

Report of the Executive Director

New Castle Historical Society

June 30, 2009

Museums

- Admissions at the NCHS museums and programs total 3,069 through June 30, 2009. Visitation for the same period in 2008 totaled 4,226, reflecting a decrease of 27.4% in 2009.
- The kitchen chimney at the Amstel House has been rebuilt, a new topside damper added, and is now in working condition. The kitchen fireplace still needs additional work before it can be used.
- The west chimney at the Amstel House (flues for dining room, master bedroom and 3rd floor bedroom fireplaces) has been completely re-pointed from just below roof level to the top of the chimney. About 50 bricks were replaced.
- The Dutch House roof has been installed. A small amount of flashing work needs to be completed. This will be done by mid-July.
- Landscaping and drainage work will begin at the Amstel House on August 1st (tentative). We are hoping to open an archaeological test pit before work begins to insure we do not disturb any valuable archaeological resources.
- The plein air paintings have been moved to the Amstel House gift shop due to a leaking roof in the Old Library. During a recent storm three of the paintings got wet, but suffered no damage aside from a framing mat on one watercolor. Additionally, some of the Society's books (which were being considered for deaccessioning) became wet. The insurance company was contacted but no official claim has been filed yet pending discussions with the artists. Most of the paintings will remain with the Society through July.
- A meeting of the reinterpretation planning committee was held on June 22 to review results from audience focus groups. The next meeting will be held on August 31 to begin to develop interpretive themes for the museums.

Programs

- A new exhibit, *A Vestige of the Dutch: The Tile House of New Castle* is open in the Dutch House. The small exhibit includes Tile House artifacts as well as Dutch archaeological artifacts excavated from both the Read House and Fort Casimir sites. The exhibit runs through November 16, 2009.
- The annual Garden Party was held in the newly renovated Academy on the Green. Guests totaled 166 people. All feedback about the event has been positive with many remarking that they enjoyed hosting the party in the Academy building.
- The preservation blog continues to be updated regularly to detail the progress of the preservation projects at the Amstel and Dutch houses. The URL is <http://preservingnewcastle.blogspot.com/>.
- Forty people went on our bus trip to Gettysburg on June 27 & 28. The group enjoyed an excellent overall tour experience – particularly the new NPS museum and guided battlefield tour.
- The Society, in partnership with the New Castle Community History & Archaeology Program, hosted a chimney and fireplace workshop at the Amstel House on June 29. The program focused on the best practices of brick restoration and the functioning of chimneys and fireplaces. Twenty-nine people attended the free workshop host by our architect, John Bowie, and our mason, Jim Groff.

Collections & Archives

- The Society received a donation of several secondary history books: *The Dutch & Quaker Colonies in America, Vols. I & II*, 1899; *Little Known History of Newark, Delaware and its Environs*, 1936; *What Them Befell – The Ridgelys of Delaware & Their Circle*, 1949; and *Decorative Antique Ironwork*, 1968.
- A recent (1960s) oil painting of the New Castle Court House cupola has been offered to the Society for acquisition. The collections committee has decided not to accept the painting due to its limited significance and space and care considerations.

Marketing/Partnerships

- The Arasapha Garden Club Anniversary tea was moved to the New Castle Presbyterian Church hall due to inclement weather.
- Mike participated in a conference call on June 10 with *Preservation Delaware* to discuss that organization's website which is severely out-of date.
- On June 25, Mike hosted some conference planners from the White Ironstone China Association. The group is planning a conference in Delaware and looking for possible excursions for their members. This is an opportunity referred to us by the Greater Wilmington Convention & Visitors Bureau, of which the Society is a member.
- The Society's next paper newsletter will be mailed by July 15.

Preservation

- The Society announced its annual preservation awards at the Garden Party on June 11. This year's recipients include the State of Delaware for the Academy, Patricia Ramone and Michael McClay for an addition to their home on East 3rd Street, and Susan Hannell for her new garage on Harmony Street.
- Mike and the Rosemont House committee are working with Keith Adams and the City of New Castle to develop a solution to a problem of trucks (primarily) hitting the corner of the Rosemont House as they travel on Dalby Alley. Our recommendation to install an decorative iron bollard (post) near the corner of the house has been approved by the HAC, but is pending discovery of the exact property line before the bollard can be installed.
- Mike has been looking for information about the current status of the Mt. Salem Church on East 4th Street. Contrary to local rumors, the vacant Mt. Salem Church is in relatively good condition, and may be used for services again within the next 12-18 months.
- David Scott has resigned from his position as executive director at Preservation Delaware (PDI) effective July 1, 2009 after just a few months on the job. Additionally, the garden manager at the Marion Coffin gardens has also resigned.

Staff & Volunteers

- Mike attended an AAM-sponsored webinar hosted by Winterthur on July 1. The webinar discussed strategic thinking for museums and historic sites. It was the first in a series of webinar that will be hosted by Winterthur throughout the rest of the year.
- The administrative office was closed on July 3 for the Independence Day holiday though the museums were open. The museums were closed on July Fourth.