



Cumberland festival - 2014

FINAL REPORT TO THE SOCIETY

In spite of heavy rains on Friday and sporadic rains on Saturday, the Cumberland Festival was held on October 11th and 12th. The committee which put this event on did experience various set-backs, including the loss of its leader due to his untimely death and a variety of circumstances, some of which forced presenters to limit their availability. In spite of these setbacks, Cumberland Festival 2014 is deemed an overall success.

However, if you were there, you might have been among the 265 people who toured the house. Gale Auer had researched the various owners of the property, met with Pam Radwani for several tours and made sure she had the facts correct. Then she wrote up a script, asked people to act as docents, and then trained them. As you entered the house, you were greeted by Gale as "Mrs. Littlepage" and she introduced her butler, who offered you a candy. Ladies were sitting in rooms throughout the house, doing hand work, painting, or reading. You may have thought they were for ambiance, but they were really just keeping an eye on the property.

Outside, you could hear the strains of Colonial music, either from one of our strolling musicians or from the dancers who enjoyed teaching others to dance. Children and adults tried their hands at throwing a tomahawk and visiting the camp site maintained by Jim Harding and Ken Gilman. On Saturday, Mark Daniel had a horse-drawn cart that took youngsters for short rides. Unfortunately, on Sunday the horse refused to participate in this activity, but did enjoy being led around and greeted by all. Climbing up and into a replica of John Smith's Explorer, you could experience a sailor's life in 1608. Then there was the blacksmith—don't get too close, you could get burned!

Visitors were greeted by the Joanne Howard, representing the Native Americans. In this area, one could grind corn, touch an animal skin, pick up a turtle shell, or learn more about the Eastern Chickahominy tribe. Nearby there was an agricultural display with tobacco drying, a wheelbarrow full of items grown in Colonial New Kent, and information about old New Kent farming was shared by an interpreter of the period. Ken Otey, portrayed the real American/New Kent hero of the Revolution, James Armistead Lafayette, while Stran Trout, as a colonial lawyer, handed out sage advice.

Children found fun things to do as well. Betsy Mountcastle told a "real story" on Saturday in the formal garden; Sharon Whitman showed them how to write with a quill pen and then had them try it themselves and seal the envelope with wax; Nannie Eacho (on Sunday) allowed them to churn butter and then taste it; Phyllis Buchanan, demonstrated quilting; and Tamika and Julia Hathaway helped children and adults play games of the period.

If you were hungry, you could have had a bowl of Brunswick stew, cooked by Howard Gammon and a host of NKHS volunteers. Or you could have purchased a barbecue or hamburger or hot dog from Nina Brown and the Ladies Auxiliary. Cookies and cakes made from Colonial era recipes were completely sold out by 2:00PM Sunday. High School Beta Club members sold soft drinks and water.

I tried to count up the number of volunteers who made this event possible. Many of the volunteers were Society members, but some were not. My count comes in at 50 – 60, including house docents, men who put up tents on Friday in the rain and then took them down on Sunday, drivers, like John Stump and Karen Schureman, who carried workers and others from the parking lot and back again, the stew makers—especially those who got up at 4:30 AM to help, the NKMS Beta Club parking attendants, the ticket sellers and gift shop cashiers, Mark Daniel, who filled in as the dance musician on Sunday, David and Sally Whiting, who designed the flyer, brochure, and poster and the many people who distributed them throughout the county. Lest he be forgotten—the ice-man did come—thank you Stran. This was a tremendous event—one that can be improved upon for next year. We have certainly made many connections, learned much, and gotten lots of positive feedback from the community. In the end, we can proudly say it was well done and well-received.

Committee members: Gale Auer, Judy Bain, Ken Gilman, Tamika Hathaway, William Hodges, Martha Martin, Gussie Pomfrey, Stran Trout, David Whiting, and Sally Whiting

Submitted by: Martha Martin, chairperson of Cumberland 2014
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