Eight years ago when filmmaker Matt Crick was commissioned by the U.S. Army Reserve to produce a short documentary on the history of Fort Totten, he never thought that a decade later he would return to Bayside to finish telling the historic fort’s story.

“I think most of us have some desire to return to our past in some way...maybe find something we lost or in my case fix something that wasn’t done quite right the first time” Crick said. He’s referring to the short-documentary he completed in 2002 called, Fort Totten: The Face of Freedom, which although meeting the objectives of his client—the Army Reserve and the 77th Regional Support Command—didn’t satisfy Crick at all.

“I think when you start any creative project, particularly your first serious documentary, you have high-hopes...I guess dreams...of how it all will go. Then you realize that in fact it’s the client’s project and their objectives are very specific—and compromises have to be made. Don’t get me wrong, at the time everyone loved the project, especially since no one had ever visually documented the Fort’s buildings or told any sort of story about the fort in probably 45 years,” Crick said. In 2001, he travelled to Fort Hamilton and Fort Belvoir, as well as the National Archives collecting interviews and documents to put into his film. As a strict, “meat and potatoes” documentary about the Fort since about 1862, Face of Freedom did the job. But for Crick, the job wasn’t finished.

So what makes his latest and final telling of the Fort’s history so different from the story of nearly a decade ago? Well, a lot’s changed with Fort Totten, and as we all know it’s now a NYC Park. Also, Crick stressed that this feature-length documentary—a project meant to be seen in a theatre or on television—is not simply an historical timeline account of the Fort. While it’s true the audience will learn about the Fort’s history, the feature-length version, called “Paper Tiger: Love War History” weaves together personal stories of those who lived on the Fort along with Crick’s own experience as a struggling documentary filmmaker. “You’re going to see footage of the Fort no one’s ever seen, hear candid interviews from the Fort’s supporters, see pieces of an Army produced film that no one’s seen in 40 years, and hear stories from people directly impacted by Fort Totten,” Crick said. He stressed that his project is meant to inform, teach, and entertain the audience. His film sheds light on the more global experiences most everyone can identify with; themes like love, war, and betrayal for instance. If it seems like an odd way to produce a historical documentary, you’ve picked up on a major strength of the film, according to Crick.

“People walking into the theatre will be surprised—in the first 5 minutes. They will literally see and hear something completely new.” The final script is now complete and final shoots are being scheduled now. But there’s a snag.

Crick states that although the majority of the shooting and the script has been completed, there’s more shooting to do, and then there’s post-production (editing). “This is a huge undertaking...I can say without a doubt that if I can’t find some finishing funds for this project, I’m not certain I can get it off the ground. We’re so close now.”

continued on page 8
Family Fun Day was a great success this year greatly in part to the volunteers, sponsors and good weather. Approximately 3,000 people turned out for what would be a slam dunk in the fun department.
Fort Totten is surrounded by water. (The Long Island Sound on the north and Little Neck Bay on the east) With all this water, it's obvious that canoe and kayak enthusiasts regularly transit and enjoy the waters around the fort. The views from the water are quite different than from land and put you up close and personal with wildlife. The canoe is a cousin of the kayak with a different design based on the water temperatures and milder climates. The kayak is of particular interest based on its history.

Most historical accounts credit the Inuit (an arctic based people) for building the first kayaks. The original ones were made of wooden frames covered in sealskin. Kayaks were made to ‘fit’ the owner based on size and use. Wooden frames were constructed and skins were boiled and then stretched over the frames and stitched to make them water tight. Kayaks varied in design from region to region based on use. Some were narrow nimble and fast. Others were wide and stable with plenty of storage. These craft were primarily used for hunting and fishing as well as moving goods and families.

As time went on and Europeans began using the kayak, waterproof fabrics replaced animal skins. In the 1950’s with the advent of fiberglass kayaks took a big leap and in 1984, the first plastic molded kayaks were sold. Cheaper production costs and lighter weights now opened the kayak to many more sport minded people.

Kayaks and their lower latitude cousins (the canoe) were used primarily for trade, hunting and transport until a Scotsman named John MacGregor designed the ‘Rob Roy’ in 1845. This canoe was designed based on the drawings of the Inuit kayaks he was so fond of. MacGregor formed a canoe club in 1866 with other like minded paddlers and began holding competitive regattas in 1873. Kayaking became an Olympic sport in 1936 with a variety of events.

THE NEW YORK CITY WATER TRAIL

If paddling in a canoe or a Kayak sounds like your cup of tea, then you really should check out the NYC Parks Dept website dedicated to the water Trails around New York City. The New York City Water Trail connects approximately 160 miles of rivers, bays, creeks, inlets and ocean suitable for kayak and canoe use. Various organizations offer both novice and experienced paddlers an opportunity to see New York City from a different vantage point. Wildlife and city views are seen from a sea level perspective and put you right in the action of things. If a calm paddle in a quiet marsh suits you more, there are areas and groups that can fill that need as well.

There is a tremendous amount of information from various clubs and organizations regarding rules and permit links available on this website. It’s worth a look. An interactive map shows where launch sites are located as well as a number of links give a detailed view into this wonderful sport. Rangers at our own Fort Totten give instruction on safe canoe and kayak use.

To learn more visit us at:
http://www.nycgovparks.org/facilities/kayak

Visit us at our ever changing web page,
www.forttottenparks.org
Check our calendar, pictures of events, newsletter, and upcoming events.

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Well, Chinese Dragon Boats were in Flushing Meadow Park in Meadow Lake this past August. It was part of the two day Dragon Boat Festival that takes place every summer since 1990 and is the largest traditional dragon boat festival in the United States.

The Dragon Boat Festival is a significant event in China and has its roots based deep in Chinese culture. Two full days of racing aboard these magnificent Dragon boats commemorates the death of Qu Yuan who committed suicide by drowning himself in a river.

Qu Yuan was a minister to the Chinese emperor during the Zhou period (475 - 221 BC). The kingdom was situated in present day Hunan and Hubei provinces in China. Qu was known as an honest and wise minister who had brought peace and wealth to the kingdom. A corrupt group of fellow ministers were jealous of Qu and began to spread rumors about him. They tarnished and disgraced Qu and convinced the emperor that Qu was a traitor. The emperor had Qu banished from the kingdom as a result. During his years away from the kingdom he collected stories and wrote poetry. He never lost his love of the kingdom but became distraught that the kingdom was in the hands of corrupt officials. Ultimately, Qu became so upset that he took a large stone and jumped into the Mi Lo river and to his death. Local fishermen rowed frantically to save him, but failed. The present day dragon boat races commemorate the fishermen’s frantic attempts to save him. As time passed, the people of Zhou mourned Qu Yuan by tossing rice into the river on the anniversary of his death to help feed his hungry ghost. This practice is still continued today.

Dragon Boat racing has become an international sport which is governed by the International Dragon Boat Federation (IDBF) who set the standards and regulations for competition. Over one hundred teams competed for $60,000 in prize money by rowing large narrow canoe style boats carved and decorated like a Chinese Dragon. These boats are a sight to see and hear with their elaborate dragon heads and beating drums. Ethnic foods, martial arts and various Chinese arts are demonstrated as part of the festival. Mark your calendars for next year’s event!

Stories, comments and suggestions can be E-mailed to FriendsofFortTottenParks@yahoo.com or can be mailed to Friends of Fort Totten Parks P.O. Box 604984, Bayside, NY 11360

Letter From the Editor

As we wind up our fifth year publishing the newsletter, we’d like to draw attention to what we think are our shining moments. A lot of people have put many hours of work effort into our events and programs. We are so very proud of them.

In the past five years we have assisted in getting a free tram in the park. We protested when the front gate security was removed, petitioned local elected officials who stepped up to the plate and did the right thing. We developed a free map outlining the areas in the park. Published a newsletter twice a year. We held Adult watercolor painting classes. Helped plant flowers, paint a gazebo, clean the shoreline. We held “Family Fun Day” a free event, which draws over three thousand people during the course of the day. We’ve held “Crafty Totten Kids” free workshops for children making everything from painted face masks to outfitting bird houses. We can’t say enough to thank everyone that helped make it all possible.

Now as fall approaches, another free and signature event will take place. Our annual “Fort on Haunted Hill” will take place on October 23 at noon. It’s a family event with pumpkin patches, hay stack rides, face painting, inflatable rides and much more.

The “Haunted Lantern Tour” has grown over the years. Park Rangers escort small groups of visitors through the fort while Friends of Fort Totten Park volunteers dressed as ghouls and goblins while letting their presence be known. It is not for the faint of heart, but all done in good spirits and fun. Please come and enjoy our events and your park! Better yet, think of becoming a volunteer!

Best regards, Pat Riot

I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand

CHINESE PROVERB
OUR FLAG — Pat Riot

The Yacht Ensign of the United States

If you have walked along the shores of Fort Totten you've probably seen motorboats zipping along and sailboats tacking across the water. You may also have noted some boats fly a flag that's different from our usual “stars and stripes”. A flag with the usual thirteen stripes but with a fouled anchor and thirteen stars in a circle around it. This is what is known as the “yacht ensign.”

Prior to 1848 any ship sailing towards New York harbor would be spotted by a customs cutter and then approached to pay its tariffs and duties before they entered the harbor. As income taxes were not yet in place for Americans, (those came into play in the early 20th century) most of the federal government’s operating funds came from the collection of customs duties levied on any foreign goods entering the harbor.

As private yachting became more common place, very often the customs cutters would sail out to meet the vessel only to find out the private yacht was not carrying goods for sale and owed no customs duty. This practice became tiresome and unwarranted.

The New York Yacht Club approached the Secretary of the US Navy and proposed that private yachts not engaged in trade or commerce should be exempted from inspection and delay. The Secretary agreed and asked the Yacht Club to propose a flag that would be flown to indicate they were free of tariff regulations. The Club designed and proposed the yacht signal flag which was accepted and adopted for use aboard private US yachts in 1849 (US Law (46-U.S.C. section 190).

Many Yachtsmen began using the signal flag as an ensign (meaning they flew the flag on the stern of the vessel rather than on the mast where it should be) and eventually the US Government announced they would accept this practice for boats in US waters. The national flag would be the only one recognized in international or foreign waters.

This law was repealed by the vessel documentation act of 1980 (Public Law 96-594). The US National Flag is the only allowable flag that may be used aboard US vessels, private or commercial. Nevertheless, the old yacht ensign is still widely used and viewed with respect as a tradition that dates back to the nineteenth century.
NATURE WATCH

Falcons Move to Taller Dwellings

No! Not the football team, but five falcon chicks and family have been moved from atop the Throgs Neck Bridge to the Verrazano Bridge. A mother falcon took in and adopted two chicks (placed there by the DEP) along with her own three chicks this past spring.

Department of Environmental Protection biologists determined all the chicks would be safer atop the higher Verrazano Bridge because the chicks would have trouble learning to fly on the lower Throgs Neck Bridge. The Verrazano is six hundred ninety three feet above the water whereas the Throgs-Neck is only three hundred sixty.

Presently, the Department of Environmental Conservation reported that seventy three pairs of peregrine falcons have been recorded state wide and 15 pairs in New York City alone. Falcons prefer to live in high nesting areas in urban areas. They prey primarily on small birds and rodents.

Owl Sighting in Alley Pond Park

This past spring a group of bird watching enthusiasts (or “birders” as they are known) gathered early one morning to observe parts of the annual spring migration. Rumors had suggested there was a nesting owl in the park (unusual for this area). As they walked along the paths they noticed a large great horned owl perched on a tree. Approximately two feet in length this owl doesn’t sport horns, but fluffy ear tufts. A nocturnal hunter this owl feeds mostly on small rodents and birds with an occasional goose. Nicknamed the “Tiger” Owl its hunting skills and hooting are well documented. Barn owls and nests have also been noted in the park suggesting an increased population. “Who” knows if we’ll start to see them at Fort Totten Park? Keep an eye out and let us know if you spot one!

Image Source: Florida Center for Instructional Technology
THE LAWRENCE CEMETERY

Located on the corner of 216th street and 42nd Avenue, a small tract of land known as “Pine Grove” was once owned and used as a picnic ground by the Lawrence family. It ultimately became the resting place of a variety of people including an Indian Servant and two New York City Mayors.

The Lawrence family was a prominent family and the land was part of a grant by the then Dutch Governor Keift of New Amsterdam in 1645. John Lawrence was twice Mayor of New York City in 1673 and 1691. Another Lawrence married into the Washington family during the reign of England’s Henry III, and we note the name Lawrence Washington from whom George Washington inherited Mount Vernon. Another historical figure from the Lawrence family is Captain James Lawrence, who shouted the immortal words “Don’t give up the ship!” while commanding the USS Chesapeake during the War of 1812.

The picnic grounds were turned into a burial ground and the first burial was in 1832 and the last in 1939. Cornelius Van Wyck Lawrence (yes, they named the highway after him) was also a mayor of New York (1834-37) and was laid to rest here. Col. Frederick Lawrence, who served in the Civil War and later became the president of the New York Stock Exchange. Lawrence Moccasin, a Native American Indian and servant to Judge Effington Lawrence was also laid to rest here.

Through the efforts of the Bayside Historical Society the cemetery was declared a landmark on August 2, 1967 by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission and is now maintained by the Bayside Historical Society.

For more information, and guided tours of the cemetery contact

The Bayside Historical Society
P.O. Box 133
Bayside, New York 11361
718-352-1548/Fax: 718 352-3904
Email bayside@donohue.com

Epitaph:

An epitaph (from Greek: epi-taphios “at, over-tomb” — literally: “on the gravestone”) is a short text honoring a deceased person, strictly speaking that is inscribed on their tombstone or plaque, but also used figuratively. Some are specified by the dead person beforehand, others chosen by those responsible for the burial. An epitaph may be in verse; poets have been known to compose their own epitaphs prior to their death, as W.B. Yeats did.

An epitaph basically records a brief history or thought that immortalizes a family or individual. Chiseled into the tombstones, these remarks carry on into time and remind us of that person and how they wanted to be remembered. Often serious but sometimes witty and funny, they stand the test of time. They make us think and sometimes make us smile.

“Looking into the portals of eternity teaches that the brotherhood of man is inspired by god’s word;Then all prejudice of race vanishes away.”
—George Washington

“A tomb now suffices him for whom the world was not enough”
—Alexander the Great

“Stranger! Approach this spot with gravity! John brown is filling his last cavity.”
—John Brown, 18th century dentist

“That’s all, folks!”
—Mel Blanc (the trademark line of cartoon character Porky Pig, whose voice was provided by Blanc for many years)

“I am ready to meet my maker. Whether my maker is prepared for the great ordeal of meeting me is another matter.”
—Winston Churchill

“Here lays Butch. We planted him raw. He was quick on the trigger but slow on the draw.”
—Tombstone, Arizona

“Here lies an honest lawyer, that is strange.”
—Sir John Strange (1696-1754)

“The children of Israel wanted bread. And the lord sent them manna, Old clerk Wallace wanted a wife, and the devil sent him Anna.”
—In a Ribbesford, England cemetery

“Here lies groucho marx and lies and lies and lies - P.S. He never kissed an ugly girl.”
—Groucho Marx (1895-1977)

“The best is yet to come.”
—Frank Sinatra

“ It was a cough - that carried him off. It was a coffin - they carried him off in.”
—Anonymous, English cemetery

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Raymond Bright - General Manager

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Along those lines, Crick has a website dedicated to the Paper Tiger project—www.papertigerfilm.com, where interested people can offer financial support and become part of what Crick calls the “Paper Tiger Army.” “Essentially, it’s an unusual way to raise money for a film by providing a membership benefit to interested people.” Crick stressed that his website isn’t a non-profit website. “You’re buying a membership…and a piece of history. I’m hopeful the Bayside community will get involved in a serious way.”

Crick was asked about whether his feature documentary is meant to be political or make some sort of statement. “Well, those folk’s that know anything about the Fort know that there’s been some controversy in the past several years and some challenging times for the Fort. I’m going to address some of that in the film, but I’m not political—I’ll let the film speak for itself through other’s voices and the audience will take away what they want from it. I think the film will be honest and authentic…how many things can you say that about these days?”

For more information about Paper Tiger: Love War History please visit www.papertigerfilm.com.

**Editor’s Note:**
Matt Crick is a documentary filmmaker and educator. He’s worked at ABC 20/20 and PBS, as well as in a variety of production and corporate environments. He’s been telling stories of one sort or another for over 25 years. He can be reached at matt@mattcrick.com.

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**EVENT CALENDAR**

**National Estuary Day**
September 25 @ 11 am — 3 pm
Games, crafts & rides.
Alley Pond Environmental Center

**Halloween Festival**
October 23 @ 12 noon—4 pm (rain date: Oct. 24)
The Parade Grounds

**Haunted Lantern Tour**
October 29 & Oct 30 @ 6:30 pm—8:30 pm
The Battery

**Crafty Totten Kids**
November 13 @ 10:30 am—12 noon
January 15 @ 10:30 am—12 noon
The Chapel

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spearing showed and not long behind them where the snappers. The kids started catching snappers and the contest was on. By 12noon we ran out of rods but everyone was having fun. There were over 100 kids and fun was had by all.

The derby is organized and run by the Bayside Anglers Group, a local fishing club who’s goal is to promote family fun and teach kids to fish. They also teach and support safe, effective, and environmentally sound recreational fishing practices. The group gives away prizes and trophies to the children who place 1st, 2nd and third for having caught the most fish. But when you catch a fish, everyone wins!

For more information on the anglers, please visit their website (http://www.baysideanglers.com/)

**Editor’s Note:**
The anglers also partner with the NYS Dept. of Conservation and the NYC Parks Dept. in sponsoring their annual beach cleanup along the shores of Fort Totten and Joe Michaels Mile. If you would like more information on the anglers, please visit their website (http://www.baysideanglers.com/)