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PRESS RELEASE

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Celebrate America with the Libby Prison Minstrels At the Ocean County Library Brick Branch

BRICK TOWNSHIP – Songs that inspire American patriotism have fascinating stories behind them. Learn their origins while you sing along with New Jersey's Libby Prison Minstrels, 2 PM Saturday, July 2, at the Ocean County Library Brick Branch.

Concertgoers will be treated to anecdotes about the events that produced the treasured music connected with the Stars and Stripes and American heritage for over 200 years.

The lineup includes Jim Kramer, John Suchernick, Victoria Kushnir, Ron Kushnir, and Ron Stevenson. Leader Brian Ross, on his first sabbatical after 30 years in the band, is busily researching facts, crafting stories, and adding new "groan-worthy" jokes.

The group pays tribute to the Union Army soldiers and officers who endured horrid conditions in Virginia's Libby Prison during the Civil War. The detainees sang to boost morale and to frustrate their captors. After hostilities ended, the freed prisoners continued to sing. They were pivotal in popularizing the Battle Hymn of the Republic.

Today's Libby Prison Minstrels have performed at the Lincoln Memorial, Ford's Theatre, Gettysburg National Military Park, festivals, schools, Albert Music Hall in Waretown, and the schooner A.J. Meerwald, New Jersey's official Tall Ship. Their repertoire also features sea chanteys and songs of World War I.

Registration at www.theoceancountylibrary.org/events is required for this free program. For more details, visit the Branch, 301 Chambers Bridge Road, or call (732) 477-4513.

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Illustration by John Suchernick

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