



# FORT DELAWARE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER

2009

## 60th ANNUAL LUNCHEON

The Fort Delaware Society will celebrate its 60th Anniversary at the Annual Luncheon on February 7, 2010 at the Christiana Hilton. Featured Guest Speaker will be David Rickman, Publications/Exhibits Coordinator for the Division of Parks & Recreation. David is a talented artist in his own right and will talk about Max Neugas, a Confederate POW who was imprisoned at Fort Delaware after the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863. While there, he made a number of beautiful and detailed sketches of the Fort and of his fellow prisoners. The Boston Athenaeum has one original in its collection, we believe the Delaware Historical Society has one, and the Fort Delaware Society is proud to have six originals. They are included in our published *Catalog of Historical Photographs* published a few years ago, and reprints may be ordered by calling our office. Invitations to the Luncheon will be mailed to all members by the end of the year. Remember that you can purchase your tickets in advance by using PayPal. See our Website for instructions. Please make it a point to attend and help us celebrate 60 years of dedication to the Fort on Pea Patch Island.

### HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Best wishes from your Officers and Directors for a Happy Holiday Season! See you in 2010.

## DESCENDENT CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

Although the Descendent Certificate Program has only been in effect for a little over a year, a total of 24 persons have been awarded such a Certificate.

A surprised Glen Layton, whose ancestor was a member of the Garrison, was presented with his Certificate by President Bill Robelen on July 11th during the Ahl's Battery demonstration of cannon firing. Glen was dressed in the uniform of the 2nd Delaware and the first "civilian" to fire the 8" Columbiad.

Anyone with an ancestor who was stationed or imprisoned at Fort Delaware during the Civil War, may call the office or go to our website to download an Application Form. For a \$25 contribution to our General Operating Fund, you will receive a handsome Certificate with your name as the descendent and your ancestor's name, rank and other brief details plus a personal letter of thanks from our President. Several members have used this service as gifts. It's an excellent way to honor your heritage and to support the Society at the same time. This gift is a voluntary contribution and does not represent a fee for our research efforts. We have always felt obligated to offer this service without charge.

## LIBRARY DATA BASE

The W. Emerson Wilson Memorial Library has been an invaluable asset to the Society as well as to the many researchers and authors who have used this resource for many years. It has continued to grow through the generosity of members and others who have contributed to it, bringing the total to over 1800 volumes. The old card system has served us well, but with the computer age making such things more efficient plus offering more information and related benefits, Director Hugh Simmons has designed a data base system using Microsoft Access to enable us to convert the card system into a digital system. Not only will it permit us to share our library files with other libraries in the area, it can be posted on our website so that researchers and authors can be made aware of the extent of this resource. The conversion process has already started and we are up to "H". We hope it will be completed by the end of next year. What makes the process slow is the necessity to scan through each and every book and compose a brief description of the contents. This alone will make the data base invaluable, since too often the title of the book provides almost no information on what it covers. This is another example of your Society in action throughout the year.

## VICTORIAN KIDSFEST

This past June, the First Annual Victorian KidsFest was held on the Island. Because it was our first attempt at this event, we went into it knowing that there would be a sharp learning curve. True to form, we acknowledged that there were a lot of improvements to be made. A joint committee of Park Staff members and Society Directors met to critique the event and to make plans to hold it again in 2010. The Park has purchased a 20' x 60' tent that will be used to conduct all activities outside the Fort, keeping everything in one dedicated location. Notices to school children will be prepared and distributed several weeks in advance. The exhibition 19th century baseball game with players in period-correct uniforms was such a success, it will be repeated. Children again will be invited to "enlist" in the Army, and to attend classes by the schoolmarm Miss Gibble. All who attend will be able to examine a fascinating collection of artifacts from the Civil War era, and we hope to have special live music throughout the day.

Many more exciting activities, games and prizes are being planned to round out the day, but parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles need to mark their calendars now for Sunday, June 13, 2010 and round up all the kids they can to be a part of this very special day at the Fort.

Don't forget to bring your cameras to record all the family fun.

## WALKWAY REPAIRS

Visitors to the island toward the end of the 2009 season couldn't help but notice the yellow caution tapes detouring everyone around the area adjacent to the Endicott section of the Fort, the concrete structure that held the three 12" disappearing guns that were installed at the beginning of the Spanish-American War in 1896.

Ravages of time and weather had disturbed the large slabs of slate making up the walkway to the extent that it was unsafe to use it. The talented and skilled State Park crew are removing the entire walk, leveling the sub base and reinstalling the slate pieces so that beginning with the 2010 season, visitors will have a smooth and safe surface underfoot.

## NOTES CD SUPPLEMENT

Director Hugh Simmons, who completed the monumental task of making a CD of the first 50 years of the *Fort Delaware Notes*, has almost completed a supplemental CD of the *NOTES* for the succeeding ten years. Owners of the original CD can purchase it for \$20 plus postage and handling. A combination pack with all 60 years will be available soon for \$45 plus postage & handling.

## WINE TASTING EVENT POSTPONED

Our Wine Tasting Fundraiser has been postponed until the Spring of 2010. Several factors made it impractical to hold it this Fall as planned. Notices with date and details will be mailed early in 2010.

## VOLUNTEER BRIGADE KEPT BUSY

The Fort Delaware Society's Volunteer Brigade coordinated by Director Jayne McCormick worked diligently this past season at the Fort under the direction of Superintendent Becky Webb with projects in and around the Fort. There are always more tasks on the Island than the present Park staff can handle, and this is an excellent way to involve more members in the community. It is hoped that some of them may become active members of the Society. We, as well as the Park Staff, are indebted to the many hours of hard work put in by all these volunteers, and Superintendent Webb has expressed her gratitude for the help.

## SUTLER SHOP VISITORS

Shop Manager Martha Bennett reported that of those persons who took the time to sign our Visitor Log, a total of 43 states and 16 foreign countries were represented. Staffers in the Shop do more than sell items; they answer a myriad of questions, about the Fort, thereby serving as an important adjunct to the Park.

## ROUNDTABLE GIFT

The Central Delaware Civil War Roundtable in Dover made a very generous donation of \$500 to the Society from the sale of books and other items. Their selfless support has been welcomed for many years and is an example of an important way we are able to continue our mission. Thank you!

*Society Activities April to September, 2009*



*Glen Layton Receives Descendent Certificate*



*Walmart (Middletown, Delaware) Donation*



*Kidsfest Cotton Candy & Pop Corn Stand*



*Society's Kidsfest Craft Table*



*Newark Community Day Outreach Display*



*Prisoner's Ball & Chain at Neshaminy Creek*

Fort Delaware Society  
P.O. Box 553  
Delaware City, DE 19706

### **DELAWARE MILITARY HISTORY DAY**

The Delaware Military Heritage & Education Foundation held a major event on November 7 at the proposed Military Museum in Burton Hall (100 yards north of our headquarters). It included a parade of reenactors, bands, veterans and a variety of military groups and guest speakers. In cooperation with the Foundation, and at its request, the Society held an Open House at the same time to show our support. We have been proud to cooperate with the Foundation by making our facility available for their Board meetings during the past year. Members of our Board were on hand to greet and welcome several visitors.

### **WALMART GIFT**

Through the excellent efforts of Director Kay Keenan, the Walmart Superstore in Middletown, DE presented the Society with a grant gift of \$1000 at a brief ceremony in the parade ground at the Fort on September 30th. Society Board members and Walmart employees were on hand to witness the presentation. The check was turned over to the Park for the purchase of period clothing for child reenactors and interpreters. It was an excellent example of community support that is so critical in allowing the Society to fulfill its mission. In return, we staffed a table outside the store on September 30 to promote the Society and the Fort.

### **SUCCESSFUL VISITOR SEASON**

Park Superintendent Becky Webb reported that there was a significant increase in the number of visitors to the Fort this season. A large part of the increase was the result of the extended Ghost Tour season, which was booked solid. It included some very special "Tours" at a premium price that were also filled up. The extra income was a real boon to the Park, which like everyone else has been affected by the economic downturn. Becky and her staff are working harder than ever to make the Fort more popular by creating special events to attract more visitors, which is a definite benefit to all of us. Keep up the good work.