

Johnston Historical Society

Historical Notes

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www.JohnstonHistorical.org

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A Talk with Bill Mathewson by Louis McGowan

On May 13, 1985, I spoke with William (Bill) Henry Mathewson III (1900-1985), who owned the family homestead on Greenville Avenue in Belknap until his death later that year.

In the course of my interview with Bill, he told me that until 1954 or 1955, his sister lived in the little gambrel-roofed house on Greenville Avenue that is there to this day and is now lived in by Mike and Liz Burch. After this, he sold the property. He also said that there was another Mathewson gambrel-roofed house on Greenville Avenue, where it is met by Green Valley Drive. Bill bought that house in 1940 from the son of Byron Mathewson who lived in the house, and he told me that the people who built the plat burned the house down about 1965.



This scene from the 1890s looks west over the Mathewson Homestead farm on Greenville Avenue. William Mathewson's 1786 will mentions a store, a cooperage, and the house. A cooper, Mathewson's workplace shows just to the right of the house. To the right of that is a drive-through shed. On the left of the house is a blacksmith shop. On the north side of the road is the large store that had a hall on the second floor where dances and shows were held. *Photo courtesy of Elaine Mathewson Pereira.*

Mr. Mathewson remembered the original Belknap School, which dated to 1790! When the present school was erected in 1892, the old school was moved across the street to the corner of Carpenter Drive and Greenville Avenue at the site of the little Brown House (I am not sure what Bill was referring to when he mentioned the Brown House). It burned about 1909 or 1910 when Bill was 9 or 10 years old. Bill also mentioned the original Belknap Meeting House which was in front of the Brown House. The building referred to was Reverend Samuel Winsor's Six Principle Baptist Meeting House.

Mr. Mathewson showed me an original lottery ticket, dated November 22, 1805, which was used to raise money for the Union Baptist Society Meeting House in Johnston (once again, Samuel Winsor's church, which by that time was no longer affiliated with the Six Principle Baptist Church).

Peg (Walch) Mathewson was Bill's wife, and her great grandfather Walch (possibly James Walch, Jr.) owned a textile mill in Thornton and after a fire at the mill, a wall collapsed and killed him. Another relative, Fred Walch, owned the land along the south side of Greenwood Avenue from Atwood Avenue down to the DiMeo farm.

Bill started farming on the family property in 1931. Many local children pulled weeds on the farm, which supplied vegetables (mostly corn, tomatoes and summer squash) to Weybosset (Pure Food Market, maybe?). Bill worked the land until 1957. He started the Mathewson Tractor business in 1946 or 1947 on George Waterman Road, selling Ford tractors. The present building, next to the Belknap School, dates to the early 1950s.



This cider house on the Mathewson Homestead farm was used for cider making in the early twentieth century. Located just to the east of the large store, it is now gone. *Photo courtesy Elaine Mathewson Pereira.*

The family long kept dairy cows and sold milk to local people. Bill himself ran the Johnston Dairy and kept milk cows until 1947. Bill's father, William H., Jr., had ninety cows and sold milk to the Hood Dairy at least from 1917 on. William H., Jr. was a farmer, was into town politics and ran a cider mill on the family farm. The grandfather, William H. Mathewson, was a farmer, kept horses and ran the cider mill (which was about 200 feet west of the tractor shop and about 200 feet from the road).

Also on the family property was a blacksmith shop (torn down in 1915 or 1916 by Bill; the Mathewsons hired blacksmiths to work in the shop), a cooper shop, at least two barns, one with three silos and a store with a dance hall on the second floor (the store and the barn next to it burned in 1898). The property has been in the Mathewson family since 1793, and a descendant lives in the house to this day. Bill told me that the front right room, as you look at the house, was used as a tavern in the old days.

Bringing Modern Transportation to Thornton

by Louis McGowan

In the late nineteenth century, the textile industry was really beginning to take off in Thornton. The British Hosiery Mill had opened on Mill Street in December of 1884. The older Bag Mill and Thornton Worsted Mill were still operating on Mill Street as was the Brown Mill on Plainfield Street. Charles Fletcher had plans to build two large mills in the village, which would forever change the village in a good way, bringing in improved roads, many small businesses, new churches and many new residents.

One stumbling block in the way of all these good things happening was the lack of modern transportation to Thornton. Horse drawn omnibuses ran to the village by the 1870s (the last one ran in 1904 in Providence, amazingly), although they were used in Providence by the 1840s. What was really needed, though, was the faster and more economical trolley system. In order to run his mills, Fletcher needed to tap into the trove of potential workers that lived in the Olneyville area, and he needed the trolleys to get the workers to his mills. Other than getting the necessary permission for the lines to run, what stopped the trolley system from being put into place was the steep hill which was located on the old Plainfield Street path (where the present School Street and Morgan Avenue meet). Trolleys could not navigate the steep rise.



This example of a horsecar ran to South Providence in the mid-1880s. The open car, or "bloomer" was a staple of good weather riding. At the line's terminus, the driver would unhitch the horses and attach them to the other end for the return trip. The conductor also "turned" the seats to face the inbound direction. Photo from *All Aboard: The History of Mass Transportation in Rhode Island* by D. Scott Molloy (1998).

On September 19, 1884, the *Rhode Island Citizen* reported that Charles Fletcher had pledged \$1000 to the town to build a road through his Carpenter Farm (The road did happen. It opened in

April of 1885 and was originally called Thornton Avenue. The name of this section was later changed to Plainfield Street and was after used by the trolleys as they ran from Olneyville to Thornton on the present route of Plainfield Street. The eastern piece of the old run of Plainfield Street was changed in name to Morgan Avenue from Plainfield Street to where it veers off to the north. At that point, School Street began, and it ran down to the old Aitchison Fountain opposite the Thornton School). By July 1889, Charles Fletcher was speaking out publically in favor of bringing trolleys from Providence into Olneyville and on into Johnston via Plainfield Street. The Providence Cable Tramway Company was originally the company that was seen as running the proposed route, but soon the Union Railroad Company came into the picture. In June of 1889 the Olneyville Businessmen's Association sent people to a Johnston Town Council meeting where a hearing was given on a petition of the Providence Cable Tramway Company to run its cars through Olneyville Square and over Plainfield Street to the railroad crossing (about 1/4 mile out of Olneyville where the Providence and Springfield Railroad tracks crossed Plainfield Street). The Businessmen's Association also wanted a 3 cents fare instituted to increase ridership and thus business. The Union Railroad was charging a full fare of 10 cents to go from Olneyville to the end of the line at Plainfield Street, a very short ride. This tended to cause shoppers to bypass Olneyville and to shop in the Downtown instead. The 3 cents fare never did happen, though.



The Union Railroad sold attractive tickets in strips, usually at a penny discount for each ride. Image from *All Aboard: The History of Mass Transportation in Rhode Island* by D. Scott Molloy (1998).

The Cable Tramway Company initially wanted the Union Railroad Company to build a cable line over the East Side of Providence, but they eventually built it themselves and ran it for a short time in 1890 in competition with the Union Railroad horsecars. In October of 1890, though, the stock of the Providence Cable Tramway Company was transferred to the Union Railroad Company (one of the parties in the agreement was Charles Fletcher). New England's only cable system hauled their cars up and down College Hill. The cars began their run at the Red Bridge. Union Railroad horsecars continued to carry passengers to Olneyville and remained in use until 1894, when electric cars, which began to run in 1892, ended the day of horsecars in the city.

At a May 1891 meeting of the Johnston Town Council, the West Providence Club, a civic organization, recommended that the Town Council grant the Union Railroad the trolley car route to Thornton. The railroad did get the license to run and by June of 1891, track was being laid on Plainfield Street for their trolley line. In 1892, ex-horsecars were used on the new electric line, but 125 new electric cars were ordered for the Thornton

line, which arrived in 1893 and 1894. These new single truck cars, along with about forty-five converted horsecars, comprised the fleet until the early 1900s when double truck cars took over. Also at this time, Plainfield Street was being macadamized, a process whereby a pavement is laid which consists of layers of small stone that is bound with tar or asphalt. The path of Plainfield Street was diverted to its present path to avoid the hill on Morgan Avenue. The trolley line ran all the way to Atwood Avenue, turned right and continued on to Hughesdale.

Fletcher now had the desired trolley system in place. He built two large mills, the Pocasset Worsted Company Mill just off Plainfield Street on Pocasset Street and the Victoria Mill on Mill Street in the Frog City section of Thornton. Both mills opened in 1898, eventually bringing in thousands of workers to the village. Houses were built, stores were constructed, churches opened and Thornton became the heart of Johnston. It continued so for most of the next hundred years.

1. *Rhode Island Citizen*, September 19, 1884; April 3, 1885.
2. *Trolley Wars, Streetcar Workers on the Line*; Scott Molloy; (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1996)
3. "The Rhode Island Company," Part I, Equipment Roster; Richard L. Wonson and Paul W. Frazier (The Branford Electric Railway Association)

Talk With Dean Aurecchia

On September 17, 2012, I had a phone conversation with Dean Aurecchia, brother of our society member Al Aurecchia. Mr. Aurecchia lives in Virginia and had made a call to us concerning his family genealogy. We got to chatting (we both grew up in Thornton), and he told me an interesting story about the fountain/horse trough which used to stand in the present Fireman's Square (diagonally across from Thornton School). Back in the old days, the square was called Aitchison Square, named in honor of William Aitchison, a prominent local businessman in the early twentieth century. I had earlier heard the story of how the fountain was damaged by fire during the celebration following the end of World War II. Mr. Aurecchia added some meat to the bare bones of the story. He said that there was all kinds of celebrating going on, singing, dancing and what not. Some of the younger local volunteer firemen decided that a nice fire would add to the festivities, so they went over to a Mrs. Walker's house nearby and tipped over her outhouse. They then rolled it to the fountain and lit it on fire. It burned pretty well, it seems, getting so hot, that at some point the stone fountain cracked. The fountain was not repaired or replaced and is now all but forgotten.

Mr. Aurecchia also told me that Mrs. Walker lived next to what was the first Veterans' of Foreign Wars location in the village.

Society Doings

2012 Annual Picnic

On Saturday, September 15, 2012, thirty-five members and guests attended our annual picnic. We had a lot of wonderful

food, including homemade chili; codfish balls; potato salad; onion rings; broccoli salad; baked beans; wonderful homemade desserts; hamburgers and hot dogs; and pulled pork, chicken wings and calzones from a local deli. The weather was beautiful, and we had a great time eating and talking.

Thank you to all who brought food and/or helped out. A special thanks to Joe Jamroz for all his work prior to the event and for his efforts that day.

JHS 2012 Building Tour

On Sunday, September 23, 2012, we held a self-guided tour of the interior of nine Johnston buildings including five private homes, the Graniteville Baptist Church, the Belknap School, the Clemence/Irons House and the Elijah Angell House. It was a beautiful day, and everything went quite well. The turnout was lower than we had hoped for, but the people that came really seemed to have a good time.

Thanks go out to the Lemoi family, Alyce and Jim Lombari, Liz and Mike Burch, Anthony Ricci and Nancy Joyce, who all had their houses open. Thanks to Dan Santos at Historic New England for letting us have the Clemence/Irons House on the tour. Thanks to Dan Brown for having the Graniteville Baptist Church open and Warren Lanpher who volunteered at the Belknap School. Thanks also to all our volunteers, including: Anthony Ursillo, Joe Jamroz, Shar Dimaio, Elise Carlson, Bel McGowan, Ida Silva, Louis McGowan and the other people who helped out at the various houses. A big word of thanks also to Christopher Martin who handled publicity for the event and also photographed happenings at the various stops.

Pocasset Cemetery Cleanup

On November 3, 2012, Bel McGowan headed a fix-up day at the Pocasset Cemetery in Cranston. The cemetery is not able to have all the toppled stones up-righted because of the cost, so Bel set up a volunteer day to get some of the work done. There was a wonderful response, with hard-working crews from the Johnston Historical Society (Pat, Steve, Everett, Elise and Doug) and Friends of Smithfield Cemeteries pitching in as well as a number of volunteers. Over thirty stones were up-righted by the more than thirty volunteers. Some of the stones were over 1500 pounds in weight. Our historical society cemetery group also repaired a number of stones. It was great to see so many people pitching in to help a cemetery that is struggling financially.

Inventory of Our Books

Renee Delos, a student at La Salle Academy, recently completed an inventory of the books in our library. It is in digital form, which makes it handy for us to use. She and her mother, Stacy, came to our museum on Monday nights over the course of a few months to do her work, making out the list by hand. Renee completed the project as part of a requirement for community service for school.

Thanks to Our Members

Phil Lemoi has been cutting the grass for us at the Belknap School. A big word of thanks goes out to him. Phil also decorates the building at the holidays, and he and Lori have

said they will maintain the garden in front of the school. Their generous spirit is much appreciated.

Thanks to Doug Stephens for painting the trim at the Belknap School and for doing some other needed repairs. His willingness to jump in and volunteer is much appreciated.

Jim Lombardi graciously printed the tour booklets free of charge for our building tour. Thank you, Jim.

Thanks also to Anthony Ricci for bringing pastries to our meetings

Our Properties

On October 5, 2012, JHS members Doug Stephens, Anthony Ursillo, Joe Jamroz, Rolf Johnson and Louis McGowan painted the back side of the Elijah Angell House. We spent the morning scraping and applying a finish coat to about 3/4 of the back side (which had received a prime coat a year ago). The other 1/4 was painted with primer. Doug came back on his own another day and painted the finish coat on that piece. We thank our trusty crew for pitching in and working hard to get another side of the house painted. We would like to paint the east side next spring.

On November 11, 2012 society members cleaned up the museum grounds, bagging over fifty yard bags of leaves in a little over two hours. Joe Jamroz, Doug Stephens, Rolf Johnson, Elise Carlson, Shar DiMaio, Anthony Ursillo, Tim Kee and Louis McGowan all worked very hard in spiffing up the yard.

The Belknap School has been closed up and prepared for winter.

Our museum barn is open Monday nights (except holidays), 6:30-8:30pm; and on the third Sunday of each month, 2-4pm, 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 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.

Grant Activity

In September 2012, the JHS received a \$750 grant from Verizon courtesy of Anthony Ricci. We extend our thanks to Anthony for his efforts in getting us this grant.

On November 15, 2012, we received great news -- our grant application for a museum building extension was approved! The Champlin Foundations will give us \$69,300 to enlarge our

museum building. It will be a square, one-story extension on the Graniteville School side of the building. It will have a high ceiling, with the roofline paralleling the roofline of the present building, but a few feet lower. The new area will be used as a meeting room, which will mean that we will not have to take the chairs up and down each time we change functions for the building. This move will mean that we will have additional storage space within the present museum room, and we will have more wall space for displaying items and extra floor space for cases in the new room. Another great feature of the extension is that we will now have handicap access for the building. There will be a new side entrance with a ramp leading to the added door.

A big thank you goes out from us to the Champlin Foundations for funding this much-needed project. Thank you also to Warren who drew up the plans for the project. We anticipate work to begin in the spring of 2013.

Cemetery Committee Report

by Pasco Macari

This cemetery update begins on the first week of July 2012. We are in the Manton yard #18 working very hard in the summer heat. Four more weeks here has finally given us major progress. Unfortunately as we uncover the grave stones from the overgrowth we begin to see the heavy extent of vandalism. The number of smashed slate and marble stones, many broken to grade level, is disheartening. How could this happen? There are gravestones of early Johnston families, the Mantons, the Angells and Mowrys. An in-depth report on the people buried here will follow.

During these weeks of extensive landscaping and clearing we could not neglect the maintenance needed across the street in yard #72. Doug volunteered to work in this yard; just one day was needed getting it ready for grass cutting. On August 4th, for a school project, Dan Meunier's son Adam cut the grass for us. Thank you Adam and a job well done.

The end of July again we took a break from #18. We next landscaped the Fenner yard #29, corner of Scituate Avenue and Old Pocasset Road. This yard has been adopted and maintained by the D'Agostino family, Henry and Bunny, for the past several years. Circumstance would not allow Henry to maintain this yard as he wished for the past several weeks, so we stepped in for him. He will continue to maintain it in the future. We appreciate and thank Henry and his family for doing so.

The next two weeks the committee landscaped the double cemetery #59 and #60 at the base of the Morgan condo development. We completed this restoration over a year ago, so you can imagine the growth we had to clear. It was completed mid-morning on the second week -- maybe a coffee break was next -- but no, not this committee. This group is not one to idle. Someone had a brainstorm -- let's go to #18. So off we went to finish the morning working again in the most difficult cemetery to date.

The last week in August several of us helped Doug clear some debris and vines from the back of the Belknap school. Doug

had volunteered to paint the trim and the growth was in his way. Again, not to waste precious time, on Sunday morning Steve and Pat went back to #18 to work on inventory.



Many of the broken marble stones in the Manton yard #18. Photo by Pat Macari.

The committee returned to yard #18 and stayed there for the next eight weeks. We sprayed defoliant for the first time on a small area of the yard and it worked very nicely. We will use this chemical as needed. Throughout the eight weeks some worked on stones and others worked on the overgrowth. All the remnants of broken slate and marble stones were put in one area and we began to try and pierce them together. Again, I must say in our four years of cemetery restoration this yard is the most difficult to reconstruct. With so many small, weather-beaten pieces it's very difficult to match them and epoxy them into the grave marker they once were. The team of Elise, Tim and Bill have been working on this project. The results of our own stone repair in cemetery #18 will be presented in a future report. We ended our work here on October 28, to resume next year.

November 4th through the 18th the committee worked on the Brown-Waterman yard #11 located on Brown Avenue. We worked on this yard a couple of times several years ago but not as thoroughly as these past three weeks. The problem in this yard is many small tree stumps and a large number of rude stones, making the job of grass cutting difficult. We were able to pull most of the stumps and level the ground around the rude markers. Now we can cut about three-quarters of the 80x40 yard. There are four marble headstones which needed to be erected and mortared into their bases. One of these also needed to be repaired. We will need one more visit to get this yard ready for adoption.

You may have noticed the cemetery committee has a new member. Elise Carlson, who is also the recording secretary of the Historical Society, joined us back in the early fall. Welcome aboard.

The cemetery committee is: Anthony Ursillo, Tim Kee, Bill Rotondo, Doug Stephans, Everett Cogswell, Shar DiMaio, Anthony Ricci, Steve Merolla, Pasco Macari and Elise Carlson. Special thanks to: Dan Mazzulla and the recreation department groundskeepers, Arni Vecchione and the highway department workers, and Adam Meunier.

Musings on Cemetery #18, the Manton Lot by Steve Merolla

For the past several months, the Cemetery Committee has been working at Cemetery #18, the Manton Lot. As the name implies, many members of the Manton clan are interred here, though the names of other family groups are also present, such as the Tripps, Angelis, Cushings, Thirsfields. The Mantons predominate, they and their married relations numbering about twenty-six of the approximately fifty inscribed stones. It must be noted that James Arnold recorded about another sixty-four unscripted "crude" stones in his 1891 inventory of this cemetery.

Almost all of the Manton stones are impressive, large marble markers, about two inches thick and four to five feet tall. That the Mantons would order such fancy and expensive gravestones is no surprise. They were one of the first families to populate the colony, living in Providence by at least 1640. The family may have owned upwards of around 1,000 acres of land in what later became the town of Johnston. For example, it is known that they owned land on both sides of present-day Killingly Street and that their holdings extended from lower Greenville Avenue all the way up that same road to where Atwood Avenue meets it in the village of Belknap. A Manton family history written in 1859 by Frederic Denison (husband of Amy Randall Manton) states: *"It is much to be regretted that the remains of the first four generations of Mantons, deposited in the present town of Johnston, R.I., are unhonored with monumental slabs bearing names and dates. Their resting places are indicated only by time-worn mounds marked with small, rough, unscripted head and footstones..."* Among the later generation of Mantons can be seen the large marble headstones of Captain Daniel Manton, who commanded his own Troop of Cavalry during the Revolutionary War. His son, the Honorable Edward Manton, served in many official positions in town government during the course of his lifetime. His daughter Lydia married Dr. Moses Mowry (whose gravestone is regrettably mostly destroyed), the local physician. The Society is in possession of Dr. Mowry's Day Book, which gives an accounting of patients visited, medicines administered and sundry other tidbits of information. Colonel Jeremiah Manton was another Revolutionary War officer; the original marble stones that marked he and his wife's graves were replaced at a later date with a double granite marker. Jeremiah's wife, Mary Anstis Borden, was the only daughter of Joseph Borden Jr., who served for many years as Town Clerk. Joseph Borden's marker is also here and is among the best examples of work produced by Johnston gravestone carver Borden Thornton. Sadly, this wonderful slate stone (which records Borden's service as Town Clerk) is falling apart along the natural fissures present in the stone, a problem seen on other slates in this cemetery.

Besides James F. Arnold, local historian Clarence I. Brown also inventoried this cemetery, doing so on August 30 and 31, 1907. He also researched the records of the Tingley Company, longtime gravestone producers in the region. He cited references to three marble stones in Cemetery #18: "ABBY MANTON; Ital. Marble (Johnston); Order #353, vol. of 1853, pg. 312. CATHERINE MANTON; Amer. Marble (Johnston); 4.6 -- 2.2, Scroll head. Volume of 1843, pg. 85. PATIENCE

MANTON; Ital. Marble (Johnston), 4.4 -- 2.0 -- 2; Order #154, vol. of 1853, pg. 51." Of course, the quite surprising thing about these orders is the fact that the company was importing Italian marble for some of its stones. That the Manton family could afford imported marble was a sign of its relative wealth at that time. Both the stones of Abby and Catherine Manton were ordered within a year of their deaths, but that of Patience Manton (widow of Colonel Daniel) was ordered in 1854, some thirty-four years after her passing in the year 1820. This is an example of what is called a back-dated stone, a gravestone that is carved many years after the actual death date. This is an occurrence that is not actually very rare; in many cases it may take a family a few years to be able to afford a suitable marker for their loved one. In this case, however, it is almost certain that this stone replaced an earlier one; it is possible that the family just wanted her stone's style to match the other large and ornate Manton stones that were erected more towards the mid-1800s. In fact, the Committee found two marble stones for the same person, Patience Manton, daughter of Edward and Catherine, who died in 1803, at age nineteen years. The two stones had the same inscriptions carved into them. What was the second stone is a thick marble with a scroll top design matching the other Manton stones nearby. The original marker was much thinner; the top is unfortunately missing and the rest of it is broken in half. Most of the stone was found buried next to an adjacent headstone. This marker would have been one of the very first marble stones erected in the town; the early 1800s were a transition period from slates to marbles, but most stones from the first decade of the century were still carved out of slate. A telling point is that the carving is done in the more delicate style seen on slate stones, but in this case the material is marble.

Another interesting headstone is that of Mr. Stephen DeBlois (d. 1814). His stone was also beautifully carved by Borden Thornton. Of particular interest is the fact that the French coat-of-arms, the Fleur de Lis, is carved into the stone. The name DeBlois is of French derivation, and it is possible that he was a native of either France or French Canada. Tom Greene, North Providence town historian, informed me that he has come across records that indicate Mr. DeBlois was a school teacher in that town, plying his profession in what was their oldest school building, still standing on Smith Street (its appearance much altered). Stephen DeBlois was probably an itinerant teacher who was recruited to fill an open position; it is possible that though he taught in the adjoining town, he may have lived in Johnston, where he is buried.

Speakers

Our September speaker was Rory Raven, Rhode Island author, tour guide and mentalist. He made a great presentation to over thirty members who attended the meeting. His topic was the burning of the Gaspee, one of the first acts of rebellion by the colonists leading up to the Revolution. Rory's book on the subject has just been recently published by the History Press.

Dr. Gary L. Hylander, visiting Professor of American History at Stonehill College was our guest speaker at our October meeting, which was held in the function room of the Little Inn Restaurant. It was decided to have our meeting there because we anticipated a large crowd. We did indeed have a large

crowd, over sixty-five people in fact. Professor Hylander was wonderful, a very knowledgeable and dynamic speaker. His topic was the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, which happened exactly fifty years ago. Our audience was thrilled to hear his talk. Thanks go out to Anthony Ursillo for all his work in bringing Professor Hylander to us.

In November we welcomed William Beaudoin from the American French Genealogical Society. He told us about the 1704 Deerfield Raid, when French Canadian and Native American forces attacked Deerfield, Massachusetts, and made off with more than 100 captives.

Acquisitions

On July 31, 2012, sisters Nancy Blais Fullerton and Donna Blais Tornatore generously made another donation of family artifacts to our society. As detailed in our July 2012 newsletter, they previously gave us a number of items relating to their Evans/Harris/ Randall family that lived on Morgan Avenue. The key item in the latest donation is a toddler's dress that dates to the middle to late nineteenth century. They are going to give us a copy of a photograph of a family member wearing the dress. It is very exciting to be given a Johnston piece like this, it being the first textile item of its type in our collection. There are also other photos and family items in the collection, including school items, religious items, and genealogical items.

On August 29, 2012, Larry Costelesse donated to our group a number of items that belonged to his father, Pasquale "Pat" Costelesse, a Johnston policeman and the first dog officer in the town. Pat had previously donated a number of wonderful items to the society, including old badges, a fingerprinting kit, a uniform and various other police items. Our latest acquisition includes: a c1960s leather police jacket, two police hats (one dress and one work), a lifetime FOP membership plaque, a brass belt buckle in the shape of a badge and a photograph of Pat Costelesse in uniform.



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!

Wish List

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

- Display mannequins
- Any Johnston-related memorabilia

Upcoming Events

January 30, 2013

General Meeting

7pm

Our speakers tonight will be members Christopher Martin and Kim Calcagno, who will give a presentation on their recent two-week trip through Maine to New Brunswick, Nova Scotia (including Cape Breton Island), and Prince Edward Island.

December 7, 2012

JHS Christmas Party

6pm

400 Greenville Avenue, Johnston. Phil and Lori Lemoi welcome JHS members and their guests to their home for a celebration of the season. There will be a buffet meal. Please bring a desert or appetizer. Enjoy the start of the Christmas season with your friends in Phil and Lori's lovely house, which will be beautifully decorated for the season.

February 27, 2013

General Meeting

7pm

Ray Wolfe will speak on his latest Images of America book, on Pawtuxet Valley.

March 27, 2013

General Meeting

7pm

Member Anthony Ursillo, former curator of the Log Gift Shoppe, will speak about the history of Shang Bailey Roadhouse, which dates to around 1776.

April 13, 2013

The 4th Great Johnston Scavenger Hunt

Details pending.

April 24, 2013

General Meeting

7pm

Richard Dragon, author of a compelling history of Rhode Island license plates since 1904 entitled "Registered in R.I.," will be talking to us about --- what else? -- Rhode Island license plates.

May 29, 2013

General Meeting

7pm

Speaker TBD.

June 26, 2013

General Meeting

7pm

Arthur Iannelli will give a presentation on prehistoric artifacts found in the Johnston area. His collection of such artifacts -- arrow heads, axe heads, stone scrapers, etc. -- has been on display in our museum barn for several years.

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 on the third Sunday of each month, 2-4pm, 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.

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.



As of this month our Facebook page has 153 followers! Have you 'liked' us yet? 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: March 15, 2013.

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 Evelyn Beaumier.

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: Info@JohnstonHistorical.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/johnstonhistorical

Annual Dues

Have you paid your 2012 dues yet? 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 2012 dues. Send us a check today!

Name: _____

Address: _____

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

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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**