

Castle Chronicle



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Cheese Making at Cocumscussoc, 1660–1692; Part 2

Though it depicts eighteenth century Narragansett, this vignette could just as well represent Cocumscussoc in the final quarter of the seventeenth century. Richard Smith Jr.'s slaves, Caesar and Ebed Melich, loaded cheese and other produce onto Smith's sloop, *Primrose*, for transport to market in Newport.

Ernst Hamlin Baker, *The Activities of the Narragansett Planters, 1939*, detail. Courtesy of the Pettaquamscutt Historical Society.

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

Note from the President

Membership renewal notices have gone out in the mail. This year we are switching back to a uniform membership calendar for all members, running from April 1 to March 31. Members whose memberships lapse mid-year are receiving invoices prorating their membership. Please renew your membership as soon as possible. Your participation is vital to our operations, as well as a sign of the strength of community interest in preserving our local heritage.

Also, if you haven't already done so, please send in a donation for our 2008/2009 annual appeal. We are close to the \$4,000 mark, but we are in more need of donations this year than any other in recent memory. We have just been notified by the Rhode Island Foundation that several of our key funds lost a significant amount of their equity during the recent market turmoil, and our fund disbursements will be down to about half of their normal level. We need your support more than ever.

To set a course toward improved financial strength, Smith's Castle applied to become part of a business planning project for small Rhode Island museums. We have been notified of our selection as one of the museum participants, along with Hearthside, Linden Place, Pettaquamscutt Historical Society, and the Babcock-Smith House. This project, spearheaded by Preserve Rhode Island with grants from the Rhode Island Historic Preservation Commission and the Preserve America program, is designed to help historic sites in Rhode Island become higher performing non-profit organizations. Watch for further information in the next *Chronicle*.

Carol Palmer

—Carol Palmer, President



The *Chronicle* has learned of the deaths of Robert E. Major and Marian E. Hazard. On behalf of the membership we extend sincere sympathy to their families and friends.



Louise Duckworth Castle Volunteer of the Year

The Board of Trustees unanimously voted Louise Duckworth as the Castle's 2009 Volunteer of the year. Louise, a native of North Kingstown, has been involved with the Castle since 1992. An avid docent, Louise also chairs the Collections Committee and serves on the Youth Education Committee. Over the years, she has been instrumental in organizing and executing all of the various public events sponsored by the Castle and in helping to bring re-enactors from across New England to our site.

The volunteer recognition award is part of a town-wide program sponsored by the North Kingstown Chamber of Commerce. Louise and other volunteers will be recognized on Wednesday, April 29, from 5 to 7 p.m. The event will be at Pelly's 19th Hole on Callahan Road in North Kingstown. It costs \$10 a person and includes light food. A reservation is needed. Please drop your check/cash at the NK Chamber of Commerce asap to hold a spot.

The Castle would like to get some comments/reflections on your experiences working with Louise that could be included in the recognition ceremony. Please email them to smithscastle@earthlink.net or call the Castle office at 294-3521 and leave a message.

Welcome New Members

Barry and Barbara Bayon

Christine Cianciolo

Robert B. Stone and

Brenda Doyle

Thurston Gray

Bea Hoffius

Susan Infantolino

Janine Jacques

Chris Johnson

Charles Petrarca

Susan Raesner

Katherine and

George Richardson

Dale Thomas

David Wrenn

—as of March 28, 2009

Association Welcomes New Trustees

At the annual meeting of the Cocumscussoc Association on January 31, 2009, the membership elected as their new officers: Carol Palmer, president; Frank Boffi, vice president; Ann Waring, treasurer; and Neil Dunay, past president. Maggie Skenyon was elected to serve in a new ad hoc position as assistant president. Members also elected a slate of trustees, including newcomers Barry Bayon, Bea Hoffius, and Kathy Richardson.

The position of secretary, vacant at annual meeting, has since been filled by Janine Jaques. Docents elected Diane Amaral as their representative on the board and

executive committee. Carol Palmer has named Barbara Vollmar and Robert Verdi as the two trustees to sit on the executive committee. (See masthead for the full roster.)

The new board held its first meeting on March 16. Upcoming meetings are scheduled for May 18 and June 15. The latter date will be a special meeting of the board with the Castle's committee chairs to share information about current activities and to brainstorm on plans for the remainder of the year. If you have any matters you would like to bring before the board or ideas for new programs or improvements to our operations, please email the Castle (smithscastle@earthlink.net). ■



Janine Jaques, secretary



Ann Waring, treasurer



Barry Bayon, trustee



Bea Hoffius, trustee



Kathy Richardson, trustee



Robert Stone, trustee

Making Narragansett Cheese

“The Best and Principal Cheese” of Narragansett

Darrell McIntire

The Smith family, at home in Thornbury, Gloucestershire, in seventeenth-century England would have known, consumed, and likely have made several kinds of cheese: new milk cheese, morning milk cheese, nettle cheese, flitten milk cheese, and eddish or aftermath cheese. These broad categories each had several subdivisions or “orderings and compositions.” [Markham: 149] When all the cream was skimmed off the milk set in milk pans, skim-milk or “flet,” “flitten,” or “flotten” cheese was made. When some of the cream was removed, a medium-quality cheese resulted, which was termed “half-full milk cheese.” Only the very best quality cheese was made from unskimmed milk, such as the new milk and morning milk cheeses. Morning milk cheese is a “one-meal cheese” in which the milk of one milking (meal) is used, neat from the cow. New milk cheese is a “two-meal cheese,” made from fresh morning’s milk, warm from the cow, to which cream, skimmed off the milk of the previous evening, is added. Nettle cheese was so named from the practice of curing it in nettles.¹



Figure 1.
(*Urtica dioica*)

As soon as the cheese had been drained of whey and brine, it was covered with a layer of fresh nettles, and left for two days. It was then turned, and fresh nettles put below and on top of it. Nettle cheese was considered to be the best of the summer cheese, and the finer cheeses were presumably picked from the new milk lots, and stored in the special way. Nettles were supposed to possess an inhibiting effect on flies and mites, but the chief advantage probably lay in their action as a draining mat, which gave moisture-soakage, and sufficient ventilation, during storage. [Cheke: 105]

All of these cheeses were summer cheeses, generally made between the months of May and October. Winter, or eddish, or aftermath cheeses were made from the milk of cows that grazed the lush, wet “aftermath” left in the pastures at summer’s end. Eddish was a wet and soft cheese that could not harden. It was less rich than summer cheeses and generally was consumed at home rather than sent to market.

The modern classifications of English cheese with which most of us are more-or-less familiar did not then exist (e.g. “Cheshire,” “Cheddar,” “Stilton”). They were not definitively established until the late nineteenth century. While “Gloucester” cheese was made in the seventeenth century, and Gloucestershire was known even then as one of the country’s prime cheesemaking regions, today’s Gloucester cheese may little resemble the cheese eaten by, or made by, the Smith family, either in England or later in America.

The Smith family left England in the mid 1630s, a time when virtually all cooks were women and few women (especially those who cooked) were able to read.² We do not know if Joan Smith or her daughter-in-law, Esther Smith, were, in fact, literate. Esther could sign her name, which indicates she could possibly have been able to read. We have no such knowledge concerning Joan, as no record of her has been found in this country. [Chronicle v.17 #4: 4] Therefore, we should not assume the cheese recipe Joan Smith carried with her from Gloucestershire was a written recipe. Perhaps what she brought was simply the “know-how” to make cheese; her recipes, cheese and otherwise, being stored in a substantial cookbook in her head. However, whether written or not, the exact recipe and precise method Esther Smith employed when she produced cheese at Cocumscussoc in the 1650s and 60s are lost to us, probably irretrievably.

Fortunately, records of the traditions of farmhouse cheesemaking in seventeenth-century England have survived. Perhaps the most well known examples are found in Gervase Markham’s *The English House-Wife* and *A Way to Get Wealth...* Markham’s cheese recipes, perhaps compilations of a number of similar recipes, would have been handed down from generation to generation, often by word of mouth, and so must have been known and used long before Markham recorded them in 1615.

To make a new Milk or morning Milk Cheese, which is the best Cheese made ordinarily in our Kingdom; you shall take your Milk early in the morning, as it comes from the Cow, and syle [strain] it into a clean Tub; then take all the Cream also from the Milk you milk’d the evening before, and strain it into your new milk:...



The practice of using the cream from the previous evening's milking was a long-established practice. Hardworking milkmaids, having spent the day making cheese from the morning's milking could hardly be expected to work all night processing the milk from the evening's milking as well. The milk from the evening's milking that sat in pans overnight had, by morning, separated into top milk (cream) and skim milk. The cream was skimmed and used for cheese, or saved and churned into butter. The skim milk was used for making flet cheese, or it was fed to the swine—the raising of which was a usual practice on dairy farms.

We know from Wilkins Updike that Mrs. Smith's cheese was "especially rich, having been fortified with cream." This suggests her recipe was some variation of Markham's new milk cheese. However, while the addition of extra cream from a previous milking did result in a rich cheese, it was a common practice at the time, and certainly not unique to Esther Smith. A cheese richer than new milk cheese can be made by using only the cream from both the morning's milking and the previous evening's milking. This makes a cheese very high in fat that can be accurately labeled "especially rich." Using only the cream from the two milkings is an extremely extravagant practice that few cheese makers of the seventeenth century could afford. However, for Esther Smith, married to one of the wealthiest men in New England, it would not have been an issue. [Chronicle v. 17 #4: 6, 7]

Using only the cream from two milkings yields what is generally referred to today as a "double" cheese. Traditionally, cheeses were described as "thick" or "thin" according to the amount of fat left in the initial milk, but the same terms were used, somewhat confusingly, to describe the comparative size and height of cheese. Thus the rich cheese of Gloucestershire was thick, full of fat, and double the height of the partially skimmed milk flat cheese. From these two types were eventually evolved the rich Double Gloucestershire and the smaller, less rich Single Gloucestershire cheeses. [Cheke: 24]

...then [Markham continues] take a pretty quantity of clean water, and having made it hot, pour it into the Milk also to scald the Cream and it together, then let it stand, and cool it with a dish till it be no more than luke-warm;...

Scalding the milk and cream mixture was a common practice for the time and one that distinguishes seventeenth-century cheese making from later eras. Although Markham indicates the heated liquid scalded the cream and milk together, it was primarily meant to ensure the mixture was sufficiently warm for the rennet, soon to be added, to work effectively. However, as one authority notes, "the practice impoverished the milk-cream mixture by squandering much of the fat." [Cheke: 24] It diminished, rather than helped, the effects of the rennet and resulted in a weak curd.

...then go to the pot where your earning bags hang, and draw from thence so much of the earning without stirring of the bag, as will serve for your proportion of Milk, and straining it there-in very carefully; for if the least mote of the curd of the earning fall into the Cheese, it will make the Cheese rot and mould;...

The earning bag or "cheselep,"³ was the source of rennet, the natural enzyme found in mammalian stomachs that is necessary to coagulate milk and separate the curds from the whey. The very complex (and very unappetizing) method of preparing "rennet" in the seventeenth century, no doubt familiar to Esther Smith, also was detailed by Gervase Markham...

The Cheslep-bag, or Runnet, is the stomach bag of a young sucking Calf, which never tasted other food than milk, where the curd lieth undigested. Of

—continued on page 6

Figure 2. The evening's milk is poured through a linen cloth into milk pans. It is left over night to separate into top milk (cream) and skim milk.

Making Narragansett Cheese

these bags you shall in the beginning of the year, provide your self good store, and first open the bag, and pour out into a clean vessel the curd and thick substance thereof: but the rest which is not curdled you shall put away; then open the curd and pick out of it all manner of motes, chiers of grass, or the filth gotten into the same: then wash the curds in so many cold waters, til it be white and clean from all sorts of motes as is possible; then lay it on a clean cloth that the water may drain from it; which done, lay it in another dry vessel; then take a handful or two of Salt, and rub the curd therewith exceedingly, then take your bag, and wash it also in divers cold water till it be very clean, and then put the Curd and the Salt up into the bag, the bag being also well rub'd within with Salt; and so put it up, and salt the outside also over, and then close up the pot close, and so keep them a full year before you use them. For touching the hanging of them up in chimney corners (as course House-wives do) it is sluttish, naught, and unwholesome; and the spending of your runnet whilst it is new, makes your cheese heavy, and to prove hollow. ...

Cheeses made with “runnet whilst it is new” often became swollen and blown up with the gas formed from contaminated extract. However, if the rennet had been pickling a year, the salt would have considerably reduced the potential danger. Calves stomachs (or vells) contain, in addition to the desired rennet enzymes, a large and varying natural flora of micro-organisms, some of which may be harmful. Markham’s preference for pickling the vells in brine rather than hanging them up in chimney corners to air dry, as well as his advice to keep the vells a full year before their use, were very well-founded admonitions.

...When your runnet is fit to be used, you shall season it after this manner; you shall take the bag you intend to use, and opening it, put the curd into a stone mortar or a bowl, and with a wooden pestle, or a rolling pin beat it exceedingly; then put to it the yolks of two or three eggs, and a half pint of the thickest and sweetest cream you can sleet from your Milk, with a penny-worth of Saffron finely dried and beaten to powder, together with a little Cloves, and Mace, and stir them all passing well together, till they appear but as one substance, and then put it up in the bag again; then you shall make a very strong brine of water and salt, and in the same you

shall boyl a handful of Saxifrage, and then when it is cold, clear it into a clean earthen vessel; then take out of the bag half a dozen spoonfuls of the former curd, and mix it with the brine; then closing the bag up again close, hang it with the brine, and in any case also steep in your brine a few Walnut-tree leaves, and so keep your Runnet a fortnight after before you use it: and in this manner, dress all your bags so, as you may ever have one ready after another, and the youngest a fortnight old ever at the least; for that four spoonfuls thereof will suffice for the gathering and seasoning of at least twelve gallons of Milk, and this is the choycest and best earning which can possibly be made by any House-wife....

Unlike the sterile rennet extracts of today, which induce the desired effect without modifying the final product, Markham’s “choycest and best earning” undoubtedly altered the chemistry, not to mention the taste of the cheese. Faced with using an animal product that had been sealed in a pickling jar for more than a year, it is not surprising seventeenth-century cheese makers attempted cover-ups by adding a variety of flavorings to their concoctions. However, all their herbs and spices apparently were insufficient to mask the often disagreeable calves vells, which were said to impart a distinctive “tang” to the cheese.

Interestingly, the addition of flavorings to the curd in the calf’s stomach recalls a very ancient method of “cheese” making. For centuries, fresh curd from calves’ stomachs has been blended with eggs, sweet cream, and various spices to make a food that resembles cheese. The seventeenth-century English housewife, by placing this “cheese” back into the vell, was following another ancient tradition—“feeding” the calf’s stomach in order to induce it to produce the desired rennet. Markham’s instruction to “boyl a handful of Saxifrage” in the final brine is likely an error. Similar recipes specify sassafrass, a frequently used flavoring of the period. [Cheke: 75]

Clearly, seventeenth-century methods of rennet production were rooted in very ancient practices. By the eighteenth century, however, the fastidious Georgians were rejecting such unsavory, primitive methods, and developing more palatable approaches to secure the needed enzymes. They thoroughly cleaned the vell and left it in brine for six to nine months, then stretched it out on sticks to dry. It could be used once it was thoroughly dry, but aging a year was preferred. Then, it was cut into small pieces and placed

in a cheesecloth bag (still referred to as a cheslep). When rennet was required a piece of the dried vell was boiled in water then cooled to luke warm. A small amount of the extract was then added to the milk-cream mixture, or alternately, the piece of the vell itself was used. [Cheke: 76]

...when your earning is put in, you shall cover the Milk, and so let it stand half an hour or there-about; for if the earning be good, it will come in that space; but if you see it doth not, then you shall put in more; being come, you shall with a dish in your hand break and mash the curd together, pos-sing and turning it diversly: which done, with the flat palms of your hands very gently press the curd down into the bottom of the Tub; then with a thin dish take the whey from it as clear as you can,...

Markham's direction to add more rennet if the curd had not formed within half an hour is surprising. Even then it was realized that adding additional inoculations of rennet was generally futile and would only make the curd become uneven and imperfect. Nor was it unusual for a curd to take more than half an hour to develop. The admonitions to "very gently press the curd down" and to keep the whey "as clear as you can" however, were well founded. Breaking the curd by hand, or with a hand-held scoop or dish—the usual practice in the seventeenth century—if not done with care forces milk solids out of the curd, resulting in a loss of fat back into the whey. Cloudiness in the whey is an indication of suspended fat. The fat loss in this step would add to that already lost when hot water was used to dilute the initial milk-cream mixture.

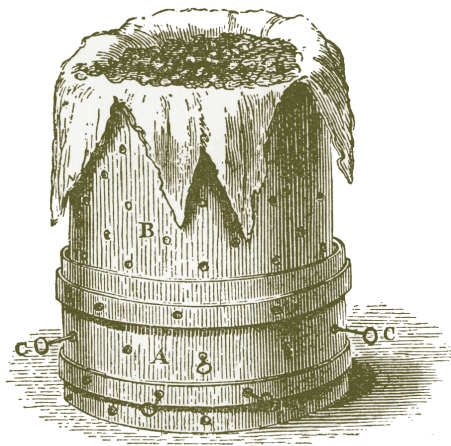


Figure 3. A man doing what is more often the job of the milkmaid—pressing as much whey as possible from the curds before they go into the press.

...and so having prepared your Cheese-fat [vat] answerable to the proportion of your Curd, with both you hands joyned together, put your curd therein and break it, and press it down hard into the fat; till you have filled it; then lay upon the top of the curd your hard Cheese-board, and a little small weight thereupon, that the whey may drop from it into the under vessel;...

The methods of initially removing the residual whey varied. Some dairymaids turned the curds onto a cheesecloth and hung the mass over a vat to drain (usually over night). Others placed the vat over a tub that rested on a cheese-tong or cheese-ladder. This enabled the fatty whey to drain down, and be collected as the dairymaid pressed the whey out by hand. Often the weight applied to the cheese board was a child, or the dairymaid herself would kneel on the board. This practice gave rise to the old saying "the bigger the dairymaid the better the cheese." This preliminary pressing before the vat went into the cheese press, was very important as the presses of the time did not exert sufficient pressure to remove all of the whey from a wet curd.

...when it hath done dropping, take a large Cheese-cloth, and having wet it in the cold water, lay it on the Cheese-board, and then turn the Cheese upon it; then lay the Cheese-cloth into the Cheese-fat, and so put the Cheese therein again, and with a thin slice thrust the same down close on every side; then laying the cloth also over the top to lay on the Cheese-board, and so carry it to your great press, and there press it under a sufficient weight; after it

Figure 4. Cheese vat or fat. The vat is labelled A. Letter B is a collar that contains the curds before the whey is forced out. As the curds are pressed, whey flows out the holes. When the curds are compressed into the vat, the keys (C) are removed and the collar is removed.

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Making Narragansett Cheese

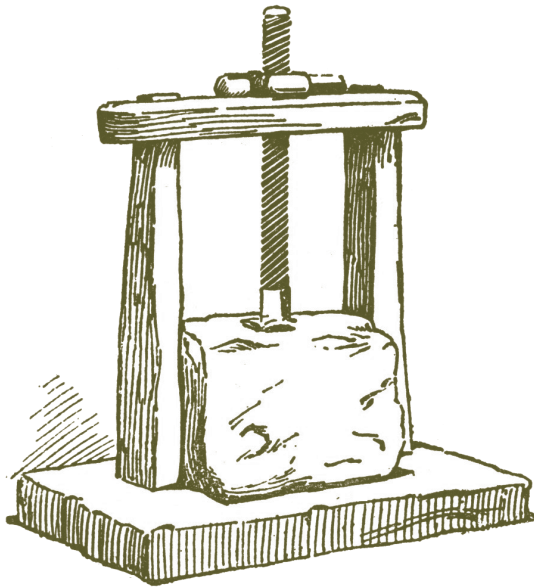


Figure 1. Cheese press

hath been there prest half an hour, you shall take it, and turn it into a dry cloth, and put it into the press again, and thus you shall turn it into dry clothes at least five or six times in the first day, and ever put it under the press again, not taking it therefrom till the next day in the evening at soonest, and at the last time it is turned, you shall turn it into the dry fat without any cloth at all. ...

In the seventeenth century, large cheeses began to appear and cheese presses that could produce greater pressure became necessary. The earliest presses worked on the dead-weight principle, using heavy stones. The simple squared stone press being an example. Various methods were devised to handle the heavy stone, a screw inserted into the stone being one of the first. The screw came up through the wooden frame enclosing the stone, and with a handle the stone could be raised and lowered as needed. In the seventeenth century, pressing was a varied and arbitrary affair. Presses remained primitive on some farms, but were more developed on others depending on the originality, mechanical ability, and financial resources of the proprietor. [Cheke: 37, 38] We have no way of knowing how cheese was pressed at Cocumscussoc, but some variation of a squared stone press with a screw mechanism, the most up-to-date example for the time, would be a reasonable supposition.

...When it is pressed sufficiently, and taken from the fat, you shall then lay it in a Kimmel [a shallow wooden tub, usually used for “powdering”

or salting meat], and rub it first on the one side, and then on the other with salt, and so let it lie all that night, then the next morning you shall do the like again, and so turn it out upon the brine, which comes from the Salt two or three days more, according to the bigness of the cheese, and then lay it upon a fair Table or shelf to dry, forgetting not every day to rub it all over with a clean cloth, and then to turn it till such time that it be thoroughly dry, and fit to go into the Cheese-heck: and in this manner of drying, you must observe to lay it first where it will dry hastily, and after where it may dry at more leisure: thus may you make the best and most principal Cheese.

In the seventeenth century, cheese generally was not treated with salt until after vating. (Salting the curds, as is the norm today, was not then done.) However, even though Markham does not specify it, some type of salting during the pressing process was not unusual at the time. Markham's method of soaking in brine tended to be practiced more in southern areas of England, including Gloucestershire.

A cheese-heck,⁴ or cheese-closet, was a cupboard usually having three or four shelves, or more if necessary, that held cheeses as they cured. The door consisted of a frame that was hinged on one side to allow easy access to the cheeses for turning and dressing, and tightly fitted with cheesecloth to permit the free circulation of air but prevent the passage of insects. Larger farmhouses, like Cocumscussoc, typically would place the cheese in upper rooms or lofts where they were ripened on floors or shelves that were specially prepared. The boards were rubbed with potato stalks, or with succulent green nettles, until the wood became blackened and wet. Then they were scraped clean and thoroughly swept. This preparation encouraged the production of desirable mold.

Mrs. Smith's recipe called for buttering and turning her cheese daily as it cured, and the curing time ranged from four to eight weeks. As this practice is recorded nowhere in discussions of early cheese making in England, it may indeed be a custom unique to Narragansett. It was certainly an extravagant practice, requiring an abundant supply of butter and a dairy sizable enough to produce milk in amounts sufficient to make the required butter in addition to that required to make the cheese. Also, sufficient labor to carry out what was likely a messy, physically demanding task would have been necessary.

Buttering daily was said (along with the addition of extra cream) to produce an especially rich cheese. As

butter was absorbed, a rich buttery flavor was undoubtedly imparted to the cheese. Also, the butter probably would have kept the rind smooth and moist resulting in a pleasant, biteable texture. In Gloucestershire the appearance of a blue coat of mold on the rind of the cheese was desired. In order to encourage the growth of mold, it was customary to wash and clean the cheeses at intervals during the first few weeks of curing. Each cheese was left soaking in a tub of cold whey for an hour, to soften the coat, which was then scraped off with a blunt knife. By removing the rough and thick rind as it developed it was hoped a blue one would rise in its place. Daily buttering and turning would have kept the rind soft and, while it is not clear if this is why the practice was adopted, it probably would have eliminated the need for tedious soaking and scraping. It is uncertain whether or not it would have encouraged the growth of the desired mold.

In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, greasiness of texture and rind was appreciated. This was accomplished by keeping the cheese warm while it was curing until it had "got tolerably hard and had a good sweat." [Cheke: 53] The sweat (an exudation of fat) was not wiped off, as it was believed it kept the cheese mellow. Butter slavered on the cheese of Narragansett must certainly have given it the "greasiness of rind" that so appealed to the palate of the period.

Throughout this discussion Esther Smith is consistently referred to as the cheese maker at Cocumscussoc. This is in accordance with long-standing tradition that assigns credit to the mistress of the manor for all domestic matters that occurred within her household. Almost certainly, however, the actual work of making cheese fell to the Smith's household servants or slaves.

The letters documenting gifts of cheese from Richard Smith Jr. to John Winthrop Jr. clearly indicate the cheeses were in gratitude for medical advice and medications given Esther Smith by Winthrop Jr. The earliest of the letters, dated 11 January 1665, states that "Esther remains lame and has pain, sometimes in her neck, shoulder, arm, and hands, and sometimes in her hip, thighs, and knee." [Updike 1937: 79] Cheese making required long days of demanding work. It is not at all clear that Esther Smith would have been physically able to do the work necessary.

For centuries cheese making was traditionally women's work, and it remained so well into the nineteenth century when it finally began to move out of the farm house and into the factory. On the plantations of eighteenth-century Narragansett, Rhode Is-

land, the chore of cheese making continued to fall to women, specifically to the female slaves. "...Robert Hazard had twelve Negro women as dairy women, each of whom had a girl to assist her, making from twelve to twenty-four cheeses a day..." [Updike 1907: 181] From Richard Smith Jr.'s estate inventory of 1692 and his will, dated 1690, we know he had at least one female slave. Her name was Sara, and she was the wife of Caesar, also a Smith family slave. They had five children, none of whom are identified by name or age in the inventory. Chances are, however, some were girls, and it is probable that Sara and her daughters were the actual cheese makers in the Smith household.

In Smith's 1692 will, Sara was described as elderly (as was, presumably, Caesar). They must have served the Smith family faithfully and well for most of their adult lives since, upon his death, Richard Smith Jr. granted the couple their freedom along with one hundred acres of farmland. The couple's five children, however, by the terms of Smith's will, remained enslaved until their thirtieth birthdays—well into the next century. Unfortunately, after their mention in Smith Jr.'s will, the children of Caesar and Sara disappear from the record and we have no knowledge of how or where their lives played out. However, if they remained at Cocumscussoc as Smith Jr. intended, it is not unreasonable to assume it was through their labors that cheesemaking continued at Smith's Castle well into the eighteenth century.

Richard Smith, Jr. died in 1692, probably less than a year after his wife Esther's death. The couple was childless. Their nephew, Lodowick Updike, who had been living and working at Smith's Castle since the 1670s, inherited Cocumscussoc at age 46. The date of Lodowick's marriage to Abigail Newton is not known, but it is very possible it preceded Richard's and Esther's deaths. Cheese making began at Cocumscussoc in the 1650s and was well established by the end of the seventeenth century. Joan Smith's cheese recipe is said to have spread from Cocumscussoc to neighboring farms. As these farms evolved into the famed Narragansett plantations of the eighteenth century, their "good Rhode Island cheese"⁵ was produced in huge quantities and sold up and down the coast of colonial America, south to the islands of the West Indies, and even back home in England. If Wilkins Updike and Updike family tradition are correct, Joan Smith and her cheese recipe had immeasurable impact on the economy of colonial Rhode Island—not a bad legacy for a woman who has left no recorded trace in America. ■

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Making Narragansett Cheese

Cheesemaking Utensiles

A description of the primary utensiles traditionally used in making cheese in Gloucestershire, England. From William Marshall, *The Rural Economy of Gloucestershire*, 1789.

1. Milking pail. The shape nearly that of a bushel. It is formed of staves and hoops; with one "handle stave" rising three or four inches above the rim. The diameter about fifteen inches; the depth about ten inches. Staves, oak; hoops, broad and close, ash.

2. Milk cooler; provincially, cheese cowl. A large, strong wooden vessel, proportioned in size to the number of cows. From eighteen inches to two feet deep: and from two to three feet diameter. Two opposite staves rise above the rest: the head of each having a hole in it, large enough to admit a pole; for the purpose of moving it, or carrying it on men's shoulders.

3. Strainer or milk sieve. Made sieve form: twelve or fourteen inches diameter; five or six inches deep: some with hair bottoms; others have cloth bottoms; which are taken out every day to wash. A frond or leaf of fern is frequently placed at the bottom of the sieve, to prevent the milk from flying over.

4. Sieve holder; provincially, cheese ladder. This is laid across the cooler, to place the milk sieve or strainer upon. It has a valuable singularity of construction: at one end, are two cross bars, about three inches asunder. This vacancy admitting one "ear" or handle of the cooler, the ladder is kept securely in its place. The wood, ash.

5. Lading dish. The usual shape, but large; near a foot diameter.

6. Pail brushes. Common hard brushes; furnished with bristles at the end, to clean out the angles of the vessels more effectually. Utensils, or rather tools, which no dairy ought to be without.

7. Pail stake. A simple contrivance; or rather a thought, which one would imagine, no person, having dairy utensils to dry, could miss; yet it appears to have been hit upon in this country [i.e. Gloucestershire], only. In other districts, I see milking pails, etc. placed upon benches, or upon walls, to dry; where they are liable to be blown down and burst by other means. Here, a bough, furnished with many branchlets, is fixed with its butt end in the ground, in the dairy yard. The branchlets being lopped, of a due length, each stump becomes a peg, upon which to hang a pail, or other utensil.

8. Skeels. These are broad shallow vessels; principally for the purpose of setting milk in, to stand for cream: made in the tub manner with staves and hoops, and two stave handles: of various sizes, from eighteen inches to two feet and a half in diameter; and from five to seven inches deep. Staves, oak; hoops, (broad and close) ash.

9. Skimming dishes. If of wood, very thin. But chiefly of tin. About eight inches diameter; and five-eighths of an inch deep.

10. Cream jars. Cream is chiefly preserved in earthen jars, of a middle size.

12. Cheese knife. A wooden handle, four or five inches long, and one inch broad, at the handle, down to about three quarters of an inch, at the point; with two blunt edges, rounded at the point, like an ivory paper-knife. The distance between the blades, which are very thin, and ranged with their flat sides toward each other, about an inch.

13. Cheese vats. From fifteen to fifteen and a half inches diameter; and from one and a half inch to two inches deep. The wood invariably elm. Some with, but many without holes.

14. Cheese cloths. Made of thin gauze-like linen cloth. The size varies in different dairies.

15. Cheese press. The construction various. Sometimes single; but in large dairies, generally double. The pressure is mostly given by a dead weight, raised by a roller, and falling, perpendicularly, on the cheese. In the upper vale [of Gloucester] they are chiefly of stone. The dimensions of one, of a superior weight are twenty-two inches square, by two feet two inches long;... weighing somewhat more than half a ton.

These are of the old construction; which is very simple. In the center is fixed a wooden skrew, rising three or four feet, perpendicularly, above the stone; passing through a hole in a cross beam, which rests on the cheeks of the press. Above the cross piece, is worked a loose nut, made out of a piece of wood, eighteen inches to two feet long, and of a diameter proportioned to the size of the worm. Each end is reduced to the size of a handle; and, with this two handled nut, the stone is raised and lowered.

Notes

1. Nettles were a popular plant with early cheese makers. In addition to their use for nettle cheese, they were recommended for making rennet. Also, they were used for treating the shelves (and floors) on which cheese cured. They were valued for their "stinging" properties, and also were thought to possess a preservative action.

2. Ninety percent of men and ninety-nine percent of women were illiterate in the age of Henry VII (1485–1509), while over seventy percent of men and ninety percent of women were unable to spell their name on the Protestation Act of 1642. Depositions from the Northern Circuit Assizes confirm a gradual improvement in illiteracy rates from sixty-five percent for men in the 1640s to only thirty percent in the 1740s. [Cressy: 51] Accounting (in part) for this improving trend was the rise in Puritanism, specifically the Puritan belief in the importance of Bible reading. By the 17th century, grass roots schooling came into the hands of the Puritans. One effect was the dissemination of Protestant values, including the ideal of women of all classes becoming literate enough to read the Bible for themselves and perhaps to teach it to their children. To the extent this general trend can be accepted as an indicator, both Joan and Esther Smith were more likely than not to have been literate. By the eighteenth century, at least half the population of New England was literate. By the time of the American Revolution, literacy in New England is believed to have been about ninety percent.

3. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), the word **Cheeselip, -lep** is made up of *cheese* (in its various forms) + a word which appears as... *lubja-* 'whichcraft, poison-herb-lore'; *lybb*, 'poison'; *lyf*, 'medicinal herb, simple'; *luppi*, 'deadly juice'; and *lūpp*, 'rennet'. The OED concludes, "the original rennet appears to have been some herb juice," and lists two definitions of the word:

1. Rennet, for curdling milk in cheese-making, (citing examples of usage from AD 800 forward), and
2. The dried stomach of a calf (or, formerly of other animals, e.g. a hare) used for this purpose. (Formerly called a cheeselep-bag.), citing usage examples from c. 1000 forward.

Interestingly, the OED labels the definition of cheeselep found in many dictionaries (Worldidge, Phillips, Ray, Bailey, Webster, etc.), "the bag wherein House-wives prepare and keep their Runnet or Rennet for their Cheese" as inaccurate. That is, according to the OED the dried calf's stomach used as rennet is properly called cheeselep or cheeselep-bag, while the bag that holds the

dried calf's stomach is not. In spite of this, reference to the [often linen] bag that holds the dried calf's stomach as a cheeselep bag is widespread in the literature.

4. In addition to the Markham reference to cheese-heck quoted here, the OED cites one other use of the term: "1611 Cotgr. *Chassiere*, a cheese-hecke: the long and round racke whereon cheese is dried."

5. "Good Rhode Island Cheese and Cod-Fish, sold by Printer hereof..." Benjamin Franklin, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, March 1733. The original is in the collection of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

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—continued on page 12

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Hearthside Cooking

Cheese in Colonial Cooking

Contributed by Barbara Crudale

Before the days of refrigeration, it was necessary to preserve foods by salting or drying so that the family would have a variety of foods to eat during the winter months. What would a family do with the milk from the cow, sheep, or goat? Butter (from cows and goats) was one answer, but cheese was certainly another way to enjoy dairy products throughout the year.

Richard Smith's herd of 26 cows could produce enough milk to create approximately 3,000 pounds of cheese, primarily in the months of July and August. [Chronicle: Winter 2008] This semi-hard cheese was most often eaten in slices, with bread or on its own.

Few recipes from the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries include cheese as a primary ingredient. Two eighteenth century recipes, **English** and **Scotch rabbit**, predecessors of the grilled cheese sandwich, are given here. Another variation, Welsh rabbit, is the source of Welsh rarebit, a bland, Americanized version of the dish.

The slice of cheese for Scotch rabbit was toasted on both sides with a "salamander," an iron, peel-like utensil (below). It was heated to red hot in the coals and then held above the cheese slice until it bubbled and formed a brown coating. The name salamander, if not the form, has survived in today's commercial browning ovens.

A few early recipes can be found that use so-called acid curds, a group of soft and semi-soft cheeses. **Cheese curd pudding** is an example. Acid curds are not true cheeses. They will not ripen on storage, and must be eaten fresh. Cottage cheese is a familiar example. Acid curds are formed by the action of lactic acid on milk (souring) not rennet. Curds of true cheese are formed by rennet that separates milk into constituent solids, the curd, and whey, the watery byproduct or serum. The acid curds of the cheese curd pudding are formed when milk is heated with wine.



Salamander
from J. Seymour
Lindsay, *Iron
and Brass Imple-
ments of the
English House*,
London, 1970

Scotch-Rabbit

Hannah Glasse

Toast a Piece of Bread very nicely on both sides, butter it, cut a Slice of Cheese, about as big as the Bread, toast on both Sides, and lay it on the Bread.

English-Rabbit

Hannah Glasse

Toast a Slice of Bread brown on both Sides, then lay it in a Plate before the Fire, pour a Glass of Red Wine over it, and let it soak the Wine up; then cut some Cheese very thin, and lay it thick over the Bread; put it in a Tin Oven before the Fire, and it will be toasted and brown presently. Serve it away hot.

—from *First Catch your Hare:
The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy*
The Cromwell Press, Wiltshire, England, 1995
by Hannah Glasse

Cheese Curd Pudding

Martha Jefferson Randolph

Mix 2 quarts of milk with 1 pint of white wine and heat. Drain all the curd from the whey. Put it in a bowl with ½ cup unsalted butter and beat curd and butter together until well mixed. Beat the yolks of three eggs and the whites of two and add to the curd. Stir in ½ cup fine cake crumbs. Sweeten to taste and add a pinch of salt. Butter a baking dish and turn mixture into it. Bake in a slow even oven until set. Serve with melted butter, wine, and sugar.

—from *Thomas Jefferson's Cook Book*
University of Virginia Press, Virginia, 1976
by Marie Kimball

During Opening Day festivities (Saturday and Sunday, May 2 and 3) the cooks of Smith's Castle will prepare a simple farmer's cheese. Don't miss this opportunity to see the fascinating process of turning milk into cheese.

Eighteenth Century Women's Headwear

Kristel Henry

Today, when women only occasionally don hats, it is difficult for us to imagine that in other centuries women covered their heads much of the time. In the eighteenth century, caps were worn daily by women of all ages and social classes, except perhaps at formal evening events when the hair would be dressed in an elaborate style. For every-day wear, most women wore caps made of fine white cotton or linen. Caps kept the hair clean and neat, and kept clothes and hats from being soiled by oils from the hair. There were many types of caps, but these were not the circular "mob caps" gathered with a drawstring or elastic that are often seen, but have not been documented. Rather, most caps consisted of a half circular main piece known as the caul, perhaps attached to some sort of a band with a ruffle on the front. The ruffle could be plain, frilly, pleated, or could even be made of fine bobbin lace. There could be multiple ruffles on a cap, and a plain ruffle could also have a thin strip of bobbin lace attached to it. Many caps were decorated with either a black or brightly colored silk ribbon, and some were even shaped with millinery wire or stiffened with starch.

Early in the eighteenth century, pinner caps, which were flat caps made of lace or linen with a lace ruffle that may or may not have had lace lappets falling down the back, were often worn atop a relatively flat hair style. They were pinned directly to the hair and often were so small that it is difficult to see them from the front in paintings and illustrations from the time. At mid-century, round eared caps with a front ruffle that was larger around the ears than at the top were common. Later in the century, caps, such as the *dormeuse*, became larger



Meghan is wearing a "pinner," a round, flat cap decorated with lace and ribbon that is pinned to the hair to hold it in place. It was worn early in the eighteenth century.



Louise's cap is plain and of unadorned cotton, typically worn by less affluent women, servants, etc.



Kristel wears a "dormeuse" cap made of fine linen with a pleated ruffle and decorated with silk ribbon. Her cap would have been worn by "middling" to more affluent women.

to accommodate the taller hairstyles of the 1770s and '80s.

The type of cap that was chosen would also depend on age. While a young lady might have worn a smaller cap, further back on her head, an older matron may have been more likely to wear a larger cap with a ruffle framing her face and lappets on each side that came down and tied under her chin. Also, the fabric used for a cap might be indicative of social class. For example, a lower class servant might wear a cap of coarser linen, while her mistress might wear a fine, lightweight cap with frills and ruffles. Caps were often worn under hats during the day as well.

Most hats of the time had a low round crown of less than two inches in height, and a circular brim that ranged anywhere from about eleven



Mary is wearing a ruffled cap, also of unadorned cotton. This cap would have been worn by less affluent to "middling" class women.



Barbara is wearing a fine linen round eared cap adorned with a silk ribbon, also worn by middling to affluent women.

to twenty inches in total diameter. Hats were often made of straw and decorated with ruffled or puffed silk ribbon, and were tied behind the head over the cap. Hats could also be made from a straw or wood chip form covered with silk, also decorated with ruffled silk or puffed silk ribbon trim, and possibly shaped by both wetting the straw and bending the hat before it dried, or by using millinery wire. Less common were hats made from wool felt, or hats made in the men's style (either cocked up on one side, or cocked in what we now call the "tricorn" style) for riding or traveling. Riding habits and their associated hats, as well as silk covered hats were mainly worn by upper class women. Bonnets were also an extremely common item, but the shape and style is very different from bonnets



Madeleine Anderson of Charlestown, Massachusetts, is wearing a bonnet made of black silk. Her mother Anna's straw hat is worn over a ruffled cap.

of the nineteenth century. These were generally worn more flatly on the head, almost akin to a modern baseball cap. Bonnets were made of silk with a puffed gathered fabric crown and a stiff brim of pasteboard or buckram, or the brim was supported with whalebone or wire. Black was the most common color, but other colors were available.

Although there are always exceptions, women in the colonies generally followed the English style, and the exaggerated towering, powdered hairstyles of the 1770s with tiny hats, large plumes, or ships riding atop them in grand style were

generally seen in France, and possibly among the extreme upper class in England or in the colonies. However, "big hair" was popular in the 1770s and at that time a calash bonnet was worn to protect the hairstyle from the weather. These were generally collapsible hood type bonnets made of silk fabric with channels sewn in for whalebone or wood strips to help the bonnet hold its shape while being worn. These were most often made from black, green, brown/tan, or purple colored silk, although other colors have been discovered. ■



Calash bonnets became fashionable around 1770 as higher, more elaborate hairstyles became popular.



Above left is a black, floppy straw hat decorated simply with silk ribbon. This type of hat would have been affordable to practically any class of woman.

Above is a silk-covered straw hat decorated with pinked and ruched matching silk trim.

Left is a shaped-straw, silk-covered hat decorated with puffed silk ribbon. The last two hats would have been worn primarily by well-to-do women.



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All photos by the author, with the exception of the calash bonnet, courtesy Charlotte Museum of History, Charlotte, North Carolina.

Suggested Reading

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Beth Gilgun. *Tidings from the Eighteenth Century*, Scurlock Publishing Co., Inc. 1993.

Mara Riley, illustrated by Cathy Johnson. *Whatever Shall I Wear, A Guide to Assembling a Woman's Basic Eighteenth Century Wardrobe*, Graphics/Fine Arts Press, 2002.

Cap and bonnet patterns may be obtained from www.lostcoasthistpatterns.com and www.wmboothdraper.com

This is the first in a series of articles on clothing that typically would have been worn by the seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century residents of Smith's Castle.

Look for *Stays, Corsets, and Undergarments Through the Centuries* in the Summer issue.

Recommended Reading

The Widows of Eastwick

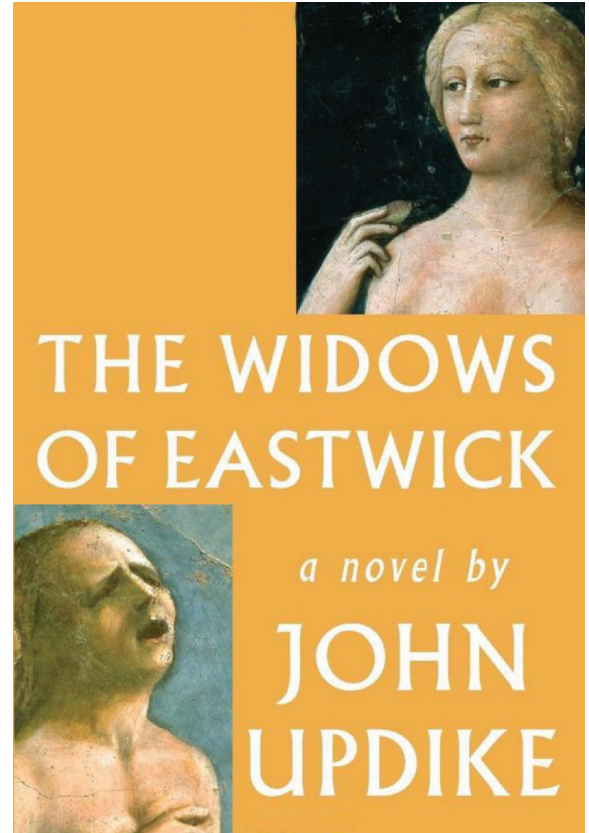
by John Updike
Alfred A. Knopf, 2008
Hardcover, 320 pages
ISBN-13: 978-0-307-26960-7

More than thirty years have elapsed since the witches left the Rhode Island coastal town of Eastwick. Widowed from their second marriages, Alexandra, Jane, and Sukie decide to return to the place where, in their prime, the young divorcees practiced their craft. Aging, in their sixties and seventies, they try to resurrect their powers to atone for their guilt at causing the death of a younger rival for the attentions of Darryl Van Horne.

Although Updike has never publicly admitted it, we all recognize Eastwick as Wickford. The mention of the Christian Science Reading Room (now a gift shop on Main Street), the Bronze Barrel Pub on the outskirts of town (formerly the Copper Kettle and now the site of Gregg's Restaurant on South County Trail), a hardware store on the main street (the former Barber Hardware on Brown Street), the local newspaper office (Standard-Times on Main Street), and a road called Cocumscussoc Way, all remind us that Eastwick is, indeed, Wickford. Near the end of their two-month stay the ladies regret that they did not visit all the historic sites on their agenda including Smith's Castle.

The old adage that "you can't go home again" holds true for the witches. The widows, faced with the aches and pains of old age, find that the town has changed in their absence. Whereas in the late '60s the three divorcees felt empowered, sexual, and strong in this sort of shabby but trendy seaside town, they now express dismay at the change of mores and the gentrification they see. Jane complains that it is "now a haven of wholesomeness, of toned-up young mothers, driving their overweight boys in overweight SUVs to hockey practice twenty miles away, the young fathers castrated namby-pambies...spending all Saturday fussing around the lovely home. It's the '50s all over again." The messy charm of Eastwick is gone, Jane complains. "Its gotten homogenized, all smoothed out."

Before they return, the three reconnect after three decades and, as many widows do, decide to travel. This is the most tedious portion of the book and their trips to Egypt and China have the appearance of a lecture. There is no discernible plot in the first hundred pages,



but some of Updike's observations, such as the preserved body of Mao was "evenly coated with orange make-up, not quite the color of living skin" are not only amusing but reflect the author's brilliant use of language and observation.

Unrepentant in their failures at motherhood, it is not surprising that their own children as well as the townspeople, who recall the havoc they wrought years ago, don't roll out the welcome mat when they rent for the summer a condo in Darrell Van Horne's former home. Alexandra, the eldest of the trio, is convinced that their spell years ago caused the death of Jenny, a young witch who married Van Horne, the devil figure with whom all three had been sexually involved. She also expresses guilt at casting a spell on a former lover's child that has rendered her barren. Acting as the conscience of the trio, Alexandra is determined that they make amends.

Castle Acquires Brown Family Tea Table

However, in their attempts to correct the wrongs of their past, they find that they are now the possible victims of another's revenge. Their supernatural powers have waned and they find themselves facing the inevitability of their own deaths.

John Updike's writings have reflected his keen understanding of women and this book is no exception. Although none of the main characters is particularly appealing, the reader comes to sympathize with them near the end. Their power thirty years ago was derived from their feminist strength and their sex appeal. Now facing the end of their lives, they have to deal with sagging muscles, arthritic limbs, liver spots, emphysema, cancer and all of other maladies that accompany aging bodies. Whereas, as younger women, they worshipped the Nature goddess, they now feel betrayed by her. The mood of the widows is contemplative with a sense of resignation. Upon seeing a group of teenagers congregating in town, Alex, lambastes that they do not realize what lies ahead is "sex, entrapment, weariness, and death."

For those readers who enjoy fiction, John Updike has once again produced a good novel. His keen insights into character set him apart from most other writers. It is easy to identify with the three women, as no longer sorceresses, they are now ordinary humans confronting the inevitability of sickness and death. (Just as Updike was dealing with his own diagnosis of terminal cancer while writing this book.) While witchcraft in *The Witches of Eastwick* was equated with women's liberation, in the sequel it has become a tool of reparation. His description of Eastwick with its "glaring sidewalks...wilting zinnias," tanned summer tourists, and children at a summer fair, make readers feel they know the town better than their own neighborhood. The fact that it is set in our own area should make it appealing to Castle members. ■

—Norma LaSalle, PhD

Remember, if you purchase this, or any book, through Amazon.com you earn awards for Smith's Castle. Simply enter Amazon by way of the Smith's Castle website, www.smithscastle.org. Navigate to the Gift shop and then the Bookstore, and look for the Amazon.com icon—

A new addition to the Smith's Castle furniture collection is the tea table below. Purchased at Cottone Auctions of Genesio, New York, on Saturday, March 21, it is a late eighteenth century tilt-top table, probably of Rhode Island origin and possibly descended in one of the Brown families. A label on the underside reads, "This table came into possession of my family in 1768, Charles W. Brown." The table is 28 inches in height and 30½ inches in diameter and retains its original finish and patina. It was formerly in the collection of Herb Laport of Lockport, New York.

Two tea tables are listed in Attorney General Daniel Updike's 1757 probate inventory. Over the past two years, artifacts and etiquette relating to tea drinking have been presented in the Updike dining room. The collections committee is considering moving this exhibit, along with the new table, upstairs to the Updike bedroom. In the eighteenth century, tea tables and ceramics were often found in the main bedroom of the house, where owners kept their most expensive and prized possessions and where they entertained important guests. Daniel Updike kept one of his tea tables and associated china in his bedroom.

Proceeds from last year's auction of redundant and non-period items were used to fund the purchase. To date, this fund has paid for the acquisition of a seventeenth century chest for the Richard Smith bedroom, the restoration of the portrait of Elizabeth Simpson, and repairs to two Windsor chairs, a coaching table, and the South County Garden Club dye wheel. ■



The Family of John Updike of New Jersey and Virginia

Possible Long-Lost Descendants of the Rhode Island Updikes and the Only Ones Still Carrying on the Surname?

Bryan S. Godfrey

In 1889, Charles Wilson Opdyke published *The Opdyck Genealogy*, tracing the descendants of the two Opdyck-Updike families in America that were descended from two likely unrelated settlers of New Amsterdam in the mid-1600s who were both born about 1605: Gysbert Opdyck, from Wesel, Germany, whose family subsequently settled Smith's Castle AKA Cocumscussoc at Wickford, Rhode Island, and became known as the German or Rhode Island Updikes, and Louris Jansen Opdyck, believed then to have come from Elburg, Holland but now proven to have been born in Husum, Germany, whose descendants settled New Jersey and New York and became known as the Dutch or New Jersey Opdycks-Updikes. Ever since that book was written, it had been assumed, without proof, that John Opdike/Updike (ca. 1718–1801), who established the Virginia Updike family when he came from Burlington County, New Jersey, to Loudoun County, Virginia, about 1750, was a grandson of Johannes Opdyck (ca. 1651–1729) of Long Island and Hopewell, New Jersey, and great-grandson of Louris Jansen Opdyck (ca. 1605–1659) of Albany and Long Island, New York, an assumption the author made mainly due to John's residence in an adjacent county in New Jersey from where his assumed grandfather Johannes had lived, from the fact that Johannes had at least eight children but only the names of six are known, and from the fact that the Rhode Island Updikes were otherwise accounted for. The author placed John among the descendants of Louris and Johannes in spite of the fact that John's grandson Daniel Updike, Jr. (1814–after 1888) claimed in a letter to him that he heard his grandfather was born in Rhode Island and that there was someone in the family “named something like Roderick” who was “engaged in a naval action,” strongly hinting at a connection to the family of Lodowick Updike (1646–1737) of Rhode Island, the only son of Gysbert who is known to have left male-line descendants (up to the early 1900s but who now appear to have died out).

However, YDNA tests on two patrilineal descendants of John Updike of Virginia indicate no patrilineal connection between the John Updike family

and the proven descendants of Louris and Johannes Opdyck. Because of this and what Daniel Updike, Jr. stated, there is a possibility that John Updike might have descended from, or been related to, the more prominent, better-traced family of Gysbert and Lodowick Updike of Wesel, Germany, New Amsterdam, and Rhode Island after all. Lodowick had at least four brothers, Richard, Daniel, James, and Johannes. It is known that Richard was born about 1651 and killed in the Great Swamp Fight of 1675, and the 1889 genealogy states that he was unmarried (possibly an erroneous assumption), that Daniel and James (both of whom left wills) had no sons, and that no mention of Gysbert's son Johannes was found after his baptism in 1658, leading the 1889 genealogy author to conclude he probably died young. Maybe that is not true, that he lived to begat offspring and was the father or grandfather of the Virginia John Updike and his family was simply omitted in wills of the early Smiths and Updikes. Indeed, many of Wickford's earliest records were destroyed, no will has been located for Gysbert Opdyck that should have delineated all of his children, nor did Richard Smith's will of 1664 list his grandchildren by name. Moreover, the information on the early generations of the family of Richard Smith and his son-in-law Gysbert Opdyck is largely based on traditions handed down in the family of Gysbert's son Lodowick Updike, who inherited Smith's Castle, AKA Cocumscussoc. Lodowick's family may be accounted for, but perhaps not all of his brothers or their possible offspring are yet. It seems the only way John could descend from Lodowick is if he were an illegitimate son of one of Lodowick's daughters, but even if that were the case, he probably would have been mentioned in Lodowick's will (and of course it is still possible that John descends from the Louris and Johannes Opdyck line if he were an illegitimate son of one of Johannes' daughters).

Unfortunately, it appears that the male line of Lodowick Updike's descendants has died out, so the Virginia Updikes have no one from that family to compare their YDNA with. Both of the Virginia Updikes tested match persons with the surnames

Germain, Wastle, and Appel, and the results seem to indicate the patrilineal origins of that Updike family are likely German rather than Dutch, as one of the matches has roots in Westphalia, the same German state in which Wesel is located. The news is disappointing to some of the Virginia Updikes because the first three assumed generations of their lineage are no longer valid, whether their Updikes were of Dutch or German descent is now questionable, and they must be content to begin the line with John Updike unless further discoveries are made. However, at least the uncertainty the Virginians have had for 120 years is now settled. The only way John Updike could still be related to Johannes Opdyck, son of Louris, is if there were a break in the male line and someone in his ancestry took the Updike surname from the mother instead. Unless that is the case, the news also means that John Updike's descendants are not related to the rest of the Updikes-Opdykes in America of variant spellings, who all appear to descend from Louris and Johannes, including author John Updike.

Hopefully one of the Rhode Island Updikes left behind locks of hair or other items from which YDNA samples might be extracted to see if there is a match with the Virginia Updikes. Otherwise, the only way YDNA samples could be obtained from the Gysbert Opdyck line is if one of the descendants were exhumed, a far-fetched endeavor. The well-known printer Daniel Berkeley Updike (1860–1941) of Providence, Rhode Island, and Boston, Massachusetts, a childless bachelor like so many of the Rhode Island Updikes, was possibly the last male-line descendant of the Lodowick Updike family.

Not only did Daniel Updike, Jr.'s remarks suggest a Rhode Island connection, but also the fact that John's son Rufus had a grandson named Smith Newton Updike (1832–1917), makes it worthy of serious consideration. Lodowick's wife and first cousin, Abigail Newton, had a brother named Smith Newton. Furthermore, a granddaughter of one of John Updike's sons who remained in New Jersey said her grandfather had a brother who settled in Boston, but the 1889 author concluded she was probably referring to an earlier generation instead. None of Louris and Johannes' early descendants went to New England, yet two of Gysbert's sons, James and Daniel, are known to have lived in Boston and were mariners, possibly explaining why Daniel Updike, Jr. heard there was someone in his grandfather's family who was engaged in a naval action, an exploit which no one in the Louris and Johannes line had been engaged in from available records.

In terms of social class and personality, the pioneering, agrarian Virginia Updikes were much more

like the New Jersey Opdycks-Updikes than the high-society, bookish Rhode Island family. However, if John Updike's father was "shot by accident" when John was young, he and his brother were subsequently put to trades, and he went to Long Island and subsequently to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Bordentown, New Jersey, as Daniel Updike, Jr. stated, then that might explain why John Updike and his descendants were not as prominent as their possible Rhode Island Smith-Updike forebears, and why this line lost contact with those who remained in Rhode Island.

Or, is it possible that John was an immigrant, since one of his great-grandsons claimed hearing that he came from Germany to Long Island with a sister named Edith, and was either a descendant of one of the Opdycks who remained in Wesel, Germany, or perhaps from a third line that is not connected with either Gysbert or Louris? It seems more likely that if John were born abroad, his grandson Daniel would have known, and that this great-grandson may have confused him with an earlier generation. Many of the Virginia Updikes are exceedingly proud of their Dutch heritage, and one has admitted she does not want to claim German heritage instead due to World War II. The aforementioned tradition of German origins strengthens the likelihood that John might descend from the Wesel, Germany Opdycks, yet the Virginians have steadfastly claimed Dutch origins. Is this a claim that arose since the 1889 book was written, or had the Virginians claimed Dutch origins long before that? This is uncertain. The discovery in the 1990s of an Albany court record in which Louris Jansen Opdyck deposed that he was born in Husum even questions whether his descendants are entitled to claim a Dutch heritage, unless of course his family indeed came from Elburg or somewhere else in The Netherlands and lived in Husum temporarily. ■

Bryan S. Godfrey, an avid genealogist and triple descendant of the John Updike family of Virginia, resides in Richmond, Virginia, and is a high school mathematics and social studies teacher. He welcomes input on this article, and can be reached at bryangodfrey@msn.com. He hopes that there might be a few Rhode Island Updikes left contrary to what he and other Updike researchers have deduced from charts in the 1889 book and from updates to the genealogy since then. He serves as a secretary and genealogist of the annual Virginia Updike Reunion and is updating an excellent 1985 genealogy of the descendants of John Updike, The Virginia Updikes-Updykes by Robert S. Craig, now of Charleston, West Virginia.

My Grown-up Doll House

Grace Palmer



As most people grow older, their desire to play make-believe begins to give way to other perhaps more conventional hobbies. Though I am seventeen years old, I must admit that I still love to play dress up. In fact, at least a few times a month, I don full colonial garb and head over to spend some time at my own personal castle. Granted, mine is not the typical turreted stone monolith that comes to mind, and there is a purpose behind my unusual clothing choice, but don't let this fool you. These excursions are driven by passion, not obligation, and I love every minute of them.

Ever since I was eleven years old, I have been volunteering as a docent at my town's major historic site, Smith's Castle, where I lead tours and participate in colonial reenactments. This seventeenth century home, known as a castle because it was once fortified, has bestowed upon me the gift of a lifetime. It has ignited my searing passion for history, and has forged connections linking me to both my town's past and its present. These links have revealed to me my passion for sharing my time and talents with others while also showing me the benefits of appreciating what others have to share. As a history lover, as a student, and as a person, I have reaped innumerable rewards from my experiences at Smith's Castle.

Intrigued as I am by the men and women who forge and shape history, I understand how a mindless recitation of dates and names read from a virtual rolodex of boring information presents history in its dulllest form. My time at the Castle has allowed me to experience history in the best possible way—hands-on and connected. At thirteen, I researched, wrote and presented a program on the life of the colonial girl. Over the years I've tried my hand at everything from working a drop-spindle to using a lucet (a device that makes braided cord) and have learned all about the cochineal beetle, an expensive dyeing agent still used in some women's lipsticks. Simple kayak trips up the inlet in front of the property have turned into opportunities to imagine how impressive that view would have been for seventeenth century traders sailing in to barter their wares. I sometimes refer to

the Castle as my grown-up version of a dollhouse, for every time I lead a tour group through its creaky halls I envision myself as Sarah Updike, daughter of the house, explaining to guests the importance of her home. Connections like this to real people are what have always drawn me so powerfully to history.

But history for me hasn't been all about the past. Besides "meeting" the home's former inhabitants, the Castle has introduced me to a whole host of modern people, each with a unique story. Although most of my fellow volunteers are many years my senior, I love being surrounded by what I call my group of adopted aunties, uncles, and grandmas. Each of these people has a fascinating history that is as interesting to me as those of the historical figures I talk about on my tours. There is feisty Englishwoman Mary Shillaber, who fell in love with her American husband when he was stationed in Britain during the war. Though she must be over eighty years old, she ends every conversation with a reminder to me not to misbehave, followed by a sly wink that signals she likes to do just that. Then there is John McNiff and his wife Cat, members of a pirate-reenactment group, who were married in a traditional colonial ceremony. One of their specialties, the pirate group "storm and capture" of visiting tour buses on special event weekends, has become an annual event with its own renown. Some of my favorite interactions at the Castle are with the youngsters who visit. On special event days in particular, when I am usually found at the children's crafts station, it means the world to me to help light these kids' inner lanterns as they construct a corn husk doll or learn that lamb's ear leaves were the original band-aids. I firmly believe that at the Castle the history I learn and teach comes from all generations of people associated with it, including the captivating stories of its current caretakers.

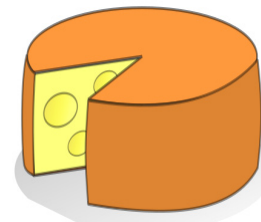
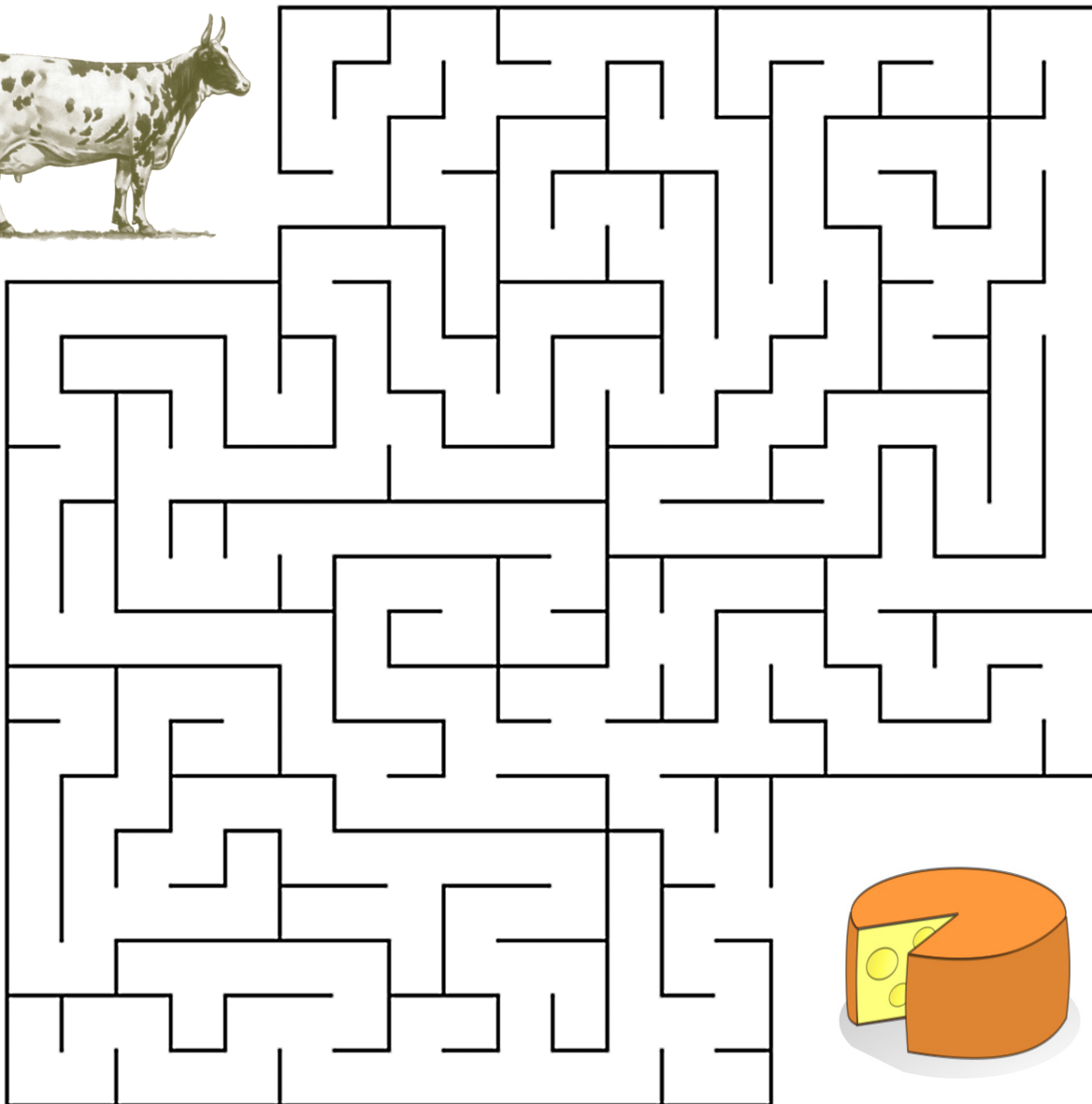
Smith's Castle turned what was already my keen interest in history into a passion. The gifts I have received from this old house—my dollhouse—have given me direction and a foundation that will serve me for many years to come. Although I'm an unpaid volunteer, my years at the Castle have more than repaid me in full. ■

Grace is off to college this fall. This essay was prepared as part of the admission process. Many colleges and universities require applicants to submit examples of their creative writing skills. Her energetic spirit and bright, smiling face certainly will be missed by Castle members. We wish her the best of luck in her college career, and look forward to seeing her during summer vacations.

Kids' Corner

Cheese making in the 17th century was very hard work. What made milk turn into cheese and what things influenced the process were not very well understood. When Sara, the dairy maid at Smith's Castle, made cheese she had to make many decisions very quickly without knowing which were correct or why. She did not know how her decisions would affect her cheese or how her cheese

would finally turn out. It was almost like she had to find her way through a maze with many twists and turns without knowing where they would lead her. She made many bad decisions before she learned from her mistakes. Think of Sara's difficult job as you look for the one path that leads from the cow to the cheese in this maze.



Kids' Corner

On a crisp, autumn evening in 1680, Sara, the dairy maid responsible for cheese making in the Richard Smith Jr. household, went to the cheese loft to butter and turn the cheeses. This summer's batch was almost ready to be boxed and sent to market in Newport. Sara had been faithfully buttering and turning the cheeses daily for eight long weeks. She was very proud of her hard work and believed this year's cheeses were exceptional.

She quickly noticed that a large slice had been cut from one of the cheeses! She had checked the cheese loft yesterday, and all was well. Now,

she cannot sell this round of cheese and she is worried that her other cheeses will not be safe. Also, the mistress will be very angry. Who is the culprit who has escaped with a slice of Sara's famous cheese?

Who do you think took a slice of Sara's cheese? Complete the story and submit your ending to the Chronicle. The best story will be printed in the next issue.

Thank you to Thomas Crudale for suggesting this writing prompt to us.

Return your completed story to:

Smith's Castle
55 Richard Smith Dr.
Wickford, RI 02852

Name	
Address	
City, State, Zip	
Age	



Smith's Castle Honor Role

The 2008/09 Annual Appeal letter went out in December, and as of March 16, 2009, we have received \$3,892 in contributions. This is a wonderful response to a mailing of just 400 Castle members and friends. We are behind the \$5,885 in donations of last year, but we are hoping pledges continue to trickle in. Many thanks to Maggie Skenyon for her hard work on this year's drive. ■

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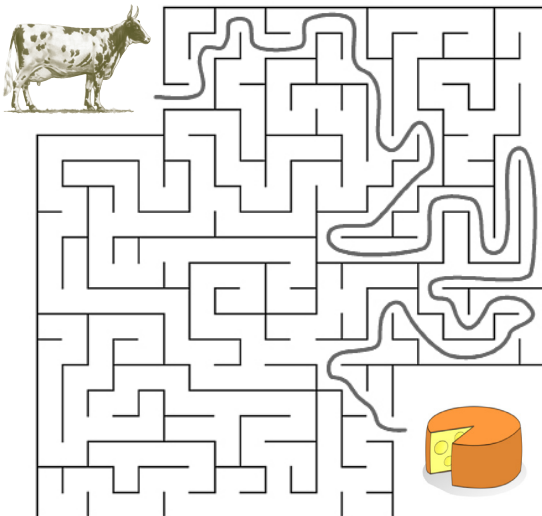
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If you've already sent in your Annual Appeal donation, thank you! If not, it isn't too late. We need your gift this year more than ever. If you agree that preserving the rich heritage of Cocumscusoc for today and for the future is a worthwhile mission, we encourage you to contribute generously to our Annual Appeal.

Solution to the Kids' Corner maze on page 21.



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Upcoming at Smith's Castle

April

Day	Time	Event
Saturday, 18	8:00 a.m.	Clean-up day (rain date April 25)
	2:00 p.m.	<i>Wenches, Wives, and Servant Girls</i> , Don Hagist N.K. Free Library
Saturday, 25	9:00 a.m.	Docent meeting
	3:45 p.m.	Historic Preservation Conference tour

May

Day	Time	Event
Saturday, 2	Noon–4:00 p.m.	Bridge to the Past / Opening Day
Sunday, 3	Noon–4:00 p.m.	Bridge to the Past
Thursday, 7	7:00 p.m.	Executive Committee meeting
Saturday, 9	11:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.	Free open house at historic sites statewide The Historic Sites Coalition of Rhode Island
Monday, 18	7:00 p.m.	Board of Trustees meeting

June

Day	Time	Event
Thursday, 11	7:00 p.m.	Executive Committee meeting
Monday, 15	6:00 p.m.	Joint Trustees and Committee Chairs meeting
Saturday, 20	Noon–4:00 p.m.	Strawberry Festival (rain date June 21)