

Smithfield Community Association

P.O. Box 42 Peterboro NY 13134

Newsletter for 2005

Greetings from historic Peterboro! Every year when Linda and I put this letter together, it gets harder and harder to squeeze in all the amazing things that are happening in our wonderful community.

National Abolition Hall of Fame

The *National Abolition Hall of Fame* has taken off and is flying high. Established just last year, as a committee under the SCA, its mission is to recognize and honor the strong people who helped achieve the ending of slavery, and also to honor those who continue the unfinished work of ending discrimination today. The NAHOF committee is led by Dot Willsey, and under her leadership, it has already blossomed into a nationally recognized organization. An article about the NAHOF written by William Kates from the Associated Press was run in many newspapers across the country. We have received word from SCA members who have seen this great report on Peterboro in Houston, Texas, Washington D.C., Florida, and other states. So once again, Peterboro is getting to be known far and wide. The Halls' *Cabinet of Freedom*, with members from our local community and nationally recognized scholars, has met twice and selected the first five inductees to the NAHOF. They are Gerrit Smith, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Lucretia Mott, and William Lloyd Garrison. The first inductees will be officially honored in a program on October 22, 2005, at the Palace Theater in Hamilton. The program will include a performance by Fred Morsell portraying Frederick Douglass. Look for future press releases for the program and be sure to join us in this momentous occasion. Colgate University is one of the institutions that is helping support the NAHOF, and they have provided a student intern this summer, who will be working on several projects for the Hall, including a web site. Watch for future press releases.

Town of Smithfield Bicentennial display

I know some of you had a chance to see the Town of Smithfield Bicentennial display at the Madison County Historical Society. We would like to give a big ***Thanks*** to our Town of Smithfield historian, Donna Burdick, for all her hard work in putting this wonderful display together. If you didn't have a chance to see it, some of the display boards will be put up in the Peterboro Area Museum, which is open 2 to 4 on Sundays until the end of September, and all day on July 17 for Home Town Day. While you're in the museum, check out the two new exhibits; one is on the Peterboro Post Office and the other is on Phrenology and Spiritualism.

Home Town Day – July 17th THIS WEEKEND!!!

The SCA will have a booth on the green for Home Town Day. Come by and see us and buy a Peterboro mug and a t-shirt. Mary Benedick has stitched a beautiful quilt for the Civil War Weekend 2006 raffle. We will be selling tickets during *Home Town Day* and other events during the year.

Civil War Weekend

The weather for *Civil War Weekend* was very hot this year, which kept some people home, but those who came had a great time. The music and entertainment were especially good this year. We want to thank the Town of Smithfield for their help in putting on the weekend. This year we want to thank all the sponsors, the most we ever had. We could not have put on this event without the 200 reenactors who come from Ontario to Florida and Ohio to Maine. Also, a big thank you goes to the 200 dedicated volunteers, who come from all the local communities to help us out in so many ways to make the weekend a success.

Heritage Campaign

Last June 2004, two of the Town of Smithfield sites that the SCA have been preserving the Smithfield Community Center and the Land Office on the Gerrit Smith Estate National Landmark were among the first of

24 sites named by the Heritage NY Statewide Underground Railroad Trail. Through this program the SCA has been awarded preservation grants for both properties. The grants are for repairs to the Community Center and Land Office which will cost \$90,000. These grants have a 1:3 match requirement, which means if we and raise \$22,500 then the grant will match \$67,500 (3 times our amount) to complete the repairs. We have started a *Heritage Campaign* to raise money for the match. For example, if you donate \$25 it will become \$100 with the match. So far we have had 50 people donate \$15 to \$1,000; a special thank you goes out to the people who gave these generous donations. We do not know when the grant monies will be available, but when they are they will go for the second floor of the C.C., for electrical work, refinishing the floors, and work on the downstairs rest rooms. In the Land Office, we will use the grant for underground electric, a heat source, for repair of a newly discovered rotten wood foundation under the brick floor, plaster, painting, and recessed storm windows.

We also have a pending member item grant from the State Assembly (through Bill Magee), the Town of Smithfield has provided money for Community Center repairs to supplement the work in the Heritage grants, and the Mid York foundation has made a wonderful donation towards the Heritage match campaign.

Gerrit Smith Estate National Landmark Acquisition

I have saved the big news for last. The SCA has just purchased the 1.7 acres property behind the Land Office!! On June 14, 2005, the Madison County Board of Supervisors passed an \$ 81,000 loan to the SCA, enabling the SCA buy the property. We have a pending State Senate member item grant (through John DeFrancisco) for part of the acquisition cost, and are hopeful for additional grant requests that have been submitted. This property includes the last three surviving buildings of the thirty plus buildings that were once on the Gerrit Smith Estate National Landmark. The house, which was called 'The Lodge' will eventually be used for a visitor's center and research library. 'The Barn', in Gerrit Smith's day, was used on many occasions to house freedom seekers on their route to Canada. This building will house the UGR museum for elementary, H.S. and post secondary students and tourists and may house portions of the NAHOF as it develops. The smaller barn building was 'The Laundry' for the estate and the place of business for Harriet Sims Russell, a woman bought from slavery by Ann and Gerrit Smith. She came to Peterboro with her husband and children and ran the laundry. 'The Laundry' will be a museum dedicated to the stories of Freedom seekers of Central NY. A Stewards Committee has been formed for the Gerrit Smith Estate.

As you can see we have BIG plans, so if you would like to volunteer on any of the projects we have going on let us know.

The SCA annual meeting is on July 28, 2005, 7:00PM, at the Smithfield Community Center, come and join us! For more information, questions, want to volunteer, call Beth Spokowsky 684-9022 or e-mail us at sca_peterboro@yahoo.com

To help us continue our restoration work, in the nationally recognized hamlet of Peterboro, please remember to send in your membership contribution. All donations are tax-deductible. A copy of our latest annual report may be obtained, upon request, from the SCA, or from the New York State Attorney General's Charities Bureau, Attn: FOIL Officer, 120 Broadway, New York, New York 10271.

On behalf of the Smithfield Community Association, ***Thank You!*** ...and have a wonderful summer.

Sincerely,

Steve Joeckel
President, Smithfield Community Association