

Smithfield Community Association

PO Box 42, Peterboro NY 13134

Hello again everyone, from beautiful Madison County. The 4th of July has come and gone, so it must be time for the annual SCA letter. So get yourself a glass of iced tea, and take a seat out on the porch while I fill you in on some of our doings of this past year. Be sure to send in the modest membership fee so we can keep our work going.

Back in August '99, we were visited by some representatives of the National Landmark in Philadelphia, along with the NY Historic Preservation office in Peebles Island. They were here to tour the Gerrit Smith estate. Hadley Kruczek-Aaron from the Syracuse University Anthropology office provided the visitors with the archeological importance of the site. Hadley helped with the research to rewrite the application for getting the site granted national landmark status, with added focus on the archeological standpoint. The application is scheduled to be resubmitted this November.

Also last summer, we had Stan Alter continue to do some finishing work at the Community Center, including painting the stairs up to the gym, outside window touch-up, and painting the new Land Office windows. Our group purchased a big storage rack for the chairs in the CC, to try and prevent damage to the new walls.

We ordered and installed a new plaque for the outside of the Land Office that shows the date of construction (1804) and that the building is on the National Historic Register. Inside the Land Office, we put up a thank you plaque with the names of people who gave an extra donation to pay for a pane of restoration glass in the windows. We still have additional panes to go at \$22 each.

August also found us at the Madison County Historical Society's Hops Festival. This years Hops Festival is coming up soon, and we'll have a booth there.

On October 2nd, Syracuse University held another archeology open house and dig at the Smith estate outside the Land Office. It was great to see so many students from our local school there learning about the history in their own backyard.

That same weekend, we participated in a county-wide museum tour. We had the Land Office and Peterboro Area Museum open as part of a 13 museum tour across Madison County.

The town had a new handicap ramp added to the north side entrance of the Community Center building. They also removed the old ramp at the front entrance.

Did you catch the Ken Burns documentary film "Not for Ourselves Alone". It was shown on November 7th and 8th on PBS. The film was about the lifelong friendship and suffrage struggles of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The influences of Peterboro and that fiery abolitionist Gerrit Smith were mentioned. It still amazes me to think about how ideas and events from little Peterboro helped shape national events. Our town historian, Donna Burdick, spoke with Ken Burns and his assistants on several occasions to provide the information on the Peterboro connections.

In February, Peterboro made it to PBS again. This time it was on the American Experience presentation called "John Brown's Holy War". Donna Burdick was contacted and we had a copy of the daguerreotype of Gerrit Smith sent out to California for use in the program.

In the spring, the bare walls in the new Community Center meeting room were livened up a bit. Linda Joeckel researched some of the groups that had used the building in past years. She put together a nice display with photo's and information about the groups. The display includes the Thimble Club, the Grange, the Peterboro Library, and a list of the past clock-winders. By the way, I do wind the clock every week, but it's a temperamental old thing and on many occasions just stops by itself for no apparent reason, especially in the winter. So if you drive by and the clock has stopped or is showing the wrong time, don't get mad. Just take your time, we all need to slow down anyway. Anyway, the coat rack by the side door is made with hooks saved from the elementary school coat closet. We are looking for a picture of William Evans, benefactor of Evans Academy. There was originally a portrait of William Evans and Gerrit Smith that hung in the school library. If anyone knows the whereabouts of this picture, please let us know.

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The floors in the Community Center common meeting room have now been refinished, and they look beautiful. The \$2900 cost of the project was split between the town and the SCA. This was one of several projects over the last couple of years where we have split the cost with the town. There was some discussion regarding whether the town should be paying for Community Center repairs. But remember why we're here. If we can help the town out with these projects, together we can both do twice as much. The Community Center is a wonderful space available to rent out. It's open and available all year long. If you're planning any big parties, weddings, receptions or whatever, keep it in mind. Call our town clerk, MaryAnn Webb at 684-3326 to make the arrangements.

In April, our group co-sponsored with the Peterboro Area Museum and the Madison County Historical Society, a performance by Fred Morsell portraying Frederick Douglass. He gave several performances for the students at the Morrisville High School and an evening performance open to the public. The program that night said that the SCA was providing the refreshments, but unfortunately, no one had mentioned this to us. So our apologies for the mix-up.

Another mix-up occurred when we invited Milton Sernett, professor of Black History Studies, to give a lecture at the Community Center on the Underground Railroad. On the night of the lecture, we discovered that the Community Center had been rearranged in preparation for a reception in memory of Ed Brown. On very short notice, the lecture was moved across the street and held at the United Methodist Church. We thank them very much! We are so fortunate to live in a community where people will go out of their way to help each other out.

On May 1st, we had a meeting with Rick Bargabos, our new town supervisor. We each went over our list of repairs and improvements that we would like to see for the Community Center, and agreed on the most important ones. Such as; repair of the leaky roof above the board room, improvements to the front rest rooms, removal of the well house on the side, and sidewalks up to the clerk's office entrance. We discussed kitchen improvement, but moved this down on the list due to the large scope of the needed improvements (fire code stuff). We agreed to again go in half with the town on a project. We will be funding about \$1800 on a village improvement plan. This plan will be written as part of a town application for a grant from the NYS Highway Department for improvements to public parks. If successful, this grant could provide for a paved parking lot for the Community Center and new sidewalks for the Land Office. The written improvement plan could also be used for additional grant applications in the future.

The SCA website is still up and running, although I haven't added anything new to it since it went up. I did borrow a digital camera during the Civil War Weekend, and took some pictures, so they might get put up on the site eventually. Check it out from time to time. <http://welcome.to/peterboro>

Don't forget these events coming up this year too.

- July 16th - Peterboro Hometown Days - On the village green
- August 5th - MCHS Hops Festival - Cottage Lawn grounds in Oneida
- September 6th - Mansion Artifacts - Hadley Kruczak-Aaron will show and present a report on the artifacts that have been found at the Smith estate grounds - at the Peterboro Area Museum
- Sept. 30 & Oct. 1st - Madison Co. Fall Festival Weekend - Tour the historical societies of Madison County. We will have the Museum and Land Office open.

And finally, lets talk about the Civil War Weekend. On June 10th and 11th we held the 8th annual Civil War Weekend. The weather was beautiful on Saturday, and a bit rainy on Sunday. Unfortunately, our overall gate take this year was the lowest in four years. Without a doubt, this year's weekend went down as our most organized ever. On the days before setting things up, straight through to the clean up afterwards, the community turned out in force to volunteer and help out. I can't thank everyone enough for their efforts. That goes for this year, as well as for all the previous ones too. But as much work as there is during those few days, it's really just the tip of the iceberg. And it's that other 90% where we have a problem...

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The Smithfield Community Association member list shows over 200 members, and while some of them live quite a distance from Peterboro, the majority live in this area. And yet, for the past eight years, all the planning, organization, preparation, storage, press releases, telephone calls, letter writing, and a million other things, have all been done by a very small group of people. And to be quite honest, we are burned out. This year in particular, there were the added burdens of work commitments, personal injury, and family illnesses. At our last meeting, we took a show of hands vote, and had a unanimous result: The group of us at the table could not put on another Civil war weekend. None of us want to see the end of the C.W.W. We all believe it's such a great event for Peterboro. The benefit goes far beyond just the money we raise. We see such a pride in the village each year as the village spruces up for the weekend. And yet, as much as we love Peterboro, we just can't do it anymore. Now, we would love to be able to pass the running of the Civil War Weekend to a new set of new enthusiastic organizers. We would be more than happy to share our knowledge and experience. But we also recognize reality. So unless a miracle occurs, and a bunch of new faces appear at our July meeting, we have to say good-bye to the Civil War Weekend.

The July meeting, which will be held on July 27th at the Community Center at 7:00 PM, is our official "annual" meeting. This is the meeting where we elect our officers. We are losing two officers this year as Judy and Kevin Hurlbert are moving down to North Carolina. So we sure could use some new faces at our meeting. If you love Peterboro's history, and want to help keep that history alive, please consider joining us at our meetings. We need some new ideas for fundraisers too.

Please remember to send in your membership contribution. We have helped the town with a lot of projects this year, and with the income from the C.W.W way down this year, we need some new members. So go get your neighbors to join us too. All donations are tax deductible, and besides, they make you feel good.

Consider buying some Peterboro items as gifts. We have new T-shirts this year. They have the image of the Land Office by Don Cornue. The colors are tan and gray with black ink, and we have L, XL, and XXL.

We will have the T-shirts on sale at Peterboro Hometown Days.

Peterboro items are available, there are Snippets: Pieces of Peterboro area history written by our Town Historian Donna Dorrance Burdick, Vol.1-6. Donna now has e-mail, her address is dburdick@stny.rr.com. Also available is the Smith family booklet on members of the Smith Family. These items are available for \$1.00 each and may be ordered along with your membership contribution. Please help by including .50 cents for postage.

There are spaces available 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.

For additional information on anything in the letter, call Beth Spokowsky 684-9022 or Linda and Steve Joeckel 684-9428 or e-mail us at ""sca-peterboro@geocities.com".

Sincerely

Steve Joeckel
President
Smithfield Community Association