



DECEMBER

FORT DELAWARE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

2014

SUTLER SHOP THE END OF AN ERA

Not long after our Society was founded early in 1950, it was obvious that some form of revenue stream other than membership dues had to be created to meet the growing needs of a new organization that essentially was starting from scratch. We needed everything—stationery, office furniture and supplies, telephone, a “place to call home”, etc. Over a period of time we began to accumulate these things—some were donated, others were purchased, but the answer to our need for funds to obtain all these things had to come from somewhere. We needed a place to sell things, and we needed items to sell. Our customers would be the visitors who came to the Fort. The Division of Parks graciously let us use space in the room to the left of the entrance (what is now the Visitors’ Center). We were able to obtain some used commercial glass front display cases that would serve our needs. They were arranged in the shape of an “L” in front of the windows that looked out onto the parade ground. Board members identified some sources of Civil War related souvenir type items that would appeal to visitors of all ages. From the beginning, the thing that made the Sutler Shop a success was the number of Society members who volunteered to work in the shop.

They soon learned that the shop evolved to provide a second benefit where the Society played an active role on the island by serving as a convenient source of information about the Fort itself. Our visitors responded very well to this personal touch, and the Society staffers enjoyed the feeling of offering a tangible service to them. In 1996, Parks realized that both we and the public would be better served by moving the Shop to the adjacent Administration Building across the hall from the General’s office. Dave Rickman had Parks purchase some period furniture including an armoire, shelf units, etc. which we could repurpose into display cases and storage of the items we had for sale. We slowly got used to our new surroundings, and other than some minor arranging of the furniture and the purchase of some additional pieces, we developed into a smoothly functioning retail sales facility. As time passed, we developed an efficient method of analyzing our sales and ordering our inventory accordingly at the beginning of each season. Inasmuch as this burden fell on the shoulders of Office Manager Martha Bennett, she developed a close working relationship with our vendors. However, as the business of the Society became more involved, Martha’s time in the office became more

demanding and her resources of persons to work the Shop rapidly declined. With an ever increasing administrative workload and our need to cut costs, the Society Board was faced with some difficult decisions. After many hours of deliberations and in compliance with Martha’s decision to retire, it was decided to close the Shop after 64 years and allow her to work two days each week for six hours per day. With some additional help from our Board members, we feel that the Society can continue to function to serve you our members as well as the public. It will require extra effort on all our part, but the Fort Delaware Society has too long and important a legacy to do anything less. We urge your understanding in this matter and your willingness to come to our

THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

The Officers and Directors wish to extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to the following persons who worked in the Sutler Shop during the 2014 season.

Martha Bennett
John LaRosch
Tom Smith
Eugenia Hall
Jean Bonner
Hugh Simmons
Maureen Zieber
Edward Fielding
Deborah Haskell

We couldn’t have done it
without you !

Society Activities in 2014



Annual Meeting



Annual Meeting



Annual Meeting Guest Speaker



Willis Phelps as Esau



Neshaminy Creek Outreach Table



Art in the U. S. Civil War

Society Activities in 2014



Steele Family Memorial Contribution



Champion Hill and Big Black Bridge



Peach Festival Outreach Wyoming, Delaware



Model of the USS Saugus



Society Museum Cases inside Fort Delaware



Final Closing of the Society's Sutler Shop

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

FALL GENERAL MEMBERSHIP

A small but enthusiastic crowd assembled in our main meeting room on November 26 to hear Don Ernsberger present a well documented discussion of the June 1863 battles of Champion Hill and Big Black Bridge with LCD projections of the battle lines and appropriate sketches.

HOLIDAY GREETINGS

The Officers and Directors of the Fort Delaware Society extend their best wishes for a very safe, healthy and happy Holiday Season .

DONATION OF USS SAUGUS MODEL

Be sure to read the article in the 2015 issue of the *Fort Delaware Notes* to be distributed at the Annual Luncheon Meeting in February and mailed to those who can not attend. It presents the history of the scale model of the USS *Saugus* which we donated to the Kalmar Nyckel museum in Wilmington. For those not familiar with Delaware's early history, the Kalmar Nyckel is the ship that brought the Swedish settlers to Wilmington in 1638. A replica was constructed and is an active participant in "Tall Ships" regattas and other east coastal celebrations. Its current home is the Christina River riverfront, the site of its original anchorage.

PRESERVATION PROJECTS

In keeping with our mission to protect and preserve the archival documents in our collection, we have begun an active campaign to have them professionally mounted.

Thanks to a grant from The Longwood Foundation and a gift from the Central Delaware Civil War Roundtable, the project is underway, beginning with the two muster out documents currently on display in our Board Room. Our Fundraising Committee is working on a proposal to initiate an "Adopt An Artifact" program to encourage other organizations, social clubs, businesses, etc. to use this as a means to become actively involved in supporting the mission of the Fort Delaware Society.