



Jamestown Historical Society

HERITAGE

Fall 2005

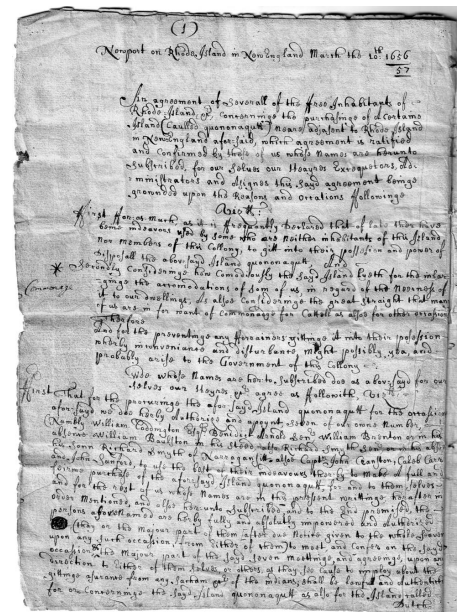
To promote interest in and preserve the heritage of Conanicut Island.

Society Begins Drive to Raise Funds for Property Agreement Purchase

In early November, the Society initiated a drive to raise \$35,000 to complete the purchase of the 1656 document detailing the agreement among the colonists to purchase Conanicut Island. A letter was sent to Jamestownians who had expressed interest in the document requesting donations to "Jamestown Property Agreement Fund." The drive got off to a stellar start with an individual gift of stocks valued at about \$5,000 and an additional \$5,000 in pledges and donations.

When the Agreement was bought in May, the Swann Gallery allowed the Society a period of grace to conduct independent tests of its authenticity. With these tests satisfactorily completed, the total \$27,750 cost is owed by December 2006. In addition, the Board has determined that dedicated funds are required to ensure that the document is properly housed and displayed.

Donations to the Jamestown Property Agreement Fund are earmarked exclusively for the purchase and preservation of this historic document. Please help the Society reach its \$35,000 goal.



Page 1 of the Jamestown Property Agreement document

Friends of Conanicut Battery Sponsor Library Talk

From late 1776 through 1779, the British and their German allies occupied and controlled Rhode Island, including Jamestown. Among the batteries manned by the "Hessians," as the Germans have been called, was Jamestown's Conanicut Battery.



Walter Schroder's new book, *The Hessian Occupation of Newport and Rhode Island, 1776-1779*, tells the stories of these strangers on our soil, using the diaries and journals of both British and Hessian soldiers. On Thursday, December 8, Mr. Schroder will talk at the Jamestown Philomenian Library about the Hessian presence in Rhode Island and especially on Jamestown. The event is sponsored by the Friends of the Conanicut Battery. Everyone is welcome to attend.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Rosemary Enright

At the beginning of a new year – and our year begins with our Annual Meeting in August – tradition demands that we look back on accomplishments and make resolutions for going forward.

Certainly the greatest accomplishment of 2005 was the purchase of the Land Agreement. Bill Burgin, our retiring President, devoted much energy to this work and deserves our warm thanks. The acquisition of this foundation document of the town both confirms our mission to “preserve the heritage of Conanicut Island” and stretches our capabilities to do so. Many of you have already received letters asking for a donation to defray the cost of the document. This newsletter contains a similar letter.

As you will read in the committee reports, our summer programs were well received and many people – Jamestowners and out-of-towners – visited the windmill, the museum, and the Conanicut Battery. Many thanks to all those who helped make the summer so successful. Without your efforts, the museum would not be open to display the artifacts of Jamestown's history and the visitors to the windmill would be greeted by a blank red door.

Bill Burgin, our hard-working president for the past two years, leaves a legacy that will be hard to live up to. We thank him for his hard work and for his unfailing good humor. Both will be missed. A special thanks also to our three retiring directors: Jane Bentley, John Murphy, and Linda Warner. Jane, who has been responsible for our Programs for many years, has promised to mentor the new Program co-chairs. Linda is continuing as a member of the Collections committee she chaired. And John continues to offer his legal expertise, so we looked forward to working with them all.

Our new board members – Dick Allphin, Sue Maden, Maureen McGuirl, and Mary Jane Murphy – have begun their tenure with enthusiasm and energy. Sue tells you about her plans for the museum collection in the Collections committee report. Dick is supporting the Finance committee and helping to upgrade our website. Mary Jane and Maureen are brainstorming ideas for programs. They are very interested in knowing what other programs you would like offered.

We have many things to accomplish this year and we are starting by developing a long range plan to guide us. Some of the ideas we are addressing are:

- Making the Jamestown Museum both an environmentally safe place to store artifacts and a more inviting place for visitors.
- Reaching out to the children in our community
- Developing a policy toward town activities that have a bearing on our history.

Please let us know what *you* think is important for us to consider. Drop a note to Jamestown P.O. Box 156 or email me at renright@jamestownri.com.

I cannot end this letter without an expression of personal sorrow over the passing of Howard Harding. From 1987 through the windmill restoration in 2000-2001, Howard oversaw the maintenance of the structure and the operation of the machinery. It was through Howard that I was introduced to the activities of the Society when he invited my late husband, Bill Slattery, to “baby sit” the windmill for one summer afternoon almost 20 years ago. His spirit will always be with me – and with all of us - on those lovely summer days on Windmill Hill.

Windmill Committee

By Linnea Petersen

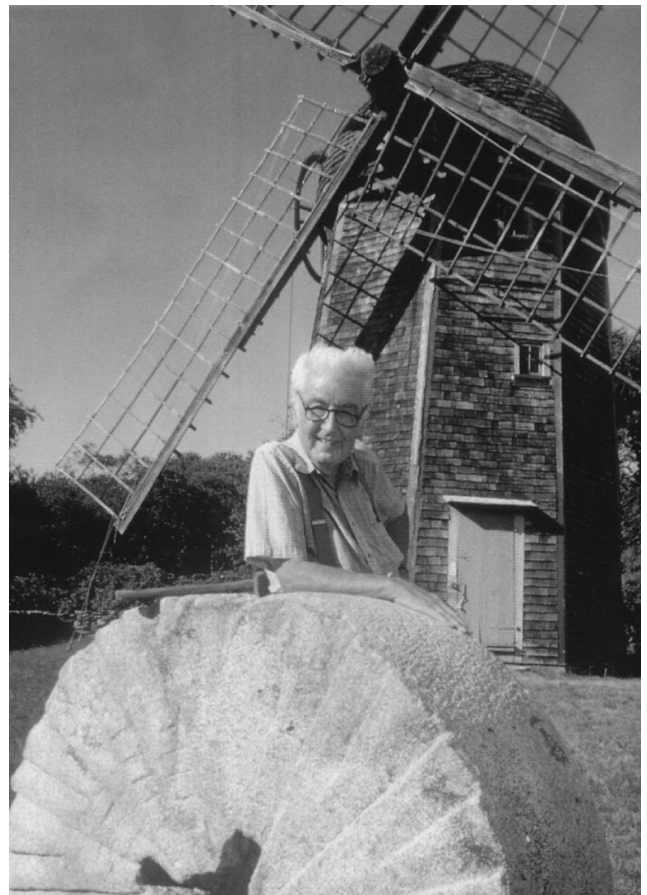
We had a great summer season at the mill. The weather cooperated and we were able to be open every weekend from late June through the end of August. We had 339 visitors who signed our guest book. On August 27 alone, 123 signatures were added as the enthusiastic gardeners on the Quononoquott Garden Club tour of the Clancy's garden next door included the windmill on their outing. I would like to extend a special thanks to Rosemary Enright who opened the mill three hours early that day so that the mill hours coincided with the garden tour hours and permitted so many people to enjoy the mill.

To all the volunteers who served as docents – John & Teddy Leyon, Marcia Glassie, Jim Buttrick, Carol Todd, Bruce Murray, Rosemary Enright, John Howard, Kathy Maloney, Sue Maden, Jane Bentley, Bob Kinder, Bob Kinzel, Ennis Chestang, Bob Connelly, Don & Heather Minto, Whit Brown, Skip Walls, and William W. Smith III. Your donation of time and your enthusiasm for the mill is greatly appreciated.

This past summer with great sadness and loss we learned of the passing of Howard Harding. Howard and his wife Brookie spent decades and countless hours preserving and protecting “The Old Jamestown Mill.” Howard had a fundamental knowledge of the mill and a passion for its preservation. He wanted to share his enthusiasm with all of us, realizing that it was important for many people to be involved in this effort. We are the grateful recipients of monies donated in his memory to the Windmill fund. To all of you who have donated, our sincere thanks. Please be assured that your contribution will be dedicated to the always on-going repair and maintenance of the mill.

The Board of Directors of the Jamestown Historical Society feels it is important to have members involved in all aspects of our work. So this winter I will be working on establishing a more formal Windmill committee that will be responsible for overseeing the care and maintenance of the mill. In the past, these tasks have been performed informally, primarily by the committee chair with help from my family and our millwright, Andy Strake. I don't anticipate many meetings, but as issues arise the committee will convene to address the problem and make recommendations to the board if the situation warrants.

The mill is a historical landmark of Jamestown and it is up to us to ensure its survival so that future generations will continue to experience the uniqueness of this wonderful building. Howard left us with big shoes to fill, so please call me at 423-1820 if you have an interest in serving.



Courtesy of Steve Dunwell Photography, Boston, MA

Howard Harding
Co-chair, Windmill Committee, 1987 to 2002

Program Committee

By Jane Bentley

Each year your Program Committee organizes a series of summer events that have two purposes. Most importantly, they promote interest in the history of our island. Secondly, they raise money to preserve the artifacts of that history.

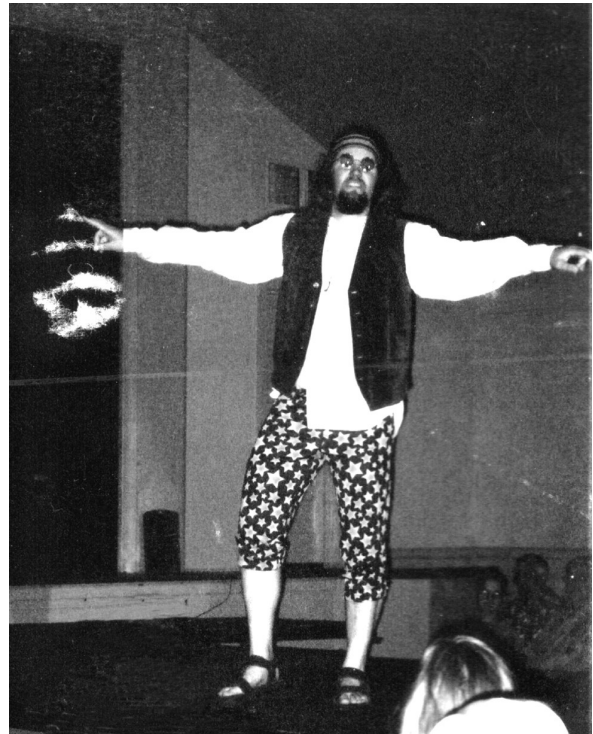
Vintage Fashion Show

On Saturday, June 11, the Jamestown Community Center was the site the Jamestown Historical Society vintage fashion show. It was not just an ordinary fashion show. Held to celebrate the 1946 conversion of the building from USO to town use, the evening included short histories of the Community Center during each of the decades from the 1940s to the 1970s, as well as clothing and music from each era.

The models were members of families that had lived on the island during the years when the clothing they exhibited were worn. They were escorted to the runway by members of the Jamestown Police Department. The 1950s Drum and Bugle Corps was represented, and Madeline White was the hit of the evening when she came on stage dressed in Norma Walsh's original drum major outfit. A big thank you to the models: Bert Brodin, Matt Clarke, Alexa Furtado, Ed Gillis, Dottie Norton, Chris Powell, Tally Pruell, Kathryn Thomas, Joe Tiexiera, Madeline White, Owen White, and Mary Wright. Bob Kinzel helped with the music, Fran Gorman did the posters, and Linda Warner, Marion Pierce, Linnea Peterson, John Horton, and John Murphy helped with setup, refreshments, and programs.

Walking Tour

A walking tour of Narragansett Avenue on Saturday, July 23, afforded the Historical Society an opportunity to share information about the history of



Ed Gillis models the fashions of the '60s at the Vintage Fashion Show in June

the East Ferry area from the 17th century and the Revolutionary War down through the late 20th century. Jane Bentley, our tour guide, met with two groups, one at 10:00 A.M. and the second at 1:00 P.M. in front of the Museum. The tours continued east down Narragansett Avenue and along the waterfront. Historical facts as well as possibly apocryphal anecdotes were relayed to the tour members.

The two groups were very diverse. Local residents with stories of their own to tell mixed with guests from off the island. We were fortunate to have a beautiful day, and everyone – including your tour guide – left with just a little more knowledge than when we started.

Annual Meeting

The annual meeting was held at the library on August 11. The Society was fortunate to have Trudy Coxe and John Scanlon, two of the early directors for *Save The Bay*, as our guest speakers for the occasion.



View of *Horsehead* from the southwest during the house tour in September

Save the Bay has its origins in Jamestown, growing out of our grassroots opposition to Commerce Oil's plan to build a refinery on Jamestown. Mr. Scanlon was its first paid employee and first Executive Director. Ms. Coxe was among the earliest volunteers and followed Mr. Scanlon as Executive Director. For over an hour, they told stories, reminisced, and delighted the audience with their recollections of the early days of this powerful watchdog organization. Many of the programs that still affect the bay had their genesis during their tenure, and it was interesting to hear how behind the scenes decisions were made.

House Tour

On Saturday, September 10, the Society sponsored a house tour at *Horsehead*. Once again we were fortunate with the weather – it was one of the nicest late summer days we have had. Harry and Josy Wright very graciously opened their home and grounds for four hours. Many people turned out to stroll the grounds, walk the beach, or tour the house and look at the lovely pictures of the past century. This could not have happened without the volunteers: Lynn Bell, David and Allison Bentley, Emily Chamberlain, Rosemary Enright, Dick Hines, Sue Maden, Jane Miner, Mary Jane Murphy, Linnea Peterson, Nancy Pollock, Carroll Pruell, and Chris Shippee.

On a personal note, it has been my pleasure to serve on the Jamestown Historical Society Board for 20 years. I started in 1986 with a house tour of three homes in the Dumlplings and it has turned into a yearly event. I have watched the Society grow and change and become more professional. We are stewards of three pieces of property and have eagerly moved into the age of digital imaging and cataloging. The Society's activities are both time consuming and rewarding. I know they have been left in good hands and I feel sure that the growth that has started will continue in the future.

Publications Committee

By John Horton

Inspired by the reception to the "thank you" cards the Society has been using this year, which display a photograph from our collection, the Publications committee has created a series of three note cards using the historic photographs shown on the right. The cards will be on sale for the first time at the Conanicut Island Art Association Holiday Sale on December 3. Six cards – two of each design – will cost \$5.



Gardner House, 1889



Narragansett Ave, 1893



Ladies on Jetty, 1912

The Society's web site is being upgraded and rehosted. At the new site, you will be able to access our museum catalog and photograph collection, as well as order gifts and check on Society events. Visit us and check our progress at www.jamestownhistoricalsociety.org.

Collections Committee

By Linda Warner and Sue Maden

More than 300 people visited the Museum this summer to view the special exhibit, *Flags over Jamestown*, as well as our permanent exhibit about the Jamestown ferries. We didn't quite finish putting together the huge American flag jigsaw puzzle that accompanied the *Flags* exhibit, but the field of stars was done.

The Society is most grateful to Elizabeth Connelly, who once again arranged the docent schedule. The volunteers this year were Joyce and Dick Allphin, Carolyn Armington, Jane Bentley, Joan Briggs, Leo Brown, Bill Burgin, Marcy Coleman, Elizabeth and Bob Connelly, Rosemary Enright, Marcia Glassie, Emma Graham, Eleanor Gravdahl, Janie Harris, Dawn Hines, Ginger Holland, John Howard, Rose and Varoujan Karentz, Bob Kinder, Anne Lane, Teddy and John Leyon, Anne and Bruce Livingston, Diana Luth, Sue Maden, Bruce Murray, John Murphy, Roland Parent, Marion Pierce, Sue Potter, Sav Rebecchi, Charlotte Richardson, Helen Richardson, Ginny Saunders, Debbie Slattery, Betty

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Donate artifacts related to Jamestown
- Volunteer next Spring to help with cataloging objects into PastPerfect
- Volunteer next summer to be a docent at the Museum

Call Sue Maden at 423-2167 for information.

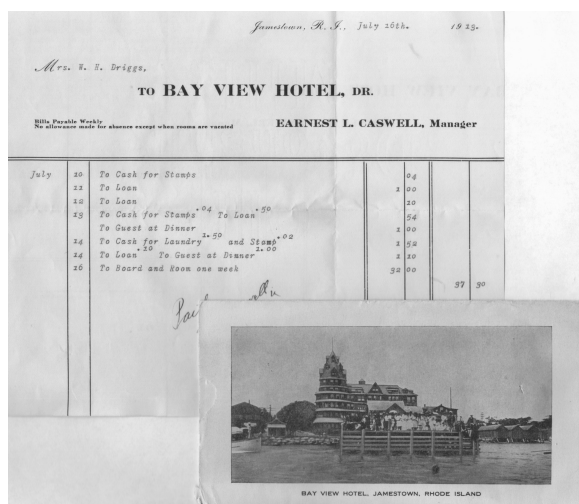
Ann Taylor, Carol Todd, Mary and Dennis Webster, B.J. Whitehouse, Harry Wright, and Ann Zartler. A heartfelt "thank you" to each.

As reported in the spring newsletter, the Collections Committee faced major challenges this summer. The death of Mary Miner, our Archivist, and the impending departure from the island of Elizabeth Connelly, our long-time Curator, created significant gaps in our capabilities and expertise. Their accomplishments were enormous, and they will be much missed.

Your new Collections Committee consists of Sue Maden and Harry Wright, co-chairs, Rosemary Enright, Joe Logan, and Linda Warner. The focus this winter will be on cataloging detailed information about various collections into PastPerfect, a software program for museums.

For the past couple of years, the focus has been on cataloging the 4,000 plus photographs in our collection. About one-half of these photographs have been digitized, and both the information about the photo and a low-resolution version of the digitized copy can be accessed directly from PastPerfect. Next the "objects," which number about 900, will be cataloged. By next spring, processes will be in place so that a group of volunteers can be trained to move this project forward at a faster rate.

It is also possible to view digital versions of over 2,000 of the Society's photographs at the Jamestown Philomenian Library. On each computer screen,



An itemized bill for \$37.30 for a week's stay at the Bay View Hotel in the summer of 1913 and the envelope in which it may have been delivered are among archives recently acquired by the Society.

there is a JHS photo icon that allows you to browse the collection. Although not all information about the photograph is available, you can make low resolution copies, at ten cents a page. If you wish to order high-resolution copies, there are request forms available at the circulation desk.

A display case specially designed by our past president Bill Burgin for the library is being made. Upon completion, the case will be placed just outside the children's room in the library. The Society can then display items during the winter when the Museum is closed. We hope to have the display case in place by the spring.

Planning is ongoing for a special exhibit for the 2006 summer.

Buildings and Grounds Committee

By Joe Logan

Over the summer, a second dehumidifier was installed in the back room of the museum building. It was generously donated by Harry Wright and helped to keep the building drier during those terribly humid days. Many thanks to Harry.

No significant maintenance was required for the Museum, Friends Meetinghouse, or the Windmill other than a minor plaster repair at the Friends Meetinghouse and the usual grounds upkeep.

Inside the Museum, we have started labeling all of the shelves and storage spaces so that the Collections committee will be able to record the location of all of our objects, photographs, books, and papers. This is a big job, but eventually, researchers or visitors who find an item of interest in our electronic database in PastPerfect will be able to locate it and view it, if required, with the help of our volunteers.



At the July meeting of the Jamestown Historical Society Board of Directors, the following resolution was proposed and accepted unanimously:

"that, to honor Mary Miner's almost fifty year of exceptional contributions to the Jamestown Historical Society, the Society establish in her name a permanent endowment fund, the

MARY R. MINER ARCHIVES FUND,

the income of which shall be used exclusively for the direct care and management of the Society's manuscripts, books, documents, photographs, prints, and paper ephemera."

Contributions to the Fund can be sent to Jamestown Historical Society Mary R. Miner Archives Fund, P.O. Box 156, Jamestown, RI 02835.



Shelves and boxes in the museum have been numbered, as part of the effort to organize storage and catalogue the Society's artifacts.

***Officers and Directors
2005 – 2006***

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| President | Rosemary Enright |
| Vice President | Harry Wright |
| Secretary | Jane Miner |
| Treasurer | Marion Pierce |
| Directors to 2006 | Joe Logan Mary Jane. Murphy |
| Directors to 2007 | Dick Hines John Horton Ken Newman |
| Directors to 2008 | Dick Allphin Maureen McGuirl Sue Maden Linnea Petersen |

***Committee Chairs
2005 – 2006***

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Windmill | Linnea Petersen |
| Collections Co-chairs | Sue Maden Harry Wright |
| Building & Grounds | Joe Logan |
| Program Co-chairs | Maureen McGuirl Mary Jane Murphy |
| Finance | Dick Hines |
| Publications | John Horton |

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