

Castle Chronicle



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Through the Great Gate and Down the Lane to the Updike Mansion House

Neil Dunay

Approaching Smith's Castle along Richard Smith Drive today is a very different experience than it was in the 18th century. After an abrupt turn off of Post Road, we are greeted by an expanse of field and lawn dotted by a few trees and shrubs

and edged by thickets of impenetrable undergrowth. Ahead, more numerous trees hide the view of the water that we know is there, and effectively obscure the house. When the house comes into view, we see we are approaching it from the back and that our destination

is a large gravel parking lot—the most prominent landscape feature adjacent to the house.

First-time visitors can be forgiven if they wonder that this is the grand mansion house of one of Rhode Island's wealthiest and most prominent 18th century families.

—continued on page 10

Inside

2
President's Note
3
Culture Coalition
4
Current Events
6
Castle Myths & Legends
8
Book Review
9
Garden Journal
Castle Letterbox
Insert
Kids' Corner
16
On-line Bookstore
19
Summer Calendar



Survey of Homestead and Saugo Farms, Caleb Harris, 1802 (detail). Homestead Farm (including Smith's Castle in the circle) and Saugo Farm were the largest of the five farms that comprised the Updike family plantation. Image courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society, (Rhi x5 308).

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

Note from the President

Summer has arrived and the Castle is bursting with activity. We have an ambitious schedule of events this season. There is certainly something for everyone. Not to be missed are wonderful educational offerings including Ladies Camp, Kids Camp, and the URI Master Gardener presentations designed to make our home gardens as beautiful as the 18th century colonial revival garden. We are so fortunate to have the support and guidance of the URI Master Gardeners. Many contribute countless hours keeping the grounds and garden at their best. Their work at restoring the garden to the 1953 plan continues and the garden looks more beautiful each day. Plans have been made to clear additional brush and install a living wall along the north side of the property to provide a buffer from the 21st century. Next time you visit, take an opportunity to view our Three Sister's Garden, planted and lovingly cared for by Mary Nunes and her team of 4H volunteers.

In 2002, the Long Range Site Committee secured a \$200,000 grant to improve the Smith's Castle landscape. Plans are finally underway to hire a historic preservation specialist to prepare a cultural landscape report. The report will provide detailed information on the historic landscape of

Cocumscussoc and provide a basis for the planning and design of future improvements to the front entrance from Post Road for buses and the general public, improved drainage, needed lighting, a bus drop-off loop and parking area, appropriate fencing, and landscape enhancement. A sincere thank you to all who serve on the Long Range Site Committee for their tireless efforts in accomplishing this project.

The Castle has received a donation of two laptops from the Amica Insurance Company. They will be put to good use by both the Collections Committee, as it continues a detailed accession of all the artifacts in the Collection, and the Office.

As always, the Castle accomplishes great things because of the tireless efforts of its many dedicated volunteers and members. As our calendar fills, it is important to remember that all these fine programs are a direct result of the hard efforts of each and every Castle member and volunteer. If you are looking for a rewarding place to spend your volunteer time, please call the office. There are countless opportunities to contribute in a valuable and significant way at Smith's Castle.

Christine

Welcome New Members

Jeannette Atkinson

Irene Blais

Elaine DeRobbio

Allyson and John Etzell

Anne Flanagan

Gail Fraser-Giacchi

Mr. and Mrs. Jack Fronce

Karen and Clive Goodwin

Geoffery and Elizabeth Grout

Marie Hopkins

Ruth Jansson

Mark Leary

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Lemieux

Sidney and Allan McNab

Mr. and Mrs. Christopher Peet

Cheryle Rhodes

Jim and Lori Viner

Priscilla and Lisa Wolff

—as of 6/17/05



National Society
Daughters of the American Revolution

*Please accept our donation,
made in memory of our
dear member,*

Esther Friend Vale

*Smith's Castle meant so much
to her.*

*Elizabeth D. Alfonso
Regent, Pettaguamscutt
Chapter*



The Culture Coalition

An Arts & History Collaborative of Southern R.I.

Kari Van Buren

In the fall of 2003, Barbara Carey, my predecessor, and Chris Kalina, association president, first met with David DePetrillo of the Rhode Island State Tourism Office and several other museum directors from throughout southern Rhode Island. The objective of this meeting was to design a historic trail through the region similar to the one in the Blackstone Valley. The group met several times with Mr. DePetrillo until the group dwindled to three museums—Smith's Castle, Gilbert Stuart, and South County Museum. This is when I began to get involved. One of the first meetings I attended here at Smith's Castle was with this group. After discussion with Mr. DePetrillo, we decided that it would be better to begin meeting on our own, and see what we could develop.

We contacted the Towers, Kinney Bungalow at Sunset Farm, and the Courthouse Center for the Arts to see if these three sites were interested in joining the group.

Several meetings later, the collaboration was born. This group will offer two, week-long collaborative events this summer—and hopefully each summer hereafter. The mission of the Culture Coalition is to draw on southern Rhode Island's rich and diverse cultural assets to create a strong identity and establish the arts and history as highly visible elements of the region's identity. By doing this and by jointly marketing the events and each site, we hope to increase visitation to the region and in turn to each participating site.

We have chosen two very exciting themes for this summer: *Gibson Girls, Garden Parties, and Ragtime: South County at the End of an Era* and *Culinary Culture: Hearth Cooking to Artful Desserts*. The events are open to all, and are just a sampling of what we hope will be a long and exciting collaboration that will continue to grow in Southern Rhode Island. ■

Week of July 16–24

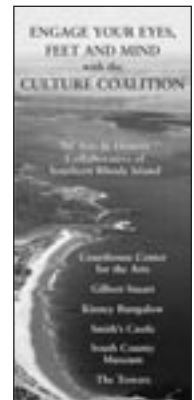
Gibson Girls, Garden Parties, and Ragtime: South County at the End of an Era

July 16–24 Noon to 4 p.m.	Smith's Castle	Week-long exhibit and special focus tour: Cocumcussoc Dairy Farm Life 1895–1920	\$5
Sun., July 17 7:30–10 p.m.	Courthouse Ctr. for the Arts	Period dance (cotton gloves, period dress optional) with dance lessons	\$12
Mon., July 18 7:30 p.m.	The Towers	Lecture on Charles Dana Gibson, creator of the Gibson Girl	Free
Wed., July 20	Kinney Bungalow	Antique Autos, Gibson Girls, and Stride/Ragtime Piano Performance by Ross Petot. Car viewing 6–7:15 p.m. Piano Performance 7:30 p.m.	\$10
Wed.–Sun. July 20–24 July 27–31	Courthouse Ctr. for the Arts	<i>The Mikado</i> by Gilbert and Sullivan 8 p.m. performances, 3 p.m. Sunday matinees	\$20 members \$22 non-members
Thurs., July 21 1–4 p.m.	Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum	Gibson Girls, Lily Pads, Parasols, and Tea. Have a leisurely ride on Carr Pond, carry our parasol, have your picture taken in one of our boats, and have some tea too.	\$12
Thurs., July 21 7–10 p.m.	The Towers	Music and Dancing with The New Black Eagle Jazz Band	\$10
Sun., July 24 1–4 p.m.	South County Museum	Garden Party with Lawn Games. Join Kate Chase Sprague for tea. Box lunches available.	\$5 adults \$2 children

Week of August 6–14

Culinary Culture: Open Fire Cooking to Artful Desserts

Sat., Aug. 6 1–4 p.m.	Smith's Castle	Open fire cooking demonstrations	\$5 adults \$2 children
Sun., Aug. 7 2–4 p.m.	Kinney Bungalow	Ice Cream Social and Teddy Bear Picnic	\$5 adults \$2 children
Weds., Aug 10 7:30 p.m.	Courthouse Ctr. for the Arts	Artful Desserts	\$15
Aug. 10–14 10–4 p.m.	South County Museum	A Taste of History: Featured Foods of the Farmer, Factory Worker, Fisherman, and the Financially Well-To-Do	
Sat., Aug. 13 7:00 p.m.	The Towers	Clams Casino Event Fundraiser	
Sun., Aug. 14 1–4 p.m.	Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum	Gilbert Stuart's Palate: Family Fun Day—Johnny Cakes and Hasty Pudding. Celebration of art, music, games, and family fun.	\$8



Camps for All Ages Exciting Season Continues

Ladies Camps

Saturday, July 9. The summer ladies camp will focus on the skills required by colonial woman to take advantage of the harvest of early summer. Summer fashions, cooking, harvesting the flower garden to create medicinal salves and sachets, decorating beautiful bonnets, making housewives sewing kits, dyeing and weaving, discussion on sex and the 18th century woman, and more.

Saturday, October 1. The fall camp will focus on readying the household for winter. Food preservation, cooking, candle making, wool preparation and spinning, whole cloth quilting, home production of beer and wine, and portrait painting for upper class and merchant families.

Hours for both camps are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and include lunch and refreshments (18th century fare) and materials used in learning 18th century skills.

Participants take home items they create.
\$50.00 members, \$60 non-member.
Open to women ages 15 and up.
To register phone the Castle at 294-3521.

Kids Camp

Monday through Friday, July 25–July 29, 9–11:30 a.m.
(9–noon Friday)

\$100 per child, \$75 for members

For children currently in grades 4–6. Enrollment is limited.

Call Smith's Castle, 294-3521, for information and registration.

History is alive at Smith's Castle! Youngsters will experience colonial Rhode Island through the rich history of Smith's Castle. They will discover what life was like for children in the 17th and 18th centuries: learning colonial crafts, cooking over an open fire, playing games, making a hand-bound journal, touring the Old Narragansett Church and its historic cemetery, and much more!

17th Century Market Faire

May 28–29. The Castle played host to a 17th Century Market Faire and encampment. On the waterfront could be heard the sounds of cannon and musket fire. Visitors enjoyed perusing necessities at the Big Bear Trading Company. The Castle's most able bodied docents demonstrated open fire cooking with

traditional dishes of boiled pudding and jonny cakes, bobbin lace making, and beer brewing. The Free Men of the Sea, Pirates of the Golden Age, delighted young guests with their tales of the sea. Performances on 17th colonial life were presented by Jessa Piaia as Mary Dyer and John McNiff as a Rhode Island Pirate. ■

Scenes of the 17th Century Market Faire by Kimber Charpentier, Charpentier Photography.



New Favorite Kicks-Off

What's It Worth Wickford?

On yet another rainy Saturday this spring, over 130 individuals found a most pleasurable way to pass the time. In collaboration with the North Kingstown Chamber of Commerce, Smith's Castle hosted an antiques appraisal, "What's It Worth Wickford." Visitors paid a small fee for a verbal appraisal of their personal treasures and had an opportunity to see the Castles' collections. Appraisals were given by Dan Soules of Daniel Buck Auctions, a Castle member. Accompanying Dan were Mary Jo Munroe, appraiser and volunteer with the N.K. Chamber of Commerce, Michael McAlister of *Old News*, Wolf Spring, and Larry Canale.

An amazing assortment of furniture, dolls, pottery, books, ceramics, weapons, stained glass, lamps, toys, ephemera, long past campaign memorabilia, and stuffed animals (to name but a few) were stationed in the meeting room as everyone waited for their appointed time. It was a day filled with interesting stories, history, and a few intriguing mysteries. Thank you to Janet Jacques and Marjorie Fleishmann of the Chamber of Commerce for coordinating this wonderful event. An additional thank you to Pickles Gourmet Deli for providing a great lunch for all volunteers! ■



Dan Soules, Daniel Buck Auctions, appraises a balance for Mrs. Lou Sansone. Looking on is Mary Jo Munroe, appraiser and N.K. Chamber of Commerce volunteer. Photo: Chris Kalina.



Mr. and Mrs. Lou Sansone, Castle members, brought an antique scale to be appraised. Photo: Chris Kalina.



Mr. and Mrs. Richard Rupp with part of their Civil War collection. Photo: Chris Kalina.

Exploring Castle Myths and Legends "Always Called Smith's Castle"

Neil Dunay

Upon first glimpsing our site, new visitors to Smith's Castle are often perplexed: Where's the moat? Where are the towers, the steep stone walls, and the drawbridge? In short, why is this colonial house called Smith's Castle?

Our docents treat this question head-on at the start of the tour: "Were you surprised when you drove in that you did not see a medieval style castle? The word 'castle' means a fortified, or formerly fortified, structure. The original Smith block house was certainly a place of safety in the early 17th century when there were few settlers and houses in the area."

The explanation is certainly logical and is consistent with the Castle's use by the United Colonies as a garrison during the Great Swamp Attack in 1675. Contemporary records, however, indicate that the site was not called Smith's Castle until the second half of the 18th century, at the earliest.

From all of the extant deeds and correspondence, the site was never habitually called Smith's Castle in the 17th century during the Smiths' ownership. Deeds recorded in the *Fones Record* refer to the site as Richard Smith's "Tradeing House," his dwelling house, or simply his house. In his correspondence, Roger Williams typically called the place "Mr. Smiths." Nathaniel Saltonstall in his narratives of King Philip's War, published in London in 1675 and 1676, also called the site "Smith's House," noting it was "one of the most delightful Seats in New England."

The idea that Smith's Castle was always called Smith's Castle comes from an undated and unsigned manuscript entitled *Recollections*, which is among the Updike papers at the Rhode Island Historical Society (RIHS MSS 770, Case 1: Folder 23). The paper has always been attributed to James Updike (1763–1855) and is thought to have been written about 1850. After quoting his father Lodowick's remembrance of the family folklore about the layout of Richard Smith's original trading post, James Updike concludes: "This was always called Smith Castle, and which was always, afterwards, the residence of the Updike family."

About 1845, at the age of 80, James' sister Anstis (Updike) Lee (1765–1864) called the ancestral home Smith's Castle in her remembrance of a trip to Hartford she took in 1791: "On the next day, we arrived at home, at 'Smith's Castle,' my father's place of residence." [W. Updike III:107]

Ironically, James' and Anstis' brother Wilkins, the chief chronicler of the family history, does not use the term "Smith's Castle" in either his *History of the Episcopal Church in Narragansett* (1847) or his biography of Daniel Updike in *Memoirs of the Rhode-Island Bar* (1842).

The sudden use of the term about 1850 suggests that it possibly arose with this generation of Updikes. An earlier reference, however, can be found in a letter from Lodowick Updike (1725–1804) to M. Carpentier, Wilkins' French tutor. The dateline at the top of the letter reads: "S's Castle, Augt 8th 1803." [W. Updike II: 57] The fact that Lodowick Updike abbreviated "Smith's" suggests the site's association with Richard Smith was well recognized. With Smith's abbreviated, the emphasis falls on "Castle."

A reference to our site as "Smith's Castle" earlier than 1803 has not yet been discovered. A document among the North Kingstown land records (Vol. 10A) offers yet another variation. Dated Nov. 14, 1746, a land transaction involving Attorney General Daniel Updike (1692–1757) and Peter Warren of Suffolk County, Mass., mentions Daniel Updike's "Mansion House & farm called Smith's hall Lying in North Kings [Town] ... which was the Estate of Lodowick Updike of Sd North Kings Town."

The records seem to suggest that sometime between 1746 and 1803, Smith's Hall became Smith's Castle. Why the change? The reasons are difficult to pinpoint. We can imagine that about the time of the Revolution, when ties with England were severed, Americans wanted to record their own history and establish their own culture. The Updikes, having held their ancestral seat for 140 years, may have wished to emphasize their preeminent social stature and their historical connection with the land. What better way than equate their home in the new world with the castle of the old? ■

This is the first in an intended series of articles focusing on myths, misconceptions, and misunderstandings surrounding Smith's Castle and its history. If you have suggestions for future issues, please contact the office:

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North Kingstown, RI 02852
E-mail: smithscastle@earthlink.org

17th-Century References to the Smiths' Estate

Year	Month-Day	Reference	Document	Source
1651	Jun(?) -7	my [Roger Williams'] trading house	Land Record: Roger Williams to Richard Smith "of Portsmouth"	Fones Record, 93-94
1656	Mar-8	now dwelling house [hadeing (sic)] at Potomcasutt	Land Record: Coginiquand 60-year lease to Richard Smith	Fones Record, 94-95
1659	Nov-4	mr. Smith's Trading house	Land Record: Division of North & South purchases	Fones Record, 5
1659	Jun-8	the trading house	Land Record: Thousand year "Red honney Suckell grasse" lease	Fones Record, 97
1659	Jun-27	the trading house	Land Record: Little [Goat / Rabbit] island sold to Smiths	Fones Record, 99
1660	Jul-26	Traideing house at Naraganset	Land Record: Quequashanuit's Receipt	Fones Record, 9
1672	Aug-22	mr. Smith's house	Capt. Cranston re: assembly	Fones Record, 174
1675	Jun-18	house of Mr. Richard Smith, at Naraganset	Plan for meeting to divide southern tract	Fones Record, 28
1675	Jun-8	Att Mr. Smith's, ... Wickford	Letter from Amos Richardson to Mr. Lyndes	Fones Record, 156
1675	Jun-13	From Mr. Richard Smiths	Letter from Roger Williams to John Winthrop Jr.	Williams Corr, 690
1675	Jun-25	From Mr Smiths at Nahigonsik	Letter from Roger Williams to John Winthrop Jr.	Williams Corr, 693
1675	Jun-27	From Mr Smiths	Letter from Roger Williams to John Winthrop Jr.	Williams Corr, 698
1675	Jul-7	From Mr Smiths	Letter from Roger Williams to Wait Winthrop	Williams Corr, 701
1675	Dec-13	Captain Smith an Englishman, that hath a large Estate thereabouts	Nathaniel Saltonstall's <i>Present State of New-England</i> (1675)	Lincoln, 43
1676	Jan-14	Mr Smiths	Letter from Roger Williams to John Leverett (re: Joshua Tefft)	Williams Corr, 711
1676	Feb-9	at Capt. Smith's House ... whose Dwelling is about four Miles off the Narragansetts Dwellings, and is now the strongest Garrison in those Parts; Mr. Smith's House [twice cited]	Nathaniel Saltonstall's <i>A Continuation of the State of New-England</i> (1676)	Lincoln, 57, 61, 68
1676	Jul-22	having placed a Garrison of about seventy Men, in Captain Smith's (a strong) House, within four Miles of the Narragansetts Dwellings; the Narragansett Garrison raised by the United Colonies, lodged as aforesaid in Mr. Smith's House, they having eat and destroyed what they could, quitted the said House; the Indians came and burnt the said Garrison-house (one of the most delightful Seats in New England) and another House of the said Capt. Smiths at Sawgaw [Saugo]	Nathaniel Saltonstall's <i>New and Further Narrative of the State of New-England</i> (1676)	Lincoln, 80, 81, 82
1681	Nov-23	Rich'd Smith's dwelling house in Narragansett	Land Record: William Maze to Richard Smith	Fones Record, 105
1681	Nov-26	Richard Smiths Dwelling house in Narragansett	Land Record: Randall Holden to Richard Smith	Fones Record, 107
1684	Mar-20	my uncle, mr. Richard Smiths dwelling house formerly called ye Trading house	Land Record: James Updike sells legacy to Francis Brinley	Fones Record, 162
1684	Sept.	my housing burnt, being of great value	Richard Smith's Petition to the United Colonies for Compensation	Shurtleff & Pulsifer, 412
1685	Apr-23	house of mr. Richard Smith at Naraganset	Meeting place for proprietors of southern tract	Fones Record, 40
1686	Jun-23	At Maj'r Richard Smith's in Rochester in ye King's Province	Court held at	Fones Record, 175
1686	Oct-13	at ye house of Maj'r Richard Smith	Court held at	Fones Record, 179

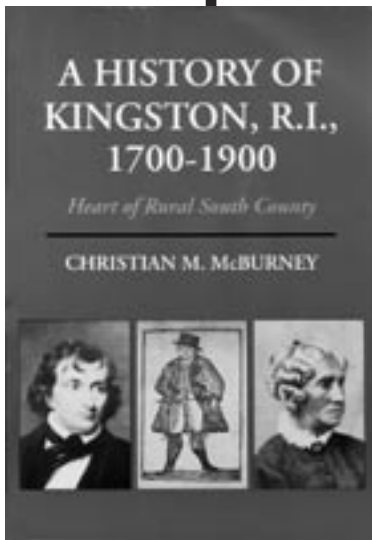
References

Updike, Wilkins. *A History of the Episcopal Church in Narragansett, Rhode Island*. Merrymount Press, Boston, Mass., 1907.
 Lincoln, Charles H., ed. *Narratives of the Indian Wars, 1675-1699*. Barnes and Noble, New York, 1959.
 Shurtleff, Daniel B. and David Pulsifer, eds. *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth in New England, Vol. V 1674-1686*. W. White, Boston, 1854.

Recommended Reading

A History of Kingston, Rhode Island, 1700–1900

Christian M. McBurney



Christian McBurney, who was raised in South County, graduated from Brown University, and is now an attorney in Washington D.C. has written an entertaining and informational history of the town of Kingston, formerly called “Little Rest.” There is a great deal in this well written work that would be of interest to those who wish to learn more about Cocumscussoc, South County, and the early days of Rhode Island.

In the 18th century, South County, was the home of a number of large plantations of which Cocumscussoc was one. The plantations were engaged in the raising of sheep, horses, and cattle and in the production of dairy products. Black slaves provided the labor and McBurney details the interesting movement of Rhode Islanders from supporters to opponents of slavery. In 1730, more than one in three persons in South County was a slave. Records show that Daniel Updike at Cocumscussoc owned 19 slaves in 1757. By 1837, attitudes had changed and residents of Kingston formed the Kingston Anti Slavery Society. By the 1880s, Rhode Island’s discriminatory laws had been abolished and white and black children attended schools together. In writing this history the author tried to look at the bright and dark sides of race relations and succeeded in distinguishing the difference between conditions in Rhode Island and Southern states.

Another interesting part of the book is the account of Rhode Island in the Revolutionary period. One is not surprised to learn that naturally rebellious Rhode Islanders were the first to declare independence from Great Britain, but it is a surprise to learn that it was the last state to

ratify the Constitution and did so under great pressure. Why? Because the plantation owners in South County were fearful of being taxed by a central government.

Wilkins Updike (1783–1867) figures prominently in the history of Kingston. He practiced law there and was a noted politician. He was raised at Smith’s Castle where his family had resided since the mid 17th century. Wilkins was the last of the Updike’s to live there. One of his brothers had started a business in New York and Wilkins guaranteed a loan in order to assist him. The business failed and in 1812 Smith’s Castle was sold to discharge the debt. Wilkins’s career shifted from that of a plantation owner to that of a small town lawyer. Did this unfortunate turn of events affect his personality? Possibly, since he later had the reputation of having insulted every important person in Rhode Island.

A theme of the book is Kingston’s role in the liberal reforms that were taking place in New England prior to the Civil War. An effort had begun to transform the attitudes of society toward human rights. Among the issues were voting rights, treatment of criminals, and access of children to schools. McBurney details the struggles Kingston had with each problem.

While this book will appeal mainly to residents of Kingston who are interested in the details of their heritage, it is recommended as well to anyone curious about the development of Rhode Island. McBurney keeps one’s interest alive with anecdotes and descriptions of the residents of the area as he paints a picture of the historical landscape.

—Peter Dunston

Christian M. McBurney. *A History of Kingston Rhode Island, 1750–1900*. Pettquamscutt Historical Society, Kingston, R.I., 2005.

Smith's Castle Garden Journal

New Herbs Introduced

Donna Shamas & Alice Greene

When you visit the colonial revival garden this year, you will find that an entire section has been given over to herbs that were in common use in colonial America. The herbs will beautify the garden and will be used by the Castle docents for demonstrations. Herbs have been of great importance throughout history and have been used for medicinal purposes, for cooking and cleaning, for making potpourri and dyes, and many other things.



One of the new herbs in the garden is costmary (*Tanacetum balsamita*). This native of the Orient was introduced to England in the 16th century where it quickly became very popular. The plants are two to three feet tall and are topped with clusters of yellow flowers in August. The plant has an aroma much like balsam. Costmary was used to flavor pints of ale as well as salads, soups and stews, and leaves were mixed with lavender to make potpourri. According to 17th century herbalist Culpepper, costmary "*maketh an excellent salve to cleanse and heal old ulcers, being boiled with olive oil and Adder's Tongue with it.*" Costmary is also known as "Bible Leaf." Colonial churchgoers used the leaves to mark their Bibles and prayer books. When the sermon became long and boring and heads began to nod, churchgoers would pull the leaves from their prayer books to sniff them or nibble on the edges, thus

reviving themselves. It has been said that you could determine which parish had the most boring clergy by the amount of costmary grown in the area's gardens.



Another new addition to the garden is hyssop (*Hyssopus officinalis*), an herb which was often used as a cleansing herb, especially in sick-rooms. These bushy plants feature lovely blue-violet flowers which are borne in profusion all summer. During the 17th and 18th century, teas made from the flowers and leaves were used to reduce perspiration, cure jaundice and dropsy, and bronchitis. Poultices made of fresh ground leaves were believed to promote healing of wounds and bruises. The leaves were used to flavor chicken soup, fruits, and lamb. Hyssop attracts butterflies and hummingbirds as well as bees. Old time beekeepers rubbed their hives with hyssop along with juniper, fennel, and thyme to encourage the bees to stay. ■

Costmary
Hyssop

Follow the Clues to the Smith's Castle Letterbox

Chris Kalina

Letterboxing dates back to 1854 Victorian England. What started as a hobby for hikers in the countryside of England has become a worldwide phenomenon. Letterboxing is a combination of orienteering and treasure hunting that uses maps, compasses or gps (global positioning system), and a series of clever clues to locate hidden containers.

Each letterbox is a sealed plastic container that holds a small notebook of acid free paper and a unique rubber stamp. Thousands of letterboxes are hidden throughout the world; there are 224 in Rhode Island alone. Once a box is located, the finder inks the stamp from the box and presses it into their personal journal, then inks his personal stamp and records his discovery of the box in the journal that each box holds. Searchers are invited to record personal observations and comments next to their stamp. The stamp copy that records the visit is the reward for the effort. Anyone can place a letterbox and register their treasure on the

Letterbox Web Ring. Clues to the location of the Castle letterbox can be found at www.letterboxing.org. Our box provides the history of Cocumscussoc and Smith's Castle and a personal invitation to the finder to enjoy the grounds and tour this local treasure. ■



The Smith's Castle letterbox is secreted somewhere on the Castle grounds. Photo: Chris Kalina.

Through the Great Gate (from page 1)

By Land or By Sea

Today, we always approach the house by this “back way.” The front of the house is clearly on the other side: a symmetrical façade with a welcoming central entrance and a sunny southern exposure facing the water. Indeed, for the first century of the Smith-Updike’s occupation of the site, the primary means of arrival at the Castle would have been by water. The Smiths, with their own sloops and their frequent trading expeditions, would have approached their home by water most of the time. The Updikes, with important social, business, and political connections to Newport, also would have regularly traveled to and from the house by water. The Harris Survey of 1802 identifies the entire area between the front of the house and the water as gardens (fig. 1). Such a large area devoted to gardens underscores the importance of this side the house.

Nevertheless, the land approach became increasingly important in the 18th century, and it is clear from the Harris survey that the landscape on this side of the house was not neglected. In fact, for most of the 18th century this approach to the house was much more impressive than it is today.

Countrey Rhoad

For visitors today and two centuries ago, the approach to Smith’s Castle by land starts at the Post Road. This route became regularly traveled probably not long after Richard Smith first opened his trading house in 1637. It is consistently referred to in mid-17th century land records as the “English path to Pequot,” with one land deed from Coginaquand, a Narragansett chief sachem, calling it “the English path or common Rhoad waye that goeth to poquitt.” [Fones Record, 94] After King Philip’s War, the road was used more frequently, and it became a major postal route. In 1704, the famous travel diarist Madame Knight (Mrs. Sarah Knight) traveled the road (and passed the Castle) on a trip from Boston to New Haven with a postman. In 1737, the year that Daniel Updike inherited the house and began its restoration, Benjamin Franklin was appointed Deputy Postmaster General, and soon authorized improvements to the road to facilitate postal delivery. Despite the improvements, the Post Road remained a dirty, bumpy ride. In 1845, Anstis Updike Lee, describing a trip to Hartford in 1791, recalled: “We left our father’s house, [Smith’s Castle,] ... on horseback on Monday morning. Carriages were at that time rarely used, as the roads were so bad that it was impracticable to ride on them with comfort or safety. I was



Figure 2. Section of the Post Road, North Kingstown, bef. 1915.

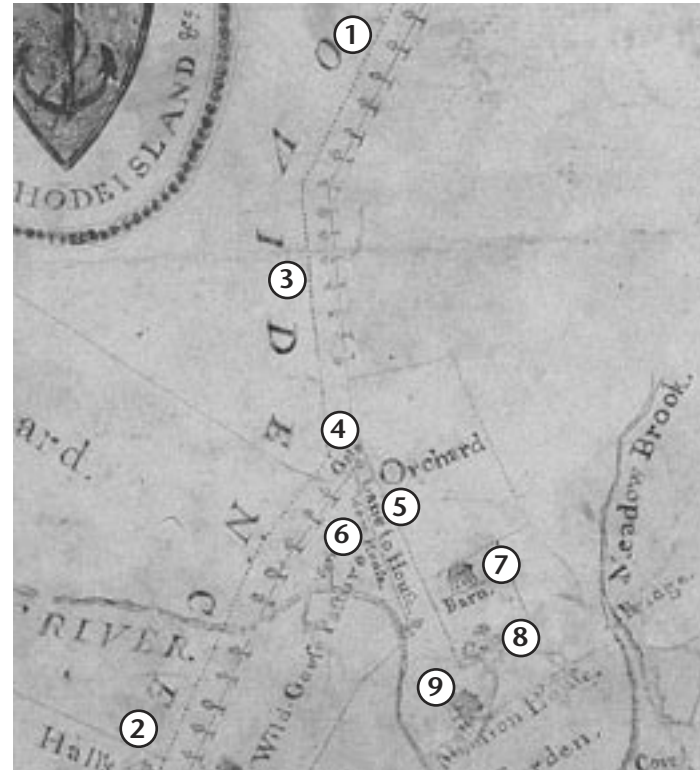


Figure 1. Survey of Homestead and Saugo Farms, Caleb Harris, 1802, (detail). The numbers refer to items described in the text. Image courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society, (Rhi x5 308).

mounted on a fine Narragansett pacer of easy carriage and of great fleetness...” The road was not paved until the early 20th century (fig. 2).

In the 18th century, the Post Road, then known as the “Countrey Rhoad” and shown on the Harris survey as “Road from Providence,” followed what today is Huling Road, the side road that leads to Stony Lane and creates an island around the liquor and rental stores. Horses and carriages traveling south toward the Castle would follow the Updike boundary line. At this time, most of the coastal farmlands were barren of trees, offering vistas down to the water. As shown on the survey, however, the Updikes chose to screen the line between their farm and the road with trees, obstructing the view of the Castle from the road.

Let’s use our imaginations and take a journey down this “Country Road” in the 1740s. We have been invited by Daniel Updike, the attorney general of the colony, to see his newly renovated home.

Imagine yourself on horseback, or in a carriage if you prefer. We start approximately where the Wash-

ington Trust is today (on your right), which in the 18th century was open pastures rising to a hilltop. On your left, you see fencing and trees neatly planted along the entire road, frustrating your attempt to see what is beyond them (fig. 1, #1). You are soon on the section of the road we know today as Huling Road. On the left, trees continue to block your view. On the right you come to Stony Lane, the road laid out in 1703 that leads to the Baptist Church in the town's western lands. Straight ahead in the distance, you see the rustic stone-end chimney wall of the Hall home-stead (fig. 1, #2). The road now bends sharply to the left (fig. 1, #3). As you swing around the corner, all at once you see a magnificent sight—the large mansion house of Daniel Updike, standing bright white against the dark green landscape and the deep blue waters behind it. You are especially struck by the dramatic white of the house. Perhaps, you have never seen such a boldly painted house before. Painters' account books of the period indicate white paint was rare at this time; white houses weren't common in New England until the early 1800s, more than 50 years in the future.

You have ample time to enjoy the view as you proceed leisurely along Huling Road up to the Great Gate (fig. 1, #4). Your servant, or perhaps an Updike field hand, interrupting his work in the orchard, unhitches the gate and allows you to pass through onto the Updike estate (fig. 3).

Great Gate

The Castle's Great Gate is the subject of ghastly history and romantic legend. It was here, it is said, on January 18, 1676, that Joshua Tefft, having been convicted of high treason in aiding the Narragansett against the English at the Great Swamp, was hanged, drawn, and quartered, and his body left dangling from a post at the Great Gate to act as a warning to all who passed by. It was also here, about 1760, that the "Unfortunate Hannah" Robinson, an Updike niece, having arrived in a carriage from her home at South Ferry to attend her aunt Abigail's elegant party, descended from her carriage and into the arms of her forbidden lover, Peter Simon. Off they traveled on the road to Providence to secretly wed against the wishes of Hannah's irate father.

The primary reason for fencing and gates was of course to keep livestock inside (and frequently outside) the confines of the property, and to also define boundaries. In some cases where public roads bisected private property (as many did in South County), the gates actually ran across the road, forcing travelers to

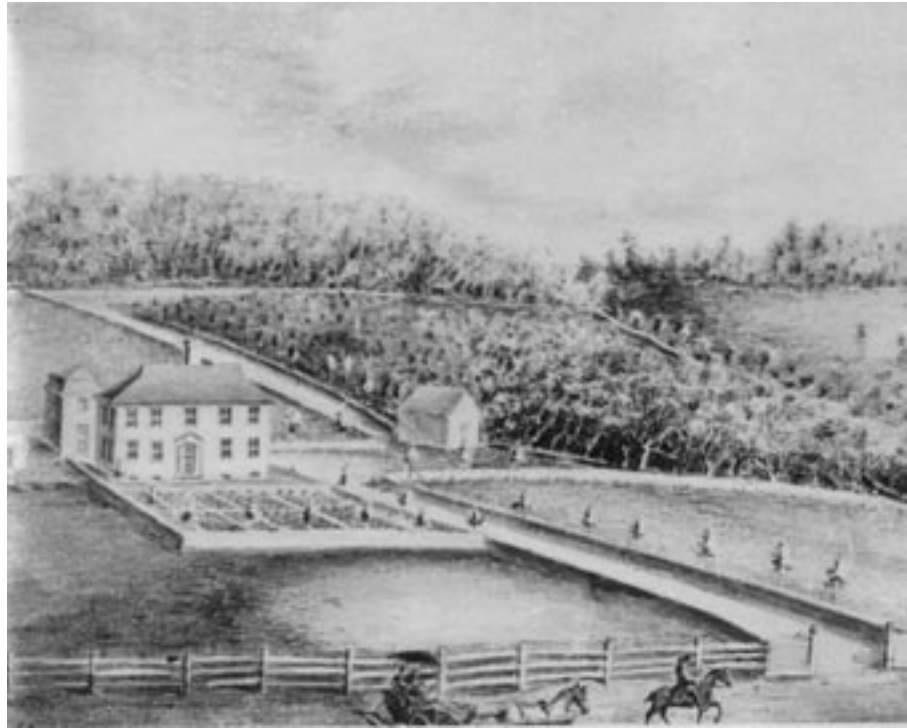


Figure 4. *South West View of the Seat of Henry Marchant*. Unknown artist, 1785–1790. Image courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society, (Rhi x5 3019).

step down, open the gate to pass, and then close the gate behind them. It is possible the Smiths/Updikes had just such a gate at the northern-most corner of their property, where today Camp Avenue meets the Post Road. Town records from 1722 refer to the spot "where the gate and bars (formerly) stood by A Black Oake Tree Neare the House [of Willia]m Havens in Kingstown." One of the Updike barns was also located nearby. [NK Land Evidences 6:100] (The Havens ran a tavern and inn, near the site of today's Pagoda Inn, where Madame Knight stayed the night.)

Once through the gate, you follow the "Lane to the House," as it is called on the Harris survey (fig. 1, #5), glancing or perhaps even stopping along the way to examine landscape features. Fencing, likely a stone wall, encloses the Lane on both sides. An orchard, which would have been beautiful and fragrant in spring, greets you at the top of the Lane. The scene may have been quite similar to the layout of Henry Marchant's estate (fig. 4). From 1795, this drawing is the only known contemporary rendering of a South County plantation. Note the road (with travelers by horse and by carriage) and the gate. The approach is a



Figure 3. Entrance Gate to the Silas Casey Farm, North Kingstown. Photo: Neil Dunay, 2003.

—continued on page 12

Great Gate *(from page 11)*



Figure 4. Stone Foundations of the Updike Ice House. Photo: Neil Dunay, 2005.

formal lane to the house, with a combination of stone walls and wooden fencing and a mixture of building styles, both formal and informal.

Ice House

Back to our ride: From just inside the Great Gate on the west (right) side of the Lane you can make out the roof of the Ice House (fig. 1, #6). Today, part of the foundation of the building remains, with two walls built into the side of the hill next to Cocumscussoc Brook (fig. 4). The brook would be dammed to create a wide, still area that would freeze in winter. The ice would be harvested and stored in the ice house.

Ice houses are very infrequently mentioned in 18th century documents. In fact, if it weren't for the Harris survey, we would never have known that there was an ice house on the property, as it is not recorded elsewhere. (A 1798 tax inventory lists only the house, barn, the corn crib, and two unnamed outbuildings.)

Placed at the head of the lane the ice house was in conspicuous view of travelers along the Post Road and visitors on the lane to the house. There are two known early examples of Rhode Island ice houses that illustrate two divergent building styles. Did the Updike structure resemble either of these?

The ice house on the Spring Green estate in Warwick was a somewhat unusual structure (fig. 5). According to the R.I. Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission, "Traditionally dated 1740, it is popularly called John Brown's Ice House after the Providence merchant who purchased the property in 1783. The structure consisted of a cylindrical pit about 12–15 feet across and 12–15 feet deep, lined with stone carried up above grade a bit to form a low



Figure 5. John Brown's Ice House with conical roof at Spring Green, Warwick. Photo: RIHPHC.



Figure 6. Ice House built into hillside at Briggs Farm, South Road, East Greenwich. Photo: RIHPHC.

foundation. On this sat an octagonal, conical roof about 12–15 feet tall. An end-gabled dormer contained a double-leaf door on strap hinges. At the top was an unusual weather vane in the form of a swimming fish." [RIHPC] Similar structures, pits with conical roofs, from this time period exist in New Jersey and Virginia.

The Updike ice house probably wasn't this grand, and may have looked more like one that can be found on the Briggs Farm on South Road in East Greenwich (fig. 6). The farmhouse dates to about 1740 and there are 18th century outbuildings on the property. Historians dated the ice house to the mid-19th century, based not on the architectural features, but rather on a general notion that ice harvesting began about that time. Note how it sits into the hill so that the low roof is at grade level and disappears into the landscape. A visitor on the Updike entry lane would have barely seen the roof and would have had an unimpeded view of the brook and the Wild-Goose Pasture beyond.



Figure 7. Fenno Barn, Old Sturbridge Village, based on a c. 1750 English barn in North Braintree, Mass.

Even though for practical reasons the icehouse needed to be below grade, the Updikes would still likely have wanted it to be visible to visitors and passers-by. The presence of an icehouse meant that the Updikes employed state-of-the-art techniques in their farming and merchant enterprises. It also meant the Updikes could afford many perishable food luxuries that were unavailable to most nearby families. Ice cream, for example, was a luxury enjoyed by the Washingtons, Jeffersons, and Madisons—and perhaps the Updikes.

Barn

The next structure you see is the barn, located quite close to the east side of Richard Smith Drive (fig. 1, #7). Barns in New England at this time were of the “English barn” type. They were usually 40 feet long by 30 feet wide with the gable on the short side and the doors at the center of the wide side. On one side of the door was the tie-up for the horses or other livestock and on the other side was the hay mow. The photo above (fig. 7) shows Old Sturbridge Village’s reproduction of a 1750 barn from North Braintree, Mass. This would have been a very common barn for this period.

The Updike barn may not have been typical. It was slightly smaller than average, being 34 feet by 28 feet, according to the 1798 tax record. In addition, Caleb Harris’ drawing of the barn suggests two unique features. First, the roof was not a simple gable but is shown as if it had two sections. This could indicate it was a gambrel roof (what we think of today as a barn roof) or a hip roof (as shown on the Marchant house in fig. 4). Second, Harris shows not one but three openings. It’s difficult to tell from his rendering, but these openings may have been rounded at the top, like archways.



Figure 7a. Dr. Hurd’s House in Concord, Massachusetts. Watercolor drawing by Henry Wilder, 1801. Concord Antiquarian Museum [Hubka, 15].

Above is a watercolor image of a farm in Concord, Mass. that contains both an English barn and a carriage house with four arched openings (fig. 7a). The unique features suggested by the Harris drawing indicate that the Updike barn was more ornate than a typical English barn. The Lane was a formal entrance to the house and aesthetics were probably a prime consideration in the form and placement of the buildings erected along it. (Remember that the Updikes had working barns at Saugo and South Farm and elsewhere on the Homestead Farm.) It’s likely this “barn” functioned more as a carriage house for the family’s and guests’ horses and carriages than an actual working barn.

Corn Crib

The next building you come to is the corn crib (fig. 1, #8). It was located in the current parking lot close to the neighbors’ mailboxes. The Updike’s crib measured 23 feet long and 14 feet wide. An image of a corn crib on the property of the former Saugo Farm is shown on page 14 (fig. 8). At 17 feet long and 16 feet wide, the Saugo crib is a little smaller than the Updike crib. According to the 1798 tax survey, the original Saugo farm crib was 16 feet long and 12 feet wide. Perhaps the current crib is not the same as the one referred to in 1798 or the original crib was expanded. One of the doors has hand-wrought iron strap hinges, suggesting it dates no later than the early 19th century. The building now stands on concrete piers. Corn cribs were built high off the ground on stone piers to encourage air circulation and deter access by mice and other critters. The walls were usually built with vertical boards with generous spacing, again to help air circulation, and some had splayed walls.

—continued on page 14

Great Gate (from page 13)



Figure 8. Corn Crib on the Saugo (Cedarhurst) Farm, North Kingstown. Photo: Neil Dunay, 2003.



Figure 9. Cheese House on the Saunders Farm, Charlestown, aft. 1740 [Old Houses..., 68].

The corn crib is the last of the buildings shown for Homestead farm on the Harris drawing. The 1798 tax survey mentions two additional outbuildings, each eight feet square, but it doesn't indicate their purpose or location.

Cheese House and Privy

One (or perhaps both) of the unnamed buildings may have been a cheese house. The Updikes produced and exported cheese from the plantation, yet we have no references in the 18th century to a cheese house being on any of the Updike farms. If there were a cheese house on the property, it may have looked like the cheese house that was part of a Saunders' property in Charlestown (fig. 9). The photo dates from the 1930s. The proportions look right for an eight-foot square building. After pressing, cheeses were coated with butter and salt and placed on a cheese ladder on the cheese house shelf to ripen. This took several months and during this period the cheese had to be turned over and buttered daily. Most of the cheese was made during July and August, but the turning and buttering continued until late in the fall. [Lownes, 68]

Another structure, not identified on the survey and probably not visible to visitors, would have been the privy. We have no clue where the Updike privy was located, which is unfortunate because, given the custom of using privies for discarding household items, the Updike privy would be a treasure trove

for archaeologists. (Excavation of the privy at the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard house in Newport has yielded valuable insight about colonial life at that site.)

You Have Arrived

As you approach the house at the end of the Lane (fig. 1 #9), you see Updike servants waiting to greet you. They are standing in front of a beautiful door trimmed in—marble? Unbelievable! It's even more than you had imagined!

Ordinarily, in the 18th century the back of the house, called a dooryard, was used for daily chores. This is what the back of the Castle now looks like, but this interpretation belies this area's appearance and function during the Updike era.

The door and surround, for example, are more lavish than required for a utilitarian space. The paneled door is flanked by fluted columns that appear to support a rectangular pediment with a transom window (fig. 10). During the Castle's restoration in the 1990s the National Park Service analyzed paint samples from this area and discovered that the doorway had been painted with a faux marble finish. This was a bold statement intended to impress important visitors.

Of course, if you are familiar with the layout of the house today you know that beyond the elegant entry door lies (what were the Updike's thinking?) the kitchen! A floor plan drawn by Norman Isham in the 1890s resolves this incongruity (fig. 11). This corner



Figure 10. Rear door of the Castle leading into the kitchen. Castle tours end in the kitchen and groups exit through this door. Photo: Neil Dunay, 2005.

of the house was greatly altered in the early 1900s (an elevator was added), and it has yet to be completely returned to its 18th century configuration. Note that on Isham's floor plan the back door opens into a hallway, rather than directly into the kitchen as it does today. The transom above the door, which serves no purpose today, would have then been essential to light the dark passageway. At the end of the hall were three doors.

From rooms identified in Daniel Updike's 1757 estate inventory, we know the door on the left opened into the kitchen (then called the back room); straight ahead was the Updikes' bedchamber (then called the bedroom below and today the Richard Smith Jr. room); and to the right was Daniel Updike's office (today's gift shop). This makes complete sense. Business visitors were shown directly into the attorney general's office; tradesmen into the kitchen, and social callers into the bedchamber. No snickering! Remember, it was the height of fashion in the 18th century to receive guests in the master bedchamber. It was, after all, the most lavishly decorated and elegant room in the house. ■

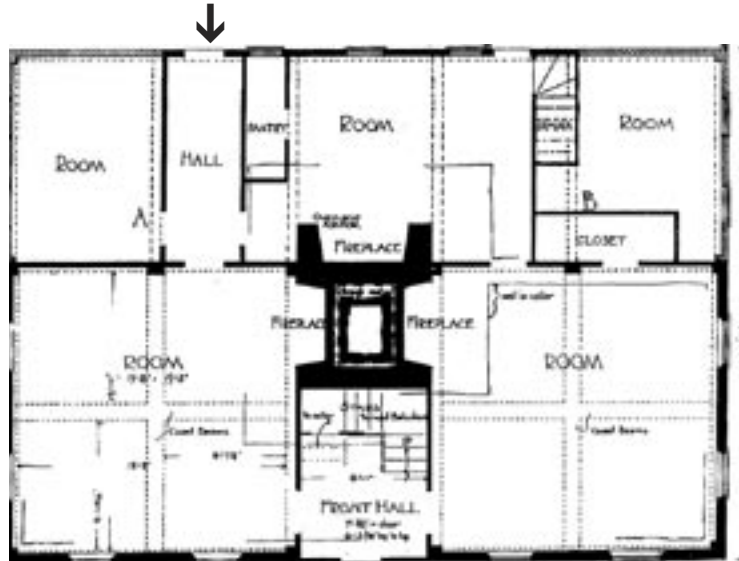


Figure 11. Norman Isham's Plan of Smith 'Garrison' House, Cocumscussoc, 1895 [Isham, Plate 52].

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This article is based on a Focus Tour of Smith's Castle given by the author on September 13, 2003, entitled *Centuries of Change: Imagining Site and Architecture Through Time*.

Publications

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Darrell McIntire

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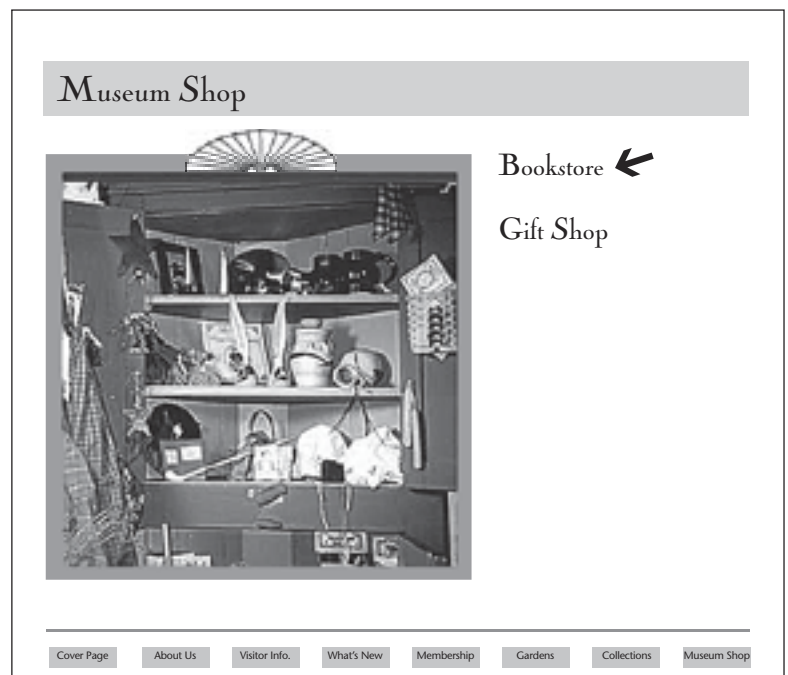
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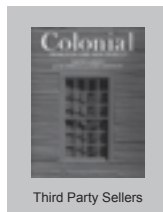
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Education

Education Programming at Smith's Castle Reaches New Heights

Chris Kalina

Since the House opened this spring, Smith's Castle docents have provided quality, hands on educational programs to over 1,000 Rhode Island school children, teachers, and chaperones. It has been a very busy spring!

A hearty huzzah to all docents whose dedication, tireless efforts, and incredible skills have made this possible. The Cocumscussoc Association can be proud that our reputation is unsurpassed in school programming. ■

Documents and Discovery, Kids Make History Live is a collaboration between Smith's Castle and Forest Park Elementary. This interactive interpretive program engages third grade students in a year long in depth investigation of the Cocumscussoc site and its significance in both Rhode Island colonial history and the evolution of the community that is present day North Kingstown. In Phase One, students use 17th century surveying and mapping techniques and tools to make a preliminary map of Cocumscussoc to determine if it is suitable for settlement.



Deb Britton's third grade class from Forest Park Elementary in North Kingstown completes phase one of *Documents and Discovery*.
Photo: Chris Kalina.

This Season at Smith's Castle

July

Day	Time	Event
Saturday, 9	8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.	Summer Ladies Camp see p. 4 for details
Saturday, 16–Sunday, 17	10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.	Master Garnder's Garden Tour
Sunday, 17–Sunday, 24	Noon–4:00 p.m.	Week-long exhibit and special tour: Cocumscussoc Dairy Farm Life, 1895–1920
Saturday, 23	10:00–11:00 a.m.	Bugs, Ticks, and Insects Marion Gold, Master Gardener
Monday, 25	7:00 p.m.	Board of Trustees
Monday, 25–Friday, 29	9:00–11:30 a.m. daily	Kids Camp for grades 4–6 see p. 4 for details

August

Day	Time	Event
Saturday, 6	Noon–4:00 pm	Open hearth cooking demonstrations
Sunday, 7	2:00–3:00 p.m.	Foods and Fiber Focus Tour
Saturday, 20	10:00–11:00 a.m.	Restoration of the Colonial Revival Garden Donna Shammass, Master Gardener
Saturday, 27	2:00–3:00 p.m.	Architectural Focus Tour Kari Van Buren, Resident Director

September

Day	Time	Event
Thursday, 1	9:00–10:30 a.m.	Docent Meeting
Saturday, 17	10:00–11:00 a.m.	Invasive Plants Rick Enser, Master Gardener
Saturday, 24	11:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.	Architectural Walking Tour of Newport Kari Van Buren, Resident Director

October

Day	Time	Event
Saturday, 1	8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.	Fall Ladies Camp
Thursday, 6	9:00–10:30 a.m.	Docent Meeting
Monday, 24	7:00 p.m.	Trustees Meeting
Friday, 28	7:00 p.m.	Ghost Stories and Graveyards

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The Cocumscussoc Association

Future Docents?

Thomas (l.), Frederick, and Mathew Crudale, sons of Castle docent Barbara Crudale, are dashing in their colonial-era finery. They provided able helping hands at the 17th Century Market Faire.

Photo: Kimberly Charpentier, Charpentier Photography.



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