

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

December 2011 Newsletter

Dear Friends and Fellow Members:

I think we are all seeing clearly, the changing of the seasons – our first snow fall, and now the leaves! Looking back to summer, I hope you will be as charmed, and delighted, as I am to add two pieces of writing, from two of our members. Jim Maloney contributes the following poem.

Swinging on a rope – in Greenville Pond

I remember many years ago
As children to stave the heat
Swinging on a rope over Greenville pond
Which to us was quite a treat.

We'd all gather around the tree
Waiting patiently in line
Finally, it was my turn
To take the plunge and yell
"Come on in the waters fine."

Sometimes we'd hit bottom
Sand squishing through our toes
Water gushing in our eyes
And going up our nose.

Now we only have our memories
As we age with the sands of time
How I'd like to yell once more
"Come on in the waters fine."

Summer is behind us, so now it is time to remind you about the annual members Christmas party on December 10, at 6:30. Please give me a call at home, 233-2679, if you are able to attend, and what potluck dish you would like to bring. Following our dinner, we will have a Yankee swap, so if you would like to participate, bring a wrapped gift (under \$10).

Our last official event for the year is our Christmas open house in December 4th from 1:00 – 4:00 pm. Please let me know if you would be able to assist with manning a room, collecting money or serving hot chocolate and cider for the open house. I'd like to call upon all cookie bakers, to make some cookies for the refreshments that day. Last year we had over 100 adults, and a great many children, so we can't have too many cookies.

Continued

Since our last newsletter, we have been busy with tours, cleaning, and making other improvements at the museum, including a new refrigerator in the main house, and a new gas stove in Ernie's house.

Peter Giammarco almost single-handedly put together our fall festival on September 24 & 25, and we had a great turnout despite dour weather predictions. So many of our regular volunteers helped that most likely they are listed below!

I'm glad to report that the Sons of Liberty Colonial Dinner was well attended, and sold out by the end of May! We had more volunteers than ever before, so many thanks to Jackie Parisien for making the gingerbread dessert, and Mary Ann Lowe who made the pinwheel cookies for the dessert garnish. Ann Marie Ignasher dished up, along with Michele Krakowski and June Giammarco. Serving and lumping was brilliantly executed by: Keri Dyer, Fallon Issler, Mary Ann Lowe, Donna Gemma, Aubrie Savikas, Dolores DeCesare, Jackie Parisien, Teresa Lorencovitz, Barry Lowe, Dennis Botelho, Peter Giammarco, Michael Korba and Greg Williams. The "dish dawg" (scraping plates) was handled by Don Goncalves on Saturday night. Acting as seating hostesses, we had young volunteers Miss Abby Goncalves and Miss Catherine Sherman. Soldiers from Tew's Company, Second RI, assisted in setting the mood – guarding the house, and apprehending a known fugitive, Mud Pond Jack. Thanks to Andrew Fredricks & family, Brian Mello, Glenn Siner, Paul LeComte, Charlie Walsh and David Martin. Check out the pictures of the dinner on our web site: www.smithapplebyhouse.org.

Our new fiscal year officially commenced September 1st, with the same slate of officers as last year. As I have mentioned in the past, your membership support remains an important part of maintaining the museum, and is very much appreciated. If our records indicate your membership has expired, your newsletter will include a reminder.

Warmest wishes to you all, and please try to join us for the members Christmas party this year, on December 10th, at 6:30. Closing out our newsletter is a story by Anthony Duskey.

Sincerely,

Maggie Botelho
Membership Chairperson

Remembering Rocky Hill Road (Jenks Hill Road) before North Central Airport by Anthony Duskey

It was 1946 when the State of Rhode Island condemned our property, and that of many others, to build North Central State Airport. Rocky Hill Road, a beautiful, winding, hilly, dirt road, was made a dead end about a mile in from the Washington Highway as the M.A. Gammino Euclid trucks deforested and leveled the area for the East-West Runway to cut across our beautiful country road. That area of Smithfield would change forever. The Narragansett Electric Company had just installed power lines along the road, too soon for us to hook up, so we continued to use our kerosene lamps and lanterns, hand pumps to draw water from the wells, and rain barrels to collect water for the cows, horses, and other farm creatures.

Milk was stored in the spring on our property, beside the road, to stay cool. Big bullfrogs would take up living quarters along the railing inside the shed that covered the milk coolers. Raymond Brothers would collect the milk daily for pasteurization and home delivery in glass bottles with paper caps.

When our wells ran dry in late summer, we'd go down Rocky Hill Road with horse and wagon loaded with 40-quart cans to the intersection with Smith Road. We'd head down the steep hills to the ponds at the limekilns where the cans would be filled and the horses got a refreshing drink.

Rocky Hill Road was basically bounded by the Washington Highway and Louisquisset Pike. Where it crossed the Washington Highway, it still exists today with Harris Road ending at it in a "tee" intersection. Houses are numbered that exist along it today; back in 1946 the address of our residence was simply RFD 1, Georgiaville. The mailman knew us all!

Roads that existed and intersected with it were Lydia Ann Road, Albion Road, and Limerock Road which became Smith Road where it crossed Rocky Hill.

Little tid bits that I remember. On nice days, I'd cut across our farm to Harris Road at the Crompton's house to get the school bus to I S Cook School. The Crompton's had the route to our part of Smithfield. The Sleboda's had another route, as did other private families. But what I remember vividly was the Crompton's bus was painted all "blue". The characteristic universal yellow of today had not been made the law of the land.

As we didn't have electricity, I'd sometimes wait for the bus at the Dow House (a former Enche Homestead) where I'd be given a piece of toast and jam made with an electric toaster that had doors on either side. What a treat!! It was so much tastier than that made on the top of our black wood burning Glenwood kitchen stove when it got hot enough to make good toast without burning it.

I was intrigued in the springtime as I walked home from where the bus dropped me off at the Washington Highway. I couldn't imagine why air bubbles were coming up from the surface of the road. I later found out it was the frost coming out of the ground soon to be filled with mud and ruts from wagons and cars. But when things dried up, Clarence Thurber would come by with the town grader and give Harris Road a smooth dirt surface for the summer. Memories I'll never forget for having grown up as a child on Rocky Hill Road in my hometown of Smithfield.