



# FORT DELAWARE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

*Spring 2012*

## *Fort Delaware Society Makes History*

62 years after its founding by renowned journalist W. Emerson Wilson, the Fort Delaware Society has elected its' first woman president. The election was held at the Society's annual luncheon at the Christiana Hilton on February 5, 2012. Elected President was Catherine "Kay" Keenan. For the last 2 years she has been the treasurer.

Kay succeeds William G. Robelen IV who was president for 18 years. Bill was elected Chairman of the Board to succeed William E. Craven Jr., Colonel Craven has served the Society for 41 years. He has been the Chairman of the Board since 1984. He was President from 1977-1983. He will now become a director once again. His knowledge of the inner workings of the Society are invaluable. The Officers and Directors wish him many more years of service to the Society. Also elected is Vice President Edith Mahoney who has served on the board for 21 years. The new Secretary is Roberta Steele Wilkins. Thomas Smith, the Board Secretary for several years has assumed the duties of the Treasurer.

The following directors have been elected for one year terms:

Jayne McCormick , Daniel J. Cashin, David P. Price, Carolyn Raniszewski , Roger G. Reynolds, J. Brendan Mackie, R. Hugh Simmons, Albert Trecost and Sarah Kuntz.

## *Volunteer Opportunities at Fort Delaware & Fort DuPont*

The Fort Delaware Society needs the help of all its members -all year round. A major source of funding for the Society's operations comes from the Sutler Shop located in the Administration Building at Fort Delaware. Only members are allowed to staff the shop but they can bring a guest to help. A thorough orientation is given to those who have never worked in a retail setting.

Docents are needed at Fort Delaware to conduct tours of the fort and staff the orientation room. The orientation room contains the model of the fort purchased by the Society and contains of a number of artifacts from our collection. Written information about the collection and the tour will be provided.

Members are also needed to work at the Society's headquarters at Fort DuPont State Park. Help is needed to staff the office by answering the phone and doing light clerical work. Members act as docents for the museum and oversee use of the Emerson Wilson Library.

If you are interested in volunteering please contact the Society's Office Manager

## SAVE THE DATES

- ◆ *May 5th-Fort Delaware State Park opens*
- ◆ *May 20th-Spring General Membership Meeting*
- ◆ *June 10th- Victorian KidsFest*
- ◆ *October 20th- Book & Ephemera Sale*

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## *62nd Annual Luncheon*

The Fort Delaware Society's 62nd Annual Luncheon was held on Sunday, February 5, 2012 at the Christiana Hilton. Eighty-two members and guests enjoyed a wonderful luncheon. It was preceded by a "happy hour" where everyone mingled and bid on several items in the Silent Auction.

Thomas Tear, who presented an outstanding program the Spring General Membership meeting, returned, in a fascinating program titled "An Under the Skirt Tour of the Civil War". Accompanying Thomas were Roxanna Hurst and Karen Jessee. The ladies portrayed Thomas' wife and her Aunt Effie. The actors demonstrated what a Victorian woman wore

during the period of the Civil War. They started from the "ground up" showing the undergarments and completed the presentation discussing the outer garment worn at the time. Each piece of clothing was explained as to its use and the material it was made from. The actors revealed how the origins of many of today's commonly used word and terms such as "wearing your best bib and tucker" actually related to Victorian fashions.

Thomas demonstrated gentleman's clothing and brought many authentic pieces of clothing and accessories displayed throughout the dining room.

"The actors revealed how the origins of many of today's commonly used words and terms such as 'wearing your best bib and tucker' actually related to Victorian fashions."



## ***Implementation of CAP Recommendations***

The Conservation Assessment Plan (CAP) prepared by Lois Price last June contained numerous recommendations. Priority recommendations were the need for gutters and downspouts on the headquarters building and a fire detection system with central monitoring. With the help of State Parks Grant Writer, Kim Johnson, the Society has submitted a grant request to the Delaware Community Foundation.

The grant request uses language from the CAP report to support the request for moisture mitigation throughout the building as well as the need to protect the collection from fire. As Ms. Price reported “The Quartermaster Building is in good condition but lacks gutters resulting dampness and incipient maintenance problems.” Currently there are battery operated smoke detectors in each room. The building has a central monitored burglar system already in place. A central monitored fire detection would add to the safety of the

The Society is also requesting funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities’ Preservation Assistance Grants for Smaller Institutions to address other recommendations such as temperature /humidity monitoring devices for the display cases. Again quoting from the CAP report: “Secure instruments for monitoring temperature and humidity. Pay particular attention to the Storeroom.” Society members have begun the task of moving objects out of the Storeroom to a more climate controlled environment in the building.

Other recommendations which the Board will work on in the coming months are a disaster plan for the headquarters’ building and updating the collections policies.

## ***The President’s Corner***

I am taking this opportunity to formally introduce myself to the Society’s members. I have served as a director for 19 years and 2 years as your Treasurer. In 2007 I retired from Delaware Technical Community College, Stanton Campus as the Retention Coordinator and nursing instructor after 28 years.

My husband, Joe, and I were born and raised in New Castle. I have been married to Joe for 42 years. We now live on a 20 acre farm outside of Odessa. Joe, a DuPont chemist in Agricultural Products, retired the same day as I did. Our son Jay, daughter-in-law Suzanne and our oldest grandson Brandon are Life Members of the Society. I am sure our youngest grandson, Charlie, will also be a Life Member someday. We are blessed to have them as next door neighbors!

My love of the Fort was forged at a very young age. My mother would tell stories about her grandfather, Henry Madden, who had lived on the island as a young boy with his parents, a sister and two brothers.

His father, James Madden, was a member of the U.S. Army’s 4th Artillery. James died on the island of heart attack when Henry was 8 years old.

Henry’s mother, Margaret, married another soldier Patrick Duffy. He left the service and they went to live in New Castle.

Thank you for the honor of allowing me to serve as your President. I will do my best for the Society and the fort I love so much.

We're on the WEB  
[www.fortdelaware.org](http://www.fortdelaware.org)

Follows us on Facebook  
[www.facebook.com/FortDelawareSociety](http://www.facebook.com/FortDelawareSociety)

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### ***Spring General Membership Meeting***



The Spring General Membership will be held on Sunday May 20, 2012 from 2-4 p.m. at the Society's Headquarters.

This marks the fifth anniversary of the dedication of our headquarters. Some very special artifacts from the Society's collection will be on display. Light refreshments will be served.

### ***Victorian KidsFest***

Please mark your calendar for the 4th Annual Victorian KidsFest to be held on June 10th. The event is co-sponsored by the Society and Fort Delaware State Park. As in past years, the Diamond State Baseball Club will conduct a game using rules of play from the mid 1800s.

The Society will provide games and Victorian craft projects for the children. Period children's clothing will be available for photo opportunities-so bring your camera!