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Gloucester County

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## TIME TRAVELER

For a township's historian, past times are more than a pastime. Page 3.

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# E. Greenwich's official history channeler

**By Louise Harbach**

INQUIRER SUBURBAN STAFF

Call Janice Brown a sleuth. As East Greenwich's historian, she has been chronicling the rural township's history, which otherwise might be lost, said John DeGeorge, East Greenwich's mayor.

"Our historian has proven to be an incredibly valuable resource," DeGeorge said. "Mrs. Brown embodies a true passion for history and genealogy. She authors an article on our history for every newsletter and even our municipal calendar has a question of the month about history. Not only has she been able to dig up volumes of history and photographs, she does a magnificent job of documenting everything."

Brown, a transplanted resident of New Hampshire who has lived in East Greenwich since 2001, has been the township's official historian for three years.

She has learned — and has made sure that her fellow residents also know — that Eglington Cemetery, started in 1776, is one of the oldest cemeteries in continuous operation in the United States, and that one of the oldest family-run businesses in the state, if not the nation, is in East Greenwich (Haines Pork Shop on Kings Highway).



DAVID M WARREN / Inquirer Suburban Staff

**The Historic Cemetery of St. Peter's Episcopal Church of Clarksboro is, according to historian Janice Brown, also known as Colonial Cemetery. Cemeteries are but one of the resources she uses to bring East Greenwich Township's past to life. She found out that the Death of the Fox Tavern on Kings Highway was used for recruiting during the American Revolution and that Bodo Otto Jr., a surgeon in Washington's army at Valley Forge, died there.**

"I think I've always been a historian," said Brown, a computer Web designer and genealogist who came to the area when her husband, Chris, a meeting and exhibition planner, was transferred.

"I inherited my love of history from my father. He was a real Yankee who loved to tell a story — real history stories."

The couple lived temporarily with longtime resident Mary Cloud Hollingshead before buying a house.

When Brown asked Hollingshead about the township's history, Hollingshead handed her a pile of books. The community had its beginnings in colonial times, long before its incorporation in 1881 from parts

#### ON THE COVER

Historian Janice Brown photographs the interior of the Friends meetinghouse in Mickleton. Inquirer photo by David M Warren.

of Greenwich and Mantua Townships.

Many people "think everything was happening in Philadelphia during the colonial era, but there was a lot happening here in East Greenwich," she said. "History is a living, breathing thing. ... People are connected to all of this. ... And if nothing else, I want people to understand that history is not just buildings and dates but people."

For instance, she found out that the Death of the Fox Tavern on Kings Highway was used as a recruiting station during the American Revolution and that Bodo Otto Jr., a surgeon in George Washington's army at Valley Forge, died there.

Hollingshead is glad Brown is retrieving local history, saying, "East Greenwich is developing so fast that without a historian, the fabric of this community will be lost."

Brown's recording of the community's past — the community does not have a historical society — is particularly valuable for the continuity it gives to new residents and the township, DeGeorge said.

"Her documentation of the



**Township historian** Janice Brown stands near the grave of Abraham Jones, a Revolutionary War veteran who died in 1842.

township's history has not only been a great reference tool for the planning board to establish a protective historic district in our master plan, it has given many of our new residents the opportunity to learn about the 'roots' [of] East Greenwich," DeGeorge said.

Brown feels she must be persistent to give those in the



**Completed in 1799**, the brick Friends meetinghouse in Mickleton stands near Kings Highway and Democrat Road.

future a look at the past, such as the story of a bridge over Mantua Creek that was destroyed in 1777 by patriots to slow the advance of the British army.

"When I look at what I see in East Greenwich, I feel transported to the past," she said. "You get a sense of time here, and I'd like people in the

#### On The Web

■ Since delving into local history, Janice Brown has set up and maintains a Web site on the history of East Greenwich.

[www.nj.searchroots.com/EG/](http://www.nj.searchroots.com/EG/)

She also maintains a site on county history. Visit it at: [www.nj.searchroots.com/Gloucesterco](http://www.nj.searchroots.com/Gloucesterco)

future to be able to do the same thing.

"I would feel very bad if the wonderful stories of this town were lost," she said.

That is not likely to happen as long as Brown is the community historian, said DeGeorge, who noted that Brown is just as interested in what is happening now.

"If there is an important lesson to be learned from history, it is that we are making history right now," he said. "It is important to document our current actions so that a hundred years from now, future generations may learn from us."

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