

Smith's Castle at Cocumscusoc

An Individually Listed National Register Historic Building
A National Historic Landmark Archeological Site

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Exhibit Date: Saturday, April 30, Sunday, May 1, Saturdays, May 7 – June 4, noon to 4pm

Place: 55 Richard Smith Drive, Wickford, RI 02852

Admission: \$8 Adults, \$3 age 6-12.

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Press: Contact us for free admission/ event coverage.

PIRATES! Take Over Smith's Castle in New Exhibit!

Neal Kirk/Free Men Of the Sea Launch Exhibit about the Real Pirates of New England

April 6, 2011 – Wickford, RI – Set sail for an adventure at Smith's Castle in Wickford, RI to see *PIRATES! Against All Flags*.

Neal Kirk, aka Captain William Kidd, founder/commander of *Free Men Of the Sea*, a pirate living-history reenactment group, will display his exhibit of original and reproduction artifacts to depict the reality and myths about the Golden Age of Piracy.

PIRATES! Against All Flags will focus its emphasis on the pirates of the Red Sea trade that were common in New England from about 1690 to 1720. Come get a glimpse into the fact and folklore of the pirates of long ago. View a variety of period weapons, an array of pirate flags, period coins, examples of what treasure pirates really sought, pirate books and movie costumes, types of punishments, and other piratical paraphernalia. If you love things piratical, you'll enjoy this exhibit.

Rated "Arrrrr" for all ages!

The exhibit will be available for viewing during the *Bridge to the Past* opening weekend Saturday, April 30 and Sunday, May 1st, from noon until 4pm. It will continue on each Saturday, 12:00-4:00 pm ending on June 4, 2011. Admission is \$8 for adults and \$3 for children 6-12.

(cont.)



PRESS RELEASE: Smith's Castle/Free Men of the Sea *PIRATES! Against All Flags* (cont.)

About Smith's Castle at Cocumscussoc

Smith's Castle at Cocumscussoc in Wickford (North Kingstown), Rhode Island, is a National Historic Landmark Archaeological Site and is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Buildings.

- Before the arrival of Europeans, it was a summer gathering place for the Narragansett.
- By 1639, it was the location of the trading houses of Richard Smith and Roger Williams—the first English settlement in South County.
- In 1675, it was a garrison for the Great Swamp attack and contains the grave of 40 slain soldiers.
- About 1678, Richard Smith Jr. built the current house, then one of the largest homes in Rhode Island.
- About 1738, Rhode Island Attorney General Daniel Updike renovated Smith's Castle into its current form.
- In the 18th century, Smith's Castle was one of the largest slave-holding plantations in South County, spanning thousands of acres.

About the Cocumscussoc Association

A group of concerned citizens formed the Cocumscussoc Association in 1949 to save Smith's Castle from a developer's wrecking ball. The Association's mission is to preserve the 22-acre site's archaeology and architecture, including the c1678 house and a c1900 house. The Association educates the public about the history of the site and its inhabitants through docent-led public tours, school programs, community events, and adult-education seminars. The Cocumscussoc Association is a private, non-profit, tax-exempt IRS 501(c)(3) organization.

Contact: 401-294-3521 | smithscastle@earthlink.net | www.smithscastle.org

About Neal Kirk and Free Men Of the Sea

Neal Kirk is the founder and owner of the pirate living history reenacting group, Free Men Of the Sea. FMOS's talented crew brings the golden age of piracy to life along the East Coast and Canada for a variety of venues. Neal portrays Captain William Kidd. He incorporates his background from his degree in criminal justice, which specialized in deviant groups and criminal behavior, and his love of sailing. Neal blends this knowledge with his expertise in nautical and pirate history into his group's historical interpretations. Sharing a pirate's lifestyle, demonstration of sword fighting and black powder weapons and their uses, as well as singing period sea chanteys are just a few examples of activities that can be shared during presentations. Neal has one of the largest privately owned collections of pirate and privateer history books in New England. He has been involved in portraying living history in the time periods of the 1600's–1800's for over 30 years. He has been focusing his talents on pirates and privateers since 1990.



Neal Kirk as Captain William Kidd.

Neal and the crew of Free Men of the Sea have provided history education on pirates and privateers for schools ranging from Pre-K thru college level as well as for library audiences and historical societies. The FMOS crew has worked for OpSail 2000, OpSail New London, OpSail 2007 Newport, RI, Sail Fest, the New England Pirate Museum, and a myriad of other historical reenactments and celebrations. In addition, Free Men of the Sea was hired to participate in Halifax's 250th Anniversary in Nova Scotia and Liverpool, Nova Scotia's Privateer Day's. Neal Kirk and the Free Men of the Sea have worked in conjunction with such sailing vessels as The Providence, The Rose, The Quinnipiac, and The Californian for films, documentaries and other historical activities. FMOS has been trained as one of the gun crews aboard the Providence. FMOS is also in the process of completing their first CD of sea shanties.

Neal has enjoyed sharing his knowledge of pirates and privateers as a consultant for the History Channel, the Arts and Entertainment Channel, Windfall Film Productions, Turner Productions, Emerson College and Mystic Seaport. He has also been called upon as a resource for pirate and privateer information for a variety of authors, students and history buffs. Neal serves on the board of Schooner Incorporation which owns the tall ship Quinnipiac in New Haven, Connecticut, as their maritime history expert, as well as having served on the Connecticut Colonel Military Association's, Board of Governor's as their maritime history consultant. As a freelance writer over the past nine years, Neal has published numerous articles for the pirate magazine, *No Quarter Given*. Neal has also developed a pirate exhibit which displays a variety of pirate/nautical artifacts which can be loaned out to museums. This pirate exhibit had its first

showing at the Custom House Museum in New London, Connecticut and will be showcased this year at Smith's Castle in Wickford, Rhode Island. Neal resides with his family in Connecticut. You are welcome to find out more about Neal and the Free Men of the Sea; just Google free men of the sea or www.freemenofthesea.com

Contact: Neal Kirk | Free Men of the Sea | 860-267-8447 | fmos@comcast.net | www.freemenofthesea.com

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