

The Project To Mark Every Revolutionary War Patriots' Grave In New Jersey

By: Pat Johnson

Ocean County will benefit from a project run by the New Jersey Sons of the American Revolution to mark graveyards in New Jersey that contain the documented remains of American Patriots. In fact, the very first markers in New Jersey have been approved for Ocean County.

Mike Mangum, President of the Colonel Richard Somers Chapter of the SAR, said the NJ Sons of the American Revolution has already received approval to set three of the attractive historical markers in Ocean County, the Methodist cemeteries in Tuckerton and Stafford Township and the Old Baptist Church in Manahawkin.



Here is how the Pomroy Foundation signs will appear.
Photo Credit: Pomroy Foundation

The markers come from the William G. Pomeroy Foundation, a foundation that supports research into blood diseases and enhances American history in part by supplying cast markers to further the historical legacy of our nation. "This grant is only open to state SAR societies and New Jersey is the second state to receive it, New York was the first; Kentucky and Alabama are getting on board," said Mangum. "There could be as many as 20 that qualify in Ocean County alone," he said. Two cemeteries in Toms River are currently being investigated, said Mangum.

Mangum is also director of the Ocean County Parks and Recreation Department and the chair of the NJ SAR committee taking applications for the markers.

The William G. Pomeroy Foundation requires that each patriot be fully researched through primary sources of both the patriot(s) Revolutionary War service and subsequent burial in the cemetery. Acceptable proof of service includes pension records, muster rosters, military bounty land records, and official state government compiled records. Acceptable proof of service is the same as membership in the SAR. Photos are required of the original headstones.

Ocean County C & H Commission Division Director Timothy G. Hart said the process is a daunting one as many cemetery records have been lost over the years and grave markers are sometimes unreadable. Sources he researched for Revolutionary War records included books such as *Salter's History of Monmouth and Ocean Counties, N.J.*, Adjunct General William Styker's book of 1872 giving the official registry of officers and men in the Revolutionary War, and pension records maintained by a veteran's nonprofit, "Fold3."

“Also in the 1920’s, the Daughters of the American Revolution tried to establish how many Revolutionary War veterans were buried in Ocean County,” said Hart. In the case of the Tuckerton Methodist Church cemetery, there is a large marker for Ebenezer Tucker, a prominent citizen both before and after the War. Tucker fought bravely with George Washington during the battle of Long Island and also owned a ship named the Kitty used by privateers.

In the Old Baptist Church there are possibly three veterans buried. Local historical anecdotal accounts said Lines Pangborn was killed there during a skirmish with the “Pine Robber” and British Loyalist John Bacon. Other veterans Silas Crane and Luke Courtney are said to be buried there but only Silas Crane has been confirmed. In the Old Methodist Church cemetery, veteran Samuel Bennett’s headstone has been found.

There are probably many more Revolutionary War veterans buried in Quaker cemeteries but these might be difficult to prove as Quakers did not always mark the graves with headstones.

Certainly the NJ SAR will continue to investigate as many cemeteries as they can in the coming months and years. Already two in Toms River—the Cedar Grove and Old Methodist Church cemeteries hold patriots from the Toms River Blockhouse Fight (1782).

The Foundation has indicated that they will pay for each cemetery marker that can be officially proven to hold a patriot’s grave. The second round of grants will be accepted in September and the already approved three for Ocean County are at the foundry and should be ready for installment and a dedication soon.



Silas Crane grave in Manahawkin.

Photo Credit: Ocean County Parks & Recreation Department