



# FORT GREENE ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

HISTORIC FORT GREENE BROOKLYN

APRIL 2008

The Fort Greene Association is devoted to historic preservation, neighborhood and park enhancement, as well as cultural, economic, and housing advancement. To find out more, become a member, or to volunteer, visit our website [www.HistoricFortGreene.org](http://www.HistoricFortGreene.org)

## EXECUTIVE BOARD

Ursula Hegewisch  
Chair

Richard Norton  
Vice-Chair

Joan Bassin  
Treasurer

Susan Butler  
Corresponding  
Secretary

Fred Lasker  
Recording Secretary

## MEMBERS AT LARGE

Naomi Dickerson

Ruth Goldstein

dorris gains golomb

Joseph Gutleber

Roslyn Huebener

Mary Priebe

## ALTERNATES

Selma Jackson

Paul Palazzo

Jed Marcus

## Greene Grape

**Provisions** is proud to underwrite this issue of the Fort Greene Association Newsletter

## NEXT FGA MEETING:

Monday April 28 7:30 pm.  
Light refreshments at 7pm.

## LOCATION:

Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church, 85 S. Oxford St (Corner of S. Oxford and Lafayette Ave), entrance on S. Oxford St.

## TOPIC:

**Enjoy a variety of speakers on the subject of Community Supported Agriculture**

*All are welcome to attend, homeowners & renters alike.*

**Historical Re-enactor, Eleanor Labine, is organizing a full scale troop encampment in Fort Greene Park.**

Read her full story inside >



SAVE ADMIRAL'S ROW

By Howard Pitsch, former FGA Chair



Admiral's Row, Brooklyn Navy Yard  
Building E - 1859, Building F - 1960, Building G - 1861

Our heritage lies within the Admiral's Row houses at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. They served as homes for people of our country who defended our interests through a long course of battles in history. We must never forget that.

Now, some elected officials and the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation (BNY) want the Row houses demolished for a mega-supermarket with parking for up to 300 cars. We believe that is foolhardy and that the Row houses should be saved for adaptive reuse. An engineering report has found them to be "sound, level and plumb."

With over six acres at the site, and the houses on perhaps just two, that leaves four acres for a well-provisioned supermarket and parking for more than 100 cars. Think of the Key Food market at Fifth Avenue in Park Slope. It is well-provisioned with plenty of fresh produce, and parking for 80+ cars, all on about an acre and a half. Why then need we lose Admiral's Row? We avidly believe the houses should be saved, and have clarified our cause to the U.S. National Guard Bureau which aims to sell the site. The National Guard has the duty under the National Preservation Act to "consider multiple and viable alternatives" before transferring the property to BNY at a fair market price.

We have also contacted other developers to express their own proposals, both to save the Row houses and erect a supermarket. Please write to Senators Schumer and Clinton, Rep. Edolphus Towns and Mayor Bloomberg, to stress that the Admiral's Row houses be saved.

Original drawing by Lucy Sikes.

A Message from the FGA Chair

We have been hard at work the past few months organizing the upcoming Fort Greene Association House Tour which will take place on Sunday, May 4th. This will be the 29th FGA House Tour so over the years close to three hundred special people have opened their homes to give people from all over, a sense of the personal visions and creative style that makes Fort Greene such an interesting place to live. While the architecture in Fort Greene is beautiful but relatively homogenous, the variety of ways people have found to modify such similar floor plans and personalize their living spaces is really fascinating.

The House Tour, which happens every other year in Fort Greene, provides the large majority of our funding for the next two years. The FGA is a very efficient, all-volunteer organization so every year, after very modest operating expenses, we are able to put money directly back into the community through both our own initiatives and small grants to other worthy neighborhood groups. This is the first year I have been involved in this project and I must say that I

am deeply impressed [though not surprised] by both the commitment of my fellow volunteers and the willingness and generosity of those neighbors who have agreed to open their homes this year.

We are still looking for a few more house sitters for this year's tour. If you volunteer, not only will you still have plenty of time to see the rest of the houses on the tour that day but you will be invited to a special after party that evening. How can you say no? If you would like to volunteer please contact Fred Lasker at [flasker@verizon.net](mailto:flasker@verizon.net). For more information on the upcoming House Tour you can visit our website at: [historic-fortgreene.org](http://historic-fortgreene.org).

Finally, I would love to hear your input about the Fort Greene Association. Do you have constructive suggestions or ideas about neighborhood issues you think the Fort Greene Association should become involved in? Would you like to become more involved? Please email me at: [ursulahfg@yahoo.com](mailto:ursulahfg@yahoo.com). I look forward to reading your comments and seeing everyone at the House Tour on May 4th, noon to 5pm.

- Ursula Hegewisch, FGA Chair

Grants Past, Grants Present

Science Classes Promote Compact Fluorescents

The FGA Grant Committee with the Greene Ft. Greene Initiative arranged for a Compact Fluorescent Light Bulb Exchange/Giveaway at PS 46 recently. It was planned to coincide with Parent Teacher Day/Evening at the school.

The Science classes, and particularly the Environmental Club, put together flyers and manned the table to promote Compact Fluorescent Bulbs as a green alternative. Students brought their parents over to the table to explain why the bulbs were a better alternative. Every family left with a compact fluorescent bulb to replace one in their homes.

The close to 300 bulbs that were distributed over the course of their lifetime, save the energy currently used by 50 average apartments in the neighborhood over the course of one year.

Congratulation to PS 46 students for their contribution to a greener Fort Greene!



Last Year's Christmas Acknowledgement

As a follow-up to last years Christmas Dinners for the less fortunate of our neighborhood, the FGA delivered \$1605 in Pathmark Gift Cards for Christmas dinners to The Church of the Open Door, Church of St Michael and St. Edward, and Sacred Heart Church. In all, 80 families received this gift of food from the Fort Greene Association.

- A Thank You to Pathmark for the \$105 donation and discount that purchased dinner for an additional five families.

The FGA's gift to the environment for the holidays was to support the Fort Greene Conservancy's Mulchfest in Fort Greene Park. Mulch from the trees mulched on Saturday, Jan. 5th, was kept in the neighborhood, either in Fort Greene Park, or in the gardens and tree pits. Thanks to the Conservancy for hosting this event again this year.

- These good-works are made possible by proceeds of the Fort Greene House Tour. Please plan on going on the House Tour or volunteering to enable us to continue to support such efforts.

House Tour Sitters Wanted

Sit for 2 1/2 hours, take the tour for 2 1/2 hours, then attend a 6 o'clock benefit buffet for volunteers, with a \$10 donation. For information call Fred Lasker 718 875 1856 or at [flasker@verizon.net](mailto:flasker@verizon.net).

NEXT FGA MEETING:

Monday April 28  
7:30 pm. Light refreshments at 7pm.

LOCATION:

Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church, 85 S. Oxford St (Corner of S. Oxford and Lafayette Ave), entrance on S. Oxford St.

TOPIC:

A variety of speakers on the subject of Community Supported Agriculture

All are welcome to attend, homeowners & renters alike.

Reach hundreds of Fort Greene households in the mail, via email & on the web by underwriting the FGA Newsletter.

Next availability: Fall 2008.

Call for details: 347-224-6487.

Greene Grape

Provisions is proud to underwrite this issue of the Fort Greene Association Newsletter

## Revolutionary War Re-Enactment In Fort Greene Park

By Eleanor Labine, award-winning re-enactor organizer for the Centennial of the Martyrs Monument

When I heard that the Fort Greene Conservancy was looking for re-enactors to appear at the Centennial next November, my spine started to tingle and I knew I had to be a part of it somehow.

As I grew up in Brooklyn, whispered recollections about the Revolution still wafted through the streets. Some of my parents' friends could recall celebrating "Evacuation Day," a school holiday to commemorate the date the British finally released their stranglehold on New York City. I also clearly remember neighbors talking in hushed tones about the bones of sailors and soldiers that were uncovered when the Navy yard was built. So intense was their murmuring, so vivid did it seem in their recollection, that only recently did I realize they must have discussing the events of the 1860s! Or as another distant echo, my family would drive by a certain gas station on 4th Avenue, to speculate yet again whether or not it was actually the mass grave of the "brave Marylanders," 400 men who made a stand and died saving others during the Battle of Brooklyn. Is it any wonder then that I would ride the Staten Island Ferry with my brothers, playing at "Washington's Retreat" across the East River? I remember one cold, rainy day, when stubbornly, I refused to escape inside into the warmth of the cabin but stayed out there by the railing, salt spray in my hair, getting soaked to the skin, as if 200 years later, I could still somehow share in the sufferings that were Brooklyn's tragic start to the Revolution.

One might say, decades later, I'm still "play-acting" history at colonial re-enactments. I've brought water to the "wounded" on 100 degree battlefields, I've been "massacred" by Native Americans, I've been



Photo by Carey Kirkella.

sold at live auction, and danced inside a fort under a full moon, watched by who knows how many ghosts of things past... But, after all, we re-enact basically just the good stuff, right? The food, the music, the clothes, but without the death and disease from lack of medicine and basic good hygiene, without the slavery and the torture and the lack of human rights.

So is there any value in what re-enactors do? Well, our Borough President at the last FGA meeting reminded us all of the economic value of historical tourism. I might further suggest there is also an emotional or philosophic value to re-enactments. For myself, the more I read history, the less I am able to romanticize it. After all, it's hard to long for a time when 11,000 plus men and women were systematically starved to death on board prison ships. I believe that each age has its own unique challenges - or evils, even. Therefore, instead of each generation being surprised at the existence of human imperfections, history teaches us to simply step up to the plate and deal with them. It's our turn.

And so, with all the sensitivity I can bring to bear, I will honor the men and boys who on Fort Greene's hills dared to stand up to the greatest army of their day, remembering those who later were to make the ultimate sacrifice, dying on the prison ships and buried in unmarked graves. I will bring wool-clad soldiers, smoke-belching cannon, and prancing horses on patrol, and hopefully, by the end of the day, as fireworks explode over the Wallabout, like actors and actresses after the curtain is drawn, we can rest content knowing we have given the public some small sense of the real life and death drama that played out here on Fort Greene's hills so many years ago...

### HDC: Facing Increased Community Demand For Landmarks Protection

Fort Greene Association both receives and gives support to the Historic Districts Council (HDC). Founded as an advocate for New York City historical neighborhoods, HDC has been a wellspring of valuable contacts with public figures concerned with historical preservation, and it has been an advisor to FGA in its application to extend the Fort Greene Historic District. This proposed extended district would be contiguous with both the BAM Historic District and the proposed extended Clinton Hill Historic Districts, giving further protection from new development that is not contextual with our Brownstone community.

HDC Executive Director, Simeon Bankhoff, has visited Fort Greene several times, and he made a presentation at the joint FGA/Clinton Hill Society's initial landmarks meeting held at the Paul Robeson Theater last winter. His remarks concerned the expansion applications that both Fort Greene and Clinton Hill submitted to the Landmarks Preservation Commission for approval some six months ago through Councilmember Letitia James. We await LPC review and then public hearings regarding these applications.

At the 14th annual HDC Preservation Conference, held March 7-9, which several FGA Board members attended, it was learned that some 52 neighborhoods await LPC review of their applications, and that there may be a waiting period of two years or more for LPC review. Professor Andrew Dolcart, who attended the HDC conference and wrote the historical surveys of both Fort Greene and Clinton Hill which accompanied the LPC applications,

urged FGA members to work with local politicians to set up a meeting with LPC so that applications may be expedited. We thank HDC for its work and support.

### In Remembrance: Jane Collin, 1937 - 2008

Jane Hutchinson Collin died on March 2, 2008, at the Cobble Hill Nursing Home. She was 70 and had been ill for several years.

Chair of the Fort Greene Landmarks Preservation Committee in the mid-1970s, she coordinated the committee's research project which was the basis of Fort Greene's application for designation as an historic district.

Fort Greene was the largest area in New York to receive Historic District status when it finally was designated by the City's Landmark's Preservation Commission in 1977. It also was the poorest. When the commission balked at the difficulty of inventorying such a large district and enforcing new regulations in an area where some landlords ignored basic Building Department requirements, Jane presented the building inventory that the Commission itself would be required to compile. James Marston Fitch and Theo Prudon of Columbia University designed the research project, and Jane coordinated the efforts of 75 community residents working in the neighborhood, at the Buildings Department, and at the Brooklyn Historical Society.

Born in Des Moines, Jane graduated from the writing program at the University of Iowa, studied library science in Philadelphia, and earned an MBA from Columbia University before going to work at Standard and Poor's as an analyst. When the Fort Greene Landmarks project was

underway Jane was helping to renovate her home at 237 Clermont Avenue and to raise three sons.

A funeral service was conducted by The Rev. D. Stephen Muncie at Grace Episcopal Church, Brooklyn Heights, on March 8. Jane's ashes are to be buried at the Collin family's summer home on Mount Riga in northwest Connecticut. She is survived by her sons Daniel C. Collin of Seattle, Samuel H. Collin of Los Angeles, and Charles A. Collin of Brooklyn, and by four grandchildren.

### Farewells

**RODERIC SUTER** - Husband of Pinkie (Mary) Rockhill, 298 Cumberland Street, in February. Long time residents of and activists in Fort Greene, both could be seen often in the neighborhood, Pinkie with her ever-present hat. We send her our sympathy and wish her comfort.

**FEMI ALABI** - Recently, brother of Olanike Alabi who many in this area know. He was an Assistant Director of Residence Life at Morgan State University in Baltimore. Our condolences to Ms. Alabi in this loss.

**ALTHEA D. BUCHANAN** - A long-time resident of South Oxford Street, Althea D. Buchanan, sadly passed away on Thursday March 21, 2008. The Buchanan family has been on the block for over 55 years. Ms. Buchanan was the past Treasurer for South Oxford St. Block Association and her husband was a founding member of the South Oxford Street Block Association in 1951. She was also active in the Military during WWII.

**Greene Grape Provisions** is proud to underwrite this issue of the Fort Greene Association Newsletter

Reach hundreds of Fort Greene households in the mail, via email & on the web by underwriting the FGA Newsletter.

Next availability: Fall 2008.

Call for details: 347-224-6487.

**NEXT FGA MEETING:** Monday April 28 7:30 pm. Light refreshments at 7pm.

**LOCATION:** Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church, 85 S. Oxford St (Corner of S. Oxford and Lafayette Ave), entrance on S. Oxford St.

**TOPIC:** A variety of speakers on the subject of Community Supported Agriculture

*All are welcome to attend, homeowners & renters alike.*



# FORT GREENE ASSOCIATION

HISTORIC FORT GREENE BROOKLYN

**Next FGA Meeting: Monday April 28, 7:30 pm**

Light Refreshments at 7pm.

Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church, 85 S. Oxford Street (corner of S. Oxford & Lafayette Ave.)

Meeting Room, entrance on S. Oxford Street

## **TOPIC:** Enjoy a variety of speakers on the subject of Community Supported Agriculture

Box 170563, Brooklyn NY 11217-0563

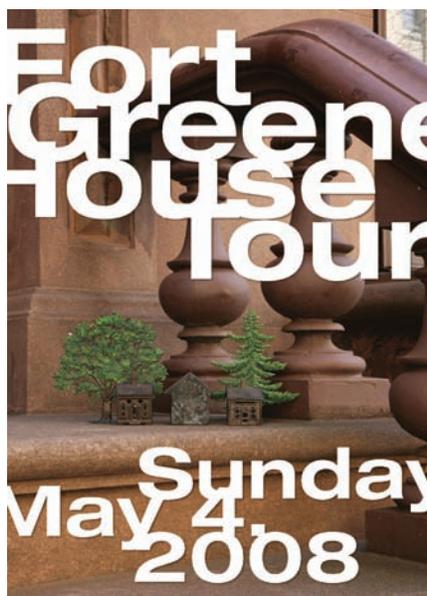
Pre-Sorted  
First Class  
US Postage  
PAID  
Brooklyn NY  
Permit #84

Reach hundreds of Fort Greene households in the mail, via email & on the web by underwriting the FGA Newsletter.

Next availability: Fall 2008.

Call for details: 347-224-6487.

**Greene Grape Provisions** are proud to underwrite this issue of the Fort Greene Association Newsletter



### **THE 29th FORT GREENE HOUSE TOUR**

**May 4, 2008, Noon to 5pm - Rain or Shine**

Experience a stunning array of architecture from wood-frame and Italianate brownstones, to extraordinary buildings containing contemporary art. Get a rare view inside the newly renovated Prison Ship Martyrs Monument, celebrating its 100th birthday in November. Enjoy a spectacular vista of Brooklyn from a modern viewing deck.

**Advance Tickets \$20**

Available Online at [www.fgabousetour.org/](http://www.fgabousetour.org/)

**Or in Fort Greene at:**

**BAM Box Office**, 30 Lafayette Ave., **Yu Interiors**, 15 Greene Ave., **Gnarly Vines**, 350 Myrtle Ave., **The Green Market**, DeKalb Ave. & Washington Park (Saturdays only), and the **Brooklyn Flea**, Lafayette Ave. at Clermont (Sundays only)

**Day of Tour Tickets \$25**

Are available in Fort Greene (cash only):

**BAM Garden**, Fulton St. at Lafayette Ave.,

**Brooklyn Flea**, Lafayette Ave. at Clermont

For more information contact Allen Hobbs or Ursula Hegewisch: 718-875-1855.