

Annual Meeting 2014 President's Report:
August 21, 2014

We have had a very busy and successful year which included many wonderful events.

Our year began at the 2013 Annual Meeting, last August, with an insightful presentation by Dr. Ron Ororato, chair of the Department of Art and Art History at the University of Rhode Island, entitled "Me, Myself, and Jordie -- The Special Appeal of Jamestown Architecture".

In September we held our annual Members Only Preview Party at, Thorncroft, where over 120 attendees enjoyed a very special evening thanks to the generous hospitality of homeowners, Susie Matthews and Jim Kenney. This beautiful mid-19th century home along with its extraordinary grounds truly set the stage for our West Ferry House and Studio Tour the next day. A spectacular sunny day and five wonderful homes that are owned by Craig and Stephanie Amerigian, Jillian Barber, Julia Held and Randy White, Linda Nilsson, and Geoff Turner and Nancy VanDevanter along with the three fascinating art studios of Jillian Barber, Peter Marcus, and Jane McNally Wright were opened to the public. We were also treated to a wonderful garden and porch that included "Rear Admiral Wood's Tea" graciously hosted by Bill and Tina Harsch which was truly a delightful experience. The Society is very grateful to these owners for agreeing to be on the tour which gave all who attended the opportunity to enjoy this historic neighborhood.

Our Volunteer Appreciation Party was held in October at the lovely home of the founder of the JHS Volunteer Appreciation party over 30 years ago, Brookie Harding. Over 110 of our Volunteers enjoyed a wonderful evening in a most beautiful setting thanks to Brookie's gracious hospitality. I would also like to extend my appreciation to Dianne Rugh who gave me invaluable assistance in organizing the event.

The Windmill and the Museum each reported a record number of visitors in 2013 from several states within the U.S. and from several countries as far away as South Korea.

The plaque that the Society had made by J. Howard Benson, a Newport stone cutter, in 1951 to mark the foundation of the 1749 Beavertail Lighthouse foundation uncovered by the 1938 hurricane has been remounted on the foundation after being blown off during Hurricane Bob in 1991. Thanks to a generous donation to the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association by our member and Past President, Brookie Harding it has been returned to the spot for which it was created.

At the Meetinghouse, a vapor barrier funded by a grant from the Newport Restoration Foundation Doris Duke Historic Preservation Fund was installed in an effort to reduce the humidity that has caused rot in the timbers of the building. Our Meetinghouse Chair, Harry

Wright has worked diligently and thoughtfully in striking the delicate balance between maintaining the historic construction and practical maintenance of a building that is over two and a quarter centuries old. Needless to say, it is not an easy task and we are very grateful to Harry for his care and concern as we continue in our efforts to preserve this wonderful building. We are very pleased that The Conanicut Friends Meeting continues hold their services there each Sunday morning at 10:30 from May through October.

We received a State Senate grant in 2013 sponsored by our State Senator Theresa Paiva Weed which enabled us to clear the undergrowth on the southwest corner of the battery to create a view corridor to Narragansett Bay. This enhances a visitor's experience and understanding of the vantage point of the West Passage the Battery provided the military personnel that were stationed there. Poison ivy continues to plague the battery and we are working with the Town on finding a solution for that problem.

A new vapor barrier and dehumidifier has been installed in the crawl space of the Museum which has really improved the humidity levels inside the museum which is a great benefit to the items in our collection that are stored in that building. The JHS Board approved the expenditure from the profits from the Centennial Gala held last June to fund this installation. Our Collection Committee chair, Dianne Rugh, who served as project manager did an excellent job in bringing this endeavor to completion.

We had a well-attended winter program that featured Kurt Weeden who gave a lecture about his family and also on his novel "Dutch Island" in January. This was held in conjunction with our exhibit in the library foyer on the Weeden family of Jamestown that was funded, in part by a mini grant from the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities. I am pleased to tell you that several descendants of the Weeden family came to view the exhibit and that has resulted in several items from the family being donated to our collection.

A new exhibit mounted in the front stairwell of the Town Hall that tells the history of Jamestown's Town Hall, our lack of a "Town House" during our first 200 years, plus several proposals for expansion and new construction during the past 100 years was unveiled in May. A grant from the Newport Community Fund of the Rhode Island Foundation to exhibit documents and artifacts in public venues helped us to fund this project.

During the past year, we have had several exhibits at the Jamestown Library including: the Hurricane of 1938, marking its 75th anniversary, various invitations from our collection, the Weeden Family of Jamestown, Ye Olde Map of James Towne on

Island, and the 25th anniversary of the Jamestown Press. Currently, on display, is entitled "Summertime Fun: Swimming in Jamestown". We were invited by Chief Mello to mount an exhibit in the foyer of the Jamestown Police Station. Thus far, we have displayed paintings

from our collection of artwork of Fort Dumpling and, presently, paintings of ferryboats and the ferry wharf can be view there. Exhibits were also mounted in the display case at the Lawn Avenue School. This outreach effort is largely due to the creativity and hard work of our wonderful Collections Committee and we certainly owe them a debt of gratitude for their efforts on our behalf.

Jim Buttrick, the curator of this summer's exhibit at the Museum entitled, "Winter/Summer Architecture", has included a fascinating new dimension to last summer's exhibit by adding the images of the winter homes of the people who built the "shingled style cottages" for their summer homes in Jamestown comparing the varying architectural styles of these homes. I had the pleasure of being a docent there recently and, I must tell you, how much I enjoyed this new feature of the exhibit and I think you will too, so please be sure to stop by.

At the Windmill, new signage has been installed, exhibit areas have been created, and improvements to the authenticity of several components inside the mill have occurred thanks to a grant given to us by the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities. Andy Shrake and his assistant, Jessie Lambert, our millwrights have done a wonderful job building and installing the new "furniture" in the mill which not only restores the way the inside would have looked when it was in operation but also has allowed us to create two exhibit areas we can use to display mill related items in our collection. We received a Legislative grant thanks to our State Representative, Deb Ruggiero, which enabled us to install lighting inside the mill. This new feature has really improved a visitor's experience and understanding of how the mill operated as they tour the mill and also provides the visibility necessary for the safety of our docents as they open and close the mill. Rosemary Enright, who wrote the grant and has served as the project manager, is to be commended for her hard work and vision in bringing to life these wonderful ideas which really enhance the inside of the mill.

Windmill day on July 19th was a wonderful opportunity to come together to celebrate the new signage and upgrades at the mill. We enjoyed great weather, music, a small farm animal petting area that delighted the children, windmill cookies, and, of course, were wowed again when the cloth was put on the sails and we watched the "Old Jamestown Mill", be set in motion once again. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jane Bentley, our Windmill Committee Chair, for her hard work and organization that put together this fun filled, successful event.

In July, a new book by authors Sue Maden and Rosemary Enright "Legendary Locals of Jamestown" was released by Arcadia Press. We will be hearing much more about this new book during this evening's program which will begin in a few minutes.

A brief report on the Society's finances is as follows:

As of December 31, 2013, our operating assets, controlled by the JHS Finance Committee, were \$225,580.00. The Battery Endowment, also controlled by the JHS Finance Committee was \$36,955.00. Our endowment assets, controlled by the RI Foundation totals \$355,168.00 and generated about 15% of the revenue needed to fund our 2013 budget. The endowment funds held by third parties provided approximately \$7100.00 in 2013 for the maintenance at the Windmill and Meetinghouse. The total revenues for 2013 were \$87,474.00 and the total expenses were \$84,172.00. Copies of the 12/31/13 financial reports are available upon request.

On September 12, 2014, our "Members Only" preview party will be held at the 1875 Howland Mansion at 36 High Street. Drinks and hors d'ouvres will be served from 6 - 8 PM. We are very grateful to Sandy Johnson for her willingness to allow us to come to her beautiful home for this party. The tickets are \$40.00 per person which also includes a ticket for entry to the houses on tour the next day. You must be a member of the JHS to attend the party -- but you can RSVP and join at the door -- or better still -- you can join tonight as we do have membership forms available. On Saturday, September 13th we are pleased to have five wonderful homes on Tour in the Ferry Meadow / Green Lane section of Jamestown which was the first summer development in Jamestown Village. The tickets for the house tours are \$20.00 each. Terry Lanza and her committee have been working very hard at organizing this event and we thank them for their efforts in bringing this special weekend together for us to enjoy. Mark your calendars now and please join us on September 12th and 13th. -- You will have fun, get to tour some great houses and support the JHS at the same time!

Two members of our Board are leaving and they will truly be missed: Betsy Moody, who co-chaired the very successful Centennial Gala in June of 2013 and has served as Chair of our Development Committee, and Tricia Evangelista, who has efficiently and masterfully served as our Treasurer during the past seven years are stepping down due to life commitments. We thank them for the many contributions they have made to the JHS during their tenures on our Board.

I would like to thank the other officers and directors for 2013-2014: Dianne Rugh, Heidi Keller Moon, Judy Bell, Jane Bentley, Matthew Clarke, Harry Wright, Delia Klingbeil, Dan Wright, Polly Hutcheson, Terry Lanza, Larry McDonald, and Arlene Petit for their hard work, dedication, and dependable service which resulted in a very successful and productive year for the Jamestown Historical Society.

Our Volunteer Party will be held on October 17th at Sue Maden's lovely home. It is a time to come together to celebrate and thank our volunteers for their willingness to give their time and talents to the Society.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our volunteers, without whom, we could not exist. Our future looks bright due to their enthusiasm and many contributions which allow us to continue to fulfill our mission of preserving, protecting, and sharing with others the rich history of Conanicut, Gould, and Dutch Islands. We are 102 years old and counting ... a proud testament to our founders and also to all that have followed in their footsteps in making the Jamestown Historical Society the vibrant, energetic, and very visible organization it is in our community.