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## **Exhibit Celebrates the Life of the American Soldier**

*Historic Odessa Foundation Presents "Letters From the Front"*

ODESSA, Del. -- July 14, 2009 -- The horror of war, a longing for family and home, and incredible resiliency are some of the common themes that run through the personal letters of Delaware soldiers from the Civil War, through World War II, Vietnam, Kuwait and Iraq - all gathered together in an intimate exhibit at the Historic Houses of Odessa through September.

While touring the Historic Houses of Odessa this summer, visitors will be able to take in "Letters From the Front" a small exhibit of personal correspondences and military items and memorabilia from veterans who served on various battlefronts. The inspiration for the exhibit comes from a donation of letters written in 1863 during and after the battle of Gettysburg by Captain Charles Corbit (1838-1887), the great- great grandson of one of Odessa's most prominent citizens William Corbit (1746-1818).

"In reading the letters of Captain Charles Corbit, I was struck by the kinds of things he wrote about....," says Johnnye Baker, HOF's education curator who organized the exhibit, "the bad weather, worry about his family, longing for letters from home and a 'care package.' I thought that this could be any soldier past or present – the concerns, worries and hopes they had were universal."

Inspired by Charles Corbit's letters, which became the basis for the exhibit, Baker found the same kinds of themes when she began looking at letters from an Army medic from the Battle of the Bulge, a Marine injured around DaNang in Vietnam, and an Air Force flight nurse in Kuwait and Iraq. Also included in the exhibit are personal items that came home with these soldiers – Geneva Convention cards, a Purple Heart and other medals, copies of original orders, civil war ammunition pouches and bayonets, and photographs among other memorabilia.

In June of 1863, at the age of 25, Captain Charles Corbit commanded Company C, one of two companies of the 1<sup>st</sup> Delaware Cavalry Battalion, numbering less than 100 men. This small Federal force, sent from Baltimore, charged Confederate General J.E.B. Stuart's cavalry division of over 6,000 at Westminster, Md., and was overwhelmingly defeated. The skirmish, however, helped delay Stuart's efforts of joining General Robert E. Lee late on the second day of the Battle of Gettysburg. Corbit was taken prisoner but was unofficially paroled the next day in Hanover, Pa. Stuart called Corbit a hero and personally praised the gallantry of the Delaware officer and his men exclaiming "he ought to be fighting for the Confederacy rather than against it."

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## Historic Odessa Foundation Presents “Letters From the Front”

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The Corbit ancestral home, today known as the Corbit-Sharp House and the jewel in the crown of the Historic Houses of Odessa, was built by William Corbit in 1774. One of the finest examples and best documented Philadelphia-style Georgian houses in the Northeast, the Corbit-Sharp House is a National Historic Landmark and last year 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.”

### **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 including “Letters From the Front”

**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 18<sup>th</sup> Century Cooking, the Apprenticeship System, 18<sup>th</sup> Century School Days and the newest - Freedom Seekers: The Odessa Story, 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](http://www.historicodessa.org).

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The Historic Houses of Odessa is an enclave of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.historicodessa.org).