

COMMUNITY EFFORT

Unlike many restoration efforts of similar scope and importance, the site Restoration at Fort McIntosh was a community effort from the start, for the project began without a commitment of funds. Each time the work almost came to a halt, some person or organization came through with funds, labor, or equipment. To acknowledge all these efforts is risky for some deserving organization or individual can be left out, but the support was so generous and timely that the attempt must be made.

It began when the directors of the Beaver Area Memorial Library and the Beaver Area Heritage Foundation jointly funded a study by historical architects James K. Hess and Charles M. Stotz for a commemoration of the Fort McIntosh site and a museum in a planned addition to the library, a Bicentennial project.

Permission had been granted by the Beaver Borough Council to excavate in the park, and after Robert Bormage's team of unpaid volunteers made their remarkable discoveries in the summer of 1974, the Woman's Club of Beaver and the Beaver Improvement Association made grants of \$2,800 and \$1,500. In 1975, the Pennsylvania Bicentennial Commission made a grant of \$9,000. In 1976 the Buhl Foundation made a matching grant of \$10,000, and in 1977 \$16,000 in National Park matching funds was

awarded by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission's Office of Historic Preservation.

Archaeologists cannot be hurried, however, and time ran out on both the Buhl and Bicentennial grants before all the funds could be expended. Conversely National Park Service funds could not be spent until mid-September 1977, and, as security conditions at the site made it impossible to halt the work, most of the reimbursable items had been completed by this date and could not be funded. This meant that \$6,250 of the expected funds were not received.

Compensating for these disappointing losses was the response by the community. The contributions of Bormage's volunteers, and the Pitt student archaeologists, which cannot be overestimated, have been recognized, but there are others without whose assistance the project could not have been completed.

The Borough maintenance crew, under Superintendent Jack Bayes, were enthusiastic partners when it came to performing the necessary heavy work which sometimes mean the use of heavy equipment. From time to time other outside operators joined them. Jack Shaner, in resetting the irreplaceable foundations and fireplaces, became as much an innovative partner as a contractor.

Volunteers typed and retyped hundreds of pages of manuscripts and reports, kept financial accounts, did the photography - sometimes with the help of the Beaver Volunteer Fire Department, prepared the post and chain fencing, organized and completed successful fund raising

events, and transformed into a reality the concept of a reenactment company to provide living history to the project.

Good neighbors across River Road permitted test squares to be dug in their lawns, enabling archaeologists to locate the north walls of the fort. The Board of Directors of the Library included the Fort McIntosh display in the planning and construction of the new addition, and other volunteers helped build the display cases and arranged the artifacts and associated graphics.

Despite all the efforts by the volunteers, working capital was needed, and an ad hoc advance gifts committee raised thousands of dollars in contributions not only from residents of the Beaver Area, but from former Beaver residents now living in other Pennsylvania towns and in 20 other states.

When this phase of the project is complete and when the two garrison cannon are in place in the two bastions, there will have been an investment of \$78,000 in cash and \$60,000 in donated goods and services. This represents a ratio of 85% private versus 15% government funding, a reversal of the usual ratio.

The Fort McIntosh Site Restoration is not finished. Beaver Council has resolved that when River Road is repaved the archaeologists will be given the opportunity to locate the footers and fireplaces believed to be under that road, and possibly to include them in the new paving.

In December 1776 Lt. Col. George Wilson, second in command the 8th Pennsylvania, while preparing that ill-equipped regiment for its epic mid-winter march over the mountains (a march on which he lost his life), wrote to his brother in Philadelphia. Perhaps those in the community who share in the Fort McIntosh Site Restoration adventure can share the hope expressed in the last sentence of his letter:

"We Hope provisions will be made for us Below, Blankets, Campe Kittles, tents, arms, Regimentals, &tc., that we not Cut a Despicable Figure, But may be Enabled to meet ye expectations of ower Countre."

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