

Castle Chronicle



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Maj. Smith's Chair

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Seven-year-old Alexander
Crudale tries out Major
Smith's Chair.

Photo: Barbara Crudale.



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55 Richard Smith Dr.
Wickford, RI 02852
E-mail: smithscastle@earthlink.net
Web site: www.smithscastle.org

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Note from the President

Those of you who read my last *Note from the President* may recall I lamented a 20 percent down turn in visitors to Smith's Castle in May and June. Here is an update for July and August: This July was as disastrous as were May and June with visitorship off 27 percent from July of last year. August, however, produced a ray of hope. Tour numbers were up nearly 50 percent over August of last year, and our docents reported they had to scramble to meet the demand. Fortunately, August's surge has rescued us from a disastrous season, and means this year will be off only four percent from last year. Good news indeed, but lest we think the storm has passed, consider this: The reason for the turn around is unclear. We did not undertake any new initiatives, introduce any incentives, or otherwise make any special effort that can account for the turn around. In addition, as many larger historic sites report very healthy increases in visitorship over last year, I fear we still significantly lag our "industry."

While the down turn in visitors is a clear cause for concern, I am much more distressed by the lack of response I received to the news and to my request for help from our members. Perhaps this is because only a small minority of our members actually read this column. Or, perhaps, complacency is a major factor—most of us trusting that someone else with more time, more talent, more energy, more (fill in the blank) will come forward and do what is necessary when times are tough.

Some believe my appeals to "our members" have been directed solely to the rank and file of the organization, and that I am letting our leaders off the hook. Not so. It is not my intent to suggest our leaders do not have a role to play in resolving the current difficulties facing our organization. On the contrary, I expect the executive committee and trustees to accept their leadership responsibilities and gear up immediately to address the challenges we face.

Our needs are great. In addition to attracting more visitors, and increasing our membership (don't forget to renew your membership!), we must:

■ Fill a wide range of staff vacancies...

- Recruit docents for educational programs. Now, Smith's Castle is turning away school programs because we have insufficient numbers of volunteers to meet demand for our programs.

- Find qualified people to fill other vacant positions many of which have been open for years: Grounds and Garden chair and Collections chair are two pressing examples.

- Recruit planners and coordinators for member functions and special events. As an example, Smith's Castle typically offers a summer member party and fund raiser. No organizers came forward this year and this valuable fund-raising opportunity was lost.

- Find a new director, resident or otherwise. Until a full time manager is in place we will continue to drift with no clear focus or direction. No organization can long operate without managerial oversight.

■ Seek and obtain new sources of funding. We do not have adequate operating funds, we do not have an endowment, we do not have development money, we do not have funds for special projects, we do not have resources to enable us to hire a resident director. The list is long. Our traditional sources of income are not adequate to meet even our most basic needs—and not because we are expanding. Today's economic climate requires us to generate greater and greater levels of income just to keep our head above water. In short, the cost of doing virtually everything we do is increasing (and at an accelerating rate). Fuel costs are rising and insurance rates are increasing to cite just two examples.

■ Initiate planning for the future. Currently, we have no long-range goals, no 5- or 10-year plan, and no strategic plans in place. Nor do we have a disaster plan or relocation procedures for collections and documents in the event of natural disasters (as I write this Hurricane Hannah is heading our way).

Clearly we have much to do. As I near the end of my term as president, I intend to do what I can to focus the Association's attention on these issues and take whatever actions I can to ensure we begin to address the many challenges we face. Please e-mail me and tell me how you are willing to help!

ndunay@gmail.com


—Neil Dunay, President



The *Chronicle* has learned of the death of member, Raymond McIntire. On behalf of the membership we extend sincere sympathy to his family and friends.

Welcome New Members

Linda VandeVrede
Sandy St. Martin

—as of September 5, 2008

Restored Portrait Again Graces Stairway

On August 8, Kerry Robinson of Wickford Cove Framing Gallery, with the help of George and Dominic Zachorne, returned the portrait of Elizabeth Simpson to its place in the front stairway of Smith's Castle. Robinson had just completed the final step in the restoration of the painting—a complete refurbishing of its frame.

The painting is believed to date from the 1740s (see Summer 2008 issue of the *Chronicle*). The portrait's frame, however, is more recent—about 200 years more recent, in fact. To be accurate, the frame is made up to two frames—an outside frame that is quite old, the exact date unknown, and an inner frame that is of mid 20th vintage. When the painting was accessioned by the Association in 1960, the frames were painted gold.

Typically, frames in the 1740s were painted black and tended to be rather flat, not as thick as modern frames. They were somewhat under size by today's standards. Gold frames, usually very elaborately crafted, came into fashion in the Rococo period of the mid-to-late 18th century.

Kerry Robinson painted and distressed the portrait's existing frames and added a gold metallic edging around the canvas, which she lightly tarnished. The overall effect is a more accurate approximation of a ca. 1740s frame and is more appropriate to the period of the painting. Below is a John Greenwood painting (Portrait of John Atkins) dating from ca. 1750. It is in its original frame. The two frames are quite similar when viewed from the front. ■



Refurbishing the frame of the Elizabeth Simpson portrait, detail left, which dates from the mid 20th century, has resulted in a more accurate approximation of a frame appropriate to the period of the painting (compare to the ca. 1750 frame of the Greenwood portrait of John Atkins, left).

Work on the Simpson frame was carried out by Kerry Robinson of Wickford Cove Framing Gallery.

Legends, Myths and Mysteries of Smith's Castle

Maj. Smith's Chair

Toward the end of the 18th century, the second Lodowick Updike commissioned Caleb Harris to survey Homestead and Saugo farms (as well as the three farms to the south of Wickford: Mansion House Farm, Cold Spring Farm, and River Farm). These surveys, along with Harris' survey of Wickford, are the only extant graphic representations of the Smith and Updike properties prepared while owned by the two families. The *Plat of Homestead Farm and Saugo Farm* is a detail-filled document rich in unexpected bits of information.

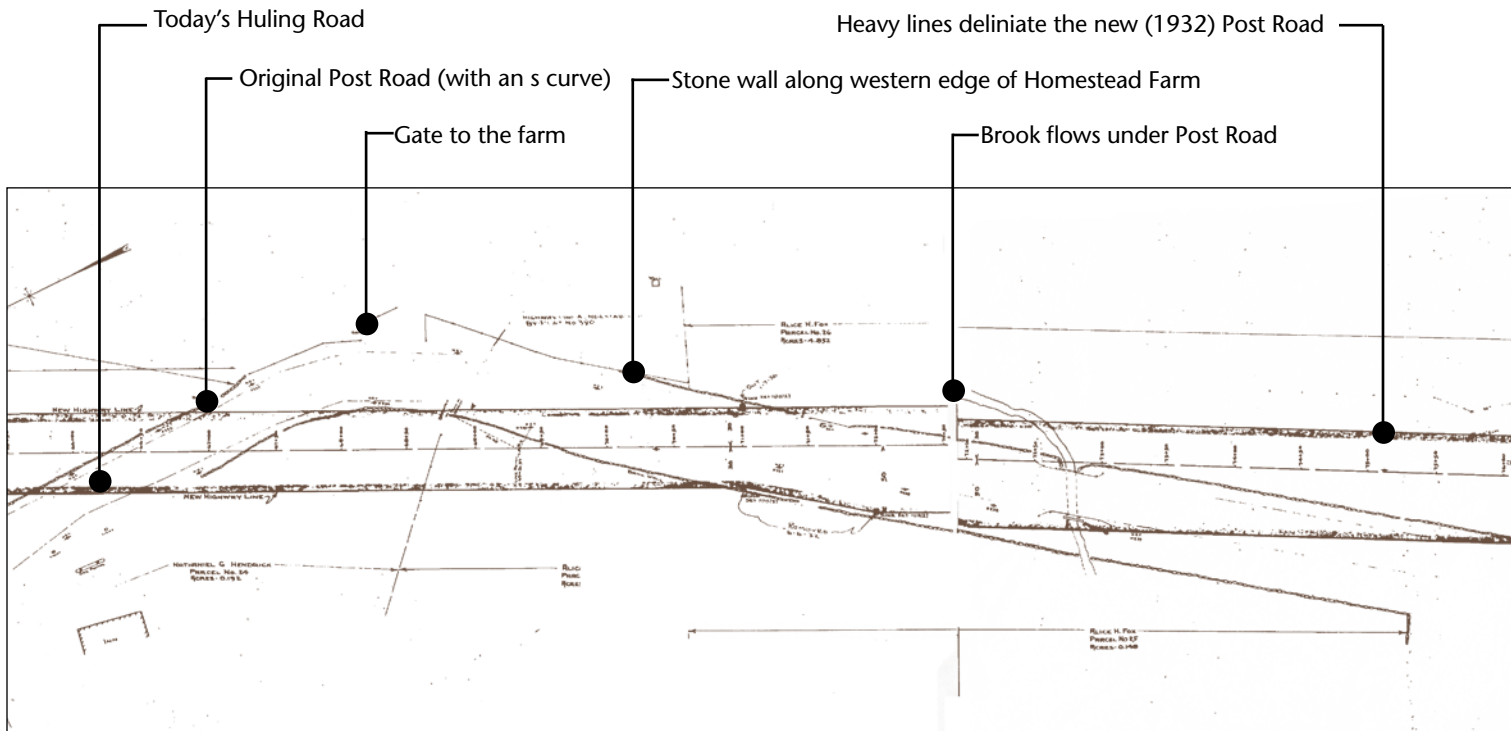
Harris included two "Field Books" on the plat—one for Homestead Farm and one for Saugo. The field books are essentially a list of landmarks that define the boundaries of the two properties. They are listed in sequence with the distances between them measured in rods. "Major Smith's Chair" is one of the landmarks noted for Homestead Farm.

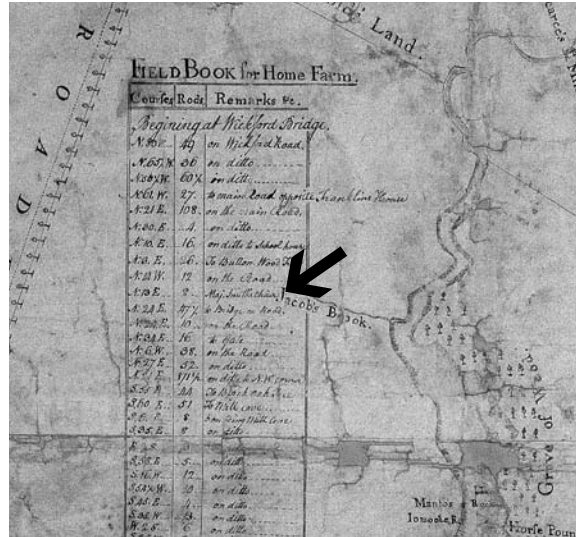
Most of the landmarks listed in the field book have long since disappeared. However, based on the sequence of the landmarks that define the western boundary of Homestead Farm and distances on the

list, "Maj. Smith's Chair" is undoubtedly the boulder with the decidedly chair-like appearance that sits in Richard Smith Grove near the edge of Post Road.

Unfortunately, no references to Maj. Smith's Chair other than the Harris Plan have turned up, and a number a of questions surrounding this landmark remain unanswered. Did Harris assign the name to the rock, or was it a feature in the landscape well known to the Updikes or even the Smiths before them? As the photos illustrate the chair comfortably accommodates a child of about 10–12 years. However, it is a tight fit for an adult.

Major Smith is Richard Smith Jr. He was about 12 years old when his father first established his trading post at Cocumscussoc. It's intriguing to think the name came about because the rock was a favorite of the young Smith and his Narragansett playmates, but we have nothing to suggest this. In fact, labelling the rock with Smith's adult military rank suggests that whoever named it might not have had Richard Smith, the boy, in mind, but Major Smith the adult. So it is possible Harris coined the name and it exists only within the context of the survey and did not exist before 1804. Another of the mysteries of Smith's Castle that may never be solved.





Above: Survey of Homestead and Saugo Farms, Caleb Harris, 1802. Detail showing "Field Book for Home Farm." Arrow identifies Maj. Smith's Chair. Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society. Photograph by David Shultz. (Rhi x5 308)

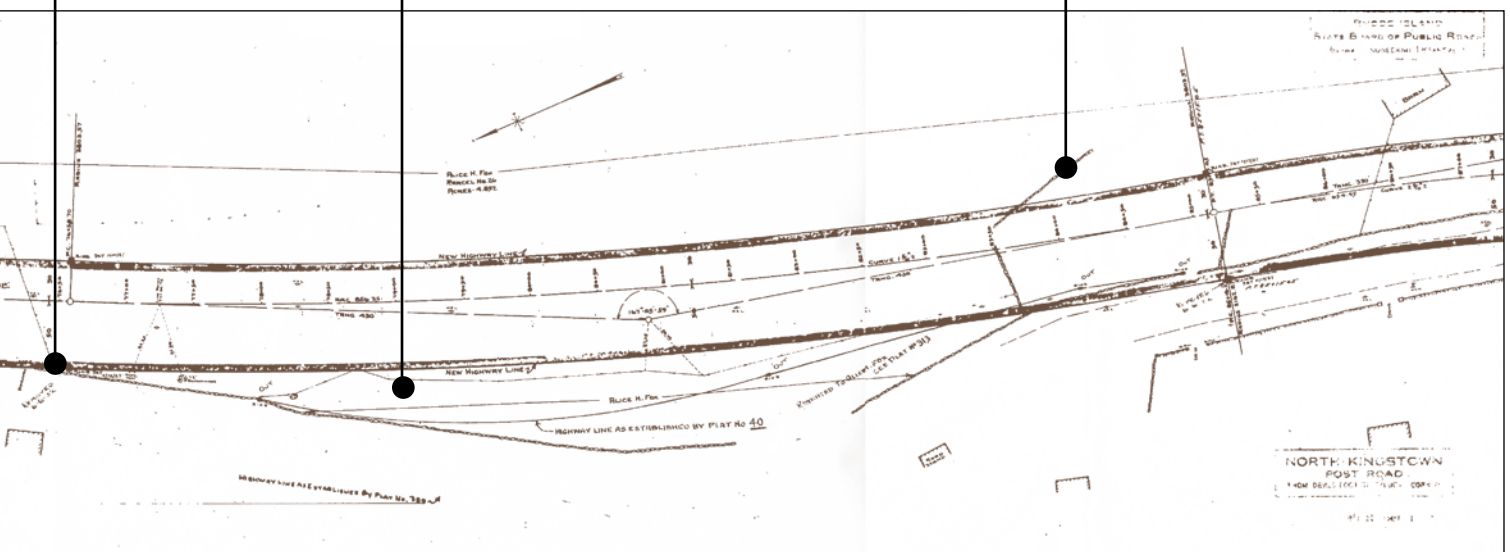
Left: Thomas Crudale, age ??, stands behind "Maj. Smith's Chair" that sits largely unnoticed in Richard Smith Grove, just a few feet to the west of Post Road. Photo: Barbara Crudale

Below: North Kingstown Post Road. Rhode Island State Board of Public Roads, Plat No. 171, October 27, 1926. Courtesy of Michael Hébert, Supervising Historic Preservation Specialist/Archaeologist, RIDOT.

Richard Smith Grove is the triangular wedge of land between the old Post Road and new Post Road.

Maj. Smith's Chair

Stone wall along western edge of Homestead Farm



Recommended Reading

The Healer's Calling Women and Medicine in Early New England

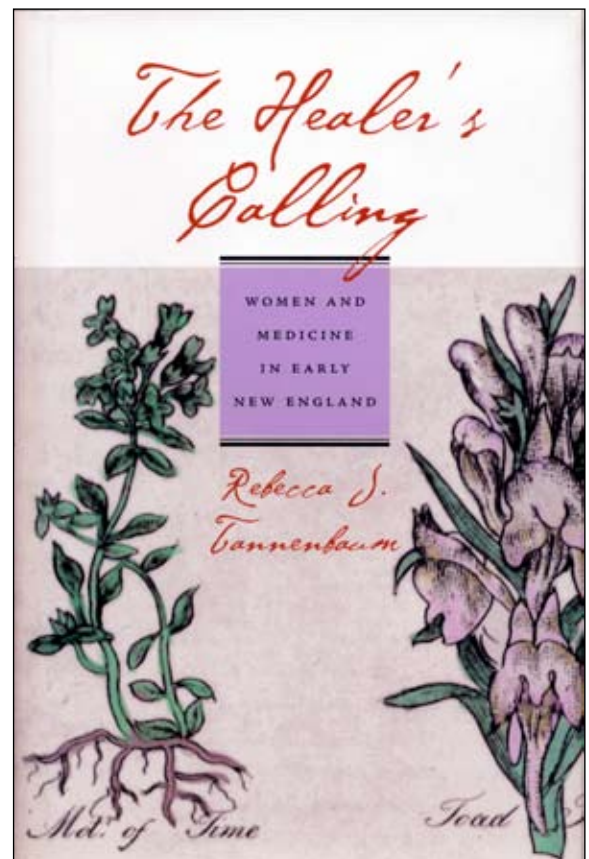
by Rebecca J. Tannenbaum
Cornell University Press, 2002
Hardcover, 253 pages
ISBN-13: 9780230602717

When most people think of the role women played in early medicine, it is usually the image of the neighbor-midwife. Rebecca Tannenbaum, Assistant Professor of History at the University of Illinois at Chicago, has written an excellent book based on scholarly sources demonstrating that seventeenth century colonial American women were, in addition to assisting at births, the primary medical caregivers. In doing so they created a social network with other women and even male medical practitioners

According to the prevalent view at that time, diseases were "caused by an imbalance in the body's humors". Therefore, medicines were designed to restore that balance. The lack of learned physicians in the colonies meant that housewives were expected to provide most of the medical care for the family. Every wife was expected to maintain a garden of medicinal herbs and handwritten recipes for healing that were handed down from one generation to the next. Even when a more formerly trained practitioner was called in on a case, the housewife was expected to prepare the needed medicines.

Some women held the position of paid healers for their neighbors. Although there were cases where several were accused of witchcraft, most women healers practiced without harassment in the colonies and in England. Their medical skills gave these women stature in the community.

Female neighbors were expected to gather together to provide "watching" in the case of an extended illness or in childbirth. Men were excluded from childbirth, so the gathering of neighbors and the midwife at the bed of the mother-to-be was not only for physical support but also gave the women a sense of community. Women also came together in prayer groups, medical groups, and for the one-week "sitting up" period when the new mother received visitors. These meetings, Tannenbaum, stressed could develop into close harmonious relationships or could explode into conflicts.



In the case of an illegitimate birth, the midwife had an obligation to question the woman as to the paternity of her child. This was usually done at the moment of the most painful point in her labor, as it was felt that at that time the woman would be most likely to tell the truth. Midwives and the other women present at the birth were obligated to testify in paternity suits as well as be witnesses in cases involving rape and other crimes against women. This gave women some role in the all-male court system.

In the chapter entitled “A Higher Calling” the author turned her attention to wealthy and well known women who made certain authorities intervene in the case of female assault victims and also used their healing skills to help the ill. This bolstered their position in the community. Most practiced on other women of their class, but some reached out to lower class women as well.

Ann Hutchinson used her medical and social leadership to challenge the religious and social status quo. The birthing room was used to create her social network that crossed the lines of rank and that network attracted other women to her spiritual ideas. Her prayer groups often included her childbirth clients and helpers.

Elizabeth Davenport, wife of the co-founder of the New Haven colony, was a well known medical practitioner and through her husband was able to ask for advice on cases from Connecticut Governor John Winthrop Jr., who was a respected scholarly medical consultant. Winthrop instructed her and other women of her class on how to make the medicines and if necessary provided the needed drugs. Winthrop, as the gentleman physician, was not a “hands-on” healer, but dispensed his advice through letters.

Early America also had women who as nurses or “doctoresses” charged for their services and viewed their role as a profession, not just a neighborly gesture. Nurses acted as watchers at bedside or general caregivers paid by the town to minister to the elderly or infirm without families. The doctoress, on the other hand, rarely dealt with childbirth, but instead practiced independently, created medicines, and even took patients into their homes. Their fees were the source of their support and they practiced outside of the women’s community. As an example,

Mary Hale, a widow, ran a smallpox clinic in Boston. However, Tannenbaum points out they were the most likely to be accused of witchcraft as they had crossed the boundary of women’s healing.

The eighteenth century witnessed a real change in the role of females in medicine. The numbers of doctoresses declined as more male doctors with European degrees came to the colonies. Men gradually excluded women from professional practice. By 1776, male doctors became the first rather than the last resort, even in cases involving female reproductive maladies. Women were relegated to a secondary role as supporters rather than active medical practitioners as had been their forbearers. Wealthy urban women preferred male doctors who had access to anesthetics and used forceps to aid in delivery. Midwives became relegated to delivering children in more rural areas.

Attempts to exclude women totally from professional medicine eventually failed. By the late 1840’s Elizabeth Blackwell blazed a trail when she was admitted to study for a medical degree. No doubt she was grateful for all those seventeenth century healers who had paved her way into the field.

In *The Healer’s Calling*, Tannenbaum has given both scholars and the general reader a wonderful insight into the role women played in early American medical care. She also explored the various ways that class and gender played in treating illness. Meticulously researched and extremely readable, it is an ambitious undertaking for a rather short book of 152 pages of actual text and 19 pages of well-documented notes. A gap has been filled not only in the history of medicine, but in early American culture as well. It should not only be of interest to classes in women’s studies and early American culture, but to the general reader, too.

—Norma LaSalle, PhD





Cocumcussoc Dairy Farm, ca. 1886.

Cultural Landscape Report for Cocumscussoc, Part 3

This spring the eagerly anticipated cultural landscape report (CLR) for Smith's Castle, begun in 2006, was completed. Lucinda Brockway of Past Designs, the historic landscape consultant retained by the Cocumscussoc Association to conduct the CLR, has submitted the Executive Summary of her study. The Executive Summary presents a comprehensive overview of the entire report and provides a concise introduction to the intent, method, scope, and result of this two-year endeavor.

The completion of the CLR and the archaeological investigations conducted as part of the study represent a quantum leap forward for the Cocumscussoc Association. For the first time we have a comprehensive, detailed, thoroughly documented examination of the landscape associated with Smith's Castle as it evolved over the more than three and a half centuries of its existence.

The Chronicle is reprinting the *Executive Summary* in four installments.

This issue includes—

1812–1870: The Congdon Family;
1870–1879: The Rathbun, Gardiner, and Chapin Families; and
1879–1936: The Babbitt and Fox Families.

and, this Winter—

1936–1949: Subdivision and Change; 1949–Present: The Cocumscussoc Association; Feature Analysis; Names and Dates; Assessment: Significance and Historic Integrity; Conclusion; and Bibliography.

The cultural landscape report and the archaeological investigations conducted in support of the study were funded by the Rhode Island Department of Transportation through a Transportation Enhancement Grant that was awarded to Smith's Castle in October 2002.

Support from the Johanna Favrot Fund of the National Trust for Historic Preservation assisted in broadening the research conducted and in developing a site maintenance plan during Phase 2 of the CLR.

The site committee gratefully acknowledges the generous financial support of these organizations and expresses its appreciation for the kind, attentive, and thoroughly professional assistance received from...

Michael Bennett, Stephen Devine, Thomas Queenan, Sharon Stone, and Michael Hébert, Environmental and Intermodal Planning, Rhode Island Department of Transportation.

Wendy Nicholas and Brent Leggs, Northeast Office, National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Paul Robinson and Charlotte Taylor of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission.

Daniel Lynch, Soil Sight LLC, Archaeological Geophysics.

Joyce Clements, Ray Pasquariello, and Richard Petyk, Gray and Pape, Inc. Cultural Resource Consultants.

Patricia Rubertone, Department of Anthropology, Brown University.

The site committee is especially grateful to Cindy Brockway, who has exceeded our very high expectations and produced a product that gives an insightful review of our site's past and also insures a sound basis for organizing and directing the evolution of the Smith's Castle landscape well into the 21st century.

Finally, the work of all of these people, along with the financial resources that supported the work, and, in fact, the very existence of the Smith's Castle site committee would not have occurred without the dedication, foresight, hard work, and leadership of Mary Packard Turkel (1946–2008). The Cultural Landscape Report is dedicated to her memory.

Cultural Landscape Report for Cocumscussoc, Part 3

1812–1870 The Congdon Family

*Prepared by Lucinda Brockway
Past Designs, Inc. Kennebunk, Maine*

Information for this era of the property is sketchy at best. Initial deed research has found that Benjamin Congdon died by 1816, eight years before Abigail Updike gave up her life tenancy on the property. The property was inherited by Benjamin Congdon's heirs and its ownership transferred to Joseph Congdon in 1823. By 1831, T. Congdon is listed as the property owner, though no deed transfer has been located to date for this ownership change. In 1870, the property was transferred to S. Allen, and almost immediately sold to Thomas Rathbun. At a minimum, we can tell that the property defined as the Homestead Farm in Lodowick's will stayed within the Congdon family from 1812 to 1870, and remained as a 300 acre parcel. Since Abigail Updike remained in residence on the farm until her death in 1824, the Congdon family probably worked the land but did not live on the property until sometime after her death. The Congdons built another dwelling house on the property between 1831 and 1870, indicating that perhaps there were two Congdon families running the farm.

In tracing the Congdon family through this period, from 1830 to 1870, it becomes clear that the Homestead Farm was operated by a family effort since many of the Congdon men seem to have died in their twenties or thirties, leaving behind a widow, children and often an aging parent within the household. In 1830, Joseph Congdon and his wife are in their sixties, and their household includes one young male 10-15 years old, and 2 females in their twenties. Thomas Congdon and his wife live in a nearby house in North Kingstown. Both are in their twenties, with two young children and one older female, perhaps her mother, who is in her forties. Eliza Congdon, age 52, Thomas' widow, is listed in the area with two daughters and a son, Thomas, age 12. Living with Eliza is Anna Spink, age 75. Next door lives Sarah Allen with her two daughters. It is from this household that Sarah and Mary Allen and George and Martha Spink come to own the Homestead Farm and sell the property to Thomas Rathbun (see Genealogical Note, p. 14). Clearly, in an age when disease, poor working conditions, and the Civil War claimed so many heads of household, it was the women and their families that were left to work the farms and this complicated living and inheritance



Figure 1. Phebe Congdon, was the wife of Benjamin Congdon when he purchased Smith's Castle from Wilkins Updike in 1815. Upon his death, Phebe married her brother-in-law, Joseph Congdon. She inherited Smith's Castle upon his death in 1838

system has muddled the waters for the Cocumscussoc landscape history.

By 1870, Sarah Allen, George Spink, Martha Spink, and Mary Allen emerge as owners of the Homestead Farm parcel. If they were living in North Kingstown, Sarah Allen, a 68 year old widow, lived alone with her daughter Lucy. Mary Allen, a 58 year old widow, was keeping house with her five children. George and Martha Spink are not listed as residence of North Kingstown in 1870. Clearly these four inherited the land from a relative of as yet unknown name or relationship to the Congdon family.

However, it is clear that the land they sold to Thomas Rathbun is the Homestead Farm. Its deed description is almost identical to the references included in earlier nineteenth century deeds, including the "New Street (so called) and road leading to Wickford." The New

—continued on page 10

View of Smith's Castle, 1880s. Viewed from across Cocumscussoc Brook, the wrap around veranda that has been added to the house can be seen. The barn is visible to the right of the house. Photo by Flora Jarvis. Courtesy of the Pettaquamscutt Historical Society.



Street was a paper street set out by Lodowick Updike in his platting of Newtown, but was never built. It remained a southern boundary description for the Homestead Farm, however, since its initial conception on paper plans up to the subdivision of property in 1936. Similarly, the English Path, by 1870 was known as the Post Road, and remained a real boundary for the western line of the property since its grant to Richard Smith Sr. recorded in 1659. To the east, the Cove and its creeks had remained consistent boundary descriptions since the seventeenth century.

The northern property line, however, which had fluctuated north to south and back again, dependent on the availability of this parcel and the needs of the farm owner, was delineated in the 1870 deed transfer as "land of Nathaniel Carpenter dec'd." Acreage calculations bring the northern property line to just below the present Oakdale Road. Sometimes land along this northern edge was linked to the Saugo Farm. By 1870 much of this land had been subdivided into much smaller lots along the Post Road—an indication of how important this road had become in the nineteenth century. A separate 14 acre parcel across Post Road, known by 1870 as the "New Orchard" and in 1798 described simply as "a lot of land above the road," was included in this deed

transfer—again a part of the Homestead Farm that had not changed since the late eighteenth century.

The 300 acre parcel sold to Thomas Rathbun was farmed by three brothers in 1870. The three farms totaled 295 acres, but were individually listed in the agricultural census records as a 60 acre farm, an 85 acre farm, and a 150 acre farm. In total, 125 acres was listed as "improved" land, and 170 acres was considered "unimproved." Each farm had on average one horse, 3 cows, a pair of oxen, a few sheep, and 4 pigs. The farms grew corn, oats, potatoes, hay and market crops, and sold wool, butter, orchard fruits, and meat—a mix not unlike that of Daniel and Lodowick Updike at the turn of the century.

For today's Cocumscussoc, there is little land evidence related to this era, with the exception of some of the road configuration. By 1873 the bridge was in place crossing Cocumscussoc Brook and permitting easy access, via a farm lane, from the house to the fields south of the brook. This dirt lane continued across the west side of the house, the vicinity of the present parking lot and extension of Richard Smith Drive, to the shore of the stream that drained the wetland areas north of the house. From 1880 property descriptions, the wharf was in need of repair, and the house remained an active dwelling. We know little about the fate of the outbuildings.



Dairy barns, Babbitt Farm. 1880s. The Babbitt's barns were located east of the house. The clipped gables, a popular late Victorian treatment, echo those of the main house. Photo by Flora Jarvis courtesy of the Pettaquamscutt Historical Society.

1870–1879

The Rathbun, Gardiner and Chapin Families

Between 1870 and 1880, the Homestead Farm changed hands three times. Whether due to financial difficulties or land speculation, the many ownerships left little time for farm improvements or a paper trail of farm records or land evidence. Each transaction included the same deed descriptions, including the references to three parcels of land (the large lot, the New Orchard, and the Island) totaling approximately 300 acres. Between 1876 and 1878 Aldridge Gardiner added a new barn to the property, and the other buildings included two houses, and the barn described in Lodowick Updike's inventory.

1879–1936

The Babbitt and Fox families

Just like the seasons, Cocumscussoc has seen its periods of growth, decline, decay, and rebirth. An era of growth and rebirth for the aging farm began in 1879. For the first time, the farm was officially owned by a woman, Mrs. Henry (Anna) Babbitt, though it had certainly seen its share of female managers, particularly in the 19th century. Anna Babbitt owned the farm for nearly 40 years, after which it was inherited by another woman, her daughter Alice Fox, wife of wealthy New York attorney and political activist, Austen Fox. After 1879

the farm buildings underwent a remarkable change: The house's gables were clipped and wings were added to the main house. An expansive wrap-around porch was added across the front (west) and south sides of the house and ornamented with orange trumpet vine, masking the old-fashioned, colonial lines of the building. A large dairy barn complex, poultry house, and later garages and other outbuildings were constructed a short distance from the house as the Cocumcussoc Dairy (note the slight variation in spelling the name) moved the Homestead Farm into a new century.

The agricultural census for 1880 details the expanse of this operation, even when only in its infancy. In 1880, the Babbitts owned a total of 400 acres: 375 "improved" acres (300 tilled acres and 75 acres of meadow, pasture, and orchard), and 25 acres of "unimproved" acres (15 acres of woodland and the 10 acre Rabbit Island). In detail, the farm included 40 acres of hay and other mown grass, 220 acres of pasture, 6 acres of corn, and 6 acres of apple orchard including 150 bearing trees. The farm housed 4 horses, 12 cows, 17 other cattle, 14 calves, 17 swine, and 100 poultry. In 1880, the farm sold 750 gallons of milk, 950 pounds of butter, 650 dozen eggs, and produced 104 bushels of corn and 20 bushels of apples.

The farm production continued to grow and expand. After 1919, when the Fox family took over, the Cocum-

—continued on page 12

The Cocumscussoc Association

Austin Hoppin Fox (left), is seated with his parents, Alice (Hoppin) Fox, and Austin George Fox in front of the fireplace they uncovered and restored. The fireplace was walled-up in the 19th century and remained forgotten for generations. Photo courtesy of Dr. John Gerster, Greenwich, Connecticut.

cussoc Ayrshires produced more milk per cow than any other farm in New England. The dairy herd expanded to an average of 145 head and the success of their breed made any extra animals bred on the farm highly coveted animals for purchase. In the 1920s and early 1930s, the dairy expanded to include a home delivery service and a milk bar and ice cream stand located nearby at the corner of West Main Street and Post Road. To service all this milk production, the farm complex expanded to include a cooling plant, tool shop, boiler room, office, a new dairy, a huge main barn, laboratory, tool shed, stock barn and two additional dwelling houses. The farm operation was moved a short distance away from the main house, offering some privacy and some separation between work and home.

Until 1893, the bounds of the Homestead Farm were substantially unchanged, and the bend in the Post Road that had characterized the main entrance to the property was unchanged from its 17th century configuration. However, between 1893 and 1901, a spur of the Sea View Railroad was designed and con-



Barn complex at Cocumscussoc Dairy, 1927. The Fox family greatly expanded the dairy operations at Cocumscussoc. The Babbitt barn (in the center) was added to, and a complex of service buildings was built. Photo courtesy of Dr. John Gerster.



Cocum[s]cussoc Farm. Deleting an "s", Austen G. Fox altered the spelling of Cocumscussoc when he named his farm and registered his herd of purebred Ayrshire cattle.



structed into Wickford, and a slice of land was sold to the railroad and its investors along the edge of the Post Road, changing the configuration of the highway and substantially changing the topography of the landscape along the roadside. The steep slopes and flat right of way for the railroad tracks is easily identified along the roadside even today. Changing technology followed the rail line, and between 1913 and 1933 several easements and land rights were granted to light and telephone companies bringing their services to North Kingstown. Though the Sea View Railroad was short lived, its track extension offered these utility companies relatively easy access to new customers and many of their service lines continue to follow the route of the old rail line.

In 1886 and 1887, Charles Wilson Opdyke visited Cocumscussoc and toured the house. His subsequent family genealogy describes the house as he found it in 1886: a two story house 53'x 42' with four, 21' x 20' rooms, which still featured an immense kitchen fireplace, wrought iron latches, hinges, and door knockers "showing great age." By 1886, the roof of the house had been modernized, and "the house has been surrounded by a piazza, impairing the antique effect of the exterior." [Opdyke: 83]. The old dock, located near the house, had decayed by 1886, but there was a deep channel 40 rods away, "through which vessels of considerable size still come to a dock near by on the place." This dock was built on the former Saugo Farm so that granite taken from Devil's Foot ledge could be transported to Newport for the building of Newport City Hall. [Woodward: 173].

Opdyke visited the graveyard, "about 200 yards from the house and near the bay and a beautiful grove." On another hillock further removed from the house was the burial site for family slaves. Near the house, according to Opdyke is the "grave apple tree, under which are believed to have been buried the 40 colonists killed in the Swamp Fight and brought here by the army on return from battle; the grass still grows coarse and rank at this spot and is never touched by the cattle." [Opdyke: 84]

The first pictures and photographs for the property date to this era, and illustrate a working farm set within an open, pastoral landscape of fields and pastures shaded in only a few spots by clumps of elms. On each side of the house are scattered the spotty remains of apple orchards, while open hay fields and pastures spread across the low lands between the house and the road. The house is most often viewed from the south, across the open waters of the brook as it opens into the Cove. Edged by a tumble of field stones and the low

grasses of the marsh, the house never seems to show its entry doors or main approach. Instead, it is most often depicted in these images as a house that has turned its efforts to the farm and skirts public scrutiny.

The remains of a low stone wall run across the field south of the house down to the shores of the creek, and may be the remains of the wall shown on the Harris plan which once continued across the front (water side) of the building. Few other stone walls are evident across the land near the house—no doubt evidence of the rich, alluvial soils that washed here between the two brooks. The entry lane, orchard, and barn yard west of the house shown on the Harris map are delineated by a dashed line that more likely represents fence lines rather than stone walls. No evidence remains, even below ground, for stone walls in any of these locations.

A dirt road connected the fields south of the house to the house yards, crossing the brook in the same location as the road system shown in the 1873 maps. This road is not shown on the Harris surveys, but is clearly evident by 1873. The road allowed easy access from the house to the fields south of the house without having to go back to the main road to cross the brook. The road ran over the brook, through the middle of the land south of the house, and then intersected with another lane which ran from the main road to the shoreline.

By the 1880s, the road had been extended across the creek northward to the dairy barn complex where it intersected another road which ran down to the water and up toward Post Road. Another farm road left the dairy barn complex, crossed the pond and lowlands west of the barns, and then ascended the slope back to the main gate. The remains of this road as well as its small earthen bridge/culvert used to cross the wetland are still visible today. None of the images from this period illustrate any gardens or cultivated fields close to the main house. The house is set simply within a network of pastures and mown fields with little delineation between utility and pleasure.

The substantial financial backing that the Fox family brought to the Homestead Farm allowed the property an opportunity to continue into the 20th century unaffected by the financial pressures which ended most of the neighboring farms. The business knowledge and agricultural science in which the family could happily invest its personal fortunes, ensured the farm the best breeds, the best facilities, and the best commercial venture for its time. With the property's sale in 1936, the Homestead Farm ceased its operation as a family and commercial farm—almost three centuries after its settlement ca. 1638 by Richard Smith. ■

Congdon Family at Smith's Castle, 1812–1870

Compiled by Neil G. Dunay

1

Benjamin Congdon¹ (1642–1718)
m. 1671
Elizabeth Albro (1647–1720)

2

William
(c. 1672–1761)

John
(c. 1674–1743)

Benjamin Congdon (c. 1678–1756)
m. 1701
Frances Stafford (1679–1774)

James
(1686–1757)

Elizabeth
(1688–1732)

Susanna
(aft. 1688–1725)

3

Benjamin
(1702–1777)

Joseph
(1704–1779)

Sarah
(1708–1741)

James Congdon (1713–1740)
m. 1732
Mary Vaughn (1713–?)

Mary
(1717–aft.
1756)

Stukeley
(1722–1746)

Frances
(1703–1776)

John
(1706–1764)

William
(1711–1755)

Elizabeth
(1715–1775)

Susannah
(1719–1740)

4

Elizabeth
(1732–1773)

John Congdon (1734–1785)

m1. 1753
Mary Reynolds (1730–1768)

5

James
(1753–1839)

John
(1757–?)

Jonathan
(1761–1836)

Hannah
(1755–1837)

Henry
(1759–?)

Benjamin Congdon (1763–1815)

Joseph Congdon² (1765–1838)

m1. ?
Sarah Sweet

m. 2. 1802
Phebe Bailey³ (?–1858)

m. 1817
Phebe Bailey³ (?–1858)

6

Benjamin (?)
(1786–?)

Henry
(c1788–1805)

Sarah⁴
(1802–1877)

Thomas⁵
(1804–1847)

Martha L.⁶
(1806–?)

Mary⁷
(1811–1885)

Hannah⁸
(1814–1894)

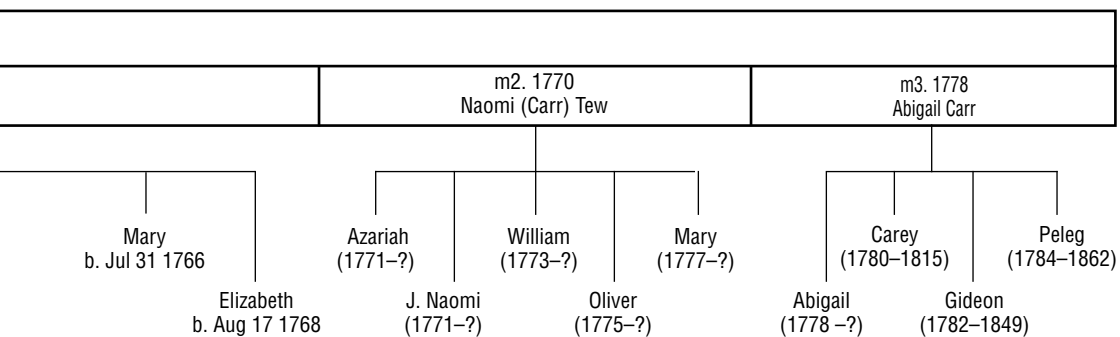
Smith's Castle conveyed to Thomas Rathbun by undetermined Congdon heir(s) in 1870.

1. First Congdon in Rhode Island.
 2. Another source indicates Joseph Congdon had a first wife named Martha Liscomb of England, who died at sea. However, Joseph Congdon had no children by either wife.
 3. Nearly 60 years of oral tradition at Smith's Castle helps keep our stories alive but also sometimes distorts facts into myths—like a very lengthy game of telephone. One story that was told on Castle tours is that Phebe (Bailey) Congdon raised 12 children at Smith's Castle, all of them boys. The image of raising a dozen rambunctious boys in the house horrified most touring parents even more than the Castle's legends of spooky ghosts and gory executions. In reality, Benjamin Congdon had one child (a son) from a previous marriage, and he and Phebe had six children, only one of them a boy. Joseph and Phebe Congdon had no children. The kernel of truth from which this myth sprang is that brothers Benjamin and Joseph had an incredible number of siblings. Their father, John Congdon, married three times and from 1753 to 1784 sired 18 children—12 of whom were boys.
 4. Sarah (1802–1877)
m. Christopher Allen (1795–1848); both buried in Elm Grove Cemetery, 206.
 5. Thomas (1804–1847)
m. Eliza Ann Spink (1808–1896); both buried in Elm Grove Cemetery, 202.
 6. Martha L (1806–?)
m. George T. Spink (c.1805–?)
 7. Mary (1811–1885)
m. Charles Allen (1798–1869); both buried in Elm Grove Cemetery, 195.
 8. Hannah (1814–1894)
m. John Jonathan Reynolds (1812–1908); both buried in Elm Grove Cemetery, 026.
- Source**

WDC GenWeb, *Descendants of John Congdon*. <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~deschart/z000241.html> Contributors: [anonymous], EVESERAT@aol.com; Susan Legare Boudreau, jsboudre@yahoo.com

Source

WDC GenWeb, *Descendants of John Congdon*. <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~deschart/z000241.html> Contributors: [anonymous], EVESERAT@aol.com; Susan Legare Boudreau, isboudre@yahoo.com



 = resided at Smith's Castle

Genealogical Note The Congdon Family

On December 31, 1812, Wilkins Updike conveyed his Homestead Farm at Cocumscussoc to Benjamin Congdon, yeoman of Warwick, for an estimated \$25,000. [Woodward, p. 164]. Prior to moving to Smith's Castle, Benjamin Congdon (b. 1763) had married twice. He first married Sarah Sweet about 1786. They had one documented child, Henry (c. 1788–1805), buried in Elm Grove Cemetery 206. Also, they may have had a son, Benjamin, born c. 1786, according to one genealogy, but no further information is provided and Benjamin, like his brother Henry, may have died young. Benjamin Congdon next married Phebe Bailey in 1802. They had the following children:

Sarah (1802–1877) m. Christopher Allen (1795–1848) both buried in Elm Grove Cemetery, 206;
Thomas (1804–1847) m. Eliza Ann Spink (1808–1896) both buried in Elm Grove Cemetery 202;
Martha L. (1806–?) m. George T. Spink (c. 1805–?)
Mary (1811–1885) m. Charles Allen (1798–1869) both buried in Elm Grove Cemetery, 195.
Hannah (1814–1894) m. John Jonathan Reynolds (1812–1908) both buried in Elm Grove Cemetery, 026.

Thus, when Benjamin and Phebe Congdon moved to Smith's Castle they brought with them four children, with the fifth born while residing at the Castle.

This seemingly tranquil domestic scene apparently did not last long. Benjamin Congdon committed suicide in April 1815, so noted in Nailer Tom Hazard's diary entry on the 7th of April: "I am informd that Benja Congdon of North Kingstown hung him Self yesterday." Benjamin Congdon was first buried in the Congdon family cemetery at Cocumscussoc (NK 43), but in the late 19th century his body was moved to Elm Grove Lot 206 (along with the bodies of his brother Joseph, his wife Phebe, his son Henry, and his sister Hannah).

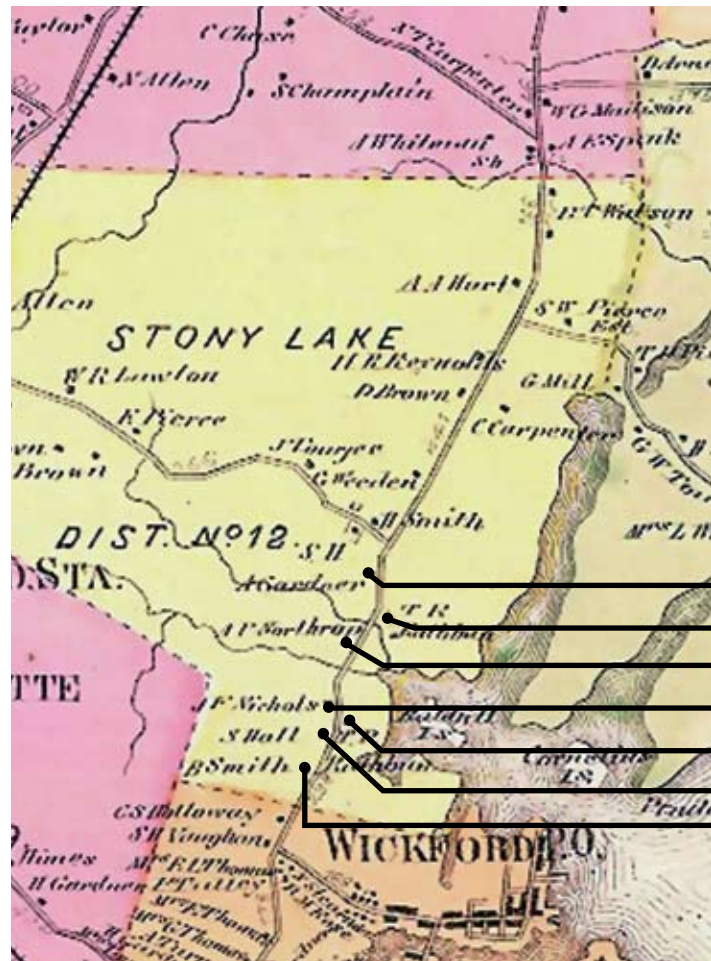
Widow Phebe Congdon married second Benjamin's brother, Capt. Joseph Congdon, on Feb. 23, 1817, in North Kingstown. The couple had no children. Joseph Congdon died in 1838, and Phebe Congdon assumed ownership of Smith's Castle.

Phebe (Bailey) Congdon's will, dated 1853 (NK 32:248), mentions Sarah Allen (widow of Christopher), Eliza Ann Congdon (widow of Thomas), Martha Spink (wife of George T.), Mary Allen (wife of Charles),

and Hannah Reynolds (wife of John J.). Son Thomas Congdon, if not all of the children, apparently inherited the Castle upon Phebe's death in 1858.

By 1860, none of the children were residing at Cocumscussoc. According to the 1860 Federal Census:

- Sarah Allen (age 57) was living with her daughters, Candice (23) and Lucy (21), in North Kingstown. Living next door was her sister-in-law, Eliza A. Congdon (52), living with (presumably) her children,
- Martha S. (22), Ann E. (18), and Thomas (12), as well as her mother, Ann Spink (75).²
- Charles (62) and Mary (49) Allen were living in North Kingstown, with 7 children ranging in age from 5 to 25. Charles Allen is a farmer with \$2,000 in real estate and another \$2,000 in personal estate.³



• John J. (47) and Hanah [sic] C. (45) Reynolds also were in North Kingstown, with four children and a boarder. John Reynolds was a merchant with real estate and personal estate both valued at an astonishing \$20,000, with Hannah listed with her own personal estate of \$2,000.⁴

• Living much father away in Ulysses, Tomkins, New York, were George T. (55) and Martha L. (52) Spink, with Eliza A. (25), presumably their daughter, and Almira Allen (24), probably a niece, and two other people who were likely boarders. George T. Spink was a clerk.⁵

So who was living at Cocumscussoc? This household can be identified in the 1860 census by correlating it with the D.G. Beers map of North Kingstown for 1870. On the west side Post Road, the 1870 map lists households from North (at Stony Lane) to South: A. Gardner; A.P. Northrop; J.F. Nichols; S. Hall; and B. Smith. On the east side of the road is T. R. Rathbun, who had just purchased Cocumscussoc in 1870, listed once at Smith's Castle and again south of the Castle (fig.1).

Following the households listed in the 1860 census, census-taker Isaac Hall lists Benjamin Smith, age 41, with wife Susan and family at dwelling 270.⁶ This is the B. Smith listed in the 1870 map. Dwelling 271 is likely the house shown as being owned in 1870 by Thomas Rathbun, on the east side of Post Road and south of Smith's Castle. The name of the resident of this house in 1860 is very intriguing. Orpha Congdon, age 75, is living with Caleb Congdon, age 47, a mariner, and Sally Congdon, age 39, probably Orpha's

daughter and possibly Caleb's wife. However, it is likely that Isaac Hall misinterpreted Orpha's last name. In the 1850 census, she appears as "Orphy Corey," age 68, living with Caleb Congdon, age 40, Arnold W. Congdon, age 37, and Sally C. Congdon, age 27. "Orphy Cory" died at age 85 in 1861 and was buried in Elm Grove Cemetery, with a stone "erected by Sally Cory," although the location of her stone and burial today is unknown. No information has been found to link this Congdon family to the one that owned Smith's Castle, and none of these individuals are listed in the WDC GenWeb Congdon genealogy.

The next dwelling listed in the 1860 census, 272, is Slocum Hall, age 65—the S. Hall on the 1870 map—so Isaac, the census taker, appears to be moving from south to north on Post Road. Household 273 list another name not found on the 1870 map. John Maglane, age 32, is a "Farm Tennant" born in Maine. His wife, Sarah C., age 27, was born in Rhode Island. They have children Marcus, age 7, Charles, age 6, John, age 2, and Fanny, age 3 months, with Arnold Browne, age 16, also living in the household.⁶ Based on the next households enumerated, the Maglane residence must be Smith's Castle.

Next at dwelling 274 is Alfred Gardiner, age 43, farmer, and family. Looking at the map, Isaac has gone up to the house of A. Gardiner, just below Stony Lane, and has skipped two houses on the west side of Post Road. Isaac then backtracks south, listing 275 as the dwelling of John F. Nichols, age 45, and family. He and one of his sons are mariners. Moving south again Isaac visits the household of Abial P. Northup, age 60, 276.

By extending the same logic to the 1850 census,

1870 Beers Map

1860 Census

West Side of Post Road	East side of Post Road	Dwelling No.	Head of Household
A. Gardiner		274	Alfred Gardiner
	T.R. Rathbun	273	John Maglane [= Smith's Castle]
A.P. Northup		276	Abial P. Northup
J.F. Nichols		275	John F. Nichols
	T.R. Rathbun	271	Slocum Hall
S. Hall		272	Orpha Congdon [sic, Orphy Corey]
B. Smith		270	Benjamin Smith

we can also likely locate the Smith's Castle household. John F. Nichols and Abial P. Northup are still residing in the vicinity (dwellings 39 and 40, respectively) and in a neighboring household, dwelling 30, we find two families. One of them, family 36, is Eliza A. Congdon, age 42, (the widow of Benjamin and Phebe's son, Thomas) with her children Henry Boone, age 23, a miner, Martha L., age 12, Ann E., age 8, and Thomas, age 4. Family 35 in the same dwelling includes Jeremiah Carpenter, age 38, a blacksmith; Welthan, age 38, likely his wife; Henry B., age 4, likely their son; Lydia Shippee, age 49; Pardon A. Tillinghast, age 20, a blacksmith; and Lodowick H. Tillinghast, age 16, also a blacksmith.⁸ Phebe Congdon is not listed in the household or nearby. She may possibly be the Phebe Congdon, age 77, at dwelling 479, living with a laborer named Joseph Congdon, 62, although her age should have been 70 in 1850.⁹

So by 1850, Smith's Castle was not only still home to members of the Congdon family, but it may have become a blacksmithing site. By 1860, the era of tenant farmers had begun.

Notes

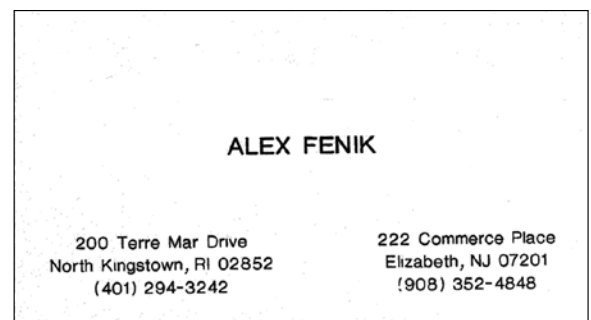
- 1.
2. Ancestry.com. *1860 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. The Generations Network, Inc., Provo, Utah, 2004. Year: 1860; Census Place: North Kingstown, Washington, Rhode Island; Roll: M653_1211; Page: 292; Image: 147.
3. Year: 1860; Census Place: North Kingstown, Washington, Rhode Island; Roll: M653_1211; Page: 321; Image: 205.

4. Year: 1860; Census Place: North Kingstown, Washington, Rhode Island; Roll: M653_1211; Page: 294; Image: 151.
5. Year: 1860; Census Place: Ulysses, Tompkins, New York; Roll: M653_868; Page: 0; Image: 204.
6. Year: 1860; Census Place: North Kingstown, Washington, Rhode Island; Roll: M653_1211; Page: 309; Image: 181.
7. Year: 1860; Census Place: North Kingstown, Washington, Rhode Island; Roll: M653_1211; Page: 310; Image: 182.
8. Ancestry.com. *1850 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. The Generations Network, Inc., Provo, Utah, 2005. Year: 1850; Census Place: North Kingston, Washington, Rhode Island; Roll: M432_847; Page: 297; Image: 152.

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



Hearthside Cooking

Preserving Summer's Bounty

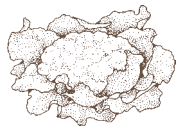
Contributed by Barbara Crudale

Before the invention of refrigeration or freezers, many of the foods being harvested throughout the summer and autumn would need to be preserved for use until the next harvest. Pickling was a common practice to preserve foods. Many of the foods that were pickled in the 18th century are not found in the local market today, including pickled lemons, white plums, fennel, and oysters!

However, there are many receipts in Hannah Glasse's *First Catch Your Hare... The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy*, first published in 1747, for some pickled items still enjoyed today, such as pickled beets,

cauliflower, onions and cabbage. The first of the following receipts, from Hannah Glasse, would be used by farmers' wives finding themselves with too many cucumbers.

The second recipe has been handed down from my paternal grandmother, Ruth Sayles Delemontex, a descendent of Roger Williams. As with the 18th century receipt, the amounts of many of the ingredients in this pickle recipe are "to taste," so feel free to add more or less of the dill, garlic, red pepper, and pickling spice, according to personal preference.



To Pickle Large Cucumbers in Slices

(Remember when reading this that the letter "s" was often written as an "f" in the 17th and 18th centuries.)

Take the large Cucumbers before they are too ripe, flice them in Thicknefs of Crown-pieces into a Pewter-difh. To every Dozen of Cucumbers, flice two large Onions thin, fo on till you have filled your Difh; with a Handful of Salt between every Row; then cover them with another Pewter-difh and let them ftand twenty-four Hours; then put them in a Cullendar, let them drain very well, then put them into a Jar, and cover them with White Wine Vinegar and let them ftand four Hours; then pour the Vinegar from them into a Copper Saucepan, and boil it with a little Salt. Put to the Cucumbers a little Mace, a little Whole Pepper, a large Race of Ginger fliced, and then pour the boiling Vinegar on. Cover them clofe, and when they are cold, tye them down; they will be fit to eat in two or three days.

—Hannah Glasse. *First Catch yourself a Hare ...the Art of Cookery Made Plain and Simple*

Easy Pickle Recipe

Brine ratio: 3 cups cold water, 1/3 cup white vinegar, 3 tablespoons kosher salt

Place fresh dill in bottom of half gallon container, and stand washed cucumbers in bottom of container. Continue to fill container with as many cucumbers as it will hold. Place more dill around cucumbers. Add 2-3 cloves minced garlic, pinch of red pepper, and 1 teaspoon pickling spices. Add brine over cucumbers until cucumbers are covered. (More brine may need to be made to insure cucumbers are covered; if the cucumbers are not covered with brine, they will become moldy.) Cover jar with a dinner plate and let stand for 2-3 days. Then refrigerate with jar cover on; slice as needed.



The Cocumscussoc Association



Upcoming at Smith's Castle

September

Day	Time	Event
Monday, 22	7:00 p.m.	Board of Trustees meeting

October

Day	Time	Event
Saturday, 18	Noon–4:00 p.m.	Harvest Festival (rain date Sunday, October 19)

November

No Scheduled Events

December

Day	Time	Event
Saturday, 6	Noon–4:00 p.m.	Christmas at the Castle
Sunday, 7	Noon–4:00 p.m.	Christmas at the Castle
?	?	Members Holiday Party

The Cocumscussoc Association
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