



June 2, 2008

## Summer a busy time at the old West Point Foundry

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The Journal News*

COLD SPRING - Summertime is when the voices of Civil War-era history promise to come alive at the famed West Point Foundry.

For the seventh summer, archaeology students from Michigan Technological University have come to dig into the foundry grounds, where 2,000 cannons and other munitions were made during the Civil War.

Yesterday, the Putnam County Historical Society and Foundry School Museum, which operates a museum overlooking the foundry grounds, held its third annual "family fun festival" to build local interest in the foundry's history and the archaeological work being done there.

"It's so interesting to walk through the ruins," said Mindy Krazmien, executive director of the historical society and museum. "When people go, they're so hungry for information."

Timothy Scarlett, an assistant professor of archaeology at Michigan Technological University, led several tours through the grounds. Outside the museum, kids clutching hot dogs and balloons got to see a blacksmith demonstration and a puppet show and to dance to a traditional string band.

"I'm not someone who cares all that much about foundry history, but this is an event that is pleasant and interesting," said Jeremy Newberger of Yorktown as he tried to keep an eye on 3-year-old Samson and 19-month-old Annabelle. "It's not your usual summer event. You get an old-time band, and the puppets are a big draw."

The foundry was built in 1817 by industrialist Gouverneur Kemble of Cold Spring and operated until 1911. It served as a highly polluted, 87-acre dumping ground through the rest of the century, until it became a federal Superfund cleanup site in 1992.

The conservation group Scenic Hudson bought the property in 1996 and is developing plans to make it more accessible and educational with an "outdoor museum" - walkways, platforms and stations for historic images.

Scenic Hudson is also sponsoring the industrial archaeological work carried out by the Michigan Tech students, who are busy collecting and analyzing artifacts of foundry life.

Some 1,400 people worked at the foundry during the Civil War. President Lincoln visited in 1862.

The archaeologists will lead tours of the foundry preserve from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. June 14 and 15. And Elizabeth Norris, an archaeologist at the site, will give a lecture about the work at 2 p.m. June 21 at the historical society.

The museum also has a new exhibit on the foundry's history, featuring displays on the boring mill, the casting shop and the East Bank House where workers lived. There are artifacts dug up on the site: jars, belts, drills, window glass, screws, topsoil, clay and the like.

The museum also just got back a famous oil painting of workers inside the foundry's vast, dark interior - "The Gun Foundry" by John Ferguson Weir. The painting was part of a Guggenheim exhibit that returned from Beijing, Moscow and elsewhere.

"Living in the Hudson Valley, we are surrounded by land that witnessed such important moments in history," Krazmien said. "When you're driving by, you just see the signs. With the foundry, you have something so tangible. You can walk through the site and see where everything stood, and it's connected to the Civil War, such an important part of our history."

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