



Gem of the Mountains

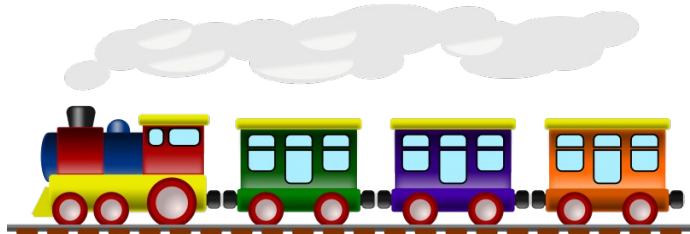
The Newsletter of the Boonton Historical Society and Museum

September, 2026

210 Main Street, Boonton, New Jersey 07005 ♦ (973) 402-8840 ♦ boontonhistory@boonton.org ♦ <http://www.boontonhistory.org>

Upcoming Events

– Boonton Day / Train Day –



Sunday, September 27th, 10 AM to 5 PM

Museum will be open, special sales in our gift shops.

– Walking Tour: Historic Main Street –



Sunday, October 18th at 1:30 PM

Led by Nancy Charlton Questa

Tour starts at Canalside Park.

John Hill Students Visit Museum



Photo: Nancy Questa

Four groups (seventy-nine students), accompanied by their homeroom teachers, visited the museum in June. Loren Katsakos, our museum educator, toured the museum with the students and discussed Dr. John Taylor and his wife Adelaide, the original owners of the museum building. In addition, the stu-

dents learned about some of our town leaders, including John Hill and his impact on the history of our town.

2026 Scholarship Recipients

For the first time since its introduction, the Boonton Historical Society's annual Helen Dixon Kunzelmann Scholarship in History has been awarded to two individuals: Linda Nichvoloda and Tyler Cechony. Congratulations!



Linda Nichvoloda and Tyler Cechony.

Linda studied as a piano major at Julliard pre-college during high school, and plans to minor in music history. She is currently enrolled in an undergraduate program at Harvard University, class of 2030. Linda was our summer intern through the Harvard SPARK program (Strategy, Participation, Action, Recognition, and Knowledge).

Tyler interned with the Boonton Historical Society from May 18th to June 18th this year through the Boonton High School internship program. She is enrolled as a history major at Ramapo college of New Jersey. She intends to pursue studies leading to a career as a museum curator or archivist.

The scholarship is open to Boonton High School seniors (regardless of residence) and Boonton residents who are high school seniors (regardless of the school they attend, including those who are homeschooled).

Candidates are selected anonymously by the Scholarship Committee.

Scavenger Hunt

Boonton's 2026 Scavenger Hunt was an adventure which promised discovery around every corner as hunters uncovered the hidden gems and stories that define Boonton's charm.

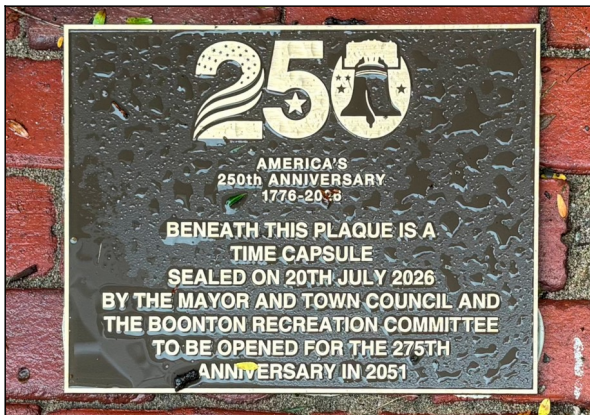
This year's Scavenger Hunt of our historic town was held July 1st through July 11th. The hunt concluded on Saturday, July 11th at 11 AM at the Boonton Museum. Attendees received a ticket for a random drawing.



Winners: Brenda Joinson, Elizabeth Ganley, and Liam Ganley.

If you missed this year's hunt, you can still obtain the booklet and a map from our web site, the Boonton Museum, Town Hall, or the Holmes library. Treat yourself to Fall adventure in Historic Boonton.

Semiquincentennial Celebration



Along with towns across America, the Town of Boonton celebrated the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in July. A time capsule of items which describe Boonton in 2026 was buried on the front lawn of the Town Hall. A brief ceremony preceded the burial, which will be opened in 2051.

The Boonton Historical Society entered copies of our newsletter and flyers, which we hope will briefly reflect the lives and times of Boonton in 2026 as well as glimpses of our industrial past.



*Tracy Pryer, the Recreation Director, addresses attendees at the time capsule ceremony.
Photos: Nancy Questa*

Colonial Boonton and the American Revolution

A full house of forty gathered at the Senior Center to hear Loren Katsakos' special presentation of the results of her interesting and informative research on Colonial Boonton and the American Revolution.

Loren's discussion did not disappoint her audience, many of whom were followers of her previous presentations for the Boonton Historical Society: *Boonton Town Leaders, Slavery and The Underground Railroad*, as well as custom presentations for schools and other groups.



Photo: Nancy Questa

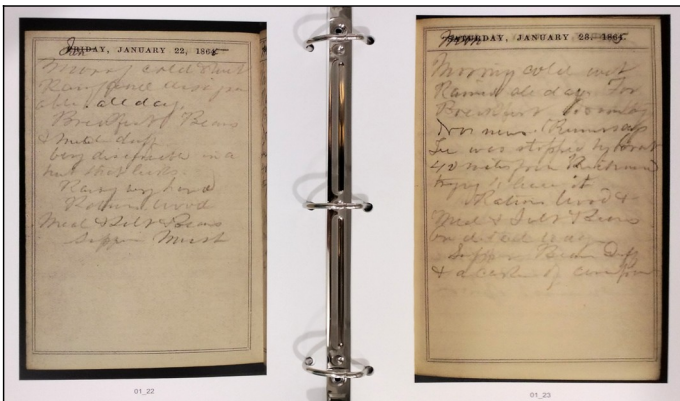
Hopkins Diaries & Memoirs Donated To The Museum

In his later years, Charles F. Hopkins served as Boonton's mayor, its postmaster, and as a Morris County Freeholder; among other civil duties and contributions to the Town of Boonton, Morris County, and the State of New Jersey. But more importantly, Mr. Hopkins was a survivor of the notorious Andersonville prison in Georgia.



Charles Maraziti.

A recipient of the Medal of Honor, it is his first-person account, detailed in his diary and memoir, that reveal the extent of the atrocities suffered by thousands of Civil War POW's.



Photos: Nancy Questa.

We are honored to have received copies of the Hopkins diary and memoir donated by Charles Maraziti, great grandson of Charles F. Hopkins. The original

diary is held at the National Prisoner of War Museum at Andersonville. Framed copies of resolutions honoring Charles Hopkins were included with Mr. Maraziti's donation.

The donated documents have been enlarged to letter size for easier reading. In addition to archived copies, binders are now on display in the museum where visitors can leaf through the pages of the documents when the museum is open.

Trustees Visit Library

Several of our trustees were delighted to be given a tour of the Caroline Rose Foster North Jersey History and Genealogy Center, a department of the Morristown and Morris Township Library.

Our group learned that the Center holds an exceptional collection of material documenting New Jersey and early American history, in addition to holding one of the finest genealogical resources in New Jersey. Our group certainly appreciated the opportunity to discuss some of the behind-the-scenes activities involved in the preservation and presentation of our local history. Thanks to James Lewis, Christopher Larlee, and Jeffrey Moy for sharing their time and expertise.



Ending on a macabre note, our group viewed the death mask of Antoine Le Blanc, a French immigrant who was the last man executed on the Morristown Green, September 6th, 1833. Even more macabre was a wallet allegedly made from Le Blanc's skin.

To read more about the library's holdings and resources visit <https://mmtlibrary.org>.

Christmas In July – A Look Back

Another Christmas in July weekend has come and gone. The years pass quickly and annual events tend to meld together. We forget the minor crises behind the baubles, bangles, and Christmas bargains. Our volunteers work hard to make sure that we are ready for the big weekend.

Christmas in July was introduced at the museum gift shops by our president, Tammie Holloway, in 2011. It has continued to grow over the years into our most popular fundraising event. The work of sorting, pricing, advertising, furniture placement, and displays are all accomplished while normal museum operations continue.

No event is complete without at least one unexpected occurrence. In 2011 New Jersey experienced record heat in July, and with temperatures in the 90s we thought potential customers might be deterred by the unusual weather. We were wrong. We certainly misjudged our loyal members and friends who did not stay away from our inaugural July sale.



Inaugural weekend July 15th, 2011.

Eric Wallin, Daniel Clark, & Tammie Holloway.

Photo: Jennifer Coultas.

In 2020 when COVID-19 closed our museum, we optimistically announced a postponement of our event schedule. Later in the year we were able to re-open on a limited, by appointment only basis (see Gem of the Mountains – November 2020).

In 2023 the roof of our 1897 museum building sprung a leak. The ceiling and floor of our Gift Shop Annex suffered water damage, together with some of our merchandise. Our volunteer mop and bucket brigade pitched in and made us ready for business. Not all last-minute upsets end in disaster:

we had several occasions when we were without air conditioning on the main museum level, but this only had the effect of attracting more customers to our air-conditioned annex level where sales soared.

Despite these unanticipated events, our volunteer staff has risen to every occasion.

Christmas in July volunteers work in shifts each sale day from Friday to Sunday, Noon to 5 PM – or later if customers are still shopping. Our volunteers enjoy the hustle and bustle of a pre-season sale, and some claim a particular shift as their own (sorry, Friday afternoon is already reserved for 2027). Nevertheless, life can change the best laid plans with little or no notice, and we always welcome additional staff. Our museum is not limited to Christmas in July. Both our gift shops offer special sale items throughout the year. Books about Boonton, gift suggestions, and Boontonware are among the treasures to be found.

If you are interested in joining our volunteer staff at any time during the year, please let us know.

Did you miss Christmas in July this year? Our gift shops are open on the first and third Sundays of each month, as well as for Boonton Day & Train Day (September 27th, 10 AM to 5 PM), Fall & Spring Walking Tours (the next tour is October 18th) and our Holiday Open House (December 6th, Noon to 4 PM).

From The Bottom Of The Jersey City Reservoir



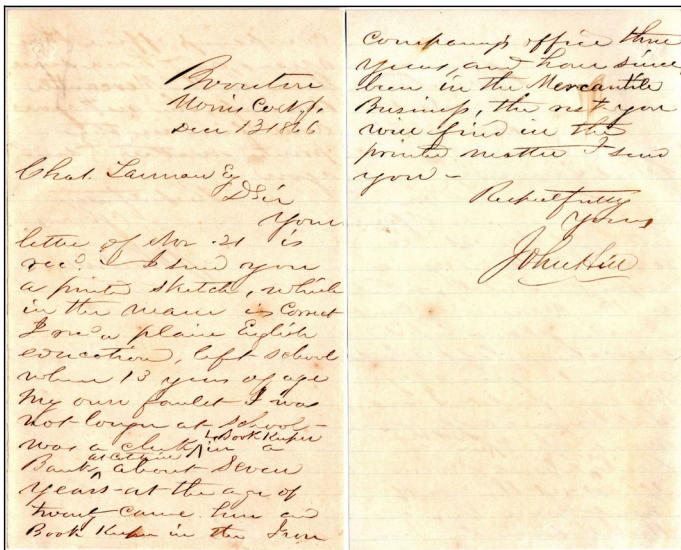
After periods of severe drought, the earthen floor of the reservoir slowly comes into view. Boontonites take the opportunity to become amateur archaeologists and scour the reservoir floor searching for hidden artifacts which have surfaced naturally.

Our current museum exhibit displays the personal collections of five different people. They have reported drought conditions in 1957, 1960, 1969, and the 1980s.

Some of their finds on display include:

- Colorful pottery and porcelain shards.
- Rusted horseshoes and scissors.
- A portion of a metal piece that clearly shows the letters T O N (presumably the missing letters would spell B O O N T O N).

John Hill Letter



In our December, 2025 issue we reported on a letter authored by John Hill and donated to the museum by former congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen. The letter's age and writing style presented issues in accurately reading the content.

Thanks to the use of AI technology, we can now present a reasonable facsimile of the text of the letter. The following is the unprompted result of having an LLM transcribe an uploaded scan of the letter:

John Hill (1821–1884) was a businessman from Boonton who went on to serve as a U.S. Representative from New Jersey. Charles Lanman was a well-known 19th-century writer, artist, and librarian (often serving as a secretary to Daniel Webster). He famously compiled the Dictionary of the United States Congress, and this letter appears to be a biographical sketch Hill sent for one of Lanman's projects.

This is the letter from John Hill to Charles Lanman, dated December 12, 1866, from Boonton, Morris County.

*Boonton
Morris Co N.J.
Decr 12 1866*

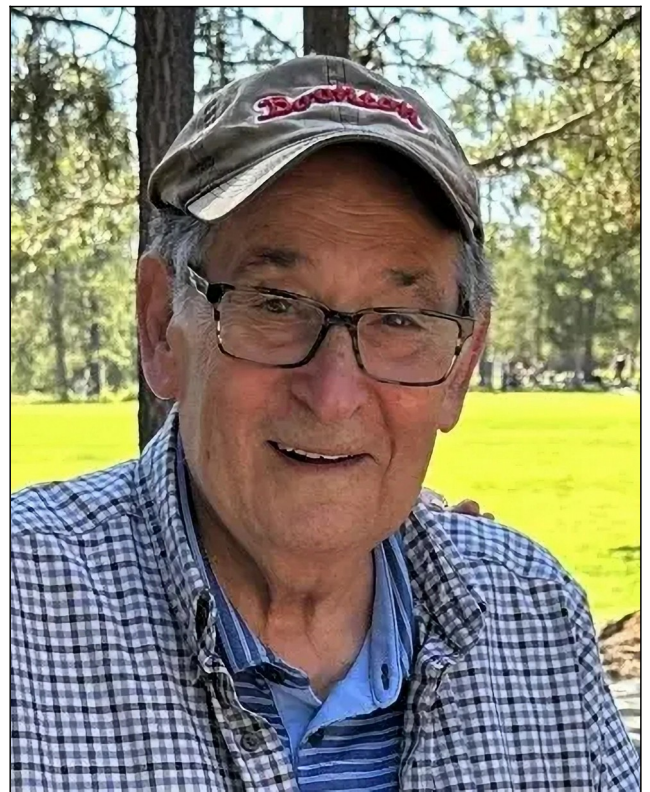
Chas. Lanman Esq

Dear Sir

Your letter of Nov. 21 is recd. I send you a brief sketch, which in the main is correct. I rec'd a plain English education, left school when 13 years of age. My own fault I was not longer at school – was a clerk in a Bank, about seven years – at the age of twenty came here as Book Keeper in the Iron Company's office three years, and have since been in the Mercantile Business, the rest you will find in the printed matter I send you –

*Respectfully Yours
John Hill*

In Memoriam



Cyril "Cy" Wekilsky – (1937-2026)



BOONTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM EVENTS CALENDAR 2026

MARCH

15th Sunday	Noon to 4 PM	New Changing Exhibit <i>Boonton Was An Industrial Town</i>
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APRIL

18th Saturday	Noon to 4 PM	Canal Day Celebration <i>Macculloch Drive, Montville Township</i>
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MAY

2nd & 3rd	11 AM to 4 PM	Pathways of History
17th Sunday	1:30 PM	Walking Tour <i>Canal & Ironworks Tour – Joe Macasek</i> Tour starts at the Museum

JULY

17th, 18th, 19th	Noon to 5 PM	Christmas in July Sale <i>Big Sales in our Gift Shops!</i>
26th Sunday	2 PM	Colonial Boonton And The American Revolution <i>by Loren Katsakos</i> <i>Boonton Senior Center, 126 North Main Street</i>

SEPTEMBER

27th Sunday	10 AM to 5 PM	Boonton Day & Train Day
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OCTOBER

18th Sunday	1:30 PM	Walking Tour <i>Historic Main Street Tour – Nancy Charlton Questa</i> Tour starts at Canalside Park Overlook
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DECEMBER

6th Sunday	Noon to 4 PM	Museum Annual Holiday Open House <i>Live Musical Entertainment & Special Sales!</i>
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We are open to the public every first and third Sunday, 1 to 4 PM, and other days by special appointment. Email us at boontonhistory@boonton.org to schedule a visit, or leave a message at 973-402-8840. Dates and times subject to change.

Boonton Historical Society & Museum

Board of Trustees

Tammie Holloway – *President*

Nancy Charlton Questa – *Vice President*

Geoffrey Millington – *Treasurer*

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Veronica Jelic – *Archivist*

Loren Katsakos – *Museum Educator*

Monica Scozzafava – *Archivist*

Eric Wallin – *Membership*

Mission Statement

The Boonton Historical Society and Museum is a non-profit organization incorporated in 1959, located in the town of Boonton, New Jersey. Its mission is to:

- Preserve and protect the town of Boonton's unique cultural, architectural, and industrial history;
- Preserve and share the area's rich history, folklore, arts, and humanities of the past and present;
- Encourage preservation and restoration of historic landmarks in the town;
- Protect and display the museum's collections;
- Provide educational programs, guided historical tours, and exhibitions to a diverse population.



Kevin M. Hale Publication Award Winner

2020 & 2021 First Place

2022 & 2024 Second Place

Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Boonton Historical Society.

– BHS&M MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL –

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____

☐ I would like to volunteer! (We have a variety of volunteer opportunities.)

Please choose your level of support (annual memberships renew in January)

LIFETIME: ☐ \$350 Couple ☐ \$200 Individual ☐ \$150 Add Your Spouse

ANNUAL: ☐ \$25 Family ☐ \$30 Business / Professional

☐ \$20 Individual ☐ \$15 Senior ☐ \$15 Student

DONATION: ☐ I have included an additional donation of \$_____

Please make checks payable to the **Boonton Historical Society** and mail to:
BHS&M Memberships c/o Eric Wallin, 465 Hill Street, Boonton, NJ 07005

– All monies directly fund the efforts of the Society and are tax deductible –

BOONTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Dr. John Taylor House 210 Main Street, Boonton, NJ

This structure has served as a home and doctor's office, American Legion Post #124, Boonton's Town Hall, and a meeting location for Boy Scouts and others. Prominent Boonton citizen John L. Kanouse gave the land on the bank of the Morris Canal as a Christmas present in 1897 to his daughter, Adelaide T., and her husband, Dr. John Taylor. The Taylors relocated here from western Morris County and Dr. Taylor continued his medical practice on the main floor while the family lived in the rest of the new building.

Taylor was joined for seven years by Dr. Ellery Peck until Peck left in 1917 to serve in World War I, and Dr. Taylor moved to Chula Vista, CA. Returning soldiers formed American Legion Post #124 with Dr. Peck as one of the trustees. Peck negotiated to purchase the building for the Post, and Boonton's Mayor and Board of Aldermen soon purchased and dedicated it as a permanent memorial to veterans and a home for Post #124.

Town offices moved here in 1922 from the Maxfield Fire House on Main Street, sharing the building with the Legion Post until the present Town Hall was built in



The Dr. John Taylor house as it appeared on a snowy day in the early 1900s.

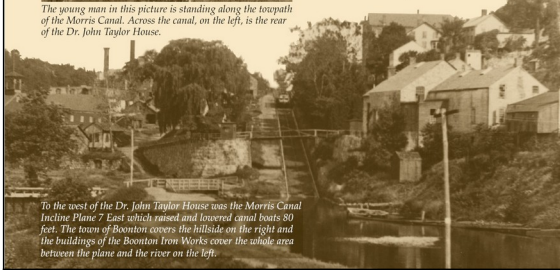
1965. The Boy Scouts, Civil Defense, and Parking Authority also used this five-story building, and the Legion later offered space to the Boonton Historical Society. On November 11, 1980, the Society opened its museum, operating for 10 years until Town officials deemed the building unsafe and closed it.

The Committee to Save the John Taylor Building sought funding for renovations, and the building reopened in May 1997.

Today, all five floors are utilized by the Boonton Historical Society and Museum.



The young man in this picture is standing along the towpath of the Morris Canal. Across the canal, on the left, is the rear of the Dr. John Taylor House.



To the west of the Dr. John Taylor House was the Morris Canal Incline Plane 7. East which raised and lowered canal boats 80 feet. The town of Boonton covers the hillside on the right and the buildings of the Boonton Iron Works cover the whole area between the plane and the river on the left.

Interpretive Sign For Our Museum

In 2025 the museum received a grant of \$2,936 from the F. M. Kirby Foundation to design and implement an interpretive sign for the exterior of our museum. Our committee began work on the text, photo selection, color scheme, and all the attendant chores of site selection, permissions, etc. Throughout the process we were grateful for the guidance and advice of Joe Macasek, who designed the layout.

You can now see our sign installed in the rear of the museum building. Next time you park or take the train, please take a few minutes to stop and take a look at our sign and learn about the history of our building.

The F. M. Kirby Foundation, headquartered in Morristown, is a major private philanthropy supporting nonprofits across arts, education, environment, health, and human services.



Boonton Historical Society & Museum
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Boonton, NJ 07005