vegetables to New Hope from the Colonial Garden and Gardener Gary Reneker

Construction – Removed the demonstration distillery in the Wheelwright shop to make way for Cooperage. Replaced the Tavern propane fireplace. Added new concrete sidewalk along the front of Dills Tavern thanks to the generous donation of two members

Fiber Arts – Maple Shade Quilters will have raised over nearly \$4000 through their quilting and sewing efforts.

Finances – Certified our Property Tax exempt status for the Distillery. Verified our State Sales Tax exempt status. NYCHAPS is just ending our probationary status as a non profit public charity

The Future:

- Continued maintenance at the Maple Shade Barn
- Preparing for the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence with events throughout the year:
 - our July 2 celebration.
 - inclusion on the Cumberland County Revolutionary War Trail.
 - A special NYCHAPS celebration on Friday, July 3.



Again, none of these accomplishments would happen without our volunteers. Thank you for your generosity in sharing your time and talents with NYCHAPS. Wishing you all the best in 2026!



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