



MIDDLETOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

30TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION



December 2006

President's Message

The previous President's Message was written by Stan Grossman and in it he announced his intention to step down as president of the Society. I agreed to take on the position with great reluctance, realizing that I had some very large shoes to fill. There is a great deal to learn and I am confident that the board of directors will be supporting me.

This should be an exciting time for the Middletown Historical Society. There are a number of projects that will involve the Society. We are planning to use the Durfee property on Valley Road near Green End Avenue to create a park marking one of the Rhode Island battles of the Revolutionary War. This small parcel of land is located in the area in which some of the battle took place. Exact details of this project have not yet been determined as we are waiting to learn what the state is planning to do to that intersection.

Witherbee School is in need of exterior restoration: exterior trim and gutters need repair, storm windows need replacement, and the building requires overall painting as well as probable re-shingling.

We are looking into means of better preserving and cataloguing our archives. Paradise Park is in the process of being enlarged and we will have input on that project. The Society is also looking forward to running the mill more often in the coming year. Contact Bill Miller if you would like to learn more about the mechanics of the mill.

We would like to see increased volunteer representation when the millwright comes to run the mill and perform maintenance.

We manned a booth at the Norman Bird Sanctuary Harvest Fair; both the Pirate evening at the library and the Jonnycake Party at Paradise School offered delightful social occasions for friends and neighbors to gather, evidenced by the terrific attendance. Please join with me in looking forward to more events.

Bill Nedderman, President

Historical Society Sponsors Educational Table at Harvest Fair

by Claire Pimentel

The Norman Bird Sanctuary's 32nd Annual Harvest Fair proved to be a great venue for the Society to exhibit educational materials and solicit new members. On Saturday and Sunday, November 14 and 15, our table was in the best location at the fair.

Situated at the entrance to the Educational Tent, Historical Society volunteers Theresa Spengler, Claire Pimentel, Betty Jane Owen, Marianne Tomisone, Mary Redgate,

Mary Bellagamba and Bill Nedderman displayed the Boyd's Windmill poster as well as the wooden replica model. Also on display for sale were all of the Society's publications including books, postcards and note cards.

Children and adults alike stopped to read the history of Boyd's Windmill and were treated to almond-flavored windmill-shaped cookies.

Ken Walsh's presentation of the Green End Fort (St. Onge Redoubt) also attracted a great deal of attention. Most of the visitors were surprised to learn that the fort exists in Middletown.

Tammis Coffin, a new member of the Norman Bird Sanctuary staff, discussed the possibility of educational collaboration with the Historical Society in the future.

Do you have a stone wall on your property of which you are particularly proud? Have you restored an old dilapidated stone wall on your property recently? With much of the development on the island in recent years, many of our beautiful stone walls have disappeared. But, take heart, there are property owners all over Aquidneck Island who realize the historic and aesthetic importance of stonewalls to our landscape. More and more are either re-building existing stone walls or having brand new ones constructed.

The Middletown Historical Society's Stone Wall Committee has as its mission the preservation and protection of the many miles of stonewalls within our town's borders. Already, nearly 100 homeowners have been recognized

by the Society for their efforts to enhance the beauty of their property by taking care of their walls. Many have cleared away the overgrown brush and growth so that their walls are now visible to those passing by. Others have rebuilt sections of their walls that have fallen down. These neighbors have done so because like many and perhaps you, they feel that our beautiful stonewalls, stand as a monument to our past. They have registered their own stonewalls so that a record exists that they care about preserving them for future generations.

If you would like to register your stone wall, please call Steve Lepley at 848-5991. Give him your name, address and brief description of your wall. He will send an informational packet with instructions. It's that easy.



Paradise Valley Park stone wall under construction, Spring 1993.

(Photo courtesy of Agnes Keeney)

“Pirates and Privateers” Draws a Capacity Crowd

By Evelyn LeDoux

On Monday, September 18, the Historical Society and Middletown Public Library co-sponsored a dynamic presentation, “Pirates and Privateers,” presented by raconteur John McNiff of the Roger Williams Park History Department. Mr. McNiff was dressed in authentic costume and more than 60 persons attended the program, which focused on piracy in and around New England and Rhode Island. Refreshments of cider and donut holes also included foil-wrapped chocolate coins in a treasure chest and chocolate-covered cannon balls.



(Photos courtesy of Sue Paquette)

Jonnycake Festival an Outstanding Success

by Evelyn LeDoux

The Jonnycake Festival held on Sunday, October 29 was an outstanding success.

Marianne Tomassone and Evelyn LeDoux decorated Paradise School in brilliant autumn colors with floral centerpieces and leaf-patterned plates and cups.

Mr. Paul Drumm, Jr., owner of Kenyon's Grist Mill and his wife, Mary Ellen, served hot-off-the-griddle jonnycakes to more than 80 attendees. Hot coffee, courtesy of Dunkin Donuts was served, as well as windmill cookies, coffee milk and candy corn.

After a short welcome by Historical Society President Bill Nedderman, Paul Drumm was presented with a framed print by Mary Bellagamba of Boyd's Windmill, and Mrs. Drumm received a pewter windmill pin.

Kathy Poremski was in charge of selling windmill pins, and presided over the donation jar, which was well filled.

Rian Wilkinson had decorated the entrance to the school with a pumpkin and corn stalks.

Bill Miller took charge of showing off Boyd's Windmill to the many who viewed it.

Mary Redgate (as usual) pitched in and was a tremendous help.

Of course, the only way to get the affair off the ground was for Norman Hall to get the pumpkin-colored postcards out in time, and indeed he did!

Leonard Panaggio gave us a nice write-up, and even appeared in person.

Without Maureen and Jay Cook,

there would not have been any hot coffee. They made the drive from Dunkin Donuts to Paradise School with four boxes of Joe, quarts of cream, pounds of sugar and scads of paper cups just as the first batch of jonnycakes were coming off the griddle. Their timing was perfect, and the coffee went just like the "hot cakes".

And so many thanks go out to all who helped in any way for making the event a marvelous success.



(Photo courtesy of Sue Paquette)

MIDDLETOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY MISSION

In order to ensure a record of the town's past, its heritage -
where we came from, what we have done, what has been important to us -
the Middletown Historical Society was formed to protect and preserve
that priceless legacy which we have inherited.

FOUNDED JUNE 1, 1976

The Middletown Historical Society, Inc.
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Email: info@middletownhistory.org

Please send suggestions or contributions to above address

Visit our website at www.middletownhistory.org

THE MIDDLETOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
CORDIALLY INVITES YOU TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Our local preservation movement started as an effort to save some of Middletown's treasures. These tangible examples of the history of our town present us with a sense of time and place, a feeling for our heritage.

The Society fulfills an important need: it preserves old buildings, walls and trees, but more than that, it saves a critically important part of the past and brings history alive to the people of Middletown.

In the past few decades, the Society has restored two one-room schoolhouses, encouraged stone wall maintenance, identified persons and plots in the Town's 75 cemeteries and published the survey results. We are building computerized archival information. We have prepared exhibits and restored the historic Boyd's wind grist mill.

Your support of the Middletown Historical Society, whether financially or as a member, is most essential to help tell our story and develop our future initiatives for educational programs, and for the preservation of relics and archival materials of our Town.

We invite you to participate in the preservation, rescue, restoration and conservation of some of Middletown's oldest and most unique architectural gems.

Please complete and return the membership form below and join us as we look forward to what the future holds for our Society!

Your gift to the Middletown Historical Society is tax deductible.

www.middletownhistory.org

MIDDLETOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM

NEW

RENEWAL

\$15 INDIVIDUAL

\$20 FAMILY

\$35 CONTRIBUTOR

\$45 BUSINESS

\$250 LIFE

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONE (days) _____ (evenings) _____

THIS MEMBERSHIP IS A GIFT FROM: _____

RETURN THIS FORM TO:

MIDDLETOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY, P O BOX 4196, MIDDLETOWN, RI 02842