



Jamestown Historical Society

HERITAGE

Fall 2003

To promote interest in and preserve the heritage of Conanicut Island.

The Town of Jamestown Celebrates its 325

On Saturday, September 20, Jamestown celebrated the 325th anniversary of its incorporation, and the Jamestown Historical Society joined in the festivities. Our primary contribution was a time line that narrated the events that have shaped Jamestown – both the monumental, like the invasion of the British in 1775, and the decidedly local, like the paving of Narragansett Avenue in 1899.

To create the time line, Jane Miner built on John Howard's 100-year time line developed for the Y2K festivities, bringing it up to date and prepending the first 222 years. Bill Burgin divided the half-mile from Four Corners to the East Ferry into equal segments, and paper posters with the time line events were taped to the sidewalk. The complete Time Line was published in the Souvenir Program.



Joe Logan, Jane Miner, Bill Burgin, and Linda Warner taped the time line to the sidewalk.

The time line was a big hit. "You can take a walk through Jamestown's history," Mike Swistak, president of the Chamber of Commerce, told *The Newport Daily News*. Several people expressed regret that the markers were removed so quickly after the celebration. The quick removal was necessary to prevent permanent stains on the walk.



Jim Buttrick autographed *Images of America: Jamestown* at the 325th Anniversary celebration

The Society, along with other Jamestown organizations, was also represented at the East Ferry. Jamestown Historical Society memorabilia at the booth included mugs, trivets, and Conanicut Battery caps. Jim Buttrick spent three hours talking about his *Images of America: Jamestown* and autographing copies for enthusiastic purchasers, while Pud Connelly and Rosemary Enright handled sales.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Bill Burgin

Another event filled summer reminds us of the many benefits the Society provides for the community: the annual flag raising at Conanicut Battery; the tour of Rhode Island mills; the History Cruise around Rose and Gould Islands narrated by the Charlotte Johnson and Captain Frank Snyder; the Annual Meeting with a fascinating slide show by the ever entertaining artist and lecturer Richard Governor; and the summer wrap-up hit – the House Tour of three Bevins Houses on Newport Street. Many thanks to Janie Harris and Jane Bentley, the Program Committee Chairs, for their hard work!

In addition to all the special events, this summer's miserable soggy beginning brought out record attendance at the Windmill and Museum.

The Society participated in the celebration of 325th anniversary of Jamestown's incorporation as a town in 1678. A half-mile long time line was laid down on the pavement from Four Corners to East Ferry, along the parade route. Many thanks to Jane Miner who extended John Howard's 100-year time line, covering 1900 to 2000, by another 225 years.

This summer saw the publication of *Images of America: Jamestown*, a wonderful book of photographs of historic Jamestown. Jim Buttrick selected and captioned the photos – most of them from the Society extensive collection – with the help of our indefatigable Archivist Mary Miner and Rosemary Enright, Publications Chair.

We are also looking forward to a new book by Sue Maden, *The Building Boom In Jamestown, Rhode Island, 1926-1931*. The Society was able to help Sue in obtaining a grant for her research from the Rhode Island Foundation. Many of the historic

photographs in the book are from the Society's collections. Other pictures were collected and digitized by Dick Allphin, while Tom McCandless photographed the still standing structures to bring their history up to the present. These new photos will be added to the Society's collection for use by future historians.

At our annual meeting in August, Jane Miner was elected to the job of Secretary. We will miss Marcia Glassie, our hard working Secretary for over 3 years. Jane will continue as the chair of our Membership committee. John Howard, who returns after his year-long vacation from the Board, replaces Harry Wright, whose term expired this year. The Board will miss Harry's sharp wit and constructive banter. Joe Logan was reelected to serve another 3-year term. Joe, who is Chair of Buildings and Grounds and member of many committees, is indispensable.

Speaking of indispensable, it is our volunteers who make this organization run and flourish. If you are interested in volunteer work with the Society or in working with the board, please don't hesitate to give me a call at 423-2033.

Planning is underway for Summer 2004 events. Varoujan Karentz is heading up a team to put together a colorful flag exhibit at the museum. He is looking for historic Jamestown flags and unique flags that have flown in Jamestown, so please let him know if you have or know of any such flags. Our Program Committee chairs, Janie Harris and Jane Bentley, are always on the look out for new ideas; they would love to hear from any of you.

Enjoy your winter and look forward to next year's programs.

Collections Committee

By Linda Warner

Another summer is over at the museum and how quickly it went by. The museum was open 46 days from June 25 until August 31. Over 300 people enjoyed the C.L. Bevins exhibit, which was arranged by Jim Buttrick. The ongoing exhibit of Ferry memorabilia also excited great interest.

During August, our new book, *Images of America: Jamestown*, by Jim Buttrick, was available at the museum. Many people came in to buy copies, especially on August 30 when Jim was the museum host and signed each copy purchased with a personalized dedication.

Next year the museum will be decked out in flags and pennants. Varoujan Karentz, ably assisted by John Howard and Joe Logan, is designing a display



Curator's Comments

By Elizabeth Connelly

We hope that most of you had an opportunity to visit the Jamestown Library during the month of September and saw the great display Nancy Logan put together in the entry hall case for the celebration of the 325th anniversary of the town's incorporation. The artifacts and ephemera presented commemorated past celebrations in the community.

Among the pamphlets and programs were those celebrating the town's 250th anniversary in 1928, its 300th anniversary in 1978, and the 50th anniversary of the USO in 1992. The USO was in the building that we now use as the Recreation Center. The

of flags that have flown over Jamestown. In addition to town flags, the display will have pennants from the ferryboats, flags from foreign countries with Jamestown connections, and a colorful assortment of military flags.

Our thanks to our president, Bill Burgin, who took on the time consuming task of setting up the host schedule. Also we want to thank all the hosts who make it possible for the museum to be open. We would love to add your name to the following list:

Dick and Joyce Allphin, Jane Bentley, John Biddle, Leo Brown, Bill Burgin, Jim Buttrick, Pud Connelly, Alma de la Ronde, Rosemary Enright, Marcia Glassie, Emma Graham, Brookie Harding, Caroline Head, Dick Hines, John Howard, Varoujan Karentz, Bob Kinder, Mark Lancaster, Anne Lane, John and Teddy Leyon, Anne and Bruce Livingston, Joe Logan, Sue Maden, Jane Miner, Mary Miner, Sav Rebecchi, Charlotte and Victor Richardson, Helen Richardson, Walter Schroder, Betty Ann Taylor, Carol Todd, Dennis and Mary Webster, Harry Wright, and Helen Zartarian.

exhibit included a 1946 pamphlet celebrating the return of veterans that was probably distributed at the Rec Center.

A T-shirt celebrating the opening of the Jamestown Verrazzano Bridge in 1992 was also on display. These were available to everyone who walked across the bridge during the celebration before the bridge was opened to vehicular traffic. There was also a medal commemorating the event displayed.

These are but a few of the items that made this a very interesting exhibit. Thanks again to Nancy for her hard work.

Susan White Pieroth, whose family was living on Jamestown in 1954, has sent us digital copies of pictures of Hurricane Carol, which hit the island that year, to add to our collection.

Program Committee

By Janie Harris & Jane Bentley

MILL TOUR

In mid June, the Jamestown Historical Society hosted a wonderful four-mill tour. We started at the Jamestown Windmill where, despite the soggy ground and threat of rain, Andy Shrake put up the sails. He conducted a tour of the mill and answered many questions about his restoration work and the mill's design and operation.



Andy Shrake explained how the Jamestown windmill was restored and how it works.

Then our group of more than 20 – followed by some hangers-on in their own cars – boarded the motor



The millpond above the sluices for the water wheels that power the Saunderstown mills reflected an almost cloudless sky.

coach and headed for the Gilbert Stuart Museum in Saunderstown. There we toured the first snuff mill in America and the Benjamin Hammond Grist Mill, built in 1662. Both of these mills are water powered. As we toured the grounds and the mill, the sun broke through, giving us a perfect day.



Paul Drumm explained the mechanics and economics of running a small independent flourmill.

We hopped back on the bus and our next stop was the Kenyon Grist Mill in Usquepaugh. After the tour of this still active mill, we enjoyed jonnycakes, smothered in syrup and cooked to crisp perfection by Dick Donnelly. Dick also entertained us with stories of Jamestown and its characters, past and present.

After our feast we returned to Jamestown, many of us with Kenyon Mills corn meal, jams, and jellies in our satchels, and plans for our own jonnycake extravaganzas in our heads.

Sunset History Cruise of Rose Island and Gould Island aboard *The Spirit of Newport*

On August 9, about 100 hearty souls boarded *The Spirit of Newport* for a “sunset cruise” despite the threat of bad weather. Thankfully, the bad weather never materialized although a delicious spread of sandwiches, cheeses, sushi, and confections did. After we sipped and munched we enjoyed a leisurely and informative tour of Rose Island and Gould Island.

While we twice circled Rose Island, Charlotte Johnson, Executive Director of the Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation, talked about the Revolutionary War history of Rose Island and its role in the defense of Narragansett Bay through the first and second World Wars. She also discussed the island's natural history and the efforts in the 1980s to prevent development on the island. She encouraged us to support the Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation (www.roseisland.org).

Next we cruised northward while Captain Frank Snyder (USN, Ret.), Professor Emeritus at the Naval War College, presented a fascinating discussion of the history of Gould Island, especially its military use over the past 100 years. A Gould Island Chronology based on his lively talk is included as an insert in this newsletter.

We cruised home across the beautifully moonlit bay.

HOUSE TOUR

The Jamestown Historical Society House Tour on September 6 was a huge success. It was a gorgeous Jamestown fall day, and over 170 visitors turned out.

The three houses we visited were all designed by Charles L. Bevins between 1886 and 1888. After Jim Buttrick's successful museum exhibit and paper introducing us to Bevins's architecture in Jamestown, it was exciting to be able to enter and walk through three of his Dumpling area homes.



***The Boulders* in 1890. An early picture of one of the houses visited on the house tour.**

Newport Street was hopping from 10 till 2 in the afternoon and no one who turned out for the event was disappointed. While each of the houses had wonderful views, unusual architectural features, and a special charm that delighted everyone, each was different and distinctive.

The Boulders retains a summer cottage feel that speaks clearly of its roots in the Jamestown vacation community. *Eglesfeld*, the oldest of the houses, shows how delightfully the old can be blended with comforts of modern life. At *Channel Bells*, the owners entertained the tour guests with music from their extensive collection of 19th and early 20th century musical devices.



The carousel and one of the musical automatons housed in the modern addition at *Channel Bells*.

Thank you to all who helped to made the day a success: David Bentley, Bill Burgin, Pud Connelly, Rosemary Enright, Marcia, Allie, and Georgia Glassie, Dick Hines, Nancy and Joe Logan, Sue Maden, Jane Miner, Linnea Peterson, Carroll Pruell, Helen Richardson, and Linda Warner. And a very special thank-you to the owners of these extraordinary homes for allowing us to visit.



***The Boulders* today.**

Windmill Committee

By Linnea Petersen

The 2003 summer season at the mill began on June 14 when 27 people toured our mill as part of the Jamestown Historical Society's Mill Tour Day. Brookie Harding and our millwright, Andy Shrake, explained the operation of the mill and answered many questions asked by the group.

The mill remained open on Saturdays and Sundays through August 31 and we had 273 visitors who signed our guest book. There were three wedding ceremonies that asked the Board's approval to use the grounds and, I'm told, "a few more" that did not request our permission. When my husband and I went to close the mill on September 21, we discovered rose pedals scattered about from a recent ceremony.

We also had five visitors that day, four from Ohio and one from Jamestown. The person from Jamestown has lived here 10 years and this was her first trip to the mill. After the tour, she gave me her name and asked that I put her on the list of volunteer docents to be called next summer! If you would like your name added to the list, please call me at 423-1820. It is a beautiful and serene place to spend three hours on a weekend afternoon. Perhaps we could even extend our season!

I would like to thank to all the mill docents, who this year were: Jane Bentley, Whit Brown, Jim Buttrick, Ennis Chestang, Bob Connelly, Jim Dodge, Rosemary Enright, Marcia Glassie, Brookie Harding, John and Lee Howard, Bob Kinder, John and Teddy Leyon, Sue Maden, Kathy Maloney, Jane Miner, Paul Petersen, Skip and Jan Walls, and Dorothy Zenie. Your reliability and willingness to give your time is very much appreciated.

Buildings and Grounds Committee

By Joe Logan

We are still assured that the Town will install a new roof on the Museum building. The work has started, but has been delayed by tree trimming and other town priorities.

The stone wall at the Windmill was rebuilt in two places where it had collapsed.

At the Meeting House, we were advised by the State Historic Preservation Commission that the dampness in the crawl space could probably be eliminated by installing a "french drain" to divert water from the foundation toward the road. During the summer, in preparation for the excavation, an archaeological study was done by Rick Greenwood and Pierre Montanon. They found no artifacts associated with Native Americans, but did find some expected small items associated with the building such as old glass pieces and old nails. Arthur Clarke completed the drain and landscaping in late October.



Archaeologist Rick Greenwood working at the Friends Meeting House

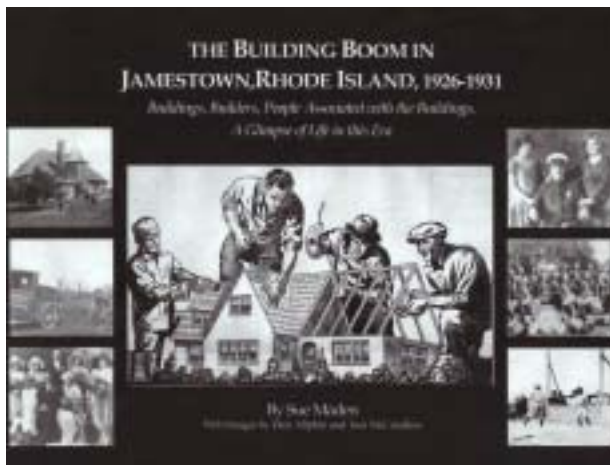
Matt Labonte is removing stumps in the lawn surrounding the building. Chemical treatment of the woodwork inside the building has been done to stop further powder post beetle damage.

Publications Committee

By Rosemary Enright

Arcadia Press released *Images of America: Jamestown*, by James C. Buttrick with the Jamestown Historical Society, in late July. You can buy this book of 222 photographs, 186 from the Society's collection, at many stores in Jamestown and at bookstores throughout Rhode Island. *Images of America: Jamestown* makes a great Christmas gift especially for friends and relatives who no longer have the good luck to live here.

As a member of the Society, you get a 15% discount if you buy your copies directly from the Society. The books will be on sale at our table during the Holiday Craft Fair on Saturday, December 6. Or call Rosemary Enright at 423-2674 or Linda Warner at 423-1278 to order your copies.



December 5 is the expected publication date for *The Building Boom In Jamestown, Rhode Island, 1926-1931: Buildings, Builders, People Associated With The Buildings, A Glimpse Of Life In This Era*, by Sue Maden with Images by Dick Allphin and Tom McCandless. Sue's book uses the *The Newport Daily News* building supplements of the era to initiate a serious, absorbing narrative about Jamestown's growth. Her final chapter looks back at the period from our perspective, 75 years later.

Conanicut Battery Report

By John Howard

Conanicut Battery on Prospect Hill is in good shape. The unusually wet summer did produce more grass and woody growth than we expected, but the field, paths and battery site have now all been cut and trimmed. By agreement with the town, the Highway Department mows the field while a private contractor, presently Mike Dutton, treats the battery site itself with hand carried tools. We don't want wheeled vehicles on the somewhat fragile banks of the redoubt itself.

There have been no further instances of vandalism since two signs had to be replaced. Visitors will notice that the two sides of the gateway sign have been covered with sheets of Lucite plastic, which can be replaced at little cost, if necessary. Unfortunately, the other three signs don't lend themselves to this protection.

The park is remarkably free of litter, certainly a credit to the regular and frequent users who no doubt are picking up whatever trash they come upon. There are many anonymous Defenders of the Battery out there, and we thank you all.

The Battery Subcommittee of the Buildings and Grounds Committee now comprises the following active members: Lisa Bryer, Janie Harris, Tom McCandless, Larry McDonald, Ken Newman, Dennis Webster, and myself. The Friends of Conanicut Battery continues as a dues-paying subset of the Society and includes those with a particular interest in preserving the site. All funds collected in the name of the Friends are segregated and used only for Battery purposes. We expect to continue to raise money to help with annual maintenance, add to the endowment, and perhaps to fund specific improvement projects.

**Officers and Directors
2003 – 2004**

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