Revolutionize. Revitalize. Rediscover. NJ HISTORY
New Jersey helped shape the nation, even before it was a nation.
History matters, and New Jersey has a special history that makes New Jerseyans proud.

The Garden State played an indispensable role in the birth of our nation, and New Jersey remains a major force through its many contributions in the fields of medicine, technology, and culture. History gives New Jersey residents a reason to celebrate their uniqueness and sense of place, creating a link from the past to the future.

ABOUT THE NEW JERSEY HISTORIC TRUST

The New Jersey Historic Trust was created by law in 1967 to preserve New Jersey’s historic resources for generations to come through education, stewardship, and financial investment.

The Trust serves as a:

- Leading voice for historic preservation
- Catalyst for preservation and community revitalization
- Partner in developing state policy
- Technical and financial resource for stewardship of historic properties

Every New Jerseyan can support the Trust’s important work by participating in the campaign to increase sales of Discover NJ History license plates. Proceeds provide grants to communities and non-profit organizations to promote tourism at historic sites. Buying and displaying the Discover NJ History license plate helps save New Jersey’s history, now.

“I can’t imagine a world where we don’t know what happened before. There’s a richness about a place that has a story to tell. There are profound lessons we can take away personally and we are inspired about people who made a difference.”

Janet W. Foster, Board Member, Chair of NJ Historic Trust, Co-Chair Madison (Morris County) Historic Preservation Commission, Member NJ State Review Board
NEW JERSEY: A KEY ROLE IN U.S. HISTORY

Home to the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area, New Jersey witnessed almost 300 Revolutionary War battles and skirmishes. At the Battle of Monmouth, George Washington personally rallied his troops. This battle inspired the legend of Molly Pitcher, said to have carried water, attended to wounded troops and helped operate a gun battery.

At the battle of Princeton, artillery fired by revolutionary troops damaged British-occupied Nassau Hall at the College of New Jersey, now Princeton University. The same Nassau Hall later served briefly as the nation’s capital, as did a tavern in Trenton.

New Jersey has long been at the forefront of technological innovation.

- In 1837, the first electrical telegraph was invented in Morristown by Samuel F.B. Morse
- In 1879, Thomas Edison invented the electric light bulb in Menlo Park, followed by sound recordings and motion pictures
- In 1883, Roselle was the first city illuminated by electricity

“People say forget the past, but it’s always what we remember. Our history helps us connect to where we came from, so we can move forward and grow.”

Michael Ruggiero, Senior, The College of New Jersey

HERE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE MANY PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY THE NEW JERSEY HISTORIC TRUST

LUCY THE MARGATE ELEPHANT
One of three elephants built in 1881 by real estate speculator James Lafferty, Lucy stands six stories high and weighs about 90 tons. Now a National Historic Landmark, more than 25,000 people a year visit Lucy the Margate Elephant, entering through one of Lucy’s legs to explore a museum within her body. A New Jersey Historic Trust grant helped fund exterior repairs, including replacement of the observation deck mounted on Lucy’s back.

THE HUNTERDON COUNTY COURTHOUSE
This historic location is best-known as the site of the 1934 “Trial of the Century.” Bruno Richard Hauptmann was convicted for the abduction and murder of the son of aviation hero Charles Lindberg. Grants from the New Jersey Historic Trust helped fund restoration of the courthouse and attached jail to its appearance during the Lindberg trial era.
A STATE OF MANY “FIRSTS”

New Jersey is a state of “firsts.”

- The nation’s first steam locomotive engine and first steam-powered ferry were built during the early 1800s by John Stevens in Hoboken.
- The first professional baseball game (Hoboken, 1846) and professional basketball game (Trenton, 1896) were played in New Jersey.
- The first dinosaur discovered in North America was found in Haddonfield in 1858. At the time, it was the most complete dinosaur skeleton unearthed anywhere in the world.
- The first college football game was played on November 6, 1869 in New Brunswick between Rutgers and Princeton.
- New Jersey gave us the first drive-in theater (Camden) and the first boardwalk (Atlantic City).

LEARN MORE ABOUT HISTORIC SITES SUPPORTED BY THE NEW JERSEY HISTORIC TRUST AT NJHT.ORG

THE DEY MANSION

This Passaic County mansion served twice as George Washington’s headquarters. Washington advisors Alexander Hamilton and James McHenry, for whom Fort McHenry is named, stayed with him. Here Washington gave command of West Point to infamous traitor Benedict Arnold. It has served as a museum since 1934. The New Jersey Historic Trust helped fund interior and exterior restoration.

CAPE MAY LIGHTHOUSE

Built in 1859, the Cape May Lighthouse is one of the oldest in the country, and serves as a historic reminder of New Jersey’s maritime legacy. Multiple New Jersey Historic Trust grants funded rehabilitation of a storage shed on the grounds into a visitor’s center, along with restoration of the tower, lantern and watch levels, and interior, including the 199-step spiral staircase.
HERITAGE TOURISM IS VITAL TO NEW JERSEY’S ECONOMY

Visiting the sites and buildings that tell the history of New Jersey is a key reason travelers choose to vacation in our great state.

About 11 million people visit New Jersey historic sites annually, almost half from out-of-state, resulting in $2.8 billion in visitor spending and supporting 38,000 jobs, generating $715 million in federal, state and local taxes.*

Tourist destinations include history museums, archaeological sites, vintage theaters, main street shopping districts, living history farms, lighthouses, and others.

An important way all New Jerseyans can help preserve and promote our history is to purchase and display the Discover NJ History license plate.

*Source: The Economic & Fiscal Impacts of Heritage Tourism in New Jersey

PROMOTING HISTORIC TOURISM IN GLOUCESTER

The New Jersey Historic Trust helped fund the research for and preparation of a themed audio tour in Gloucester County. The historic sites included Red Bank Battlefield, where the Colonial Army defeated the Hessians, a Quaker farmhouse that served as a hospital during the battle, and the Woodbury Friends meeting house, built in 1715, which served as military headquarters.

ELLIS ISLAND

From 1892 to 1954, Ellis Island was the point-of-entry for more than 12 million immigrants seeking new opportunities and pursuing their dreams in the United States. While most people think Ellis Island is in New York, a large portion is actually in New Jersey. Grants from the New Jersey Historic Trust have been used to develop plans for preservation of several buildings, including the hospital complex and recreation building.

LEARN MORE ABOUT HISTORIC SITES SUPPORTED BY THE NEW JERSEY HISTORIC TRUST AT NJHT.ORG
PRESERVE NEW JERSEY’S HISTORY FOR THE FUTURE

Buy a Discover NJ History license plate and help preserve our special heritage.

HOW TO PURCHASE THE DISCOVER NJ HISTORY LICENSE PLATE

You can purchase your Discover NJ History license plate from the NJ Motor Vehicle Commission or through your auto dealer. The cost is $50 with a $10 annual renewal fee.

Through your auto dealer:
Ask to order the plate when buying or leasing a new car. Most dealers will handle all the details.

Through the NJMVC:
Go to https://emvc.state.nj.us/MVC_VEHSP/AVSStart.jsp and follow the steps to purchase your plate online.

“The Discover NJ History License plate is an innovative way to spread the word about the importance of NJ’s heritage tourism. It’s a reminder that NJ encompasses places that are poised for discovery, which richly celebrates our cultural heritage. Our history makes us uniquely special.”

Sophia Jones, New Jersey Historic Sites Council, Chair
Preserve New Jersey’s Past for the Future