After a few bumps in the road, the Parks Department is happy to announce a free tram service will be available in the park starting this Spring. Funded by Queens Borough President Helen Marshal, the $260,000.00 tram will be fueled by Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) and will refuel locally. CNG was chosen as the best possible fuel source after much research & consideration. Recent rumors regarding the installation of temporary tanks were unfounded and not needed.

The tram will actually be two cars. The lead car will carry 12 passengers and 2 wheelchairs. It is also where the driver will operate the vehicle. The second car will be towed when demand requires and will carry an additional 28 passengers. A route & schedule will be published soon.

In a surprise & sudden move the FDNY dropped security at the front gate at Fort Totten on March 1, 2009. Officially, budget cuts were cited by the FDNY Commissioner Scoppetta as the cause but local neighborhood organizations, residents and even fort personnel are justifiably upset. The FDNY assumed and agreed to staff the front gate as part of the agreement with the city when the Fort became a park in 1999. Yet abruptly, the FDNY ended its commitment with short warning and no alternate plan in place.

Fort Totten is a unique park in the city with various needs and security requirements. The historic buildings in the park will all become potential targets for graffiti, loitering, drug trafficking and arson. The Battery (or actual historical fort) is a dangerous place at night, and with no one monitoring who has access after hours, the scenarios are indeed scary.

A protest rally was organized by the Friends of Fort Totten Parks and the Bay Terrace Community Alliance and held at the fort on Saturday, March 8, 2009. Many elected officials were on hand and many off duty members of various uniformed departments were there to protest and voice their concerns. Senator Padavan criticized both the FDNY & NYPD for their lack of involvement, Sen. Stavisky stressed the importance of maintaining front gate security. City Council Members Vallone & Gennaro spoke against the removal as well. It was former Community Board 11 Chairman Jerry Iannece who best summed up the frustrations of those in attendance with his comment to the FDNY “You made an agreement(to supply security at the gate). You are reneging on (the responsibility)what you took from the City and that’s not right.” We at the FOFTP strongly suggest you contact the Mavors office by dialing 311 and voicing a complaint about removal of the front gate guards at Fort Totten.

Fort Totten Is Not Just Another Park — It’s “Our” Park!

www.FortTottenParks.org
OAKLAND RAVINE STORMWATER PROJECT

For the last several years, many residents have observed quite a bit of construction and excavation near the Cross Island Parkway Northern Blvd ramp, by the southern entranceway to Joe Michael Mile across from the Alley Pond Environmental Center. Most people do not realize that this project is the culmination of a decade long civic undertaking spear-headed by civic leader Jerry Iannece, in conjunction with Parks, DEP and our local elected officials, to solve a severe flood condition much further south in the area of Bayside Hills.

In the later part of the 1800’s, many of the farms that once covered our area were converted into golf courses. When the developer Gross Morton converted the Bel-laire Golf Course into what is now the community of Bayside Hills in the 1930’s, and filled in the large spring that traversed the area, which is now “Springfield” Blvd., the natural flow of rain/storm run-off was disturbed and some local flooding was reported. In the 1960’s, this was greatly exacerbated when the City of New York bought the adjacent Oakland Golf Course, built Cardoza High School, Queensborough Community College and P.S. 203 and paved over the last remaining area of natural absorption. This resulted in severe local residential flooding conditions which greatly exceeded the built sewer capacity, caused millions of dollars in property damage, caused massive soil erosion and slope destabilization in Oakland Ravine and Park, and if left uncorrected, would eventually cause the death of Oakland Lake; the last glacier kettle lake in NYC.

Through Herculean civic involvement and political pressure, a $125 million storm water combined sewer project was designed and is now in its final stages. Its purpose is to divert storm water out of the community and away from the Oakland Lake Ravine area. It will increase the combined sewer capacity and take raw sewage and pollutants out of the ecosystem. A large retention tank is being built in the area north of Northern Blvd. to capture millions of gallons of combined storm overflow. An upgrade of pumping systems and treatment capacity will further aid the overall project. As a by-product of this project, not only will area flooding problems be resolved, improved water quality of Alley Creek and Little Bay will be seen. Once the area is restored, the community will be the benefactor of dozens of acres of new parkland and wetlands. The perimeter of Oakland Lake and Park will be remediated and refurbished, and Oakland Ravine will be completely rehabilitated. The anticipated project completion date is late 2010.

This project is a textbook example of how a civic/community identified issue/problem can be addressed and solved with persistence and coordinated collaboration between the community, local elected officials and government agencies.

Ed note—Mr Iannece is a very civic minded attorney and former Chairman of Community Board 11, who was most instrumental in pushing this project along to its successful outcome. Jerry has been a good Friend to the FOFTP as he helped establish our organization (pro bono) into a 501(c) (3) corporation and regularly attends our planning meetings...

www.FortTottenParks.org
Since 2004, the FortTotten.org web site has become a place where people who lived or worked on Fort Totten can share memories about their time on the post. The site is also evolving into a source of detailed information about Fort Totten's history.

The web site is a labor of love, designed, developed and maintained by former "Totten Kid" Rick Stricker, who is a full-time web developer. After three years visiting the post with his Naval Reservist father, Rick's family moved onto the post in 1968. Rick left in 1977 to join the Navy, but his family remained until 1981. There was a 2-year break when his father was transferred to Virginia, but he jokingly calls those "the lost years.” Over the years, Rick lived in four homes on the post, and has been inside nearly every building (Even those that were off-limits. Shhh...).

Rick has photos of places on the post that few people have seen. "There was a pet cemetery at the top of the hill behind the Old Fort,” he says. “The headstones were carved from granite and had inlaid copper lettering." He hopes that the headstones were recovered safely. He's still trying to identify the location of the soldiers' cemetery, and has narrowed it down to two probable locations and a third possible location.

No part of the site is more popular than another, but the "Photos Then & Now" section and the pictures submitted by the "kids" seem to get a lot of attention. The web site also features an alumni directory, a "Looking For" list, a memories page, videos, and photos submitted by visitors.

Time permitting, Rick is working on an expanded history section with historical documents, photographs and essays. "I have much of the material already - it's just a matter of getting it all organized." The site already has some aerial photos of the post, and a detailed timeline of the post's history from its founding to its closure in 1995.

Rick was involved in the production of a recent episode of The History Channel's "Cities of the Underworld,” but is quick to not take credit (or blame) for the show's discussion of an underwater tunnel to Fort Schuyler. "The Sound is very deep, and slopes very quickly to the middle. A tunnel simply wasn't possible at any level. No tunnel was planned, no tunnel was built, no tunnel has been found, and what they showed on the program could never have been used as an underwater tunnel."

(continued on Page 7)

ED NOTE— Occasionally, your humble Editor may comment from time to time on an issue or a thought. This is one of those times.

Recently, former US Secretary of State Colin Powell shared his thoughts in the Wall Street Journal (1/17/09) where he outlined his ideas of renewing America. In his editorial, Mr. Powell noted the great service of Military Personnel and Elected Officials but noted that every American needed to pitch in as well. He recognized the need “to step forward and to reach into the reservoir of this nation’s unrivaled capacity for good”. To “pause for a moment and ask yourself what you can contribute to the life of this nation”. Along with helping in a soup kitchen and helping a child to read he also suggested that “maybe you and your friends can spare an afternoon to clean up your local park or prepare packages for our soldiers in far flung countries of the globe”.)

Maybe he also meant becoming a volunteer with the Friends of Fort Totten Parks?

President Obama has asked us all to join in making a renewed commitment to enriching the life of others. Mr. Powell clearly agrees with that when he wrote, “ If we answer that call, I have every confidence that we as a people will ignite a new national sense of purpose necessary to meet the great need of this hour.”

-Pat Riot
OFFICERS OF THE FRIENDS OF FORT TOTTEN PARKS

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OUR FLAG

Flag Day

The fourth of July is when we traditionally celebrate America’s birthday, but the idea to have a day specifically celebrating the Flag is generally believed to have first occurred in 1885. A preschool teacher, BJ Cigrand, arranged for the students of Public School 6 in Feeney, Wisconsin to observe June 14th as “Flag Day.” (It was also the 108th anniversary of the adoption of the Stars and Stripes.) Numerous newspapers and magazines covered the event enthusiastically.

In 1889, George Balch, a kindergarten teacher, planned an “appropriate” ceremony which was later adopted by the New York State Board of Education. And in 1891 the Betsy Ross house in Philadelphia held a Flag Day celebration and shortly after the Sons of the Revolution celebrated it as well.

The first state to endorse Flag Day was Pennsylvania with a resolution passed on April 25, 1893 requesting that the Mayor, all other in Authority and private citizens display the flag every June 14 henceforth. New York State then followed in kind in 1894. In 1916 Flag Day became a national event as ordered by then President Woodrow Wilson but not until August 3rd, 1949 did President Truman sign an act of Congress designating June 14 of each year as National Flag Day.

FRIENDS OF FORT TOTTEN PARKS

MEMBER HONORED

The Queens Coalition for Parks and Green Spaces held their annual awards dinner in November, 2008. Fellow Friend of Fort Totten Parks Volunteer Carol Rupp (pictured far right) was awarded the Coalition’s “Emerald Award” which is presented to an outstanding parks volunteer who serves as a role model. Carol has certainly been a role model for local children as well as fellow FOFTP members. Congratulations Carol. Well deserved!

IDEAS WANTED

The Friends of Fort Totten Parks Planning Committee needs your ideas! Adult and kid workshops are being planned for the next year as well as family events. We’d like to hear what you want! - You told us you’d like an art class and POOF! There’s an art class! Crafts at Family Fun Day? POOF!—we did that too! Does the idea of a knitting class interest you? How about a pen and ink sketching class?

Please Email us telling us in a few words what you would like to see at FriendsOfFortTottenParks@yahoo.com

www.FortTottenParks.org
Execution Rocks

Located approximately eight miles east of Fort Totten on Long Island Sound the name alone would send chills up the spine on mariners and landlubbers alike for years to come—but Execution Rocks Lighthouse has a history seated in service to ships and men alike.

In 1847, the US Congress appropriated $25,000.00 for a granite lighthouse to be built, and in May of 1849, it was completed.

The light keeper and his family lived in the cramped tower as the adjacent house shown in the picture was not constructed until 1868. His duty was to keep the whale oil lantern lit at night and sound the manual fog horn whenever fog was present. He would live on the reef with his family and receive supplies by boat when weather allowed. It was clearly a tough life.

The local folklore had people wondering how the reef got its name. British Admiralty charts listed the location as “Executioners Rock” and well before the lighthouse was built, the legend grew. There are some historical facts to back up their concerns but probably not to the extent of the rumors. Common belief was that the British wanted to avoid public executions as not to inflame the revolutionary spirit of the local inhabitants. So to avoid this they would chain any condemned colonials to the low water areas surrounding the reef. The incoming tide and crabs took their toll on the unfortunate. Some even reported that skeletons were left behind, chained to the rocks to further torture the newly condemned as they faced a certain death. Legend has it that the ghosts of the condemned had their revenge on a ship of British soldiers who crashed onto the reef. There were no survivors.

The legends were so strong that light keepers assigned to Execution Rocks Lighthouse in later years were under a unique contract. No keeper was to ever feel as if he were “chained to the reef” during his time in the US Lighthouse Service (as it was known then.) Thus, instead of a usual fixed time length of duty, a keeper could request a transfer at any time and it would be granted without question.

A more plausible reason the reef got its ghastly name is told by the settlers nearby Cows Neck (now Port Washington). They tell of many ships trying to make their way past the dangerous reef being “executed” on the rocks.

The lighthouse was manned around the clock and all year long until 1979, when it was automated. From after the Revolutionary War until present, the lighthouse has served only to save lives and safely guide ships into the East River. - Pat Riot

Stories, Email, comments and suggestions can be Emailed to
FriendsOfFortTottenParks@yahoo.com
Or can be mailed to
Friends of Fort Totten Parks -
PO Box 604984, Bayside, NY 11360

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www.terracediner.com

www.FortTottenParks.org
Aspiring boat builders and Pirates got together at the January FOFTP Crafty Totten Kids workshop and built a variety of crafts from Tugboats to Chinese Junks and Pirate ships.

The event was sponsored by FOFTP member Lily K Louis in loving memory of her Mother, Fong Ju Louis. Everyone present had a splashing good time.

Boat builders, assisted by Parents and FOFTP, Volunteers used wood hulls & masts, glue guns, and paper sails to build these classic vessels. Then adorned with magic marker colors and paper flags, each boat received its own character and style. Quite a few “yo ho ho’s” were heard here and there as the young sailors left the chapel.

Ed note-If you would like to help at or sponsor such an event, please contact us at 718 670 3684
Did You Know?

In 1914, Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane addressed the crowds during a Flag Day celebration with a speech telling the people gathered that the flag had spoken to him that morning:

"I am what you make me; nothing more. I swing before your eyes as a bright gleam of color, and a symbol of yourself."

THE AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY

The American Cancer Society will be hosting the 5th Annual Relay For Life of Fort Totten taking place on June 6-7, 2009. 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/forttottenNY or contact John Link at 718-263-2225, ext. 5538 or e-mail John.Link@cancer.org. For 24-hour cancer information call 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit www.cancer.org.

BAYSIDE ANGLERS GROUP

BAYSIDE WATERFRONT DAY
SUNDAY, APRIL 19, 2009—10AM
(RAIN OR SHINE)

Please join the Bayside Anglers for their 15th annual beach clean-up day along the shores of Little Neck Bay. With the support of the NYC Parks Dept. Partnership for Parks and the NY State Dept. of Conservation, bags, gloves, rakes and shovels will be provided for this event. Food and drink will also be provided.

A raffle will be held for those participating for a variety of prizes. The shores seen along Joe Michaels Mile will be the focus. Please check our website or the Bayside Anglers website (www.BaysideAnglers.com) for details of meeting places.

Come Enjoy Your Signature Favorites!

Applebee’s

23-48 Bell Blvd. Bayside, NY 11360
718 819-0908

www.FortTottenParks.org
Friends of Fort Totten Parks and The New York City Dept. of Parks
Schedule of Events

Crafty Totten Kids
April Sat, 4/18 12 noon—1:30 PM
May Sat, 5/9 12 noon—1:30 PM
June Sat, 6/20 10:30 am—12 noon

June
Lawn Concert /Bayside Historical
Sun 6/28 6PM Bring a Chair!
Shakespeare’s The Comedy of Errors
Sat, 6/25 4PM—Bring a chair or blanket.
Dancing Under the Stars Finale
Wed, 6/29 7PM/ Little Bay Park Roller Hockey Rink
Bring your dancing shoes or just a chair as we enjoy
the sounds of the live band “One Night Stand”.

July
Friends of Fort Totten Parks’ Family Fun Day
Sun, 7/19 12 noon – 4 pm / Fort Totten Parade Grounds
Join us for a fun afternoon of free activities including games, crafts, medical screening, pet micro chipping, inflatables and more.

August
Puppets in the Parks “Sleeping Beauty”
Mon, 8/3 10:30AM—lawn area near entrance
Please bring a chair or blanket.

September
Back to School Festival
Sat, 9/12 noon—3pm
A free afternoon of fun in the park including arts & crafts, projects games and other fun activities

October
Fort on Haunted Hill—Halloween Festival
Sat, 10/24 12—4 pm raindate 10/25
Fort Totten or Crocheron Park
(TBD/check website!)
Join us for a free day of spooky family fun. Games, rides, craft projects, costume contest, inflatables, hay rides, a pumpkin patch and goodie bags.
Nighttime Haunted Lantern Tours
10/30 & 10/31 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm
raindate November 1
Join the Urban Park Rangers and FOFTP volunteers as they mix history with Halloween on a spooky lantern tour of the historic Water Battery at Fort Totten.

Please call (718) 352 4793 x16 or check the websites for all the details and/or changes

2009 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—we don’t share Emails)

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

$5 ☐ $10 ☐ $25 ☐ Other ☐

Are you interested in joining one of our many committees? Yes ☐ No ☐ Please ☐
(We welcome your suggestions under separate note or via e-mail FriendsOfFortTottenParks@yahoo.com)

~ The FOFTP Newsletter— All the news that fits, we print ~