

**Report of the Executive Director
New Castle Historical Society Annual Meeting
March 25, 2009**

Museums

- The total number of visitor experiences we provided in 2008 through our museums and programs is 10,325. This represents a decrease of approximately 12.5% from 2007's total of 11,808.
- Three exhibits were mounted in the Amstel House in 2008: *Getting to Know Them*, *Hunting for the Woman in Blue*, and our annual Holiday Exhibit. In 2009, the Van Dyke and mourning exhibits will be reprised in the Amstel House and an exhibit on the Dutch Tile House will be mounted in the Dutch House.
- The Old Library museum featured two exhibits: *Painting the Town* and *A Victorian Christmas*. In 2009 *Tying The Knot: New Castle Nuptials Since 1784* opens at the Old Library on May 16.
- In 2008, the Society began a project to review the current interpretation of our museums – primarily the Amstel & Dutch Houses. The project will continue through most of 2009 and will result in a formal interpretation plan and most likely furnishing and collections plans as well.

Programs/Partnerships

- The Society's *Hauntings in History* tours continue to sell out with 378 people taking the tours in 2008 – representing about a 50 % increase over 2007. The tours will again be offered on five weekend nights in October.
- The Society hosted a concert event on November 13 at the New Castle School auditorium with folk music group Simple Gifts. The response to the community concert was overwhelmingly positive. The Society also brought the group into local schools to present music programs to over 1,300 school children.
- The Society partnered with the Delaware Historical Society's Read House on their Garden Festivus program last August. The Arasapha Garden Club provided garden workshops for adults in the Amstel House garden, tours of the Dutch House garden and the Society hosted outdoor painting and craft activities at the Old Library Museum for children. A scavenger hunt developed by a local girl scout troop utilized the Societies historic sites.
- We continued to work with Public Archaeology students from the University of Delaware to provide real world projects involving artifacts from the Amstel House property. We are currently working with students on a strategic planning project for the NCCHAP.
- We continued our outreach program in 2008 with offsite lectures provided at the Hercules Women's Club.
- The Society is an active member in the Tri-State Coalition of Historic Places, an alliance of historic sites from Delaware, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.
- NCHS is an active partner in the statewide initiative, Delaware Disaster Assistance Team. The initiative seeks to create a disaster planning and response network of museums, libraries and archives throughout the state. In 2008, this partnership began to survey that state of the State's collections and NCHS was visited by a conservator who provide us valuable feedback on our collection management practices.
- Mike Connolly is actively involved with the Historic New Castle Alliance – a community-based volunteer organization that is working to revitalize New Castle's downtown business district by using the Main Street model.
- The New Castle Historical Society supported other community organizations through our involvement in *A Day in Old New Castle* (for which we developed a guided walking tour), *From Kitchen to Garden* tours, and the *Spirit of Christmas*.

Marketing /Communications

- The Society continues to research additional ways to use its website for marketing and the dissemination of historical research and preservation related information. Look for additional changes to the website in 2009 and beyond.
- We continue to expand our email list. We know have over 380 members and non-members receiving monthly emails from the Society.
- Through our partnership with the New Castle Heritage Tourism Group we reprinted the colorful Historic New Castle brochure using a grant from the Delaware Tourism Office.
- The Delaware Historical Society has developed a full marketing campaign for Historic New Castle in 2009. The Society is please to work with the Delaware Historical Society on this project by offering discounted tickets for travel packages, providing images for marketing materials, etc.

Publications

- In 2008, we received a grant from the Delaware Heritage Commission to republish 350 Year of New Castle in a paperback edition. The new books are now for sale at the museum shop at the Amstel House.

Facilities

- The preservation projects are slowly getting underway at the Amstel House and Dutch House. We have completed preliminary projects including asbestos abatement, electrical work and sidewalk work..
- The first major project, beginning in April, will be the restoration of the Amstel House kitchen chimney and fireplace. Following that project we will continue with roofing of both houses and outbuildings, painting of the outbuildings, structural work at both houses, security upgrades at both houses, installation of an accessible entrance at the Amstel House, installation of UV filtering interior storm windows at the Amstel House, drainage work at the Amstel House, and repair of the Delaware Street sidewalk at the Amstel House.
- During 2008, we have trapped and removed several squirrels and raccoons from the attic of the Amstel House.

Collections

- The Society is continuing our major collections registration and research project that started last year. Our goal is to fully documenting every single item in the collection of the Society, and create a computer database of our holdings.
- The Society lent historic headwear and accessories to the Mount Clare Museum in Baltimore for an exhibit called *Hats Off to History*.

Upcoming Events

- On April 15th at 7pm at the Arsenal, Mike Connolly will present a program on *Understanding the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation*. The program is free.
- As preservation projects begin we will schedule NCCHAP workshops to view the projects and talk with the contractors and architect about the work. Announcements will be made in the New Castle Weekly, our website & our email newsletter.
- A new exhibit, *Tying the Knot: New Castle Nuptials since 1784* opens on May 16. We are searching for photographs of New Castle weddings for inclusion in the exhibit.
- There are still spaces available for our weekend trip to Gettysburg, PA on June 27 & 28.