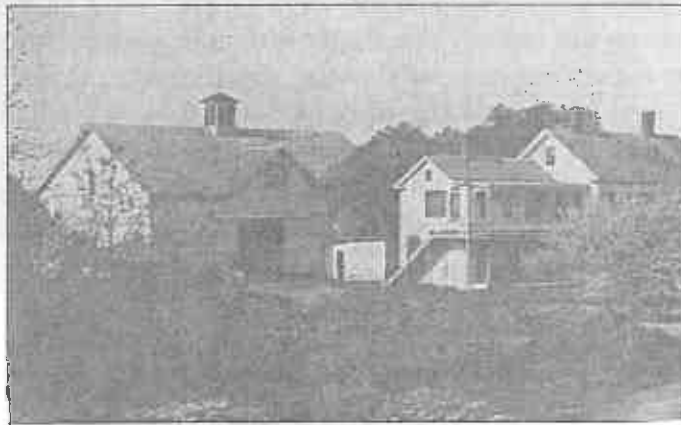




George T. Cranston, shown right, purchased the old stained-glass window from St. Paul's Church when the church installed the new window shown above. Cranston proudly displayed the stained-glass window on his barn along Ten Rod Road until the window was destroyed in a fire in the middle of the 20th century.



The View from Swamptown

George T. Cranston and his Stained Glass Window

My great great grandfather, the man whom I was named for, was known throughout 19th century southern Rhode Island for his big heart, his good nature and the slightly outlandish streak that was his business trademark. A local celebrity of sorts, the self-proclaimed "Swamptown Merchant", knew then, that, "all publicity was good publicity" and could not seem to resist any opportunity to either help a fellow citizen in need or fire up his imagination enough to make him want to do business with him either at his trading post-like general store or his teamster and coal deliver business based out of his home at the intersection of Scrabbletown, Old Baptist, and Ten Rod Roads.

Perhaps it was that sense of showmanship that motivated him to purchase the large round stained glass window that St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Wickford no longer needed after the gift of the grand and glorious imposing image of Paul himself, crafted in vibrant colorful glass was put into place in the new church on Main Street. Or maybe it was one of those "because it was there" moments that often motivate folks to do things out of the ordinary. Or it could have been a Swamp Yankee reaction to seeing something that was perfectly fine going to waste. Whatever the case, George Cranston purchased that stained glass window and had it installed in the prominent front gable of the big barn on his farm "*out Wickford Junction way*". It stood there for decades, front and center on the Ten Rod road as a landmark of sorts, until it was consumed by the fire that destroyed the barn in the middle of 20th century.

This is one of the countless tales that make up the greater story that is St Paul's Parish in the "Narragansett country" and later Wickford. For 300 years now, St Paul's has, along with a handful of other churches, been the very thread that has bound this patchwork quilt, which is our fair town, together. As a part of the St Paul's community's celebration of their 300th anniversary, an exciting exhibit is available for all to view at the North Kingstown Free Library. It features ephemera and artifacts that illustrate how the Church grew throughout its 3 centuries as a beacon of hope, a rock of salvation, and a constant tangible connection to our colonial roots. Stars of this exhibit include a 1710 prayer book donated to the Church by Queen Anne herself, an Updike Merrymount Press Altar Book often cited as being "the finest example of printing in America", and, my favorite, the mantle piece from the old rectory "The Glebe" once the home of the parishes earliest rectors. You can rest assured that Roger Williams, Gilbert Stuart, Bishop Berkeley, and all the major "movers and shakers" that formulated this "lively experiment" that became Rhode Island leaned upon it as they warmed themselves by not only the fireplace of the Glebe, but by the warm glow and strength of purpose that was the hallmark of this wonderful Anglican community centered here in our fair town. The exhibit runs for the next four weeks or so. Be sure to stop by and commune with history.



Dr. George H. Church



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

"Doc Church" and members of his family are buried in this plot at Elm Grove Cemetery, which he helped found.

The View From Swamptown

Doctor George H. Church

A while back we examined the lives of two of our fair town's early 19th century doctors, the father and son team of "old doc Shaw" and "young doc Shaw" also known as William G. Shaw and William A. Shaw. This week we are going to take a *Swamptown Gander* at another medically minded family, that of Doctor George Hazard Church.

George Church was born in neighboring South Kingstown in 1798 and after graduating from the local school system; he attended Yale in New Haven Ct., graduating in the spring of 1824. From 1824 until his death in 1871, Doc Church, along with his contemporary "old Doc Shaw", cared for the citizenry of North Kingstown. Along the way, Doctor Church also found time to serve a spell on the Town School Committee, act as the Town Treasurer for a few years, and spend a number of years representing North Kingstown in the State Legislature. Additionally, George Church was an avid supporter of the temperance movement, having seen full well during his years as a practicing physician, the evils of drink and what it could do to a person. He also was a "radical anti-slave man" and contributed in anyway he could to that movement. Doctor Church and his wife Maria (Burnham) raised six children; two sons, Alphonso and Charles both became well known druggists and one son, Samuel followed in his father's footsteps and became a Doctor serving North Kingstown alongside his contemporary "young Doc Shaw". George Church also had a fourth son George Jr., who gave his life for the cause his father so fervently believed in; he died in March of 1862 in the Battle of New Bern, N. Carolina during the Civil War. Additionally George and Maria had two daughters Phebe and Maria.

If all this wasn't enough, Doctor George Church also had one more passionate cause. He truly believed that North Kingstown needed a town cemetery. It was largely through his efforts that Elm Grove Cemetery was opened in 1851. And fittingly, that's where all of Doc Church's family rests right now; in Elm Grove Cemetery plot #1, forever keeping an eye on his townfolk, friends and neighbors.



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

Henry Fonda once called Wickford home, living in an apartment at 56 Main Street while training as a U.S. Naval Officer at Quonset during World War II. Fonda, shown below at a USO show he attended while he was in the Navy that starred Bob Hope, caught the attention of the local youth while he was living here.



The View From Swamptown

Henry Fonda Comes to Wickford

Alright, I'll admit it. There are times when even Swamp Yankees get caught up in the swirl of celebrity sightings. Now not just any celebrity mind you; I could care less about the lives of most of today's stars, what Brittany's doing or what Tom's saying or what some pencil-thin waif is or isn't eating matters not one whit to me. But you start talking about people like Henry Fonda and, I don't mind saying, my ears perk up a bit.

So why would Henry Fonda have been visiting Wickford you might ask? Well the truth is, he wasn't just visiting "Ye Olde Quaint & Historic" he actually lived here for a few months back in 1943 while training as a US Naval Officer during WWII. The star of "Young Mr. Lincoln" and "The Grapes of Wrath" rented an apartment during that brief stretch of time at 56 Main Street (shown in the accompanying photograph) with his second wife Frances (Seymour), with which he would one day have two children, Jane and Peter.

A few interesting episodes have been passed on from that timeframe. The first has to do more with Mrs. Fonda than it does with the future star of "On Golden Pond". It seems that one day Frances intended to surprise her Hank with a fine steak dinner upon his return from base. With this thought in mind she headed off to, where else but Ryan's Market, in order to select a steak befitting of a man such as Henry. Now Mrs. Fonda, who came from a rather high society family before marrying, was seemingly used to getting what she wanted. She sauntered into the Market, up to the meat counter and asked for the proprietor, EJ Ryan. She then explained to EJ her need for a good steak for her husband and waited for a reply. EJ responded politely that there was a war going on and what with rationing and all there were no steaks to be had. Frances stood up all aghast and replied, "Do you know who I am? I am Mrs. Henry Fonda!!" To which a slightly ticked-off EJ Ryan replied, "Ma'am, I don't care if you are Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, there are still no steaks to be had today!"

On a more positive note; young folks in the village were definitely in awe of this big time movie star in their midst. It seems like few had the fortitude necessary to approach the man who played the rail-splitter president to ask him for an autograph. One brave lad, a boy named Paul Wilson, mustered up the requisite courage one Sunday after Church and approached him autograph book in hand. To the boy's surprise Henry Fonda graciously signed his autograph and that boy still has it to this day. If you want to, stop in to grown-up Paul Wilson's store, Wilson's of Wickford, and ask him about the day he shook hands with Henry Fonda.



The Brown/Viall family plot at Elm Grove Cemetery is filled with finely carved headstones such as those pictured at right of Cyrus Brown and his wife, Fannie Chadsey, and Richmond Viall and his wife, Adelaide Brown.



The View From Swamptown

The Legacy of Cyrus P. Brown and the Viall Family

I don't expect that there's any one in our fair town who hasn't taken note of the bucolic scenery that borders the roadsides of the Boston Neck Road as it travels from the village of Hamilton past Gilbert Stuart Road and on to Saunderstown. Yes, those rolling pastures and quiet wooded fields are a blessing indeed, a natural oasis, a peaceful place in the hustle-bustle world that is North Kingstown in the 21st century. But what you may not realize is that these pastures, woods, and fields are more than just that; they are a living legacy of sorts, the legacy of Cyrus Brown and his descendants; three generations of Viall's and their relations, various McClouds, Tingleys, and Meyers.

It all begins in 1884, with a 16-year-old Providence High school graduate with a natural ability for business and math named Cyrus Perrin Brown. He began working in the world of Providence banking as a simple teller, but that did not last long. He moved through the ranks quickly, through positions as a bookkeeper, secretary and treasurer until in 1908, at the age of 39, he became the president of the Industrial Trust Company of Providence. This was not enough for young Cyrus as by 1911 he had left the comfortable life of bank president and entered the much riskier world of investment financing with the formation of his own firm Brown, Lisle, & Marshall. His natural abilities and investment savvy caught the eye of financier James Hill of St. Paul Minnesota, who hired Cyrus Brown as the vice-president of his National Bank of St. Paul and placed him in charge of all the financing, investment capital and related concerns for the construction of the Great Northern Railroad; an entity that connected the farmlands and cattle ranches of the northern plains states to the markets in the great lakes area and eastern seaboard. In essence, Cyrus Brown helped make this country the "bread basket" of the world and along the way made himself wealthy enough to retire back to Rhode Island in 1929.

Although he maintained a beautiful home in Providence, that retirement really centered around the fine large "gentleman's farm" he had in Saunderstown, a farm that originally came to him through his wife, Fannie Chadsey's family. There Cyrus "engaged extensively in raising pheasants and devoting his leisure time to the study of Rhode Island history and genealogy" (no wonder I like this guy so much). While retired, Brown also held directorships in two Providence based insurance companies as well. Cyrus P. Brown passed away in 1945 at the age of 77 on the Saunderstown farm he loved so much. That farm was passed on to his daughter Adelaide and her husband WWI veteran and businessman Richmond Viall.

The core of that farm has stayed in the Viall family to this day. Now this is where the legacy part comes to play. You see the Viall families, across the generations, have always been philanthropists. I'm not talking about in your face, Feinstein style philanthropy – no more than a tagger with a checkbook rather than a can of spray paint; I'm talking about quiet behind the scenes philanthropy, a family that not only gives but gives of themselves as well. The Vialls and their relations have given time and money, in part, honoring the legacy of Cyrus Brown and his love of local history, by aiding like minded organizations particularly the Gilbert Stuarts Birthplace and the Cocumscussoc Assoc that operates Smiths Castle. And more than anything else, they have given back to

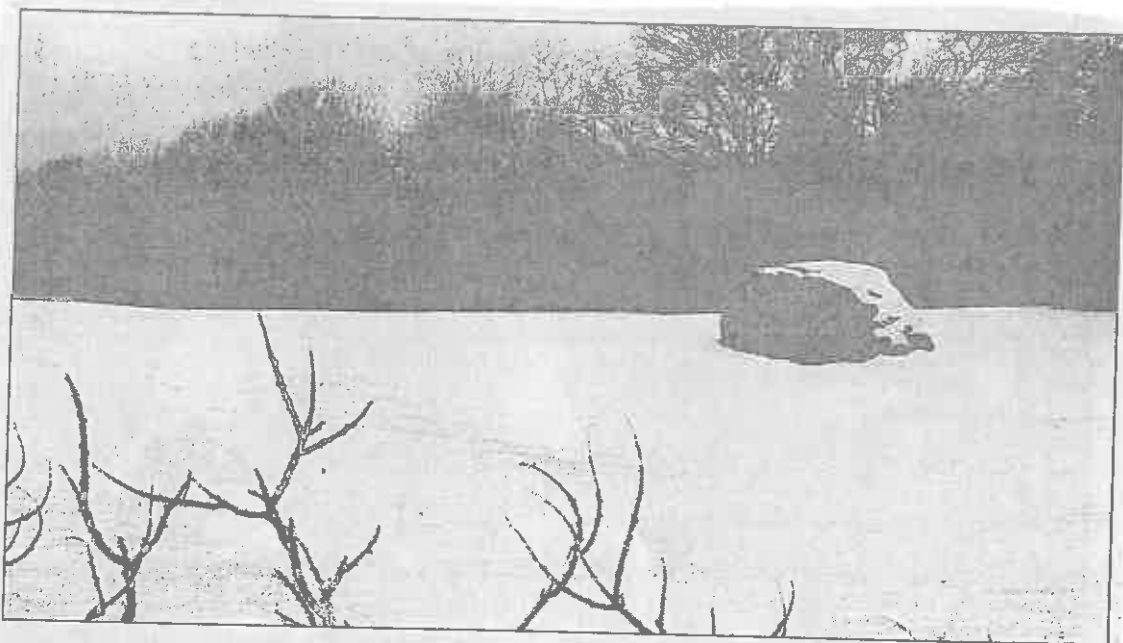


PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR
Land donations made by the Brown and Viall families along Boston Neck Road make this vista possible.

their community, North Kingstown, generously, in the form of land donations that now provide us with these marvelous vistas as we drive down Boston Neck and Gilbert Stuart Roads. You see the wonderful gentleman's farm on which Cyrus Brown once raised and hunted pheasants, now raises our spirits each day as we drive by the pristine fields and pastures that he once strolled. Cyrus Perrin Brown, banker extraordinaire, would have found it a very profitable venture indeed.

The Vialls have also left us with one more stunning gift. Out in Elm Grove Cemetery in the Brown/Viall family plot stands a group of the finest modern headstones ever assembled in one place as far as I'm concerned. Carved by three separate generations of the Benson family, of Newport's ancient John Stevens Shop, these special slate markerstones stand both literally and figuratively at the crossroads between craft and art. They are a silent testimony not only to the elegant artistry of the Benson clan, but also the craft and skill of a Providence boy who came to call our fair town home.

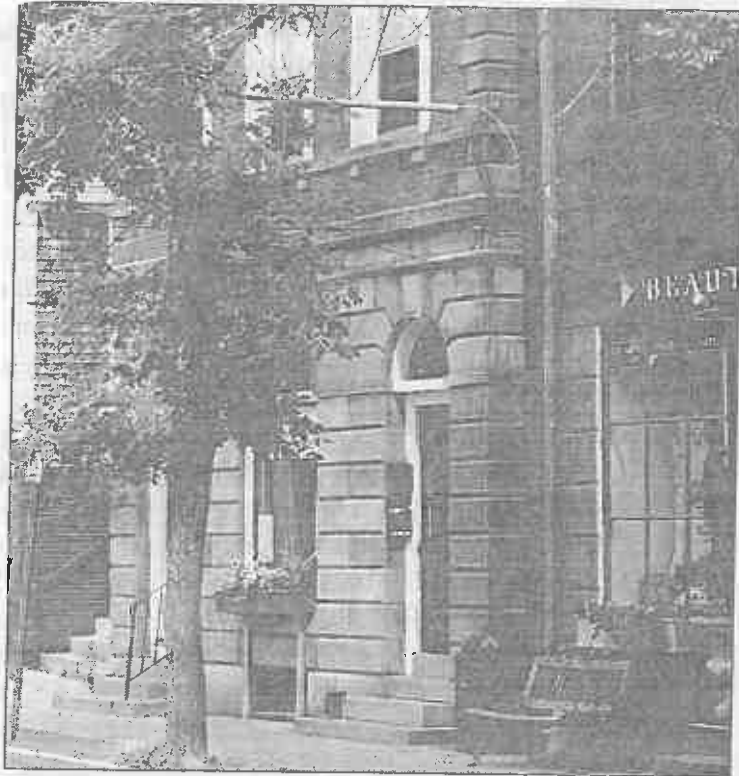


PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

A well-known stone mason, James Eldred had a hand in the construction of the Wickford National Bank building, now the Standard Times office, on Main Street.

The View From Swamptown

James Eldred and Marriage in the 19th Century

As a part of the planning for my most recent historic walking tour out at Elm Grove Cemetery in what was once known as the village of Allenton, I have been pondering the married life of one of that place's most prominent former citizens. James Eldred was a respected member of the village community, a deacon at the Allenton Baptist Church, a well known tradesman who, as a stone mason, had had a hand in the construction of not only the Belleville and Lafayette Mills and the Wickford National Bank (now the Standard Times Building), but also had been the man most responsible for the erection of the fine meeting hall in which his congregation met each Sunday. He lived a long a full life and was past the age of eighty-eight when he "met his maker" and retired permanently under the cool green grass at Elm Grove Cemetery. But in spite of all that, the lesson we learn from his life has more to do with his many wives, rather than his numerous accomplishments. No, James Eldred, in spite of his three wives, was not a philanderer or a bigamist; he was just a regular guy living within the confines of the reality of his times. You see before the 20th century rolled around, the notion of marriage based solely upon romantic love was something for fairy tales, rich folks, and stories and novels written by rich folks. Back in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, marriage, particularly second and even third marriages, was largely another of life's very practical considerations; really a matter of forming partnerships for survival's sake rather than because of a notion of true love, romance, fireworks and hearts skipping a beat or two.

Let's look at Mr. Eldred's marital alliances as an example. When a young man, he married first, Sarah Niles of Block Island. They were both in their early twenties and, as it was after all the 1830's and he was from North Kingstown and she from an island many miles to the south, they most certainly barely knew each other, if at all. Whatever the circumstances that brought them together were, they made a go of it and began a family, bringing, eventually, five children into the world. Now a harsh reality of life in these times was that being a woman during your child-bearing years was about as risky a proposition as there was out there. Frankly you'd have better odds of sneaking into a Plain's Indian village and "counting coup" on an Apache warrior than surviving through two or three decades of child-bearing through the first 200 years of the history of New England. And was so often the case that last childbirth got the best of Sarah and her life ended far too early. So, Deacon Eldred is suddenly not only a widower, but a single parent as well with four children and an infant no less. As 19th century stone masons were not getting any bereavement or family leave, and there were no paid vacations, early retirements, or anything else for that matter on the horizon, Jim is left with some hard choices. Luckily for him so was Lavira (Peckham) Tillinghast, a local girl who had married a Baptist preacher assigned to the Allenton Church and then transferred to a congregation in Connecticut. The good Reverend Tillinghast had also died much too soon and she was a widow left with no pension, no Social Security Survivors benefits and few prospects other than to become a burden upon some family relation or another. Somehow these two people put aside their grief and met, in order to see if there was any chance they could live together as man and wife; then a deal was made, this deal included a spot for Lavira's husband in the Eldred plot and one for her right next to the good



James Eldred was laid to rest with his three wives, and some of his wives' relations, at Elm Grove Cemetery.

reverend, and Lavira and James became man and wife within a timeframe so short that it would shock and appall the sensibilities of any 20th or 21st century relative, but which didn't raise nary an eyebrow in the practical-minded world of the mid-1800's. This arrangement, whereby James provided a home and hearth for Lavira and she in turn took over raising his children, tending to the household needs, and generally "keeping the home fires burning" (a common phrase that has its roots in the very important task of being certain that the fires in the home stayed lit and warm throughout the cold New England winters) lasted only two years until Lavira sadly succumbed to a "woman's disease" and joined Reverend Tillinghast in the Eldred family plot at Elm Grove. So now Deacon Jim was faced with basically the same problem all over again and he came to another very quick solution when he married Sarah Heath a local girl that, at the age of 29 without ever being married, was quickly entering the realm of the "old maid". The circumstances were similar I'm sure; Sarah and the Deacon got together to see if they could get along with each other, a deal was set, this time requiring James to not only take in Sarah as his wife, but also her widowed mother as well and of course, provide both of them with a space in the Eldred family plot. This arrangement at least, lasted throughout the remainder of James Eldred's life; as a matter of fact he, at the age of 65, fathered a son Vernon with Sarah Heath and it was Sarah and Vernon that stood there graveside as the good Deacon joined his first two wives, along with his relations, and Lavira's first husband Rev. Tillinghast and the widow Heath in the Eldred plot out at Elm Grove. Eventually, Sarah Heath as well, joined them all in final repose under that same shaded grass.

So as you can see, we here in the 21st century with our soap operas, romance novels, and numerous extremely popular romantic-comedy genre films (I admit it, I enjoy them as much as the next person) really haven't a clue about the nature of marriage within the harsh realities of early New England life. But the next time your watching Hugh Grant charm the heck out of another pretty ingénue, think about hard working stone mason James Eldred, buried under the rough granite headstone so appropriate for a man whose hands hefted many a granite block, and the choices he ... and his three wives had to make and live with.



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR



A picture of famed Wickford author Frances Burge Griswold hangs in the North Kingstown Free Library on Boone Street. Writing under a number of pen names, Griswold completed 33 books, many of which took place in her childhood home of Wickford. She is buried by the Old Narragansett Church, where her father was rector while she was a child.

The View From Swamptown
Frances Burge Griswold

When I was a boy, this portrait of a beautiful lady was hanging over the fireplace in the library on Brown Street in "Ye Olde Quaint & Historic". I had no idea who she was and just accepted her as part and parcel of the wonderful experience of sitting down in a warm room on a cold winter day passing the hours away while thumbing through an intriguing magazine or two or reading a great book. I'm sure if I had asked, the librarian would have been pleased to tell me all about her; all about this remarkable woman named Frances Burge Griswold.

Frances was born here in Wickford on April 18, 1826, the daughter of Episcopal Priest Rev. Lemuel Burge and local lass Elizabeth Shaw. She described her childhood thusly when asked, "I grew to womanhood beneath the historic shades of St. Paul's Old Narragansett Church where my father was for twenty years the rector". Wickford in general and the Old Narragansett Church in particular kept its hold on Frances throughout her life. She was married, and widowed, twice and spent much of her adult life away from the village she loved. But in her heart, she was always in Wickford.

Frances Burge was a prolific published writer, as a matter of fact, with 33 books to her credit; she was probably more frequently published than any other North Kingstown writer ever. Throughout the years she wrote her faith based fiction under many *nom-de-plumes* including F. Irene Burge Smith, F. Burge Smith, Mrs. Fanny Burge Smith, F. B. Smith, Mrs. F. Burge Griswold, and even S.B. Phelps and Fan Fan. The majority of her books were children's literature including the ten volume series called Fan Fan Stories published in 1863 and the five volume series called May and Tom Stories published in 1870. Whenever possible she would set these children's tales in the village of her youth; additionally, many of her adult novels including "Sister Eleanor's Brood" a thinly veiled biography of the life of her mother as a country clergyman's wife, written under the pseudonym S B Phelps, played themselves out here in Wickford.

In a time when women were just beginning to see the possibilities presented by a life as writer, Frances was well-respected for her craft. So well respected in fact, that in 1893, many of her books were placed in the Library of the "Women's Building", an exhibit at the World's Colombian Exposition, right along side those of Harriet Beecher Stowe, Julia Ward Howe, and Emily Judson. This must have been her proudest moment.

By the middle of the 1890's, after the death of her second husband Judge Elias Griswold, Frances moved back to Wickford and lived with her two unmarried sisters in "Old Doc" Shaw's house which once stood on the site of the present day Wilson's of Wickford addition. She began her 33rd and most important book at that time, "Old Wickford, the Venice of America" and finished it just before the turn of the century. She died in November of 1900, just a short while after it was published and was buried appropriately right next to the ancient Church she held so dear.

It's also appropriate that this portrait can still be found in our new library. For decades after her death it hung in a prominent location in the home of her two spinster nieces, known locally as the Burge Sisters, at 141 West Main Street. As they grew older they donated it to the Library, and rightly so. Go and enjoy it in the South County Room while you thumb through one of her books there. The quietly beautiful soul of Frances Irene Smith Burge Griswold will be infinitely pleased.



Maria Hammond Champlin created the needlepoint above at the Hammond Homestead farm during the early part of the 19th century. She spent most of her early years living at the Hammond House (below) on Main Street in Wickford, but eventually moved to the Bullock House (at left) on Brown Street with her sister, Lydia, where she lived until she died. The needlepoint was later donated to the North Kingstown Free Library.



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

The View From Swamptown

The Maria (Hammond) Champlin Sampler

A well executed needlepoint landscape is like a portal to another time. And this one, imagined and created by a young Wickford lass named Maria Hammond is a perfect example of just that. Created nearly two hundred years ago; it is stitched with silk thread upon a hand-painted silk background and shows an almost idyllic scene of the Hammond Homestead Farm just a short while after the start of the 19th century. This piece of art is, at the same time, both sophisticated in its technique and childlike in its portrayal of a place that obviously was very important to its maker. I have no trouble imaging a twelve or thirteen year old Maria laboring away lovingly on this beautiful and honest representation of her grandparents home; why I imagine she could hardly wait to finish it so she could show it off to them.

Maria Hammond was born in October of 1795 and spent her early years at the Hammond House on Main Street in Wickford. She probably learned her exceptional embroidery skills at either the Wickford Young Ladies School, which met at another as yet undetermined Main Street home, or at the nearby Washington Academy on Phillips Street, which, around 1808, began to offer training such as this to young ladies, in addition to the rigorous teacher's training they offered only to males. Indeed, Maria's father William T. Hammond was actively involved in the Washington Academy at that timeframe. She was married to Exeter resident Col. Benjamin Champlin (rank attained while in the Exeter regiment of the RI State militia) and lived with him somewhere in the vicinity of the present day Yawgoog Valley Road. Her marriage however was short lived, as Champlin died at the age of 26, and after burying him in the Champlin burial ground nearby, she moved back in with her parents on Main Street. Unlike most young widows from a prominent family, Maria Champlin never remarried.

She did however; eventually leave her parents home when she moved in with her sister Lydia when Lydia married the widower Jabez Bullock. They lived in the fine Brown Street home Jabez constructed for his new bride. As a matter of fact, Maria and Lydia lived out their lives there on Brown Street, sharing the house with Lydia's daughter Abby for the remainder of their days. I bet this fine needlepoint hung proudly on the wall there throughout. After the death of daughter Abby in the early 20th century the needlepoint returned to the Hammond family and was eventually donated to the NK Free Library where it hung behind the librarian's desk in the Brown Street library for many years; it can now be seen by appointment in the South County Room at the library.

Sadly, I could find very few details about the life of Maria Hammond Champlin in the historic record as I researched this story. I am left with only the comforting mental image of a young teenaged girl sitting by the fireplace working diligently upon the labor of love that is this extraordinary piece of folk art that she left behind.

If you have an 18th or 19th century locally made needlepoint sampler I'd be pleased to try and research its history for you in exchange for the opportunity to share it with our readers. Contact me at Swamptown@msn.com for details.



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

The Reynolds Homestead on Essex Road was the starting point for William A. Reynolds, but it was Delaware where he would make his mark. His sister, Mary Elizabeth, lived in the home with her husband, John Essex, and Reynolds returned to visit often when he worked in Boston.



Though his roots are here in North Kingstown, William A. Reynolds made a name for himself in Delaware, where he is recognized as a champion for higher education.

The View From Swamptown

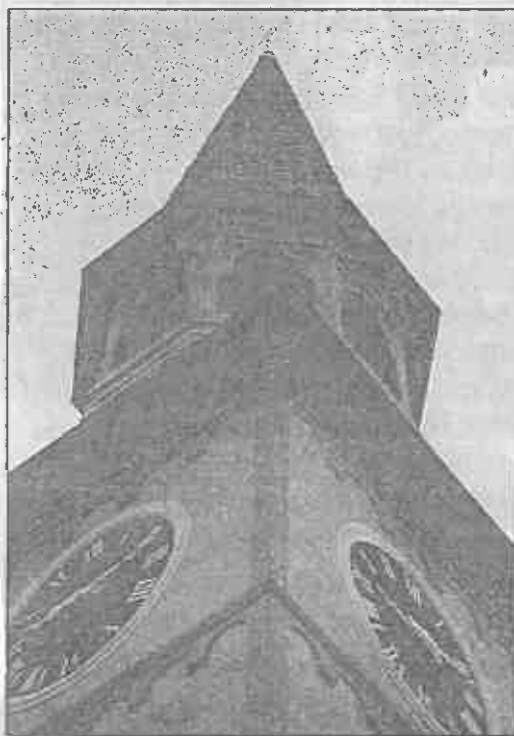
Professor William A. Reynolds

The Reynolds Homestead Farm has seen its share of changes in the nearly 350 years it has existed on what is now Essex Road in North Quiddnessett. The house that sits on the land now, and has for the last 206 years, is the third to grace this place, and countless generations of Reynolds' have lived and died here within sight of the farm. Many are buried just up the road at the Reynolds Burial Ground and many more are buried at Elm Grove Cemetery and still more at Quiddnessett Cemetery too. Numerous Reynolds' left North Kingstown and fanned out across America. Among those was William A. Reynolds who, along with his sister Mary Elizabeth, was raised by his Grandparents William and Elizabeth (Bowen) Reynolds, after their parents William K. and Mary Ann (Gardiner) Reynolds passed away suddenly. William A.'s grandparents were devout Quakers and raised he and his sister in that faith. Young William was a lad of remarkable intelligence and after he breezed through his education at the East Greenwich Academy, was sent to Wesleyan University in Connecticut. He graduated from Wesleyan in 1858 and returned to the Reynolds Homestead of his grandfather as one of the most educated men in the area. He toyed with the idea of taking up medicine as a profession but after a time settled upon education as his calling. Around that same time he met a girl whose roots were from Dover, Delaware and he married her and moved back to that state. By the Fall of 1858, William A. Reynolds remarkable career as a Delaware educator had begun with his opening of the Dover English & Classical School. Throughout the time of the Civil War and the years leading up to it, Reynolds educated most of the promising young men who would one day lead that state. Upon the Great War's conclusion, William then moved to Wilmington Delaware and opened another school, first called the Wilmington Classical Seminary, it was later renamed Reynolds Classical & Mathematical Institute. At this school he again prepared the minds of some of Delaware's leading young men and sent many on to numerous Colleges and Universities, as well as West Point and Annapolis. In 1877 William Reynolds left Delaware to accept a position as a headmaster for the prestigious Boston Latin School, one of the finest in the nation. During that period of his life he took advantage of the opportunity to visit his family back in North Kingstown, staying in the same place he was born and raised, the Reynolds Homestead House. It was now owned by his sister Mary Elizabeth and her husband John Essex and the road in front of their fine home was beginning to be called Essex Road. After one year at Boston Latin, Reynolds longed to return to his adopted home state of Delaware and did just that when he was offered a position as professor at the Goldey Commercial College (still extant in Delaware but now called Goldey-Beacom Commercial College). He spent out his remaining days there in Delaware lecturing at the College and attending to his numerous students that he tutored privately. He also taught as the head of adult bible studies at Grace Methodist Episcopal Church in Wilmington from 1866 to 1904. He died in July of 1906, having secured his place in the history of the State of Delaware. The one-time orphan boy from North Kingstown has often been rightly described as one of the champions of higher education in 19th century Delaware.



PHOTOS: MICHAEL DERR

One doesn't need to look far to see the work of Horace Hammond around North Kingstown. After an apprenticeship in Providence, Hammond returned to live in a home he purchased on West Main Street (below, right) and began to construct several notable buildings in the area, including the building that houses the Kayak Centre at 9 Phillips St. (above), the former Wickford National Bank Building (at right) and the steeple, bell and clock tower at St. Paul's Episcopal Church on Main Street (below, left).



The View From Swamptown

Horace Hammond

No one who was alive in 1913 would dispute the fact that old Horace Hammond, who died in March of that year, had left an indelible mark upon the community. For certain, they'd all admit, numerous Hammond's could lay claim to that statement; why, Hammonds have had an influence upon North Kingstown since the very beginning. But none of them had done it quite like Horace.

Horace Hammond was born some 78 years earlier in 1834 to Cranston and Eunice Hammond of Wickford. As a young man he was sent off to Providence to apprentice with a prominent carpenter named John Pitts. After a decade or so of working and living in the capitol city, part of that time with his young wife Eunice (Slocum), he came back to Wickford and set up shop as it were. Shortly after returning to the village, he purchased a home on West Main Street (now 83 West Main) and began to leave his mark on the community. His first big job was as the lead carpenter on the construction of the Chapin Bobbin Works at the corner of Brown and Boston Neck Road. This building now houses the Kayak Center and Gold Lady Jewelry among other things. After completing that he performed the same function on the construction of the impressive mill building at Belleville (destroyed in a horrific fire in the early 1960's). He and Eunice also had a son named Edgar born to them during this timeframe. Sadly Edgar did not live to see his third birthday and even sadder still Horace and Eunice never had another child of their own. They did however, become the legal guardians of young Henry L. Morse, the son of local saloon keeper William Morse and his wife Octavia (Smith) after their family fell apart. So with a son of sorts in Henry, the Hammond family got along just fine.

Horace then went on to build the Wickford National Bank Building (now the home of the Standard Times) after its original office was destroyed by fire. His ward, young Henry made his adoptive parents proud by being a whiz at school, eventually becoming a successful bookkeeper and marrying Hattie Belle, the daughter of Wickford Junction shopkeeper Almond E. Huling. Around this time Horace Hammond, a man who was so successful at his craft that he actually had purchased a large orange grove as an investment down in Eustis Florida, began the job that would define him for the rest of the citizenry of Wickford. If Horace was an artist with wood and nails, well then the grand steeple, bell and clock tower he constructed for Saint Paul's Episcopal Church on Main Street was his masterpiece. He indeed, felt so connected to the steeple that he continued to maintain and repair it as long as he was able. Horace's life went along in a predictable fashion, filled with work and family, until 1910 when he lost his life partner Eunice. Folks remarked that he just wasn't the same after that and three years later, while on a trip to Eustis to visit his orange groves there, he passed away. He was carried past that extraordinary steeple for the last time by the folks that knew him best; the town blacksmith, a couple of fellow carpenters, a stone mason he worked with often, and a very appreciative Providence bookkeeper named Henry. No one back at the beginning of the last century had any problem remembering Horace Hammond; all one had to do was look around, his legacy was everywhere. Now, we in the next century can be reminded of him as well; each and every time we pass by one of his remarkable creations.



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

Capt. Joe Smith lived in this home at 61 Pleasant St. during his employ with Edwin Berwind. Both Smith and Berwind's boat, the *Truant*, were regular fixtures in Wickford Harbor.



Capt. Joe Smith (left), who came from a family of sea captains, worked for coal magnate Edwin Berwind for more than 30 years, piloting Berwind's personal yacht, the *Truant*.



Capt. Joe Smith was charged with keeping the *Truant*, shown here in a picture taken in Florida around the turn of the 20th century, ready to go at a moments notice when the Berwinds came to town.

The View From Swamptown Capt. Joe Smith & the Truant

Over the years, we've examined a number of yachts connected to both "Ye Olde Quaint & Historic" and the fabulously wealthy folks who summered here, alongside the waters of the Narragansett Bay, during the first three decades of the 20th century. Whether it was the yeast king Julius Fleischman or Rockefeller's right-hand man John Archbold, these powerful men and their extraordinary yachts and their influential friends and business partners were connected to Wickford Harbor by one common thread; the amazing Smith Brothers, Captains all – Joe, John, Frank, and Jim. We've looked a bit at Capt Frank Smith, the skipper of Fleischman's magnificent yacht, the Hiawatha, and we've studied a bit upon John Smith, the man at the helm of Archbold's enormous yacht the Vixen; so now lets pay our respects to Capt Joe, the master of the steam yacht Truant, built across the bay at Hereshoff Manufacturing and owned by coal baron and confidant of JP Morgan, Edwin Berwind.

Joseph E. Smith was born in Smith's Castle, of all places, in August of 1865. After attended school here in North Kingstown, he, like his other five brothers, was drawn to the sea and began his career working on sailing vessels in and around Newport and Dutch Island. Upon achieving his Masters rating, Capt. Joe, as he was called by his friends, worked for a short while for the Fleischman's on a yacht, but then began a 30 year career at the helm of the "Truant", the Hereshoff built steam yacht owned by coal baron Edwin Berwind.

Now Berwind is a story in and of himself; educated in Philadelphia, he attended the US Naval Academy and was commissioned as a Lieutenant. While in Italy, he met and married the daughter of the US Consul to Italy Franklin Torrey. This union of two wealthy clans, combined with Berwind's association with NY financier JP Morgan provided him the wherewithal to begin the Berwind-White Coal Mining Company. By the dawn of the 20th century Edward Berwind was considered to be the world's largest individual owner of coal mining operations. He was also known as a hard-nosed anti-union owner who never negotiated with his employees. Berwind's mines were the last non-union mines in the country. The Berwinds lived in a style befitting their station in life. This, of course, meant having a fine yacht, and the Truant fit that bill nicely. Although it was a bit smaller than some of their contemporary's vessels, what the heck, they did have a nice summer place over in Newport constructed around the same time called "The Elms" to have their larger parties in, not to mention their primary home back in NYC at 2 East 64th St. Yes, the Berwinds lived a life straight out of the Great Gatsby.

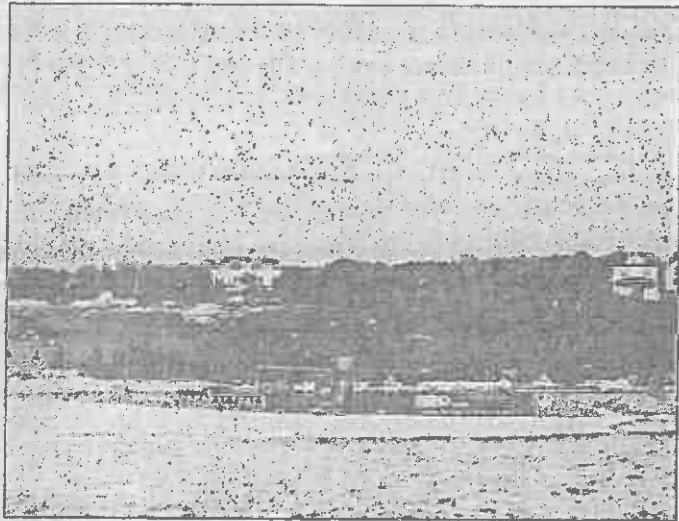
The Berwinds employed Capt. Joe right up until he retired around 1930. He kept the Truant "primed and ready" whenever it might be desired. During the off-season it was a regular fixture here in Wickford Harbor as was Capt Joe himself.

Next week we'll wrap up the amazing story of the Smith Brothers and try to get a handle on not only who they might have met during their remarkable careers but also what this all meant for Wickford itself.



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

H. Irving Reynolds (below) probably felt right at home when he married into the Smith family of captains, as he was at the helm of the *Turbese* (lower right), a yacht owned by the cousin of a U.S. president and, later, by one of the most powerful families in the country. One of his brothers-in-law was Capt. James Smith, who lived in the Pleasant Street home shown above and piloted the *Whirlwind* (top right), which was owned by the Fleischmann family of Cincinnati.



The View From Swamptown
Capt. Jim Smith & Capt Irving Reynolds

Last week we examined the life of Capt Joe Smith and his career as the master of the yacht "Truant" owned by the coal baron E. J. Berwind, and in the past we've studied on Capt Frank Smith the master of the Flieschmann-owned yacht "Hiawatha" and Capt. John Smith the man at the helm of the enormous yacht "Vixen" owned by Rockefeller's right hand man John Archbold. This week, as promised, we are going to finish the story of the amazing Smith brothers and also throw in an added tidbit regarding their brother-in-law H. Irving Reynolds.

Walter James Smith, known by his coworkers, friends, and neighbors as Capt. Jim was born in 1877 on the Smith farm near the intersection of Post Road and Stony Lane. Like his five brothers, Jim chose to make the sea his vocation and, as they did, worked his way through the ranks until he obtained his Captain's rating. His career as a yacht captain reached its zenith in the employ of the same family as his brother Frank, the powerful Fleischmann's of Cincinnati. As master of the yacht "Whirlwind" Capt Jim spent part of his time on the Great Lakes and part of his time plying the waters of the eastern seaboard's intercoastal waterway from Newport to Miami and everywhere in between. Additionally, Capt Jim also spent time as the master of various merchant vessels engaged in coastal traffic along that same eastern seaboard. He died in June of 1938 in an ironic and tragic drowning accident in the relatively safe confines of Wickford Harbor. Before we study on sister Hannah Smith's husband H. Irving Reynolds, let me not fail to mention the other two Smith brothers, Capt. William Smith, who had a long and successful career behind the helm of the steam ferry "Jamestown" right here on the Narragansett Bay and Chief Engineer Wesson Smith who served, with his brother John on the yacht "Vixen".

Their brother-in-law, Henry Irving Reynolds, Captain Irving to local folk, spent much of his seagoing life as the master of the yacht "Turbese" originally constructed for NYC publisher Adolph Schwarzman. Schwarzman was the man behind the wildly popular magazine "Puck". As editor and publisher of "Puck", a weekly that poked fun at everything and everybody through editorial cartoons and text, Schwarzman would have entertained everyone who was anyone on his grand yacht and Capt. Reynolds would have met many remarkable folks during his tenure at the Turbese's helm. Upon Schwarzman's death, the yacht changed hands, first being owned by Stephen Roosevelt, a moderately successful artist who also happened to be Teddy Roosevelt's cousin, and then, railroad tycoon Alfred Vanderbilt, who as you are probably aware had, like EJ Berwind, a fairly nice little summer place in Newport. While it is unclear whether Capt. Irving worked for Roosevelt or not, there's no doubt that he again was behind the wheel of the "Turbese" throughout the Vanderbilt years. Again, one's imagination can spin out of control thinking about the kinds of folks that Capt. Irving would have met while working for the Vanderbilts. After 20 years as master of the "Turbese", Irving Reynolds left his life as a yacht captain to start up the Beacon Oyster Company with partners Rollin Mason and William Smith. The Vanderbilts were not sure that Irving's business venture would be a success and therefore kept him on the payroll for a full year as a retainer just in case he might return.

So you see, the Smith brothers, along with Irving Reynolds, had remarkable careers as yacht captains for some of the most powerful men in the United States during a period that extended from the close of the 19th century into the first two decades of the 20th. They would have met most of the “movers and shakers” of the day and seen the world through the lens of the richest of the rich. Along the way, they not only managed to keep themselves employed through those turbulent times but also employed numerous other North Kingstown men as members of their crews. They also had a hand in the renaissance of Wickford village in that they brought these rich folks into the village, some of whom purchased and restored homes right here in “ye olde quaint & historic”.



Traveling preacher Lorenzo Dow was the highlight of a five-day camp meeting that took place in the area known as Quidnessett Neck in 1820. The minister, shown in a portrait at right and in an engraving depicting one of his sermons at far right, was known for his exciting talks, which often included laughing, screaming, shouting and crying. Dow's influence on South County can be seen in the names granted to children born around the time of the preacher's visit to North Kingsown, like Allenton's Lorenzo Dow Miner (above) and Swamptown's Lorenzo Dow Rathbun (above, right).



The View From Swamptown

Lorenzo Dow Comes to Town

Lorenzo Dow was an early 19th Century phenomenon. The Coventry, Connecticut born travelling preacher was part Johnny Appleseed, part John the Baptist, and part Phineas T. Barnum with just a touch of the puritan preachers Jonathan Edwards and Cotton Mather thrown in for good measure. He roamed the country from around 1800 to his death in 1834, preaching at Methodist Camp meetings, in town squares, farmer's barns, or even open fields. For effect, he liked to appear unexpectedly at a large public gathering and announce that he Lorenzo Dow would preach on that very spot, to all who showed up, exactly one year hence. He never missed an engagement. He travelled on foot across the nation from Maine to the Louisiana Territory and back again more than once. He owned nothing but the clothes on his back, which he kept until they literally fell off his body, and a knapsack full of Bibles. He was thought by the establishment of the day to be an eccentric at best; a madman with a following. In spite of all this, he regularly preached to crowds of more than 10,000 souls at a time, hungering for salvation, his autobiography at one time was the second best-selling book in the nation, exceeded only by the Bible, and he, during the middle half of the 19th century had more children named after him than any one in America. The 1850 census lists Lorenzo as one of the nation's most popular names and by 1870 there were, nation-wide, more than 12,000 men with the first name of Lorenzo and the middle name of Dow. Yes Lorenzo Dow was a force in 19th century America.

His Camp Meetings were just as extraordinary as he was. From June 8th to the 13th, 1820, 10,000 people camped out on the John Spink Farm on what was then known as Quidnessett Neck (now the area around Allen Harbor & Bruce Boyer Roads) to hear Dow and a number of other prominent ministers speak. Although there were nearly two dozen other speakers across the 5 day period, make no bones about it, Lorenzo Dow was the reason folks came from far and wide, from all over southern New England; they wanted to be able to say they had seen him in the flesh. You see, Dow's speaking style was like nothing anyone had ever experienced. He shouted, he screamed, he begged, he flattered, and he insulted and challenged everything and everybody he came in contact with. He told jokes, he told stories, he laughed uproariously and wept like a child. He often ran back and forth flailing his lanky arms willy-nilly before his audience only to then fall prostrate upon the ground before his Lord and Maker. Lorenzo Dow was a show man just as much as he was a preacher and no one then or now could hold a candle to him.

One of the most famous stories about him went something like this, "Once there was this crazy preacher named Lorenzo Dow who was travelling in the northern part of Vermont, when he got caught in a terrible snowstorm. He managed to make his way to the only light he could see. After repeated knocking at the door of the humble log house, a woman opened it. He asked if he could stay the night. She told Dow her husband was not home and she could not take in a stranger. But he pleaded with her and she reluctantly let him in. He immediately went to bed, without removing his clothing, in a corner of the room separated from the main living quarters only by a rude partition with many cracks in it. After he had slept for just a short time, the preacher was awakened by the sounds of

giggling and whispering from the main room. Peering through a crack in the partition, he saw that his hostess was entertaining a man not her husband! No sooner had he taken this in, when Dow heard a man's drunken voice shouting and cursing outside the front door, and demanding to be let in. Before admitting her husband (for it was he, returned unexpectedly), the wife motioned her lover to hide in the barrel of tow, a coarse flax ready for spinning, beside the fireplace. Once inside, the suspicious husband quickly sensed that his wife had not been alone, and demanded to know who else was in the house. When the quick-witted wife told him about the Rev. Dow, sleeping in the corner, he was not satisfied. After all, he was not so drunk that he would take his wife's word for the identity of the houseguest. "Well, now," roared the husband, "I hear tell that parson Dow can raise the devil. I think I'd like to see him do it -- right here and now." Before the devil could shut up her boisterous husband, he had pulled the famous preacher from his bed, where he had pretended to be sound asleep. "Rev'rend," he bellowed, "I want you to raise the devil. I won't take 'no' for an answer." Seeing that he would have to perform, Lorenzo finally said, "Well, if you insist, I will do it, but when he comes, it will be in a flaming fire. You must open the door wide so he will have plenty of room." The husband opened the door. Then, taking a burning coal from the fire with the tongs, Dow dropped it into the tow cask. Instantly the oily contents burst into flame. Howling in pain from the fire which engulfed him, the flaming figure of the man hidden in the barrel leaped out onto the floor and, just as quickly, darted out the open door, trailing ashes and smoke. He ran down the snowy road as if pursued by demons. It is said that the sight of all this not only sobered the drunken husband immediately, but permanently cured his taste for booze. And that was certainly one of the Rev. Dow's major miracles!"

After Lorenzo Dow's 5 day marathon Camp Meeting during that June week in 1820, he went on his way preaching and testifying to the masses, not only here but in Ireland, England, and Europe as well. He died in Georgetown in 1834 and is buried in a small unassuming cemetery just outside of Washington DC. But his legacy lived on, long after he did. Like everywhere else he preached, the next crop of baby boys born in South Count contained a large living legacy to the effect he had upon the regular folks he preached to; out in Swamptown, Martin Van Buren Rathbun and Thomas Wilson Dorr Rathbun's new baby brother carried the moniker of Lorenzo Dow Rathbun. Allenton's Lorenzo Dow Miner was no different, nor was Davisville's Lorenzo Dow Vaughn or Lorenzo Dow Hall. Just over the line in Exeter, Lorenzo Dow Sweet carried on the good preacher's memory, as did Charlestown's Lorenzo Dow Harvey. Down Westerly way, you could count on Lorenzo Dow Barber, Lorenzo Dow Chase, and Lorenzo Dow Wilks to speak proudly of the man they were named after as well. In South Kingstown Lorenzo Dow Knowles and Lorenzo Dow Knapp carried on the memory as well. All of them and the tens of thousands like them across the eastern United States were tied together, sons as it were of a childless itinerant preacher who roamed our nation.



Alan and Joan French of Wickford were brought together by one of the worst tragedies in American history – the bombing of Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. Though the attack would force the country, and Alan, to enter the War in the Pacific, he would return and the couple eventually made their way to the East Coast – finally settling in North Kingstown.



The View From Swamptown

Hometown Heroes

There are few place names in America whose very mention conjures up a more intense set of imagery than “Pearl Harbor”. Every American is moved emotionally in some fashion by those words. You see, “Pearl Harbor”, joined now by the “World Trade Center” represents America at its most vulnerable and at the same time it’s most heroic. Nothing was ever the same after Pearl Harbor. No facet of American existence was untouched by what happened there. Americans have no choice but to be affected by the mere mention of those three syllables. All that said, I expect that few folks have as unique a connection to the place as Alan and Joan French of Wickford; for it was Pearl Harbor that had brought them together.

Joan had been in Honolulu for a number of years prior to that fateful December Day, as her father was employed with the Commercial Pacific Cable Company. She graduated from Roosevelt High in Honolulu, and after some post-high school training had secured a position as the secretary to the treasurer of Honolulu Iron Works. Alan French was there as well prior to December 7th. He was stationed at Fort Shafter as a part of the 64th Coast Artillery and was the leader of an anti-aircraft gun section charged with protecting the Harbor. As you can imagine, both of these young people were profoundly affected by what transpired on December 7th, but they still had not met.

That day came a couple of weeks later, on the day that the first resupply convoy tentatively made its way into Honolulu Harbor. The population of the Islands was still in shock over what had transpired, but was understandably overjoyed upon the arrival of that first convoy. Not only was help on its way, but food and goods as well. Maybe life would begin to return to some sort of normalcy now, perhaps sanity would again prevail. Joan was among the group of lucky civilian workers allowed up on the roof of the Honolulu Iron Works to watch the convoy arrive. The excitement in the air was palatable; folks felt safer now, Honolulu was literally bristling with anti-aircraft gun batteries, one of them was even set up on the roof of the Iron Works and you can guess who was in charge of that battery; Alan French.

Alan French remembers that moment clearly, he saw Joan come up the stairway and out on to the rooftop. He elbowed his buddies and said something to the effect of “Hey, look at that dame, that’s the girl for me”. A man of his word, then as well as now, they were married seven months later.

By then, Alan’s artillery battery was relocated to Ford Island, dead center in Pearl Harbor. On that fateful June day in the European Theatre known forever as D-Day, another enormous group of more than 127,000 young men set off from Pearl Harbor headed for the Invasion of Saipan and Tinian. Just as important as the action on the beaches of Normandy, this was the turning point in the War in the Pacific. Alan French was one of those 127,000 and although casualty levels were high and he was there for 11 months, he managed to survive the action and return to his young wife back in the States. By the early summer of 1945, Alan French’s enlistment, like the war in Europe, was over.

Alan, who had enlisted in Massachusetts, returned there, but then moved to Rhode Island, where he found a civilian position at the busy Quonset/Davisville military

complex. He lived with his young family, at first in the Wickford Housing Project (now Wilson Park), and later purchased a comfy little home on Phillips Street. He supplemented his income by working part time as an attendant at the Wickford Mobil Station in the village and it is here where my earliest memories of Mr. French (although he was universally known as Frenchy to every adult I knew, I would have been in big trouble had I addressed him that way) begin. My life had radically changed as well by then, I was the eight year old man of the house and my mother was a 29 year old widow with her world turned upside-down. Alan French with his gregarious good nature, ever-present smile, and occasional jokes that, although they were incomprehensible to my sisters and myself, always made my mother laugh. After a time our paths crossed again, when I, like most boys that grew up in the 1960's, made the jump from Cub Scout to Boy Scout. He was our troop leader, a calling he had subscribed to for some 25 years. We met every Saturday in the Rec Center at the Wickford Housing Project and while he was busy teaching me how to tie knots, whittle, do Morse code, and make a radio out of wire and toilet paper tubes, he taught me an awful lot about how to be a young man. Sitting around countless campfires at Yawgoog and Kelgrant, I learned how to roast marshmallows, cook fish, tell ghost stories and deal with the rapidly changing landscape that was America in the late 1960's. And Joan French was there too, providing not only great cookies and brownies but care and compassion as well. In short, Alan French, for me and lots of other boys, did what real men do; he stepped up and helped fill the void. And we'll never forget it.

The world is so different from the way it was in the 1940's, or the 1960's for that matter. It's a cynical place in many ways; folks are always asking "Where have all the heroes gone?" Well, I don't know about all the heroes, but I do know where two of them are – they're sitting in a comfy little house on Phillips Street.



Above, Charles and Gladys (Simpson) Fallon sit with an uncle outside of their Buena Vista Drive home in 1939. Gladys continued to stay in the home after Charles died in 1979, and lived there until she died in 2000. Below is a current picture of the home.

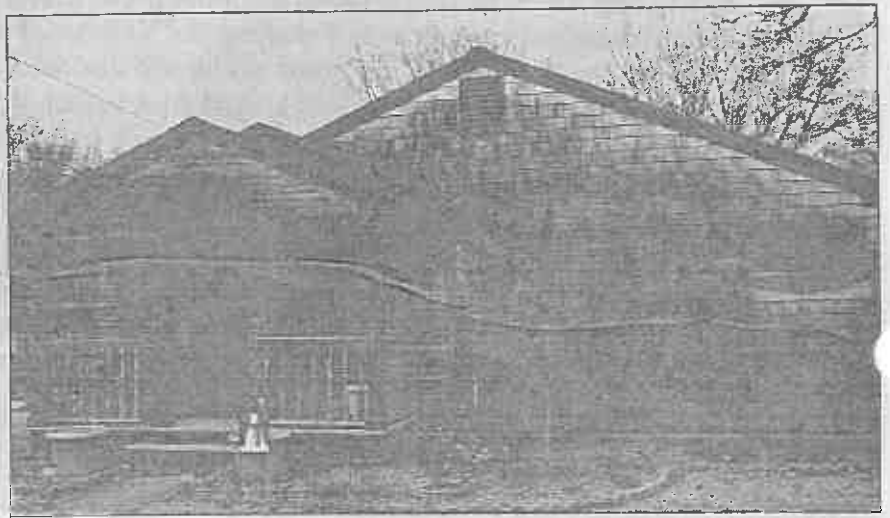


PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR



Young Gladys Simpson plays in the snow at her grandmother's house Pawtucket in the 1920s.

The View From Swamptown

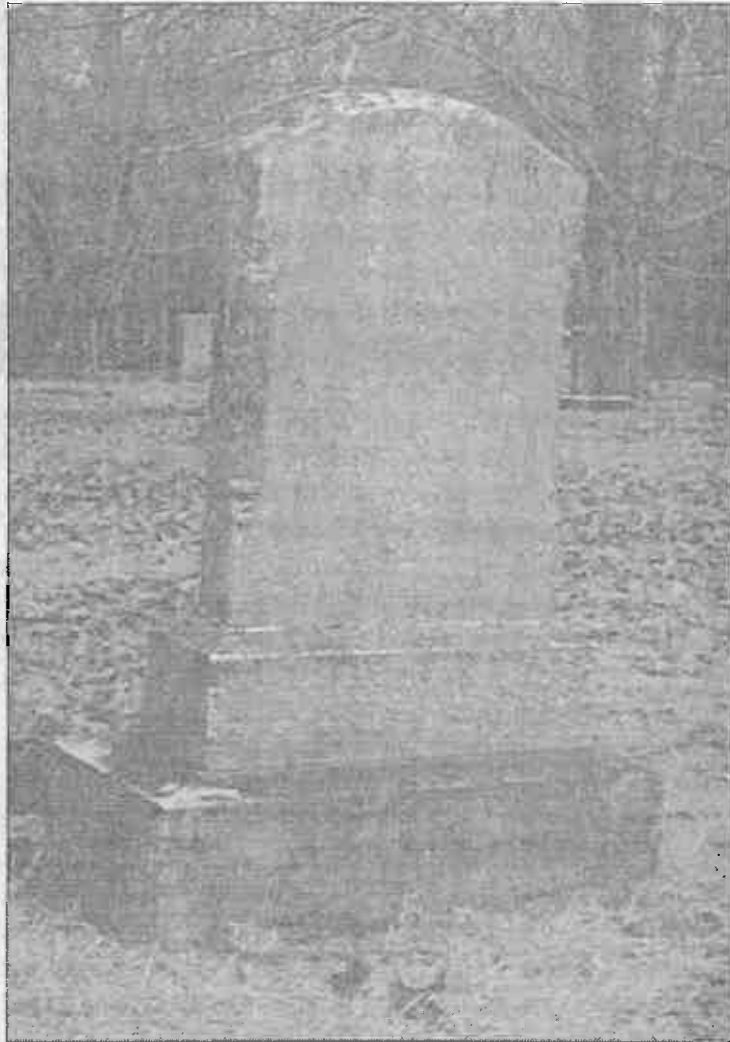
Charles & Gladys Fallon

You know, I never met Charles or Gladys (Simpson) Fallon during the many decades we lived here together in our fair town. The Fallon's summered within a mile or two of my house when I was a child and then lived there permanently throughout my youth and adulthood, and our paths never crossed. In 1979, when Charles passed away, I was completely unaware. And then in 2000, when a 93-year-old Gladys joined her husband for eternity at Exeter Veteran's Cemetery I still knew nothing of their lives. But I know something now!!

I know that Gladys Simpson was a Pawtucket girl and Charles Fallon was a Providence boy. He was a veteran of WWII and was a building inspector in Providence. Gladys who was called Glady by her parents, worked as a secretary for the phone company. They loved to travel and in spite of the fact that they were unable to have children of their own, enjoyed their nieces and nephews to no end. Charles, who was quite a bowler, seemed a bit reserved but Glady seemed full of spunk. They bought one of the first summer homes in the Hamilton plat off of Waldron Ave in 1938. They used it to escape the summer heat of the capitol city where they lived, but moved down here full time in 1960 as Charles neared retirement. In that respect they were like so many other folks who lived there and at Shore Acres and Mount View. You see the "Greatest Generation" was also the first with true disposable income and a summer place on the shores in North Kingstown was a statement of sorts. It meant you were somebody. Gladys loved the place so much she stayed after Charles passed on. Buoyed by neighbors and friends, supported by her faith and her beloved St Bernard's Church, she lived a full but different life after Charles passed.

So, how could I know all this about folks I never met? You see a few months ago, fate brought us together, when I was given a trunk full of photographs and memorabilia that chronicled the life that Charles & Gladys shared together. It had been left in the house that they owned from 1938 to 2000 when the elderly childless widow passed on. A very concerned and thoughtful Hamilton plat resident left them with me. She felt what I instantly did, that this was the very sum of someone's life and somewhere, there must be someone for whom these forty pounds or so of photos, awards, memorabilia and children's drawings would matter. I knew I had to find that person or persons and reunite them with the legacy of Charles and Gladys's life.

So some detective work was in order. I sorted through the contents of the trunk and looked for names. I examined microfilmed obituaries and studied real estate records and then searched the internet for current addresses and then mailed out inquiries. Finally after a time I hit pay dirt. A letter back from the widow of Gladys' nephew out on the west coast led me back to a number of grand- nieces and nephews here in Rhode Island. Just this past weekend, I handed over the life and times of Gladys and Charles to those fine folks from Warwick. Those photos and such, some dating back to 1920, are now in the hands of folks to whom they matter greatly. As a historian, I know how many of these types of things go forgotten off to a landfill. Little feels sadder to me than that, and I think Gladys, and yes even stoic old Charles, shares the smile that I have, knowing that they will not be forgotten.



The grave of Abby Cranston at Elm Grove Cemetery may seem like it is alone, but it is also the resting place of many members of the Cranston clan, including her husband, Pardon Cranston, and many of their children.

The View From Swamptown

Pardon T. Cranston

Abby Cranston's gravestone sits seemingly alone on the family plot out in the back of Elm Grove Cemetery. If you were to wander by you might wonder why she was left here apparently all alone to rest eternal under the moss and grass of the cemetery. But here again, looks can be deceiving as Abby is anything but alone. For here with her resides her entire extended family; the family of Abby (Davis) Matteson Cranston and her husband Pardon Thomas Cranston.

Pardon Cranston was born in 1837, the first son of local farmer Cyrus and Sally (Northup) Cranston. His younger brother was; you guessed it – George T. Cranston, who went on to serve in the Civil War with distinction and came back a local hero and made quite a life for himself in spite of his humble roots. Pardon's story was quite a bit different. You see, at some point in his early years Pardon suffered a horrible farming accident of some sort or another which left him with only one arm. The fact that he survived this trauma, at this time in history, is amazing in and of itself. However it left him unable to serve his country in the War to save the Union; and, from that point on, his life, and that of his brother's went off on very different paths. As a matter of fact, Pardon probably felt he had more in common with the biblical Job than with his popular politician brother.

Not only was Pardon left to tend to the family's farm out in Swamptown, he was also the "man in charge" as his father Cyrus had died of tuberculosis just before the Great War had begun. So Pardon not only had to take care of the farm, he also had to tend to his widowed mother and younger siblings. All this with only one arm no less. By the end of the war Pardon's burdens were lessened. His mother had remarried to local widower Benjamin Bicknell and his siblings were off on their own. With the sale of a portion of the family farm to his sister Emeline and her husband William Weeden, Pardon had sufficient funds to buy his own place. He purchased a sizeable parcel of land on the northeast shore of Silver Spring from textile king Robert Rodman and began his own life. Soon after purchasing it he married a young widow, Abby (Davis) Matteson and took her and her two children George and Ida to live with him on his Silver Spring Farm. Pardon and Abby went on to have seven more children of their own.

Trouble for Pardon began in 1886 when his 43-year-old wife of eighteen years passed away without warning. Pardon was now left with a brood of children ranging from their early 20's down to 6 years old. You can be sure the older ones; Pardon's step-children took on many of the duties performed by their mother. Pardon Cranston, as he had always done, just "soldiered on" as best he could. As the end of the 19th century rolled around, Pardon, one by one, began to lose his children as well. Eldest son James died abruptly soon after his mother, daughter Daisy died of tuberculosis at age 20, daughter Minnie died during an epileptic seizure, and son Burrill contracted textile industry induced lung disease and died in his early 20's. Before Pardon knew it, four of his seven natural children were gone just like that. All were buried next to their mother in Elm Grove, albeit without headstones due to the costs involved. Additionally, Pardon also had to attend his brother George's funeral in 1894.

After all this tragedy in one family, perhaps the most difficult moment for his three surviving natural children and two step children occurred in 1905 when Pardon himself developed the malady we now characterize as Alzheimer's disease. Sons Charles and Byron and daughter Evelyn signed the papers to have him committed to the state hospital at the end of that year. Pardon T. Cranston died in June of 1906. The family farm with all its "memories and ghosts" was left to his son Byron Cranston a popular Allenton area milkman.

Byron lived there for many years until one day in 1936 when he walked out into his front yard and took his own life with his hunting rifle. He had spent his entire 66 years there. Perhaps all the memories and tragic circumstances finally got the best of him. He too was buried in the family plot marked only by his mother's gravestone with all the rest that had gone before him. The Silver Spring Farm built by his father Pardon then came into the possession of his grand-nephew George C. Cranston, my Grandfather. It is still in the family to this day more than 130 years after Pardon purchased it from the Rodmans.

Pardon Cranston shows up a number of times in the historic archives of the old Wickford Standard. My favorite story is the one where he, the well-known one-armed farmer ran down a run-away wagon with a neighbor lady and her children on it and, from astride his favorite horse jumped across into the gap between them and saved the day. That's the way I prefer to think of him; a heroic character who took what life gave him and did his best. I hope one day to place a marker stone upon his grave right next to Abby's. Rest in peace Pardon.



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

Many credit the survival of the Stony Lane Six-Principle Baptist Church to the hard work of Betsey Briggs (at right). Historians say Briggs, who became blind at a young age, collected the offering, paid the bills and even tended to the church building and grounds during a difficult period in the late 1800s.



The View From Swamptown

"Blind" Betsey Ann Briggs

I expect that no one since Betsey Briggs's death on Christmas Day 1907 has known the highways and byways of the Stony Lane and Scrabbletown Districts as well as she. To say that she knew these two rural hamlets like the back of her hand would be an understatement. To hold the opinion that Betsey Briggs could find her way around these two villages blindfolded would be closer to the truth, but would still miss the mark a bit. You see Betsey Ann Briggs, born in February of 1822 had been completely blind since she was a young girl; and in spite of this, she made her living as a door-to-door peddler calling on the womenfolk of Stony Lane and Scrabbletown and selling them sewing supplies and other such notions. "Blind Betsey", as she was often called, did not allow her personal handicap to limit her or define her. She lived a fairly independent life in spite of her blindness.

I know little of her early life, other than that she was born in 1822 of Joseph T. & Sarah Briggs somewhere near the present day intersection of routes 2 and 102, on the outskirts of Scrabbletown. She lived a life that was centered around family, friends, and, most importantly to her, her beloved Stony Lane Six-Principle Baptist Church on Old Baptist Road. As a matter of fact, Betsey supplemented her meager income as a peddler by being the caretaker of the Stony Lane Church. During the church's leanest years, the last quarter of the 1800's, "Blind Betsy" according to historian Mary Huling, "tall and thin, with snowy hair, and bearing the expression of an inspired prophetess, would take charge of the service." Betsy basically ran the business of the Church through that difficult timeframe, collecting the offerings, paying the bills, and taking care of the church building and grounds. Actually, it's safe to say that, without the dedication and devotion of this determined blind woman, the Stony Lane Church, would not be here today.

Betsey Briggs shows up often in the historic record, walking alone and unguided along the country roads of Stony Lane and Scrabbletown "with a firm and stately step" as she made her way from house to house on her route as a peddler. Often she would spend the night at her last stop of the day, particularly at her friend Hattie Smith's place located at the eastern end of Stony Lane near where the Post Office is now. As a matter of fact, Betsey's living arrangements were constantly changing. At every 10 year U.S. census interval, She could be found listed as a "boarder" residing with a different member of the Stony Lane community, such as the Allen family on Old Baptist Road or at the Brown farm on Stony Lane. Even Betsey Ann's final resting place in Elm Grove Cemetery in similar arrangement. She is now a "boarder for all eternity" in the Wood family plot out in Elm Grove Cemetery.

Betsey Ann lived a full and productive life that ended with a heart attack just shy of her 86th birthday. Her Christmas Day death cast a pall upon the holiday that year for those who loved her. But no one ever felt sorry for Betsey Ann, for, as she was wont to say whenever she felt moved to sermonize at the little church that meant so much to her, "her faith in God and her spiritual sight was of more value to her than any physical sight could be".



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

Howard Phillips (H.P.) Lovecraft (shown below, right) will eternally be associated with Providence, but he was also a big fan of South County and what the area had to offer. Through letters written to family and friends, it is known that he made several trips to North Kingstown and enjoyed visiting sites like the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace (above) and Main Street in Wickford (below).



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

The View From Swamptown

Lovecraft comes to North Kingstown

From time to time, I must admit, I indulge myself by prattling on about various artists, writers, actors, and other celebrity types that have lived in or passed through our fair town. Lets face it, we all like a little celebrity gossip now and again. So, that said, this week I'm going to indulge myself once again and talk about one of America's "masters of the macabre", Providence's own Howard Phillips (H.P.) Lovecraft.

Now Lovecraft's short life in and of itself is a bit on the macabre side. Both of his parents went insane and died in Butler Hospital. He was raised by grandparents and various spinster aunts, had one short failed marriage and lived a life focused almost completely on his writings. Additionally, thankfully for us, he was also a prolific letter writer; and through these letters, we are able to see that old H.P. had a soft spot in his heart for South County.

He was attracted to the land of the Swamp Yankee due to the ancestry of his mother's family. Through her, his family tree was full of Phillips, Rathbuns, Caseys, Dyers, Hazards, and Wilcox's, and Lovecraft wished to commune with these departed souls via travel in their old haunts. Unfortunately for him, he did not own an automobile. His friends and fellow horror writers E. Hoffman Price, Edward H. Cole, and James F. Morton did however, and every time he would get together with one of them,...a traveling they would go. These visits to North Kingstown occurred during the first half of the 1930's.

Lovecraft was particularly taken with Gilbert Stuart's Birthplace, and actually visited it several times, bringing Cole and Price with him on separate occasions. He marveled at the "venerable old water mill" and enjoyed the "winding roads, stone walls, verdant slopes and meads, and shadowy woods" along the way there. Wickford itself, Lovecraft found "exquisite beyond words" with its "crumbling wharves, great elms, and centuried white houses". He walked the village's shady streets and lanes and paid homage to his family's past at the Old Narragansett Church.

Lovecraft was also taken with the whole concept of the Narragansett Planter Society that existed here in South County in the 1700's. He wrote to many of his pen pals of the days of Narragansett Pacers, and vast dairy plantations run by fine gentlemen utilizing the labor of countless slaves. He compared the area at that time to Virginia and marveled at the similarities between the two places. Howard Phillips Lovecraft was often quoted as saying, as is written on his gravestone, "I am Providence", but he also took a shine to our fair town as well.



PHOTOS: MICHAEL DERR

Born in Wickford, Joshua Himes, shown below, overcame adversity to become a minister in four different Christian faiths. Born in the Updike House on Pleasant Street, he would eventually become one of the founding members of the Advent Christian Church, which still has a local home in Lafayette (below, at right).



The View From Swamptown

Joshua Vaughn Himes

There's no doubt about it, Joshua Himes has got to be one of our fair town's most intriguing native sons. Born on May 19th, 1805 to Stukely and Elizabeth (Vaughn) Himes, he spent his early years living in the finest house in Wickford and receiving his Christian education at the knee of St. Paul's of Wickford's rector Rev. Lemuel Burge and a prominent Wickford summer resident Episcopal Bishop Griswold. Joshua's father Stukely, whose roots extended back to the first Himes' who had settled Swamptown nearly a century earlier, was a very successful local merchant and West Indies Trader who, through his marriage into the prominent Vaughn family and his own astute business acumen, had become one of the region's wealthiest individuals. Stukely had planned to send his boy Joshua (named after Joshua Vaughn, Elizabeth's father) to Brown University in Providence to study theology for an eventual calling as an Episcopal priest, but all that changed in 1817 when Stukely's two business partners in the three-masted schooner Ocean, which was built and sailed out of Wickford, betrayed him. Ship's Captain Samuel Carter and Supercargo (the officer in charge of the ship's cargo) Alexander Stuart, when they arrived at their first Caribbean port, sold the cargo and the vessel and fled with the proceeds. This had to be doubly painful for Stukely Himes, as he was close enough to Stuart to have named his other son Alexander Stuart Himes. With the Himes' family reeling financially from this extraordinary loss, Joshua's future plans were changed. Instead of a Brown education and an eventual career as an Episcopal priest, he was apprenticed to a New Bedford cabinetmaker to learn a trade. The grand home on Pleasant Street in the village of Wickford was sold and Stukely and his family relocated to a Vaughn farm out on the NK-Exeter border.

Religion though, was in Joshua Himes heart and soul, so much so that in 1826 he was ordained as a minister in the First Christian Church in New Bedford, and eventually became the pastor, in 1830, of the First Christian Church in Boston known locally as the Chardon Street Chapel. While there, he not only became deeply involved in the abolitionist work of William Lloyd Garrison's New England Anti-Slavery Society, he also met and befriended prominent Adventist minister William Miller when he allowed him to not only preach at his Church but also invited him to stay at his home. Himes was so impressed by Miller's preaching and his message revolving around the second coming (or Advent) of Jesus, that he eventually became an Adventist minister himself and additionally began to write and publish a number of newspapers, including the nationally distributed "Signs of the Times" that spread the message of Miller's Adventist movement. Himes also became a prime architect in Miller's Adventist Camp meetings which began in East Kingston, Massachusetts in 1842 and were held all around the eastern half of the United States. These became so popular that before long Joshua Himes purchased the largest tent in America at that time, seating a purported 6000 people, it was heralded in the newspapers of the nation as the "great tent" and one writer proclaimed that "Joshua Himes has spread more canvas than any circus in America". Eventually the Adventist supporters of Miller became known as the "Millerites" and, utilizing the prophecies in the Book of Daniel as a guideline, set as specific date of October 22nd 1844 as the day that Jesus would return to earth in his glory.

That day, October 22nd dawned a beautiful sunny day across New York and New England. All across the English speaking world, literally tens of thousands of “millerites” waited with anticipation for the coming of the Savior and the “Day of Atonement”. Of course, on the morning of the 23rd the sun rose as usual, another regular day began and “the worn and weary watchers wended their way home” in dejection and ridicule. This day was known as “The Great Disappointment” and was the beginning of a chaotic period for the Advent movement. In 1845, Miller and Himes convened a meeting of all members of the faith in Albany NY; from this meeting, known as the Albany Conference, came the two branches of the Advent faith that exist today, the 7th day Adventists and the branch led by Miller and Himes, the Advent Christian Church. In this way, Joshua Himes can be identified as one of the founding members of this faith.

After the momentous days surrounding the Albany Conference, Himes moved with his family to Buchanan, Michigan to take a leadership role in the Advent Church as the nation expanded westward. He began a new newspaper there, called the “Voice of the West” (later known as the “Advent Christian Times”) and was the founder of the American Advent Mission Society.

He next turns up as an older man of 75 years of age in Elk Point, South Dakota, part of the Nebraska Territory, where he fulfills the dream of his father decades earlier when he became an ordained Episcopal priest; the rector of St. Andrews Church in Elk Point. Regular readers of this column might remember that the Episcopal Bishop of the Nebraska Territory at that time, Nathaniel Thomas also had deep Wickford roots.

Himes continued in this position until his death in July of 1895. Speaking about him then Bishop Hare of Nebraska Territory remarked, “he fights the battle of the Church with the gallantry of the stripling David and preached the Gospel with the power of a youthful St. Stephen.”. He is buried in a cemetery in Sioux Falls South Dakota in a spot he specifically selected. True to his Adventist roots, the Episcopal priest wanted to be buried high on a hill so as to be among the first to hear it when the angel Gabriel blows his trumpet.

So in the end, this Wickford boy who was ordained to preach in four separate Christian faiths, spends his eternity on a hill in South Dakota waiting for the sound of God’s trumpets calling us all home.

1848	CHARLES FRANCIS MAYNARD	1914
	HIS WIFE	
1855	CARRIE BLANCHE WILSON	1924
	THEIR CHILDREN	
1876	FRANK SAMUEL	1876
1877	FRANK NEWINS	1881
1876	ARTHUR HAYES MAYNARD	1970
	HIS WIFE	
1877	MABEL LOUISE MAYNARD	1890
	THEIR SONS	
1924	GEORGE ARTHUR MAYNARD	1970
1921	CHARLES H MAYNARD	

Arthur Maynard is buried with his family at Quidnessett Memorial Cemetery in North Kingstown. The inventor rests close to the East Greenwich Bostitch plant, a facility he helped build.

The View From Swamptown

Arthur Maynard

One of the countless gravestones out under the cool leafy shade of Quidnessett Memorial Cemetery in our fair town, quietly commemorates the life of Arthur Maynard. You could pass right by it on a stroll through those immaculate grounds and never really understand the impact that the bespectacled Mr. Maynard had upon the communities of North Kingstown and East Greenwich; heck upon the whole world for that matter. You see Arthur Maynard was one of the first employees Thomas Briggs hired back in 1903 when he began his new company, the Boston Wire Stitcher Company. Not that Briggs had a whole lot of choice, you see Arthur Maynard had just invented the device that was going to revolutionize the office of the 20th century and put Brigg's Boston Wire Stitcher "on the map" as it were. Arthur Maynard, an innovative young machinist at Taft-Peirce Co. in Woonsocket, had just refined and patented Briggs' concept for what we now call the desktop stapler. And the invention of the stapler by Art Maynard is what propelled Briggs' firm, later called Bostitch, to the heights it would eventually reach.

Maynard was born in 1877 into the family of a Marlboro Massachusetts shoe store owner. Right from the start he was inventive, whiling away the hours constructing fanciful contraptions out of the wooden shoe crates and other such things found in the back of his father's store. As a matter of fact, the young lad once told his dad, "You know, I can build anything." And once he reached Bostitch at the start of the 20th century he held true to his word. By the time he retired in 1957 after 54 years with the firm, the East Greenwich resident held nearly 80 different patents ranging from the desk top stapler right up to a commercial box stapling machine capable of firing 8000 staples a minute to make corrugated cardboard boxes.

Arthur Maynard and his wife Mabel (Crumb) moved to the Avondale section of Westerly upon his retirement. But he now rests eternal here in North Kingstown, just a mile or two as the crow flies; from the giant Bostitch plant that his inventions kept busy.

Please feel free to join me at Quidnessett Memorial Cemetery this Saturday at 10AM and learn more about this beautiful place and the remarkable souls that are interred here.



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

Although it was officially called the South County Patrol, the Wickford Barracks – as locals have always referred to it – has been around since 1925, when it was opened at 24 Brown St., the current home of Green River Silver Co. The barracks can be seen in its original state in the historical photo at right, where it is the second building on the left. The Wickford Barracks was moved to its current home on Post Road in 1935.



The View From Swamptown

Death at the Wickford Barracks of the RI State Police

According to their website, only two men have been murdered while wearing the familiar and respected uniform of the Rhode Island State Police. Now you might naturally expect that these two brave troopers who made the ultimate sacrifice for the citizens they were sworn to protect died in recent years and served perhaps in the urban center of our state. But you'd be wrong with that assumption; you see, both of these fine men served and died in the early 1930's, and both of them reported to work each day at the old Wickford Barracks located during that timeframe at 24 Brown Street in the heart of the village of Wickford.

Before we remember these two men and the circumstances surrounding their deaths, let's get a little background information. The Rhode Island State Police was established in the Spring of 1925 by Governor Aram Pothier to help deal with the changes brought to the State by the increasing popularity of that new-fangled mode of transportation, the automobile. Additionally the State Police would be able to provide a little dose of "the law" in communities around the State where there was little or no organized law enforcement entity. That first year saw the appointment of a 23 man force headed by Colonel Everette St. Jean Chaffee and one of the satellite offices opened was the South County Patrol staffed by 6 officers and located in Wickford at 24 Brown Street. Although its official name was always the South County Patrol it was called by all, the Wickford Barracks, and even after its relocation out of the village to its present day Post Road site in 1935, it's still the Wickford Barracks to trooper and citizen alike.

The first of these two tragic events occurred on December 18, 1931 when young trooper Arthur Staples noticed a vehicle with only one headlight pulling through the "Collation Corners" intersection of Tower Hill and Ten Rod Roads. He pulled the car in question over near Tower Hill's intersection with West Allenton Road and began to examine the car and its occupants, 16 year old Armand Lescault and Phillip Janelle both of Pawtucket. They had stolen the car earlier that evening and neither boy had a drivers license. Before Trooper Staples could react, Lescault pulled out a revolver and shot him, at point blank range, in the back of the head. He died instantly and was left by Lescault and Janelle laying on the side of Tower Hill Road. Walter Kingsley, working in his store nearby, heard the commotion and went to investigate with a customer Otis Taylor. They found the body and immediately called the Wickford Barracks. After one of the State's "largest manhunts ever" Janelle was captured with the help of locals, Herbert Gardiner and Milton Freeborn and Lescault who had fled into Slocum and down the railroad tracks, was captured near Coventry. Staples was mourned by, not only his family, but by all of North Kingstown.

Two and one half years later, at a location just a mile or two away from the site of the Staples killing, Lt. Arnold Poole was shot and killed by an inebriated farm hand at the Baker Estate on what is now Prospect Avenue. He had gone there on May 30th 1934 to try to quell a disturbance between farm superintendent Tom Standeven and longtime farmhand Pete Freeman; and man considered by most to be "a good natured man who was a heavy drinker that got mean and ugly on occasion". Poole was acquainted with

Freeman and had no idea what was to transpire on that day. When Lt. Poole arrived at the farm he and Standeven approached a shed where Pete Freeman was hiding. As Tom opened the shed door, Freeman fired a blast from a double-barreled shotgun, nearly killing his target Tom Standeven. Poole drew his gun and told Freeman to come on out. Both guns blazed and Lt. Poole took a shot in the head and fell badly wounded. He called to Standeven and told him to call the Wickford Barracks. As Standeven ran to the phone Pete Freeman reloaded his shotgun and fired both rounds into the prostrate Poole killing him. He then calmly reloaded and headed off to track down his boss and finish the job. Soon after, the entire Wickford Barracks, plus a group of 8 trainees from the nearby Wakefield training facility arrived and cornered Freeman in a milk shed. After the ensuing gunfight, the largest in North Kingstown history, Freeman lay dead with 10 bullet wounds. Lt. Arnold Poole was found to have 180 pieces of buckshot in his body. Poole left a wife and three children behind. The entire community was shocked and saddened by the incomprehensible tragedy. Pete Freeman's family, good people every one, never got over what their relation had done that day. No one understood "why he had done what he did."

It's been more than 73 years since that day, and thankfully, no other State Troopers have met the fate of their comrades; Troopers Staples and Poole. These two fine men gave their lives here protecting the citizens of our fair town.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE R.I. STATE POLICE WEB SITE

Troopers Arthur Staples (left) and Lt. Arnold Poole, both of whom worked out of the Wickford Barracks, were killed in separate incidents while trying to protect North Kingstown residents.

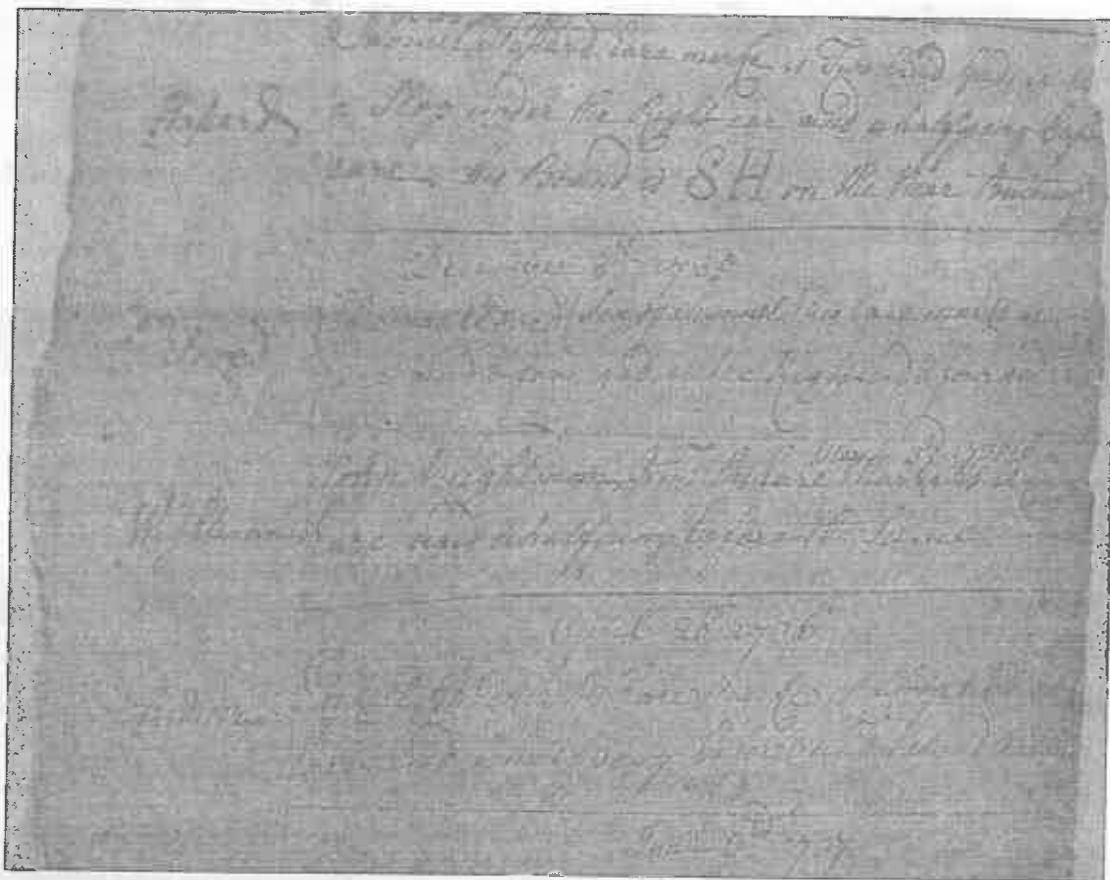


PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

Excerpts from the "Miscellaneous Records" book at town hall document the markings that people put on their livestock so they could be properly identified if they ever got loose. The book was compiled to give a home to loose pages recovered from a fire at the old Wickford Bank, where the records were once stored.

The View From Swamptown

.....Of Earmarks and Livestock Brands

Buried in the records vault at the Town Hall, is a book called "Miscellaneous Records". It can be found in one of the numerous stacks of musty and dusty records that constitute the recorded memory of our community. Like all the rest of the pre-1850 records this book's pages are all burned away around the edges; the result of a bungled robbery gone bad back at the Wickford Bank where they were once stored. This particular book actually owes its existence to that fire; for these are records that were damaged in such a way that the restorers were unable to ascertain where these loose pages belonged. One of them at least, if you study it closely and you know what you are looking at, does reveal its secrets and lets us in on an interesting little aside that sheds light on those days of long ago.

You see this ancient document, written in 1735 and '36, is a legally recorded listing of livestock earmarks and brands, presented to and accepted by the Town Council as the official "be all and end all" regarding arguments and disagreements over the important issues of whose cow, pig, goat, sheep, mule or horse was whose. This document was read into the record during those years long before a Revolution against the British rulers was even contemplated, by Town Moderator William Spencer or Town Clerk Thomas Willett and then voted upon by the seated Town Council consisting of Nicholas Gardiner, John Albro, Francis Willett, Robert Eldred, George Tibbets, and James Reynolds. The meeting, held long before our fair town had any municipal buildings, was held in the usual place; the Havens Tavern, an ancient Inn dating back into the 1600's and located where the circa 1803 Peter Maxwell House (now the Pagoda Inn) can now be found. From it we can find for instance, that the livestock belonging to Caleb Gardiner were notched on the left ear and then branded with an English half-penny just behind that same ear. Or that Samuel Haszard's cows could be indentified by the SH brand on the buttocks and if you found a goat with a hole punched in its ear and an 8 branded on it, well you ought to return it to Rowse Helme.

These are the little details that bring those folks from so long ago back to life for me. I can close my eyes and envision an important meeting in a smoky tavern, where men of substance contemplated details such as this. It's truly a statement on a very different set of priorities during a very different age.



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

Above, a livestock culvert remains in existence as a driveway for a home with no other access. The structure was once used as a pass-through for livestock so the animals did not have to directly cross the train tracks above and face the wrath of an oncoming train. At right is a culvert built to give access to the Wilbur Hazard farm on Boston Neck Road in Saunderstown.



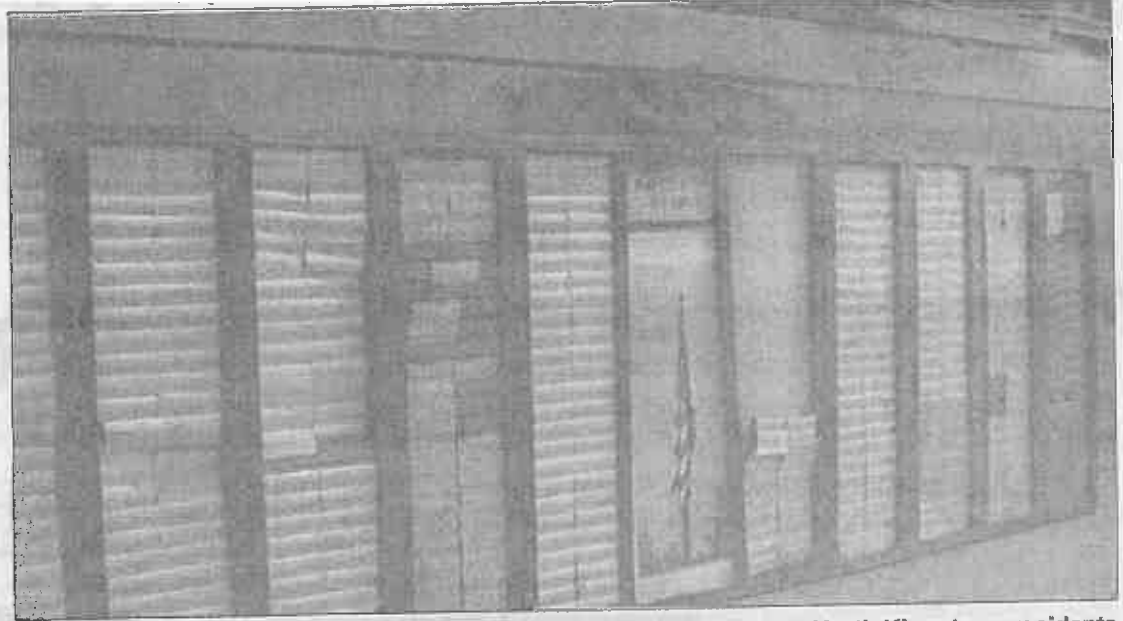
The View From Swamptown

Livestock Tunnels & Cattle Culverts

I guess just about every movie about Americans in Europe or the British Isles has one cliché scene where the hero (or heroine's) automobile ends up surrounded by a herd of sheep being driven down a country lane causing them to be late for some important event or another. For that matter, how many classic Westerns include a scene involving an obstinate cow smack dab in the middle of the railroad tracks holding up a steam locomotive belching out black smoke while the standoff plays out? Well, these cliché movie moments, like most, do have a basis in fact and here in our fair town, we still have the evidence to prove it.

Now anyone who loves those old steam locomotives knows that they all came equipped with a "cowcatcher" to help move those ornery cattle off the tracks. Unfortunately, these meetings between cows and trains rarely worked out well for the cows; even with the cowcatcher these impacts were always fatal, the cowcatchers purpose was to shunt the carcass off to the side rather than allow it to get caught up underneath the engine causing a derailment – it was not added to help save errant bovine lives. To try to avoid these problems, and to sweeten the deal with farmers when the original right-of-ways for the line were negotiated in the 1830's, a number of cattle culverts were constructed. These culverts were tunnels under the tracks which allowed farmers to move their herds, be it cattle or sheep, from one field to another without crossing the tracks directly. The culverts were great for farmers, but a maintenance headache for the railroads and one by one, as opportunities arose, the rail line filled them in. One prominent local Swamptown character, farmer Thomas W. D. Rathbun (the Rathbun clan is one of the most colorful of NK families and has been profiled in many other columns) became a local hero of sorts after he successfully battled Cornelius Vanderbilt's lawyers in the 1870's and forced the Rail Line owned by the transportation magnate to reopen a closed culvert. From that time onward, Thomas Rathbun was known as the famed "Swamptown Lawyer" and was sought out often for his wisdom and sage advice. Here in town though, we still have at least one of these left just adjacent to Old Baptist Road, it was saved because it does double duty as a drive way for a home with no other access.

Similar problems existed with the town's highways and byways as the 20th century began and North Kingstown, along with the rest of America, transitioned into a society centered on the automobile. A number of livestock tunnels were constructed to alleviate these problems, including one associated with the large dairy enterprise that existed on the site of the present day Stop & Shop Plaza on Ten Rod Road. These too, were maintenance headaches for the state division of roads and, one by one as the opportunity arose, they were filled in or removed. We are lucky enough to have perhaps the finest example still left at the historic Wilbur Hazard farm on Boston Neck Road in Saunderstown. This wonderful livestock tunnel, replete with some excellent dry laid stonewalls which funnel the Hazard's sheep and cattle into the culvert, remain to remind us of a time when cows were at least as important as cars in our fair town.



This smaller version of the Roll of Honor, which was used to recognize North Kingstown residents who served in World War II, has been in storage at the North Kingstown Free Library for several years now. Anyone who has more information on where the roll may have been placed and those who might be interested in restoring the roll should contact Tim Cranston at swamptown@msn.com. Below is a closer view of some of the names on the list.

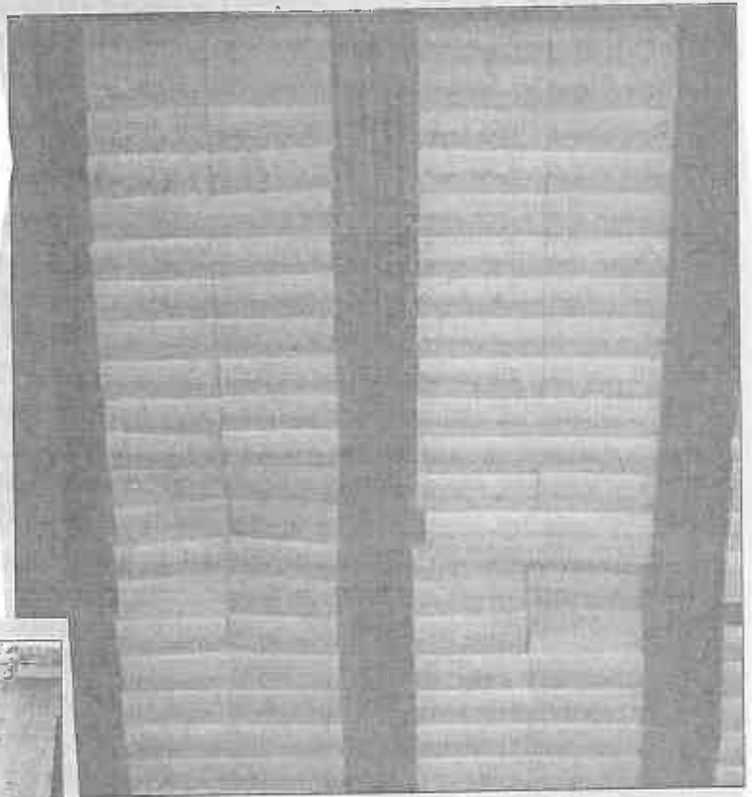


PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

The Plum Beach Garden Club will hold a fund-raiser this weekend to help support an effort to place a Blue Star Memorial at the intersection of Post Road and West Main Street to honor all those who served the nation in military service.

The View From Swamptown

Remembering Our Heroes

This week we are going to take a look at two inter-related stories that center around honoring those who have served our nation in its military. The first is a mystery of sorts and the second a challenge to us all.

As World War II came to a close, small towns all across our nation did what they could to honor, not only those who had made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom, but all of their citizenry who served in the great war. As a result of this desire to celebrate the bravery of their fellow townsfolk; Rolls of Honor, signs or monuments listed all who served in any and all branches of the military sprung up in town squares, parks, and village greens all across America. North Kingstown was no exception – a grand billboard-like Roll of Honor was set up in the little town park at the corner of Brown and West Main streets. It was quite large and listed all North Kingstown residents that served in the War. It remained there from around 1945 until the early 1960's when, as it was in quite poor shape by then, it was removed. It also seems that a smaller version of the Roll of Honor was also created for display in the Town. As you can see by the accompanying photos, it was obviously designed for a sheltered display location; perhaps the Town Hall, Library, or Post Office. It has been in storage now for many years at the Library after an even longer time in storage at the old West Main Street Fire Barn, and is in forlorn shape itself. I bring it to everyone's attention for a number of reasons. First, it is unclear at this point, where this smaller Roll of Honor was displayed; maybe someone out there remembers seeing this before and can clear up this mystery for us all. Additionally we do not know who made this memorial, its provenance is unclear; anyone who has answers on that as well would be greatly appreciated. Second, perhaps someone out there has a good photograph of the original large outdoor Roll of Honor which could be copied and kept with this smaller version. This brings me to the final reason for showing this off to the good folks of North Kingstown. There must be a veterans or civic group out there willing to undertake the noble task of restoring and displaying this important memorial. Although many many of the names on it are familiar to me, few of these folks are still around and while there are still a few left, we ought to get this cleaned up and displayed again. It's too important to be hidden away.

This brings me to a related story, another challenge of sorts. The Plum Beach Garden Club is about to undertake a restoration and re-landscaping of the three grassy traffic islands at the intersection of Post Road and West Main Street. Part of this project includes the installation of a Blue Star Memorial, an ongoing tribute of sorts to all veterans who serve our nation. Just like the aforementioned Roll of Honor, this memorial is dedicated to all our military men and women, not just those noble souls who made the ultimate sacrifice for our nation. Additionally, I am pleased to be partnering with the Garden Club on the design of a new Historic-themed "Welcome to Wickford" sign. A major source of fundraising for this project is this weekend's wonderful Plant & Bake Sale at the Garden Club-maintained old library park on Brown Street next to the Town Hall Annex. So come on down and support this project on Saturday from 9AM-2PM. And remember if you have any information on NK's WWII Roll of Honor, please contact me at swamptown@msn.com.



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

The former G. Willakers Country Store building on West Main Street in Wickford was once home to the North Kingstown Ambulance Association, the town's first emergency rescue operation.

The View From Swamptown

The North Kingstown Ambulance Assoc.

Reliable emergency medical transportation is something we take for granted these days. We all rest comfortably knowing that an EMT and an ambulance are just a 911 phone call away. But things weren't always that way. This week we are going to take a look at how this vital public service began in our fair town.

To paraphrase my learned predecessor in the chronicling of North Kingstown's history, newspaperman John Ward of West Main Street, "North Kingstown's Ambulance service was inaugurated thanks to a huge pile of rusty junk." The learned old Swamp Yankee was right on the money as usual. You see, as a part of the war effort during WWII, all towns were urged to form Salvage Committees to help round up vitally needed raw materials that could be utilized as America "tooled up" for the fight to come. North Kingstown was no exception, and throughout the winter of 1942 and into the spring of '43, a small army of volunteers totaling over 200 townfolks, utilizing 40 trucks, collected scrap iron, tin foil and tin cans, scrap copper and brass, scrap rubber, newspapers, and even used cooking oil. The US government was not interested in the funds generated from these drives; what they wanted was to get these raw materials available for the construction of everything from aircraft carriers to tanks to bullets and all in between. So the NK Salvage Committee, which had rounded up more than 300 tons of scrap iron alone, was left with a good chunk of money after it was all over. They met in committee and decided that the best use of the money they had raised would be to fund the beginnings of an ambulance service for the community. On June 2, 1943 they brought the idea before the town's people at a meeting and it was approved unanimously. In September of 1943 the newly formed North Kingstown Ambulance Association accepted delivery of a small beige 1942 Chevrolet Stylemaster ambulance with an all steel body and shatterproof glass throughout. The ambulance was at first housed in Kenyon's Garage (now demolished) located at the intersection of Tower Hill and Ten Rod Road.

The NK Ambulance Association operated as a subscription service. Families interested in joining paid \$2.50 per year to guarantee that they would get transportation to the nearest hospital should the need arise. Families in nearby Exeter were also allowed to join providing that they paid an additional per mile stipend up to the North Kingstown-Exeter town line. The Ambulance Association was staffed entirely by trained volunteers that were divided up into three crews of 10-12 volunteers, these crews rotated "on-call" coverage for one week at a time. There were also three registered nurse volunteers as well, with one assigned to each crew. Dispatching and crew call-out was handled by the North Kingstown Fire Dept. In that first year they made 123 runs covering 5100 miles.

In 1948, the Association raised funds to purchase a larger ambulance and it was delivered in May of that year. To save the Association some money, long time volunteer Harry Lewis took a train out to the factory in Loudonville Ohio, picked up the brand new Buick ambulance and drove it back to North Kingstown; Harry made it back in time to drive it in the Memorial Day parade.

In January of 1949, the Ambulance Association purchased the former Wickford Methodist Episcopal Church building on West Main Street (until just recently this

building was occupied by Gee Willakers gift shop) and had it converted into their headquarters by local contractor Paul Arnold. By the Spring of that year they were settled in their new home. Things went along fine until the 1954 Hurricane when the building was flooded and the ambulance ruined. A new Ambulance was purchased with insurance proceeds and arrived in 1955. By 1961 the town had grown so much due to activities at Quonset Davisville that a second ambulance was required.

The North Kingstown Ambulance Assoc. continued to provide vital service to the town until the early 1980's, when a dispute between the FCC and the Town caused them to close up shop. The Federal Communication Commission objected to the town using its radio license to dispatch for the non-profit but separate entity. Unable to come up with the thousands of dollars required to establish their own radio license, the Association pulled up stakes and relocated to Exeter where it still provides quality timely emergency response to the citizens of our neighboring town. North Kingstown in response to this turn of events had to beef up its fire department to fill in the gap left by the loss of the association.

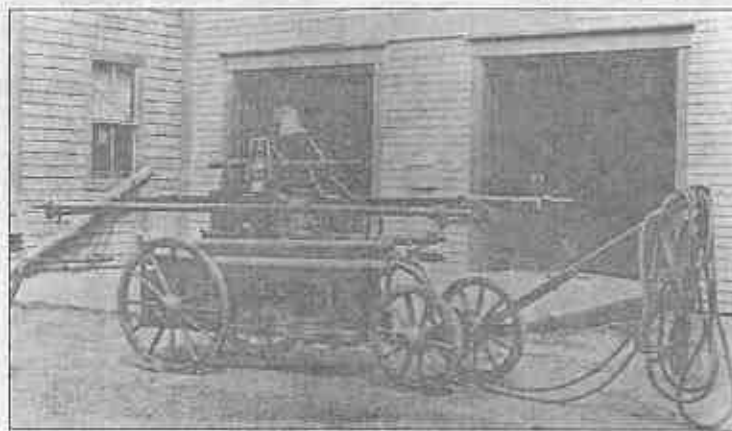
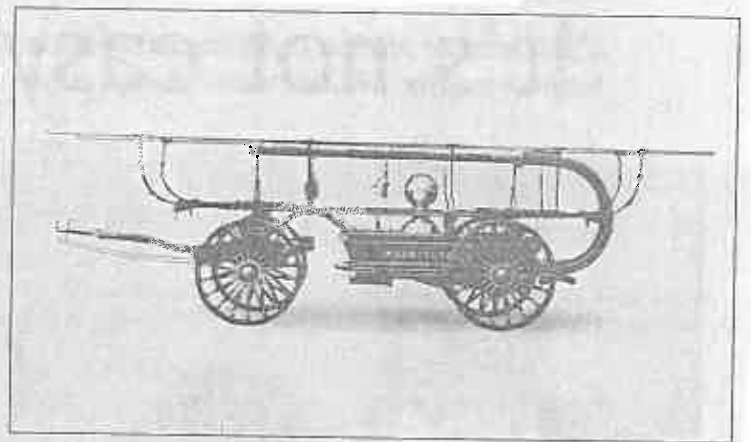
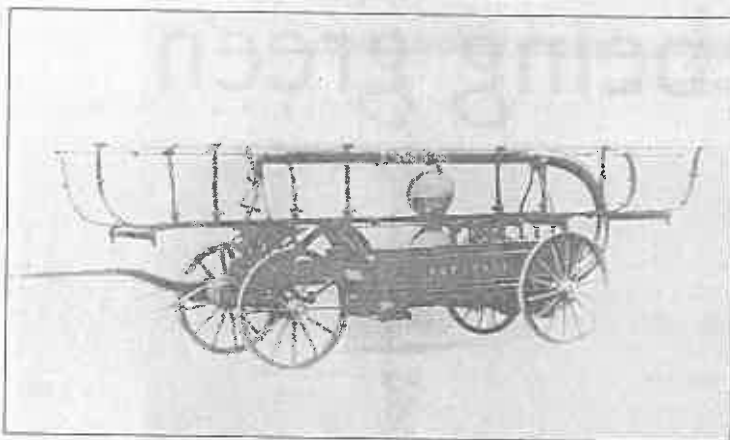
Over the 60 years that this all-volunteer operation existed in town, literally 100's of folks gave of themselves to keep their neighbors safe. They came from all walks of life; religious leaders, medical professionals, newspapermen, teachers, carpenters, truck drivers and the like. They all stood ready to head out into the night to help their fellow man expecting only the gratitude they deserved as a reward.

If you have an interest in finding out about any particular person involved in the formation of the NK Ambulance Assoc., please contact me.



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

The Washington No. 1 hand pumper sits on display at the East Greenwich Veteran Fireman's Hall on Queen Street. The Washington No. 1, which was used to help keep fires from getting out of control in a tightly packed Wickford Village, is undergoing a renovation and will soon be looking for a place to be displayed in North Kingstown. Below, from left to right, are pictures of three Wickford pumpers in their heyday: the Narragansett, the Defiance and the Washington No. 1.



The View From Swamptown

North Kingstown's Early Hand Pumpers

From the November of 1806 vote to require all residents to purchase two leather fire buckets within 90 days, it is apparent that the leadership of the village of Wickford was concerned about the devastation that an out of control fire could wreak upon the tightly settled little village. You can bet that the residents also had practice drills on their "bucket brigade" skills, using those same required leather buckets to pass water hand-to-hand from the closest well to the site of an imaginary fire. And when a real fire occurred all available citizens turned out, buckets in hand, knowing full well that an out of control blaze in a village where each house was no more than an arms length or two a way, could easily have an effect on everyone. Nothing brought more fear into the hearts and minds of 18th and 19th village folk in Wickford, Lafayette, Belleville, Davisville, or anywhere else for that matter than the dreaded screams of "Fire, fire, fire!!".

This fear is what motivated the good folks in Wickford to again vote on a fire related issue in 1847. After that vote, the village, through its fire district, purchased a hand pumper called "Narragansett" to supplement their bucket brigade skills. A hand pumper is the predecessor to a modern fire engine; it had a water tank and attachment fixtures for one or more fire hoses. Pressure to pump the water up onto a stubborn blaze was supplied by a number of strong armed residents manning the pumping bars on either side. Later versions also had the ability to act as a pump only with a suction hose being dropped into a well, pond, or even the bay if necessary; whatever it took to extinguish a fire that might threaten the community. In 1885, the Narragansett was replaced by the Washington #1, which was in turn replaced by the Defiance in 1921. Skills at operating these various hand pumpers were displayed at regional firefighting competitions known fondly as "squirts". Fire Districts from around the region would meet regularly and compete to see who had the requisite skills, power, stamina, and equipment to move the most water; to "squirt" it the longest distance. These competitions were hard fought, bragging rights were at stake and knowing that you possessed the most competent fire fighters in the region sure allowed for a more peaceful nights' sleep for the residents of the winning fire district.

The Defiance was the last hand pumper to protect Wickford and its reign was short as it was replaced by a motorized fire engine soon after its service began. The "squirts" though, continued on as an opportunity for firefighters, both paid and volunteer, to celebrate the heritage of their profession. Another wonderful benefit of these "squirts" is that these three hand pumpers survived into the 21st century. The ancient Narragansett can be seen at the South County Museum, the Defiance is owned by the Westerly Veteran Firemen Assoc. and the beautiful Washington #1 is now undergoing a complete restoration by the fireman of our own fair town. The next step for the Washington #1 after its restoration is complete, is to find it a safe, secure display space in North Kingstown so all of the Town's residents, both young and old, can see it and marvel at it and the dedicated men who manned those pumping bars all those years ago. If you can help us in anyway in finding such a place for this extraordinary artifact, please contact me at my e-mail address or Fire Marshall Gordon Walsh at the NK Fire Department.



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

Willett Carpenter, whose grave is shown above, was one of many slave owners in North Kingstown that asked for help in locating a lost slave through newspaper advertisements. In 1799, he reported losing two slaves and offered a \$5 reward for each. Below is the home of Charles Short, who advertised his wife as a runaway in 1797. He offered no reward.



The View From Swamptown

North Kingstown Runaways & Deserters

Most of my friends and relations seem to feel that I have a penchant for making some very obscure selections when it comes to reading material. I can't quite understand this; why, during this long holiday weekend I passed the time pouring over the details of the very interesting two-volume work entitled "Runaways, Deserters, & Notorious Villains" written by noted Providence historian and photo archivist Maureen Taylor. These books are a compilation of all the advertisements placed in 18th century RI newspapers regarding runaway slaves, wives, and apprentices, as well as deserters from the Revolutionary War and a few escaped prisoners thrown in for good measure. From these advertisements, it is possible to glean all sorts of interesting tidbits of information regarding life in 18th century North Kingstown. With all this going for them, for the life of me I can't understand why they aren't on any bestsellers lists.

So what did we learn from these advertisements? As far as runaway slaves go, as expected in a community with more than its fair share of slaves, there were quite a number – 19 to be exact. There would be quite a few more were it not for the division of the town into North and South Kingstown during this period, as there were even more slaves in our sister community to the south. Lodowick Updike at Smith's Castle lost his slave Dimas, in April of 1763; he described him as a "subtle fellow with a forged pass" and is willing to pay \$6 to get him back. At the other end of town, Phebe Browning lost four of her slaves, Rose and infant, Nancy, & Jenny, in 1799 and will only pay ten cents reward for each. She describes them in some detail and proclaims that Jenny is a "wench". Also in the southern end of town, Willett Carpenter lost two slaves in 1799 one named Cezar and the other with the very odd moniker of Handsaw. He offers up a \$5 reward for each. Down in Wickford, Immanuel Case advertised the loss of his slave Cuff who he describes as a "short thickset fellow with a long-built head". The most valuable slave advertised was Warren who belonged to John Barber and was trained as a merchant seaman. In 1780 a reward of \$120 was offered the capture of this "fellow who is exceedingly black with a greasy look". Most likely Barber "rented" Warren out to ship owners and this loss of income caused him to offer up a large reward. Slaves were not the only runaways listed here; also we can find a few runaway apprentices like William Wightman who ran off from his employ with Benjamin Reynolds in 1796 and, intriguingly enough Sarah Short "who deserted the bed" of her husband Charles in 1797. Charles tells the world that he will pay none of her debts from this point on.

As for deserters from the armies and navy of the colonial government during the war for independence, North Kingstown with 13, had her share as well. Easily the most intriguing was William Corey who deserted not once, but twice; first in 1779 and then again in 1782. This was more common than you might imagine; you see in a time when recordkeeping was limited at best, numerous less than honest young men collected more than one "signing on" bonus in this manner. Also interesting is the fact that 31% of all the North Kingstown deserters were from the Shearman family. I can't say as I know what to make of that fact.

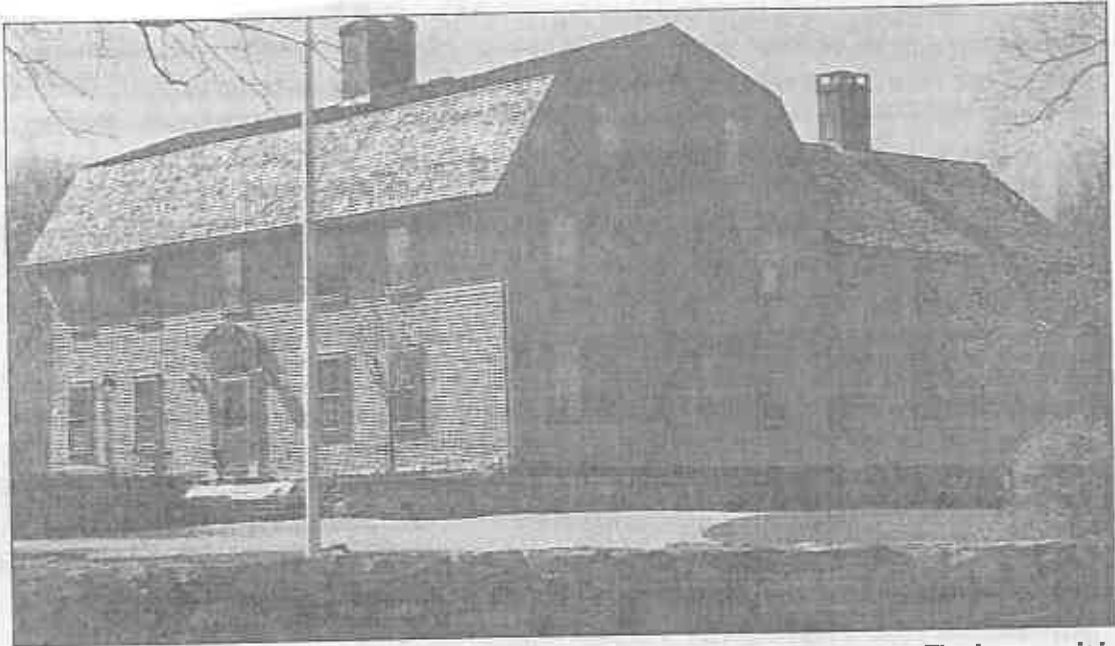
Finally, we only had one escaped prisoner to be on the lookout for according to the advertisements, that being Christopher Fowler, who broke out of the county jail in January of 1778. Based on the date, it's probably safe to assume that Fowler's crime was being a Tory; a loyalist to the King of England. His ultimate fate is unknown to me at this time.

If anyone has any interest in further information on these runaway slaves and deserters, feel free to contact me at my e-mail address. Also, don't forget about the recent compilation book of these columns; it's a great Christmas gift and they are going fast – get yours before its too late.



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

Immanuel Case lived at this Main Street home in 1799 when he advertised the loss of his slave, Cuff.



The Rowland Robinson House sits just over the town's border in Narragansett. The home, originally built around 1710, was restored in 1925 to its original look, with workers demolishing an addition put on in 1755 and restoring the grounds to its approximate 18th-century condition.

The View From Swamptown

The Rowland Robinson House

I guess it's just human nature to think in terms of superlatives. We're all certainly fascinated by the notions of "the biggest" and "the best". So lately, I've been pondering just such a question. Which colonial-era home here in our area deserves the title of "the best"? Anyone who reads this column on a regular basis knows that this Swamp Yankee is bullish on our fair town. Over the years I've sung North Kingstown's praises regarding the extraordinary selection of historic housing stock here in town. Why I've even made the case that we here in NK beat out Providence and Newport for the title of oldest overall collection of historic structures. As a matter of fact, I've even claimed that our most ancient of ancients, the Hall/Northup House on Post Road may indeed be one of the oldest homes in all of New England. We can lay claim to America's oldest wooden lighthouse, New England's oldest Anglican Meeting House and one of the Colony's earliest trading posts; but, I'm sad to say that I cannot, in good conscience, give the title of the area's "best" colonial home to a North Kingstown structure. And I've got to tell you that just gets my goat! At least I can take some satisfaction in saying that this exemplary home was once within the confines of our fair town and for the want of a few hundred yards added to our southern border with Narragansett would still be here. If I could only get my hands on that 18th century surveyor, well I'd tell him a thing or two....

You see, in my humble estimation, the finest colonial era home in all Rhode Island, maybe all New England, sits just a stone's throw from the southern reaches of Saunderstown out on the Old Boston Neck Road. No home can hold a candle to, or shake a stick at, the circa 1710 Rowland Robinson House. It was among the finest homes in the Narragansett Country back in 1710 and it still is today. Even more importantly, much of its immediate surroundings have been retained across the many centuries. It sits proudly amidst the same utilitarian stone walls, outbuildings, and orchards as it did in the days of Hannah Robinson and her father Rowland Robinson II. This house is a gem, a gift from the past, a reminder of a different time and a different world.

That time was the age of the Narragansett Planter, and this home was the center of the plantation world which the Robinson's inhabited. Although today's incarnation of the home mirrors its 1710 look, in 1755 it was, if you can imagine it, much larger, with an addition including a huge kitchen and slave quarters that brought its length to 110 feet. From this massive home Rowland II ran his empire, which included a dairy farm churning out cheese in large quantities, a horse breeding operation whose product was the famed Narragansett Pacer; a steed preferred above all others from the islands of the West Indies to the wealthy southern plantations and beyond, and grain which was shipped out, along with the Pacers and the dairy products, on Robinson owned vessels sailing from the nearby South Ferry Pier. All of this was accomplished utilizing labor supplied by the Robinson's many slaves, along with hired locals and indentured laborers, tradesmen, and servants. The Robinson clan, one of the Plantation Society's most prominent, was tied both socially and by marriage to the other families within this class, including the Updike's of Cocummscussoc and the nearby Gardiner clan headed by Judge Ezekiel Gardiner both of which ran a plantation also based around the economy of cheese production.

We here in the 21st century owe a debt of gratitude to the Rowland Robinson House's early 20th century owner Fredrick R. Hazard, who purchased it and 230 surrounding acres in 1925. It was he who hired North Kingstown resident and noted restoration architect Norman Isham to restore the house to its original 1710 configuration. Isham had the 1755 addition demolished and added an appropriate replacement 2-story ell to the north side of the home. Isham, and his employer Mr. Hazard, were thankfully purists who realized that the home, to truly retain its significance as the stunning structure it was, required the appropriate landscape context in which to set. Their decision to maintain and restore the grounds around it to the approximate condition that it would have been back in the days when Hannah Robinson chose love over family and paid the ultimate price for her choice, is part of what makes this the finest, the best, colonial-era home that this old swamper has ever seen.

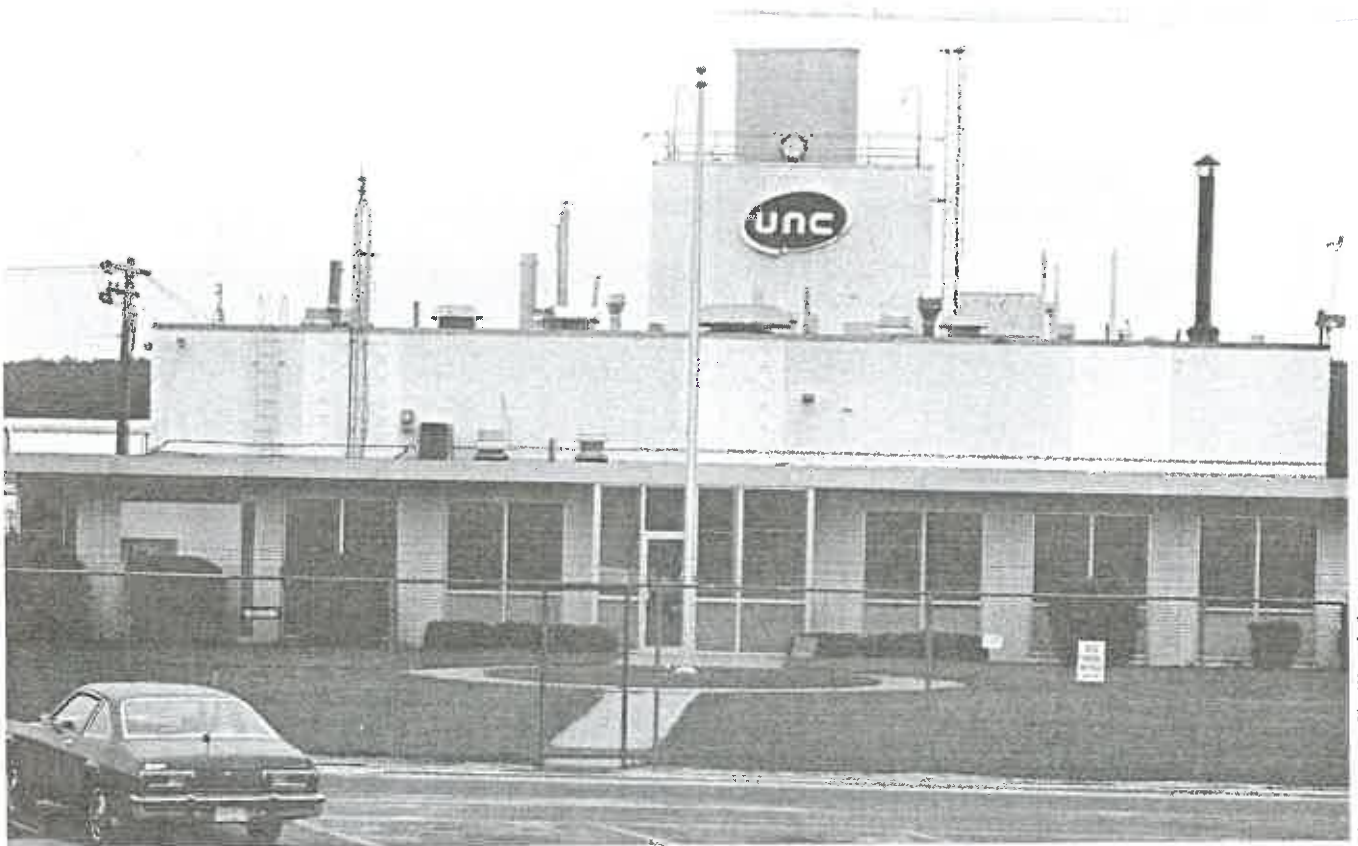


Photo courtesy The Westerly Sun

The United Nuclear Corp.'s Wood River Junction facility was the site of the nation's only commercial nuclear fatality, an event that may have changed the course of the area's history. The land the facility once stood on is now the Nature Conservancy's Francis Carter Preserve.

"Being a contrary & cantankerous Swamp Yankee, I thought it only right that, as the rest of this month's issue is centered on looking forward a half a century, we ought to take a gander back in time a half century or so."

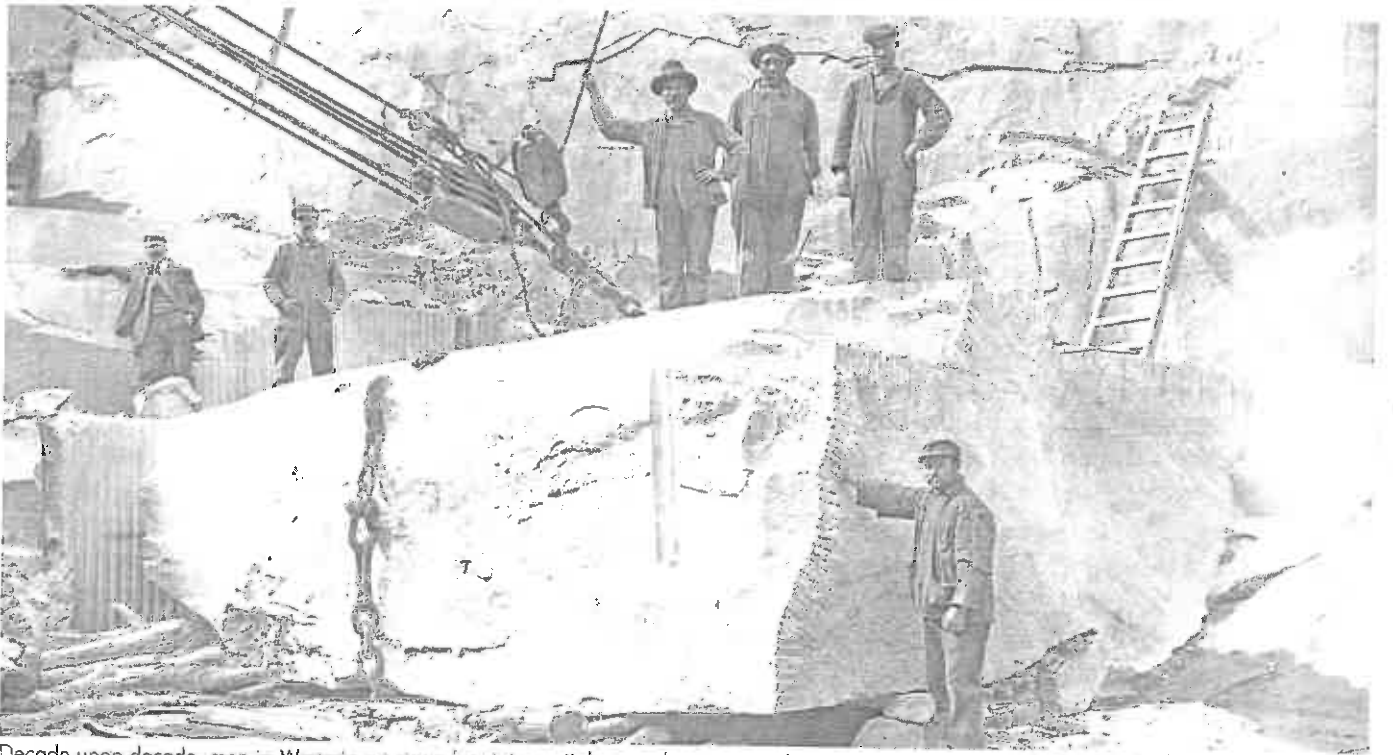
Wood River Junction - Charlestown, The Blue Flash, & Unsafe Geometry

Sometimes the most innocuous of events on the most ordinary of days can have far-reaching consequences. Like a tiny pebble tossed into a still pond, the ripples of a single act extend outward affecting everything. Wood River Junction, July 24th 1964 was just such a day and the moment that Robert Peabody grabbed the 11" diameter mixer container left for him on the shelf rather than the usual 5" one, was just such an event – a seemingly simple chain of events that had far-reaching consequences for South County.

Peabody was a night shift operator at United Nuclear Corporation's Wood River Junction processing facility, a place hailed by the sitting Governor John Chafee as "a tremendously exciting thing for us here in Rhode Island" when it opened just a few months earlier. He had taken the job, in which he was tasked with precipitating low concentrations of uranium out of contaminated trichlorethane solvent, to help make ends meet, he also worked full time during the day as a mechanic. That day he was just doing what he always did; he grabbed the mixer container left for him and began filling it with solvent, trouble was the container was far too large and the solvent was inadvertently far too concentrated – critical mass was reached, a reaction occurred and Robert Peabody was knocked down by a deadly blue flash containing 1000 times the lethal dose of radiation. He was dead within 49 hours of that blue flash, the U.S.'s only commercial nuclear fatality. A review of the accident cleared Peabody of any wrong-doing, citing the "unsafe geometry" of the container as the primary cause for this criticality incident. Not only is Robert Peabody the nation's only commercial fatality, he is perhaps the only man killed by unsafe geometry.

Less than a decade after his tragic death, the rest of the United States was beginning to share the resentment held by the Peabody family towards the nuclear power industry. At that same time, Narragansett Electric was contemplating construction of a large nuclear generating plant at its Rome Point property in North Kingstown and a similar project was in the works for the former Charlestown Naval Air Station. Fueled in part by the memory of the Wood River incident; local resistance to these projects was strong, and although the Three Mile Island incident was certainly the last nail in the coffin of the Rome Point & Charlestown nuclear plants, it was Robert Peabody's tragic death that initially closed the lid.

Robert Peabody, sadly, is largely forgotten, a footnote as it were, in the larger controversy swirling around the nuclear power industry. He was a good man who died tragically. I can't help but find irony in the fact that two of the enormous parcels of South County property associated with this tale are now protected nature preserves; the would-be nuclear power plant site is now the John Chafee Nature Preserve named after the man that lauded the Wood River processing facility. And much of the land where Peabody met his fate is now the Nature Conservancy's Francis Carter Preserve named after a former head of the Champlin Foundation. Nothing however, is named after Robert Peabody and I wonder what that says about our priorities.



Decade upon decade, men in Westery cut stone for state capitols, grand statues, tombstones and monuments at Gettysburg and Antietam.

Westerly

A Stone Cutter's Hands

A stone cutter's hands always gave him away. Even wearing his Sunday best on an outing with family at the Watch Hill carousel, the difference between his hands, rough and calloused, fingers split and healed; split and healed from years of doing battle with the stone in Westerly's famous granite quarries, and the manicured soft hands of the Cincinnati and New York City socialites who summered here was painfully obvious. The stone cutter's hands marked him; they defined him.

It had been that way since the beginning, since Orlando Smith and Alexander Crumb began pulling the fine uniform grained blue-white granite from the ground in Westerly and Bradford in the 1830's & 40's. Decade upon decade it continued; stone for the Connecticut and NY state capitals were quarried cut and polished. Stone for heroic monuments at Gettysburg and Antietam, and grand statues of Roger Williams, George Washington, and Fredrick Douglass were quarried and carved by masterful artists at the Smith and New England Granite works. Gravestones, tombstones, vaults, and crypts by the thousands, building stone, steps, and curbstones – ton after ton all pulled from the earth in Westerly; manhandled, bullied, carved and caressed by the hands of generation upon generation of Westerly stone cutters.

They literally lived and died through the benefits and at the mercy of this wonderful granite. It housed and clothed them and fed their families. It was their life and their livelihood; it fueled their sense of self-worth and pride and, it took them when it wished. A stone cutter risked life and limb each and every day as they quarried cut and moved the massive blocks of granite. Their existence could end in an instant or be taken away from them slowly and insidiously through the accumulated damage done by each dust-saturated breath they drew. Eventually, nearly all of them, the cutters and quarrymen, the carvers and designers, ended up in the same place; River Bend Cemetery in Westerly. They rest there eternally, beneath and surrounded by their finest work. I heartily recommend a trip to River Bend; there you can honor these men and see and touch what those hands created.

Photo courtesy: East Greenwich Historical Society



Charlie Sweet and Jim Remington deliver a block of ice to the "Doc" Taggart place on Main Street in East Greenwich. Long before appliances provided South County residents with cool treats, it was people like Sweet and Remington who kept things cool in the summer.

The Ice Man

You know, we here in 21st century South County take so many of the joys associated with summertime for granted. We don't give a second thought to the pleasures of an ice cold glass of lemonade on a hot summer day, or a cool slab of watermelon as the perfect end to a family picnic, or a sinfully decadent dish of ice cream on a July evening. But travel back in time 100 years or so ago, and these summertime necessities become luxuries dependent upon the efforts of one the unsung heroes of the 19th century; the iceman. Every community had at least one and here we are taking a peek back in time at the efforts of East Greenwich's own Charlie Sweet and his assistant Jim Remington as they get ready to deliver a block of ice at "Doc" Taggart's place on Main Street. Through Spring, Summer, and Fall, six days a week, from dawn 'til dusk, this scene; the iceman stops, dons his leather apron, grips a great block of ice with a pair of iron ice tongs and then lugs it inside and deposits it in the business half of an icebox, repeated itself over and over again all across South County and beyond. But the iceman's efforts were not confined to the warm weather months, on the contrary, throughout the frigid months of December, January and February the iceman's labors consisted of cutting, harvesting, and packing his icehouses for the warm weather ahead. Here we see a crew working on a pond near Wickford village, but the scene would have been similar at Charlie Sweet's icehouse out on the Bleachery Pond in East Greenwich. This was the critical part of the whole operation, you see, packing an ice house was not only a back-breaking bone-chilling effort, it was an art form, and the true measure of an iceman's abilities, his artistry with his "palette" consisting of a deep cellar, ton upon ton of ice and loads of insulating straw and sawdust, if you will, could be ascertained in the dog days of summer, those late August days when only the best icemen still had those precious blocks of ice left to deliver. So as you sip on that lemonade, bite into that slab of watermelon, or lick that delicious cone of cold vanilla ice cream pause for a moment and remember Charlie Sweet, Jim Remington and all the other icemen who lugged the ice-cold essence of the pleasures of summertime gripped in a pair of iron tongs to the back doors of South County.



Hope Valley

You can certainly sense the optimism that Captain Gardner Nichols and his brothers-in-law Josiah and Joseph Langworthy possessed back in 1835 when they renamed the two adjacent small mill villages of Carpenter Mills and Locustville. They decided to call their community "Hope Valley", as all their hopes and dreams for the future were right here along the banks of the Wood River and the Brushy Brook. The company they created that year, Nichols & Langworthy Machine Works, was not only the source of hope for its owners, but as it was the area's only major employer; it also represented hope for a better future to everyone for miles around.

Nichols & Langworthy Machine Works began by manufacturing textile machinery; the looms, carders, winders, and the like that clacked away in fabric mills all across New England. Guided by the mechanical genius of Gardiner Nichols and the business acumen of the Langworthy boys, they diversified into newspaper printing presses, steam engines and boilers, and even took a stab at the construction of a few 52 foot steam powered yachts; one of which was shown at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. Also, in partnership with Messrs. John Olney and J.P. Arnold, they began the manufacture of textiles in the village – cotton cloth at the mill on the Wood River and woolen goods at their Brushy Brook Mill. By the middle of the 1800's, everyone in town worked for, in one way or another, Nichols & Langworthy. Those were the halcyon days for Hope Valley; full employment, warm hearths and a chicken in every pot. Hope Valley may have been a "one company town", but by gosh what a company it was! As the old song goes, "Seldom is heard a discouraging word." Hope Valley was in its golden age.

Everything changed though on April 13th 1909 with the sound of the word that was universally dreaded in every mill town in New England and beyond; "Fire!! Fire!! Sound the alarm there's a fire at the main building at the mill!!" Everyone in Hope Valley turned out to lend a hand, but to no avail. All they could do was stand by and watch as the inferno, fueled by the oil soaked wooden floors of the decades old buildings, raged out of control. When the flames subsided and the smoke cleared it was obvious to all that nothing would ever be the same in Hope Valley again.

Nearly 100 years later, Hope Valley, slowly, incrementally, has recovered from the effects of that fateful April Day. A stroll through the village though, passing down Mechanic Street, High Street, and Nichols Lane past the site of the big mill and the fine mill owner's homes that surround it can still remind us all of the time when this village had as its heart and soul, the forges and machinery of Nichols and Langworthy Machine Works.



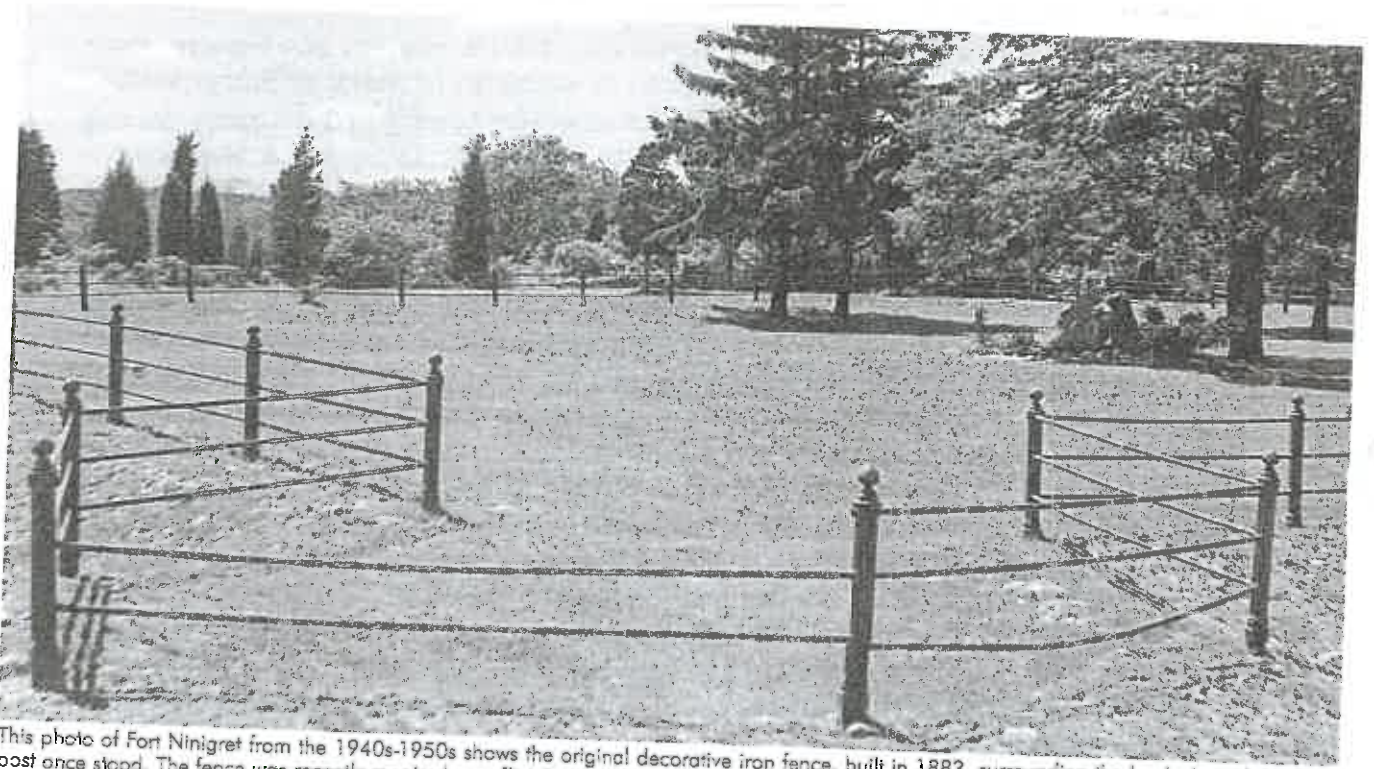
The Neighborhood Guild in South Kingstown was born out of the desire of Augusta Hazard to provide a place for South County women to be self-sufficient. In its early days, the Guild offered classes in areas like textiles and culinary arts and gave women the chance to bond.

Augusta Hazard and the Neighborhood Guild

The word "Guild" is ancient in its usage, and harkens back to a time in Europe and England when craftsmen would meet together in an intimate setting and share the particular secrets of their craft. It's no coincidence that Augusta Garloff Hazard chose this very specific word to describe the place that she created for the women of Peacedale as the 20th century dawned. You see, Augusta's life had prepared her to have a true understanding of the difficulties that lie ahead for women as the new century began. The Neighborhood Guild she envisioned was designed to be a safe haven of sorts, a place where Peacedale's women could band together like the craftsmen of old and educate and support each other in the modern world.

Augusta Garloff was born on August 10th 1850 the daughter of a German Army officer who came to America with his family to escape the hardships of Europe at that juncture in time. Both of her parents perished soon after coming to this country, leaving Augusta as an orphan. Thankfully for Augusta she was adopted by Mr. & Mrs. John Wister of Philadelphia. Mrs. Wister was the sister of Mrs. Rowland Hazard and through this connection the little orphan girl came to spend her summers in Peacedale each year. At the age of 17 she was married to John Newbold Hazard with whom she eventually had eight children. Before her 50th birthday however, Augusta had attended the funeral of her husband and her eldest son. Out of these tragedies came the genesis for the idea of the Neighborhood Guild. Augusta Hazard realized that women needed a place that would provide them the opportunity to keep up with a rapidly changing world. By funding the construction of the Guild she hoped to fulfill that need; to give the women of Peacedale the opportunity to band together and lift each other up. During those early years training was given in the culinary arts, textile work, seam stressing, dressmaking, and furniture making among other things. Crafts that could be turned into trades, skills that might allow a woman to support herself and her family if need be. As the world continued to change, so did the Guild; classes for young people were added, general adult education classes were held here too. Even after Augusta's death in 1917, this work, thanks to a generous endowment, continued. In 1940, the building, the endowment fund, and the hopes and aspirations begun by Augusta Hazard were turned over to the Town. Even to this day Augusta's thoughtful gift to the women of Peacedale continues to provide for her community as the building now houses South Kingstown's recreation department. So, 100 years later, let's stop and remember the orphan girl Augusta Hazard and the legacy she left behind.

Courtesy Charleston Historical Society



This photo of Fort Ninigret from the 1940s-1950s shows the original decorative iron fence, built in 1883, surrounding the land where the trading post once stood. The fence was recently repaired, as officials try to restore the historic spot.

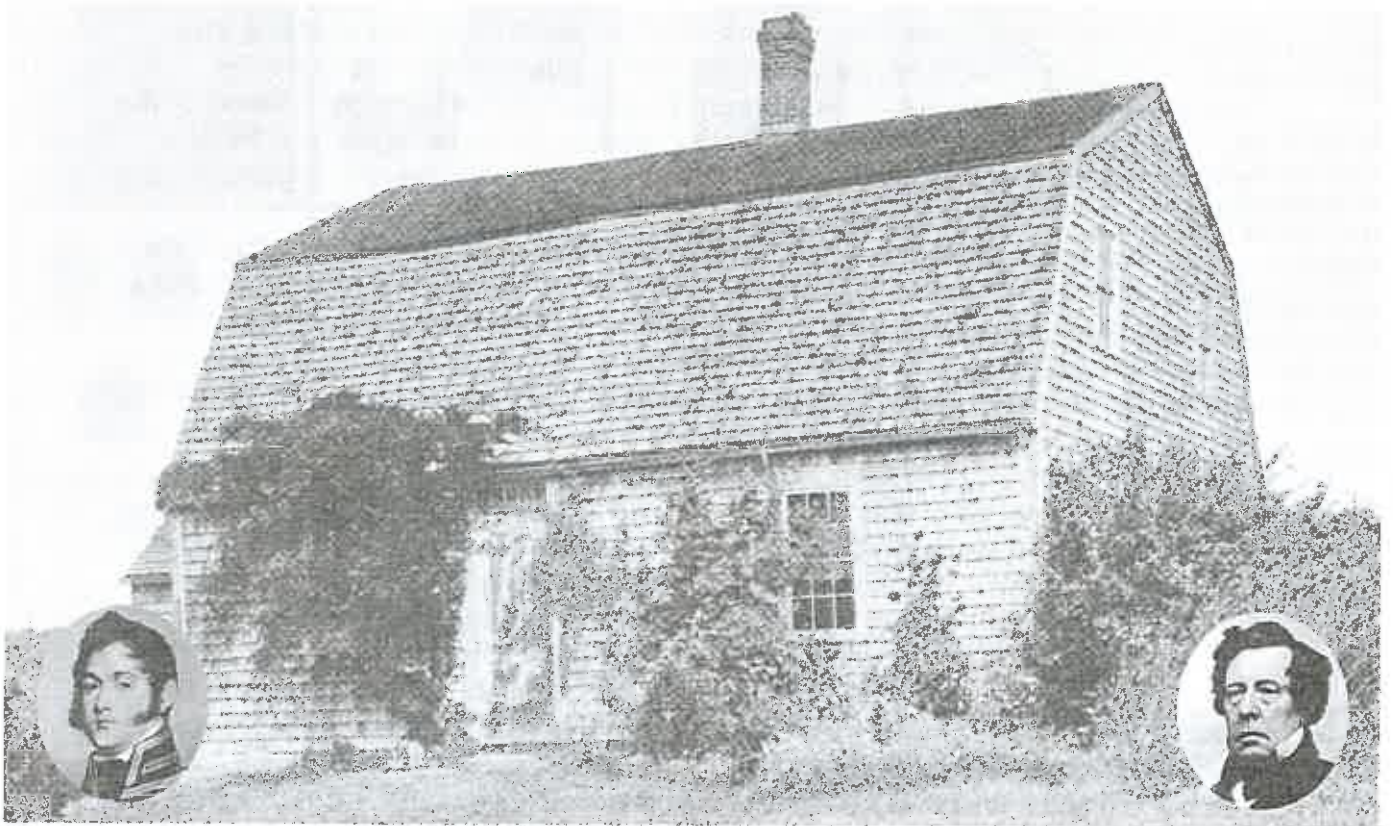
Fort Ninigret – Charlestown

Even the most die-hard of South County Swamp Yankees, if asked to compile a list of New England's ancient Anglo-European sites, would probably miss this one. It's truly one of Washington County's under-appreciated gems in the rough, overlooking Ninigret Pond, it possess both scenic vistas and a history stretching back in time beyond even the days of America's earliest visitors from Europe and England.

Named after Ninigret, the chief sachem of the Niantic Tribe on whose ancestral lands it is located, the rectangular fortification, utilized for trade with the Native Americans, with its three five-sided bastions has captured the imagination of historians and scholars for 150 years. Most attribute Fort Ninigret's construction to the efforts of the Dutch West India Trade Company and attach a date to the structure ranging from 1626 to 1637. Another intriguing competing theory, supported to some degree by archaeological evidence but not in the historic record, does not refute the presence of the Dutch at Fort Ninigret in the early 1600's, but extends the beginnings of Fort Ninigret back to the efforts of Portuguese explorer Miguel Corte Real in the amazing timeframe of 1502.

That archaeological evidence, though not definitive, is indeed compelling. Firstly, in 1922, at an archaeological dig adjacent to the Fort, an open breech type cannon and an elaborate sword, both dating back to the 16th century, were recovered along with four unidentified skeletons. Similar artifacts have been found on the Portuguese controlled Azores Islands in the Atlantic Ocean. Proponents of the "Portuguese Theory" for the Fort feel that this "cinches the deal" and it is hard to argue that the Dutch would utilize a cannon that was nearly 100 years old in the 1630's, to defend their fortified trading post. Additionally fragments of blue pottery, found in a well at the center of the Fort, also may date back to the 16th century. One fragment, found with a scripted initial "R" on it has been attributed by the "Dutch Theory" proponents to have belonged to Isaac de Rasier, the Manhattan based secretary of the Dutch West India Company, "Portuguese Theory" supporters point to Miguel Corte Real as the owner of this dish.

Whatever the case, while archaeologists and historians fight this skirmish, the Charlestown Historical Society has been waging their own battle to get this neglected and under-utilized asset spiffed up and noticed by the public at large. Working with Richard Jacques and Steve Wright at RIDEM Parks & Recreation, and Charlotte Taylor from RI Historic Preservation and Heritage, Charlestown Historical has managed to get the parking lot rebuilt and the circa 1883 decorative iron fence that outlines the ancient fortification repaired and restored. A vandalized historic plaque has been replaced by a new educational kiosk, and interpretive panels designed by a RISD student are in the works as well. Long term plans include some sort of museum within which all of the site's artifacts and mysteries, including the sword and the cannon can someday be displayed and explored. Meanwhile Fort Ninigret itself continues to add to collection. A tree tipped over during a recent windstorm had, embraced in its root ball, a 17th century Dutch kaolin clay pipe. So head on down to Fort Ninigret and explore South County's extraordinary history.



This South Kingstown house was the home of Oliver Hazard Perry (left) and Matthew Calbraith Perry (right), two men who made such names for themselves out in the world that a portion of South Kingstown was eventually named after them.

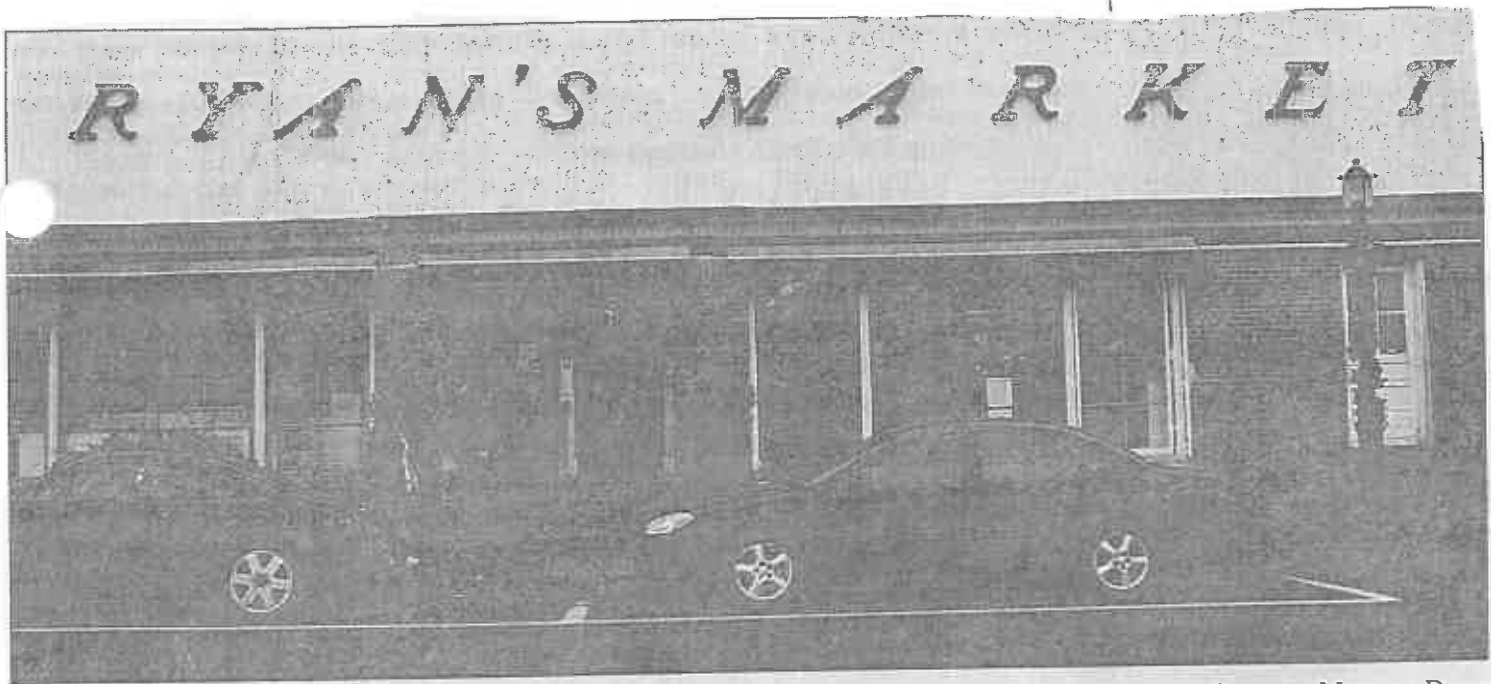
Perryville and the Perry Brothers

The sleepy hamlet of Perryville, one of the many villages that make up South Kingstown, is a place that time has seemingly forgotten. That's a shame really, because the stories of the two most prominent members of the clan for whom this place is named; US Naval heroes, brave explorers, and brothers, Oliver Hazard Perry and Matthew Calbraith Perry ought to rank in the history books of our nation alongside folks like John Paul Jones, Benjamin Franklin and Paul Revere.

Elder brother, Oliver was born in Perryville in August of 1785. After completing his education, he followed the career path of his father Capt. Christopher Perry, and rose rapidly through the ranks of the fledgling US Navy from a midshipman on his father's command, the warship "General Green" in 1801 to the his own command, the US Navy schooner "Revenge" in 1807. By the outbreak of the War of 1812, then Commodore Oliver H. Perry was in charge of the defense of Lake Erie commanding a small fleet of scarcely seaworthy vessels. Immediately realizing he was vastly outgunned by the well-manned large British warfleet under the able command of Commodore Barclay, Perry switched hats as it were, and went from naval commander to master ship-builder; at breakneck speed, he had his men and the local carpenters and craftsmen construct a fleet of vessels more adequate to the task at hand. Perry's brilliant strategic victory in September of 1813 over the vastly superior forces commanded by Barclay was not only a regional turning point in the War, it demoralized the British forces to such a degree that the repercussions caused a general panic back in jolly old England. Perry would from henceforth be known as the Hero of Lake Erie. After the war Perry was sent on an expedition up the Orinoco River in the Venezuelan Republic. In command of the ship "John Adams", Perry contracted Yellow Fever while there. He died there in 1819 and was buried at Port Spain. In 1826, the US sloop of war "Lexington" was sent to retrieve the remains of the "gallant hero of lake Erie" and he was subsequently re-interred with honors back in Newport.

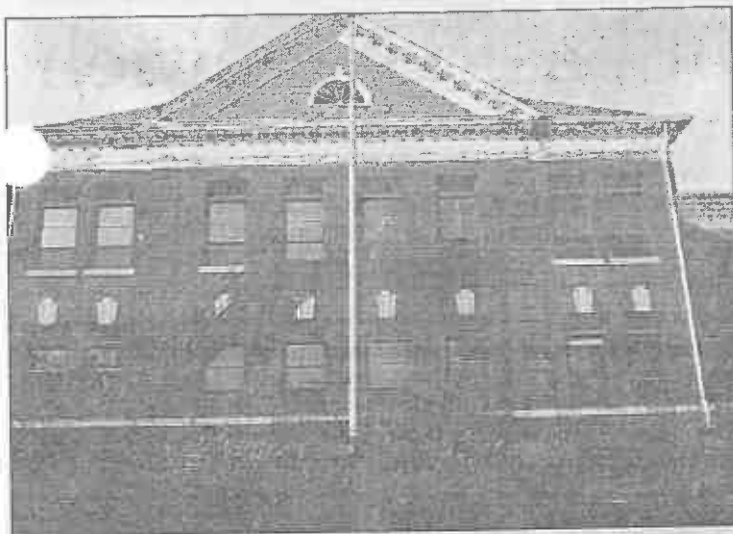
Most certainly his younger brother Matthew was at that memorial service. He too, had followed in their father's footsteps and was a career Navy man. With no wars to fight, Capt. Matthew Perry busied himself battling pirates and protecting American shipping in the West Indies and the Mediterranean. In 1852 then Commodore Perry was given the assignment that would forever define him. The United States government had long desired to establish formal relations with cloistered nation of Japan. Time and time again efforts to do just that were rebuffed and Perry was appointed to try once again. Perry examined the previous failed attempts, and after interviewing whaling captains and sailors who had been castaways on the island nation, it was his opinion that the crux of the problem revolved around the vast cultural differences that existed between the two nations and the caste system extant in Japan. To make himself sound important enough to actually speak to a high ranking Japanese official Perry created his own caste system among his officers and staff conferring upon himself the title of "Lord of the Forbidden Interior". To make a very long story short, after much back and forth diplomacy between various lower ranking Japanese officials, the "Lord of the Forbidden Interior" was finally allowed to meet with the First Counsellor of the Empire Prince Toda of Idsu. These meetings ultimately culminated with the signing of a trade agreement between the two nations on March 31st of 1854.

Commodore Matthew C. Perry, the "Lord of the Forbidden Interior" is now buried in Newport alongside his older brother Commodore Oliver H. Perry, the "Gallant Hero of Lake Erie". Their roots though, extend back to and begin in, a gambrel-roofed farmhouse in a sleepy little South Kingstown hamlet.



PHOTOS: MICHAEL DERR

Ryan's Market in Wickford tops out this year's list of most at-risk historic sites in North Kingstown. The market, which was put up for sale in 2007, has been located here in North Kingstown for more than 120 years. Pictured below (clockwise from top left) are the other four members of the list: No. 2, Wickford Elementary School; No. 3, the "big house" of the Baker Estate; No. 4, the Red Rooster Tavern; and No. 5, the Reynolds Farmhouse on Post Road.



The View From Swamptown

North Kingstown's Five Most Endangered Historic Sites for 2008

Well, for the ninth iteration and counting, it's time, loyal readers for us to take a gander at this cantankerous old Swamp Yankee's choices for our fair town's most at risk historic places.

As has been the case for the last couple of years, I'm pleased to be able to report that there have been some bright spots in our battles to save the places that contribute to the uniqueness of our community. For one, a group of folks with some local roots have purchased the old Lafayette nursing home, once the grand mansion of Franklin Rodman, and plan to restore and reuse this great old building. While the jury is still out on their efforts, we're happy to give them the benefit of the doubt for the time being. Down in "Ye Olde Quaint & Historic", the Wall/Bailey double-house on Main Street has recently received the kind of TLC that will aid it in its journey through its third century. Also up in Quidnessett, a trio of fine homes, the Daniel Gould Allen House, the Nathan Waldron place and the wonderful N. Quidnessett district schoolhouse have all been spruced up and repainted to better reflect their significance to the area. These are just some highlights mind you; here and there all over town, historic structures are being cared for in a manner respectful of their places in our local legacy. But not these five important structures!! So crank your righteous indignation up a notch or two, raise them hackles and pick up the phone, or peck out an e-mail and let the appropriate "powers that be" here in town know that, in North Kingstown, we just won't stand for this sort of thing.

Coming in at Number five on the list is a wonderful home that was on and then off this ignominious tally. Well, the circa 1790 Reynolds Farmhouse, sadly, is back here again. Originally built by John and Sarah Reynolds on the Boston Post Road, this is one of a very few surviving federal style farmhouses in the region. It is specifically cited in the Town's Comprehensive Plan as worthy of protection and was removed from this endangered site list in 2005 when the developer that purchased it promised to restore it as a part of his plan for the property. Well its three years later and nothing has happened. I fear that this extraordinary example of an NK home from centuries ago is caught in what I call "a developer's planned death spiral"; this is when a developer who never had any intention of saving an existing structure leaves it unoccupied and unattended until it falls into such a state of disrepair that they can then justify demolishing it, which is what they wanted to do all along. I could quickly rattle off another half dozen "death spiral" examples here in our fair town and indeed have another on this years list. We in North Kingstown shouldn't stand for this sort of thing; if a developer doesn't keep his word – well then someone ought to hold his feet to the fire a bit!

Number four on the list a building that was once among the State of Rhode Island's premiere "places to see and be seen", the Red Rooster Tavern also on Post Road. Built in 1875 by Samuel Carpenter, a local farmer, it has also been owned by members of the Mason family and the inter-related Gardiner/Hackett clan before it was purchased by Norman LeClair the founder of the Red Rooster legacy. Well, like the simple but attractive Mason family farmhouse that was, until recently, right next door; it's headed down the road to the wrecker's ball as we speak. Now I know just as well as the next guy that development of the Post Road corridor is important to the financial viability of our

town. What I question is not the fact that this is necessary; it's the character of the community that will remain after it's done. Do we really need to turn Post Road in North Kingstown into something like Quaker Lane in Warwick? Historic structures and new development can co-exist successfully; we don't need to erase all of the history resident on the old Boston Post Road to make way for the new vision for this important thoroughfare.

Number three on the list is a returning site from last year, the once grand "big house" of the Baker Estate located on what is now Prospect Avenue. It too, is being inexorably sucked into a developer's death spiral and we need to have something done about this extraordinary example of the craftsmanship of its builders, the Sherman Brothers of Wickford pronto!! One misguided teenager or transient with a book of matches and a bad idea and this fine building will truly be "history"!! Pick up the phone on this one North Kingstown because they just don't make summer cottages like this anymore.

Number two this year is no stranger to this list or to controversy for that matter. I won't "rail on" regarding my feelings about this building as everyone already knows where I stand here. Just let me say that the closing of this school, again in direct contradiction to the Town's Comprehensive Plan, was the straw that broke the camel's back when it comes to catapulting our next entry to the top of this unfortunate tally.

So that brings us to the most at risk site in all of North Kingstown for 2008; and really its more than just a building, even more than just a business, for Ryan's Market is truly an institution here in South County. It has stubbornly held on for 122 years serving the community in ways most folks can't even imagine. We cannot afford to lose Ryan's Market! Wickford will be diminished without it. Yes there definitely are things that "the powers that be" can do to help the cause here; but really the onus for Ryan's Market's future – good or bad falls on all of us. What you can do to help is so simple that it's a no-brainer. Go there and buy something! Enjoy a hot bowl of soup in the winter or the Salad Bar in the summer. Buy a roast or a steak; pick up some of their great produce; maybe you can save a nickel or dime elsewhere on a head of lettuce; but it won't taste as good. Chat with the wonderful staff – pester EJ Ryan if you like; he doesn't mind. What matters is that you go to Ryan's and support it. It truly is the kind of place where everyone knows your name; but only if you come in the door and introduce yourself.



The Daniel Gould Allen House (above) on North Quidnessett Road and the Wickford House (right) both received some sprucing up recently. The Allen House was home to Daniel Allen, who furthered higher education in Rhode Island by backing the East Greenwich Academy in the 1830s. The Wickford House was home to one of the most famous inns in the area thanks to the work of Ellen "Mother" Prentice.



The View From Swamptown

Two Hurrahs, Two Goodbyes

This week we are going to take a break from our historic ramblings to tip the old Swamptown hat to some homeowners that have gone "above and beyond" with their renovation projects here in our fair town. As a matter of fact, if the great high mucky-mucks at the Rhode Island Historic Preservation & Heritage Commission don't acknowledge at least one of these extraordinary renovation projects with an award this upcoming spring; well shame on them! Additionally, we are going to bid a melancholy farewell to two buildings that really deserved a better fate than they got.

Lets start with the glad tidings first, and lets begin in the north end of town with the remarkable restoration of the circa 1862 Daniel Gould Allen House on North Quidnessett Road. Old Daniel Allen is rightly considered to be one of the architects of higher education in Rhode Island. After graduating with honors from Wesleyan University in the early 1830's, Allen returned to Rhode Island and purchased the struggling Kent Academy in East Greenwich. Renaming it the East Greenwich Academy, he guided the institution to the forefront of educational institutions in southern Rhode Island, eventually eclipsing the earlier established Washington Academy in Wickford. Allen sold his school to the National Methodist Episcopal Conference in 1844, but stayed busy in town by serving as the Town Council president, the Superintendent of Schools, a Justice of the Peace, Town Moderator, and a State Legislator. His 1862 home built on the site of an earlier Allen House has , - well, just never looked better.

Down in Wickford, another institution of sorts is getting the TLC that it has long deserved. The Wickford House, built in 1769 by Alexander Huling, owes its fame to the efforts of Mother Prentice, a cook and innkeeper unsurpassed across the centuries. Why, Ellen "Mother" Prentice was so adept at her trade that none other than the Vanderbilt's and the Astor's out of Newport did their level best to get her to "jump ship" and work for them over in their "summer cottages" in the city by the sea. "Nothing doing", said the Wickford lass, and the rest is, as they say, history. Mother Prentice's fine inn, The Wickford House" is getting a well-deserved historically correct sprucing-up thanks to its new owners.

On a sadder note, I bid a somber farewell to two fine historic homes that have been sacrificed to make way for a new St Bernard's Catholic Church. Both of these homes have faced the music before about 100 years ago and were saved by simple Swamp Yankee frugality. The Anthony Turner farmhouse, and the Hugh Duffy Cottage both were once located on the Tower Hill road side of the property, but were moved to the Ten Rod Road and turned into rental properties by local character and lumber dealer Henry Girard. Henry understood the value of a good house and saved the home of Duffy's Tavern founder Hugh Duffy and the original farmer of the property, Anthony Turner because it just made good sense. Unfortunately, good sense has gone out the window in 21st century North Kingstown, as these two fine buildings are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the demolition of perfectly good homes in North Kingstown. More on that when we take our annual "Swamptown gander" at the most at risk properties in North Kingstown a couple of months from now.

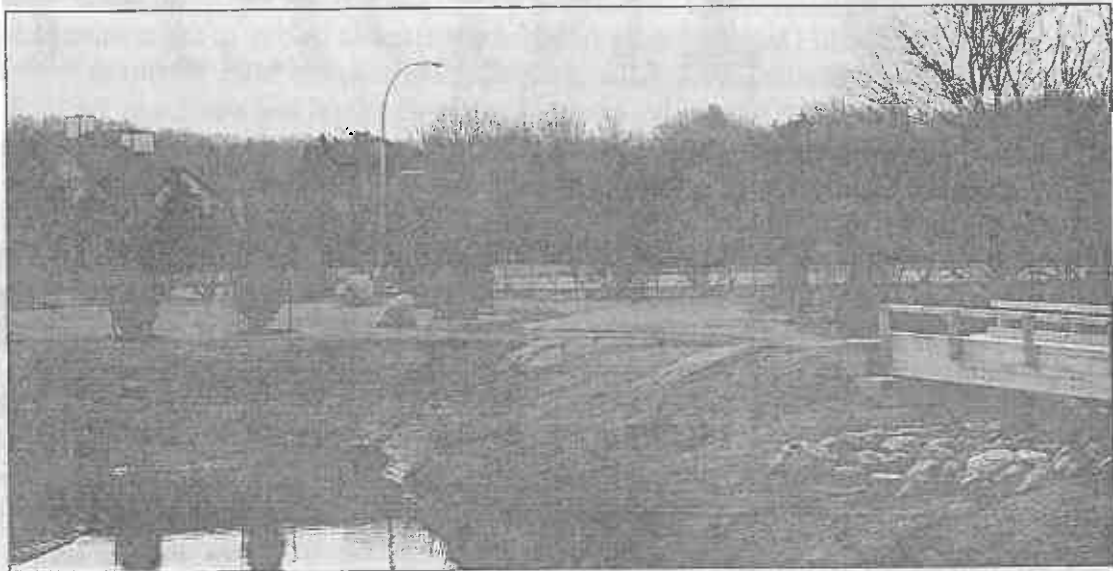


PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

Although the original graves were disturbed with the construction of Fiddlesticks in 1983, the redevelopment of the property now allows 48 members of the Narragansett tribe to be re-interred on a section of the land.

The View From Swamptown

Thoughts on the Narragansett Nation and the Burial Ground at Fiddlesticks

Over the years, I've spent countless hours contemplating the significance of the ancient burial grounds of our fair town. From the great green expanses of Elm Grove and Quidnessett to the tiny quiet places deep in the backwoods of the southwestern corner of our community, I've knelt down in each and every one of them, swept the leaves and grass away from the headstones and done my best to honor the memory of the spirits of those who remain there. All but one that is. You see this one burial ground, perhaps the oldest in all of North Kingstown, ceased to exist in 1983, when the first of forty-eight kindred spirits were unearthed by the unknowing swipe of a dozer's blade out on a patch of abandoned pasture land that was destined to become a mini-golf and driving range. After a painstakingly precise archaeological excavation, graciously agreed to by the site's owner and preformed by professionals under the watchful eyes of the Tribal Historians, these forty-eight members of the "*Nanhigganueuck*" tribe (the name was corrupted into the English version - Narragansett), who had until then spent eternity faced to the southwest from whence their creator spirit *Cautantowwit* had come, were carried away from this their final resting place. Uprooted like the *Paugautemisk*, or great oaks, from which *Cautantowwit* had made them, these people were usurped for golf and games. But they were never forgotten. Now, twenty-four years later, they are to return to where they belong. As a part of the re-development of the old driving range site, an appropriate re-burial site has been prepared, and sometime this spring those 48 will be reunited with the land they once belonged to.

The whole process of this fills my mind with images and ideas of days long past. First and foremost I think of the land, their home – it was their salvation and their undoing you know. For this land that they cherished, was also coveted by the English colonists who came in the 17th century. The Anglo-European concept of landownership was so foreign to the native Narragansett's mindset that it was unassimilatable to them. All Native American's knew that they belonged to the land; they were a part of it and it was a part of them. Why, they were created from it by *Cautantowwit* himself; how could any mere man claim ownership of such a thing? This was behind their willingness to sign what they viewed as treaties but what were actually deeds of transfer, with the colonists. They had no notion of ownership; it meant nothing to them, but in fact became the vehicle of their undoing.

Events from those times play over in my mind's eye as if I was there to witness them. I can imagine the powerful and dignified presences of the last three great sachems of the Narragansetts; Canonicus, Miantonomi, and Canonchet. All my life I've know of these men; read about them, thought about them, conjured them up in my thoughts and dreams. I've understood, as long as I can remember, that I owe my very existence to promises made by them. Their word, given to Roger Williams, that he and his family would never be harmed by the Narragansetts, is the reason I am here; for that protection extended to his infant granddaughter, a child who would grow up to be my grandmother many generations removed. These thoughts always lead me to imagine the very last meeting between Williams and Canonchet on the plains just south of Providence. By that time, the die had been cast, King Philip's War was being played out and both men, wise in their ways, knew too well what the outcome was to be. They stood there together, the old man Williams long past his prime and the strong and powerful Canonchet at his apex, talking little but communicating volumes. In Williams' eyes one could see the vision of dreams unrealized and in Canonchet's the sting of promises made and then

broken. Both men mourned the loss of friendships to be consumed in the maelstrom to come. They both then left and went off to their separate destinies. Ironically, the old statesman would live to tell the tale and the younger sachem would only exist in the telling. The end of the 17th century meant the end of the Narragansett tribal nation as it had existed for millennia before.

I've watched the preparations associated with the reburial of the 48 with interest over these last few months. I'm eager to pay them their due. As I've passed by the site time and time again, I can't help but notice the nearly constant presence of a large red-tailed hawk nearby. He's always either sitting on a lightpole on the side of the Col. Rodman Highway as it passes by or wheeling over head riding a thermal high into the heavens. You know, the cry of the red tail is the most mournful sound in nature. On a still morning, whether it be in 2007 or 1607, it brings chills to any man who stops to listen. When the 48 are reburied there where they belong, when they are laid back down oriented to the southwest, facing *Cautantowwit* again as they should be, that red tail is going to be there and I hope I will too.



Memorial day has a long history in North Kingstown. Above, a parade celebrates Decoration Day, the precursor to Memorial Day, around the turn of the century. Today's Memorial Day Parade takes participants several places, including the Civil War monument in Elm Grove Cemetery, shown here at right soon after its installation, the World War I monument at Updike Park (far right) and the statue in front of Town Hall (below), which once existed as a fountain in the park across the street from the building. Also on the parade route is the newly dedicated Veteran's Park across the street from Town Hall (left), which used to be the home of a train station (bottom right).

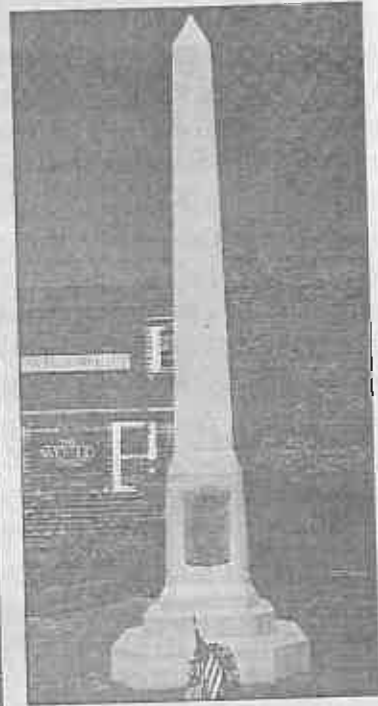
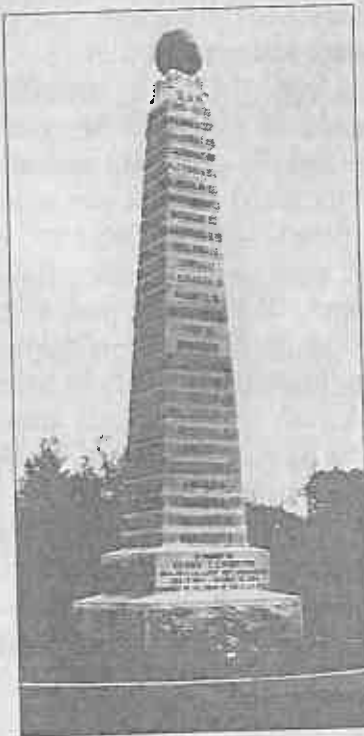


PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR



The View From Swamptown

Some Thoughts on Memorial Day

Memorial Day weekend, an annual milestone of sorts – the unofficial beginning of the summer season. It's a day associated with that first trip to the beach, a barbeque with friends and family, and, oh yeah, that parade business. Loved by children, tolerated by adults ("Mom, Dad, can we go see the parade? Well... I guess so, if you really want to...") there's always that parade and the traffic jam afterwards. Sadly this is the way that much of America looks at Memorial Day. Like so many other holidays, this one's real meaning has been largely forgotten. I've always placed part of the blame for the gentrification of many of our Nation's special days upon the National Holiday Act of 1971; known by most as the Monday Holiday law. By shuffling these special days around to make them into three day weekends, we've marginalized their meaning. These days were specifically set for special reasons. These special days had, and should still have, great meaning and significance to the country. Let's take a Swamptown gander at Memorial Day and try to reconnect with its past.

Memorial Day began in May of 1868, by the official proclamation of General John Logan the national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic; the blue half of the Great War between the blues and the grays, our nation's Civil War. It was, at that time called Decoration Day and its stated purpose was to honor, celebrate, and decorate the graves of the fallen heroes of the Civil War. May 30th was specifically chosen because it was a day where there were generally many flowers available for the decoration of veteran's gravestones. This was, in part, a very solemn holiday as, at that time, the war's effects were still painfully felt across the nation, both north and south had lost so many of their young men; literally no family in America had escaped this extraordinary conflict unscathed, with 620,000 deaths attributed to this war, more than all of America's other wars, from the Revolution to Iraq, **combined**, all were touched deeply by this conflict.

This holiday's connection to the Civil War was so great in fact, that it was not until after the government proclaimed it a day of remembrance for all US war dead and its name was changed to Memorial Day rather than Decoration Day that the southern states would even officially recognize it. This happened just after WWI.

So let's look at some images and places locally associated with Decoration/Memorial Day here in our fair town. First, as you can see from the accompanying photos, the parade was all about Civil War veteran's during the late 19th century. The images of these two parade shots, one taken near the intersection of Brown and Main and one taken near the dock at the end of Main Street, feature those "boys in blue" decked out in their old uniforms to honor their fallen comrades. Memorial Day related sites in town include the present day Updike Park, once known as Veteran's Park, it included the still extant WWI Veteran's Monument and a wooden memorial known as the "Roll of Honor" a sign that listed the Town's WWII veterans. Interestingly enough, the majority of the dead listed on the WWI obelisk were taken not by the Kaiser's men, but by the unspoken third participant in the end of that war; the Great Spanish Influenza Epidemic. Another site associated with this holiday is the new Veteran's Park across the street from the Town Hall. This site was previously occupied by the Train Station shared

by the SeaView Trolley line and the Newport & Wickford Train and also sported the GAR Veteran fountain that now exists as a statue in the Town Hall front yard. The final Memorial Day site in town is appropriately the one at which each and every parade ends. The Civil War Veteran's Monument in Elm Grove Cemetery is a solid connection to the roots of this solemn holiday; it stands there forever reminding us of the sacrifice made by those 620,000 boys wearing blue and grey.

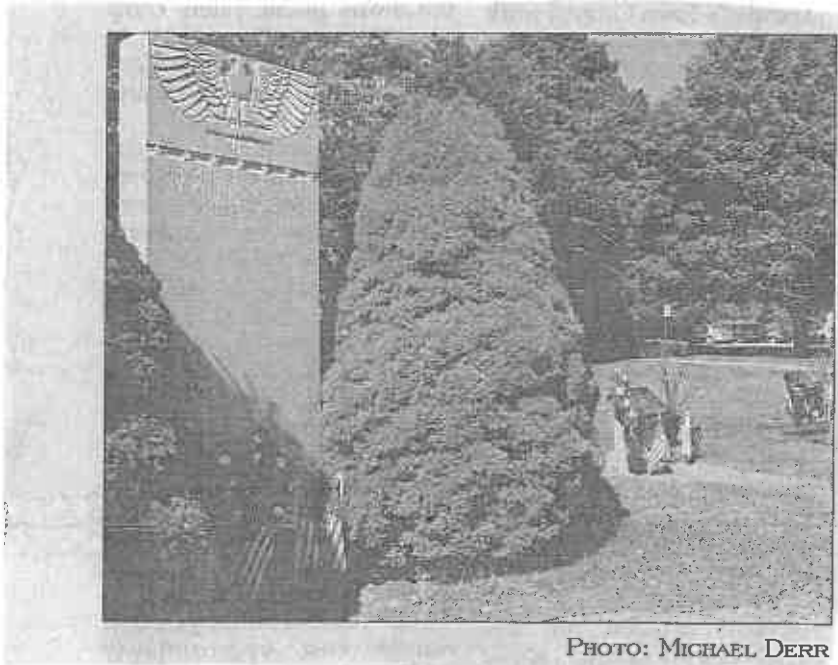


PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR



Opinions on Christopher Columbus have begun to split in recent decades. While some continue to recognize him as the man who discovered the Americas, other evidence suggests that he was responsible for the extortion and deaths of millions of indigenous people.

The View From Swamptown

The Rest of the Story on Christopher Columbus

You know ever year as Columbus Day rolls around, this particular history buff gets a little angry. I expect that might surprise you, as the natural expectation would be that, "Hey this guy likes history so he's got to like Columbus Day, doesn't he?" Wrong! You see history is all about the truth and the Columbus story that we were all indoctrinated into as youngsters in the first and second grade is full of lies, half truths, and omitted facts that change every thing. We all learned the myth of Columbus, as the truth is really not all that rosy.

You know what irks me most is not the outright mistruths like, "Columbus was the first person to discover the new world." For he most certainly was not, we know with good probability that other folks from various parts of the world, particularly the Norse regions came and left well before "1492, when Columbus sailed the ocean blue", and anyway what does it say to the ancestors of the countless native Americans from Alaska all the way down to Tierra del Fuego when we say Columbus was the first person here. The whole flat earth story is hogwash as well; by the time 1492 rolled around, this was not the common belief among educated people. I could go on and on about the lies and mistruths in the myth we were taught; heck I can even tell you where they all came from, a fictionalized account written by American writer Washington Irving in 1828 is the source for the vast majority of the misinformation our schools all pass on as fact today, but they are not what really bother me. What bothers me the most is what has completely been left out. The other part of the Columbus tale, the ugly part that no one likes to hear is, in fact the part that has had the largest impact upon the Americas, and as I firmly belief history is all about truth, this part of the story, ugly or not, needs to be told.

This part really begins with Columbus' return to the New World in 1493. He came back much more well equipped; an expedition of 17 ships and 1500 men, cannons, crossbows, guns, even cavalry and trained attack dogs. Once tied up in safe harbor off of Hispaniola (Haiti/Dominican Republic) he sent an official party ashore and has the standard Spanish speech of dominion read to the native elders, which they obviously could even understand as they did not speak Spanish, this speech was known as "The Requirement";

I implore you to recognize the Church as a lady and in the name of the Pope take the King as Lord of this land and obey his mandates. If you do not do it, I tell you that with the help of God I will enter powerfully against you all. I will make war everywhere and every way that I can. I will subject you to the yoke and obedience to the Church and to his majesty. I will take your women and children and make them slaves. The deaths and injuries that you will receive from here on will be your own fault and not that of his majesty nor the gentlemen that accompany me.

This was done primarily to assuage the collective European conscience, hey they offered the natives a chance to convert and obey and they didn't take advantage of this beneficence. This was when the ugliness began.

Columbus was there for, what else, but gold and he set up a tribute system among the native Arawaks to begin collecting it. He made certain that all of the Arawaks “promised” to pay tribute to the Catholic Sovereign every three months in either a prearranged portion of gold or 25 pounds of spun cotton. When a native delivered his tribute he was given a brass token he was required to wear around his neck; this token assured his survival for the next three month period. Arawaks without tokens were subject to the whims of Columbus and his Spanish crew and soldiers. They could be hunted for sport or just killed to provide dog food for the trained attack dogs that the conquering “heroes” had brought with them. These dogs were used for control purposes, the local natives had never seen anything like them and feared them greatly. If a native was unable to fulfill his tribute by the time his token had expired he was punished by having his non-dominant hand chopped off. Second offenses were punishable by death. Minor infractions against Spanish control were also punished by the decapitation of a hand or perhaps a nose if it was deemed appropriate. All the while Columbus was gathering up his major Hispaniola export, slaves and shipping them back home and elsewhere within the Spanish Empire. As a matter of fact, Christopher Columbus is thought to be the single most prolific slave trader in the history of the western world.

Beyond these acts of barbarism, Columbus and the Spaniards destroyed the native ecosystem and culture. Working in gold mines or cotton fields rather than farming for food led to widespread malnutrition and death. The introduction of non-native livestock and rabbits reeked havoc upon the local ecology. Between these factors, the introduction of European diseases to the local population, removal for slave purposes, and the torment that they underwent, the Arawak nation was in freefall. Mass suicides were common place as devastated natives could take no more. Birth rates dropped to near zero with the few infants brought into the world by Arawak mothers being killed at birth rather than live the life of their parents. Pre-Columbian estimates of population on the giant island range as high as 8 million people. By 1516, just 24 years later, the official tally of remaining Arawaks was 12,000. By 1555, no Arawaks remained of the original 8 million. This is the Americas unspoken genocide. This is why Columbus Day ticks me off.

So what can we really say about Christopher Columbus? What superlatives does he warrant? Already we see he has won the honor of number one slave trader in the Americas, and he did introduce the European world to the phenomena of outright taking of land, wealth, and labor from indigenous peoples setting the stage for what was to come not only in South and Central America but North America as well. And, oh yeah, he was the first Italian person (although historians are not even sure of that fact) to come to the new world at the behest of the Spanish government. So he is certainly worth remembering that’s for sure.

Amazingly enough these facts have been out there for centuries and have been overlooked and ignored by the majority eager to perpetuate the feel good Columbus myth begun by Washington Irving in 1828. As a matter of fact another prominent writer H. G. Wells used the Columbus “truth” as the basis for famous science fiction classic “The War of the Worlds”. The story is really an allegory for what occurred in Hispaniola back in 1492 with the Spaniards and good old Christopher Columbus playing the part of the aliens and the Arawaks filling in as the British commoners (or the New Jersey folks in the Orson Welles version).

So now we all know the not so rosy truth about the guy who sailed the ocean blue in good old 1492. We also know just a little bit about the long-standing animosities that exist between the nations of the Carribbean and the white world that came here and changed everything. Next month lets look at the real story behind the myth that is Thanksgiving and see how that plays into the relations between the remnants of the United States Native Americans and the rest of us. For more on the real intriguing story of Columbus, check out the book "Lies My Teacher Told Me" by University of Vermont History Professor James Loewen.



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

While many think of the Pilgrims and Native Americans sitting down together during the Thanksgiving holiday, the actual relationship between the two groups was a contentious one.

The View From Swamptown

Reflections on Thanksgiving

As promised last month, this week, we are going to examine the truth behind the traditions surrounding Thanksgiving. Now I know what some of you are thinking; "First he tears into Columbus Day and now he's set his sights on another traditional American holiday!" And, while I'll admit you are correct, I really do not understand why we celebrate Columbus Day, I truly do however, appreciate the concepts behind Thanksgiving. It's a holiday centered around fellowship and family, and in its purest sense, is an opportunity for us to take the time to contemplate the bounty that surrounds us; to give thanks for what we have, who we are, and the folks we share our life's with. So, you see, I support Thanksgiving and what it stands for; it is the context in which we celebrate it that I am troubled by - that troubling context is the Pilgrim myth.

First, before we explore that myth, let's take a look at the roots of Thanksgiving as a national holiday. It was proclaimed such in 1863 by President Abraham Lincoln. You see during the Civil War, Lincoln and his administration realized, in order to survive the conflagration it was involved in, the Country needed all the patriotic pomp and circumstance it could muster. This was the roots of the holiday; it was based upon a set of timeless traditions begun by the Native Americans of the greater Algonquin nation and the Pilgrims had nothing to do with it; as a matter of fact, they were not even a part of the tradition until the 1890's; why, the term "pilgrim" was not even used to describe these Puritans from Massachusetts until the middle of the 1870's. So let's examine those Puritan folks and the relationship that they had with the Wampanoag people; after all, this relationship does form the basis of the pilgrim myth.

To do this though, to really understand the dynamic that existed between them, we really do have to go back a bit earlier than the traditional 1620 date that we all learned in grade school. You see, it was 1617 when regular contact between the Wampanoag's and Anglo-Europeans, in the form of British and French cod fisherman (hence the name Cape Cod), really began. After filling their hulls with codfish, these folks would go ashore and lay in a supply of firewood and fresh water (and heck maybe even a native-American child or two that they could sell as a slave back home) for the voyage back across the North Atlantic. While there, they left something behind as well, a devastating plague, thought to be either bubonic or a very virulent form of smallpox. During those three years between this contact and the arrival of the "pilgrims" in 1620, nearly 90% of the Wampanoag population was wiped out. These people had never experienced anything even remotely like this, and overwhelmed by the horrors around them, most of the few survivors from the villages affected, fled, leaving whole communities of corpses behind them. In doing so, they unwittingly spread the plague throughout the entire Wampanoag community. This was the world into which the Pilgrims entered in 1620. Not only was the whole of what would become eastern Massachusetts a ghost town, they, as Anglo-Europeans, came with natural immunities which allowed them to move into the empty villages and already planted cornfields without consequence or concern. Additionally, the remnants of the Wampanoags led by Massassoit, fearful of the incredible imbalance that now existed between themselves and the powerful

Narragansetts to their west, were ready to aid them; hopeful of protection in a world, that for them, had changed forever. During the next 15 years or so, additional epidemics, none as devastating as the plague that destroyed the Wampanoag people and their culture, swept across New England and New York affected to greater and lesser degrees, all of the native populations of the time.

And how did these "God-fearing" souls, the Puritans of the Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, and Connecticut colonies react to the devastation playing out before them? Did they aid their fellow man, did they offer comfort and assistance? No on the contrary, they rejoiced and praised God for this blessing. John Winthrop the governor of the Massachusetts Bay colony called it "miraculous" and wrote that "God hath so pursued them, as for 300 miles space the greatest part of them are swept away by the small pox . . . so God hath thereby cleared our title to this land." Puritan minister Increase Mather said "God ended the native controversy by sending the small pox among the Indians." William Bradford of Plymouth said "it pleased God to afflict these Indians with such a deadly sickness that out of each thousand, over 950 of them died, and many lay rotting above ground for want of a burial.." Even King James himself gave thanks to "almighty God in his great goodness and bounty towards us for sending this wonderful plague among the savages." This is the "Thanks Giving" that went on in the puritan world of the 17th century.

Of course, this is only a small, albeit the first, piece in the puzzle that makes up the history of Anglo-European conquest of North America. Most historians and anthropologists suggest that the pre-contact (prior to 1617) population of native peoples in what would become the US and Canada was between 10 and 14 million souls. By 1840 only 2 million were thought to remain and by 1880 due to plagues, epidemics, illness, warfare and deculturation, only 250,000 were left. These numbers, when contemplated, are staggering. In 250 years or so, "We the people" eliminated an entire inter-related interconnected race of other people and took from them; everything.

In 1970, on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of that "mythic thanksgiving origin" the government of Massachusetts approached the remnants of the Wampanoag tribe and asked them to select a speaker for the celebration. Frank James, of the tribe, drew the honor, but first had to show a copy of his comments to the folks in charge of the Plymouth Mass., based event. When they read what he had written they refused to allow the tribe to speak. James wrote;

"Today is a time of celebrating for you . . . but it is not a time of celebrating for me. It is with a heavy heart that I look back upon what happened to my people . . . the Pilgrims had hardly explored the shores of Cape Cod four days before they had robbed the graves of my ancestors, and stolen their corn and beans . . . before 50 years were to pass, the Wampanoags and other Indians living near the settlers would be killed by their guns or dead from diseases that we caught from them . . . Although our way of life is almost gone and our language is almost extinct, we the Wampanoags still walk the land of Massachusetts. What has happened before cannot be changed, but today we work towards a better America, a more Indian America where people and nature once again are important."

No ACLU representative concerned about Frank James' civil rights, joined the fray, no indignant federal officials stood up for the Wampanoags and this latest injustice. Everyone involved was solely concerned about preserving the "myth" – the myth involving a group of grateful Indians sharing in the bounty that God had given to a band of our pious and God-fearing Pilgrim forefathers. Something for all of us to contemplate before we carve that turkey this year.

I, Alford Phelps D. Johnson of Warren in the state of Rhode Island, on oath do testify & say, that I am agent of the Bark Hector, that sailed from this place about July 5th 1850, that Nathaniel Gardner a man of color went from this place in said vessel that said vessel returned but said Nathaniel did not return in the vessel but was reported by the Master of said vessel to have died at Zanzibar when about one year out. Capt. Whiston Cole was Master of said Bark Hector, he is now absent, and all the officers and crew of that vessel, were now absent from this place, & the log book of that voyage I am unable to find, but from the report of the Capt. and officers & crew of said vessel there is no doubt that said Nathaniel Gardner died at said Zanzibar about July 1851 and that I have no doubt of that fact.

Warren September 8th 1855

sworn to before me Sept 8th 1855

Josiah Randall Justice of the Peace

A. D. Johnson Agent
of Bark Hector

Relatives of Nathaniel Union Gardner were not notified of his death until three years after the fact, when they received this sworn affidavit from a ship's agent in Warren. Nathaniel was serving on the Hector off the coast of Zanzibar in 1851 when he died.

The View From Swamptown

The Black Gardiners

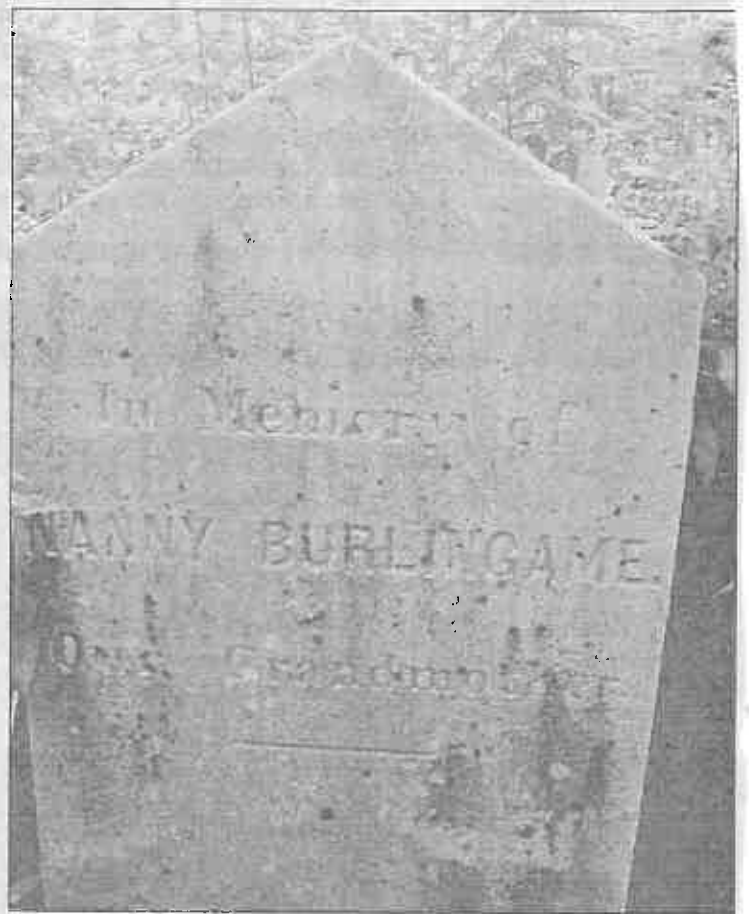
Back in the late 18th and the first half of the 19th century, the largest clan of all, in our fair town, was the Gardiner family. There were numerous Gardiners living in every village that made up North Kingstown in that timeframe, and this large inter-related clan was an integral part of the community for decade upon decade. The truth of this can be found today in the cemeteries of North Kingstown; from the tiniest little historic cemetery lost in the deep woods to the great burying grounds at Elm Grove and Quidnessett, literally hundreds of Gardiners still rest eternal here in the town they called their own. Gardiners today have cause to be proud of those that went before them; those folks had a hand in making North Kingstown, their ranks contain important political figures, revered judges, and master builders that left their mark on the town. One branch of the Gardiner clan though, has largely been forgotten; no grand memorial stones mark their gravesites, little has been written regarding their accomplishments – or the trials and tribulations of their days on this earth. These folks are the descendants of the original slaves that worked on the six farms that made up the vast dairy empire of Judge Ezekial Gardiner and his sons; the good judge was a member of the Narragansett Planter elite and his enormous agricultural enterprise churned out literally thousands of pounds of cheese each year and all this required the efforts of numerous slaves. These folks upon their manumission took the last name of their master. This is the “roots” of the black Gardiners and from time to time this spring and summer we are going to delve into their lives; by remembering them we will bring them back to life, if only for a moment. Today we will examine what we know about two of these folks, sailors both – Tom Gardiner and Nathaniel Onion Gardiner.

Thomas Gardiner was born sometime around 1808, the son of 15-year-old Dorcas Gardiner and a yet unknown father. Dorcas herself was born to Richard and Sarah (Onion) Gardiner and was the cousin of Thankful (Onion) Union a woman whose life we profiled a number of years ago. I know little about Tom’s early days, only that he chose a life as a seaman and that he was very successful at it. At the moment of his untimely death on the Wickford-based Grand Banks cod fishing schooner “Metamora” a 63 foot vessel owned by Wickford businessmen Eliphalet Young, Pardon T. Hammond, and William Hammond, and captained by another Wickfordite George Hammond, old Tom Gardiner had amassed quite a little nest egg. The 46 year old left a home in which he lived with Dorcas, in addition to monies in a number of banks with the 2008 inflation adjusted cash equivalent of \$98,000. Old Tom Gardiner was buried at sea in the “Bay of Islands” off of Newfoundland. His mother Dorcas, who had passed away unbeknownst to him while he was off fishing for cod, was buried under a gravestone paid out of Tom’s estate.



The half-buried gravestone of Dorcas Gardiner can be found in the potter's field at Elm Grove Cemetery in North Kingstown. Dorcas, a descendent of slaves that worked dairy farms in town, was the mother of Thomas Gardiner, who died at sea aboard the Wickford-based *Metamora*.

Nathaniel Onion Gardiner was born to Margaret Onion around the same time as Tom and was the brother of the aforementioned Thankful. Nat's father, whose exact identity is unknown, was a Gardiner and upon reaching adulthood, Nat Onion changed his name to Nat Gardiner. He too, chose a life at sea and like his cousin Tom, the sea took him when it wished. According to Warren, Rhode Island ship's agent Randolpheus Johnson, Nathaniel Gardiner died at sea onboard the 89 foot bark "Hector" off the coast of Zanzibar; an island nation on the eastern coast of Africa in July of 1851. He was buried there at sea by his Captain, Wheaton Cole. His family back in Wickford was not informed of his death for three full years until the "Hector" finally returned to Warren, its homeport. Later this Spring, we'll take another Swamptown gander at the life and times of the Black Gardiners.



Small signs show the way to two separate burial sites for the Burlingame family. Both sites are near what is now the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum. Although many of the graves are adorned with simple fieldstone grave markers, Anna Burlingame will be forever known as "Nanny," after the family took the unusual step of engraving her name.



The View From Swamptown

The Burlingame Family burial Grounds

This week, as a part of our continuing efforts to examine the historic cemeteries of our fair town, we are going to contemplate the lives of the ancient Burlingame clan as we visit the final resting places of two inter-related Burlingame families.

The first of these burying places is located on the grounds of the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace. You see the head of this particular family was Peter Burlingame, the miller at the Grist Mill located next door to the Birthplace. Peter, born in 1727 in what is now Cranston, RI, came here with his wife Patience (Potter) and his family, most likely around the same time that Gilbert Stuart's family moved in as well, to run the grist mill for its owner, Dr. Thomas Moffatt of Newport. Unlike the Stuart's, the Burlingame's stuck around at what we now call Carr Pond, and continued milling corn through the Revolutionary War and beyond. As a matter of fact the Burlingames eventually moved into the Birthplace House when, in 1783, they became the lawful owners of the site which had been confiscated from Moffatt, a Tory's Tory, a man who had been burned in effigy in front of the Newport State House and had fled to England. Its ownership had been transferred to local War hero Colonel Archibald Crary, who had in turn sold it to the miller Peter Burlingame on the very same day he took possession of it.

Peter and Patience's youngest daughter, Sarah, married Caleb Cranston (Now you just knew there was going to be a Cranston connection, didn't you?) and the birthplace site and the grist mill remained in shared Cranston/Burlingame ownership until at least 1813. Most certainly Peter and Patience, along with any of their children that had died young and/or unmarried are buried here under the shade of the Birthplace their final resting places noted only by simple fieldstone grave markers.

The second Burlingame family cemetery is located just a short hike away at the western end of Gilbert Stuart Road near where the farm of Peter and Patience's eldest adult son Nehemiah was located. Nehemiah settled here with his wife Anna (Philbrooks) and their children including son Henry and his wife Nancy and their son William who are also buried here in the burying ground located along the roadside near the Tower Hill Road intersection. Nehemiah, who most certainly brought his grain down to the Gristmill run by his father and brother-in-law, is also buried like the miller, Peter, under a simple unmarked fieldstone as are a number of other Burlingame relations. But his wife Anna, who lived to be more than ninety-years-old, and was know by her family as Nanny Burlingame will be forever memorialized by the gravestone shown in the accompanying photograph; a telling testimony, in an age when every penny counted and a gravestone was an extravagance, regarding someone who must have been very special to those who knew her.



Mill owner Daniel Hiscox erected the above monument for his wife and infant son after their deaths in 1854. Hiscox is buried with them at the small family plot, which is located close to their still-standing home near the intersection of Hamilton-Allenton Road and Boston Neck Road.

PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

The View From Swamptown

The Hiscox Cemetery

This week, as a part of our continuing efforts to chronicle the many historic cemeteries in our fair town, we are going to take look at the family plot of one of the mid-19th century's most prominent residents of our fair town; mill owner Daniel C. Hiscox.

Daniel Hiscox purchased the Silver Spring Mill from Robert Rodman in 1845 and a year or so later picked up the Narragansett Mill (formerly located near the location of Razez's Motorcycles). Hiscox's entry into the elite class of southern Rhode Island mill owners had been eased by his marriage to Robert Rodman's cousin Louisa Rodman of South Kingstown. Louisa was also the little sister of General Isaac Pease Rodman, also of South Kingstown.

Daniel and Louisa lived at the corner of what is now Hamilton-Allenton and Boston Neck Roads in the fine Hiscox Estate House still extant and shown here in the accompanying photograph. Life went well for the newlyweds, in 1849 Louisa gave birth to a daughter Susan and by late 1853 she was again with child. Tragedy struck though, in May of 1854, when Louisa died giving birth to her second child Daniel Jr. The grim reaper came again to the Hiscox Estate in August and left with the mill owner's infant son. The grief stricken husband and father had the exceptionally beautiful monument placed at the family graveyard to commemorate the short lives of his wife and infant son. Daniel Hiscox expressed his awesome sense of loss through the selection of a verse for his wife's gravestone; "I shall go to her, but she shall not return to me. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God". This verse was indeed prophetic, as only seven years after the death of his beloved Louisa, Daniel C. Hiscox joined her here for eternity. He was 55 years old and left his daughter Susan an orphan at 12 years old. The story of Susan Hiscox, the 12-year-old mill owner was featured in an earlier column.

The Hiscox family plot can be found off of Hamilton-Allenton Road, just a few hundred feet west of its Boston Neck Road intersection. Although most of the earlier Hiscox's were removed and reburied at Elm Grove Cemetery in the related Crombe/Cole section, Daniel, Louisa and their infant son still share this quiet little plot together.



The final resting place of members of the Fones and Brown families lies beside the Amtrak train tracks in North Kingstown. Work crews recently erected a large, concrete retaining wall to protect the cemetery from erosion.



Daniel Fones' gravestone contains a poetic epitaph, printed in the accompanying column.



Vandals likely broke the headstone of Catherine (Austin) Fones.

The View From Swamptown

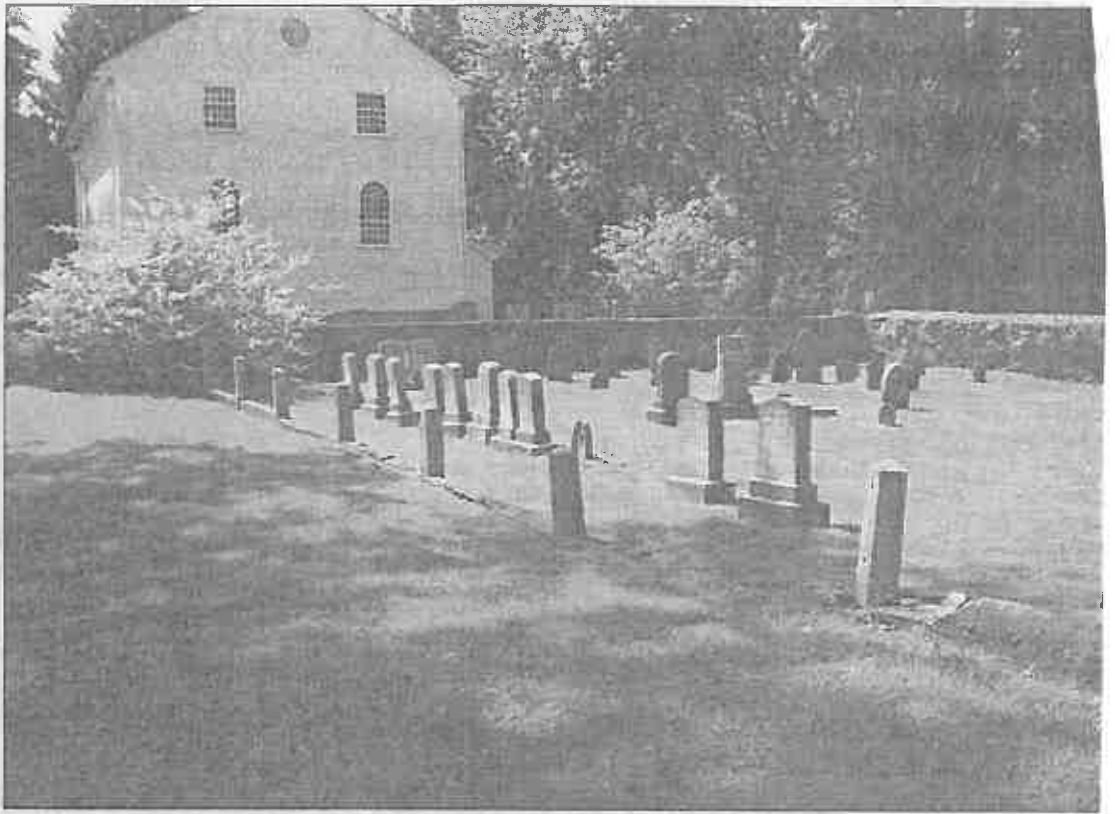
The Captain Daniel Fones Graveyard

Daniel Fones' grave is awash in cinders. Kneel down next to his gravestone and your knees turn black. The "Acela" high speed commuter train screams by on a regular basis, day in and day out, much too fast for anyone on the comfortable train to read the message left there by the Fones clan nearly two hundred years before. There was a time, not long ago, when the accumulated effort of decades upon decades of rain and erosion nearly caused Daniel's grave and its content to spill out onto the tracks. Amtrak work crews recently solved that problem by sealing the old cemetery in place with the addition of an enormous concrete retaining wall. I often wonder whether any of them ever kneeled down in the cinders to read Daniel's epitaph; his message to those left behind and those yet to come. Vandals and their ilk come here as well, they've damaged and desecrated this hallowed place, broken the headstone at the Revolutionary War veteran's wife's grave' and left their beer bottles and litter behind; I'm sure they never stopped and hunched down among the cinders to see what Daniel Fones had to say.

Daniel Fones, who served as a private in the War for Independence, was made a Captain after the Revolutionary War while serving in the Rhode Island State militia. He is buried here next to the tracks just north of Austin Road along with his wife Catherine (Austin) Fones, their daughter Phebe Ann Brown and her husband Samuel and another daughter Sally, who died as a teenager. Also buried here are Sam and Phebe's infant son John and at least one or two other individuals.

You are probably wondering what the Fones & Browns decided to have carved upon the good Captain's gravestone. I'll include it here, but I heartily recommend kneeling down in the cinders and reading it for yourself. Go ahead and get your knees dirty.

*Behold and see as you pass by
As you are now so once was I
And as I am now so you must be
So prepare for death and follow me.*



A stroll through the burial grounds near the Old Narragansett Church (above) reveals many of the movers and shakers of Wickford's early days. At the top left is the intricately carved gravestone of Elizabeth Bigelow Updike, a member of the village's founding family and, below that, are the graves of Wilkins and Abbey Updike. At right is the grave of Frederick Hesley Beiden, the tenth bishop of Rhode Island, and his wife.



The View From Swamptown

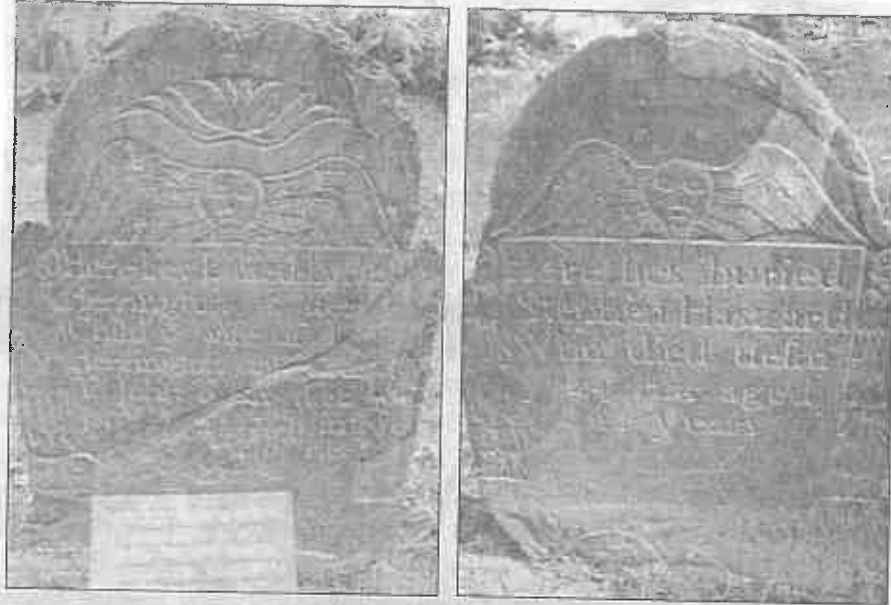
The Cemeteries at the Old Narragansett Church

This week, as a part of our continuing effort to examine all of the historic cemeteries in our fair town, we are going to take a look at the burial grounds at the Old Narragansett Church, located on Church Lane in Wickford. I use the plural term here, because there are, in actuality, three separate historic cemeteries located adjacent to this old Anglican Meetinghouse; the Old Narragansett Church burial ground, the Eliphalet Young family plot, and the large burying place of the inter-related Wightman, Weeden, and Fowler families. These connected graveyards are not only sacred ground in and of themselves, collectively they tell the tale of much of the history of the village of Wickford.

You see, here like no where else, the story of Wickford is laid out for anyone who cares to take the time to stroll the grounds and read the stones. From the village's founding family the Updikes of the 18th and 19th century, right up to the beloved Canon and Mrs. Belden of the 20th century and many folks in between, a great number of the people who made Wickford what it is today share this hallowed space. Here rest men who made their living on the sea like Captains John McLaughling (an early spelling of the present-day McLaughlin name) and Richard Updike as well as the two Christopher Fowlers- one who died at 23 and the other at 24, both of whom were claimed by the sea and memorialized by Benjamin Fowler, who called himself the brother of the former and the father of the latter. Businessmen and shopkeepers too, can be found here, like Eliphalet Young, the village's first apothecary (pharmacist), a man who was also a major investor in the maritime trade of the region as well. He was ironically replaced upon his death by Elwin "doc" Young, another beloved pharmacist in the village who was not related to "Eli" Young as far as I can tell. There's even a local historian in repose in the Church burial ground; Frances Burge Griswold, the author of "Wickford, the Venice of America" rests here alongside the folks she helped to memorialize in her writings.

Some extraordinary gravestones can be found here too. Of particular note is the tabletop stone of Elizabeth Bigelow Updike. It is ornately carved and shaped like the top of an ancient sarcophagus. There are also numerous fine slate and granite stones of the 18th and 19th century here as well.

This is a wonderful place for peaceful reflection on what our fair town's signature village is all about. Stop by and commune with the ages on a fine late spring morning. You won't be disappointed.



The headstones of John Fones' married daughter, Lydea Herrington, and son-in-law, Stephen Haszard, feature intricately carved winged skulls, which was typical for late 17th- and early 18th-century gravestones. Fones' marker, on the other hand, features a winged cherub.



John Fones was one of the first settlers in North Kingstown. The earliest reference to his life here comes from a 1709 General Assembly document that outlines his purchase of some of the vacant lands in Narragansett County.

The View From Swamptown

The John Fones Family Burying Ground

Back in the woods off of Congdon Hill Road lies one of North Kingstown's oldest historic cemeteries; the final resting place of some of our fair town's first settlers, the 17th century members of the extended family of John Fones of Swamptown. As part of our continuing efforts to examine each and every one of these historic graveyards, today we are going to pause for a moment and remember these fine folks and the lives they led.

The earliest record of this John Fones is the 1709 decree by the General Assembly of the Colony of Rhode Island to sell a portion of the vacant lands in the Narragansett Country to those who have already settled upon them. One of those large parcels, 792 acres more or less, was divvied up among "Beriah Brown, John Fones and others." This same John Fones is buried here along side his wife and family members.

As you can see by the accompanying photographs, this lot contains three of the finest early John Stevens shop headstones ever carved in Newport. The headstones of married daughter Lydea Herrington and son-in-law Stephen Haszard feature the very early winged skull image so typical of late 17th and early 18th century grave markers, while the later stone of patriarch John Fones himself includes the "softer" image of a winged cherub's head. Also found here are the remains of the stone of John's wife Lydia which would have been similar to his, and perhaps a dozen or so graves marked only by simple fieldstones, including that of Lydea Herrington's infant daughter who died with her mother, as well as Susannah Haszard, two year old daughter of Stephen and his wife Margaret (Fones) Haszard.

Job Herrington, husband of Lydea, remarried a year or so after her death to local lass Sarah Tillinghast and took her and his children away from Swamptown. It's easy to understand why. This was, in the early 18th century, an unforgiving place far from anything we might call civilization, life here in a time before there was a Wickford or a Lafayette, was hard and the memories of Lydea and his daughter certainly vexed him considerably. Knowing this makes it even easier for me to admire those that stayed on here and eked out a living in the hard-scrabble swamps of this region that would one day be known as Swamptown and Scrabbletown. To paraphrase my predecessor in the recording of local history George Gardiner, "Here men had to commit burglary upon nature, they had to steal their existence from the land which did not give it up without a struggle."



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL DERR

Potter and Alcella Sweet, resided in this quaint farmhouse (above) located at the intersection of Stony Lane and Old Baptist Road in North Kingstown during the 1800s. Their family plot at the historical cemetery on Old Baptist Road (right) hints at their tragic lives, during which many of their 10 children died.



The View From Swamptown

The Potter Sweet Family Burial Ground

Some times, I've got to say, my heart just aches for some of the folks that I spend my time researching over, pondering upon, and thinking about. Such is the case with the extraordinarily difficult life and times of Potter and Alcelia Sweet. I've gotten to know them as I've spent my time, glancing over their shoulder as it were; peeking into their life's as a part of our ongoing efforts to examine each and every historic cemetery located within the confines of our fair town. Starting off, as I always do, with the information included in my friend Althea MacAleer's wonderful book on the historic cemeteries of North Kingstown, I began to dig deeper into the life of the folks whose very existence are chronicled by the stones that stand in this little cemetery. Once you spend some time with them, once you get to know Potter & Alcelia, you can't help but feel their pain; their life's difficulties help to put our own lives into some kind of perspective.

Potter Sweet was born here in North Kingstown in 1797. He was apprenticed at an early age to a shoemaker and trained in that very practical trade. Potter continued to identify himself as such until the census of 1870; you see, the 1860's were a time when mass-produced shoes were just beginning to affect the lives of shoemakers like Potter Sweet, therefore, from this point onward, Potter Sweet called himself a farmer. Potter had, in the late 1820's married a distant cousin from Connecticut, Alcelia, and had 10 children with her. They had settled into the fine and practical little farmhouse located at the intersection of Stony Lane and Old Baptist Road and concentrated their efforts upon the daunting task of raising this big family.

Like so many others at this timeframe, this is where the trouble began; in the 1800's, sadly, most parents just knew deep down inside, that some of their children would "meet their maker" long before they did. Potter and Alcelia, were no different to be sure; but they, nor anyone else for that matter, could have ever imagined the tragedies they would face.

Potter & Alcelia's eldest son George, born in Dec of 1831, died in 1876 in Jamestown where he had spent the better part of his adult life. Their second child William lived as an adult just over the border in East Greenwich and died there in 1892. Third son Washington Sweet moved to Massachusetts and then passed away in 1897. Their first daughter Mary, was wed to Ambrose Taylor, the brother in law of Robert Rodman and lived above the company store that her husband managed until her death in 1900. Their next child was son Daniel Sweet who died before the age of two from tuberculosis. Next came the twins Lucinda and Esther, they were both dead by 1860 also from tuberculosis. Esther is buried here with her parents, and Lucinda is "resting eternal" next to her husband Sylvester Arnold, who had died two years earlier from the same persistent disease. Their next child was son Parker Sweet, who after a long enlistment in service during the Civil War, came back to North Kingstown, never quite the same, and after marrying Ruth Clarke and doing his very best to lead a "normal" life committed suicide in his Ten Rod Road home in 1878. Potter & Alcelia's 9th child Isaac died from

typhoid fever around his 20th birthday and their last child Sarah died in 1858 at the tender age of 7 from a chronic case of dysentery .

When all was said and done, Potter outlived 5 of his children and Alcelia, who spent her last years alone renting out rooms in the old house she had raised her children in, outlived all but her daughter Mary. I'm sure they both closed their eyes for the very last time, fully aware of the fact that this was just not the way things were supposed to turn out, parents were not supposed to outlive nearly all of their children! I cannot help but think about this one simple fact each and every time I drive by the little cemetery in which they lie. Lately, I am amazed by the strength that Potter & Alcelia Sweet must have drawn upon each and every day; they truly do put my petty problems in perspective.



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

One of North Kingstown's lost cemeteries can be found near the old Aylesworth homestead at 494 Potter Road. The cemetery is believed to contain about 40 graves of some of the region's earliest settlers.

The View From Swamptown

The MIA Historic Cemeteries

Over the last few years, we've taken a close look at dozens of our fair town's historic cemeteries; yes, we've "stopped a spell" and tried to honor those who rest eternal in these simple graveyards by examining their lives and times. We've also spent some time looking at a handful of graveyards that are seemingly lost to us at this point in time; we know exactly where they used to be, where they ought to be now; but sadly, they can no longer be found for one reason or another. This week, we are going to take a Swamptown gander at a different group of lost cemeteries; I call them the MIA cemeteries and there's nearly three dozen of them, we know they exist, they've been seen and documented in the past, but no one around today has found them. They are out there in the woods and fields of North Kingstown patiently waiting for someone to rediscover them. As always, the basis for my information on these cemeteries is my good friend Althea MacAleer's wonderful volume on the "Graveyards of North Kingstown". Lets take a look at some of these.

The first and most important from a historic perspective is the Aylesworth family cemetery lost somewhere in North Quidnessett. The Aylesworths are some of the region's earliest settlers and their second family homestead, a grand old farmhouse, can be found at 494 Potter Road. This burial ground, thought to be located to the northwest of this home has nearly forty souls resting in it with a number of marked stones scattered among the numerous fieldstone graves.

Next in historical importance is the family graveyard of Benjamin Hammond, the original gristmill operator from the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace property. This graveyard, with at least three occupants, was described many times and should be located to the west of the Birthplace.

The next two cemeteries are very near to each other adjacent to a small pond in the deep woods off of Stony Fort Road. The first is the family burial yard of the Sherman clan; this graveyard was described as being set upon a knoll and has a number of marked stones among the dozens of fieldstone graves. On the west side of the same pond lays the extensive graveyard of the colonial era slaves of the Gardiner and Stanton families of North and South Kingstown. It was last described as being the largest graveyard ever seen in the area with fieldstone markers too numerous to count. These two graveyards are important to find as well.

Next on the list is the family graveyard of Lodowick Thurston which should be located east of the house at 376 Tower Hill Rd. This graveyard has seven occupants, many with marked headstones.

Next on the list is the family plot of David Northup which should be found in the woods to the west of the house at 240 Shermantown Rd. This yard has 10-12 fieldstone markers and dates back hundreds of years.

Also off of Shermantown Road, somewhere in the woods behind the Platform, the former site of the Old Narragansett Church, lays the graveyard of The Rev. Aaron Chapin and family. This small family plot has half a dozen markers with a few marked stones.

Our last MIA Historic Cemetery for today is the family plot of Lebbens Northup. This ancient yard, found in the woods somewhere between Hatchery Road and the Col. Rodman Highway contains the remains of Lebbens Northup, his wife, children, and grandchildren.

So, loyal readers, the challenge is on! Let's locate these sacred places (remember to be respectful of private property rights, mind you.) and get them the recognition and protection they deserve. If you've seen these graveyards or know someone who has, contact me at Swamptown@msn.com and Merry Christmas North Kingstown.

Finally as a clarification regarding last week's column, the Brigantine Black Pearl's length overall (from stem to stern as the expression goes) was listed at 79 ft. Her length at the waterline was 52 feet.



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

Another one of the town's missing graveyards, the Lodowick Thurston family plot, is believed to be found east of the house at 376 Tower Hill Road. Historians believe seven members of the family are buried there.



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

The cemetery containing the remains of the family of Benjamin Hammond (shown below) was thought to be lost until recently, when it was discovered beneath a fallen tree. Benjamin and his son, Wilbour, operated the Hammond Grist Mill at the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace (above) for a combined 54 years.



Tree Concealed Cemetery for 50 Years July 3, 2008

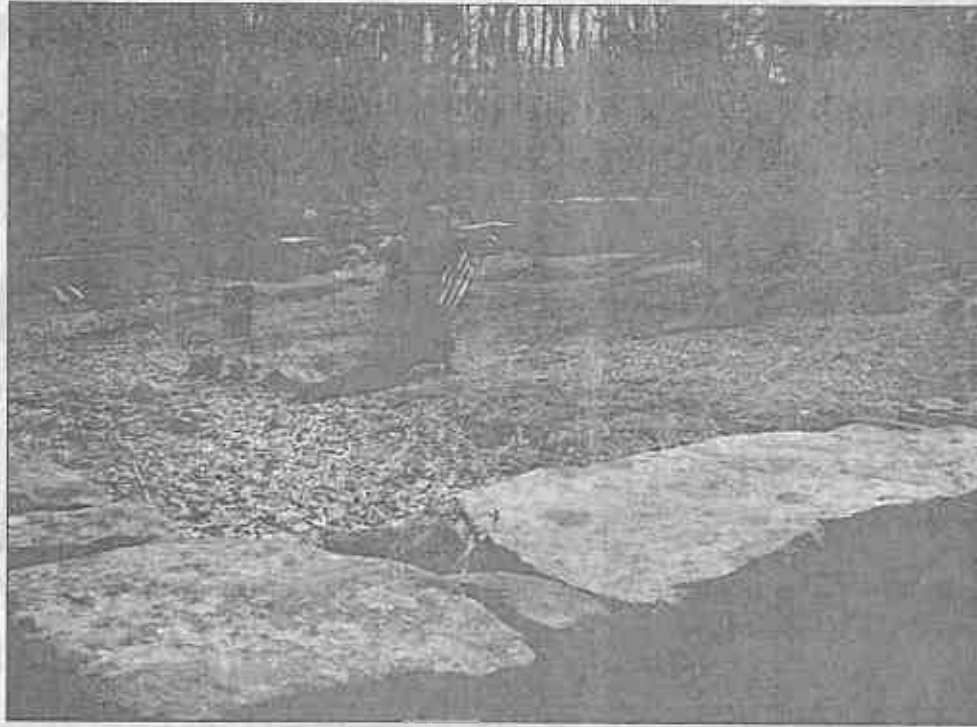
Earlier this year, we took a look at a handful of historic cemeteries that had been lost to the world. We knew they were out there in the deep woods of our fair town, but we just didn't know where. I'm pleased to report that, since that late winter column, much progress has been made in relocating these important family burial grounds.

Here's the story on the first of these formerly lost historic cemeteries. The family plot of the miller, Benjamin Hammond, which contains the early remains of Benjamin, his wife, Ruth, his son Wilbour, and a number of other unmarked fieldstone graves, has been located on the property owned by the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace. Between these two fine grist mill operators, Benjamin and Wilbour, we have an uninterrupted span of 54 years of corn and grain milling at the nearby Hammond Grist Mill.

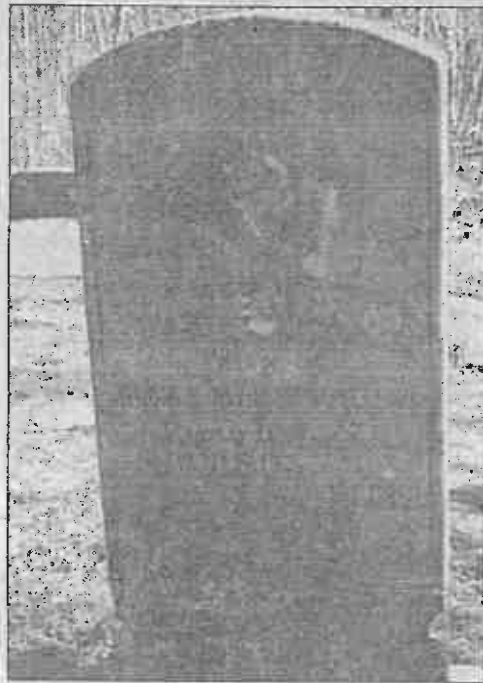
If you add to that the time frame that the mill was run by the inter-related Burlingame/Cranston clan--the other family buried on the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace property--you have a total of 85 years worth of Burlingame, Cranston and Hammond men guiding the whirling stones powered by the water of Carr Pond to make the corn meal that early historian "Old Shepherd Tom Hazard" called "food fit for the gods."

The little graveyard off in the woods behind the snuff mill was lost due to one simple event, a large tree fell and landed right in the middle of the graveyard, knocking down and laying upon the three larger marked gravestones. For nearly 50 years that tree trunk has concealed the Hammond Stones until just last week, when the 50-year-old memories of a man who once roamed these woods as a boy were reawakened, allowing the Hammond stones to stand for all the world to see once again.

A hearty Swamptown "tip o' the hat" is due to young-at-heart Carl Barksdale, who aided us by relocating this important historic cemetery. As the year continues, we'll learn the stories of a few more of the lost historic cemeteries.



Many members of the Greene, Browning and Lanphear families are at rest in a small cemetery just north of Plum Point Road, including David Greene, who served in the Revolutionary War. At right is the intricately carved headstone of Patience Lanphear, wife of Silas Lanphear.



The View From Swamptown

The David Greene Family Burial Ground

Back in the woods just north of Plum Point Road lies the old family burying ground of David and Sarah (Allen) Greene and their relations. This is where we will stop today as a part of our continuing efforts to examine all of our fair town's historic cemeteries.

In this cemetery, surrounded by a fine dressed and capped wall, complete with a set of stone walkover stairs to keep livestock out, and nicely maintained by its present owner, rest eternal the inter-related Greene, Browning, and Lanphear families. The patriarch of this clan, David Greene, was born in the late 1750's and served in the Revolutionary War under Colonels Carey and Topham. He was known in his youth as "an athletic and fearless rider, who in the winter of 1789, rode his horse around a fleet of French warships frozen in the ice." Crippled in his later years, he was then known as "Lame David" Greene and thought to be a bit cantankerous it seems. His wife, Sarah (Allen) was said to have been one of the areas most brilliant women possessing a keen business sense. They had seven sons and three daughters, many of whom are buried here with them. Those that are not here are at repose in Elm Grove Cemetery and include sons Reynolds and David Jr. These two successful farmers owned the present day Rome Point property as a part of the larger Ezekial Gardiner dairy farm that they purchased and ran for many decades.

Also found here at this Greene burial ground, just east and outside the fine walls is the more modest burial yard of the family's slaves. As always I am indebted to Althea McAleer, Beatrix Hoffius, and Deby Nunes for their fine book on the historic cemeteries of North Kingstown in which, much of this, and a whole bunch more information regarding our towns historic cemeteries can be found.



There are plenty of locals who could probably trace their ancestry back to one or more of the people buried in a large family cemetery located just off of Post Road between the North Kingstown Chamber of Commerce and the Rhode Island State Police Wickford Barracks. Representatives of the Hall, Northrup and Carpenter clans spanning four centuries can be found in this historic spot.



Cecil Carpenter joined generations of relatives at the small family cemetery in 2006, the last person to do so. The former Army man also held up another tradition, as the cemetery contains a veteran from just about every major American war from the Revolutionary War through World War II.

The View From Swamptown

The Hall/Northup/Carpenter Burial Ground

As a part of our continuing effort to pay our respects to each and every one of the many historic cemeteries of our fair town, this week we are going to tarry a spell at the ancient graveyard of the Halls, Northups, and Carpenters, found on the west side of Post Road between the NK Chamber of Commerce and the Wickford Barracks of the RI State Police.

It's only fitting really, that the historic family cemetery associated with the oldest building in all of North Kingstown, the 17th century stone-ender known as the Hall-Northup house, should be such a remarkable place. With nearly one hundred souls in residence, it's the largest family cemetery in town by just a bit, just besting the nearby Smith/Lawton plot found on Stony Lane. Its also has the longest history of just about any historic cemetery in all of Rhode Island, beginning with the unmarked burials of members of the Northup clan at the tale end of the 17th century and then extending through the 18th, 19th, 20th and even into the 21st century with the recent interment of WWII veteran Cecil Carpenter among his kin in 2006. Indeed, this cemetery contains a veteran of nearly every major war from the Revolutionary War right up to WWII. Also found here is perhaps the most poignant reminder of how difficult life was back in the beginnings of our nation, the memorial stone to the ten children of Phillip and Frances (Hall) Tillinghast. All of these children died in infancy and were born between 1793 and 1806. Ten little fieldstone grave markers are adjacent to the larger memorial marker. Nearby stands the unusual grave marker for another child, Henry H. Carpenter who died at the age of ten, and is memorialized with a white-metal grave marker which would have been custom ordered from the Sears & Roebucks catalog at the end of the 19th century. Also found here is the gravestone for Lauriston Hall. Lauriston was born here in the house in 1808. He eventually became a lawyer of some renown and a world traveler. No one knows why the 68-year-old resident of North Kingstown was in Callao, Peru when he died.

These are just a few of the stories told to us by the gravestones of the Hall/Northup/Carpenter Burial Ground. Stop by some day and pay your respects to these fine folks, some of whom were here at the very beginnings of our community and our nation. As with all historic cemeteries, just remember to be respectful of not only the dearly departed in the cemetery, but the private property owners that, for the most part, take wonderful care of these little repositories of history.



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

This historical cemetery located at the corner of Slocum Road and Shermantown Road is unique because it is actually above ground. Built for William Henry Harrison Rose, he was laid to rest on a patch of land that was enclosed by a 20-by-30 stone wall and filled in.



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

Some of the remains of the barn the Rose family used are still standing at the former site of the family's farm on Slocum Road. People came from near and far to purchase the delicately detailed wool cloth sold by the clan.

The View From Swamptown

The Weaver Rose Historic Cemetery

As a part of our long standing effort to more closely examine the historic cemeteries of our fair town, this week we are going to tarry for a time at the burial place of famed 19th century hand weavers William Henry Harrison Rose and his two sisters Misses Elsie and Mary Rose.

This small historic cemetery, found near the intersection of Shermantown and Slocum Roads out in the southwestern corner of town, an area once known as Dark Corners, is without a doubt, the most unusual historic cemetery in all of Rhode Island. Indeed, it may be one of the most unique historic cemeteries anywhere. But before we explore that claim, let's examine the life of the good weaver.

William Rose was born just a few weeks after the untimely death of the nation's 9th president, William Henry Harrison who served the nation for only 30 days before becoming the first Commander-in-Chief to die in office. He, and his sisters were third generation hand weavers and lived a life split between running their small farm and operating the many looms, both large and small, on the second floor of their ancient home perched right on the North Kingstown-Exeter town line. "Quaker Billie" as he was known, and his sister Elsie were, perhaps, the most talented and accomplished weavers in the region. They specialized in superbly detailed patterned wool cloth in unique designs with names such as "cart wheels and cathedral windows". Folks came from miles around to purchase their coverlets, pillow covers, drapes and throws. You never knew who might show up at his door. Teddy Roosevelt and his wife stopped by more than once, the famed authors of the Wister, LaFarge, and Wharton families all owned Weaver Rose coverlets and drapes, and examples of Billie and Elsie's work can be found far and wide; from Smith's Castle here in town to the Smithsonian Institute in Washington DC. Quaker Billie was a character in his own right; a man who insisted on taking a cold water bath each and everyday and almost never wore shoes except in the very dead of winter, stopping by his place was a memorable event for those who purchased his remarkable fabric. Even towards the end of his days, as the 20th century began and intricate machine made textiles were becoming more readily available, Quaker Billie and Miss Elsie's work was in such demand that there was still a waiting list.

Now one of William Henry Harrison Rose's greatest peculiarities was his total inability to come to grips with the idea of spending eternity buried below ground. In the end, his sisters came up with a unique solution when they placed the good weaver, in final repose, into a small hollow at the bottom of an animal impound on their farm. They then had the 20' X 30' stone wall-enclosed pen filled in with soil to the very top. So now Quaker Billie Rose rests for all eternity buried right on the surface of his own farm. Both of his sisters joined him there when they passed on as well. Although as devout Quakers, there are no gravestones to mark the final resting place of the Rose's of Dark Corners, their one of a kind family cemetery speaks volumes about these extraordinary souls.



PHOTOS: TIM GRANSTON

The Wanton Himes family home (above) built in the early 1700s still exists in a residential development near Hideaway Lane. The gravestones of Himes' wife Susan (right) and many of their children can be found in a graveyard in the woods near the cul-de-sac of Hideaway Lane. The couple had a hard and tragic life that was typical for the time period.



The View From Swamptown

The Wanton Himes Family Burial Ground

This week, as a part of our continuing effort to examine each of the historic cemeteries of our fair town, we are going to “tarry a spell” at the graveyard of Wanton Himes and family.

The Wanton Himes family graveyard is tucked off in the woods near the cul-de-sac of Hideaway Lane out in what was once the farming community of Swamptown. Hideaway Lane itself was once the shady lane leading from the Swamptown Road (now Lafayette Rd.) up to the ancient Himes Homestead farmhouse, which thankfully still exists as a part of this residential development. The Himes House is thought to date back to the early 1700's and will certainly be the subject of a future column. In a past column, we took a look at the graveyard of Wanton's parents Sylvester and Ann Himes and his siblings which is located nearby, right alongside Lafayette Road. Today though, we are going to look at the last of the Himes clan to live on the homestead farm; Wanton and Susan (Northup) Himes and their children.

Wanton Himes was born in the home in August of 1796 and lived out his life of more than 80 years here. He married Swamptown lass Susan Northup around 1815 and they had nine children together, sons Stephen, Albert, Jorem, Daniel, and the twins William and Aden, and daughters Martha, Susan, and Roxanna. Their lives' were hard, typical for that time frame, and Wanton and Susan attended far more of their children's funerals than any parent should have had to endure. Indeed, only sons Stephen and William outlived their parents, and neither Aden or Roxanna even made it out of childhood. Daughter Martha married a neighbor Albert C. G. Rathbun, but died giving birth to her namesake baby Martha. Her sister Susan, married her brother-in-law Albert (amazingly enough, a fairly common practice in the early to middle 1800's) and tried to raise her little niece as her own; but sadly the baby Martha died as well, followed by Susan a decade later. One of the few of Wanton and Susan's children that aren't buried here is Albert, who, at the age of 43, enlisted in the 2nd RI infantry and went off to serve in the Civil War. He was killed at the Battle of Spotsylvania and is now buried as an unknown soldier in the Fredericksburg National Cemetery. Additionally William and his family, the last Himes to live on the farm, having inherited it after Wanton's death in 1877, are buried at Elm Grove Cemetery.

I expect Wanton would be real pleased to know that his practical little workingman's farmhouse still exists some three hundred years after his ancestors first put down their proverbial roots out in the hard scrabble landscape that was Swamptown. He'd be even more pleased to see some limited agriculture being carried out on that same land. He rests there eternal surrounded by a simple stone wall and all of his family. Its just a short stroll from my own home and I visit him and his kin from time to time. Why don't you stop by and pay your respects as well.



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

Though part of the town's history after settling here more than 300 years ago, there are few reminders of the Tourgee clan in North Kingstown. Above is Deacon John Tourgee's home, which sits at 450 Davisville Road. Below are pictures from the family's nearby burial plot. At left is the grave of Benajah Tourgee and at right is the grave of his son, John.



The View From Swamptown

The Tourgee Burial Ground

Just off the east side of Davisville Road, a stone's throw from the former home of one of its occupants, Deacon John Tourgee, sits the burial ground of the ancient Tourgee family. The Tourgees (also spelled Tourjee, Torge', Tourge') came to our fair town from France along with 45 other families as part of the Huguenot protestant group fleeing persecution in Europe. They came, attracted by the RI colony's reputation for religious tolerance, in 1686 and began to put down roots at the border of North Kingstown and East Greenwich. Sadly though, within four years, most of them had been driven off by English speaking settlers who were troubled by these "foreigners". Tradition tells us that only three families remained in the area by the start of the 1700's; the Ayraults, the Le Moines (anglicized to either Mawney or Moone) and the Tourgees.

At a minimum, at least four or five generations of Tourgees are buried here beside the busy highway on this plot of land owned by the family for hundreds of years until its final sale to a non-Tourgee in the 1920's. Deacon John, who gained his title as an important figure in the founding of the Quidnessett Baptist church, made his mark on history by selling a great portion of the family farm to the local Reynolds, who constructed the Reynolds Steam-powered Textile Mill here on that Tourgee land, near the intersection of Davisville and Old Baptist Roads. The Reynolds had already absorbed the old Davis Mills textile plant up the road into their empire by that time, the same mill that had employed the Deacon's father Benajah at the beginning of the 1800's. A small farm pond on the property, known to all as Tourgee Pond, was utilized as the source for the water needed to make the steam that ran the mill. After the mill closed, the pond was drained and much of the old farm was graveled out and hauled to Quonset/Davisville as fill. The old gravel banks can still be seen between Davisville Road and School Street. Only the good Deacon's home and his family plot remains here as a physical reminder of the more two hundred years that this land was Tourgee land.



The Taylor family left behind many markers while living in North Kingstown, including Silver Spring Pond (below), which was used to fuel an 18th century carding and fulling mill, and their home (above), which sits on the northern shore of the pond. Joseph Taylor, a colonel in the Revolutionary War, and many of his family members are buried on the land (right).



The View From Swamptown

The Joseph Taylor Burial Ground

Up on a rise overlooking both the Silver Spring Pond that they created and the fine early 18th century home they lived in; lay the earthly remains of the Taylor Family. As a part of our continuing efforts to examine all of our fair Town's historic cemeteries, today we will delve into the life and times of this important family.

In 1762, Joseph Taylor purchased 40 acres of land around the Mettatuxet River and began the construction of a dam, spillway, and carding and fulling mill. They called the mill pond they created Silver Spring, as they noticed that the spring from which this brook came had a tendency to throw up shiny flecks of mica along with the cool clear water. They also constructed a fine home along the northern shore of the pond as well. Their lives and their business enterprise went along well enough until the beginning of the Revolutionary War when Joseph, feeling threatened by the British who were encamped in nearby Newport and regularly raiding farms and businesses up and down the West Bay in an effort to feed clothe and support their troops, joined with three other prominent North Kingstown men and secured a charter to form a company of soldiers to protect and defend Wickford Harbor and the surrounding region. The result of this effort was the formation of the "Newtown Rangers". First Lieutenant Joseph Taylor was made second in command of the group and his son William served as well. Throughout the course of the Revolution, the Rangers and their cannon, known as the Wickford Gun, were involved in numerous excursions and skirmishes up and down the West Bay and defended Wickford Harbor from all attempts at invasion. The Taylors were also involved in the Sullivan Expedition and the Battle of Rhode Island.

After the War Joseph Taylor achieved the rank of Colonel in the State Militia and served as a member of the North Kingstown Town Council. His son William became a lawyer.

The Taylor graveyard with more than 20 related souls within it, still stands as a sentinel above the Silver Spring Pond they created, cared for by a nearby resident, it is a reminder of times gone by and lives well led.



Horace Hammond is buried with his wife, Eunice (Slocum). The two had only one son together, who died when he was 3 years old, but eventually adopted Henry L. Morse, who became a bookkeeper in Providence.

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