



Jamestown Historical Society

HERITAGE

Fall 2004

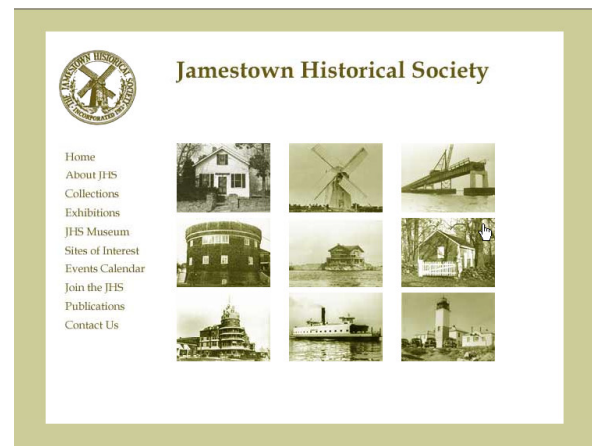
To promote interest in and preserve the heritage of Conanicut Island.

Go To jamestownhistoricalsociety.org

Thanks to the website expertise and hard work of Bunty Burgin, the society's website is up and accessible across the Internet. Our website address is very simple: jamestownhistoricalsociety.org. Bookmark it in your browser.

From the home page, you can click on the links in the left column and go to other pages at the site. A calendar tells you the time and place of JHS events. Other pages describe the museum exhibits, our collections, and historical sites on the island.

As you explore and have suggestions for improvement, contact your Publications Committee chair, John Horton, at jghorton1@verizon.net.



Home page for jamestownhistoricalsociety.org



New Flagpole for the Museum

For two days in early June, the *Flags Over Jamestown* exhibit committee became the flagpole construction crew. It was warm and sunny when Varoujan Karentz, John Howard, and Joe Logan, with help from Eagle Scout Robert Russ, dug the hole and poured the cement (left). The flagpole raising, though, took place in a cold spring rain with Richard Russ, whose museum efforts are part of his Eagle Scout work, providing the muscle (right).



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Bill Burgin

What a great season of events our program chairs Janie Harris and Jane Bentley put together for us this year! From Windmill Day in June through the House Tour in September, the activities they planned were both entertaining and educational. Rita Scotti's talk following the Annual Meeting on the hurricane of 1938 prompted fascinating stories from Jamestowners who had witnessed the hurricane. The Society is considering hosting a follow-up evening so Jamestowners can share more stories and memories of the storm. If you are interested or have suggestions, please let me know.

The museum was the focus of our construction efforts in 2004. In June, a flagpole was erected in front of the building as part of the successful *Flags over Jamestown* exhibit. And the museum has a new roof. Steve Goslee and the town maintenance crew managed to complete the roof between threatening rainstorms so nary a drop of moisture entered. During the process, they realized the old chimney looked a little shaky and decided to take it down to below the roof level. The mortar was so rotten that all they had to do was lift the bricks off with their bare hands.

At the Annual Meeting, the members elected three new board members: John Murphy, Ken Newman, and John Horton. As many of you know John Murphy is a local attorney and avid historian. Ken Newman is a mover in the successful and attractive Dutch Island Lighthouse Restoration

project. John Horton brings years of experience in business development.

Our treasurer, Marion Pierce, is also new to the board. As Director of Finance for the Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority, Marion manages the funds for the Pell and Mt. Hope bridges. She replaces Mary Webster, to whom we are deeply indebted for transferring the Historical Society accounts from a spreadsheet to a computerized accounting system.

Much to the delight of its members Harry Wright is back on the Board! Everybody is looking forward to his wry humor and clear thinking. Rosemary Enright has agreed to take over the Vice President position from hardworking Jane Bentley. To our dismay Janie Harris has stepped down to devote more time to her other historic interests; we will miss her creative programs and boundless energy. John Howard has also left the Board but will continue his leadership of the Friends of Conanicut Battery.

A very big thank you to all the Board for all their hard work throughout the year.

This is the time of the year that we do our budgeting and start to think about the programs for the coming years. If you want to volunteer or have ideas for programs or projects, please call me at 423-2033 or drop an email to wburgin@williamburgin.com.



Bill Burgin enjoyed the JHS cruise to Prudence Island

Windmill Committee

By Linnea Petersen

We had a wonderful 2004 season. Over 400 people visited the Old Jamestown Mill. Our first visitors, on May 12, were a group of 28 fifth graders and 5 adults from the Jamestown School. The students really seemed to enjoy the tour and wrote comments such as “*awesome*, incredible, and nice gears!” in our visitor guest book. Their thank you note was accompanied by a lovely drawing of the mill. They represent our future millers so their enthusiasm was very gratifying.



The windmill bonnet was turned to catch the wind.

June 19 was Windmill Day and the official opening of the mill. More than 100 visitors came and had a great time. You may have noticed that the windmill arms now face in a more westerly direction than in other years. Because the wind was coming from

the southwest on Windmill Day, our millwright, Andy Shrake, turned the bonnet to bring the arms into the wind. With the sails in place, the arms began to move gracefully around, and we left the bonnet in that working position at the end of the day.

While Andy worked tirelessly talking with visitors, setting the sails, and putting the windmill into motion, Dick Donnelly from Kenyon Mills fed us delicious jonnycakes. Matt Bolles and his Parallel String Band played some great music. A special thanks to all of them and to Janie Harris and Jane Bentley who organized the event.

A successful season could never happen without the volunteers who served as docents. A heartfelt thanks to Jane Bentley, Jim Buttrick, Rosemary Enright, Marcia Glassie, Brookie Harding, Dick Hines, John Howard, Bob Kinder, Bob Kinzel, Teddy and John Leyon, Sue Maden, Kathy Maloney, Martha Milot, Jane Miner, Bruce Murray, and Carol Todd. Their willingness to donate their time and energy and their genuine support for the Mill is greatly appreciated.

I am looking forward to 2005 at the Mill. I hope we can count on you to assist us in our efforts to protect, preserve, and display this awesome Jamestown asset.



Buildings and Grounds Committee

By Joe Logan

Over the summer, the Town finished reshingling the roof of the museum, allowing us to clean the attic and start installing some storage shelves there to make things neater and easier to locate. One side of the attic has been done, including fixing the floorboards to be continuous and the addition of a floor covering which will be brighter and cleaner. We plan to continue the attic renovation over the winter.



The refurbished attic at the Jamestown Museum makes access to stored artefacts safer and easier.

Program Committee

By Janie Harris & Jane Bentley

WINDMILL DAY, 2004

On June 19, under sunny skies and amidst a glorious summer breeze, the Jamestown Historical Society hosted a lively and fun-filled Windmill Day. The celebration, organized to kickoff the 2004 summer programs, drew a good crowd of enthusiastic revelers to Jamestown's historic and recently restored 1787 windmill. There, on the hill, music and games abounded while Andy Shrake, the millwright who restored the Jamestown Mill two years ago, led tours and answered questions.

The visitors also traveled the recently cleared Windmill Hill Trail leading from the Windmill to the Quaker Meetinghouse. The paved path, built at the suggestion of the historical society, parallels North Road next to the stone wall of the Dutra farm and links the two historic sites. At the Meetinghouse, Jan Chapin and Bill Smith conducted informative tours of the historic building.

Meanwhile, at the entrance to the windmill field, multiple grills were fired up and the "Master of Jonnycakes", Dick Donnelly, entertained the crowds with stories and legends of local heroes. In between punch lines, Master Donnelly flipped scores of "Jamestown-style Jonnycakes."



Matt Bolles and his Parallel String Band entertained under the trees on Windmill Hill.

What is a Jamestown-style jonnycake? According to Master Donnelly, they are " ...not too thick, not too thin, not South County-style, and not Newport-style, but well... just right!" And they were!

As the alluring aromas wafted from the grill, celebrants swayed and danced to the unique and engaging mix of folk, bluegrass, swing, and old-time string band sounds of Matt Bolles and his Parallel String Band. While the musicians picked and strummed, fiddled and sang their special blend of original and traditional tunes under the shade tree, children ran races and hula-hooped their way through the party.

The summer season had begun!

SUNSET HISTORY CRUISE TO PRUDENCE ISLAND

A near sell-out crowd boarded *The Spirit of Newport* in July for an enchanting sunset cruise to Prudence Island. On calm seas and under clear skies, our guest speaker Joseph Bains recounted the history of the island since Colonial times. Mr. Bains is Vice President of the Prudence Island Historical Society and author of *The Prudence Inn Land*, a book about the history and land stewardship activities on Prudence Island. He talked about Chibachuwese, as Prudence Island was known in the days of Canonicus and Miantonomi, reported how Prudence got its current name, and told the story of the origin of the Sandy Point Lighthouse.



Joseph Bains aboard *The Spirit of Newport*

Offering engaging asides about his own childhood on the Island, where he attended its one-room schoolhouse, Mr. Bains drew an endearing and

enduring portrait of Prudence, Jamestown's neighboring island.

While Mr. Bains provided his instructive commentary, Jamestowners enjoyed the delicious sandwiches, hors d'oeuvres, and confections prepared by Catering Concepts. All in all the evening proved a magical and informative three-hour tour.

ANNUAL MEETING FEATURED AUTHOR OF SUDDEN SEA

This year's Annual Meeting, held September 2, featured R. A. Scotti, author of *Sudden Sea: The Great Hurricane of 1938*. Members and guests gathered in record numbers at the Portuguese American Citizens Club to hear her account of that famous hurricane, to learn of her research methods, and to marvel at the number of first-hand accounts that are reflected in her popular book.

Ms. Scotti, speaking after the conclusion of the Society's annual business meeting, showed a film of actual footage filmed during and immediately after the hurricane. She held the audience spellbound, as she discussed the storm and its force relative to other storms. She also provided anecdotes from those members of the National Weather Service who were on duty in the hours leading up to the storm surge's assault on New England. She then encouraged members of the audience to share with the assembled group their personal accounts of 1938 hurricane experiences.

Many people stood up and told of their own or their family's experiences on that fateful September day. The events were also documented in large posters of photos from the Jamestown Historical Society collection. The photos posted on the walls of the PAC showed such scenes as the Governor Carr ferry sitting well out of the water north of the harbor and Beavertail Road cottages with walls torn off by the winds.

These images triggered memories and inspired stories throughout the wine and cheese reception that followed Ms. Scotti's presentation. As Jamestowners compared accounts and enjoyed smoked salmon, strawberries, and an array of cheeses, Ms. Scotti autographed copies of her books.

HOUSE TOUR

Once again, the fall house tour was an exciting and successful culmination to our summer season. On Saturday, September 11, the Cahoon Cottage, Horgan Cottage, and Howland House were open to visitors. For four hours, these three lovely homes in the Walcott Avenue area were alive and crowded with fascinated people interested in how homes that had stood for more than 100 years had been restored and renovated for modern use.



The recent renovations to the Horgan Cottage enhance its panoramic view of the bay.

Once again this would not have come together if it were not for the hosts who volunteered to stay in the homes during the tour. A big thank you to Allison Bentley, Elizabeth Connelly, Rosemary Enright, Karen Estes, Marcia Glassie, Janie Harris, Joe Logan, Sue Maden, Jane Miner, Linnea Petersen Carroll Pruett, Linda Warner, and Mary Webster.

Thank you also to all the people who turned out to tour the houses and support the house tour. Look in the spring newsletter for news about our fall 2005 house tour.

Collections Committee

By Linda Warner

More than 300 people visited the Museum between June 23 and August 29. Varoujan Karentz, Joe Logan, and John Howard are to be commended for assembling a very interesting exhibit of flags and pennants, both historic and present day, which have flown over Jamestown. Richard Russ from Jamestown's Boy Scout Troop 1, contributed panels on flag usage and protocol as part of his Eagle Scout work. Richard was also very helpful in erecting the new flagpole in front of the museum. Deborah Richards, Scoutmaster of the troop, coordinated with the committee. The exhibit is being held over for the 2005 season.

The permanent Ferry Exhibit continues to be of great interest to our visitors, especially those who had family members who worked on the ferries.



Curator's Comments

By Elizabeth Connelly

Our Historical Society has recently received a very special donation. The gift is a wedding dress and slippers worn by Esther Arnold at her marriage to Robert Howard Weeden in 1897. Esther was the daughter of Horace Arnold, the lighthouse keeper at the north end of Conanicut Island. The Arnolds were descendants of the colonial governor Benedict Arnold, governor of the colony intermittently from 1663 until his death in 1678. The dress and shoes were presented to us by Thomas B. Almy, a grandson of the Weedens.

A well-deserved "thank you" goes to Elizabeth Connelly for her hard work organizing the host schedule. The hosts had new duties this year – to raise the American flag and the Jamestown Historical Society pennant on our new flagpole when opening the museum. We want to thank all those who welcomed our visitors to the museum.

Dick and Joyce Allphin, Carolyn Armington, Jane Bentley, John Biddle, Joan Briggs, Leonor Brown, Bill Burgin, Elizabeth and Bob Connelly, Alma Davenport, Rosemary Enright, Marcia Glassie, Emma Graham, Brookie Harding, Janie Harris, Dick Hines, Ginger Holland, Rose and Varoujan Karentz, Bob Kinder, John and Teddy Leyon, Anne and Bruce Livingston, Diana Luth, Sue Maden, Gerry Miller, Jane Miner, Mary Miner, Gloria O'Laughlin, Sav Rebecchi, Charlotte Richardson, Betty Ann Taylor, Carol Todd, Mary Webster, Jim Wiles, and Harry Wright.

If you would like to be a museum host, we would be happy to add your name to the list

Another new item of interest is a five-gallon wooden water bottle holder from the E. R. Vieira Co. This company operated on Jamestown from 1922 to 1981, when it was sold to the Newport Oil Company. The family-owned and operated business started as a moving service to bring luggage and freight from the ferries to homes and businesses on the island. The service soon expanded into fuel and ice delivery. In their description of the company in *Jamestown Affairs: A Miscellany of Historical Flashbacks* (1996), Sue Maden and Patrick Hodgkins briefly describe their water delivery enterprise: "The company leased a spring owned by the Clarke family, and bottled and delivered Diamond Spring Water. The building where this operation was conducted can still be seen on Southwest Avenue."

Conanicut Battery Report

As this newsletter goes to press, the Town Council is considering a proposal from the Planning Commission for the development of affordable housing. The plan calls for selling a portion of the Conanicut Battery site to help finance the program. John Howard, co-chair of the Friends of Conanicut Battery, has sent a letter to the council in an effort to forestall immediate action.

I write on behalf of the Friends of Conanicut Battery regarding the proposal that a part of the Conanicut



Finance Committee

By Dick Hines

At each Annual Meeting, we report the total asset balances for the society. On September 30, 2004, this total was \$145,620, \$141,867 in cash and investments and \$3,753 in inventory. However, the makeup of the accounts that are managed by the society is far more complex than simple balances.

Although we are a relatively small society, our activities are varied and this variety is reflected in our financial structure. We organize our finances to mirror our four major activities: the Jamestown Museum, the Jamestown Windmill, the Friends Meetinghouse, and the Conanicut Battery, plus a fund for general expenses.

Each major activity is supported by a dedicated fund that receives any income that is specific to the activity, such as endowments, donations, or sales. These funds provide for expenses associated with the activity. The General Fund receives income that

Battery property be sold to help finance affordable housing.

We fully understand the need to identify sources of revenue to increase our stock of affordable housing. We do, however, urge caution before deciding that this property is surplus to town needs. Public, town-owned parkland is precious, and this particular park is not only an irreplaceable historic site and but increasingly popular. Sale of the lot could impact future improvement plans, shrink the buffer between private properties and the public space, and in general reduce the flexibility of park management in future years. Certainly it is an issue that warrants a full public discussion.

We recommend, therefore, that the sale of this lot not be added to the Comprehensive Plan until its pros and cons are fully vetted and weighed, and urge that the Historical Society and the Friends of Conanicut Battery be included in the decision process.

is not specifically designated, such as dues, and is used to support any activity of the society.

Some of these funds are restricted in use; for example, some may make use of both principal and income to fund activities while others are restricted to use only income. The Treasurer is responsible for ensuring that the various restrictions are followed and that the funds remain separate from each other.

Our investment policy is established by the Board of Directors and administered by the Director of Finance and a five-member Finance Committee. Currently we retain a relatively small checking account to cover expenses while investing the bulk of our assets in a conservative portfolio: 70% in a U.S. Government securities and a bond mutual fund, 20% in an indexed stock mutual fund, and the remainder in money market accounts.

While seemingly complicated, the structure we have adopted ensures that funds are used for the purpose intended and that our investments protect principal while producing income and some growth. In this way we can be confident that the society's programs will be adequately funded now and in the future.

Officers and Directors 2004 – 2005

President	Bill Burgin
Vice President	Rosemary Enright
Secretary	Jane Miner
Treasurer	Marion Pierce
Directors to 2005	Jane Bentley Linnea Petersen Linda Warner
Directors to 2006	Joe Logan John A. Murphy
Directors to 2007	Dick Hines John Horton Ken Newman Harrison Wright

Committee Chairs 2004 – 2005

Programs	Jane Bentley
Windmill	Linnea Petersen
Collections	Linda Warner
Buildings and Grounds	Joe Logan
Finance	Dick Hines
Publications	John Horton
Nominating	Harrison Wright

Activities

Conanicut Battery	John Howard
Meetinghouse	Bill Smith
Membership	Jane Miner
Newsletter	Rosemary Enright

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