

President's Report, GCBMA Annual Meeting, December 8, 2025

The year 2025 continues the activities of the Grover Cleveland Birthplace Memorial Association and the Grover Cleveland Presidential Library & Museum. This past year, we have been making good use of the new Carriage House Room with various activities.

The GCBMA would like to thank Caretaker Sharon Farrell and State Interpretation Specialist Elizabeth Dowd. In addition to regular duties, both Ms. Farrell and Ms. Dowd have been very supportive of the GCBMA's programs and events. Ms. Farrell is a member of the Communications Committee with Members James Gardner and Akiko Axe. Most recently, Ms. Farrell and Ms. Dowd organized an "exchange of ideas" trip for the Interpretation Committee with the Twin Lighthouses State Historic Site in Atlantic Highlands. (Ms. Dowd serves as Co-Chairperson of this committee.)

As this report is being prepared, the 2025 Annual Meeting on December 8th will be taking place in the Carriage House Room with a special program, "Grover Cleveland Returns to Caldwell", a Presidential Trivia Contest, and the annual report and elections of the Board.

Plans for the renovation of the first floor of the birthplace continue. These plans will put emphasis on Cleveland and his family life.

The Presidential Library and Museum is in the process of continuing planning displays for the presidential museum in the Visitor's Center. See the report from Mr. Louis Picone, Presidential Library and Museum Chairman in this packet.

Our membership and treasury continue to be in good shape. Details are provided by Membership Chairperson Don Stevens and Treasurer Greg Cowell respectively.

Our Annual Grover Cleveland Week for Grover Cleveland's Birthday in March included Local Historian Richard Gibbs discussing the Monomnock Inn, a resort hotel which existed in Caldwell in the early 1900's; Linda Russell, a historic musician, performed songs from Cleveland's era; Annette B. Dunlap, author of Frank: The Story of Frances Folsom Cleveland, America's Youngest First Lady gave the concluding talk.

Our website at <https://presidentcleveland.org/> continues to inform the public about our activities. Maintained by Francesca Picone, there are also links on the site to our Presidential Library. Our social media specialist Akiko Axe continues to keep the public informed with Facebook and Instagram.

The GCBMA continued participation in the West Essex Memorial Day Parade.

Our "hallmark" event, the "Fourth of July Ice Cream Social" continues to be a focal point of the community. Children's games; refreshments from the Cloverleaf Tavern, Guerriero Gelato, West Caldwell Shoprite, Jack's Foodtown; and the postcard collection of Richard and Linda Gibbs

were part of the celebration. Contributions and volunteer help from the Women's Club of the Caldwells, the Kiwanis Club, the Rotary Club, and Boy Scout Troop 6 also made the event successful. As always, we are very grateful to Msgr. Emery and St. Aloysius Church for being on hand as a rainsite and for being so welcoming with their parking lot. Special thanks to Diane McMahon for being co-chair for the event.

At the "Fourth of July Ice Cream Social", we had three very special programs, all of which were getting a head start on "USA 250" for all time periods. Trustee James Gardner continued a previous program, "Homefront Heroes". "Homefront Heroes" is a program celebrating and honoring the accomplishments of people who have supported war efforts. This recognition was started by World War II Pilot Lucky Lukadoo who passed away during the past year. Trustees David Cowell and Greg Crump presented a program on "General Marquis de Lafayette" and whether Lafayette traveled through the Caldwells during his Farewell Tour in 1825. For a third program, Trustee Paul Maloney impersonated Benjamin Franklin where "Franklin" spoke of his relationship with his son, William Franklin.

Within the next few months, policies will be in place for renting out the GCBMA Visitor's Center for community and private groups. Stay tuned for more details in the next year.

This past September 20th, the Grover Cleveland Birthplace and the Grover Cleveland Birthplace Memorial Association hosted an "Open House Celebration" for the new Visitor's Center. Speakers included Former GCBMA President David Cowell; Caretaker Sharon Farrell; State Administrator Mark Texel; State Superintendent Jake Hamilton; Essex County Commissioner and GCBMA Trustee Carlos Pomares; Vice President Bunny Jenkins; and Mark Twain Scholar John Pascal. The 75 attendees were treated to performances from the group "Cohesion", (a barbershop quartet singing group), and servings of "Snickerdoodle Ice Cream" from Guerriero Gelato. Attendees toured the Visitor's Center and were treated to a GCBMA slide show. Ms. Farrell was recognized for her 45 years as Caretaker of the Grover Cleveland Birthplace.

Under the direction of Akiko Axe, the GCBMA Gift Store continues to be very profitable. The gift store is held in high regard in the New Jersey historic community. This past October, the Gift Store was on hand at the Kiwanis and Rotary Club Street Fair. Mrs. Axe always goes "above and beyond" in her efforts with the gift store. Be sure to make an appointment to shop for items during the holidays.

We continue being registered as an Officially Recognized Friends Organization (ORFO), held all regular monthly meetings, held several committee meetings, and created and passed a new budget.

With the new year, we will be continuing our "Traveling Trunks" programs with artifacts available for loan to schools and historic institutions.

Caretaker Sharon Farrell, Second Vice President Don Stevens, and Trustee Greg Crump are currently working on a planter for a tree dedicated in memory of the late Trustee Alice Gibson. We look forward to seeing the new tree. In addition to the tree and planter, Ms. Farrell, Mr. Stevens, Mr. Crump, Ms. Axe, and Ms. E.Jay Rogacki arranged for the purchase of tables and a refrigerator for use in the Visitor's Center.

We are also grateful for various publicity this year from the Caldwell Progress; the Bergen Record; Atlantic Monthly; Scott McFarland from CBS News; and John Elliot from WCBS Television. Thank you to all forms of media.

Goals in 2025 include developing museum displays and continuing programs. The GCBMA is currently planning our Annual Week of Celebration for Grover Cleveland's Birthday (March 18th). With this year's birthday celebration, we would like to recognize the 100th Anniversary of Grover Cleveland Middle School in Caldwell. With the coming year, the GCBMA is working on activities related to the 250th Anniversary of the United States. There are plans to bring back the "Bizarre Bloomfield Avenue Tours" in the next year. Board Members Louis Picone and Paul Maloney are scheduled to present at the Grover Cleveland Middle School "Make a Difference Day" this spring.

We look at our organization not only as a tribute to Grover Cleveland but a tribute to American History. Our organization is honored to provide such a tribute to the Caldwell Community, New Jersey, and the United States.

Committees

1. Committee for Annual Meeting/ Grover Cleveland Week (See Presidential Library Committee.)

James Gardner- Chair
Louis Picone
Greg Crump
Akiko Axe
Sharon Farrell
Don Stevens
Paul Maloney

2. Committee for Memorial Day and 4th of July

Diane McMahon *
Roxanne Douglas
Bunny Jenkins
Greg Crump
James Gardner
Paul Maloney *
Greg Cowell
Mike Pszcola
* Chairs

3. December Decorating

Marjorie Jameson
Sharon Farrell
(In 2025, special thanks to Boy Scout Troop 6.)

4. Communications Committee

James Gardner- Chair
Diane McMahon
Akiko Axe (Social Media)
Roxanne Douglas
Sharon Farrell
Paul Maloney
(Francesca Picone is webmaster.)

5. School Programs

Louis Picone
Paul Maloney
James Gardner

6. Presidential Library

Louis Picone- Chair
Sharon Farrell
James Gardner
Akiko Axe
EJ Rogacki
Greg Crump
Don Stevens

7. USA 250

A theme with all other committees-- more on the theme in the coming months.

8. Buildings and Grounds

Greg Crump
Don Stevens
EJ Rogacki
Akiko Axe
John Hamilton (Emeritus)
Matt Rollins (Emeritus)
(Don Stevens, Mike Pszcola, and Adele Meyer worked on AdHoc Committee in the past with room rentals.)

9. Nominations Committee

Bunny Jenkins works with two Board Members

10. Finance Committee

Greg Cowell
Akiko Axe (Gift Store)

11. Interpretation Committee

Elizabeth Dowd *
Paul Maloney *
Dave Cowell
Roxanne Douglass
Adele Meyer
Janel Markman
Jake Hamilton
Carlos Pomares
*Chairs

12. Membership Committee

Don Stevens

Adele Meyer

13. Officers

Paul Maloney - President

Bunny Jenkins- Vice President

Don Stevens- Second Vice President

Greg Cowell- Treasurer

Dave Cowell- Emeritus

EJ Rogacki- Recording Secretary

Adele Meyer- Corresponding Secretary