

HistWick Herald

!! Garden Tour - July 19 - 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. !!

June 2008

Volume 5, Number 2

Message from the President by Nora Hall

As we slip slowly into summer days, I am reminded how fortunate I, and I believe, all of us are to have landed in Wickford. Even more than the promise of warm weather that adds to summer's enjoyment, the many activities around the village and of the spirit of cooperation among residents is what makes this a wonderful place to live.

I would imagine that those of us who had the opportunity to attend Tim Cranston's recent walking tour of Captain's Homes came to a new awareness of our history. Tim has the ability to make the lives of our ancestors come alive as he tells stories that frame the development of this remarkably livable historic village. We are lucky to have such a dedicated historian in our midst, and HistWick was pleased to sponsor this tour for members. A special thank you to Tim for helping us preserve and protect the historic environment of Wickford and its surrounding areas.

I hope that you will be around town on July 19th so that you can enjoy the beautiful gardens on tour for HistWick's Garden Tour. The generosity of homeowners who are opening their yards to visitors is greatly appreciated, and the remarkable accomplishments of an extraordinary Garden Tour Committee must be applauded. This committee has managed to bring the garden tour to a new level of excellence. We anticipate being able to make a major financial contribution to the Three Island Project at the Gateway to Wickford sponsored by the Plum Beach Garden Club and that everyone will have a wonderful time touring the gardens.

Speaking of events and collaboration among various groups in the area—the Chamber of Commerce is planning its annual Harbour Fest for September. This lively and fun event gives us yet an opportunity to join with our neighbors and friends in celebration of all that is good in Wickford. Funds raised from this event will support individuals and educational efforts within the town of North Kingstown. Call the Chamber for more information if you would like to volunteer and help make this event a success.

See you at the garden tour.

Histwick is a not for profit corporation dedicated to historic preservation and community information for those interested in the village of Wickford. All dues and contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Tim Cranston on the origins of Wickford

(an ongoing series)

Wickford and the Age of Sail

As mentioned in our last installment, it was a decision by a rail company, The Providence and Stonington Railroad, which began the village's mid-19th century malaise. However, this slow period of general decline in the village was abated in 1870 by the construction of another rail system, the Newport & Wickford Railway & Steamship Line, funded largely by wealthy Newport patrons, including Cornelius Vanderbilt, looking for a way to avoid the long trek up through Providence and Bristol to get to their summer mansions in the "City by the Sea". This train left Wickford Junction, just west of Lafayette, on a regular basis which tended to mirror the mainline train schedules, and made the short run down to Poplar Point where a waiting steamer could take travelers directly to Jamestown and Newport.

This influx of new money, jobs, and visitors revitalized the village at a critical juncture in its history, as many of the old colonial-era homes were falling into disrepair by that time. Additionally the construction of the Sea View Trolley Line some two decades later, funded largely by wealthy Narragansett casino owners intent on providing a easy way to bring Rhode Islanders to their resorts and beaches, continued the revitalization initiated by the Newport Line. This electric trolley line which ran from the southern terminus of the United Electric Trolley line at "Bleachery Hill" in East Greenwich down to the Narragansett Pier area, also was an incredible boon to local residents as it afforded them the opportunity to expand "their world" through this inexpensive and convenient transportation option into Rhode Island's more metropolitan northern communities such as Providence and Pawtucket. Now they could obtain employment outside of the immediate area, send their children to college in the capitol city, or just enjoy a day trip to the Narragansett Pier.

The Sea View also ran a daily "farmers run" through the rural areas and picked up dairy and agricultural products for ultimate delivery to the large produce markets in Providence. Additionally the trolley company also developed, in conjunction with Syria Vaughn and the Greene family running Hamilton Web, an extensive coal transportation business as well. Finally, excess power from the trolley distribution system was sold to homes and businesses adjacent to the tracks bringing electric power into North Kingstown homes for the first time. Again it was a transportation related change that brought this period in Wickford's history to an abrupt close; next time we'll examine this transition as we look at "Wickford and the Age of the Automobile".

More notes on the village for this summer..

The Lighthouse project is nearing completion due to the efforts of Wickford artist and craftsman Dominic Zachorne. Another Wickford artisan Dave Butler is assisting with the incredible details of the lighthouse light with an accurate scale Fresnel type light now part of the model. The Arts Council is also working on preparing the case to protect the lighthouse at it's future exhibit site.

The historic Construction Battalion of the Navy in conjunction with the Sea Cadets has announced a partnership to bring harbor launch services to the Wickford waterfront. 'The General' an historic vessel that has cruised Wickford for many years will also help Sea Cadets learn water skills and Coast Guard licensing. Stay tuned to Marine radio VHS channel 68 or call 294-9098 for more information.

Wickford in Bloom, Garden Tour by Barbara Burgess

It is again time to celebrate HistWick's Garden Tour, a tradition valued by so many of us. The role of HistWick is to preserve, enhance and celebrate the unique historical charm of our village, and *Wickford in Bloom* provides an excellent opportunity to do just that. The tour on Saturday, July 19th from 11:00 am to 3:00 PM promises to provide an opportunity to stroll through our extraordinary village and become aware again of the many pleasures of living in this spot of the earth.

The Garden Tour is one of HistWick's primary fundraisers, and the funds are used for projects that help support the village's historic quality and beauty. This year the proceeds will be used to support the Plum Beach Garden Club's Traffic Island Project at the top of West Main Street. The Garden Tour Committee is also planning a raffle to raise additional resources. Christine Pratt has made and donated a beautiful doll house, "A Seaside Cottage". It is now in the window of the Standard Times to be viewed until the tour. In addition there will be a number of baskets, donated by local organizations, merchants and businesses, to be raffled off that are valued at \$100 each.

Fifteen gardens are on view this year, and in each of these gardens, there will be an artist who will be painting the garden during the tour. This will add another dimension of beauty and art to the event. Come! Join in the fun. Support your friends and neighbors who have opened their gardens to the tour and enjoy a renewed awareness of our wonderful village.

Tickets for the tour are \$15, and can be purchased in advance at the Book Garden. Both tickets for the tour and raffle can be purchased at the Wickford Arts Festival and on the day of the tour.

Ask the expert...

(Questions on the history of Wickford...answered by Tim Cranston)

Mike Dacey writes in wondering what the story is behind our village's competing names during the early 18th century, Wickford & Updike's Newtown.

Good question Mike, there certainly is confusion over this one. This all stems back to Lodowick Updike's involvement in the birth of our village; you see Lodowick really is the father of Wickford. He envisioned Wickford as a seaport town in the style of a mini-Boston and had the little quasi-island that had been owned by the Smith/Updike clan for decades platted out in 1709. As a part of his marketing strategy, he promoted this venture as Updike's Newtown. However, at the time, there was great concern that Rhode Island as a distinct colony would cease to exist, with Connecticut absorbing the West Bay and the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay Colonies divvying up the East Bay. Indeed Lodowick and his predecessors Richard Smith Sr. & Jr. were completely in favor of this plan. Hedging his bets, as it were, Lodowick changed the name of his new village to Wickford during this tumultuous period in RI history. He chose that name to curry favor with the colonial governor of Connecticut as Gov. Winthrop's wife had been born in a small village in England named Wickford. So you see, even three hundred years ago, it's all about politics in good old Rhode Island.

Historic Wickford, Inc. - Program Schedule 2008

July 19th	Garden Tour – Fund Raiser
September	Social Event at local Historic Site – Fund Raiser
October	Historic Armchair Tour of Pleasant Street with Tim Cranston and Elizabeth Donovan
December 7th	Pot Luck Community Dinner

Other Programs of Interest

June 20 and 21 House tour and antique sale –St. Paul’s Church Rectory, 14 Gold St.

Historic Wickford, Inc.
P.O.Box 261
North Kingstown, RI 02852

HistWick Garden Tour

Wickford in Bloom

Saturday, July 19, 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

\$ 15.00 - Advance Tickets available at The Book Garden

Also available at the Wickford Arts Festival and on the day of the tour.

The HistWick Herald is published three or four times a year for members of Historic Wickford Inc, and for the Wickford community. We welcome your comments and encourage HistWick members to submit articles for publication. We will print our next issue in June. Please contact Mike Donohue at 267-0104 or mdonohue@aol.com with your ideas or articles.