



DuBois

Family News

June 2009

My Girl Scout Project—A Labor of Love

by Allison Findlay

For several years, I knew exactly where I wanted to complete my Girl Scout Gold Award project — in DuBois Cemetery, an abandoned cemetery not far from my home in rural Alaiedon Township in Mason, Michigan.

On our trips to town, my family used to drive by DuBois and I would look out of the car window and wonder who was buried in that cemetery that was on a hill in the middle of a farmer's field. I wondered if descendants ever went to visit their relatives there. In all my trips past the cemetery, I never once saw any cars or people there. I always felt sorry that the cemetery was neglected and forgotten.

When it came time to start my Girl Scout project, I made my first trip to DuBois Cemetery. I had to climb a fence and walk through a trail of waist-high field grass to even reach it.



Author Allison Findlay

When I got there, I found that the half-acre cemetery was filled with tall tangled weeds, thick grape vines, downed fencing, dangerous holes, and bee's nests. Underneath all the debris were toppled tombstones, half-buried headstones, footstones and broken monuments. I was overwhelmed by all of the work that needed to be done and didn't know how I would ever accomplish my dream for DuBois Cemetery.

I received a boost when a news reporter heard about my plans to rescue DuBois. He wrote several articles about my project and I began receiving emails, telephone calls, letters, and offers of help from volunteers and descendants. I was contacted by people from all over the country and even overseas!

I organized and planned our work days at DuBois and was amazed at the response I received. The volunteers

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From The President's Desk

By Terry L. DuBois, DBFA President



DBFA members and friends,

Here it is June already! Huguenot Street is open for another season. Our beloved Fort is sporting a brand new roof that should last for 100 years. There have been a lot of improvements to the Fort since the December newsletter. As promised, this newsletter centers on those improvements. Not only is there a new roof, but also the interior has new paint, new plaster. The fireplace room has a beautiful display to bring back memories of the Fort Restaurant (Thanks to Dianne DuBois Gleichenhaus, Old Fort Restaurant Historical Committee). The upstairs rooms feature

exhibits and the addition of beautiful glass display cases (two of these were purchased with funds from the DBFA). On the exterior, HHS Historic Preservation crew member, Jon Winans and some of his co workers have rejuvenated Sam Newsome's garden on the river bank behind the Fort. Many thanks to Jon and his crew for bringing this beautiful garden back into view. A special Thank You to HHS for all the efforts to bring the Fort back to life.

2009 is a reunion year for the DBFA. Plans are underway for a great reunion. Please plan on attending. The theme will center on the Henry Hudson celebration.

As usual the reunion will be held the 3rd weekend in October (16th and 17th). This is also an election year. We need new members on the Executive Board. Please contact me if you would like to help out. We will be publishing a special reunion edition of the newsletter in August with details. Details will also be posted on our website, www.dbfa.org.

So far we are having a good year in our CafePress premium online store. I have added some new graphics and done more improvements to the Coat-of-Arms graphics. They are clearer and larger. With the economy as it is I have lowered our commission on most of the items. I have priced items in other shops with like items in our premium shop and our prices are much lower than the other shops and most of our graphics are only available in OUR shop. The price of the popular golf shirt has been reduced from \$21.99 to \$18.99. See ordering information in the CafePress Shop ad.

This April, I received some very encouraging news from my doctors. April 15th I was given my last hormone implant. My prostate cancer has now been in remission for one year. They will now monitor me every six months. My PSA reading is holding at 0. If my PSA readings begin to rise again, they will start the hormone implants again. Also my kidney readings are returning to normal. Thanks to all of you for your continued prayers and support.

The current economic situation has touched each of us. Historic Huguenot Street (HHS) continues to struggle financially. Staff cuts and program cut backs have become necessary in order to keep the Street open. Needed repairs to some of the houses have had to be put on hold for lack of funds. HHS has been very good to the DBFA and our beloved Fort. Let's show them our appreciation with a donation. As I said, I know times are tough for all of us but every little bit helps.

Please send them a check with a note of thanks for all they have done for our House.

See you at the reunion!

Terry DuBois, DBFA President



ranged in age from a Speer family descendant who was four, to an Every family descendant who was an 87-year old former Girl Scout leader.

On our first work day, over eighty volunteers and descendants came armed with weed whackers, brush hogs, riding mowers, wagons, chain saws, and even a front-loader tractor! We cleared the grounds, resurrected fallen monuments, and were able to find over twenty gravestones that had fallen and become buried underground.

A local restaurant, *The Golden Rose*, donated fantastic gourmet lunches for all of the volunteers. *Ice Mountain* provided all of the ice and bottled water for the workers.

In the end, the volunteers, descendants, and I were able to correct over 75 years of neglect that DuBois Cemetery had endured since its last burial in the mid-1920s.

Another aspect of my dream was to save DuBois Cemetery's history by transcribing each tombstone, taking digital photographs of each stone, and submitting all of the information to the "Tombstone Transcription Project" on rootsweb.com. I wanted descendants or history buffs to be able to virtually tour DuBois Cemetery and see all of the gravestones without having to travel. During this on-going research part of my project, I met many of my township neighbors and families related to the pioneer

families buried in DuBois Cemetery. I learned first-hand some of the heart-breaking stories about the deaths of the people, especially the children, who are buried there.

When I started my project, I had quite a few people say to me, "Why would you want to work in a cemetery? It's creepy, it's scary." But the people in DuBois became very special to me. I now know each gravestone, I know who is related to whom, and I know a little bit about everyone there. One of my most touching experiences was when a volunteer family with two young children found, underground, the tombstone of a baby girl named "Infant DuBois". Infant DuBois' tombstone is now standing upright so that it will never be forgotten.

My work in DuBois Cemetery has been the most significant and rewarding activity I have ever

done. Along with earning my Girl Scout Gold Award, I was proud to receive a special honor, a bronze medallion, for the National "2008 Prudential Spirit of the Community Award."

Since the cleanup process, I have contacted the

Veteran's Administration and have replaced Civil War markers and one War of 1812 marker for the soldiers buried in DuBois Cemetery. The military markers were placed before Memorial Day and the American Legion has honored them with U.S. flags – something that has never happened in DuBois Cemetery.



Infant DuBois tombstone

I am now in the process of ordering a large cast marker to be installed this year at the cemetery. It will list all of the known burials in DuBois with their birth/death years.

When the marker is completed, I will be hosting a rededication ceremony for the community. Military people, scouts, and even a bagpiper have offered to participate. My attachment and love of the cemetery has continued on for me. I will always keep a watch over DuBois Cemetery and honor my township's pioneers who are buried there.

Allison Findlay



Shown above are photos of the DuBois cemetery before the girl scout project and after its completion.

Editor's Note-Allsion Findlay is 18 years old, she has been in Girl Scouts since 1995. Restoring the cemetery allowed her to receive the Girl Scout Gold Award. She is also a recipient of the President's Volunteer Service Award and as part of the award received a letter from President Bush. Allison heard about DBFA through a member who contacted her through the Headstone Transcription website. The national honor society presented her with a scholarship to Michigan State. DBFA is grateful for her perseverance in the restoration of the cemetery and her article and photographs. Best of luck to Allison in her upcoming college career.

Allison and her mother will be our guests at the upcoming DuBois reunion (October 16-17), Allison will speak on Friday night at the reunion.

DuBois Fort Roof Project

by Richard Heyl de Ortiz

Director of Public Programs, Historic Huguenot Street

Working is well underway on the DuBois Fort roof project. The project has a total cost of \$97,500. To date, the DuBois Family Association has contributed \$24,000. Historic Huguenot Street has received two grants for the project -- \$5,000 each from the A. Lindsay and Olive B. O'Connor Foundation and the Felicia Fund. Several additional proposals are pending. Monies from the Newsome Fund will fill in any fundraising gap that exists at the end of the year.

The cedar shingle roof has been removed and has been replaced with a standing seam metal roof. The change in roofing materials was discussed thoroughly before the project commenced. Ultimately, it was decided that there are strong practical and historical reasons for going in this direction. The cedar shingle roof has been replaced several times since the 1970s. Generally, cedar roofs last ten to twelve years. Given the shallow slope of the roof over the porch, there were continual water infiltration issues with the cedar shingle roof. The metal roof will solve this problem. In addition, the Fort has a standing seam roof for several decades. Photographs from the 1880s show the building with a metal roof.

Tuttle Construction of Greenwich, New York is doing the work. The Tuttle's are familiar with the site. They have worked on the slate roof of the Deyo House and have repointed the DuBois Fort. In addition to replacing the shingles with metal, the Tuttle's are installing plywood to support the existing skip board sheathing under the roofing materials, repointing the three chimneys of the Fort and outfitting the south side of the building with galvanized gutters, hangers and leader pipes.

The project is schedule to be completed this summer.



North view of new roof



Top left- Scaffolding on North side,Top right- looking up the attic stairs, Bottom- North side Plywood underlayment



Top- Front with scaffolding Bottom-Roof replacement

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