



MAY

# FORT DELAWARE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

2009

## 59TH ANNUAL LUNCHEON

The Fort Delaware Society celebrated its 59th Annual Luncheon on February 8th at the Christiana Hilton. A total of 80 persons attended to hear Jim Hessler, a Licensed Battlefield Guide at Gettysburg present a fascinating detailed insight into Picket's Charge. President Bill Robelen gave his report on the activities of the Society over the past year and a number of excellent door prizes were given out. The members present elected the following Officers and Directors to serve for 2009. Chairman of the Board: Bill Craven; President: Bill Robelen; Vice President: Edie Mahoney; Treasurer: Don Sholl; Secretary: Tom Smith and Directors Dan Cashin, Kay Keenan, Jayne McCormick, David Price, Carolyn Raniszewski, Roger Reynolds, John Samis, Hugh Simmons, Bob Stark and Roberta Steele Wilkins (newly elected). Howard Row was presented with his Life Member Certificate by the President.

## PAYPAL IN EFFECT

Several people have taken advantage of the PayPal program to pay their dues and to purchase books from the Society. It's a convenient means of making credit card purchases through our website. [www.fortdelaware.org](http://www.fortdelaware.org)

## DESCENDENT CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

Although the Descendent Certificate Program has only been in effect for a little over a year, a total of 19 persons have participated. If anyone has an ancestor who was stationed or imprisoned at Fort Delaware during the Civil War, please contact Martha Bennett at 302-834-1630 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. Several members have used this service as gifts, and it is an excellent way to honor your heritage and to support the Society at the same time. We want to make it clear that this gift is a voluntary contribution and does not represent a charge for our research efforts. We have always felt obligated to offer this service for free to the public and to our members.

## PARK OPENS

Fort Delaware will be open to the public May 2 and open on Saturdays only May 9 & 16. Beginning May 23 it will be open on weekends and Holidays. Reservations for 20+ call 834-7941. Smaller groups call 877-987-2757

## 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 and 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 computer 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 hope it will be completed by the end of the year. What makes the process slow is the necessity for our office manager Martha Bennett 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. Here is another example of your Society in action.

## VICTORIAN KIDSFEST

There are a lot of new and exciting events planned for Fort Delaware State Park this season. One event that is sure to be a hit with children and adults alike is a fun filled day with activities for everyone. The Fort Delaware Society is teaming up with the Park Staff to co-sponsor a Victorian Kidsfest on Sunday, June 14th.

The Society will conduct a number of carnival-like games with prizes for the youngsters in the area in front of the Fort. Visitors will be able to step back in time with historic games and activities inside the Fort that represent those of 200 years ago. There will also be an exhibition 19th century baseball game with players in period-correct uniforms. Children will be invited to "enlist" in the Army, and to attend classes by the schoolmarm Miss Gible. 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.

Park Staff Program Director Laura Lee and members of the Society V.P. Edie Mahoney and Director Carolyn Raniszweski form the Committee that has been working hard to make this a memorable event for everyone who attends. More activities are being planned, but parents, grand parents, aunts and uncles need to mark their calendars now and round up all the kids they can to be a part of this very special day. We hope it will turn out to be an annual event for Fort Delaware State Park.

## SUTLER SHOP REPAIRS

Visitors to the Sutler Shop in the past couple of years may have noticed the crumbling plaster on the front wall of the second room and in the wall behind the service counter. It certainly was not attractive, and it was a mess to keep clean. That has all changed thanks to the efforts of two of the maintenance and restoration men who work at the Fort, Harry Baughman and Tom Smith. They stripped off all the old plaster, fastened wire lath in place, replastered big sections of the walls and repainted them. It looks better than it has for several years, and it should eliminate the problems of the past. Not only the Society members who work behind the counter, but everyone who comes into the Shop owes these men a big thank you for a great job.

## MEMBERSHIP CARDS TO BE REDESIGNED

Our present Membership Cards have been in use for the past 15 years, so it is only fitting that they take on a new look. Treasurer Don Sholl agreed to undertake this task to produce a product that is cleaner in appearance, while at the same time maintaining the Society's logo, eliminating the rounded corners and resizing it to match similar cards that people carry around with them.

## WANTED—LOBBYIST

We are looking for a volunteer to act as a lobbyist for the Society by keeping our name and activities in front of the Legislators in Dover. Interested candidates may call Martha Bennett in our office at 834-1630.

## VOLUNTEER BRIGADE OFF AND RUNNING

The Fort Delaware Society's Volunteer Brigade is off to a good start thanks to Director Jayne McCormick as Board Liaison and Glen Stubbolo, Volunteer Coordinator for the Division of Parks & Recreation.

The Brigade was formed to assist Park Superintendent Becky Webb with projects in and around the Fort. Fifty-nine years ago and for many years following, members of the fledging Society did all the physical work at the Fort, but one look at most of the present Officers and Directors and you'll readily see why we aren't involved in much of that kind of work these days. "The spirit is willing, but..."

There are more tasks at the Fort than the present Park staff can handle, so this is an excellent way to involve more members in the community, and it is hoped that some of these volunteers may become members of the Society.

On March 14th, airmen from Dover AFB spent a whole day cleaning then replacing broken planks on the pier. Twenty members of Phi Delta Epsilon fraternity from the U of D spent several hours in general cleanup in the Fort. April 23rd, 28th and 30th saw Bank of America employees hard at clean up work, and Gamma Sigma sorority members not only did major clean up work, they built a new fire pit near the Confederate POW barracks. The Society as well as the Park staff is indebted to the many hours of hard work put in by all these volunteers.

*Society Members Set Up Sutler Shop and Visitor Center Displays*



*Leveling Storage & Display Cabinets*



*Sorting Merchandise for Display*



*Putting Inventory in Cabinets*



*Society's Visitor Center Display*



*Society's Visitor Center Display*



*Ready for the 2009 Season!!*

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

### **SUTLER SHOP READYED FOR THE 2009 SEASON**

Friday , April 17 at 9:00 AM, ten members of the Society boarded the Park work boat for a ride to the Island over the unruffled surface of the Delaware River carrying artifacts for the museum and cleaning materials in preparation for the set up of displays and our annual cleaning and stocking of the shelves in the Sutler Shop, which was scheduled to open just two weeks later. Since the furniture had all been moved to accommodate the repair of the plaster walls, it had to be put back in place, leveled and plumbed using wood wedges and shims. Then the workers began

the task of unpacking the boxes of inventory and placing them on the proper shelves. While this was going on, three of the men walked over to the Visitor Center and put the artifacts back into their respective display cases. Because of the high humidity during the winter months, all these items had been packed up at the end of the season last year and brought back to the mainland to be stored in our headquarters. The members involved were Bill Robelen, Tom Smith, Kay Keenan and her grandson Brandon Keenan, Hugh Simmons, Jayne McCormick, Bill Craven, David Price, Martha Bennett and Glen Pusey. Because it was a Friday, and a work day, Edie Mahoney stayed in the Society office to answer the phones.

### **FUND RAISING COMMITTEE BUSY**

The Society's Fund Raising Committee chaired by Director David Price and including Vice President Edie Mahoney, Director Kay Keenan and Park Activity Director Laura Lee has met several times to discuss plans for funding some projects at the Fort as suggested by Supt. Becky Webb and to explore sources of funding for them. Watch for more details.

### **WINE & CHEESE EVENT**

Save the date November 7th from 7 to 9 PM for our first Fund Raising event. Flyers will be mailed to all members with details about location, etc.