

Castle Chronicle

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Old St. Paul's—Wickford's Enduring Spiritual Core

Natalie R. Hamlin

As visitors stroll along the streets of Wickford, they may notice at the end of a pleasant greenway, what looks to be a colonial home. Upon closer inspection, they learn that the building is, in fact, the Old Narragansett Church or, using its original name, St. Paul's in Narragansett. If we delve into the history of the church we will discover numerous connections between the old church, which will celebrate its tercentenary in just a few years, and Smith's Castle, which is celebrating its 325th anniversary this year.

From the time that Richard Smith moved permanently to Cocumscussoc about 1651, his household reflected the religious diversity that was Rhode Island. Believing in the doctrine of full liberty of religious concerns, he opened his home to Roger Williams for his Baptist preachings. [Woodward 1971: 27] His daughter-in-law, Esther Smith, favored the Quakers. [LaFantasie 1988: II, 693]

Smith himself, Castle historian Dr. Carl Woodward said, was "a puritan of the moderate school [who] never wavered in his allegiance to the [Anglican] church of his early life." At Smith's invitation, the Rev. William Blackstone (riding his trained bull) came down monthly from his estate north of Providence to hold services at Cocumscussoc. These are believed to have been from the Book of Common Prayer and constituted the first regular Church of England services in Rhode Island, if not in New England. [Woodward 1971: 27]



Old St. Paul's. Built in 1707, it is considered the oldest Episcopal church building north of the Potomac. In 1800, it was moved to its current location in Wickford. The site was donated by Lodowick Updike (1725-1804), grandson of the founder of the village. In doing so, he fulfilled the wish of his grandfather and namesake (Lodowick Updike, 1646-1737) that the church be part of his village. Photo by Wayne M. McCarthy, Wickford.

When Lodowick Updike inherited Cocumscussoc in 1692, he too opened his home to the Church. In 1702, Rev. George Keith, a Quaker turned Anglican and the first missionary sent here by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, visited Rhode Island. According to Keith he "preached...at the house of Mr. Opdyke's where [he] had a considerable Auditory." This precipitated a correspondence between the clergyman and others interested in founding an Anglican church in the area and the Society

for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts in London. This led, in 1706, to the arrival of the Rev. Christopher Bridge as the first Anglican rector in the Narragansett country, and a year later, to the beginning of the construction of a church, built "by the voluntary contributions of the Inhabitants." [Woodward 1971: 65]

—continued on page 8

Natalie R. Hamlin is a parishioner of St. Paul's and has been a docent there for more than 12 years. She is also a member of Smith's Castle.

Inside

2

President's Note

3

Volunteers Needed

4

Colonial Colors

5

Smith's Castle Dyers' Garden

6

R.I. Slavery & Its Legacies

7

Upcoming Events

11

Fall Calendar

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The viewpoints expressed by contributors to *Castle Chronicle* are not necessarily those of the Cocumscussoc Association.

Note from the President

Good Neighbor Policy

I would like to take this opportunity to remind our members, volunteers, and visiting public that the Castle sits not on an isolated parcel of land but rather is part of a residential neighborhood. Recently, our neighbors at the end of Richard Smith Drive have witnessed several trespassers on their property and their access to and from Post Road has been hampered during some of our public events.

We have no idea whether the trespassers were Castle members, but I would like to urge everyone to respect our neighbors' privacy. Please do not wander onto property that is not owned by the Association and remember that Richard Smith Drive is a public road—not the Castle's private driveway—so walk to the side of the road and allow vehicles traveling on it to pass. Please do not park in front of the mailboxes or in any way block access to our neighbors' drive. During special events, pay strict attention to the volunteers that are directing traffic.

We have been working for several years to improve traffic flow and parking at the Castle. Recently, the Association was awarded a State transportation grant to reconfigure the entrance to Richard Smith Drive from Post Road and to relocate the parking site to an

area near the entrance. We are also planning walkways from the new parking area to the Castle, which should ease concerns about pedestrians on Richard Smith Drive.

I realize that some of our members have a legitimate concern about access to the Updike cemetery. More than 50 years ago, the Association was named by the Town as a caretaker for the cemetery, and Updike descendants have a right to pay their respects to family members buried there. It is in our interest as well as our neighbors' to keep unknown parties from wandering into the graveyards. The Association is working to schedule access to the cemeteries, at a time convenient for all parties, in order to facilitate visits by descendants and to insure that the graveyard remains tidy, broken or toppled stones are repaired, and tombstones and their inscriptions are fully documented.

Please treat our neighbors with the kind of respect that you would expect at your own home and in your own neighborhood.


Neil G. Dunay
President

Welcome New Members

Phil Cassidy
Barbara and Alfred Crudale and Family
Mr. and Mrs. John S. Dunay
David and Alice Greene
Mr. and Mrs. David Griffin
Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Hamilton
Carol Jacques
Mary Kaminski
Christina Kassal
Jeremy and Elizabeth Martin
Mr. and Mrs. Raymond McIntire
Kimberly Coon and Stuart Mears
Rich and Mary Nelson
Mr. and Mrs. A. O'Brien
Barbara Pagh
Gene and Monique Pouliot
Mr. and Mrs. William Prescott
Mr. and Mrs. David Tirrell
Donna L. Young

—as of 8/2/03



Emily Nicholson, 76, daughter of the late Rufus and Alice Fuller and sister of the late Nathan A. Fuller, died August 15, 2003, after a brief illness. She was a life member and made significant contributions to the Cocumscussoc Association.

The *Chronicle* staff has been informed of the death of Castle member and docent **Frieda R. King**.

A fund has been established at the Castle in memory of **Christopher Greene**, a Chariho school teacher and friend of the Castle.

The Cocumscussoc Association extends sincere sympathy to the families.

2004 Events in Jeopardy—Volunteers Needed

The annual events at Smith's Castle have become a community tradition. Strawberry Festival heralds the start of summer with the taste of homemade strawberry shortcake. Plantation Days helps the community relive its past through re-enactments of colonial life and trade. Christmas at the Castle brings a traditional flavor to the holiday with our volunteers' home-baked goodies and the presence of Father Christmas.

If you have come to love these occasions, consider volunteering to help plan and stage an event next year. *These programs can not continue without an active role by our members.*

Planning for 2004 events starts now. In order to begin necessary promotion and publicity in January, we must have the program schedule for next year set by the end of this year. In the past, we have scheduled annual events even though leadership posts had not been filled. This has resulted in people already stretched thin with extensive volunteer respon-

sibilities on behalf of the Castle being required to accept even greater burdens so these programs could continue.

To prevent this from occurring again next year, the Association's Executive Committee has decided that only events with leadership positions in place by November 1, 2003, will be scheduled for next year. If leaders don't come forward for a particular event by then, it simply will not be held next year.

If you agree that the Castle's traditional programs are important, please step up and volunteer your time for one of these events:

- Strawberry Festival (June)
- Plantation Days (September)
- Christmas at the Castle (December)

If you are concerned about taking on leadership responsibilities by yourself, encourage a friend to sign up with you—you'll have a great time! And the process is less intimidating than you may imagine. After years of staging these events, previous leaders have left solid guidance on the process.

We will soon be making phone calls and sending members a letter soliciting volunteer leaders for next year's events. But don't wait—call the Castle office today and volunteer! ■

Member-Guest Holiday Party Proceeds

Despite the summer's hot, humid weather, our Christmas events are just around the corner. Every year, proceeds from the holiday party for members and guests are earmarked to benefit a selected project. In recent years tree maintenance, a new entry sign, and the visitor orientation exhibit panels have benefited. We are seeking ideas from members as to what project should benefit from this year's party. Please phone or email the Castle office with your suggestions.

294-3521
smithscastle@earthlink.net

Meet the New Trustees

Betsy Steinman

Wickford runs deep in Betsy Steinman's family. Her father was born here; she was raised in her present home, a former distillery built in 1789; and her parents were among the founders of the Cocumscussoc Association.

As a child Betsy participated in many of the early activities at the Castle, including fashion shows of antique clothing and wedding gowns. In the 1960s she played Mrs. Richard Smith in the annual rent-paying day. Nathan Fuller, a student at the time, accepted the token "clover" for the Narragansetts.*

Betsy served previously as a Cocumscussoc trustee and also as a docent—under the direction of Mrs. Emily Greene. Emily and her husband were among the primary movers in saving the Castle.

When Betsy's husband Don retired 22 years ago, they returned to Wickford and Betsy's ancestral home. She is active on the Updike Park Committee, in hospitality at St. Paul's Church in Wickford, in civil defense in North Kingstown, and has been a primary fundraiser for Hospice. She and Don restored the Old Lafayette School together and ran the facility as a business incubator for 15 years. ■

*This refers to the terms of the so-called Thousand-Year Lease of 1659: "I, the Said Coginiquant, doe hyer out and grant this Least of for the full terme of On[e] Thousand yeares, to Morrow, to both the fore s'd Richards Smiths, their heires and assignes, peaceably to Enjoy the Same, for which the fore s'd Rich'ds Smiths, their heires and Assignes is to pay on every mid summer day a Red honneySuckell grasse, If it be lawfully demanded for acknowledgem'ts..."



Betsy Steinman.
Photo by Ellie Perkins

Dyed in the Wool: Colonial Colors Bloom at Smith's Castle

Mary Nunes

The home-based production of textiles was a year-round endeavor in which everyone in the household—from children to sturdy farm hands—had a part.

The plantation at Smith's Castle grew flax for linen and raised sheep for wool—for export as well as for use at home. We are fortunate to have an extensive collection of period tools that were employed in the creation of woolen and linen fabrics at the Castle, and we also have a dyers' garden where plants that are valuable as sources of dye are displayed.

For centuries, colorful textiles have been created for both useful and decorative purposes. The Dutch, whose influence was felt at the Castle, traded in exotic locales for silks, spices, and dyestuffs that were not available at home. These early trade items included indigo and cochineal which yield dye baths of brilliant blues and true red—two colors that are difficult to achieve from the plant materials common throughout Europe and the American colonies. Indigo is derived from various plants of the genus *Indigofera* grown in the Far East, Mexico, and South America. It was a trade item documented to have come into Wickford's warehouses. Cochineal is made from the dried and crushed bodies of the female *Dactylopius coccus*, a South American insect that feeds on certain species of cacti.

When we visualize a typical, hardworking colonial family, we may think of their clothing as drab.

Mary Nunes is a docent volunteer at Smith's Castle and has a degree in textiles, clothing, and arts from the University of Rhode Island. She has been spinning, weaving, and dyeing for over 25 years.

To a large degree, the color of their clothing was dictated by the breed of sheep they raised—wool ranges from pure white to light and dark shades of gray, oatmeal, brown, and pure black—and the flax they grew, harvested, and processed. Linen thread and fabric range in color from natural tan to bleached white.

The process of adding color to these naturally occurring fibers began well in advance of the actual dyeing process when members of a household begin gathering the ingredients. Hawk-eyed observations of the whereabouts of dye plants and outings to collect the roots, barks, berries, leaves, nuts, lichens, and flowers would take place seasonally, and the dyestuffs would be dried and stored for future use, or dye baths would be prepared immediately if the wool and linen yarns were ready for the dye pot. Successful dye-bath recipes are valued if the results give a stable color that survives multiple harsh washings.

The dyeing process begins with the preparation of the fibers. Wool yarn, for example, requires at least two washings and a clear rinse before it is ready to be dyed. All dye baths require the use of a mordant to make the color permanent so it won't fade from exposure to light and from repeated washings. The word mordant comes from the French meaning "to bite." The mordant is a chemical salt that helps the color bite into the fiber. Common kitchen staples such as vinegar, salt, soda, and alum, as well as chamber lye (guess what that is!), creosote, copper, tin, and iron (which often come from pots designated just for dyeing) are used.

Next, the dye bath is prepared. Generally four gallons of liquid are

needed to dye one pound of wool. Dyestuffs are broken into small pieces and put into a cheesecloth bag so that they can be removed easily once the color has been released into the bath. Dyestuffs are generally placed into cold water and heated slowly, allowing the bath to come to a boil for 45 minutes to one hour. When the dye bath reaches its peak, the dyestuff is removed and relegated to the compost pile.

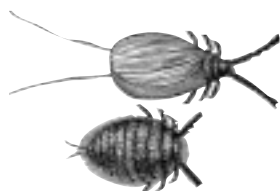
The next step is the addition of a mordant, unless a metal pot is acting as such. Wet fibers are added to the dye bath and the temperature slowly returned to a boil—abrupt changes in temperature must be avoided—while stirring gently. Rough stirring increases the likelihood of shrinking, felting, and brittle fibers. Fabrics remain in the dye until the desired color shade is obtained or the bath is exhausted (becomes clear). They are then squeezed, rinsed, squeezed again, and allowed to air dry. ■

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Indigo



Cochineal Beetle



Onion Skins



Marshmallow



Walnut Hulls

The Dyers' Garden at Smith's Castle

Mary Nunes

Gardening isn't a traditional part of dyeing. Most dyers gathered local wild plants and weeds or purchased imported dyestuffs of indigo and cochineal. However, our Dyers' Garden has examples of 12 common garden plants from the New England area that yield dyes in a rainbow of colors.

Other uncultivated plant materials on the grounds of the Castle also contribute to that rainbow. Trumpet vine blossoms, sumac berries, oak bark, Queen Ann's lace, and goldenrod all have been collected and used for dye pots. A stroll through our garden, using the numbered guide, and a visit to the North Chamber to view the color wheel of dye samples, will give you a feel for the many hues our familiar New England plants yield.

Here are the plants found in the Dyers' Garden:

Tansy, *Tanacetum vulgare*. Cole's *Art of Simpling*, published in 1656, assured that tansy tea cured every ill that flesh is heir to. Such strong credence was given to its medicinal powers in Europe, it is not surprising that the colonists felt they could not live without it. Tansy, a runaway from old gardens, is a perennial feature along the New England roadside.

Sunflower, *Helianthus giganteus*. In the early 1600s, when Champlain visited native Americans on Lake Huron's eastern shore, the sunflower was being cultivated for a textile fiber within the stalks, leaves for fodder, flowers for dye, and seeds for food and hair oil. The flowers were described as "greater than a greate platter or dishe" and "marvelous faire in gardines." Indeed!

Marigold, *Tagetes* sp. Sometimes called the "pot marigold," because it was put in the cooking pots as a substitute for saffron, to color cakes, but-

ter, and puddings, it was also used for broths and dye. The 16th century herbalist, William Turner sternly explained: "Some use to make their heyre yellow with the floure of this herb, not being contet with the naturall colour which God hath given them." Some things never change.

Yarrow, *Achillea millefolium*. Everywhere, this commonest of common weeds confronts us. Appearing in mythology, to 17th century herbalists, to battlefields of the Civil War, to roadsides around the world, this plant is called the "All Heal." It has great medical and some say magical, qualities to help the blood clot. It has been used as a general tonic for nosebleed, loss of hair, reducing fevers, earache, head colds, bruises, toothache, and stimulation of the appetite.

Onions, *Allium cepa*. Cultivated for 5,000 years, the versatile onion has been a food for both the poor and the wealthy. According to diaries of colonists, bulb onions were planted as soon as land could be cleared.

Musk Mallow, *Malvaceae*. A relative of the Hollyhock, Hibiscus, and Cotton plant, the wild *Malvaceae* plants were used medicinally, and the root was used to make a confection called marshmallow. The medicinal uses listed in 1652 include "belly, stones, reins, kidneys, wheezing, cramp, chincough (whooping cough), wounds, falls, and sun-burning. The fibrous stems can be used to make cloth and the plant yields a very good dye."

Rudbeckia, *Compositae*. This native of North America is affectionately known as "Black-Eyed Susan" who figures in many ballads and songs. The saucy Susan's flower was named Rudbeckia by the 1730 botanist Linnaeus when he was employed by Olaf Rudbeck as a tutor for his three children. He named the flower after his patron, saying "so long as the Earth shall sur-

vive and as each spring shall see it covered with flowers, the Rudbeckia will preserve your glorious name."

Hibiscus, *Malvaceae*. A relative of the Musk Mallow, Hibiscus blossoms are good for dyeing cloth and make a wonderful tea.

Nasturtium, *Tropaeolum*. As early as 1592, botanist John Gerard observed that "one plant doth occupie a great circuit of ground." Thomas Jefferson planted nasturtiums every year and in a letter to Bernard Peyton said, "I missed raising nasturtium seed the last year and it is not to be had in this neighborhood. Can your seedmen furnish it?" He wanted enough seed for a bed of nasturtium ten by nineteen yards!

Coreopsis, *Coreopsis*. A native American wildflower, coreopsis grows easily in fields and sunny open spaces. The genus name means "bed bug" because the seeds are black, have a small hook on one end and look like a tiny bug. Another common name is tickseed. Seeds from the plant were put into the stuffing of pillows and mattresses to help repel insects.

Blanket Flower, *Gaillardia*. This plant, named for the 18th century botanist Gaillard de Charentonneay, is native to North America. The common name, blanket flower, was inspired by the designs and colors of native American weavings.

Solomon's Seal, *Smilacina racemosa*. From New Brunswick to Florida, this shade loving plant is a native wildflower. From a thick rootstock, a single graceful curved stem arises each spring. As it dies back there is a scar left behind whose outline resembles the seal of Israel's wise King Solomon. As you read the age of a tree by the rings in the trunk, so you tell the age of this plant by the number of "seals." ■



Tansy



Sunflower



Marigold



Hibiscus



Nasturtium

RICH Initiative to Address the Meaning of Freedom

Lara Seaberg and Barbara Carey

The Rhode Island Council for the Humanities (RICH) has awarded grants for projects examining the question, *What Is Freedom?* This initiative was designed to engage Rhode Islanders in consideration of the nature of freedom today and how notions of freedom have evolved over time. Funding is provided in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Verizon Foundation.

In response to this challenge, the Rhode Island Slavery and its Legacies three-part project has evolved. It is a collaboration that includes Smith's Castle; Joanne Pope Melish, Associate Professor of History at the University of Kentucky and a visiting scholar at Brown University; the Rhode Island Historical Society; the Newport Historical Society; the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society; and the Pettaquamscutt Historical Society.

The project will encompass public history activities intended to fos-

ter public understanding of the significance of the slave trade, slavery, emancipation, and evolving ideas about the meaning of race and freedom and race relations in Rhode Island. It will include a performance piece and two curriculum supplements, which will be available for loan to elementary school teachers.

The performance piece will explore events from the perspectives of both slaves and slave holders in Rhode Island. It will be followed by public discussion led by Melish. Performances will take place in Providence, Washington County, and Newport County. Sylvia Soares, a Rhode Island native of Cape Verdean descent, trained in the Brown University Theater Department, has been selected to develop a script based upon extensive sources compiled by the project partners.

One of the two curriculum supplements is entitled "Interpreting Rhode Island Slavery Through the Narragansett Planters Mural" and is

designed to help children learn about slavery in Rhode Island by examining a copy of the Ernest Baker mural depicting activities of the Narragansett planters and their slaves. This mural is newly installed at the Pettaquamscutt Historical Society.

The second supplement is a game in which students assume the roles of slaves and slave holders and follow a story path through a variety of encounters. All players ultimately become free people of color and whites of varying class levels and occupations.

The planning committee in addition to Melish are Jessica Files, Newport Historical Society; Kathleen Bossy, Pettaquamscutt Historical Society; Joaquina Bela Teixeira, Rhode Island Black Heritage Society; Alison Fields and Don Carleton, Rhode Island Historical Society; and Christine Kalina, Lara Seaberg, Margaret Skenyon, and Barbara Carey, Smith's Castle. ■

Recent Events

Colonial Clothing. The Seaberg family (page 12) and Ron Baker and Louise Duckworth (right) donned colonial attire for the 18th century fashion show held at Smith's Castle on July 17. Photos by Barbara Carey.

Colonial Camp. Sally Marinelli (page 12) tends the fire at the Castle's 18th century day camp on July 19, and (far right) Dianne McGowan shows camp participants how to use a lucet to make cording. Photos by Barbara Carey.



Upcoming Events

Preserve Rhode Island Series to Address Local Issues

Smith's Castle and Preserve Rhode Island will cosponsor *Commercial Revitalization, Growth Management and Protecting Community Character*, one in a series of public lectures offered through Preservation Priorities: Conservation and Community in Rhode Island, a project funded by the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities.

The lecture, to be held 10 am to

noon on October 25 at the North Kingstown Public Library, is one of the Castle's adult education October speakers series.

The overall project represents a comprehensive approach to addressing preservation issues locally, creating solutions, and educating Rhode Islanders about the tools and techniques available to protect their communities. ■

Chamber of Commerce to Sponsor Museum Night

The public is invited to Museum Night, a new NK Chamber of Commerce event, on Wednesday, October 22 from 5:00 to 7:00 pm at Quonset Air Museum. Local museums are invited to participate with

booths to inform the local community about their programs, membership benefits, and volunteer opportunities. Learn about all the great sites in our own backyard! Watch the local papers for more details. ■

Don't Forget You Can "Ask the Chronicle"

Get answers to those perplexing local history questions that have been nagging at you. All members and their families, young and old alike, are invited to send questions in to "Ask The Chronicle."

Local historian, Swamp Yankee, and *Chronicle* staffer Tim Cranston will field your queries. He will draw upon the resources of Smith's Castle, as well as his Swamptown Enterprises network of local historians and genealogists to root out the answers to your questions. So sit down, scratch your head, put pen to paper, and send in your questions.

Smith's Castle gratefully acknowledges the support of its business members.

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Sunday 12pm - 4pm; Closed Monday

Old Narragansett Church *continued from page 1*



Soon after its founding, St. Paul's was given a silver chalice, paten, and baptismal bowl by Queen Anne. The chalice and paten are still used. From F. Burge Griswold, *Old Wickford, The Venice of America*, 1900.

A plot of land for the church was donated by Capt. Benoni Sweet. [White 1957: 5] This site lay about five miles southwest of Wickford on Shermantown Road (approximately a mile to the west of Route 1). "The Platform" on which the church was built can still be seen today.

The Rev. Mr. Bridge was at the church for only a little over a year due to ill health. During his rectorship the church received from Queen Anne a gift of a silver chalice, paten, and baptismal bowl. The chalice and paten are still used once a year on the first Sunday of August, named Queen Anne Sunday in her honor. The baptismal bowl was melted down around 1850 to make "into as many plates as practicable." [White 1957: 5] The reason for this strange occurrence remains a mystery.

From 1708 to 1717 the church had no permanent rector, although services were held from time to time, whenever a clergyman could be persuaded to come. It was in 1717 that the Rev. Mr. Guy arrived from South Carolina. His parish there had been nearly wiped out in an Indian raid, so he was sent by the missionary society to St. Paul's. Barely able to withstand the New England winter, he departed for the South the following year. During his stay however, he called a meeting

of the parishioners to elect church wardens and vestrymen.

Among the names on the vestry was Gabriel Bernon, a French Huguenot emigre and successful merchant who was one of the prime movers in the establishment of St. Paul's. Born in 1644 in La Rochelle, France, he suffered several years of imprisonment in his native country for his opposition to the state religion. He immigrated to Boston, then to a settlement in Oxford, Mass. In neither of these places did he find the kind of life and religious liberty that he hoped for. On a business trip to Newport he met Lodowick Updike and through this relationship, in 1712, he acquired property for a warehouse and wharf in Wickford. He also bought property for a home and became very active with those dedicated to establishing St. Paul's. [White 1930: 73, 85] Bernon's name can be seen on one of the slate stepping stones at the entrance of the present day church property.

It was not until 1721 that the church was to have a permanent rector. The Rev. James MacSparran was sent by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts to fill that role and he was to remain at his post until his death in 1757.

Arriving from England in 1718, MacSparran served as minister in the Congregational Church in Bristol, R.I. [White 1957: 10] During this time he had a number of opportunities to visit Narragansett, an area he found very pleasing. On a return trip to his home country he decided to change his religious allegiance, entered the seminary, and was ordained "a presbyter of the Anglican Church." [Updike 1847: 66] Among his most active parishioners were the well-known Narragansett planter families: the Updikes, Willets, Phillips, and

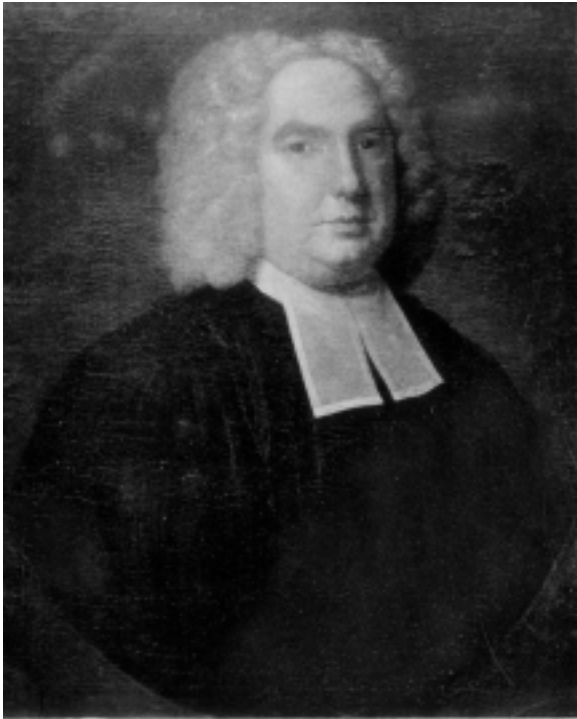
Gardiners. Dr. MacSparran married Hannah Gardiner, whom he called "the most pious of women and the best of wives in the world." [Woodward 1971: 67]

From the Gardiner family, the couple purchased about 100 acres of land overlooking the Pettaquamscutt (or Narrow) River, where they spent the remainder of their lives. This home was known as "the Glebe," an early English name for a parish rectory and adjoining lands.

Dr. MacSparran considered himself a preacher-farmer, and "although small compared with Cocumscussoc and the great plantations of other neighbors, the Glebe was operated as a bone fide farm enterprise." From the pages of his diary, we have "the best written record known today of slave labor on the plantations of this region, reflecting, not only the farm practices of the time, but the manner of plantation life." [Woodward 1971: 71]

Dr. Mac Sparran, is pictured as "a man of lofty missionary spirit, but ever mindful of life's practical affairs, mixing the management of the farm with a multitude of pastoral duties; preaching and administering the sacraments of the church, traveling about the parish on foot or on horseback, or riding more easily in his 'chair' or chaise, fording or ferrying streams on visits to the sick and needy, dispensing both spiritual and medical aid, welcoming an endless flow of guests at the rectory, and attending to other social obligations, meanwhile supervising the farm and directing the slaves and hired hands." [Woodward 1971: 71]

At the Glebe the MacSparrans entertained their friends in the charming mode of living that characterized plantation society of that time. They, in turn, were said to be almost weekly visitors at the Updike



The Rev. James MacSparran, D.D. From the portrait by John Smibert, in the possession of Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine.

Mrs. MacSparran (Hannah Gardiner). From the painting by John Smibert, in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

home at Cocumscussoc. [Woodward 1971: 95]

Dr. MacSparran, on his ministries, traveled the area often going to Newport or Providence to preach, and under his leadership the parish of St. Paul's grew and prospered.

Tragedy struck when he and Hannah visited England in the autumn of 1754. Hannah contracted smallpox, died, and was buried in the shadow of Westminster Abbey. MacSparran's health began to fail after his return home. Carrying on with his duties however, on Palm Sunday of 1756 he baptized a baby, named Gilbert Stuart. [Woodward 1971: 88, 117]

In December 1757, while returning from a pastoral visit in Providence, MacSparran stopped at Cocumscussoc for the night before going on to the Glebe. During prayers with the family, he began to kneel, "putting his hands on the table to

ease himself down, the table split off and his weight came down [he was a man of over 300 pounds] and he hit the edge of his eyebrow against the sharp edge of the table leg and he bled profusely. But he would have nothing done until he had finished his prayer."

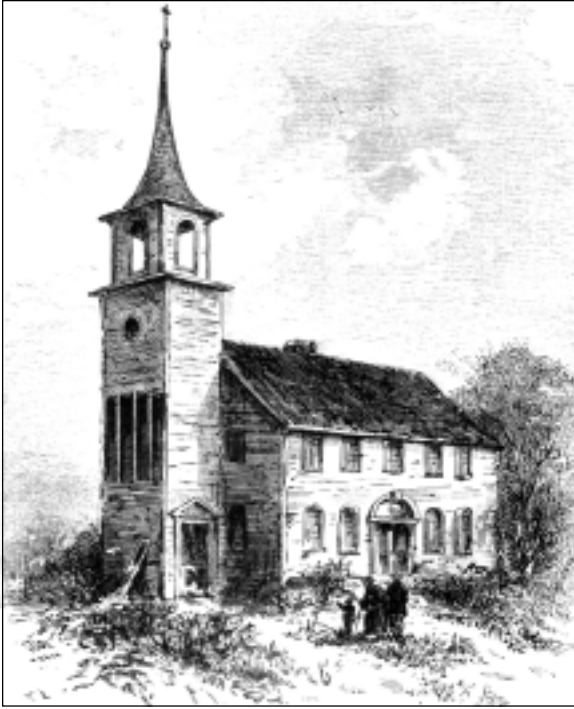
The following morning he continued on to the Glebe where he died within a few days. Wilkins Updike attributed MacSparran's death to quinsy—a form of tonsillitis, but one of Wilkins' older brothers suggested it resulted from the accident with the table. Lodowick Updike, son of MacSparran's recently deceased good friend, Daniel, was with him when he died. The funeral was held in St. Paul's and he "was decently interred under the Communion table in said church." [Woodward 1971, 117] His grave and the monument marking it still exist at the Platform.

Once again St. Paul's found itself without a permanent rector. Due to the problems of communication with Europe in the 18th century, it was not until 1760 that the Rev. Samuel Fayerweather, a native New Englander, arrived to take up his duties. [White 1957: 13] Fayerweather "was quite liberal in his views for his time and was popular not only with those of his own faith, but also with those of other faiths."

In spite of his popularity, the new rector had problems in his own church. During its three years without a minister, it had fallen into a state of disrepair and the congregation had dwindled in size. The question of whether to repair the church or to rebuild divided the congregation. A vote was taken in 1771 to build a new church. "The records are silent as to why this vote was never carried out." [White 1957: 13]

—continued on page 10

Old Narragansett Church *continued from page 9*



The Old Narragansett Church as it appeared 1811–1866. From a wood engraving by Charles E. Hurd, made prior to 1866.

In October of the same year, the roof of the church was taken off by “a member who did not concur with the vote for building a new church... Therefore it will not be fit to hold church in until repaired.” [White 1957: 15] On Easter Sunday 1773, the rector finally preached again in St. Paul’s.

Unfortunately for Fayerweather, the political climate of the country was becoming undone. When finally the Colonies declared their independence, most of the members of St. Paul’s objected to the prayers for the king and the members of the royal family. The Rev. Mr. Fayerweather, being very strict in his ideas regarding church ritual, did not feel that he could conscientiously omit these prayers. The church closed for the duration of the war. At some time during this period, the church was used as a barracks to house American troops. (Local tradition has it that at times livestock also was housed there.)

During the two periods when the church was closed, Fayerweather continued to live at the Glebe and minister to the needs of his parish, holding services in private homes as well as at the Glebe. He died there in 1781 and was buried next to his predecessor, Dr. MacSparran. [White 1957: 16]

The end of the war did not bring happier times to the congregation of St. Paul’s. The severance of political ties with England also broke St. Paul’s relationship with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts and its financial support. “Thus the remaining members of the flock had to assume the whole burden and responsibility themselves.” [White 1957: 17]

Since the 1760s, church members had debated moving the building to a more convenient site. Many of the plantation owners had died or left the area, others had relocated closer to the commerce and shipbuilding in the area of present-day Wickford. The issue was resolved at a meeting in December 1799, when it was voted to move the church to Wickford on a site designated by the first Lodowick Updike in his will and donated by his grandson, Lodowick Updike. The name Updike was prominent among those who voted in favor of the move. [Woodward 1971: 154]

Thus in January 1800 the church was moved. One local legend says it was removed whole one Saturday night and dragged “on stout timbers for runners” over the snow to the new site. The next morning when the faithful went to church they found an empty lot! More plausible is the account that the church was dismantled, the boards were numbered, and then re-assembled at the present location. [Woodward 1971: 155]

Gradually, after its removal to Wickford, St. Paul’s regained its vitality. It took several years before money could be raised to install the pews. But then another change occurred in the appearance of the church. In 1811, a steeple was added to the west side of the building. [White 1957: 21] It remained there until one calm, starry night in December 1866, when it collapsed and the bell that had been added to it disappeared. Another mystery!

A not-so-obvious change took place in 1848 when the new St. Paul’s building was built on Main Street almost opposite the old church. [White 1957: 30] For many years afterwards, our old friend, St. Paul’s in Narragansett, remained closed and neglected.

Happily, not only members of the Updike family, but numerous others have been moved to make donations towards the preservation of the old church. Today when we visit, we may relive for a few moments those early times when Cocumscussoc and St. Paul’s in Narragansett were preparing the way for our modern-day Smith’s Castle and the Old Narragansett Church. ■

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This Fall at Smith's Castle

September

Day	Time	Event
Saturday, 13	10:00 am	Centuries of Change: Imagining Site and Architecture Through Time
Sunday, 14	10:00 am	Centuries of Change: (rain date)
Sunday, 21	4:00 pm	Blessings from the Earth: Medicinal Uses of New England Plants

October

Day	Time	Event
Saturday, 4	11:00 am–5:00 pm	Plantation Days
Sunday, 5	11:00 am–3:00 pm	Plantation Days
Wednesday, 22	5:00–7:00 pm	Chamber of Commerce Museum Night, Quonset Air Museum
Saturday, 25	10:00 am–Noon	Commercial Revitalization, Growth Management and Protecting Community Character, NK Free Library
Sunday, 26		Closing day of walk-in tour season

December

Day	Time	Event
Saturday, 6	Noon–4:00 pm	Christmas at the Castle
Sunday, 7	Noon–4:00 pm	Christmas at the Castle
Friday, 12	6:00–8:00 pm	Member-Guest Holiday Party

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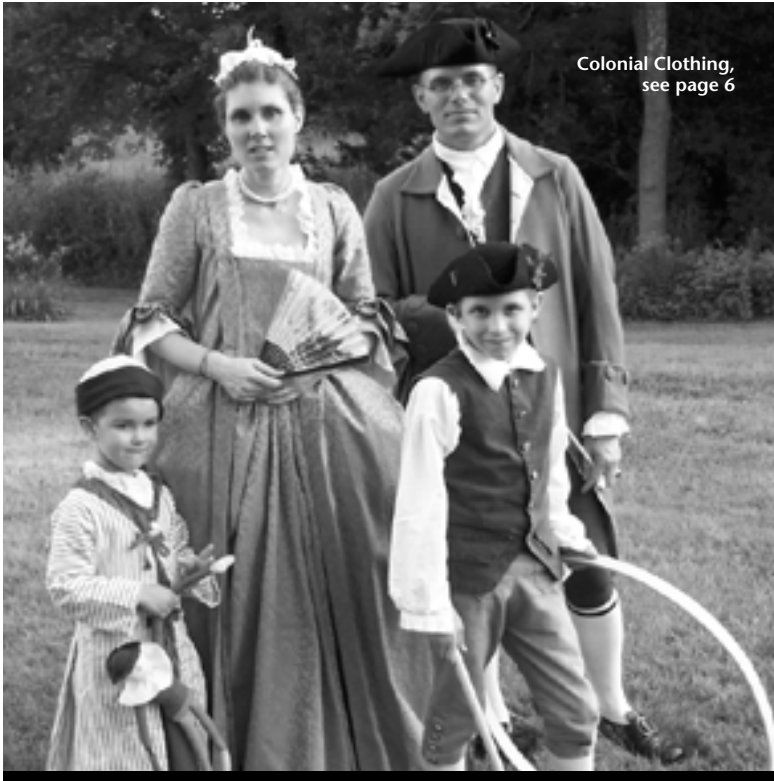
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