

President's Report 2011-2012

Jamestown Historical Society

Annual Meeting August 9, 2012

We have had a very busy and productive past twelve months featuring many programs and events.

In September, our Members only party was a tremendous success with over 95 people attending. The following day we were delighted by a beautiful day and two unique homes--the Farmhouse and the Crickets--at Fox Hill Farm that we were allowed to tour at our leisure. Spectacular views of the fields and the West Passage created an idyllic experience for all who attended. We are very grateful to Nonie and Bill O'Farrell and Patrick Driscoll and Jemma Craig for their hospitality and generous use of their properties which resulted in a very successful House Tour weekend. The Jamestown and the Silver Screen Series continued with The Great Hurricane of 1938 on the 73rd anniversary of that devastating storm on September 21st.

In October, we had our Annual volunteer appreciation party at "Birdview"--the beloved home of Eleanor Gravdahl. The clear night afforded the more than 60 people who attended phenomenal views of the East Passage. I shall never forget the gracious kindness and warm hospitality Eleanor extended to us that evening.

November brought two more events in the very popular Jamestown and the Silver Screen Series. Clips and Quips attracted over 85 people to watch short scenes from seven movies with Jamestown connections followed by several stories from people who had involvements with those films. On November 11th, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion co-sponsored a showing of Crash Dive which was, in part, filmed here and whose stars lived in Jamestown during the filming. The Jamestown and the Silver Screen Series, which involved 14 non-profit organizations, produced 15 very popular programs in the yearlong series.

In February the new permanent exhibit, "Jamestown in the Resort Era" in the West Street stairwell of the Jamestown Town Hall officially opened with over 100 people coming to the event. Rosemary Enright served as project director and Adams Taylor designed and installed the exhibit. If you haven't had the opportunity to see it yet, be sure to stop by Town Hall.

In March we participated in a "Volunteer Fair" sponsored by the Friend's of the Library.

In April we hosted Jamestown School's fifth graders at the Windmill and the Meetinghouse. We are always amazed at their interest in seeing old buildings and their wonderful questions and enthusiasm. We are pleased to have forged a strong relationship with Jamestown School by maintaining Jamestown History exhibits in a display case at the Lawn Avenue School, opening the Mill, Meetinghouse, and Museum for tours, and beginning this year, we are sponsoring the Excellence in Social Studies Award which is presented to two students selected by their teacher for high achievement in that subject. The

Little Rhody Model A Club also visited us in April, bringing about 40 members in 18 beautifully restored automobiles to the Mill. They seemed to really enjoy the Mill as we did their cars.

Our "All About Jamestown" lecture series, celebrating our 100th Anniversary, were very well attended and featured Nick DiGiando's talk on Native Plants of Jamestown in April was co-sponsored by the Quonnonoquott Garden Club, Jeremy D'Entremont presented a program, co-sponsored by the Beavertail Lighthouse Association, about Narragansett Bay Lighthouses in May, and Jim Buttrick's very interesting talk on "Architecture of Jamestown and Its Lost Buildings" in June.

The new exhibit in the Museum, "1912 and the JHS Centennial" which depicts our history as well as displays of period clothing from the early 1900's opened on June 17th. The Windmill also opened in June. Two new exterior signs which explain the history and operation of the mill that were funded by a grant from the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities have been installed. We have new "furniture" at the Mill. Andy Shrake, our millwright, and his apprentice, Jessie Lambert, have replaced the old broken Plexiglas around the millstone with a replica of the original vat, hopper, and shoe. It is a beautiful example of woodworking and craftsmanship that is more in keeping with what the mill would have been like when it was in operation.

In July, we celebrated a very special Windmill Day. Those that attended enjoyed touring the Mill and Meetinghouse, jonnycakes, windmill cookies, lemonade, children's games, a small petty zoo, music, and of course seeing the "Old Jamestown Mill" with her cloths on sails turning in the breeze. We were able to keep this event free of charge to the over 400 people who came largely due to a Legislative grant sponsored by Rep. Deb Ruggiero. The Newport Art Museum was the setting for a most enjoyable evening on July 31st sponsored by the Jamestown Philomenian Library, Friends of the Library, The Jamestown Arts Center, and the JHS. We had special "after hours" gallery tour by the Curator, Nancy Whipple Grinnell, of the exhibit: "From Pennsylvania to Paradise: William Trost Richards, Harrison Morris, and the Newport Art Association" which was followed by refreshments at the Griswold House. This exhibit has strong connections to Conanicut Island and if you haven't seen it, I would urge you to do so before it closes on September 9th.

During this past year we have also installed signs of Jamestown businesses and institutions from our collection, as you can see, in this room and have maintained ongoing exhibits in the display case in the entrance to the library. Our outreach efforts have increased with our twice monthly articles on Jamestown's history in the Jamestown Press. This is a yearlong series of columns by Rosemary Enright and Sue Maden that they have agreed to do in celebration of our 100th anniversary.

In addition to the legislative grant for Windmill Day I previously mentioned, we received a grant from RI Foundation --Joseph Ott Fund -- to conserve between 60 & 70 town documents, that been entrusted to our care, that relate to the Revolutionary War, the Apprenticeships & Indentures, and early Removals. A grant from The Rhode Island Foundation's Jamestown Community Fund will produce two brochures--a self guided Walking Tour of Historic Narragansett Avenue and an Around Town tour showing locations of JHS properties and exhibits. We also received a Senate grant this spring, sponsored by Senate President Theresa Paiva-Weed to replace three badly deteriorated informational signs at the Battery. I am

pleased to announce that, thanks to Mick Cochran, we were able to find the original data files and the new signs have been installed.

Finance and Membership

As of December 31, 2011 our operating assets, controlled by the JHS Finance Committee, were \$116,033.00. The Battery Endowment, also controlled by the JHS Finance Committee is \$32,000.00. Our endowment assets, controlled by the RI Foundation total \$318,906.00. The RI Foundation funds generated approximately 19% of the revenue needed to fund the Society's operations in 2011. In addition, endowment funds held by third parties provided approximately \$7000.00 in 2011 for the maintenance at the Windmill and Meetinghouse. The total revenues for 2011 were \$52,394.00 and the total expenses were \$41,354.00. Copies of the 12/31/11 financial reports are available upon request. Our Membership and Development committee estimated that we have approximately 450 members of which over 100 volunteer on committees, at the mill and museum, and other JHS events. Your willingness to serve has made the success of this past year possible. The renewal date for dues is July 1st each year. Thank you to those that have renewed their memberships. If you have not, or would like to join the Society, please consider doing so now.

The annual House Tour Weekend begins on Friday September 14th at a members-only cocktail party at Friendship House, owned by the Moody family, who has recently completed an extensive and thoughtful renovation that has renewed the splendor of this wonderful home inside and out. We greatly appreciate their willingness to open their home to us for this party. If you are not a member and would like to attend, we will gladly accept your dues when you buy your tickets. We are very excited about the house tour on September 15th that will feature "Stonewall Cottage" a large Victorian home in Conanicut Park on East Shore Road owned by the Lanza family. This house has also been beautifully renovated in the past few years and we are most grateful to Terry and Michael for allowing us the privilege of touring their home. We are currently working to secure a second home and information on that will be in the Jamestown Press and by email to our members. The tickets to the Preview Party are \$40.00 and include tickets to the house tour, which are \$20.00 if purchased separately. Please plan to attend and watch the Jamestown Press for more details.

Three members of our board are leaving and they are; Greg DiGasper, who has done a wonderful job as Chair of the Building and Grounds committee. He was the "go to" man whenever there was a problem at any of our properties and always responded with solutions or resources that could help us find answers in a very timely manner, Erica Gregg, co-chair of the Development committee, who worked diligently on our major fund raising preview parties, appeal letters for dues, donations, and on our 1657 Society memberships, and Caroline Frank, who wrote the grant we received from RICH and helped with the design of the exterior signage at the Windmill. On behalf of the JHS, I would like to thank them for the many contributions they made to our organization during their tenure. We will miss you.

I would also like to thank the members of the present board: Dick Allphin, Judy Bell, Matthew Clarke, Greg DiGasper, Rosemary Enright, Tricia Evangelista, Caroline Frank, Erica Gregg, Mary Heath, John Horton, Larry McDonald, Dianne Rugh, Sally Schott, James Wright, and Harry Wright for their support and reliability throughout this past year.

This is a very special time for the Jamestown Historical Society as August 2012 marks our 100th anniversary. When I read the history of our incorporation, I was amazed at how quickly our founders were able to accomplish that process. While I realize that they were formalizing the structure of the Jamestown Windmill Association formed seven years earlier, they still got a lot done in a short period of time. In a two month span, from August 1912 to October 1912, they decided to form the Jamestown Historical Society, elected officers, adopted by-laws and formed committees, had the organization incorporated by the State, had the windmill deeded over to them, and secured an additional half acre of land to the south of the mill which gave them direct access to the Mill from North Road. From now on, when things seem overwhelming for me in this job as your president, I will not only remember to be grateful I am not facing the amount of work they had in 1912, but also to be appreciative of the passion and determination they demonstrated in saving the Old Jamestown Mill and in forming the JHS. Our founders set the bar high for us and I believe we have responded to that challenge over the years by expanding our stewardship of Jamestown History. I would hope they would be proud of our accomplishments. May our future continue with the same commitment and enthusiasm for preserving and sharing with others the heritage of Jamestown, R. I. as we have experienced in our past. Happy 100th Anniversary, JHS!