

# Johnston Historical Society

## Historical Notes

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

### William Borden King Jr. House (c.1840)

by Steve Merolla

There is a rather non-descript house located on a rise along the course of the roadway at 240 Central Avenue. Many of its original architectural features have been removed through the years and the structure is now clad in yellow vinyl siding. Nevertheless, the house is well over 150 years old and the man who built it had a connection to the only Johnston native to serve as Governor of the State of Rhode Island.



The William Borden King Jr. House as it looked in days gone by.

The background to the history of the house and the land surrounding it can be traced back to the late seventeenth century. At that time, a Mr. Joseph Wise of Roxbury in the State of Massachusetts, came to own a massive 600 acre farm in an area of Johnston roughly bounded by Neutaconkanut Hill on the east and Atwood Avenue on the west. On June 7, 1671, Mr. Wise sold the northerly 300 acres of the farm to Deacon William Parks, who was also a resident of Roxbury. The boundary line of the split between the two 300 acre parcels ran roughly along present-day Morgan Avenue, with Parks owning north of that roadway. It is doubtful that either Parks or Wise ever lived in the area, the land being more of an investment. On April 17, 1680, Parks sold his 300 acre parcel to a Mr. John Thornton for £100 Sterling (Providence Deed Book 1/40).

John Thornton had lived in Newport for forty years before his move to this area. He is said to have been a friend of Roger Williams. He and his wife Sarah had six sons and two daughters. On April 22, 1686, John Thornton sold sixty acres of his farm to his son John Thornton Jr., who was married to Dinah Steere; they

had eight children. On December 29, 1715, John Thornton Jr. drew up his Will; in it he left £40 to his son Josiah, a fair amount of money for the time. After all his debts were paid the estate was to then be divided amongst his heirs. The will also gave sons Josiah Thornton and John Thornton 3rd authority to dispose of the estate as they saw fit. The fact that Dinah Thornton is not named in the Will indicates that she was probably deceased at this time. John Thornton Jr. himself died on January 9, 1716.

Brothers John Thornton 3rd and Josiah Thornton moved fairly quickly to divide what had now become an eighty-five acre farm. On April 4, 1716, they made an agreement to partition the farm (P 2/497), which was divided by a line that ran east to west, thus leaving northern and southern halves; John received the northern parcel and Josiah the southern. The northern parcel of John Thornton 3rd contains the subject house. With his future now secure, John 3rd decided it was time to marry, and on June 7, 1716, he wed Miss Abigail Clemence. He and Abigail had five children: Richard (b. 1716), Solomon (b. 1719), Dinah (b. 1726), John (b. 1728), and Daniel (b. 1733). Solomon died in 1741, and his brother Lt. Richard Thornton died in 1756 near Albany, New York, while on service with Colonial troops during the French and Indian War. Surviving records indicate that John Thornton 3rd was a man with some wealth; in 1736, he and a partner commissioned the building of a sailing sloop. It also seems that he had a house built in Providence on the "Towne Street," around the year 1743, on what is present-day North Main Street. This house was in addition to his father's house in what is now Johnston, near to Central Avenue. John 3rd carried on a good deal of deed activity, buying and selling much land. On August 16, 1745, John Thornton 3rd died at fifty-six years of age, leaving his widow Abigail and four surviving children. By this time, he had acquired an estate that comprised about 200 acres. When his executors divided the estate (P 12/392), the eldest son, Richard, received the eastern one hundred acres; the two youngest sons, John Thornton 4th and Daniel Thornton received between them the western one hundred acres, to be divided between them. This parcel contained the site of the old homestead dwelling house. On October 3, 1760, Daniel sold off the fifty acre parcel he owned to his brother John (Johnston Deed Book 1/54). John Thornton 4th was now in full possession of the one hundred acres that included the old homestead, but he soon began to sell off pieces of it, perhaps to recoup some of the payment made to buy out his brother. On October 4, 1760, he sold twenty-two-and-a-half acres on the south side of the farm to cousin Josiah Thornton, (J 1/15), and on April 10, 1767, he sold off another twenty-two-and-a-half acres, this on the northern side of the farm, to Thomas Angell (J 1/281).

This John Thornton married his second cousin, Anne Thornton, the daughter of Richard and Patience Thornton. They had eight children; Anne died around 1773, leaving her husband with many small children to raise. One source states that after Anne's death, they were raised by her sister Patience, who never married. It seems that John Thornton ran into some financial difficulty, possibly the result of the depreciation of the currency at the time. It may have been the reason that he sold his fifty-three acre farm, with its dwelling house and many outbuildings, to William Borden King on December 4, 1776 (J 2/107). John Thornton died sometime in 1810.

The "old Thornton Farm" now passed into possession of the King family. The Thorntons had owned the property for ninety-six years, but the Kings would own it for an even longer period of time. William Borden King was born in 1751, the son of Josiah and Mary King; his family homestead was located on present-day Hartford Avenue, the house still standing at #829. On November 6, 1774, William married Welthian Walton of Warwick, and within two years they purchased the farm and dwelling house of John Thornton, as noted above. They had six children: Lydia (b. October 14, 1777), Mary Borden (b. December 3, 1779), William Borden Jr. (b. March 13, 1782), Samuel Ward (b. May 23, 1786), Josiah (b. February 3, 1788), and John (b. January 21, 1795). It seems natural that William and Welthian decided to purchase a homestead and set up house before starting their family, and indeed their first child was born ten months after they gained ownership. An important fact to note is that their son Samuel Ward King (born May 23, 1786) must have been born at this very homestead on Central Avenue, the significance being that Samuel became the only Johnston resident to serve as Governor of Rhode Island, his term running from 1840 to 1843.

William Borden King was one of the leading men of the town in his own right. When Rhode Island finally ratified the U.S. Constitution in 1790, every town in the state sent two delegates to the ratifying Convention held in Newport, and one of the two representatives from Johnston was William Borden King. In 1793, William's parents deeded to him their one hundred acre homestead on Hartford Avenue (J 3/155), and he in turn granted them a life estate to the property. His father Josiah died in 1800, and his mother Welthian in 1810, and it is probably around this time that William left the Central Avenue area to live on the old King homestead on present-day Hartford Avenue. In any case, when William Borden King died on March 29, 1829, he was living at the Hartford Avenue address. Mr. King owned in total about 235 acres in the town, spread between many locations. At a Court of Probate the estate was divided into six different shares, or one for each child. For our story, we are interested in share #5, which was selected by William Borden King Jr. The main part of this share consisted of twenty-seven acres located on the south side of what was then called the Central Turnpike, and refers to this parcel as the former "Thornton farm." The buildings referred to as then standing on share #5 almost definitely included the old Thornton farm house.

William Borden King Jr. was the third child and eldest son of William B. and Welthian King, born in 1782. In 1805 and 1806, he served as Lieutenant in the 2nd Company of Johnston militia,

and from 1807 to 1809 as Captain and commanding officer of the same unit. On April 9, 1812, he married Martha Smith of North Providence, and they had three children: James S. (b. 1811-d. July 4, 1837) who died at sea; Amey Janet (b. December 1814-d. July 1904) who never married and lived all her years on the home farm; John Mawney King (b. March 5, 1822-d. 1893). Indications are that William B. King Jr. was living at the northeast side of the intersection of present-day Hartford Avenue and Killingly Street at the time of his father's death in 1829. Census records indicate it is possible that William Jr. continued to live for some at the Killingly-Hartford site even after he received the parcel of land along the Central Turnpike as his share of his father's estate. However, he eventually began to show some interest in the land he inherited years earlier, for on May 18, 1839, he purchased a ten acre lot of land on the north side of the Central Turnpike, just across from his share #5 (J 11/35). This parcel of land in fact was sold to him by his brother Samuel Ward King, who himself had inherited it out of his father's estate in 1829, as part of share #3. One year later, on June 24, 1840, William Borden King Jr. sold his property along Hartford Avenue-Killingly Street to Earl Knight (J 11/101) for \$1,400, a substantial sum for the day (it is possible this was the site of the "Greek Tavern" stage coach stop). These two factors, the purchase of the ten acre parcel on the north side of the Central Turnpike in 1839, and the selling of the Hartford-Killingly site in 1840, indicate that by 1840, William B. King Jr. decided to take up residence along the Central Turnpike. The 1840 Census seems to confirm this, as the people enumerated near him were also residents of the Central Turnpike area. Being a man of means from a prominent family, he would not have wanted to live for long in the old Thornton farmhouse on the property. It is probable that William very soon decided to build a handsome new house on the site, probably around the year 1840, and in fact an older picture of the house shows that it had some very fine details of the Greek Revival style of the period. Thus the date selected as the build year for 240 Central Avenue can fairly reliably be given as circa 1840.

On July 19, 1847, William Borden King Jr. sold the easterly part of his homestead farm to his son John Mawney King, the parcel consisting of twenty acres on the southern side of the Central Pike (J 13/250). The 1850 Walling map clearly shows one house occupied by William and another occupied by John Mawney King. William would have lived in the new house and his son most likely in the old Thornton farmhouse. The 1850 Census also indicates that both father and son lived in adjacent dwellings with their respective families. In the case of William (house 7/family 7), residing in the house were himself, his wife Martha, and daughter Amey J. King. Also present was Daniel A. Harris, who was probably a farm laborer, and Jane G. Smith, who was likely a domestic servant. Members of the Harris family lived with or next to the Kings from at least 1850 through 1880, and very well may have been related. Meanwhile, son John lived next door (house 8/family 8) with wife Emeline. The 1850 Agricultural Schedule shows that William owned fifty acres of improved land and eight acres of unimproved land, with a value of \$3,000; he owned one horse and ten cows. John M. King owned twenty acres of improved land worth \$2,000, along with two horses and thirteen cows.

On November 24, 1851, William sold the rest of the estate to his son John for \$1,500 (J 14/202), and this included the subject house. Perhaps William was ill and wanted to dispose of his estate to his only surviving son before his death, which occurred on March 27, 1854. After his father's death, it is almost certain that John M. King moved into the newer house on the property; the fate of the older house is unknown but it does seem to appear on maps until 1895; it probably was taken down or fell apart by the early years of the twentieth century.

J.H. Beers' biographical tome, *Representative Men and Old Families of Rhode Island* states that John Mawney King was educated in the local district schools and the Fruit Hill Seminary and that he spent his entire life on the home farm of his father. Beers also states that he was a prosperous farmer who also ran a retail milk route, and that at the time of his death he was considered one of the most successful men of the town, having served on the town council. John Mawney King had married Miss Emeline Frances Angell (b. October, 1825) of North Providence in 1849; she died only two years after the marriage, in 1851. Mr. King carried on much deed activity, and was involved as mortgagee in around twenty-one mortgage deeds. This indicates that Mr. King served as a sort of a banker for his neighbors, a not uncommon state of affairs at the time.



Google Street View of the King House in 2011.

When John Mawney King died on September 7, 1893, his only child, William F. King, inherited his considerable estate. William's mother, as noted above, died the same year he was born, thus he was raised until age twelve in North Providence by his maternal grandmother. Like his father before him, William was a rather prominent member of the community. The biography of him in J.H. Beers states that he worked as a trained civil engineer until 1883, when he was elected town clerk, and served in that post continuously until 1893. William F. King moved to 115 Whittier Avenue in 1884, in what was the Olneyville section of Johnston. In 1898, this section of Johnston was annexed to Providence. Olneyville was the center of activity of the town at that time, and it was not uncommon for people of prominence to locate there. William's aunt, Amey J. King, continued to live in the house at 240 Central Avenue until her death in 1904. William F. King died in 1930, leaving only one heir, son Irving A. King (b. December 10, 1889). It is nearly

certain that Irving King lived at the Whittier Avenue address. On October 21, 1933, Mr. King mortgaged the Central Avenue property for \$3,500 (J 52/460). For whatever reason, King did not meet the terms of the mortgage and in May of 1939, the property at 240 Central Avenue was sold to mortgage-holder Amey Arnold (J 57/200). Thus, after 163 years, from 1776 to 1939, ownership of the house and property at 240 Central Avenue passed out of the hands of the King family.

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**Excerpt from  
Nathan Hale: The Life and Death of America's First Spy  
by M. William Phelps (2015):**

Hiking toward Providence, Rhode Island, with his 7th Regiment, Nathan documented the journey inside a large, leather-bound book he would rely on in the coming days for companionship, support, and perhaps a cathartic way of talking himself through what was sure to be the most trying times of his life. The first entry Nathan wrote was on September 23, 1775, a day after he and his unit departed New London. "Cannon[s]... heard from the last stage to the present; marched... arrived Waterman's (a private house & entertainment good) after a stop or two (six miles) -- tarried all night."

The Benjamin Waterman House in Johnston, just a few miles west of Providence, was a popular overnight lodge for travelers along the Hartford Turnpike, located at a crossroad called Hughesdale. Nathan and his companions had traveled about 56 miles to reach Waterman's. For a rebel army unit heading toward the theater of war, staying outside Providence, a major port city, was a tactical move. No army wanted to be sitting ducks for a regiment of General Gage's men, who were said to be roaming the region. Gage had sent several warships into Providence Harbor, and the surrounding ports, to support a group of British troops heading into the area. An intelligent commander such as Nathan knew the danger of marching his troops into what could turn into a trap or ambush.

Waterman's was a two-story inn, which allowed several of Nathan's men to stand guard on the second floor, while the remaining troops set camp for the night outside, fed themselves, prepared a marching plan for the following day, and rested.

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**General Zenas R. Bliss (1835-1900)**

During the Civil War, Zenas Randall Bliss, one of Johnston's native sons, earned the Congressional Medal of Honor, our nation's highest honor, for bravery on the battlefield. Zenas R. was born in the Simmonsville section of Johnston on April 17, 1835, the son of Zenas Bliss and Phoebe Waterman Randall Bliss. His father, a textile print works



operator in Hughesdale, provided his son with proper schooling and had enough influence to procure an appointment to the military academy at West Point, from which Zenas R. graduated in 1854. He subsequently spent many years in the army, both before and after the Civil War, on the frontier in Texas. His congressional Medal was won during the first battle of Fredericksburg, December 1862. "... to encourage his regiment, which had never before been in action, and which had been ordered to lie down to protect itself from the enemy's fire, (Bliss) arose to his feet ... " and led a charge against the Confederate lines. Bliss eventually served forty-seven years in the Army and rose to the rank of Major General.

Zenas Work Bliss, the General's son, was also born in Johnston, becoming prominent in the state himself. He was elected to one term as Lieutenant Governor of Rhode Island and was instrumental in organizing the state Department of Taxation.

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### Historical Tidbits

Here are some bits of information from old newspapers:

From *The Rhode Island Citizen*: On September 19, 1884, it was reported that Charles Fletcher pledged \$1,000 to the town to build a road through his Carpenter Farm. He said that he was anxious to build a four-story mill at Simmonsville (later renamed Thornton), and it would be cheaper to use the new road than to haul building materials over the original stretch of Plainfield Street [editor's note: other sources say that the reason for the new road was to bring the trolley to Thornton, but maybe we are talking about the same thing].

Also from the *Citizen*: On April 3, 1885, it was written that Thornton Avenue, the new road through Charles Fletcher's Carpenter Farm, opened the previous fall [editor's note: this would be the present stretch of Plainfield Street running between Morgan Avenue and School Street. At some point after this, the name of the section was changed from Thornton Avenue to Plainfield Street].

From the *Olneyville Times*: in the November 15, 1889, edition it was reported that J.G. Burton was recognized as clerk for the Congregational Church in Thornton. John Tomlinson was serving as acting deacon. (The church was actually located in the Cranston side of Thornton, but would have been used, of course, by many Johnston residents).

From the *Rhode Islander*: On November 6, 1891, it was reported that the new Johnston High School would be dedicated on November 13, 1891.

From the *Olneyville Times*: in the December 30, 1897, edition, it was reported that the streets of Thornton were illuminated with electric lights for the first time.

The *Providence Journal* reported on August 31, 1936: "Former Federal Judge Ira Lloyd Letts, speaking at the dedication of Grand Army Highway yesterday afternoon at Ochee Springs House, Hartford avenue, Johnston, recalled the record that Rhode

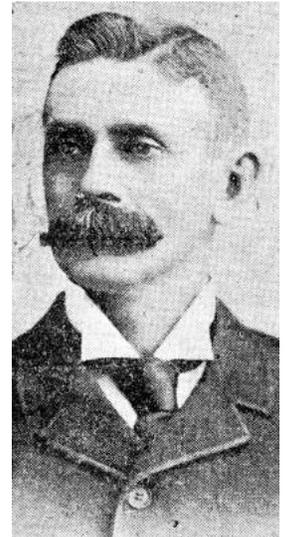
Island had in the Civil War, and said that 'with that record, it is right that we should here meet today in honor of the great Union Army, and that the first of the 48 States of the Union here dedicate this length of 24 miles of what was once U. S. Route 6, but which will soon become the great transcontinental highway, the Grand Army Highway.' Route 6 is the Hartford Pike to North Scituate and Danielson Pike to the Connecticut State line."

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### From an unidentified 1919 newspaper:

#### FUNERAL HELD OF JOHN O. WINSOR, EX-ASSEMBLYMAN

Grand Army Veteran, Long Prominent in Johnston Town Affairs, and Former Gold Miner in Colorado, Dies at Home Following Brief Illness.



Funeral services were held this afternoon for John Olney Winsor, a life-long resident of Johnston, Grand Army veteran, and a former member of the General Assembly, who died at the old Winsor homestead, Johnston, after a brief illness, on Wednesday last. He died in the house where he was born on May 3, 1842, and he represented the fourth generation of Winsors to live there. He was a direct descendant of Rev. Samuel Winsor.

The funeral services, which were held at his home, were attended by a large number of relatives and friends. Rev. G.B. Cutler of Scituate, assisted by Rev. John H. Roberts of Greenville, officiated. The internment was in the family burial lot on the farm.

He received his early education in the public schools of Johnston, and later, attended business college at Poughkeepsie, N.Y. He enlisted in 1861, and was a Corporal of Battery F, First Rhode Island Light Artillery, serving his country for three years, being mustered out Oct. 28, 1864. After the war he went to the gold fields of Colorado, travelling the entire distance on foot or horseback.

He has always taken a deep interest in the political affairs of his town, State and nation, serving his town as a Councilman and Assessor of Taxes, and was a member of the General Assembly in 1880, 1881 and 1882.

As a member of Prescott Post, G.A.R., he has been actively interested in all of their meetings and reunions.

He was married Nov. 13, 1867, to Edna F. Brown, who survives him, together with a son, Harry B. Winsor, and two daughters, Mrs. George W. Steere and Mrs. Howard F. Holbrook, all of Providence.

## Society Doings

### JHS President Gives Talk

On August 20, 2015, JHS President Louis McGowan gave a talk on the village of Greystone to a group of twenty paddlers that had signed up for a fundraiser with the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council. The talk was presented at Cricket Field across the river from the Greystone Social Club.

### 2015 Annual Picnic

We held our annual picnic on Sunday, September 13, at our museum. Due to a prediction of rain, we held our picnic inside. About twenty members had a great time, with plenty of good food and lots of good talk.

### Election of Officers

At our June 2015 General Meeting, we held our election of officers. Everyone ran unopposed, so our Executive Board remains unchanged (see the last page of this newsletter for a roster).

### Our Properties

Thank you to all who worked hard to do our fall yard cleanup on Saturday, November 21st. We filled fifty-five bags and were able to clean up most of the property. The following participated: Doug, Joe, Dan, Shar, Elise, Paul, Louis, Marie, Walter, Anthony and Tim.

### Museum

Our museum barn is open Monday nights (except holidays), 6:30-8:30pm; and on the third Saturday of each month, 9-11am, for those who would like to visit the museum or examine the society's collection of printed materials. Also, the Belknap School, corner of Atwood and Greenville Avenues, is open 2-4pm the first Saturday of each month, April to October. Both the museum and Elijah Angell House continue to be open by appointment -- we always welcome visits by interested individuals or groups. Just shoot us an email at [history@jhs.necoxmail.com](mailto:history@jhs.necoxmail.com), 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.

### Grant Activity

In September, Christopher Martin was once again able to secure us a \$500 Community Spirit 9/11 Mini-Grant through the Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation, a charitable arm of his employer, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care. The grant is earmarked for the design and printing of a wall display detailing the history of textile manufacturing in the Town of Johnston. Leftover funds, if any, will go toward improved street signage for the Johnston Historical Society's historic Elijah Angell House and museum barn.

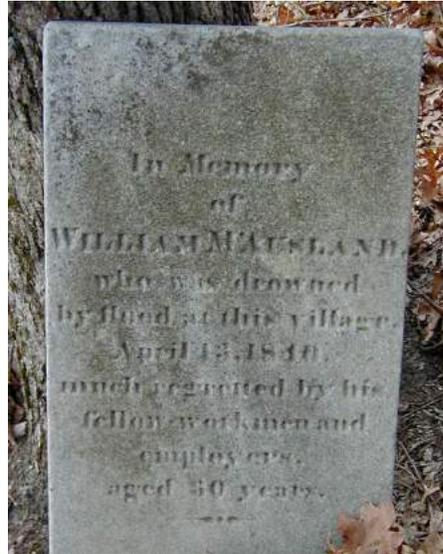
### Cemetery Committee Report

by Pasco Macari

The cemetery committee through the past four months returned to several yards for spring cleanup. As mentioned many times the recreation department ground crew cuts the grass and several of

our restored yards, but many more are maintained by the committee. Yard #s 5, 59, 60, 71, 72, and 87 are several we maintain.

We are close to completing #58. On our last visit we mortared and repositioned the last of the stones. We repositioned the Marble head stone of William McCausland who died in the Simmonsville flood of 1840. Also, we probed the ground, and uncovered more pieces of the children's foot stones.



In Memory  
of  
WILLIAM  
MCAUSLAND  
who was drowned  
by flood at his village,  
April 13, 1840,  
much regretted by his  
fellow workmen and  
employers,  
aged 30 years.

Cemetery #1, the Deacon Thornton yard, is located about 100 yards off Hopkins Avenue on the Dr. Latham property. Granite posts and iron rails protect it. We repaired three broken stones and reset them into bases, and four foot stones were mortared into bases. We installed a new sign and pole. All head and foot stones were found, and the cemetery is complete. Four weeks start to finish.

Cemetery #2 is a large yard protected with granite posts and iron rails. We found the access gate, in good condition, about twenty feet from the yard. Arnold's inventory for June 1891 notes more than twenty-seven burials including un-engraved rude stone burials. We spent four weeks cleaning before we could determine the full amount of restoration needed. There was some vandalism but for the most part the toppled stones were due to normal settling. One medium marble had settled straight down as the casket rotted. The next newsletter will highlight our restoration progress.

We visited yard #27, located in the Resource Recovery Industrial Park, to get a handle on what needs to be done. Sims Metal Recycling Company's plant is next to the cemetery. Upon our request Sims is committed to helping with our cleaning project, including removing large trees. We will start this yard in 2016.

Cemetery #48 is a very small yard with granite posts and iron rails and two very ornate iron entrance gates. The last family to farm this land, on the east side of Brown Avenue, was the Dames. The state owns this land today. This yard was an easy fix. First, thanks to Arthur Iannelli for clearing all the high grass in the yard and around the perimeter. One base needed repair and the headstone mortared onto it. A child's headstone was placed

next to the mother stone, because we did not know its exact location. Two marble headstones were moved away from the rails; through the years they began to lean into the rails. The cemetery is the Steere-Dame yard. About eight to ten burials, with a couple of other persons interred.

The cemetery committee that restored the Colonel Peter Briggs yard, #19, in 2013 was treated to a fine dinner recently. Ginger and Fred DeGregory -- Ginger is a descendent of Peter Briggs -- were thrilled with the restoration. A dinner engagement was scheduled in March at Eddie's Restaurant to show their appreciation. Ginger has been tracing her family tree for quite some time, I think it's become her passion. She also has a connection to Roger Williams.

The DeGregorys are from California and first contacted us in early 2013 about the Briggs yard. They returned home before we were able to restore the yard with plans to return in 2014. Those plans fell through but they made the trip this year. Thank you Ginger and Fred for your generosity. There is an added bonus to this restoration. A local businessman has adopted the cemetery. Angelo Aiello owner of AA Insulation on Killingly Street appreciates what the committee does. He feels he has the means to "give back to the community" and adopted the cemetery as one way to do so. Because the yard is located behind a small plaza, dumpsters used by the Plaza have been placed next to the yard. Angelo and his crew have cleaned up the area, built a railroad tie wall and added mulch to separate the yard from the dumpsters.

The committee thanks Dan Mazulla and his grounds crew for their continued work in our cemeteries. We also thank the Young family, Windsor family, and Mathewson family for perpetual care of their family yards. Also Joe Jamroz for cemetery #11 and Angelo Aiello for cemetery #19.

[Editor's note: The Rhode Island Historical Cemeteries Facebook page reported in late November that the area around JN062, the cemetery below the Home Depot parking lot, had been clearcut, possibly disturbing unmarked fieldstones outside the main cemetery enclosure. In addition, the sign seems to have gone missing. Our Cemetery Committee will have to investigate to determine the extent of the damage, if any.]



JN062 on November 27, 2015.  
Photo courtesy of Rhode Island Historical Cemeteries.

## Speakers

At our September meeting, author David Norton Stone spoke about a Rhode Island favorite, stuffed quahogs, or stuffies as they are more commonly called. Mr. Stone told us of his extensive research on the subject (which involved much tasting of hundreds of stuffies!). It was a fun evening, and we all enjoyed the talk. He, along with Christopher Martin, is writing a book about clam shacks and related restaurants in Rhode Island.

For our October meeting, twenty-five member braved a windy, rainy night to take in a wonderful video presentation by Betty and Carlo Mencucci from the Burrillville Historical and Preservation Society. They showed excerpts from a series of videos that they put together on the history of Glocester, RI. The show was very professional and very informative.

## Acquisitions

- In July, Anthony Ricci donated a number of items from the estate of his uncle. Included were: items from St. Rocco's Church (a number of church bulletins from the 1940s and '50s) and Thornton Junior High School, a key and tag from the Hi-Way Motor Inn, many obituaries of Johnston people, and items from his uncle's military years.
- In July, Dan Brown donated a two quart Ochee Springs Bottling Company water bottle. It is clear glass with embossed letters.
- In August, Louis McGowan purchased two items from a local antique co-op. One was "Old Times in Graniteville" by Ralph N. Sweet, which detailed his remembrances of the village in the 1890s. The other item was an original cabinet card photo of Samuel Ward King, Johnston's only governor.
- In August, Reverend Phyllis E. Hackett, daughter of Reverend Arthur F. Jennings, donated a Hitchcock-style chair that was given to her father at the 100th anniversary (1991) of the opening of the Belknap Chapel, where he preached in the 1930s.
- In August, Alfred Parillo donated a couple of dozen photos of Pocasset School, his family, and a few other town shots.
- In September, Lori and Phil Lemoi donated a punch bowl and cups to our group.
- In September, Alicia Pinto donated a Lori Auto Glass (Johnston) metal advertising thermometer.
- In October, Louis McGowan donated seventy-five milk, water, and soda bottles to the society. All are from Johnston and all are different. They represent about forty separate companies.
- In October, George Daigneault donated a 1958 Thornton Grammar School yearbook and a Lloyd's Diner matchbook.
- In November, Danny Brown donated forty postcards and photos of the town.



Many donated objects may be seen in the Acquisitions photo album on our Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/johnstonhistorical](http://www.facebook.com/johnstonhistorical)). As always, 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:

- Display mannequins
- Any Johnston-related memorabilia

### Historical Teasers -- Do You Know Your Town's History?

*Answers to last issue's teasers:*

- 1) Victor DeCosta was Johnston's Paladin. He sued the show's owners for stealing his character and won the case. The verdict was appealed, and he subsequently lost without ever receiving a penny.
- 2) Thomas Tefft designed the handsome, English-style St. Peter's Episcopal Church in the Manton section. The church burned in the 1970s and was not rebuilt. Tefft, Rhode Island's first trained architect, designed a number of buildings still standing in Providence, including a stone house on the Providence College campus and a former church on Benefit Street.
- 3) A bridewell is a jail. The name came from a prison in London that stood next to St. Bride's Church. There was one Bridewell on Greenville Avenue in Manton and another that changed location a few times (two locations in Olneyville and one in Thornton).

*New Historical Teaser Questions:*

- 1) A Johnston chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, a group working to ban alcohol, started a subscription campaign in the late 1880s to raise money to build a chapel in their area. What is the name of that chapel?
- 2) The Pezzullo family, well-known for their role in twentieth century town politics, has lived in an impressive mansion in town since 1921. Which house is it, who was its first owner, and who was the famous architect that designed the house?
- 3) This impressive social club was the only one ever built in Johnston by a manufacturing concern for the benefit of its workers. What is that club?

### Upcoming Events

#### December 2, 2015

General Meeting  
7pm

Filmmaker Marian Gagnon will screen, and answer questions about, America's Forgotten Heroine, her award-winning documentary about Newport lighthouse keeper Ida Lewis.

#### December 4, 2015

JHS Christmas Party  
6:30-8:30pm

Elijah Angell House and JHS Museum Barn will be open for a celebration of holiday cheer, and JHS members and their guests are invited for seasonal merrymaking. Please bring a dessert or appetizer to share.

#### January 27, 2016

General Meeting  
6:30pm

Filmmaker Mark Levitt will introduce and discuss his new documentary, *Woven in Time: The Narragansett Salt Pond Preserve*, about one of the most important archaeological sites on the East Coast, and the stories that emerged from it. (Note earlier start time to allow for the film's running time).

#### February 24, 2016

General Meeting  
7pm

Society President Louis McGowan will give a talk on the mill village of Greystone.

#### March 30, 2016

General Meeting  
7pm

Society Vice-President Danny Brown will give a talk on the White Star Line (1900-'60).

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.

**Note:** Our museum barn is open Monday nights (except holidays), 6:30-8:30pm; and Fridays, 2-5pm, for those who would like to visit the museum or examine the society's collection of printed materials. Just in case, call ahead to confirm we're here. Also, the Belknap School, corner of Atwood and Greenville Avenues, is open 9-11am the first Saturday of each month, May to October.

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 [history@jhs.necoxmail.com](mailto:history@jhs.necoxmail.com) or leave a message at (401) 231-3380.



As of this month our Facebook page has 470 followers! Have you 'liked' us yet? To find us type this address into your computer browser:

[www.facebook.com/johnstonhistorical](http://www.facebook.com/johnstonhistorical)

### 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: March 15, 2016.**

**Our Executive Board**

President: Louis McGowan  
Vice-President: Dan Brown  
Treasurer: Joe Jamroz  
Recording Secretary: Elise Carlson  
Corresponding Secretary: Christopher Martin  
Trustees: Belmira McGowan, Rolf Johnson, Doug Stephens and Anthony Ursillo.

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 Barn.

Phone: (401) 231-3380  
Website: www.JohnstonHistorical.org  
Email: History@JHS.necoxmail.com  
Facebook: www.facebook.com/johnstonhistorical

**Annual Dues**

Have you paid your 2015 dues yet? Your dues help us to operate. The price of a single membership is only \$20; a family membership is only \$30. Wotta bargain! So once more, please pay your 2015 dues. Send us a check today!

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

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

Renewal    Single (\$20) \_\_\_\_\_  
                  Family (\$30) \_\_\_\_\_

New            Single (\$20) \_\_\_\_\_  
                  Family (\$30) \_\_\_\_\_

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**