

Friends of Fort Knox Annual Report 2015

Overview

The following is an annual report for the Friends of Fort Knox (FFK) reflecting the organization's activities in 2015. This report will highlight substantial building/site repairs, masonry work and marks the fourth year of full management responsibilities at Fort Knox. An upward turn in attendance from the previous year was a key factor in an increase in all four-income sectors.

Overall, FFK gross revenue was up **11.05%** in 2015, from the previous year.

This marked the first year of a new management lease provision that restricts 25% of Fort gate income to repairs or projects. In addition, **15%** of Fort gate income is restricted to be sent to the Maine General Fund. These two restricted gate income percentages total **40%** of all Fort gate income.

The Friends of Fort Knox Board of Directors and staff continued to work hard to contain expenses, work with community groups, maximize resources, diversify income streams and complete projects at the Fort. The success of the organization would not have been possible without the outstanding efforts of volunteers, community groups and our many seasonal staff.

At the end of 2015, all FFK combined available unrestricted funds were \$165,461; in addition, a total of **\$32,899** was restricted for restoration/repair projects.

The FFK partnership with the Bureau of Parks and Lands continues through a lease arrangement, which places all day-to-day Fort management responsibilities with the organization. FFK staff, now include operational staff as well as personnel who work the fee collection booth, provide interpretive tours for school children and visitors, do bookkeeping, special event management, marketing, traffic/parking control and staff the Penobscot Narrows Observatory. The operations staff was involved with day-to-day maintenance, enforcing park rules, medical first response, cleaning, landscaping and overseeing contracted services.

The total season visitor attendance at Fort Knox and the Penobscot Narrows Observatory was **100,309**, during 2015. Attendance totals were up **8%** from the previous year.

* Overall, Fort operational season exempt use (non paying admission) was up 18%, due to special events, Boy Scout camporee, passes and school groups. Exempt use also includes Maine senior citizens; children under age 5, social service programs, preseason and season pass holders.

* Non-resident adult visitors was up 1% for the observatory and non-resident seniors observatory visitors decreased 5%.

* Observatory attendance was up by 1%.

* Exempt school student visitation increased by 29%.

* Special event visitor attendance increased by 20%.



Boy Scout camporee

Information in the report will be contained under general headings listed below.

Restoration/Preservation/Maintenance/improvements

This year's major projects involved a significant masonry repointing two-step alley's loopholes (rifle gun ports). Two-step alley contains 42 loopholes that run the length of this defensive Fort feature. The project, which was delayed until late fall is approximately 75% complete and will conclude this spring.

The masonry repointing involved using a natural cement known as, Rosendale, that had been identified by Maine Historic Preservation Commission testing, as the original mortar mix used during Fort construction. This natural cement mix is manufactured at only two known locations and retails for \$65 per bag, which is a significantly higher cost than modern cement mixes. The mason has indicated that he has found using the Rosendale mix challenging and very labor intensive.



Emergency repairs- An historic rainstorm, which dumped as much as 10 inches of rain, in early October, led to significant damage throughout the property. The hillside overlooking the Battery B hotshot furnace collapsed, narrowly missing the historic structure. The leach field adjacent to the Visitor Center rest rooms was nearly destroyed and other areas throughout the property suffered severe erosion damage.



Leach field repair



Battery B hillside collapse



Battery B repair

The Friends repaired all the damage from the massive storm by hiring contractors to complete the work. The contracted repairs were completed by late November 2015.

Roof repairs- The Friends contracted repairs to the Visitor Center's slate roof and former gift shop building, now used for storage.



Maintenance efforts- Operations staff initiated picnic table repairs, lighting repairs, extensive painting and staining efforts throughout the season. Paint/staining efforts targeted picnic tables, chain link barriers, Visitor Center and out buildings. Staff was involved in significant brush removal in the Visitor Center area and roof areas of the Fort. A significant effort took place during the spring months to clean up after major storms, which occurred throughout the winter.

Contracted services- Lawn care and snow removal services have been contracted out. Operations staff provides supervision for lawn care contractors.

Volunteers

Volunteers are a crucial component to Friends of Fort Knox activities. A breakout in the number of volunteer hours for 2015 is listed below:

Estimated Volunteer Hours 2015

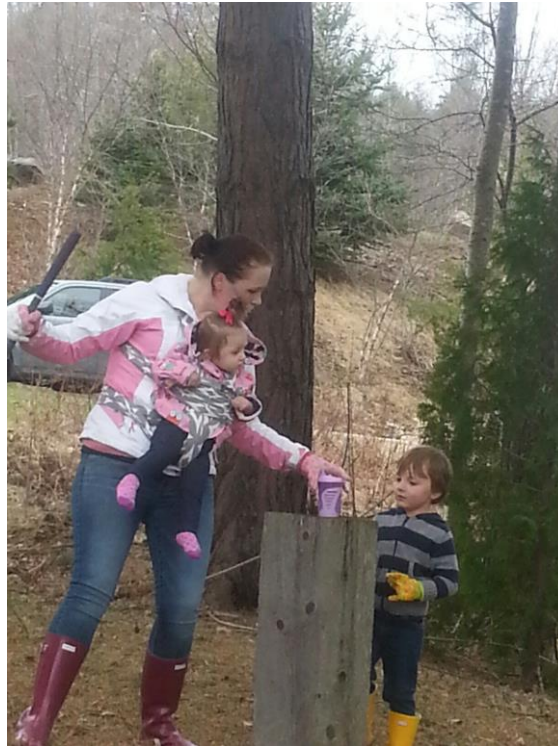
FFK Board and Committees: 360 hours

FFK Gift Shop Volunteers: 640 hours

FFK Tour Guide: 208

FFK sponsored special event volunteers includes Park Day, Scottish Tattoo, 20th Maine, SCA, Fright at Fort: 3,300 hours

Total estimated Fort volunteer hours: 4,508 and 450 volunteers.



Park Day clean up volunteers

Visitor Services

Interpretive Tours- Another bright spot in this year's annual report are the interpretive tours provided by Friends' staff during 2015.

Of school group tours 56– 1,779 students
of general public tours 287 – 1,676 individuals
of non school group tours 32 – 1,552 individuals
Total # of tours – 375
Total # of individuals receiving a tour –5,007



Summer camps often visit the Fort and enjoy an educational tour by FFK staff.

FFK Staffing Overview

The Friends of Fort Knox maintain one full-time, year-round Executive Director and part-time Asst. Director. During the six-month plus operating season, the numbers of seasonal part-time employees swell to approximately fifteen people. The seasonal operations manager and Asst. Director become exempt full-time employees during the operating season.

Many of the seasonal employees are cross trained in various functions, which may include gate attendant, observatory, operations, gift shop or tour guide duties. The organization is fortunate to have many seasonal employees return each year.

Gate Staffing- Friends of Fort Knox personnel greeted visitors throughout the operating season, providing guidance and collecting admission fees. Gate personnel provided services seven days a week, 8 hours a day for the operating season (9 hours a day July/August).

Observatory Staffing- Beginning May 1, FFK provided two staff people, seven days a week, at 8.50 hours a day (9.5 hours July/August), to operate the observatory. All FFK staff was trained in CPR, first aid, emergency evacuation procedures and in the use of a defibrillator. Staff performed exceptionally during several emergency evacuations of the observatory due to elevator malfunctions.

Gift Shop Staffing- The FFK gift shop is staffed daily by volunteers or paid staff. Aside from adding retail revenue for the organization, people staffing the gift shop, are able to answer basic questions concerning the facilities and refer visitors to local services.

Tour Staffing- Tour guides were available daily for the majority of the season for visitors. In addition, tour guides provide meaningful educational tours for students of all ages.

Operational Staffing- These staff provide for overall facility upkeep, safety, security, maintenance, first aid and visitor assistance.



The observatory looms in the summer sky awaiting daily visitors.

Special Events – Friends sponsored special events continued to please visitors with a variety of entertainment and educational demonstrations throughout the season. Special events also provide an opportunity to work with community groups like the local scout troops and the Bucksport Bridging the Gap fundraising race. Notable special events included a Park Day cleanup, Maine Foster Care Family Day, Paranormal/Psychic Faire, Scottish Tattoo, Pirate Day, Medieval Tournament, 20th Maine Company ‘B’ Civil War reenactment, cannon firings, Shakespeare, Pet Weekend, Fright at the Fort and Boy Scout camporee.

This year’s Fright at the Fort was very successful, with a record attendance of **10,202** guests during five-nights of Fright (all nights were rain free.) In addition, the Fort is increasingly becoming a destination for wedding ceremonies and other group functions.

Building on the notoriety that the Fort garnered in the SyFy Channel’s Ghost Hunter TV program and with the volunteer help of a local paranormal investigation group, The East Coast Ghost Trackers, ghost tours offered several ghost tours throughout the season. The ghost tours were held during evening hours and provided a special event income boost.



(Left to right) Dracula performance, Pirate Day and some of the volunteers at Fright

Financial Income

Listed below are the four main income streams for FFK that span the past four years.

<i>Income</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2012</i>
Gift Shop	\$100,848	\$89,210	\$91,587	\$84,639
Special Event	\$122,409	\$96,193	\$83,868	\$93,489
Gate	\$165,211	\$161,037	\$166,811	\$153,070
Contribution	\$35,088	\$21,599	\$40,567	\$16,369
Totals-	\$423,556	\$368,039	\$382,833	\$347,567

Promotion and Public Education

The Friends of Fort Knox distributed over 8,000 newsletters to visitors to Fort Knox. The newsletters contained information on the history of the Fort, Friends' restoration priorities and event schedules. Ongoing radio and television ads encouraging visitors to visit Fort Knox and the observatory aired throughout the season.

The Friends received a large amount of electronic and print media coverage throughout the year. The reopening of the observatory, restoration efforts and special events drove media coverage.

The Friends' web site is smart phone friendly, which has increased visitation to the site. Phone and tablet access to the web site has increased to nearly 24% of all site visitations.

Finally, after many years a new History on Maine's Fort Knox has been penned. Author, Liza Gardner Walsh, traces the story of this National Historic Landmark from its geologic past to the present day. This entertaining book brings the granite fortress to life by highlighting the many people involved in its construction, military use, caretakers and the role it serves in the present community. The pages are full of stunning photos that bring this magnificent monument to life.

Upcoming Restoration/Preservation/Improvement Projects

The Visitor Center interpretive displays and information will be updated this coming year. The two-step alley masonry work will be completed in the spring. The Friends' have requested a meeting with the Bureau of Parks and Lands to discuss future projects that may extend to restoration/preservation of metal work throughout the Fort.