

Castle Chronicle

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Sampler Loaned for RIHS Spring Exhibit

A Newport sampler given to the Cocumscussoc Association by Mrs. William Davis Miller in 1954 normally hangs in the dining room at Smith's Castle, and there has always been curiosity about its history. Be curious no more—Sybil Dean's ancestry has been found, and the sampler definitely has a North Kingstown connection!

Sybil was born in Plainfield, Connecticut on August 25, 1747, the daughter of Ezra Dean (1718–1811). Her mother's name was Elizabeth, but little other information is known about Elizabeth Dean at this time. Ezra was married four times, and his last wife was Phoebe Waterman of Rhode Island; they married in 1774.

Ezra and Rebekah Dean moved the family to East Greenwich, R.I., circa 1754. Rebekah was likely the third wife of Ezra Dean and Sybil's stepmother. Ezra, Rebekah, and Henry Tibbits owned land together in East Greenwich; Ezra's occupation is listed as blacksmith on the deed to that land. Ezra also purchased land in Warwick, near Moose Neck Hill in 1772 and later bought additional land in Cranston. As a man with a lucrative trade and the owner of property, Ezra Dean could well afford to send his younger daughter to be educated. To date no sampler or other documentation exists about older

daughter Anna's education. But surely the two sons, Jonathon (b. 1741) and James, were also well educated.

At the time the sampler was made in 1761, the family was living on the Pardon Mawney farm in Davisville. Sybil very likely attended

already been schooled at home or at a local dame school with basic instruction, like reading, writing, and elementary sewing. But the boarding school went further, and most of the Newport schools taught extensive stitchery techniques to their young students. However, no

single technique can be attributed to the teaching of any one school mistress. Few records or lists of students exist; primary sources include mostly correspondence between students and parents or between teachers and parents.

Sybil married Joshua Davis in Davisville on the 19th of November in 1775. Her brother Jonathon married Joshua's sister, Molly Davis. The three sons of each family were named Ezra, Jeffrey, and James; apparently the cousins were very close as youngsters. Sybil died on December 20, 1829.

Sybil's sampler is being featured, along with about 35 others, at an exhibition at The Rhode Island Historical Society, 110 Benevolent St., Providence, R.I. The exhibition opens to the public on March 16, 2001 and runs through April 6, 2001. Hours for Aldrich House are Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. A workshop to make a reproduction sampler from the RIHS collections will be held on Saturday, March 31, 2001. Call 331-8575 for further information.
—Linda Eppich



school in Newport; her sampler shows characteristics of other Newport samplers—animals and particularly the meandering floral border. Young ladies of affluent families were sent to a boarding school to learn French ciphering, dancing, painting, deportment, and other subjects. They had probably

public on March 16, 2001 and runs through April 6, 2001. Hours for Aldrich House are Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. A workshop to make a reproduction sampler from the RIHS collections will be held on Saturday, March 31, 2001. Call 331-8575 for further information.

—Linda Eppich

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Note from the President

A few years ago I came across "Lessons of the Geese" (author unknown). From time to time I pass it on to others, including our officers and trustees. I believe the message helps us become more accomplished in our work together. The past year's achievements by so many dedicated folks are proof that the geese know what they are doing! Now, I'd like to pass it on to all of our members. The benefits of "flying together" are real. Join our flock!

Lessons from the Geese

As geese fly together, each goose flaps its wings and thus creates an "uplift" for the bird following. By flying in a "V" formation, the whole flock adds 75 percent more flying range than if each bird flew alone.

Lesson: People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier because they are traveling on the thrust of one another.

Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to fly alone, and quickly gets back in formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the birds in front.

Lesson: If we have as much sense as a goose, we will join in formations with those who are headed where we want to go.

When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back into the formation and another goose flies in the point position.

Lesson: It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks and sharing leadership. With people, as with geese, there is interdependence with one another.

The geese in formation honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

Lesson: We need to make sure our honking from behind is encouraging—not something less helpful.

When a goose gets sick or wounded, two geese drop out of formation and follow their fellow member down to help and provide protection. They stay with this member until it is either able to fly again or dies. Then they launch out on their own, with another formation, or catch up with their own flock.

Lesson: If we have as much sense as the geese, we'll look out for one another and help one another in good times and bad.

—Dick Bowen

From the Annex Window

Castle volunteers reported nearly 5,900 hours for 2000, an increase of 4,380 over 1999. 5,900 correlates approximately to the work of three full-time employees. That's significant! A personal note of appreciation will be sent to each member who submitted hours. Thank you all for your efforts and your reports. We hope everyone is already counting for 2001.

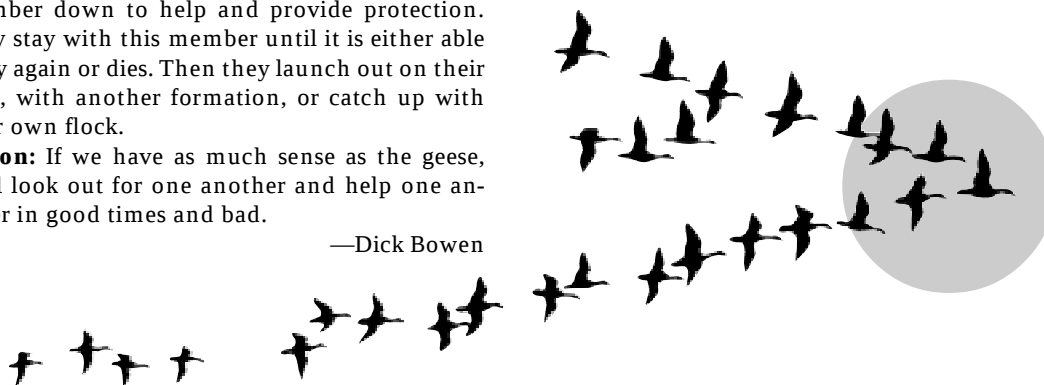
Smith's Castle is clearly a year-round operation. Business continues even as the snow flies despite the fact we're not open for tours! And now we look to the spring activities. Please call to lend a hand with Clean-Up Days, April 7 and 8; Opening Day with Spring Days on the Plantation, May 5; or Strawberry Festival, June 9. Join the flock and fly with us.

We are recruiting volunteer docents for spring training. This is a prime opportunity to learn more about our place in history, meet other people with similar interests, and be part of the association mission of education and historic preservation. Free training begins April 26 and will continue for six sessions.

Or consider one of the many other volunteer opportunities: If you like the fresh air, help tend the garden or maintain the grounds. If you like working with kids, get involved in school programs or junior docents. Join other members on a committee and help with membership, education, collections, fund raising, or grant writing. Be a docent's friend during tour hours by assisting with admissions or in the gift shop.

Please call the office, 294-3521, today, so we can help find just the right opportunity for you!

—Barbara Carey

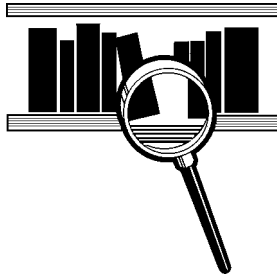


News from the Committees

Collections Committee Searches for Missing Books

In keeping with the Castle mission, it is imperative that we keep our library collection of approximately 250 books intact. So for the past year and a half, we have been doing an inventory and catalogue of these volumes. As we renumber the collection, we need to have every book in hand.

The result of the survey shows a surprising number of missing books, some of which are deemed rare or have unique reference content. We believe the majority of missing volumes were probably borrowed by Castle members who have innocently forgotten to return them.



Please, would every member take a moment, look at your bookshelves, and see if you have any books that belong in the Castle library? Borrowed volumes might also have passed from parents or grandparents into the hands of family members who do not realize the value of these books.

We are also establishing a new loan policy that requires Castle members to sign out books. Some books will be set aside as non-circulating and available only for on-site research. If you have any questions, please contact Neil Dunay, 294-7461. Books may be dropped off at the Annex office, no questions asked. ■

—Neil Dunay

New Membership Coordinators

Ellie Ferguson and Cathy Shippee, new membership committee coordinators, report that invitations to renew have been mailed, and that plans for a new member drive are underway. Members can contribute to increasing our ranks by inviting a non-member to join them for a house tour or for a special event. Such an experience will show guests firsthand how the reasonable cost of membership supports historic preservation and education at Smith's Castle.

Readers interested in working with the membership committee should call the office, 294-3521. ■

Junior Docents

Both the older and younger groups are involved in a unit of textile study. After doing additional research on colonial clothing, the older group will make new and more authentic costumes. An extension of their research includes a March fieldtrip to meet with staff at URI and examine colonial clothing in the University's textile collection.

The younger junior docents have been learning about weaving and its importance in colonial life. They have made small hand-held looms out of Popsicle sticks and are now learning to weave tape that was used as drawstrings for clothing in colonial times. The next project will be to make cording with a lucet, a colonial era tool.

Mrs. Joanne McCarthy has been a big help in leading the younger group. She, Elizabeth, a Junior Docent, and their family will soon be moving to Georgia. They will be terribly missed. Volunteers who can assist in this program should call the office, 294-3521. ■

Welcome New Members

Sarah D. and Hilary Hurdis
Christine and Larry Kalina
LaFleur Family
Rebecca Morgan
Albert and Barbara Perez
Robert C. and Ruth Rathbun Pitman
Davis Robinson
Joseph and Bonnie Smith
Norma La Salle and Richard Tomlinson

New Business Members

Toray Plastics, Inc.

Peter and Betty Dunston and Alex and Betty Fenik join the special group of life members giving exemplary support to Smith's Castle. Thank you!

—as of 2/14/01

Updike Descendents Give to Castle Collection

Eliza Collins and her cousin Clarkson Collins, descendents of Wilkins Updike, have generously gifted the Castle collections with objects that belonged to the Updike family. Included are fabric from a wedding gown worn in 1799, a waistcoat that belonged to Daniel Updike, books, baskets, wooden boxes, a salt glazed jug, and several more items. We are thrilled and grateful. Please watch for a full story in the next issue of the *Chronicle*. ■

Annual Meeting

Sweetest Dreams Voiced at Annual Meeting

The experts tell us that dreams are healthy. We problem solve and create in dreamtime. Association members at the January 27, 2001 Annual Meeting engaged in this healthy process and dreamed their sweetest dreams for the future of Smith's Castle. Their enthusiasm was contagious and the ideas intriguing. Participants good-naturedly "demanded" that their voices be heard by the wider organization. Readers may notice that some of these dreams are already coming true:

- Thoroughly research and replicate the plantation era and develop living history interpretation with animals, weaving shop, blacksmith, grape arbors, strawberry beds, etc.
- Make Smith's Castle the #1-visited site in R.I. with a full service visitors' center, including education facilities, climate-controlled collections storage, meeting space, kitchen facilities, and gift shop.

- Strengthen recruitment efforts to increase membership to 1,200, build the number of general volunteers, and provide a corp of 300 active docents/interpreters.

- Coordinate activities with the North Kingstown school district so all children in the community understand the importance of this site.

- Record Betty Follansbee's talks and use them in the production of a new video.

- Establish an active grants committee.

- Promote public awareness of the Castle both singly and in cooperation with other historical entities.

- Advertise Castle rental availability.

- Improve the library.

- Develop a Smith's Castle coloring book.

- Enhance Plantation Days to better reflect the history of the era.

- Produce an exhibit of objects

found during the URI and Brown University archeological digs; pursue plan for their return to our collections.

- Seek expertise for archeological research in the shallow water between the Castle and the island.

- Complete the collections inventory and registration; purchase reproduction pots to be used for educational purposes.

- Develop a Smith's Castle ornament to be sold in the gift shop.

- Expand efforts to accumulate higher quality objects for the collection.

- Complete the restoration.

- Convert the annex to a visitor center and education facility; provide other quarters for resident manager.

Readers interested in being on the Cocumscussoc dream team—the volunteers who make all things happen at the Castle—should call the office, 294-3521. ■

Committees' Annual Summaries

Collections. The name of the Furnishings Committee has been changed to Collections Committee to reflect the variety of artifacts, objects, and archives that it oversees. Inventory and accessioning projects using current museum standards are still in progress. Laura Anderson, intern for Smith's Castle, designed a database for data generated.

— Linda Eppich

Docents. The Docents worked hard to manage and staff special events—from Spring Cleanup to Christmas at the Castle. But the Castle work-year goes beyond events: It is in the steady, everyday work—serving on committees, manning Castle tours, etc.—that our Docents shine.

— Joyce Fuller

Education. The Education Committee suggested many new programs: Spring Life on the Plantation, Herb Day, and a lecture series on jonnycakes, Blackstone, and beekeeping. More than a thousand students visited the Castle on school tours in 2000, and we are expanding programs with local schools.

— Jan Breault

Finance. In 2000, the Association had receipts of \$53,761.00 and expenditures of \$52,342.00. The full financial statement is available at the Annex office.

— Mary Shillaber

Grounds. At Spring Cleanup, volunteers trimmed trees and brush, raked leaves, and spread mulch. Jon

Bengtson was contracted to mow and trim the lawns weekly, volunteers did monthly light maintenance, and Les Flood mowed the parking fields before events. Audrey Moncrieff and her volunteers tended the 18th Century Garden beautifully.

— Dick Breault

House. The Castle enjoyed a smooth year with minor repairs and few maintenance issues. A power-wash of the exterior and the installation of low-profile, custom-fabricated storm and screen windows were completed.

— Mary Turkel

Membership. For 2000, the Castle had 277 nonbusiness members (including 26 life members) and 11 business members.

— Jim Sullivan

New Trustees Bring Range of Expertise and Interest

Four new trustees were elected at the January 27 annual Association meeting. We welcome Neil Dunay, Peter Dunston, Ellie Ferguson, and Norma La Salle to the board.

Trustees are charged with the following responsibilities: participate fully in the decision-making and management process of the Association; be a dues-paying member; attend scheduled meetings and functions; accept responsibility by taking a leadership position on a committee; provide financial support; represent the Association in a positive manner in the community; and seek new members.

Here are brief profiles so that members can get to know new trustees.



Neil Dunay is a senior analyst at KMI Corporation, a fiber optics market consulting firm based in Newport, where he tracks worldwide markets for telecommunications optical equipment. Neil earned his BA from Trinity College in Hartford and his MA at Johns Hopkins in Washington, D.C.

He has a special interest in Rhode Island local history, genealogy, and colonial architecture. He is researching records relating to Cocumscussoc as he studies the history of his own house, a structure built before 1725 on land originally owned by Richard Smith.

Since becoming a Castle member in 1998, Neil has served on the *Chronicle* staff and the Collections Committee, and is cataloguing the

Castle library. He is interested in preserving and organizing the archives relating to the Castle and the Cocumscussoc Association.



Peter Dunston is a retired business executive. He is a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley and the AMP program at the Harvard Business School, and was Vice President, Planning and Acquisitions, for Martin Marietta Corporation. After retirement, Peter and his wife Betty, a sculptor, moved from Washington, D.C. to Florida where he became a trustee of the Norton Museum of Art in West Palm Beach. During his tenure, he coordinated the production of the museum's first long-range strategic plan, served as Treasurer and Chairman of the Finance and Planning committee, and was involved in raising thirty million dollars and tripling the size of the museum. Today Norton has the largest and most important permanent collection of painting and sculpture in the South.

Two years ago, Peter and Betty moved to Wickford to be closer to family and friends, Betty's New England roots, her interests in gardening and historic homes, and Peter's sailing hobby. They love life in Rhode Island and say there will be no more moves.

Ellie Ferguson is an officer of Ferguson Perforating & Wire Co., Providence and a current trustee on the boards of Willett Free Library and Gilbert Stuart Birthplace. She is the First Vice Presi-

dent of the Plum Beach Garden Club and a past Commodore of the Wickford Yacht Club.

Ellie has keen interest in preserving historic New England and believes that we have a unique grace and responsibility, with Smith's Castle in our midst. Having enjoyed the study of history all her life, she believes offering Castle visitors the opportunity to understand our past is a crucial and fascinating part the Castle mission.

She is interested in music, art and architecture, gardening, reading, and dogs—especially pugs! Ellie and her husband Bruce have lived in Saunterstown for 11 years.



Dr. Norma La Salle has been a professor of history at Community College of Rhode Island since 1966. Retired from full-time teaching in

June 2000, she now continues part-time, teaching *U.S. History to 1877* and *U.S. History 1877–Present*. She has published articles in *Rhode Island History* and in the *New England Quarterly*. Her doctoral dissertation, *The Perils of Providence: Rhode Island's Capital City* during the Depression and New Deal, focused on Providence in the 1930s.

Born in Warwick, she earned a BA from Newton College (now Boston College), an MA in History from Villanova University, and a PhD in American History from the University of Connecticut. She returned to teach in Rhode Island and has been a resident of Exeter since 1970.

Recent Events

Hundreds Came for the Holidays



Photo by Barbara Carey

The ambience of the Castle brought hundreds of community friends and members together over the holidays. The efforts of many volunteers guaranteed the success of each event. The nearly

800 guests who came for Christmas at the Castle, December 1 and 2, were greeted by Wickford Middle School carolers. Father Christmas welcomed children at the kitchen hearth. Junior Docents demonstrated the art of quilling and colonial games. Docents served hot-spiced cider in the gracefully decorated dining room where *Updyke's Rose* thrilled the audience with carols and rousing Renaissance tunes.

The bake sale took in over \$760, and the Felicity Doll drawing brought in nearly \$1200 for education. Betty Sue Reed, Felicity prize-winner, generously contacted the Department of Children and Family Services and gave her doll to a needy child.

On December 6 the membership committee and Affiliated Insurance Managers co-hosted the North Kingstown Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours. Through the generosity of participants, the Chamber raised over \$200 in town-wide gift certificates for needy teens in the area.

More than 100 members and guests ventured out on a snowy evening to gather in the candlelit Castle for the December 8 holiday party. Abundant and delicious fare, good company, and fine music graced the event. Thanks to the generosity of ten member sponsors, the Castle realized proceeds of over \$2400 for care of our lovely trees. ■



Betsy Fenik



Betsy Steinman

Rhode Island Fund Raising Executives Honor Castle Members

Elizabeth Fenik, Mr. and Mrs. Henry D. Sharpe, Jr., and Betsy Steinman were volunteers honored by the Rhode Island Chapter of the National Society of Fund Raising Executives (NSFRE) at the Society's National Philanthropy Day, 2000. NSFRE is the leading professional association for fund raising executives who work for not-for-profit and philanthropic organizations.

Elizabeth "Betsy" Fenik, member and daughter of Cocumscussoc As-

sociation officers, Al and Betty Fenik, was cited as a Partner in Philanthropy for her tireless work with AIDS Project Rhode Island. She has just completed a two-year term as Co-President of the Board of Directors of AIDS Project Rhode Island.

Mr. and Mrs. Sharpe, life members of Cocumscussoc, received the Helm Award for Outstanding Philanthropic Citizen. This award was given in recognition of the family tradition of exceptional generosity

in Rhode Island philanthropy. The Sharpe family is one of the oldest pioneering families in Rhode Island.

Betsy Steinman, is an active Cocumscussoc member and former trustee. NSFRE honored Betsy as a Partner in Philanthropy for her work for Hospice Care of Rhode Island, a Lifespan Partner. Betsy served as cochair of the Hospice Regatta for the past two years, her enthusiastic leadership raising thousands of dollars for Hospice. ■



Smith's Castle Included in New Guide Book

The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America in Rhode Island has recently published the first edition of *A Guide Book...*, which lists important museum houses across the state. Smith's Castle is featured along with 41 other important sites.

Maps, photos, descriptions, contact information, and hours of operation for each site make this compilation a very usable reference.

The Society is a nonprofit organization dedicated to restoring, maintaining, and preserving the

buildings and antiquities of the early times of the country.

Any readers interested in seeing a copy should contact the office, 294-3521. To obtain a copy, please contact the National Society of Colonial Dames—R.I., 15 Hopkins St., Providence, RI 02903. ■

What's Ahead

Clear the Cobwebs!

 Clean-Up Days are the kickoff spring volunteer event for the Castle. On Saturday, April 7 and Sunday, April 8, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. volunteers will spruce up the Castle for the season ahead. Some chores are washing inside windows, dusting and cleaning the Castle top to bottom, and tidying the garden and grounds from end to end.

Any amount of volunteer time given is a big help—even an hour or two. This activity also provides a good way to get acquainted and renew friendships.

RSVP to 294-3521 so the coordinators will know how to plan the tasks and the delicious lunch for all volunteers. Please bring your own clippers, rakes, and gloves. ■

Colonial Wars Funds Reproduction Cookware

The Society of Colonial Wars has once again generously supported Smith's Castle; this time with a grant for purchase of reproduction cookware. Society Governor William N. Makepeace announced the gift in December 2000. Member Bill Moncrieff served as liaison in seeking the funds.

The new utensils will be used to train Castle members in the essentials of 18th century cooking so that more interpreters will be available for demonstrating open-hearth cooking at special events.

The purchase of the reproductions will enable equipment of historic value currently being used to be retired, properly preserved, and exhibited as part of the permanent collections.



Photo by Dick Breault

Past grants given by the Society made possible such projects as the conservation of the portrait of Anstis Updike Lee and the purchase of an outdoor bench.

A cooking class will be held this spring. Members interested should call the office, 294-3521. ■

Castle Ready for Next Phase of Museum Assessment

Last fall, Smith's Castle received a grant to participate in the Museum Assessment Program (MAP). MAP is funded in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and developed and managed by the American Association of Museums (AAM). In mid-January, the Castle completed a major first step in the three-stage program: a comprehensive self-study of the Castle's operations.

The self-study was conducted by a board-level team, including President Dick Bowen, Vice President Al Fenik, Jan Breault, and Linda Eppich. Neil Dunay and Barbara Carey coordinated the group effort. The team sought the participation of a range of Association members, especially docents. Overall, the team and other volunteers spent approximately 160 hours

completing the self-study.

Everyone who participated in the study and the activities experienced unexpected insights, and the process will lead to a strengthening of all aspects of Smith's Castle operations. The study yielded numerous specific areas for improvement, but the team's major recommendations were:

- Review mission statement for possible changes.
- Strengthen and deepen our interpretive program and methods of customer satisfaction.
- Establish a standing grants committee.
- Energize and strengthen membership development.
- Reinforce the importance of preserving and expanding the collection.
- Establish a committee to develop a comprehensive plan for

marketing and public relations.

- Introduce a consistent system for ongoing review of the long-range plan.

With this phase concluded, Smith's Castle goes on to the second phase of the program—a peer review. An experienced museum professional will review the Castle's self-study and visit the Castle to help us explore our organization through the eyes of an independent outsider. The third phase will be the most difficult but the most important—implementing the findings and recommendations.

For anyone interested, a copy of the team's self-study, activities summaries, and major recommendations is available in the annex office. ■

—Neil Dunay



Hearty Pats on the Back to...

All the holiday festivity volunteers: **Bette Lou Pease and committee**, and **Father Christmas**, for a heartwarming Christmas at the Castle; **Jan Breault, Dot Dion, Cathy Shippee, Betsy Steinman**, and **Lee Williams** for hosting the exquisite holiday party. Other special appreciation goes to: the **sponsors** who funded the holiday party to benefit the tree fund; **Nancy Birch, Larry Seaberg, Louise Heard, and Louise Duckworth** for special decorating touches; **Les Flood** for the welcoming Christmas lights out front; **Junior Docents** for help-

ing with both events; and the **Wickford Middle School carolers**, the **North Kingstown Community Chorus**, and **Udike's Rose** for holiday music.

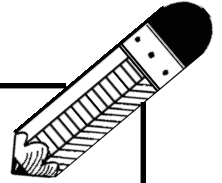
Members who made Annex improvements: **Dick and Anne Bowen** for lending a cheery braided wool rug; **Roger Greene** and **Diane Tucker** for a sturdy storage shelf and a just-right wooden bookshelf for the office—and for assembling the storage units on the second floor. These improvements freed enough space in the Annex for an additional meeting area. ■

Thank You, Community Volunteers

Our community volunteers, **Kathleen McGovern, Florence Ambrosio**, and **Mike Morrison** con-

tributed a total of 30 hours of office and clerical work for the Castle. What a great help! ■

Mark Your Calendar



By end of March—
www.smithscastle.org
goes on-line. Bookmark it!

Saturday, April 7

Sunday, April 8

9 a.m.–3 p.m.

Spring Clean Up

Saturday, May 5

Noon–4 p.m.

Opening Day and Spring Days on the Plantation

Saturday, June 9

Noon–4 p.m.

Strawberry Festival

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