



# Barrington Preservation Society

DISCOVER • PRESERVE • RESTORE

Winter 2022

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## Barrington Preservation Society Museum

Lower Level, Public Library

## Hours

BPS plans to reopen in February  
Wednesday & Saturdays  
1:00 - 4:00 or by appointment

Please check our website at  
[barringtonpreservation.org](http://barringtonpreservation.org)

## Phone

(401) 289-0802

## E-mail

[info@barringtonpreservation.org](mailto:info@barringtonpreservation.org)

## THOMAS REYNOLDS, CATO BANNISTER AND THE COST OF FREEDOM

### RESEARCHING BARRINGTON'S PAST HISTORY OF SLAVERY: PART 3

By Stephen Venuti, *President BPS*

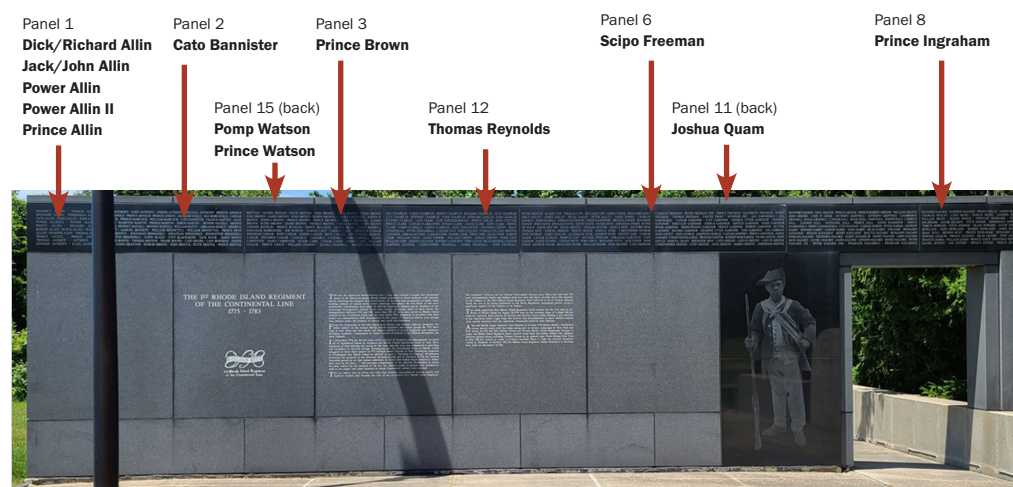


Photo: Monument honoring Black Slaves and Freemen who fought in the First Rhode Island Regiment, Portsmouth, RI.

On February 14, 1778 the Rhode Island General Assembly – in direct response to a request from General Washington – voted to establish what has since become known as the ‘First Black Regiment’. This Legislative Act, in part, reads as follows:

“It is Voted and Resolved, that every able-bodied Negro, Mulatto, or Indian Man Slave, in this State, may enlist...to serve during the Continuance of the present War with Great-Britain.”

“...that every Slave, so enlisting, shall...be immediately discharged from the Service of his Master or Mistress; and be absolutely FREE, as though he had never been encumbered with any Kind of Servitude or Slavery.”

“...that there be allowed, and paid by this State, to the Owner, for every such Slave so enlisting, a Sum according to his Worth; at a Price not exceeding one Hundred and twenty Pounds for the most valuable Slave; and in Proportion for a Slave of less Value.”

Soon after the formal establishment of the “First Black Regiment,” a significant battle took place in Portsmouth, Rhode Island known as the “Battle of Rhode Island” where the newly enlisted soldiers reportedly fought bravely.

In 1976 the Rhode Island Branch of the NAACP erected a stone marker near the battlefield. The inscription on the marker reads “In Honor Of The First Black Slaves And Freemen who Fought In The Battle Of Rhode Island As Members Of The First Rhode Island Regiment”.

Also erected at this site is a much larger monument inscribed with the names of

## Annual Meeting Announcement

Please join us 2:00 pm on January 9th, 2022, for our first-ever online annual meeting featuring a presentation by Pat Mues and Sarah Weed, co-chairs of the Warren Middle Passage Project, entitled “How To Find Phebe.” The meeting will also feature brief updates on other projects in the works and the results of online balloting for new and re-elected Board Members and Officers.

*Details inside*

*Cont'd page 4*

# museum news

## The Museum Reopens!

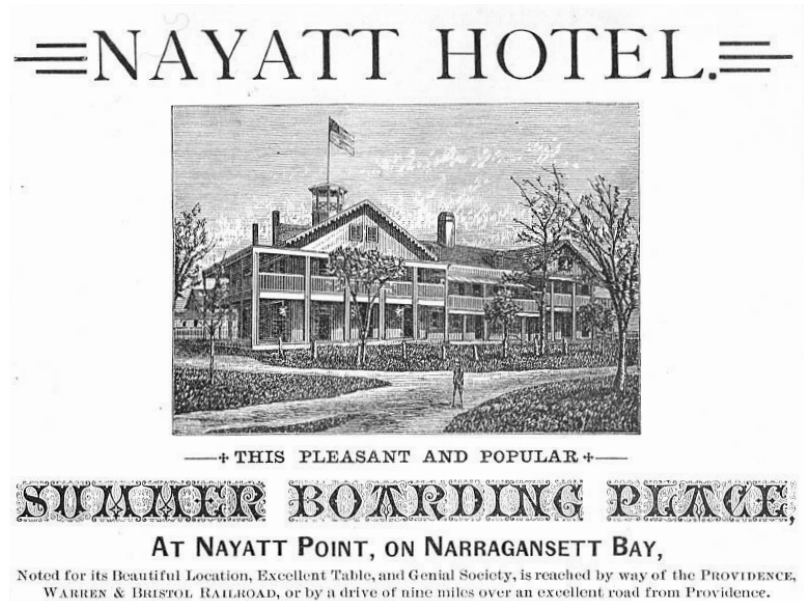
By **Julia Califano**, *Museum Committee*

The BPS Museum, located on the lower level of the Peck Center, plans to reopen in early February 2022 and will revisit the exhibit “The Way We Were: Paul Darling Photographs 1949-2019” that was prematurely shut down because of the COVID-19 epidemic. The Museum will be open on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 1-4 PM or by appointment.

Also featured will be permanent exhibits explaining the major factors affecting Barrington’s development, including fishing and farming by Native Americans and early Baptist settlers, immigration and manufacturing, and the extension of the railroad that turned this farming community into a waterfront, summer destination.

Newly returned from conservation, the nineteenth century Barrington Militia banner now hangs in a protective framed case. It was hand painted on silk by William W. Pitman. The banner was recently restored with the generous support of the Heritage Harbor Foundation, and is displayed under a musket carried by Barrington Militia member Thomas Heath in the march to Chepachet for the Dorr War in 1842, a skirmish about extending voting rights to adult males who were not freeholders.

The Museum Committee is currently developing ideas for a new exhibit, tentatively entitled “Ghost Houses and Gardens.” It will feature photographs and artifacts from historic properties that have been



*Illustration: The Nayatt Hotel, also known as Bay House, built in the 1850s.*

destroyed by storms, burned down, or razed for further development.

If you are interested in serving as a museum docent or working with the museum committee on collection care, please contact Museum Committee Chair Barbara Hail at [barbarahail401@gmail.com](mailto:barbarahail401@gmail.com).

## My Student Internship at the Museum

By **Amelia Taylor**

*(In the summer of 2021 Amelia Taylor, currently a 10th grader at Barrington High School with an interest in local history, undertook a volunteer internship at the BPS Museum. Under the supervision of staff members she contributed five hours a week for eight weeks.)*

“During my summer internship with the Barrington Preservation Society I spent a large portion of my time working with historical aerial photos of Barrington taken by Paul Darling from 1959 to 1999. The changes that Barrington has undergone over decades are incredible to witness. I accessioned over one hundred of these photos with detailed descriptions. It was a valuable opportunity to develop my organizational skills, in addition to learning about Barrington’s layout and history. Aside from working with the Darling collection,

I mostly worked on accessioning other items from the museum’s collection, updating the exhibits, and doing other miscellaneous tasks as needed.”



*Photo: Amelia Taylor sorting Paul Darling photographs on floor of museum.*

## Slave History Presentation at Roger Williams University, January 26th, 2022

This past Fall BPS began a research collaboration with Roger Williams University (RWU), Associate Professor of History, Charlotte Carrington-Farmer and three of her undergraduate students, Kristen Black, Courtney Garrity and Lucas Laager. Working under the joint direction of Dr. Carrington-Farmer and BPS Member and Past-President, Dr. Nathaniel Lane Taylor the students have been reviewing, transcribing and cataloguing original eighteenth-century hand-written documents in the BPS Town Museum archives and other locations related to formerly enslaved people of color in Barrington. Their findings and their experience will be the focus of what we hope will be an informative and engaging Presentation. Stay tuned for details!



## RI 39 Club

This past January 2021, Town Manager, Jim Cuhna received a request from author and publisher Marty Podskotch saying, "I am planning on publishing a travel book on all the towns in Rhode Island and I am looking for local residents to write approx. 500-600 words containing the town's location, short history, and interesting places to visit." Knowing who to count on, Jim forwarded this request to BPS. BPS Board Members Julia Califano and Jean Douglas, then completed an informative chapter on Barrington. The book "The Rhode Island 39 Club: Your Passport & Guide To Exploring Rhode Island" is now published and available at bookstores – including Barnes & Noble in Middletown (pictured).



## STUART DIARY TO BE PUBLISHED

**V** "Very quiet during the Night, about six in the Morning two line of Battle Ships went up the Narragansett

Passage, between Conanicut & Prudence..."

These are just a few of the words that appear in the handwritten, leather-bound personal diary of British Major Charles Stuart, on Thursday, July 30th, 1778, during the British Occupation of Newport and in the lead-up to the Battle of Rhode Island. This remarkably well preserved diary is amongst the items collected by Frederick Stanhope Peck and later donated to the Town Museum by Nicholas Gizzarelli Sr. On October 1st, 2021 BPS entered into a licensing agreement with John B. Hattendorf to transcribe and publish the full text along with images of the entire diary. Professor Hattendorf is a teacher at the Naval War College and serves as Historian for both the RI Society of Sons of the Revolution and the RI Society of Colonial Wars. Publication is expected sometime in 2022.

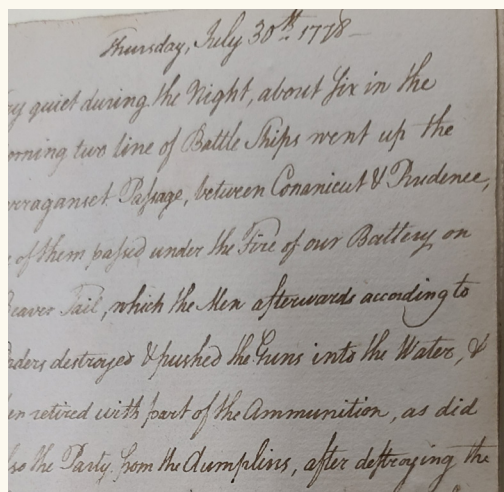


Photo: Stuart Diary



*Cont'd from page 1*

over 700 soldiers who enlisted in the First Rhode Island Regiment, including at least 13 people of color known or believed to have lived in Barrington prior to enlisting. Joshua Quam, who is listed as Indian head-of-household in the 1774 census, likely enlisted as one of the “Freemen” of color. The 5 men listed with the “Allin” surname (misspelled as “Allen”) are believed to have been enslaved by Thomas Williams Bicknell’s ancestors Mathew and Thomas Allin.

This article touches briefly on the lives of two men listed on the Monument, Thomas Reynolds and Cato Bannister.

Included in the Barrington Town Museum archives are three handwritten notes regarding the enlistment of Thomas Reynolds.

The first is dated May 17th, 1777 and reads as follows: “These may Certify all to whom it may concern that Thomas Reynolds a Negro Man was Really and Truly Inlisted, upon account and in behalf of Messr’s Nathaniel & Peleg Heath.” Signed “Simon Smith Ensign”

The next is dated May 20th, 1777 and reads “Then came personally Mr. Nathaniel Heath & made Solemn Oath that Thomas Reynolds, a negro man was bona fide Inlisted by and for himself & Brother Peleg Heath...” Signed Solomon Townsend, Jr. Justice of the Peace.

This second note is apparently the certification the Heath brothers needed to be compensated for the loss of “property.”

In a separate record obtained from the Ancestry.com military files dated September 11, 1777, Thomas Reynolds appears on the Muster Roll of the First Rhode Island Battalion under the Command of Colonel Christopher Greene. In the columns beside his name, it records that Thomas Reynolds enlisted on May 17th and for the entire “Duration of the War.”

The third handwritten note included in the Barrington Town Museum records is dated December 17th, 1777, and reads “Rec’d of Nathaniel Heath the Sum of Forty four pounds 10/ being on (and) of enlisting Man...” Signed Jos. Clarkely. Treasurer (Providence)

It is worth noting that this enlistment, and the payment made to the Heaths compensating for their loss, actually precedes the RI Legislation by months.

Thomas Reynolds next appears on the Muster Roll of the First Rhode Island Battalion on April 1st, 1778 while camped at Valley Forge, PA. It has been reported that more men died at Valley Forge in the preceding winter from cold, hunger and disease than in any actual battle fought at that time. In fact, it was this loss of men that prompted General Washington to ask Rhode Island to formally establish the “First Black Regiment.”

Reynolds, who survives his time at Valley Forge, is later recorded as receiving 5 pounds pay on January 7th, 1780 for 2 months service. An interesting side note is that 2 other men from Barrington, Prince and Pomp Watson, appear on the same pay roll record.

It is unknown exactly what battles, other than the Battle of Rhode Island, Reynolds may have fought, but by May 4th, 1781, he is listed on the muster roll of the First Battalion as “sick at camp Rhode Island.”

He is also listed in book “Forgotten Patriots” (published by the National Society of Daughters of the American Revolution) as “transferred to Invalids,” May 1, 1781.

It is unknown what became of Mr. Reynolds after this, but it is

clear that he paid an incalculable cost in the quest for freedom.

Next, we come to Cato Bannister.

On February 28, 1746/47, John Bannister II, the Newport merchant and slave trader for whose family Bannister Wharf is named, paid Rick Dunn 120 pounds cash for the “Negro Cato.”

Though Bannister continued to ‘own’ him, Cato was subsequently indentured to Elkanah Humphrey of Barrington. According to the 1774 Colonial Census, one Negro was recorded as living in the Barrington home of Elkanah Humphrey at that time. Though it cannot be said with certainty, this Negro was very probably the indentured servant Cato.

By 1777 Cato was enlisted in what became known as the First Black Regiment.

On May 4th, 1781 Cato appears on the Muster Roll of the First Rhode Island Regiment while at the Rhode Island Village camp in New York along with two other men from Barrington, Prince Brown and Prince Ingraham. The length of his enlistment is recorded here as being for the duration of the war. Sadly, we know he did not survive that long.

Following the Battle of Rhode Island, Cato fought alongside Colonel Christopher Greene in multiple engagements. Their last battle together was the Battle at Croton River in Westchester County, New York, on May 14th, 1781. Wikipedia, citing the papers held by the Rhode Island Historical Society, includes the following account of this fateful battle:

“Colonel Greene and Major Ebenezer Flagg, along with six black soldiers” including Cato Bannister “were killed...when a group of loyalist insurgents, known as the Royal Refugee Corps... surrounded Greene’s headquarters on the Croton River...”

Greene’s “body was found in the woods, about a mile distant from his tent, cut, and mangled in the most shocking way.”

A common conjecture is that “this indignity was retribution for his leading black soldiers against the British Crown.”

Though Cato paid the ultimate price in his quest for freedom, both Elkanah Humphrey and John Bannister were the ones to be compensated. In accordance with Rhode Island Act of February 14, 1778, John Bannister collected 105 pounds, while Elkanah Humphrey collected 8.2 pounds for his “interest in the slave’s value.”

In his oft quoted speech delivered July 5th, 1852, some 71 years after Cato gave his life and Thomas was left an “invalid” in their respective quests for freedom, Frederic Douglass asked “What to the American slave is your 4th of July?” “I answer: a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim.”

Though the war fought to free the colonists from British rule was eventually won, the sacrifice and bravery of those enslaved people of color who fought alongside their white brothers in their quest for personal freedom have been too long forgotten.

*Note: This article is excerpted from “Beyond the Monument: Reconsidering the History of Enslavement in Barrington, R.I.” presented at the New England Historical Association, Fall Conference, October 23rd, 2021. To view the entire presentation click here <https://youtu.be/L7WXXZg2E8M>*

# Our virtual meeting

## TIME TO MEET

Our Featured Speakers will be Pat Mues and Sarah Weed, co-chairs of the Warren Middle Passage Project presenting *HOW TO FIND PHEBE: UNCOVERING THE HISTORY OF ENSLAVEMENT IN BARRINGTON*. Pat and Sarah, have spent the last five years uncovering the history of enslavement in the Town of Warren, which included Barrington from 1747 until 1770. In fact, the first enslaved person they documented was a woman who had lived on a farm near Adams Point and married the man enslaved by John Adams. Their presentation will discuss the sources they've used, what they've discovered and how others can use their experience to uncover their own town's history. They're inviting questions and hoping for a thoughtful discussion.

### Request A Zoom Link

Attendance is free and open to all. To request a Zoom Link to participate in the meeting and to hear Pat and Sarah's engaging presentation, you must send an email to [barringtonhistory04@gmail.com](mailto:barringtonhistory04@gmail.com). Include Zoom Link in the Subject line as well as your name and contact details in the body of the email.

### HOW TO FIND PHEBE: UNCOVERING THE HISTORY OF ENSLAVEMENT IN BARRINGTON



Sarah Weed



Pat Mues

## TIME TO VOTE

Every two years, BPS members are asked to vote for new or returning members of the Board of Trustees and for Board Officers. In the past, only those who have been able to attend an in-person meeting held in January of even-numbered years have been able to vote. For the 2022-2024 term, however, all current BPS members will be eligible to vote online. Ballots will be distributed via email. Although we have email addresses for most BPS members, we are still missing a few. If you would like to participate in the annual meeting, please send your contact information to [JSchiff@textron.com](mailto:JSchiff@textron.com).

### Request A Ballot

If you have not received your ballot by mid-December please contact us at [barringtonhistory04@gmail.com](mailto:barringtonhistory04@gmail.com). Include Ballot Request in the Subject line as well as your name and contact details in the body of the email. Completed ballots will be due as soon as possible, but no later than midnight January 8th, 2022.

An image of the ballot is included in this newsletter. You will note that, in addition to voting on Trustees and Officers, members are being asked to vote on a possible name change. The legal name of the Organization will remain the same. But the public face may change in accordance with a majority vote of the membership.

Ballot

### Time to Join or Renew Your Membership

Membership in the organization goes according to the calendar year. Therefore, everyone (except BPS life members) must apply for or renew their membership each January. This is a friendly reminder to please send in your membership dues at your earliest convenience. New and returning members are encouraged to send in dues via the online member portal found at [www.barringtonpreservation.org](http://www.barringtonpreservation.org). Dues can also be paid by completing and returning the membership form included on the back of this newsletter.

# become a member or renew today

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

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Barrington, RI 02806



Please complete this form and return with dues.

\*\*\* Be a member and help preserve Barrington's rich history.  
2022 dues cover from January 1 to December 31.

## Join the Barrington Preservation Society!

### Membership Categories

- |                               |                            |                                 |                 |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$5  | High School Student        | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100  | Supporting      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10 | College/University Student | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250  | Patron          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$35 | Individual                 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250  | Business Member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 | Family                     | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1000 | Life Member     |

Join or renew online at [barringtonpreservation.org/membership](http://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.