

Revolutionary War Soldiers in Kirkwood Cemetery

By Karen Ferguson, Town Historian

Over the last few months, I have been researching the backgrounds of our early settlers for the Town of Kirkwood. To date, I have discovered that 13 of them were soldiers in the Revolutionary War. Of those 13, 6 are buried in our local cemeteries. In preparation for America's 250th Celebration, I have been working with the Sons of the American Revolution to ensure those patriots get the honor and recognition they deserve by installing Patriot Burial Markers at each location. Each marker is funded by a grant from the William G Pomeroy Foundation.

Our first marker dedication was held at the Kirkwood Cemetery on June 7, 2025 honoring Elias Bevier, Elias Conklin, and Cornelius Snedeker.

Cornelius Snedeker arrived before Bevier and Conklin. In fact, he was more than likely one of the original settlers coming to this area between 1793-1794. His brother, Garrett Snedeker, is more recognized in Kirkwood's history, but Cornelius also made Kirkwood his home about 1 mile above the Village.

Cornelius and Garrett were both Revolutionary War Soldiers, enlisting at the same time in Middlesex NJ. Since only Cornelius is buried in Kirkwood, I will share a little bit about his life and his time in service as written by his wife, Helena.

Cornelius Snedeker was born on February 8, 1755. He was baptized at the Six Mile Run Reformed Dutch Church in New Jersey.

At the age of 20, Cornelius was a private in the militia of NJ in the service of the United States during the Revolutionary War in the years 1775, 1776, 1777, 1778, and 1779, and other services afterwards. In 1775 Cornelius served under Captain Piat when they marched to Long Island and other places and was engaged in disarming the Tories in 1776. Five months he was enlisted under Captain Gordon and marched to Long Island, Jamaica, Oyster Bay, as well as to a few other places . . . After 5 months of service, he was either drafted or volunteered once again, when a fellow soldier was killed by his side in 1777. For three or four months of one-month tours each under Captain Piat and Captain Ross, he marched to Amboy Spottswood, Elizabethtown and other places in 1778 and 1779. He completed three or four tours of duty principally under the same officers.

Cornelius and Helena were married on the 23rd day of March 1779 by the Reverend Thomas Smith, Pastor at that time of the Presbyterian Church in the Village of Cranberry. They had 5

children: 1 girl and 4 boys, 2 of which were twins. Their son, Isaac, was accidentally shot and killed on Christmas day 1810. He was approximately 18 years old at the time of his death. The circumstances of the accident are not recorded. An etched fieldstone marks his grave.

Cornelius died just over 2 years later on February 14, 1813. His body was laid to rest next to Isaac's in the Kirkwood Cemetery. His grave marker is an etched fieldstone engraved by his friend William Hutchinson.

Between 1815-1817, a three more Revolutionary War Soldiers came to this area: Elias Bevier, Ebenezer Park, and Elias Conklin.

Elias Bevier was born on March 28, 1753, in New Pultz, Ulster County, NY. He was a Dutchman. In 1775 he enlisted and served as a private and then Corporal in the 3th Ulster Militia under Captains John Hasbrouck, John Hardenbergh, and Abraham Deyo under the command of Colonels John Cantine and Levi Pauling. He went on short tours at various times mostly against the Indians on the frontiers. His regiment also served in the Battles of Saratoga, Stillwater and Half Moon in Albany. With his team, he moved the "big chain" to the Hudson River where it was laid to prevent the British from going up the river. His service ended in 1779.

He moved to this area in 1815 from New Paltz, NY and settled in the area now known as Bevier Street & Old State Road in the northern part of Kirkwood. His wife's name was Sarah. They had at least 4 children: 3 girls and one boy. Their daughter Jane died at birth in 1826. Elias passed away on July 28, 1838. The family was originally laid to rest in the Bevier Cemetery, their private family cemetery on their farmland. However, they were moved to the Kirkwood Cemetery due to the construction of a new one-room schoolhouse.

Elias Conklin was born on September 15, 1758. He was the brother of John Conklin, the namesake for Conklin NY, and together they served in the Revolution. Elias was a Private in the New Jersey Militia. He enlisted in 1777 in a company of men from the Upper Delaware Valley of Pennsylvania and New York commanded by Captain Bezaleel Tyler. The men built a fort at Cochection where they encamped until driven out by an Indian raid in July 1778. In the following month, Tyler's company, joined by a few regular troops, attacked a force of Tories and Indians. One of the Tories was killed and three were taken prisoner.

Elias then went down the Delaware River to Fort Minisink at Sussex, New Jersey, where he volunteered in 1779 to serve in Captain Chambers' company of the Sussex County Militia that was organized to protect the frontier from Indian and Tory raids. He served in this company for four years until he was "discharged by verbal orders".

He was described by James Eldridge Quinlan as such "Elias was an Indian doctor of note—cured cancers, the bites of rattlesnakes, etc. His art descended to his son and grandson."

Elias married Charlotte Helm on December 25, 1779. Together they had 8 children: 4 girls and 4 boys. The family lived in Cochection until they settled in Kirkwood in 1817. They made their residence in the Village area. Elias Conklin died on February 20, 1839 and was buried in the Kirkwood Cemetery.

In the coming months, there will be two more Patriot Burial Marker dedications: one at Riverside Cemetery and one at Layton Cemetery.