



The Marinus Willett Collections Management and Education Center



"In such country, blessed with so fine a soil, lying along a delightful river, which afforded an easy transportation of the produce to a valuable market, with a climate exceeded by none...which is in itself one of the first places perhaps upon this Continent may expect to be surpassed by none. Flourish it must. Nothing but the hand of tyranny can prevent it much longer from becoming the garden of America."

— Marinus Willett to George Washington about the Mohawk Valley, January 23, 1783

The Marinus Willett Center



The National Park Service is constructing a new facility that will enhance operations, museum collections management and education programs at Fort Stanwix



National Monument. Within the 13,700 square-foot Willett Center will be exhibits, audiovisual presentations, public event space, a bookstore and a climate-controlled museum collection storage area for

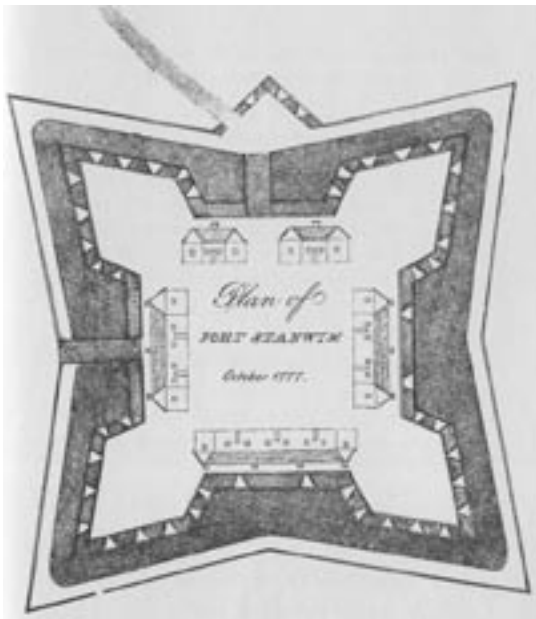
450,000 museum objects. This center will open to the public during 2005. The Willett Center represents a partnership with financial and other support from the National Park Service, the Oneida Indian Nation, New York State Department of Transportation, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Eastern National, Oneida County and the City of Rome.



Marinus Willett: A New York Patriot

Marinus Willett was born July 31, 1740, in Jamaica, New York. He began to resent the Crown while still a teenager after watching British marines on the streets of New York seizing conscripts to fight against France. Oddly enough, he joined the British Army and served in the French and Indian War, part of the time protecting settlers in the Mohawk Valley against enemy raiders.

As the revolution unfolded, Willett joined the Sons of Liberty despite the Loyalist leanings of his family. The late upstate author, Walter D. Edmonds, once described Willett as “a man of simple courage and singleness of purpose: he had faith in the American cause and unlike many of his brother officers was willing to put it above his own ambitions.” Perhaps that explains why Willett, Fort Stanwix’s second in command in 1777, led a sortie on British and



Map drawn by Marinus Willett

Indian camps while those forces were six miles away battling at Oriskany. He and another officer, soon afterward, crept through enemy lines to summon relief at Fort Dayton (Herkimer), 50 miles away.

After the war, Willett returned to New York City and served there as high sheriff and later as the city’s mayor. He died August 22, 1830, at the age of 90 and rests in the graveyard at Trinity Church in New York City.



Marinus Willett Profile
(courtesy Observer-Dispatch)
Painting (courtesy NY Metropolitan Museum of Art)

A Need Fulfilled

Fort Stanwix National Monument was established in 1935 but it was not until 1967 that a Master Plan was developed for the site. This plan was the basis for a major reconstruction effort that took place in the early 1970s and in 1976 Fort Stanwix National Monument was opened to the public. The original master plan was never fully realized when the fort opened to the public. A key piece missing was a visitor center. Additionally, the fort's artifact collection, recov-



ered prior to fort reconstruction, was far larger than anticipated in the 1967 Plan and has been temporarily stored in a tunnel under the eastern wall of the fort. Due primarily to the absence of the park visitor center that was proposed in the Master Plan, the park has inadequate space for a wide range of visitor orientation and support functions. The problem has become more acute, as essential park operations, especially visitor services, have expanded. The Willett Center will help alleviate these problems and give the National Park Service adequate space for proper care and treatment of the museum collection, visitor orientation, and interpretive and educational programs.



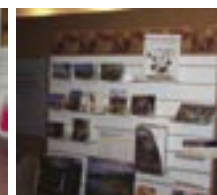
Preserving Our Heritage

Fort Stanwix National Monument stands proudly in the heart of downtown Rome, New York. The fort was crucial to the outcome of the American Revolution and the fort's reconstruction was developed with great fanfare and enthusiasm in the early 1970s. Much has changed since the Monument's opening over 25 years ago. What has not changed is the need for the National Park Service to share our passion and knowledge of the sites under our care with the public. National Parks are truly the gateways to every American's heritage. The Marinus Willett Center represents a tremendous opportunity for the National Park Service to enhance stewardship of our shared past and the visitor experience at Fort Stanwix.



The design of the Marinus Willett Center reinterprets the use of traditional materials in a new context and reinforces the materials origins to both Fort Stanwix and the City of Rome. The exterior materials selection of cedar siding with natural cleft Mohawk Valley blue stone base was chosen to anchor the building's mass into the natural landscape surrounding the fort. Timber framing in both the interior and exterior of the facility relates the appearance to the timber construction of the fort. The zinc coated copper shingle roofing pays homage to Rome with its historic use of the material as well as being a major supplier of the material. The design intent was to reinterpret the use of these traditional materials in a new context, reinforcing their historic origins to Fort Stanwix and the City of Rome.

Credit: Oneida Indian Nation





National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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