

Blog 123 ~ Thanks to Our Heroes



*2026 Montgomery/Rocky Hill Rotary's Flags for Heroes display
at Montgomery High School*

If you passed by Montgomery High School between Memorial Day and Independence Day, you would have seen the 60+ American flags on display on Route 601. Called Flags for Heroes, this exhibit was organized by the Montgomery/Rocky Hill Rotary, and it has been presented yearly since 2018. Citizens purchased all these flags. A medallion was affixed to each flag with the name of the donor who presented the flag, the name of the hero being honored, and the reason for the honor.

While we often associate heroes with the military or first responders, a hero can be anyone who displays courage, achievement, or wholesome qualities. Heroes are recognized for their selfless actions, putting others ahead of themselves. Some heroes are widely known because of media notoriety, while others may only be known by those they help.

In recognition of our nation's 250th anniversary, we will focus in this blog on military heroes associated with Blawenburg and Montgomery Township.

Wars make many heroes. Sadly, some soldiers become known because they sacrificed their lives for America. If you look at all the wars in our nation's history, many more soldiers have fought and survived than have died. Many were injured.

Montgomery Veterans Memorial Committee

Finding all those who have served from Blawenburg and Montgomery Township is a challenging task. Residents have served in the military from the French and Indian War through many campaigns and wars until the present time. Over 15 years ago, the Montgomery Veterans Memorial Committee set out to make as complete a list as possible.

The Montgomery Veterans Memorial Committee was formed to recognize the wartime service and sacrifice of Montgomery residents. A memorial was constructed in Veterans Park in 2011. It is engraved with the names of known veterans. The committee also has a website, where new names are added as they are discovered.



Montgomery Veterans Memorial is at 235 Harlingen Road, Montgomery, NJ 08558 in Montgomery Veterans Park.

The Ultimate Sacrifice

Out of the hundreds of veterans from Montgomery who served, only seven soldiers from the Montgomery area are known to have died in action and appear on the memorial.

They are:

Civil War

James Cray

John A Cray

World War I

Samuel Duffield

World War II

George L. Brown

Michael Malko

Charles Rospapa

Vietnam War

Stephen H Warner

Heroes from Several Wars

There are heroes in every war, but as time passes, it becomes harder to identify the names of those who fought or perished. This is especially true of wars that took place over two centuries ago. We will look at our major wars, beginning with the American Revolution, to share some local information.

Revolutionary War

In 2025, the Van Harlingen Historical Society embarked on a project, led by Candy Willis, to find additional names of soldiers from Montgomery Township who served in the Revolutionary War. This project found and used information from a register of Jerseymen, residents and soldiers who fought in the American Revolution, and other historic documents to expand the list of veterans. When they developed the Veterans Memorial, the Committee only knew of 23 soldiers who fought in the Revolution, but the VHHS group knew there had to be more. After some challenging research, 123 additional names were found. These names were published in the July 4, 2026 edition of the *Van Harlingen Historian*, the Van Harlingen Historical Society newsletter. It was republished in the July 2026 edition of the Montgomery News:

<https://www.themontynews.org/single-post/montgomery-s-123-unrecognized-revolutionary-war-soldiers>

Civil War

Thomas Skillman



DECORATION DAY TRIBUTE: Tom Skillman puts a fresh flag on the grave of his grandfather Thomas Skillman, a Civil War soldier of Company F, 30th Regiment, New Jersey Volunteers, buried in the Skillman family plot in Blawenbergh Cemetery. An earlier Thomas Skillman fought in the Revolution.

(Photo by Clem Fiori.)

Samuel Duffield—World War I

The local soldier who perished in World War I, Samuel Duffield, was from Blawenburg. There is an article about him in Blog 24. Corporal Duffield died at the Battle of Blanc Mont Ridge in France on October 3, 1918. There is a plaque in Blawenburg Church in memory of him.

There is also an article about him in the Montgomery News archives:

<https://www.themontynews.org/single-post/2019/11/11/world-war-i-corporal-samuel-e-duffield-hometown-heros>



In 1919, Blawenburg Reformed Church published an honor roll of local service members who served in WWI. Here is a page from the directory in which the names appeared.

Honor Roll

Carl Ahlstrom—Private, Co. C, 108th Field Sig. Battalion, 33rd Div., A. E. F.

Samuel E. Duffield—Corp. Co. D, 9th Infantry, Second Division, A. E. F.

Wesley Larkin—Second Lieutenant, 153rd Depot Brig., Camp Dix.

Garret P. Stryker—Private 312th Field Signal Battalion, 87th Div., A. E. F.

Albert VanZandt—First Lieutenant, 29th Engineers, A. E. F.

Malcolm VanZandt—Second Lieutenant, of Aviation.

These six young men, sons of our church, gave themselves to the service of their country. We are proud of them and give to them our heartfelt thanks for the service they rendered. We honor them for the spirit of sacrifice they showed. Five have returned, but one, Samuel E. Duffield, lies sleeping under the sunny skies of France. He fell in the battle of Mont Blanc Ridge, Oct. 3, 1918. Unto him be double honor for the supreme sacrifice he made, may he ever live in our hearts and his memory be cherished by this church.

This honor roll recognizes Blawenburg residents who served in World War I.

World War II



Three patriots from Blawenburg stand in front of Blawenburg Church in October 1943 during World War II. L-R Bill Terhune (Army), Parvin Stryker, Jr. (Marines), and Bob Van Fleet (Navy).

The Local Defense Council of Montgomery Township held a Dedication of Honor Roll on the Harlingen School lawn on Sunday, July 9, 1944. This honor roll had many more names than the list from WWI. You can download the booklet that shows the program and names of service members [here](#).



Honor roll 1944.pdf

Vietnam War

Stephen H Warner



There has been much written about the death of public information specialist Steven Warner. He was almost ready to leave Vietnam when he was struck down by an enemy attack in 1971.

The Montgomery News wrote a story about him: <https://www.themontynews.org/single-post/2019/11/11/hometown-heroes>.

Killed in Action by Arthur J. Amchan details Stephen's efforts despite his war resistance and the tragic way he died.

There are so many examples of military heroes in our history. We should give a collective thank you to those who helped us retain our freedom. Without these people, life in America would be much different.

Also of Interest

1. The Montgomery Veterans' Memorial Committee is always looking for names of veterans to add to its online list. If you know anyone who lived in Montgomery when they served, let the committee know so they can determine if they should be listed. Montgomery Veterans Memorial Committee: Call (908) 359-8211 (Ext. 2279) or email mvmc@twp.montgomery.nj.us
2. A person not on the Montgomery list lived in my house from 1960, after purchasing it from the estate of local postmaster Stanley Dorey. Brigadier General George Stephens and his wife, Muriel, lived there until he passed away in 1969. We purchased the house from Muriel in 1973. You can learn more about

the history of my house, which is on the National Register, by reading Blog 27—Annie's House.

General Stephens had a long and successful career, as outlined in his obituary below. He did not live in Montgomery Township until he retired and spent his time until his passing teaching in the Princeton area.



BRIGADIER GENERAL GEORGE R. STEPHENS, 71, formerly Head of the Department of English at the U.S. Military Academy, died 13 December 1969 at his home in Blawenburg, New Jersey. Born in Berwick, Pennsylvania, and educated in the Philadelphia schools, General Stephens graduated from Princeton University in 1921. While teaching and coaching at Swarthmore Preparatory School, the Haverford School, and Dickinson College, he received his Master's Degree and the Doctorate at the University of Pennsylvania (the latter in 1931). From 1935-1945 he was an Associate Professor in the Department of English, History, and Government at the U.S. Naval Academy. He was appointed by President Truman as Head of the Department of English at West Point and a Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Army in 1945 and served in that capacity until he retired 31 January 1961. At that time he was promoted to Brigadier General and awarded the Legion of Merit.

Upon retirement General and Mrs. Stephens bought a home in Blawenburg, New Jersey, near Princeton. From 1962-1966 General Stephens acted as a Visiting Professor of English at the Westminster Choir College, teaching Philosophy and serving on several committees. He discontinued teaching in 1966, but continued his relationships with this institution until the time of his death.

Professor Stephens was an occasional writer, interested in the classical subjects. He was the author of *The Knowledge of Greek in England in the Middle Ages* (his thesis) and of several monographs on medieval subjects, mostly published in *Speculum*. He was listed in *Who's Who in America*, *The Directory of American Scholars*, and other subsidiary works.

Fond of travel, the Stephenses made many trips in various directions. They visited England nine times and also journeyed to Germany, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, France, Panama, the Caribbean Islands, and Hawaii.

General Stephens was a member of The Modern Language Association, The Mediaeval Academy of America, The Modern Humanities Research Association, and The National Council of the Teachers of English. He was a member of The Nassau Club in Princeton, The Old Guard of Princeton, New Jersey, and of Delta Upsilon Fraternity.

He is survived by his wife, Muriel Brice Stephens, formerly of Philadelphia; a daughter, D'Arcy, the wife of Lieutenant Colonel Theodore J. Charney, Fort Dix, New Jersey; and a son, former Captain Robert G. Stephens, Hilton, New York; two sisters, Miss Wilhelmina Stephens, Philadelphia, and Mrs. James E. Stevens, Morton, Pennsylvania; and five grandchildren. Burial was at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York.

3. Who are your heroes?

If you were going to post a flag for a hero, who would it be? A military person, relative, teacher, or someone else? What would you say about your hero? If your hero is still alive, now is a good time to say thank you!

Sources

Information

Rotary - <https://montgomeryrotary.org/page/flags-for-heroes-project>

Montgomery Veterans Memorial Committee - <https://www.montgomerynj.gov/854/List-of-Veterans>

Brigadier General George R. Stephens's obituary - Brigadier General George R. Stephens, Blawenburg, NJ, USMA Association of Graduates Spring 1969

Known veterans - <https://www.montgomerynj.gov/854/List-of-Veterans>

Blawenburg Church Directory, 1919, shared by Larry May

Montgomery Township Local Defense Council, Dedication of Honor Roll, July 9, 1944, shared by Larry May

Willis, Candy. Montgomery's 123 Unrecognized Revolutionary War Soldiers, https://drive.google.com/file/d/14N5aVv7qaKDD1Gf-SBI2Euy0SmaH9Z_7/view, p. 15

Pictures

Flags for Heroes display—D. Cochran

Montgomery Veterans Memorial—Montgomery Veterans website

Samuel Duffield—Montgomery News/NJ Archives

World War I Honor Roll—1919 church directory

Thomas Skillman—Clem Fiori, Town Topics, May 21, 2003

Three soldiers from Blawenburg—courtesy of the late Grace Terhune

Stephen Warner—Gettysburg College archives

Brigadier General George R. Stephens—from his obituary

Writer—David Cochran

Editor—Barb Reid

Researcher—Ken Chrusz

Email: blawenburgtales@gmail.com

Blog website: <http://www.blawenburgtales.com>

Author site: <http://www.dcochran.net>