



Exploring History

Barrington Preservation Society Newsletter

WINTER 2025

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Barrington Preservation Society Museum

Lower Level, Public Library

Hours

Open Wednesdays 10:00-12:00pm
or by appointment

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BARRINGTON
RHODE ISLAND

Nockum Hill and the First Battle of the King Philip's War, June 24th, 1675

By Stephen Venuti



Public Archaeology Survey Team hard at work on Nockum Hill.

In 1663 the Reverend John Myles began preaching to a small congregation at the home of John Butterworth in the Plymouth Colony Town of Rehoboth. Myles was a Baptist minister who had recently fled his home in Swansea, Wales when he found himself on the losing side of the English Revolution. But just four years later in 1667, due to differences between the officially recognized Puritan/Congregationalist church and the Baptists, Myles, along with two other members of his church, were fined and ordered to remove their church to some other place.

Later in 1667 the colonial court authorized the establishment of a new Town, just south of Rehoboth in the Sowams territory which had recently been purchased from the Pokanoket Massasoit Osamequin and his son Wamsutta. It was agreed that this new town would be named Swansea in honor of Myles' home in Swansea, Wales and that a meetinghouse for his congregation would be built at Nockum Hill in present day Barrington, RI.



Nockum Hill First Baptist Meeting House Monument.

Cont. from page 1

Until recently few details were known, but it was believed that the meetinghouse and most of the nearby houses were destroyed in the King Philip's War. The area was abandoned and remained largely undeveloped until the present day. The location of this settlement could easily have been lost to history if it were not for the granite monument erected by the Rhode Island Historical Society in 1906 commemorating the founding of Myles's Church "Near This Spot."

Jumping forward to the year 2019, following an intensive lobbying effort by the Barrington Preservation Society (BPS), the Barrington Land Conservation Trust (BLCT), the Doug Rayner Wildlife Refuge and a coalition of concerned neighbors, the Town of Barrington purchased the 6-acre parcel of land at Nockum Hill known as George Street Lot 3A. It was, and remains, the hope of those who supported the purchase that the land would be preserved as open space for its natural and historic significance.

With a goal of confirming the property's historic significance, the Town, in collaboration with BPS, hired the Public Archaeology Survey Team (PAST.inc) in 2020 to investigate the site as the location of the seventeenth century meetinghouse. Although this brief initial survey did not identify the precise location of the meetinghouse, it did uncover compelling physical evidence that Nockum Hill was, in fact, both a 17th century settlement and a battlefield site most likely related to the King Philip's War. This evidence included 2 seal-top spoons, of a type known to have been in common domestic use in the seventeenth century, and a large quantity of impacted musket balls and shot found throughout the lot.

In 1676 Increase Mather, a prominent and influential Puritan Minister in Boston, published an account of the ***"War with the Indians."*** In this account, Mather records that following an incident on June 23rd, 1675, at the home of John Salisbury (a member of Myles' congregation) where a Wampanoag man was reportedly shot and killed:

June 24th, 1675, was ***"appointed and attended as a day of solemn Humiliation throughout the colony."*** But then ***"as soon as ever the people of Swanzy were come from the place where they had been praying together, the Indians discharged a volley of shot whereby they killed one man & wounded others."*** ***"...there were nine English men murdered that day."*** ***"Thus did the War Begin..."***

Citing Mather's 1676 written account, coupled with the physical

evidence found in the brief 2020 site investigation, the Town, along with BPS and PAST inc., applied for and was awarded an FY 2021 National Park Service, American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) grant to further research Nockum Hill and its probable connection to the King Philip's War.

As summarized in PAST's final report (Ross K. Harper, et. Al, 2025) for the recently completed FY2021 ABPP grant, the "archaeological survey accomplished its three main objectives: 1) *it established the location of the First Baptist meetinghouse, on Nockum Hill, 2) it established the location of the battle which was the inception of King Philip's War on June 24, 1675, which we have labeled the Battle of Nockum Hill, and 3) it identified the location of a house associated with one of the original Baptist families who lived near the meetinghouse."*

"There seems little question that the identified house and meetinghouse were engaged in the flashpoint battle of Nockum Hill on June 24, 1675."

"The battle site has excellent integrity and is clearly eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places..."

Work on the FY 2023 ABPP grant is now in full swing onsite. The objective of this second grant is to answer the following questions: *Does the Battle signature extend beyond Lot 3A? What more can we learn about how the battle unfolded? What is the precise location of the house and is there conclusive evidence that it burned down? Can we confirm the identity of the family that lived in the house? Is there further evidence of fortification near the meetinghouse site.*

For additional information regarding the ongoing work at Nockum Hill and related articles and reports, please refer to the Nockum Hill page on our website at barringtonpreservation.org.

museum news

NEW EXHIBIT *Accessorize!*



Dresses, hats, hatboxes and parasols on exhibit in the BPS museum.

Wanted!

Vintage clothing, accessories and objects relating to Barrington history and suitable for display in the museum (no wedding dresses, please).



The Barrington Preservation Society Museum recently opened a new exhibit entitled *Accessorize!*, featuring men's top hats and hat boxes, ladies' party dresses, hats and accessories, fans, gloves, purses and parasols dating from 1908 to 1950.

The exhibit features a cotton and lace dress, ca. 1908, donated by Katherine Hazard; a beaded and lace, ecru silk cocktail dress from the 1920s, donated to the museum by Charles and Kay Chapin; an orange Georgette flapper dress with ribbon embroidery, ca. 1920, given to Louise Wallace by an older friend who worked as a model in New York; a sheer, pink midi dress made out of rayon, a synthetic fabric developed in the 1920s as a less expensive alternative to silk, and a red lace cocktail dress created in the 1950s for Elizabeth Leighton Briden and sewn by Jennie DiPasquale using lace manufactured at Barrington's Rhode Island Lace Works (1904-1990).

As well as the new exhibit, the museum features a permanent exhibit showcasing the major phases of Barrington history: the Pokanokets and earliest Colonial settlement at Nockum Hill, farming, the Barrington militia and military, local industries, the railroad and waterfront development during the 1850s and the town's eventual evolution into a commuter suburb during the 1950s when the state widened the historic Wampanoag Trail into a four-lane, divided highway.

Visit the BPS Museum on Wednesdays, from 10 AM to noon or by appointment and join or rejoin the Barrington Preservation Society in 2026 and become a volunteer. We welcome anyone interested in learning about or doing research, museum curation, program and exhibit planning or serving on the BPS Board. We also hope to expand our museum hours on Wednesdays and keep the museum open on weekends, but we need more volunteers! Visit us at the museum or contact us at barringtonpreservation.org.

By Jean Douglas

FORTY YEARS OF ELEGANT ENTERTAINING

On January 23, 1904, Annie Lee Steele and Herbert Matthews Adams exchanged wedding vows at the Steele family home at 123 Walcott Street in Pawtucket, RI, in what a contemporary newspaper described as one of the “most elegant weddings of the season.”

The Adams’ wedding marked the beginning of a union that would be filled with grand social celebrations, and Annie Adams carefully documented those forty years of celebrations by collecting and preserving a variety of ephemera in a seventy-page album, entitled *The Wedding Book*.

The Adams couple loved to entertain and particularly to celebrate their wedding anniversaries with great fanfare, and both *The Providence Journal* and *The Pawtucket Times* liked to cover their social events, detailing the guest list, menu, decorations and fashions.

In the early years of their marriage, Annie and Herbert Adams entertained their guests with bridge parties, but as the years passed, the parties grew in size and opulence. Their thirteenth (lace) anniversary included three hundred guests at their home in Pawtucket and was described as “one of the most distinctive social events of the season. Mrs. Adams was attired in a gown of black net with a trimming of silver lace and carried a bouquet of lilies of the valley”, wrote the social reporter from one newspaper. “Dancing was also a feature of the occasion which proved a social success and a happy anniversary observance.” A selection of anniversary party memorabilia includes a small envelope containing a sample of her thirteenth anniversary dress fabric, an invitation and several newspaper clippings.

During the 1920s, the Adams family moved to Sagshamas, a stately and sprawling waterfront home overlooking the water on Nayatt Point in Barrington, and their new residence became the center of their social life. They regularly hosted carefully curated and



Photo: Annie Lee Steele and Herbert Matthews Adams

memorable gatherings for several decades, and Annie Adams selected new, couturier gowns that reflected the anniversary number for each of these special occasions and kept fabric scraps from five of them, including her wedding dress, alongside the invitations, newspaper clippings and other memorabilia in her albums.

The anniversary parties at Sagshamas included lavish dinners, live music, dancing, and an ambiance of refinement, a hallmark of the Adams household. Incorporated in the album, a fragment of the orchid and silver gown Annie Steele Adams wore for her twenty-fifth (silver) anniversary as well as a pale green gown trimmed with rhinestones and pearl Mrs. Adams wore for her thirtieth (pearl) anniversary. At their thirty-fifth (coral) anniversary, the couple entertained 450 guests, and a piece of Mrs. Adams’ coral chiffon dress is included along with a coral paper napkin, with their names printed in silver: “Annie and Herbert”. A newspaper clipping described the Adams’ fortieth (ruby) anniversary as a somewhat more modest gathering of forty guests at the Rhode Island Country Club.

Although the years passed and the house was eventually torn down, Annie and Herbert Adams’ Wedding Book documents and preserves their legacy of love, friendship and elegant entertaining over forty years, ensuring that their years together and their legacy of love, celebration and elegant entertaining will endure.

The Wedding Album was donated to BPS by Thomas Pezzullo.

BHS SENIOR FOCUSES SENIOR PROJECT ON LACE MAKING IN MOLISE, ITALY AND BARRINGTON, RI

By Julia Califano



Barrington High School student is currently working with the Barrington Preservation Society on a senior project focused on lace making. The student became interested in lace during a recent visit to a lace museum in Isernia (Molise) in South-Central Italy. Handmade lace was first introduced to the Molise region by Benedictine nuns during the 15th century.

Many Barrington residents, who worked at the Rhode Island Lace Works and created manufactured lace from 1904 through 1990, can also trace their ancestry to the Molise region of Italy, and BPS has a file of photographs and documents from the Rhode Island Lace Works as well as tools, bobbins, lace designs, lace samples and lace sample books, but we are always looking for more information, personal photographs, stories and objects relating to lacemaking in Barrington.

Visit the museum on Wednesdays, from 10 AM – noon and share your stories with us or visit the BPS website and email us at barringtonpreservation.org



THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE BARRINGTON PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Look out for your invitation to the annual meeting of the Barrington Preservation Society, scheduled for January 31, 2026, at 1:00 pm in the Salem Family Auditorium.

The meeting agenda will include a report to the members on current BPS activities and the election of Trustees and Officers for the two-year period beginning at the close of the annual meeting.

Following the business part of the meeting, Nat Taylor, distinguished historian and former president of BPS, will give a glimpse back in time to Barrington in 1776.

MEMBERSHIP

Be sure to join or renew your membership in BPS for 2026 with the form and pre-addressed envelope included with this newsletter.

And, if you have an interest in learning more about Barrington history, consider becoming a BPS volunteer, planning programs, as a docent in the museum, or as a researcher or fundraiser.

Visit the museum on the lower level of the Peck Library on Wednesdays, 10-12 or check out our website at barringtonpreservation.org,

HISTORIC HOME MEMORIES: 251 RUMSTICK ROAD

By Barbara Hail, Museum Chairman



The Curit family on the back steps at 251 Rumstick with the view of Narragansett Bay, ca. 1945.

Left to right, back row: Barbara Curit, Marjorie Sands Curit, Barton Francis Curit, Betsy Curit and Grandmother Maggie Curit. Front row: Martha Curit.

Former Barrington resident Martha Curit Hough has shared vignettes of her childhood growing up in the 1940s-60s in the gracious mansion at 251 Rumstick Point Road built by Arnold Hoffman in 1916-18. She has gifted the Museum excellent photographs of this property as well as an aerial view covering the expanse from the Bay to Smith's Cove and across to the Warren shore.

The property adjoined that of Arnold's parents, industrialist William Hoffman and his wife Mira. Mira founded the Girl Scouts of Barrington and Rhode Island, was a National President of the Girl Scouts of America, donated the land for Camp Hoffman in West Kingston and co-founded the Barrington Community House on Maple Avenue.

When their only son Arnold married Elizabeth Hoppin Walker in 1916, his parents gave them the 7.5 acre field next to them, as well as funds for building a new house, as a wedding gift, hence the playful nickname "Betty's Bungalow." Betty's grandfather, Howard Hoppin, was the architect. The actual name of the home was "The Anchorage."

The Hoffmans brought in huge mature elm trees to landscape the field, and years later the Curits were still stalwart stewards of them. Mrs. Curit said, "We don't take vacations. We take care of our trees."

In 1945 new owners, Barton and Marjorie Curit and their three daughters Barbara, Betsy and Martha, moved in and renamed the home "Whitecaps." They remained until 1965. Barton Curit, an engineering graduate of Tufts University, was VP of the Fireman's Mutual Insurance Company in Providence, later Allendale, now FM Global. In Barrington he was involved with the District Visiting Nurse Association and also a Civil Defense volunteer during hurricanes, patrolling the beach with a hi beam flashlight, helmet and rifle. His wife Marjorie was a fashion illustrator trained at the Massachusetts School of Art, a lifetime member of the Providence Art Club, and founder of the Barrington Sketch Group, which continued for many years and included next door neighbor Happy White, among others. The group met in the basement of 251 Rumstick for 25 years.

Martha Curit was the youngest of the three daughters. She remembers skating in the “big puddle” that froze every winter in the front yard of the Meehan’s house next door. She remembers her older sister Betsy running away from home when she was 12 and taking Martha, age 4, with her, along with their Irish setter, Rusty. Later that night their father found them snuggled together behind the stone wall at the top of the driveway!



251 Rumstick front facade. ca.1922.



Photo of Arnold and Elizabeth Hoppin Walker Hoffman ca. 1918.

Martha attended the summer camp led by neighbor Natalie Peterson, walking across the road to 220 Rumstick Road daily for camp. Campers were assigned orange crate lockers which stood on end in the sun room of the house and held their belongings. When it was time to go swimming the campers would cross the road to the Curit house and walk down the long drive to the beach. Unfortunately the waters of Narragansett Bay were often polluted in those years and the beach sometimes covered with dead menhaden. (Thanks to *Save the Bay* this is no longer the case.) Years later, Natalie Peterson would marry Swiss educator Armin Luethi and together found the Luethi-Peterson International Camps which still flourish today.

Martha attended Nayatt, Maple Avenue and Peck Schools in Barrington and Lincoln School in Providence. She and her sisters all held their wedding receptions at 251 Rumstick, which she recalls as “a pretty magnificent place to celebrate.” In the 1980s she returned to Lincoln as Director of Development for 15 years, and then moved on to Rocky Hill School in a similar position.

It is nice to remember that these Barrington families from homes neighboring each other have been the source of lasting local and international educational opportunities for young people. We thank Martha Curit Hough for enlarging our knowledge of this history through her photographs and memories.

RECENT BPS MUSEUM ACQUISITIONS:

Rosemary Danforth donated 1960s period costume jewelry, including tie clips, cufflinks, and a necklace and earrings set from Tilden-Thurber; a RI '76 bicentennial medallion necklace; and quahog shells smoothed by Native artisans in preparation for jewelry making.

Abigail Lippe donated a floor length, white, long-sleeved, lace-netted “tea” dress with silk under-slip, which would have been worn during mornings and afternoons at home in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

50 books donated to the Museum Shop: **Lieutenant-Colonel the Honorable Charles Stuart’s Diary in Rhode Island 29 July to 28 August 1778.** A Facsimile, Transcribed, Annotated, and Edited with an Introduction and Additional Letters.

Authored by John B. Hattendorf, with contributions to the Introduction by Dr. Nathaniel Taylor and Maria Bruce. Published in 2024 by Stone Tower Press for the Rhode Island Society, Sons of the Revolution. 151 pp. maps.

This diary is part of the Peck Collection, a subset of the Nicholas Gizzarelli Senior Collection of the Barrington Preservation Society. It provides a brief, first-hand glimpse of the American war for independence as seen through the eyes of a British officer stationed in Newport, Rhode Island.

Available for \$25 from the BPS Museum Shop.

Barrington Preservation Society
P.O. Box 178
Barrington, RI 02806



It's time to join or renew your BPS membership for 2026!

As well as an article inviting you to attend the BPS annual meeting on January 24, 2026, we are attaching a membership renewal envelope. Join or re-join the Barrington Preservation Society and help support our efforts to preserve, inform, educate and showcase Barrington history!

Please complete this form and return with dues.

*** Be a member and help preserve Barrington's rich history.
2026 dues cover from January 1 to December 31.

Join the Barrington Preservation Society!

Membership Categories:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| ☐ \$100 | Supporting |
| ☐ \$250 | Patron |
| ☐ \$250 | Business Member |
| ☐ \$1000 | Life Member |

Join or renew online at barringtonpreservation.org/membership,
or clip and send this form with a check payable to:

The Barrington Preservation Society
P.O. Box 178, Barrington, RI 02806

Name _____
City, State, Zip _____
Phone _____ e-mail * _____
New member _____ Renewal _____

*Stay connected and help BPS reduce costs by giving us your
email address. Dues are tax deductible.