

THE OLD FORT PALISADE SUMMER 2026

“Women served as laundresses, cooks, nurses, and seamstresses. Though sometimes dismissed as nuisances, their labor was essential to maintaining the Continental Army’s operational stability during prolonged campaigns such as at Valley Forge.”

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Greetings!

I’ll bet you didn’t know that in the 1950’s a group of people got together and decided that Fort Wayne needed a fort. After all, the city wasn’t named Anthony or Waynestown or St. Mary’s or St. Joseph; it was named Fort Wayne.

(It probably should be named Kekeonga but I don’t want to open that can of worms!)

They spent the next 20 years gathering support and planning. Finally, when they had everything they needed, the fort was built, all ready for the 1976 Bicentennial celebration of our country. For those of you who are my age, it’s hard to believe that it’s been 50 years. None the less, time has marched on.

And now at that 50 year mark, the Old Fort nears completion of an entire reconstruction of its buildings within the fort walls. What better place to honor and celebrate the 250th birthday of our nation? Come out and join us on July 4th to wish our country “Happy Birthday” from Historic Fort Wayne! *(see page 3 for more details)*

Norm Gable
President Historic Fort Wayne Inc.

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OWN A PIECE OF THE OLD FORT'S HISTORY



As we finish the Old Fort's restoration, you can take home some memories of the first buildings. Two of our local artisans - Kip Lytle (Woodwright) and Jason Winterrowd (Tinsmith) - have created special souvenirs from reclaimed items. Choose between a candle holder fashioned from the copper chimney flashings or a commemorative piece of the Commander's Quarter's floor boards.

Both items are available in the gift shop (Modern Building) while supplies last. This is your opportunity to take home a memory and support the reconstruction as we build toward more great years to come.



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

[www.facebook.com/
HistoricFortWayne](http://www.facebook.com/HistoricFortWayne)



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



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

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

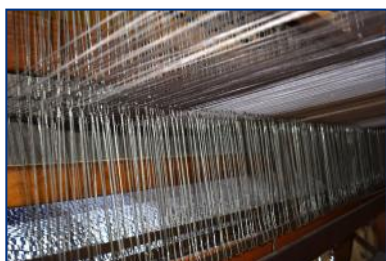
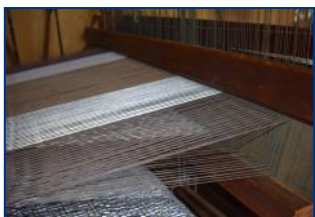
Send your request to:
publications@oldfortwayne.org

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 Fall Palisade will be September 1, 2026



Weavers at Work

This spring, five volunteers from the Fort Wayne Weavers' Guild (including Fort volunteers Lora Browning and Connie Houck) spent two weekends - approximately 15 hours - preparing our 4 shaft counterbalance Hammet loom. The Weavers' Guild is a wonderful local resource for those learning fiber arts, and has been around for 75 years!

The volunteers began by pre-measuring the vertical strands, aka the 'warp'. This involved 480 individual threads. Then they had to 'sley the reed', threading a comb-like metal frame which helps keep the weaving evenly spaced and in order. Lastly, they prepped the heddles, which control the pattern, and wound the thread onto the back beam. One step remains. They are hoping to build a bench so our weavers can sit at the correct height as they work.

During Muster weekend they had the loom set up for rag rugs so visitors could take a turn at weaving. It's great to see this loom providing our guests with another fun way to experience some hands on history. Thank you to all the volunteers who helped.

COME CELEBRATE WITH US



PLEASE JOIN US IN CELEBRATING
AMERICA'S 250TH AND
HISTORIC FORT WAYNE'S 50TH!

SATURDAY, JULY 4, 2026

AT THE OLD FORT
1201 SPY RUN AVE.
FORT WAYNE, IN

11:00 am
Gates open to the public

1:00 pm
Mayoral Proclamation and
Re-dedication of the "new"
Old Fort

Afternoon activities
and demonstrations

6:00 pm
Gates close to the public

Guests are invited to stay
afterward to enjoy the
community fireworks from the
Old Fort's Lawn.

Fort Reconstruction



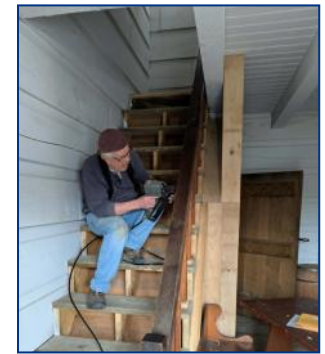
Work on the Enlisted Quarters is progressing quickly. The roof is sheathed and papered. The porch and railings are built. The next step is applying the cedar shakes.

Volunteers have been active on the other buildings as well.

They all have been internally whitewashed and sprayed with the external wood preservative which also helps to age their appearance. The electrical work is currently being run in the Junior Officers' Quarters, and much of the chinking has been completed. Once the construction work on the Enlisted Quarters is done, volunteers will begin tackling the jobs of finishing the building inside and out.

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 [here](#).

Thank you to everyone who has helped with this immense project!



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,

July 4

250th Celebration

Saturday: 11 am – 6 pm

October 24

Wayne's Legion Garrison

Saturday: 10:00 am – 5 pm

September 13

Be a Tourist in Your Own Hometown

Sunday: 12 pm – 5 pm

December 5

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

Saturday: 10:00 am – 5:00 pm

October 17

Fright Night Lantern Tours

Saturday: 6 pm – 10 pm

Tickets Required

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.

Reenactment of the Battle of the Cowpens

Date: July 18th

Time: 1:00 pm - 7:00 pm

***Reservations Required**



A day of history including the reenactment of the Battle of the Cowpens

A fundraiser for Fort Wayne's Old Fort, this is a day filled with history, Revolutionary War soldiers, gunfire, and cannons highlighting one of the greatest victories of the Revolutionary War - the Battle of the Cowpens.

[TICKETS AVAILABLE THROUGH EVENTBRITE HERE.](#)

This is an afternoon long event on the Joseph Decuis Farm, with events, lectures and demonstrations; period exhibitors, and food inspired by the era. The day culminates with the narrated Revolutionary War battle reenactment which took place on January 19, 1781, at the Cowpens in South Carolina, (a pasturing area for cows on their way to market.) The British had been winning the war up until that point and this decisive victory led by Patriot General Daniel Morgan against the British Commander Banastre Tarleton, turned the tide for the colonists and led to their eventual victory.

The program will start with a video from the Cowpens National Battlefield which gives a storied explanation of the battle, how it evolved and how the Patriots were able to turn the tide against the British and win the battle. There are also demonstrations of musket loading/firing, artillery demonstrations, blacksmith presentations and a visit from Paul Revere. The reenactors will be set up around the farm. Chat with them about their guns, their uniforms, what they eat and how they fight. A family friendly event, there is also an opportunity for the kids to learn to march while they carry wooden muskets, and try-out Colonial era toys.

A barbecue dinner featuring Revolutionary War foods will be served following the reenactment. Questions about the event? ASK! aeshelman@josephdecuis.com

TICKETS



Admission by
advance ticket
purchase only

Volunteer Advance

Bob Jones



In the early two-thousands volunteer orientation, as I remember it, consisted of becoming familiar with a document, *The Tour*, which provided the historical background of the region surrounding the three rivers. *The Tour* included a description of Major John Whistler's Fort Wayne, its structures, the people of the garrison, and historical figures of note, 1794 through 1819. Since that time the document *The Tour*, has undergone a rewrite. Included in volunteer orientation today are characteristics of a good docent and tour guide, safety procedures, and

living history experiences to prepare volunteers to engage with the public at events presented by Historic Fort Wayne.

Living history communicates to our visitors in ways the books, timelines, and charts cannot. Living history allows the public to see, hear, touch, and even smell what our past may have been like for the people who lived it. As a volunteer, you are an ambassador for Historic Fort Wayne. Whether you learn and practice one of the historic hand arts, 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 and 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 and is personally satisfying. We need you. Consider joining our effort to Keep the Fort In Fort Wayne. These are the years of America 250. Don't miss the historic opportunities this year.

Volunteer Advance sessions follow a pattern, meeting the third Sunday of the month (with one exception). Sessions are held at Historic Fort Wayne, 1201 Spy Run Ave. (again, with one exception) the third Sunday of the month from 2:00PM to 4:00PM.

Hands-on sessions:

January, April, July, and October

Living history documentary archive sessions:

February, May, August, and November

By appointment only, new volunteer orientation:

March, June, and September

In December, volunteer to help with the event, Christmas at the Fort.



Continued next page

In January, a Volunteer Advance Research session is held in the Genealogy Department of the Allen County Public Library, 900 Library Plaza, Fort Wayne. There is free parking if you have an Allen County Library Card. You'll see documents pertaining to life at the Fort up to 1819. Learn the stories of early residents such as Major John Whistler, Captain William Wells, Angeline Chapeteau, and Miami Chief Little Turtle and many more.

All other sessions are held at the Old Fort, 1201 Spy Run Ave. In addition to the main topics, sessions may also include review of the Volunteer Manual, New Volunteer Orientation, and a VIP Tour of the Fort Complex (weather permitting). Parking is on the east side of Spy Run Ave. across from the Fort. Take the paved River Greenway under the Veterans Memorial Bridge for easy access.



Upcoming Volunteer Advance Sessions:

Sunday, **July 26, 2026**, 2:00PM to 4:00PM

PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE OF DATE

Topic: History Skills: Music, Games and Distractions
Making and Writing with a Quill Pen, Letter Folding

Sunday, **August 16, 2026**, 2:00PM to 4:00PM

Topic: Living history documentary archive sessions

Place: Historic Fort Wayne Orientation Building aka MB for Modern Building

From the collection of a board member, these videos are high quality, interesting, and related to living history.

Questions and comments? Please send your message to:

events@oldfortwayne.org

or call the Fort Phone Monday through Friday 10AM 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



SPRING AT THE OLD FORT



Education
Day



Muster on the
St. Mary's



Purdue
University Fort
Wayne's
America 250
Time Machine



Napoleonic
Garrison



Great Lakes
National Association for
Interpretation Workshop



FOP Color
Guard



British
Garrison

Women as Soldiers

Josh Grubaugh

When we look at the Revolutionary War as a conflict, we often see it as a struggle fought primarily by men, which is largely true. However, it is often in the exceptions that we find the most compelling stories. One such individual was Deborah Sampson, who disguised herself as Robert Shurtliff (also spelled Shurtleff). She joined the 4th Massachusetts Regiment in 1782 and participated in skirmishes around occupied New York City.¹

During her service, she was wounded in both the thigh and the forehead. When she was taken to a field hospital, she allowed the surgeon to treat her head injury but refused treatment for her thigh wound. Instead, she slipped out of the hospital before the surgeon could examine her leg. According to the biography written by Herman Mann, Sampson later removed a musket ball from her own thigh using a penknife and sewing needle.² However, one musket ball had penetrated too deeply, and she left it in place, causing her to suffer from the injury for the rest of her life.

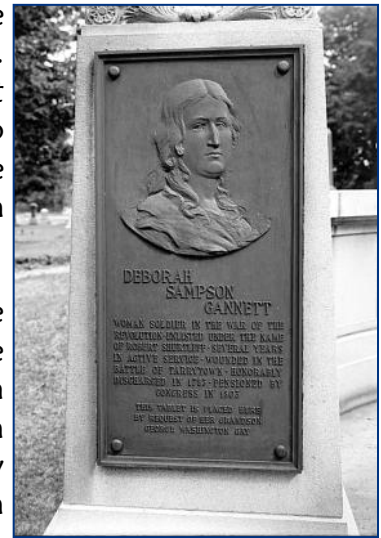
It was not until 1783 that her identity was discovered after she fell ill with a high fever in Philadelphia. The attending physician, Dr. Barnabas Binney, did not publicly expose her but instead informed her commanding officer, which ultimately led to her honorable discharge.³ She later married and petitioned for a military pension. In 1805, she successfully received federal pension benefits based on her verified service record.⁴ To support herself financially, she later toured and delivered public lectures recounting her experiences in the war—one of the first American women to do so.

Molly Pitcher is often cited as another woman to consider when examining female participation in the Revolutionary War. It may come as a surprise that the stories associated with “Molly Pitcher” may actually be a combination of accounts from several women who served during the war. However, one individual appears to have contributed more than any other to the legend: Mary Ludwig Hays.

Mary married William Hays, who served in the 4th Pennsylvania Artillery. Like many army wives, she followed him as a camp follower, mending clothes, washing linens, and cooking. It is believed she earned the nickname “Molly Pitcher” because she carried water to cool cannon barrels and provide relief to soldiers during battle.

During the Battle of Monmouth in June 1778, William Hays was reportedly wounded. The cannon he had been serving fell silent—until Mary stepped forward and took his place. The soldier and memoirist Joseph Plumb Martin later recorded:

“A cannon shot from the enemy passed directly between her legs without doing any



*Deborah Sampson Monument
in Rockridge Cemetery,
Sharon, Mass.*



*“Molly Pitcher”
by Currier & Ives
1856-1907*

Continued next page

other damage than carrying away all the lower part of her petticoat. Looking at it with apparent unconcern, she observed that it was lucky it did not pass a little higher... and continued her occupation.”⁵

Later tradition claims that George Washington commended her bravery, though documentary evidence of a formal battlefield promotion is limited. However, Pennsylvania did grant Mary Hays a state pension in 1822 in recognition of her service.⁶ She later settled in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where she died in 1832.

With the Army, but Not Part of It...

Many women followed their husbands into the war as camp followers. Most were wives, daughters, or mothers of soldiers who wished to remain close to their family members and care for them. Others sought protection and stability during wartime economic hardship.

General orders from George Washington frequently reference the presence of women in camp and attempted to regulate their numbers and behavior, demonstrating both their prevalence and their importance.⁷ Women served as laundresses, cooks, nurses, and seamstresses. Though sometimes dismissed as nuisances, their labor was essential to maintaining the Continental Army’s operational stability during prolonged campaigns such as at Valley Forge.⁸

Without their work and resilience, the army’s ability to endure the hardships of the war would have been significantly weakened.

Footnotes

1. Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War, vol. 14 (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1903), 93–94.
2. Herman Mann, *The Female Review: Life of Deborah Sampson* (Dedham, MA: Nathaniel and Benjamin Heaton, 1797), 132–136.
3. Mann, *The Female Review*, 149–152.
4. U.S. Congress, House Committee on Revolutionary Pensions, “Report on the Petition of Deborah Sampson,” January 18, 1805.
5. Joseph Plumb Martin, *A Narrative of Some of the Adventures, Dangers and Sufferings of a Revolutionary Soldier* (Hallowell, ME: Glazier, Masters & Co., 1830), 130–131.
6. Pennsylvania Archives, 2nd series, vol. 11 (Harrisburg: Lane S. Hart, 1879), 782.



7. George Washington, General Orders, July 4, 1775, in *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1931), 3:309.

8. General Orders, Valley Forge, February 1778, in Fitzpatrick, *Writings of George Washington*, 10:198.

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 Robin Grimm



Robin has been a volunteer at the Old Fort since 2020. While she prefers to reenact the Revolutionary War era, she's one of those folks who can be found pitching in wherever needed, whether it's checking in guests at *Be A Tourist In Your Own Hometown* (pictured left), staffing the volunteer table or pitching in with school group tours! One of her favorite memories is the time she had an opportunity to learn to shoot a pistol, while disguised as a male Civil War soldier.

Robin has lived in Fort Wayne her entire life, with her mom, step dad and five siblings. Her sister has five animals that Robin considers family as well. She affectionally refers to them as her nephews! She works at St. Francis University as a cafeteria worker. In non work or Fort time, Robin enjoys watching Antiques Roadshow on PBS. She also loves to draw, sing, and watch Anime. Keep an eye out around the Fort, and you're sure to see Robin!

Speakers' Guild and Color Guard

There has been a sharp increase in the number of organizations and civic groups asking for HFW's assistance, particularly in the field of public speaking and flag displays/Color Guards. To deal with this increase, HFW has developed a public appearance function. This body, working closely with the PR and Social Media departments, will screen public appearances, solicit volunteers, and showcase HFW in the best possible light.

Here's where you can help. A corps of volunteers who would be willing to march in parades, speak in public, or conduct demonstrations is needed. If that is you, please contact Kip Lytle. If he is not in the woodwright's shop, you can reach him at info@historicfortwayne.org. Requests for speakers should also go to him.



Historic Fort Wayne, Inc.



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Kathleen O'Connell
Editor

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