

Smithfield Community Association, Inc.

PO Box 42, Peterboro, New York 13134

June 30, 1998

Hello again to all our friends and members of the Smithfield Community Association:

Summer has fully arrived, the kids are out of school, and with another Civil War Weekend under our belt, it's time to relax and reflect on another great year for Peterboro! Here's a recap of some the neat stuff that's been going on around town.

- Archeological Dig at the Gerrit Smith Estate

On September 27th, a team of archeologists, led by Lou Ann Wurst of Syracuse University came to Peterboro to literally dig into history. The SU team had made arrangements with the town to perform an "Open House" dig on the Smith mansion house site. The community was invited to join in with the students from SU to learn the basic techniques of a dig. Many local folks came out, including quite a few MEHS students. This dig was in part a preparation for a more extensive two week dig this spring. The team from SU returned in April to hold the "lab" portion of a class in archeology.

- 1835 NYS Anti-Slavery Convention

On October 19th, the SCA and the Peterboro Area Museum co-sponsored a program to commemorate the 1835 New York State Anti-Slavery Convention. As it did in 1835, the Community Center served as a meeting place for the people of New York to openly discuss and debate the issues of slavery. The 1997 meeting included a panel discussion with Dr. Milton Sernett, Bob Shear, Dr. Sally Roesch Wagner, and our own Dr. Norm Dann, who read an eloquent speech written by Gerrit Smith.

- Smith Estate Added to National Historic Register

In November, we received word that the Smith estate property had been placed on the NY state and on the National Historic Register. While the Land Office building was already on the register, this listing covers all the property that at one time made up the Gerrit Smith estate. We owe our thanks mainly to Mark Peckham of the NY state office of parks and recreation for getting the listing.

- Peterboro on the Central New York Freedom Trail

Over the winter, a the Preservation Association of Central New York, headed by Bob Shear, established a new committee to identify sites for the Central New York Freedom Trail. This trail is the local part of a National and a New York State trail intended to identify and preserve the sites of the underground railroad. The PACNY is in the process of putting together a guide book for central NY sites, and Peterboro will be a key part of the trail. For more information, check out the web site at "www.nyhistory.com/cnyft".

- Donation for the Museum Roof

In the interest of preserving Peterboro's history, the SCA board voted to donate \$1000 to the Peterboro Area Museum, for use in repairing the museum roof. The roof was in desperate need of repair after the winters snow and ice. With the generous help of the Town, the museum now has a brand new, non leaking, roof!

- Land Office Brick Repair

After a long search for a mason with the necessary skills to properly restore 190 year old mortar, we finally found Gary Van Voorhis. The original plan was for him to begin repairs and restoration on the Land Office building this past spring, but the unfortunate passing of his friend and partner required a postponement of the work. We hope to have him begin the exterior brick restoration work this summer.

- New Community Center Sign

We have a new sign, it was done by a Cazenovia artist, Paul Parpard. He hand carved both sides of the sign, it reads Evans Hall 1820 The Smithfield Community Center. In May, it took a crew of 5 people to put it in and we couldn't have done it without Jim Stokes and his tractor with the hole digger, we went down 4 feet.

- **Smithfield Community Center's Future Renovation**

The town has plans for renovating the old board room. Our group will help out in any way we can.

- **Harriet Tubman Returns to Peterboro**

As the kick-off to this year's Civil War Weekend, we arranged for a wonderful performance by Gwendolyn Briley-Strand as Harriet Tubman. On Friday, June 12th, Ms. Briley-Strand mesmerized an audience of over 300 people in the HS auditorium with a powerful one-woman play. Gwendolyn's portrayal of Harriet Tubman from a young child through her adult underground railroad years was magical, and the audience sat entranced by her performance. After the play was over, we gave Gwendolyn a night tour of the museum and Land office. Even though she was quite knowledgeable about Gerrit Smith, who she had researched as she developed this play, her and her husband were amazed at the extent of the history that Peterboro and Gerrit Smith played in the anti-slavery movement. As she takes this play around the country (she has performed it in the White House), she will now take Peterboro with her.

- **Civil War Weekend**

As usual, the highlight of our year. The greatest thing I can say about this year's weekend is the TREMENDOUS effort from ALL the volunteers!!! We had 140 volunteers help out and we offer a heart felt Thank You to everyone.

- **July 23rd Unveiling of a New Stamp**

The U.S. Postal Service has chosen Peterboro as the site to unveil a new stamp, The Stephen Vincent Benet stamp. He is mainly known for his Pulitzer Prize winning work *John Brown's Body*, which revealed the impact of the Civil War. Peterboro was chosen because of John Brown's connection to Gerrit Smith. Look for further details.

- **Annual Meeting July 23rd 7:00PM Smithfield Community Center**

This is our annual meeting in which we elect half our board members for the next two years. All members are encouraged to come out and vote. We welcome and encourage any members to help out by holding a board position. We meet once a month, on the fourth Thursday. Join us if you can.

- **Upcoming Peterboro Historical Society Program**

On Tuesday, July 21 the museum will host a program on beginning genealogy. This program will be presented by Donna Burdick, Smithfield's Town Historian and Beth Spokowsky, the President of the Peterboro Historical Society.

On Tuesday, September, Katherine Greenia of Kirkville, NY will present a program titled, "Early New England Gravestones and the Stories they tell." This is a one hour slide show program which will take you on a guided tour of the outdoor museums of New England. Both programs start at 7:00 PM.

- **Memorial Plaque**

There are spaces open on our second memorial plaque to remember a loved one with a donation of \$25.00 to help preserve the Smithfield Community Center. The plaques are located in the foyer of the Community Center. See below for details.

- **Peterboro Items for Purchase:**

Snippets: Pieces of Peterboro area history written by Town Historian Donna Burdick, Vol. 1-5 (#5 is new this year)
Smith family booklet on members of the Smith family.

These items are \$1 each and may be ordered along with your membership contribution. Please help by including 50 cents for postage.

Please remember to send in your membership contribution. Still only \$10. THANKS!!!!

For additional information on anything in the letter, call Beth Spokowsky 684-9022 or Linda Joeckel 684-9428.

Sincerely,

Steve Joeckel

President, Smithfield Community Association, Inc.

To help the Smithfield Community Association continue it's work of restoring and preserving the historic landmarks of Peterboro, I enclose my contribution as indicated below. Membership in the Smithfield Community Association is included with a minimum donation of \$10.

Contribution enclosed:

\$1000 \$50 Name _____
\$500 \$25 Address _____
\$100 \$10 _____ zip _____
other _____ Phone _____

- I would like to donate a pane of glass-\$22.00 -How many? _____
 I would like to volunteer my help for next Civil War Weekend.
 I would like a name on the memorial plaque. (\$25.00/name)
Name _____ Year of birth _____ Year of death _____
 I'd like to order the following items:
_____ total \$ _____

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