



Richmond Reflections

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The Richmond Historical Society Newsletter Spring 2019

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As I write this, Spring is but a few weeks away and Winter has left another plowable snow. The Society has been active with new members and volunteers who have made productive contributions.

For those of you who missed our Spring program, I am delighted to report that it was a great success. RHS Member Mark Trimmer, Captain of the Varnum Continentals, brought to life General Varnum and the Revolutionary War in Rhode Island. Mark also spoke of the Varnum Continentals, the Varnum House Museum, and the Armory in East Greenwich. A field trip with other Society members seems a good idea when the Varnum House Museum opens later this year. Anyone interested, please call me at 364-7057.

Our archivists, Patty Millar and Betty Mowchan, are presently indisposed. An ad hoc committee formed of Kristen Chambers, RHS Member Merrill Moone, and I to fill the gap. We have been meeting every Wednesday morning at the Clark Library, and have learned Past Perfect (archival software) and where things are stored. Betty Mowchan also did much to keep the website going. Fortunately, Bruce Simone, a new RHS Member, has volunteered to help us maintain the website. Clark Library assistants Chamonie Moss-Simone and Alexis Turner have given the Society invaluable assistance with our computers and website.

Another new RHS Member, the Reverend Bettine Besier of St. Thomas Church in Alton, has kindly offered the church's facilities should we need the space for

our meetings. I met with Rev. Besier in February and thanked her for her offer. The church has kitchen facilities and ample room for our programs.

In closing, I should mention that our next program to be held sometime in June, is titled, "Lost Mill Towns of South County." It will be presented by Mark Kenneth Gardiner who is a local historian.

I hope to see an increase in the attendance of RHS Members and their guests enjoying our enlightening and informative programs.

Richard Wolke

Bringing A Smile

My dad was an avid reader (and a founding member of the Richmond Historical Society). He had clipped a copy of this poem from a newspaper and though brittle and badly yellowed, it was still legible. The poet, James Thomas Field (1817 – 1881) was a Bostonian, and counted many famous authors among his close personal friends, including Hawthorne, Wordsworth, Dickens and Melville. He is probably best known for his poem "The Ballad of the Tempest", but this one is my favorite; it never fails to bring a smile...

Carolyn Richard

THE OWL CRITIC

by James T. Fields

"Who stuffed that white owl!?"

No one spoke in the shop;

The barber was busy, and he couldn't stop; The customers, waiting their turns,

Were reading the Daily, the Herald, the Post,

Little heeding the young man who blurted out such a blunt question;

Not one raised a head, or even made a suggestion; *And the barber kept on shaving.*

"Don't you see, Mister Brown,"

Cried the youth with a frown,

"How wrong the whole thing is,

How preposterous each wing is,
How flattened the head,
How jammed down the neck is- In short, the whole owl,
What an ignorant wreck 'tis! "I make no apology;
I've learned Owleology,
I've passed days and nights in a hundred collections,
And cannot be blinded to any deflections
Arising from unskillful fingers that fail,
To stuff a bird right, from his beak to his tail.
Mister Brown, Mister Brown! Do take that bird down,
Or you'll soon be the laughing stock all over town!" *And the barber kept on shaving.*
"I've studied owls, And other night fowls,
And I tell you What I know to be true! An owl cannot roost
With his limbs so unloosed;
No owl in this world
Ever had his claws curled, Ever had his legs slanted,
Ever had his bill canted,
Ever had his neck screwed
Into that attitude. He can't do it, because
'Tis against all bird laws.
Anatomy teaches,
Ornithology preaches, An owl has a toe
that can't turn out so!
I've made the white owl my study for years, And to see such a job almost moves
me to tears! "Mister Brown, I'm amazed
You should be so crazed
As to put up a bird
In that posture absurd! To look at that owl really brings on a dizziness;
The man who stuffed him don't half know his business!" *And the barber kept on shaving.*
"Examine those eyes,
I'm filled with surprise
Taxidermists should pass
Off on you such poor glass; So unnatural they seem,
They'd make Audubon scream,
And John Burroughs laugh
To encounter such chaff.
Do take that bird down;
Have him stuffed again, Brown!" *And the barber kept on shaving.*
"With some sawdust and bark

I could stuff in the dark
An owl better than that.
I could make an old bat
Look more like an owl
Than that horrid fowl,
Stuck up there so stiff like a side of coarse leather;
In fact, about him there's not one natural feather."
Just then with a wink and a sly normal lurch,
The owl, very gravely, got down from his perch,
Walked round, and regarded his fault-finding critic,
(Who thought he was stuffed) with a glance analytic,
And then fairly hooted, as if he should say:
"Your learning's at fault, this time, anyway;
Don't waste it again on a live bird, I pray.
I'm an owl, you're another.
Sir Critic, good-day!" *And the barber kept on shaving.*

Volunteers and Suggestions Requested

The Richmond Historic Cemetery Committee would like to ask for volunteers and suggestions. The second Saturday in April (the 13th) has officially been designated by the state of Rhode Island as RI Historic Cemetery Preservation and Awareness Day.

All across our state, groups will be volunteering in the over 3,000 (mostly neglected) historic cemeteries. And, Richmond has almost *a hundred* from which to choose!

We need volunteers to step forward on April 13th to help preserve these historic Richmond burial grounds.

Please send your suggestions of Richmond historic cemetery locations that are in need of care to : Dory Wagner at Dorwagg@aol.com Follow this site to see which cemetery is chosen, and where to go that day.

And, please consider volunteering ! Thank you!

RHS Spring Event General Varnum and the Revolutionary War in RI

RHS Member Mark Trimmer as General Varnum (2 photos)



