



Jamestown Historical Society

# HERITAGE

Spring 2005

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

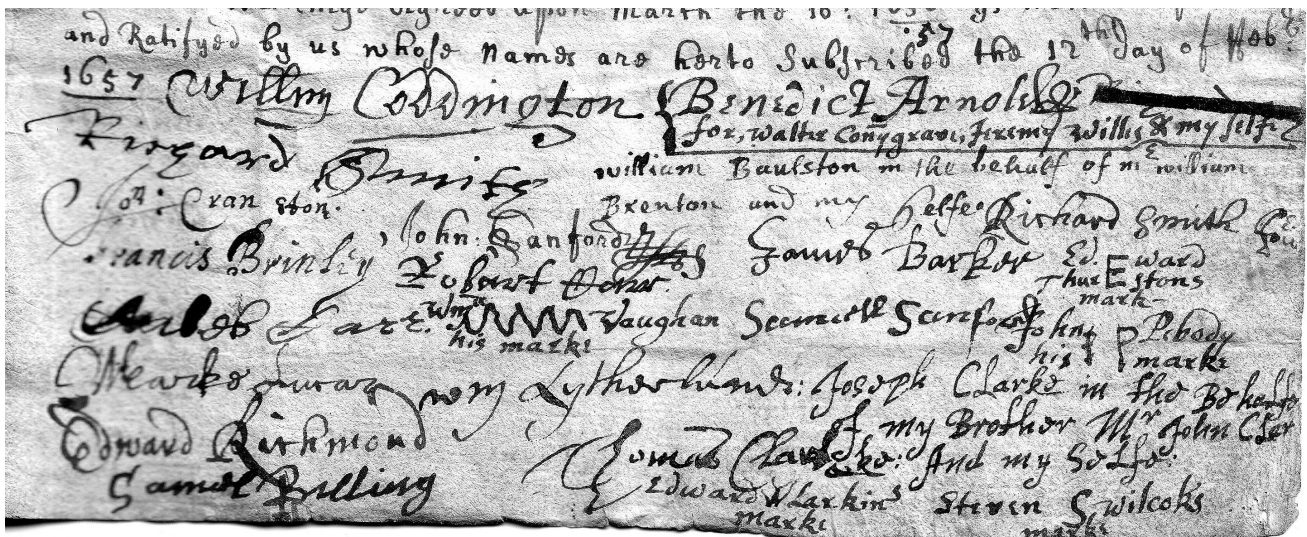
## Society Acquires 1657 Jamestown Land Agreement Document

In 1657, 100 colonial Rhode Islanders negotiated the purchase of Quononaquutt, now Conanicut, Island from the Narragansett Indians. Before completing the purchase, the group met to establish how the land would be divided among them. This contract is known as the Quononaquutt Land Agreement.

Multiple copies of the agreement were made. A transcribed copy with a list of the signers but without their signatures rests in the land records of the Town of Jamestown and is the starting place for all title searches for island property. The town copy has been badly damaged and is virtually unreadable.

In late April 2005, Arlene Petit, the Jamestown Town Clerk, notified the Society that a copy of the agreement with the original signatures was to be auctioned in New York City. A scanned copy of the document was obtained and examined by knowledgeable members of the Society. At an emergency meeting on May 11, the Board authorized our President, Bill Burgin, to bid up to \$20,000 to buy the document.

The auction was held on May 12. When the bidding went above the authorized amount, an individual Society director, Ken Newman, stepped in to guarantee the additional \$4,000 required.



First Page of Signatures on the Quononaquutt Land Agreement

## **Summer Program 2005**

**Saturday, June 11**

### **VINTAGE FASHION SHOW**

**Jamestown Community Center, 7 PM**

The Jamestown Community Center was built in 1941-1942 by the USO as a recreation center for servicemen on Jamestown. Learn the story at the vintage fashion show featuring costumes from the 1940s, 50s, 60s, and 70s. Tickets: \$5.

**Saturday, June 18**

### **BATTERY DAY**

**Conanicut Battery, 11 AM**

Annual celebration of the military history of the Battery and of Jamestown. Jamestown Band will accompany the raising of the British, French, and American flags. Military units in colonial and revolutionary dress will punctuate the proceedings with cannon and musket fire.

**Wednesday, June 22**

### **Jamestown Museum Opens**

Museum hours 1 to 4 PM, Wednesday through Sunday through August 28. Summer exhibit: *Flags over Jamestown*. Permanent Ferry exhibit.

**Saturday, June 25**

### **Jamestown Windmill Begins Summer Hours**

Windmill will be open from 1 to 4 PM, Saturday and Sunday through August 28.

**Saturday, June 25**

### **Quaker Meetinghouse Open**

The Meetinghouse will be open to the public from 1 to 4 PM. Open by appointment throughout the year.

**Saturday, July 23**

### **WALKING TOUR OF JAMESTOWN CENTER**

**Leaving from Jamestown Historical Society  
Museum**

**92 Narragansett Avenue**

**First tour: 10 AM – 11:30 AM**

**Second tour: 1 PM – 2:30 PM**

Walk through downtown Jamestown and learn the history of the town and buildings on Narragansett Avenue and the Jamestown waterfront.

**Thursday, August 11**

### **ANNUAL MEETING**

**Jamestown Philomenian Library, 7 PM**

Election of officers and Board of Directors for 2005-2006. Featured Speaker will be Trudy Coxe, one of the first directors of *Save the Bay* and organizer of the first *Save the Bay* swim from Jamestown to Newport.

**Sunday, August 28**

### **Jamestown Museum and Windmill Close**

Last day to visit the Jamestown Museum or the Windmill until June 2006.

**Saturday, September 10**

### **HOUSE TOUR**

**10 AM - 2 PM**

Come see *Horsehead*, designed by Charles L. Bevins in the early 1880s. Visit the house, wander the grounds, and enjoy the beautiful views of Narragansett Bay and Mackerel Cove. Tickets: \$15.

### **Help Your Historical Society: Be a “Greeter”**

The Museum and Windmill can be open to visitors only if a member of the Society is there to greet them. Call Linnea Petersen (423-1820) if you would like to spend a weekend afternoon on breezy Windmill Hill. Call Linda Warner (423-1278) to volunteer for a few hours at the museum.

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

**By Bill Burgin**

With great sadness, we report the passing this May of our archivist Mary Miner. Mary was the steward of our organization and of the history of Jamestown. It was her mind that stored our history so carefully and that so clearly understood our images of the past. Mary was always thoughtful and clear thinking about the collection and the Society. She very much cared about how things were done and was careful about doing them. She will be missed. Our heart goes out to Jane Miner, Mary's daughter, our hardworking Secretary and Membership chair.

We have much news to report, as you will read in this newsletter.

Your Board has been very busy this winter getting our programs ready for the upcoming summer season. Jane Bentley has a full inventory of events planned beginning with a Fashion Show at the old USO (now the Community Center), followed by a walking tour of the town and our annual house tour. This year the house tour will feature *Horsehead*. Jane has also arranged to have Trudy Coxe as our speaker at the annual meeting, which is being held in August this year to accommodate Trudy's busy schedule. Jane's enthusiasm is inexhaustible, and I can't thank her enough for her efforts. Jane will be stepping down from the Board this fall after 20 years of service. She deserves all of our thanks for her devotion to the Society.

Speaking of inexhaustible, Joe Logan has just finished building and installing new shelving in the attic of the museum to house our collection in a more organized fashion.

Rosemary Enright attended a course on the software, PastPerfect, that we use to catalog the artifacts in our museum. For the first time we will be working with

a museum intern from the Salve Regina University History Department and will be using the intern's talents to create a solid baseline catalog. Rosemary and John Horton have also updated the windmill booklet. It will be available this summer.

Thanks to a great tip from our town Clerk Arlene Petit, we now have the original seminal document on the formation of the Town of Jamestown. Dated 1656/57, the Quononaquitt Land Agreement is the contract signed by the first settlers of Jamestown that describes who will own what land and how the town will be partitioned. Many thanks to Ken Newman whose experience in grant acquisition and auction bidding has allowed us to acquire this rare and valuable document. The total cost, including fees, is close to \$28,000, and the auction house, Swann Galleries in New York City, has permitted us to pay for it over three years. We are looking forward to unveiling it this summer and are planning some exciting events to fund its purchase.

Thanks to Marion Pierce, our new treasurer, and Dick Hines, our finance committee chair, for their important work on this year's budget. Their jobs will be important in the purchase of this document.

It is unfortunate that our long time Curator Elizabeth "Pud" Connelly is moving off the island and resigning her post. We can't thank her enough for her tireless work for the Society. It will be a difficult task to find a replacement for her.

Once more I want to thank all of you who volunteer to make this organization what it is. We can always use more help. This year our Collection Committee will be updating our catalog and can find a job for any computer literate volunteer – or any volunteer willing to learn how our database catalog works.

## ***Program Committee***

***By Jane Bentley***

### **June 11, Vintage Fashion Show**

Our first program this year will be something new and different for the Jamestown Historical Society. To honor the Community Center and the many decades of service it has given to the island, the Historical Society is proud to present a vintage fashion show.



**The Community Center in 1946**

The show will feature a brief history of the building and its uses, followed by a display of clothing of the 1940s, 50s, 60s, and 70s modeled by some of Jamestown's finest citizens. The date is Saturday, June 11, and the price is only \$5.00 per person. So hurry over to Baker's Pharmacy and pick up your tickets now, as there is limited seating at the Community Center. See you there at 7 PM sharp.

### **July 23, Walking Tour**

On Saturday, July 23, the Historical Society will conduct a walking tour of downtown Jamestown. The tour will start in front of the Historical Society Museum at 92 Narragansett Avenue. From there we will head east down Narragansett and take a walk back in time. Old buildings and homes will be pointed out and their history discussed. The tour will end in front of the Community Center, the site of the old Gardner Hotel.

If you are interested in learning about this history or just want a day of fun reliving old times, come

along. There will be two tours. The first will leave the museum at 10 AM. The second will start at 1 PM.

### **August 11, Annual Meeting**

The Historical Society is excited to have Trudy Coxé as our speaker for our annual meeting on Thursday, August 11. We will meet at the Jamestown Philomenian Library at 7 PM, and, as usual, will begin with the election of officers and Board.

Come and learn about *Save the Bay's* Jamestown roots. Ms. Coxé was one of the original directors of *Save the Bay* and introduced many innovative ideas such as the *Save the Bay* Swim from Newport to Jamestown. With so many issues in the news about uses of the bay, it will be interesting to see just how far we have come. Mark your calendars now.

### **September 10, House Tour**

Our annual house tour is planned for Saturday, September 10, from 10 AM to 2 PM at *Horsehead* on Highland Drive. The house and grounds will be open. Stroll back in time to 1884 when Joseph Wharton built this majestic home. Follow the old carriage road along the shore and up the hill from Highland Drive. Walk the beaches on the Mackerel Cove side. Explore the side paths and look out at Fort Adams, Beavertail, and Block Island.

This historic site of over 20 acres should be exciting for one and all. The price is a \$15 per person and can be paid at the entrance on the day of the tour.



**The Wright Collection**

**Horsehead soon after it was completed.**

## **Collections Committee**

**By Linda Warner**

The big news for the Collections committee, as for the Society, is the Quononaquitt Land Agreement. Plans are being made for its exhibition, as soon as the authenticity of the document is independently confirmed.

### **Museum Exhibit**

If you missed the *Flags over Jamestown* exhibit, which was very well received last year, you have another chance to see it this year. We have held the exhibit over for the 2005 season. The exhibit features a wide variety of flags, burgees, and pennants that have flown over Jamestown, some as early as colonial times.

A montage of more than 250 photographs of flags that have been spotted flying over Jamestown in recent years is also part of the exhibit. Come on in to the museum and see if you can recognize where the photos were taken. Varoujan Karentz and his committee have updated the exhibit, which was originally assembled with the help of Richard Russ, a member of Boy Scout Troop 1, as part of his Eagle Scout work.

The Ferry Boat room is also open and can be particularly fascinating to the children. Show them how to blow the whistles and clang the bells.

The museum will open this year on Wednesday, June 22, and will be open every Wednesday through Sunday from 1 to 4 PM. We close for the season on August 28.

### **Cultural and Historic Preservation Intern**

This year for the first time, the Historical Society is partnering with the internship program at Salve

Regina University. Kristen Young, a senior in Cultural and Historic Preservation, will be supporting the museum's cataloging efforts. We recently upgraded our catalog application on the Museum computer and are facing the immense task of verifying current entries and adding our older manual records to the computerized database. Kristen's tasks this summer include comparing the objects in our collection to their descriptive records, entering the descriptions, and checking on anomalies that arise. Some of you may be hearing from her in the course of her research.

### **Committee Losses**

The Collections Committee has been especially hard hit by events of this spring.

The death of Mary Miner, our archivist and font of knowledge about the history of the island, leaves us saddened and acutely aware of all she did and knew that we cannot replicate. She has documented the accessions and has maintained the records of the museum for over 30 years. A committee, chaired by Harry Wright, is meeting to determine the form of a memorial to this long time leader of our preservation efforts.

Our curator, Elizabeth Connelly, is moving off the island. Her unflagging efforts to oversee our collection, identifying objects that could be deaccessioned to make room for new items and recommending new accessions, will be missed. Her acuity in getting full value for objects that did not belong in the collection contributed greatly to the availability of funds to purchase the Quononaquitt Land Agreement.

New members of the Collections committee are eagerly solicited. If you have an interest in historic artifacts, want to learn how we manage and track our possessions, or just want to help the Society in its preservation efforts, please call Linda Warner at 423-1278 or Rosemary Enright at 423-2674.

## **Windmill Committee**

**By Linnea Petersen**

On May 11, 2005, I had the privilege of hosting a group of study exchange members of Rotary International from Brazil for a tour of our mill. They were delightful and very impressed. They had toured a mill on Cape Cod and told me, in comparison, that our mill was very advanced in technology!

The summer schedule at the Jamestown Windmill will begin this year on Saturday, June 25, from 1 to 4 PM. We will be open the same hours every Saturday and Sunday, weather permitting, until August 28. I will be calling past docents to ask their assistance in volunteering for a shift. Please call me at 423-1820 if you would like to be added to the roster of enthusiastic and wonderful people who are willing donate their time to share this 218-year-old historic landmark with others.

I encourage you to take the time to visit us this summer. Let your life “come to a grinding halt” as you marvel at the craftsmanship of yesteryear and enjoy the fantastic views across the pastures to Narragansett Bay. Please put it on your “to do” list this summer. We look forward to seeing you!

### **Protecting the Windmill Historic District**

Over the past years, our windmill has been lucky in its neighbors, the Clancys. Many of you who have served as greeters during past summers have benefited from their kindness, and we have appreciated their genuine interest in our preservation efforts. It was with reluctance, then, that the Board of Directors decided we had to take a stance against the Clancys’ request to expand their glassblowing operation to include retail sales. The full text of our letter to the Zoning Board is reprinted here so that you, our members, may understand our reasoning.

### **Letter from the Jamestown Historical Society to the Jamestown Zoning Board about the request for a variance to allow retail sales in the Windmill Historic District**

The directors of Jamestown Historical Society oppose the application for retail sales at the glass blowing shop in the Windmill Historic District. The Clancys have been good neighbors to the Jamestown Windmill, and the Society is well aware of and appreciates the Clancys’ stewardship of the Windmill. Their craftsmanship and art are clearly valuable assets to the island. Nonetheless, a permanent retail outlet for their art at the shop is inappropriate and unnecessary.

The Board believes that the zoning board faces a decision that is quite simple:

The Comprehensive Plan and zoning ordinance are quite clear about prohibiting retail sales in areas other than the ones designated in the ordinance and most certainly in the historic Windmill District.

An expansion of retail sales beyond the boundaries established by the Plan discredits the efforts made by those businesses who have worked hard to comply with the ordinance and jeopardizes the pristine beauty of the Windmill District.

There is no hardship; multiple opportunities exist for the sale of the glass in other outlets throughout the town.

Retail sales on-site represent a contradiction of the understanding of the original request for a variance to build the glass blowing building and would set a poor precedent for the entire island.

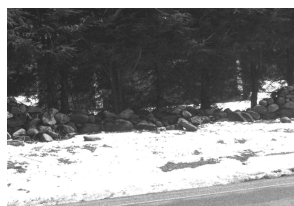
As the zoning board is well aware, there are many, many wonderful and successful artists in Jamestown who have plied their art quietly at home using local merchants and galleries for retail outlets. There is no need for an exception from this tradition in the current instance.

Thank you for your consideration.

## ***Buildings and Grounds Committee***

***By Joe Logan***

The flooring in the attic has been completed. Several shelving units for storage were built on each



side, which should make storage and access to the museum's collection much easier.



**A stone wall at the meetinghouse, damaged in a winter accident, has since been repaired.**

During a late winter storm, the stone wall by the Friends Meetinghouse was damaged by a pickup truck that skidded off of North Road. The damage is being repaired at no cost to the Society:

## ***Publications Committee***

***By John Horton***

The new PastPerfect software used to catalog the Museum collection also lets us display our collection on our web site ([jamestownhistoricalsociety.com](http://jamestownhistoricalsociety.com)). Work is ongoing to update the web site with this new capability.

**The Jamestown Windmill**



**North Main Road  
Jamestown, Rhode Island**

*Owned and maintained by  
Jamestown Historical Society  
Jamestown, Rhode Island*

*Open to the Public  
Summer weekends and by appointment*

Look for the new booklet explaining the history and operation of the Jamestown Windmill. We've updated the text and drawings from the 1989 edition and added photographs of the recently renovated structure. The booklet will be available at the windmill and museum.

## ***Conanicut Battery Report***

***By John Howard***

All is well at Conanicut Battery.

Last fall, a new view corridor was opened from the Pam Mitchell memorial bench, on the ridge just east of the battery site. It presents a view of the entire battery site and West Passage beyond. Additionally, a clearing was opened around the memorial weeping beech at the north end of the ridge trail, and a large cherry tree at the northwest edge of the battery field was liberated from the bramble jungle.

At the spring workday, a few hardy volunteers spread the resultant woodchips along some of the paths and began to clean up the newly cleared areas.

Don't miss Battery Day, June 18. Major Blodgett, General Greene's Aide de Camp, will again emcee the proceedings, which will feature the Newport Artillery with a cannon or two and representatives of several other units. Capt. Tew's Company of the Second Rhode Island Regiment will establish an authentic encampment and offer demonstrations of some 18<sup>th</sup> Century military camp activities. The Jamestown Band will provide appropriate martial music. The centerpiece will be the raising of the flags of the three combatants that were stationed on Conanicut Island between 1776 and 1779.

The town provides routine maintenance of the park, while contributions, Friends of Conanicut Battery dues, and small grants from the State fund improvement projects and Battery Day activities. All such monies are segregated from other Historical Society funds. If you would like to support Battery activities, please write and send your check to Battery Fund, c/o Jamestown Historical Society, PO Box 156, Jamestown.

## ***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 Harry Wright

## ***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., 6/05) 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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