Widows of the Blockhouse

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"Blockhouse" by Wini Smart

By Patricia H. Burke

The ten soldiers who were killed on March 24, 1782 at the Toms River Blockhouse Fight were the sons, the husbands, and the fathers of families whose lives were forever changed on that day. How did the families carry on without the support of these men? Who took care of them?

If there were relatives in the immediate area then we can assume that they helped in whatever way they could. The need was so great that the government took up the cause and passed "An act for the relief and support of maimed and disabled soldiers, officers, and seamen and of the widows and children." Applications by maimed or disabled soldiers or the widows of soldiers killed during the Revolutionary War cover the years from 1779 to 1790. Full Service pensions did not exist until 1832.

John Farr was one of the ten soldiers who were killed at the Toms River Blockhouse Fight. His widow, Sarah Farr, made an application on April 24, 1783 to the Legislature for the half pay of her deceased husband. John Farr had enlisted on February 14, 1782 with Captain Joshua Huddy's Company of New Jersey State Troops. On Sarah Farr's behalf, Captain John Walton certified that John Farr was killed in the Blockhouse at Toms River and "left a wife who since his death hath been delivered of a child which is now living."

On October 20, 1784 the court decided that Sarah Farr was entitled to receive the sum of "twenty five shillings pr Month from the twenty fourth day of March 1782 being the half pay of her late husband..." As we piece together the story of their lives we see that Sarah and John Farr were only married fourteen days when John was killed. Sarah was left to carry on as a widow who was pregnant in the closing days of the war.

James Kinsley was a soldier in Captain Joshua Huddy's Company who died at the Toms River Blockhouse Fight. His widow, Elizabeth Kinsley applied for relief and support in October of 1788. Her application includes a sworn statement by Joseph Parker saying that he was a soldier in Captain Huddy's Company and saw James Kinsley "lay dead he being shot in the head and further sayeth that he was one of the persons that helped bury him."

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Woman at camp. 2007 Blockhouse Fight Ceremony at Huddy Park

Also on the application was the sworn testimony of Abraham Sutfin who said that he "was present

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when James Kinsley was married to Elizabeth Welch in the year 1776, as near as he can remember, and that this deponent always understood that sd James Kinsley was killed at the Block House at Toms River in sd County and that the said Elizabeth is at this time Living and remains a widow by the name of the Widow Kinsley." John Smock, Justice did adjudge, "that Elizabeth Kinsley is entitled to receive so much pay of her late husband James Kinsley..."

James Kinsley was born in Ireland in 1737 and died in Toms River in 1782 at approximately forty-five years of age. He and his wife Elizabeth had a daughter Nancy (born 1777) and a son David (born 1781). She remained a widow and died on August 24, 1830 and is buried in the Baptist Church Cemetery in Glen, Montgomery County, New York.

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Homelife

OCEAN COUNTY CULTURAL PLAN UPDATE

By Nicholas Wood

We are pleased to announce that Arts Market, of Montana, will be assisting us with the upcoming Ocean County Cultural Plan. The lead consultant, Louise Stevens, has nearly 30 years of experience consulting cultural agencies and has authored four books on the topic. Having worked on the Hudson, Mercer, and Monmouth County Cultural Plans, we believe that Arts Market's contributions will be invaluable in shaping the policies that guide our efforts to best serve you over the next five to ten years.

The cultural planning process will be broken down into two distinct phases, assessment and strategic planning. Assessment will begin by looking to the community to determine how we can best meet the arts, culture, and heritage needs of Ocean County residents. We will work with Arts Market and community members to create the new Cultural plan based on the findings of the assessment. The resulting plan will provide a roadmap for our future initiatives and collaborations with the public and private sectors.

The Cultural Plan, however, can only reach its fullest potential with participation from you. We will be holding our first Ocean County Culture and Heritage Summit on March 16th and will be introducing Louise Stevens to members of the arts, culture, and heritage communities here in Ocean County. If you would like to share your thoughts or would just like to know what's going on; please see events listing calendar for more details.