

MULLICA HILL. The Harrison Township Historical Society opens a new exhibition focusing on the colorful history of taverns, temperance, prohibition and wine making on Saturday, April 6, 1-4 pm, at Old Town Hall Museum. The opening weekend features a Temperance Tea Tasting at the museum on Saturday and a lecture and book signing on New Jersey's colonial taverns and the American Revolution on Sunday, 3 pm, at Richwood Academy Cultural Center.

Because of the state's strategic location between New York and Philadelphia, taverns proliferated in colonial New Jersey - there were over 400 at the time of the Revolution. In Old Harrison Township alone there were three well-patronized inns along present-day Bridgeton Pike. More were to follow throughout the community in the 19th century, not all of which had sterling reputations. The White Horse in Richwood gained such a notorious reputation that the settlement was known as Helltown. Such situations contributed to the rise of the Temperance Movement and ultimately Prohibition.

Last Call: Taverns and Temperance explores this colorful history through an extraordinary collection of artifacts, images and documents, many of which will be exhibited for the first time. From the tavern table from Helltown and a still from South Harrison to a quilt made by the Women's Christian Temperance Union and a rare 1840s minute book from the Harrisonville Division of the Sons of Temperance, visitors can discover the controversies that arise surrounding the regulation of social behavior.

The visitor experience is enhanced by a series of recorded narratives drawn from local history. There are tales of "tavern crawls" before the Civil War, a raid on a bootleg still in Richwood, and a story about drunken pigs in Mullica Hill, all accessible by scanning QR codes in the gallery. On opening day, the Greenwich Tea Burners Tea Company (New Jersey's only tea plantation) and Silver Feather Farm Herbal Teas invite the public to sample their offerings, a nod to Temperance Teas of the 19th century. Teas will also be available for purchase.

On Sunday New Jersey author Michael Gabriele will present a program on his newest book, Colonial Taverns of New Jersey – Libations, Liberty and

Revolution, at the Society's Richwood Academy Cultural Center at 3 pm.

New Jersey was the "Crossroads of the American Revolution," and as battles raged, colonial taverns formed the social network that held the state together. A haven for Patriots and Loyalists alike, the colonial tavern was the main stage for key debates on the question of independence and conversations on daily life. They were the "seedbeds" for the Revolution, strongholds for political activities, beacons for travelers, and venues for entertainment, merriment, business conversations, and libations.

"Each day in the Garden State, we literally walk along the Crossroads of the Revolution in the footprints of our forebears, a legacy that lies just below the surface of our everyday lives," Mr. Gabriele noted. "The ghosts that linger on these byways sustain our state's collective heritage from the years of the Revolutionary War".

Gabriele's book will be available for purchase and signing at the event and his lecture will be live streamed and archived at the Society's Facebook page. Information about the exhibition and all the Society's programs this Spring can be found at HarrisonHistorical.com and on the Harrison Township Historical Society's Facebook page. Admission to both the exhibition and lecture are free and open to the public.

The Harrison Township Historical Society's arts and history programs are made possible in part by funding from the Gloucester County Cultural and Heritage Commission at Rowan College of South Jersey, in partnership with the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State and the National Endowment for the Arts and the New Jersey Historical Commission/Department of State.