

THE OLD FORT PALISADE SPRING 2026



Greetings!

As I'm writing this article, the third of our winter garrisons is taking place. Attendees of the first two were thrilled with our new fort structures! The construction method used has made the buildings so much tighter and warmer and the white-washing of the interior rooms has made everything so much brighter; "We can see what we're doing now" has been heard a lot!

I can't tell you how good it feels to have been a small part of the rebuilding process. The fourth building is set to be demolished as this issue goes to print, and the logs have been ordered. Our goal is to have the building useable by July 4th, the 50th anniversary of the Fort, ready to celebrate our nation's 250th year!

"It may come as a surprise that the Revolutionary War resulted in some of the first integrated units in what would become the United States Army. Soldiers were needed from all backgrounds, including African Americans, Native Americans, and those of European descent."

Unnoticed Heroes, pg. 10

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A lot of work needs to be done before then. Interior walls and closets are being built, wiring and plumbing installations need to happen, followed by chinking and preservative sprayings.

Tom Grant and Sean O'Brien have been spearheading the interior construction and doing a great job. I want to give a huge "Thank You" to Pat Milton for wiring the first two buildings with the support of local electrician, Chris Gielow. Yes, you may see modern exit signs in the Fort, but know that they are a code requirement.

Continued next page

As we have applied for grant money and donations, we have run into an unexpected road block. Many of the local foundations are private and funds can only be applied for by invitation. It seems like a "Catch 22" to me, but that's where we are. If anyone reading this works for a company or knows an individual that has a foundation, ask them if they know what's going on down at the Old Fort. Please inquire if they might consider donating to our project. I think it's pretty obvious we're serious about this total restoration undertaking.

Enjoy the spring! It really is coming!

Norm Gable
President, Historic Fort Wayne, Inc.



Education Day

Education Day is one of our favorite and most popular events. Each year, we welcome students in grades 4-5 for a day of interactive learning as Indiana history (and more) comes alive. If you know students or teachers in those grades, please let them know about this wonderful opportunity. Homeschool groups are also welcome.

This year, Education Day will be Friday, May 8, followed on Saturday and Sunday by our Muster on the St. Mary's timeline event.

Pre-registration is required for classes, and space is limited but still available, so sign up soon! For more information, contact Ken Sorg at:

educationday@oldfortwayne.org

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. 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

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

Deadline for submissions to the Summer Palisade will be June 1, 2026

Reconstruction Update

Norm Gable

The question has been raised occasionally, “Why does the Fort need to be rebuilt? I mean really, it looks fine...doesn’t it?” However, so do many bridges right before they collapse! Most forts were expected to last less than 20 years... not 50, like ours. In fact, the first wooden, American fort built in Fort Wayne didn’t even last that long before it was replaced with the ‘ancestor’ of our Fort.

How can it be that there are log cabins out there that are over a hundred years old? The answer is: size, design, and chinking. Protection from rain is paramount if your intention is for your cabin to last. Yearly chinking inspections and repair must be done or water will seep in, coating the logs, eventually causing rot. All original cabins develop rotten logs that have to be replaced, from time to time. When structures are moved they start to fall apart, normally standing only one story high; not three stories, like our Fort. Weight of the upper stories creates pressure, making any log compromised by rot that much weaker and thus unsafe.

So, were all our Fort’s logs rotten and shipped off to a landfill during demo? Nope! The interior walls and rafters are fine since they have been protected from rain by the roofs. Since our new structures are coming to us with all the needed lumber, we don’t have any need for these logs, nor any place to store them for future use. It should also be noted that all doors, windows, shutters, staircase banisters, hardware and anything else we can reinstall into our new buildings has been salvaged. In short, we have endeavored to use or repurpose everything that has a useful life left in it.



Volunteers salvaging reusable items

We have received requests to repurpose the good logs to build smaller structures or to make repairs at other historical sites, such as Mississinewa 1812, Townsends village, and others. Reenactor J.H. Northrop stepped up and has hauled the good logs to a storage area where they can be sorted and eventually distributed to the various sites, depending on their needs. A few of the logs and some floorboards have been donated to a couple of wood-working clubs in the Fort Wayne area for new projects and new life. In this way the legacy of the 1975 Fort can live on.



Deconstruction of the Enlisted Quarters has begun!

Phase 5 of our reconstruction is currently underway. The Enlisted Quarters has been emptied, and deconstruction has begun. You can help us “Keep the Fort in Fort Wayne” by sending a check to Historic Fort Wayne, Inc. P.O. Box 12650 Fort Wayne, IN 46864, or at the following link:

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

HAVE A SEAT

By Kip Lytle

The furniture makers at Colonial Williamsburg have taught me that dining/side chairs are the most used and abused pieces of furniture in the house. Quite often, I am asked to repair the seat on chairs that have been in the Fort for the last 50 years and I have demonstrated three or four different seat replacement styles. The chair selected, pictured to the right, started as a woven rush seat. Decades of use and weathering have broken a few of the rush strands and it is time for a new seat. Replacing a rush seat is one of my least favorite activities so I decided to weave a new one out of split reed. Of the various techniques available, it is the quickest, and this article's subject.



Historically, a six to eight foot long trunk of straight grained hickory or ash would have been spit and resplit several times with wedges, a froe, and eventually a knife until you have accumulated a pile of half-inch wide and one-sixteenth inch thick strips for weaving. Today, splits are available from a multitude of websites in a variety of woods, widths, and colors. I have chosen half-inch wide natural colored willow splits for this project.



The first step is to remove the existing seat material. Use a sturdy knife or scissors and stay about an inch inside the seat framework while cutting away the old, worn material. Once the old seat is removed, you can perform any needed repair work and cleaning on the frame.

The seat weave starts as a square, however most seats tend to be trapezoidal in shape, so you need to define the main square. Using a tri-square tool, make marks on the front rail that match the inside of both back legs. The square delineated by the back legs and the two marks on the front rail will be the main work area. I prefer to start weaving in the back left corner. Wrap about six inches of the first split around the back rail two or three times. The split can be tacked or tied in place. The splits work easier if they have had a chance to soak in a tub of water. I recommend soaking five or six splits at a time in room temperature water. As I pull one out of the water, I put a fresh one in.

The wrapping should be in such a manner that the split comes up the outside of the back rail and is snug against the back left leg. Stretch the split to the mark near the front left leg and line up the left edge of the split with the mark. Feed the split under the front rail to the back rail.



Go up and over the back rail with the left edge of the split butted up to the previous wrapping (fig. 1). You want a little slack in the wrappings. They will be easier to work and weave. Don't worry. As the splits dry, they will shrink and tighten. Keep wrapping until you get to the right side mark on the front rail. Ensure that the right edge of the split is at the mark on the rail. Take the split to the back rail but instead of going over the back rail, go outside the back right leg then go over the right rail and start the herring bone weave. (fig. 2)

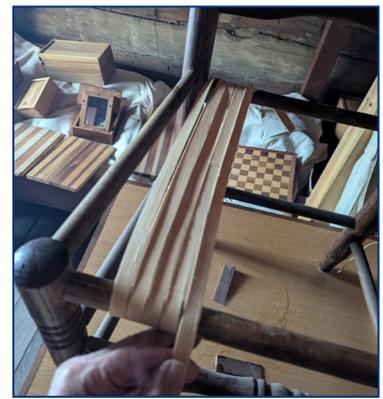


Figure 1

Thread the split under the first two strands then over the next two. Continue alternating between under two and over two until you get to the left rail. Adjust the woven strand into a straight line between the back legs. Go over the left rail and flip the chair over. You are going to be flipping the chair at the end of every strand both top and bottom. Ensure you have room to do this. Since it is rarely seen, I suggest weaving the underside in a manner that is easy for you. I use a three-by-three basket weave. (fig. 3)



Figure 2

When you get to the right rail, flip the chair back over and start the second strand by going under ONE then over two and under two. The third strand will start over TWO then under two and over two. The fourth strand starts over ONE then under two and over two. The pattern then repeats: Under 2, Under 1, Over 2, Over 1. (fig. 4)

Continue the weaving until the strand is up against the front legs. I have found that a butter knife and a 1/2" wooden block help to thread and align the strands. Keeping the seat and splits damp also helps. Because of the friction created by the weaving, there is no need to tack or glue the end of the last strand; just tuck it in on the underside.



Figure 3

Finishing the triangular areas between the front rail marks and the front legs is accomplished by taking shorter splits and weaving them

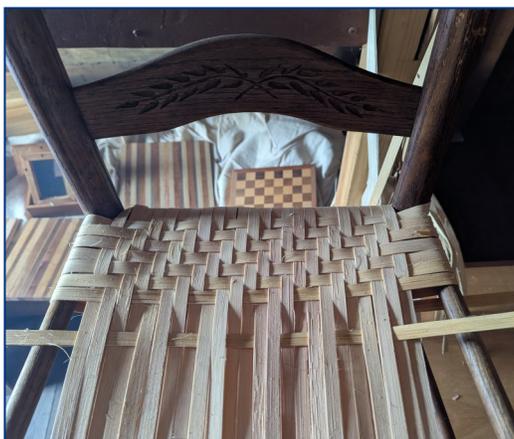


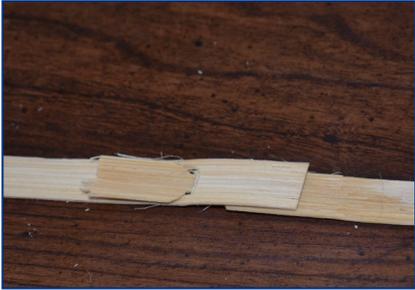
Figure 4

from the front rail. Again, there is no need to tack or glue the end; just tuck it in. Typically you will need three or four pieces, each one shorter than the one before, for each triangular section.

As you work on a chair, be aware that it is going to take about 135 feet of splits to weave the seat. However, commercial splits come in 6'-8' lengths. As you come to the end of a split, you will need to splice on the next one.



First, trim the length of the ending split so that the splice occurs on the bottom of the seat. At about an inch from the end of the first split, cut a keyhole with the tail pointing toward the last rail crossed. On the new split, cut a neck about an inch from the end. To assemble the splice, insert the new tab into the keyhole from the outside of the split. Twist the new split so that it lays flat. The end of both splits should be between the top and bottom layers. Once you have your splits spliced, you can pick up right where you left off.



That's the basics. Of course, there are variations that may be used. For instance: weaving a 3x3 or 4x4 herringbone design or using splits of different color. The only limit is your imagination.

There are approximately three dozen chairs at the Fort and

nearly all of them need their seats replaced. Chances are that I will be demonstrating this all summer. Stop by my shop for a closer look.



Finished chair



Kip Lytle has a BA in History and volunteers as a woodworker and militia member at the Old Fort. After retiring from the Indiana Air National Guard as a Network Administrator, aka "Computer Geek" he started his own company: Macaddis, Woodwright, where he creates hand made wooden items using period tools and techniques.



You can find us on Facebook for up-to-date event news and happenings!

www.facebook.com/HistoricFortWayne

Follow us on Instagram
[historic_ft.wayne](https://www.instagram.com/historic_ft.wayne)



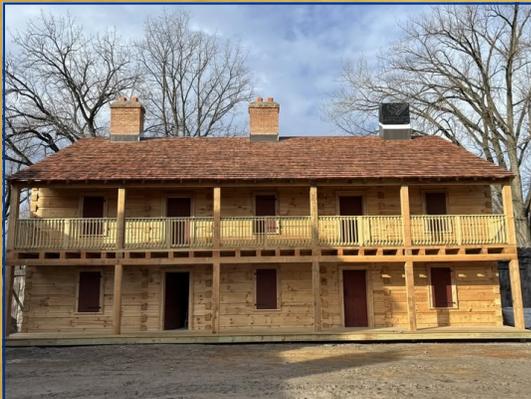
NEW:
We are now also on Bluesky
[@historicfortwayne.bsky.social](https://bsky.social/@historicfortwayne)

WINTER AT THE OLD FORT



Nouvelle Annee

Revolutionary War Garrison



Junior Officers' Quarters Reconstruction

1812 Garrison



December Work Day





Volunteer Advance

Bob Jones

Volunteer Advance sessions are planned so that volunteers may feel better prepared to answer questions from the public, gain new skills, or demonstrate existing interests and living history skills. Attending regularly scheduled events, meeting, talking to, learning from, and observing visiting reenactors is a great way to prepare to take your place helping out at Historic Fort Wayne.

Living history touches our visitors in ways books and charts cannot. As a volunteer you are an ambassador for Historic Fort Wayne. Volunteer opportunities abound 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. This is the year of America 250. Don't miss the historic opportunities this year.

Volunteer Advance sessions will follow a new pattern this year with hands-on sessions, video series sessions and one month off. Volunteer Advance sessions are all planned for the third Sunday of the month, once a month and twice a quarter.

Sunday, April 18, 2026

2:00pm to 4:00pm.

The skills addressed will include Manual of Arms, rolling cartridges, loading, firing and cleaning a musket, field safety, cannon college, musket ball casting, and making a "lead" pencil.

Sunday, May 17, 2026

2:00pm to 4:00pm.

Select from documentary videos all related to living history. The session will also include FAQ, Q&A, VIP Fort Tour and review of new Volunteer Manual.

Parking is on the east side of Spy Run Ave. Take the paved River Greenway path under the bridge. We hope to see you at the Fort.

Questions and comments? Contact us at events@oldfortwayne.org or call the Fort Phone Monday through Friday, 9am to 4pm.

If you are not currently registered as a volunteer, follow the link to our web site:

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

Thank you,
Bob Jones, Event Manager and Co-Volunteer Manager

An Easy Way for Extra Giving Kroger Rewards

Are you a Kroger customer?

You can now support the Old Fort through your regular shopping! We are one of the organizations that you can designate under their "Community Rewards" program. When you do, we automatically receive a rebate based on each purchase. What an easy way to help out!
To enroll, go to

www.kroger.com/communityrewards

The directions are there to take you through the sign up process.
Thank you!

Historic Fort Wayne Inc Organization number TG790

2026 UPCOMING EVENTS

Public hours as listed below.

If you are interested in participating as a reenactor or vendor, please contact events@oldfortwayne.org for registration forms,

March 21

Napoleonic War Garrison

Saturday: 10 am – 5 pm

July 4

250th Celebration

Saturday: 11 am – 6 pm

May 8

Education Day at the Old Fort

For Grades 4 & 5

Pre-Registration Required

September 13

Be a Tourist in Your Own Hometown

Sunday: 12 pm – 5 pm

May 9-10

**Muster on the St. Mary's
A Timeline Event**

Saturday: 10 am – 5 pm

Sunday: 10 am – 4 pm

October 17

Fright Night Lantern Tours

Saturday: 6 pm – 10 pm

Tickets Required

October 24

Wayne's Legion Garrison

Saturday: 10:00 am – 5 pm

June 20-21

Siege of Fort Wayne 1812

Saturday: 10 am – 5 pm

Sunday: 10 am – 4 pm

December 5

**Christmas at the Old Fort
A Timeline Event**

Saturday: 10:00 am – 5:00 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.

Unnoticed Heros

Josh Grubaugh

Continental Cause

It may come as a surprise that the Revolutionary War resulted in some of the first integrated units in what would become the United States Army. Soldiers were needed from all backgrounds, including African Americans, Native Americans, and those of European descent. One such integrated unit was the 6th Connecticut Regiment. Several members of this unit bore names that suggest they may have already obtained their freedom prior to enlistment, such as Pomp Liberty and Cuff Freedom

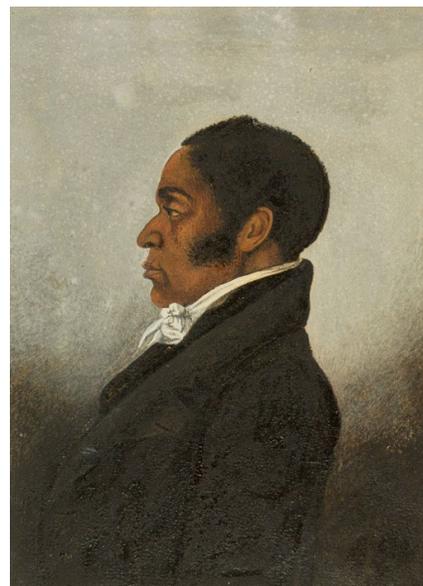


Flag of the Rhoad Island Regiment

The 1st Rhode Island Regiment, organized in 1778, was composed entirely of African Americans and Native Americans. Due to heavy losses by 1781, the regiment was reorganized into the Rhode Island Regiment, which retained two companies from the original 1st Rhode Island. These men repeatedly demonstrated their bravery, not only on the battlefield but also in challenging the societal norms of their time.

Even greater opportunities existed for African Americans in naval service. Skilled seafarers were valued for their abilities, and skin color often mattered less aboard ships than it did on land. Many African Americans served in the Continental Navy and in various state navies, but the greatest opportunities were found with privateers. The government issued letters of marque to privately owned ships, legally authorizing them to attack and seize enemy vessels on behalf of the Continental cause. Privateering could be highly profitable, as crews received a share of the proceeds from captured ships and cargo sold in neutral ports or in the colonies. In many cases, African Americans made up as much as 10 percent of these crews. Their efforts significantly disrupted British trade and contributed to economic strain across the Atlantic.

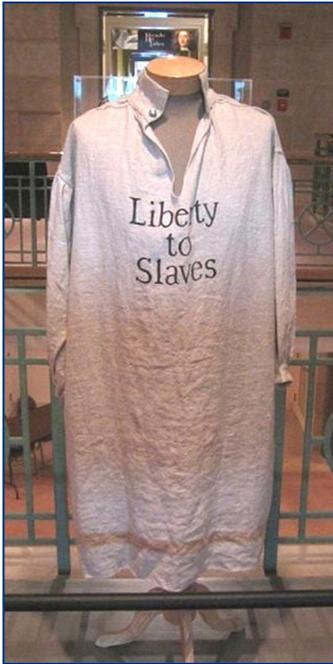
One notable example is James Forten, a free Black man from Philadelphia who joined a privateer during the war. On his first voyage, the ship successfully captured six enemy vessels. His second voyage, however, ended in capture, and Forten was taken prisoner. Though treated relatively well, he was offered the opportunity to switch sides and receive a formal English education. He refused, choosing instead to remain loyal to the American cause. Forten spent seven months aboard a prison hulk in New York Harbor. At one point, he had the opportunity to escape by hiding in an officer's sea chest but



Watercolor of abolitionist James Forten (1766-1842) believed to have been painted during his lifetime. The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

selflessly gave the chance to a fellow prisoner who was in worse health. That man later became his lifelong friend. After his release, Forten walked across New Jersey to return home to Philadelphia. In the years that followed, he became a prominent abolitionist and advocate for interracial workplaces.

In the northern states, the ideals of liberty expressed during the Revolution gradually influenced public policy. Pennsylvania took a significant step in 1780 with a gradual abolition law that freed enslaved individuals once they reached the age of twenty-eight. Over time, other northern states followed similar paths toward ending slavery.



A replica of the gray smocks worn by the soldiers of Lord Dunmore's Ethiopian Regiment.

British Dreams Realized

In 1775, Lord Dunmore authorized the formation of Black regiments composed of enslaved men from Virginia. His proclamation offered freedom to those enslaved by “rebel” masters who were able and willing to fight for the Crown. This move was less about moral opposition to slavery and more about weakening the Patriot labor force while strengthening Loyalist military numbers. The unit he formed, known as the Ethiopian Regiment, included men of African descent from various backgrounds.

In 1779, Sir Henry Clinton expanded upon this policy through the Philipsburg Proclamation. While not as explicitly worded as Dunmore's original announcement, it implied that enslaved individuals who escaped to British lines and supported the war effort would gain their freedom. As a result, more than 20,000 enslaved people fled farms and plantations to seek refuge with British forces.

When the war ended, thousands of African Americans who had sided with the British were evacuated to other parts of the British Empire, including Canada and the Caribbean, where they were provided with basic supplies to begin new lives. In the newly formed United States, the experiences of African Americans varied widely. Some in the North experienced limited forms of equality, while many others continued to face discrimination and systemic racism.

By 1800, all northern states had enacted measures to abolish slavery, though often gradually. In contrast, southern states continued to maintain and defend the institution. Ultimately, it would take the conflict of the Civil War in the mid-nineteenth century to bring a legal end to slavery in the United States.

Ethiopian regiment smock picture credit: <https://www.worldhistory.org/image/18464/smock-similar-to-the-uniforms-of-dunmores-ethiopia/>

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.



Volunteer Profile: Meet Jason M. Winterrowd

Jason is an (almost) life long resident of Fort Wayne. He was born on an Air force base in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan near Sault Ste. Marie, and has been here all but three months of his life. He works at Zimmer Biomet as a Principle Designer, designing Sterilization Cases for use in the O.R. He lives with his wife Trista and their three children—two boys, Alexander, Andrew, and one girl, Kamryn.

Jason has been volunteering at the Old Fort since the summer of 2022. He's usually found in the workshops, demonstrating both tin and copper smithing. He enjoys researching what tinsmiths did, and how they did it, and especially enjoys working with the techniques and tools of the late 18th century.

One of his favorite memories is volunteering during our Lantern Tours event in October. He shares, "we had a really bright moon and I took this picture (above right). This happened as ghost stories were being told. Yes, that is just me standing there, but when you don't expect to see shadows at night, it did catch me a bit off guard."



In his spare time, between work and the Fort, Jason has two Cushman Trailsters, one that is running, and one he is rebuilding. He says, "My father and great uncle go to vintage scooter shows. They both have several different types of Cushman scooters."

Next time you're at the Old Fort, stop by the tinsmith's shop and say 'hi' to Jason. He's sure to be working on something interesting, and have some great stories to tell about his projects.

Historic Fort Wayne, Inc.



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Editor

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