

Affordable housing

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todian, and the assistant keeper's quarters, used as the museum.

Beavertail's first of three lighthouse towers was built in 1749 and is recognized as the third oldest lighthouse in the U. S.

Opinions of residents who have spoken at council meetings about the lighthouse uses and the lighthouse association plans have included full support for preservation. Opinions on the housing issue have ranged from praise for the affordable housing designation to speculation about its value as a rental property.

Site planning

Through its Antoinette F. Dowling Preservation Trust for Rhode Island, the National Trust

for Historic Preservation has awarded a competitive matching fund \$4,894 grant to the association to complete a professional appraisal and a study on expanding the museum.

The study will examine the lighthouse association's five-year program, evaluate site preservation needs for stabilizing and restoring structure, and develop conceptual designs for expanding the museum to provide greater accessibility and education to the visiting public. Newport Collaborative Architects, Inc. was named to do the study under the direction of the lighthouse association's Site Acquisition Committee.

The Jamestown Windmill remains a popular attraction after 219 years

By Sam Bari

Like a faithful sentinel for well over two centuries, the Jamestown Windmill has stood high on Windmill Hill overlooking Marsh Meadows and Great Creek on North Main Road. To be exact, the windmill has witnessed 219 years of American history.

Built by the town of Jamestown in 1787, the windmill served island farmers for 109 years before being retired in 1896. Until that time 14 different millers worked the stone wheel to grind corn for island residents. The last millers, Thomas A. H. and Jesse C. Taft, found that the mill could

not compete with the rolling mills in the west that produced cheaper steel-ground meal and flour. The millers made their profits by keeping a small percentage of the grain they milled for customers and reselling it. Sadly, the mill was closed as a commercial enterprise for fiscal considerations.

Thanks to the Jamestown Historical Society, the windmill has been restored to working condition and is now one of Jamestown's most popular tourist attractions. Every summer, the mill is open for all to see from 1 to 4 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. Visitors can embark on a self-guided tour of yesteryear, see the inner-workings of the mill, and enjoy the spectacular views of the pastoral settings surrounding the structure from the windows on the second and third floors. Although admittance is free, donations to the preservation of the mill are welcomed.

When the mill was open for business, its primary use was to provide stone-ground corn to feed cattle and horses. For human consumption, the millers also ground a special variety of corn called Rhode Island white flint, originally obtained from the local Indians to make jonnycake meal. A small amount of this corn is still grown and stone ground at Rhode Island mills throughout the state for this purpose.

The original windmill was state-of-the-art technology at the time it was constructed. Surprisingly, the technique for stone-grinding wheat and corn is not much different today. Not many modern mechanical devices can stand the test of time and boast over two centuries of unsurpassed usefulness. Although the rolling-steel grinding mills that forced the windmill out of business were cheaper, it does not mean they were better.

A recent feeding study in Germany by Judy Campbell, Mechtild Hauser, and Stuart Hill from McGill University in Canada revealed the nutritional importance of using fresh stone-ground grains for bread-making. Health food stores and proponents of organic diets strongly support

the advantages of stone-ground grains for better all-around nutrition. If the Jamestown mill were re-opened today, it could possibly make a profit and develop into a thriving business by serving the health-oriented market.

After the windmill closed in 1896, it stood neglected until 1904. Then, according to Linnea Petersen, chairwoman of the Historical Society Windmill Committee, "a group of ladies from Philadelphia who summered in Jamestown took interest in the aging relic and bought it from the town. They had the damage wrought by vandals and weather repaired and again made the mill operable." Despite the neglect, much of the structure and machinery was intact, and craftsmen were able to restore the windmill to close to its original condition.

In 1912, the mill was given to the newly formed Jamestown Historical Society. The members adopted a drawing of the mill for their corporate seal and assumed responsibility for the windmill's upkeep, which needs considerable maintenance to keep it operable. Two Jamestown Historical Society members, sisters Nan Thompson and Margaret Evans, established a fund devoted to mill upkeep in 1987. Major restorations were completed in 1982 and 2000-2001 with additional grants from the Champlin Foundations, the Rhode Island Foundation, other local foundations, and donations from Jamestown residents.

Known as a smock mill, so called after a fancied resemblance to a countryman's linen smock and once common throughout southern New England, the Jamestown Windmill is a three-story octagonal structure with a domed cap, or bonnet, which can be turned. The bonnet carries the wind shaft and the arms, or sweeps. The original framework of the mill is of hand-hewn chestnut timbers and it is shingled on the outside. The 540 square feet of sail on the four arms turn the 3,500-pound runner stone used to grind grain. The Jamestown Windmill is believed to be the third mill used by the early settlers of the island.

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