

President's Report 2010-2011

Jamestown Historical Society

Annual Meeting August 11, 2011

We have had a banner year in our outreach effort.

A program series entitled "Jamestown and the Silver Screen" was spearheaded by our Collection Committee. The steering committee that was comprised of thirteen non-profit organizations in Jamestown met monthly from October 2010 to April 2011 planning fourteen community events that related to Jamestown and Jamestown's involvement in movies. This series began last February and will continue until November.

The Windmill and the Friend's Meetinghouse opened to the public on June 18th. Our exhibit at the Museum, "Jamestown on Stage and Screen" opened on June 19th. The windmill will be open on weekends from 1pm to 4pm through Columbus Day and the Museum is open Wednesday through Sunday from 1pm to 4 pm through Labor Day weekend and on weekends from 1pm to 4pm through Columbus Day. The Collections Committee maintains a display case at this library, located in the main entrance hall to the library that is changed approximately every three months. Please be sure to check it out next time you visit the library. We continue to reach out to our young people through our strong relationship with Jamestown School. At the Lawn Avenue School, we provided an exhibit in the display case outside the library on movies made in Jamestown and a new exhibit will be prepared for the fall. We opened the Museum, Meetinghouse, and Windmill early for student tours of those facilities.

The fifth graders completed their Jamestown History unit by making videos depicting the history of Jamestown's churches, schools, bridges, ferries, lighthouses, and the Hurricane of 1938. We were happy to allow them access to our photograph collection for this project. The videos they created, along with videos made by young people from the Teen Center are included as part of our exhibit at the Museum this summer thanks to a legislative grant sponsored by our State Representative, Deb Reggiero.

The museum, meetinghouse, and windmill will open at 11:00 a.m. on September 24th to participate in Smithsonian Magazine's Museum Day under the sponsorship of Preserve Rhode Island of which we are a member.

We continue to have a Jamestown Historical Society column monthly in the *Jamestown Press* which keeps Island residents informed about our organization and our activities. We are now on television! On April 15th, the first 15 minute installment in an occasional series called "From the Vault" about the JHS founding 99 years ago was filmed and aired on Newport County's local PEG (public, Educational, and Governmental) Access television channel, NCTV-18. This episode can now be seen on YouTube. Visit our website-- jamestownhistoricalsociety.org and click on the link. The second installment—a tour of this year's exhibit at the museum—has been filmed and will soon be aired as well.

Our website also offers a streamline way to search for material in the JHS collection through an upgrade we made to PastPerfect Online. From our home page, click on "On-line Catalog" which will lead you to the collection catalog. This has made a tremendous improvement in the ease and speed in which our collection can be accessed on line.

Programs

The 2010 member's only preview party was attended by more than 85 people on September 17th and a beautiful day and three great houses attracted more than 150 house tour guests on September 18th which made last year's house tour weekend a great success. This year the member's only cocktail party will be held at the O'Farrell residence on Fort Getty Road on September 16th. Remember, if you are not a member and would like to attend, we will gladly accept your dues at the door. The house tour will be held on Saturday, September 17th and will include Fox Hill Farm House and Beavertail Farm House. Watch the Jamestown Press for more details and please plan to attend.

In March we sponsored a well attended program, in conjunction with the Jamestown and the Silver Screen Series, featuring a very interesting talk by Steven Feinberg, Executive Director of the R.I. Film and Television Office about Rhode Island and the Movies.

In May, we held our biennial Conanicut Battery Day. It was a wonderful event filled with patriotism and pride for all in attendance.

Next year, 2012 is the 100th anniversary of the founding of our Society. We were formed primarily to save the "Old Jamestown Mill" and next summer's Windmill Day will be a celebration of the Windmill and our history. If you would like to help us in this endeavor, please contact Rosemary Enright or me.

CAP update

At last year's annual meeting, it was reported that a Comprehensive Assessment Program of our Collections and Buildings was conducted by outside professionals and funded by a National Preservation grant. While our accomplishments were praised by our assessors as being "highly commendable examples of preservation stewardship", they made a number of constructive suggestions on ways to improve and organize our efforts. I am pleased to report that the recommendations we received have been put into two "Action Plan Tables" that includes priorities of actions to be taken, dates they should be accomplished by, resources needed, and when appropriate, the person or group responsible for implementing the tasks for both our Collections and Buildings. This enables us to achieve our goals of maintaining and preserving our collections and buildings in a comprehensive and timely manner.

Finance and Membership

As of December 31, 2010 the three funds we hold and the Rhode Island Foundation had a total value of \$289,139.00. The Conanicut Battery endowment balance as of 7/31/11 is \$32,000. The estimated amount of annual income from these endowments is \$10,700 which is approximately 21% of our annual operating budget. The Windmill and the Meetinghouse trust funds, which are not under the Society's

control, provide income of about \$7000.00 annually. Copies of the 12/31/10 financial reports are available upon request.

The Development Committee standardized our "Membership Year" last year which now runs from July 1st to June 30th each year. Your response to that approach was very positive with many renewals, lapsed members rejoining, and some new members by referrals. Thus far this year, the return from the Membership Renewal letter mailed in June has been good. We have two new 1657 members at the \$1000.00 level and two new Patrons at the \$500.00 level. Your dues and donations enable us to further our stewardship of island history through preservation, education, and outreach. If you have not renewed yet this year, please do so and for those who have, we thank you for your support. Of course, new members are always welcome.

Signage at the Mill

One high priority recommendation from the CAP report said about the Mill, "Because it is such a unique and diminutive building, the Windmill cannot be made handicapped accessible without significantly impacting its historic character. Alternative means for providing the experience of visiting the interior of the Windmill should be considered". Although it had been a long standing goal to have exterior informational signs at the Mill, this recommendation increased our sense of urgency. The Windmill committee decided to post two low-level, cantilevered outdoor signs near the mill. One will explain the building's history and one will depict the internal workings of its mechanism. In addition, this would allow visitors who stop by when the mill is closed to have the "inside story" of the workings of the mill. We successfully proposed this project to the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities (RICH) and the society was awarded \$1,700.00 grant toward creating the signs which should be completed by the end of summer.

Conanicut Battery Burn Project update

The Society maintains the historic features within the Town of Jamestown's Conanicut Battery Historic Park. Because of the state-wide significance, and benefit to all the people in Rhode Island, we have solicited and received a series of grants from the Rhode Island Senate, sponsored by Senator Theresa Paiva Weed for the maintenance of the Revolutionary War earthworks at the park. It has been deemed that a controlled burn, rather than mowing or weeding, is recommended to maintain the integrity of the configuration of this unique site. All plans, permits, licenses, and signatures are now in place and the burn is now planned for the fall.

JHS Board

Three members are leaving the Board this year.

Deb Swistak who has served for the past two years and Dennis Webster, who has served one term, have had to step down due to family commitments that make it impossible for them to continue their active involvement. We thank them for their service to the Jamestown Historical Society. Sue Maden, who has completed her second term on the Board, is stepping down from the Board in accordance with

our By-laws. Sue has done a marvelous job in her role as our Collections Committee Chair. She has worked tirelessly providing excellent leadership which has made that committee vibrant, efficient, productive, and, most importantly, fun in their important work as caretakers of our collection and increasing our outreach to the community. While on the Board, she also co-authored a book, with Rosemary Enright, Jamestown, "A History of Narragansett Bay's Island Town" from which they donated the profit from the sale of that work to the Society. We will miss your energy on the Board but we are very grateful you will continue working on the Collection's committee.

I have had the privilege of working with wonderful Board members this past year and would like to thank them for their hard work and support. They are Dick Allphin, Greg DiGasper, Rosemary Enright, Tricia Evangelista, Caroline Frank, Erica Gregg, Mary Heath, John Horton, Larry McDonald, Sue Maden, Dianne Rugh, Sally Schott, Deb Swistak, Dennis Webster, and James Wright. To our many volunteers—well over 100 of you—it is because of your hard work and willingness to help that we are able to preserve, protect, display, and share the many historic items that have been entrusted to our care. Your efforts are truly appreciated.

Respectfully Submitted,

Linnea C. Petersen

President