

THE PENNSYLVANIA MAYFLOWER

www.sail1620.org

Fall/Winter 2026

VOLUME XXXIX ISSUE NO 2

SOCIETY OF MAYFLOWER DESCENDANTS IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA (SMDPA)

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SMDPA Governor Address

By: Mike Saunders, Governor

To all Mayflower Cousins,

For descendants of the Mayflower passengers, the annual change of seasons brings a profound, deeply personal connection to our ancestors. Every autumn, as the leaves turn to brilliant shades of color and the air grows crisp, we are collectively reminded of that pivotal moment in November 1620 when 102 passengers first sighted the rugged, unfamiliar coastline of New England. They arrived on the threshold of a daunting and untamed wilderness, fueled by an unwavering faith and an extraordinary courage. This Grit would soon be tested to its absolute limits by the harshest of natural elements. The arrival, in mid-November, followed a grueling, terrifying 66-day crossing of the Atlantic Ocean. Having endured cramped conditions, raging Atlantic storms, and the constant, creeping threat of disease, the Pilgrims did not find a hospitable haven waiting for them. Instead, they met the stark, chilling reality of a looming New England winter. Before even setting foot permanently on land, they recognized that survival would require absolute unity. Aboard the ship, they drafted and signed the Mayflower Compact. This foundational document established a self-governing community bound by mutual consent and equal laws, a timeless testament to their foresight, intellect, and commitment to order amidst total chaos.

As the fleeting beauty of late autumn quickly transitioned into the brutal, unyielding winter of 1620–1621, the settlers faced severe conditions. With inadequate shelter constructed on land, many passengers were forced to spend the coldest months confined aboard the damp, freezing, and unsanitary ship. Severe coastal weather, acute malnutrition, and rampant scurvy quickly ravaged the small community. The toll was devastating; by the time the ground began to thaw in the spring, nearly half of the passengers and crew had perished.

Yet, it was precisely in the deepest, darkest depths of



this winter that the true measure of their resilience was revealed to the world. Rather than succumbing to absolute despair or turning on one another in a desperate bid for individual survival, the survivors rallied together to care for the sick and bury their dead.

A remarkable spirit of selflessness and mutual support emerged from the tragedy. Only a handful of individuals remained well enough to chop wood, tend fires, cook, wash clothing, and physically care for the bedridden. This small group single-handedly ensured the survival of the fragile Plymouth colony.

When spring finally bloomed, and the Mayflower prepared to return to England in April of 1621, a remarkable event occurred: not a single surviving Pilgrim chose to abandon the settlement to sail back to safety. They had irrevocably bound their fates to this new land and to one another. With crucial peace alliances formed with the local Wampanoag people, they learned to cultivate the unfamiliar soil, catch local fish, and permanently secure their footing in Plymouth.

As members of the Society of Mayflower Descendants of Pennsylvania, we carry the actual lineage, names, and blood of these resilient individuals. The annual transition from the harvest of fall into the barren cold of winter serves as our living monument to their endurance. Their historic journey is not just a dusty chapter in a textbook; it is an active, vibrant legacy of shared faith, bravery, and community that lives on through us. This season, as we gather with our families in the comfort of our modern homes, let us honor the memory of the Pilgrims of 1620 by actively embodying the same steadfast spirit, gratitude, and unity that carried them triumphantly through their darkest winter.

I'm looking forward to our Thanksgiving Service and Dinner meeting in November and then wishing everyone a joyous Christmas Season with your friends and family.

I remain your humble servant,
Mike Saunders, Governor



The Current Governors of SMDPA

From left to right:

James Campbell, Susquehanna Colony Governor

smdpa-deputy_governor@sail1620.org

Pam Palchowski, Western Colony Governor

smdpa-westerngov@sail1620.org

Mike Saunders, SMDPA State Governor

smdpa-governor@sail1620.org

The SMDPA 2026-2027 State Officers,

Board of Assistants,

Committee Members, and Colony Governors

Governor: Michael Saunders

Secretary: Open* James Campbell, Acting

Treasurer: Open* Scott Bond, Acting

Lead Historian: Ginny Fossa*

Registrar: Althea Fejes*

Elder/Thanksgiving Service: James Buckner*

Counselor: Open*

Surgeon: Ronald Simonsen, MD*

Deputy Governor: James Campbell

Assistant Secretary: Open*

Assistant Treasurer: Anissa Harper

Co-Historians: Sharyn Davis, Ginny Fossa, Lois Howanec

Western Colony Historian: Kevin Smith

Assistant Historians: Nan Ball, Sue Makosy, Peggy Shaffer

Research Assistant: Brenda Weaver

Assistant Registrar: Sue Henning*

Captain: Keith Kammenzind*

Membership Officer: Lois Revenaugh*

GSMD DGG: Michael Saunders

GSMD AG: Sharon Saunders

(*Voting Member)



The Board of Assistants: (BOA at-Large Dates)

2024-2027

Sharyn Davis*

Lois Lang*

Bradford Ridgeway*

2025-2028

Brian Atwood*

Margaret Barnette*

Pam Palchowski*

2026-2029

Thomas Ahern*

Lois Lang*

Kevin Smith*

*Voting Member

Colony Governors

Western (Pittsburgh Area)*

Colony Governor –

Pam Palchowski

Susquehanna (Harrisburg Area)* Colony Governor –

James Campbell

Committee Chairpersons**

Audit: Open

Archivist: Thomas Ahern

Bylaws Committee (ad hoc): Open

Education and Scholarship: Lexie Kelly (Chair)

James Buckner, Sue Makosy, Linda Molitaris, Christine Krem

Finance Committee: Scott Bond (Chair), James Campbell,

Melanie Lynagh, Jonathan Hunt

Junior Membership Co-Chairs: Open

Elder/Thanksgiving Service: James Buckner

Newsletter Co-Editor (Chair): Pam Palchowski

Newsletter Co-Editor: Sharyn Davis

Sales (ad hoc): Open (Chair); Associate: Open

Social Events: James Campbell (Chair), Pam Palchowski

Nominating Chair: Open

Parliamentarian (ad Hoc) Chair: Open

Photographer: James Buckner

Membership Officer/Chair: Lois Revenaugh

Publicity/Community/Marketing Relations Chair: Open

Society Liaison: James Campbell (Chair)

Social Media: Open James Campbell, Acting

Virtual Events (ad hoc): Open

Web Committee: Scott Bond (Co-Chair), Laura Tyndall (Co-Chair)

**No voting rights

Note: Any SMDPA member with an interest in open positions may contact the Deputy Governor at smdpa-deputy_governor@sail1620.org

Western Colony Update

By: Governor Pam Palchowski

Greetings, Cousins and Mayflower Friends,

I am honored and excited to begin my term as Governor of the Western Colony. When I was a preteen, my Aunt Charlotte told me that our relatives were “real pilgrims,” and I knew I wanted to be one too. My parents, brother, and earlier generations of our family all lived within 50 miles of Plymouth. Although I was born in Maryland, we often visited New England, especially at Christmas. I am proud to be a “real pilgrim” and grateful to be connected with my Pilgrim family in Pennsylvania.

I would like to recognize Governor Keith Kammenzind for his outstanding leadership as our previous Western Colony Governor. During his term, he introduced engaging new events, renewed enthusiasm for our colony, and fostered relationships with other lineage societies. Thank you, Governor Kammenzind, for your hard work and continued support of our colony.

I am proud of the volunteers serving on the Western Colony Board and its committees. Together, we will keep the Pilgrim spirit alive through education, gatherings, historical events, and community outreach. A list of these dedicated volunteers appears below. Thank you for your service and friendship. You are greatly appreciated.

As we look ahead, we aim to build on our momentum and continue growing our membership. I invite members and friends to attend our informal gatherings. Our first official informal gathering will be October 22nd, at Eat n Park in Robinson Township. These gatherings will offer new members opportunities to participate, connect, and form lasting friendships. Locations will vary based on the group’s preference. To join the gathering email list, please contact smdpa-westerngov@sail1620.org.

After a one-year pause for renovations, our traditional fall meeting will return to Oakmont Country Club. The SMDPA Fall Luncheon will be held on November 7th. Reservation details are available in this newsletter and online.

In February, Governor Kammenzind and I represented the Society at Genealogy Day at the Oakland Carnegie Library. We explained the membership process, promoted the SMDPA, and answered visitors’ questions.

This summer, we represented the Mayflower Society at Military Miniature Day at Woodville Plantation. Visitors welcomed our presence, and we answered questions about joining the SMDPA and provided contact information.

I look forward to working with all of you to honor our Mayflower heritage, strengthen our fellowship, and keep the Pilgrim spirit alive. Together, we can ensure that the Western Colony remains active, welcoming, and growing



for generations to come.

If you would like to volunteer for an open position, lead a gathering, or contact me for any reason, please email smdpa-westerngov@sail1620.org.

Happy Thanksgiving,
Pam Palchowski, Governor

SMDPA Western Colony Officer and Assistants for 2026-2027

By: Erin Windhorst, Deputy Governor

Officers

Governor: Pamela Palchowski

Past Governor: Keith Kammenzind

Deputy Governor: Erin Windhorst

Secretary: Linda Pepper

Treasurer: Marcia Coleman

Assistant Treasurer: Open

Historian: Kevin Smith

Membership: Open, Pamela Palchowski - Acting

Registrar: Open

Elder: Bette Ruh

Counselor: Franklin Reed

Social Events: Open, Pamela Palchowski - Acting

Captain: Keith Kammerzind

Board of Assistants

Linda Pepper

Sandra McKissock

Mary Jane Koenig

Susquehanna Colony Update

By: James Campbell, Governor

It has been a pleasure to begin serving the Susquehanna Colony as its Governor, taking over from our current SMDPA Governor, Michael “Mike” Saunders, and his wife and former Colony Secretary, Sharon. I am pleased to report that we have enjoyed a robust schedule of events that have proven both educational and enjoyable. I can also safely state that our guests have dined quite well!

Three years ago, as SMDPA Governor, I strove to bring our events to underserved geographies within the state. One such attempt was in the Scranton area, locally termed “NEPA” for Northeast Pennsylvania. We chose an excellent and reasonably priced “farm-to-table” restaurant with a suitable private room, the Alter House in Clarks Summit, and have been blessed with three years of steadily increasing turnout. This year, we even brought in an excellent speaker, Dick Stone, who kept us enthralled with all the modern-day connections in bringing the “Mayflower II” to



life in the 1960s. We also decided to maintain our Colony tradition of donating from our surplus to a worthy cause. This year, we voted to give \$1,000 to the Plimoth-Patuxet Museums in Plymouth, Massachusetts, for their fundraising campaign to construct a period “1670 Warren House” on their grounds.

Should we maintain our new tradition at the Alter House? Or should we explore different venues and activities? If any Colony members living in NEPA wish to weigh in, I welcome your thoughts!

Meanwhile, we are maintaining our pre-existing Colony traditions in the center of the state by scheduling Spring and Fall Meetings. The former was held in Harrisburg in June at an interesting pair of 19th-century homes. There, we received a private group tour of the Fort Hunter Mansion before driving 15 minutes east to dine at the Greystone Public House. For the latter, we will step back to the 18th century in Berks County in October with a private group tour of the Conrad Weiser Homestead in Womelsdorf, then drive five minutes west to savor a brunch buffet at the historic Stouch Tavern. Unfortunately, I can’t attend, but Mike Saunders has graciously agreed to take my place.

We wish to honor longtime Colony Treasurer Dorothy “Dottie” Lees. After Dottie’s retirement this Spring, following years of dedicated service, the State Society has assumed this role. We also thank Daniel Lute, who has volunteered to serve as Colony Deputy Governor, and SMDPA Elder (and chief photographer) James “Jim” Buckner, who continues his longtime service as Colony Elder.

We still have two critical volunteer roles to fill in our Colony. We need a SECRETARY to take meeting minutes and help with Colony communications. And we need a volunteer to join SMDPA’s SOCIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE and assist me in conceiving, planning, and executing our Colony events. The time requirements are nominal but essential for our Colony to function successfully. To learn more, please contact me.

Best regards!

James Campbell, SMDPA Deputy Governor
smdpa-deputy_governor@sail1620.org

**Upcoming: SMDPA
Thanksgiving Gathering
Saturday, November 21, 2026
By: James Buckner, SMDPA
Elder**

The annual Thanksgiving Service will be held at the historic Norriton Presbyterian Church located at 608 N Trooper Rd in Norristown, PA, on Saturday, November 21 at 3 PM.

The Church History



Norriton Presbyterian Church was founded in 1678. Originally founded as a Dutch Reformed Church (1674), the congregation soon became English as British settlers arrived. The stone structure was built in 1698. This building still stands and, along with its graveyard, is one of the country’s oldest Presbyterian Church buildings.

Ben Franklin and David Rittenhouse are said to have worshiped here while visiting David Rittenhouse’s parents, whose farmhouse is across from the church. The Rittenhouse family deeded the property to the church.

The building was used as a hospital during the Battle of Germantown. George Washington visited the wounded troops here. Revolutionary War troops are buried in the graveyard.

The Luncheon Gathering

After the worship service, guests will drive 17 minutes east for an exceptional Thanksgiving dinner buffet at the Blue Bell Inn (ca. 1743) in Blue Bell.

The registration deadline is Fri., November 13th.

All are welcome, but seating is limited to 60 guests, so act promptly!

www.sail1620.org and click “Future Meetings/Events”. Please register early.

For any questions, please email James Campbell at smdpa-deputy_governor@sail1620.org

Treasurer’s Report From your Acting Treasurer By: Scott Bond



Organization Announcements:

First, I am delighted to announce that Anissa Harper, Western Colony, will be serving as

Assistant Treasurer of SMDPA. The Assistant Treasurer primarily manages our membership dues process. Please read her introduction later in this issue.

Second, Dot Lees has retired as Treasurer of the Susquehanna Colony, and SMDPA has assumed the Colony’s treasury responsibilities, at least temporarily. Thank you for serving in that capacity, Dot.

Third, you will also see that we have engaged Celebelle as a third-party administrator for SMDPA to assist with bookkeeping, meeting and event coordination, and system administration. This has been a big help.

And, finally, SMDPA is still looking for a new Treasurer. If you or someone you know is interested, please reach out. I would be happy to talk to you about the position.

Where do my \$70 Dues go?

-\$35 (50%) was paid to GSMD as Per Capita Dues

-10 is paid to each colony to help fund their activities

-25 remains with SMDPA to fund our organizational expenses

Financially, like most of our personal retirement funds, SMDPA continues to benefit from a relatively good financial market. The primary purpose of our investments is to sustain our Life Membership Fund, which contributes almost \$19,000 per year to our operating budget, and houses our other restricted and unrestricted funds, like Scholarships and Thanksgiving.

As of August 31st:	2026	2025
Vanguard Balance	\$772,883.40	\$713,282.09
Wells Fargo Checking	9,385.51	9,314.09
Total Cash and Investment Balance	\$782,268.91	\$722,596.18
(w/o colony balances)		

	Fall 2026	Fall 2025
Regular Members	530	546
Life/Emeritus Members	263	266
Total Members with GSMD #	793	812
Juniors	75	71
Total Members	868	883
Please help us stay current with your contact information.		

Colony Non-Junior Membership

Susquehanna Colony	180	22.7%
Western Colony	202	25.5%
Philadelphia (the catch-all)	411	51.8%

We will be working on our 2027 Budget and Dues recommendations over the next month or two.

The 3-year paid-in-advance option at the current rate has been popular. 41 members have taken advantage of this option. If interested, please send an e-mail to Scott Bond.

Sponsored Regular Members 37

Membership value and retention are important to us and, obviously, an ongoing challenge. We are always open to hearing from you regarding our value proposition. Feel free to send your comments or questions to Treasurer@sail1620.org. I will respond.

Scott Bond Treasurer@sail1620.org

Anissa Harper Asst-Treasurer@sail1620.org

Administrative Assistant admin@sail1620.org

Introducing Anissa Harper, Assistant Treasurer

Anissa Harper is delighted to serve as Assistant Treasurer of the SMDPA. A recent member of SMDPA and Western Colony, she is a descendant of Edward Fuller. She also serves as Treasurer of the Fuller Society and is pleased to have another opportunity to become more involved in the lineage-society community.



Anissa has a master's degree in American History from Binghamton University, where her research examined the role of currency and banking in the unraveling of the British Empire in North America. Her interest in history has continued well beyond graduate school. She is active in the Daughters of the American Revolution, currently serving as Regent of the Tuscarora Chapter in New York, and has held several state- and national-level DAR appointments.

Professionally, Anissa works in data center infrastructure and operations. Her work ranges from building out the power and cooling infrastructure needed for modern data centers to coordinating the equipment, logistics, and installation involved in bringing large-scale computing and supercomputing systems online. It's a decidedly modern career for someone who spends much of her free time thinking about the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Outside of work and volunteer service, Anissa enjoys knitting, genealogy, and historical costuming—interests that occasionally overlap more than one might expect. She looks forward to getting to know more SMDPA members and becoming an active part of the Society's community.

In Memoriam

By: Althea Fejes, Registrar

The members of the Board of Assistants of the SMDPA would like to express their sympathy to the family and friends of our recently departed members. We thank you for your service and dedication to the Society of Mayflower Descendants of Pennsylvania.



Philip Ritter passed away on New Year's Eve 2025; he was 91. Phil was passionately involved with his family, community, and hobbies. He was VP of the Philadelphia Chapter of the Pennsylvania Railroad Technical and Historical Society and volunteered in several capacities with other historical, scientific, and arts organizations.



Shirley Ann Stevens - May 2, 1928, to February 1, 2026. Shirley had many hobbies, including needlework and knitting. Shirley will be remembered for her quick smile and her willingness to help others. One of Shirley's proudest accomplishments was tracing her lineage to the Mayflower. She treasured the opportunity to visit Plymouth, Massachusetts, a meaningful journey that deeply connected her to her family history.



Gary Foltz - November 25, 1949 – May 16, 2026. Gary led a very active life and was married to his wife, Denise, for



nearly 52 years. Gary proudly documented his family history back to the Mayflower. He joined the Mayflower Society as a descendant of his 10th-great-grandfather, William White. Family was most important to Gary, and he especially loved being “Papa” to his grandchildren.



Elizabeth Jeanne “Beth” Ruh – March 14, 1956 – August 19, 2026. Beth had a lifelong appreciation for American and Western Pennsylvania history. She was a member of the Mayflower Society, a past president of the Pennsylvania Society Children of the American Revolution, and a member of the Pittsburgh Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. She also served on the Board of Directors of the Pittsburgh Block House. Beth will be remembered especially for her devotion to family, her generosity, wonderful cooking, lively spirit, and the friendship and kindness she extended to others.

SMDPA Welcomes New Members

By: Ginny Fossa, Lead Historian

Our Historians continue to work hard to help SMDPA prospective members gather documentation for their applications. Our team consists of Co-Historians: Sharyn Davis, Ginny Fossa, Lois Howanec; Western Colony Historian: Kevin Smith. Assistant Historians: Nan Ball, Sue Makosy, and Peggy Shaffer; and Research Assistant: Brenda Weaver.

Thank you to all the Historians for their hard work, dedication, and passion for SMDPA.

YOU ARE APPRECIATED!

Welcome to our newest SMDPA members:

Fall 2026 New Members and Supplements

Woolam, Jennifer	Hopkins 12th
Swartzbaugh, Tammi	Bradford 10th
Fechnay, Terri-Lee	Samson 11th
Patrick, Carol	Brown 11th
Hauser, Carolyn	White 11th
Madden, Elizabeth	Brewster 12th
Lager, Gail	Howland 13th
Pfaff, Rebecca	Warren 12th
Krolikowski, Morgan	Warren 13th
Johnson, Jacqueline	Hopkins 15th
Baublitz, Jessica	Alden 12th
McElhinney, Connie	Billington 13th
Bowser, Bryanna	Billington 14th
Lampert, Alison	Brewster 13th
Mueller, April	Brewster 15th



Peffer, Tamara
Russell, John Wynkoop

Warren 14th
Warren 15th

Supplements

Ahern, Thomas
Ahern, Thomas
Ahern, Thomas
Davis, Sharyn
Davis, Sharyn
Chapin-Lunz, Pamela
Chapin-Lunz, Pamela
Chapin-Lunz, Pamela
Chapin-Lunz, Pamela
Wheatall, Robert
Laws, Theodore

Elizabeth Tilley
John Tilley
Joan Hurst Tilley
Joan Hurst Tilley
John Tilley
William Mullins
Priscilla Mullins
Mary Norris
Mary Allerton
Edward Fuller
Edward Fuller

Juniors

McKissock, Camryn
McKissock, James
McKissock, Richard
McKissock, Theodore

Sailing

By: Ronald Simonsen, MD, Surgeon



How do birds fly together in their big swooping flocks? Tight though separate, as equals they sail, side by side to billow and gather in a rhapsody of a graceful Polonaise. Nature takes refuge in such displays. Cooperation has allowed our own species to reach unbelievable heights. Bringing to light the tools of language led families and clans to become town dwellers and farmers, and now nations explore the universe. History appears to be choreographed. If this can be true, what then is this feeling – that something has gone wrong? Birth rates are falling and self-destructive behaviors rising – is there a blunder lurking in the Score? Isolation, dreadful by itself, encourages reckless choices; infectious anger and fear become contagious, and then there is War.

Rumors of War draw us toward the Valley of Death. Those who have entered and been allowed to return have their story. Some may help to explain our present hour. War has tested the limits of humanity. War has illuminated Death, thereby magnifying the stark passage that closes the living from the dead. Reactive turning away to silence the word, Death, offers no advantage, nor does the utterance of Death bear a curse. So why is it that even in War, leaders try to dull Death – covering it in confusion or covertly omitting it?

If I could, I would shout out to all who do not know:

U.S. Special Forces A-Teams at Song Be and Bu Dop whose listening posts were overrun during the monsoons in 1965

-- all dead and their stories also dead
The platoon of the 1st Division infantry that my friend, Sam, accompanied that morning
 --all dead in less than an hour and a mile from camp
The A-Team at Loc Ninh in October 1967
 --I had come home by then. Overrun by the 9th Vietcong Division and all dead.

So many dead - both sides and all those in the cross-fire.

In random moments of every day, I go back still to that time when the bewitching beauty of Vietnam taught me how to live, and then, with the misty memories that still murmur from those green hills close to Cambodia, I can go on.

Talking heads on TV discuss nuclear weapons, but no one approaches the nitty-gritty task of a far-sighted investigation to describe what a General Nuclear Exchange by the Superpowers would bequeath to any that were left. They fear stirring up a revulsion that could ignite repudiation of this infernal suicide pact that humanity has been saddled with for more than 80 years. The disgusting station after the rapid tumbling completion of a true Nuclear War defies language. There is no comparison that even begins to apply.

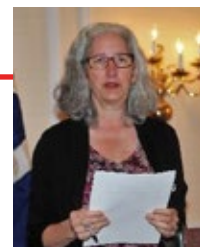
The Messenger, I had known. He was my peer. He was reliable. He was a man of honor in our group. He was a friend. He meant his news to be entertaining. He explained that he had just returned from a business trip to NYC a few days earlier. Relaxed and untroubled, he told us that while there, he had met privately with Henry Kissinger. He was the Secretary's guest that day. I listened carefully, but I was not astonished because at a similar gathering I remembered the Messenger's captivating report of a matter that could have been of mutual interest to his host. My pulse shifted when I heard him say, "He said"...and all my nerves fixed on somewhere in space when I heard, "Nuclear...". Compressed for an instant like a punch from a close-by 500-pounder, I almost called out, "What in the hell was that?!"

The Princes of Darkness are on the move and gathering the innocent with felonious guile. It's not easy sailing now. Good luck to all of us on the good earth. Hold your light high so we never have to feel alone.

War Poem

War is bad because it's sad
 If I could stop it I'd be glad
 But it goes on and doesn't stop
 It turns the world into a glop
 I quiver and I jitter when I think of all the litter
 Caused by the bombs bursting hard
 It turns the houses into splinters
 And the pigs into lard
 --by Tina Simonsen Hoffman, 2nd grade.

SMDPA Website Sail1620.com Laura Tyndall, Co-Chair



The SMDPA website is more than a source for upcoming events and Society news—it also includes a **Member Area** with additional resources available exclusively to our members.

Once logged in, members can access the **Member Directory**, review **Board of Assistants meeting minutes and reports**, browse **photo galleries from past events**, revisit **past Forum discussions**, and explore **other member-only information**.

Haven't logged in recently? This is a great time to take another look and see what is available! If you have forgotten your username or password, or need assistance accessing the Member Area, please contact Admin@sail1620.org.

Education Committee Report By: Lexie Kelly, Education Chair



Elizabeth Tilly Howland Scholarship
 2026 Winner Announced

Our scholarship winner is Sienna Ellsworth, granddaughter of SMDPA member Lee Ellsworth. She graduated from North East High School in North East, PA. In high school, Sienna was a member of the National Honor Society, Student Council, Dance Team, and Track and Field, among other activities. She is attending Indiana University of Pennsylvania and is majoring in Early Childhood Education/Special Education. Sienna was awarded \$3,000 for tuition at IUP.

We had many qualified candidates for the Elizabeth Tilley scholarship this year. Many thanks to the following Education Committee members who reviewed and ranked essays: Jim Buckner, Mary Ann Cunningham, Linda Molitoris, and Ashley DeFlice.

Sienna Ellsworth

"How do the values of the Mayflower Pilgrims relate to your 21st century life and plans?"

For the longest time, I viewed the Mayflower Pilgrims as just another group of people I learned about in history class. I knew they came to America seeking religious freedom, and I knew they faced many hardships, but I never really thought about how their values connected to my own life. As I have gotten older and started thinking seriously about my future, I have realized that many of the principles that guided the Pilgrims, such as perseverance, courage, faith, and commitment to building a better future, align with the same values that inspire me as a young woman preparing for college and adulthood.



One of the values I admire most about the Pilgrims is their willingness to take risks in pursuit of something they believed in. Leaving behind everything familiar and traveling across the ocean to an unknown land was not an easy decision. They faced uncertainty, fear, and countless challenges, yet they continued forward because they believed there was something better waiting for them. That kind of faith is something I admire and hope to achieve in these next four years. While my journey is obviously very different, I can relate to that feeling of stepping into the unknown, especially as I prepare to attend college and begin the next chapter of my life. Lately, I often feel nervous about what lies ahead, as there are many decisions to make and responsibilities to take on, but I know that growth comes from having the courage to move forward even when the future is uncertain. I have many people in my life that show me this every day.

Another value that connects the Pilgrims to my life is perseverance. The Pilgrims faced difficult conditions, including harsh weather, illness, and limited resources. Despite these obstacles, they continued working toward their goals and building a community, which I think is the most important thing. Throughout my own life, I have learned that success rarely comes easily. Whether it has been balancing schoolwork, extracurricular activities, family responsibilities, or preparing for my future, there have been times when I felt overwhelmed. This is where you find the people who will support you day in and day out! Those hard experiences have taught me the importance of staying determined and continuing to work hard even when things become difficult. The Pilgrims' perseverance reminds me that challenges are not roadblocks; they are more like opportunities to become stronger and more resilient.

I also admire the Pilgrims' commitment to creating a better future, not just for themselves but for future generations. They made sacrifices because they believed their efforts would provide opportunities for their children and families. As I think about my own goals, I find this value especially meaningful. Going to college is not just about earning a degree for me; it is about creating opportunities that will positively impact my future and allow me to contribute to the lives of others. For one thing, becoming a teacher will be so fulfilling in my want to help others. Knowing that I will prepare children with the skills they need throughout the rest of their student careers is so meaningful, and I see the vision that the pilgrims had as they did this for themselves. I want to build a life that makes my family proud and gives me the ability to make a difference in my community. As a first-generation college student and graduate, I also am excited to set a standard of greatness and commitment for my future children. Like the Pilgrims, I am motivated by the belief that the work I put in today can help create a better tomorrow for not just me, but those I cross paths with. That is truly my purpose.

Faith is another value that played a significant role in the

Pilgrims' journey and continues to influence my own life. Although everyone experiences faith differently, I believe there is value in trusting that hard work, dedication, purpose, and God will lead me where I am meant to be. There have been times when I questioned whether I was making the right decisions or whether I was capable of achieving my goals, but knowing that there is a plan for me has pushed me through the worst of times. During those moments, I learned to trust myself and the path I was on, much like the Pilgrims. They relied on their faith during uncertain times, just as I rely on my confidence, determination, and belief that I can accomplish the things I set out to do.

Perhaps the value that resonates with me most is the importance of community. The Pilgrims survived because they worked together, supported one another, and recognized that success was not something they could achieve alone. Throughout my life, I have been fortunate to have support from my family, teachers, friends, and mentors to do the things that I think are too hard. I would not even have this opportunity to obtain this scholarship if it wasn't for the support that rallies around me every day. Their encouragement has helped shape the person I am today, and knowing I am loved moves mountains. As I move forward, I hope to continue building strong relationships and giving back to the people who have supported me. This also ties into teaching. I hope to be a safe space for children who don't have one. You never know what a child is bringing to school with them, and knowing I could be the only good part of their day is what will push me to be as phenomenal of an educator as the ones who I have grown up around. I believe that success becomes more meaningful when it is shared with others and used to help those around us.

As an 18-year-old planning for my future, I know that the road ahead will not always be easy. There will be obstacles, unexpected challenges, and moments of doubt. However, when I look at the values demonstrated by the Mayflower Pilgrims, I am reminded that courage, perseverance, faith, and community can help people overcome even the most difficult circumstances. These values have remained relevant for hundreds of years because they continue to inspire individuals like me to pursue their goals and create positive change.

As I work toward earning a college degree and building a successful future, I hope to carry these values with me every step of the way. The Pilgrims' journey demonstrates the power of determination and belief in a better future, and I strive to embody those same qualities in my own life. By working hard, staying true to my goals, and supporting those around me, I hope to make a meaningful impact and create opportunities not only for myself but for others as well. Thank you for considering my application and for helping students like me to pursue our dreams through educational opportunities!

**Upcoming: Susquehanna Colony
Fall Meeting and Luncheon – October 17, 2026
Conrad Weiser Homestead and Stouch Tavern**



The Susquehanna Colony Governor, James Campbell, is inviting all SMDPA members and guests to the Conrad Weiser Homestead on Saturday, October 17. We will convene at 11:00 AM at the Conrad Weiser Homestead, 28 Weiser Dr., Womelsdorf, PA 19567. We will participate in a 90-minute guided tour of the visitor center and galleries, the house with period furnishings, the education center, and the exhibits. We will also explore the spring house, gravesite, outdoor grounds, and museum shop. These historic facilities, set on 26 acres, are the remains of the 890-acre estate of Pennsylvania pioneer Conrad Weiser (1696-after 1760), considered the founder of Berks County.

Upon concluding our tour at 12:30 PM, we will drive two minutes west to dine at historic Stouch Tavern, 138 W. High St, Womelsdorf, PA 19567, (610) 589-4577. (Ample paved parking is available in the rear.) Jacob Seltzer built this sturdy stone structure in Womelsdorf in 1762. It was later converted into what became known as Stouch's Tavern. In 1793, it hosted President George Washington as he inspected construction of the Union Canal. Warmed by the fireplace, we will enjoy a delicious dinner buffet.

The registration deadline is Friday, October 9th. You may visit SMDPA's website for more details and to register – either conveniently online or by downloading, completing, and mailing the RSVP form. Go to the Events tab, and then click on Future Meetings/Events: https://sail1620.starchapter.com/meetinginfo.php?p_or_f=f.

All are welcome!

**Upcoming: Western Colony
Fall Meeting and Luncheon – November 7, 2026
Oakmont Country Club**



Western Colony Governor Pam Palchowski invites all SMDPA members and guests to the Oakmont Country Club on Saturday, November 7th, for our Fall Meeting and Luncheon. The Oakmont Country Club is located at 1233

Hulton Road, Oakmont, PA 15139, and was founded in 1903. Best known for its historic Golf Course, Oakmont has also hosted major golf tournaments since 1919. It is a beautiful Country Club and has hosted the Western Colony multiple times.

Traditionally, the Western Colony celebrates Thanksgiving at the Oakmont Country Club. Last year, the Club was under construction, and we chose another venue. After discussing the options with members, it was decided to return to Oakmont for our Thanksgiving celebration. We have reserved the Grand Ballroom for our celebration.

Members and their guests are welcome at noon to check in and socialize. Our brief business meeting will commence at 12:30 PM. We will serve a traditional Thanksgiving luncheon following the meeting. The afternoon will cost \$50.00 per person.

As we approach the end of our nation's 250th celebration, Western Colony is pleased to announce our guest speaker: Rob Windhorst, a Revolutionary War reenactor. Mr. Windhorst will speak about the vital importance of music during the Revolutionary War. We will learn how the drum and fife corps acted as battle command signals. Certain sounds and cadences let troops know to advance, retreat, or move left or right across the battlefield. The fife was loud and piercing and could drown out the sounds of war. A drum and fife demonstration will show some of the command signals and battle tunes used to boost morale.

The registration deadline is Friday, October 30th. This is a firm deadline! Please visit the SMPDA website for more information about this event and all events: www.sail1620.org and click "Future Meetings/Events". Please register early.

**Genealogy, Fellowship, and the Mayflower
By: Laura Tyndall, Membership**

Do You Like Chinese Food, Ice Cream, or a Cup of Coffee?

A group of SMDPA members has been getting together once a month in the Coopersburg area to enjoy good conversation, share genealogy discoveries, learn about new research tools, and, of course, talk about all things Mayflower!

There's no formal agenda—just an hour or so with fellow Mayflower cousins over lunch at a local restaurant, an ice cream sundae at a picnic table, or perhaps a cup of coffee and a donut.

Interested in joining us—or starting a similar informal gathering in your area? Contact Membership Chair Lois Revenaugh at smdpa-membership@sail1620.org. We'd love to see more of these casual gatherings spring up around Pennsylvania!

Our most recent get-together was held on August 25th at a local Chinese restaurant.





Pictured left to right: Molly Jager, Laura Tyndall, Lois Lang, Lois Revenaugh, Charlene Servian, Ginny Fossa, Karen Bateman, and Nancy Ball.

Western Area Begins Lunch Gatherings By: Pam Palchowski, Western Colony Governor

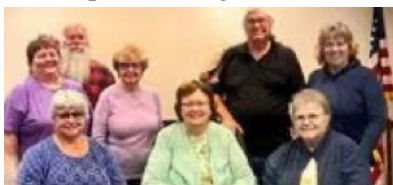
SMDPA members in the Coopersburg area meet regularly to enjoy one another's company. Their conversations cover genealogy discoveries, research strategies, and all things Mayflower. These monthly gatherings have been well received.

Western Colony has begun hosting similar informal gatherings. Recently, members, guests, and a prospective member met for lunch at a popular Pittsburgh restaurant. The event provided a welcoming opportunity to connect with others in the SMDPA, form new friendships, and discuss topics ranging from genealogy and America 250 to upcoming local historical events.

If you are interested in joining us at an upcoming monthly gathering, please email me at the address below. I look forward to seeing you there.

Pam Palchowski

smdpa-westerngov@sail1620.org



Front row: Pam Palchowski, Linda Pepper, Judy McNamara
Back row: Pam and Jeff Lunz, Priscilla Schneider, Chuck Pepper, Cyndy Ridgeway

SMDPA Member Spotlight The Centenarian ~ Mr. Charles Smith

Charles Smith could not attend the Western Colony Spring Meeting and Luncheon this year because he was busy celebrating his 100th birthday! His birthday was on May 14th, and he celebrated with family, but he also celebrated with his friends at an open house on May 16th. Grand Celebrations!

Charles is a Mayflower descendant of Pilgrim James Chilton. He found out he was a Pilgrim descendant while doing genealogical research. Charles has been a member of the General Society since 2013 and joined SMDPA in 2016 after moving to Pennsylvania.



The Society of Mayflower Descendants of Pennsylvania Officers, Board of Assistants, and especially the members of the Western Colony wish Mr. Smith a very happy belated birthday. Reaching the century milestone is a rare and remarkable achievement that merits a place in "The Member Spotlight".

Mr. Smith, your zest for life and your infectious smile continue to brighten the lives of all who know you.

Congratulations on your 100th Birthday!



Mr. Smith with his children (L to R) Stephen Smith, Lois Smith Puglisi, Mr. Charles Smith, Christopher Smith, and Peter Smith

Genealogy Series By: Lois Revenaugh, Membership Director

What's New at Ancestry - 2026

One highlight of the annual RootsTech conference in Salt Lake City is discovering what's new at Ancestry—and 2026 did not disappoint. With a wave of new features, many are already available, and more are on the horizon. 2026 is shaping up to be an exciting year for genealogy researchers!

Ancestry currently has three main paid Family History membership levels: U.S. Discovery, World Explorer, and All Access. Some features may require one of the higher subscription levels or the ProTools add-on subscription. Here is a plug for ProTools. It's only \$10 per month, and you can cancel at any time and resubscribe later. In my experience, it is worth every penny of the \$10, especially for those who use their DNA matches.

In honor of the nation's 250th anniversary, Ancestry has announced an extraordinary initiative: digitizing 2.4 million handwritten pages of **American Revolutionary War** pension files. These records, previously accessible only at the National Archives in Washington, DC, will soon be available to researchers everywhere, opening new doors for those with Revolutionary War ancestors.

Another exciting introduction is **Ancestry Preserve**, a new service designed to safeguard your family treasures. For \$20, you receive a storage box (approximately 18" x 12" x 3") to fill with photos, VHS tapes, 8mm films, and more. Once returned, Ancestry provides a digitization estimate. After processing, your items are added to your online gallery and safely returned to you—preserving your memories for generations to come.



Ancestry has also developed **AI Photo Insights**, a feature that will help analyze and estimate when your historical photos were taken—an invaluable tool for placing images in the correct context.

Artificial intelligence continues to play a growing role across the platform. One standout enhancement is **automatic transcription** of documents attached to your tree, whether handwritten or typed—making records easier to read, search, and understand.

You may also notice a refreshed site design aimed at simplifying your research experience. In the past, **hints** could appear in multiple places on a person’s profile—sometimes with inconsistent results. The updated layout brings greater clarity and consistency, making it easier to follow leads.

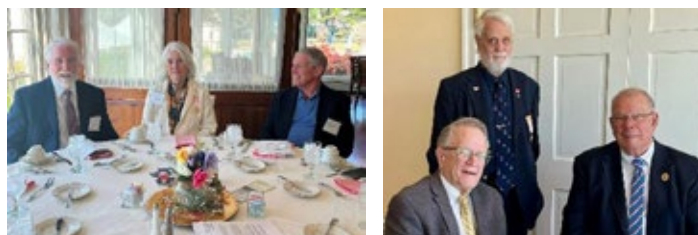
Citations have also been streamlined. Instead of completing up to 18 fields, you can now create a source by answering just three simple questions—while still having the option to use the more detailed format if you prefer.

The new **“Ideas”** button is available to US subscribers—complete with a touch of sparkle—and suggests additional research paths to help guide your next steps.

Tree Compare feature—Ancestry’s current Family Tree page lists Tree Compare as a regular feature. You can compare your tree with another member’s tree side by side to see differences, identify possible new ancestors, and verify research.

SMDPA Held Spring Meeting and Luncheon Corinthian Yacht Club April 11, 2026

Our annual SMDPA Members Meeting was held at the historic Corinthian Yacht Club of Philadelphia, in Essington. Sixty-two guests enjoyed a gourmet, three-course luncheon with riverside views. After lunch, noted historian Rod Gragg, traveling from his home in South Carolina, spoke on his recently reissued book, The Pilgrim Chronicles: An Eyewitness History of the Pilgrims and the Founding of Plymouth Colony (Regnery History, 2014). Mr. Gragg graciously answered all members’ questions and signed copies of his new book.



Susquehanna Colony Spring Event Alter House Restaurant May 9, 2026

The Susquehanna Colony’s Spring Social Event was held at the Alter House Restaurant in Clarks Summit. Thirty-one guests feasted on a “farm-to-table” brunch buffet, while author Richard Stone, driving from his home in the Hudson Valley, recounted the extraordinary connections in his recent book, Project Mayflower: Building and Sailing a Seventeenth-Century Replica (Lyons Press, 2024). Mr. Stone shared a fun fact that the crew of the Mayflower II’s maiden voyage



acted as postal workers, canceling mail with a “Mayflower II Maiden Voyage” postmark. Colony member Jyl Reeves made sure everyone was ready to celebrate America250 with fun favors and summertime raffle items.



Western Colony Spring Meeting, Elections and Luncheon Oakmont Country Club May 16, 2026

Western Colony’s Spring Meeting was held at historic Oakmont Country Club in May.

Budding grounds, flowers, and greens provided a beautiful setting for 39 guests. Governor Keith Kammenzind opened with the Pledge of Allegiance and the Mayflower Compact, followed by the Descendant Roll Call and guest introductions.

Governor Kammenzind reflected on three years in office, highlighting the Daniel South dedication, a Lake Erie cruise aboard the Lettie G, and seasonal field trips. He then turned the meeting over to Governor Mike Saunders to install the new officers and BOA members.

Nominating Committee Chair Erin Windhorst introduced the slate. Deputy Governor Jim Campbell moved to accept it, and the members voted unanimously. Governor Saunders installed the officers, who took the oath of office.

Sandy McKissock offered a prayer of praise and gratitude before Oakmont Country Club served a delicious three-course luncheon.

New Governor Pam Palchowski resumed the meeting, introduced herself, and reviewed the colony’s goals for the future. Governor Palchowski recognized the newly appointed officers and members of the Board of Assistants. She was also pleased to introduce three attendees who are applying for membership in the SMDPA. Best wishes to Patty Key, Judy Macnamarra, and Helen Cahalane as they gather the final pieces of their genealogy puzzles. Congratulations to the new officers and committee members of our Western Colony.



Before concluding the meeting, Governor Palchowski thanked Governor Kammenzind for his wonderful leadership over the past three years. Western Colony has increased its number of members and expanded its activities. We will work together to gain new members and keep the pilgrim spirit alive.

Guest speaker Rob Windhorst, a period re-enactor and husband of SMDPA Deputy Governor Erin Windhorst, discussed Woodville Plantation’s history, including John Neville’s 1774 purchase of significant acres of land in Collier Township. John Neville was the Tax collector, and this angered the farmers. John Neville built two mansions, and the one on Bower Hill was burned down in protest. His mansion at Woodville Plantation is still standing. It is a National Landmark, and it is worth a visit to see history come alive. For more information: Woodville-experience.org



Gov Saunders congratulates Gov Pam Palchowski



Western Colony Officers from left to right: Sandy McKissock, Marcia Coleman, Erin Windhorst, Keith Kammenzind, Pam Palchowski, Gov Mike Saunders, and Linda Pepper.



Historic Event: Five Governors, past and present, in one place. From left to right: Governors Jim Campbell, Keith Kammenzind, Pam Palchowski, Lois Lang, and Mike Saunders.



Guest Speaker Rob Windhorst, History of Woodville Plantation

Susquehanna Colony Spring Meeting June 13, 2026

Susquehanna Colony's Spring Meeting consisted of visits to two 18th-century homes in Harrisburg: a guided tour of the preserved Fort Hunter Mansion atop the banks of the Susquehanna River, followed by a gourmet lunch buffet for 15 guests at the repurposed Greystone Public House.

Western Colony Summer Event Meadowcroft Rock Shelter and Villages By: Pam Palchowski, Social Events Committee June 13, 2026



Western Colony celebrated the start of summer on May 13th at the historic Meadowcroft Rockshelter and Villages in Avella, PA. After our fun photo session with photographer Cyndy Ridgeway, we explored the Rockshelter, Meadowcroft Villages, and the Transportation Museum.

The MEADOWCROFT ROCKSHELTER is the region's earliest proof of human inhabitants, dating back at least 19,000 years! SMDPA cousins and their families shared a private tour of the Rockshelter. The park ranger explained that in 1955, Albert Miller, a Meadowcroft farmer and landowner, found a groundhog living in a dugout hole under the massive rock overhang on his farm. The groundhog had brought prehistoric bones and a prehistoric knife to the surface. Mr. Miller kept his discovery a secret until he hired the archaeological team from the University of Pittsburgh. The excavation started in 1973, and the team discovered nearly two million artifacts and Eco facts. The Rockshelter remains an active archaeological site today and became a National Historic Landmark in 2005. Fun Fact: The Miller family still operates a working farm on the land in Meadowcroft.

Three interpretive villages on site bring 500 years of history to life. First, we entered a 16th-century Monongahela Indian Village. We walked through a wigwam and saw animal pelts drying nearby. The garden was getting ready to plant, and they would grow their "Three Sisters Garden," including Corn, which acts as a trellis for the beans that provide nitrogen for the soil, and then squash, which keeps the soil moist with its broad leaves. The Indigenous peoples

in North America grew and refined the Three Sisters Garden.

We entered the 19th-century exhibits and learned about the Frontier Trading Post, where we made candles and dipped our own as souvenirs. We were invited to visit the one-room schoolhouse and watch a blacksmith bend iron into a fork. It was interesting to see how the weaver used the fresh weeds to prepare for weaving; the craft was beautiful.

The last exhibit to explore, Trails to Transportation, displayed maps of foot trails and examples of early farm equipment. In 1811, construction began on the National Road, the first federally funded highway. In 1818, the link from Meadowcroft to Pittsburgh was established. This started the use of the Stagecoach. Then, the Conestoga Wagons appeared in 1837. Finally, the development of the railroad in 1870 reached Meadowcroft farms and allowed farmers to send their grains to bigger markets for more revenue.

We concluded our outing with lunch at the Historical Breezy Heights Tavern & Restaurant. It originated as a General Store Roadhouse in 1920 with the opening of the National Road. In 1933, after Prohibition, it became Breezy's Restaurant and Tavern. In 1954, the current owners, the Esposto Family, purchased the establishment. They renamed it Breezy Heights Tavern & Restaurant. The owner, Rick Esposto, seated our whole group at one very large table in the middle of the dining room; it was fabulous. He personally thanked us and shared the establishment's history. The food was delicious, and the fellowship was wonderful.

We had a great day exploring Meadowcroft Villages and Rockshelter. It was wonderful to share this event with so many cousins and friends. Here are some photos of our outing. SMDPA members experienced 19,000 years of history in one day!



Meadowcroft Rockshelter and Villages: SMDPA members and guests.
Photo: C. Ridgeway



Group Candle Making



Stagecoach Mail Delivery

SMDPA's Social Brunch Event August 15, 2026

Members convened at the historic Valley Green Inn in rustic Wissahickon Park of Philadelphia. Twenty-two guests from three Mayflower societies— Pennsylvania's, New Jersey's, and Delaware's—enjoyed gourmet sandwiches and libations in surroundings that appeared unchanged in 250 years. Period re-enactor Michael Carver carried the theme by educating and entertaining us on the importance of taverns and brewing in Colonial America. Photos taken by SMDPA Elder James Buckner

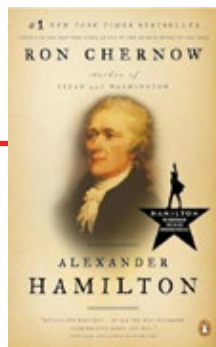


If you have ideas for next year's meetings and outings, please forward them to SMDPA's Social Events Committee, presently consisting of Western Colony Governor Pamela Palchowski and myself. We start planning our events in December for the following year. To properly engage our members, Pam and I are always looking for great destinations, speakers, and restaurants, as well as volunteers willing to help. Email us at smdpa-deputy_governor@sail1620.org.

SMDPA Book Review Hamilton By: Carol L. Hodes

"Hamilton" by Ron Chernow chronicles not only the fascinating life of Alexander Hamilton, but also the founding of our country predominantly in the mid-to-late 1700s. The book is lengthy but brings understanding to the origins of the deep divisions that existed at the birth of our nation and persist to this day.

I give this book a thumbs up! The book is over 700 pages and very detailed. I didn't see the movie or the play, but from what I can discern, there is little relationship between the Broadway musical and the book.



"What I Did on My Fourth of July Vacation" By: Bradford and Cynthia Ridgeway



Remember the days in school when the first assignment was writing about what you did on your summer vacation? There was a bit of a chuckle in the Ridgeway house when Pam's email arrived, as it reminded us of those days.

She was asking for accounts for:

- * Articles on your summer vacations, especially anything Pilgrim-related.
- * A review of the new "Young Washington" major motion picture.
- * Recommendations of relevant books you have recently read, plus any book reviews.
- * Accounts of any "America 250" events that you attended and felt were "AMAZING".

But what if we did all of them? How could we narrow down our 2026 adventures to just a few lines here and there?

We had a beautiful day with the Mayflower cousins at the Meadowcroft Rockshelter, but this was covered earlier in this newsletter.

Our Mayflower fellowship continued with a fun little cousins' get-together at the Teutonia Männerchor Club with Jim and Ulana Campbell and Keith Kammenzind. The Campbells were in town because...well... Pittsburgh is awesome. Is there any other reason needed?

For the 250th Semiquincentennial, Brad planned several trips, including the May 2nd–3rd kick-off at George Washington's Mount Vernon home for The Revolutionary War Weekend. For two days, we experienced living history displays of military drills and encampments, performances by actors embodying General Washington and the Marquis de Lafayette, book signings, and a marketplace filled with 18th-century-inspired artisans and craftspeople. The Mount Vernon grounds were amazing, and we highly recommend a visit if you are into history, gardening, museums, or just a stroll back in time. One highlight was a display of George Washington's clothing. The man had style!

Our second trip was to the Philadelphia area for the 4th of July celebration. The temperatures soared to 100 degrees most days. Yet even with these sweltering highs, we managed to walk, shuttle, and subway our way through Southeastern PA.

Our first day started at Valley Forge. The exhibits tell a story that is somewhat lost on us — yes, the winter at Valley Forge was hard, but it was also productive. One of the major reasons the Continental Army won the war was due to the training provided by Friedrich Wilhelm August Heinrich Baron von Steuben (say that three times fast). Baron von Steuben turned a ragtag bunch of men and boys into a trained army that could face the British forces.

While browsing in the Valley Forge gift shop, we purchased the book: A Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier by Joseph Plumb Martin. History tells us about the hardships of Valley

Forge. Joseph Plumb Martin, who enlisted at the tender age of 15, tells us about the everyday struggle to survive while serving in the Continental Army. The British soldiers were just one threat to the young American troops — starvation, exposure, and disease were just as dangerous as a bullet or a bayonet.

Philadelphia was bursting at the seams with events. We visited the National Constitution Center, listened to a town hall discussion, and enjoyed a private tour of the new exhibit hall. The Museum of the American Revolution (MAR) offered an early-morning private tour, which let us visit without the crowds. One exhibit at the MAR was George Washington's original battlefield tent, which can be shown under lights only once every hour because of the fabric's fragility.

Directly across the street from the MAR is the First Bank building, which opened its doors for the first time since the 1970s. We were honored to view the building on its opening day, July 1st.

We spent an entire day at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, with its extensive collection of portraits, architectural elements, and tapestries. We were fortunate to see two of Van Gogh's Sunflowers paintings as part of a special event.

We visited Old City Philadelphia, with the Betsy Ross House and the Flagmaker's Hall.

We stopped at the Reading Terminal Market for lunch and people-watching. We visited the Jeweler's Row area, more for sushi than for diamonds.

One evening we attended the light show LUMINISCENCE at the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul. The live orchestra and choir were amazing. On our walk back to the hotel, we met two of the singers who performed that night, who gave us recommendations for additional activities to try out during our visit.

On the 4th of July, we toured the U.S. Mint, where we received a free sample! Yes, the U.S. Mint was giving out the "4th of July" stamped commemorative quarter. Only 250,000 are in circulation. How will you know if you have one? Look for the phrase "July 4th" just to the left of Jefferson's shirt front.

The B Free Franklin Post Office in Old City was also open that day. We purchased a sheet of stamps and had them hand-canceled with the date of July 4, 2026. The U.S. Postal Service workers were fantastic. They even gave out free pretzels and commemorative pins for those waiting in line in the heat.

Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell were bustling with people on the 4th, but we managed to find the small, air-conditioned Museum of the American Philosophical Society just around the corner in the Independence Hall building complex. The exhibits showcased the Declaration of Independence in its many forms, as printers from the Colonies recreated the document to spread the news of the break with England.

If that weren't enough, we were in the right place at the right time to see the Union Pacific Big Boy 4014 train on Sunday, July 5th. The heat was oppressive, but we headed

to the Navy Yard complex early in the morning while it was relatively cooler. The Union Pacific workers greeted us with bottles of water and goodie bags, including hand-held fans to help stay cool. It's a good thing we went early because the train yard closed in the afternoon due to dangerous temps. The first-aid tents ran out of ice and water to treat those with heatstroke.

On Monday morning, as we were departing, Brad took us back down to the Navy Yard to watch the Big Boy leave the Philadelphia area. People were lining the bridges over the train tracks to see the massive engine chug its way west to its final resting place. As the engine slowly inched forward, the steam enveloped the tracks and the workers, recalling how it must have been when steam trains chugged out of the stations.

Lastly, we saw "Young Washington" with free tickets given out during our Mount Vernon visit. Knowing a lot of the story, it was a bit disappointing that some of the facts were bent or broken for the Hollywood formula, but overall, it was enjoyable having a date with each other. The magic lives on.

Our 250 Adventure is not over yet. We have one final trip on the schedule: Boston and the Tea Party Museum! While there, we will capture a photograph of Brad standing next to the plaque with the name of his 5th great-grandfather, "Isaac Ridgway".

Editor's note: Some students arrive on the first day of school, all set and ready to impress! Cyndy and Brad, you nailed the assignment! A+++++

**Family Trip to the U.S.
Capitol
Our America 250
By: John E. B. Baldrige**



I never expected to find one of my ancestors staring back at me from the walls of the U.S. Capitol.

While visiting the Capitol, I came across Robert Walter Weir's 1843 painting, Embarkation of the Pilgrims. The monumental painting depicts the Pilgrims preparing to leave Delfshaven, Holland, in 1620, beginning the journey that would ultimately bring them to America. And there, among them, was Myles Standish—my ancestor. I stopped and looked at him for a long time.

Weir painted Standish kneeling in prayer alongside his wife, Rose, surrounded by the other Pilgrims as they prepared to leave everything they knew behind. The painting commemorates an important chapter in America's founding story and was installed in the Capitol in 1843.

Of course, when I sent the picture to my brother, he had the historical insight that only a brother could provide: "Myles Knealish."

But standing there nearly two centuries later, the scene felt much more personal.

I knew the history. I knew the name. I knew that Myles Standish crossed the Atlantic, helped establish Plymouth

Colony, and served as its military leader. But seeing his likeness preserved inside the Capitol made the distance between his world and mine suddenly feel very small.

I found myself wondering what he would think if he could look up from that painting and see one of his descendants standing before him. He could never have imagined the country that would grow from that little colony, or that four hundred years later, one of his descendants would stand beneath the dome of its Capitol, looking back at him.

For a moment, I wasn't simply looking at American history. I was looking at family. And somehow, after all those centuries, it felt less like I had discovered Myles Standish in the Capitol than that I had come to visit him with my three children and wife, the next generation.



America 250 in Harrisburg

By: Pamela E. Neill

It was July 18, 1776, when the people of Harris's Ferry first heard the news. That is when John Harris, Jr., received the broadside copy of the Declaration of Independence and read it from his front porch on the east shore of the Susquehanna River. Congress requested that this document be read publicly throughout all the colonies.

On July 4, 2026, Harrisburg reenactor David Biser, appearing in accurate colonial garb, portrays John Harris, Jr., as he stands on "his" front porch for the first reading of the Declaration of Independence to the public assembled on the Harris's front lawn near the Harris's Ferry landing.

I, too, witnessed the reading of this groundbreaking document while standing on the front lawn of John Harris Jr's. home, just as frontier residents stood and heard the news for the first time 250 years ago in 1776!

It was an unforgettable experience!

Volunteering in America

By: Robert Keck

I am originally from Greenville, PA. I have been to many different America250 events. I currently live in Littlestown, PA, near Gettysburg, and have attended 3 events in Gettysburg and several more in other states, including Connecticut. As a Member of the Sons of

the American Revolution, Continental Congress Chapter, where I am currently the President, I have also been to Carlisle several times, as well as Tia Daughton and Hershey, to assist with the Color Guard.

As a member of the Executive Committee and District 3 Deputy for the State (PASSAR), representing the State Sons of the American Revolution, I also attended events in Kentucky twice. I look forward to attending Congress in New Orleans next year.

Presentation to Focus on Pilgrims

The Mount Joy Area Historical Society will meet at 7 p.m. on Monday, May 18, at the Cemetery Road Schoolhouse, 120 Fairview St., Mount Joy.

James Buckner will speak about how his 11th-great-grandfather John Howland came to America from England as a passenger on the Mayflower. Buckner will describe what the Pilgrims' first years in America were like using a variety of props, ranging from children's toys to ship's biscuits.

Buckner is a member of the General Society of Mayflower Descendants and the Society of Mayflower Descendants in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. He was born in New England and traces his lineage on his mother's side to

immigrants who arrived in 1620. Buckner has a background in education, and he has always enjoyed history and genealogy. He and his wife reside in Marietta.

Refreshments and tours of the museum will be available after the program. The meeting is free and open to the public, and donations will be accepted.

The historical society's building is open every Sunday from 1 to 4 p.m. Visitors may explore exhibits featuring Mount Joy memorabilia and information about local history. For more information, visit www.mountjoyhistory.com or search for "Mount Joy Area Historical Society" on Facebook or @mountjoyareahistoricalsociety on Instagram.



"Seen in the News"

Check out who we found in the newspaper!

Jim Buckner's article appeared in the Merchandiser (Donegal Edition) on May 13, 2026.

Sharyn Davis's article appeared in the Citizen's Voice on July 21, 2026.



Sharyn Davis, of Tunkhannock Daughters of the American Revolution, packs canned food during the sixth annual Pennsylvania Day Initiative at the CEO/Weinberg Food Bank in Pittston on Monday. PHOTOS BY JASON ARDAN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Celebrating Pennsylvania Day

Recognized nationally on July 20, Pennsylvania Day celebrates the Commonwealth's history, heritage and people. America250PA dedicated the occasion to the theme "Pennsylvanians Helping Pennsylvanians" through acts of service across the Commonwealth. Volunteers will participate in projects focused on food insecurity and neighborhood beautification in partnership with Feeding Pennsylvania, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, The GIANT Company, Natural Food Group, EQT Corporation, and PennDOT.

On Monday, volunteers helped pack boxes of food at the CEO/Weinberg Food Bank.



Volunteers pack food during the sixth annual Pennsylvania Day Initiative at the CEO/Weinberg Food Bank in Pittston on Monday.

SMDPA Member Question By: Sharyn Davis and Pam Palchowski, Co-Editors

Member Question: Have you ever received a response from anyone who was totally in awe that you are descended from a Pilgrim?



Mike Saunders - I've received statements from numerous family members and friends when they find out that both Sharon (Mike's wife) and I are Mayflower descendants. My cousin's 12-year-old granddaughter remarked that she thought it was kind of cool when her grandmother told her that she was a descendant of Edward Fuller, his wife, and son Samuel, who were passengers on the Mayflower around Thanksgiving time a dozen years ago. Same goes for my brother's daughter in New York when she found out she was a Mayflower descendant. On the other hand, my sister remarked: "So what; does that qualify me for anything special?" In my genealogical circles, I sometimes hear "I missed that boat." So, I've had mixed responses.

Susan Henning - My brother-in-law's family is from Eastern Europe. He has told his grandsons how important his family was in Europe. Some places are even named for the family.

Shortly after, the boys were told that Aunt Sue was related to 2 passengers who were on the Mayflower in 1620. Much to my brother-in-law's chagrin, the boys were far more amazed and impressed by Aunt Sue's legacy than by their grandfather's.

Erin Windhorst - My dad found our possible connection to the Mayflower (Richard More) while doing genealogy in his retirement. He was unable to finish his research before he passed away. Once I started to look at his preliminary information, I went down the rabbit hole! My goal, to honor him, was to complete his goal of determining if we were descendants so I could tell the family, including his last living sibling, who was almost 100 years old at the time (she will be 103 in October), that we were indeed Mayflower descendants of passenger Richard More, who has documented Royal ancestry!

I was beyond excited to receive the news that my application had been proven and that I was accepted as a member of the Mayflower Society. Many family members were excited to learn the news too; I've met wonderful people in the SMDPA and look forward to many future events.

Pam Palchowski - It was 6:30 AM, and I was driving on a four-lane road with traffic lights. I noticed a pickup truck behind me, and then it wasn't. I stopped at the red light, and the truck was beside me, the driver honking his horn to get my attention. He wanted to know what kind of Doctor I was. He said, "I don't know what a Gen Doctor is?" Then it all became clear. My Mayflower license plate says Gen 11 MD. I proudly explained that I am a Mayflower Descendant - MD! He said, "The Mayflower Ship?" I said yes!!! He thought that was very cool, and then the light turned green.

James Campbell - One time, in mixed company, it came up that I was a Mayflower Descendant. A young woman in my group jested, "Oh, should I curtsy?" #KeepingItReal #StayGrounded

Brad Ridgeway - My wife Cyndy was amazed at how far back the Ridgeway family stretched (thanks to Stephen Hopkins and Elder William Brewster). She traces her U.S. roots as far back as January 1967, when her plane landed from Germany.

Sharyn Davis - About a year ago, Mrs. Renee Jones, an excellent and experienced educator at the school where I work, asked me to speak to her 8th-grade writing students as part of her "Midweek Mastermind" lesson. Knowing some of her students were interested in genealogy, she asked if I'd share some of my research findings and experiences. Knowing it is not easy to impress high school students, I did my homework and came prepared to tell them how I got started researching my family, where my research has taken me, the people I've met along the way, and even how I now edit this newsletter (remember - they were in a writing class). I told them about all the famous people I am related to through our common Mayflower Pilgrims: Presidents John and John Q. Adams, George and George W. Bush, FDR, Ernest Hemingway, Marilyn Monroe, the Baldwin brothers, and others. The students weren't really impressed with my famous cousins or my stories about searching through old record books in New England Town Halls. But then I remembered... Taylor Swift is a famous cousin whom I share my lineage with, to Pilgrim Richard Warren. Once I told the students Taylor was my cousin, they got very excited; they asked all sorts of questions about her. They wanted to know if I knew her or if I could get them tickets to her concerts.



Society of Mayflower Descendants of Pennsylvania
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Did You Know? The General Society of Mayflower Descendants has a YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@mayflowersociety/videos>. WOW!

Save the Date for SMDPA Upcoming Events SMDPA's 2026 Fall Events By: James Campbell, Deputy Governor

SMDPA has an exciting series of events planned for you and your guests this Fall! You may visit SMDPA's website for more details and to register – either conveniently online or by downloading, completing, and mailing the RSVP form. Go to the Events tab, and then click on Future Meetings/Events: “https://sail1620.starchapter.com/meetinginfo.php?p_or_f=f.”

~ Sat., Oct. 17: Susquehanna Colony's Fall Meeting and Luncheon will be held at two 18th-century venues in the small town of Womelsdorf. Guests will begin their day at 11:30 AM with a private tour of the Homestead (ca. 1729) of Conrad Weiser, considered the founder of Berks County. Then, we will drive five minutes west to a delicious brunch buffet at the Stouch Tavern (ca. 1762), which has been serving travelers since before the American Revolution. Registration deadline is Fri., Oct. 9 – look for emails shortly.

~ Sat., Nov. 7: Western Colony's Fall Meeting and Luncheon will be held at the historic Oakmont Country Club in Oakmont, site of numerous U.S. Open and Amateur golf tournaments over the past century. Guests will check

in at noon for a business meeting at 12:30 PM. A traditional Thanksgiving dinner will follow. Period re-enactor Rob Windhorst will discuss the importance of battle music during the American Revolutionary War, then demonstrate a live performance of battlefield music and commands. Registration deadline is Fri., Oct. 30 – look for emails shortly.

~ Sat., Nov. 21: SMDPA's Thanksgiving Worship Service and Dinner – one of our two signature annual events – will begin at 3:00 PM with a worship service to honor our Pilgrim ancestors at the Norriton Presbyterian Church (ca. 1698) in Norristown. Afterward, guests will drive 17 minutes east for an exceptional Thanksgiving dinner buffet at the Blue Bell Inn (ca. 1743) in Blue Bell. After the Battle of Germantown, General George Washington visited wounded troops being housed at the church, while staying at the inn to plot strategy. Registration deadline is Fri., Nov. 13. All are welcome, but seating is limited to 60 guests, so act promptly!

SAVE THE DATE – The SMDPA Spring Meeting and Luncheon will be held on Saturday, April 10th at the Grand Concourse in Pittsburgh, PA!

For any questions, please email James Campbell at smdpa-deputy_governor@sail1620.org.