



The Rhode Island Historical Society

# Notes and News

SPRING / SUMMER 2012

## IN THIS ISSUE:



### MAIN STREET

1



### COLLECTIONS

4



### HAPPENINGS

5-6



### EDUCATION

8



### HISTORY ALIVE

9



*"The appearance of three hundred muskets in our streets in the hands of as many sturdy, stalwart, black men was a novel sight in Providence, and we were sure it was looked upon with unusual interest..... there are many other excellent soldiers in both of these companies; a vast proportion of them are of superior moral worth, and they are trusty and faithful men"*

*Providence Journal August 28, 1863*

MAIN STREET

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110 Benevolent Street

Providence, Rhode Island 02906

PH: 401.331.8575

### JOHN BROWN HOUSE MUSEUM

52 Power Street

Providence, Rhode Island 02906

PH: 401.273.7507

### LIBRARY

121 Hope Street

Providence, Rhode Island 02906

PH: 401.273.8107

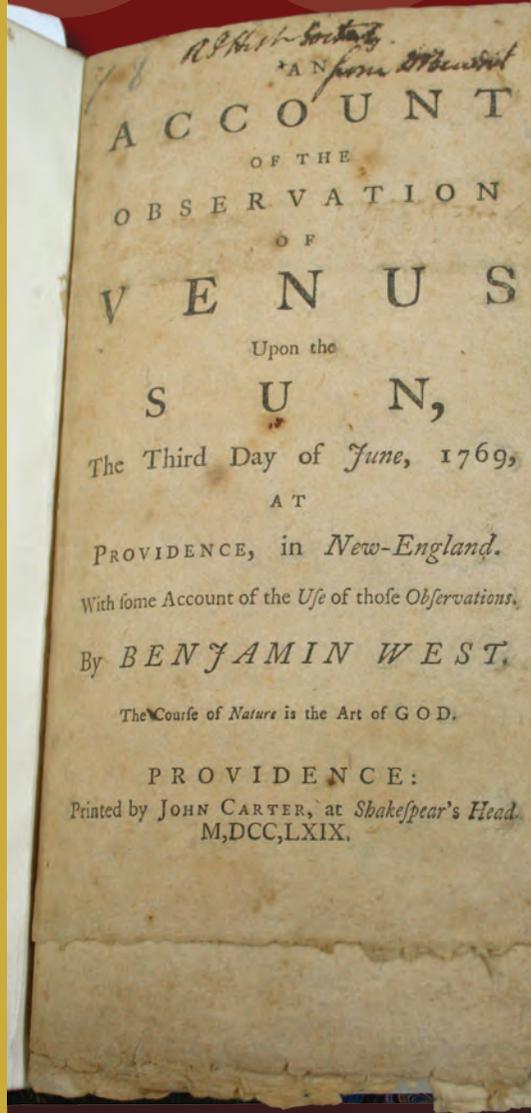
### MUSEUM OF WORK & CULTURE

42 South Main Street

Woonsocket, Rhode Island 02895

PH: 401.769.9675

## Upcoming Event Highlight: Transit of Venus



Have you ever wondered where Planet and Transit Streets got their name? On a clear June morning in 1769, a curious crowd gathered near a tall wooden platform to watch Joseph Brown, his brother Moses, Stephen Hopkins and other notable men of Providence who were using a telescope to observe the Transit of Venus. The streets near their makeshift observatory now bear the memory of their amazing experiment.

This June, don't miss a truly once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to observe the Transit of Venus firsthand; it won't happen again until 2117! First, on Sunday, June 3rd, you can learn more about the 1769 Transit on a walking tour of Providence's East Side, exploring the sites connected to the Transit observation almost 250 years ago. Then, on Tuesday, June 5th, join us at the Museum of Natural History and Planetarium in Roger Williams Park to view the Transit via a live telecast! Eclipse glasses will be provided. For more information, check out the Events page at <http://www.rihs.org>.

## COVER PHOTO

Title: Flag of the 14th Rhode Island Heavy Artillery

Description: American flag. The 14th Rhode Island Heavy Artillery was an African American unit with white officers. The flag belonged to Joseph Carey Whiting Jr., First Lt. Company B.

Date: c.1865, Medium: Cotton, Place: Rhode Island

RHi X17 551, Classification: TEXTILE, Collection: Museum - 1962.21.1

# For the Love of History

## RHODE ISLAND EXPERIENCES

### YOU CAN INSPIRE OR BE INSPIRED BY OUR LOCAL STORIES

by *C. Morgan Grefe, Ph.D., Executive Director*

Since I've been working at the Rhode Island Historical Society, I have gotten to know some amazing women. One, Helen Clarke Grimes, was a comfortable, middle-class, married woman, sitting at home listening to the radio when Pearl Harbor was bombed. She recorded the news on most days along with the regular business of her life with her husband. Another woman I've been privileged to get to know, Ostena Diggs, had a very different life during the war. She was from an African-American family in Providence, with deep family roots in Rhode Island. Her husband, whose family was originally from Virginia, was stationed in Norfolk awaiting deployment. Ms. Diggs was adjusting to her first factory job, as so many American women were, and her husband was navigating not just the military, but also the challenges of Southern race relations for a Northern man.

I have loved getting to know these women, and by extension, the people in their lives. Their stories have told me not just about themselves, but they have also taught me about things such as the postal system of the 1940s, ethnic neighborhoods in Providence, the African-American great migration to New England, the influence of radio in popular culture, and just the simple, quotidian lives of husbands and wives during World War II in Rhode Island.

What is perhaps more surprising is that I've never met either of these women. They had passed away before I even moved to Rhode Island nearly fifteen years ago. I know them because their personal papers can be found in the Library of the Rhode Island Historical Society. When many people think of the papers kept in historical repositories, they think of our founding fathers, masters of industry and shapers of politics. Yes, we have those collections, too, but many of the papers and records that fill our library practically overflowing are made up of the words and worlds of men and women like you and me.

All of these stories remind me of why I fell in love with history when I was a child. It was not because I was fascinated by the tales of Theodore Roosevelt or Queen Elizabeth; I was enchanted by the stories I saw on PBS (the only channel I was allowed to watch without supervision) about the Freedom Riders and the stories my



*Photo courtesy of Coelynn McIninch*

parents would tell me about their parents and grandparents coming to the Delaware Valley from Cuba and Hungary, or a hundred years earlier from Germany. I wanted to understand how people carved out their own places in American history and how they changed the lives of those around them--whether it was 50,000 people or just five. I wanted to know what and who they loved, what they feared, and what they read. I wanted to know more about each and every one of them, just as I want to know more about each of you.

At the RIHS, we are stewards not only of artifacts and manuscripts, but we are also the protectors and sharers of human stories. Each account is precious and when we read it we enter into a relationship with the "creator" of that history. It is one of respect, appreciation and historical empathy. And, one day, if we're lucky, our words will be in that same library--and I trust our words will be treated with such care.

I want to hear from you about why you love history. Whose stories have you learned from? Whose story do you want to know more about? To that end, I invite you to visit the RIHS on Facebook and answer that very question: why do you love Rhode Island history?

I can't wait to see you online. <http://www.facebook.com/RIHistoricalSociety>. 🌿

# Message From the President



*Board of Directors President  
Barry G. Hittner, Esq.*

I am honored to be following Roger Begin as President of the Board of this great Society, and look forward to meeting more of you, our members and supporters. I am thoroughly energized by the Trustees' partnership with Executive Director Morgan Grefe as we embark on the newest era in the Society's long storied history. We were founded nearly 200 years ago by people just like you – people who valued the stories

of the past and the present, preserving it for the future.

The enthusiasm here is palpable when talking with our members, our staff, and the public. Morgan's deep knowledge of and passion for Rhode Island history are apparent whether

she is meeting revelers at Providence's 375th birthday party, teaching a class at URI, or mingling with the business community at a function hosted by Brown University President Ruth Simmons. Our renewed excitement shows in the wealth of programs we are hosting, the increasing numbers of visitors to our physical and virtual sites, and in the support we are receiving from the community.

From the volunteers giving tours at our museums to the board of trustees, all of us thank you for making the Society the vital place that it is. Your support, as a member, donor, and friend, makes it all possible. Rest assured that we will never take your faith in us lightly, and we will continue to care for Rhode Island's treasures for generations to come. 🌿

Very Truly Yours,  
*Barry G. Hittner*

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## New Fire Detection System Installed at John Brown House Museum



*The self-illuminating exit signs point the way to safety in an emergency. The door will be a smoke barrier in an emergency.*

As if on cue for our newsletter deadline, installation of the new fire detection and alarm system at the John Brown House Museum is largely complete as of February 17, and like roommates moving out, the workmen have loaded their pickup trucks and driven away. Work began January 9 with an exploration of the most interior spaces in the house: attic crawl spaces in the ell, and the areas behind the knee walls of the main attic. Workers were searching for ways to run wiring through the house without damaging walls and finishes, because although

the detectors are wireless, the strobe and horn signals, and the repeater boxes (which, simplistically, amplify the wireless device signals) must be hard wired and not battery-powered.

A satisfactory route was found and after a few days of fishing wires, the electricians were able to create a route that did not involve opening historic plaster walls, cutting mahogany trim, or any of the other options that cause trembling in the owners of a historic property.

The project helps bring the John Brown House Museum into compliance with current fire and building codes with pull stations, exit signs, emergency exit lighting, and a new door on an electric closer. The exit signs were startling to see in the halls at first, but over time we have become more accustomed to them. The strobe and horn devices were chosen because they are white, and are less intrusive visually than the existing devices—though they are quite as loud. A preliminary test of all devices was accomplished on Thursday, February 16. The horns set the JBH doorbell ringing; the buzzing and the ringing were underscored by a nail gun as the carpenter installed a new threshold, and for a time, there was true cacophony in the house.

It's worth the noise, though, for now we have exit signs, an inverter that will power existing lights should the electricity fail, and an addressable system that will show exactly where any fires are—not that we plan to have any. The work was funded in part by grants from the National Park Service's Save America's Treasures program and the 1772 Foundation. Final testing and inspection is scheduled for March 1, when the house should ring and buzz again. The general contractor was E.W. Burman, Inc. Electrical work was done by Energy Electric; Cornelis J. de Boer of Haynes/de Boer Associates was the architect, with Gaskell Associates, Engineers. 🌿

## GOODS FOR WESTERLY

General Trial Balance			
Dr.	Cr.	Dr.	Cr.
Stock	10000	10000	
Bank	20000	20000	
Real Estate	50000	50000	
Debtors	10000	10000	
Equities	10000	10000	
Profits & Loss	10000	10000	
Reserve	10000	10000	
Capital	10000	10000	
Surplus	10000	10000	
Dividends	10000	10000	
Interest	10000	10000	
Expenses	10000	10000	
Income	10000	10000	
Retained	10000	10000	
Assets	10000	10000	
Liabilities	10000	10000	
Equity	10000	10000	
Income	10000	10000	
Expenses	10000	10000	
Retained	10000	10000	
Assets	10000	10000	
Liabilities	10000	10000	
Equity	10000	10000	
Income	10000	10000	
Expenses	10000	10000	
Retained	10000	10000	
Assets	10000	10000	
Liabilities	10000	10000	
Equity	10000	10000	

Charles Perry Ledger, MSS 9001-P, #2012.1.1 (RH X17 1168)

A fascinating new acquisition for the manuscript collection sheds light on the trading activities in Westerly, R.I. in the 1820s. The ledger book of Charles Perry is dated Nov 5. A.D. 1823. While there is a famous abolitionist named Charles Perry who lived in Westerly, he was born in 1809 so the date of the ledger would make him only 15 years old at the time. This does not rule out that it is that same man, as Charles Perry first cut his teeth as the

cashier for Washington Trust Bank at the age of 16 when he inherited the position after his father Thomas' sudden death. The young Charles had accounting and writing training so perhaps he was employed elsewhere before the cashier job.

The ledger itself documents the wealth of goods that were in demand in New England at that time. They include hundreds of gallons of rum, port wine, coffee, gin, tea, linen, broadcloth and sugar. Voyages were financed out of Westerly to destinations including New Orleans, Bordeaux (France) and London. His accounts were with local customers, but also with families from Boston. One of the most striking goods were the sale of 16 pianofortes—a sign of the affluence and culture of the young Republic. 🌿

## EDWARD W. DABNEY LETTERS



How goes the horsemeat?

The Manuscripts Division recently purchased a set of letters attributed to Providence native Edward W. Dabney. He received a War Service Appointment

as a classified laborer and was employed by the Civil Service Commission at the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard in Honolulu, Hawaii from November 1942 to February 1946. The majority of his letters are between him and his Uncle Thomas Fitzgerald and include observations of life on the base and topics such as prostitution, baseball, race relations and union strikes. One example, dated 29 July 1943: “What do you think of old Mussolini getting the gate? They had ought to hang the louse.” There are also some poignant letters between Dabney and his wife Mary that reveal the timeless stresses of living apart from each other in military families. 🌿

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Elyssa Tardif, Director, Newell D. Goff Center for Education and Public Programs

Elyssa Tardif got excited about history on a 3rd grade field trip to the Little Red School House in North Attleboro, and has been building on the experience ever since. The Director of the Newell D. Goff Center for Education and Public Programs has always felt a connection to family stories and the heirlooms that illuminate them.

“Incredibly, my love for New England history was solidified in Indiana during a graduate course on Literature and Violence in Early America. That course introduced me to figures like Anne Hutchinson and Mary Dyer, and I’ve been smitten ever since.

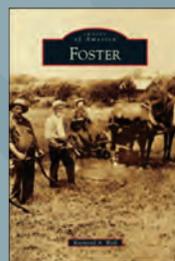
Studying early American culture can be thrilling and fun, but also it has taught me to look more deeply at the layers of history that are everywhere around us. I spent most of my childhood summers in a cottage near Lake Assawompset, and I learned recently that this lake played a pivotal role in King Phillip’s War! It was incredibly powerful to realize that a site that I had associated only with summer fun is layered with the traces of war. I feel privileged to share that kind of “a-ha” moment with the people I teach here. I hope that what we learn from history shows us that there is more than one side to every story – stories from the past, and stories that we tell in our present moment.

I feel so blessed that my personal passions match my professional goals. The work we do here is so exciting and creative; when I came to the Society I knew immediately that I wanted to stay for a very long time.”

Follow Elyssa’s blog on the RIHS website.

<http://relishinghistory.blogspot.com/> 🌿

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Ray Wolf became passionate about history later in life, after retiring from his long-time career in sales and retail. The local author has just published his 4<sup>th</sup> book, *Foster*, and began writing as a way to honor his mother’s poetry. She was born in 1910 in the village of Rockland, condemned to build the Scituate Reservoir in 1915. “She never got over being uprooted – friends separated, buildings destroyed. She wrote hundreds of poems about her life in the village.”

Mr. Wolf has collected historic photographs while doing his research, many volunteered by people now in their 90’s. With each book he has become more and more concerned about the fate of these images. “How many are being lost, thrown away, because the younger generations can’t identify the subjects? I don’t want these pictures and stories to be lost forever.”

Mr. Wolf’s books are available in the book store of the John Brown House Museum and the Museum of Work and Culture, and are published by Arcadia Publishing. We are so pleased to feature him and his work in our first member spotlight. 🌿

# 2012 RIHS Events

## Aldrich House

110 Benevolent Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02906  
Info: Caitlin Murphy 401-331-8575 x28, cmurphy@rihs.org

## John Brown House Museum

52 Power Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02906  
Info: Barbara Barnes 401-273-7507 x 62, bbarnes@rihs.org

## RIHS Library

121 Hope Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02906  
Info: Natasha Brooks-Sperduti 401-273-8107 x12  
nbrooks@rihs.org

## Museum of Work & Culture

42 South Main Street, Woonsocket, Rhode Island 02895  
Info: Liz Maynard 401-769-9675, eomaynard@rihs.org

For more information visit our website at [www.rihs.org](http://www.rihs.org)

### SUNDAY, APRIL 1, 1:30 P.M. – 2:30 P.M.

#### RANGER TALKS

CHIP BISHOP, “THE LION AND THE JOURNALIST:  
THE UNLIKELY FRIENDSHIP OF THEODORE ROOSEVELT AND  
JOSEPH BUCKLIN BISHOP”  
The Museum of Work & Culture ..... Free

### THURSDAY, APRIL 5, 6:30 P.M. – 7:30 P.M.

#### AMANDA HOSKINS, “SACRIFICE FOR FREEDOM: A WORLD WAR II HERITAGE PROJECT”

Aldrich House ..... Free  
*Reservations not required, but encouraged.*

### SATURDAY, APRIL 14, 10:00 A.M. – 11:30 A.M.

#### PERSONALLY PROVIDENCE WALKING TOURS

North Burial Ground..... \$10 per person  
North Main Street at Branch Ave., Providence

### TUESDAY, APRIL 17, 6:30 P.M.

2012 ANNUAL NEWELL D. GOFF LECTURE: JASON OPAL,  
“THE PEOPLE’S GREAT AVENGER: ANDREW JACKSON,  
BORDERLANDS WARFARE, AND THE NATURE OF  
NATIONALISM IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY RHODE ISLAND”  
Aldrich House ..... Free

### THURSDAY, APRIL 19, 5:00 P.M. – 8 P.M.

#### GALLERY NIGHT

Further details: [www.gallerynight.info](http://www.gallerynight.info)

### 6:30 P.M. – 7:30 P.M.

#### GALLERY NIGHT LECTURE

FRANCIS LEAZES, “A RHODE ISLANDER’S ROAD TO THE ALAMO”  
John Brown House Museum ..... Free  
*Reservations not required, but encouraged.*

### SATURDAY, APRIL 21, 10:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M.

#### “SPRING CLEANING: A DAY OF EXPERIMENTAL ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE NEVER-ENDING WAR ON DUST”

John Brown House Museum ..... Free  
*with admission to the museum at the regular house tour times:  
10:30, 12:00, 1:30 and 3:00.*  
See article on page 9.  
Info: 401-273-7507

**New!**

### WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 6:30 P.M. – 8:00 P.M.

#### KATE SCHAPIRA WILL READ FROM HER BOOK OF POEMS, “HOW WE SAVED THE CITY”

RIHS Library ..... Free  
Info/RSVP: [libprograms@rihs.org](mailto:libprograms@rihs.org)

### SATURDAY, MAY 5, 9:30 A.M. TO 12:00 NOON

#### BEYOND NAMES AND DATES:

#### TAKING THE NEXT STEPS IN GENEALOGY

RIHS Library ..... \$15/\$10 RIHS members  
Info/RSVP: [libprograms@rihs.org](mailto:libprograms@rihs.org), *Reservations required*

### THURSDAY, MAY 10, 6 P.M.

#### PATTI CASSIDY, PART I: “THE SECRET LIFE OF WAR MEMORIALS” A FILM VIEWING AND LECTURE

*(a program in two parts)*

Aldrich House ..... \$5 per person  
\$12 for lecture and May 26<sup>th</sup> walking tour

### THURSDAY, MAY 17, 5:00 P.M. – 8:00 P.M.

#### GALLERY NIGHT

Further details: [www.gallerynight.info](http://www.gallerynight.info)

### 6:30 P.M. – 7:30 P.M.

#### GALLERY NIGHT LECTURE

#### THOMAS MORRISSEY, “CIVIL WAR PHOTOGRAPHY”

John Brown House Museum ..... Free  
*Reservations not required, but encouraged.*

### SATURDAY, MAY 19, 10:00 A.M. – 11:30 A.M.

#### PERSONALLY PROVIDENCE WALKING TOUR:

#### AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY ON COLLEGE HILL

Starts at the John Brown House Museum ..... \$10 per person

### SATURDAY, MAY 26, AT 11:00 A.M.

#### PART 2: “THE SECRET LIFE OF WAR MEMORIALS” WALKING TOUR

Starts at John Brown House ..... \$10 per person  
\$12 for May 10<sup>th</sup> lecture and walking tour

### SUNDAY, JUNE 3, 2:00 P.M. AND TUESDAY, JUNE 5, 6:00 P.M.

#### THE TRANSIT OF VENUS (A PROGRAM IN TWO PARTS)

#### PART I - JUNE 3RD, 1769 TRANSIT OF VENUS WALKING TOUR.

#### PART II - JUNE 5TH, JOIN US AT THE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY AND PLANETARIUM IN ROGER WILLIAMS PARK TO VIEW THE TRANSIT VIA A LIVE TELECAST!

Starts at John Brown House ..... \$12 per person  
for both events, or \$8 per person for one. Kids under 12 free.  
*Reservations for walking tour required. Advance tickets: [www.rihs.org](http://www.rihs.org)*

**Don't  
Miss!**

**SATURDAY, JUNE 16, 10 A.M. – 11:30 A.M.**  
**PERSONALLY PROVIDENCE WALKING TOURS:**  
**EDWARD BANNISTER**  
Starts at Aldrich House ..... \$10 per person

**THURSDAY, JUNE 21, 5:00 P.M. – 8:00 P.M.**  
**GALLERY NIGHT**  
Further details: [www.gallerynight.info](http://www.gallerynight.info)

**6:30 P.M. – 7:30 P.M.**  
**GALLERY NIGHT LECTURE**  
**GABRIEL LOIACANO, “WILLIAM FALES, THE DORR WAR, & THE IMAGE & REALITY OF PAUPERS IN MID-19TH CENTURY RHODE ISLAND”**  
John Brown House Museum ..... Free  
*Reservations not required, but encouraged.*

**THURSDAY, JUNE 28, 6:30 P.M.**  
**CONCERTS UNDER THE ELMS**  
**THE AMERICAN BAND, PATRIOTIC MUSIC & “POPS” REPERTOIRE**  
John Brown House ..... Adults \$10  
RIHS members and children under 12 Free

**THURSDAY, JULY 12, 6:30 P.M.**  
**CONCERTS UNDER THE ELMS**  
**CARLOS DE LEON LATIN JAZZ BAND, JAZZ, LATIN AND SALSA**  
John Brown House ..... Adults \$10  
RIHS members and children under 12 Free

**THURSDAY, JULY 19 6:30 P.M.**  
**CONCERTS UNDER THE ELMS**  
**DUKE ROBILLARD BAND, CLASSIC BLUES, R&B AND SWING**  
John Brown House ..... Adults \$10  
RIHS members and children under 12 Free

**THURSDAY, JULY 19, 5:00 P.M. – 8:00 P.M.**  
**GALLERY NIGHT**  
Further details: [www.gallerynight.info](http://www.gallerynight.info)  
John Brown House Museum ..... Free

**SATURDAY, JULY 21, 10:00 A.M. – 11:30 A.M.**  
**PERSONALLY PROVIDENCE WALKING TOURS:**  
**CAPE VERDEAN HISTORY**  
Starts at the John Brown House Museum ..... \$10 per person

**THURSDAY, JULY 26, 6:30 P.M.**  
**CONCERTS UNDER THE ELMS**  
**MAGNOLIA CAJUN BAND, TRADITIONAL FRENCH CAJUN MUSIC**  
John Brown House ..... Adults \$10  
RIHS members and children under 12 Free

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 2, 6:30 P.M.**  
**CONCERTS UNDER THE ELMS**  
**PENDRAGON, CELTIC-INSPIRED MUSIC**  
John Brown House ..... Adults \$10  
RIHS members and children under 12 Free

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 9, 6:30 P.M.**  
**CONCERTS UNDER THE ELMS**  
**GREG ABATE JAZZ QUARTET, JAZZ STANDARDS & MORE**  
John Brown House ..... Adults \$10  
RIHS members and children under 12 Free

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 16, 5:00 P.M. – 8:00 P.M.**  
**GALLERY NIGHT**  
Further details: [www.gallerynight.info](http://www.gallerynight.info)  
John Brown House Museum ..... Free

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 18, 10:00 A.M. – 11:30 A.M.**  
**PERSONALLY PROVIDENCE WALKING TOURS: H.P. LOVECRAFT**  
Starts at the John Brown House Museum ..... \$10 per person

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 5:00 P.M. – 8:00 P.M.**  
**GALLERY NIGHT**  
Further details: [www.gallerynight.info](http://www.gallerynight.info)  
**6:30 P.M. – 7:30 P.M.**  
**GALLERY NIGHT LECTURE**  
**ROBERTA MUDGE HUMBLE, “THE HISTORIC ARMORIES OF RHODE ISLAND”**  
John Brown House Museum ..... Free  
*Reservations not required, but encouraged.*

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13**  
**WHAT CHEER DAY 2012:**  
**“RHODE ISLAND AT WAR”**  
VISITORS WILL BE INTRODUCED TO OUR STAFF, OUR SITES, AND THE VARIOUS TYPES OF PROGRAMMING AND RESOURCES WE OFFER.  
RIHS Library, Aldrich House & John Brown House..... Free



**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 18, 5 P.M. – 8 P.M.**  
**GALLERY NIGHT**  
Further details: [www.gallerynight.info](http://www.gallerynight.info)  
**6:30 P.M. – 7:30 P.M.**  
**GALLERY NIGHT LECTURE**  
**JANET UHLAR, “FREEDOM’S COST: THE STORY OF GENERAL NATHANAEAL GREENE”**  
John Brown House Museum ..... Free  
*Reservations not required, but encouraged.*

### SUMMERWALKS: HISTORICAL WALKING TOURS OF PROVIDENCE

**JUNE 15 - OCTOBER 31, TUESDAYS - SATURDAYS AT 11 A.M.**  
**BENEFIT STREET WALKING TOURS: A MILE OF HISTORY**  
Starts at the John Brown House Museum ..... Adults, \$12;  
Seniors & RIHS members, \$10; children under 12, \$6  
*Walkers can also choose to purchase a combination ticket for a walking tour and admission to the John Brown House Museum for \$16.*

**EVENINGS OF FULL WATERFIRE LIGHTINGS - 5:30 P.M. – 6:30 P.M.**  
**RIVERWALK: BEFORE THE FIRES ARE LIT**  
Starts at the John Brown House Museum ..... \$10 per person.  
*Reservations requested.*  
*For a complete schedule of this season’s WaterFire lightings, visit [www.waterfire.org](http://www.waterfire.org)*

**TUESDAYS AND FRIDAYS IN AUGUST, 10 A.M.**  
**(AUGUST 3, 7, 10, 14, 17, 21, 24, 28, AND 31)**  
**ART AND THE CITY WALKING TOUR**  
Starts at the John Brown House Museum ..... \$10 per person

## 2012 CONCERTS UNDER THE ELMS

- June 28**     **THE AMERICAN BAND**  
Patriotic music and “pops” repertoire
- July 12**     **CARLOS DE LEON LATIN JAZZ BAND**  
Jazz, Latin and Salsa
- July 19**     **DUKE ROBILLARD BAND**  
Classic blues, R&B and Swing
- July 26**     **MAGNOLIA CAJUN BAND**  
Traditional French Cajun music
- August 2**     **PENDRAGON**  
Celtic-inspired music
- August 9**     **GREG ABATE JAZZ QUARTET**  
Swinging melodic jazz standards  
& original music in the same style

Adults \$10.

RIHS members and children under 12 Free.

All concerts begin at 6:30 pm on the John Brown House Museum lawn, 52 Power Street, Providence.

FOR INFORMATION CALL 401-331-8575, ext. 33 or [mlupham@rihs.org](mailto:mlupham@rihs.org).



## New Membership Categories

GREAT VALUE - QUALITY PROGRAMS

On July 1, 2012 we will raise our membership rates for the first time in quite a while. We know that right now, with everything else costing so much, rate increases can be challenging – and we haven’t made the decision lightly. Our costs have gone up too, as our funding has been cut drastically; it is a very difficult situation for us all.

The good news is that you can renew your current membership at the current rates until June 30th. The best news is that we will be able to continue bringing you the quality programs you expect from us, and to care for the artifacts we all treasure.

We are so very appreciative of your continued support, and want to make sure that the services we offer our members are meeting your needs. Look for a short survey in your inbox next month, because we are your historical society, and we want to know what you think. If you are not currently receiving our E-newsletter, sign up today at [www.rihs.org](http://www.rihs.org) and you will receive the survey soon.

### NEW RATES AS OF JULY 1, 2012

**INDIVIDUAL \$40** Offers free admission for one person to the Society’s museums, Library and summer concert series. Free or discounted admission to the Society’s programs and events. Twelve month subscription to *RI History Journal* and *News and Notes* newsletter. Discounts on gift shop purchases, tickets for SummerWalks historical walking tours, and research and program fees.

**SENIOR INDIVIDUAL \$35** Same as above for one person age 65 and older.

**DUAL \$50** Same benefits as above for two people.

**DUAL SENIOR \$45** Same as above for two people age 65 and older.

**FAMILY \$60** Same as above for two adults plus accompanying minor children.

**GASPEE GROUP \$100** Same as Family benefits, plus four additional free Museum admission passes and four half-price SummerWalks tickets.

**MAY 4<sup>TH</sup> CIRCLE \$250** Same as Gaspee Group benefits, plus 4 free SummerWalks tickets, and reciprocal Time Travelers benefits at museums and historical societies nation-wide.

**FRIENDS OF ROGER WILLIAMS \$500** Same as May 4th Circle benefits, plus an invitation to an event with the Executive Director.

## What's in Your Pocket?

Girls and women in the 18th century didn't have pockets sewn into their skirt seams so slits were cut and finished in gowns, and side seams left open at the top of petticoats, to allow access to separate pockets.

Pockets in museum collections seem to fall into two size ranges, with the larger pockets about 16 inches long and the smaller pockets, worn by girls, about 12 inches long. Because each pocket was unique and handmade, no two pockets are exactly alike.

The RIHS Museum Collection includes just one pocket (1985.1.9) and at 12 inches tall and 9 inches wide, it was probably a girl's pocket, and the embroidery is typical of the period from 1750 to 1800. A girl might have carried a thimble, a handkerchief, sweets, and perhaps some pennies, in her pocket.



Overall view of plain-weave linen pocket with silk embroidery, 1750-1775. RIHS Museum Collection 1985.1.9 (RHiX171121A)

We've made a simple pattern of the embroidery, so you can make your own pocket, to carry whatever pleases you. You can find it on our blog at <http://rihs.wordpress.com/2011/12/23/whats-in-a-pocket/>.

## EDUCATION DEPARTMENT GETS A NEW LOOK

I'm absolutely thrilled to take on my new role as Director of the Newell D. Goff Center for Education and Public Programs. As you may know, I have some impressive shoes to fill! I'm eager to continue to offer dynamic, inspiring programs, and I look forward to meeting you at one of our events in 2012.

There is another new face in the Goff Center you'll want to get to know, too: our Programs Coordinator, Caitlin Murphy, who is currently pursuing a Master's Degree at Trinity College in American Studies with a concentration in Museums and Communities. You can meet Caitlin at the first Gallery Night lecture of the season, Thursday, March 15, when Christian McBurney will speak about his recent book *The Rhode Island Campaign: The First French and American Operation in the Revolutionary War*.

## LET'S GET DIGITAL

If you haven't been to our website in a while, we encourage you to click on over to <http://www.rihs.org> where we've added some new features to make it easier to access our resources. On the homepage, you'll find a prominent link to NETOP, our online collections catalog. You'll also find a link to our newest page, "Connect with the RIHS," a portal for our digital resources, online exhibits, and more! Come back often, as we'll be adding content regularly.

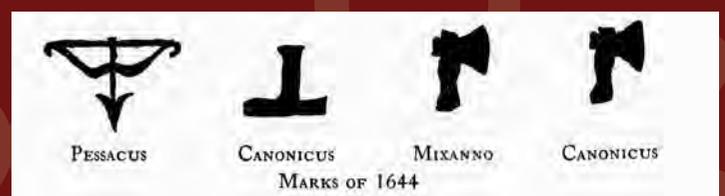
## Library Programs

Among the Fall 2011 Library programs, two lectures continued our series on pre-1700 Native American history in Rhode Island. The programs drew diverse audiences of 40-60 people each, confirming the hunger for public discussion on Native American topics we observed at last spring's talk on the Salt Pond archaeology site in South Kingstown.

On October 26, Colin Porter, a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Anthropology at Brown presented "The Jireh Bull House at Pettaquamscutt: Archaeology of a Fortified House in Narragansett Country." The talk raised a number of questions about the changing relationship between settlers and Narragansetts before and after King Phillip's War, and the continuing role of the Jireh Bull site in tribal culture. The second lecture, on November 2, focused on another aspect of

the same period in Native history. Lisa Brooks, Associate Professor of Humanities at Harvard, gave the audience a close look at several documents featuring the voices, protests and challenges of local Native American women in "The Queen's Right: Native Women Leaders on the Eve of King Phillip's War".

We will continue to explore a range of topics on the history-both distant and more recent- of the Native peoples of Rhode Island and their essential role in the evolution of the place that a million inhabitants of all races and nationalities now call home.



# A Day of Experimental Archaeology and the Never-Ending War on Dust

SATURDAY, APRIL 21<sup>ST</sup> 2012



*Kirsten Hammerstrom dressed as an 18th century servant*

Eighteenth and 21st centuries meet at the John Brown House Museum when RIHS Director of Collections Kirsten Hammerstrom and Registrar Dana Signe Munroe get the museum ready for spring in the 18th century manner. Dressed in period-appropriate clothing, we will discover what it takes to make the John Brown House ready for spring. With buckets, cloths, and brooms, we will start with the formal parlor and demonstrate for visitors domestic work described in Hannah Glass's *The Servants Directory, Improved, or, House-Keepers Companion*, published in 1762 and Susannah Whatman's *Housekeeping Book* (1776-1800).

To prepare for this day's event, in addition to researching historic housekeeping methods and the Brown family servants, we have been hand-sewing clothing suitable for servants in the 1795-1803 period. Although we do not know exactly who worked for the Browns at the cusp of the 19th century, we do know that they, like other wealthy Rhode Island families, employed servants and owned slaves. In this program, we will not interpret specific servants, but instead explore the work and methods that servants or slaves would have used, wearing clothing typical of the period.

It may seem a kind of perverse exercise: having already cleaned the museum rooms after construction in 2010, I know that the house seems insurmountably large, a vast Sahara of dust and dirt, to a woman wearing jeans and equipped with a vacuum cleaner. Taking on spring cleaning in late 18th century stays and long dress and petticoat, knowing that we will climb ladders (fortunately modern) to reach woodwork, will be daunting. But the experience will provide us with first-hand knowledge of what a day was like for a house maid who followed Hannah Glass's exhortation to "Be up very early in a morning, as indeed you are first wanted; lace on your stays, and pin your things very tight about you, or you never can do work well. Be sure always to have very clean feet, that you may not dirty your rooms, and learn to walk softly, that you may not disturb the family."

The methods outlined in these period books are surprisingly similar to today's conservation cleaning methods outlined in the *Manual of Housekeeping* published by the National Trust of Britain in 2006. Fortunately, recently completed construction has provided us with a house full of dust ready for cleaning. Join us on **Saturday, April 21, from 10 to 4:00**. The program is free with the regular house tours at 10:30, 12:00, 1:30 and 3:00. Follow dress making progress and research updates, as well as a report of the day's findings, on our blog at [rihs.wordpress.com](http://rihs.wordpress.com).

*Kirsten Hammerstrom*

## The Aldrich House

### AN ELEGANT SETTING FOR YOUR SPECIAL EVENT!

Rich in elegance, the Aldrich House is the perfect setting for your unforgettable holiday party or memorable wedding reception. A national historic landmark referred to by many as a "hidden treasure," is located on the beautiful and historic East Side of Providence. The Aldrich House offers a lovely sitting room and a reception area that serves as a foyer entrance to an 800-square foot ballroom with French doors leading to our beautifully landscaped grounds.

RIHS members at the \$100.00 level and above will receive a 20% discount.

Contact: Renata Luongo, Rental Program Manager, 401-331-8575 x49 - [rluongo@rihs.org](mailto:rluongo@rihs.org)



*Photo courtesy of Peter Morse*

# Collaboration Leads to Success at the Museum of Work & Culture

For almost 15 years, the Museum of Work & Culture has been and continues to be a community-based organization. This year we have had great successes with the partnerships that we have cultivated with local organizations and individuals. One of our most fruitful partnerships has resulted in the very popular Ranger Talks, a series of six winter lectures which have been featured at the Museum since January of 1998. The cooperation between the Museum's staff and volunteers along with the sponsorship and expertise of the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor have guaranteed the program's success. The Sunday afternoon Ranger Talks continue to attract hundreds to the Museum's I.T.U. Union Hall. This year the Ranger Talks centered on the theme, "Rhode Island at War."

While the Ranger Talks enlighten and entertain outside of the classroom, the Museum's ever-growing educational programming is bolstered by a City of Woonsocket Community Development Block Grant again this year. The Museum's Hands-On Education program for Woonsocket students had amazing success last year, with a 100% attendance rate of the district's fifth grade classes. In order to continue at this rate, we are focusing solely on the fifth-grade for the 2011-2012 school year. In order to best serve our students, we have been developing new teaching aids to help build empathy across historical barriers which educators can take advantage of in the classroom setting. We are also very excited about our new partnership with the Army Corps of Engineers' presence at Woonsocket Falls dam, which has helped expand the outdoor experiences we offer to visiting school groups. Of course the educational infrastructure enabled by the CDBG benefits not only the Woonsocket district, but any school which takes advantage of our programming. Our new Education Coordinator, Liz Maynard, is working hard to both solidify the meaningful relationships we have built with local schools as well as reach out to new participants in Hands-On Education.

From February 15th through March 23rd, Woonsocket's Beacon Charter School for the Arts featured its second annual

student art show in the museum's gallery; we are so pleased to have this working relationship with Beacon and to serve as an exhibition space for its students for two years now.

We are also delighted to present a photographic exhibition, *In History's Wake, Trap Fishing in Rhode Island*, with the help of Historic New England. It features forty photographs by Markham Starr that tell the story of the state's trap fishermen and women. Starr worked with the last four trapping families of the Narragansett Bay area, photographing them on the docks and at sea, to document the industry before it disappears. The exhibit runs from April 15th to June 15th, so be sure to come see it before it moves on!



Photo courtesy of *The Call*

Finally, the Museum of Work & Culture has had a benchmark year in terms of community support. Our Annual Appeal began in November and ended on the 25th of March, with the Museum's signature event, *A Salute to Spring ~ Bonjour Printemps*. This year, the Appeal exceeded expectation, raising over \$36,000 with more than 1,200 participants. In addition to the very generous donations, people showed their support by participating in the Raffle, which featured gift certificates to local restaurants and entertainment venues, as well as a grand prize trip for two to Québec City. We wish to thank all who participated in the Appeal and Raffle, both individuals and sponsors. It is you who give us the support and resources, year to year, that enable us to share the compelling story of the people who settled in the Blackstone Valley with visitors from both near and far.

From February 15th through March 23rd, Woonsocket's Beacon Charter School for the Arts featured its second annual

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## The Passing of a President

As many of you know, State Senator and former Newport mayor Robert McKenna passed away on January 15th of this year. What you may not know is that Senator McKenna had a long history with the Rhode Island Historical Society and a great love of our state's history. He was a man deeply dedicated to education in RI, but perhaps even more so, he was fascinated by and incredibly supportive of exploring Rhode Island's vast and varied ethnic communities. He was actively engaged in Irish Heritage organizations, but, in fact, transformed his appreciation for his ancestry into a life helping other communities celebrate theirs. He was also a founder of the Fort Adams Foundation and the Fort Adams Trust. As an aide to the remarkable U.S.

Senator Claiborne Pell, Senator McKenna was able to find ways to activate their mutual interest in history and education through increased funding to organizations like ours.

And, to be sure, for much of his career, we were in the forefront of his mind. He served as a board member of the RIHS from 1983 to 1995 and was board president from 1983 to 1984. He also served on the Campaign Cabinet for the John Brown House Bicentennial Campaign. Al Klyberg was the RIHS Executive Director at the time and stated, "As president, Bob was an irrepressible enthusiast for Rhode Island history. He was enormously generous with his time to the Society, and he shared all of his contacts with us from the many civic boards and commissions he served."

We were lucky to have him.



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*Thanks for your loyal support.*

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**OUR FISCAL YEAR ENDS JUNE 30<sup>TH</sup>**