Construction is progressing on both the comfort station and parking lot now that winter has lost its grip on the weather. One of our signature spring events, Friends of Fort Totten Parks Family Fun Day will be held back in Fort Totten! Word is, the parking lot will be open!! Stay tuned!

FAMILY FUN DAY—2015

Saturday—June 13, 2015 12 noon - 3 pm
Location: Fort Totten Park

Please join us for a fun afternoon of free activities including games, crafts, medical screening, pet micro-chipping, demonstrations and more!

4th of July Fireworks

City Councilman Paul Vallone announced that Fort Totten will host fireworks this year in celebration of July 4th. The date will be Wednesday—July 1st as not to interfere with other potential celebrations spectators might have. Mr. Vallone noted that local bands may perform before the show starts. The fireworks show will take place over Little Neck Bay and spectators will be able to view them from Little Bay Park along the shore. Check local papers or the Councilman’s website for more details.

AHOY! Ferry Service

If you don’t know what a “Bronx Cheer” is, you should have been on hand when Mayor DeBlasio announced that the city will begin ferry services from The Bronx and a variety of locations starting this spring.
When discussing World War I many think of the battlefield itself, not the other places where the war would have an effect. I mean, who thinks of Jamaica Bay and World War I? Jamaica Bay is just such a place. It was home to the Rockaway Naval Air Station where seaplanes traveling to and from Europe landed as well as the departure point of the first commercial trans Atlantic flight. The station closed in 1928 and years later Robert Moses transformed the area into what we now know as Riis Park. (www.nyharborparks.org/visit/foti.html)

Queensborough College History Professor Mark Van Ells, has written a book on the above subject titled "AMERICA AND WORLD WAR 1 - A Travelers Guide" centering around the life of an American Soldier (known in those days as a 'doughboy') from basic training to the battlefield. The reader travels to both sides of the Atlantic in this story while the rest of the world marks the 100th anniversary of the war which spanned 1914—1918. Mr Van Ells hopes the book will raise awareness of World War I as that war turned the United States into a superpower but it was sadly overshadowed by World War II.

Officers of the Friends of Fort Totten

Co-President Joe Branzetti
Co-President Gary Forster
First VP Al Evans
Second VP Lily Louis
Treasurer Lu Kernahan
Corresponding Secretary Sylvia Johnson

Assemblyman Edward C. Braunstein was born and raised in Bayside and now resides in Whitestone with his wife, Stephanie. Assemblyman Braunstein was elected to the New York State Assembly in 2010 to represent the 26th District in Northeast Queens...
The 2014 Halloween event held during the day was met with crisp winds and the sounds of family and friends alike enjoying a day out in the park. Inflatable rides, pumpkin patches and a costume contest topped the day of free merriment. A good time was had by all. Many thanks to all our volunteers and supporting vendors. Without them, these free events could not happen.

Raccoons unmistakably identified by their bandit-like masks as well as their ringed marked tails are a common sight almost anywhere you go these days around here, mainly because they will eat just about anything they find. They can be found rummaging for food anywhere from forests, marshlands, here in Fort Totten Park and quite possibly even in your backyard trash can!

These foragers have dexterous front paws and long fingers which allow them to feast on anything and everything from crayfish and frogs, mice as well as raiding a nest or two for their eggs. They will also feast on your prized vegetable garden given the opportunity.

Raccoons are such adaptable mammals that they can make their dens in a fallen log, a hollowed out tree and even a house attic. Female Raccoons can have one to seven cubs in early summer. The cubs generally stay in their nests for the first two or so months of their lives before they move to the ground to explore on their own under the watchful eye of mother raccoon.

Raccoons are medium sized mammal native to North America, weighing in anywhere from 8 pounds to 20 pounds and have a body length between 16 to 20 inches. Common raccoons can have either a grey coat or even a red coat with a dense underfur to insulate them against the cold. Raccoons in northern parts of the country will gorge themselves in spring and summer with food to store up body fat as they spend most of the winter asleep in their dens.

Recent visits by Council members noted a ‘haunting melancholy’ feeling to the island given the history of the island but feel an upgrade and public access would change that feeling quickly. The views of Manhattan are breathtaking. Stay tuned! (sources—NY Times)

March 31, 1895 - News flash

The steamer Continental ran aground on Hog’s Back Reef at Wards Island near Hell gate (currently under the Triboro /JFK Bridge) in dense fog shortly after midnight. The ships passengers were asleep when the accident occurred. They were all taken off the grounded vessel the following morning. The ship was ultimately pulled off the reef and was placed back into service between NYC and New Haven CT.
Meadow Lake, (located in Flushing Meadows—Corona Park) originally a salt marsh is a man made lake, flooded as part of the plan to host the 1939 World’s Fair. It is also the largest lake in New York City. Since the 1939 World’s Fair numerous events and wildlife including the 1964 World’s Fair, The Dragon Boat races, many a fowl & fish call the lake home.

Unfortunately years of neglect and lack of technology updates have left the lake in a reduced state. Excessive algae blooms and invasive reeds along the shore choke the water of oxygen needed by wildlife to survive. In addition, run off from nearby highways, spent BBQ coal and even goose droppings have turned the water to a soup of stagnation.

One water issue of concern that parents should be aware of is a blue/green algae known as cyanobacteria which can pose a health risk to people and animals. Contact (or drinking) the blue/green algae can cause nausea, vomiting, throat irritation skin rashes, breathing difficulty and diarrhea. Don’t swim or ingest any water that has an algae bloom on the surface just to be safe.

Some of the lakes in New York City are fed by municipal water supplies. In 1992 the Environmental Protection Agency required cities to add orthophosphate to water supplies to reduce the ill effects of lead poison from old pipes. As a result, these high levels of nutrients fuel algae blooms. A green algae known as duckweed can completely cover the surface of a lake looking very much like a green Astroturf or pea soup. This cover chokes the water and the fish living in it.

The answer is potentially complicated and centers around two primary options. A large filtration system similar to those used in a fish tank at home could improve the water quality or tapping into the natural water sources below the lakes where possible. Time will tell.—Pat Riot

Information source NYTimes 10.4.2014

Meadow Lake to get much needed TLC

THE EAGLE HAS LANDED

STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK -

Much to our bewilderment, we at the FOFTP newsletter realized that we never featured the official emblem of the United States of America. What better time to relate this history in light of the pair of bald eagles that were discovered in late January 2015 to be building a nest within the environs of New York City?

A tug boat captain spotted the pair shuttling nesting material to the top of an unused dock on a small uninhabited island off of Staten Island. This is a great news as this is the first time this once endangered bird is nesting in New York City in the last 100 years according to the National Audubon Society. Officials will not release the actual location of this nest as to protect the birds and the nest against poachers and crowds as the birds may abandon the nest and their chicks if they are spooked.

The eagle population grows in the winter when the eagles from Canada and Alaska fly to find areas with open waters and ample food. An estimated 173 breeding eagle pairs live in New York State and a pair of them have called New York City—home.

It is reported that the Bald Eagles species were almost wiped out nationwide because of the use of pesticide DDT in the 1960’s. However, since its ban in the 1970s the population has increased. It is thought that more eagles could pop up in the city as more birds look for food.

"Because eagle numbers are increasing," Bob DeCandido, a Bronx-based ornithologist, told Audubon, “this is probably just the beginning.” - LKL

Sources, NY Times, National Audubon Society

Stories, Email, comments and suggestions can be Emailed to
FriendsOfFortTottenParks@yahoo.com
Our Flag
Signal Flags @ Sea

Before the internet, before the cell phone and even before the invention of the printing press people communicated. Signal flags were primarily designed as a means for ships to communicate, they played an important role in safety and communications. The first documented use of signal flags appears to be the Galley Captains from the Knights of Malta, (date uncertain—let’s just say a LONG time ago)

These signal flags announced the departure of a ship from harbor, extended a greeting to passing ships or announced intention to engage in battle! The 17th & 18th centuries expanded use of signal flags by the British enabled England to rule the seas with organized attacks. During world Wars I & II signal flags and now the use of signal lanterns improved communication at sea. Today, signal flags are primarily used as an additional way to communicate between ships at sea and are known as the International Code of Signal Flags.

It’s fun to see a large tanker or sailing vessel enter a harbor and understand what they’re saying via their signal flags. They are usually flown from the bridge or the highest point on the vessel as to be seen at great distances. A flag denoting what country the ship is from is usually flown from the back of the boat (the stern) and visiting ships will display a smaller ‘courtesy flag’ of the country they are in from a high point of the boat. Best thing about signal flags? They don’t need batteries!

(BTW—can you figure out what we spelled above? - answer on page six.)

Link to signal flags—http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/xf-ics.html

The Battle of Long Island - 239th anniversary

The Battle of Long Island, also known as the Battle of Brooklyn or the Battle of Brooklyn Heights, fought on August 27, 1776, was a defeat for the Continental Army under General George Washington and the beginning of a successful campaign that gave the British control of the strategically important city of New York. In the American Revolutionary War it was the first major battle to take place after the United States declared independence on July 4, 1776. In terms of troop size, it was the largest battle of the entire war.

Very Cool Places to Explore

Bayside Macaroni Kid

A nationwide e-newsletter and website that provides information on family friendly activities for parents that also focuses on Bayside & northeast Queens? Brilliant idea! Beth Rivera & Kym Muscat are the guardians of the site and cover a wide range of activities (both free and paid programs) for kids including events, shows, book reviews, arts & crafts, cooking projects and activities that can be done at home. Subscription is free to those who register.

http://www.bayside.com/macaronikid.com

Red Tail Hawk Cam in New York City

The New York Times has set up a live-streaming camera on a 12th-floor window ledge outside of the office of the president of New York University located in Washington Square Park, NYC. This year we’re partnering with New York City Audubon Society to bring you expert commentary and interactive features about raptors and their roles in their urban ecosystem.

http://livestre.am/H080

The American Cancer Society hosts the 11th Annual Relay For Life of Bayside
June 6-7, 2015.

Relay For Life is a non-competitive overnight event where teams walk around a track, relay-style, in honor and in memory of those whose lives have been touched by cancer. The first lap at a Relay For Life is special. It’s the Survivor/Caregiver Lap. Cancer survivors from the community are invited to participate in this victory lap. In the evening, there is a luminaria candle ceremony. These luminarias are purchased in honor or in memory of those who have courageously battled this disease. The candles are kept burning throughout the night, representing the healing power of community and the importance of funding to find a cure.

To register, participate, or volunteer, log on to http://www.relayforlife.org/baysideNY or contact Marlene Medina at 646-318-7636 or e-mail Marlene.Medina@cancer.org.
Fifty years ago this past summer, Flushing Meadows Park celebrated being the location for the 1964 Worlds Fair. If you were lucky enough to have gone to that event, the memories will certainly bring a smile to your face. It was a time before the internet, cell phones, and supersonic airplanes. TANG was a popular beverage and no one ever heard of the internet.

The 1964 Fair was the third such event to be held in New York City and hailed as an international and universal whose theme was through understanding” and dedicated to "Mans achievement of shrinking globe in an expanding universe". The world recognized story Unisphere as a symbol of the fair and our small planet. American companies were given an opportunity to showcase technology and advancements in their products. “High Tech” computers were highlighted by Westinghouse, Cars of the future by General Motors and Wireless telephones of the future by Bell Telephone were just part of the showcased designs. Teletype machines, punch cards and telephone modems were new technologies that amazed and intrigued the visitors. NASA and the Department of Defense sponsored the “Space Park” on two acres to showcase advancements on rocket technology. A section of the Saturn V rocket along with a Titan II booster and the famed Gemini capsule were on display along with a full scale model of a state of the art X-15 aircraft.

Over fifty one million people attended the fair at a time before the moon landing in 1969 and during the Vietnam War. It was a fair that made you wonder what was possible in America. It lead the ideas that we would eventually take for granted and wonder, ‘how did we survive without a cell phone?’

Ed note—A fun 50th Anniversary Worlds Fair website to visit to see the pavilions is worth a look, [http://www.nywf64.com/](http://www.nywf64.com/)

Queens

Still independent in 1888

January, 1888, a grand time for Queens. The New Year had slogans like, “press the button—we do the rest” and thus George Eastman introduced the Kodak Camera. The Presidential Election pitted Benjamin Harrison against Grover Cleveland. (Harrison won btw) The famous “School House Blizzard” struck from Texas to Dakota & claimed the lives of 235 children making their way home from school. In New York City, Katz’s Delicatessen was founded on the lower east side of Manhattan.

Queens was not part of New York City at the time and spanned from the East River out to the country side which is now all of Nassau & Suffolk counties.

One night in mid January on the bustling docks of Long Island City an explosion ignited the Standard Oil yards on 10th street and the East River. The flames spread through the refinery starting additional fires along Newtown Creek.

The Brooklyn Bridge broke records by having over two and a half million people across its span in the prior month. Locals called for an addition bridge to span the county of Queens to Manhattan. Then Blackwell’s Island Bridge (now known as Roosevelt Island) became a necessity. Visitors who crossed the new bridge would visit the the Steinway section of Astoria quickly buying land. The Steinway Family (of piano fame) offered four hundred acres for the construction of new homes. This also served as convenient housing for workers who were employed at the Steinway Piano Factory located on the East River and Broadway in Astoria.

Queens has always been an ethnic global hub. German immigrants met and toasted the New Year at Schutzen Park which was located on Broadway and Steinway Street. Schutzen Park welcomed all, from German singing groups to African Church groups and Presidential Candidates looking for votes.

Shipping was a big part of the Queens story as vessels from all over the globe tied up in Long Island City unloading goods and exporting materials, oil, food and even pianos for the corners of the world. Ships bound for Europe also departed for destinations such as England and Australia.

Today, Queens is a thriving area very much associated with New York City involved in trade, manufacturing and travel. A great variety of cultures still flock to Queens bringing with them the culture and history of their forefathers.

Source—Bayside Times & Astoria Historical Society

Our Flag

Answer to the question from page 5—What do the signal flags at the top spell? “FOFTP”

Friends Of Fort Totten Parks
NEW YORK CITY - ONCE THE SEA OF SHIPS

By Rick Spillman

For a period of roughly forty years from the opening of the Erie Canal to the end of the Civil War, New York City was one of the leading shipping centers of the world. The North Atlantic packet trade was dominated by New York ship owners, sailing fine packet ships built in New York yards. The Rainbow, the first extreme clipper ship, was built in New York, sliding into the East River from Manhattan’s Corlear’s Hook. The Young American, Sea Witch, Challenge, Comet and scores of others, which followed, would set records both for speed and profits. New York merchants earned vast fortunes in the China trade and the California clipper trade. Many New York institutions, from Columbia University to the Metropolitan Museum of Art were funded by money made in silk, porcelain and the opium trade. New York ship designers and builders Webb, Griffiths, Steers and others, were, for a time, the world’s finest, building ships powered by sail and steam. In the Civil War, Ericsson built the revolutionary battleship USS Monitor in just over 100 days in shipyards and engine works in Manhattan and across the East River in Greenpoint. Part of Whitman’s poem has survived as a railing in the North Cove Marina in downtown Manhattan on the Hudson River. - Rick Spillman

Ed note—Rick Spillman is a Father, an Author, Naval Architect, Videographer, Sailor & Friend.. He has a diverse backround & has served aboard the replica ships HMS ROSE & HMS BOUNTY.

He maintains a daily blog known as “Old Salt Blog” where he documents events and happenings related to worldwide news of shipping, sailing and the sea. His recently published book, “The ShantyMan” is the follow up to “Hell Around The Horn” both set around the turn of the 20th century and is a great read.

* www.oldsaltblog.com

COLEAR’S HOOK - Then & Now

Corlear’s Hook was located on the SE part of Manhattan currently where Jackson and Cherry street meet (along East River Drive). Owned by the Corlear Family along with the surrounding areas the marsh was also used by Lenape Native Americans to land their canoes. During the Battle of Brooklyn (August 1776) the British tried to land at Corlear’s Hook in pursuit of General George Washington only to be thwarted by earthen barricades placed there by the Colonial army. It allowed Washington additional time to retreat towards what’s now midtown Manhattan and an opportunity to fight another day. Source - NYC Parks Dept.

Sometime during the Civil War, the poet Walt Whitman wrote a poem about New York City, titled “The City of Ships”. The first stanza began:

City of ships!
(O the black ships! O the fierce ships!
O the beautiful, sharp bow’d steam-ships and sail-ships!)
City of the world! (for all races are here;
All the lands of earth make contributions here;)
City of the sea! Hurried and glittering tides!
City whose gleeful tides continually rush or recede, whirling in
and
Out with eddies and foam!

The Bronx River + Oysters = A good idea

Oysters, those yummy shellfish we order all year round and adorn with various condiments serve a larger purpose believe it or not. In the 1970’s the Bronx River was not a thriving marine ecosystem. Chemicals, cars, and human waste clogged the river to make it less habitable for marine life. One species of marine life did however hung on—the oyster. They fixed themselves to tires, junk and anything they could, waiting for the inevitable clean up that would occur. Now, decades later, the oyster emerges as a benchmark to guide scientists and volunteers what needs to be done to bring the waterway back to its natural state.

Students from the Urban Assembly New York Harbor School relocated approximately 100 thousand baby oysters (known as spat on shells) to a one acre area just off the shore of Soundview Park in the South Bronx.

These oysters won’t end up on the menu or produce pearls but rather will serve to filter waters and anchor the marine eco system to the rocky bottom. Fish will have a place to feed and thrive. This tough little mollusk is the first step in rejuvenating the waters around the Bronx River and will have an impact on the health of surrounding waters.

Pat Riot

Sources, NY Times, Wikipedia, Bayside Times.

BOAT FOR SALE

Potential luxury yacht for sale by New York City. The Newtown Creek is a 300 foot long steel ship powered by twin 1,500 horsepower diesel engines that drive twin 7 ft diameter propellers. Built in 1967, the ship has sailed the waters of New York City on a daily basis. The boat is listed on an on-line auction by the city and details can be found at http://www.publicsurplus.com/sms/nydcas/ny/auction/view?auc=1327532

Oh, there are some important details. Since her launching, the Newtown Creek has hauled human waste sludge. Sludge is residual organic material removed from waste water during treatment. The sludge then undergoes a dewatering process and converted into pellets which is now hauled away by truck to other states. The Newtown Creek hauled 1.2 billion gallons of sludge per year and has developed a ‘unique’ smell even though her cargo holds are now empty. Two potential new homes for the ship include an artificial reef in Florida and as raw metal via a scrap dealer in Maryland. Opening bid Price is $235,000.00 / air fresheners—optional.

Source, NY Times
Friends of Fort Totten Parks and The New York City Dept. of Parks

Date: Sunday, May 3, 2015
Event: Pets & Pals/Walk 4 Paws Party
Time: 12 noon – 3:00 pm
Location: Alley Pond Park (76th Ave off Springfield Blvd)
Description: Join us for a free day of family and pet fun. Games, rides, craft projects, pet adoption, pet walks and microchip clinic, animal demonstrations and more. Free giveaways.
Sponsored by Council Member Mark Weprin, Bobbi & the strays, Central Veterinary Associates & the Northeast Queens Park Administrator.

Date: Saturday, June 13, 2015
Event: Friends of Fort Totten Parks’ Family Fun Day
Time: 12 noon – 3 pm
Location: Fort Totten Park – Parade Grounds.
Description: Please join us for a fun afternoon of free activities including games, crafts, give a ways, medical screening, pet micro chipping, demonstrations and more.
Sponsored by The Friends of Fort Totten Parks, Council Member Paul Vallone and the Northeast Parks Administrator.

Date: Wednesday July 1, 2015
Event: Independence Celebration Concert
Time: 7 pm
Location: Fort Totten Park
Description: Join us for a fun patriotic concert featuring Bill Costa and the ‘Something Special Swing Band’. This 18 piece swing band will perform on the Fort Totten Parade Grounds as a pre show to the fireworks scheduled after sunset. Bring a lawn chair or blanket.
Sponsored by Council member Paul Vallone & the Bayside Historical Society

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2015 FRIENDS OF FORT TOTTEN PARKS DONOR

Please join us in shaping the future of Fort Totten Parks by making a donation.

Name __________________________ Address __________________________ City/State ____________ Zip Code ________

E-Mail Address __________________________ (for notices, updates and events)

Please make checks payable and mail to: Friends of Fort Totten Parks, PO Box 604984, Bayside, NY 11360

| Amount | 
|--------|----------------|
| $5     | $10            | $25       | Other |

Are you interested in joining one of our many committees?  ____Yes  ____No
(We welcome your suggestions under separate note or via e-mail FriendsOfFortTottenParks@yahoo.com)