

THE OLD FORT PALISADE

SUMMER 2025



Greetings From the Board President

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary describes chink as “a small cleft, slit, or fissure”; “a weak spot that may leave one vulnerable”...such as “a narrow beam of light shining through a chink.” “Chinking” means filling those open spaces to protect from light, rain, wind, as well as varmints!

The five original forts and the 1975 reproduction were built using traditional methods of log construction, creating gaps between the logs, and thus requiring something to fill those gaps; in a word, “chinking”. Traditionally mud and straw were used to form a sort of mortar.

Various methods and products have been applied since 1975 to try to maintain our buildings, with varying degrees of success. However, none of them permanently stopped the infiltration of rainwater, because the logs were settling as they decayed.

It may surprise many to know that during its first 10 years, the Fort had begun to decay so quickly that a partial rebuilding had to be undertaken in the late 1980’s. I was surprised to learn that the logs rotted from the top down, because that was where the water settled when it slipped past the chinking. This is why it is not surprising to see modern log homes being covered with siding a few years after construction.

The Regiment of Light Artillery was an elite horse artillery corps. It was organized in 1808 in response to President Jefferson’s request for an augmentation of the Army in the face of hostile British and French acts against the United States.

Page 4

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Fort Reconstruction Update	2
Who’s Who	3
New in the Store	3
Bridge Dedication	3
Introduction to Light Artillery	4
The Cannons of the Old Fort	6
The Fort in Pictures	7
Volunteer Advance	8
Volunteer Profile	9
Preparing the Garden	10
Upcoming Events	11

Continued next page

This spring, we acquired a two-person lift, allowing volunteers to readily chink the top portion of the reconstructed Hospital Building. We chose to use a product called Permachink, because it produces an elastic flex when dry. Using interlocking pressure-treated logs with no gap in between, sealed with modern chinking material, our current Fort structure should last a long time with minimal maintenance. Several weeks later, the lower portion was also chinked by volunteers, easily accessed from ground level.

"You build on failure. You use it as a stepping stone." – Johnny Cash

We're building the past today, for tomorrow.

Norm Gable
President Historic Fort Wayne

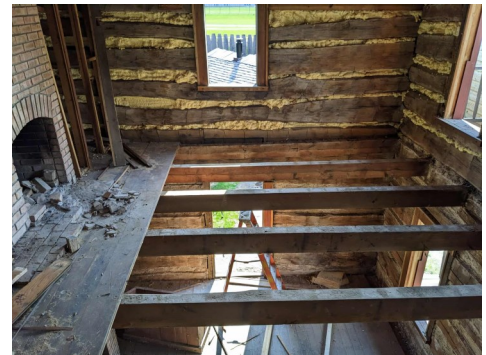
Fort Reconstruction

Work continues on the reconstruction of the Old Fort. Our goal is to have this project completed by July 2026 in time for the 250th birthday of the U.S.A. and the 50th anniversary of the construction of this reproduction fort.

The construction of the Doctor's Quarters was completed back in February. This spring, volunteers came together to spray treat the building and later applied the chinking. Tom Grant, treasurer of Historic Fort Wayne, inc. noted that "the spray utilized was developed in Canada and is completely organic and is safe for children, pets and livestock. Yet it ages the timbers, railings and trim providing protection from insect infestation including carpenter bees." There is still some indoor work to be finished, but Phase 2 is quickly approaching 'done'.

Work on Phase 3, the Commander's Quarters, began in May. Volunteers salvaged all the planking, doors and more that can be reused from the current building. Grant commented, "Repurposing the material saves us thousands of dollars and minimizes the impact on the landfill." Once the chimneys were braced, the current building was torn down. Working around the spring rains, construction quickly had the new building up. As with the Doctor's Quarters, the next steps will be wood treatment and chinking, which volunteers will work on throughout the summer

Phase 4 will tackle the Junior Officers' Quarters. The anticipated cost for this portion of the project is \$620,000. Depending on the final cost of the Commander's building, this phase is approximately 25% funded. Work will not begin until all necessary funds are raised. You can help us 'Keep the Fort in Fort Wayne' by donating at <https://oldfortwayne.org/get-involved/donate/>.





New in the Store: Old Fort T-shirts

New T-shirts are now available for purchase in the Modern Building (bake sale) during events. Small and Medium sizes are \$12. Large and Extra Large are \$14, and 2, 3, and 4 XL are available for \$16. Special pricing is available for volunteers. Show your Fort pride!

The Bridge is Open!

The pedestrian bridge from Lawton Park to the Fort along the River Greenway has been under repair, and is finally open. Parking at Lawton is a great way to access the Fort. A crew from the Fort was on hand to help celebrate as Mayor Tucker and the Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation department officially reopened the bridge.



Who's Who

Board Members: Norm Gable, President
Josh Grubaugh, Vice President
Tom Grant, Treasurer
Nancy Stansberry, Secretary
Members: Andi Hahn, Bob Jones, Kip Lytle, Sean O'Brien

Events Planning/School Demos: Bob Jones

Facilities Committee: Sean O'Brien

Maintenance: Sean O'Brien

Volunteer Coordinator: Bob Jones

PR/Marketing: Jennifer Balkenbusch

Social Media: Kathleen O'Connell

Send your comments/questions to
info@oldfortwayne.org. Your message will be
sent to the appropriate person.

Sign up to receive our quarterly
e-newsletter

THE OLD FORT PALISADE

Send your request to:
publications@oldfortwayne.org

We are looking for articles
for future issues.

If you have an historically pertinent
subject you'd like to write about,
let us know at:

publications@oldfortwayne.org

Deadline for submissions to the
Fall Palisade will be
September 1, 2025

Introduction To Light Artillery

Rowena Richardson

The crowd gathers, the excitement rises, and suddenly BOOM, the cannon fires. People jump, children go 'ooo' and 'ahhh', and everyone wants to see it happen again! Cannon demonstrations are always a favorite at the Fort. We asked one of our most seasoned artillery specialists to share her experiences and the process for firing a cannon.

The Regiment of Light Artillery was an elite horse artillery corps. It was organized in 1808 in response to President Jefferson's request for an augmentation of the Army in the face of hostile British and French acts against the United States. By 1812 it was ranked first among combat units in the Army. The regiment retained its position of eminence until it was disbanded in 1821.

The 1st US Light Artillery 1812 Unit was organized in 1997. The unit uses a replica 3-pound cannon made at South Bend Replicas in South Bend, IN. It is mounted on a field carriage. Small size cannons, pulled by horses or men, were more maneuverable in the extremely dense forests. A cannon crew normally consisted of 6 members with each man performing a specific function. Light artillery cannon balls could range in size from 3 to 6 pounds.

The unit is based in Huntington County, Indiana, with members from northern Indiana and Ohio. Families of the cannon crew portray camp followers and participate in many events within Indiana and Ohio.

The uniform the unit wears is typical of the current issue of the 1812 period. The jackets or coatees are of blue wool with gold-colored braid and gold buttons. The hats or shakos worn by the men are made of black felt with an artillery insignia on the hat plate. The white





*Cannon firing at Education Day,
photo courtesy of Ken Sorg*

feathered plume with red tip signifies the unit as light artillery.

The Artillery unit follows National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association guidelines on safety and firing. Crew members have regular training in black powder safety and cannon operation.

The GUN COMMANDER is responsible for giving the loading and firing commands and is also the safety officer.

When the call “To Action – tend the vent, search and sponge” is given, the VENT TENDER will place their gloved thumb over the vent hole to create a vacuum. The thumb is held in place during the worming, wet sponge, dry sponge, loading charge, and ramming charge process.

The WORMER will run the wire worm down the barrel to remove any debris left over from the previous firing. This crew member will also “dry sponge” just prior to loading.

After worming the barrel, the RAMMER will use a wet sponge to extinguish any remaining embers. Then the dry sponge is used. At this point the cannon is ready for the powder charge.

The POWDER CARRIER (we call this person the “powder monkey”) will be instructed to bring the charge to the gun with the orders “handle cartridge/advance cartridge”. The powder carrier also guards the powder box that is placed a required safe distance from the cannon.

After the powder carrier has handed off the powder charge, the WORMER will load the charge into the barrel. The RAMMER will be instructed to “ram down the cartridge”.

Then the VENT TENDER will “pick and prime”. This person will insert a brass pick into the vent hole creating a hole in the powder charge. A priming device called a “quill” is placed into the vent hole. One must ensure that the quill has been properly placed (this is generally the cause of misfires when not correct).

At last, the cannon is ready to fire.

The LINSTOCK man is given the command to “FIRE”. The SLOWMATCH (burning rope) is applied to the priming quill. BOOM!

Rowena Richardson and her family have been part of the 1st U.S. Light Artillery 1812 unit since its beginning in 1998. She says, “In 2007 I purchased the cannon we call 'Dolly' from the widow of its previous owner so our Unit could continue our mission of education of the War of 1812.”

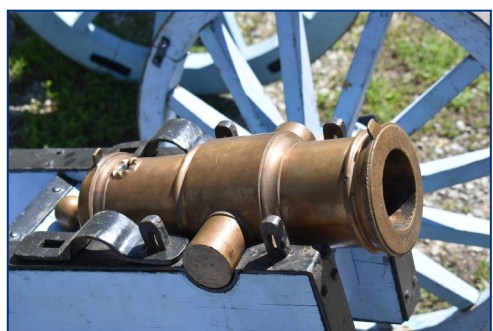


The Cannons of the Old Fort

Kip Lytle



*Above: 6lb Field Gun
Below: Howitzers*



Now that you are familiar with the firing procedure for black-powder era cannons, let's take a look at the cannons that are owned by Historic Fort Wayne and demonstrated during events.

Cannons came in three different styles—field guns which were the main artillery of the army when traveling, garrison guns which were assigned to a fort, and naval guns which were mounted on ships. The difference between a field gun, garrison gun, and naval gun is in the carriage. Field carriages have large wheels so they can move over rough terrain easily whereas garrison and naval carriages have small wheels and are seldom moved.

Historic Fort Wayne is lucky enough to own five cannons, two field guns and three howitzers. The largest field gun is a civil war era piece and is very unwieldy. It generally is wheeled out for display by the bake sale building and is rarely fired. The canon that is fired the most at HFW is the 6-pounder field gun. It is a relatively long barreled (over 5 feet), smooth bore gun that can fire a 6-pound projectile up to 1800 yards. While considered a mobile weapon, it still takes at least four to five volunteers to move it into position. But, it has the loudest and most dramatic display, and is always a crowd favorite.

The other type of cannon that the Fort owns is Howitzers. These are smaller versions of field guns and can be moved by one or two people. Since the muzzles are smaller and the barrels shorter, their rounds and firing range are reduced. However, they are lighter and more maneuverable, making them the cannon of choice for cavalry and light artillery units. Generally, their carriages also allow the piece to be pointed higher to allow a more arching shot, making it better suited for indirect fire. When HFW is asked to provide a cannon shot to start a race such as the Fort-4-Fitness, it is usually one of the howitzers that is used.

We love being able to demonstrate these cannons at events. The black powder for every shot costs roughly \$10, and is supported by your donations. Come out to an event to see and hear one for yourself!

SPRING AT THE OLD FORT



Civil Air
Patrol Tour

Civil War
Garrison



Education
Day



Muster on the
St. Mary's



Legacy Johnny
Appleseed Tree in
Bloom



Siege of Fort
Wayne 1812



Volunteer Advance

Saturday 10AM to 2PM and
Sunday 2PM to 4PM

Historic Fort Wayne is an all-volunteer organization. We operate the Old Fort on behalf of the Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Department. Whether you are considering volunteering, are a recent volunteer, or have years of experience, Volunteer Advance is intended to give you a window into living history and an opportunity to preview and discuss historic hand arts and daily skills of the past. Regardless of your interests, you can benefit from sessions to acquaint yourself with the many aspects of events at Historic Fort Wayne.

Volunteer Advance offers a chance to meet and network with other volunteers. Currently, except for the January session which meets at the Allen County Public Library, all meetings are held at the Fort, 1201 Spy Run Ave., either in the Modern Building or in the main Fort complex of buildings. Due to the current demolition and reconstruction of the Fort, it may be necessary to change the topic and/or location of the meeting. If you have questions or wish clarification of the topic, please call the Fort Phone during business hours. (260) 437-2836.

Volunteer Advance will not meet during July and August, but will resume September 13 and 14. The topic will be sewing and mending, with a focus on shirt and chemise. Follow us on

Facebook and Instagram for updates and announcements. Thank you for your interest in helping to Keep the Fort in Fort Wayne. We need you. Join us when you can.



To register as a volunteer, navigate to:
<https://oldfortwayne.org/get-involved/volunteer/>
Fill in the few blanks that apply and "SUBMIT"

Thank you
Bob Jones
Event Manager
and Co-Volunteer Manager



You can find us on Facebook
for up-to-date event news and happenings!
www.facebook.com/HistoricFortWayne

Follow us on Instagram
[historic_ft.wayne](https://www.instagram.com/historic_ft.wayne)

Volunteer Profile: Meet Lora Mable Browning



Several years ago I started coming to events at the Old Fort as a member of the public; just a few at first, but I have always had a deep love for history and have been sewing for 20 years. In 2022 I was at an event when I finally asked a volunteer how did they get started - was there an application process? Imagine my surprise when the volunteer told me all I had to do was start showing up! I enthusiastically jumped in and started attending events in 2023.

During my first year I wasn't sure where I might fit in as I am not a soldier, but I soon found my footing demonstrating spinning on a drop spindle and sewing garments as they would have done in period. I enjoy sewing the early 19th century gowns the most as they come together so quickly but all of the periods have unique challenges to a seamstress and the research that goes into each new piece of clothing is an adventure in itself!

The big change came when we were cleaning out the block house and I looked over at the loom that had been sitting in storage. The old piece of history just needed some cleaning, and with the help of a dear friend and assistance from our local weaving guild we have brought the loom back to life. I now demonstrate all sorts of fiber arts of every period that the Fort has events for, and love sharing a huge part of daily life - the production and care of fabrics - that we don't really stop to think about in our busy modern lives.



Any time I am at the Fort I feel happy so it is difficult to narrow down a particular favorite memory, but the Christmas event in 2023 stands out - working with Connie Houck to clean up the loom and put a warp on it for the first time since the 90s and freezing the whole time. It was fun and a learning experience! I now have a lot more cold weather clothing in my historical closet!

I first moved to Indiana in 2008 and have lived around Fort Wayne off and on through the years. I permanently moved back to the city in 2016. I live with my long term boyfriend and our beautiful dog and our sometimes friendly two cats. My partner has a lot of family in the area and we both enjoy living in the city. I work for a local business that does screen printing and embroidery work. I also occasionally take commissions for other re-enactors needing new pieces of clothing, I am especially fond of making stays for the 18th and early 19th centuries. I am the secretary for Flax and Fleecers - the fiber guild of Fort Wayne which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year! And when I have time, I also sew, knit, crochet and spin yarn!

Check out page 10 where Lora share the process of preparing the Fort garden to grow flax that she and Connie will eventually spin and weave.

Preparing the Garden

In May, volunteers finished the process of getting the ground ready for planting the flax. Lora Browning shared the process with us.



Our garden plot had been a temporary storage place for construction, so there was a lot of cleaning to do first.

Once volunteers cleared it out, there was still a little weeding to get through!

Once that was complete, Connie Houck (with the help of several people who just happened to be walking through the Fort) was able to use the cultivator on the ground to finish preparing to plant it for flax.



When the ground was ready we finished preparing the seeds by removing the seed pods and any of the lighter plant material. The flax bed is now planted. Watch for updates on our Facebook page as the garden grows!



Photos courtesy of Lora Browning

2025 UPCOMING EVENTS

Public hours as listed below.

If you are interested in participating as a reenactor or vendor, please contact events@oldfortwayne.org for registration forms, or visit our website.



AUGUST 9-10: NAPOLEONIC DAYS

Saturday: 10 am–5 pm

Sunday: 10 am–4 pm

SEPTEMBER 7: BE A TOURIST IN YOUR OWN HOMETOWN

Sunday: Noon–5pm

OCTOBER 18: FRIGHT NIGHT LANTERN TOURS

Saturday: 6 pm–10 pm

Admission is \$5.00. Nine and under free when accompanied by an adult.

OCTOBER 25: WAYNE'S LEGION

GARRISON

Saturday: 10 am–5 pm

Sunday: 10 am–4 pm

DECEMBER 6: CHRISTMAS AT THE FORT

Saturday: 10 am–5 pm

If available, we post a schedule of activities prior to each event.

Always check our Facebook page and webpage for any updates or schedule



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Editor

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