



NORTHERN YORK COUNTY HISTORICAL & PRESERVATION

Society

April 2026 Newsletter

“Liberty, when it begins to take root, is a plant of rapid growth.”

George Washington

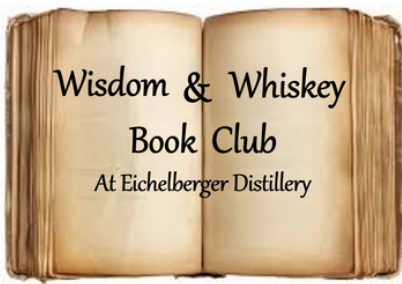
250 years ago...

By April 1776, the American colonies were in a tense, transitional phase. War had started a year earlier at Lexington and Concord. Public opinion continued to shift towards independence and colonies began to turn away from British authority and take local power into their own hands. The Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia was functioning as a national government, managing the war effort and moving cautiously toward independence, while not yet officially declaring it.

Even with war underway, people were still focused on survival and routine—but everything felt more uncertain. Most colonists were farmers, working long days planting spring crops. Others were artisans (blacksmiths, carpenters, weavers) or merchants. Trade was disrupted due to British blockades, so goods like cloth, tea, and tools were harder to get. People improvised by drinking herbal teas instead of imported tea, making homespun clothing instead of buying British textiles, etc.

War was always in the background however. Many men were part of local militias or the Continental Army. Families often had members away at war. News of what was happening traveled slowly—through letters, newspapers, and word of mouth. Conversations in taverns and homes often became political debates around independence causing tension between those identifying as Patriots (supporting independence) and as Loyalists (supporting Britain), sometimes within the same family. Overall, there was a growing realization that the time for reconciliation with Britain might be over.





April Events

Wisdom & Whiskey Book Club

Wednesday, April 8th

6:30-8 pm at the Eichelberger Distillery

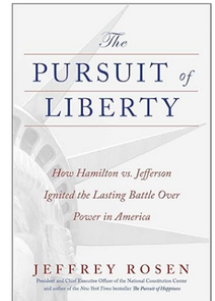
Rosen explores the clashing visions of Hamilton and Jefferson over how to balance liberty and power in a debate that continues to define—and divide—our country today.

Our discussion schedule is as follows:

April 8th : Chapters 7 & 8

May 13th : Chapters 9 & 10 / Conclusion

This event is free and open to the public. You are welcome to bring a snack to share and we will have beverages.



First Friday at Dills Tavern

April 10th: 7pm-10pm

1st
FRIDAY

As one of our favorite performing groups, **Stone House Breakdown** revives and celebrates Appalachian music. They perform original songs in the traditional bluegrass style, old timey standards, bluegrass gospel, and contemporary Americana folk. Driven by Scruggs-style banjo picking, their full and distinctive sound and organic style is reminiscent of the classic bluegrass greats like The Stanley Brothers.



They take inspiration from Doc Watson, Jim & Jesse, and the Osborne Brothers as well as 1960's country, modern bluegrass, and folk.

This event is exclusive to the 21+ crowd and advanced ticket sales are not available. Simply pay at the door when you arrive - \$10 for members and \$15 for nonmembers.

At the Eichelberger Distillery...

For our final 1st Friday of the 2005-2006 Season, we have a special spirit program highlighting drams with our talented docents. These committed and knowledgeable people not only have been actively lending a hand at the stills but also educate visitors that come for tours. Don't miss out on this very special tasting!

[Advance tickets for Tasting Program found here!](#)

April Events cont.

Sunday Tours at Dills Tavern

April 12th - October 25th

We are excited to announce that our 2026 seasonal Sunday Tavern Tours will begin on April 12th and run through October 25th - every Sunday at 2pm & 3pm.

\$5 per individual / \$10 per family (immediate & living in the same household) Children under 12 are free. Come learn what life was like as America changed from a colony to a country. [For more information about the history of Dills Tavern, click on this link!](#)



[Read more about Michael here!](#)

Speaker Series: Michael Cassidy

“Working Gardens in 19th Century PA”

Thursday; April 16th, 6:30-8 pm

at Maple Shade Barn

As a Master Gardener with Penn State Extension, Michael focuses on historic gardens, pollinators, and native plants, and now jumping worm education. He will be discussing the contrasts between the practical gardens of the Pennsylvania Dutch country and the Victorian gardens.

Maple Shade Barn: 35 Greenbriar Lane, Dillsburg, PA 17019

Spring Cleaning

April 26th

Many hands make light work and your hands are just what we need! It's time for Spring Cleaning at Dills Tavern, Maple Shade Barn, and the Eichelberger Distillery. We will have supplies but if you have preferences, you may bring your own. Please contact knellis@northernnyorkhistorical.org if you are available to help!



April Events cont.



2026 Dills Celtic Festival

April 17th & April 18th at Dills Tavern

Over 276 years ago, Scots-Irish settlers like the Dill family established homes, farms and businesses in areas west of the Susquehanna River as part of a new American Dream. The community of Dillsburg grew

from those humble beginnings when Northern York County was still the frontier. These same Scots-Irish formed the backbone of the first patriotic militia from Pennsylvania in 1776. Their valor and courage helped establish the United States 250 years ago, whose independence we celebrate during this Semiquincentennial anniversary year!

On Friday, April 17, from 4:30 to 9 pm and Saturday, April 18, from 10 am to 6:30 pm, that legacy will be celebrated at the Dills Celtic Festival, held at the Historic Dills Tavern. Sponsored by the Northern York County Historical And Preservation Society (NYCHAPS), the event promises two days of Celtic culture and fun for the entire family.

The Dills Celtic Festival will offer some of the best musical traditions of Scotland, Ireland and Wales with continuous musical entertainment, including favorites Charlie Zahm with Tad Marks, Kilrush, Seasons, Pilgrims of Deep Run, Culra, Regimental Pipers, Across the Pond, and On the Lash. The Coyle School of Irish Dance also brings their step dancing talents to the festival.

For a full entertainment schedule, please go to dillscelticfest.com. Thirty vendors will offer a wide range of Celtic wares and products. Celtic designs and themes will be featured on jewelry, leatherware, scarves and clothing, glassware, and more. Unique offerings such as alpaca wool items and Welsh cookies will also be available. Of course, no Celtic Festival would be complete without KILTS, and you will be able to find your 'clan' tartan at the festival!!!! You might even be able to trace your genealogy with the help of the clans that will be represented at the event.

Traditional foods and beverages for the event will be provided by the Celtic Festival kitchen, as well as favorites: Tomasic's Sausages; Baltimore Style Pit Beef; Williams Custom Catering; K2 Creamery; Revival Coffee; Munchies Basic; Yakisoba's; and Breski's Beverages. The menus are sure to delight and please everyone!

[More information and tickets may be found on our website by clicking here!](#)

Looking ahead to May



Dillsburg Farmers Market returns to Dills Tavern!

**Saturdays: 8:00 - noon
May 2nd - November 21st**

Looking forward to fresh local produce, baked goods, and meats? Then you will want to experience this season of the Dillsburg Farmer's Market at Dills Tavern!



Publick Tyme

May 9th at Dills Tavern

Publick Tyme at Dills Tavern takes place in conjunction with the Dillsburg Pickle Fest. Interact with living history reenactors covering Colonial America all the way up to the modern era throughout the property.

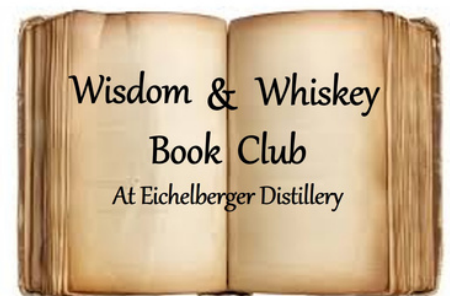


Wisdom & Whiskey Book Club

**Wednesday, May 13th; 6:30-8 pm
at the Eichelberger Distillery**

The **final session** of this season's book discussion on Jeffrey Rosen's, **The Pursuit of Liberty** will cover:
Chapters: 9, 10, & Conclusion

This event is free and open to the public. You are welcome to bring a snack to share and we will have beverages.



May Events cont.

Katelyn Reist

"The Conestoga Wagon"

Thursday, May 21st; 6:30-8 pm

at Maple Shade Barn



Our Speaker Series concludes on May 21st with Katelyn Reist. Conestoga wagons have played a significant role in shaping our nation. Unlike some misnomers, the wagons were not used to haul people, but were used to transport freight.

During the presentation, Katelyn will talk about the history of the Conestoga wagon, the roads they traveled, the Conestoga wagon design, and accessories associated with the wagon.

[Read more about it on our website by clicking here!](#)



NYCHAPS History Camp Registration Enrollment Open to All!

Planning for this year's camp is already in the works and promises to be an exciting one in celebration of America's 250th!

Camp is the week of July 13-17 from 9:00am to noon at Dills Tavern.

[Enrollment information may be found here!](#)

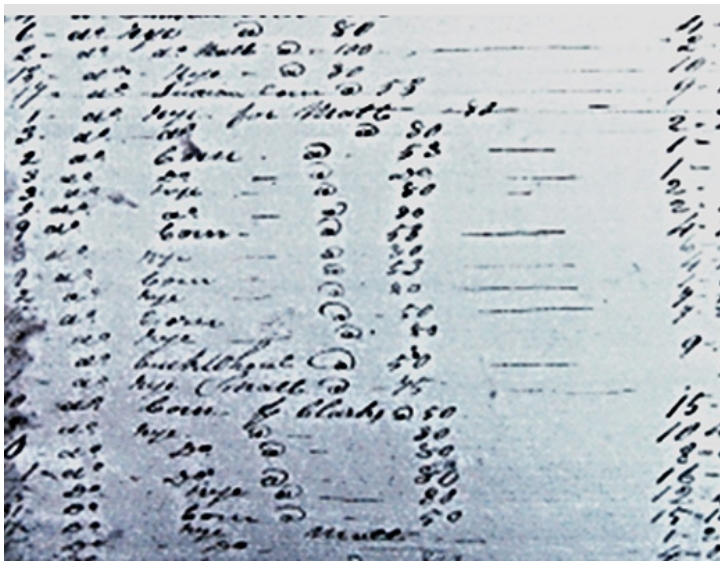
Please contact: knellis@northernnyorkhistorical.org
if you have any questions.



The Impractical Distillers: Vol 2.4

Still House Grain Inventory, 1810

The Eichelberger Distillery at Dills Tavern is fortunate to have the Eichelberger Ledgers. This treasure trove of historical information covers the time span of the entrepreneurial Eichelberger family who owned the property from 1800-1833. Fifteen hundred handwritten pages chronicle the many business activities on site. Displayed is one example of an inventory conducted in 1810. The page depicts an accounting of the grain purchased during the year. No other such inventory appears anywhere else in the ledger.



Account of Still house expenses A.D. 1810

4 lbs. hops @ 25	\$1.00
6 lbs. do @ 25	1.50
2 bushels of rye for malt	1.60
do do	12.00
15 do buckwheat @ 50	7.50
15 do do @ 80	16.80
21 do rye @ 80	80
1 do malt @ 50	12.00
24 do Indian corn @ 80	4.80
6 do do @ 1.00	2.00
2 do do malt @ 80	10.40
13 do rye @ 80	9.80
17 do Indian corn @ 53	90
1 do rye for malt @ 80	2.40
3 do do @ 80	1.60
2 do corn @ 58	1.54
3 do do @ do	2.40
3 do rye @ 80	2.40
3 do do @ 80	4.77
9 do corn @ 53	6.40
8 do rye @ 53	4.77
9 do corn @ 80	1.60
2 do rye @ 50	7.50
9 do corn @ 80	7.20
18 do buckwheat @ 50	9.40
1 do rye malt @ 75	75
30 do corn @ 50	15.00
13 do rye @ 80	10.40
10 do do @ 80	8.00
21 do do @ 80	16.80
15 do rye @ 80	12.40
31 do corn @ 50	15.10
1 1/2 do rye malt	1.20
5 do do	4.00

This one-time account demonstrates the quantities and varieties of grain purchased for distilling. The four grains listed were 125 bushels of rye, 33 bushels of buckwheat, 131 bushels of Indian corn and 15 ½ bushels of rye malt. Also listed was 10 lbs of hops. At about 50 lbs per bushel this represents over 7.6 tons of grain.

We have not found a specific mash bill for the whiskey made, a reasonable estimate can be made from the grain on hand. Grain was purchased at different times probably dependent on growing seasons. Rye was harvested in early summer, corn in fall. They likely purchased as it was available, in amounts they could afford when they had the confidence they would all of it. Rye and corn as the main ingredients would be consistent with McHarry's 1808 book *The Practical Distiller* which lists recipes typical of the Central Pennsylvania region. Rye outweighed corn because rye was the dominant grain in Pennsylvania distilling. Commonly rye made up at least 50% of the mash bill. Buckwheat made up a mere 12% of the inventory. Was it a flavor enhancer or back-up grain? We can't be sure. Which Indian corn was used? There were numerous varieties, many lost in time. We have no definitive answer. The cost of corn varied from 50-60 cents per bushel; rye was 80 cents per bushel and buckwheat 50 cents.

Still House Grain Inventory, 1810 cont.

The inclusion of hops was puzzling. Hops is associated more with brewing than distilling. Hops isn't found in mash bills and the TTB has a definite opinion about including it in a whiskey recipe. We eventually stumbled onto the fact that hops was used for making yeast. Hops helps suppress bacteria, especially helpful for mashing in wooden barrels. Hops also helps stabilize yeast cells and even helps attenuate the conversion of sugar from grain into alcohol by yeast. McHarry recommends – always have enough!

They did not understand the science of different mash bills, optimizing yields and yeast in 1810. By observation and record-keeping they learned what worked. One thing they did understand was hard work. Think of the labor it took to harvest, process, malt, ferment, and distill 7.6 tons of grain – by hand? Stop by the Eichelberger Distillery to see how they did it and taste whiskey like it tasted in the early 1800s.



The Impractical Distillers: *Sam and Murray*



Saturdays: Open 10am to 4pm. Tours begin on the hour at 12, 1, 2, and 3pm

Sundays: Tours begin on the hour at 1, 2 and 3pm

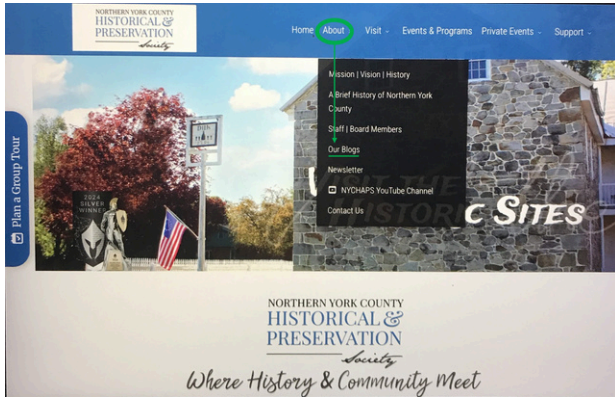
Mondays: Closed

Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays: By appointment only. Contact the office at 717-502-1440 or admin@northernnyorkhistorical.org to schedule.

Wednesdays: Open 3pm to 7pm. Drop in and "see what's happening" in the distillery. In a relaxed and casual atmosphere, our Impractical Distillers will be sharing stories of our most recent endeavors - the trials, tribulations and triumphs.


Tours are available to walk-ins as space permits or you may order your dated & timed tour tickets. Cost - \$10.00 by [clicking here](#).

In Case You Missed It!

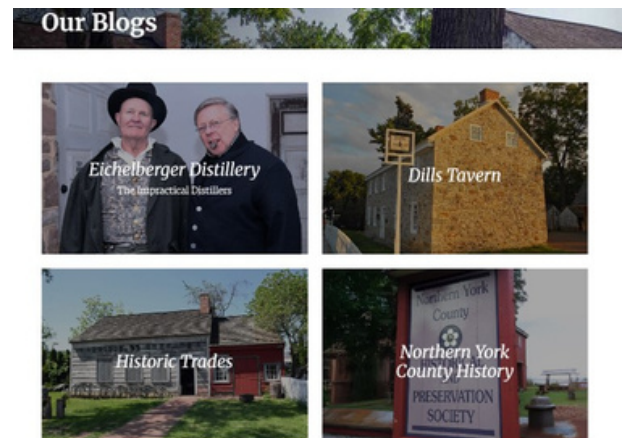


If you haven't checked out the [NYCHAPS website](#) in the past year, you may not be aware that an "Our Blogs" section was added to the **About** tab.

This has allowed us to keep special articles available that may have been missed when featured in one of the monthly newsletters.

When you click on the "Our Blogs" section, you will be taken to a page with story options. 

- Eichelberger Distillery contains stories from our Impractical Distillers, Sam and Murray. They reflect on successes, challenges, inspirations, and interactions with visitors.
- Dills Tavern stories feature special aspects of the tavern property (furnishings, garden, etc.)
- Historic Trades focuses on stories of projects completed in the Wheelwright Shop (carpentry, painting, and blacksmithing) and Cooperage.
- Northern York County History features stories related to our collections and history specific to this area. The NYCHAPS Revolutionary War Project is currently a highlight!



[Click here to go to Our Blogs!](#)

Newsletter "News"

A note from the Editor...

As our newsletter content has expanded, so has our page count! While this is a digital newsletter and doesn't have associated printing costs, it can still be overwhelming. Two of the longer articles this month have been condensed to an introduction with links to the rest of the articles. This should help shorten the actual newsletter and allow readers to focus on the information they are most interested in.

If you have questions or comments, please e-mail knellis@northernnyorkhistorical.org

The Battles of Trenton and Princeton: 10 Crucial Days

By December 1776, the Continental Army was in a state of near despair. British victories at Long Island and across New York and New Jersey had driven Washington's forces across the Delaware River and into Pennsylvania. Morale was shattered, the army was exhausted, and enlistments were set to expire at the end of the month.

So desperate were the times, that, on December 19, 1776, Thomas Paine was moved to pen his famous lines "... These are the times that try men's souls ..." in his American Crisis No. 1. Indeed, the stakes could not have been higher. In perhaps a last-ditch effort to save the revolution, Washington developed a bold plan to cross the Delaware at three locations and attack the British mercenary force of German Hessian forces at the Trenton garrison. As Washington prepared for the coming confrontation, on December 25, 1776, he issued the now-famous watchword for the operation, "Victory or Death," encapsulating both the desperation and resolve of the moment.

On Christmas evening, Washington implemented his plan. Over ten hours, Washington, his troops and their artillery made their way across the ice choked river.



**Source: PublicDomainPictures.net -
Free Download - Washington
Crossing The Delaware**

What happens next? In what ways were our
York County patriots involved?
[Click here to find out more!](#)

The Garden Shed Vol 1.4

Soil Test Results: What's Next?

by Gary Reneker, Garden Master

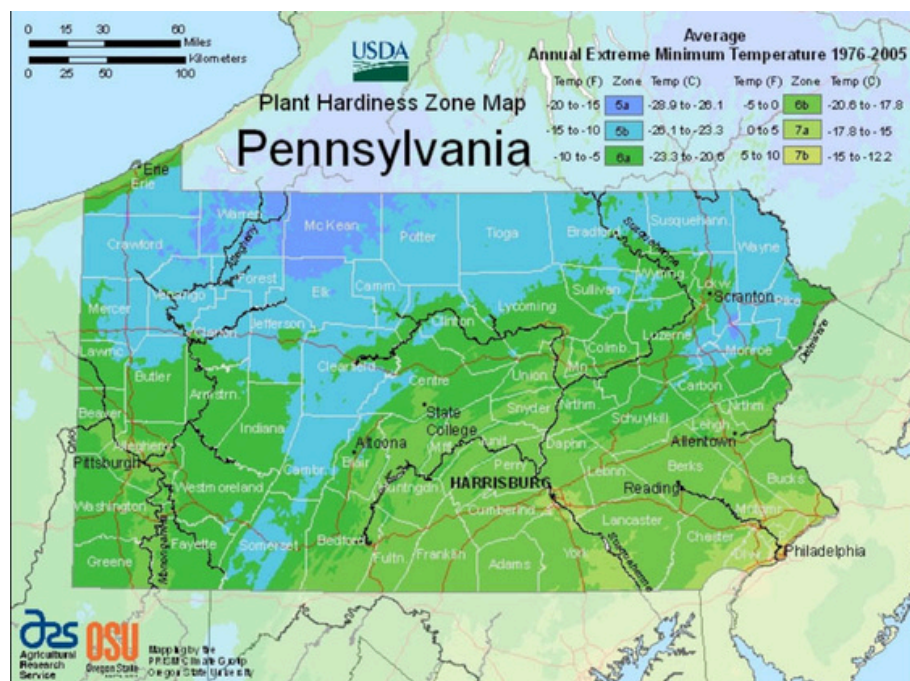
This is like a double article this month, because there is so much to talk about and explain. I want you to have the best garden possible. For that you need this information.

Regardless of what you are growing April begins our busy season in the garden. The bad news is we have to spend some money to develop a productive garden. The good news is that we don't have to spend the children's inheritance or forego a vacation just to have a good garden. With work and a little expense in the beginning, and gradually building over a few years, you can turn South-central PA's hard packed clay into a very healthy and productive garden.



Most people till their ground and then run to the garden store to buy expensive super-duper soil amendments. You will have to buy some things, but you can produce much of what will be needed yourself with a little effort.

This month we'll cover three topics. The most important, and the longest to discuss, is building healthy soil. Then we need to look at garden tasks to be done in April, and what we can plant in April in our 7a USDA growing zone.



[Continue reading by clicking here](#)
for Gary's practical garden suggestions for getting your soil in top shape and seeds in the ground!

Community Interests



Calling all Green Thumbs



Would you like to be a part of something bigger than yourself? Would you like to find a fun way to help your larger community? Dills Tavern has just the thing – volunteer to help us in our Historic Garden. Our garden hosts vegetables:

such as beets, beans, cabbage, chard, parsnips, peas, pumpkins, rhubarb, rutabaga spinach, tomatoes & turnips; herbs: like basil, comfrey, dill, echinacea, garlic, hops, lavender, mint, sage & thyme; and flowers: namely columbine, day lilies, marigold, nasturtium, calendula, & zinnia.

These are representative of the kinds of things that would have been planted in gardens during the Colonial and Early American periods and, most likely, would have been planted in the Dill's Irish/German garden. Last year's garden yielded 363.5 pounds of produce. Some was given to visitors and volunteers and some was left in the garden but the majority of it – a whole 283.5 pounds – was donated to New Hope Ministries!

So how can you get involved? I'm glad you asked. If you enjoy sinking your hands into the soil and/or watching the ground produce a bounty, our gardener could use the following help:

1. cutting cover crops and using it to start compost – takes about 2 hours in early April.
2. Planting & marking rows – takes about 2 hours per week (or every other week) from mid-June to mid-September.
3. Mulching – takes 1 hour per week from mid-May to mid-June
4. Weeding – takes 2 hours per week from mid-May to late September
5. Watering – takes 1 hour 1 time per week from mid-May to late June and again late August to late September while it takes 1 hour 2 times per week thru July and August.
6. Pruning Plants – takes 1 hour per week from early June to mid-September
7. Make Compost – takes 1 hour 2 times per week from early May to mid-September
8. Make Weed Tea – that's our DIY liquid fertilizer – takes 1 hour per week mid-May to late August
9. Harvesting & transporting produce to New Hope Ministries – takes 2 hours per week from mid-June to mid-September
10. Spray DIY fertilizer on foliage – takes ½ hour per week from early June to early September
11. Spray DIY insecticides – takes ½ hour 2 times per week from mid-June to mid-September
12. Harvesting Hops – takes 2 hours per week from mid-August to mid-September

There are other tasks that need done for which the times vary widely. If you are interested in knowing more, or volunteering for one (or more) of the jobs listed above, please contact the office at 717-502-1440 or email admin@northernnyorkhistorical.org and we gladly connect you to our gardener.

Community Interests

Coming Soon!



standing on history

Website: PatriotsPathPA.com

Contact: info@armyheritage.org

PARTNERS

- *Army Heritage Center Foundation*
- *Cumberland Area Economic Development Corporation*
- *Cumberland County Historical Society*
- *Shippensburg University Fashion Archives*
- *Dills Tavern and Eichelberger Distillery*
- *West Shore Historical Society*
- *Hampden Township Veterans Park*
- *Northern York County Historical and Preservation Society*
- *Friends of Peebles Homestead*
- *Shippensburg History Center*

PATRIOTS' PATH: EXPLORE THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR IN CUMBERLAND VALLEY, PENNSYLVANIA

Coming Late Spring 2026

• **WHAT IS PATRIOTS' PATH?**

Patriots' Path is a community-driven heritage trail organized through a partnership of the Army Heritage Center Foundation, Cumberland Area Economic Development Corporation, and several other historically focused organizations. It showcases key Revolutionary War-era landmarks, prominent patriotic figures, and highlights the military, political, and industrial contributions made by the citizens of Cumberland County, Pennsylvania.

• **WHO IS THIS FOR?**

This free tourism trail is designed for history lovers of all ages. The trail path will be made available online with an accompanying brochure being made available at several historical societies and museums throughout the county.

• **WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?**

Interested travelers and history enthusiasts can use the QR code below & sign up to become a Patriots' Path Trailblazer and receive updates, early access information, and launch invitations to our formal trail unveiling in July.



Lights, Action, Camera!

Travels with Darley

NYCHAPS members involved in the original filming this past year had an opportunity to enjoy an exclusive viewing of the episode titled "Communities That Shaped America" at the Appell Center. This episode showcased York County's historic sites, local attractions, memorable food and drink experiences and especially, Dills Tavern.

This will be shown in Season 13 as Episode 7 as part of the series "Communities That Shaped America."



Whiskey Rebellion Documentary



[Click here to watch the trailer!](#)

Did you know that both Dills Tavern and the Eichelberger Distillery were recently used as filming locations for an upcoming documentary on the Whiskey Rebellion? WPSU's new production explores the dramatic uprising that shaped early American history and our historic sites helped bring that story to life. More filming is still to be conducted before completion of this project. In the meantime, take a look at the trailer!



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