



Richmond Reflections
Vol. 46 No. 1 The Richmond Historical Society Newsletter Spring 2020

Greetings Members and Friends of RHS,

The winter months have been productive as the Society grows and plans for future events which will bring Richmond history alive for our community. The Richmond Historic Cemetery Committee headed by Dory Wagner is off and running after its inaugural meeting in January; see her update inside. VP Richard Wolke has been hard at work readying the Carolina Village Museum to be open to the public this spring. The Bell School Museum has a new acquisition too; see inside for the news about both museums.

Russ Lacey writes about memories of growing up in Wyoming, in a house which is no longer standing. You'll get a kick out of his true Rhode Island description of where the house used to be! If anyone remembers the Josiah Palmer house or knows anything about Josiah Palmer or the house's history, please let us know. We've drawn a blank in the Archives thus far.

We are most excited about the upcoming fundraiser on May 30th, an Open House at the Samuel Clarke Farm. We are grateful to owner and RHS member John Peixinho, who approached the board and offered to support the Society by opening the property to the public. With his experience at facilitating such events, he is pretty much doing all the work for us! There will be tours of the house, outbuildings, and cemetery; period music by One Blue Sky and refreshments. See the flyer inside for full details, and feel free to print and share it.

Kristen Chambers, RHS President



View of Samuel Clarke Farm ca. 1910, looking east from the Beaver River, foreground

The Carolina Village Museum presently occupies the former Richmond Town Clerk's Office located on the property of member Reinhard Straub at 24 Carolina Main Street. The building is owned by the Richmond Historical Society given to us by an easement from former owner, Charles Dyson. It has a long and somewhat colorful history.

In the second half of the 19th Century it was a cigar factory owned by William D. Cross. Attached to its northern side was a saloon, the name of which I believe was Andross Saloon.

Sometime after 1869, the saloon was closed. At that time Mrs. Ellison Tinkham, wife of the mill owner, moved into 25 Carolina Main Street. She was an active member of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and a saloon across the street must have been galling. It was closed, and Cross moved his business to a large house across the river near the dam in Carolina (Charlestown). At some point the saloon was demolished, but its foundation stones are still present on Mr. Straub's property.



Twenty four Carolina Main Street became the property of Mr. Oscar Barber (the 'Uncle' as Charlie Dyson called him). At that time Richmond town clerks had their offices in their homes. Mr. Barber used the old cigar factory building. It served as the Town Clerk's office from 1908 until 1966, home to clerks Oscar Barber (1908 to 1950), Hazel Dyson (1950 to 1952) and Elizabeth Searles (1952 to 1966).

In 1972, when I arrived on the scene, the building was owned by Charlie and Hazel Dyson. It was no longer in use, housing chicken crates and junk from Charlie's carpentry shop. The ceiling was collapsing and the floor was in disrepair. However, the original sign, designating it the Richmond Town Clerk's Office, was still in the front window. It occurred to me that it should be preserved.

John C. Quinn, of USA Today fame, had bought the old mill and was of a like mind. He gave the Society, via The Freedom Forum, \$10,000 for its restoration. The work began. The Carolina Volunteer Fire Department put on a new roof. The building was essentially gutted. A new ceiling, floor, and a concrete pad were put in the southeast corner for a safe that was said to have been there. Oscar's old desk, sans the rolltop, was saved as was his chair. I saved the three layers of wallpaper, and began to search for a reproduction of the most recent. Finally, I found something very close with the help of the Boston Historical Society. This was purchased and is presently on the walls.

But what of the safe? Rumor had it that Charles Smith, owner of the Chevrolet dealership in Wakefield, had the safe. He told me he had an old safe from the Town, but could not guarantee it was from the building. He offered it to the Society, and with the help of Bob Kenyon, then Town Highway Commissioner, we set off to get it. It was very large and heavy, so it was necessary to remove the front windows to get the safe to the concrete pad. Bob did it with a bucket loader. With the safe in place, things quieted down. The building was not used again until I put in a wood stove, and moved a hand book bindery there, when I retired in 1999. A few years later I moved the bindery to my house, and the building has remained unused with the exception of a few Society meetings.

A few years ago, Mr. Straub kindly had the outside of the building painted at his expense. In 2019, the Society decided that the building could be better used as a museum of the history of Carolina Village. Rep. Justin Price

helped get a legislative grant of \$2,000 for both the building and the Bell School. RHS Member Ron Mowchan repaired and refinished the clerk's desk and a roll top was found for it; a display case from member Mark Trimmer was painted; and pictures, maps, and timelines hung. The museum begins to take shape. We hope to have it open to the public in the spring of 2020.



New Addition to the Bell School Museum

RHS member Merrill Moone donated this beautiful 1900 wall map, believing it would be an appropriate display in the Bell School. The map was restored by Richard Wolke, shown admiring the map in its new location. The map has indeed found its perfect home!



Richmond Recollections

Russ Lacey

Enclosed is a short story and several pictures of the **Josiah Palmer House** that used to be located on Main Street (Rt.138, Wyoming, RI) which is now the site of the closed Hess/Speedway gas station. Other nearby landmarks are the Richmond Police Station, the former Flemings Dept. store (now the YMCA) and the former A&P market (currently vacant).



Russ recollects... My family and I, including Randall, Angie, Russ, and Robin, lived on the first floor from 1964-1969. Almost across the street was Cal Ford's Sunoco gas station, and the now retired Chief of the Richmond Police Department, Neil Place and his family. The photos were taken by Sue Ford, Cal's wife, after our family had already moved to Burrillville, RI.

My aunt Elsie McCauley and her daughter Paula (now Paula Gaebe) lived upstairs. Paula now owns Addieville East Farm in Mapleville, RI. The **Josiah Palmer House** was torn down June 8-11, 1969 in order to build the gas station.

My mom still lives in Richmond, RI. I went to Richmond Elementary School, where I was taught by Mrs. Barbara Rawlings. The school Principal was Mr. Gregg. Our school's year end parties were held at the Meadowbrook Golf Course.

I was in Rangers, and our meetings were held at the American Legion Post (of which my aunt Elsie was a member) on Locustville Pond, opposite the Baptist church. My sister Robin and I used to go to the Hope Valley School, up on the hill, to watch the Saturday afternoon movies. It cost only 50 cents! Those were the days that I will never forget!



Richmond Historic Cemetery Committee

Dory Wagner

The committee has met twice now at the Clark Memorial Library. Our next meeting is scheduled for **March 19th at 6:30 pm** at the library. Our number of volunteers is up to fourteen now. We will begin to plan a field trip to some of our cemeteries prior to each meeting. Please meet at the library at 5:30 pm, if you would like to venture out with us.

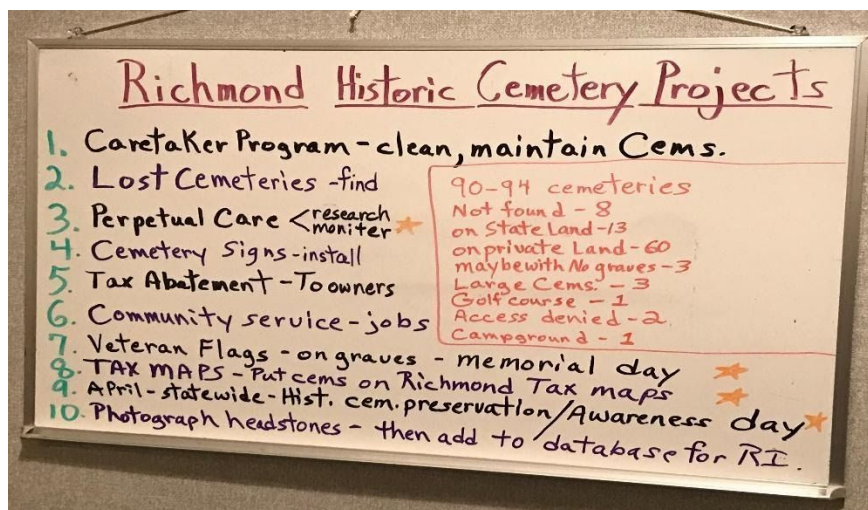
We have begun to tackle about half of the 10+ projects that need to be done. Sarah Lawhorne is photographing all of the Richmond headstones, and getting them entered into the state database. Doug Rogers will be working with the Rhode Island Veterans Cemetery office to obtain flags. The flags will be placed at our veterans' graves that do not get flagged by the American Legion groups. Alex LaForce is working at the town hall to guarantee all of our historic cemeteries are accurately placed on the Richmond tax maps. Other projects getting volunteer attention are: searching for lost cemeteries, new sign placements, and cleaning cemeteries.

The accomplishments and dedication of this group, after only two meetings, is astounding. It takes a village, and Richmond has a very special one.

April 11, 2020 is the annual statewide **Historic Cemetery Restoration and Awareness Day**.

We will be cleaning the Israel Lewis lot (Cemetery #37). The location is at the intersection of Routes 138 and 95 at the Park and Ride, Richmond, RI. Please join us at 10:00 am with rakes, clippers and gloves.

Hope to see you there!





2020 marks the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment by the US Congress, granting women the right to vote in all US elections. Rhode Island is celebrating this milestone with dozens of events around the state throughout the year.

The milestone was kicked off at the State House on January 6, 2020, the centennial of RI's ratification, by Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea. (RI was somewhat late to the party, as 23 states had passed the amendment before it did. But at least it was not one of the twelve states ratifying decades after its Congressional passage, with Mississippi bringing up the rear in 1984.)

Secretary Gorbea pointed out, "Though the 19th Amendment in theory guaranteed all women the right to vote, women of color in many states were still barred from the polls for decades, at least until the Voting Rights Act of 1965 outlawed discriminatory voting practices. How do we celebrate something that didn't really include everybody? But the truth of the matter is that history is imperfect, and I do think that we need to be able to support each other and celebrate those things that are positive."



Several of RI's women legislators attended the opening celebration of RI's ratification of the 19th Amendment

XIX: Shall Not Be Denied is a partnership initiative of the Rhode Island Department of State and the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities which developed events and programs to mark the anniversary. The logo created turned the Roman numerals XIX into the quilting stitches they resemble, long a symbol of women's industry, and here also representing the 72 years of work it took to stitch together universal suffrage since the first women's rights convention at Seneca Falls in 1848. The website <https://www.shallnotbedenied.org/> offers a calendar of events, partner resources, and educational materials, as well as a link to the RI Voter Information Center. Check it often as new events of interest will be added throughout the year.

We would love to hear any stories of suffragist activity in your family.

From the Archives

To coincide with the 100th anniversary of women's right to vote in America, we came across a mention of its recognition on its 50th anniversary in Volume 1, No. 11 of the January 1969 issue of the RHS newsletter:

"The Ninth meeting of the Richmond Historical Society will be held in the Richmond Town Hall, Tuesday evening, Jan. 21st at 8 P.M. The program will be planned around FIFTY YEARS AGO and particularly stress the fact that just fifty years ago women began registering as voters for Presidential Elections for the first time, in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 1507 of the Public Laws, January sessions, 1917. Women have come a long way in Government since then, and the Society will take this occasion to honor our new Richmond Town Clerk, Hazel Dyson, and have her as our featured speaker at this meeting. Everyone is invited to offer comments on their own life fifty years ago and bring interesting offerings for the SHOW & TELL TABLE."

A follow up article was in the next issue, Vol. 1, No. 12, February 1969, written by Virginia Arnold, excerpted here:

"Mrs. Hazel Dyson was appointed deputy clerk to Oscar Barber the town clerk...and in 1950 became the first woman clerk in Richmond after the death of Mr. Barber. She was sworn into office by then council president Giles Hopkins. Mrs. Dyson recalled the four days of "cleaning the vault" and sorting papers, wills, and other documents from the 1700's and 1800's...Mrs. Elizabeth D. Searle was the second woman town clerk to serve in Richmond and is the first woman elected to the town council, a position she now holds.



Hazel Holman Dyson, Richmond Town Clerk from Mar. 1950 to Nov. 1952 (2 years) and from Nov. 1968 to Nov. 1974 (6 years).

Mrs. Dyson noted that there are now 14 women town clerks in Rhode Island as compared to the seven who served in 1950. She pointed out that many women have served as members of the Richmond School Committee. Mrs. Olga Nimmo is a tax collector.

She recalled that as a deputy clerk, she and [Oscar Barber] toured the villages in Richmond to register voters. There were separate books for men and women to write their names in. She remembered sitting on the porch at the old Usquepaugh Store and Post Office waiting for villagers to stop by to register, also in Alton where the general store is now located.

She finds the work of a town clerk "very fascinating and a great challenge".

Historic 1691 Samuel Clarke Farm
— OPEN HOUSE —

Sponsored by The Richmond Historical Society



Saturday, May 30, 2020 ♦ 12:00 PM- 4:00 PM
(Rain date Sunday, May 31)

106 Lewiston Ave, Richmond, RI 02892

Parking in field off of Shannock Hill Rd- follow signs

*The Samuel Clarke Farm, dating to 1691, was added
to the National Register of Historic Places in 2019.
The property is a treasure of period architecture and furnishings.*

Tours of the house, outbuildings, and cemetery
Musical entertainment by One Blue Sky
Refreshments

Tickets \$25 per person; \$35 includes 1-year RHS membership, available at the door
Proceeds benefit the Richmond Historical Society

Appropriate for ages 10 and up. All children must be closely supervised by an adult.

For more information contact: <https://www.richmondrihistoricalsoc.org/>;
rihiso@gmail.com; On Facebook: Richmond RI Historical Society

~ *Upcoming Events* ~

March 19, and 25, 6:00 PM, Cross Mills Library, Charlestown, RI

The Charlestown Historical Society, in conjunction with Earthinform Studio, the Cross Mills Public Library, and the Brown University Center for Slavery and Justice, is holding a FREE series of talks entitled “ ***Illuminating History: The Plantation Life of Southern Rhode Island***”. The series will examine the history and impact of slavery in South County. Full information may be found on their website: charlestownhistorical.org

April 5, 1:30 PM- 5:00 PM, The Museum of Work and Culture, Woonsocket, RI

Salute to Spring/Bonjour Printemps A celebration of Franco-American culture. Visit their website for more information: rihs.org

April 11, 10:00 AM-12:00 PM, Israel Lewis Cemetery #37, Park & Ride at Routes 138 and 95

Annual Statewide Historic Cemetery Restoration and Awareness Day
Please join us at 10:00 am with rakes, clippers, and gloves.

May 20, 5:00-8:00 PM, Clark Memorial Library, Carolina, RI

Appraisal Night Bruneau Auctioneers will appraise items. \$5 for one item, and \$10 for three items. Proceeds to benefit the Clark Memorial Library.

May 23, 2:00 PM, Babcock-Smith Carriage House, 124 Granite St, Westerly, RI

Do you wonder what Granite Street looked like before it became a strip of retail establishments? Come and find out at the Westerly Historical Society's Annual Open House. “***Granite Street: Then and Now***” by John Coduri and Tony Smith. Free.

May 30, 12:00-4:00 PM, Samuel Clarke Farm, 106 Lewiston Avenue, Richmond, RI

Open House to benefit the Richmond Historical Society. Flyer in this newsletter.

RICHMOND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Website: <https://www.richmondrihistoricalsoc.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/RichmondRIHistoricalSociety/>

Email: rihiso@gmail.com Snail Mail: RHS, PO Box 408, Wyoming, RI 02898

RHS Slate of Officers

President **Kristen Chambers** krischambers1@gmail.com

Vice President **Richard Wolke** cloud11@cox.net

Secretary **Johanna Wolke** hansicloud@cox.net

Treasurer **Laura Orabone** laura@orabone.com

Member at Large **Dave Johnson** oneshadowridge@gmail.com

Member at Large **Virginia Williams** outhouse40@verizon.net

Member at Large/Cemetery Chair **Dory Wagner** dorwagg@aol.com

Newsletter Editor **Susan Jalette** sjalette1@verizon.net

