



Friends of Washington Crossing Park

2024 Annual Report

A Mission to Preserve, Promote and Educate

The Friends of Washington Crossing Park shares the powerful story of General George Washington's daring crossing of the Delaware River on Christmas night 1776 and interprets its ongoing impact on world history for both today's citizens and future generations.

Through fundraising, the generous support of our donors and members, and our partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, we are able to maintain and sustain this significant historic site and welcome thousands of schoolchildren, families, individuals, and groups every year.



New Program Development

- Hosted 10,000 students for our Colonial Days Field Trip and created a new promotional video.
- Launched free weekly living history programs bringing history to life for visitors from April through November. Farmstead Fridays, in particular, saw strong attendance, offering a closer look at the Thompson-Neely House and Farmstead.
- Hired a new full-time Interpretative Programs Specialist.
- Installed a Bronze Relief of Emanuel Leutze's famous *Washington Crossing the Delaware* and partnered with Philly Touch Tours to create an exhibit for blind and low-vision visitors.
- Enhanced the visitor experience at the Thompson-Neely Farmstead through tree planting and ecological restoration along the Mill Race Trail.
- Began the reestablishment of the historic Thompson-Neely Farmstead Garden.
- Launched a new mini camp for students that allows them to "unplug" and take a trip back to the time of Washington.
- Inspired the next generation of historians by hosting four summer interns who served as living historians and docents.
- Launched a new "Rescuing the Revolution Field Trip" program in partnership with Americana Corner. From the site of the Crossing, students tour two sites in New Jersey to learn about the Battles of Trenton and Princeton.
- Brought the experience of the park to the community through outreach programs at local schools, senior facilities, and community programs such as Historic Fallsington Day, Historic Bristol Day, and Grooving at the Gates in Levittown.
- Hosted record-breaking attendance at our Fall Lantern Tours and leaf season at Bowman's Hill Tower. This year, Bucks County was named #1 for Fall Foliage in the country by *Travel and Leisure*.

Continued on page 3

Our People



Friends of Washington Crossing Park Board

The all-volunteer Friends Board of Directors is made up of a diverse cross section of community members.

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Friends of Washington Crossing Park Staff

Under the direction of the Board of Directors, FWCP staff members run the day-to-day operations of the organization.

Jennifer Martin, Executive Director
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Katherine Manning, Development Coordinator
Alex Robb, Interpretive Programs Specialist
Trish Rowen, Staff Accountant
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Historical Interpreters

Guided tours led by trained historical interpreters are offered at the Historic Village and the Thompson-Neely House and Grist Mill. Visitors can trace General Washington's footsteps at McConkey's Ferry Inn, traverse the three floors of a 19th-century grist mill, and peek into the park's replica Durham boats used in the annual Crossing Reenactments.

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Volunteers

In 2024, more than 440 volunteers contributed 6,614 hours in support of Washington Crossing Historic Park. Volunteers serve the park as historical interpreters, in visitor services, special events, gardening, animal care, school programs, and musicians in our fife and drum corps. Thank you to all!



Our Activities



2024 Visitation

Daily Tours	21,425	4th of July	1,200
Student Field Trips	7,473	Rebels & Redcoats	600
Washington's Birthday	300	Classic Car Show	670
Wheat and Sheep Day	135	Wine on the Waterfront	432
Spring Brewfest	1,750	Lantern Tours	3,250
Memorial Day Concert	300	First Crossing Reenactment	8,000
Memorial Day Ceremony	300	Christmas Crossing	215
Juneteenth Event	80	Ten Crucial Days Bus Tours	537
		Lecture Series	120
		Book Club	

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New Program Development, continued from Page 1

- Presented our annual lecture series featuring award-winning scholars and well-known historians, such as James Taub, Brady Crytzer, Kathleen Brown, Don Heiges, and Frank Cogliano in partnership with the David Center for the American Revolution.
- Enhanced the visitor experience at the First Crossing Reenactment by partnering with the 4th Continental Light Dragoons, who portrayed mounted militia.

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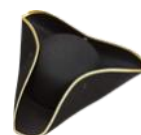
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Our Focus on Family Fun

Expanding Programs for Every Visitor at Washington Crossing Historic Park

In our 2023 annual report, we highlighted the important role the Friends of Washington Crossing Park (FWCP) proudly plays as a keystone of education in our community. Through programs like our Colonial Days living history program and free educational resources, such as our 76 Seconds of History video series, Camp in a Box, and History Chest, we continue to make history accessible.

As we look ahead to the 250th anniversary of Washington's Crossing in 2026, we want to take a moment to showcase programs designed to meet the needs of family visitors, improvements we made in 2024, and give you a sneak peek at our new offerings for 2025.

Daily Tours and Seasonal Park Experiences

Throughout the year, our park is open for daily tours and each season brings exciting things to see and do!



In the spring, flowers bloom and plants grow in our gardens, providing a glimpse into 18th-century horticulture. This past year, we completed the reinstallation of our historical Hibbs House Garden in the Lower Park Village. In 2025, the completion of our historical garden at the Thompson-Neely House will strengthen the interpretation of our Thompson-Neely Farmstead and Farmstead Friday programs. The garden will be a great addition to the Thompson-Neely House Tour, which will reopen in the Spring of 2025. Included in the tour is a new exhibit featuring reproduction bedding by textile historian Natalie Larson, whose work has been shown at Winterthur and George Washington's Mount Vernon.

In the summer, the park is a perfect place for a family trip. In 2024, our Weekly Living Programs, which included Farmstead Fridays, enhanced daily tours by providing interpretations of daily life for civilians and the experience of soldiers encamped in Bucks County during the American Revolution. In 2025, we look forward to providing expanded monthly living history programs with unique themes and new interpretations never seen before, such as the life of 18th-century Hessian soldiers.

In the fall, Bowman's Hill Tower offers an incredible 14-mile view of fall foliage with extended hours each weekend. On Friday and Saturday evenings, our overwhelmingly popular lantern tours provide a unique interpretation at the site of Washington's crossing, displaying the conditions men would have experienced during nights in December 1776.

In winter, the park hosts its highest volume of visitation as people come to experience Washington Crossing during the time of year when the Continental Army encamped and rowed across the Delaware River on Christmas Night in 1776. The winter landscape and views of the icy river demonstrate the fierce determination of General Washington and his men during the 10 Crucial Days Campaign of the American Revolution.

Our free Lower Park Exhibit Gallery is a great addition to site tours or seasonal visits. The gallery includes a kid-friendly interactive play area where young visitors can dress up and play with reproduction tents and accoutrements, providing an engaging experience that helps children and students connect with the history of the era in a fun way. Also on exhibit are fragments from a 1770 iron stove plate unearthed during an archaeological excavation at the Thompson-Neely Mill site in 1974. New in 2025 are several items on loan from the State Museum of Pennsylvania, such as an authentic Hessian musket.

In addition to the gallery, you can also view a full-size reproduction of Emanuel Leutze's famous painting, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, in the Visitor Center Auditorium. A newly exhibited

Our Focus on Family Fun

“please touch” bronze relief of the same painting was donated by award-winning Philadelphia artist Ellen Schick Tanz, who created a similar relief outside of the Museum of the American Revolution in Philadelphia.

Family Programs

Beyond daily tours and seasonal program offerings, FWCP provides several family programs designed to meet the needs of a multigenerational audience. Each year we offer five free programs. Washington’s Birthday in February and our Wheat and Sheep Day in April are designed for our youngest participants, allowing them to enjoy a free slice of birthday cake with General Washington and a chance



to get an up-close look at our sheep. Our free Memorial Day Concert at the Lower Park and Ceremony at the Soldiers’ Graves in the Upper Park provide community residents with a local opportunity to commemorate this important patriotic holiday. In 2024, our free Juneteenth Program returned for its second year, beginning with a new lecture and living history presentation on the contributions of Black soldiers during the American Revolution and Civil War. The event ended with a

concert overlooking the Delaware River. In 2025, our Juneteenth program will include a lecture by researcher and historian Matthew White, explaining his methodology and findings during a year of primary research on the contributions of Black soldiers and civilians to Washington’s Crossing, the Ten Crucial Days Campaign, and Bucks County. Our 4th of July program has several hands-on activities and an opportunity to hear the reading of the Declaration of Independence. During the 4th of July weekend, we host our hands-on Colonial Field Day and Rebels and Redcoats Classic Car Show. Our living history season ends in December with programs designed to completely immerse visitors into a soldier’s life during the winter encampment at the Thompson-Neely Farm (Evening Encampment Program), the Crossing of the Delaware (Crossing Reenactments), and the Battles of Trenton and Princeton that followed (Ten Crucial Days Bus Tour).

In 2024, our Evening Encampment Program attendance doubled. Program enhancements for the year included new presentations on civilians who followed and supported the army and mounted militia. Visitors also got a first look at our redesigned Thompson Neely House exhibits. The Crossing Reenactments were enhanced with new program offerings by On The Army’s Strength, which interprets the role of non-military combatants during the revolution, and the 4th Continental Dragoons, who portray mounted militia.



Through continued surveying in 2025, we are working to enhance our programs through new interpretive offerings, sound enhancements, and visitor amenities.

Additional Offerings

The Friends of Washington Crossing Park, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, also offers additional programs throughout the year. Our book club and lecture series provide opportunities to learn more about 18th-century military and civilian life with additional insights into Washington’s Crossing, the 10 Crucial Days, and the American Revolution.

In 2025, we are very excited to welcome acclaimed author Rick Atkinson to discuss his new book, *The Fate of the Day*, as part of his trilogy on the American Revolution.

FWCP offers programs for every age and interest level. The assistance of you, our donors, and members have made all of these programs possible. With your continued support, we will grow and improve in 2025 and beyond.

Thank You!



Our Focus on Field Trips

A Trip Back in Time: Exploring the Ten Crucial Days of the American Revolution

One of the core values of the Friends of Washington Crossing Park is stewarding the next generation of Americans. With the 250th anniversary of the founding of our country rapidly approaching, we have been hard at work crafting programs that not only tell the story of Washington's Crossing, but also contextualize that story within the larger framework of the American Revolution.

To this end, our new Rescuing the Revolution field trip program—made possible by Americana Corner's Preserving America initiative—represents a perfect blend of our hands-on Colonial Days school field trip program paired with the immersive storytelling of our Traversing the 10 Crucial Days bus tours.

Through this one-of-a-kind program, students learn about life in the encampment and the quartering of officers in homes leading up to the Crossing, as well

as the planning and logistics needed to get an army of 2,400 soldiers across the icy Delaware River during a harsh winter storm on Christmas night in 1776. Next, students travel to Washington Crossing, New Jersey, to learn about Washington's landing and the Battle of Trenton. Finally, at Princeton Battlefield, students walk the same grounds as the Continental and British Army and learn about the battle from both American and British perspectives.

In telling a comprehensive story about the Crossing, the moments leading up to it, and the battles that followed, students leave with a new understanding of the pivotal role the 10 Crucial Days campaign played in changing the trajectory of the American Revolution. We engage students at multiple levels, reaching physical, visual, and verbal learners in ways that traditional classrooms and other programs cannot.

Rescuing the Revolution launched during fall 2024 and has attracted a large percentage of schools that have not previously visited the park, as well as returning schools that have not been to the park for many years.

More than 1,500 students have registered for this exciting new educational offering. The program has been especially impactful for students visiting the park from New Jersey, who comprise about 70% of our annual field trip participants. Our unique program allows these students to visit multiple sites in a single day—two of which are in their home state—for an immersive and impactful educational experience they would not be able to encounter at any individual site.



Our vision for this program is that students will leave with a greater understanding of the complex challenges Washington and his army faced before making the daring Crossing of the Delaware River. We are very excited that this program has been so well received, and we aspire to triple attendance through strategic partnerships and marketing as we enter the 2025–2026 school tour season.

This program would not be possible without the generous support and partnership of Tom and Char Hand of Americana Corner, who have invested \$250,000 over 5 years to bring this program and the park's rich history to life.

Founded in 2020 by Tom Hand, Americana Corner shares engaging stories of pivotal events, documents, and leaders that shaped America's founding. Through compelling articles and captivating videos, Tom hopes to rekindle a spirit of patriotism in his fellow Americans and remind them of our nation's incredible past and why our founding era still matters today. Tom's passion to tell the Great American Story extends to conserving its cultural and historical treasures through the Preserving America program, which supports diverse projects across the nation that contribute to sharing the rich tapestry of early American history.

