
Press Release

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VICTORIAN GAMES AT SMITHVILLE KICK OFF MANSION TOUR SEASON

Free Family Event Set for Sunday, May 1st

Burlington County Freeholders will kick off the annual tour season of the Historic Smithville Mansion by joining in a carefree afternoon of Victorian Games in the park on Sunday, May 1st, 2011, from 12 Noon to 4 PM, rain or shine.

Organized by the Burlington County Division of Parks in collaboration with the non-profit Friends of the Mansion, this new event will officially launch the 2011 tour season of the stately manor that is the centerpiece of Historic Smithville Park in Eastampton.

Built in 1840, the mansion is the former home of Hezekiah B. Smith, an inventor, entrepreneur and politician who founded the company town of Smithville in the late 1800s.

"This is a great opportunity for families to begin discovering or rediscovering our County parks," said Freeholder Director Bruce Garganio. "Our Parks staff is always looking for inventive ways to showcase the County's historic and natural assets, and with this event on the first of May, they've done it again."

During the tour season kick-off event, visitors will be invited to help recreate some of the outdoor enthusiasm of the Victorian era by playing a variety of games that Hezekiah, his wife Agnes Gilkerson Smith, friends and employees may have enjoyed when the Village of Smithville was an international center for the production of woodworking machinery and the Star Bicycle.

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Activities will include hopscotch, quoits, marbles, kick the can, hoops and sticks, jump rope, leap frog, badminton, tug of war, checkers, and of course, croquet. Played as both a recreational pastime and competitive sport, croquet involves hitting balls through hoops embedded in a grass playing court and was popular during the Victorian era when Smith's model industrial town thrived.

There is no cost to participate in the Victorian games, but anyone interested in playing croquet should call the Division of Parks at (609) 265-5858 to register for a time slot.

The afternoon event will also feature free carriage rides, live Victorian era music in the park's "event tent" and gazebo bandstand, free lessons in tea etiquette, and Victorian crafts. Tours of the mansion will be available that day for \$2, and Victorian tea with tea sandwiches and dessert in the mansion will be available for \$5. Refreshments will also be for sale.

In addition, the Smithville Mansion Annex Gallery will be open and there is no charge for admission. On display through May 31st, the Juried Victorian Art Show will feature still life and portraits that reflect a Victorian theme.

Visitors are also invited to tour the stately mansion that has been decorated with period furniture every Wednesday and Sunday at 1, 2, and 3 p.m. beginning May 4th through October. Offered by The Friends of the Mansion at Smithville, the non-profit group that raises funds to help restore and maintain the property, the tours cost \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors and \$3 for students. For more information, call (609) 261-3295.

Tea and Tours of the mansion also will be available on the last Wednesday of each month from noon to 2 p.m., May through October. The cost is \$20 per person and advance registration is required by calling (856) 767-3159.

Historic Smithville Park is located on Smithville Road in Eastampton, just three-quarters of a mile off Route 38. Admission and parking are free. For more information about the Victorian Games event, call (609) 265-5858. For more information about the mansion tours, visit www.smithvillemansion.org

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