



The Castle Chronicle

Vol. 7 Issue 3

Letter from the President By John Dower

Hello Friends of Smith's Castle,

It has been a busy summer here at the Castle, and as should be expected, our tours have been the focus of most of our efforts. A decision was made by the Executive Committee to again offer Thursday tours in July and August, and it has proven to be successful. In fact, Thursdays outpaced several of the Saturdays and Sundays in July and August. At the suggestion of docents and greeters, we will also stay open for tours into November this year, something we have not tried in the past.

Speaking of tours and docents/greeters, our current group has distinguished itself in another way this season. There has been an uptick in donations following tours this year, and some have been significant in the \$100 to \$250 dollar range. This is a testament to the terrific job our docents/greeters do in not only telling our history, but also making visitors feel more than welcome at our historic house.

In addition to the regular tours, we have also offered our Lost Voices Tours on several Saturdays this year, that focus on the story of enslavement at Smith's Castle. Not surprisingly, the Lost Voices Tours started out slowly, but as time has gone on, and word has gotten out, we have seen more visitors showing up for those specific tours. I expect that next year will see even more interest in those tours.

The Adult Education Committee has been active once again this year, providing some sixteen Afternoon Teas, Breakfast Talks, and Evening Lectures up to this point, with more to come. The tireless Marilyn Harris, who already added a new Mother's Day Tea earlier this year, has a Christmas Tea planned for December 16th. Get your tickets early for that one!

Next month the Adult Education Committee will be hosting its biggest event in years, Anchored in Rhode Island: The Slave Trade & Reckoning with Our Past. The event will be a one-day seminar held on Saturday, October 14th, and will feature some of the leading academics in the field of Rhode Island enslavement. Bob Geake is to be commended for single-handedly assembling the various speakers that will be participating. More info is available on our website.

Members of the Adult Education Committee and the Youth Education Committee are finishing up lesson plans to be submitted for approval to the Rhode Island Department of Education. The long-term goal is to eventually receive grants to host teacher workshops at Smith's Castle, and in turn have the teachers return with students each year to learn about colonial life and slavery. To encourage schools to send their students to Smith's Castle, we will also seek funding that would cover the cost of the school tours and their transportation.

Worth mentioning is the fact that membership in the Cocumscussoc Association has climbed to over one hundred. This includes all types of memberships including individual and families, which means we have something closer to 135 or so people that belong to our organization. We added at least 35 memberships this year with people that were new or had previously been members but not in 2022. Welcome to everyone. Next year we will look to increase our numbers again!

And talking about members, we are just a week away from holding our 75th Anniversary Dinner at the Carriage Inn. It should be an enjoyable night of socializing with other members and hearing about the association's history. Our own board member, John McNiff, will share stories about his many visits to the Castle. Chris Heinzmann, a favorite at the Castle, will provide musical entertainment. A big thank you to Sharon Ferrara, Catherine Delorme, Marilyn Harris and Bob Geake for all their work behind the scenes to make this event happen.

As I finish up this letter to all of you, I am crossing my fingers. We are two days away from one of our biggest fundraisers of the year, the Harvest Festival, and the weather predictions call for 100% chance of rain with rainfall amounts of 1-2" possible. Sunday looks only slightly better. After being forced to cancel the popular Strawberry Festival in May, Mother Nature appears ready to do the unimaginable to our organization. Factors beyond the weather have made these fundraising events difficult enough already- lack of people willing to help organize them, cost of entertainment that will draw people, cost for police details, and competition from other events. In the coming months, the board will have to look at what can be done to increase our income to cover our operational costs. The bottom line is that we need not just new ideas for fundraising, but also people that can help us implement them.

I hope to see you at the 75th Anniversary Dinner!

John



Art Show Highlights Upcoming Seminar Slated for October 14th

A recent art show opening at Smith's Castle featured three Rhode Island artists whose themes highlighted the topics and discussions that will be offered at an upcoming seminar on enslavement in the Ocean State.

The artists whose work were featured were Trustee Mark Burnham's Middle Passage themed watercolors, the tea-bag canvas and African identity markings that are integral parts of artist Susan Hardy-Twaddell's work, and the portrait and story-telling quilts and deco-tage of Veronica Mays Perkins.

The show opened on September 9th, a hot, steamy evening that nonetheless drew a diverse crowd of people who viewed the art, and then listened to the individual artist's interpretation of their work..

Both visually and educationally a great success, we hope to host more of such shows in the future, whether related to programs or on their own.



Above: Mark Burnham, Susan Hardy Twaddell, and Victoria Perkins-May discuss their work with visitors to the "Anchored in Rhode Island" art opening. Below: the trio of women scholars who will present at October's seminar. From L-R Joanne Pope Melish, Charlotte Carrington-Farmer, and Hannah Francis.

The upcoming seminar at Smith's Castle entitled "Anchored in Rhode Island: The Slave Trade and Reckoning with Our Past," has garnered much enthusiasm from organizations and individuals around the state. The all day seminar will : Joanne Pope-Melish, well-known Brown graduate and Professor Emeratus from he University of Kentucky, Charlotte Carrington-Farmer, Associate Professor of History at Roger Williams University, and Hannah Francis, Associate Professor of History from the University of Rhode Island.

Joanne Pope-Melish is best known for her work "Disowning Slavery", and has contributed greatly to the literature on enslavement in early Rhode Island. Professor Carrington-Farmer has committed extensive research to her work min progress on the Narragansett Pacer or "slave-horse", indelibly tied to the trade and traffic from the West Indies. Professor Francis has most recently researched the lives of enslaved people who lived and worked on properties now owned and maintained by Historic New England as part of a post-graduate internship with the organization devoted to such research and discovery.

Francis writes that 'The perception of American Slavery is almost synonymous with slavery in the South. However, enslavement did in fact exist in places in the Northeast".

Her talk entitled "To Be Possessed and Enjoyed: Slavery in Southern Rhode Island" will discuss the nature of enslavement in this region of the state.



Lecture Series, Breakfast Talks, and Teas : A Fruitful Season Winding Down to A Few Remaining Events

This seasons series of lectures, Breakfast Talks and Teas's have given us a very active and successful season. The end of summer brought two fascinating talks from trustees who are also attorneys. At a recent evening lecture, Mark Burnham spoke on Rhode Island's unique colonial laws, especially the "black code". With his presentation at September's first Breakfast Talk, James Murphy espoused upon the first murder trial in South County amidst the tussle between Connecticut and Rhode Island regarding the latter colony's boundary, and the legal jurisdiction over the case.

Two more Breakfast Talks remain, with Castle historian Marilyn Harris giving a presentation on the history of the Docents at Smith's Castle on Saturday October 7th at 10:00 a.m. , and historian and past president Robert A. Geake, who will present the history of Rhode Island's family plots and their stories on October 28th.

The Tea & History events proved to be the most popular this season, selling out each time, with coordinator Marilyn Harris adding another, so that we will have a special "Christmas Tea" on December 16th at 4:30 p.m. Registrations are being taken now for this event, so don't miss out. Registrations begin in October

75th Anniversary Dinner Features Trustee John McNiff, as Guest Speaker, & A Salute to Docents Past & Present

Our long planned 75th Anniversary dinner will be held at North Kingstown's Carriage Inn on September 29th at 6:00 p.m. The dinner will feature former National Park Service Ranger, Reenactor, and Educator John McNiff, who became a trustee of Smith's Castle not long after his retirement . McNiff has had a long history with the Cocumscussoc Association, serving as an advisor and educator at events over the years. He has also tirelessly promoting the philosophic and democratic ideas promoted by Roger Williams, founder of the colony of Rhode Island and the first European to settle at Cocumscussoc, where he established a trading post at the indigenous Narragansett's request.

The evening will also include a three-course buffet and entertainment by Chris Heinzmann. A large raffle-table will also be offered as well as door prizes, and a 50/50 raffle.

Our thanks to the 75th Anniversary committee comprised of John Dower, Catherine Delorme, Sharon Ferrara, Bob Geake, and Marilyn Harris for their efforts in coordinating the dinner. Thanks also to the many generous donations we received, both monetarily and in gift cards and goods for the raffle baskets. Here's to the next 75 years of the Cocumscussoc Association and Smith's Castle!

Wet Summer Dampens Fundraising Efforts

The unusually wet summer that we have experienced this season (officially the 4th most saturated on record) has had an impact on our traditional fundraising events.

Both Strawberry Festival and Harvest Festival fell victim to extended rain over two days, and their cancellation was to prevent what surely would have been a loss of revenue for the Castle.

Since the pandemic, many services, entertainment, and food prices have risen; making coordinators cautious about spending so much for what has amounted in the past few years to be risky ventures.

All non-profits are facing this dilemma, and the Castle Executive Committee may well have to change the way we have thought about fundraising for so long.

In the meantime, we look forward to the 75th Anniversary Dinner and Christmas at the Castle to add to our ongoing fundraising efforts. In the new year we will begin our Annual Appeal in earnest.

We are grateful for the continued support of our members and look forward to increasing our membership as we send out the appeal to those who have visited the Castle this season.

New Digital Map Lets off-hours Visitors Learn About Cocumscussoc History

Many people visit Smith's Castle during the "off-hours", even when there are no docent volunteers on site to guide a tour, to enjoy the grounds, the view of the cove, explore the gardens and nature trails. Until now, only our signboards communicated small snippets of the rich history of Smith's Castle's story.

This year, thanks to a local entrepreneur, a new mobile app will enable a fun learning experience, even when the museum is closed! Michelle Girasole of Fresh Maps (FreshMaps.us), also based in North Kingstown, recently created an interactive map to guide visitors on their journey around the property. A "digital learning map", delivered via visitors' smartphones, will highlight different points of interest with video tidbits from historians appearing in costume. Each map pinpoint challenges visitors to complete trivia questions, puzzles, and games, reinforcing the learning in a fun way.

Over the summer, thanks to a grant from the H. Kimball Foundation, which made the project possible - and free - for visitors, Girasole worked with a team of historians, including Tim Cranston, Bob Geake, Marilyn Harris, John Dower and Jason Roomes to collect and film stories from all three eras of Cocumscussoc's history - pre-colonial, colonial and plantation era. She hired a team from W. Parmentier Media to capture these stories in short film segments that were then programmed into the mobile app. The "Fresh Maps" experience can be accessed via download instructions posted on the Smith's Castle signboard, so visitors can use it even during off-hours.

She said her combined love of the property, history and new technology made it a compelling project. "I started coming here during the off hours because of its proximity to where I live," she said. "There is a lot of beauty here that can be enjoyed, and I found the history intriguing. Smith's Castle is a hidden gem that more people should get out and see for themselves."



Jason Roomes, in the uniform of the 1st Rhode Island Regiment told of the enslaved men who served from Smith's Castle in the Revolutionary War. Other video presenters were Ann Casey, Tim Cranston, John Dower, Bob Geake, Marilyn Harris, and some of our junior docents.

Book Recommendations by Robert A. Geake

***For the People, For the Country: Patrick Henry's Final Political Battle* by John A. Ragosta, University of Virginia Press 2023 286pp.**

Historian John A. Ragosta's biography of Patrick Henry's re-emergence into the political fray during the attempted de-ratification of the Constitution, is a fascinating portrait of the political mosaic of early America, its many players and parties that made up its composition. Henry, as many know, was a Revolutionary orator who came into his own during the 1780's as, if not the most famous, then certainly the most quoted anti-federalist politician.

As with others in the fledgling United States, Patrick Henry recognized that the Articles of Confederation, drawn in the throes of war, needed to be replaced. He just as firmly believed that most Americans did not want a government that held complete oversight over their lives or their economies. This was a position that would later be adopted by "states' rights" advocates, and an issue that is still often debated today. In Henry's time, he and other anti-federalists worried about a constitution giving too much power and authority to either a sitting president or the congress,

He would press these concerns through two conventions and the eventual ratification of the Constitution, finally coming to the realization that reform of the document would only e through a change in the elected senators and representatives. Henry was a firm believer in the will of the people as expressed at the ballot box. When his efforts to mobilize anti-federalists and get them elected to the House fell short, he accepted the loss and though frustrated, retired from politics.

When he returned, it was at Washington's request when partisan rhetoric had fallen to the level of slander, and the president felt that the fights between Jeffersonians and Hamiltonians would end the American experiment in democracy altogether. He chose the eloquent Henry to defend that democracy. As Ragosta writes "the world watched the infancy of the first modern constitutional republic, if political means did not work, revolution would inevitably lead to collapse of the republic and to monarchy."

***Prisoners of Congress: Philadelphia's Quakers in Exile 1777-1778* by Norman E. Donaghue II, Pennsylvania State University Press 2023 269pp**

This work by independent researcher and historian Norman E. Donaghue reveals a little known chapter of the American Revolution, that of the period of contempt, and even fear that American colonists had of the once powerful Society of Friends. Rhode Islanders of course, are familiar with the Quakers as they are more popularly known, having much of its early history fall under their influence. The destruction of so much property during King Philip's War however, led to an undercurrent of discontent with their wealth, and their religious dissent from taking up arms in defense of their town or country.

By the time of the outbreak of the American Revolution, Donaghue writes, "Quakers found themselves out of step with revolutionary sentiments". Within months the once powerful members were "out of office, out of influence, out of business". Once the Continental Congress ordered the apprehension of "dissatisfied" Quakers in Pennsylvania and Maryland, a ripple effect occurred in those colonies that held even the smallest of Quaker communities.

Donaghue's book centers on Pennsylvania's response, the state which had held the largest population of members of the Society of Friends for over a century. The result was the arrest of twenty-two men who were held in a makeshift camp of cottages beside a Virginia prison for seven months as political prisoners. Their families appealed to Congress, and when a resolution was slow in coming, the wives of several men, including Elizabeth Drinker, appealed to the Commander in Chief for the men's release.

As fascinating as the "Quaker Exile" is in and of itself, the author explores more historical and legal aspects of the incident when "politics and religion...became entangled at the birth of the new republic, even in a state known as a haven for religious toleration. It happened even against a supposed peaceful minority whose loyalties came under intense question...The great difficulty of staying true to founding principles while attempting to ensure the safety and security of civil society is a lesson from the 18th century that—amid questions of the global war on terror and cries of religious profiling—remains intensely relevant to the twenty-first century."

From the Archives: Cordwainers at the Castle by Robert A. Geake

Cordwainer was the early colonial term for shoemaker. While most of us assume that the craftsmen called cobblers made the shoes that fashion-minded colonials wore, a cobbler in those times only repaired shoes as needed. A “shoomaker” as they were advertised by late in the 18th century, was a valuable craftsman. In early colonial times, many families and farms had to rely upon itinerant craftsmen, who would become part of the household as he crafted shoes for separate members of the family.

Some set up shop in their homes like other craftsmen, where they made shoes on request. Models of feet were carved out of wood and kept in stock for examples in various sizes and styles from which customers would choose. Though of varied style, each shoe was made identical to the other. The crafting of shoes to fit right and left feet would not become available until the 1840's. The shoes themselves were simple and unglamorous compared to today's footwear. They were made strictly for practical use, to withstand the muck and mud of footpaths and for walking long distances.

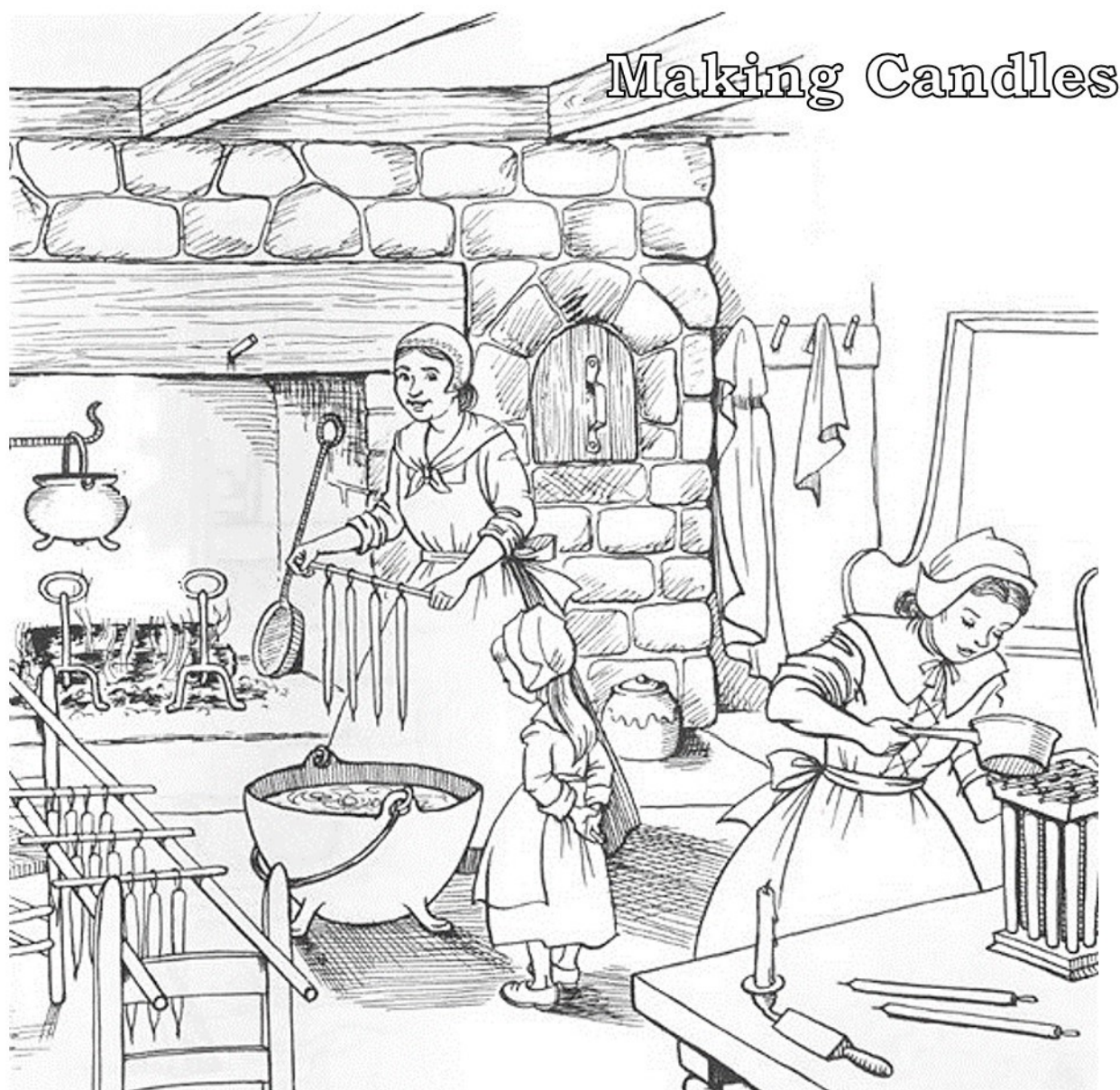
A cut of leather was “cured” by scraping over a wooden beam. Unlined shoes were made with the smooth side to line the foot and the rough outside leather dressed with a mixture of soot, lard, bear grease and beeswax. Soles were often replaced by cobbler, and could be either leather or wood.

On well populated plantations, the craft was needed even more, and such large landowners often sought to have enslaved workers trained in the craft. While there is no evidence that any of the enslaved at Smith's Castle were trained in the craft, the Daybooks from the final years of the plantation in Lodowick and Daniel Updike's hands show that one local indigenous man named Daniel Onion, was paid several times for the “making of shoes”. A shoemaker was considered to have mastered his craft when he could produce a good pair of riding boots or jackboots.

Smith's Castle recently acquired a pair of 3' x 2' cases with shelving that were donated by the Old Colony Museum of Taunton, Massachusetts. These units will allow us to have revolving and permanent displays of some of the artifacts from the archives of Cocumscusoc.



A sample of our foot model collection from the archives



<https://clerk.ulstercountyny.gov/sites/default/files/resources/Colonial%20Kingston%20Coloring%20Book.pdf>

If you lived in colonial times, your whole family would probably go to bed with the sun. That's because there were no electric lights and candles did not last very long or give off much light. Unless you lived in a town where you might be able to buy them, families had to make their own candles from fat they collected from cooking their meat.

One way to make candles was by dipping over and over again into the melted meat fat (*tallow*). If your family was lucky enough to have a tin or pewter candle mold, it was faster, but in either case, the candlemaker had to be very careful not to be painfully burned by hot wax!

The field mice who often lived in colonial houses loved the meat fat candles too; that's why candles were kept in tightly covered tin boxes.

Around and About Smith's Castle:

September 29th 6:00-10:00 p.m.

The Cocumscussoc Association 75th Anniversary Dinner, Carriage Inn, North Kingstown

Members & guests only

October 7th 10:00-11:30 Breakfast Talk

Marilyn Harris relays the history of the docents at our historic site with *75 Years of Interpreting Smith's Castle and RI History*

October 14th 9:30-3:30 p.m.

Anchored in Rhode Island: The Slave Trade & Reckoning with Our Past

An all-day seminar for teachers, students, and the public featuring speakers **Charlotte Carrington-Farmer, Joanne Pope Melish, and Seth Rockman.** Workshops will feature discussions from **Tim Cranston, John Dower, Robert Geake, Charles Roberts, and Loren Spears.**

October 28th 10:00-11:30 a.m. Breakfast Talk

Robert A. Geake recounts *Rhode Island Family Plots and Their Stories*

December 2nd & 3rd 12:00—4:00 p.m.

Christmas at the Castle

December 16th 4:30 p.m.

Christmas Tea



The story of Hannah Robinson's grave (pictured above) is one of several to be discussed in October 28th's Breakfast Talk.



Smith's Castle and the Master Gardeners' "Three Sisters" garden flourished this year, as did the 18th century medicinal, and herb gardens.

Wet weather and the resultant growth also made keeping the trails clear a challenge. Our thanks to Jason Roomes who helped Bob Geake remove some fallen trees and trimmed the junipers at the edge of the parking area.



President John Dower snapped this picture of a visitor to the grounds during the height of the summer season. We continue our efforts to make the grounds and island protected and preserved.



- *Admission includes continental breakfast
- *Attendance at all workshops and three keynote presentations
- *Box Lunch and refreshments
- *Tour of Historic Smith's Castle

REGISTER TODAY

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

EMAIL: _____

_____ADMISSION : \$40 _____ STUDENT \$25 _____ SENIOR \$25 _____MEMBER –FREE

Make check to The Cocumscussoc Association and mail to 55 Richard Smith Dr. North Kingstown, RI 02854