

Johnston Historical Society

Historical Notes

Vol. XVII, #2

Christopher Martin, Editor Louis McGowan, Assistant
www.JohnstonHistorical.org

July 2011

A Month in the Life of a Johnston Farm Family transcribed and annotated by Louis McGowan



The Leroy White House.

George W. and Eunice S. White ran a dairy farm with their family on Cherry Hill Road in Johnston in the mid-nineteenth century. The farm was on the south side of the road about halfway between Greenville and Atwood Avenues. He later sold the farm and moved by 1895 to another at the corner of Cherry Hill Road and Greenville Avenue that he bought from Jonathan S. Killey. At this second location, he and his son, Leroy Sr., and his grandson, Leroy Jr., earned their living farming until well into the twentieth century. Around 1990, the massive barn was taken down, and later the house gave way to the wrecking ball. Today, the site is occupied by Whytebrook Terrace.

The White family men kept farm diaries for over sixty years. The Johnston Historical Society purchased this collection a number of years ago. Various White males took part in this endeavor. Some of the diaries contain very brief entries, little more than the weather and what chores they did that day. Other diaries contain much more information, including local trips, farm chores, real estate dealings, temperatures at various times of the day, etc.

I have selected one diary from 1883 to use because the entries are more complete during this period. All of the text has been copied verbatim from the diary (except for some added punctuation marks that I included). As to be expected in a farm diary, weather conditions were noted four, five, even six times a day. Weather was, of course, an important factor in successful farm management. I have only shown the conditions for one of the recordings each day, as close to mid-day as was given.

On the inside cover is written: "Charles O. White, Johnston, R.I., January 1st, 1883." Charles, the author of this diary, was fifteen or sixteen at the time, a year or two out of school. George and Willis were older brothers, about twenty-three and twenty respectively, and

Henry, a younger brother, was fourteen or fifteen. All of them were still at home. Leroy was an older brother, about twenty-nine years old, who was off on his own at the time. Roella A., the lone daughter, was twenty-six or twenty-seven in 1883.

Mon., Jan. 1, 1883. William Sweet here with fish cart. We bought [*sic*] of him. 31 degrees and pleasant at 1:00 p.m. Willis carried Father to Manton depot at 8 a.m. then went after Mrs. Fielding. She here washing. I carried her home then carried George out to ride p.m. Leroy brought Father home p.m. Willis and Fred up to the sawmill and got a load of sawdust, got back about 1 p.m. Doing chores, etc. the rest of the day. Henry to school. Mr. E.M. Evans here a.m. [Editor's Note: The Evans family lived at the next farm west of the White farm on Cherry Hill Road]. Walter E., Frank H., Hannah B., Chas. F. Evans, Eddy M. Vichory and Fred E. Heath here in the evening. Hens laid 10 eggs.



Edward J. Mathewson is shown working on the Leroy White farm. Mathewson was the stepson of Clarabel (White) Mathewson, the daughter of George White. *Photo courtesy of Whytebrook Terrace.*

Tues., Jan. 2, 1883. 28 degrees and pleasant at 9 a.m. George and I out to ride p.m. Father to Mr. Walch's p.m. Henry to school. Willis to Albert O. Thornton and brought down a load of cider then to Olneyville depot and got a load of short? off of the car bought of N.B. Harris a.m. Fred doing chores & C. Willis choring about p.m. Father made 2 runs to run in ice on in to the ice house one 12 ft. long the other 14 ft. Snowed some during last evening. The ice on Walches Pond 12 in. thick. Fathers 8 in. Hens laid 10 eggs.

Editor's Note: the Manton Depot, located where the Woonasquatucket River crosses Greenville Avenue, was the local stop for the Providence and Springfield Railroad (later N.Y., N.H. & H.). The line ran from Downtown Providence to Olneyville, through Johnston, Smithfield, Burrillville and up into part of Massachusetts. The White family sometimes also used the Olneyville Depot. Later on

in the diary, reference will be made to family members riding the bus out of Manton. At that time bus would have referred to "omnibus," a horse-drawn public transportation vehicle (owned privately). Horse-drawn trolleys replaced omnibuses, and they in turn were replaced with electric trolleys, which also later ran to Manton.

Wed., Jan. 3, 1883. 33 degrees and cloudy at 1 p.m. George and I out to ride p.m. Went as far as Elisha Dyers. Father to Olneyville and got a load of grain. Henry to school. Willis and Fred choring about. John Walch to see about cutting ice for father. He took the job to fill the ice house with ice. Wilson Mathewson here to see if he could sell any piggs [*sic*] but did not. Hens laid 10 eggs.

Thur., Jan. 4, 1883. 24 degrees and pleasant at 12 noon. R.T. Angelle [*sic*] here with fish cart. We did not buy. I at home all day. Henry at school. Willis and Fred doing chores etc. Willis to Olneyville to Abel Reynolds after clam shells but did not get any p.m. John Walch here getting in ice with 9 other men a.m. He and 10 other men getting in ice p.m. The ice is about 10 in. thick. He had 2 teams hauling ice, 3 horse teams. Philip L. Mathewson and Emery Waterman here p.m. Mr. A.G. Green here and wife to see Fred. They are his stepfather and own mother. Fred away in eve. Hens laid 13 eggs.



Torn down around 1990, this huge barn was the focal point of the Leroy White farm. Leroy White is shown taking the horses out for a day's work. *Photo courtesy of Whytebrook Terrace.*

Fri., Jan. 5, 1883. 8 degrees and snowing at 9 a.m. I at home all day. Henry to school. Willis and Fred stuffing the sides of the icehouse with sawdust, putting on boards, doing chores, etc. George Cram here to see if John Walch had come to get in ice but he had not. John Walch here at night and took away his tools that he cut ice with. George W. Watson paid his last month milk bill. Hens laid 14 eggs.

Editor's Note: Ice-making was an important part of farm life at this time. Many farms had small ponds where the ice was harvested, and separate structures were often set aside for the storage of ice. The walls of the buildings were stuffed with sawdust which is a very good insulator. Sawdust was also used below and on top of the ice blocks and between the layers of ice in the ice house. The ice would last right through the warm months. For farmers, the ice was used primarily to keep milk cool.

Sat., Jan. 6, 1883. 19 degrees and snowing at 12 noon. I at home all day. Willis carried Father to Olneyville and bought up a load of grain a.m. Willis to the depot at 4:30 p.m. and brought up Father. Willis, Fred and Henry doing chores etc. Willis carried down 11 1/2 doz. of eggs to N.B. Harris @ .42 doz. Fred to the city in the evening. He rode down to Manton with Geo. W. Watson. Hens laid 12 eggs.

Sun., Jan. 7, 1883. 32 degrees and cloudy at 1 p.m. I at home all day. Leroy here today. Eddy M. Vickory here in the evening. Fred to Manton in the evening. A fox went by the house in the road about 40 ft. or 50 ft. from the house about 8:30 a.m. The snow is 2 1/2 in. deep. Hens laid 80 eggs the first week of the year. Hens laid 11 eggs.

Mon., Jan. 8, 1883. 29 degrees and pleasant at 1 p.m. George went after Mr. Fielding. She brought Walter Nailor over with her. She here washing. I carried her home. George and I to Olneyville. He got his hair cut. Father to the city to sell some cider. Henry to school. He rode down with Father. William Sweet here with fish cart. Willis and Fred cutting up wood, taking care of cows, etc. Hens laid 10 eggs.

Tues., Jan. 9, 1883. 25 degrees and cloudy at 3:30 p.m. I at home all day. Willis and Father to the city with cider. Willis came home with the team. Henry rode down to school with them. Willis after Father at night. Fred doing chores and cleaning up under the shed a.m. Willis and Fred getting up wood and doing chores p.m. I set 4 traps for muskrats and caught 2 muskrats. Hens laid 13 eggs.

Wed., Jan. 10, 1883. 12 degrees and snowing very hard at 12 noon. I at home all day. Willis and Fred and Henry doing chores, etc. George W. Watson stopped in here in the evening. He came up the hill and came near getting stuck in the snow. Fred went down with Geo. Watson and showed him the way through the lots. Hens laid 14 eggs.

Thurs., Jan. 11, 1883. 20 degrees and hazy at 3 p.m. George milked 3 cows, first time he milked since sick. I at home all day. I caught 2 muskrats and took up 1 trap on account of being broken, leaving 3 set. Father to Olneyville and got a load of grain and groceries and got a barrel of clam shells of Abel Reynold. Henry to school. He rode down with Father to the schoolhouse. Willis and Fred chopping up wood and cleaning snow off of the hot house and carried a load of corn butts from the horse barn to the cow barn and brought a load of hay from the cow barn to the horse barn. Philip Salisbury hired boy here with 2 cows to B.

Fri., Jan. 12, 1883. 16 degrees and pleasant at 2 p.m. Father to Olneyville and got a load of grain. R.M. Roella rode down with him. I went after Roella at night but George W. Watson brought her home when he came up after the milk. Henry to school. Willis cleaning off snow off of the hot house and doing chores. Fred had the headache. George and I helped milked and fed them. Hens laid 12 eggs.

Sat., Jan. 13, 1883. 30 degrees and hazy at 12 noon. I at home all day. Willis carried Father to the depot at 8 a.m. Father to Providence. Willis to Olneyville after Father in the evening. Willis and Henry cleaning up the shed and office and doing chores, etc. George and I helped milk, etc. Fred went away today. George W. Watson and Susie B. Holden called here. Stephan Session here to see if Father wanted to buy any shorts but he did not. Hens laid 10 eggs.

Sun., Jan. 14, 1883. 32 degrees and snow squall at 1 p.m. I at home all day. Henry Session and George F. Youngs [*sic*] here a.m. to see about his going to work to Henry Session. Fred here at night and packed up his things. James Killey and Oscar S. Bradley [*sic*] here a.m. A Portigue came here to let himself he had to work to Job Belknap. I caught a muskrat. George W. Watson stopped here in the evening when he came after the milk. Hens laid 90 eggs the second week. Hens laid 17 eggs.

Mon., Jan. 15, 1883. 26 degrees and pleasant at 12 noon. I at home all day. Willis carried Father to the depot at 8 a.m. He doing chores etc. Willis to Olneyville after grain and carried to N.R. Harris 8 doz. Of eggs @ .42 a doz. Mother and Roella went down with him. Mother came back with him. Roella and Father came up on the 4:30 p.m. train. George to the depot after them. Father got a Plymouth [*sic*] Rock Rooster of Samuel A. Irons of Olneyville. Leroy, Frank H. Evans, Mr.

Thatcher here. William Sweet here with fish cart. I caught a musk rat. Hens laid 13 eggs.

Tues., Jan. 16, 1883. 22 degrees and pleasant at 6 p.m. I at home all day. Willis doing chores etc. I helping him. George helped milk. Lewis Healy here after a job to work but did not get any. Robert Youngs here to see Father p.m. George W. Watson when he came after milk at night stopped in the house. Roella and George to Manton to Mr. A.O. Coates in the evening. George went to his literary society also. Father to Mr. Ritcherson [*sic*] shop at Manton and got a water pipe fixed. Hens laid 12 eggs.

Wed., Jan. 17, 1883. 31 degrees and snowing at 2:30 p.m. I at home all day. Henry to school. Willis carried Father to the depot at 8 a.m. Willis and I getting cornstalks from the horse barn to the cow barn for the cows and doing chores, etc. Nettie E. Towne here p.m. George carried her home, then to the depot after Father at 4:30 p.m. George W. Watson when he came up after the milk, he stopped in the house at night. Hens laid 15 eggs.

Thurs., Jan. 18, 1883. 33 degrees and pleasant at 4 p.m. I at home all day. Father to Mrs. Youngs and then to Olneyville after a load of grain and to Abel Reynolds and got a barrel of clam shells for the hens. Willis chopping up wood and doing chores, etc. I helping doing chores. George helped milk at morning and night. Henry to school. Randall T. Angell here with his fish cart. Bought 1 qt. of oysters out of the shells. George Cram and Martin Thurber here at 3:30 p.m. to mark the ice so as to get in the ice. Hens laid 15 eggs.

Fri., Jan 19, 1883. 26 degrees and snowing at 2 p.m. I at home all day. Henry at school. James Killey here a.m. George W. Watson when he came after milk stopped in the house. John Walch here getting in ice with 9 men beside himself part of the time and 8 men all of the time and 2 teams getting in ice. They filled the ice house which holds about 100 T. Willis doing chores and helping the getting in ice. I helping doing chores. Hens laid 11 eggs.

Sat., Jan. 20, 1883. 34 degrees and cloudy at 6 p.m. I at home all day. Willis carried Father to the depot at 8 a.m. Then Willis to Perin & Irons and got 3420 lbs. of coal for the furnace a.m. Willis and Henry unloaded [*sic*] the coal p.m. Then doing chores, etc. I helping doing chores. George to the depot after Father at 4:30 p.m. Father to Centredale to the horse metting [*sic*] in the evening. George Perin and James Kenedy [*sic*] here catching shiners p.m. Andred [*sic*] Irons here and had one of his cows B. [Editor's Note: the B might stand for butchered]. Hens laid 16 eggs.

Sun., Jan. 21, 1883. 44 degrees and cloudy at 9 a.m. Leroy here he came back this way from carrying the milk down. George W. Watson stopped in here in the evening. Nat Whitney came up with him. Topsy we put to B. Hens laid 15 eggs.

Mon., Jan. 22, 1883. 16 degrees and hazy at 1 p.m. I went after Mrs. Fielding and carried her home. She here washing. Father to Olneyville with eggs and got a load of grain. Father and Willis boarding up the doorway and braiking [*sic*] up ice to cover over the top of the ice a.m. Willis doing chores. I helping doing chores. William Sweet here with his fish cart. Mr. Walch team and 2 men here and took away the runs which they run the ice on. Hens laid 15 eggs.

Tues., Jan. 23, 2010. 8 degrees and pleasant at 2 p.m. I at home all day. Henry to school. Willis doing chores. George W. Watson stopped here in the evening when he came up after the milk. Hens laid 18 eggs.

Wed., Jan. 24, 1883. 20 degrees and pleasant at 2:30 p.m. I at home all day. Father to Olneyville and got a load of grain. George carried Roella to the depot at 1 p.m. She to the city. Geo to the depot after her

at 4:30 p.m. Willis doing chores, etc. I helping doing chores. Elisha A. Windsor here p.m. Hens laid 17 eggs.

Thurs., Jan. 25, 1883. 26 degrees and cloudy at 1 p.m. I at home all day. Father to the city and got a load of grain. George carried Roella to the depot at 8 a.m. She to the city. George to the depot after her at 2:30 p.m. Willis and Henry choring about. I helping doing chores, etc. Randall T. Angelle here with fish cart. Charles F. Evans here p.m.



Leroy White Jr. poses with a young calf in 1958 at the Leroy White farm. The Whites kept cows and sold milk from the barn, 5 cents a pint and 10 cents a quart. They also grew sugar and corn. *Photo courtesy of Whytebrook Terrace.*

Fri., Jan. 26, 1883. 23 degrees and pleasant at 4 p.m. George carried Father to the depot at 8 a.m. Father to the city. George to the city on the 1:30 p.m. train. Came out in 4:30 p.m. train. Came up with Tony, Mother and I to Olneyville. I got a overcoat, pair of gloves and a hat. I to Manton at night. Willis and Henry doing chores. Willis painting. George W. Watson stopped in here in the evening. Mother and I stopped in to Mr. Coates when going to the city.

Sat., Jan. 27, 1883. 38 degrees and cloudy at 2:30 p.m. I carried Father to the depot at 8 a.m. He to the city. George to the 10 a.m. train to see if his overcoat had come up on it which he ordered to yesterday but did not. He to Holden store then to Mr. Coates and brought up Mrs. Whitney & carried George to the 1:30 p.m. train. He to the city. Came out on the 4:30 p.m. train. Got his overcoat. Came up with George W. Watson. Nat Whitney came up with him. Watson stopped here in evening. Willis and Henry getting up wood, doing chores, etc. I helping doing chores. Charles F. Evans here. George cut his hair for him a.m.

Sun., Jan. 28, 1883. 35 degrees and raining at 1:30 p.m. I at home all day. Leroy here. He carried his milk down to his milkman and came back this way. Mrs. H.C. Whitney and her son, Nathaniel Whitney, here all day.

Mon., Jan. 29, 1883. 32 degrees and cloudy at 12 noon. I at home all day. Willis and I fixing the windmill and doing chores, etc. Willis carried Father to Olneyville. They carried Cherry's calf down to Bennett's. Willis brought up a load of grain p.m. Leroy brought Father home in the evening. Mrs. H.C. Whitney and her son Nathaniel here. Henry to school. Nathaniel to school with Henry. William Sweet here with the fish cart. Mr. Samuel A. Irons here to see Father a.m. Willis carried 7 1/2 doz. of eggs to N.B. Harris in Olneyville.

Tues., Jan. 30, 1883. 36 degrees and pleasant at 12 noon. I at home all day. James Killey here. Father went away with him and came back a.m. Henry to school. Mrs. H.C. Whitney and her son Nathaniel Whitney here all day. George W. Watson stopped in here in the evening when he came up after milk. George and Roella carried Mrs. H.C. Whitney down to Mr. A.O. Coates in the evening. They spent the

evening. Nat stayed here all night. Shiner calved this afternoon. Had heffer [*sic*] calf.

Wed., Jan. 31, 1883. 44 degrees and cloudy at 4 p.m. It rained about 4 hours. Commenced about 11:30 a.m. Stopped about 3:30 p.m. I at home all day. Father and Roella to the city with a team. Henry rode down to school with Father and Nathaniel Whitney rode down to Mr. Coates. Father and Roella got back about noon. Willis and I choring about, doing chores, etc. George Everett Thornton here a.m. One of the cogs broke this morning. The small cog broke on the perpendicular shaft on the windmill. Father sent a postal card to W.H. Wheeler [*sic*] to Worcester, Mass this morning for the gears of the wind mill. Pert to --B. [Editor's Note: Pert, probably a cow, was butchered, I think].

Visitors to Belknap School

by Louis McGowan

On March 18 I met Glenn Ray with his family at the Belknap School. His cousin, Warren Kaye, who lives in Belknap, had arranged the visit. Glenn lives in Texas, but his mom, Gloria Ann (Taudvin) Ray was one of the last students attending the Belknap School, finishing her schooling there with the completion of the third grade in June 1939. At one time the school housed students from grades one through eight, but by this time only grades one through three were housed there. The school closed in June of 1941 with only three boys and three girls in attendance at that time.

Joining Glenn on the visit to the school was his aunt, Mabel "Betty" (Taudvin) Kaye, Gloria's sister. Betty attended Belknap School in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Sadly, Gloria passed away not long ago, but her son and his family were happy to be visiting the school that she attended as a little girl. Glenn and I went back to the museum barn, and found the school registers for the period that Gloria attended Belknap School. He was excited to see his mom's name in the book. We also found a newspaper article written in 1938 when there were only three students in the school, one of them being Glenn's mom! I mailed off photocopies of these items to him in Texas.

While Glenn was in the school, he mentioned that he had the original hand school bell that was given to him by his great-great aunt, Mrs. Ethel Fassel, who taught at the school in the 1920s and 1930s. He said that he would like to donate the bell to the school and will mail it to us. We thank him for his generosity.

During our time in the school, Betty Kaye told me some things about the school that I had not heard before. Betty and Gloria's father, Harry Taudvin, was one of the people who fought to keep the school open in the late 1930s. The move was successful for a few years, but eventually the town said it was too expensive to keep the school open for just a few students.

She told me about the supply cabinet that was in the south-east corner of the classroom. The cabinet is in her basement, and she has donated it to us. She said that the boy's coat room was in the south-west corner of the building next to the boy's entrance. The girl's coat room and entrance was on the other side. Boys could not use the girl's entrance and vice versa. She spoke of the water crock in the corner of the room near the boy's entrance. It was grayish in color, oval in shape and had a cover and a metal stand she thinks. There was also a black dry sink in a cabinet in the girl's coat room.

Betty said that the school was used by the church as a community house, and the church paid for its upkeep. Suppers, May Breakfasts and the like were held there. One problem was that all the water had to be hauled in. Water was never piped into the school while the students were there. One of the last teachers at the school was Gertrude

Kimball who taught at the school in 1938. She was the daughter of Hiram Kimball, long-time police chief in town.

It was nice to have people come through the school who have ties to the building and the community. This is what being involved in history is all about.

Rose Beverage Company

by Louis McGowan

(with thanks to Bill Sgambato for his help)



Photo by Louis McGowan.

I picked up a soda bottle from the Rose Beverage Company a few years ago. The company was in Johnston, but I was never able to find out any information about it (location, when it was in business, etc.). At our June meeting Bill Sgambato mentioned the company during his talk. I perked up right away and asked him some questions concerning the business.

The Rose Beverage Company started out in Providence, located near St. Augustine's Church, Mt. Pleasant Avenue. In the 1960s, it bought out the Bare Rock Beverage Company on Route 44 in Johnston. I checked my bottles and I have a Virginia Dare/Bare Rock Beverage bottle that was manufactured in 1964 (stamped on the bottom of the bottle) and a Rose Beverage Company (Johnston) bottle that was manufactured in 1966. From these two bottles, it seems clear that Rose took over about 1965. We do not know how long Rose ran the facility, but at some point they sold out to the R.I. Fruit and Syrup Company, which was previously on Mineral Spring Avenue in North Providence. R.I. Fruit and Syrup runs the company at the same location, 250 Putnam Pike, to this day.

Society Doings

Scavenger Hunt

On April 9 we held our Second Great Johnston Scavenger Hunt. As you may recall, we had to reschedule from a date in August of last year because of a torrential downpour.

This year's list of scavenger hunt items was longer and more difficult than ever with 122 things to find, ranging in value from one to ten points. Ten bonus questions about town landmarks that "usta be there" added to the complexity of the contest.

We had eleven teams with a total of forty-two participants this year. Last year there were eight teams with thirty participants. Teams had four hours to locate and digitally photograph as many items as possible. Prizes were awarded to the top five teams.

The winners were:

Team 41, 223 points
Team Catatonics, 212 points
Team Contillo, 193 points
Team Adam, 186 points
Team Allison, 177 points

One item that eluded all the teams last year -- Johnston Mayor Joseph Polisena -- was ferreted out by three teams this year. Polisena was found attending the opening of the new Mohr Library.



Christopher Martin, second from left, tabulates the score for Team Contillo.
Photo by Beth Hurd.

First prize included an Italian gift basket, four \$15 Best Buy cards, four \$5 Brewed Awakenings cards, and a photobook on historic cityscapes of Boston. Second prize was the same minus the book. Third was an Italian gift basket and four \$5 Brewed Awakenings gift cards. Fourth prize was a jams and jellies basket, a \$10 Stop n Shop card, and two \$5 Brewed Awakenings cards. Fifth was a pair of travel mugs and two \$5 Brewed Awakenings cards.

Prizes were donated by Anthony Ricci, Kim Calcagno, Christopher Martin, Pat Macari and Brewed Awakenings (via Danny Brown). Anthony also secured two large boxes of party pizza for the event, and Danny brought Yacht Club Soda. A hearty thanks to them and to all who helped with event logistics.

Liberty Fest

On April 30 a Liberty Fest was held at Johnston Memorial Park. It was organized by the Johnston Educational Foundation. Battery B, 1st. R.I. Light Artillery and the Gloucester Light Brigade highlighted the event. Our society maintained an informational table with pieces from our archives. Our thanks to Dan Brown, Joe Jamroz, Elise Carlson, Shar DiMaio and Louis McGowan who gave up most of the day to man our table.

Our Properties

Yard Cleanup

On Sunday, May 1, we held our annual Spring cleanup at our headquarters. It was a nice day and we got a lot done. All the beds were cleaned out, some trees and bushes were trimmed, our vegetable bed was turned over, and some hostas (courtesy of Pat Macari) were planted. Our thanks to Doug Stevens, Elise Carlson, Pat Macari, Steve Merolla, Bel McGowan, Anthony Ursillo, Joe Jamroz, Bill Rotondo, Shar DiMaio, Everett Cogswell and Louis McGowan for all their hard work.

In June, we also had to have one of our trees cut down. It stood in front of our shed and was rotting out from the ground up.

New Fence at School

In early July Warren Lanpher installed a split rail fence across the front of the Belknap School. We had a problem with someone dumping landscaping waste on our property, and this should take care of the situation. The fence installation was funded with a grant from Verizon that was obtained for us courtesy of Anthony Ricci.

The JHS museum barn is open on the third Sunday of every month from 2 to 4pm. The museum is also open every Monday evening from 6:30 to 8:30pm, and 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 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.

Cemetery Committee Report

by Steve Merolla

After a tough, snowy winter, the Cemetery Committee was able to get back into the field once more in late March. On March 20 we returned to Cemetery #33 on Simonsville Avenue to finish off our work from the late Fall. We reset a repaired footstone, found the bottom half of a headstone and discovered a large, beautifully carved headstone (of Ann T. Mathewson) that was buried almost three feet underground and practically under the main root of a large tree. Once again, "stone dog" Everett made the discovery of this long missing stone. There are still a couple of loose ends to take care of here in the future.

From March 27 on to the writing of this report in the middle of July, the Committee has been working in Cemetery #72, located along Bucklin Avenue, off lower Greenville Avenue. The site is basically behind Silvio's Restaurant. This is a large cemetery, holding at one time about ninety bodies. In front is a well-built stone wall with granite steps leading up the hill where the bodies are interred. On the left side of the steps are many different family groups, with about sixty-two of the burials. This is the side of the lot we have been working on for the past four months. After James Arnold recorded this cemetery in April of 1891, eleven bodies were removed from this part of the burial ground, with nine re-interred in Pocasset Cemetery and two in Scituate Cemetery #24. In general it could be said that this cemetery was more of a neighborhood burial ground as opposed to the many small family plots found in town. It is possible that many of these people worked in the nearby mills. In the next newsletter the results of our work on the left side of this large cemetery will be reported.

On April 17 the Committee once again ran the town-wide Cemetery Cleanup Day. Seven burial grounds were cleaned by various individuals and groups (cemeteries 5, 16, 18, 21, 24, 33 and 72). Funding was provided by the RI DEM as part of its Earth Day activities. RI Resource Recovery kindly donated a truck to pick up the



Members of the Cemetery Committee pose with some of their handiwork in Cemetery #72. *Photo by Beth Hurd.*

many bags of refuse on the Monday after the event. In addition to our normal repair work on the weekends, members of the Committee were able to clean Cemeteries #59/60 and #22. A special thanks to Shar DiMaio and John Ladish for their work on Cemetery # 79/91, located behind our headquarters. As always, thanks again for working almost every weekend to our Cemetery Committee members: Pat Macari, Billy Rotondo, Anthony Ursillo, Tim Kee, Anthony Ricci, Doug Stephens, Everett Cogswell and Steve Merolla.

A Big 'Thank You' from the JHS President

First of all, I would like to thank all our members who contribute so much to the functioning of our historical society. Without this group we would have no organization. Their names are: Christopher Martin and Kim Calcagno; Pat Macari, Steve Merolla and their cemetery group; Bel McGowan; Rolf Johnson; Elise Carlson and her son Eric; Beth Hurd; Evelyn Beaumier; Fred Mikkelsen; Kit Rhodes; Phil Lemoi and his family; Mike and Liz Burch; Mike Salvatore; Anthony Ursillo and Tim Kee; Doug Stephens; Kit Rhodes; Alice and Jim Lombardi; Elli and Anthony Panichas; Billy Rotondo; John Barattini and our newest member, Shar DiMaio. Thanks also to our many valuable members who come to meetings and support us in our functions.

The above list would, of course, include three other people that I will mention here, separately. Sometimes members do a lot for an organization, but their efforts are not showcased. I would like to thank three of our members whose efforts often fit into that category. Dan Brown, our Vice-President, does a lot of things for us that greatly help our group but often go unnoticed. He has spent a lot of time over the years dealing with town officials, contractors and businesses, helping us get things done. Whenever the grass needs mowing at one of our properties, a tree needs cutting down or anything else like that, he is always there to help out. He has also donated many items to our fundraisers. I would like to personally thank him for all the work he has done behind the scenes.

Joe Jamroz is another person who does a lot of things behind the scenes, from picking up our mail on a daily basis, to meeting up with the pest control people, to picking up supplies for our organization. If I need anything done during the work week especially, Joe is always willing to help out. I thank him for his generosity in donating so much time to our group.

Anthony Ricci is a third person who does a lot for our group, but wants no acclaim. Anthony has been picking up pastry for our meetings for the last couple of years at his own expense. He also has donated a number of items to the JHS that he has paid for himself or accumulated in other ways. For example, he has donated electronic picture frames, many items for fundraisers, and most recently, a device to copy slides and negatives.

All three of these gentlemen give generously of their time to our group. My thanks go out to each of them, as well as to all the people mentioned previously and to all our members who come out and support us in all that we do.

Speakers

Raymond A. Wolf, author of *Lost Villages of Scituate and The Scituate Reservoir* was the speaker at our March 30 meeting. Ray told us about the building of the Scituate Reservoir and about the five dismantled villages that now lie beneath its waters. In a personal vein he told how the farm his mother grew up on was taken by eminent domain, and how her memories of the farm stayed with her throughout her life. She wrote dozens of poems celebrating village life in the early part of the twentieth century, and mourning the loss of her home.

Ray will be leading a bus tour of the Scituate Reservoir in August. See below under Upcoming Events for details.

Glenn Laxton, local author and long-time Rhode Island television reporter, spoke to us at our April 27th meeting. Speaking to a packed house, he entertained us with tales from his latest book, *Hidden History of Rhode Island: Not-to-Be-Forgotten Tales of the Ocean State*.

At our May 25th meeting, held at the Belknap School, Louis McGowan presented a slide show on the holdings of our archives. He talked to us about the many elements of our ever-growing archives.

Bill Sgambato joined us for our June 29th meeting, thrilling an overflow crowd of over forty attendees with a history of his Yacht Club Beverage Company, which has been run by his family since the early 1960s (the company started in 1915). We also had hot dogs before the meeting along with Yacht Club soda, naturally, to wash them down.

Acquisitions

- Louis McGowan bought for the society a William Jaeger Dairy milk bottle, purchased on-line; a John O. Brown milk bottle, purchased at an antique co-op; an uncirculated stack of *Providence Journal* newspapers from 1840 to 1841 (continuous run), purchased at a yard sale; and a reproduction chamber pot chair that will make a nice addition to our Angell House furnishings.
- Alfred Newman donated a 1830s arithmetic book.
- Dan Brown donated a pair of Johnston High School Yearbooks from 1965 and '66.
- Beth Hurd donated a pair of Johnston Senior Class commemorative mugs from 1973 and '75.
- Richard Siembab donated a brass seal (for stamping official documents) for the District #15 School District (Plain Farm); a group of c.1980s Johnston High School theater production photos; and a box of glazed pottery artifacts (shards) from a late eighteenth or early nineteenth century pottery site on or near the old Sarah Dyer Barnes property where Cherry Hill Road terminates at Greenville Avenue.
- Paul Deion donated a 1952 poster announcing the opening of Collins Drug Store; the glass partition that separated the customers from the pharmacist (with the original hand-painted lettering) that was used at the store; and a 1970s Collins Drug Store prescription bottle.
- Fred Mikkelsen donated a number of individual slate boards for classroom use; a bobbin with thread (probably from a mill in Hope, RI); and a 1909 *Peerless Atlas of the World*.
- Anthony Ricci donated a new device to make digital copies of slides and negatives.
- Christopher Martin donated a photo of a pair of Johnston fire trucks, dated 1939; a framed newspaper clipping showing a new rescue vehicle being handed over to Johnston Hose No. 2, dated 1947; and a 1908 copy of *Walsh's Arithmetic for Upper Classes*, all purchased from a Cranston yard sale.
- To help organize some of our recent acquisitions, we purchased a used display cabinet.

Many of these 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!

A Special Donation

Mr. Robert Jackson, a long-time member of our group, has graciously donated an important collection to our archives. It consists of record books relating to the Graniteville Volunteer Fire Department (Johnston Hose No. 2) and books relating to the Graniteville War Memorial Association. Within these



Photo by Christopher Martin.

books is a wealth of information relating to the village of Graniteville. We are very thankful to Bob for saving these pieces of our history.

The War Memorial books contain minutes of meetings going back to 1918 when the Graniteville Improvement Association and the Mother's Group were meeting in the village. The Graniteville War Memorial Association, which started meeting in 1919, seems to have evolved out of these groups. The stone for the memorial was in place by the end of 1919, as well as the bronze plaque which listed all the Graniteville men who enlisted in the Great War (World War I).

The Johnston Hose No. 2 books list the fires and medical emergencies responded to by the Graniteville group. In many cases the firefighters who were there are also listed. There are meetings of meetings and lists of items bought by the group.

All in all, the books constitute a treasure trove for historians. Again, we thank Mr. Jackson for his foresight in preserving these records and for passing them on to our historical society.

Wish List

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

- A small cube refrigerator
- 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.

July-August 2011

Summer meeting hiatus.

August 13, 2011

Lost Villages of Scituate Bus Tours

Hope, Scituate

Tours at 10am, 12pm, 2pm.

Hope Elementary School, Route 116. Join Ray Wolf, author of *The Lost Villages of Scituate* for a tour around Scituate Reservoir. Mr. Wolf will point out the former locations of the five villages lost when the reservoir was built, including specific buildings and landmarks, plus the cemetery where all of the villages' graves were relocated. \$15 in advance (\$5 of each ticket purchased by a Johnston Historical Society member will be donated by Ray back to the Society). Call (401) 821-0016 for tickets, or visit www.fosterpreservationsociety.org for more information.

September 17, 2011

Big Ol' Fundraiser

Noon-4pm

There'll be tours of Elijah Angel House and the JHS Museum Barn, and the Belknap School will also be open. Blacksmith and wheelwright demos, silent auction, historical displays, finger foods and refreshments, and more! Rain or shine. Check our website for further details as they get ironed out.

September 28, 2011

General Meeting

7pm

Folks from the American-French Genealogical Society in Woonsocket will visit to speak with us about genealogy.

October 26, 2011

General Meeting

7pm

Danny Brown will be our speaker. Topic TBA

December 7, 2011

General Meeting

7pm

Raymond Wolf returns, talking about his new Images of America book on West Warwick.

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



We now have our own Facebook page! To find us type this address into your computer browser:

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: November 15, 2011.

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
Our email address is: Info@JohnstonHistorical.org

Annual Dues

Have you paid your 2011 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**