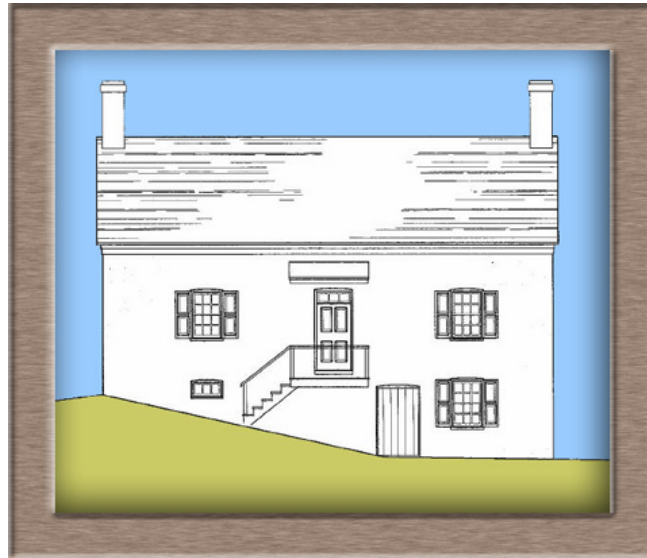


The 1759 Vought House



A Revolutionary War Loyalist Homestead

House Location

Gray Rock Road
Clinton Township
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Owner

Clinton Township School Board

Current Description

A one-family, two-story bank house, with attic, constructed of wood, stone and concrete. Exterior is white-painted stucco, with slate over cedar shake roof.

Architectural Significance

An exemplary 18th century Palatine German homestead in central New Jersey, consisting of a typical colonial stone bank house with unusual decorative plaster ceilings and much original trim, doors, flooring and hardware.

Historical Significance

The architectural and social history of the house, highlighting the life and times of its original owners, Christoffel and Cornelia Vought, illustrates the circumstances and dilemmas of ordinary citizens during the American Revolution.

Why the 1759 Vought House should be preserved.

Historical Significance of the House

1) This Revolutionary War loyalist homestead meets four criteria, any one of which would make it eligible for inclusion on the New Jersey and the National Register of Historic Places. It is eligible due to:

- The people who lived here, starting with Stoffel and Cornelia Vought in 1759.
- Events that took place on the property during the War of Independence.
- The architecture of this exemplary Palatine German farm, especially the unusual surviving decorative plaster ceilings.
- The ability of this farm, one of the largest surviving German American artifacts in New Jersey, to shed light on colonial era life ways and culture

Architectural Significance of the House

The 1759 Vought House is a prime example of mid-18th century stone bank houses typical of the Palatine area of Germany. The Vought family emigrated from there in the early 1700s.

The second floor rooms have original wattle and daub plaster ceilings. These extremely rare ornamental plaster ceilings have differing designs, including a rare, serpent-shaped design in the hall. This ornamental plasterwork is very like that of another Palatine German stone farmhouse in Berks County, PA, the well-known Hehn-Kershner House, ca. 1755, which had architectural elements relocated to Winterthur Museum in 1958.

The 1759 Vought House will be the first Loyalist museum in New Jersey.

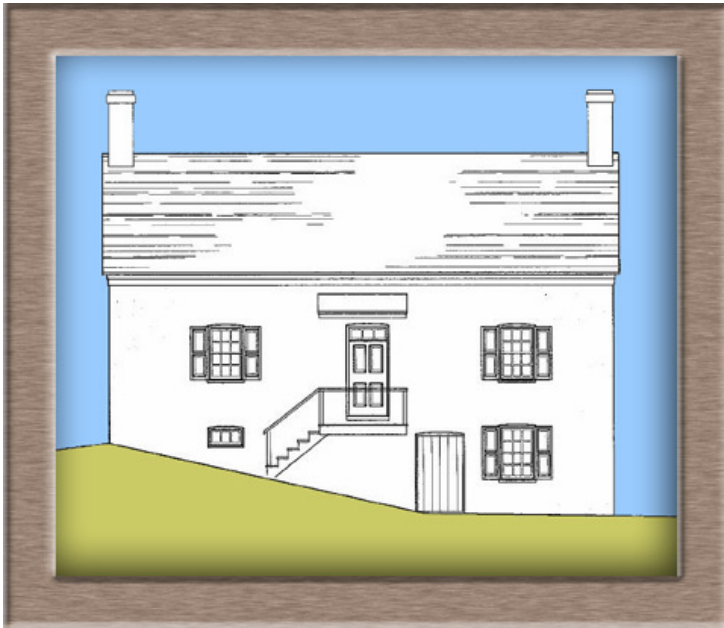
The Vought House fits an important niche in New Jersey revolutionary history. Hunterdon County was a hotbed of loyalist and patriot conflict, and the story of the immigrant Vought family brings the Loyalist side of the Revolution to life.

Since no other site in New Jersey is currently interpreted as a loyalist museum, an important perspective on the American revolutionary experience has been neglected. One question a loyalist museum would raise is why so many men and women not only remained loyal but took up arms to preserve British parliamentary democracy from the rebellion.

From the Loyalist perspective, the consequences of an American rebellion are open questions, just as they were in 1775. When people make choices and face uncertain outcomes, history comes alive.

The 1759 Vought House

A Revolutionary War Loyalist Homestead



Historical Background

The Vought House can tell a story of three generations of European refugees swept up in the major religious and political conflicts of the 18th Century. They strove to make a new life and became community leaders. In the crisis of 1775, they took a principled stand against the rebellion, volunteered to join British troops and at war's were exiled to Nova Scotia .

The German Palatine Exodus: 1709

In the late 1600s and early 1700s, the British government wanted to increase the population of the American colonies in order to boost American growth and, thereby, British wealth. However, draining the mother country of Englishmen was considered unwise, so England looked outside its borders for likely settlers.

German Lutherans were seen as highly desirable by Protestant Queen Anne, who promised them free passage, land and money. Advertising pamphlets were distributed in the Palatinate, a formerly prosperous rural area of Germany that been ravaged by devastating religious wars and left in ruins. In 1709, after a severe winter, more than 10,000 desperate Palatines packed up and left for England; 3,000 of them were sent by the British government to New York. Among them were Christoffel Vought's parents, Simon and Christina Vogt.*

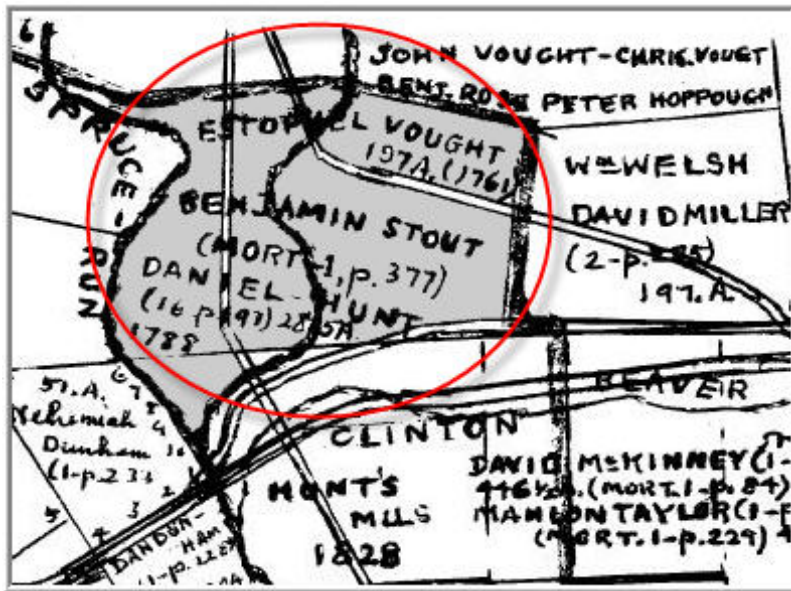
The Refugees Arrive in North America: 1709-1710

The immigrant refugees were, effectively, indentured servants. Many were sent to work in Britain's local naval industry, making masts, ship's timbers, tar and pitch north of New York City until they repaid the government for their passage, land and upkeep. The Vought family managed to stay in New York City instead. After subsistence payments ended in 1712, semi-destitute, they followed about 45 other German families to the Lower Raritan Valley of central New Jersey, joining the Dutch-Americans who had already settled the area.

Simon was anxious to farm, but the best land in the Lower Raritan Valley was already taken so the family joined clusters of German settlers heading inland to the relative wilderness along the North and South Branches of the Raritan River, in the nearly 100,000 acres of the West Jersey Society's Great Tract. On August 1, 1714, Simon and Christina's infant son, Johannes Christoffel Vought (known as "Stoffel,") was baptized at the first recorded German Lutheran service in New Jersey.

Simon and Christina Vogt Settle in Hunterdon County: 1720-1759

The Palatine Germans were especially attracted to the fertile farmland of Hunterdon County and its limestone outcroppings, so like the land of the Rhine Valley and the Palatinate. The familiar limestone soil lured Simon, who was anxious to feed and clothe his growing family.

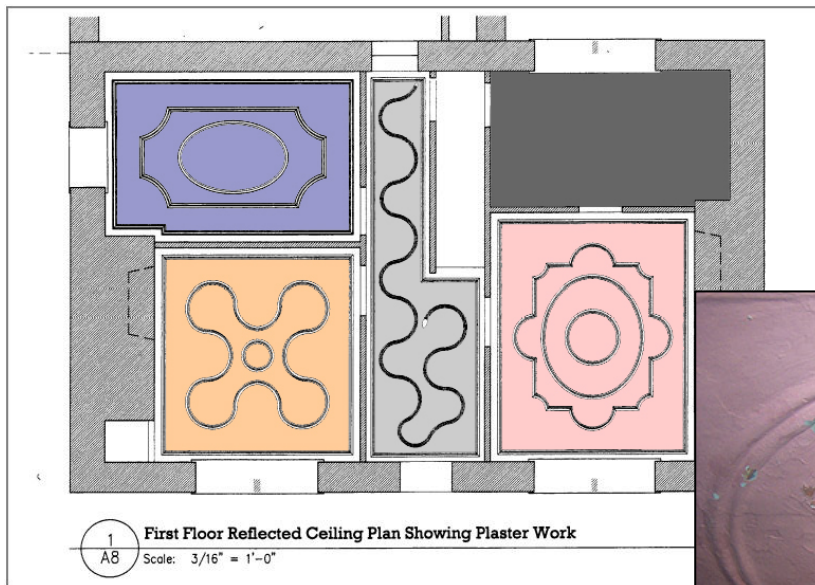


The family settled in Hunterdon, first on land between today's Oldwick and Potterstown, leasing 200 acres. They became active members of the New Germantown (Oldwick) Lutheran church. In 1749, at age 35, their son Stoffel became head of the Vought household, marrying Cornelia Portman Traphagen and soon fathering two children, John and Christina. Ten years later, he bought 285 acres of prime, limestone-rich land on the South Branch of the Raritan and Spruce Run in what was then Lebanon Township and is now Clinton Township.

Stoffel and Cornelia Vought Prosper: 1759-1774

In 1759, 45-year-old Stoffel Vought began improving his new land holdings and built the large stone house that still stands on it.

Impressive for its time, the house was built partly into an earthen bank, with sturdy stone walls reminiscent of rural homes in the Palatinate, where Stoffel's parents had grown up. The second floor was remarkable for its formal, decorative plaster ceilings.



Stoffel Vought rose to take a respected place in the community and within the German Lutheran congregation. He was elected to the council of his church and became an elder. In 1768 he was named one of Hunterdon County's Road Commissioners. He also bought 2,000 acres of land in New York State, as an additional legacy for his children and grandchildren.

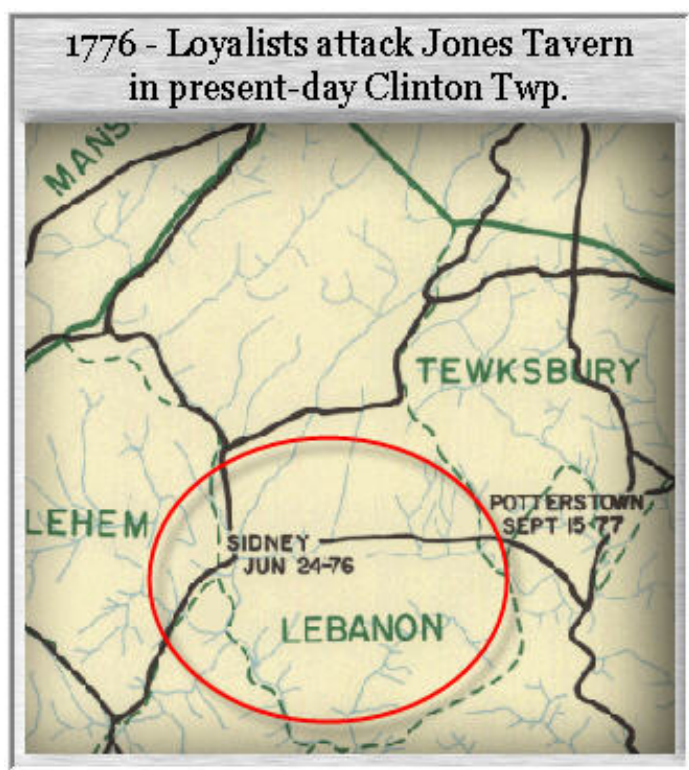
In 1774, when he was 60, Stoffel turned over the day-to-day operation of the farm to his son, John, because he was “old and unable to cultivate it.” He also bought an additional 203 adjoining acres—which he gave to John. Stoffel planned to enjoy his retirement.

Choosing Sides in the Revolution: 1775

Unfortunately, the outbreak of the American Revolution brought an end to the family’s good fortune. Everyone in the colonies was forced to choose sides, and the Voughts became well-known supporters of the King’s Armies. What motivated them to back the British Crown?

It is likely that, comfortably established in the colony, the Voughts felt they had a lot to lose in a war and wanted to maintain the status quo. And like many other immigrant families, they may still have felt indebted to Britain for the opportunity it had given their family through its generous immigration policy of the early 1700s. The Vought family had been transformed from desperate, impoverished refugees to well-established, financially secure landowners in two generations.

New Jersey was also close to New York City, which had a huge, solidly loyalist population. Stoffel and John Vought, like one-third of the colony, became staunch loyalists.



The Turmoil of War: 1776

At first, loyalists worked through legal channels to support the Crown. But anti-British sentiment grew and tempers rose in 1776. The colonists raised militias. John was drafted, but when his militia unit refused to serve, he and his friend Joseph Lee were held responsible. Rumors of a coming British invasion emboldened the loyalists, who began raiding colonial militias throughout north and central New Jersey.

After midnight on June 24, 1776, John Vought, Joseph Lee and a group of about 25 loyalists armed with clubs raided the tavern house of Thomas Jones, a longtime Vought friend and close neighbor. The tavern was a local militia-recruiting center. The group beat Captain Jones, threatened his family and stole money from the tavern bar.



“John Voaght, Swindle and others Struck this Deponent with Clubs, who then took his gun & told them that if they did not leave the House and cease striking him he would blow their brains out—They answered Gd Dam him he presents his Gun at us, & fell on this Deponent & beat him with their Clubs & hurt and wounded him much—This Deponent then flashed his gun at them, upon which the(y) immediately Ceazed the Gun & twisted it out of his hands & beat him on the head and sundry parts of his body w’ their Clubs & said Dam by whig kill him out of the way.” (from Jones’ deposition)

Within days, Col. Frederick Frelinghuysen marched with a squad of militiamen from White House to the Vought farm, where at midnight they surrounded the house and the colonel rapped at the front door with his sword. Stoffel slipped out a back window in his nightshirt, but was apprehended by a rebel who threw him to the ground. John had escaped, but he soon gave himself up out of solidarity with his father. In early July 1776, Stoffel and John were imprisoned for five days in the Hunterdon County Courthouse in Trenton until they posted bail of 2,000 pounds. Each was fined 100 pounds—a surprisingly lenient penalty. They now both became well known loyalists.

Leaders of Loyalist Resistance: 1776-1778

In the fall of 1776, with George Washington's troops in retreat from New York, the loyalist cause gained strength in New Jersey. As Washington, with the help of Captain Jones, ferried his retreating troops across the Delaware into Pennsylvania in December, the Voughts assembled a force of 50 to 60 loyalists. The party moved south along the Raritan, trying to link up with the British Army. They were intercepted, but Stoffel and John escaped and reached the British lines, where John officially joined the New Jersey Volunteers, the largest American loyalist military organization.

In the next year and a half, John's battalion saw action in Bergen County, occupied Philadelphia, and took part in the battle of Monmouth before finally returning to New York. Promoted to captain, he also saw duty on Long Island's North Shore.

Loyalist Ruin: 1778-1783

Back in Hunterdon County, Cornelia Vought and her son's wife, Mary Grandin Vought, led difficult lives as wives of renowned loyalists. They had to fight eviction to remain in the home. In June 1778, the Hunterdon County Commissioners held a "Jury of Inquisition" on the matter of Stoffel and John Vought. At the tavern house of Thomas Jones, seven jurors declared them guilty and over the next nine months, their livestock and personal possessions, including the house, barns and land were sold at auction. The main part of the farm was sold for 8,550 pounds, a large sum that reflected the desirability of the holdings.

When the war was over in 1783, the Voughts, like other loyalists, had nowhere to go. Their home was gone, their former neighbors hostile, and they were again refugees. Another exodus began, and the Vought family joined the loyalists who were being resettled by the British in Nova Scotia. The British government compensated them 1,721 pounds for their war losses.

But life in exile in Nova Scotia was bleak, with poor farming land and rugged weather—and it was filled with English and Anglo-Americans. The Voughts still felt German; they had been comfortable in the German ethnic enclave of Hunterdon County. It turned out that the property in New York State was still available, and the family returned to the farm in Duanesburg, NY, to live out their lives. Cornelia died first, at age 93, in 1800. John passed next in 1803, then his father Stoffel, in 1809. John's wife, Mary, died in 1831.

*Spelling was fluid in the 18th century, and the family name was spelled differently in at different times in different documents, including Vogt, Vecht, Voght, Voke and Vought.

These pages draw extensively on a cultural resource investigation by Hunter Research for the Clinton Township School District which was repared by Damon Tvaryanas, Douglas Scott, George Cress, Nadine Sergejeff, and Ian Burrow, Principal Investigator, in April 2005.

Official record of attack on Captain Jones' Tavern, June 24, 1776:

New Jersey, Hunterdon County

On Monday the twenty fourth of June last past about Twelve of the Clock at Night John Voaght Joseph Lee . . . and Sundry others to the Amount of about Twenty five in number came to the House of this Deponent Armed with Clubs and fell upon John Shurts Junr. near his back Door with their clubs in a furious manner. This deponent upon hearing sd Shurts Cry Murder run up the Celler Kitchen Stairs with his loaded gun by which time a number of the Above Named Persons had got Entry—This Deponent then set his Gun by and attempted to relieve sd Shurts by pulling them away, upon which John Voaght Swindle and others Struck this Deponent with Clubs, who then took his gun & told them that if they did not leave the House and cease striking him he would blow their brains out—They answered Gd Dam him he presents his Gun at us, & fell on this Deponent & beat him with their Clubs & hurt and wounded him much—This Deponent then flashed his gun at them, upon which the(y) immediately Ceazed the Gun & twisted it out of his hands & beat him on the head and sundry parts of his body w' their Clubs & said Dam by whig kill him out of the way

This Deponent broke from them Twice and Attempted to Escape of the House but they prevented him by pulling him back but the third time he broke from he hot into his house & locked the Door and fled up Stairs—They Immediately broke Open the Outside Door & Several Inside Doors in Search of this Deponent threatened to kick his wife if she did not tell them where he was who answered she did not know & Cryed out don't kill me you have killed my husband

This Deponent further Saith that they pursued his wife and Children out of Doors and he heard the Children Screaming & Crying you have killed my daddy don't kill me

This Deponent saith the Insurgents then went off & his wife then informed him the Barr door which had been locked was broke open & his pocked Book & Money was Stole upon which this Deponent with the help of his Wife got down stairs & found sd Barr Door Pen & upon Examining the Drawer Missed his Pocket Book in which he had that Morning put Twelve pounds just & one

dollar & in which this Deponent's wife informed him she had put seven pounds proclamation money which pocket Book and Money this Deponent firmly belives the Afforesaid Insurgents or some one or more of then Robbed him off & further this Deponent sayeth not

Sworn before me the Eighth Day of July Dom. 1776 Thomas Jones

Oliver Barnett

One militia man's account of Stoffel Vought's arrest a few days later:

They started about sundown . . . from White House and marched quietly and noiselessly to Lebanon arriving there about midnight. Having surrounded the house with his men, [Colonel Fredrick] Frelinghuysen [who was in command] went to the door and rapped with the hilt of his sword. In a moment a back window was thrown open and the man they sought jumped out in his night shirt but ran into the arms of one of the men who at once threw him down and had him bound. They then went into the house to search for something to eat. In the cellar they found a boiled ham and some bread and butter and a barrel of Methiglen which was soon tapped and some of the men had the bees buzzing in their heads all day and even at night fall.

The 1759 Vought House, Inc.
Why this non-profit should preserve the house.

The Current Situation:

- The Clinton Township School District does not have the funding, expertise, or mandate for historic preservation.
- The Township Historic Preservation Commission has a mandate to promote preservation but cannot take ownership or provide adequate funding.
- Transfer of ownership to a third party non-profit corporation is the best way to meet our responsibility to preserve this important heritage resource.

The 1759 Vought House, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt public charity willing to take possession of the Vought House and manage development of a museum promoting the study of New Jersey society during the Revolutionary era.

This non-profit is composed of local residents who wish to relieve Clinton Township taxpayers of this burden by seeking private donations, public and private grants to preserve a house of state-wide and even national significance.

This group can coordinate the diverse tasks involved in creating a full-scale operating museum. Its members' skills can provide:

- Restoration of the original stone bank house and the early 19th century addition to their original condition.
- Maintenance and preservation of the building and its immediate environs.
- Conservation of the unique plaster ceilings, assuring that they are returned to and preserved in their original condition.
- Grant writing, appeals to private donors and efforts to encourage volunteers and in-kind services.
- Creation of interpretive materials (booklets, exhibits, multimedia resources).
- Supervision of educational programs, including curating onsite exhibits and production of interactive media and website revisions.
- Publicity and promotion of 1759 Vought House as a destination for students, heritage tourists and local residents.

Our Goal: A compelling visitor experience.

The 1759 Vought House Inc. will interpret the restored house and lands as a revolutionary war loyalist homestead. Stories told in this setting will help visitors visualize the Vought family, experience a taste of rural New Jersey life in the mid-1700s, and from that perspective wonder how to respond to the growing crisis in Britain's American colonies (which we now know ultimately led to international warfare and this nation's independence).

The 1759 Vought House, Inc., A Revolutionary War Loyalist Homestead

Board of Trustees

Todd W. Braisted is an independent researcher in Loyalist military studies and a Loyalist re-enactor. He is the author of numerous articles and contributor to Moving On: Black Loyalists in the Afro-Atlantic World, 1999. He has lectured before the United Empire Loyalist Association, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the State of New Jersey's 225th *Anniversary of the American Revolution* series in Princeton.

Antje Doyle was born and raised in Germany where historic sites are preserved and history is given to children. She has a passion for history and preserving it for our children.

Timothy K. Johnson has a business degree and Certificate in Historical Preservation. His company is Renaissance Restoration. He serves as Vice-Chairperson of the Hillsborough Historic Commission and the Hillsborough Architectural and Site Design Standards Board.

Melissa Travis Mohlman has a History of Art degree. She's a writer concentrating on history, architecture and art, and has experience in public relations. She has worked for the Concord Museum (MA), RKT&B Architects, the Seattle Art Museum, New Jersey State Council on the Arts. She is a board member and acting curator of exhibits at the Red Mill Museum Village.

Charles Riddle earned an MA in History from Notre Dame and has taught Social Studies in the Bethlehem Township schools for 35 years. He is a historian who speaks on the Revolutionary era in Hunterdon County, and the author of Colonial and Revolutionary Bethlehem Township, 1976.

Ginger Rolleri is a 23 year resident of Clinton Twp. and former secretary of the Twp. Historic Commission. As an educator, she has observed that most children connect to the past best with hands-on experiences. She would like to see a teaching museum in Clinton Township.

Donald Sherblom, earned a doctorate from the New School for Social Research and has taught politics and history at the City University of New York, Seton Hall University, and Cedar Crest College. He is a member of the Clinton Township Historic Preservation Commission and works at RE/MAX Town & Country in Clinton.

Jo-an' Van Doren, Ed.D. is immediate past president of the Red Mill Museum Village and remains on the Board of Trustees. She is an educator with an interest in houses and history. She has restored/renovated nine homes ranging from Victorian to Contemporary. Her work has been showcased in the Democrat, Star Ledger, Courier News and Hunterdon Living. She was a featured speaker in last year's Restore Hunterdon program.

Adam Wengryn is President of Restoration Technologies, a company involved in dismantling and restoring historically significant homes and barns. He documented the Vought house under contract to the Clinton Township Historic Preservation Commission and was among the first to recognize the importance of the unique plaster ceilings.

Application for Membership

The 1759 Vought House Inc, a Revolutionary War Loyalist Homestead



Privileges of membership: Members elect the Board of Trustees, contribute ideas, and work to meet our educational purpose. Members receive free admission to the museum and event discounts. They also receive the Vought House Newsletter and the annual report. Membership applications are approved by the Trustees.

Types of membership and subscription rates:

- A. *Adult membership:* ages 18 to 60. Annual dues: \$ 25
- B. *Senior & Student membership:* ages -18, or + 60. Annual dues: \$ 10
- C. *Family membership:* parents/guardian & children. \$ 40
- D. *Benefactor:* Annual dues: \$ 100
- E. *Sustaining:* Annual dues: \$ 250
- F. *Patron:* Annual dues: \$ 500
- G. *Business:* Annual dues: \$ 150 +
- H. *Corporate Sponsor:* Annual dues: \$ 1,000 +

Name _____

Address _____

Tel. _____ email _____

Membership type: _____

Please enclose a check and mail to:

The 1759 Vought House, Inc.

P.O. Box 369

Annandale, New Jersey 08801-0369

Visit our website: www.1759House.org