

# Johnston Historical Society

## Historical Notes

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[www.JohnstonHistorical.org](http://www.JohnstonHistorical.org)

March 2010

### Don't Doubt Mabel

By Steve Merolla

Through the years, many of us in the Society had the pleasure of hearing Mabel Atwood Sprague recount stories of the past, most of which were interesting, and some of which were local gossip. One of the more interesting stories that she relayed to me was that Johnston Historical Cemetery #57 was moved from her property to an abutting property (about 200 yards away) some time in the past. She stated that her father, Edmund C. Atwood, had told her the story, but I do not remember if she said he actually saw the relocation himself. In this day and age, when we inter our loved ones they remain at rest where they are first buried. However, it was not uncommon in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for remains to be moved from one cemetery to another, and this was done for a variety of reasons. However, it was quite uncommon for an entire cemetery to be moved, especially one the size of Cemetery #57, known as the Harris-Atwood Lot, which is one of the largest in Town. The cemetery contains fifty burials with inscribed stones and another dozen or so with unmarked or "crude" stones.



Part of historical cemetery #57.  
Photo by Christopher Martin.

Interred here are primarily members of the Harris, Atwood, Rathbone, Smith and Lathem families. This burial ground is located on land that has been in possession of the Harris family since the late 1660s. Nicholas Harris (1671-1746) inherited about 170 acres of land on the south side of Morgan Avenue

from his father Thomas Harris, an area stretching from the fork in the road at School Street and Morgan Avenue down to the Pocasset River. In his Will, Nicholas Harris divided his homestead between sons Thomas Harris and Colonel Christopher Harris (Providence Will Book 4/184). Thomas was the eldest son and was to care for his mother as per terms of the Will. The boundary between the lands of Thomas and Christopher have basically remained the same to this day because where they adjoin, the properties have remained in the hands of the same families since at least the nineteenth century. An eight-acre parcel of land owned by Col. Christopher Harris was until a couple of years ago owned by Mabel Sprague; it was purchased by Society member Anthony Ricci and he is now steward of the property. A twelve-acre parcel of Thomas Harris' half of his father's homestead is owned by the family of the late Dorothy Collingham Butler. In fact, Mrs. Butler and her family are descendants of the Harris', while Mabel's family, the Atwoods, purchased their part of the farm from members of the Harris family in 1824. The dividing line between the two Harris properties began at Morgan Avenue, and stretched down a dirt right-of-way that is present to this day at the right side of Mabel's (Anthony's) house at 216 Morgan Avenue.

Cemetery #57 is located on the Butler land, on a small hill about fifty yards from a very old house on the site. It was always felt that #57 is the original Harris burial ground, and that the earliest members of the family are buried here, possibly under one of the "crude", unmarked stones. Of the inscribed stones, the two people born furthest back in time are Andrew Harris (born c. 1736), son of Col. Christopher Harris, and Miss Elnathan Harris (born c. 1737), daughter of Thomas Harris, making them first cousins. Members of the Atwood, Smith, and Rathbone families married into the line of Thomas Harris and are thus also present here. As stated before, it is highly unlikely that this entire cemetery was moved to its present site, especially since it is part of the Thomas Harris estate and contains people from his direct family line. However, what of Mabel's story; could she have been misinformed? One possibility is that some, but not all the people in Cemetery #57 were exhumed from Mabel's land and reburied on the adjoining property, and there is reason to believe that this might be so. Buried in the far corner of Cemetery #57, furthest away from what would have been the front of the lot, are the remains of Andrew Harris Esq. and his immediate family; his wife Sarah, sons James and Christopher, daughter-in-law

Hannah and grandchildren Christopher and Mary. Andrew was the son of Col. Christopher Harris, whose land in fact included all of Mabel's property. It is also quite probable that Andrew also built Mabel's (now Anthony's) house. Is it possible that Andrew and his family were the people referred to by Mabel's father as being moved and reburied?

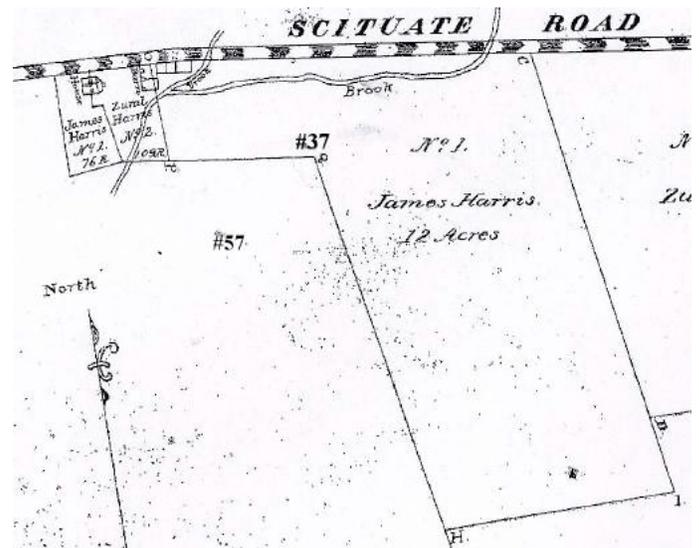


Part of historical cemetery #37.  
Photo by Christopher Martin.

There is located on Mabel's land Cemetery #37, a smaller lot with sixteen burials. Here are Mabel's branch of the Atwood family, plus a couple of outsiders; there are no Harris'. It was logical to assume that this was the only burial ground located on Mabel's land, but a recent study of Col. Christopher Harris' line has proven otherwise. Andrew Harris Esq. died on September 27, 1807. A Court of Probate was held on December 19, 1808, in order to divide his estate amongst his four sons: James, Christopher, Zurial, and Andrew Jr. The estate was divided into four parts, a plat map was drawn, and lots were picked to determine who got what part of the estate. James Harris picked Lot No. 1, a section of which was a twelve-acre parcel, most of which Anthony Ricci now owns. Part of the description was a surprise, for it read: *"Nevertheless, and it is understood that all the family of Andrew Harris shall & may have free liberty of burying their dead in the Burying Ground on this lot ..."* (Johnston Probate 6/537). This statement proves that there was indeed a burying ground on Mabel's land that contained members of the Harris family. The inference is that the cemetery was already in existence and being used before the Probate of 1808, and in all probability it contained the remains of Col. Christopher Harris, his wife, son Andrew, and other family members. No inscribed stone for Col. Christopher exists, so it can be assumed that he and his wife's graves were marked with "crude" stones. As Mabel recounted the story, her father said the bodies were moved from a hill near Morgan Avenue, which happens to be a description of where Cemetery #37 is now, thus I strongly suspect that these particular Harris' were originally buried somewhere near that spot. Also note that the cemetery on Mabel's property was also part of the area of Lot No. 1 set off to James Harris.

But why were the bodies moved? The answer comes in Deed J 6/212 of February 5, 1824. On that date Abraham C. Atwood (Mabel's great grandfather) purchased from the heirs of James

Harris (who died in 1823) part of the dwelling house, the twelve-acre lot where the family burial ground was located, and another eight-and-three-quarters-acre lot: *"...all of which lots of land are the same which formerly belonged to James Harris, deceased... and are Lot No.1 in the division of the estate of Andrew Harris Esq..."* On that same day, other heirs of Andrew Harris Esq. sold off their parts of his estate to Abraham C. Atwood, making him sole owner. Now that Andrew Harris' heirs gave up ownership of the family homestead, it was probably felt that it was necessary to remove Andrew and other family members from the property. A complicated twist of family ties and marriages indicate why the Andrew Harris family ended up in Cemetery #57, on land in the ownership of the heirs of Andrew's uncle, Thomas Harris. Christopher Harris, the eldest son of Andrew (and the only one of his sons to remain in R.I.), took as his second wife Hannah Atwood, the daughter of Benjamin F. Atwood. Benjamin's other daughter, Abigail, was married to Abraham C. Atwood, who had bought the Andrew Harris estate, as related above. Benjamin F. Atwood had married Ruth Clemence, daughter of Thomas Clemence, and Thomas Clemence was the son-in-law of Thomas Harris. When Benjamin Atwood died (1818), his daughter Hannah, and through her, Christopher Harris, took ownership of the part of the old Thomas Harris (Christopher's grand uncle) estate whereon Cemetery #57 is located. It is likely that when Christopher Harris died in 1825 (at age 45), he was interred directly into Cemetery #57, which he now owned. At some point afterwards, the remains of his father, mother, and other family members were removed from their original resting place and reburied in Cemetery #57, probably only 200 yards or so from where they once were. When this happened can't be known for sure. Mabel's father was born in the 1860s, so there is a distinct possibility that he only heard about this story rather than seeing it himself.



Detail from the 1808 plat map showing the relative positions of historical cemeteries #37 and 57. Mabel's house is located on the small plat in the upper left corner.

While studying the deed activity of Abraham C. Atwood, I came across an interesting transaction. On October 13, 1853, he sold to Charles Knight for \$30 *"...a certain lot of land... for a cemetery or burial ground on the southerly side of the farm whereon I now live & adjoining land of the widow Harris, it*

*being a strip of land measuring ten feet wide on the north end and extending southerly thirty-one feet and is on the west side of the burying ground and within the enclosure already erected -- also the right to enclose another strip of land of the same width & size next adjoining west without the present enclosure; also a right to cross my land to and from the road to said burying ground... To have and to hold the same to Charles Knight for the special purpose of a burying ground for himself, his wife and their sons, and also the wives and children of their sons and no others..."* (J 15/189). This deed indicates that Abraham C. Atwood sold space in his family cemetery (#37) to Mr. Knight and his family; however, at this time I do not know of any particular relationship between the two of them. Charles Knight (born 1794) and his son Anthony (born 1821) both died in 1870 and were presumably buried in the Atwood cemetery. Charles' wife Christianna died in 1881 and also was probably buried there. However, records from Pocasset Cemetery in Cranston indicate that on December 7, 1881, the bodies of Charles, Anthony, and Christianna were removed from Johnston and interred there, possibly by one of the other Knight sons. This happened to be at about the period when the small family burying grounds started to lose popularity in favor of larger, well-maintained, public cemeteries. In fact, Abraham C. Atwood himself would also be buried in Pocasset.

Of the fifteen inscribed stones in Cemetery #37, nine are Atwoods. There are also two Fenners and a Waterman. Research indicates that John L. Fenner (c. 1810-1849) was the husband of Elizabeth Waterman (1817-1841), and Elizabeth was the sister of Abraham's second wife, Hayley. Also buried here is another sister of Hayley Waterman Atwood, Rebecca Waterman (1818-1854). Mabel recounted to me that the Fenners did not have the money or land for their own cemetery, so they were given spots in the Atwood family plot. It is quite possible that these three people were transferred to Cemetery #37 from another burying ground, for Abraham and Hayley did not marry until 1852.

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### **A Short History of the Belknap Chapel**

By Louis McGowan (as adapted from Ethel Fassel's handwritten history of the chapel and other sources)

Before the opening of the Belknap Chapel in 1891, there was no building set aside for religious services in the Belknap district. Sunday school, preaching services and prayer meetings were held in the old school house, which occupied the site of the present Belknap School House across the way from the chapel.

Some time after 1883, it is said that Miss Lydia Belle Cram, daughter of John Cram, suggested that the women of the area form a society to raise money to build a new house of worship for the Belknap district. Ethel Fassel wrote that the people of the vicinity met several times at Fred Walch's house in the fall and winter of 1886 to form a society. Cora Walch was elected President and Mary Clemence was elected Secretary. The women planned and held bean suppers and sales to help raise money for a chapel. The first bean supper and fair was held at James O. Mathewson's farm on January 27, 1887. They raised

the tidy sum of \$75.53. Other events soon followed, including clam chowder suppers, pound parties, strawberry festivals, oyster and bean suppers, and fairs throughout the years from 1887 to 1895.

Wishing to make their group more formal, the subscribers petitioned to incorporate the society at the January 1888 session of the R.I. General Assembly for "educational, charitable and social purposes and for the worship of Almighty God." Cora E. Walch was named President and Ruth A. Mathewson was named Treasurer. The petitioners were: Elira A. Mathewson, A. Eliza Barnes, Anna M. Belknap, Louisa Hicks, Charlotte S. Waterman, Elsie A. Clemence, Mrs. Cora Walch (President), Mrs. Georgia Winsor, Mrs. Frank Thurber, Mary E. Mathewson, Mrs. E.B. Winsor, Mrs. Helen A. Angell, Ruth A. Mathewson (Treasurer), and Mary A. Clemence (Secretary).



Belknap Chapel. Photo by Beth Hurd.

The first meeting of the Johnston Industrial Society was held at the home of Mrs. Anson P. Winsor on February 23, 1888. At this meeting they voted to accept the charter presented and carry it before the legislature. The charter was read and passed before the R.I. General Assembly on March 23, 1888, and the Industrial Society of Johnston formally came into being. At the first meeting, it was also voted to buy a half acre of land for the chapel from Frederick J. Walch for \$100. The property was nearly opposite the schoolhouse.

Some of the men of the district also became interested in the project and worked towards raising funds. Jonathan V. Barnes, Ephraim Sweet, Charles and George Grant, and Mr. and Mrs. James O. Mathewson raised \$80 between them. Mrs. Barnes also went about soliciting from people in the area, and many came to her home with donations of financial aid.

Plans for the chapel were drawn up by William H. Place. The chapel was built by Elisha A. Winsor and helpers. Many gave their labor instead of money to help the project along. The final cost of the building was about \$1600. In 1890, some meetings of the society were held in the chapel, but most meetings were

still in private homes. Meetings were held in the homes of: James O. Mathewson, Mrs. Anson Winsor, Job Belknap, Fred Belknap, Jonathan V. Barnes, and William H. Mathewson. Fund-raising was so successful that on February 28, 1891 all debts were paid on the chapel. The chapel was dedicated on Sunday, June 2, 1891. The dedication sermon was preached by Rev. George N. Musgrove of the Greenville Baptist Church. Throughout the 1890s, meetings of the society were usually held in private homes, with about fourteen people attending on the average.

Cora Walch served as President from 1886 until 1893. Following her in office up to 1901 were: Mrs. Paris Mathewson, Miss Ida Clemence, Mrs. Emma Belknap, Mrs. Anson Winsor. Ida Clemence took over again in 1901 and served until 1927. From then until 1908, monthly suppers and socials were held in village homes. Bean suppers cost ten cents each. Several chowders and lawn parties were held at Etta Pray's house. Entertainments, sales and annual harvest suppers were held at the chapel. Games were often played and outside entertainment was sometimes obtained by Nettie Barnes. Proceeds helped to pay for the minister.

The chapel was painted in 1904-1905 at a cost of \$43.42. The chapel silver was bought in 1908. It was said that these were the busiest and liveliest years at the chapel.

From about 1908 on, society meetings were held less often and fewer people attended. In 1908 and '09, meetings were monthly or less often. Fewer meetings were held in the 1910-1915 period. After that until 1931, there was either one meeting a year or none in many years. Suppers and other fundraisers decreased greatly in number. A tax on members was applied in place of the suppers, twenty-five cents, fifty cents, or seventy-five cents monthly.

In April of 1931, it was voted to name the chapel the Belknap Baptist Chapel. In 1949, Mrs. Lora E.O. Clemence related that in the early part of the twentieth century the chapel was a branch of the Broadway Baptist Church. Ethel Fassel's history runs only to about 1931, although she does list officers of the organization through 1970.

By 1937, the little church became known as the Belknap Community Chapel. It adopted a non-denominational creed at that point. Judging by newspaper articles, there was a resurgence of activity in the 1940s within the chapel community. A building committee was formed in 1947 to manage a project for building an addition to the church. A June 21, 1949 *Providence Journal* article told of the need for the addition which would take care of overcrowded Sunday School classes. Back around the time of the First World War, the seven or eight children in Sunday School had met in private homes. In an April 9, 1949 *Journal* article, it is stated that Mrs. Clemence in years previous worked to have the church building re-opened for school purposes. Evidently, the chapel had been closed for a time, probably in the 1930s. Around 1939, the church was re-formed and the interior space was once again set up for church services. As attendance at the Sunday School increased, the need for additional space became apparent, and the push for an addition began. The drive was successful, and

on April 11, 1949, 200 people attended the dedication of the new annex. Dr. Howard W. Ferrin, president of the Providence Bible Institute, conducted the official part of the exercises. Mrs. Lora E.O. Clemence gave a history of the Sunday School, "A Dream Come True." The pastor, the Rev. Valley Andresen, was master of ceremonies.

The chapel still holds services, but is no longer affiliated with the Baptist Church. The Industrial Society of Johnston's history is a wonderful story. It shows a group of local women coming together for a goal -- their chapel -- achieving it, and then going on and maintaining their chapel for many years. The story of the chapel itself is also fascinating, how this little structure was the focal point in the lives of village residents for many years. A true community was formed, providing religious strength, social harmony and entertainment to the people of this little hamlet. It is hoped that they are able to continue on for well into the future.

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Many of the floors in Mabel Sprague's house were covered with decorative, but very worn, oilcloth sheets instead of rugs. When Anthony Ricci began cleaning out Mabel's house he found, hidden under the oilcloths, dozens and dozens of pages from local newspapers. The ad above comes from the January 7, 1959, *Providence Evening Bulletin*. The former site of the El Marocco is now the home of the Johnston Senior Center.

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### An Interview with Two Former Belknap School Students

By Louis McGowan

Because Belknap School, a one-room building, closed for good in 1938 or 1939, there are not a lot of people still around who went to school there. On Saturday, February 27, 2010, while Dan Brown and I were checking out the work in the Belknap School, we were visited by Alfred Newman and his sister, Lillian (Newman) Threshier. Alfred is now eighty-eight years old and Lillian is eighty-one. They both went to school here; Alfred attended grades 1 to 6, from 1928 to 1935, and Lillian grades 1 to 4, from about 1935 to 1938. The room was pretty full in Alfred's time, but by the time Lillian went there, there were fewer students each year.

They were both excited to visit their old school and glad to see that it is being preserved. It was amazing for me to talk to the two of them about their experiences in the school that date back seventy-five or eighty years ago. They related that the different grades were separated into sections of the room. The first

graders sat in the southwest corner of the room, immediately on the left side of the room as you enter the building on the left. The older children were in the back of the room. No students were allowed to wander around the room during class time. Their teacher, Mrs. Ethel Fassel, was pretty strict they said. If anyone did something against regulations, they were given some whacks on the hand with a rattan cane.

There was a wood stove in the back left-hand corner of the room. It was plenty warm in there on even the coldest days, they said. But, when it was real cold, they students went right to the stove to warm up when they came in from the outside. The oldest boys took care of the wood for the stove, bringing it in from the outside.

There was a big crock on a stand in the front left corner of the room which the boys filled with water from the Kaye house next door. There was one dipper that everyone drank from. Alfred said using the same dipper for everyone did not hurt him any. He is obviously quite healthy!

The Newman children went home for lunch. They were given an hour for break and were able to walk home and eat in plenty of time. Their house was on Pine Hill Avenue.

During recess the boys and girls played separately, the boys on one side of the school and the girls on the other. Lillian said that the students were not even allowed to touch classmates of the opposite sex. The girls played jump rope and jacks, but sometimes they just liked to sit under the big tree outside. The boys played ball, tag and had snowball fights. In snowy times, they would take fifty gallon drums, put a dent in them for seating, and ride them down the hill all the way to the brook. Alfred and Lillian both remember a chart showing birds that Mr. Fassel used. Alfred remembered that on the east side of the room the students had inkwells which were filled from a big bottle.

At the end of the school year, Mrs. Fassel would have a party for the students. Her husband worked for Hood's and would get all the children their own little box of ice cream. Mrs. Fassel would put them on the platform in the front of the room.

There was a boy's entrance and a coat room on one side of the school and the same for the girls on the other side. There was a double row of coat hooks in each coat room, the top row for hats and the bottom row for coats. Lillian remembers there being a shelf in the left-hand (west) coat room which was used for storing lunches and school books. Some students went home for lunch, but the ones that came from a distance ate at school. At the time that they attended Belknap School, the Bell District, further west along Greenville Avenue, had closed and students all the way to the Smithfield line came to school at Belknap. This was too far for them to walk, so an old school bus was provided by the town to transport them. For the fifth and sixth grades, Lillian went to the Lincoln School, just south of George Waterman Road on Greenville Avenue. She then went to Calef School for junior high, as did her brother, Alfred. They took the old bus to go to the Lincoln and Calef Schools.

Dinners were held in the school occasionally. Mrs. Lora E.O. Clemence taught Sunday School across the street at the Belknap Chapel. She was a schoolteacher herself, but not at Belknap. Her daughter, Lora, was a watchmaker who ran a shop in the little reproduction school building that stands a few buildings east of the school along Greenville Avenue.

Most of us remember Herb Newman, brother of Alfred and Lillian. He was a great guy and is missed by all his friends at the historical society. He always had a smile and a pleasant word when he came to meetings. We are sad that Herb will not be around for the re-dedication of the old school. He would have loved it.

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## Society Doings

### Our Properties

Our museum and Elijah Angell House continue to be open by appointment, and we always welcome visits by interested individuals or groups. Just shoot us an email at [info@johnstonhistorical.org](mailto:info@johnstonhistorical.org), or leave a message at (401) 231-3380 to set one up.

Our museum space is also available (on a limited basis) for meetings of small groups of adults at a reasonable price. If you know of a local group or organization that is looking for a meeting space, and might be interested in using our museum, please have them contact us.

### Belknap School Update

by Louis McGowan

The restoration of the interior of the Belknap School is rapidly drawing to a close. Warren Lanpher, as always, has done a wonderful job for us. The plastered walls and the ceiling in the main room have been finished. The modern ell has been refitted to include a bathroom. The front portion of the ell is freshly painted and has a new floor. It will make a nice museum space.

The wainscoting in the main room and the two cloak rooms needed work. Much of the old wood had been ripped out a couple of decades ago to use for nailing for modern paneling. Warren fabricated and installed new wainscoting which matches exactly the old boards. He installed four hanging light fixtures that closely resemble the original ones. He installed some old slate blackboards in the front of the room. The slates were given to us by Tom Greene, the North Providence Town Historian. They came from a one-room schoolhouse in Warwick, R.I.

Warren had two sub-contractors do the electrical and plumbing work for the building. The electrical system was completely updated and electric exit signs were installed. A new sink and toilet were installed in the bathroom. Warren also cleaned out the basement of junk, which was a real project.

The real problem area for the building was the floor. It had two layers of tile on it, separated by plywood. The original floor

seemed to be underneath all the layers, but we were not sure what shape it was in. Additionally, while our \$45,000 Preservation Grant from the State had been stretched much farther than expected, thanks to Warren, we had no money left to finish the floor. Estimates for the interior restoration from two other contractors were for \$75,000 and \$85,000.

So, resolving to make up for the shortfall with elbow grease, a number of us got together on a Saturday morning in January to rip the old floor up and to stain the new wainscoting. Mike Burch, Doug Stevens, Dan Brown, Pat Macari, Joe Jamroz, and Louis McGowan all worked hard helping Warren, but at the end of the day there was still one more layer of tile to take up. Warren said that he would do it himself, but unfortunately, when he set about trying to pry them up, they simply fell apart after some back-breaking work. The original floor did not look good either and it was obvious it would need to be professionally sanded. We decided instead to put down new tongue and groove flooring. Warren installed the flooring and Dan Brown, Louis McGowan, and Warren stained the new boards on the morning of February 13th. Warren applied a couple of coats of poly to the boards and we are just about in business.

Next we will begin moving in school desks, school artifacts, etc. We are planning a dedication in May and an auction soon after that to pay for the floor.

We send a huge thanks to Warren. We would not be at this point within him.

### **Cemeteries**

It's never too late to adopt one of Johnston's one-hundred or so historical cemeteries. All you need to do is pick up trash, weed whack grass and undergrowth, and cut and clear brush at least once a year. Not only will you be helping to make your town more attractive, you'll also be helping to preserve our heritage. If you are interested, or know of someone who might be, please contact the Johnston Historical Society at (401) 231-3380 or [info@johnstonhistorical.org](mailto:info@johnstonhistorical.org), or Steve Merolla at (401) 944-3412.

### **JHS Holiday Events**

Our Christmas open house on December 4th was very well attended, both by society members and newcomers. The Elijah Angell House was beautifully decorated for the season with boughs of evergreen and red berries and Louis and Bel, dressed in their Victorian best, gave tours. Refreshments, including hot cider and many homemade treats, were served in the museum barn. Among the visitors was Johnston mayor Joseph Polisena who spent quite a bit of time looking over the displays with Louis as his personal guide. It was a fun way to kick off the holiday season. Thanks for everyone who helped make the evening a success.

On the following Friday, December 11th, Phil and Lori Lemoi opened their house for a members-only Christmas party. Their house was beautifully decorated, and the Lemoi's were wonderful hosts. About thirty members and their families attended, and we all had a great time socializing.

On New Year's Eve, thirty-five people attended a dinner that our society hosted at the Smith-Appleby House in Smithfield. It was a turkey dinner with all the fixings, and the food was delicious. It was a nice, safe, family-friendly celebration. Our thanks go out to Maggie Botelho and her people at the Smith-Appleby House. It is a great place to hold a function like this. We extend big thanks also to Bel McGowan and all her kitchen help, which consisted of Bel, Liz Burch, Louis McGowan, and Bel's two sisters, Ida and Lucy Silva. Thanks to Stephanie Lemoi, who helped wait on tables. We also thank all the people who made things for the event (including Nancy Brown, Kit Rhodes, Pat Perry, Pauline Ramieri, and Ellen Lanpher) and all those who attended.

### **Speakers**

Danny Brown gave a slide presentation on U.S. first Ladies at our December meeting, focusing on the more salacious details of their lives. A surprising number of Presidential wives suffered from ill health and many died before, during, or shortly after their husbands attained the highest office in the land. We learned also that Bill Clinton wasn't the first president to have an eye for ladies half his age.

At our January meeting author Rory Raven told us the fascinating story of Sarah Cornell, an unmarried, pregnant mill-worker who was found hanged in a Tiverton stack yard in 1832. Circumstantial evidence seemed to indicate she had been murdered by a married Methodist minister but the charges, through two sensational trials, could not be made to stick. For details, read Rory's book about the tragedy, *Wicked Conduct*.

Joseph Waller from the Public Archeology Lab enlivened our February meeting with a detailed description of the finding, unearthing, and relocation of the Blanchard Family burial ground just off Plainfield Pike on the southern edge of town. "Lost" from public knowledge, the cemetery was almost destroyed when a storage facility was slated to be installed on top of it. A cautionary tale with the moral of Know Where Your Cemeteries Lie.

### **Acquisitions**

- Four different blacksmithing hammers from the workshop on Mable Sprague's property, donated by Anthony Ricci.
- A pair of lucite plaques commemorating recent building dedications, and related ephemera, donated by Beth Hurd.
- A pair of small butter press molds, donated by Rolf Johnson.
- A collection of paper items from the late Herb Newman relating to Johnston history, passed on to us by Doug Stevens.
- A small collection of Graniteville photos, a gift of George Caldwell.
- A collection of turn-of-the-twentieth century ephemera, gift of Rolf Johnson.
- Two book of Graniteville PTA minutes, gift of Elaine Cabral.
- Book on *The Art of the Tinsmith*, purchased by Louis.
- Danny Brown donated a set of window shades for the Belknap School.

Our sincere thanks to all who have donated items for our collections. Keep it coming!

### **Wish List**

Following are a number of items we could make good use of:

- A microwave oven
- Display cases
- Display mannequins
- Any Johnston-related memorabilia

### **Upcoming Events**

Unless otherwise noted, all events take place at the Johnston Historical Society Museum Barn, 101 Putnam Pike, Johnston, and are free and open to the public.

#### **March 31, 2010**

General Meeting

7pm

Our speaker will be member Rolf Johnson who will talk about "The Work of the Wheelwright."

#### **April 10, 2010**

Vintage Dress-Up Fundraising Auction

2-6pm

Shang Bailey Roadhouse, 2737 Hartford Avenue, Johnston. Dress up in your best circa-1900 finery and bid on items ranging from gift certificates for local goods and services to craft items to baked goods. Refreshments will be served; dress-up encouraged by not required. Proceeds benefit the Johnston Historical Society. Call Anthony Ursillo at (401) 934-0123, or email aursillo401@gmail.com for more information.

#### **April 17, 2010**

High Tea

3-5pm

Smith-Appleby House, 220 Stillwater Road, Smithfield. Socialize, enjoy homemade finger foods and desserts, and try your luck in the raffle/auction. Pat Perry from Sneak Peek Productions will give a presentation on "The Language of Flowers." Hats and gloves are optional (or wear full costume if you like!). Tickets are \$20 and their number is limited, so reserve your space early! There will be no ticket sales at the door. Proceeds benefit the Johnston Historical Society. For tickets please call Kit Rhodes at (401) 231-7523. If you would like to help out on the day of the event, please call Bel McGowan at (401) 529-0863.

#### **April 28, 2010**

General Meeting

7pm

Our speaker will be member Jim Lombardi who will talk about his hobby of collecting Hot Wheels cars and accessories.

#### **May 15, 2010**

Belknap School Dedication

Belknap School, Greenville Avenue. Plans are still underway for this exciting event. Stay tuned!

#### **May 26, 2010**

General Meeting

7pm

Our speaker will be George Sutcliffe, a decorated World War II pilot and longtime Graniteville resident who appeared in the History Channel show *Dogfights*. He'll tell us a little bit about his experiences flying a P-47 Thunderbolt.

#### **June 13, 2010**

Open House

2-4pm

Elijah Angell House, 101 Putnam Pike, Johnston. The public is invited to tour the restored 1824 Elijah Angell farmhouse. The adjacent Johnston History Museum, housed in a replica post-and-beam barn, will also be open. Free.

#### **June 30, 2010**

General Meeting

7pm

For our presentation this evening, the multitalented Fred Mikkelsen will give a blacksmithing exhibition.

#### **Early August 2010**

Historic House Tour

Details TBD

#### **August 22, 2010**

Johnston Townwide Scavenger Hunt

Details TBD

Do you have a suggestion for a future speaker? Or do you yourself have a topic you'd like to present at one of our meetings? Please drop us a line at [info@johnstonhistorical.org](mailto:info@johnstonhistorical.org) or leave a message at (401) 231-3380.

### **Contribute To Our Newsletter!**

We are always looking for articles for our newsletter. Naturally, we would like pieces that have to do with the town's history, but if you have an interest that ties in with history somehow, why not share it with us? Maybe you collect old snuffboxes or old railroad material. Maybe you have done some of your family history that others might be interested in. Maybe you would like to talk about the old days in Johnston. Wouldn't it be fun to share your knowledge! You do not have to be a great writer to put together an article. None of us are great literary figures. If you need help though, one of us would be glad to assist you.

We think that it will make for a much better newsletter if others contribute pieces that they have written. Remember, your reminiscences about the old days in Johnston will become valuable pieces of our town's history. But if you do not get them down on paper, they will be lost forever. We should make sure that future generations know what went on in times past.

**Next newsletter deadline: July 15, 2010.**

**Our Executive Board**

President: Louis McGowan  
Vice-President: Dan Brown  
Treasurer: Joe Jamroz  
Recording Secretary: Evelyn Beaumier  
Corresponding Secretary: Christopher Martin  
Trustee: Bel McGowan  
Trustee: Rolf Johnson  
Trustee: John Barattini  
Trustee: Kit Rhodes

Our Executive Board meets at 7pm in the Museum building, 101 Putnam Pike, on the second to the last Wednesday of each month, September through June (except December). All are welcome to attend.

General Meetings are held at 7pm the last Wednesday of each month, September through June (no December meeting. We hold our Holiday Party that month). The meetings are held in the Museum Building.

Our phone number is: (401) 231-3380  
Our website address is: [www.JohnstonHistorical.org](http://www.JohnstonHistorical.org)  
Our email address is: [Info@JohnstonHistorical.org](mailto:Info@JohnstonHistorical.org)

**Annual Dues**

Have you paid your 2010 dues yet? It's that time again. Your dues help us to operate. The price of a single membership is only \$15; a family membership is only \$20. Wotta bargain! So once more, please pay your 2010 dues. Send us a check today!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Renewal Single (\$15) \_\_\_\_\_  
Family (\$20) \_\_\_\_\_

New Single (\$15) \_\_\_\_\_  
Family (\$20) \_\_\_\_\_

Don't forget -- your donations to the Johnston Historical Society can be deducted from your taxes. We are registered with the Federal Government as a non-profit organization.

**JOHNSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
101 PUTNAM PIKE  
JOHNSTON, RHODE ISLAND 02919**