

• EDITORIAL •

An island landmark that will be missed

Next week the center three spans of the old Jamestown Bridge will tumble into the West Passage of Narragansett Bay — if all goes as planned. It will be an inglorious ending for a structure that had much to do with changing the nature of Conanicut Island.

The bridge was criticized even before it was built. The span was proposed to replace the ferry service from Saundertown to Jamestown. In the early 1930s the idea for such a bridge was called “Jamestown’s Folly” and later become known simply as the “Bridge to Nowhere.”

Of course, we are all familiar with the story that follows. The bridge was built. You could drive to Jamestown, but still had to take the ferry from Jamestown to Newport. Then the Newport bridge was built, and the ferries became part of our island lore.

The old Jamestown Bridge was much maligned over the years because people were afraid to cross it. Open grates at the top allowed motorists to see the bay below them. The bridge was narrow and tended to sway, which left you with the certain feeling that the structure was not all that stable. Finally, there were the reports that the bridge had outlived its usefulness and in the words of some was “falling down.”

The new Jamestown Bridge was opened in the early 1990s and a new four-lane highway was constructed across the island. Jamestown was now a great place to live for those who worked in Providence. Again the island became a popular location for summer homes, just like it had been 100 years earlier.

It has been more than a decade since the old Jamestown Bridge was retired from service. There were many debates about what to do with the old structure, but in the end, an artificial reef for fish will be its final mission. We’ll be sorry to see the old landmark disappear from view.



Breaking ground

Officials were on hand Monday morning for the ceremonial picture of the ground breaking for the new water tower that will be built on Howland Avenue. The new tower will be erected next to the old one. Construction should be completed by late fall. Photo by Jeff McDonough

Thieving cowards strike at home

I’m writing in response to the theft of four garden sculptures/ornaments from my front-yard garden at 85 High St. this past week. Although not totaling more than \$200 in monetary value, I’m angry primarily because of the personal sentimental value of two of the items in particular: one an item given to me from the garden of my deceased father, the other a unique sculpture created by a personal friend and given to me as a gift. The other items were inexpensive store-bought items that can easily be replaced. The items in question are irreplaceable because of the personal memories associated with them.

Having reported the theft to the local police, I don’t know whether or not it is at all real-

istic to expect that they may show up somewhere soon or be returned to me. The items of importance to me are a ‘run-of-the-mill’ concrete-cast frog, perhaps 8 inches long by 6 inches high, and a more contemporary creation out of metal parts and an old army helmet made to look like an oversized ‘army ant.’ It is larger, perhaps 2 feet square in dimensions with a height of 12 feet or so.

It’d be ideal if the individual(s) who took them would simply return them, no questions asked. Return them at night, under cover of darkness — after all, that’s when you took them in the first place.

While admittedly I may be jumping to inaccurate conclu-

sions, my suspicions lead me to believe the items were taken by a relatively young person. Those things taken are relatively lightweight and portable, while other items in the front garden are heavier and less wieldy. They were left behind.

I was informed by police that there have been numerous similar incidents reported in the general neighborhood — on Clarke Street, Windsor Street, and Southwest Avenue — including the theft of a unique bootscraper from the entry of the new Jamestown Fitness Center. Whoever is behind these thefts obviously knows the neighborhood fairly well, and most likely is a Jamestown resident.

I hope the thieves responsible are not viewing these escapades as simply harmless childhood or teenage pranks. Taking another’s personal property without permission is not a laughing matter. At the risk of sounding like an old curmudgeon at the ripe old age of 52, I wonder if they realize they could be charged with criminal trespass and theft if caught.

And guess what, kids, potential employers and college admissions counselors don’t look kindly on job and school applicants with arrests on their record.

It’s something for the parents of these individuals to consider also. If juveniles are involved, it’s you parents who will be held liable for financial restitution. And having had

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• LETTERS •

The news of 10 and 15 years ago is from the Jamestown Press. The news of 25, 50, 75, and 100 years ago from the Newport Daily News comes from the collection of the Newport Historical Society.

100 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, April 3, 1906:

Mr. A.M. Bailey of Hope Valley, who conducted a market here for ten years before moving to the west part of the state, is in town today, renewing old acquaintances.

Barge William H. McCleave arrived here this morning with a cargo of pea coal for the Ferry company. This, with the load recently discharged from barge James E. Mulholland, will give the company more than 1,000 tons of coal on hand.

Tomorrow will probably be the quietest town meeting experienced here in years. As according to the present law only the town officers can be voted for and they are unopposed, being the same without exception who now hold office.

From the Newport Daily News, April 5, 1906:

So little interest was manifested in yesterday’s town meeting that only 51 of the total number of 256 qualified voters visited the polls.

From the Newport Daily News, April 9, 1906:

The proposition to appropriate \$6,000 for a building of the fire department was brought up, causing the only protracted contest of the day (at the financial town meeting). . . . (So) little interest was taken that only 89 of the 167 voters qualified cast their ballots, the appropriation being lost by a vote of 49 to 40.

A small gathering was attracted by the auction of the Bay View House at noon today, but among the number there was not a prospective buyer.

75 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, April 1, 1931:

There was a meeting during the assembly hour at the Thomas H. Clarke school yesterday of the Basketry Club, the Study Club, Newspaper Club and Dramatic Club, with the different leaders in charge.

From the Newport Daily News, April 2, 1931:

Although yesterday was one of the stormiest election days ever recorded in Jamestown, a large vote was polled, and the Republicans were swept into office by good majorities with but

This week in Island history
Compiled by Sue Maden
Week of April 6

two exceptions. The total vote cast was 718, the straight Republican tickets numbered 276 and the straight Democratic tickets 201.

From the Newport Daily News, April 3, 1931:

At a recent meeting of fire wardens, it was voted to ask for an increase of \$1,500 at the financial town meeting tomorrow, as a salary for a driver, to be stationed permanently at the central engine house on Narragansett avenue.

From the Newport Daily News, April 6, 1931:

Jamestown adopted a budget \$18,300 less than that for the past year, at Saturday’s town meeting, allowing the tax rate to remain the same, \$20 per \$1,000. The bottom line of the budget was \$112,309.

From the Newport Daily News, April 9, 1931:

(At a Town Council meeting) Chester J. Greene was appointed chief of police, salary \$140 per month.

Messrs. Ferdinand Armbrust and Leroy F. Meredith have leased for a term of years the Palace Theatre on Narragansett avenue to W.C. Purcell of Fall River, manager of the Academy of Music of that city. Mr. Purcell is already making extensive improvements and redecorating. He will have a new ticket office at the entrance and will have talking pictures.

50 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, April 6, 1956:

A bill providing that Jamestown traffic offenders who do want to appear in First District County in Newport may pay their fines directly to the police chief, was introduced yesterday in the House of Representatives by Rep. John J. Wrenn of Providence.

From the Newport Daily News, April 7, 1956:

The House yesterday received a bill appropriating \$58,200 to

make up the operating deficit of the Jamestown Ferry Authority. . . . The deficiency bill is necessary, it was explained, because the ferry system failed to earn enough last year to cover its expenses.

25 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, April 2, 1981:

A contract was signed at Jamestown Windmill Wednesday afternoon for the continued restoration of the historic mill built in 1787.

From the Newport Daily News, April 8, 1981:

A hurricane plan for Jamestown will be acted on (at) the April 13 Town Council meeting. Jamestown Civil Defense Director Jay Cantrell explained the plan Monday at a work session. . . . The last plan was written in 1976, but the council took no action on a proclamation establishing the Jamestown Civil Preparedness Agency.

From the Newport Daily News, April 9, 1981:

A program on how a “neighborhood watch” operates to prevent crime was sponsored Wednesday night at the Jamestown Theatre by the Jamestown Taxpayers Association and the Police Department.

15 years ago

From the Jamestown Press, April 4, 1991:

The Town Council may consider adopting a wastewater management ordinance as a solution to the Island’s septic system problems. The town may also start an education program to teach homeowners how to keep their individual sewage disposal systems (ISDS) in good working order.

10 years ago

From the Jamestown Press, April 4, 1996:

Interest in Jamestown real estate has blossomed with the spring. Brokers say there are a number of factors that have caused the local market to heat up. (Mentioned were low interest rates, the Navy relocating NUWC, a low tax rate, growing confidence in the economy, completion of new the Jamestown Bridge and cross-island expressway, and weather.)

The municipal well located just south of North Pond reservoir has been producing 72,000 gallons of water a day for the past week with little drop in its water level.

Is it true that Dunkin’ Donuts is coming to Jamestown?