

Mayor's Message

Spring 2023

That Piscataway is home to the “First 4th,” the site of first national Fourth of July celebration, is always a source of pride. Now Piscataway will be able to showcase our role in history throughout the year with the new Forever the 4th Gallery at the Metlar-Bodine House Museum.

Construction has begun on this new \$1.3 million annex that will house the Ross Hall Wall, the last remaining artifact from the July 4, 1778 battle held by General George Washington at the 1742 Ross Hall mansion which once stood on River Road. The Ross Hall Wall was designated an “American Treasure” by the National Park Service.



We are very grateful that Representative Frank Pallone, Jr., Senator Bob Menendez & Senator Cory Booker included \$500,000 in federal historic preservation funds for the construction of the Forever the 4th Gallery in

the Omnibus Appropriations bill signed into law by President Joe Biden in December.

So how did Piscataway become home to the First 4th? With the Declaration of Independence signed in 1776, America's first birthday in 1777 was only acknowledged across our young country with sporadic celebrations.

However, in early July 1778, the British Army was in Sandy Hook after having lost to our Continental Army at the Battle of Monmouth. General Washington was headquartered at Ross Hall in Piscataway with thousands of American troops camped along the Raritan River.

To mark America's second birthday and set an example of how to celebrate the Fourth of July, Washington ordered soldiers to "...adorn their hats with green bows," and provided them with a, "double allowance of rum." On July 4, 1778, American troops paraded in two lines nearly a mile long for Washington and other officers. At 5 p.m. a single cannon was fired followed by approximately 11,000 soldiers performing the "feu de joie," a celebratory firing of rifles in a succeeding pattern, on the riverbanks.

Washington would host a celebratory ball later that evening at Ross Hall with guests including Nathanael Greene, Alexander Hamilton, the Marquis de Lafayette, Lord Stirling and Baron von Steuben.

While Ross Hall was demolished in 1957, the parlor wall was preserved. To prepare the Ross Hall Wall for display in our Township, it is undergoing conservation work in Tennessee and is expected to return to Piscataway this fall. I look forward to the completion of the Forever the 4th Gallery and in the meantime, as you celebrate Independence Day in Piscataway, make sure to tag your social media posts with #First4th.

As always, please call my office at (732) 562-2301 if I may ever be of assistance to you.

