A sunny and warm day set the stage for the annual Friends of Fort Totten Parks Family Fun Day. Various vendors and city agencies were on hand to enlighten, educate and have a fun time. Face painting, balloon art animals, story telling and giant air rides were also on hand. Free refreshments and goodies were provided by local vendors. The Bayside volunteer ambulance Corp was on hand as well as members of New York’s finest and K9 unit. The NY Fire Department handed out honorary fire helmets as well as demonstrations in their touring smoke simulation and safety trailer. It’s estimated that over two thousand people visited the event during the course of the day! If you missed this years event, mark your calendar for next year!

CHILDREN'S LITERACY PROGRAM CREATED BY THE FRIENDS OF FORT TOTTEN PARKS

In partnership with Queens Public Library, FOFTP has created children's story reading sessions at Fort Totten Park events. The program is designed to encourage literacy at an early age. Parents and educators are lamenting the fact that children spend inordinate amounts of time on computer games and are not developing reading/writing skills. Librarian, Jasmin Amely of the Bay Terrace Public Library on a volunteer basis, conducted the story reading throughout Family Fun Day for children ages 3 to 10. As an incentive for the children to read on their own, story books were distributed to the children by FOFTP. The Partnership for Parks, a program of the NYC Parks & Recreation and City Parks Foundation provided a grant through their Capacity Fund to purchase story books for distribution for this new program.

The Friends of Fort Totten Parks are most appreciative of this grant. In addition, we wish to acknowledge a grant from Councilman Daniel Halloran which has enabled us to continue our Crafty Totten Kids Arts and Crafts classes and this year's Family Fun Day.—Lu Kernahan
The Common Sparrow

Seen in almost every corner of the United States, the common House Sparrow has been in North America less than two hundred years. Although relatively new to the US, the Sparrow may be one of the most common birds of the world! Estimated at over 150 million birds in the United States alone, these feisty little birds have many names across the globe. Sometimes called an English sparrow, a gamin, a tramp or hoodlum, they were originally recorded in Eurasia, North Africa and the Middle East. These birds did not migrate here by chance, they were introduced on a number of occasions in various parts of the United States and Canada thus allowing them to prosper.

In spring 1850, Nicholas Pike (Director of the Brooklyn Institute) released eight pairs of Sparrows purchased from England. Sadly, they did not survive. Then, in 1851 Mr. Pike purchased and released another twenty five pairs along the East River in New York. Sparrows were also released in Central Park, (possibly to control canker worms infesting trees) Union Square Park and Madison Square Park. In 1854, Sparrows were introduced to Portland, Maine. In 1858, Nova Scotia. By 1870 the Sparrow could be found as far south as South Carolina and Texas, as far west as Iowa and as far north as mid Canada.

Many states and cities released Sparrows as an “aid against the encroachment of insects and the ennobling influence felt by the inhabitants”. Unfortunately, and found out a bit too late, the common Sparrow doesn’t feed on insects! Trouble would ensue.

An 1883 article in The Messenger (Indiana, PA, 06/27/83) said “The little sparrow has been declared an outlaw by legislative enactment and they can be killed at any time. They were imported into this country from Europe some years ago as a destroyer of insects, but it has been found they are not insectivorous.

Besides they drive away all our native song birds and give no equivalent. Let them all be killed “. “Sparrow Wars” became the popular topic amongst American ornithologists and reached its height in Massachusetts during the winter of 1877/78. The hunt for the Sparrow was on!

By 1877, some states had begun plans to eliminate the Sparrow. Illinois and Michigan established bounty programs paying a few cents per bird. The Sparrow had clearly outlived his welcome by driving away the native insect eating birds and making a mess of things wherever they were found. The US Department of Agriculture issues a Farmers Bulletin (#493) in which they noted the Sparrow as a ‘pest’, eating half their weight in grain per day. They even had included a recipe for House Sparrow Soup! Sparrow Clubs were formed with the objective of destroying these birds. By 1943 the original 50 pairs of birds had grown to an estimated one hundred fifty thousand nationwide.

By the 1970’s the sparrow population had decreased by 60% in England and rapidly declining in the US as well. But no one was able to determine why. Suggestions that changes in the agricultural practices, pollution & pesticides as well as natural changes have brought on their reduced numbers.

Whatever the case maybe be, the sparrow population has leveled off that they are not considered a pest and have established themselves within our nature’s corner.

Sources—EA Zimmerman, Wikipedia, House Sparrows by Steve Eno, Invasion Biology Introduced Species Summary Projects—Columbia University

Friends of Fort Totten Parks

Haunted Lantern Tours

Friday & Saturday October 28 & 29
6.30 pm—8.30 pm
Bring a flashlight and your nerves.
(little Children may find the tour too scary)
**Friends of Fort Totten Sponsorship Program**

The Friends of Fort Totten Parks have begun a sponsorship program in cooperation with local and nationwide corporations in order to fund the various programs and events we offer. These corporations are the cornerstones of our community and realize the importance of community spirit and funding local civic programs. Currently, the following Companies are part of this program.

Cord Meyer Development Co - Platinum Sponsor

BJ’s Wholesale Club (College Point) - Gold Sponsor

Whole Foods Store (Manhasset Store) -Bronze Sponsor

We will be listing and highlighting these various corporations in upcoming newsletters. If your company would like to be part of the sponsorship program please contact us via our website. [Www.FortTottenParks.org](http://Www.FortTottenParks.org)

Silver Sponsor - $100.00  Bronze Sponsor - $250

Gold Sponsor - $500.00  Platinum Sponsor - $1000.00

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**Fort Totten Park Fact**

According to dog owners, and the Daily News “Best of New York 2011” the dog run at Fort Totten is the best. It was voted number 1 based on it’s construction and location. Adjacent to Long Island Sound, the dog run has included a section for small dogs only. Shade, water fountains and a sand base make the run perfect for dogs and drainage. Owners love the shade and views. Check it out!

*(located to the west of the parking lot and closer to Utopia Parkway)*

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**Bay Community Volunteer Ambulance**

The Bay Community Volunteer Ambulance Corps (BVCAC) has been serving the Bay Terrace; East Clearview; and Fort Totten communities with free pre-hospital emergency medical care since 1968. Operating two modern ambulances staffed by New York State certified Emergency Medical Technicians, equipped with the latest high tech lifesaving equipment.

They provide ambulance service to all local hospitals 7 days a week from 8pm to 6am weekdays, and 24 hours on weekends (as membership permits). Members also provide CPR and First Aid Courses to the residents of the community at Corps. headquarters on Fort Totten.

*If you need an ambulance call us directly at 718 352 1133*

WE NEED VOLUNTEERS!!! Bay Community Volunteer Ambulance Corps (BVCAC) has various positions to suit a variety of interests and abilities. Corps. membership ranges in age from teenagers to senior citizens with some members having served over twenty-five years.

The “welcome mat” is always out for anyone in the community wishing to volunteer. If you would like to volunteer, call 718 352 2080 or email [volunteering@bcvac.org](mailto:volunteering@bcvac.org)

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MANS BEST FRIEND NEEDS HELP

Ever since the dog run at Fort Totten Parks opened in December 2010, Miguel Chavez has been working his (ahem) tail off. He was at the forefront of the plan to have the dog park built and opened. Along with the help of elected official and Janice Melnick of The Parks Department, the dog run took shape and was eventually built. A non-profit organization, known as Freedom Run Association was founded to serve as a framework for future plans and maintenance of the dog run. Now that dogs from everywhere come to enjoy the park, the run needs your help.

In order to receive funds and maintain their non-profit status, Miguel and the dog run need volunteers to serve on the board and discuss the operation of the dog park. PLEASE consider donating a little bit of your time in order to make this facility a ‘top dog’.

Contact Miguel via Email miguel@littlebaydogrun.com.

“The British fleet in the lower bay”
(Harper’s Magazine, 1876) depicts the British fleet amassing off the shores of Staten Island in the summer of 1776.

The Battle of Long Island

Its hard to imagine while we drive on the Belt Parkway near the Verrazzano Bridge (or better known as being stuck in traffic) and looking out to sea, that in July and August of 1776 over 400 ships of the English fleet were anchored right where the bridge stands today. British forces were landing thousands of soldiers in Gravesend Bay along the shoreline. Meanwhile General George Washington and ten thousand soldiers of the Continental Army had set up camp on Broadway in lower Manhattan waiting for one of the biggest battles of the American Revolution. In the end 300 Colonial soldiers were killed, an unknown number were wounded and over a thousand taken as prisoners. Many were left to die on prison ships anchored in the East River and along the coast. The English would suffer 64 killed, 293 wounded and 31 missing. The Colonial Army would suffer many more casualties.

More about the battle elsewhere in this issue.
The flag of the President of the United States has a colorful and diverse history. Many presidents left their mark on its design and use.

The first record of any presidential flag was noted in the 1858 Signals for The United States Navy which specified that the ‘Union Jack’ (the canton or the blue and white stripes part of the US flag) be flown at the main mast of a ship to signify the presence of the Commander in Chief of The United States. This custom switched to use the national flag and back to the Union Jack over the next twenty odd years.

In the spring of 1882, President Chester Aurthur noted that many other heads of state had their own personal flag but the United States did not. These head of state flags were used to signify their presence at large gatherings or aboard a ship. By August of that same year, President Aurthur decided and implemented what would become the Presidential Flag. At the time only the Navy and Army were the active branches of the military service. Different versions of a Presidential Flag were made by both the Army and Navy but the Navy version seemed to suit the President. An order to center the coat of arms of The United States on a blue background and shall be the dimensions prescribed for an Admiral. It shall be flown at public events and at the main mast aboard a US man of war.

The flag was first used by Aurthur on a trip to Florida in 1883 and used primarily aboard boats such as the presidential yacht of the time, the USS Dolphin.

As time went on, variations of the original flag were authorized but the basic coat of arms remained the same. The number of stars and their placement being the most significant changes. President Roosevelt made changes in 1916 that were kept in place by the final and current Presidential Flag that was enacted by President Truman in 1945. The Truman design maintained the coat of arms and was illustrated into full color. Except for the increases in stars (one for each state of the union) this design is still in use today. It is defined by executive order 10860 /Feb 5, 1960.

‘The color and Flag of the President of the United States shall consist of a dark blue rectangular background of sizes and proportions to conform to military and naval custom, on which shall appear the Coat of Arms of the President in proper colors. The proportions of the elements of the Coat of Arms shall be in direct relation to the hoist, and the fly shall vary according to the customs of the military and naval services.’

The Friends of Fort Totten Parks
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The Fort on Haunted Hill Friday & Saturday, October 28 & 29 2011 6.30/8.30 PM

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www.FortTottenParks.org
The Battle of Long Island

"Matt Crick"

On July 4th 1776 the American Continental Congress signed the Declaration of Independence which announced that the thirteen American colonies at war with England were independent states and no longer part of the English Empire. Although this document declared our independence from British rule, it did not end our newly developed nation’s military conflict with England, which had been raging for at least a year prior to the signing. Soon after the Revolutionary War, the Battle of Long Island took place in what is now Brooklyn and Manhattan, with additional skirmishes along Astoria and Whitestone; it would also be the largest battle post-Declaration of Independence during the period.

WASHINGTON PREPARES FOR BATTLE:
British troops were defeated by American colonial forces in May, 1776 during what is known as the “Siege of Boston.” Shortly after, Washington moved his army of ten thousand to New York City as he felt it would be the next target. At that time, New York comprised of southern Manhattan island, with areas roughly North of 34th Street—nothing but woods and some farms in the late 1700’s. Washington made camp on the primary road, known as Broadway, and lay in wait for the British.

On June 29, 1776, a number of British war ships were sighted by local settlers, anchored in the waters off what is now Bay Ridge, Brooklyn and Staten Island—within hours, forty five additional English Man of War ships had anchored. And by the end of the week, over one hundred and thirty ships had arrived. Washington was right, the British were staging for a battle.

Under the command of General William Howe, the British set up camp along the shore of what is now Fort Hamilton. The sight of all the ships and massing troops sent the city’s population into a nervous panic. Washington knew defending the city wouldn’t be easy.

On July 12th, 1776 while British troops gathered in New York Harbor, two British ships, the Phoenix and the Rose sailed up the Verrazano narrows towards the mouth of the Hudson River. As the two ships sailed toward the Hudson, the American batteries located at Fort George, Red Hook and Governors Island opened fire. The English returned cannon fire at the coast and into the city itself. By nightfall, the ships had arrived in Tarrytown and anchored there. The real battle was yet to begin.

Next Issue, The Battle begins

Friends of Fort Totten Parks Fall Calendar

FOFT Halloween Event
Sat, Oct 22 noon—3PM - hay rides, pumpkin patches, air rides, singing and dancing (rain date Sunday, Oct 24 noon—3PM)

Haunted Lantern Tours
Fri & Sat Oct 28 & 29 6.30—8.30 PM - Park Ranger tours through dark & haunted sections of the Fort - bring a flashlight & your nerves

2011 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)

Interested in volunteering with FOFTP  Yes ____ No____

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

$5     $10      $25         Other __________