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Historic Houses of Odessa Open Their Doors for Seasonal Tours and Exhibits

Historic Odessa Foundation Introduces NEW Family Haversack Tour



ODESSA, Del. – April 7, 2009 -- With the first signs of spring the Historic Houses of Odessa throw open their doors to reveal their history and treasures that offer a rich, unique and well-documented picture of 18th and 19th century lifestyles in a rural farming community. This season the Historic Odessa Foundation (HOF) introduces the new ***Family Haversack Tour*** and presents the exhibit ***The Costume of Great Britain*** that runs through June.

Beginning in March, the Historic Houses of Odessa, owned and operated by the Historic Odessa Foundation, resume regular public hours through the end of December. This year HOF is introducing to the public among its traditional tours of its historic properties the new ***Family Haversack Tour*** that will give children and their parents the opportunity to experience 18th century Odessa as it really was through period items such as a spyglass, compass, slate and slate pencil, fire starter kit and pocket watch all stored in a haversack that the children will use to help them orient and navigate through a fun, educational and interactive experience, as they see colonial Delaware through the eyes of their 18th century counterparts.

“As such, the children have to look the part,” says Johnnye Baker, HOF’s education curator, “so they will be given caps – mob caps for the girls and men’s working caps for the boys. Proper 18th century behavior will be expected as children follow George Washington’s *Rules of Civility*. Also, the children will help keep their guide on schedule by regularly taking out their pocket watches and checking the time in the proper 18th century manner.”

Family Haversack Tour stops include a scavenger hunt in the newly restored National Historic Landmark Corbit-Sharp House, featuring an 18th century school room and lesson; a trip to the Wilson Store in the Brick Hotel and an interpretation of hearth cooking and a discussion of a child’s responsibilities in assisting at the hearth in the Collins-Sharp House among other activities.

Tickets for the ***Family Haversack Tour*** are \$18 per family, with an additional \$4, if families want to include HOF’s recently launched Living History Education program tour ***Freedom Seekers: The Odessa Story*** that gives children and adults a look into the life of a fugitive slave traveling under the cover of darkness with limited supplies at a historic stop on the Underground Railroad.

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Last year, the Corbit-Sharp House was accepted into the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom by the National Park Service, which evaluated the site as “making a significant contribution to the understanding of the Underground Railroad in American history.”

The Historic Odessa Foundation is also excited to present *The Costume of Great Britain*, a small exhibit of copies of sixty illustrated prints depicting early 19th century professional and working-class British men and women from all walks of life from English painter and illustrator William Henry Pyne’s (1769-1843) book *The Costume of Great Britain*, 1805. Considerable attention was paid to each trade, giving a valuable record of British society on the eve of the Industrial Revolution. HOF possesses in its collection an early 19th century, English print of a tanner drawn by William Henry Pyne that illustrates how one of Odessa’s most prominent citizens at the end of the 18th century, William Corbit, might have dressed at his occupation as a tanner.

ABOUT THE HISTORIC HOUSES OF ODESSA

The historic village of Odessa, Del., known until 1855 as Cantwell’s Bridge, played a vital role in the colonial life along the Delaware River and America’s commercial history as a busy grain shipping port. Nestled between the banks of the Appoquinimink River and U.S. Route 13, Odessa belies its vibrant history and displays all the charm of a tranquil village that time has forgotten, yet perfectly preserved through some of Delaware’s finest examples of 18th and 19th century architecture known collectively as the Historic Houses of Odessa which include:

Corbit-Sharp House, completed in 1774, this registered National Historic Landmark recently underwent a complete historical restoration and is now open to the public

Wilson-Warner House, built in 1769 and fully restored in June 2007, exemplifies Delaware-Georgian architecture

Collins-Sharp House one of the oldest houses in Del., built ca. 1700 and a setting for historically accurate open-hearth cooking and gardening demonstrations

Brick Hotel from 1822, houses the Wilson Store as part of a innovative school program

Odessa Bank, built in 1853 and served the Odessa community as a bank till 2000, today houses the Visitor’s Center and special exhibitions

Open from March through December, Thursday through Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Sunday from 1 to 4:30 p.m., the Historic Odessa Foundation offers tours to the public, families, groups and schools of its landmark properties that house the foundation’s collection of more than 4000 objects and furnishings that span an interpretive period in regional decorative arts from 1760 through 1850 and provide a backdrop for a variety of educational programs for schools that include 18th Century Cooking, the Apprenticeship System and 18th Century School Days among others. Tours are available in January and February by reservation only.

General Admission: Adults \$10.00; Groups, Seniors, Students \$8.00, Children under five are free. Member discounts available.

For more information on the Historic Houses of Odessa, tours and special exhibits, call 302-378-4119, or visit www.historicodessa.org.

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The Historic Houses of Odessa is an enclave of 18th and 19th century structures located in the town of Odessa, Del. on the Appoquinimink River. The historic buildings along with a well-documented collection of more than 4000 objects and furnishings are owned and operated by the nonprofit Historic Odessa Foundation, and offer a unique picture of Delaware’s colonial period in a rural village that played a vital part in America’s commercial history. For information on the Historic Houses of Odessa, public tours of the properties, and the foundation’s Living History Education program, call 302-378-4119, or visit www.historicodessa.org.