

The Historical Society of Smithfield, Inc.
Smith-Appleby House Museum
220 Stillwater Road, Smithfield, Rhode Island 02917 (401) 231-7363

June 2010 Newsletter

Dear Friends and Fellow Members:

Unusually, I would like to start this newsletter with a story. Sometime last year we switched our previous pest control company for a new one, Terminex. They installed bait boxes inside and outside of the museum to reduce the mouse population. (This has been amazingly effective, and I think in the past, our Christmas decorations - dried apples; popcorn and the like would have lasted longer if this practice had been in place sooner!) While in the process of checking the largest of the bait boxes outside, the representative discovered the box to be unusually heavy. Glancing at the opening, he saw something scaly. Thinking that a snake had gotten in somehow, eaten the bait and died, he went to get a key to open the box. You already know where this story is going – upon opening the lid, there *was* a snake, but it was very much alive. Snake, and man were equally startled. The snake, described as a four-foot black racer moved quickly away from its very comfortable, warm hideout. Others have seen the snake, referring to it as a four-foot anaconda! I'm sharing this story with you, to remind you of our next event, Reptiles of New England, on July 17, from 2 -4. Apparently we have a good candidate for this program in our own back yard!

Regarding projects, the restoration of the exterior of the main house has been completed. Our thanks to the Dennis Moffitt Painting crew, who have been very careful and diligent in the restoration process. The paint restoration project was funded by a grant from the Champlin Foundation, and we are very grateful for their support in keeping the exterior of the museum in good repair.

We have also been graced this spring with three new volunteers, who are now new members. Mr. Peter Giammarco, his mother June, and their dog Sassy have been working on the 18th Century kitchen garden, the grist stone flowerbed, and the flowerbed nearest the outdoor restroom. I am amazed to see the beauty of the grounds appearing wherever Peter and June step. Another new volunteer, Greg Williams has been assisting Peter with some major clearing, so many thanks to these new members.

Having covered these interesting things, I need to tell you that our dock, built by Eagle Scout Tom Techner, was reported as found recently by someone. This came as a surprise, as we were unaware that our dock had left, but apparently following the big rainstorms this spring, the dock just floated away. I considered putting a sign out at the road, "have you seen our dock?" However on Friday, May 14th, while checking the progress of the pumpkins we planted I noticed something at the waters edge. Our own Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, in the guise of Don Burns and Lonnie Thurber apparently took to the pond in a rowboat, located the dock, and towed it back to the shore. It will still take some effort to return it to its original position, but at least it's closer to home.

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Regarding past events, we hosted our 37th Annual May Breakfast on May 2, one day after giving tours to 50 guests who arrived on a Blackstone Valley Bus Tour. We sat 50 people for the May Breakfast, and I think our guests enjoyed the meal. We were richly blessed with volunteers, including Michele Krakowski, Michael Korba, Dennis Botelho, Claire & Don Mercier, Don Burns, Fallon Issler, Keri Dyer, Will English, Eva Bleyer, Deb Cote, Pat Siegmund, Maxine Cavanagh, Teresa Lorencovitz, Dolores De Cesare, Jackie Parisen and Jeanne Betancur. Doesn't that sound like a who's who of our membership?

On June 5, we rented the museum to the United Train of Artillery (UTA), who prepared an amazing 18th Century hearth cooked meal. The original UTA was a group formed in 1774. On June 5 & 6, we hosted girl scouts from several different troops, who stayed overnight. Some of the girls were able to tour the museum, and observe the hearth cooking first hand.

On June 10, despite threats of poor weather, approximately 50 children from the Anna McCabe School enjoyed a field trip close to home. They dipped candles, wrote with quill pens, and played games. A large rope came in handy for tug-o-war, and the children were taught an 18th Century dance. Volunteer Peter Giammarco was on hand, in period appropriate clothing, along with Greg Williams, and June Giammarco to display 18th Century cooking, and farming.

On June 16, members of the Friends of Smithfield Cemeteries cleared the brush remaining from the tree removal last fall, leaving a nice piece of land where Peter has planted corn.

In closing, thank you for your membership support, as it is an important part of maintaining the museum, and is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Maggie Botelho
Treasurer