



The Castle Chronicle

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Letter from the President

By Denise Boule

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In 1949, the Cocumscussoc Association formed to protect and cultivate Smith's Castle located on the shore of a small cove, just north of Wickford, Rhode Island. This great house, built by Richard Smith Jr. in 1678, sits on the site of the first trading post in Narragansett Bay. The Cocumscussoc Association has had many volunteers, whether they were part of the Board of Trustees, the Officers' team, the Docents and/or Volunteers at-large. Each group has had the belief that the history of the people who settled here and the 338-year old structure must be preserved. I am pleased to be in the group of a long line of presidents of the Association which continues to build the bridge to the past, and continues to follow our mission to keep the rich history of the castle alive and known to our North Kingstown community and nationwide.

This past spring and summer the exterior project on the Castle was completed. It included but was not limited to: a new roof, a new front door, five rebuilt windows, and painting of the entire house. The Site Committee/Grant Committee spearheaded by Susan Danforth are to be congratulated for a job well done. Funding was secured through the Rhode Island State Preservation Society and the Champlin Foundation. The Education Committee lead by Maggie Skenyon has forged a partnership with the Rocky Hill School, to open up doors to project-based learning. The students are working to make history come alive. This effort adds to an already vibrant educational program. The Smith Castle Docents are amazing people! There is so much to share and learn from our many talented volunteers, many of whom you must meet!

Membership Finishes First Phase

The 2018 Membership Drive has reached the end of its first phase. As in previous years, membership renewal forms and invitations have been sent out, and we have begun receiving renewals at the office.

Bob Stone, who has coordinated the membership drives for the past several years tells the *Chronicle* that the current drive is running about even with last year at this time.

Membership is a driving force of our organization and the life of Smith's Castle. Our health as an organization is tied to a robust membership. It is what keeps the Cocumscussoc association running, and allows us to be successful in seeking grants to preserve the site.

If you have not yet renewed your membership, please do so. We want to have everyone get the full use of their membership, and opening weekend will be here before we know it.

A renewal application is available on the website under the Membership tab or contact the Castle's office at 401-294-3521



The Castle in the final stages of the restoration grant last year sponsored by the Rhode Island Historic Preservation Commission.

Opening weekend to give “A Tour of Rhode Island History”

Local Historical societies, the Patriot Fife & Drum Duo, and the Rhode Island Pirate Players will take part in this year's festivities...

Opening weekend at Smith's Castle is shaping up to be a special event this year. The theme, “a Tour of Rhode Island History”, lets us invite local historical societies, historic sites, reenactor groups, and museums to set up displays about their museums and activities for the coming season..

The “Caretakers of History”, those students from Rocky Hill School who have studied Smith's Castle's history during the past year will give presentations in the Castle.

In addition, guest speakers Gerald Carbone, author of *Nathanial Greene*, and Loren Spears of the Tomaquag Museum will give presentations on Saturday and Sunday respectively.

The Rhode island Pirate Players return this year to provide family entertainment, along with the Patriot Fife & Drum Duo who will stroll the grounds on Saturday, and give a performance on Sunday afternoon.

Local vendors and colonial craftsman demonstrating their craft, and selling their wares will also be part of the weekend.

Rocky Hill Students Create Website, Write Article on Castle's History

The “Caretakers of History” from Rocky Hill School created a child-centered website on the history of Smith's Castle.

With an attractive and easy to navigate format, the website named the Colonial Kids Corner, takes the viewer through several phases of the Castle's history, beginning with an historical timeline, and links that highlight Castle artifacts, important people, and the “top reasons why kids should visit the Castle.

The Rocky Hill classes under teacher Charles Laurent spent last semester in studying the history of the Castle in coordination with Maggie Skenyon, our Youth education coordinator, and docents from the Castle.

In the course of their research, they visited the State Archives, gave a presentation to the North Kingston High school history class under teacher Chris Carty, and wrote a lengthy article about the Castle which appeared in the Rhode Island Independent newspaper

this spring.

We are delighted that the “Caretakers of History” will also be part of our opening weekend, and in addition, are now working on a play to highlight some of the inhabitants of the house.

More on that to follow as our partnership continues through the year.

Those wishing to visit the site may find it at <https://sites.google.com/rockyhill.org/atsmithscastle/home>

Docents Recruit, Promote Smith's Castle

Docents have recently made the rounds of local groups and organizations to recruit docents for Smith's Castle in the upcoming season. Bob Rouse visited the East Greenwich Senior Center, and Marilyn Harris talked with the North Kingstown Senior Center. Bob Geake is scheduled to give a talk at both the Beechwood Men's Club and the Warwick Rotary Club on April 12th.

In addition, Professor Jon Marcoux of Salve Regina, sent a notice on the docent training to student. Professors Marcoux and filmmaker Jamie McGuire brought students from their class to visit the Castle during the Slave Dwelling project .

Docent training began on April 3rd and will continue for several weeks. Current docents involved in the training plan to “adopt” a new docent and support them during the upcoming season.



Eric Dean and Mike Jacques of BB&S Lumber drop off the wood for bridges at the Castle

Trails on Path to Open by End of June

Thanks in large part to the donation of lumber needed to build two bridges and a walkway from BB&S Lumber, and a grant from the town of North Kingstown for educational signage, the long planned trails on the old farm roads of Smith's Castle should be open by the end of June..

The bridges and walkway are needed for the Farm Road trail which passes through what are now wetlands, and crosses Meadow Brook twice in its S shaped route through the new woods grown in what were once pastures for cattle between the Castle and Post Road.

The signage chosen by the sign committee are solid steel plates and frames that attach to treated posts and hold a laminated weather-proof sign within the frame. These will be placed at selected sites and highlight both the historical orientation of the farm, but also the environmental changes that have occurred at Cocumscussoc since the closing of the farm.

A total of twelve signs will be placed along the three trails, including the Spring Trail, and the Sea View walkway, along the embankment where the famous railroad brought passengers to Narragansett.

The installation of signs and building of the bridges will be under the supervision of Max Ferrara, who recently took the vacant position of Grounds and Maintenance Supervisor. He will report to the President and Site Committee. Max and Bob Geake were instrumental in organizing what was needed and acquiring the lumber for the bridges and posts for the signs. Our thanks again for BB&S Lumber for responding to our request in such a generous manner, and is yet another testament to their reputation for supporting projects undertaken by local Audubon sites, the Exeter Job Corp, and Eagle Projects throughout the state. We are proud that they are part of the North Kingstown community.

2018 Golf Tournament Planning Underway

Longtime coordinators Bob Verdi and Bob Stone are getting things in motion for the 2018 golf tournament. This year the tournament will tee off on September 14th at Laurel Lane Golf Course, West Kingstown. If you would like to help in planning this major fundraising event for the Castle, please give a call to Bob Verdi or Bob Stone and volunteer. The more people involved in planning the better the event can be.



Round and About Smith's Castle

Opening Weekend: A Tour of RI History,
May 5th & 6th 12:00—4:00 pm

Lecture on the Lawn

James Glickman reads from *Crossing Point*

May 15th 6:00 pm

Docent/Trustee Pot Luck Supper

Guest: Jane Hennedy

May 24th 6:00 pm

Lecture on the Lawn

Jo Ann Butler reads from *The Golden Shore*
A Scandalous Life

June 12th 6:00 pm

Strawberry Festival

Saturday June 16th 11:00-4:00 pm

Docent/Trustee Pot Luck Supper

Thursday June 21st 6:00 pm

Guest: TBA

We were saddened by the deaths of a several long-time members and friends of Smith's Castle this past winter and early spring. Al Klyberg was a Rhode Island historian and past president of the Rhode Island Historical Society. He was a life member and supporter of the Castle. William Sabo was a longstanding member and gave generously each year to the Annual Appeal. Maureen Danforth was a dedicated docent and friend of the Castle for many years. They will be missed.

This past January at our Annual Meeting we welcomed Max Ferrara, Bo Fuller, and Robert Rouse as new trustees. Max will also take on the duties of Grounds Supervisor to keep the Site Committee notified of needs or concerns. Bo will be helping maintain the trails on the property.

Chet and Janet Browning continue to help with the cleaning of the Castle and odd jobs around the grounds.

