

Tails & Tales

of the

Seneca Army Depot

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Message from the President by Dennis Money

Volume 2, Issue 1

- President's Letter 1
- "The Best Tour" 1
- Colonel Franklin Kemble 2
- A Buck for a Buck 3
- Atomic Annie
- Kendaia History 4
- New Logo-SWD
- "3000 Miles and 200 Deer Later" 5
- About Seneca White Deer 6

2009 will go down as a great one for showcasing the former Seneca Army Depot and how it can become a world class tourism destination. Over 3500 people attended the spring and fall tours while many more had to be turned away due to space limitations. From the active osprey, red-tail hawk and great horned owl nests of the spring, to the magnificent bucks and meeting 'Private Ryan' during the fall, the tours of the Depot provided a great blend of wildlife and military history. What a unique place it is!

For 2010, we have submitted a proposal to the IDA conduct more tours to accommodate everyone's needs along with possibly refurbishing the guard house on the West side of the Depot as a "Welcome Center". There is no guarantee for any of those options to be approved but we are hopeful that they will. Keep checking www.senecawhitedeer.org for updates. We will also notify all those who previously attended most likely by post card as we did for the fall tours if we do obtain approval for any tours.

On behalf of our Board of Directors and volunteers, we want to thank you so much for your support in 2009 and we truly hope you will continue to support the mission to conserve the natural resources and preserve the military history of this very special place, the Seneca Army Depot. Your continued letters of support to local and state politicians and your donations are very important if we are to be successful.

Thanks so much!

Best Tour of the Fall by Carl Patrick

When I checked in at the registration desk at the Varick Fire Department to see who was going to be on my next tour, I was at first delighted -- and then a little worried -- when I saw it would be the Romulus Red Hot Ladies. What was it about these ladies that made them "red hot" anyway? Just as my imagination was running wild, someone told me that I had misread the registration sheet and they were really the Red Hat Ladies.

Well, that was a different story! I was very familiar with the organization of women, generally over 50, who dedicate themselves to enjoying life in the fullest and wear red hats. I had a feeling this was going to be a good one (and a real test of my tour guide skills.) They were the most lively, most inquisitive and most responsive tour group I worked with all Fall. They were out for a good time and determined to get it.

Their interest in everything we saw, and their willingness to ask tough questions was remarkable! I think I was able to answer all their questions with enough accuracy to satisfy them. We had a great time and really got into some of the critical issues associated with protecting the white deer at the depot. If I ever had any doubts about the Red Hat Ladies or the value of our tours, they disappeared that afternoon. No doubt, it was the best tour of the Fall for me!



"Private Ryan" maintaining his composure with the Red Hat Ladies!

Colonel Franklin Kemble by Thomas J. Klotzbach

More than any other person, it is Colonel Franklin Kemble, Jr. who is responsible for the decision to protect the Seneca white deer. Kemble, a 1934 graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, was Depot Commander from 1956 until 1960 (the longest tenure of any commander at Seneca). Arriving in 1956, Kemble was faced with an immense project - that of construction of the North Storage Activity, an area that would be used to house "special weapons" (a euphemism for nuclear weapons).

The project was somewhat behind, but Kemble, along with Lieutenant Colonel R.C. Dailey, provided the leadership to get the project back on track. However, during the project, the deer population within the confines of the Depot continued to grow as it had been since 1941 when the Depot was constructed. Deer-vehicle accidents were being reported and the deer were outstripping the carrying capacity of the Depot habitat. In the winter of 1956-57, 10% of the deer population died due to starvation.

In the early spring of 1957, the New York State Conservation Department came to the Depot at Kemble's request to study the deer population. The report, authored by C.W. Severinghaus (who would go on to become one of the world's foremost experts on whitetail deer ecology), described the dire straits of the deer herd when he referred to the deer as nothing more than "living skeletons". Alarmed at the prospects of more deer starving and possible disease further impacting the herd, Kemble started to lobby the Conservation Department for permission to hunt the deer via a special hunting season. That approval came in late September of 1957.

For reasons still unknown, Kemble instructed the officers whom he placed in charge of the deer hunt to protect the few white deer still alive in a sea of 2,500 brown deer. In a September 30, 1957 memo, Kemble wrote "I understand there are still some white deer remaining and I hope you will instruct all hunters to refrain from shooting them." With that sentence, Colonel Franklin Kemble, Jr. put the white deer under the protection of Seneca Ordnance Depot.

There has been no information yet discovered explaining why Kemble made this decision. Certainly the deer were known at Seneca, where they had been seen since 1949. Kemble's September 30 memo mentions that there were "*still* (emphasis added) some white deer remaining", which suggests that some white deer had already perished, perhaps due to the recent starvation. That any white deer survived at all is amazing, given the large herd population of 2,500 deer and the poor condition of the herd and habitat.

Even after the fall 1957 deer hunt in which over 1,000 deer were taken, over 24% of the *remaining* herd starved to death during the winter of 1957-58.

Franklin Kemble made the decision to protect the white deer undoubtedly because he viewed the deer as unique - and because he could. Within the confines of the Depot, Kemble's word was essentially the law. A testament to this authority was the fact that the first deer hunt application makes no mention of white deer being off-limits to hunters. Kemble's directive in his September 30 memo was undoubtedly communicated to all Depot military and civilian personnel who participated in the hunt - and that directive was obeyed.

As the life of a career military member is one of moving to new assignments, in 1960, Colonel Kemble received orders for Mount Rainier Ordnance Depot in Washington, where he was Depot commander until he retired from active duty in 1962. After military life, he moved back to Greenville, South Carolina. Kemble taught mathematics for several years at Greenville Technical College. On April 21, 1985, he died and was buried in Greenville.



"Handsome Hank" photo taken during Fall, '09 tours

Today there are estimated to be over 25 million white tail deer in the United States which is a number far greater than when the Pilgrims landed.

(Continued on Page 5)

280mm Atomic Annie Artillery by Dennis Money

The first atomic artillery, nicknamed "Atomic Annie" was a 280mm cannon capable of firing artillery shells with tactical nuclear warheads. Twenty of the atomic cannons were produced at a cost of \$800,000 each. The weapon weighed over 83 tons, with cannon and carriage, or 50 tons in firing position, and was more than 80 feet in length, the largest mobile artillery ever built.

Gun crews could set the cannon up and be ready to fire in less than 15 minutes using hydraulic jacks and winches. The atomic cannon could be returned from firing position to traveling position also in 15 minutes, record time for any artillery of similar size. The huge gun is balanced on its nine foot circular base plate with jacks, enabling its crew (5 to 7 men) to move it through its full 360° traverse capability. The projectile and powder charge are loaded with the assistance of a power hydraulic ram.



280mm "Atomic Annie" Nuclear Field Artillery in firing position

It is reputed that the atomic shells for Annie were kept at the **Seneca Army Depot**. Each artillery shell had the same equivalent destructive power as the bombs dropped upon Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Atomic Annie was only fired once, in 1954, in Nevada. The magnitude of this solo firing was evidenced by North Korea coming to the peace table to end the Korean War. Today, only a few Atomic Annies remain as museum pieces at various military bases.

Give a Buck for a Buck!



**Can you help
Seneca White Deer, Inc.
by making a small
contribution?**

Please send your donation to:

Seneca White Deer, Inc.
c/o Dennis Money
4780 Deuel Road
Canandaigua, NY 14424

A deer can run over 40 mph, leap over an eight foot high fence and 'broad jump' over 20 feet!

A buck deer, the male, grows a new set of antlers each year starting in the spring. By September, he rubs his antlers on trees to shed the 'velvet' which reveals the hardened antlers. The antlers start to be shed usually in February of each year. Generally, the antlers of a buck continue to grow larger each year but this growth is also influenced by habitat quality and genetics.

Seneca White Deer, Inc.

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A Brief History of Kendaia by Ronald Enslow

Early in World War II over 100 Seneca County farm families were asked to give up their land for a munitions storage depot for the US Army. The land, soil, and location were just what the Army needed. It was chosen over 40 other sites. The nearest hamlet on the west was called Kendaia. It was so named for a Seneca Nation Chief who distinguished himself in battle against the French at Fort Niagara during the French and Indian War. The Indian village of Kendaia was two and half miles south of the Depot near the Lake shore. It had twenty long houses made of logs and bark roofs with many fruit trees and cultivated fields nearby. The village was destroyed by Gen. John Sullivan during the Revolutionary War as the Iroquois Indians (except the Oneida) fought with the British against the Americans. Early White settlers called it Appletown because of all the apple trees the Indians had. Kendaia was settled by veterans of the Revolutionary War. In 1941, Kendaia had a store, school, blacksmith shop, post office, two churches, assorted houses, and a cemetery. What happened when thousands of workers descended on the area with very little planning is a story for another time.

The Kendaia Cemetery's oldest listed burial was John Bainbridge on April 5th 1812. The cemetery is administered by the First Baptist Church of Kendaia Cemetery Association. Known as the Romulus Baptist Graveyard it is the only undisturbed site in the Seneca Army Depot. There are many weathered gravestones of revolutionary and civil war veterans under the shade of the maple trees. The families of those buried here had to get permission from the Army to visit the gravesites. This was usually granted on Memorial Day each year. If allowed to once again give tours in 2010, Seneca White Deer, with the necessary permissions, would like to stop at the old Romulus Baptist Cemetery to show people this historic site.

(works by Betty Auten & Helen Watrous were cited for this article)

**NEW LOOK FOR
SENECA WHITE DEER!**



LOOK FOR OUR NEW LOGO ON FUTURE NEWSLETTERS, LETTERHEADS AND BUSINESS CARDS! THANKS TO GRAPHIC ARTIST, MICHELE VAIR OF NEWARK FOR HER GREAT DESIGN FOR SWD, INC.

Deer don't see color like humans do, rather they sense color as degrees of brightness so that a blaze orange jacket looks like a bright white object, hence the need for hunters to break up the solid block of orange with another color or design.



Private Ryan and happy tour goers inside Igloo #A0604 during the fall tours sponsored by Seneca White Deer, Inc.

3000 Miles and 200 Deer Later by “Private Ryan”...(Ryan Spadafora)

After seven years of living in Los Angeles and toiling in the film industry, I decided that it was about time to get back to my roots, back to the place where I was born – The Finger Lakes. Piece by piece I sold what I could of the objects I had accumulated since relocating to Tinsel Town in 2003. There was the TV, the tables and lamps, the golf clubs, I’m keeping the skateboard, but some of the sunglasses can go, the loveseat, the bed, chairs – all gone. As the strangers from the strange land came and went with the things I’d collected, I thought of what might await me when I arrived back home. A few of the things I knew would be waiting for me: fresh water, deciduous trees, grass that grew without the aid of irrigation, and two lane roads. The list of things I was unsure of was quite a bit longer and included one item that seemed to flash like a warning light on the dashboard of my life: [A Job](#). Then Dennis Money contacted me.

3000 miles later I found myself dressed in Army fatigues posted outside of an old building I had recently learned was called an “igloo”. From what I knew of igloos they were supposed to be made of ice. Well, let me tell you it sure felt cold enough to snow in the chill of those early autumn hours, but as I write this and watch Canandaigua Lake freeze at the hands of January, I long for such warm temperatures as we had during the tours. However, that is a topic for another day. The topic for today is my experiences as a tour guide at the Seneca Army Depot.

The first thing I noticed while waiting for the tours to come through was the silence. After seven years of noisy cars, planes, earthquake rattles, and caffeinated actors talking about themselves, the absolute silence that blankets the depot was like a breath of fresh air. Also, it was literally a breath of fresh air – Los Angeles is home to some brutal smog. Yet, before I

completely rip Los Angeles to shreds, there were many positive things about the city that I took with me. One such thing was my experience on stage and in front of cameras there. Both of which helped to prepare me for the task of entertaining and informing the hundreds of people who showed up every weekend to catch a glimpse of nature’s beauty and some Army history as well.

Luckily Dennis had armed me with a couple of jokes to tell the tours along with a crash course on the history of the Depot. I was fascinated by something that I grew up merely 20 miles from, and yet never knew existed. I learned a lot during my time as a tour guide - most of it from those of you who came through and had actually spent time working and serving our country at the Depot as far back as the 1950s. It was a diverse cross section of people from ex-military to explosive experts to nuns.



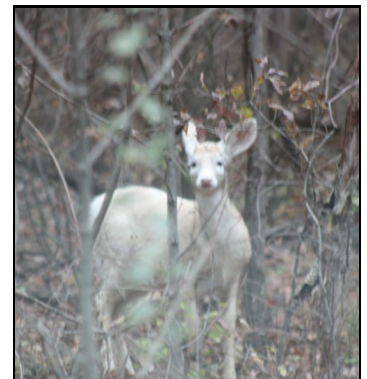
Private Ryan talks to the tour goers before they enter an igloo in the “Q” area

It was the Sisters of St. Joseph from Rochester that got me thinking about what the depot has come to represent to me: peace. I know what you’re thinking, “how can a place that powerful weapons called home for so long be a place of peace?” Well, they were stored there in the hopes that they would never be needed. Secured in igloos designed to hold them for the long haul, hopefully, the longest haul. Now that the weapons have been removed all that remain are the deer - white beacons of peace and prosperity. Let us hope that the depot can now store these precious creatures safely forever.

(Continued from page 2)

The white deer of Seneca Army Depot Activity are in existence and thriving to this day, due to the order of Colonel Franklin Kemble, Jr. over fifty-two years ago. If not for that order, the white deer would surely have been hunted in the fall of 1957 and perished. Colonel Kemble is indeed the father of the white deer of Seneca Army Depot - and we should be thankful for his decision to protect what has become an important part of military and wildlife history that continues to be enjoyed.

Thomas J. Klotzbach is the author of a research project "Cold War Artifacts: The White Deer of Seneca Ordnance Depot" which is currently out for peer review. He is pursuing a graduate history degree, with an emphasis on environmental history in militarized environments. A federal and state licensed bird bander, he participates in the Spring and Fall banding seasons at Braddock Bay Bird Observatory.



About Seneca White Deer, Inc.

Seneca White Deer, Inc. (SWD) a 501c(3) not for profit corporation, is committed to the preservation, development and display of the unique resources of the former Seneca Army Depot. The mission of SWD is to protect, conserve and educate the world re:

- *The life and habitat of the world's largest herd of white, whitetail deer (Odocoileus virginianus);*
- *The preservation of the vital role played by the Seneca Army Depot in the winning of the Cold War;*
- *The formation of a conservation park dedicated to protecting the world's largest herd of white deer.*

All donations to Seneca White Deer, Inc. are tax-deductible.



Seneca White Deer, Inc. President Dennis Money with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester after their fall tour of the Seneca Army Depot.

Visit us online at:

Senecawhitedeer.org

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