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The Amazing Military Adventures of John Viall

by Steve Merolla

One of the most fascinating and even amazing stories to come out of the Revolutionary War has to include the tale of John Viall of Johnston, Rhode Island. To begin with, the spelling of his name must be addressed. Though the correct spelling is "Viall" (as is inscribed on his gravestone), most deed, census and tax records spell the name "Viol," and some accounts spell the name "Vial." Different spellings of family names was somewhat common back in the day, but family histories confirm the name should be "Viall"; thus, his name will be spelled the proper way in this story, except when a particular document is being quoted.

Luckily for researchers, when a Revolutionary War veteran applied for a military pension, his war record and some personal details of his life were included in the pension application. In most cases letters from past comrades and superior officers were obtained to corroborate the pensioner's assertions. At the time the pension information was taken (1818 and 1820), Viall had moved from Johnston to North Providence, but more on that later. A letter on file at the United States Pension Office, in Pension Book #70, states that John Viall was born in Johnston on May 12, 1756.

At the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, the Pension Book states that Viall enlisted in April 1775, as a private in Captain John Field's Company of Colonel Hitchcock's Regiment, as part of the Rhode Island Line of the newly formed Continental Army; he signed up for eight months' service. An excellent article in the "William & Mary Quarterly" (July 1984, vol. XLI #3, pages 365-389) authored by David Chacko and Alex Kulcsar, and entitled "Israel Potter: Genesis of a Legend," sheds light on this very interesting part of Viall's career. It seems that General George Washington, at the siege of Boston, devised a plan to outfit American vessels with cannon in order to blockade the British occupiers of the city. Two of the vessels were outfitted at Plymouth, and one them (the *Endeavor*) was renamed the *Washington*; the pension records describe her as a "public armed brig." This particular vessel was to be solely manned by Rhode Island troops, but as it turned out, men from other colonies were also brought on to round out the crew. The *Washington* was commanded by Captain Sion Martindale; this information is confirmed in the pension records. According to Chacko and Kulcsar, the vessel was practically a floating junk "...so badly rotted and decayed that she was unfit for sea." Viall volunteered to serve aboard the ship. However, the *Washington* proved to be an unlucky vessel. On its first foray, it was chased back to port by an enemy frigate. On November 29, 1775, the whole crew mutinied because of appalling living conditions; the insurrection was ended with no punishment to the crew. On December 4th, about three days after setting sail on her second voyage, the *Washington* was captured by the British frigate *HMS Fowey* and taken to Boston. She surrendered without a fight. British Admiral Graves had the crew transported to England to stand trial for treason; they reached Portsmouth in early 1776. In his pension statement of April 2, 1818, Viall stated that he was "...captured and carried to England as

a prisoner, and kept 15 months, when I made my escape." When reading the statement, I thought it quite astonishing that Viall was able to escape and make his way across the Atlantic back to America. However, there was an inconvenient secret behind the story. According to Chacko and

Kulcsar, the captured American sailors were impressed into the Royal Navy (Captain Martindale and the other officers were sent to Nova Scotia to be exchanged for British prisoners). It would not have been convenient for Viall and the other sailors to admit, when applying for a war pension, that they had served for a time with the enemy's navy. Viall did make it back to America, but on a Royal Navy vessel; Chacko and Kulcsar state that he jumped ship off New York in 1777. A note concerning Viall in the Revolutionary War personnel records at the Rhode Island State Archives states that he escaped on March 4, 1777. On April 2, 1777, he appeared before the Rhode Island Council of War, claiming back pay.



The gravestone of John Viall, Johnston Historical Cemetery #21.

Photo by Christopher Martin.

Perhaps as an incentive for the fledgling government to pay him what he felt he was owed, or because he was very patriotic, John Viall decided to enter the fray once again. He rejoined the Continental Army and received an Ensign's commission (an ensign being similar to an army non-commissioned officer -- not a naval rank in this case). An interesting story concerning Viall can be found at the State Archives in the Book of Petitions to the General Assembly, volume 19, page 37. In this document, Stephen Hammon, at the time of the story a Johnston resident, gives a deposition concerning two enlistees into the Continental Army: "I Stephen Hammon... do testify and state that some time in the Spring of 1777, I was at Providence at the goal [jail] in company with Mr. John Beverly Esq. discoursing with said Beverly concerning some particulars of our own, and as we were talking together before the goal door, Col. Israel Angell came down the street and came to us where we were talking and we soon got into a discourse concerning of enlisting Continental soldiers and Col. Angell said he had got two very good soldiers a few days before in the Town of Johnston;

said Beverly asked Col. Angell who they were and he replied and said John Vial and Robert Hanson and he said they both enlisted for the term of three years and Col. Angell further said that he took a very good liking to the said John Vial and he decided to get a commission for him if it was in his power, and accordingly I understand that said Vial was commissioned in his the said Col. Angell's Reg't and further saith not." Hammon gave this deposition on May 31, 1782. Viall served in Captain Shaw's Company of Colonel Israel Angell's 2nd Rhode Island Regiment of the Continental Line. It just so happened that Israel Angell, who commanded one of the two Rhode Island Line regiments during much of the war, was a resident of Johnston, living in the western part of town, near where Pippin Orchard Road meets Plainfield Pike. Viall, who may have been an artilleryman, participated in the major battles of the New Jersey campaign at Red Bank (October 22, 1777), Mud Fort (October/November 1777), and Monmouth (June 28, 1778). A deposition given by John S. Dexter of Providence on January 20, 1818, who held the rank of Major in the 2nd Rhode Island Regiment, stated: "...certified that John Viol... commissioned and served with reputation as Ensign, 2nd R.I. Regt., Col. Israel Angell, U.S. service, 1777 to 1778, in the battles of Red Bank & Monmouth, in which his conduct was gallant and meritorious..." These battles in New Jersey were not to be his last, for he was also a participant in the only real action on his native soil, the Battle of Rhode Island.

American and British forces had been in a stand-off on Aquidneck Island since the British seized Newport in 1776. Major General George Washington decided it was time to force a decision and end the occupation. Half of the state militia was called up, as well as other militia units from neighboring states. Contingents of Continental Line units also arrived from the middle Atlantic area, including Israel Angell's 2nd Rhode Island Regiment. The American forces were commanded by General John Sullivan. In addition, the French fleet, under Admiral d'Estaing, was to support the American forces. On account of the withdrawal of the French fleet to Boston to repair storm damage, an American council of war decided to lift the siege of Newport and move their lines northward, straddling the whole of Aquidneck Island in a defensive position. On August 29, 1778, the British attacked the American line. The battle was a stand-off, but General Sullivan decided to evacuate the island, withdrawing to Bristol and Tiverton on the night of August 30. The evacuation was well done and efficient, with the loss of hardly any equipment. But of course, no military operation ever goes totally according to plan. The story is taken up in one of the seminal early histories of Rhode Island, the *State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations at the End of the Century: A History*, Vol. I, 1902, edited by Edward Field. The following is from page 502: "In all the accounts of these operations it is stated that the retreat was conducted so successfully that not a man nor a piece of baggage was left behind on the Island, but the narrative of Lieutenant John Viall, of Johnston, who served gallantly all through the war, tells a different story, for he states that, 'Being on piquet guard, they forgot to notify me at the retreat, and I fell into the hands of the British, and was kept for a long time in one of the prison ships in the harbor of Newport'; and Col. Israel Angell, in his diary telling of the events of that day, states that Viall and fourteen others were taken prisoners." (It should be noted that the above story erroneously gives Viall's rank as lieutenant).

The unfortunate circumstance of being taken prisoner a second time put Viall in a kind of double jeopardy. In footnote #63 on page 387 of their work, Chacko and Kulcsar state: "During the Battle of Rhode Island, Vial was captured again by the British, who considered him a deserter and threatened to hang him. He was finally exchanged but was listed in Continental records as absent from duty during the period. John C. Calhoun tried to revoke Vial's pension for this reason in 1820." Talk about bad luck! Why Calhoun tried to pursue this is unknown, because depositions taken two years earlier show that the subject had already been investigated. In a supplementary declaration of August 27, 1818, Israel Angell himself stated: "Oct. 9, 1778, [Viall] was then a prisoner, taken last of August, and not exchanged till Oct. 15, was never absent

without leave." A deposition by Ebenezer Macomber of Providence, who served as a Lieutenant in Israel Angell's 2nd Rhode Island Regiment in 1778, stated that "...John Viol belonged to the same Regiment as an Ensign, and Viol on guard one night on the east side of the island, and was taken prisoner by the British together with all of the guard except one, and about Oct. 15, Viol was exchanged." Possibly as a result of his stay on one of the infamous British prison ships, it is possible that his health was affected. The pension and Continental Army records indicate that at his own request he asked to be discharged from service because of ill health. He was given an honorable discharge and taken off the army rolls toward the end of 1778.

But this was not the end of the war for John Viall; it seems as if he just possessed tremendous patriotism or a desire for more adventure. Chacko and Kulcsar briefly state that Viall served as a crewman on several privateers based out of Providence. This is confirmed by the Revolutionary War personnel records at the State Archives. A note states that John Viall of Johnston served as chief mate aboard the sloop *Revenge*, commanded by Solomon Jenckes. On May 20, 1780, while bound for Providence the *Revenge* captured a British sloop commanded by Thomas Smith. On June 9, 1780, Viall was sent aboard the captured vessel to serve as prize master, presumably to sail her to Providence. It was poetic justice that after being himself captured twice, John Viall was able to turn the tables on the British towards the end of the war. It is possible that he continued serving on privateers right up to the end of the war in 1782.

Thus ends the rather amazing military career of John Viall, as far as existing records show. He was probably one of the few men who served almost from the first day of the War of Independence until its very end - a true Patriot. He is buried in Johnston Historical Cemetery #21, along Hartford Avenue.

Next issue: John Viall returns to Johnston after the war.

Remembrances from Mabel

by Louis McGowan

Editor's note: *In doing my usual Monday night filing of Johnston papers at our museum, I come across interesting tidbits from the past that we kept for future use. Lately, I have been going through items from Mabel Atwood Sprague's family papers, and in the course of this work, I pulled out a folder of interviews that I conducted with her in the 1980s and '90s. They were not formal interviews, just me trying to write down as fast as I could things that flashed into her mind. She had a remarkable memory, but she was difficult to interview.*

May 31, 1984, at Mabel's house, 216 Morgan Avenue, where Mabel lived all her life except for the first two years of her marriage:

She spoke of two slave houses that were on the property of the Welcome Alverson (aka Tillinghast, Crandall) House, across the street from her house. She said that she had a painting of the slave houses (whereabouts unknown). She remembered one of the houses when she was a little girl. This house was moved down the road to the Onsley property, at the corner of Borden Avenue. Ernie Onsley purchased the house when it was at this new location. He moved it to the back of his property, and with lumber taken from a house being taken down in Scituate, he fixed up the home. Mabel said that there were people of color (farm workers?) on the property, who lived in tar paper houses.

Mable said that "piggery hill" was up Plainfield Pike.

When the Thornton School burned down (1919), classes were temporarily held at the following: two grades at the old Thornton Fire Station, two at the Pocasset Club (Casino), two at the Church of the

Holy Nativity and two at the Congregational Church (on the Cranston side in back of where Mainelli's Spa used to be).



The Welcome Alverson Homestead, pictured about 1890, is viewed from the Abraham Atwood property. The main house, a Greek Revival style structure from the 1830s or 1840s, stands today but with a porch across the front, dormers, and a large ell on the rear. The small houses to the right are said to have been slave houses. They are now gone. The ell on the back of the house in this view was the kitchen. *Images of America: Johnston, pg. 61.*

She told me that the Morgan Mill was run by the Almy brothers and one of the brothers, Samson Almy, lived on (and owned?) the Toby Farm on Atwood Avenue. One of Samson's daughters married Dr. Toby. Leander Peckham's house, #278 Morgan Avenue, and the two houses east of it were owned by the mill. There was a grocery store at the mill, run by Joseph Webb. Later, the building that housed the store was moved to the other side of the Peckham house, and Webb continued to run the grocery business there. Webb had two wagons delivering groceries daily and did so until his death in 1924.

Joseph Webb lived at 281 Morgan Avenue, a small house which was built around 1845 by Mabel's grandfather, Hiram Atwood. The house was later passed on to Webb's grandson, Webb Wilder.

The area around Monson Street, which runs off Morgan Avenue and up Neutaconkanut Hill, was farmed in the early twentieth century (and probably before that).

She knew of three mill houses on the drive off Morgan Avenue into the mill area. The first house was built of stone and the other two were wood frame. The one closest to the mill was a multi-unit tenement.

The Hughesdale School, where her sister Alice taught from 1935 to 1946, closed in 1946.

Brothers Howard and Benjamin Almy ran a cider business on Simmonsville Avenue at the corner of Almy Street in Simmonsville. The business was in the old stone textile mill. The Almys later sold out to the Gatta family who ran the Primrose Laundry and moved their cider business to Atwood Avenue.

The Pocasset Worsted Mill was called Pocasset College by local people.

April 26, 1987, at Mabel's house:

Simmonsville Lower Reservoir was called Merritt's Pond and had a very large ice house, which was accessed by a dirt road off Plainfield Pike, just north of the exit ramp from Route 295. There were also ice houses at: the west side of Morgan Mills Pond, run by the Ferri family; on the Stamp Farm on Cherry Hill Road (Stamp peddled ice in Manton); and in Belknap at the pond on the north side of Greenville Avenue at Pine Hill Road.

George Ducharme was Chief of Police when Edmund Atwood, Mabel's father, was Town Sergeant.

The King Observatory on Neutaconkanut Hill had no roof and a spiral staircase, and was a good place to view the city of Providence.

Byron Sweet used to cut hay on the Monson Street side of Neutaconkanut Hill.

There was a gold mine in back of the balancing rock on the hill above the former 1025 Club on Plainfield Street which her father saw operating about the 1870s (Editor's note: *the rock was blasted to pieces long ago and Mabel told me another time that the gold mine was "salted"*).

Mrs. Tillinghast (Grace) would take Mabel's mother and her three children around "cemetering," that is, copying inscriptions from headstones all around the state. Chester Onsley, who chauffeured for the Tillinghast family for a while, used to drive them around. Grace's copies of the records were donated to the Elmwood Library on Elmwood Avenue. She died in 1932 or 1933.

The stone house that stood on Atwood Avenue until a decade or so ago (not too far south of Morgan Avenue) was probably on the site of the Abram L. Atwood House that burned around the turn of the twentieth century. Sterry K. Luther, town clerk, lived a house or two towards Thornton from the stone house (Mabel said it housed Jean's Beauty Shop).

There was a trolley turn out at Fenner Stand (site of the 1025 Club) and a turn out for buses across from the former Almacs Market on Plainfield Street in Silver Lake. The latter was called Cooper's turn out. She also mentioned one at Pezza'a Market on Plainfield Street between Walnut Street and Maple Avenue. There was not one at Mill Street in Thornton. The trolley was "just switched" (not too sure what she meant).

At some point the trolley line ended at Plainfield Street and Duxbury Street in Providence. From there to points west to Thornton, one would travel on Henry Gorton's hack. His barn was in back of the auto dealer which formerly stood at that corner.

Mabel remembers her father getting sawdust from the saw mill in back of Charlie Stone's house (the Thomas Fenner House on the Cranston side of Plainfield Pike). He would use the sawdust as packing between the blocks of ice that was stored in the icehouse on their farm.

Ben Onsley, who lived at 258 Morgan Avenue, used to dig holes in the ground on his property, stick in a dead fish for fertilizer in each hole, and then put a plant in each hole. It is said to have been quite smelly, but he grew wonderful vegetables.

Next issue: Remembrances from Mabel continues.

Interview with George Daignault by Louis McGowan

In January, 2013, I was talking to JHS member George Daignault at the Pocasset Cemetery (he does a lot of volunteering there), sharing memories about growing up in Johnston. He is 69 years old, only two years older than me, but we grew up in different villages, so our memories are not quite the same. He lived in Hughesdale in two of the town's very historic houses. His early childhood was spent on the Toby Farm (also known as the Pocasset Farm), where the Allendale complex stands today. His family lived on the first floor of the 300+ year old Toby House. That house was moved in the 1970s to upper Thames Street in Newport, where it still majestically sits. After it was moved, the Allendale Insurance Company headquarters was constructed on the farm.



Toby House, now known as Wilder House (c.1735), stands at the corner of Thames Street and Cozzins Court in Newport. *Photo by Christopher Martin.*

The Daignault family rented part of the house on the first floor from the Wilder family, who owned much land in the area. The house was so big, that they only rented part of the first floor. In the main room, there was a large fireplace. They had no indoor toilet, but they did have water that ran to the sink. The Tooey family lived upstairs over the Daignaults.

In front of the house was a stone cistern, with one pipe filling the structure and one leaving. This was their source of drinking water. There was no central heat in the house, so they burned wood in the kitchen stove to keep warm. George remembers a couple of old barns on the property, one with an old buggy inside. He and his family lived there between 1944 and 1949. There was a long dirt road leading up to the house. Mr. Wilder used to come in once a year to level the road.

About 1949 or 1950, George's family moved to the Judge Patton House on Central Avenue in Hughesdale, which they rented from Bertha and George Patton. The Caldwell family lived on the second floor. There was no central heat or hot water in this house. A big barn once stood on the property, but it was torn down many years ago. He remembers no fireplaces in the house, just a wood stove in the kitchen and a space heater in the parlor. At the upper dam, a few properties west on Central Avenue, was the Fontaine homestead. He remembers that the Fontaines had a turkey farm on their property. Another neighbor was Jimmy Goss. George remembers planting many trees with Jimmy on the slopes of his property.

George recalled that someone made gunstocks at the Morgan Mills, and there was a big pile of them on their property. He speculates that they may have been from World War I.

George's grandfather Daignault was on the town police force. He also was a charter member of Hose #1 (Thornton Volunteer Fire Department) and one of the founders of St. Bridget's Church.

Society Doings

Earth Day Observances

On April 20, 2013, a number of people from our society helped with a clean-up of a section of the Woonasquatucket River in observance of Earth Day. Many dozens of volunteers showed up to weed, spread mulch and pick up trash. Much of the work was done on the Johnston side of the river bike path in the Manton section. Kudos to Joe Jamroz for helping to bring out many volunteers and for heading a section of the work crew.

On April 27, 2013, the Apple Blossom Garden Club donated and planted a sugar maple tree at the Belknap School. About twenty people attended the event. There were refreshments, some brief speeches and many guests visited the school. It was a nice event, and we thank the good people at the garden club for their generosity.

Our Properties

On Saturday, May 4, 2013, a number of society members gathered to do a spring cleanup at the museum grounds. Anthony Ursillo, Tim Kee, Elise Carlson, Shar DiMaio, Doug Stephens, Joe Jamroz, and Louis McGowan all worked hard sprucing up the flower beds and grounds around the Elijah Angell House and the museum grounds. Thanks to all for a job well done.

In a separate happening, thanks to Pat Macari, Joe Jamroz, Louis McGowan, Rolf Johnson, and Bel McGowan for together helping us to get a truck load of manure on our garden. Someone told me that Pat's truck still stinks.

Museum Addition

As of July 9, we are awaiting the start of work on our museum addition. Warren Lanpher, our contractor, has purchased the lumber and has met with the electrical and heating contractors. They moved the central air conditioning unit. The excavating contractor is scheduled to move the shed and dig the foundation hole during the third week of July. We are anticipating that work will move quickly after that.

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

Christopher Martin once again secured us a \$500 grant from the Harvard Pilgrim Foundation through his employer, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care. The funds will be used to purchase a used computer and database software so that we may begin to create an electronic catalog of our holdings.

Cemetery Committee Report

by Pasco Macari

Cemetery #26, the Young Family yard, is located on Central Avenue near the Scituate line. We mortared four head stones, chiseled out a keyway in a base, and epoxied one head stone and one foot stone. While adjusting the base of Nathan J. Taylor we discovered his foot stone (not broken) and the foot stone (broken in half) of Abbie R. Keach. Someone used these two foot stones to level Nathan's headstone. If it was not in need of repositioning we would never have found the foot stones. I will again thank the members of the Young family for the support they have given the cemetery committee and the continuing care of the cemetery. This cemetery has been completed.

Cemetery #41, Welcome Sprague yard on Peck Hill Road, is a small stone walled yard approximately 40' by 60'. There are five marked burials, although Arnold inventoried seven; two have been removed.

Throughout the few visits to this yard we landscaped, made one concrete base, and repositioned several head and foot stones. I transported the head of Welcome Sprague (broken in three pieces) to Steve's workshop for repair. Upon returning his repaired head to the yard we used Arnold's inventory to determine the location of his and his wife, Ruth's, markers. Ruth Sprague's head was mortared into the concrete base we made earlier.



The James Colvin Lot (cemetery #25) as it looked back in March 2013. Brush cleared, but stones and bases not yet repaired, and posts along the sides and rear out of whack. *Photo by Christopher Martin.*

Cemetery #25, the Colvin yard, is a very small yard, very overgrown, with granite posts. Only three marked graves have been recorded by James Arnold. The marble head of Marcy Colvin was broken in half. We cemented the bottom half into the base, and next visit we epoxied the top half. The marble head of James Colvin is in very good condition but we have not found his base. The head of Mehitable has not been found. We worked hard to reposition the granite posts; as they were pushed over some were knocked out of their original locations. The cemetery now has its perimeter defined. We will need to visit #25 a couple more times.

Cemetery #45, the Colonel John Waterman yard, is located off Plainfield Pike behind a Dunkin Donuts shop. All but one marker have been located matching our inventory with that of James Arnold. This yard is difficult to access because of heavy growth and poison ivy surrounding it. Dan Meunier and his friend Kevin cut several trees encroaching on some stones, allowing us to remove two head stones and one foot. I transported the slate head of Sarah Waterman, the marble head of Stacy Waterman, and a marble foot, initials L.S., to Steve's workshop. We have several repairs to do on site and a lot of landscaping.

Cemetery #6, Barnes and Angell, is located on Roosevelt Avenue in the Graniteville section of town. This yard is nicely maintained by neighbor John Nelson and has been for many years. We thank John for his dedication. We worked in the yard for three weeks, first doing some detail landscaping to help John with the heavier work. Next, we used Everett's tri-pod to raise a double headstone of Sarah and William Smith and three other large marble headstones. We repositioned six marble heads and three footstones of children. We raised the base of Phila B. Staples and mortared the head and repositioned small markers for the Staples family. I transported the head of Andrew J. Angell to Steve's workshop. Upon completion of repair we mortared it into its brown stone base. A small obelisk for three children is being repaired by new member Ed Cornwell. Otherwise, this yard is complete.

Cemetery #46, the Simon Smith yard, is located off Plainfield Pike on Joe Ianelli's farm. This yard is about 30' by 30' with five inscribed stone and two rude stone markers. On our first visit we cut the grass (very high) and began working on a small tree stump. Of the rude markers only one foot is missing. The marble head of Betsy Ann is in poor condition but needed no attention; her footstone is in place. The marble head of Sylvester Kingsley is in place and in very good condition. The marble head of Orrin Smith is in very good condition, but broken in half. We drilled, epoxied, and mortared it. The foot is in place. The marble head and foot of Abigail Smith needed no attention but both are beginning to wear. The marble head of Simon Smith is very worn and broken in half. We drilled and epoxied the stone. We have completed this yard in three visits.

Cemetery #87, the Knight yard, is located off Green Hill Road, which is off Plainfield Pike. We cut the grass and trimmed the trees and shrubs on the perimeter of the yard. Also, one slate stone, with four children's names on it, had fallen and was remortared.

Cemetery #71, the Sweet yard, is located off Blueberry Lane behind Bill Northrup's house; a large yard protected on all sides with a stone wall. The last couple weeks of July we have been clearing and cutting this yard. It will be a few more visits before we can begin repairing the stones.

The committee has been worked very hard clearing and cutting the cemeteries as I have noted in this report. In addition to the cemeteries mentioned, the committee has spent five Sunday mornings, one Saturday and two Thursdays, cutting and raking the cemeteries we restored previously.

I would like to acknowledge and thank member Anthony Ricci for lending us his walk-behind weed whacker. It saved us so much time and was easier to use than less-efficient hand-held trimmers.

Once again, many thanks to Dan Mazzulla and his recreation department crew for the work they do cutting the grass in several of our restored cemeteries. And in the past month they have added three large cemeteries to their schedule on my request. Thank you again.

Many thanks go out to Pat Palermo and his son, Sal, for all the hard work they have performed in cemeteries #18, Manton, and #21, King. Sal is leaving in August for college. We wish him good luck.

A special thanks goes out to the staff from Central Nurseries, Jenny and Bill Oxx, Carlos Gonzalez, Giles MacDonald, Garden Center manager Dave Martin and co-owner Steven Pagliarini for their work in cemetery #21, King yard, raking and picking up debris. Several trips in the company dump truck proved this was a major accomplishment. Thank you very much.

The cemetery Committee is Doug Stephens, Tim Kee, Anthony Ursillo, Bill Rotondo, Elise Carlson, Shar DiMaio, Everett Cogswell, Anthony Ricci, Steve Merolla, and Pasco Macari. The committee welcomes new member Ed Cornwell.

Speakers

Guest speaker Anthony Ursillo thoroughly entertained the packed house audience at our March 2013 meeting. Over forty members and guests came by to hear Anthony tell them of the history of the Shang Bailey Roadhouse, which his family has owned since the 1970s. Anthony had many informative and funny tales to tell us of the adventures of Frederick "Shang" Bailey, who ran an infamous business here at the turn of the twentieth century. He also told us of the history of the house before Shang and brought us up to date telling us of his parents' restoration of the building and the gift shop that he and they ran here for many years.

We had another capacity crowd in April, when Richard Dragon spoke to our group. His topic was Rhode Island license plates, and the man knows his stuff. He brought us back to 1904, when the first R.I. plates were issued, and took us through most of the different plates that were seen on the road, right down to the present day. He is a very good speaker, and everyone at the meeting seemed to enjoy themselves very much.

About thirty members and guests attended our May 29th meeting. They listened and watched Louis McGowan present a slide show on postcards of Johnston. A lot of lively comments from the audience added to the talk. Bel McGowan and her sister Ida brought deviled eggs, fresh fruit cups and Portuguese cake to everyone's enjoyment.

Thirty-five- plus members and guests showed up for our June meeting. We had a rousing good time with a hot dog roast, watermelon, and Yacht Club Soda to start off the evening. After our general meeting, society member Arthur Ianelli entertained and enlightened us with a talk on stone implements that were used by early man in our area and their relationship to modern day implements.

Much thanks to Joe Jamroz for his work in getting the hot dog roast together. Thanks also to Elise Carlson, Bel McGowan, and Wendy Ingram for their part in helping out.

Acquisitions

- Dan Brown donated six early Johnston School Reports and two tax books.
- Michael Smith donated a gently used snowblower.
- Bob Heywood and his sister, Debbie Heywood Russo, donated two items connected with their family farm on Atwood Avenue: a Heywood Dairy milk bottle and an order book for the dairy.
- Louis McGowan found and purchased for the society a twenty-page booklet (constitution & by-laws) on the Rough & Ready Fire Station on Plainfield Street in the Annex Section of Providence. Founded in 1887, it was Johnston's first fire department. The building still stands, although changes have made it unrecognizable.
- Dan Meunier donated a nineteenth century graduation certificate from the Concord School in the Annex section of Johnston (now Providence).
- Billy Rotondo donated a *Journal-Bulletin* Rhode Island Almanac and a 1963 Centredale School Diploma.
- Nancy (Atkinson) Sprague donated some of her father's (Alan Atkinson) papers. Included were: a 1920 schedule for the Benn's Mohairs (Greystone Mill's cricket team) for whom Alan played; Alan's 1941 application for a Federal Civil Service position as a painter; and a wonderful 1913 indenture between Alan and The Joseph Benn and Son Mill, whereby Alan would be trained over the course of four years to become a loom fixer. The Atkinsons were Graniteville people.

Clock Donated

A few years ago, Bob Heywood, after Mabel Sprague died, put aside for us a wonderful clock from Mabel's house. She wanted us to have it, and Bob saved it at a time when the house was unoccupied and open to theft of its contents.

The clock is not working, but it is an early one. The thing that is exciting for us though is the reverse painting on glass below the clock face. The scene depicted in the painting is a full view of the Morgan Mill, just down the river from Mabel's house. The mill burned to the ground in the 1970s. The painting was executed by William Waldo Atwood, a relative of Mabel's. We have a small collection of his drawings and paintings displayed in our museum.

A big thank you goes out to Bob.

One of our members, Ed Cornwell, has graciously volunteered to restore and repair Mabel's clock. We are really pleased that he is doing this for us. The clock will be on display, probably in the new addition to the museum.

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

JHS Election

At our June 2013 meeting, we held our election of officers. Steve Merolla presented the slate of candidates to Secretary Elise Carlson. There were no nominations from the floor. The new officers are:

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

Thanks to all these great people who agreed to run and help preserve our town's history.

Upcoming Events

July and August 2013

Summer hiatus -- no general meetings in these months.

August 25, 2013

JHS Picnic

4-7pm

Johnston Historical Society members and their families and friends are invited to partake of pic-a-nic goodies. JHS will supply hamburgers, hot dogs, buns, and soda. Anything else is pot luck, so please bring a dish to share. Plus, there'll be badminton, horseshoes, sitting around chatting, maybe even a raffle.

September 25, 2013

General Meeting

7pm

Author Ray Wolf returns to talk about his newest book, *Images of America: Coventry*.

October 30, 2013

General Meeting

7pm

Author Paul F. Caranci will speak about and sign his new book, *The Hanging and Redemption of John Gordon: The True Story of Rhode Island's Last Execution*.

December 4, 2013

General Meeting

7pm

Christopher Martin will give a presentation on Providence: Then and Now, pairing historical images of Providence buildings and views with current ones. See how things have changed in the last 120 years, and in what ways they've stayed the same.

January 29, 2014

General Meeting

7pm

Park ranger John McNiff from the Roger Williams National Memorial will tell us everything he knows about Roger Williams. Well, everything he knows that he can tell in about an hour. If he told us everything he knows, we'd be there all night.

February 26, 2014

General Meeting

7pm

Our speaker will be Pat Perry from Sneak Peek Productions. She'll tell us something about eight presidential first ladies. And Bel McGowan will prepare some first ladies' dessert favorites for us to sample.

March 26, 2014

General Meeting

7pm

Our speaker will be Sylvia Bartholomy of the American French Genealogical Society in Woonsocket, and the topic will be the Daughters of the King, a program sponsored by Louis XIV that brought approximately 800 young French women to New France between 1663 and 1673 in an effort to boost Canada's population.

April 30, 2014

General Meeting

7pm

Reinhard Wohlgemuth of East Providence will tell us about the history and current status of Carver, Massachusetts' beloved Edaville Railroad.

Spring 2013

Dedication of Our New Meeting House

1-5pm

Join us for the gala ribbon cutting at our new museum barn addition! We'll also have a silent auction where you can bid on items ranging from gift certificates for local goods and services to craft items to baked goods. Refreshments will be served. Proceeds benefit the Johnston Historical Society. Free admission; rain or shine. Call Anthony at (401) 934-0123, or email aursillo401@gmail.com for more information, or to donate items or gift certificates for the silent auction.

May 28, 2014

General Meeting

7pm

Society president Louis McGowan will present on Rhode Island advertising postcards.

June 25, 2014

General Meeting

7pm

Speaker TBD.

July and August 2014

Summer hiatus -- no general meetings in these months.

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 Saturday of each month, 9-11 am, 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 9-11 am 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 177 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: November 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 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: Info@JohnstonHistorical.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/johnstonhistorical

Annual Dues

Have you paid your 2013 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 2013 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**