

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

HistWick Herald

!! Histwick Holiday Potluck Supper : December 6th !!

November 2009

Volume 7, Number 1

Preservation has made Wickford....Historic by Mike Dacey

As we approach the beginning of an often hectic holiday season, I am reminded of how very fortunate we all are to live in such a beautiful, picturesque historic community. Our village often looks like a scene in one of Norman Rockwell's paintings, but never more so than during the holiday season.

One of the unique things that is evident to anyone coming to Wickford and the surrounding area is the large inventory of authentic 18th, 19th and early 20th century homes and buildings that have been carefully preserved and restored. The historic character and setting, in fact, attracts many to visit Wickford, shop in our stores, and often relocate to our community. This attraction would not exist today were it not for the hard work, commitment and investment of time and resources made by many previous generations to maintain and protect these historic homes and buildings.

We are at a critical point in time regarding a decision to be made on the future of several of our town-owned buildings. Of particular concern is the future of our 1873 Beechwood House, former home of RI Governor Elisha Dyer; and the 1908 Wickford Elementary School, site of previous schools dating from 1802. Both buildings have served our citizens well over many years, and with proper stewardship can continue to do so in the future.

A pivotal meeting is scheduled for Monday evening, November 16th at the Beechwood House. The Town Council will receive recommendations on the future of these and other town-owned buildings, and hear views of concerned citizens.

I ask that you consider attending this meeting to learn more, and share your opinion on the future of these historic structures. Previous generations have been willing to "step-up to the plate", and I hope that you will consider doing so as well. I believe that both buildings should be preserved as town assets, and that both can have viable useful roles in serving the citizens of North Kingstown in the future. There are numbers of concerned residents that are working to preserve these buildings. Please consider joining with them in supporting this effort.

Thank you for your attention and consideration on this issue.

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.

Samuel Aborn and the very beginnings of Wickford

by Tim Cranston

When we think of the birth of the village that we all have grown to love, its only quite natural that the name of Updike is the first to come to mind. As we all know, it was the vision and business acumen of Lodowick Updike that created the place that we now call home. But few realize that without the benefit of one group of inter-related real estate transactions, Wickford or Updike's Newtown as it was sometimes called, might have never gained the necessary momentum to become the vital village that it is today. Those transactions, signed sealed and delivered in 1710, were all between Lodowick Updike and a transplanted Massachusetts Bay Colony shipwright named Samuel Aborn.

Aborn purchased from Updike a number of the best waterfront parcels of land on the little island that was to become Wickford. These include the parcel on the east side of the end of what is now Pleasant Street and the entire parcel that is bordered by what we now call Bay Street and Main Street. Aborn built his home, only the second one constructed in the village, near the site of what is now the Wickford Yacht Club and immediately began to build ships on that parcel and the other Bay Street lot. With the abundance of prime lumber on the western side of the Narragansett Bay and Wickford's wonderful natural protected harbor, Aborn's shipyard complex was a sure fire success. Samuel Aborn's success was to Wickford's (and the Updikes) ultimate benefit as jobs in his shipyard were the spur that ultimately brought people to the village. Soon, Benjamin Waterhouse, a shipwright of Newport, joined Aborn here in Wickford building sailing vessels and more tradesmen and their families were required. Additionally, associated industries and trades, necessary to support a thriving shipyard, such as blacksmiths, lumbermen, carpenters & cabinetmakers, sail makers, and the like came as well. Of course, a village such as this needed housewrights and shopkeepers, weavers and coopers; and where there were new sailing vessels, mariners and ships captains were soon to follow. Before long Wickford was on its way a village was born based upon ship construction and the maritime trade.

Aborn and Waterhouse moved on to other locations, particularly another upstart village up the Bay called Pawtuxet; but they were replaced here by the shipwright clans more familiarly associated with Wickford, the McKenzies, the Holloways, the Vaughns, and the Saunders families and things just kept on growing here in Wickford until she became, in the first half of the 19th century, a maritime port rivaled only by Newport. All this from the scratching of a quill pen on some deeds of sale at the desk of Lodowick Updike nearly 300 years ago.

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 March. Please contact Mike Donohue at 267-0104 or mndonohue@aol.com with your ideas or articles.

*Come Celebrate With the
Wickford Community*

*HistWick's
Annual Holiday Potluck Dinner*

Sunday, December 6, 2009

5:30 - 8:00 pm

St. Paul's Parish House

Bring your favorite dish for 8 people;

A - I Main Dish J - Q Dessert

R - Z Side Dish

Coffee, Tea and Cold Drinks will be provided

Current HistWick Officers and Board Members

President : Mike Dacey - 89 West Main St., - dacey1000@verizon.net - 294-2420

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Treasurer: Rick Moore -17 Main St., - rimooore0331@gmail.com - 295-0152

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It's Time to Renew your Annual HistWick Membership

Please mail to *Historic Wickford, Inc. P.O.Box 261 North Kingstown, RI 02852*

Or bring your membership renewal to the annual holiday Potluck Supper.

We thank you for your ongoing support.

HISTORIC WICKFORD, INC.

Membership Form

Thank you for your support of Historic Wickford, Inc. Please complete the form below with your check made payable to "Historic Wickford, Inc." and mail it to:

Treasurer
Historic Wickford, Inc.
P.O. Box 261
Wickford, RI 02852

1. Select the Membership Level right for you.

<u>Membership Level</u>	<u>Annual Dues</u>
Annual Individual / Family Membership	\$25
Annual "Supporter"	\$50
Annual "Donor"	\$100+

2. Please provide us with your contact information.

First Name: _____ Last Name _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: (_____) _____

Email: _____

3. Please select any activities in which you would like to contribute.

HistWick Newsletter

Pot Luck Dinners

HistWick Web Site

Garden Tour

Wickford History

HistWick Contributes Signs on Islands

We're sure that everyone has seen the newly landscaped traffic islands on the top of West Main Street. The Plum Beach Garden Club has completed the landscaping with an ornamental pear tree, beautiful shrubs, many varieties of perennials, grasses and bulbs. The middle island has hardscape that includes cobble stones and granite. This is a wonderful improvement of these traffic islands which represents the gateway into our village.

In collaboration with the Plum Beach Garden Club, HistWick has contributed resources raised from the last two garden tours to the Island Project. These funds have been used to purchase the two beautiful signs on the center Island. The design of the signs is a replication of door trims of homes built during the 18th century. One sign welcomes individuals into Historic Wickford with the date of 1709 when the village was established. The other smaller sign is a Blue Star Memorial By-way sign. This sign is dedicated to honoring the men and woman who have served, are serving and will serve in the Armed Forces of America.

Wickford Decks the Halls! Holiday Kitchen Tour

Title: Wickford Decks the Halls! Holiday Kitchen Tour
Description: Historic Wickford presents a village walking tour of eight unique historic homes featuring kitchens, keeping rooms, and dining areas, showcasing festive holiday decorations, distinctive table settings and creative holiday arrangements.
Date: Sunday, December 6, 2009
12:30 – 4:30 pm
Tickets: \$25 in advance
\$30 day of tour
Purchase advance tickets at The Book Garden, 99 Brown St., Wickford Village, or by emailing HistWick1@verizon.net
Purchase tickets the day of tour at St. Paul's Parish House, 76 Main Street, Wickford-
Proceeds: All proceeds benefit the North Kingstown Food Pantry

Community Spirit Causes a Change of View

As the work on Main Street wound to a finish, three neighborhood women (who choose to remain anonymous) decided that the view at the end of the street did not do justice to the new look. Seeing that the overgrown bushes and straggly weeds in the small garden at the entrance to the town dock looked terrible and hid the lovely view, they took it upon themselves to clean it up.

Their trimming of bushes and elimination of weeds made a huge difference, but they decided to go a step further and add some new plantings that now "sing in the breeze" and say *welcome*.

The purpose of this recounting is to encourage you to take a walk to the end of Main and enjoy the new water view. Hopefully, it will also remind us that each of us can make a difference in our neighborhood. While we enjoy our new smooth roads, lovely lamps and bump free sidewalks, let's be aware that we can all pitch in to keep the Village as clean and pleasant as we like our own homes and yards.

Another purpose of the recounting is to thank those construction workers who, on their own, offered to haul away the debris of overgrown bushes and weeds because they were so impressed by our neighbors' efforts. In the scheme of life, some may say "what is the big deal about a little garden," but we think that it speaks reams of what can be done when people decide to take responsibility for something and pitch in to help one another. How wonderful to live in a village like this!

Upcoming Meetings and Events

November 11 : Dedication of the Blue Star Memorial at the new Island Project on West Main (Gateway to Wickford) 9:15 a.m.

November 16 : Town Council Meeting on the future of the Beechwood House to be held at the Beechwood House : 7 p.m.

December 6 :HistWick Holiday Kitchen Tour : See Details at the bottom of this page

December 6 : Annual HistWick Holiday Potluck Dinner, St. Paul's Parish House, 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. (See Details inside)

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