

Castle Chronicle

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Thank-yous

Hundreds of colonial reenactors and visitors will make their annual pilgrimage to Smith's Castle September 30 and October 1 for Plantation Days.

Attracting children and adults from throughout New England, more than 30 reenactment groups are expected to set the stage for a view of colonial times with their white tents, crackling fires, early music, and skill demonstrations. Hours are from 11 a.m. until 5 p.m. Saturday and 11 a.m. until 3 p.m. Sunday.

Historical reenactments as well as demonstrations of colonial-period skills including blacksmithing, quilting, and spinning will be presented. Youngsters will especially enjoy participating in colonial games, listening to the storytelling and children's music programs, viewing the cider press in operation, and petting the sheep. Docents will provide information for visitors touring the first floor of the Castle and the 18th century garden.

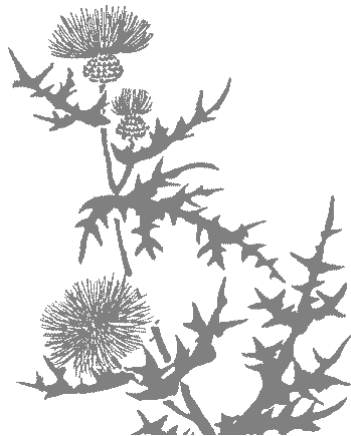
A special attraction for young and old will be the Sunday arrival in Mill Cove of the *Brandaris*, the



Wickford-based restored Dutch sailing ship crewed by Doug Somers and his family. Plans are to use the reproduction punt to load goods that would have been traded from Smith's Castle in the mid 18th century.

Throughout the day on Saturday, Louise Duckworth will again supervise the outdoor cooking of a variety of meat and vegetable dishes using period utensils and authentic ingredients. The resulting fare will be eagerly consumed by the 150+ reenactors and volunteers at the annual dinner later that evening.

Association President Dick Bowen said, "In addition to membership, tour, and grant income, Smith's Castle relies on special educational event proceeds. Plantation Days provides not only operational funds, but broad exposure throughout the state and the region. To assure continued growth and increased attendance, we members must volunteer our talents and contribute our time generously. And remember to invite your relatives and friends to experience Plantation Days." ■



Notice to all Sufferers of Quinsy, Mania, Breakbone Fever, Colic (Either Simple or Windy) and Other Colonial Ailments...

If you experience these complaints, stop by the Junior Docents' Apothecary at Plantation Days to see what herbal remedies they can recommend. After attending a comprehensive demonstration of early American herbal medicine by Christy White of Old Sturbridge Village, the Junior Docents are now prepared to treat all manner of common colonial maladies. A great thank-you goes to Candace Bengtson and Trish Harmon who braved pouring rain and bumper-to-bumper traffic to drive the Junior Docents on this great educational field trip to Lexington, MA on July 27. ■

—Diane Long, Junior Docent Leader

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Note from the President

The news just in on our receipt of the MAP award is exciting (see story on p. 6). This grant offers us a meaningful opportunity to reflect on who we are and what we do. That process, honestly, sensitively, and objectively pursued, has the potential to guide us in determining conscientious steps for the future. It's healthy to look at what one does well, what facets of an operation can be improved, and how to make the best use of today's resources for tomorrow's work. We're glad to be embarking on this journey of growth together to gain increasingly respected museum status.

If you find yourself in the area, I encourage you to take a few minutes to stop by and simply enjoy the surroundings at the Castle. The 18th century garden continues to thrive with a progression of blooms as the summer marches on. Sit awhile on the lawn, look out over the water, enjoy the breeze, and imagine the activities that might have occurred at Richard Smith's trading post. You'll also find a lovely new perennial garden that Barbara and Bill have established near the Resident Manager's home—where the old willow wept.

—Dick Bowen, President

From the Annex Window

It is fascinating to be involved in preparing the Castle Museum Registration Record, an important process guided by our Collections Chair, Linda Eppich, intern Laura Anderson, and members of the Collections Committee. The project is tedious and time consuming but provides Smith's Castle with an important official document. It ensures accurate records of ownership and associations with people, places, and events; enhances our interpretation; aids in preservation; and enables us to identify and account for every object in our care. Work done by volunteers in the past has been invaluable. Linda estimates that it will take two years to complete the project.

Please consider our many volunteer opportunities and call when something piques your interest. To name two, we are looking for assistance in preparing grants and for help in getting the Castle library back in business. Or, if you have another idea needing fertile ground, we'd love to hear about that too.

Bring a friend with you the next time you come. We look forward to seeing you on Plantation Days and at the October speaker series too!

—Barbara Carey, Resident Manager

Membership Stats

These figures reflect new and renewed members and include all memberships received on or after Plantation Days, 1999.

(As of August 4, 2000)

Nonbusiness membership units: (individual, family, patron, sustaining, and life members)	249
Business membership units:	10
Membership receipts to date:	\$8,480.

Budgeted income for 2000 is \$15,000, including business and nonbusiness units. ■

Costumed Models Wanted

Wickford Art Association's portraiture sessions are seeking costumed models for openings in 2001. Sittings are Wednesdays 9-1 at \$11.00 per hour or \$44 per session. Subject sits 20 minutes and breaks 10 minutes and must be able to sit still and focus. If interested, please call 294-7705.

Volunteers/Pros Keep Up Grounds

The Castle grounds look great this year due to a lot of professional and volunteer help. Bengtson Landscaping has been mowing the lawns regularly and Les Flood has been doing the field along Route 1 monthly. Bob Shillaber and Bill Moncrieff have done miscellaneous maintenance activities in June and July respectively. Barbara and Bill Carey continue to beautify the grounds also.

The 18th century garden is spectacular due to the efforts of Audrey Moncrieff and her Master Gardeners.

Contact Dick Breault (294-2326 or rbrea32337@aol.com) to volunteer for the Grounds Committee. ■

—Dick Breault, Grounds Coordinator

Welcome New Members

Lawrence & Lara Seaberg Family	Lila M. Seelen
Dianne L. McGowan	Linda Davidson
Mr. & Mrs. Faxon Billings	Nicole & Linda McPhillips-Bush
Friends of the North Kingstown Library	Constance Kane Tucker
Gregory A. Nadoian Family	James C. Sheehan
Bob & Cindy Skwirz	Sandra A. Spina
	Laura Anderson
	James & Mary Kennedy

Docents Give Time Generously

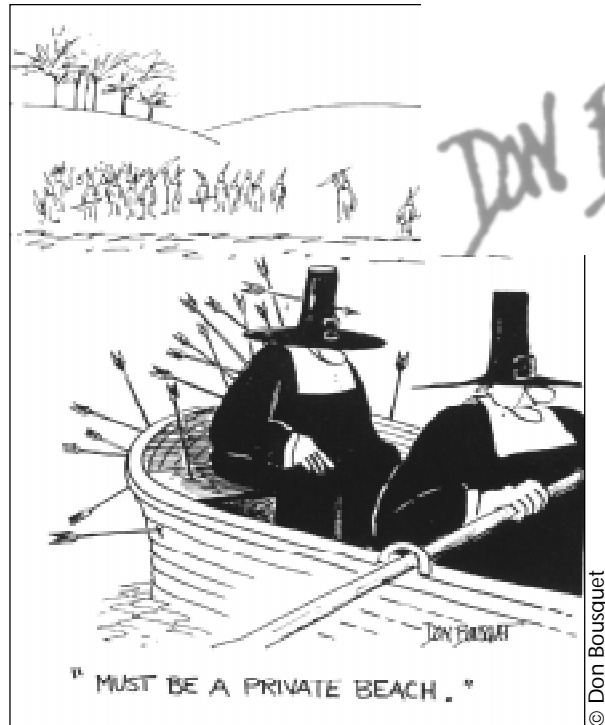
In June the Docents worked very hard. The many educational and social tours stretched our little band pretty thin, but as usual the extra volunteer hours were given with cheerful generosity. In addition to the busy schedule the Docents helped staff the Strawberry Festival and Herb Day. The hard work put in by all paid off, for the Castle raised more money and sold more strawberry shortcakes than at any Strawberry Festival in recent memory. The hard-working Docent staff deserves hearty thanks.

When visiting the Castle please stop by the gift shop. Candace Bengtson has done a wonderful job stocking the shop with very interesting items at reasonable prices. Sales are booming. We're sure you'll find something that you can't live without!

Our regular events in August will include a picnic with the Junior Docents for which the Education Committee is providing food and beverages to say thanks to all.

Also in August, aside from the full tour schedule, our group will be actively planning fall activities, such as Plantation Days and more school tours. ■

—Joyce Fuller



Materials Sought for Costume Box

The Junior Docents are preparing a costume box to be used at events and with school groups so visitors can get a hands-on view of colonial dress. We are looking for petticoats, short gowns, waistcoats, caps, etc. If you have any old pieces or suitable fabric that you can donate, please leave a message for Diane Long at the Castle office, 294-3521. ■

Jr. Docents Bag Tea for Strawberry Festival & Herb Day

With the help of new members Sarah and Nicole and the assistance of Trish Harmon, the Junior Docents ran a very successful booth for Strawberry Festival and Herb Day, Saturday, June 10. Visitors learned about the colonists' use of herbs as tea substitutes during the boycott of British tea and made their own herbal tea bags. The **Herb Wyfe** of Wickford donated all of the herbs and the Junior Docents provided tags and decorative stamps. Over eighty people took home their own tea bags!

To prepare for Plantation Days we are now researching the plants in the Castle garden. We are taking notes on how herbs would have been used in the colonial household, especially as medicine. We would like to hear from anyone with colonial herbal recipes or folklore. ■

Junior Docent Program Seeks More Leadership Assistance

The Smith's Castle Junior Docent program has had a very good year! Now, more children have indicated interest in becoming Junior Docents, and we'd like to start a new group in mid-September. In order to do so, we need additional leadership. Here are some details:

When?

- Mid-September orientation for new Junior Docents and parents
- Thursday meetings begin in October. (3:30-5:15 p.m.)

How old and how many?

- Girls and boys entering grades 5-7 in September
- Maximum group size: 6

Leadership responsibilities?

- Plan program activities with co-leader. Lead meetings.
- Prepare for special events participation (Christmas at the Castle, for example).
- Coordinate costume-making workshop for children.
- Coordinate scheduling and program activities with leaders of older Junior Docent group.
- The current Junior Docent Leader, Education Chairperson, and Resident Manager are available for planning assistance and support.
- Smith's Castle membership is required for leaders and Junior Docents.

If you'd like to learn more about this opportunity to work with kids, please call the office, 294-3521. ■

Light Shed on Sampler and Its Maker

This article is extracted from the June 8, 2000 edition of the *North-East Independent*. The complete article is available in the Castle office.

For me this story started out as a mystery, a challenging piece of detective work. It ended up a revealing glimpse into the life of a typical woman born in the early 1800's. Initially an enigma, Lucy was another faceless name amongst the many who braved the challenges of life in early Rhode Island. She became an old friend, revealing her trials and tribulations through clues left behind through not only a paper trail buried in the dusty ledgers of archives and town halls across the state but also a tangible legacy in the form of the crowning achievement of her childhood—a sampler. This brings us to the start of the sleuthing—to Lucy Wall Reynolds' sampler—sewed in meticulous detail when she was but eleven years old and now hanging in Smith's Castle. How this little swatch of history came to the wall of the Castle some 100 years later is a mystery I intend to pursue. But I was able to bring Lucy out of the shadows to be remembered as the remarkable woman she must have been.

Lucy Wall Reynolds was born in 1816 to Thomas and Elizabeth (Howland), who lived in East Greenwich somewhere near the North Kingstown border. They were a fairly affluent family of builders, and Lucy's early years were probably good. Both Lucy's mother and father came from families with long Rhode Island histories, having arrived in the new world in the mid 1600's. She likely received some sort of education, although it was surely the abbreviated type deemed appropriate for a girl. Little evidence remains of her early years; only the sampler lends testimony to that time. The intricate piece shows Lucy to have been a serious student in the study of the "womanly" skills then taught to young ladies. Some suggest that Lucy made the sampler

while attending "The Wickford Young Ladies School," but I was unable to confirm that intriguing possibility. Lucy, thankfully, told us in her creation, that it was done in 1827.

Records show that Lucy married Albert Clark Gardiner of North Kingstown, who was ten years younger, making Lucy about thirty years old when she accepted his



proposal. Possibly her mother died young, and Lucy was left to assist her father in raising her siblings as this is an advanced age for a first marriage in the early 1800's. It was not uncommon at that time for husbands to lose their wives to the rigors of childbirth. Also, this may have been Albert's second marriage.

Lucy's union with Albert brought them two children, John Albert and later Sarah Adeline. Albert was a machinist by trade, working in the flourishing North Kingstown fabric industry. He eventually left the mills of North Kingstown for a presumably better opportunity at a Providence mill. Real estate records show that

he was successful enough to purchase his own home at 31 Wilson Street in the city.

Although their life was likely hard, Lucy probably felt that she was doing well, with a happy family and a home of her own. But fate dealt Lucy a bad turn on April 18, 1874, when forty-eight year old Albert succumbed to a tuberculosis-like condition caused by nearly thirty years of breathing cotton and wool dust in the mills. Fifty-seven year old Lucy sold her Providence home and eventually moved back to North Kingstown. She then fades into the background of permanent record. She most certainly lived with a relative, probably one of her children, and spent her days with grandchildren and day-to-day housekeeping responsibilities. Nearly eighty and outliving her husband by twenty-one years, she succumbed to heart failure on April 4, 1895, following a long bout with uterine cancer. Lucy's will was recorded and probated in North Kingstown. John, her eldest, was the executor. She evidently had very little, as her will states only that personal effects should be divided equally between her two children. But among those meager possessions was a nearly seventy-year-old sampler which, I'm sure, John and Sarah cherished above all else.

The next time you're in the Castle, stop and examine Lucy's handiwork. Think of her. In doing so, you will bring her back to life along with other hardworking women who helped shape their world and our future. ■

—Tim Cranston

Tim Cranston is a local history writer, weekly columnist for the *North-East Independent*, historic preservation activist, and Smith's Castle member. Cranston is proud to claim that his great, great, great, great, great grandfather's brother was Caleb Cranston, Lodowick Updike's horse trainer.

The 18th Century Garden

Everything seems to be growing bigger and better this summer due to the wonderful cool, rainy spring we had.

Several groups have visited the garden to date, including the South County Garden Club—founder of our 18th century garden in 1953. ■

—Audrey Moncrieff

Common yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), prominent in the garden this summer, was once used in treating fevers, colds, rheumatism and arthritis, and kidney disorders. The leaves were used fresh in salads and dried in snuff.



Did You Know?

- Richard Smith used “Wickford” in 1663 to name an area of undefined limits in honor of the Connecticut governor’s wife, Elizabeth Winthrop, who was born in Wickford, England.
- Roger Williams sold his trading post at Cocumscussoc to Richard Smith in 1651 for about £50.
- In the 18th century, Cocumscussoc was a leading breeder of Narragansett Pacers, a popular riding horse favored by women because of its even gait. Export of the breeding stock and a changing economy resulted in the extinction of the breed in the 19th century.
- In the 1920s and 1930s Cocumscussoc was a dairy farm.
- During World War II, Smith’s Castle was owned by the Vesta Underwear Company.

From Carl R. Woodward’s *Plantation in Yankeeland* (Chester, CT: Pequot Press, 1971.)

Book Review

No Idle Hands: The Social History of American Knitting

Anne L. Macdonald
Ballantine Books, 1988. 484p.

A lifelong knitter, Anne Macdonald is the perfect guide for this look at the history of knitting in America.

Ms. Macdonald examines each phase of our history and gives us a clear and compelling look at the social aspects of knitting then and now. She takes the reader from colonial woman—for whom idleness was a sin—to her Victorian counterpart who enjoyed the social pleasure of knitting while visiting with friends. She describes the war-era wife eagerly providing her man with warmth and comfort and the modern woman creating fashionable handknits for herself and her family.

Men, too, have taken up the art of knitting. In 1917 the Fire

Department and Police Department spent their noon hour being instructed in knitting. Arizona Governor George Hunt knit socks during his spare time at the office and evenings at home. Male residents in hospitals and charitable institutions were taught knitting as occupational therapy. Recuperating soldiers, particularly those confined to bed, were grateful to knit.

Knitters will find this book especially humorous and entertaining, and even those who have never picked up a needle will find it an enjoyable read.

—Elinor Dykstra

Elinor Dykstra has generously donated this book to the library for the benefit of our members.



You Heard It on Main Street Wickford

“Smith’s Castle, isn’t that where Gilbert Stuart lived?” asked my hairdresser, yelling over the blow dryer.

“No,” I shouted. “His house is a different historical landmark.”

“I think my kids went there on a field trip,” he said. “They’d know more about it than I do.”

Living in the back yard of such a monument, it would seem that more Rhode Island residents would know something of Smith’s Castle, one of the oldest existing plantation houses in the country and an integral part of its history. But, as I discovered asking people I met in everyday life, few adults know much more than its location, while those who are not yet old enough to drive to the Castle know all about the history.

One youngster that I talked to at the supermarket told me that the people who lived at the Castle traded with the Narragansett Tribe

and had to make all of their own clothes.

“The Indians called it Cocosussock,” she said struggling, but correct in knowing the Native American name for the property, Cocumscussoc. Well, maybe not *all* the history.

Many of the adults who knew about the Castle were familiar with its events, like the Strawberry Festival and Plantation Days. “I like to go there when everyone’s in costume,” said a co-worker.

News in the last *Chronicle* that school tours were numerous this past spring shows their value in educating children about the area’s history. They know that Gilbert Stuart lived on the other side of town. ■

—Melanie Shortman

Melanie Shortman, a North Kingstown High School graduate, is an aspiring writer majoring in journalism at New York University.

Come for Coffee & a Taste of History

Join us for an exciting new lecture series and coffee hour planned for three October Saturdays from 10 to 11:30 a.m.



Saturday, October 14

Growing, Grinding, and Griddling Corn, Part 1: an historical perspective on corn, with jonnycake griddling and tasting, by Richard Donnelly, one of Rhode Island's Jonnycake Kings.



Saturday, October 21

William Blackstone: a first-person interpretation of this multi-talented early settler, by John McNiff, Roger Williams National Memorial Park Ranger.

Saturday, October 27

Boxes of Bees: everything you always wanted to know about these amazing creatures by Betty Mencucci, Burrillville beekeeper featured in the June, 1999 *Rhode Island Monthly* story, "Minding Her Bees' Wax."



This program offers small groups (20 maximum) coffee and pastry while participating in a lecture-style program. It's a good opportunity to bring a friend to the Castle. \$3.50 for members, \$5.50 for nonmembers. Call 294-3521 for reservations.

NK Library Provides Castle Tour Passes

Thanks to a new family membership purchased by the Friends of the North Kingstown Free Library, library patrons can now borrow a library pass to admit 2 adults and 3 children for a guided tour of the Castle during our regular hours of operation. We appreciate the Library's community involvement. ■

Felicity Returns to Raise Education Funds

The Education Committee is sponsoring a Felicity doll fundraiser with the winning ticket to be drawn at the Christmas Party on Friday, December 8. All proceeds will be used by the committee to replace and enlarge hands-on material for

school children. The doll is exhibited in the Meeting Room at the Castle. Every member will receive \$10 worth of tickets to buy or sell. Additional tickets are available in the Castle or at the Office. Please support this good cause! ■

Education Program Moves Full Steam Ahead

Over 600 students of all ages have visited the Castle on school tours since April 8, 2000. Four lessons are available which can be adapted to different grade levels and curriculum needs. Bookings are already coming in for the fall.

Docents can take a Castle trunk show into schools, nursing homes, and senior centers to give a 45-

minute history program. The trunk contains reproductions and materials that can be touched and studied, making the experience more interesting for audiences.

A mailing is being planned for the fall to preschool and kindergarten groups. At this level a half hour lesson on the kitchen, including a snack of bread and homemade butter, is presented. ■

Castle Gets Program Assessment Grant from American Association of Museums

A long wait followed the submission of the application for the Museum Assessment Program (MAP) for Institutional Assessment, but we are proud to have received notification that Smith's Castle is one of the awardees. In short, the program is "designed to provide an overview of a museum's entire management and operational practices."

Comprised of three phases—self-study, peer review, and implementation—the assessment is a collegial collaboration involving the museum staff (paid and unpaid), a MAP surveyor (who conducts an on-site visit and helps the museum staff write the assessment report) and access to the MAP staff at the American Association of Museums Division of Programs for Museum Advancement and Excellence.

A team appointed by Dick Bowen, president of the association, will utilize a Self Study Workbook that includes a questionnaire and activities designed to guide the team through the initial phase of assessment. For many museums this is the first attempt to conduct a comprehensive review. Self-study enables staff and governing authority to step back from the day-to-day work of the museum and take an in-depth view of its mission, goals, programs, use of resources, and operations.

The completion of the study, which is expected to take four months or less, enables the institution to evaluate strengths and weaknesses in management and operations. The study summaries are important records and valuable planning documents against which to measure institutional progress. ■

June Strawberry Festival and Herb Day Delights Participants

Strawberry Festival and Herb Day... what a grand day it was! The weather was perfect, the grounds looked wonderful, and the 18th century garden was, and is, magnificent.

Children with their families happily participated in the variety of activities on the front lawn under the grand old mulberry tree. They made sachets and nosegays, planted seeds, and stamped and colored bookmarks. The Junior Docents' "Teas and Tisanes" was not only educational but lots of fun.

Over 600 strawberry shortcakes were served, and 550 plus visitors strolled through the first floor of the Castle asking great questions about history, architecture, and the

collection. The Earl's Court Consort added a musical treat in the Updike Dining Room. Candace Bengtson's creative merchandising brought strong Gift Shop sales inside and out with the added feature of a children's shop on the lawn. Betty Follansbee once again charmed all with her storytelling.

Abbottwood Farms, Freeborn's Rose of Sharon, and Schartner Farms sold herb plants and related herbal products. Joe Conroy of Stony Lane Basketry provided information on Nantucket basket making. David Key led an interesting herb and edible plant walk.

From the moment our visitors arrived on the grounds to their

departure, they were warmly welcomed, sweetly fed, and graciously entertained. Without a doubt, the festival day was a tremendous success for which we thank the more-than-70 Castle volunteers, Boy Scout Troop 152, and the community volunteers who so willingly supported the event.

A special thanks goes to committee chairs Shirley Burnham, Eunice Pratt, Nancy Birch, Diane Long, Anne Bowen, and Audrey Moncrieff, as well as Resident Manager, Barbara Carey. As a result of our cooperative team effort, my job as overall logistics coordinator was an enjoyable task. ■

—Mary Shillaber

Photos left to right: Ron, Adam, and Odette Turenne; Sharon McMahon (l) and Debbie Hays; Jeanne Amoto Abbott of Abbottwood Farm; Sophie and Carl Neff; Eva Hall (l), James Hall, and Amanda Maxwell.



Photos by Dick Breault

Spring Days of the 18th Century Revisited

In May 20, in conjunction with May is Museum Month, Smith's Castle held Spring Days on the Plantation. This was the first time that the Castle sponsored such an educational event.

The setting was the mid 1700s. Volunteers and docents were dressed in clothing typical of the period. Both floors of the house were open with docents in every room busy at work. Hearth cooking, cheese making, weaving, candlemaking, needlework, soap making, and rug hooking and braiding were some of the many activities that were being demonstrated.

Outside, the beautiful 18th century garden was in bloom, the Junior Docents were proudly showing


off their dye garden, and children were playing 18th century games.

Reenactors, such as Mrs. Updike, Israel Phillips the overseer, and the schoolteacher added flavor and authenticity to the event. The steady stream of visitors was able to see what people of the period looked like and how they conducted activities of daily life.

Displays in the meeting room included a tool exhibit and a clothing display. The cookies and lemonade being served were a hit with old and young alike.

This day would not have been the success it was without the efforts of many volunteers and the special talents of our dedicated Docents and Junior Docents. ■

—Candace and Russell Bengtson



Castle Gift Shop

Good Books for Autumn Reading

Captain Gallup	\$2.50
Plantation in Yankeeland	\$7.00
Two Paths in the Wilderness	\$9.50
Facts & Fancies	\$10.00
Cobblestone	\$4.95
Cocumscussoc Primer	\$2.00
Yankee Magazine's Great New England Garden Tour	\$1.95
North Kingstown	\$17.95
Mitchell Cookbooks	\$3.00

Stop in the Gift Shop anytime the Castle is open for tours. Don't forget to bring your 2000 membership card for your Castle discount.

Open during Castle hours of operation

Hearty Pats on the Back to...

Darrell McIntire for the classy new Castle letterhead stationery, in addition to his design work on the *Chronicle*, work on a new Castle general brochure, and a new 18th century garden brochure.

Russell Bengtson for building and installing the efficient and attractive new Gift Shop sales counter.

Audrey Moncrieff, Dick Breault, Les Flood, Bob Shillaber, and Bill Moncrieff for keeping the gardens and grounds tip top. Also to Audrey and Dick for planting the four new *Rosa rugosa* by the old cistern.

Candace Bengtson and Cathe Rezendes for wonderful creativity in planning and executing Spring Days, May 20, setting a new precedent for involving many volunteers in a great season opener.

Mary Shillaber, Shirley Burnham,

Eunice Pratt, Nancy Birch, Diane Long, Anne Bowen, Audrey Moncrieff, and 70+ volunteers for an unforgettable Strawberry Festival and Herb Day.

Strawberry Festival and Herb Day merchants: Schartner Farms for beautiful, fresh first-of-the-season strawberries to garnish our shortcakes, the Herb Wyfe of Wickford for a generous gift of materials for the Junior Docents' "Teas and Tisanes," and the North Kingstown Getty for ice.

Marge Swift and the Pettaquamscutt Chapter of the D.A.R. for the new American flag.

David and Betty Follansbee for their generous donation of a Smith's Castle advertisement in the East Greenwich *Music on the Hill* program booklet.

Bill Spicer of B & M Mower for continuing support: this time for repair services on our lawn tractor. It's humming like a top.

Eleanor Wilson for cheerfully giving assistance at every turn on Strawberry Festival and Herb Day.

Paul Biron for weed-whacking and brush-clearing on the lawn.

Elinor Dykstra, Jan Breault, Jean Chapman, and Trish Harmon for Castle Library book donations. We're anxious to ready our library for loans so members can enjoy these interesting new books!



Our Sympathy

The *Chronicle* staff has been notified of the death of Russell O. Burnham of Saunderstown. On behalf of the membership, we extend sincere sympathy to the Burnham family.

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