

Johnston Historical Society

Historical Notes

Vol. XXII, #1

Christopher Martin, Editor Louis McGowan, Assistant

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www.JohnstonHistorical.org

The Widow's Third

by Steve Merolla

In the mid-eighteenth century a property dispute roiled one of the town's neighborhoods. At this time, the town of Johnston had not yet been incorporated and thus the locale of this story was at that point still part of Providence. The area was in the eastern part of our town, namely a section of land situated on the south side of present-day Morgan Avenue, from where Morgan Avenue meets Plainfield Street on one end, down to where Morgan forms a prominent fork in the road with present-day School Street. Back in the eighteenth century this section of Morgan Avenue and School Street were the original route of the Plainfield Pike. From the south side of Morgan Avenue the lands in dispute ran southerly to the banks of the Pocasset River.



Google Maps view of the area in question.

The devolution of the property is somewhat convoluted. Captain Arthur Fenner was one of the original founders of the colony with Roger Williams, and a significant landowner; his house was located in the Fletcher Avenue area of Cranston, near to the Johnston line. Two of his sons were Major Thomas Fenner and Arthur Fenner Jr. The division of the Captain's estate was not made until many years after his 1703 death. This final division was finally made in 1735 (after both Thomas and Arthur Jr. had also died), between the heirs of Major Thomas Fenner (Richard and Joseph Fenner) on the one part, and the heirs of Arthur Fenner Jr. (Edward Fenner and John Fenner) on the other. The land in question was basically located on the south side of

Neutaconkanut Hill and south and east of it, extending at least to the Pocasset River; the amount of acreage amounted to well over 100 to 150 acres.

Arthur Fenner Jr. was the younger of Captain Arthur's two sons, the date of his birth however being unknown. He married Mary Smith, the daughter of John and Sarah (Whipple) Smith, and they had five children: Arthur, John, Edward, Mary, and Mercy. The younger Arthur died some time before 1723, leaving a daughter Sarah (who died in 1745). Edward Fenner married Amey Thornton on April 11, 1728, and they had nine children. The third son was John Fenner, who was born some time in 1704. On November 1, 1724, he married Amey Colwell, the daughter of Robert and Amey Colwell.

Arthur Fenner Jr. died on April 24, 1725. In his will, he left his wife use of the house and the household goods, gave his daughters £100 each, and his grandchild Sarah was given the new house her deceased father had built on the east side of Neutaconkanut Hill. The remainder of the large estate, including most of the land, was divided between his sons Edward and John.

Unfortunately, John Fenner was not going to be able to enjoy use of his inheritance for very long, for he died on November 25, 1725, at the young age of 21 years and only seven months after his father's passing. He and Amey had one child, Mercy, who was born on April 20, 1725, just seven months before her father died. At this point in her life, Amey Fenner was still a very young woman, born June 23, 1703, and thus only 22 years of age when her husband died. Remarriage, sometimes soon after widowhood, was quite common at the time. Thus it is not surprising that within a couple of years Amey remarried, being joined in matrimony to her neighbor Joseph Thornton on March 14, 1727.

Half of Arthur Fenner Jr.'s considerable estate was left to his son John, but having died young, John Fenner's heir, only child Mercy Fenner, inherited his estate. However, a widow was usually entitled to some temporary share in an estate, usually what was called the "widow's third." In practice, this "third" seemed to be in effect either until the widow remarried or she died. Even though Amey Fenner had remarried (becoming Amey Thornton), she was still entitled to this share, especially as the lawful heir was still a minor. In most cases the size of the widow's share was determined by the probate court and the decision was usually accepted. However in a few cases there could be dispute, in which case the situation had to wend its way through the regular court system. The real problems began with

the marriage of Mercy Fenner to Seth Dean of Plainfield, Connecticut. The marriage took place on October 6, 1743, Mercy being 18 years of age at the time. The exact living conditions in the Thornton household before Mercy's marriage cannot be known for sure, but there are indications that all was not well. What we do know is that Seth and Mercy (Fenner) Dean sued her stepfather Joseph Thornton in 1749 for work she performed "as a maid" in his household up until the year 1743, the year of her marriage. The fact that Mercy Dean felt as if she was treated as a maid leads one to surmise that there was a less-than-happy situation in the household (the case was withdrawn). These bad feelings are probably one of the reasons that litigation began as early as 1745. On November 19th of that year, the Thorntons brought suit against the Deans and the Deans reciprocated with their own suit against the Thorntons. For this story the lawsuit of the Thorntons against the Deans will be studied.

At the March 1746 Term of the Inferior Court of Common Pleas, the lawsuit brought by Joseph and Amey Thornton against Seth and Mercy Dean was heard in an "...action of Dower that the defendants justly and without delay render to the plaintiffs [the Thorntons] one-third-part of 60 acres of land... with one Dwelling House & shop thereon standing, which is the reasonable Dower of the aforesaid Amey Thornton..." This court case also records that the Thorntons requested £600 in lieu of the Deans not giving them their rightful one-third dower share of the John Fenner estate. In their suit, the Thorntons stated that Amey was first legally married to John Fenner and then legally married Joseph Thornton. Furthermore "...on or about the first day of April AD 1744, the Defendants [the Deans] entered into the aforesaid House & Land & have ever since withheld the whole of the same from the Plaintiffs [the Thorntons] & have utterly denied to render & deliver the possession to them of the aforesaid Third Part which is the Dower of the said Amey..." The Deans obviously wasted very little time in moving to claim their rightful ownership of the John Fenner estate.

Depositions were taken from various neighbors. Richard Brown, Justice of the Peace, testified that he lawfully joined in matrimony John Fenner and Amey Colwell on the evening of November 1, 1724. Daniel Sheldon stated that John Fenner lived and died in the house now occupied by Seth Dean and that Fenner owned the land west of the house and that Dean was now improving the land. Thomas Fenner Jr. confirmed the above and added that Dean took over the property on or about May 1744. Richard Thornton testified that on or about March 14, 1727, he was at the house of Thomas Fenner. Also present in the house were his brother Joseph Thornton and Amey Fenner, widow of John Fenner. He further stated that then and there Joseph and Amey applied to John Burton Esq., Justice of the Peace, to marry them, which ceremony he did in fact perform at that instant.

Of course, the Deans contested the merits of the case, asserting that it should be thrown out. However, the verdict by the jury was in favor of the plaintiffs, the Thorntons, and that they should finally have receipt of the dower share they sued for in their lawsuit. Not surprisingly, the Deans appealed the verdict, this time to the state Superior Court.

The case had many hearings at the Superior Court. At the March 1749 Term of that Court, part of the record stated: "*Seth Dean...*

appellant... Joseph Thornton, blacksmith... and Amey his wife, who was heretofore the wife of John Fenner... appellees. The foundation of this appeal was an action of dower brought and prosecuted by said Joseph and Amey against the said Seth at an Inferior Court of Common Pleas... for the recovery of one-third part of about 70 acres of land... and also one-third part of the Dwelling house and Shop and cellar thereon standing..." The records of this case (March 1749 Term) state that the Deans had initially appealed the case to the Superior Court, March Term 1747, that Court set aside the jury verdict and that the appeal went through several more Court Terms. Finally, at the Superior Court, September Term, 1749, the two parties agreed to submit the case to an arbitrator. "...*We the Subscribers together with Thomas Rice Esq. being appointed by the honorable Superior Court... to set off Dower and settle damages and costs in an action of Dower brought by Joseph Thornton and Amey his wife against Seth Dean do report that we have set off one-Third part of the Lands and Buildings described in the Plaintiffs declaration...*" What followed was a detailed description of the land involved, as well as which rooms and areas of the house belonged to the Thorntons. The Thorntons were also awarded court costs and damages of £137.15s. The final report was completed and presented on March 29, 1750. Both parties agreed to the terms. It was further stated that Amey possession of her thirds "during the Term of her Life."

In the meantime, while the lawsuits made their way through the courts, the situation was changing on the home front. Possibly in part because of the rather toxic relationship with the Thorntons, Seth and Mercy Dean decided to sell off their share of the disputed lands. On January 14, 1747, they deeded to a Mr. William Dean of Plainfield, Connecticut (Providence Deeds 12/160) all the lands they owned in Providence for £3,000. Not only did they sell off their Providence lands, but also those they owned in Smithfield, Gloucester, and Scituate. At this time I do not know to where they moved; as to William Dean, he was surely a close relative, possibly a brother or even father to Seth Dean. William Dean lived in the area for a few years and in fact in the final disposition of the lawsuit it was stated that William agreed to parts of the compromise with the Thorntons.

For reasons unknown, William Dean and his wife Elizabeth decided to start selling off parts of their rather recently purchased estate. On May 15, 1751, they sold for £1,438 to Hezekiah Carpenter of Rehobeth, Massachusetts, about 41 acres of land that bounded easterly on Edward Fenner, southerly on Pocasset River, westerly on the Plainfield Road and "...*northerly on the thirds set off to Joseph Thornton... together with half [should read 1/3] the dwelling house...*" (P 12/466). This parcel of land was part of what came to be known for many years as the Carpenter farm, and was located on the south side of present-day Morgan Avenue.

A little over a year later, on August 22, 1752, William Dean sold to Jabez Westcott about 39 acres of land on the southwesterly side of Neutaconkanut Hill (P 13/117). Part of this parcel was bounded on "...*land that is set off to Joseph Thornton and his wife Amey in part of her Dower in the estate of her former husband John Fenner, deceased...*" This tract of land was located on the north side of Morgan Avenue, just above the fork in the road where School Street meets Morgan Avenue. These last two

mentioned parcels of land, about 80 acres, were the two-thirds part of the John Fenner estate set off to his daughter Mercy Dean.

The last transaction concerning the Fenner/Dean estate took place on July 7, 1755 (P 12/264 & 14/291). On that date, William and Elizabeth Dean, now living in North Kingstown (near Seth and Mercy ?), first leased and then outright sold to David Thayer, for £1,200, about 40 acres of land, in three lots. Two of the lots were south of Morgan Avenue and the third was a small 10 acre lot north of the road. One of the lines in the deed reads "...all of which lands contain about 40 acres, and all are now in Possession of Joseph Thornton in the Right of his Wife's Dower..." This deed describes William's rights to the "widow's third." It must be recalled that in the court decision rendered in the Thornton v. Dean case, Amey Thornton was to have possession of her dower's third only "during the Term of her Life." Thus, after her death this 40 acre "thirds" would revert to Mercy Dean or her heirs. Since Seth and Mercy sold ownership of all their property in Providence to William Dean, he and his heirs would thus eventually have claim to possession after Amey Thornton's death. Thus in this deed William Dean was giving up future claim he now possessed in the "widow's third" to another party, David Thayer.

Joseph and Amey Thornton were not about to give up on her "thirds." In an ironical twist, on May 9, 1757, David Thayer sold to Joseph Thornton for £1,100 the same 40 acre parcel of land noted above (P 15/182). This meant that Joseph and Amey Thornton now had outright, absolute ownership of what had been set off as Amey's "thirds" in the John Fenner estate many years ago and after much contention. Joseph and Amey Thornton continued to live in the area until their deaths. Deed records indicate that Amey was alive at least until 1759; probate records show that Joseph Thornton died some time around October/November 1765. Their son Solomon Thornton took possession of much of the estate and the family lived in the area well into the nineteenth century.

[Postscript #1. As mentioned earlier, the Deans had counter-sued the Thorntons in 1745, demanding £1,000 for the rents and profits that the Thorntons had accrued while in control of the property from December 1, 1725, to September 1, 1743. There was a very interesting deposition given by Edward Fenner, brother of John Fenner, in that suit. Edward stated that it was his father's (Arthur Fenner Jr.) will and intention that his lands be divided equally between himself and his brother John, that John died before this was implemented, and that shortly afterwards the marriage of the widow Amey to Joseph Thornton took place. Edward further stated that shortly after his sister-in-law's remarriage, Joseph Thornton approached him and requested that he claim the "profits" of one-third of the estate as her rightful dower. It was agreed between the two around April 1728, and that Joseph Thornton began "improving" the one-third part of the whole of the estate, not just John's half share. Edward Fenner further stated that the following year, 1729, final division was made of his father Arthur Fenner's estate and from that time forward Joseph Thornton "improved" all the half part of the estate that was John Fenner's share, not just Amey's one-third "widow's share." He further said that sometime in the Spring of 1744, Seth Dean appeared and also began "improving" part of the estate.]

[Postscript #2. After the arrival of the Deans in 1744, Joseph and Amey Thornton most likely vacated the John Fenner house. They would of course eventually need their own dwelling. On March 17, 1753, Joseph Thornton purchased a small lot of land from Edward Fenner for £25: "*One certain lot of land containing 55 rods, and is that lot of land whereon the said Joseph Thornton hath lately built a House and now dwells in... adjoining to the South side of the Highway that leads to Plainfield...*"

I am fairly certain that this house was located on the south side of Morgan Avenue, on a short street called Thornton Street, which is just across from the entrance to the Morgan Condominium complex. Joseph and Amey's son Solomon later lived in this house.

Police Chief Chester Bennett Colwell

By Louis McGowan



For 25 years Chester Bennett Colwell was the Chief of Police in Johnston. He was the man who replaced longtime Police Chief Hiram Kimball, taking over the reins in 1934 when the Democratic Party took control of Johnston for the first time since the Civil War. In his 1959 obituary it is said that he "ran the town's affairs in the manner of an indulgent father of a large boisterous family." It was noted that he loved the rough-and-

tumble of election campaigns. Until the department became permanent in 1956, he was his party's leading vote getter.

As boss of the police department, he is said to have sometimes dealt harshly with offenders, but he was also known to be kindly in his treatment as much as he could. His obit states that he was liked and respected by the men of the police force. He was a controversial figure, though. His attitude towards bookmaking and gambling was described as "tolerant." He stated in an interview in 1951 that he planned to do nothing about bookie operations which had been discovered in Johnston (Editor's note: growing up in Thornton in the middle and late 1950s, we all knew who the bookies were in the village. It was not exactly a secret -- LHM). Colwell referred to known bookmakers as "gentlemen" whom he welcomed in the town (Editor's Note: This is interesting -- in England, "Turf Accountants" are just regular businessmen. Maybe Chief Colwell was just ahead of his time). There were protests against him for his attitude, but they did not seem to amount to much.

His working career started with a turn as a butcher and farmer. He was a life member of Johnston Hose No. 3 Fire Company, a Mason, a member of the Johnston Lions and a congregant of St. Peter's Episcopal Church. Since he was a direct descendent of Roger Williams, he was also a proud member of the Roger Williams Family Association.

All in all, though he was a colorful and controversial figure, it looks as if he was also a successful and competent Police Chief.

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*Correction:* Last issue we included an excerpt from a 2015 book by M. William Phelps called *Nathan Hale: The Life and Death of America's First Spy*. The author specifically referenced a Benjamin Waterman Tavern in Hughesdale, but as of this point in time we know of no such tavern. If the tavern was on the Hartford Pike as Phelps tells us, it was not in Hughesdale. A Benjamin Waterman did live in Hughesdale, though. We don't know if Hale left the Hartford Pike to travel to Hughesdale, or if he stopped on Hartford Pike at a tavern mistakenly called the Benjamin Waterman Tavern. More research is needed on this subject.

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Society Doings

2015 Christmas Party

We held our annual Christmas Party on Friday, December 15th, with about 30 people attending. Thanks to all who attended, all who helped clean up, and those who decorated the house. We had a great time with lots of good food and good company.

Holiday Open House

On Sunday, December 20th, we held an Open House for members, guests and visitors. We had a great turn-out, with over 40 people stopping in to share history and holiday cheer. As always, thanks to all who helped to put the day together: Joe, Pat, Elise, Shar, and Louis. Thanks also to everyone who attended and bought goodies for the event.

High Tea at Angell House

On Saturday, February 13, 2016, we held a Valentine High Tea at our Elijah Angell House. Twenty-five members and friends attended the sold-out event. A wonderful time was had by all.

There was much delicious food, including many tea sandwiches and other treats. These ranged from roast beef and chutney roll-ups to salmon on bagel slices. Desserts included cheese cake with berry sauce and home-made carrot cake.

The building was beautifully decorated by Kylie Swett, Bel McGowan, Elise Carlson, and Shar DiMaio. Thanks to all the others who helped make the day a grand success: Ida Silva, Liz Burch, Alice Lombardi, Louis McGowan, Kylie, Bel, Elise and Shar. Thanks also to all who attended. A special thanks, of course, goes out to Bel, who made the whole tea happen.

Our Properties

Belknap School Returned To Town

After 13 years of being under our care, our historical society will soon relinquish ownership of the Belknap School. When the town deeded the school over to us in the early part of the twenty-first century, we assumed ownership of the building mainly because we wanted to make sure that the school remained intact. We also hoped to restore the school to the way it looked when it

was functioning as the neighborhood school. Thanks to two grants, one from the Champlin Foundations and one from the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission (a State Preservation Grant), we were able to preserve and restore the building. For the interior restoration, we were awarded the 2010 Rhody Award for historic preservation by the Preservation Commission.



The school was pretty well socked in during the winter of 2013.
Photo by Christopher Martin.

Members of our group also put in quite a bit of labor in preparation for the inside work. We were optimistic about the school's future. As things have turned out, though, things did not go the way that we had hoped. For a variety of reasons, the school was underused. Its remote location was a problem, as well as a lack of parking. Because we could not afford to heat and air condition three buildings, we decided that we would not heat or air condition the school. Unfortunately, then, the school was very hot in the summer and very cold in the winter. Over time, these conditions cause problems in any building. The heating system needs to be replaced. The building also is in need of outside work, including painting, replacement of windows and pointing of brickwork.

We recently sought to obtain grant money to take care of needed exterior work. We were not given a grant, and we were left with little choice other than to talk to town officials to see if they could use the building in a way that would respect the building historically. Those discussions went well. We have been told that the school will be painted, the windows replaced and a new heating system installed. Additionally, a town organization will use the school as its headquarters.

Overall, we are sad to see the building not used as part of our museum. But, we are happy to have restored the building as much as we could and are happy that the town looks like it is going to make good use of the building.

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. 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, 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.

Cemetery Committee Report

by Pasco Macari

With the cleaning process completed as noted in the last newsletter, November 2015, we began the restoration of cemetery number two. There are approximately twenty-two marked burials and seven rude burials. Minimal vandalism but many stones were found to be deep in the ground, due to settling.

We pulled up four headstones (using the tripod) and many foot stones. We pulled up four bases and leveled them. We adjusted several slates, epoxied one large marble and one small marble, and epoxied and repositioned the headstone of Mary Jane Turner. We also repositioned several foot stones.

The headstone of Daniel Owen was broken at the base so we cemented it onto the base using the form. The headstone of Sophia O. Harris was leveled using pieces of lead under the upper base. We pulled up a double base in very good condition along with the marble heads.

Someone, in the past, tried to restore the headstone of Elizabeth Mathewson by cementing the broken head into its base. In doing so some of the inscription has been lost.

We spent about six weeks in this yard, and it is now complete. Next, as the winter was settling, we were hoping for one more cemetery project. That cemetery was number 69, the Belknap yard, located 1/4 mile from Greenville Avenue, behind the Baptist Church. James Arnold recorded twenty-four inscribed burials and twenty-four rude burials. We spent three weeks cleaning the yard and will return on the first Sunday of April.

With the mild late winter forecasted, we chose to get a jump on spring cleanup in many of the restored yards. The following cemeteries have been cleaned: number 21, number 69, number 58, number 66, number 36, number 59, number 60, and number 71.

The cemetery committee is Doug Stevens, Everett Cogswell, Elise Carlson, Shar DiMaio, Marie Thierfelder, Steve Merolla, and Pasco Macari.

Correction: In the last issue, due to a transcription error, we erroneously reported that the cemetery committee was treated to a dinner at Eddie's Restaurant. It should have been Marchetti's.

Speakers

Marian Gagnon, documentary film maker and Johnson & Wales University professor, visited us at our December 2, 2015, general meeting for a screening of her film about Ida Lewis, Newport's famous lighthouse keeper. The documentary is fabulous and, hopefully, it will bring Ida Lewis the national recognition that she deserves.

Marc Levitt came to us at our January 2016 meeting for a showing of his documentary film, "Woven in Time -- The Narragansett Salt Pond Preserve." It was a wonderfully made look at this important archeological site, and also an informative look at recent Narragansett Indian history.

Louis McGowan was our speaker at our February 2016 meeting. He spoke and showed slides to a crowd of twenty-five persons about the village of Greystone, our neighbor across the river in North Providence. The presentation was well-received.

For our March meeting, restoration carpenter Warren Lanpher treated us to a presentation on the 1795 Mount Vernon Baptist Church that he's been working on in Foster. Originally a Quaker meeting house, the building was struck by a pickup truck in October 2014 and significantly damaged. Warren gutted the building, raised it, and restored it to something approximating its 1795 condition (with some modern improvements hidden inside). He also had a stone wall built in front to hopefully protect it from future accidents.

On April 3, member Arthur Iannelli gave a special presentation of some of his nature photography. Arthur has a nice eye for a colorful bird.

Acquisitions

- In February, a Johnston Auxiliary Police/Civil Defense Badge (1940s or '50s) was purchased online.
- In March, Dan Brown donated an early twentieth century child's rocking chair and an oil color painting by a Smithfield artist.

Many donated objects may be seen in the Acquisitions photo album on our Facebook page (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. In the 1880s, the Women's Christian Temperance Union started a subscription campaign to build the Antioch Chapel on Plainfield Street in western Johnston.
2. The Pezzullo family has owned and lived in the James F. Simmons House on Atwood Avenue in Thornton for many years. Russell Warren was the famous architect that designed the house.

3. The impressive social club built by the Pocasset Worsted Mill was the Pocasset Casino (aka: the Pocasset Social Club).

Upcoming Events

April 27, 2016

General Meeting

7pm

Samuel Slater: crafty entrepreneur or pioneer of industrial espionage? Carl Johnson, a historical interpreter from Slater Mill, will speak about the man who kicked off America's Industrial Revolution.

April 30, 2016

Tag Sale

8am-2pm

Come by and buy stuff. Better yet, donate some gently used stuff that we can sell. Proceeds from the sale will benefit the Johnston Historical Society. Rain date: Sunday, May 1.

May 7, 2016

Queen Mary Dinner

4pm

Pretend you're setting sail on the luxurious Queen Mary with a four course bon voyage dinner, slide show, and display of QM memorabilia. \$25 donation per person; proceeds benefit the Johnston Historical Society. Space is limited, so reserve your place early! To reserve please call Bel McGowan, (401) 529-0873.

May 9, 2016

Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce Networking Open House

5-7pm

The JHS will be hosting a networking open house for the NRICC (of which we are a member). This will give our members a chance to mingle and meet many of the members of the NRICC and give them an opportunity to visit our Museum and the Elijah Angel House. All members of both organizations are welcome; refreshments will be served. Want to help out that night (we'll need volunteers in the house and museum)? Please contact Bel McGowan at (401) 529-0873.

May 25, 2016

General Meeting

7pm

Our speaker will be CCRI English Professor Roberta Mudge Humble, who will give a presentation on Rhode Islandese. Laugh at some of our words and pronunciations. Enjoy learning what is more tolerated and that which is less well endured. This presentation is made to entertain and inform, and you will learn how to speak, in perfect dialect, the language of Rhode Island.

June 5, 2016

Wine Tasting Event

Johnston

4pm

Verde Vineyards, 50 Hopkins Avenue. This event has proved so popular, we're doing it again! Jim Verde will give a talk on the history of Verde Vineyards, how wine is made, and how to taste

wine, and he'll give a tour of the vineyard right here in Johnston. \$25 per person; 21+ only; limited to a total of twenty-five guests; rain date, June 12. This event sold out the previous times it was offered, so please book early by calling Anthony Ursillo and Timothy Kee at (401) 764-5901 or e-mailing aursillo401@gmail.com to reserve your spot.

Verde Vineyards (verdevineyardsri.com) is a farmer-winery established under the Rhode Island Agricultural Act of 2008. The purpose of the act was to promote new forms of agriculture in Rhode Island. Verde Vineyards opened to the public in June 2012.

The ninety-minute tour will consist of three parts: Grape growing and vineyard maintenance; the process of winemaking; and tips for wine tasting. The tour includes the tasting of four wines currently for sale at the vineyard: two reds and two whites.

Verde Vineyards ("Green" in Italian) is green in another important aspect: All of the energy—electricity, hot water, heating and cooling is produced on-site resulting in a carbon-free footprint. The tour covers this aspect of the vineyard and all questions are welcomed at any time during the tour. Bottles of wine will be available for sale that day for those who are interested in purchasing. The tour will also include cheese and crackers and grapes provided by the JHS.

The ninety-minute tour will consist of three parts: Grape growing and vineyard maintenance; the process of winemaking; and tips for wine tasting. The tour includes the tasting of four wines currently for sale at the vineyard: two reds and two whites.

June 29, 2016

General Meeting

7pm

Our guest speaker will be George Luz, Jr., who will talk about his father, whose World War II exploits with "E" (Easy) Company, 506th PIR of the 101st Airborne Division, were detailed in the 1993 non-fiction book *Band of Brothers* by Stephen E. Ambrose, as well as in the subsequent 2001 HBO miniseries of the same name. If you watched that series you will remember his father, the funny guy from Rhode Island. George Luz, Jr., will talk a little bit about his dad and how he was blessed to have grown up around him, these men, and their families.

July and August 2016

Summer hiatus -- no general meetings in these months.

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.

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 or leave a message at (401) 231-3380.

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- The Browns of Belfield Drive
- Memories of Thornton
- Visit to St. Peter's and St. Andrew's Church
- Greystone Social Club Donation
- Historical Teasers

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- The Thomas Henry Hughes House
- Historical Teasers
- Cemetery Commission Report



As of this month our Facebook page has 611 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: July 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, Doug Stephens, Marie Thierfelder, 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**