

# THE OLD FORT PALISADE

WINTER 2025



## Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

Spring has sprung, fall has fell, winter is here, and it's colder than...usual! Wow, what a way to start winter.

By now you know that we had to cancel our Christmas at the Fort event. We really hated to do that at the last minute, but with the heavy snow, they just couldn't move all the construction equipment and debris out of the way to be safe. One of these days the Fort will be completely rebuilt and everyone will

be able to enjoy it year round without all the problems we've had in the past.

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If you have followed our rebuild story on Facebook you know that the Junior Officer's Quarters (JOQ) structure is under roof as I'm writing this. There is still a lot of work to be done: the shingles need to go on, wiring installed, doors, windows, alarms installed, interior walls and closets built, and plumbing. Yes, plumbing! Those of you who have stayed in the Fort know that we had one toilet and sort of shower on the second floor. Now there will be a toilet on both floors and two showers on the second floor. Unfortunately these will only be usable in warm weather.

Now, there is a mystery unfolding! People have noticed that after the building was torn down there were only two chimney stacks, but previously there were three! The contractors must have demolished the

*"By 1560, in Lyon, as many as 5,000 workers were weaving silk and ribbon to meet the demand for extravagant dress."*

A Bit of Ribbon History  
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one chimney! Nope. The third chimney was always fake. To save money when the Fort was built there was never a chimney stack built where the break room and restrooms were. Unfortunately their answer to this was to build a massive metal structure on the third floor to support a conventionally constructed fake chimney that literally weighed a ton! The new replacement is using newer methods that will reproduce the look without the weight.

We wish all of you a blessed new year and hope you come and visit.

Norm Gable, President Historic Fort Wayne Inc.

## National Bison Day

Jennifer Balkenbusch

Historic Fort Wayne, Inc. was invited to celebrate National Bison Day on November 1st at the LC Nature Park in Roanoke, Indiana. LC Nature Park is nestled in the Little River Valley and encompasses over 300 acres. With herds of bison and elk grazing on restored tallgrass prairie, the park offers a glimpse into Indiana's natural heritage.

Historic Fort Wayne, Inc. reenactors invited guests to step back in time to an early settlement in the 1800s. There were demonstrations of woodworking, spinning, cooking, and early methods of starting fire. Various furs and hides of animals found on the prairie were displayed. Kids had the opportunity to play the game Nine Man Morris like soldiers did in 1812, and make their own game to take home.

There were other activities throughout the park as well as a scavenger hunt. Though the weather was a



bit brisk, over 1000 guests visited the park that day. Historic Fort Wayne, Inc. was honored to be a part of the celebration.

## WHO'S WHO

**Board Members:** Norm Gable, President  
Josh Grubaugh, Vice President  
Tom Grant, Treasurer  
Nancy Stansberry, Secretary  
**Members:** Andi Hahn, Bob Jones, Kip Lytle, Sean O'Brien

**Events Planning/School Demos:** Bob Jones

**Facilities Committee:** Sean O'Brien

**Maintenance:** Sean O'Brien

**Volunteer Coordinator:** Bob Jones

**PR/Marketing:** Jennifer Balkenbusch

**Social Media:** Kathleen O'Connell

Send your comments/questions to [info@oldfortwayne.org](mailto:info@oldfortwayne.org). Your message will be sent to the appropriate person.

Sign up to receive our quarterly e-newsletter

## THE OLD FORT PALISADE

Send your request to: [publications@oldfortwayne.org](mailto:publications@oldfortwayne.org)

We are looking for articles for future issues.

If you have an historically pertinent subject you'd like to write about, let us know at:

[publications@oldfortwayne.org](mailto:publications@oldfortwayne.org)

Deadline for submissions to the Spring Palisade will be March 1, 2026

## Reconstruction Update

Tom Grant

What a twelve months it's been!

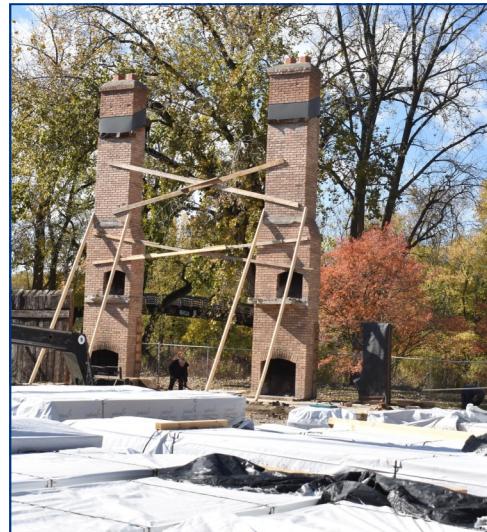
A year ago we had just completed the restoration of the Spy Run Blockhouse and were in the process of the demolition of the Doctor's Quarters. During the last twelve months we have successfully completed the "ground up" restoration of Phase 2, the Doctor's Quarters and Phase 3, the Commander's Building. Although at the time it wasn't fully funded, we chose to begin the demolition and reconstruction of Phase 4, the Junior Officers' Quarters. As I'm writing this the building is being roofed and the shell of the building should be completed within a week. The exterior treatment and chinking will have to wait until warmer weather. Interior work will continue during the winter months - interior partitions, electrical wiring, and plumbing for the modern restrooms. Special thanks and kudos to Bob Jones who spent much of the last year opening the Fort every morning and closing it every night to accommodate the contractors!

Phase 5, the Enlisted Men's Barracks, is the largest of the Fort's buildings, being approximately 40% larger than the building currently under construction. Faced with a 10% increase in the cost of timbers effective Jan. 1, 2026, we have decided to move forward with Phase 5. Providing our supplier with a 10% deposit prior to December 31 will lock in 2025 pricing. Please note that as of this writing we are still scrambling to fully fund Phase 4 and do not have the first dollar pledged to fund Phase 5 which is estimated to cost \$810,000. Moving forward with Phase 5 should allow the Fort's reconstruction to be completed prior to its 50th anniversary on July 4, 2026.

Stating the obvious, we need your support in funding Phase 5! Support doesn't necessarily mean writing a check. Support can come from many sources - a relative, a neighbor, an employer. Share your passion with every contact and ask for THEIR support. It's amazing how many lives have been impacted by a visit or visits to the Old Fort! Just recently we learned that our Mayor, the Honorable Sharon Tucker dipped candles here while in the 4th grade!

Fifty years ago a group of local visionaries provided our community with this valuable resource that honors our history and continues to be a magnet for visitors both young and old. We challenge you to be one of the current visionaries who, 50 years later, are securing the future of the Old Fort! You can help us 'Keep the Fort in Fort Wayne" by donating at:

<https://oldfortwayne.org/get-involved/donate/>



# A Bit of Ribbon History

by Candy Trout

Ribbon was originally more functional than decorative; used to secure clothing and other articles, to tie together bunches of herbs and as tiebacks on canopy beds. As early as the 13th century, ribbons were used to keep papers together. It was not until silk-weaving arrived in France, in the 15th century, that the use of ribbon in fashion began to flourish. The Mediterranean climate was ideal for growing mulberry trees (the silkworm's only food) and this stimulated the production of silk.



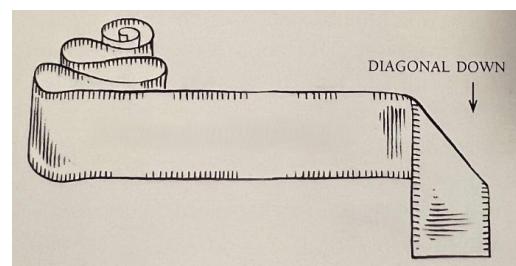
In the 15th and 16th centuries, the French nobility encouraged men and women to bedeck themselves in lavish clothing with elaborate trimmings. By 1560, in Lyon, as many as 5,000 workers were weaving silk fabric and ribbon to meet the demand for extravagant dress. Demand for ribbons continued throughout the 17th, 18th, and early 19th centuries and it adorned every aspect of fashion. Narrow, looped bows trimmed the shoulders, sleeves, and cuffs of ladies' dresses. Large bows or ribbon rosettes were attached to dress bodices and bows embellished men's clothing at the waist, shoulders, knees, cuffs, and hats. Ribbons were ruffled and gathered in a variety of ways and were applied to dress necklines and skirts as well as ladies' caps and bonnets.

The French and English used ribbons to decorate household goods and clothing, including hats, shawls, parasols, and reticules. Americans also used ribbon in their homes and clothing, but with more restraint. Girls were taught ribbon-work (using ribbon to create flowers and leaves) and silk ribbon embroidery. A wide variety of colors and designs were available, including stripes, plaids, and variegated ribbons.

## Materials:

36 inches of 1-inch-wide silk satin ribbon (for the rose)  
5 1/2 inches of 3/4-inch-wide silk satin ribbon (for the leaf)  
3-inch square of buckram  
3-inch piece of grosgrain ribbon (pulled threads to be used for stamens)  
Thread, needles and scissors

1. Trim off one edge of the grosgrain ribbon. Pull out several (6-10) threads and tie them together at the center with thread. Set aside.
2. Take the 1-inch-wide silk ribbon and fold down the right-hand end as shown, so that about 1 inch hangs below to form a handle.
3. Fold the stamens in half and stitch them to the bottom of the folded portion of the ribbon.



4. Fold this portion of the ribbon in half again around the stamens to form the center of the bud. Stitch carefully through the stamens and lower selvedge edge of the ribbon. (right)



5. Roll the ribbon 2-3 more times around the stamens and stitch 2 small tucks at the base of the bud.



6. Sew the bud through the lower selvedge edge onto the center of the buckram with several stitches, so that the budded center stands up in the air. Knot the thread on the back side of the buckram.

7. Knot approximately 24 inches of thread and sew running stitches along lower edge of the remaining ribbon.

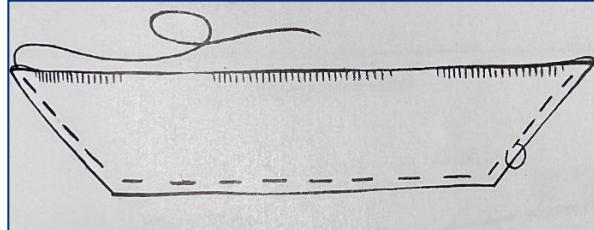
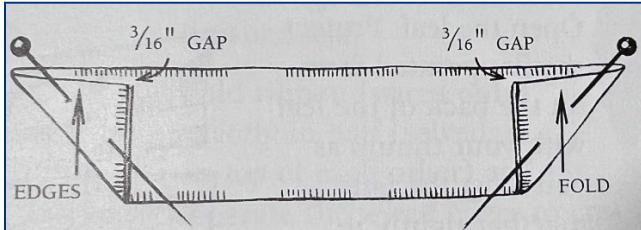


8. Pull the thread at the left-hand end of the ribbon to gather the ribbon to a length of about 11 inches. Knot the thread to secure the gathers.

9. Knot approximately 24 inches of thread and secure it underneath the buckram at the center. Gently wind the gathered ribbon around the bud in the same direction that you rolled the center. Stitch the lower edge of the ribbon to the buckram as you go, allowing approximately 1/8-inch space between the gathered rows.



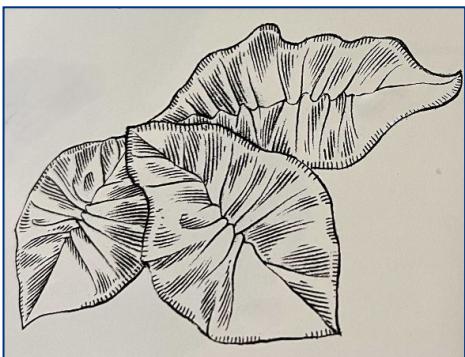
10. Adjust the gathers as you carefully stitch the remaining ribbon around the center until it resembles a full-blown rose. Tuck the raw edge at the end of the ribbon under, stitch it to the buckram, and knot the thread underneath. Trim off the remaining buckram close to the finished rose.



11. For the leaf, fold the  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inch piece of  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-wide silk ribbon in half crosswise. Fold up the two corners of the ribbon as shown to form a boat shape. Form points at the tips of the diagonal folds.

12. Sew a small running stitch down the diagonal edge with the cut ends, then along the bottom edge and up the opposite diagonal edge.

13. Pull up the thread slightly, open the layers to arrange the gathers as desired then knot the thread to secure. Sew the leaf to the buckram behind the flower.



#### References:

Nitschke, Camela, 1998. *A Passion for Ribbonry* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). Landauer Corp.  
 Kling, Candace, 1996. *The Artful Ribbon*. CT Publishing.  
 A History of Silk Ribbon Embroidery. <https://dpstitchin.com/2013/07/09/a-history-of-silk-ribbon-embroidery-part-1/>



*Candy Trout*, shown sewing by candlelight, at Pathways Women's Gathering, Fort La Buse, Bellville, OH, is a mother of 3 and grandmother of 3 little girls. She has been an historical reenactor for more than 40 years. She lives on her central Indiana farm with her husband, Bill, along with a couple barn cats as well as her much-loved ponies and horses. She is a 4H leader and enjoys reading, singing, cooking, gardening, and sewing/crafts, and willingly shares her knowledge.

Photographer: Frances Christman

# Volunteer Advance

Living history touches our visitors in ways the books and charts cannot. As a volunteer you are an ambassador for Historic Fort Wayne. Whether you learn and practice a historic hand art, serve in the bake sale and store, come for work days, greet visitors at the gate, perform a vital service from your home, or serve on a committee, to be confident is to be equipped. That is the goal of Volunteer Advance sessions. Meeting and working with other volunteers is a valuable personal experience. Making new friends, learning new skills, having the feeling of being involved in something that is a significant part of our community is personally very satisfying. We need you. Consider joining our effort to Keep the Fort In Fort Wayne. This is the year of America 250. Don't miss the historic opportunities this year.

Volunteer Advance will follow a new pattern this year, meeting on the third Sunday of most months. January, April, July, and October will include hands-on sessions. During February, May, August, and November, the gathering will feature a living history documentary. Except for January, sessions are held at Historic Fort Wayne, 1201 Spy Run Ave. All sessions may include review of the Volunteer Manual, New Volunteer Orientation, and VIP Tour of the Fort Complex (weather permitting).



**January 18, 2026, 2:00PM to 4:00PM**

Place: Genealogy Department Allen County Public Library  
Research Primary Sources for Fort Wayne and Local History

See documents pertaining to life at the Fort up to 1819, including the story of early residents such as Major John Whistler, Captain William Wells, Angeline Chapeteau, and Miami Chief Little Turtle, and many more. It is possible that we will have time with a guest historian.

**February 15, 2026, 2:00PM to 4:00PM**

Place: Historic Fort Wayne Modern Building

Topic: Documentary videos, all related to living history.

An Evening With Daniel Boone

Research and Documentation: A Few Good Frontier Stories

There is no session planned for March, though there are several events that month with volunteer opportunities. Parking is on the east side of Spy Run Ave, take the paved River Greenway path under the bridge. Questions and comments: call the Fort Phone Monday through Friday 9AM to 4PM (260 437-2836) or email [events@oldfortwayne.org](mailto:events@oldfortwayne.org).

If you are not currently registered as a volunteer, you may download a form, fill it out and bring it with you or register online. Volunteers thirteen and under must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. You may bring a guest.

<https://oldfortwayne.org/get-involved/volunteer/>

Thank you Bob Jones  
Event Manager and Co-Volunteer Manager

# 2026 Schedule

- Jan. 24-25: Nouvelle Annee
- Feb. 7-8: 1812 Officers & NCO Training Garrison
- Feb. 28-Mar. 1: Rev. War Garrison
- Mar. 21-22: Napoleonic War Garrison
- April 18-19: British Garrison
- May 8: Education Day at the Fort
- May 9-10: Muster on the St. Mary's
- June 20-21: Siege of Ft Wayne 1812
- July 4: US 250<sup>th</sup> Celebration
- Sept. 6: Be a Tourist in Your Hometown
- Oct. 17: Fright Night Lantern Tours
- Oct. 24-25: Wayne's Legion Garrison
- Dec. 5: Christmas at the Fort



## Rebuilding the Frontier: Inside Fort Wayne's Old Fort with Harrison Snyder

Historic Fort Wayne, Inc. was asked to participate in [The Busted Knees and Pretty Trees Podcast](#). The three hosts, Brad, Paddy, and Travis, explore the world of nature, backcountry adventure, and wilderness living. They invite guests from all walks of life who have chosen to make nature a central part of their lives and what they do to protect it for future generations.

In this episode, they explored one of Fort Wayne's most iconic historic landmarks: The Old Fort. Historian, reenactor, and storyteller Harrison Snyder guided them on a captivating journey through the Fort's rich past. Harrison shared tales of the men and women who lived, worked, and defended this frontier outpost. From the daily rhythms of life on the edge of the wilderness to the challenges and triumphs of the people who called it home, Harrison brought the 1800s to life.



They also discussed the massive reconstruction effort currently underway, revealing dedicated volunteers' efforts to get each building rebuilt to keep Fort Wayne's heritage alive for generations to come.

Brad, Paddy, and Travis were given a tour of The Old Fort prior to the podcast to gain a bit of background history and to see the reconstruction project. It brought back memories of past visits. We look forward to welcoming them back again!

# Unnoticed Heros

Josh Grubaugh

With the anniversary of the Revolution continuing throughout the year, we must take time to look at another population that has often been ignored in the telling of its stories. In the last installment, we discussed the contributions of women during the Revolution; now we will turn to another group that has been frequently overlooked and overshadowed by others.

Due to the introduction of slavery into the colonies during the 1600s, African Americans became a common yet often disregarded part of colonial society. With this anonymity came the opportunity to influence the course of the Revolution. From its very beginning to the end, African Americans played significant roles on both sides of the conflict. This article will highlight several of these important individuals and bring to light the honor and courage they displayed.

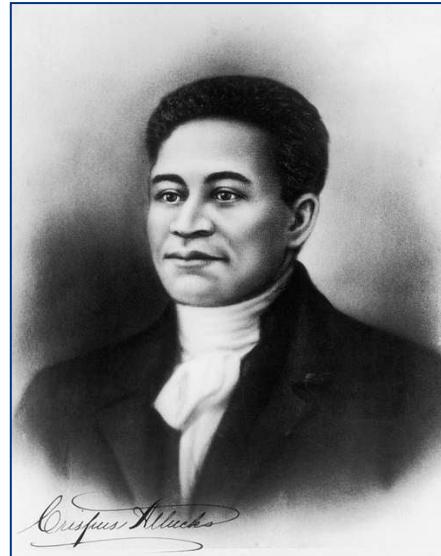
The evening was crisp in the last hours of a March day. Colonists had been harassing British soldiers on duty in front of the Customs House, and a general sense of unrest filled Boston as the night wore on. The people were angry about the taxes and penalties levied against the colony, and a groundswell of protest filled the streets. The soldiers, nervous and uneasy, faced an ever-growing crowd, as newcomers arrived from the docks.

Crispus Attucks was among those men—leading a group of sailors forward with clubs in hand, hoping perhaps for a bit of melee and mischief. He approached the small squad of soldiers and stopped a few paces back with his comrades, hurling insults and brandishing his large club with bravado. As the crowd surged and closed in, someone from behind shouted “Fire!” A sudden volley erupted from the Brown Bess muskets, filling the street with smoke. When it cleared, Attucks was found with two musket balls in his chest—one of the first martyrs for the freedom that the colonies would soon fight to secure.

At the trial of the British soldiers, John Adams defended them, arguing that they had been intimidated. In doing so, he portrayed Attucks as a “ruffian,” which helped prevent the soldiers from being lynched by angry colonists. Thus ended the story of our first patriot—Crispus Attucks—a former slave turned revolutionary, and likely a confidant of Samuel Adams and the Sons of Liberty during those momentous early days.

As tensions turned to war, riders thundered from Boston warning of the approach of British Redcoats. The British marched through Lexington toward Concord to seize vital military supplies. After skirmishes at Lexington and Concord, colonial militia units throughout Massachusetts rushed to ambush the retreating British column. Among those who joined the fight were Caesar Ferrit and his son John.

Caesar, born in 1720 on a Caribbean island, immigrated to Massachusetts, where he became a farmer and landowner. While working as a coachman in the city, he fell in love with Naomi Isaac, a ward of his employer. When her family ordered her to marry another man or lose her inheritance, she chose love over wealth and married Caesar. This decision came with great sacrifice—their children would not be allowed to own property or be considered full citizens



due to their African heritage—but she chose that path nonetheless. The Ferrit family later settled in a “praying town,” a community of Native American converts to Christianity, where they were more readily accepted.

When the Revolution began, Caesar’s daughter had married Thomas Nichols, another free Black man. Nichols was arrested for “enticing divers servants to desert the service of their masters” and was imprisoned in Concord on April 19, the very day the British marched into town. Caesar and his son John took up arms, firing on the British from a nearby house. Though the British stormed the building, the pair escaped. Both later joined the army surrounding Boston and followed it to New York when the war moved there. Despite not being allowed to drill with the militia, they were expected to furnish their own muskets and ammunition when called to service.

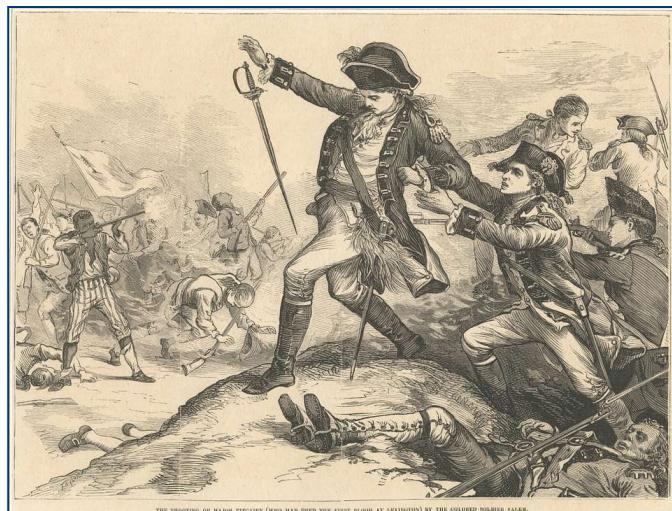
The siege of Boston began soon after the battles of Lexington and Concord, as the newly formed Continental Army surrounded the city. For months the army remained largely on the defensive until the decision was made to fortify Breed’s Hill—a move the British could not ignore.

The night before the battle was filled with tense excitement. Hundreds of militiamen dug trenches and emplaced cannons on the heights overlooking the harbor. By dawn, the British fleet anchored below realized the threat these fortifications posed. Soon, naval guns opened fire, bombarding both the hill and the nearby town of Charlestown, which quickly went up in flames as the British prepared their assault.

Among the colonial defenders stood Peter Salem, a skilled marksman who had been granted leave from enslavement to serve in the militia. Nearby was young Titus Coburn, eager and determined. Salem Poor, another brave soldier, moved anxiously among the ranks, ready for battle.

The British advanced up the hill in steady formation. “Wait, boys, wait!” the officers called as the men aimed their muskets. At last, the order came—“Fire!”—and a devastating volley cut down the front ranks. Twice more the British reformed and attacked. During one assault, Peter Salem took careful aim at a British officer—Major Pitcairn—and shot him dead as he urged his men forward. As ammunition ran low, the colonists fought hand-to-hand before retreating. Titus Coburn fought fiercely during the withdrawal, while Salem Poor stayed behind to aid the wounded. Spotting another officer rallying his men—Lieutenant Colonel Abercrombie—Poor calmly fired and killed him, delaying the British advance long enough for others to escape. Though the British took the hill, their victory came at tremendous cost.

After Bunker Hill, each of these men followed a different path. Salem Poor was commended



Engraving entitled “The Shooting of Major Pitcairn (who had shed first blood at Lexington) by the colored soldier Salem”

for bravery and later fought at Saratoga before returning home a free man. He married four times before his death in 1802. Peter Salem, freed by his master so that he could continue fighting, reenlisted twice and served until 1780. He lived until 1816 but received little recognition or compensation for his service. Titus Coburn returned home after his enlistment ended but reenlisted in 1777 to help defeat Burgoyne's invasion. Sadly, he contracted smallpox during the winter at Valley Forge and became one of the thousands who perished there.

We will continue exploring more remarkable individuals of the Revolution in the next installment. The sacrifices of these noble people deserve to be remembered and cherished.

### References:

National Park Service. (n.d.). *Crispus Attucks*. <https://www.nps.gov/people/crispus-attucks.htm>

National Park Service. (n.d.). *Peter Salem*. <https://www.nps.gov/people/peter-salem.htm>

National Park Service. (n.d.). *Salem Poor*. <https://www.nps.gov/people/salem-poor.htm>

National Park Service. (n.d.). *Caesar Ferrit*. <https://www.nps.gov/people/caesar-ferrit.htm>

*Joshua Grubaugh is a frequent demonstrator at Historic Fort Wayne. He grew up in the area and has bachelor degrees in education, history, and anthropology. He loves to do demonstrations including cooking and pewter casting.*



## 2026 UPCOMING EVENTS

Public hours as listed below.

If you are interested in participating as a reenactor or vendor, please contact [events@oldfortwayne.org](mailto:events@oldfortwayne.org) for registration forms,

**January 24-25**  
**Nouvelle Annee**  
Saturday: 10 am – 5 pm  
Sunday: 10 am – 4 pm

**February 7**  
**1812 Officer and NCO Training Garrison**  
Saturday: 10 am – 5 pm

**February 28**  
**Revolutionary War Garrison**  
Saturday: 10 am – 5 pm

**March 21**  
**Napoleonic War Garrison**  
Saturday: 10 am – 5 pm

**May 8**  
**Education Day at the Old Fort**  
For Grades 4 & 5  
Pre-Registration Required

**May 9-10**  
**Muster on the St. Mary's A Timeline Event**  
Saturday: 10 am – 5 pm  
Sunday: 10 am – 4 pm

If available, we post a schedule of activities prior to each event.  
Always check our Facebook page and webpage for any updates or schedule changes.

## Volunteer Profile: Christa Brothers



Christa Brothers is our new bake sale coordinator. She began working at the Fort this past spring, and is an invaluable addition to the volunteer crew!

Christa and her husband have four children. "One is married in Florida with a house and a cat, two are here in Fort Wayne and one is currently in Michigan and has given us a brand new grandbaby." She worked over 20 years in nursing—mostly nursing management and with clients with developmental disabilities.

While Christa remembers visiting the Fort on a field trip years ago, it's thanks to one of her children, son Jayden, that Christa is involved at the Fort now. Christa explains, "Jayden was interested (in the Fort), and I was looking for ways to give him

high school credit for more hands-on activities. He found he enjoyed showing people around the Fort and learning more about the Fort's history. I met some cool people who are really focused on preserving our area's history. Bob Jones said what he really needed was a bake sale manager. I said yes, and here I am as your new bake sale lady."

In her new role, she's finding ways to tie the future of the Old Fort together with its heritage. She shares that "We built some shelves for the bake sale by reclaiming some wood from the Commander's quarters/kitchen, because it was just too much treasure not to try to keep a memorial."

Beyond her work at the Old Fort, Christa says, "I like nature. My husband and I no longer camp. We now glamp in a camper, but we still try to enjoy the outdoors. I also like visiting historical places. I am working on building up some grandma skills, but they aren't super developed yet. I love animals, especially dogs. I have a Labrador Retriever; he is the GOAT! Don't think that because his brain power is going into games and fun he is not intelligent. He's smart enough to know what he's interested in."

Get to know Christa, and stop by the Modern Building at the next event to support the Fort by picking up some of the goodies and souvenirs available there.

### Historic Fort Wayne, Inc.



1201 Spy Run Ave.  
Fort Wayne, IN

Mailing address:  
P.O. Box 12650  
Fort Wayne, IN 46864  
Phone: (260) 437-2836  
[www.oldfortwayne.org](http://www.oldfortwayne.org)

The Old Fort Palisade  
Winter 2025  
Published quarterly

Kathleen O'Connell  
Editor

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