

Friends of Fort Hartsuff

Summer 2015

Third Annual Spring Muster a Success

The Friends of Fort Hartsuff used grant money from the Wozab Foundation and the Gene & Jody McCoy Foundation to sponsor the third annual Spring Muster at Fort Hartsuff April 18-19, 2015.

The event hosted approximately forty-five civil war reenactors this year and attracted nearly eight hundred visitors, including visitors from six states: Minnesota, Missouri, Arizona, Utah, Colorado and Iowa.

Tourists enjoyed watching soldiers drill, the canon fire, and a blacksmith working among other things. Reenactors set up a civilian followers camp by the stables and Fort Hartsuff operated for two days much as it did in the 1870s. Soldiers and civilians (and tourists) attended a Sunday morning memorial service for President Lincoln, who was buried on April 19th 150 years previously, and watched as a group of soldiers and officers assembled for a 21 gun salute.

The highlight of the weekend, however, was the skirmish between “Galvanized Yankees” and soldiers where the Union forces advanced and finally surrounded the renegade scout, smithy and deserter and their “prisoners” in the carpenter shop.

The Friends would especially like to thank the Fremont Pathfinders, First Nebraska and the reenactment groups that coordinated the event with the civil war groups, the Nebraska Game and Parks commission for help with promotion and Gene McCoy for recording and placing ads for the event.

The FOFH decided in 2014, after hosting the first Spring Muster in April and the second one in May of 2014, to make this the signature event of the year. We look forward to inviting the civil war groups back in April of 2016.

Anyone wishing to help with the planning or coordination of this event is welcome to help. Planning for next year’s Spring Muster will start at the FOFH Annual Meeting held the second Sunday in October at Fort Hartsuff at 4:00 P. M. in the afternoon.

2015 Board Members:

Jeff Anderson, President – Burwell

Kevin Carson, Vice President

Steffan Baker – Ord

Troy Dowling – Hampton

Sally Domeier

Richard Nemeč – Lincoln

In-active – A.W. McDermott

Volunteers Needed

The Board is actively searching for new board members. If you would be interested in serving a three year term on the board, please contact any board member or come to the annual meeting in October.

Not wanting the responsibility of being on the board? Volunteers are always welcome and needed.

Also Needed: Coordinator for an August event to include Living History and professional barbeque fund-raising cook-off.

Meeting Coordinator: Someone to plan, organize and contact membership regarding meetings, including the Annual Meeting in October and the January meeting and any additional meetings as requested by the board.

Project Sign Coordinator: We need someone willing to work with the Game & Parks Commission, Department of Roads, FOFH, and Dept. of Tourism to petition for an attraction sign along I-80 promoting Fort Hartsuff and the Calamus Reservoir. This is a time consuming project, but one that we have already started and need someone willing to push through with it. We currently have \$5,000 from Nebraska's Junk Jaunt and \$5,000 from Friends pledged for this project.

Living History Volunteers: Need people willing to learn the history of the Fort and do living history on Memorial Day weekend, Rodeo weekend, Fourth of July and Labor Day. If you are interested, call Jim at Fort Hartsuff 308-346-4715.

Secondary sign project director: Raising funds and gaining permission to put cut-out soldier signs in strategic locations to drive traffic to Fort Hartsuff.

Event Coordinator: someone to manage volunteers, coordinate communications between Fort, volunteer groups and FOFH board.

Office Volunteers: People to greet visitors and help our other volunteers staff the Fort Office and book store in the summer months.

Awards Banquet or Recognition Event Coordinator: FOFH would like to recognize its volunteers and donors and give THANKS to

those individuals and businesses that make it possible to put on events at the Fort and have helped keep Fort Hartsuff open to the public.

Grant Writer: someone to apply for and write requests for grant money.

Secretary: file tax returns for FOFH, keep minutes, file non-profit status with state of NE, post minutes, etc.

Website/Facebook-Social Media – Coordinator: Post events, needs, etc. communicate with members via social media on a regular basis.

School group coordinator: contact schools invite to special events, coordinate volunteer days, set up field trips during Spring Muster, work with history teachers.

Membership Coordinator: currently we are being helped by the RC&D with both the website and membership mailings.

Big Give: need members willing to attend monthly meetings on behalf of Friends of Fort Hartsuff – this position is vital if FOFH is to be allowed to continue being a part of the Valley County Big Give.

Funding Needs

All memberships, donations, funds are returned to Fort Hartsuff. No board members, volunteers or members of Friends of Fort Hartsuff are paid or reimbursed for expenses while serving on behalf of Fort Hartsuff or the Friends group. You can designate your donation to a specific project or event.

Projects: (and funding goals)

- Repair ceilings that are falling down in the Officer's Quarters. \$1500

- Flag Pole - \$150 for paint
- Sign Project – Need \$75,000 to \$80,000. Have \$10,000 pledged.
- Wagon Wheels repaired on escort wagon - \$5,000.
- Secondary sign project: Cut-outs of soldiers near Ord, Burwell, and Elyria directing traffic to Fort. \$750.00
- Path Rebuilding/leveling Project: add clay, level and set drainage on paths at fort, fill with crushed limestone

2015/2016 Events:

- August BBQ Fund Raising event
 - Supplies/Meat, etc. - \$1000
 - Advertising - \$2500
- Annual Meeting – Advertising - \$150
- First Annual Awards Banquet - \$500 - \$1000 (food and awards)
- Spring Muster 2016 - \$5000 – advertising

Five Year Review

After five years of being a 501 C3, it seems like Friends of Hartsuff has hit a low-point. Board members and the loyal volunteers that were so instrumental in starting Friends of Fort Hartsuff, keeping the park office open and letting Lincoln know that Fort Hartsuff is a valuable historical and tourist site are dwindling. As with any organization, some of the Fort's longtime supporters are getting burned out and in need of fresh blood and new ideas.

Friends has accomplished a lot in five years and the FOFH has always felt, and still does, that Fort Hartsuff is important economically to not only the local area, but to the State of Nebraska. The Fort continues to draw visitors from 50 states every summer and with an average of 10,000 visitors per year, the

economic impact is around \$3 million a year. But economics aside, the real importance of the Fort is that it is a part of the history of the State of Nebraska and of the Indians and soldiers that lived on the frontier.

If nothing else, Friends has at least had a tremendous impact in keeping the Fort open for the past five years and in continuing to provide living history experiences, volunteer opportunities, programs such as Jeff Barnes on Buffalo Bill, plays, vintage ball games and events such as the Stars and Stripes Sunday, the Spring Muster, star-gazing on the parade ground, a Military Firearms exhibit and helped provide volunteer labor for manning the park office, picking up leaves in the fall, and financial aid for things like new flags, and building repairs and maintenance. Friends put electricity in the barracks building to make it easier to bring groups to the Fort and gave as much financial support as it could to events and maintenance. Many individuals and groups contributed to the efforts – from the construction of a butterfly garden to the rebuilding of the Guard House foundation, to thousands of volunteers hours spent in the park office, many faithful friends have supported the Fort over the last five years.

And while it seems like Friends has accomplished what it was initially established to do, the truth of the matter is that Fort Hartsuff needs her "Friends" more than ever.

Superintendent Jim Domeier will be retiring in a few years and the standard that has been set for a park to continue to receive state funds is that it brings in or makes money. And while Fort Hartsuff attracts an average of 10,000 tourists each year, the entry fees and book sales do not tally enough for Lincoln to take notice to find the Fort a valuable asset.

The only thing that keeps the Fort on the positive side of the score card is an active “Friends” group that demonstrates community support for Fort Hartsuff.

Please consider volunteering your time or donating to Friends of Fort Hartsuff. We want this historic resource to be around for you to use and enjoy for many, many years to come.