

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

REVOLUTIONARY WAR VETERAN JESSE BELNAP TO BE HONORED WITH NEW MONUMENT IN NORTH EAST, PA, AHEAD OF AMERICA'S 250TH CELEBRATION

The Belnap Family Organization invites the public to celebrate the legacy of an unheralded Continental Army blacksmith, his wife Eunice Hall, and their contribution to American Independence.

NORTH EAST, PA — June 2026 — On Saturday, June 27, 2026—exactly one week before the United States celebrates its semiquincentennial (250th) anniversary—the descendants of American Revolutionary War veteran Jesse Belnap (1760–1854) and his wife Eunice Hall (1762–1849) will gather to dedicate a new, five-foot-tall granite monument at their final resting places in Phillips Cemetery.

More than 60 family representatives traveling from all over the United States will attend the historic commemoration, bridging generations of family history that today spans tens of thousands of descendants across 11 generations. Joining the family in attendance will be prominent local community leaders alongside representatives and officers from national Revolutionary War lineage organizations. The event stands as a positive milestone for the local community, closely aligned with national celebrations honoring the everyday patriots who forged the United States.

The Strategic Importance of the Great Chain at West Point

Jesse Belnap enlisted in the Continental Army in Hebron, Connecticut, in August 1777, just 25 days before his 17th birthday. Serving for three years as an "artificer" (blacksmith), Belnap provided critical logistical support to General George Washington's forces. Notably, he was stationed at New Windsor and West Point—known as "America's Gibraltar"—where he actively helped construct and deploy the famous Great Chain across the Hudson River.

During the American Revolution, the Hudson River was considered the single most vital strategic asset outside of major coastal cities. Whoever controlled the river could either keep the American Colonies united or drive them into submission. West Point sat at a narrow, high-ground "S"-shaped bend, making it the perfect choke point. The 65-ton iron Great Chain was engineered to completely block British warships from sailing upriver. Had the British broken through, they could have successfully split the New England colonies from the rest of the country, potentially crushing the American war effort entirely. Because of the barrier, the British never even attempted to run the chain.

The Legend of Jesse's Swim

According to historical documents provided by the family, they explicitly credit young Jesse with a daring, firsthand role in stretching this historic barrier across the water.

The family account records that Jesse successfully swam across the treacherous currents of the Hudson River, pulling a thin string with him to the opposite bank. He then used the string to haul a much larger rope across, which the remaining soldiers held onto as they swam over. The team then tied the heavy iron chain to the rope and pulled until it was successfully stretched across the river and fastened to the trees on each side.

Following this monumental engineering feat, Belnap endured the brutal, historic freezing conditions of the "Hard Winter" of 1779–1780 at Morristown, New Jersey, before being honorably discharged. Despite his vital behind-the-scenes contributions, Belnap modestly noted in his 1832 military pension application, "*I was in no battles of any consequence.*"

Monument Dedication Event Schedule: Saturday, June 27, 2026

The commemoration will feature multiple events across northwestern Pennsylvania and northeastern Ohio, open to the public and media:

- **10:30 a.m. – Revolutionary War Soldiers Memorial Recognition**
 - *Location:* Gibson Park (intersection of Main and Lake Streets), North East Borough, PA.
 - *Highlights:* Led by Sherry Lou Thomas-Schnarrs, Chapter Regent, Triangle Chapter of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR).
- **12:00 p.m. – Jesse Belnap and Eunice Hall Family Monument Dedication**
 - *Location:* Phillips Cemetery, E. Main Street/U.S. Highway 20, North East Township, PA.
 - *Highlights:* Remarks by Belnap Family Organization President Larry Julian and family historians. The ceremony features an Honor Guard and Pledge of Allegiance by Carl J. Anderson, III, President of the Erie Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR); a memorial plaque unveiling by the Triangle Chapter of the NSDAR; a ceremonial honorary bell ringing; and a bagpipe recessional.
- **1:30 p.m. – Family Luncheon & Documentary Premiere**
 - *Location:* Erie Ward Meetinghouse, 1101 South Hill Road, Erie, PA.
 - *Highlights:* Premiere of a short documentary tracking the family's history, produced by Austin Falter.
- **6:00 p.m. – Family Devotional and Tour**
 - *Location:* Kirtland Temple, 9020 Chillicothe Road, Kirtland, OH.

A Call to Action and Community Service

The original 19th-century headstones for Jesse and Eunice Belnap have become nearly illegible after nearly 170 years of weathering. Thanks to funds raised by the non-profit Belnap Family Organization, a new, durable monument will be unveiled to ensure their sacrifices are preserved for centuries to come.

In the spirit of the upcoming 250th American anniversary, and inspired by the Belnap ancestors who prioritized community building and frontier labor through military service, **the Belnap family extends a warm invitation to neighbors, community members, and distant relatives alike to take time this month to personally thank any active duty military or veteran who sacrificed for our freedom, or to perform an act of meaningful service within their own local communities.**

"Our ancestors built new and firm foundations through everyday acts of hard work, military duty, and community solidarity," said Larry Julian, President of the Belnap Family Organization. "By inviting others to express gratitude to our modern service members and engage in local service, we hope to honor the collective spirit of sacrifice that created and continues to sustain this nation."

About the Belnap Family Organization

The Belnap Family Organization (established in 1904) is one of the oldest and largest non-profit ancestral family organizations in the United States. It is dedicated to preserving, perpetuating, and promoting family solidarity among the descendants of early American pioneers. To learn more about the family history, review genealogical records, or access further details regarding the June 27 events, visit belnapfamily.org.

Media Contacts:

Larry Julian

President, Belnap Family Organization

Email: ljulianut@gmail.com

Phone: (801) 318-2791

Brent J. Belnap

2nd Vice President, Belnap Family Organization

Email: brent@brentjbelnap.com

Phone: (646) 320-7707

General Organization Inquiries

Email: belnapfamily.org@gmail.com

Website: www.belnapfamily.org

To ensure excellent media coverage for your historic family gathering, you should target local news outlets in **Erie County, Pennsylvania** (which directly covers North East Borough and North East Township) as well as the **Kirtland/Cleveland, Ohio** area.

Wikipedia+ 1

Below is a breakdown of the specific news stations, newspapers, and radio outlets to target, followed by a step-by-step guide on exactly how to send it to them.

1. Local Media Outlets to Target

Television Stations (Erie, PA Market)

Television stations love visual events, making your monument unveiling, bagpipe recessional, and 60+ attendees highly appealing for a brief segment.

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- **WICU (NBC 12) & WSEE (CBS 35) / Erie News Now**
 - *Why:* They are the primary newsrooms in Erie. John G. Duckworth from Erie News Now is actually listed in your documentary acknowledgments, making this station your **warmest lead**.
Wikipedia+ 1
 - *Website:* erienewsnow.com
Wikipedia
- **WJET (ABC 24) & WFXP (FOX 66) / YourErie**
 - *Why:* The shared newsroom for ABC and FOX in Erie actively covers community-driven, historical, and patriotic interest pieces.
Wikipedia
 - *Website:* yourerie.com
Wikipedia

Newspapers (Erie County & North East, PA)

Print and digital journalists provide deep, written profiles that do justice to detailed family lore and genealogical discoveries.

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- **North East News-Journal**
 - *Why:* This is the dedicated weekly paper for North East, PA. Because the event is local to Gibson Park and Phillips Cemetery, this is an absolute must-target for a community interest piece.
Wikipedia+ 1
- **Erie Times-News (GoErie.com)**
 - *Why:* The major daily newspaper for the entire Erie region.
Wikipedia

- *Website:* goerie.com
Wikipedia
- **Erie Reader**
 - *Why:* A popular local weekly publication tracking regional culture, history, and community milestones.
Wikipedia

Radio Stations & Talk Shows

- **TalkErie.com (103.3 FM / 105.9 FM / 1530 AM)**
 - *Why:* This is Erie's premier local news-talk station. Their afternoon talk program, *The Joel Natalie Show*, actively highlights local organizations, regional historical events, and unique community stories.
TalkErie.com

Kirtland/Cleveland, Ohio Outlets

Because Saturday evening concludes at the Kirtland Temple, consider looping in Lake County/Cleveland media for an optional brief mention:

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- **The News-Herald** (Serves Lake County/Kirtland area)
- **WKYC (NBC), WEWS (ABC), or FOX 8** (Cleveland TV Markets)

2. How to Send the Press Release (Step-by-Step)

Because your event takes place on **Saturday, June 27**, timing is key. You want to give editors enough time to plan their weekend schedules without letting the email get buried.

Step 1: Find the Right Contact Information

Go to the websites listed above and look at the top navigation or footer for links labeled "**Submit News**," "**Contact Us**," "**Newsroom**," or "**Submit a Tip**."

- **For Television/Radio:** Look for the general **Newsroom Assignment Desk** email (e.g., news@... or tips@...). The assignment desk controls which camera crews get sent out to weekend events.
- **For Newspapers:** Look for the **Community Editor**, **Local News Editor**, or a general submissions portal.

Step 2: Send the Email (Perfect Timing)

- **When to send:** Send the press release exactly **3 to 5 days before the event** (Monday, June 22 or Tuesday, June 23). Weekend news crews plan their schedules mid-week.
- **Subject Line:** Make it clear, compelling, and localized.

- *Example: NEWS SUBMISSION: Revolutionary War Vet to be Honored in North East, PA on June 27*

Step 3: Format the Email Professionally

- **Do not send an attachment:** Journalists rarely open unexpected PDF or Word attachments due to cybersecurity rules.
- **Paste it directly:** Copy the full text of the press release we finalized and paste it **directly into the body of your email**.
- **Offer Visuals:** In your brief introductory note above the press release text, make sure to mention: *"Excellent photo/video opportunities will include a 5-foot granite monument unveiling, historical uniform honor guards, and a live bagpipe recessional."*

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Step 4: Make a Follow-Up Phone Call

On the morning of **Friday, June 26** (the day before the event), call the assignment desks of *Erie News Now* and *YourErie*.

Wikipedia

- **What to say:** "Hi, I'm calling from the Belnap Family Organization. We sent over a press release earlier this week about a Revolutionary War monument dedication happening tomorrow morning at Gibson Park and Phillips Cemetery. We're expecting over 60 descendants from across the country. We just wanted to confirm if you might have a camera crew available to drop by for the 10:30 a.m. or 12:00 p.m. events?"

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