

Harpers Ferry Park Association Annual Meeting

September 3, 2017, 3:00p

Upper Classroom, Mather Training Center

Welcome and Introduction of Board Members (Jim Silvia)

President Jim Silvia started off the meeting with welcome and introduction of board members.

Board members in attendance: Carol Gallant, Cynthia Gayton, Dave Gilbert, Jim Jenkins, Doug Perks, Jim and Suzanne Silvia, Wayne Welty, Ed Wheelless.

Staff members in attendance: Cathy Baldau and Whitney Richards.

Park staff in attendance: Tyrone Brandyburg, Autumn Cook, and Dennis Frye

Welcome from the Park (Tyrone Brandyburg)

Park Superintendent Tyrone Brandyburg welcomed Association members and friends.

Report of Finances, Association Activities, and Member Recognition (Cathy Baldau)

Association News

Name change has taken about a year. Getting it changed with the State of WV was the easy part. Getting it changed in all of the gov't payment and contract systems was like walking through an endless labyrinth. Thursday I received word from the IRS that they've changed our name. Still a few vendors that haven't changed their records, and search engines that I've never heard of, but we'll get there. Thanks to Dave Gilbert for designing our new logo – and outside we have our new product for you to see and purchase if you'd like.

Staff Updates

Jennie - membership and sales

Katelyn – communications and sales. Beefing up our social media presence, on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Example: sent out a call to members to do a member feature. One that responded hadn't renewed their membership in a few years. Katelyn kindly reminded them and they renewed at the \$500 armory supt. level.

George Best left us to work for the park this summer. We hired Catherine Oliver, who's also a very talented writer and editor, so she is going to be helping with publications. The next newsletter you get, you'll see Catherine's name as the editor, and she also did a final, incredible edit on the Storer College book, blending the voices of many authors together and giving it the final polish.

Whitney continues to do a superb job as our operations manager. It was a learning year for both of us – still is – and we've learned a lot together. Whitney's creativity, determination, and customer service skills made it a successful year.

We had a 15-year-old volunteer over the summer, Scout, who was a tremendous help in the bookshop, especially on days when we had over a hundred kids coming through. Sue Baker is also volunteering in the bookshop, still running circles around us after her knee replacement.

Summer help - Andrea Gilbert worked two days a week in July and much of August, and was a tremendous help not only getting our manuscript ready, but getting me organized, getting invitations out to Storer Alumni, and doing anything you asked.

Debbie continues to work one day a week on inventory management. Plans for use of the “Debbie Fund” are leaning toward a Writer’s in Residence program for our next publication.

Certified Park Guide Program

Our guide program, through really very little marketing effort, and just one tweak to the reservation process really took off this year. Our June tours doubled what they were last year. The first half of the year was tough. One of our guides had some health issues, getting these tours scheduled, rescheduled, shifted, was very difficult. Thank you to Whitney, who did an amazing job keeping up with it all, and to Jim Silvia, who made the drive from Massachusetts to Harpers Ferry countless times to give tours. We also partnered with the KOA this summer, offering a tour for their visitors that began at the Civil War earthworks at the campground, then went over to the Murphy Farm.

In June we certified two new guides. Chris Craig – another person who used to visit Harpers Ferry, fell in love with the town and its history, and then made it his home. Chris was a high school teacher for 20 years, has a tremendous passion for history and hiking and this town. Jeff Evans, is a middle school history teacher, and he also worked many years for the national park service, still volunteers at Gettysburg, has volunteered for Harpers Ferry.

Whitney has been sending out post-tour surveys and all of our guides have received outstanding ratings and reviews. We will be testing again this November. If you are interested – talk to me, talk to Jim and Doug. It’s an amazing program, one that we are very proud of, and if we can get a couple more guides, we’ll be able to grow it even more.

Activities

2016:

- Day in the Park
- Coin launch
- Don Redman Jazz Academy and Heritage Awards and Concert
- Author & Artist Fest
- Naturalization Ceremony
- Lewis & Clark annual meeting
- Confluence Music Festival
- Living History weekends & Historic Trades Workshops

2017:

Three offsites with the Shenandoah Valley Battlefield Foundation; 2 in Winchester, 1 in Luray. Implemented new “Square” for credit card sales. Sold \$4500K in books.

Tried something different this year with Living History branch – took the bread workshop and expanded it to a historic bread and bake sale, which included fresh, made on the spot, donuts, pretzels, cakes, breads, bread pudding, cookies. We just put out a donation box and asked for donations. One day event in April raised almost \$500 and two-day event last weekend raised

almost \$1200. Thank you to Gayle Underwood who is here – one of our volunteers last weekend, who was one of the reasons it was so successful. Her energy and enthusiasm – not just the smell of fresh baking bread - drew people to the table.

Other workshops this year:

- Apple pie
- Blacksmith (sold out)
- Offered a photography workshop – but couldn't get any interest
- October – Military BBQ
- November – African American Dance, waiting for details
- December – candy making (already sold out)

May – co-sponsored reception with Journey Through Hallowed Ground for the student art exhibit “Healing Through History – Shackles to Scholars”

June – supported the annual Don Redman Jazz Academy, Heritage Awards and Concert

July – provided a reception for the naturalization ceremony.

October – Biggest Storer College 3-day event. Outside we have commemorative product, including pottery mugs, t-shirts, pennants, and pins. We are managing a task agreement with the park, we received a grant from the West Virginia Humanities Council, the Jefferson County NAACP, and, because of the themes of literacy, education, and the arts, we also received a grant from the Nora Roberts Foundation. [sign up sheet for volunteers]

At the end of 2016, began working on our next publication, a book to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the founding of Storer College. Twenty authors contributed 25 chapters about the founders, teachers, students, and faculty of the school. Dave Gilbert did the book design, saving the association a tremendous amount of money. We received the proofs last week, and are anticipating a delivery by October 1, with a book launch and reception on Saturday, October 7.

Finances

2016 bookshop revenue increased about 17% over 2015.

Bookshop revenue = \$462K, profit \$235K

Expenses were a little higher in 2016 due to overlap of salaries, payout of accrued vacation pay, and printing of two books.

Milestone reached in 2016: Total aid to HFNHP since 1978 = \$3,065,225

As expected, 2017 revenue is down from 2016. Last year the Centennial brought a lot of people to the parks and to the bookshop. We had several events that generated a lot of revenue. But, if we compare to 2015 – a “normal” year – revenue is up about 10%.

Membership

We had a centennial goal of getting 100 new members. We made that goal in December. We also for the first time ever, reached the \$10K mark in membership dues. 2017 we are down in numbers, many didn't renew, but we are hoping to gain more members during the Storer event.

We are looking for ideas to expand membership and attract the next generation of park visitors. We may need to update our mission statement, add a vision statement, and change member categories.

Recognition of charter member Dave Gilbert, for his help this year with the transition, designing our new logo, redesigning our newsletter, and doing the Storer College book design.

Report from the Park (Dennis Frye)

Dennis recognized the importance of the Association's support to the Park. Cannot place a dollar value on this support. The Association helps alleviate many of the bureaucratic hurdles the Park faces.

The Park's 2017 budget is being sustained. The 2018 budget is unknown at this time. Association aid to the Park helps ameliorate some of the Park's budget uncertainty.

Park visitation has increased by double digits each of the last three years (ranging between 18-25%), due in part to the NPS Centennial, advertising by the Jefferson County CVB, and a sharp increase in visitation by millennials.

Dennis highlighted the upcoming Storer College 150th Anniversary commemoration, which will be held on the weekend of October 6, 7, and 8. In particular, he talked about how NPS interpretation of African-American history has evolved over the last two decades, and how Harpers Ferry Park has become one of the Service's best examples of how African-American stories are now being told. Dennis also recognized the contributions of Park rangers Todd Bolton and Gwenny Roper in planning the event, and that Gwenny will host a panel of six Storer College alumni during the event.

Dennis highlighted the forthcoming book on Storer College, *"To Emancipate the Mind and Soul", Storer College, 1867-1955*, which is being published by the Association. Dennis then presented a \$1,000 personal donation from himself and Sylvia Frye to the Association to support publication of this new book.

Election of Board Members (Jim Silvia)

Incumbent board members Dave Gilbert and Jim Jenkins were re-elected to new three-year terms.

New candidate James Beckman was elected to a three-year term (expires 2020).

New candidate Mark Elrod was elected to a one-year term (expires 2018).

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:05p so that members could enjoy the picnic.