



Jamestown Historical Society

HERITAGE

Spring 2009

To collect, preserve, and share with others the heritage of Jamestown, Rhode Island.

Battery Day 2009 A Great Success

The celebration of Battery Day 2009 in Conanicut Battery Historic Park began late in the afternoon of Friday, May 8, with the arrival of Captain Tew's Company of the 2nd Rhode Island. The company set up a camp that replicated the camps lived in by the Rhode Island volunteer troops during the eight years of the American Revolution and spent a rainy night in their tents sleeping on straw bedding.

Saturday, May 9—Battery Day—dawned misty and chilly but the rain had stopped. At 10 AM, the historical society crew began erecting a tent for the Jamestown Community Band and setting up the sound system. From then until the formal ceremonies began at 1 PM, the park bustled with enactors in uniform, band members carrying instruments, and JHS



Photo by John Horton

volunteers overseeing the activity. Quite early on, visitors began to arrive—many of them ferried from Mackerel Cove in the Conanicut Marine shuttle bus kindly provided by Bill and Mae Munger.

At 1 PM, the band began to play. At 1:15, the Artillery Company



Photo by John Horton

of Newport fired its first cannon salute and members of Ye Olde Lebanon Towne Militia, the Varnum Continentals, Le Regiment Bourbonnais, the Grenadier Company of the 10th Regiment of Foot, and the Jamestown Boy Scout Troop #1 marched in.

Paul Brunelle, in the uniform of Major Blodgett, our traditional host for Battery Day, welcomed everyone, and Father O'Neill led the invocation. The flags of France and Great Britain were raised to cannon and musket salute while the band played the

two national anthems. Jamestown's VFW and the American Legion raised the American flag to the strains of the Star Spangled Banner.

Colonel Bruce Livingston, U.S. Marine Corps (ret) and current commander of the Jamestown VFW, talked about the history and importance of the Battery.

It was a great day, made possible in part by a legislative grant procured for us by our representative, Deb Ruggiero.



Photo by Aaron Brunelle

From the President

by Rosemary Enright

Most of the society's winter activities are detailed in the committee reports. The Board as a whole considered a couple of wider issues.

Local Historic District Question

In late November 2008, the Jamestown Town Council asked the JHS Board to review a request from the First Subdivision of Shoreby Hill, Inc., for an ordinance establishing an historic district. The request also proposed the First Subdivision as the initial historic district under the ordinance. The First Subdivision, more commonly known as Lower Shoreby, comprises the eastern part of Shoreby Hill from Standish Road to Conanicus Avenue.

A "local historic district" is an area, defined in a manner similar to any other zoning district, within which building permits for new buildings or for permanent exterior changes to existing buildings are reviewed for conformance with the historic character of the building being altered and of the area. The idea is to help save historic buildings and to preserve a sense of time and place for the benefit of the community.

The Town Council can create the framework for a local historic district in Jamestown by passing an ordinance that establishes a historic district commission and identifies at least one area as a historic district. The historic district commission develops written standards and procedures, to be approved by the Town Council, that govern what principles it applies and how it applies them.

The commission's job is to review, make suggestions, and approve/disapprove new construction and exterior alterations to buildings within a historic district. It doesn't review permits for interior changes or for temporary changes, such as paint color. Nor does it regulate the use of a building.

Decisions of the local historic district commission are binding on the building official but may be appealed to the Zoning Board of Review. The ZBR's decision may in turn be appealed in the state courts.

Board Response

In January, the Board responded to the Town Council's request in a letter—to long to be quoted

here in its entirety—expressing our support for a local historic district ordinance:

"The Historical Society supports the establishment of a local historic district ordinance to which additional historic districts can be added at a later date, if the property owners within an area of the town so wish. The existence of well-crafted standards and procedures for implementing the ordinance—not too onerous or complicated but able to fulfill the goals intended—would benefit the whole island."

On the subject of the selection of Shoreby Hill—or any specific area—as a historic district, the Board said that the Historical Society should not try to define which portions of Jamestown should be designated as historic districts—that was up to the residents of the area. The letter did acknowledge that Shoreby Hill has the necessary historic credentials to be considered a local historic district.

If you would like a copy of the letter, please email jhs@jamestownri.com or phone me at 423-2674.

Bylaw Revision

The JHS Board has been conducting some of its business—including votes on some important issues, like the final wording of the letter to the Town Council—by email. The use of electronic communication was not explicitly covered in the bylaws, although the authority of the Executive Committee to operate between meetings was.

The Board decided to add a paragraph in section IV "Board of the Society" that spells out the responsibility of the Executive Committee to notify the Board of certain types of actions. The new paragraph, 4.8, reads in part:

"The executive committee shall notify the board of any issues it is considering that pertain to the expenditure of funds outside the approved budget, to formally approved board policies, or to matters under litigation; and except in the case of emergencies it shall poll the board electronically, both to obtain a sense of the opinions of its members concerning these issues and to give members time to request a board meeting should they wish to do so."

A complete copy of the revised bylaws is posted on the JHS website.

Program Calendar for Summer 2009

Saturday, June 20

Jamestown Windmill Begins Summer Hours

The windmill opens for the summer. Docent training, 1 to 4 PM. Windmill will be open from 1 to 4 PM, Saturday and Sunday through October 12. It will also be open on July 4th and Labor Day.

Saturday, June 20

Quaker Meetinghouse Open House

1 to 4 PM

Open house at the Conanicut Friends Meetinghouse. The meetinghouse is also open by appointment throughout the year. Meeting is held at 10:30 each Sunday morning. All are invited.

Saturday, June 20

Volunteer Training at Jamestown Museum

1 to 4 PM

Preview of summer exhibit for volunteers. Training in procedures for opening and closing museum.

Sunday, June 21

Jamestown Museum Gala Exhibit Opening

1 to 4 PM

Summer exhibition, *Educating Jamestown: Then and Now*, opens with reception and tour of both museum and JHS vault in Town Hall.

Wednesday, June 24

Jamestown Museum Begins Summer Hours

Museum hours 1 to 4 PM, Wednesday through Sunday through September 6. Weekends in September.

Saturday, July 18

**Walking Tour of Jamestown Village
Leaving from Jamestown Museum**

10 AM

Learn about the history of Jamestown as we admire the town center.

Sunday, July 19

**Walking Tour of Jamestown Village
Leaving from Jamestown Museum**

2 PM

Reprise of Saturday's walking tour for those who missed it.

Thursday, August 13

Annual Meeting

Jamestown Philomenian Library, 7 PM

Election of officers and Board of Directors for 2010. Speaker to be announced.

Sunday, September 6

Jamestown Museum Goes to Fall Hours

Museum open only on weekends.

Friday, September 18

Members-Only House Tour Preview Party

6 PM to 8 PM

Beginning of House Tour weekend. Cocktail party at historic Jamestown house to be announced. Tickets: \$40. Include ticket to Saturday's house tour.

Saturday, September 19

House Tour

10 AM to 2 PM

Visit Fox Hill Farm and second home to be announced. Tickets: \$20

Sunday, September 27

Jamestown Museum Closes for the Season

Last chance to see the *Educating Jamestown: Then and Now* exhibit.

Monday, October 12

Jamestown Windmill Closes for the Season

The windmill is open by appointment any time.



Jamestown Historical Society Collection

**Fox Hill Farm about 1900. Parts of the building
were probably built about 1733.**

Development

by Shawn Mayers

Your Development Committee has been working on two efforts over the winter: Our first priority has been to make your membership in the society worth more to you. We have also been reviewing our membership lists in preparation for reaching out to members who have let their membership lapse.

Members-Only Events

Our first members-only event of the 2009 season was a tour of the International Tennis Hall of Fame on May 21st. From 5:30 to 7:30, JHS members sipped wine, nibbled on cheese and crackers, and wandered through the museum, using audio tour devices or just looking at the magnificent exhibits.

Museum Director Doug Stark introduced the evening with a talk about the building, its history, and how its preservation came about. The 1880 Newport Casino was designed by McKim, Mead and White, the nationally prominent architectural firm of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was one of the firm's earliest projects.

Jamestownner Jane Lippincott and her daughter Caroline enthusiastically explained court tennis—a forerunner of modern tennis that has been played in its present form since the 12th century. Jane then took a group of members down to the courts to watch a match. Both Jane and Caroline are nationally ranked court tennis players.



Photo by Rosemary Enright

Court tennis enthusiast Jane Lippincott

This wasn't a fundraiser. It was just a time for us all to come together and have fun.

Our next members-only party will be the second annual house tour preview party on September 18th at 6 PM. The Development Committee is working closely with the Program Committee to make the whole weekend a gala occasion.



Photo by Rosemary Enright

View of the interior court of the Newport Casino from the United States Tennis Association room where the JHS event was held.

1657 Society

The 1657 Society has a new member. On Memorial Day, JHS presented an honorary 1657 Society plaque for the *Jamestown Press* building to Jeff and Kim McDonough in appreciation of their ongoing support of the society.

The *Jamestown Press* building was built soon after the First World War and the roofline of the building is typical of the era. Several buildings on Narragansett Avenue—including Chopmist Charlie's and the Bomes Theater mall—once had the same stepped façade. The *Press* building is the only one left. Supporters like Kim and Jeff keep our organization vibrant, which in turn helps us better carry out our mission to preserve, protect, and share our island's history.

To find out more about how to join the 1657 Society, contact Shawn Mayers at 423-9678.

Membership Renewal

We are currently updating our membership database and will be sending out reminders about membership renewal at the end of June. It would be a great service to us—by reducing postage, stationery and mailing costs—if you would kindly renew your membership prior to this mailing. A membership form is on the back page.

Additionally, we are hoping to garner new members in a separate direct mail effort; please let us know if there is anyone you think would be interested in joining the JHS.

Collections

by Sue Maden

The Collections Committee, which meets monthly, consists of Sue Maden, Rosemary Enright, Joe Logan, Dianne Rugh, Linda Warner and Harry Wright.

Summer Museum Exhibit

This year's summer exhibit, *Educating Jamestown: Then and Now*, will be unveiled at the museum on Sunday, June 21st, with a reception from 1 to 4 PM. The new exhibit is an update of last summer's *School Day!* and retains much of the information about, and pictures of, the early days of public education in Jamestown. Material has been added about more recent events, and Lawn Avenue students have provided comments aimed at younger visitors.

At the suggestion of some of last year's visitors, we have also added many more pictures of past students. We're still looking for class pictures—especially for the early days of Lawn Avenue School, 1956 to 1981. If you have a class picture from those years, we would love to borrow it and make a digital copy for our collection.

We aren't able to put all the pictures on the wall, so some will be in notebooks that you can flip through to find yourself or people you know or just browse.

During the reception on June 21st, visitors will also be invited to visit the JHS vault in the basement of the Town Hall across the street, where most of the archives, photographs, and clothing in the JHS collection are now housed. Members of the JHS

Collections Committee will be on hand to show the vault and demonstrate how to access information about the collection in the database.

The museum will be open every Wednesday through Sunday afternoon from 1 to 4 PM. until Labor Day—and weekends until September 27th, if we can get volunteers to cover this extended schedule.

The final action in the renovation of the museum was the arrival of a new bench for the front deck. The bench, generously donated by Diana Smith, was delivered in time for some late visitors to enjoy it in the fall. This summer it will provide a spot in the sun for visitors and docents alike to watch the activity on Narragansett Avenue and admire the Town Hall across the way.

Visit the museum to learn the history of our public school system, browse the collection of 100 years of class photographs, and see pictures of our historic town as it grew from agricultural backwater to its current prosperity. And volunteer to greet other visitors as they come to the museum.

Museum Volunteers

Fran Boyer has taken on the volunteer scheduling again this year and has already called many of you who have volunteered in recent years. Fran is also scheduling volunteers for the windmill.

A formal orientation will take place on Saturday, June 20th from 1 to 4 PM., but if you cannot make it then, come to the museum whenever it is open, prior to your scheduled time. Whoever is on duty can orient you.

If you haven't been scheduled and would like to volunteer, please call Sue Maden at 423-2167.

Library Display Case

Three different exhibits have cycled through the JHS display case in the library this winter.

From October to early December the exhibit was "In Honor of Those Who Served: Jamestown Veterans" and many of the medals and military insignia from the collection were on display.

From December to early March, the exhibit featured some of the donations received in 2008. Although not everything could be shown, the list of items on display described gifts from 30 donors.



**Dressing for school: 1938 and 2008
From JHS summer exhibit**



from "Parson, Brinckerhoff, Quade & Douglas NOTES Fall 1969

The Newport Bridge under construction. A preview of the spring exhibit in the library.

The story of Jamestown Movable Chapel has been featured in the case since early March. Photos show the Movable Chapel when it was moved from St. Matthew's Church to East Shore Road in 1899 and then from North Road to Harbor Street in 1933.

The summer exhibit will be about the Newport/Pell Bridge, completed in 1969, in honor of its 40th anniversary.

Ferryboat Signs at the Recreation Center

For some years, two signs for the ferryboats *Hammonton* and *Conanicut* were on view at the Recreation Center. This winter, two more signs were added: a second *Conanicut* sign and a wooden ferry schedule sign. A plaque explaining these signs is in the outer lobby.

The expansion of the displays at the Rec Center is an outgrowth of the JHS's mission to share what we have and know about the history of our community. We are unable to display everything we have acquired over the years in the museum. So we are searching for public places—the Town Hall, the library, the Lawn Avenue School, the Rec Center—where they can be seen and safeguarded.

Cataloging

Volunteers are a major key to success and we are pleased that a number of people have learned the cataloging software program, PastPerfect. Recent volunteers are: Stephanie Amerigian, Carolyn Armington, Rosemary Enright, Carol Lake, Nancy and Joe Logan, Sue Maden, Dianne Rugh, Ginny Saunders, and Wendy Shapiro.

Ginny Saunders has specialized in finding obituaries of Jamestown residents and cataloging them. So far she has added over 2,000 to the collection.

Others have helped in other ways: Patti Cassidy has transcribed handwritten records; Connie Enright is digitizing a slide collection; and Judy Knight is taking care of our textiles.

Over 17,000 records have been created in the PastPerfect software program; 4,000 have been entered in the last year. Internet users can access these records by going to jamestownhistoricalsociety.org.

Accessioning and Deaccessioning

Recent donations and acquisitions are listed on the page 8 of the newsletter. Our rules for accepting a donation allow us to accept only objects that relate directly to Jamestown, that are in sufficiently good and original condition to warrant the cost of preservation, and that can responsibly be preserved and cared for by the Society.

Sometimes we have to say "no" to something we'd otherwise like to have because it doesn't fit one of those criteria. Perhaps the relationship with Jamestown is too tenuous. Or the size of the object makes it difficult for us to care for it properly in our limited space at the museum and vault. Or several copies in good or better condition are already in the collection.

The JHS Collections Committee welcomes gifts that fit those criteria. If you have articles, papers, photos or other memorabilia that you'd like to donate, please contact Sue Maden, the Collections Committee chair, at jhs@jamestownri.com or 423-2167.

In addition to enhancing the collection by acquiring new items, the committee periodically assesses items already in the collection to make sure they meet the standards of the collection policy. We've taken advantage of all the moving around we've been doing because of the museum renovation to evaluate everything we touch. Several items that have been accepted in the past do not pass the new rules.

When an accessioned item is inappropriate for the collection, the committee asks the JHS Board to allow it to be disposed of. Deaccessioned items are returned to the donor or the donor's family or are disposed of in some suitable way. For example, a number of World War I posters have recently been given to the Naval War College.

Care of the Collection

Our new vault and the temperature controls in the museum are big steps toward ensuring that the collection was well protected. In addition, the committee has consulted with a conservator about the care of its collection of signs, some of which need conservation.

Ever since the Katrina disaster, disaster planning has been a major focus for all museums, libraries, and repositories. What do we do if a hurricane like the 1938 hurricane hits Jamestown? What are our first priorities as an historical society? What do we save first? How do we mitigate deterioration of items we cannot safeguard that suffer damage?

A disaster plan is being written using a template provided by the state library system.

Reference Questions

Answering reference questions about the collection and about Jamestown is an important part of the Collections Committee's work. For example:

- The *Newport Daily News* staff often asks us for information and pictures for their "Then & Now" column. To date some 25 columns about Jamestown have appeared.
- The Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association recently appointed a shipwreck archivist who has been in contact with us about local wrecks.
- We set up a meeting between the descendants of Samuel Smith, who emigrated to Jamestown in the 1860s, and the descendants of his sister who remained behind in England

Often our investigations uncover more interesting information than we knew was available. As facts surface, we capture them in articles and notebooks that we hope will help future researchers. For example, a question about the moveable chapel has led us to start a data file of all the buildings on Jamestown that have been moved. To date, we have identified 68 buildings that have been moved from one lot to another and another 17 that have been repositioned on the same lot.

Communications

by John Horton

Are you looking for up-to-date information about what is going on in the historical society? Go to our website at jamestownhistoricalsociety.org to get the latest news and calendar of events.

From our home page, you can now link to the monthly "Jamestown Historical Society News" column in the *Jamestown Press*. While you're at the *Press* site, click on "Watch Videos" in the left hand menu and see a three-minute video of Battery Day. In the video, Jeff McDonough captures both the excitement and the historic significance of the celebration.

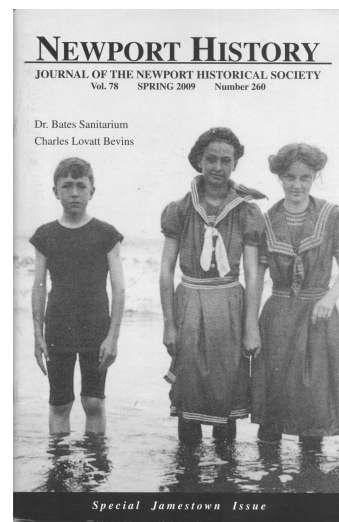
Newport History, Journal of the Newport Historical Society

Two articles by members of the JHS appeared in a special Jamestown issue of *Newport History, Journal of the Newport Historical Society*, that was published this spring.

"Dr. Bates Sanitarium" by Sue Maden and Rosemary Enright tells the story of the health spa that existed from 1900 to 1940 on Conanicus Avenue across from the Bay Voyage hotel. The article is the result of Sue's independent research over the years. The JHS profited greatly from helping Sue with the article since Dr. Bates's descendants have allowed digital copies of the pictures used in the article to be added to the collection.

A photo essay by Jim Buttrick describes with words and pictures many of the houses on Jamestown that were designed by Charles L. Bevins. Most of the pictures with the article are from the JHS collection and the article itself was prompted by Jim's monograph on Bevins published by the society in 2002.

The journal will be available at the museum this summer for \$10.



**Special Jamestown Issue of
*Newport History***

Donations and Acquisitions: October 2008 through April 2009

- Dave Adams: Photographs of moving of the Movable Chapel to Harbor St. in 1933; copy of a "Believe It or Not Ripley" column featuring Movable Chapel; two discs with photos.
- Connie Andrews: description of and published article about her experience as a teenager on a sailboat in the 1938 Hurricane.
- Rita Antine: key from the old Bayview Hotel, room 16
- Jeanne Bunkley: Report on Shoreby Hill (undated)
- John Doty: 17 photographs of Jamestown: 3 collages (4 photos of 1938 Hurricane, 12 of Hurricane Carol and 15 of ferryboats); motel at foot of Jamestown Bridge; Arnold house on Fort Getty Road; Bay Voyage.
- Rosemary Enright: roll of Newport/Pell Bridge tokens
- Janice Fletcher: letter dated Jan. 29, 1959 from US Navy Sailor CM2 G Skip Fraley aboard USS Glacier AGB4, during Operation Deepfreeze1, to Hiram Beers of Jamestown.
- Ken Froberg: Christmas card with Jamestown windmill and Friends Meetinghouse from a painting by him in 2008
- JEMS (Jamestown Emergency Medical Service): uniforms: jacket, skirt and hat pre-1949; Red Cross volunteer dress and jacket; Jamestown Ambulance Association jacket, skirt and hat, jacket from 1949, and later jacket.
- Randy Lebeau and David Silva (E-bay sellers): A 1941 photo of soldiers at Fort Getty.
- Joe Logan: dvd of 2006 town hall move and construction; thumbnails of over 150 photos; photos of four JHS signs at Recreation Center.
- Sue Maden: Seven Christmas ornaments (Windmill, Beavertail Light, Jamestown Bridge, The Conanicut; Beavertail Light; Jamestown IV); *Shipwrecks of the United States. Volume I, Rhode Island 'The Ocean State'* by Jim Jenney; plat map by Mullins of Conanicut Park; Sanborn map 20 from 1921; four plans for a proposed municipal building by Herbert Wetherill, about 1927; plat map of Shoreby Hill; material about hotels and the Conanicut Lighthouse; four Newport Bridge tokens; poster from Rhode Island's Islands project; a poster of St. Matthew's Church, drawing by June Webb, 1986; "originals" used to reproduce the compilation of *The Electric Spark* and of *The Newport Daily News, 1900-1929 and 1941-1945*; two notebooks with information about the Jamestown Bridge, one is arranged by subject from 1939-1960s from a variety of sources and the other contains largely prints from microfilm of Jamestown Bridge Commission records
- Pede Manchester: an envelope that was used at one time to hold nine Bridge tokens
- Nancy Caswell Mason: three small bead baskets made by Oliver Caswell; one share (number two) for the Conanicut Telephone and Telegraph Company, 1883, which is made out to Wm. K. Knowles; handmade booklet of "Conanicut our Island Home," 1897, Present to Mrs. W. F. Caswell by a classmate (MAT) Class of 1886, C.L.S.C., Chautauqua Circle; "The Town Crier, Vol. 1, No. 4, March 9, 1926 with article on Proposed Canal for Jamestown; scrapbook of Jamestown articles cut and pasted in a Sears Roebuck catalog, ca 1911 to 1915
- Jeff McDonough: pictures of Jamestown Theatre production of *Wizard of Oz*; Edna Hill Schultz in dress whites in 1956, from 45 Pemberton; and two of fires (Benoit, 1939 and Maplewood, 1944)
- Don and Heather Minto/Heritage New England: Videotape of the move on May 29, 1991 of the Tiddeman-Hull house (ca 1840) to Watson farm. [Videotape converted to dvd by Frank Meyer.]
- Peter Newbauer: some newspaper clippings (copied and returned) and pictures of his class (class of 1959) at Jamestown School and some of sports teams on Jamestown and at Rogers High (with Jamestown students on team).
- Marion Pierce: variety of Newport/Pell Bridge tokens and token bags and brochures related to the Newport Bridge..
- Preservation Society of Newport County: two ferry tickets
- Donald Richardson: three articles about his father from 1917
- St. Mark Church: "St. Mark Church, Jamestown, Rhode Island. Parish family Album 1909 2009," signed by Rev. William J. O'Neill April 29, 2009
- Bob Saunders: a photo of a portrait by Alvan Fisher of Oliver Caswell from about 1845, he is shown with his teacher Laura Bridgeman.
- Sally Schott: five Newport/Pell Bridge tokens
- Irene and Ed Silvia: brochure on Narragansett Bay Bridge promoting its bond issue, 1964; box with equipment Ed used as a purser on the Jamestown Ferry (tickets, hole punch, change holder, schedule of cost for tickets, brochures); framed photo of Bay View House before corner tower section built; wooden sign for Bayview Hotel (11'x14 1/2"). (Delivered by Pede Manchester, who is helping the donors)
- Linda Warner: A billing form from *The Standard Jamestown edition*, used by Emily Warren.

Education

by Sally Schott

This winter and spring, a group of 7th and 8th graders from the Lawn Avenue School has been studying Jamestown history once a week in an elective course taught by Lawn Avenue School Principal Kathy Almanzor. As part of the course, the students have visited the Jamestown Museum several times to view and soak up the 2008 *School Days!* exhibit with the goal of helping to revise the exhibit for the upcoming summer season.



Photo by Sally Schott

Lawn Avenue students study the 2008 exhibit to recommend improvements for 2009.

The students have provided feedback to the historical society about what appeals to them in the exhibit and what they feel is missing or could be improved. They have also been thinking about what elements of more recent school history should be emphasized. The effect of the students' efforts will be reflected in the exhibit when *Educating Jamestown: Then and Now* opens on June 21st.

Their feedback has resulted in a timeline that visualizes the growth of the town and school chronologically. The chronology is linked to an easy to read map of past and current school locations.

The students have been particularly interested in reviewing the school behavior codes over time and seeing how they have changed and how they have stayed the same. In response to their interest, a new panel has been added, part of which compares the rules for behavior and dress across the centuries.



Photo by Sally Schott

Students were particularly interested in “then and now” school rules.

Finally, the students have written observations about various parts of the exhibit in an effort to provide commentary at a level more accessible to younger children who visit the museum. These comments are being printed on highly visible, easy to read green cards and incorporated in the exhibit.

Eight groups of 2nd, 3rd and 4th graders from Melrose School will visit the museum for a sneak peek before the exhibit officially opens.

Lawn Avenue School Exhibit

In addition to bringing the students to our exhibits, JHS has also brought an exhibit to the students. The school has allowed the JHS the use of a display case outside the Lawn Avenue School library for displays of local history. Currently the exhibit tells the history of the demolition of old Jamestown Bridge.



Photos by Rosemary Enright

Bridge demolition exhibit currently at the Lawn Avenue School.

The JHS plans to rotate the exhibit each school semester.

Windmill Hill

by William Mullins and Harry Wright

The new season at the windmill begins on June 20th. Linnea Petersen will open the mill from 1 to 4 PM. Members who have volunteered to be greeters this summer are encouraged to come and review with her their knowledge of the mill and the opening and closing procedures. Windmill booklets explaining the history and operation of the mill will be available for each volunteer.

While you're on Windmill Hill, take advantage of their annual Open House to visit the Conanicut Friends Meetinghouse nearby on Weeden Lane.

Summer Hours

As usual, the mill will be open to visitors from 1 to 4 PM every Saturday and Sunday during the summer. The meetinghouse is open for meeting every Sunday at 10:30 and by appointment. We are hoping to lengthen the windmill season this year and stay open through Columbus Day. If you will be in Jamestown in September, we are still looking for people to cover the autumn weekends. It is easy duty. The setting is beautiful and the views spectacular. To become volunteer, please call 423-2674 or email jhs@jamestownri.com with your name and phone number. We look forward to hearing from you!

Plans and Problems

We have begun serious planning for the long promised upgrade to the didactic signage inside the windmill. The current signage was put up after the renovation eight years ago and is showing wear. The current schematic of the mill is small and has faded, making it hard to read.



Jamestown Historical Society Collection

Meetinghouse about 1900

Caroline Frank, a historian with expertise in material culture and a new member of the Board for 2008-2009, is working with William Mullins and Rosemary Enright on the content. We'll also be getting help from Andy Shrake, the millwright who oversaw the 2000 renovation, to make sure our pictures and descriptions are accurate. Adams Taylor, who designed the Land Agreement display in the Town Hall, has volunteered to help us create a more detailed exhibit that at the same time does not obscure the "bones" of the building with excessive signage.

When you read Greg DiGasper's Buildings and Grounds report on the next page, you will learn that some of the old structural problems at the mill are resurfacing. Powderpost beetles, which were a major cause of the 2000 renovation of the mill, are back. We hope we have caught them early enough this time to preclude the need for any major overhaul.

The meetinghouse is also experiencing problems associated with age and the high water table on Windmill Hill

Early Visitors

Several groups of visitors visited both the Jamestown windmill and the Conanicut Friends Meetinghouse before the official season began.

Tour Rhode Island, the annual state-wide event to introduce Rhode Islanders to the beauty of their own state, brought 45 people from all over Rhode Island to Windmill Hill on May 2nd. The event is sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce.

On May 9, the *Thresholds: Step Inside History* celebration included the JHS sites among the 26 historic sites across the state open to visitors free of charge and 33 visitors came by.

Each spring the Jamestown Rotary sponsors a visit of fellow members of Rotary International to the island. When eight Rotarians from Russia toured the mill on May 11, we discovered that we must update our description of how the windmill works. Translating from English to metric measurements on the fly is not easy. If it takes an hour to mill a bushel of corn, how long does it take to mill a hectoliter?

Metric notation is something we will definitely have to consider for the new signage.

Buildings and Grounds

by Greg DiGasper

As many Jamestowners know, the task of maintaining old structures is never done. Maintenance of historic landscapes is also time-consuming.

Jamestown Windmill

Once again this fall, evidence of powder post beetle activity was discovered at the windmill. The old jib crane that was replaced in 2000 has remained in the mill for demonstration purposes and may be the source of the new infestation. Andy Shrake, the regional specialist in windmill restoration and preservation who oversaw the 2000 renovation, has been consulted and will be on hand this spring and summer to treat the entire windmill for beetles.

In addition, the wooden structure of the sail arms is showing signs of deterioration. A thorough inspection of the structure will be done in conjunction with the beetle treatments. The inspection will help to determine the scope of the damage and to plan subsequent repairs.

Conanicut Friends Meetinghouse

At the Conanicut Friends Meetinghouse, minor repairs have been done to strengthen some age-weakened benches. Shims have been added to stabilize floorboards that settled following repairs to the floor joists last year. We are still maintaining a “wait and see” stance in regard to parts of the substructure that seemed to be in danger of rotting from an excess of moisture.

Last summer, several tree stumps on the meetinghouse grounds were removed in order to smooth out the lawn for mowing. The evergreens facing North Main Road were trimmed and de-vined last autumn. They appear to be healthier this spring.

Jamestown Museum

Only one minor repair had to be made during our spring opening of the museum.. When the Jamestown Water Department went to turn on the water, they found that the interior water valve had frozen shut. A new ball-valve was installed, and the museum’s water system is up and running.

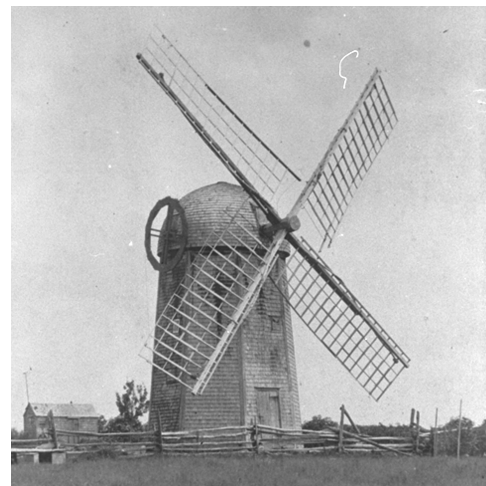
Conanicut Battery Historic Park

The Battery has received a new covering of grass seed. The crown or top of the Battery mounds was suffering from “trail-pattern” baldness from years of foot traffic, rain, and wind erosion. After Battery Day, a layer of loam was spread on the affected area, and the whole crown was then hydroseeded with native grasses that should be hardier than the previous covering.

Part of the funding for the new grass that will help to preserve the Revolutionary War battlements was received through two legislative grants sponsored by Senator Theresa Paiva-Weed.

While the reloaming was underway, vandalism was discovered in the battlements themselves. Someone had dug several holes—some in the top but more in the sides—of the battery mounds. The supposition is that the vandal used a metal detector and dug up the earth in hopes of finding historic artifacts.

The holes were refilled and sodded as part of the seeding process, and JHS has asked the police to keep a closer eye on the site. However, vigilant users are the best defense. If you notice any vandalism when you visit Battery Park, please let us know immediately, either by sending us an email at jhs@jamestownri.com or calling the museum at 423-0784. The sooner the evidence of vandalism is erased, the less likely it is to continue.



Jamestown Historical Society Collection

Jamestown Windmill about 1890

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