

Castle Chronicle



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Smith's Castle: Haunt of Phantom Spirits? Exploring Castle Myths and Legends

Christine Kalina

 In early fall evenings, as shadows lengthen, the question beckons: Of the many who have lived and died at Smith's Castle's throughout its long history...who still roams its halls at night?

Given the trials and tribulations of former residents, it would be understandable if one believed that some remnant of a long ago event or trace of a restless spirit lingered still. In grand New England tradition, most "old" houses lay claim to at least one ghost, and over the years many whispered tales of spirits have been passed amongst those who visit, volunteer, and work at Smith's Castle. Visitors frequently inquire if the house is haunted. There are many legends, stories that tell of things amiss and unusual. Following is a sampling of these tales for your Halloween pleasure. For full effect, read by candlelight in the dark of night with a thunderstorm raging.

Perhaps no story is as widely known as the mysterious fate of Elizabeth Singleton. Elizabeth, whose portrait hangs in the front staircase of the Castle, is said to tread the floorboards in the night. Nate Fuller, a former president of the Cocumscussoc Association, in an interview for the *Standard Times* in the 1980s described her presence:

"She was a distinguished Newport lady. She attended many balls here, fell down the stairs and died, probably had too much rum. It is

Docents have reported that out of special consideration of Elizabeth's spirit they always wish her a good day when opening the house for tours. (A recent reevaluation of the painting indicates the young lady it portrays is Elizabeth Simpson, not Singleton. Further study may reveal, not only the painter of this beautiful portrait, but perhaps details of her genealogy and possible connection to the Castle).

Another portrait that hangs in the Castle is rumored to hold the spirit of a past inhabitant, Phebe Congdon. Phebe's portrait hangs in the 18th century bedroom of the Updikes. Phebe and Benjamin Congdon purchased Homestead Farm, which included Smith's Castle, from Wilkins Updike in 1812. It should be noted that Phebe's portrait does not reveal a particularly hospitable countenance. She is rather grim faced and appears quite stern. Perhaps that

is why many sense her presence in the house. A former docent, who asks to remain anonymous, reports an unusual impression of Phebe's presence in the house.

"I can't say I ever saw her. But there were times when I was totally

—continued on page 10

rumored that she is buried on the property in an unmarked grave. She did attend balls here, her dress caught in the stairs and she fell to her death. The noise heard could be that of a lady falling down the stairs delicately and breaking her neck."

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Note from the President

After a summer that will certainly go down in the record books for excessive heat, humidity, and lack of rainfall, Rhode Island's glorious fall weather will be a welcome change. Surprisingly, rising gas prices and poor weather have not limited the number of visitors to Smith's Castle. It has been a very busy summer. Our dedicated docents, clothed from head to foot in historic costumes, have prevailed in the sweltering heat. The addition of fans in each room of the house has provided a welcome breeze that not only cools both our volunteers but also protects the collection.

Fall arrives with a full calendar of opportunities to participate at the Castle. Events to look forward to include Ladies Camp on October 1, the Harvest Festival on October 8, and Halloween Haunting on October 28. Please check the calendar for details on these wonderful programs.

Congratulations to the Development Committee headed by Karen Pizzaruso, Sarah Bliven, Betsy Steinman, Joyce Fuller, and Maggie Skenyon for their tireless efforts to make the Castle's first public fund raiser such a wonderful success. A Summer's Evening Party and Silent Auction, held on Sunday, August 14th was well attended and the auction items were interesting and varied. The Castle chefs never fail to deliver the finest of cocktail party fare. Many Castle volunteers contributed their efforts to make this event a wonderful success and a significant amount of funds were raised to support the Castle's preservation and educational programs.

I would also like to extend a most sincere thank-you to the *Chronicle* staff on behalf of the entire membership. Much work goes on behind the scenes to assure that each issue is informative, interesting, and enlightening. We can all be proud of the exemplary publication delivered to our membership each quarter.



Members News

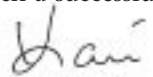
Congratulations to **Linda Eppich**, chair of the Smith's Castle Collections Committee, who has been elected chair of the Curators Committee of the 700-member American Association of Museums.

View from the Annex

As the summer season comes to an end, I have been thinking of all the wonderful events that we have held here at the Castle, and what a busy season it has been!

On May 1, we opened our doors to the community at no charge and made many new friends. Then came the 17th Century Market Faire, a first-time event here at the Castle, followed two weeks later by an old favorite—Strawberry Festival. Two weeks after that was a new favorite, the Antique Auto Show. Folks came from all over the state to see the wonderful collection of cars on display on the grounds. In July, the pace continued with lectures, tours, and the Ladies Camp. One of August's highlights was the Summer Cocktail Party. It was an important fund raiser that will allow the Castle to continue its important mission.

I would like to thank the many volunteers who helped pull these events together. They just don't happen spontaneously. They take a huge commitment by many people who spend money and hours demonstrating that they care about Smith's Castle. The work doesn't stop from the moment an event is suggested. It takes volunteers to organize it, committees to provide a rich flow of ideas to make it interesting, and the commitment of those who give up their Saturdays and Sundays to staff the event—doing everything from selling food and collecting entrance gate tickets to moving tables around. Without all of its wonderful volunteers, the Castle simply would not survive. So I would like to personally thank each and every one of you for all that you have done to have made this such a successful season.



Welcome New Members

Charles & Donna Carpenter

Brenda Potter

Wilfred Gates

Barbara Petraca

Ms. Chris Barrie

Mrs. Betty Dana

Lynnette Foucher

Judy White

Ron & Carol Vessey

—as of 8/15/05

First Phase of Transportation Enhancement Grant Underway

Darrell McIntire

In August 2002, Smith's Castle was awarded a \$200,000 transportation enhancement grant from the R.I. Department of Transportation. Funds from the grant will be used to...

- Hire a qualified historical preservation professional to prepare a cultural landscape report
- Reconfigure the front entrance (widen access from Route 1 for buses and the general public and improve drainage)
- Provide improved and appropriate signage
- Provide needed lighting for public access areas
- Construct a bus drop-off, loop road, and parking facilities
- Install appropriate fencing and barriers
- Provide landscape enhancement
- Provide design and engineering services

This month work got underway on the first phase of the project—hiring a historic preservation professional to prepare a cultural landscape report (CLR)

of the Castle site. The CLR will provide the Association with a comprehensive research and planning document that will guide the preparation of a landscape master plan and, ultimately, the detail design and construction of the specific landscape improvements for which the transportation grant was awarded. The CLR will thoroughly document the history of the site and serve to strengthen the interpretive and educational programs relating to the landscape. It will also support decision making for potential future development of the site.

In August, the Long Range Site Committee issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) soliciting candidates to prepare the cultural landscape report. September 15 is the deadline for responding to the RFQ. The site committee will evaluate the responses and advise the executive committee and trustees as to the most qualified candidate. Once the consultant is chosen, it is anticipated that the CLR will require about five months to complete. ■

Parking and Traffic Control

Jules Cohen

Living next door to Smith's Castle isn't always as idyllic as you might think. Imagine that Strawberry Festival is in full swing and you want to run a quick errand. Richard Smith Drive, normally a quiet side street, is a bumper-to-bumper headache.

In an effort to maintain good neighborly relations, Smith's Castle's traffic cops, Harry Eastwood, Al Fenik, Larry Kalina, Ed Swirka, and myself, are always looking for ways to keep things moving. That means getting cars off Richard Smith Drive and parking them as quickly as possible, and minimizing pedestrian traffic on the street.

First Spouse Larry Kalina has come up with a series of yellow rope guides that direct pedestrian traffic from the street onto the lawn. They are accompanied by signs that (politely) solicit cooperation and are reenforced by volunteers who apply all their considerable charm to assure that visitors see and heed the signs. (Those who really cannot walk on the grass are excepted—from the rule, not the charm). The guides are erected for major events and are taken down afterwards.



Traffic Control. Jules Cohen, Larry Kalina, and Harry Eastwood (l. to r.) greet visitors and keep things moving for Castle special events.

Handicapped parking continues to be, whenever possible, in the gravel parking lot next to the Annex. Overflow handicapped parking is on the grass at a right angle to Richard Smith Drive.

Normally, at least two of our crack traffic team are on duty at the same time for all events. Also, members of Boy Scout Troop 152 of North Kingstown frequently give us a greatly-appreciated assist. ■

Lazy Hazy Days of Shrub and Switchel

Dianne McGowan

The third season of 18th Century Ladies Camps is in full swing. This year a spring, summer, and fall camp were scheduled, but unseasonably cold, wet weather forced the cancellation of the spring outing. But when the sun came out in July, an enthusiastic group of women were on hand to make the summer camp one of the most memorable ever.

A long, varied list of activities was available for the women to choose from. Their day in the 18th century could be spent making a *housewife*, which, in the 18th century, meant a sewing kit (and still does in England today); making and decorating with paper; cooking over an open fire; weaving a book-mark; decorating a hat; preparing *shrub* and *switchel*, two 18th century drinks with the same ingredients as Gatorade; felting and dyeing cloth; and making salves and sachets with herbs from the garden. Two talks, *The Englishman's Flies* (beekeeping) and *Sex and the 18th Century Woman* were also offered.

The 18th century ladies camps were created by several Smith's Castle docents and volunteers

who contribute countless hours of their time and pool their considerable skills and knowledge to plan, design, organize, and conduct the camps. Carol Bozarth, Diane Amaral, Mary Nunes, Dianne McGowan, Louise Duckworth, Kim Clark, Jan Breault, Barbara Crudale, Sally Marinelli, Virginia Royle, and Marcia Brennan are to be congratulated on a job well done.

This summer, two men, Wilfred Royle and Ted Leary, infiltrated the ranks of the women. As word spreads of these well-organized, educational, entertaining events, are the men of Smith's Castle asking why only the women should be having all the fun?

Activities offered at the upcoming fall camp (Saturday, October 1) will be candle making, rug hooking, preparing a winter apothecary, preparing wool and spinning with a drop spindle, cooking over an open fire, quilting, brewing beer, weaving baskets, playing 18th century card games, and living without refrigeration. ■

Scenes of the Summer Ladies Camp by Diane Amaral.

1. Virginia Miller listens as Kim Clark speaks on women's fashion into the 18th century.

2. Barbara Crudale, Louise Duckworth, Ted Leary, Sally Marinelli, and Wilfred Royle prepare lunch.

3. Marcia Brennan leads a frank discussion with campers on sex and the 18th century woman under the mulberry tree.

4. Louise Duckworth instructs three campers as they prepare lunch over the open fire.



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Summer Camp 2005

Kids Make History Live

Christine Kalina

Ten children participated in kids camp this summer. Dressed in historic costumes, with haversacks and quill pens and ink at the ready, they began their week with a tour of the Castle and its grounds. Activities for the week included many past favorites: journal keeping, hammering flower prints, and touring the Old Narragansett Church in Wickford.

Several new activities were introduced this summer: an archaeological dig seeded with reproduction artifacts of pottery, glass, metal, shell, and bone; a well dressing (side bar); and a stream exploration for food sources for a fledgling settlement (a great way to cool off as temperatures approach 95°). Towards the end of the week campers cooked over an open fire and prepared a full meal for themselves complete with an apple pie for a snack. Friendships were forged during the week and as camp ended, hugs were exchanged and promises made to return soon for a visit. Several campers requested a two-week camp next summer! ■



Paige Rocha, Oscar Goodwin, Lilly Bell, Will Britton, and Jessica Eldredge (l. to r.) sift soil from the camp's "archaeological dig" to find buried artifacts. Photo: Chris Kalina.

Presenters for this summer's camp were John Currier, *Tales of the Revolution*; Dick Meyer, *Mapping and Surveying and the Business of War*; and John McNiff, *Archaeology*. Jane Rawlings conducted the tour of the Old Narragansett Church.

Special thanks to Chris Kalina, Maureen Danforth, Grace Palmer, Sarah Bell, Will Britton, and Kari Van Buren for guiding the campers and for setting up and cleaning up each day.

A Well-Dressed Well



As part of this year's kids camp, a well dressing was prepared for the Castle. Well dressing originated in the British Isles, perhaps during Pagan times. It is a ritual performed to give thanks for the supply of fresh water. Some sources attribute the practice to the period of the Black Death (plague) in 1348–9, when an estimated third of the population of England died of the disease. Some villages, however, were untouched and local people attributed this to their clean water supply. They gave thanks by decorating or "dressing" the village wells. The tradition continues today to celebrate the digging of a new well. Well dressings are constructions, built with natural materials (flowers, seeds, bark, berries, moss, etc.) imbedded in clay, and held in a wooden form. The Smith's Castle campers chose the Castle as the subject of their well dressing. Each camper also constructed a small well dressing of their own to commemorate their week at camp.



A well dressing depicting the front facade of the Castle was made by the kids at this summer's camp. Photo: Chris Kalina

Madison May displays her own "well dressing." Photo: Chris Kalina

Sizzling Summer Success

On a sultry, tropical-like, August evening members and friends of Smith's Castle gathered for a casual get together on the front lawn. Storm clouds building in the distance didn't dampen their enthusiasm as they chatted with friends, swayed to the Romps 14 Swing Band, nibbled on delectable hors d'oeuvres, and placed bids on an array of exciting auction items.

Rudi Hempe, recently retired editor of North Kingstown's *Standard Times*, and his wife, Lorraine, were the honored guests. During Hempe's five-decade tenure as its editor, the *Standard Times* faithfully

covered the events, programs, and people of Smith's Castle. How many of us first came to the Castle in response to an item in the *Standard Times* and ended up staying for years?

The Castle owes a huge thank-you to everyone who made this event the resounding success it was. It takes a tremendous amount of skill and countless (wo)man hours to create an event of this caliber. That it all came together with such seemingly effortless aplomb, flowed so smoothly, and ended so successfully is to the immeasurable credit of the organizers and their cadre of dedicated helpers. ■

Scenes of the evening by Kim Charpentier, Charpentier Photography

1. Rudi and Lorraine Hempe

2. Betsy Steinman

3. Joyce Fuller, Peter Kohlsaas, and Larry Erhardt

4. Joyce Fuller and Ed Swirka



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5. Bob Shillaber, Ed and Jane Rawlings, and Mary Shillaber

6. The Romps 14 Swing Band

7. Donna Shammass, Nancy Drury, and Mark Shammass

8. Donna Fonce and Jeff Crooker, bartender

9. Dick Breault, Sharon Walworth, Jan Breault, seated: Barbara Eastwood, Sue Kresinski, and Pete Pizzarusio

10. Lorraine Hempe, Jules Cohen, and Kari Van Buren



9



10

The Numbers

150 guests
 + 2 honored guests
 + 14 bandmen
 + 2 bartenders
 + 15 cooks
 + 2500 bites of food
 + 3 turkeys
 + 43 auction items
 + 99% humidity
 + 80% chance of rain
 = 100% SUCCESS

Recommended Reading

John Townsend Newport Cabinetmaker

By Morrison Heckscher with the assistance of Lori Zabbar



John Townsend (1733–1809) was one of the most prominent of the Newport cabinetmakers of the 18th century. His competition for that title was primarily in the family: his father Christopher, his uncle Job, Job's sons Job and Edmund, and his cousin-in-law John Goddard all had cabinet shops in Newport's Point neighborhood.

Newport pieces, always prized by their owners, received belated scholarly notice in the beginning of the 20th century. Some Newport pieces appeared in books on colonial furniture and others were discussed in articles in the magazine *Antiques* in 1922, its first year of publication.

But the first in-depth view of the life and work of a Newport cabinetmaker came from Wickford's own Norman M. Isham. In 1927, the Rhode Island School of Design mounted an exhibition of Goddard pieces. Isham wrote the accompanying study "John Goddard and his Work," published in RISD's *Bulletin* in April 1927 and reprinted as a stand-alone catalog. The twelve-page, eight-figure booklet contained a biography of Goddard and an analysis of the exhibited pieces and their provenance. One year later, New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art published an eight-page essay on John Townsend and examples of his work that the Met had recently acquired.

Now, almost 80 years later, the Met has taken another look at Townsend in a beautiful new exhibit and accompanying book. Times have changed and interest in the Newport cabinetmakers has surged. In contrast to the eight-page essay, the current volume spans 225 pages with text amplified by more than 200 photographs, most in color. The book includes a catalog of the exhibit, which focuses on 48 pieces, more than half of them signed or labeled by Townsend. For many readers, the most surprising part of the catalog may be Townsend's later creations. While Townsend is renowned for his exuberant mid-18th century pieces, with undulating cabriolet legs, ball-and-claw feet, and shell-carved block-fronts, his restrained and linear Federal-style pieces show a craftsman at the height of his work.

This book, however, is much more than a catalog of Townsend furniture. The first section of the book explores Newport's place in American furniture-making and its setting for these master craftsmen as well as their patrons—families like the Updikes. This section would serve as an indispensable guide for a tour of Newport's Point section, where several Townsend/Goddard buildings and shops still exist. (Finish your tour at the Preservation Society's Hunter House in the same neighborhood to see examples of Townsend-Goddard pieces.)

The Townsend family history is also well explored, including in-depth views of the other Townsend family cabinetmakers. As an appendix, a genealogy is included with transcripts of Townsend wills and inventories.

Did the Updikes own Townsend pieces? We know of none with certainty. This current volume does not mention any Updike pieces. The only Wickford connection in the book is a Townsend piece (unfortunately not shown) that was owned by the Shaw family. Attorney General Daniel Updike (1694–1757), who lived in Newport until removing to Cocumscussoc in 1738, but continued his social and professional connections with the city for the remainder of his life, likely furnished his home with Newport pieces. His 1757 inventory records several case pieces possibly of Newport origin. "Books 2 Desks & Book Case" in his office are the most valuable furniture items in the inventory. In the "Bedroom Below" (today's Richard Smith Jr. room), there is listed a valuable bed and furniture (linens and hangings), a "High Case of Draws," and a less valuable "Low Case of Draws." Shortly after inheriting Cocumscussoc from his father, Lodowick Updike purchased a Newport desk-and-bookcase (see *Castle Chronicle*, Winter 2004). The cabinetmaker is not known, but it thought to bear no resemblance to Townsend's work and possibly could be a Goddard piece.¹ It is possible the Updike family had a natural predisposition toward the Goddard shop: Daniel Updike's sister Sarah (c. 1700–1770) had married Dr. Giles Goddard in 1735, although his relationship to the cabinetmaker is not known. ■

1. Wendy A. Cooper, "207: Desk-and-Bookcase, Newport, Rhode Island, 1760–1785." In Nancy E. Richards and Nancy Goynne Evans, *New England Furniture at Winterthur: Queen Anne and Chippendale Periods*. University Press of New England, 1997, 441.

—continued on page 9

Smith's Castle Garden Journal

'Gardening with the Masters'

Donna Shamas

This summer, Smith's Castle was a stop on the URI Master Gardener tour of Rhode Island gardens. *Gardening with the Masters*, as the tour was called, brought about 150 guests to the Smith's Castle colonial revival garden on Saturday and Sunday, July 16th and 17th.

The most popular plant in the garden was undoubtedly the balsam impatiens (*Impatiens balsamina*) that is located in the partly shaded corner behind the pear tree. Thomas Jefferson grew balsam impatiens and this beautiful showy annual enjoyed great popularity for many years. It was an important plant in Victorian-era gardens, but in recent times has fallen out of favor. Today, it is rarely seen in garden stores and is difficult to find in seed catalogs.

Balsam impatiens is also known as garden balsam and touch-me-not. This plant doesn't look anything like the familiar impatiens that are widely used today to fill shady areas with color. Balsam impatiens is a sturdy plant that reaches 24 to 36 inches in height and grows in sun to partial shade. The plant features columns of large blooms in white, apple blossom pink, red, salmon, white, or lavender.

Balsams are prolific self-sowers, but that can sometimes be avoided by deadheading before the plants set seeds. The nickname "touch-me-not" comes from the plant's habit of explosively expelling seeds when the seed pods are touched.

Garden visitors frequently asked where we obtained the seeds for this plant. They were purchased from Select Seeds (www.selectseeds.com), a firm that specializes in heirloom plants and seeds and has been the source of a number of the annuals, biennials, and perennials that have been added to the garden. ■



John Townsend (from page 8)

Morrison H. Heckscher, with the assistance of Lori Zabar. *John Townsend Newport Cabinetmaker*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Yale University Press, New Haven and London.

If you want to purchase this book, please go through the Castle's new bookstore link to Amazon.com (www.smithscastle.org/museum_shop/bookstore/Books_Art1.htm).

Amazon will return a portion of your purchase to Smith's Castle.

Exhibition Details:

The exhibition *John Townsend: Newport Cabinetmaker* runs through **September 25, 2005** at the

The Erving and Joyce Wolf Gallery, 1st floor
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
1000 Fifth Avenue at 82nd Street
New York, New York 10028-0198
General Information: 212-535-7710

Hours:

Friday, Saturday: 9:30 a.m.–9:00 p.m.

Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday:
9:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m.

Closed Mondays.

—Neil Dunay

Haunted Smith's Castle *(from page 1)*

alone in the house but didn't feel totally alone. Just to calm my nerves I would talk to her—say hello and goodbye."

Last spring an artist painting a watercolor scene of the cove had her own brush with Phebe. The house was closed for visitors but when she was invited to come in to see the interior she declined. When asked why she was reluctant, she related seeing a face in the bedroom window. The face was uninviting and ghostly. When pressed for details, the painter, who had never before entered the house, described Phebe's portrait in detail. She is one of many who feel that Phebe's spirit roams the second floor.

The most well known story of a ghostly appearance occurred in the 1970s. The curator reportedly called the police after hearing noises in the early morning hours. When the responding officer entered the house to look for an intruder, he opened the front door, so the tale goes, and encountered a figure in colonial clothing standing halfway up the stairway. When ordered to halt the figure aimed the musket he was holding and fired at the officer. The officer reportedly dropped his gun and ran.

Ken Burnham, another former caretaker at the Castle, had his share of encounters with the spirits. "It was not unusual to hear noises outside the building at night moving along the side toward the front door." Though watchful, no one was ever spotted. On one such occasion the footfalls reached the door which was heard to open and then close. The mystery remains.

While most tales of ghosts come from volunteers and staff from the past, a group of psychics from Massachusetts who visited the Castle in 2004 reported their own encounters with the unusual. Their hope was to document and record their observations of the Castle's spirits. Those who participated arrived with no knowledge of the Castle and its history. In fact, the leader of this group kept that day's meeting location secret until the last moment to insure that advance research on the site would not be possible. The psychics walked through the Castle room by room in silence. Each recorded their impressions on large sheets of paper, including diagrams of various rooms, notations of cold and hot spots, and names of spirits. These were then shared with the docents and the other psychics in the historic kitchen. Several retold events that could have taken place within the house and correctly noted names of long ago residents. Of the many spirits they believed walk the house three, reported by several with similar detail, are of particular interest.



The portrait of Phebe Congdon (1780–1858) by an unknown artist hangs above the Beriah Brown desk in the Updike bedchamber. Light reflecting off the portrait often presents photographers with a ghostly image. This phenomenon has no doubt reinforced the stories associated

All of the psychic visitors reported the presence of the resident colonial soldier armed with his musket prepared for a fight. It was felt that his spirit remained after the Great Swamp attack. One psychic described the Narragansett razing of the building in 1676 in great detail. She felt this soldier remains to protect the Castle from further attacks. Might this be the ghost of Richard Updike, the only Updike to perish in the Great Swamp attack?

Many of the psychic visitors sensed that Hannah Robinson, a Rhode Island woman whose story many know, continues her visits to Smith's Castle. Hannah, a reputed beauty, the daughter of Rowland Robinson and Anstis Gardiner, was born in 1746. A fair young lady of exceptional charm, she was always a welcome guest at Cocumscussoc. Although she had many suitors, she fell in love with Peter Simons, a music master at the dancing class she attended in Newport. When their affair was discovered she was, of course, forbidden to see Peter Simons again. The young lovers hatched a plan. One



with the painting. These two photographs were taken within seconds of one another with the same camera by the same photographer. The second image is unaltered—no computer enhancements other than cropping were used. Photos: Neil Dunay

evening Hannah was driven to Cocumscussoc to attend a ball hosted by her Aunt Abigail Updike. At the top of the hill near the Updike's great gate, Simons arrived with his own carriage. Hannah joined him, and off they eloped. Their marriage proved an unhappy one and her parents sent for her to return home. On her return to South County Hannah stopped to look back over the bay to Newport (at the site of the legendary Hannah Robinson Rock). She died later that evening, October 30, 1773. She most likely succumbed to tuberculosis. The spirits of Hannah and her husband are said to roam the second floor of the Castle, in particular the small bedroom, attempting to rekindle their lost affection.

One final "spirit" of note is that of a slave. Slavery began at Cocumscussoc in its earliest days as a trading post in the 1600s and extended well into the 18th century when it was a profitable northern plantation. This other worldly presence is described as a young black man who sits upon the stone stairs behind the half door in the front entrance. The stairs lead to the

cellar below. In this spot he remains, secretly reading his master's books and planning his escape.

Not all these legends speak of spirits inside the house. Many who come visit the common grave of the 40 men buried at Smith's Castle following the Great Swamp attack in 1675. Although its exact location has been lost, the burial site is commemorated with a plaque on a large boulder near the waterfront. "Here were buried in one grave 40 men who died in the Swamp Fight or on the return march to Richard Smith's Block House, December 1675." Throughout its long history Cocumscussoc has been a dairy farm with large herds of cows. According to legend, cows would never graze on the site of the grave.

Of all the traumatic and dramatic events that occurred at Cocumscussoc, perhaps none matches the fate of Joshua Tefft, who met a ghastly end at the hands of United Colony troops under the leadership of Major Richard Smith Jr. following King Philip's War. One would think he would be entitled to freely haunt the property having been hung until nearly dead, cut down and disembowelled, and then drawn and quartered. His head was chopped off and left on a pike to remind all of what became of a traitor. Yet no one has encountered his spirit. Or have they but not come forward?

The Tefft story is terrifying partly because it is true. From this same period, Carl Woodward has related several "largely unverifiable" stories of barbarity against Indian captives. One is the hanging of an Indian from an iron hook in a kitchen beam. Some members point to the large iron hook in a beam in the dining room today as evidence. Another tells of a drunken colonial officer who, during dinner, boastfully drew his sword, turned on an Indian servant, and sliced off his head. Woodward noted, "With such horror and bloodshed on its threshold, it is no wonder that the Castle has long been suspect as the haunt of phantom spirits."

Perhaps on your next visit to the Castle, you too will join those who have experienced the haunting of Smith's Castle. Happy Halloween! ■

More Ghost Stories

For more Halloween related fun, don't miss *Ghost Stories and Graveyards* a presentation to be given by Anita Rafael at the Castle on Friday, October 28, 7:00 p.m. Admission, \$5.00.

Conservation Assessment Program Wraps Up

Neil Dunay

In September 2004 two conservator surveyors inspected Smith's Castle as part of a Conservation Assessment Program (CAP) grant (see *Castle Chronicle*, Winter 2004). In July 2005, Alexandra Allardt, the objects conservator for the CAP, returned to Smith's Castle to present her recommendations to the board.

Overall, Smith's Castle is probably a bit ahead of museums of comparable size in its collections care, no doubt because of the tremendous efforts spearheaded by Collections Chair Linda Eppich over the past years. Yet, much work remains. Ms. Allardt identified nine key areas:

- 1. Gain intellectual control of collections.** Complete the task of inventorying our collections and archives and provide proper storage for documents and artifacts to keep them safe and easily retrievable. Computerize records and develop a furnishing plan.
- 2. Improve fiscal planning.** Assign budget line items for materials and supplies, equipment, cabinets, and training to ensure proper collections care.
- 3. Gain physical control of collections.** Some of our collections items not on display (including architectural fragments from the 1990's restoration) are haphazardly stored in attic spaces that experience extreme environmental changes. These items should be stored in a proper environment.



The basement of the Castle has a chronic moisture problem. The dampness has contributed to an infestation of mold that threatens many artifacts. Photo: Alexandra Allardt



Furniture, textiles, and paper all suffer from the extreme changes in temperature and humidity of harsh attic environments. Developing new climate controlled storage areas, however, will be costly and difficult to find within the current Castle and Annex footprints.



Due to the Castle's space limitations, some collections items are being stored in attic spaces. Textiles, especially mattresses, are inviting homes for insects and rodents.

4. Strengthen preventive care procedures. The Castle should have written housekeeping and building maintenance plans. Volunteers need to be trained in collections handling.

5. Improve environmental control. Dampness is one of our top problems. The Castle needs to ventilate and dehumidify the basement and develop ways to monitor the environment in collections spaces. The Castle should also develop a winterization plan.

6. Develop a lighting plan. Some spaces are too dimly lit (e.g., Richard Smith Jr. room); other spaces are bathed in sunlight that can degrade collections objects.

7. Enhance security measures. Incorporate tamper resistant mounts for collections items that are within arms reach.

8. Control pests. Integrated pest management should include regular inspection and monitoring, creation of barriers to entry, and elimination of any active infestations.

9. Emergency preparedness. The Castle needs to expand its emergency plan to specifically cover the collections. In case of flood or fire, a plan to relocate the collection must be in place

In response to the CAP recommendations, Linda Eppich has prepared a Long Range Preservation Plan. She has developed a highly detailed list of more than 80 specific problems identified by the conservators. For each, she has listed the conservator's recommendations, the priority for completion, the specific solution, date of completion, and funding status. To help solve the problem of the wet basement, Linda has applied for a Preservation Assistance Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The grant will enable us to bring an environmental conservator here to assess the basement problems and recommend measures to resolve the problem. ■

The Conservation Assessment Program is funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and administered by Heritage Preservation. It is a non-competitive funding program, meaning that there are no outside reviewers who read the applications. IMLS awarded \$846,700 in CAP grants in 2004. The majority of these went to small institutions, like Smith's Castle.

Cocumcussoc Farm



The Cow Comes Home. Sonja, a pure bred Ayshire cow, traces her lineage to the award winning Ayshires of Cocumcussoc Farm in the 1930s. Shown with Sonja is Pam Jeffrey of the Rhode Island Dairy Farms Cooperative. Photo: Kari Van Buren



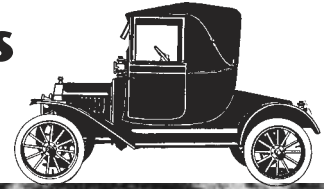
An exhibit of photos and artifacts that recall the dairy and cheese-making heritage of Cocumcussoc was assembled by Kari Van Buren as part of the two-week Culture Coalition calendar of events, July 16–August 14.



Dairy artifact returns too. Thanks to the bidding skills of President Chris Kalina, Smith's Castle has added a Cocumcussoc Dairy milk bottle cap to its growing collection of items from this little-known period.

Antique Auto Show Returns

Diane Smith & Chris Kalina



The second annual Smith's Castle Antique Auto Show, held June 26th was a success, despite the terribly hot weather. Fifty-six antique auto owners came with a beautiful array of vehicles. Live music was provided by the Romps 14, traditional fare was offered for sale on the lawn, and Don Bousquet, noted Rhode Island cartoonist, again served as MC. Congratulations to Bob and Diane Smith and Bob and Betty Sue Reed for organizing this wonderful event. Thank you to the many committee members who made it such a wonderful day! Plans are underway for next year. Castle members are encouraged to call the office at 294-3521 if interested in joining this great committee. ■



A bright red Mercedes coupe was one of many foreign autos at the show.



A row of Model A Fords with their hoods up await the judges.



Two powerful Bentleys owned by Bob Reed and Bill Johnson were a popular attraction.



Bob Smith and Geoff Skog discuss some of the entries.

This Season at Smith's Castle

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
Saturday, 8	Noon–4:00 p.m.	Harvest Festival
Sunday, 9	Noon–4:00 p.m.	Harvest Festival, rain date
Monday, 24	7:00 p.m.	Board Meeting
Friday, 28	7:00 p.m.	Ghost Stories and Graveyards Anita Rafael
Monday, 31	4:30 p.m.	Castle closes for the season

November

Day	Time	Event
Thursday, 3	9:00–10:30 a.m.	Docent Meeting

December

Day	Time	Event
Thursday, 1	9:00–10:30 a.m.	Docent Meeting
Saturday, 3	Noon–4:00 p.m.	Christmas at the Castle
Sunday, 4	Noon–4:00 p.m.	Christmas at the Castle
Saturday, 10	6:00–8:00 p.m.	Member-Guest Holiday Party



Oops!

Smith's Castle's long-anticipated roadside directional signs finally went up by August's close. But something's missing! RIDOT's been notified of the error, but, if history's any indication, we will be seeing these signs for some time. In spite of the misspelling, Chris Kalina, the Castle's president, reports visitor foot traffic's increased since the signs went up. They are located on Post Road's shoulder just to the north and south of the Castle's entrance. Photo: Neil Dunay

The Cocumscussoc Association

Haunted Smith's Castle
Morgan Bozarth's eerie
photographs set the
mood for this issue's
lead article, page 1.



The Cocumscussoc Association
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