



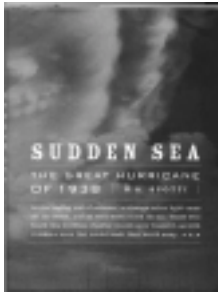
Jamestown Historical Society

HERITAGE

Spring 2004

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

Sudden Sea Author to Speak at Annual Meeting



“On September 21, 1938, the fastest hurricane on record caught the Northeast by surprise and left a wake of death and destruction across seven states. Traveling at record speeds, the storm raced up the Atlantic coast, reaching New York and New England ahead of hurricane warnings and striking with such intensity that seismographs in

Alaska registered the impact. Winds, clocked at 186 miles per hour, stripped cars of their paint. Walls of water fifty feet high swept homes and entire families out to sea.”

(From the book jacket of *Sudden Sea: The Great Hurricane of 1938*.)

Jamestown sat directly in the path of that violent storm in September of 1938. The families and features of Jamestown are a major focus of much of R. A. Scotti’s gripping and heart-wrenching account of the hurricane in her widely acclaimed book, *Sudden Sea: The Great Hurricane of 1938*, released last year. Drawing on an extensive range of personal interviews, newspaper articles, and other references, including a variety of resources provided by the Jamestown Historical Society, Ms. Scotti draws a vivid and tragic account of the storm and its toll on Jamestown, coastal Rhode Island, and all of New England.

Join us on September 2 at 7 PM for this year’s Jamestown Historical Society Annual Meeting when Ms. Scotti, as our guest speaker, will discuss her book. Ms. Scotti is a former *Providence Journal* journalist and the author of numerous novels and thrillers.

This year’s meeting will be held at the Portuguese American Club on Narragansett Avenue and will be followed by a wine and cheese reception during which Ms. Scotti will be available to sign copies of her book. Everyone is encouraged to bring photographs or other artifacts concerning the Hurricane of 1938, to share with others during the reception.



Photographs in the Jamestown Historical Society collection, including this one of the *Governor Carr* aground north of the harbour, are vivid reminders of the 1938 hurricane.

Summer Program 2004

Saturday, June 12

BATTERY DAY

Conanicut Battery, 11 AM

Jamestown Band will accompany the raising of the British, French, and American flags, while the Newport Artillery offers cannon salutes.

Saturday June 19

WINDMILL DAY

Jamestown Windmill and Quaker

Meetinghouse

10 AM – 2 PM

The windmill opens for the summer. Enjoy the food, music, and games. Jonnycakes prepared by Dick Donnelly. Guided tours of the windmill and the Quaker Meetinghouse.

Sunday, June 20

Jamestown Windmill Begins Summer Hours

Windmill will be open from 1 to 4 PM, Saturday and Sunday through August.

Wednesday, June 23

Jamestown Museum Opens

Museum hours 1 to 4 PM, Wednesday through Sunday through August. Summer exhibition: *Flags over Jamestown*. Docent orientation on June 23rd at 1 PM.

Saturday, July 10

SUNSET HISTORY CRUISE

Leaving from East Ferry

7 PM – 10 PM

Cruise up the Bay on the *Spirit of Newport* and learn about the history of Prudence Island from Joseph Bains, Vice President of the Prudence Island Historical Society. Reservations required. Tickets \$35 per person, hors d'oeuvres included. Cash bar.

Sunday, August 29

Jamestown Museum and Windmill Close

Last day to visit the Jamestown Museum or the Windmill until June 2005.

Thursday, September 2

ANNUAL MEETING

PAC, 7:00 PM

Election of officers and Board of Directors for 2004-2005. Featured Speaker will be R. A. Scotti, author of *Sudden Sea: The Great Hurricane of 1938*. Wine and Cheese reception follows.

Saturday, September 11

HOUSE TOUR

10 AM - 2 PM

This year's house tour includes three late 19th and early 20th century houses in the Walcott Avenue / High Street area. Tickets \$15.

Jamestown Bridge Featured

The history of the Jamestown Bridge will be featured on NBC's *Timelines*. The show will air on Thursday, May 27 at 7 PM and again on Sunday, June 13 at 11 AM on WJAR Channel 10. Jamestown's Sue Maden was interviewed for the segment.

Timelines' two other segments in this show tell the stories of the U.S.S. Bennington, an aircraft carrier where a

deadly explosion took place 50 years ago, and the zeppelin Hindenburg.



**Sue Maden, on camera for
*Timelines***

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Bill Burgin

Your hard-working Jamestown Historical Society directors and volunteers have been busy. They have installed a brand new exhibit, *Flags Over Jamestown*, at the museum. A new and always fun Windmill Day is planned. A 3-hour History Cruise to Prudence Island features a talk by the vice president of the Prudence Island Historical Society. The inexhaustible Jane Bentley has organized a terrific new house tour. And a lecture by R.A. Scotti, the author of *Sudden Sea*, the spellbinding account of the '38 hurricane, will make the 2004 annual meeting the most exciting ever.

For details on the activities, see the individual committee reports in the newsletters.

Janie Harris, our program committee co-chair, and John Howard from the Friends of the Battery are spearheading a project that will create interpretive signage at Jamestown's many military sites. The signage will identify and provide some history for the various sites as well as link the sites together by cross-references and uniform presentation. The history of Jamestown's military installations, beginning with the Conanicut Battery, has been so fragmented that it is almost unrecognizable. This new effort by the Society, in consort with the associations working for the preservation of Fort Getty and other military sites on the island, will preserve that history and refresh our memories of Jamestown's past.

This winter Nancy Logan took the time (in a very cold building) to inventory our many books at the Museum. This inventory has enabled the beginnings of a catalog that will eventually be accessible at the museum and at the library. And speaking of hardworking Logans. Joe Logan has had the plaster work repaired at the Friend's Meetinghouse and has

designed some new shelving to be installed at the Museum to safely store and organize our collection.

You may have read about it in the *Jamestown Press*, but do look in the *2004 Yankee Magazine Travel Guide to New England* to see our museum featured as a place to visit. The recommendation focuses on our permanent ferryboat exhibit, so *Flags over Jamestown* will be a welcome surprise to our off-island visitors. To volunteer as a docent at the museum, call 423-3474 or attend the museum opening on June 23rd.

It would take many paragraphs to thank all of our volunteers who work so hard on our many programs but there is one volunteer who deserves many thanks for her hard work not only on this newsletter but on all of our publication efforts. During the past year, Rosemary Enright has managed to work with two authors, negotiating contracts and permission, proof reading, and even helping in selling the books.

Finally, welcome to the following new members who joined the Society during 2003: Andrea Adams, Anne DeStefano and Toby Alterman, Anthony and Rita Antine, Patricia Buckley, David Fuquea, Edward and Madeleine Gromada, The Michael Hanners Family, Peter Hull, Richard Hull, Polly Hutcheson, Jim and Gwen Keller, Larry and Mary McDonald, Lawrence McDonald, Jr., Susan Plowden, Bill Salmons, Bill and Mimi Sharpe, Raymond and Cynthia Smith, Bill and Jane Sprague, Terrence Sullivan, Mark and Deborah Swistak, George Taylor, Joan Thompson, and Richard Wilson. And for our long-time members, see the back page of the newsletter for dues information.

I hope you enjoy this very busy and exciting summer brought to you by our busy volunteers.

Program Committee

By Janie Harris & Jane Bentley

The Program Committee has planned three exciting events for your summer. We hope you can join us for all of them.

June 19, WINDMILL DAY

On Saturday, June 19th, the Jamestown Historical Society will be showing off the recently renovated Windmill and the Quaker Meetinghouse. The festivities from 10 AM to 2 PM include music by *The Parallel String Band*, games for the kids, and tours of both buildings. Both Andy Shrake, the restorer of the windmill, and our local windmill expert, Brookie Harding, will be on hand to guide us through the windmill and answer questions. Bill Smith and Harry Wright will be available at the Quaker Meetinghouse to explain its history and current use.

The day's events will be highlighted with Jonny Cakes prepared by "Mr. Jonny Cake" himself, Dick Donnelly.

Parking will be available across the street at Hodgkiss Farm. So come join the fun, food, and friends for free. See you there!



July 10, SUNSET HISTORY CRUISE

The History Cruise is back by popular demand and this year's cruise promises to be fun for all! We plan to leave the docks at East Ferry at 7 PM on Saturday, July 10, aboard the *Spirit of Newport* and head for Prudence Island. Joseph Bains, Vice President of the Prudence Island Historical Society, will be our featured speaker as we circumnavigate the Island and learn of its past.

Mr. Bains plans to report on the Revolutionary War activity on Prudence Island and discuss the history of its Sandy Point Lighthouse, originally built on Goat Island in Newport and later transported to Prudence. He also will relate interesting facts about the natural history of our six-mile long, three-mile wide Island neighbor.

Mr. Bains, author of *The Prudence Inn Land*, a book about the history and land stewardship activities on Prudence Island, has been involved with the Prudence Island Historical Society since it was established in 1983. He also serves on the Board of Directors of Prudence Conservancy, an island based land trust. His parents were full-time residents of Prudence Island and he spent his early years there and attended its one-room schoolhouse.

Once again, Catering Concepts will provide a bounty of delicious sandwiches, scrumptious hors d'oeuvres, and flavorful confections. The *Spirit of Newport* will provide a cash bar.

Tickets are \$35 per person. Reservations are required. You can reserve your tickets by sending your check, made out to the *Jamestown Historical Society*, to Elizabeth Connelly, 169 America Way, Jamestown. To reserve your place on the cruise, please mail your check by July 1.

If you have questions, call 423-3474.

September 11, HOUSE TOUR

Our annual House Tour takes place Saturday, September 11, from 10 AM to 2 PM. Of the three houses on the tour this year, two – the Cahoon cottage and the Horgan cottage – were scheduled for demolition and were brought back to life and renovated by their present owners. The Historical Society is very excited about showing you the results of these historical conservation efforts.



15 High Street

The Cahoon cottage at 15 High Street was designed by Charles L. Bevins for Stephen Cahoon of New York City. The builder, Robert Curry, is reported to have framed the house in Newport before bringing the lumber over to Jamestown in November of 1895. The house remained in the Cahoon family until 1918, when it was bought by Lydia Gilmore, who kept it for only three years. Mrs. Gilmore also owned the cottage down the hill from her on the Cliff Walk.

The Horgan cottage at 6 Walcott Avenue is one of a pair of cottages built as summer rentals for Patrick



6 Walcott Avenue

Horgan of Newport. One home was built in 1901 and the other in 1910. We are not sure which came first. Patrick Horgan was the owner of the Thorndike Hotel, which stood where the Bank of Newport is now. He maintained a number of rental cottages in the area, among which were the Sister Houses at 17, 19, and 25 Walcott Avenue; *Driftwood* at 2 Walcott Avenue; *Hilltop* and *Whitewood* at 44 and 50 Walcott Avenue; and *Shingleside* at 10 Lincoln Street.



22 Old Walcott Avenue

The Howland House at 22 Old Walcott Avenue, was designed in 1874 for John Howland of Jamestown by George C. Mason, a prominent Newport architect. The house featured a handsome front porch on the ground level and an elaborate hooded balcony opening off of the second floor. Above the balcony, quaint dormers flanked an imposing tower. Lacy ironwork outlined the roofline. The porch is now gone, the ornate tower has been replaced by a smaller, simpler dormer, and the original dormers have lost some of their Victorian elegance. The balcony, also, is gone, but its hood remains as a last bit of Victorian splendor.

The house, completed in the spring of 1875, was undoubtedly the most elegant house on the island at that time. Mr. Howland's house appears to have become a boarding house after his death, in 1882. Purchased in 1895 by Lyman Tiffany of Washington, DC, it was his summer residence for about 15 years. After Mr. Tiffany's death his family made it available as a summer rental property known as *Fairacre*. In 1925, it became one of the Horgan properties. Mr. Horgan rented it for several summers to the family of Meyer Davis, the society orchestra leader. Between 1951 and 1970, Arthur Washburn, Sr. maintained it as a funeral home.

Tickets for the tour are \$15 per person and you can purchase tickets on the day of the tour at any one of the houses.

Collections Committee

By Linda Warner

Our annual summer exhibit in the museum this year is *Flags over Jamestown*, featuring flags that have been part of the island's history from early times to the present day. The exhibit showcases not only flags from our Society's collection, such as our 36-star American flag, but a wide variety of flags that have flown over Jamestown: early colonial flags, military flags, private flags, burgees, and pennants that reflect significant aspects of the island's history. If you have a flag or barge of significance that the committee may borrow, please contact Varoujan Karentz or other exhibit committee member.

In addition to the flags themselves, a montage of over 250 photographs of flags that daily fly over our community covers three large panel boards. The flags at Town offices and Departments, local businesses, and private homes will surprise Jamestown residents with how many flags adorn our town. When you visit the exhibit, the challenge will be to identify the location where each photo was taken.

We also plan to install a new flagpole in front of the museum. The pole will include a yardarm for signal flags and burgees as well as the American standard

and will be used in conjunction with the "Open" flag this summer to signify that the museum is open for visitors.

Varoujan Karentz led the exhibit committee, with Rosemary Enright, John Howard, Joe Logan, and Richard Russ supporting him. Richard, who represents Jamestown's Boy Scout Troop 1, is contributing to the exhibit as part of his Eagle Scout work. Deborah Richards, Scoutmaster of the troop, is coordinating with the committee. Bill Burger's talents were used in creating the panel boards.

The exhibit opens June 23 and will continue through August 29.

Sue Maden has given the Society over 450 digitized photographs collected for use in her *Building Boom in Jamestown, Rhode Island, 1926-1931*. She has included with her gift the formal permissions and limitations on use that she so diligently collected from the owners of the photographs during her research for the book. In addition to the ads and pictures from the *Newport Daily News*, the collection contains over 200 historical photographs from individual donors on and off the island. The 102 photographs taken by Tom McCandless, showing the state of these 75-year-old homes in 2003, will be invaluable to future historians.

Windmill Committee

By Linnea Petersen

The Windmill will open for the 2004 summer season on June 19. A Windmill Day is being planned by the Program Committee on that day and our Millwright Andy Shrake has agreed to join us and, weather permitting, put "The Old Jamestown Mill" into operation. Brookie Harding will also be there to answer your questions and share her vast knowledge about the history of the Mill.

The Windmill will be open to the public on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, June 19 to August 29 from 1 PM to 4 PM. I will be calling past volunteers during the month of May to ask for your assistance by serving as a docent. As always, I encourage you to call me at 423-1820 if you have never volunteered and would like to be added to the list. Our ability to have the Mill open and available for the public to "catch a glimpse" of the past depends on your willingness to help. In addition, it is a lovely place to spend a summer afternoon! In anticipation of your positive response, I thank you.

Buildings and Grounds Committee

By Joe Logan

The Town has re-shingled the west side of the roof of the Museum building and removed two trees that were overhanging the east side of the roof. The east side will be re-shingled when the weather is warmer. During this period of re-shingling, plastic sheeting was installed over the items stored in the attic for protection. A general cleaning will be required when the roof repairs are completed.

The plaster ceiling in the Friends Meetinghouse has been extensively repaired over the winter. The



Before



After

Meeting hours plaster repaired

plaster was cracked and loosened in many places but now is in reasonably good shape. The work was done by a plasterer recommended by the Rhode Island Historic Preservation Commission, and was designed to retain the “old” rough look of the existing plaster. Some cracks in the walls were also filled. Members of the Conanicut Friends Meeting can now worship in a safer environment.

Conanicut Battery Report

By John Howard

Conanicut Battery weathered the off-season with little damage. Most importantly, the interpretative signs came through with no additional damage, so we can hope that the vandalism problem has waned. The grounds are in overall good condition, with only a few bare spots on the ramparts themselves. The heavy rains of early April left some muddy areas around the Great Boulder, but the work done last year on the low spot in the access road kept it drained and dry. Volunteers accomplished outstanding clean up and repair on both the town-wide Earth Day clean up, and on the Battery’s own clean-up day on May 1.

Battery Day is planned for June 12, at 11 AM, our second such celebration since the park’s inauguration in 2002. Once again, the morning will feature appropriate music by the Jamestown Community Band, manning of the ramparts by re-enactors, and raising of the flags of the three Revolutionary War combatants.

If you approve of the preservation of this historic site, please consider joining the Friends of the Battery. While the park is town property, and the town has budgeted funds for grounds maintenance, the Friends are responsible for site improvements and historic interpretation. Additionally, an endowment has been established to ensure that the park never again reverts to Jamestown jungle. Membership is only \$15. Send your check to JHS-Battery Account, PO Box 156, or call me for further information.

Publications Committee

By Rosemary Enright

Images of America: Jamestown, published last summer by Arcadia Press, has paid its first royalty check to the Society for \$578. Each purchase of the book nets the Society between 40 and 50 cents.

Elmer Congdon’s reminiscences on his part in building the Jamestown Bridge are excerpted from the manuscript he sent to the Society last October. The complete manuscript is in the JHS Museum collection.

Officers and Directors 2003 – 2004

President	Bill Burgin
Vice President	Jane Bentley
Secretary	Jane Miner
Treasurer	Mary Webster

Directors to 2004	Janie Harris Dick Hines
Directors to 2005	Linnea Petersen Linda Warner Rosemary Enright
Directors to 2006	John Howard Joe Logan

When Is My Membership Due?

By Jane Miner

To determine whether or not you need to renew your membership dues, please look at the address label on this newsletter. Just after your name, enclosed in parentheses, you will see a letter or the abbreviation "Exp." followed by a number. The number is the month and last two digits of the year (e.g., 6/02) when your current membership expires. A letter means you are a contributing (C), life (L), or honorary (H) member, and do not need to renew your membership annually (although we always welcome voluntary contributions). Please note that for this issue of the newsletter the membership form is printed on the enclosed remittance envelope.

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