



RESTORATION
PROJECTS INC.

Fort Nathan Hale BULLETIN

Volume III, Issue II

August, 2008

Inside this issue:

Defenders Monu- ment	2
History in Danger	2
Park Maintenance	3
The Quinnipiacs of New Haven Harbor	3
Flowers at the Fort	4
Secretary Needed!	4

A Note from the President

Our Native American Festival held recently was a high quality, educational event. Sunday had reduced attendance because of the rain, but everyone agreed, it was a terrific production. The dancers, musicians, story teller, exhibitors and visitors were very pleased. So were we. Thanks to all who participated and helped out. Rafael Rodriguez and Mary Ann and Gary Townley deserve special thanks.

Unfortunately, the weather did not cooperate again with our July 4th Concert. We had our Tiki torches ready to light the way and planned an evening of music under the stars, concluding with watching New Haven's fireworks in the harbor. We decided to cancel because of the wet grounds and still threatening weather. About 50 people did show up and watch the shortened fireworks anyway. We will plan for another concert!

We have a wonderful new brochure, professionally designed by Richard Brassil to more accurately describe the Forts, our past, present and future history in a beautiful, 3 part color style. We hope to distribute these to all the local visitor centers as well as on our web site. The future portion, describes our final Phase 3, the museum to be built on our site.

This is a huge undertaking for us. It will involve major fund raising to include grants, individual donations, and special events. We are counting on your support. More to follow on this exciting topic.

Marge Ottenbreit President, FNHRP

Park Commissioners Meet at Fort

On July 16th at 5:30pm the Fort was pleased to host the regular meeting of the Park Commissioners. For many this was their first visit to Fort Nathan Hale and they were suitably impressed with our historic site. It was one of those "special" days where everything was beautiful, with warm sunny breezes, the flags billowing in the breeze at the Flag Court, and the flowers blooming profusely throughout the site. Our board provided light refreshments and cold drinks which were well received.

Marge Ottenbreit, President, handed out an overview of what we have done over the past five years and a copy of our new brochure. Bob Levine, Executive Director of the Parks Department, and the Commissioners expressed appreciation for what we do on our own and offered their full support and assistance whenever possible in maintaining and preserving our site.

Bill MacMullen gave a preview of the model of our future museum and architects plans for the site. Jake Epstein, Vice President, gave an overview of our website and how we are linked to many other search engines. Many of our visitors tell us they learned about the Forts from our web site. (We are thankful that this professional technology is donated by RECOL, Jake's employer).

Although we have always had a good working relationship with the Park Department, it was good to meet with them and "show off" this second most important historical site in the city.

Defender's Monument

Elm City Parks Conservancy each year casts a pewter medallion of one of New Haven's historic monuments. This year it's the Defender's Monument located at the intersection of Congress, Davenport and Columbus Avenues.

When the British invaded New Haven in 1779, three loyal patriots manned the cannon defending the intersection from invaders trying to cross the West River. The monument depicts

three men, an older rich merchant, a middle aged farmer and a Yale student, manning the cannon against the invaders.

The seven foot monument was designed by sculptor James Kelly of New York (best known for his sculpture of General John Bunford on the Gettysburg Battlefield). It was cast in bronze by the Henry Bonnard Bronze Company of New York and stands on a pink granite pedestal.

The Defenders Square Monument

Association was formed in 1891 under the guidance of the New Haven Colony Historical Society who was to raise funds for the monument, half by private donations and matched by the State of Connecticut. Lack of Funds and support delayed the dedication until October 27, 1911. The total cost for this extraordinary piece of sculpture was \$20,000!

To purchase a medallion, contact Marge Ottenbreit at 466-1596 or any member of ECPC. They sell for \$12 each.

History in Danger

A recent article in Parade magazine by historian David McCulloch asks: How important is history in the U.S.? He states that "for the past 25 years we are raising young Americans who are historically illiterate—the founding of our nation, the Civil War and World War II should all be common knowledge but they are not. History has not just been pushed to the back burner, it's been pushed off the stove."

Historian David Boostein said "trying to plan for the future without a sense of the past is like trying to plant cut flowers."

In the periodical "Historic New England", (summer 2008), an article states that "in the past 30 years most historic museums have experienced a decline in public interest." Why? They state several reasons: increased travel to exotic and distant destinations by the Baby Boomer generation, possibly replacing traditional history in grade schools with Social Studies, reduced overall appreciation and knowledge of the subject.

In addition, others point out the wide array of competing activities and amusements available today, such as TV, DVDs, video games, iPods, web surfing and the like. These are mostly solitary activities and divert

people from more family and group activities such as visits to museums and historic sites. Further, today there seems to be less time for personal and leisure activities. Families are busy, both parents work outside of the home, shopping has become the great-American pastime 7 days a week and kids have an exceptional amount of extra-curricular activities, needing to be driven to soccer, baseball, tennis, hockey, dancing, etc. No wonder history has taken a backseat.

What can be done or what can we change to embrace this new society? Experts agree, we must compete in the current marketplace. We need to market our services to attract busy families. We need to make our museums and sites more lively, interesting and educational. We must provide programs, tours, exhibits and events that will appeal to the whole family. We must provide more "hands on" opportunities and experiences for learning.

We are changing at the Fort. We are fortunate that our state mandates that students in the 5th grade must study Connecticut history. We are also fortunate to have our East Shore Ranger, Terry McCool, conduct lively and educational programs for hundreds of school kids at the Forts. We need to get these children to bring their parents back for a visit..

Our season is relatively short, but we must do outreach to other area schools to bring their students to the Fort in May and June, and also September and October. We must begin to train docents who can lead visitors on guided tours of our site and provide hands-on demonstrations. Aristotle once said, "What we hear, we forget, what we see, we remember and what we DO, we understand." We need to get our cannons out, secure, on public display so that people can see them and learn about them. We need to recreate and furnish Bunker #2 with artifacts and furniture appropriate for that time period.

I am sure there is a lot more we can do to preserve and educate on our history, and I invite you to offer your suggestions and particularly your help.

IDEAS WANTED!



Email suggestions to:
Info@fort-nathan-hale.org

Thanks

Special thanks to all those submitting articles for this publication.

Park Maintenance

Christy Haas, Deputy Director and head of maintenance for the Parks Dept. met with Marge Ottenbreit and Jake Epstein for a working luncheon to discuss maintenance concerns at the Fort. We were able to “fine tune” how we can work together to maintain our site.

We also discovered that many times we are struggling with addressing a particular maintenance problem only to learn that this is something Christy could easily handle with a phone call.

An example of this is the welding of the Iron Gates at Bunker #2 which were vandalized, and the removal of the huge tree rotting in the moat.

It was an interesting and productive luncheon and we all came away with an appreciation of what we do, and a strong commitment to preserving and maintaining this beautiful park.



Many people have asked if we couldn't Email our newsletters to them. Since postage, updating and printing have become more time consuming and expensive, we are embracing that idea.

If you would like to receive our newsletter via Email, please send us your name and Email address.

Our Email address is:
Info@fort-nathan-hale.org

The Quinnipiacs of New Haven Harbor

Long before Columbus and other explorers came to the New World, the tribes of the Algonquin nation claimed the land we now call the Northeast. Specifically, an early Dutch map plotting by Adrian Black in 1613 shows the coastline and Indian tribes of early Connecticut (“Qua-neh-ta-cu” as the Indians called it, meaning long tidal river.) Surrounding the present New Haven Harbor from Milford to East Haven lived the Quinnipiacs. These early native Americans migrated seasonally, allowing them to enjoy the cool breezes of the seacoast in the summer, and the shelter of the wooded inland valleys in the winter.

At that time, the winter forests of present day North Haven, Wallingford and Meriden were abundant with wolves, bear, moose, deer and wildcats. There were also otter, fox, raccoon, woodchucks and mink. These animals along with ducks, geese, pigeons and teal were hunted by the Quinnipiacs with bows and arrows for food and furs. Their winter woodland homes were made of sturdy poles set firmly in the ground, bent and fastened at the top and covered with bark. Simply furnished, these homes had wooden dishes, bowls, spoons, woven baskets and floor mats.

The Quinnipiacs summered on the shoreline of New Haven Harbor where there were all kinds of shellfish. Clams, oysters, and mussels were harvested and eaten, the shells of which, once discarded in piles, are still in evidence

today. These Indians fished in canoes using hooks, spears and nets. Wild strawberries, blackberries and whortleberries growing along the shore also supplemented many Indian meals.

Little farming, aside from growing tobacco, was done by Indian men. This left the difficult chore of raising beans and corn to the women and children. Farming was particularly difficult because the only tools of the time were wooden spades, or large shells fastened to wooden handles. From the vegetables, a staple of Indian diet called “succotash” was made. This food, boiled in earthen pots, was sometimes seasoned with fish. Cornmeal cakes, another favorite food, was prepared by wrapping the meal in leaves and roasting it in hot ashes. And so lived the Indians, known as the Quinnipiacs, providing the fundamentals of survival for themselves as best they could until the early 1600's.

Although the Dutch early on had claimed Connecticut, by 1638 the English led by Theophilus Eaton and John Davenport were founding a settlement at present day, New Haven, on land belonging to the Quinnipiac Tribe. Because these leaders had not secured a charter from the English king, and therefore had no legal claim to the land, felt it fair and in their best interest to pay the Quinnipiacs. By this time, due to wars with other tribes, starvation due to poor harvests, and disease, few Indians were left of the once numerous tribe, their numbers had dwindled to some 50 – 60 members. The Quinnipiac Sachem Mo-

mauguin, from what is now East Haven, and a Chief Montowese from the land beyond East Rock (North Haven) signed a treaty with the eager English. This treaty granted all rights to the land, rivers, ponds, and trees, extending as far east, west, north and south as the Quinnipiacs owned to them. So in exchange for some two dozen coats, a dozen each of spoons, hoes, hatchets, bowls, two dozen knives and scissors, the land that is now New Haven, East Haven, Branford, North Branford, North Haven, Wallingford, Cheshire, Hamden, Bethany, Woodbridge and Orange became the property of the English.

Mr. John Stanton of the Hartford settlement brokered the 1638 deal being the only person who could speak the language of the Quinnipiacs. In return for giving up everything including the land they lived on, the Quinnipiacs asked for three things only; a place in what is now East Haven where they could plant their corn; the right to hunt and fish in and on the lands they had given up; and protection from the English against the Mohawks, Pequots or their other tribal enemies.

So a great tract of land whose worth today cannot even be calculated, was exchanged for a pitifully small sum to the Quinnipiacs. In the end the tribe trusted the English and the terms of the treaty and faithfully observed their agreement.



Secretary Needed!

The Fort is looking for someone to actively manage current and future memberships. They do not need to be board member or attend regular monthly meetings. This does require computer and marketing skills and the ability to maintain our mailing lists.

Most dues are paid at our annual meeting in November. However, for those not attending and not mailing in their dues, a reminder letter needs to be sent. When dues are paid, members should receive their membership card and a thank you letter. We depend on their support. We have not been consistent in this area in the past but are committed to doing a more professional job in the future.

In these days of tight economic times, every non-profit organization is looking to maintain and recruit members and we must do the same, especially as we go forward with plans for the museum. In submitting grant requests we must show a strong membership base and numbers do count. Our dues are reasonable, ranging from \$20 to \$100 depending on the level chosen.

We are also looking for a recording secretary, (a board officer) to record and distribute minutes of our regular monthly meetings. We meet on the first Wednesday of each month at the Coast Guard Station.

Anyone interested in these positions, contact Marge Ottenbreit at 466-1596 to discuss.

We're on the Web!

<http://www.fort-nathan-hale.org>

Flowers at the Fort

The plantings at the Fort really look beautiful this time of the year. We owe thanks to many people for the lovely flowers planted around the park. Beginning with Doreen Larson Oboyski, who's in charge of Community Gardens, for providing the flowers. The Morris Cove Garden members, Lynne Pastore, Ann DiElsi, Kit Wilkinson, Marge Ottenbreit, Tina Doyle and Deborah Williams for planting.

And, finally thanks to Beth Bernardo for her hard work and effort. This is an enormous undertaking, particularly with the replanting of the Flag Court, and our sincere thanks and appreciation to all involved in this project.

The end result is that visitors comment on how well cared for and lovely the Fort looks.



Marge Ottenbreit
84 Fort Hale Road
New Haven, CT 06512-3603

<http://www.fort-nathan-hale.org>