

FFLF Statement Regarding OHS Proposed Shut Down Of Ft. Laurens Site

May 21, 2003

Friends of Fort Laurens Foundation Statement Regarding Ohio Historical Society Proposed Shut Down Of Fort Laurens

The Friends of Fort Laurens Foundation is not surprised by the proposed action of the Ohio Historical Society (OHS) to shut down Fort Laurens, the only American Revolutionary War fort built in what now is the state of Ohio.

This year marks the 225th anniversary of the establishment of Fort Laurens.

OHS took the same action in 1991 when the organization faced a similar budget cutback from state government. It was this prior action that precipitated the establishment of the Friends of Fort Laurens Foundation.

We are outraged, that a week before the nation honors those who served and died in the defense of this country, the Ohio Historical Society has decided to turn its back on the first American patriots. The first American blood spilled in Ohio territory in defense of a new nation was at Fort Laurens.

This is equivalent to the federal government shutting down Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia.

Quite frankly, OHS has too many sites throughout the state to administer and it is time for them to divest of some, including Fort Laurens. The site of the wilderness outpost is not a priority of OHS, never has been and never will be.

Since there is no fort at Fort Laurens, there are no maintenance funds to be saved. The grass will still have to be mowed and electrical power will still be required at the museum in order to maintain the security system and the environmental controls of the tomb that houses the remains of the soldiers killed defending Fort Laurens.

If Fort Laurens was rebuilt, the site would be a revenue enhancer for the Society and bring additional tourists dollars to the region.

Fort Boonesborough, located in Richmond, Ky., has an annual attendance of 45,000; Fort Ligonier in Ligonier, PA., has an annual attendance of 40,000; Prickett's Fort in Fairmont, WV., has an annual attendance of 18,000; Historic Manskers Station, near Nashville, TN., has an annual attendance of 20,000; and Colonial Michilimackinac, located in Mackinaw City, MI., attracts over 110,000 tourists per year.

Both Boonesborough and Colonial Michilimackinac charge approximately \$8 for an adult admission. Do the math and reasonable people should be able to understand that OHS, by refusing to rebuild Fort Laurens, is missing an opportunity to generate an additional \$250,000-\$320,000 annually.

The Foundation will reserve any additional comments about the potential closing until a final decision is made by OHS on its actual plans pending the outcome of the state budget expected on or before July 1, 2003.

At this time we fully expect to hold our major events at Fort Laurens such as the Frontier Family Reunion of the Northwest Territory, featuring family descendants of Daniel Boone,

Simon Kenton, Simon Girty, William Crawford, Lewis Wetzel, Alexander KcKee and Shawnee Chief Bluejacket, scheduled for August 16, 2003 along with the Brigade of the American Revolution's Annual Encampment scheduled for August 16-17.

In addition, the Annual Moccasin Roast Fund Raising Dinner is scheduled at Fort Laurens on October 18, 2003 and the 225th Anniversary Reenactment: Arrival on the Tuscarawas, November 8-9, 2003.

The Friends of Fort Laurens Foundation is a 501 (c)(3) not-for-profit organization established in 1994. Its purpose is to raise the public awareness of the role Fort Laurens plays in both Ohio and American history. In addition, it seeks to raise private donations to rebuild Fort Laurens.

For additional information about the Foundation, please visit our website at:
www.friendsoffortlaurens.org.