



Smithfield Community Association

Peterboro, NY

Newsletter for 2006

*Greetings from historic Peterboro!
Home of the Gerrit Smith Estate National Historic Landmark*

I would like to catch everyone up on what's been going on in Peterboro.

Gerrit Smith Estate National Landmark

As you may remember last June the SCA purchased 1.7 acres property behind the Land Office. Our original mortgage was for \$81,000, the SCA has paid off \$35,000 of it and has asked for another year extension for \$46,000 on our loan from Madison County. The property includes the last three surviving buildings of the thirty plus buildings that were once on the Gerrit Smith Estate. Some ideas we have for the buildings are : 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 an UGRR museum for elementary, high school 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. Acquisition of these buildings was a big step in preservation of the Gerrit Smith Estate. Last summer volunteers got the Lodge ready for a caretaker to live in. There was a lot of clean up to do. We had the water tested, electrical was updated, a new furnace was installed, railings were installed, trees were cut down and brush cleared. The Barn also needed lots of clearing out. The laundry had all the windows and openings boarded up for winter. In the fall, we had a yard sale to sell off items that were left in the buildings. The GSENLH Stewards Committee has been meeting, the group will eventually have docents to give tours and create tour activities for the Estate.

For tours of the Gerrit Smith Estate NHL and or programs relating to the GSENLH contact the SCA.

Heritage Campaign

In 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 Historic 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 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. A special thank you goes out to the people who have given to this campaign. We do not know when the grant monies will be available, but when they are they will go for the 2nd floor of the C.C., (the initial home of the National Abolition Hall of Fame) for electrical work, refinishing the floors, and work on the downstairs rest rooms. In the Land Office, we will use the grant for adding electrical service, a heat source, for repair of the rotten wood foundation under the brick floor, plaster, painting, and a new cedar shake roof. This summer we had additional archeological testing done on the L.O. property. A report will be submitted to the state so underground electrical lines can be run. Once we complete the repairs Heritage NY will install exhibits on the UGRR in CNY.

We have received a Member Item grant from Bill Magee which was for \$10,000. The repairs were for the 2nd floor of the C.C.. We had the wainscoting repaired, three new doors made, and plaster work done on the moldings. The SCA paid for the installation of the doors and hardware. Volunteers have stripped the C.C. sign in front of the building and repainted it.

The C.C. gets lots of use for meetings, weddings, parties, what a great space to use for functions. If interested in renting the C.C. call Mary Benedict, Town Clerk of Smithfield at (315) 684-9293 or e-mail twncrlrk@dreamscape.com.

National Abolition Hall of Fame

The *National Abolition Hall of Fame* has taken off! Established in 2004 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 Town of Smithfield has recognized and supports NAHOF and authorizes the use of the 2nd floor of the C.C. for the Hall of Fame. The NAHOF committee has been pursuing becoming a separate not-for profit organization. The NAHOF had a successful ceremony introducing the first five inductees at a program held at the Palace Theater in Hamilton. This year, NAHOF will be honoring the original 5 inductees, Morrisville State College will be sponsoring the NAHOF inductee commemoration on **October 21, 2006**, look for the press releases.

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Peterboro Civil War Weekend

A special day was added to the 14th Annual Peterboro Civil War Weekend . The Civil War Heritage Foundation and the Peterboro Civil War Weekend Committee arranged a Living History experience on Friday before the weekend for fifth graders in two local schools. The program consisted of a living history experience for small groups at various learning stations on the green. The first year at doing this program was met with very favorable comments. Thanks to all who volunteered their time for this valuable education experience.

We didn't do as well as we hoped this year, but we would like to thank all who came out. Despite the weather, which was in the 40's and drizzly in sharp contrast to last year's 90's, those who came had a great time. We want to thank the Town of Smithfield for their help in putting on the weekend, and also thank all the sponsors. Their generosity made up for the lower attendance. 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. *Our many thanks to all involved.*

Peterboro Home Town Day- Sunday July 23rd

The SCA will have a booth on the green, stop by and see us, look at our latest photos of work that is being done, buy a new mug, which has the C.C. on it and add it to your set.

We will also have the Land Office open for tours. Read about Gerrit Smith and his abolitionists work. Also stop by the Peterboro Area Museum, talk to our Town Historian Donna Dorrance Burdick, she can also be e-mailed at dburdick@stny.rr.com. New this year is an exhibit of Gibson Girl Illustrators, most of the exhibit is on loan from Donna's own collection for the summer.

Other Events

September 23 and 24 - the SCC, the museum and the GSENLH will all be open for the Fall History Weekend, look for times.

Donna Burdick and Beth Spokowsky have been working on a volunteer group created for the Madison County Bicentennial called the Madison County Freedom Trail which was created to identify sites in Madison County connected to freedom seekers or abolitionists.

Sunday, October 21, There will be a bus tour on which will take you to the 16 sites in Madison County, five of which are in the Town of Smithfield. For info call Beth Spokowsky at (315) 684-9022.

Memorial Plaque

Do you have a loved one who was born or lived near Peterboro? Did your loved one go to school in Peterboro? Were they a member of one of Peterboro's organizations? Do not let them be forgotten. You can assist in the preservation of Peterboro's continuing history by having the names of your loved ones engraved on the SCC's Memorial Plaques.

Enclosed is the list of people who are on the SCA's memorial plaques, if interested in purchasing a Memorial please contact Beth Spokowsky (315) 684-9022 for a form.

Do you love local history? Want to help us preserve the history and structures of Peterboro for future generations, then JOIN US !

The SCA annual meeting is on July 27, 2006, 6:30 PM, at the Smithfield Community Center. For more information, questions, to volunteer, or become an SCA board member, please contact the SCA.

Check out our new and improved web site at www.sca-peterboro.org; e-mail mail@sca-peterboro.org

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, Inc.