

'Halfacre' renovation reveals historic architecture

By Michaela Kennedy

The Jamestown Historical Society will proudly present Halfacre on Saturday, Sept. 9, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. for its annual house tour. Built in 1895 for Elizabeth H. Clark, the summer cottage boasts one of the last American shingle-style designs of locally renowned architect Charles Bevins. Halfacre is located at 170 Walcott Ave. Tickets, sold at the door, cost \$15.

"The tour is our biggest fundraiser in recent years," said Historical Society President Rosemary Enright. She noted that the non-profit organization has sponsored a house tour every year since 1986, and has highlighted as many as 16 historic houses and landmarks in Jamestown. "We try to bring in different aspects of how to look at houses on the island," Enright added.

This year the tour invites people to look at a house that is in the process of renovation. "We hope this will give visitors a different way of looking at a 110-year-old structure," Enright said. "They can concentrate on the structural detail and original ornamentation rather than the current owner's taste in furnishing. We also hope that it will encourage people who buy these historic homes to renovate rather than to tear down and build new, to help us preserve the 'feel' of Jamestown that brought them here in the first place," she explained.

The house will not be completely devoid of furnishings during the tour, however, according to current owner Alexandra Kent. Kent noted many possessions were passed down through the generations of her family, and

some of the pieces still remain in the house. "I grew up hearing stories of all the furniture," she remembered. Kent attributed the large collection of furnishings to the many women in her family who went unmarried and never took their belongings out of the house.

Ownership of the house stayed within a female line as it was passed down to maiden nieces until Kent's grandmother, Lisa Beuwkes, bought the house from cousins in 1969. The home has continued to stay in the hands of the women in the family, and Kent now lives there with her family and her mother. She and her husband are taking on the task of renovating the home for year round use while still preserving the integrity of the original style.

Maureen McGuirl, co-ordinator of the event, said that the house is one of the best-documented structures in Jamestown, thanks to the meticulous record keeping of Clark. "The house embodies many stylistic qualities Charles Bevins was known for and reflects the strength of the woman who commissioned it," McGuirl noted.

According to McGuirl, Clark was an extraordinary woman for her time. She worked as a sorter and classifier of marine specimens at the Museum of Comparative Zoology in Cambridge, Mass., which is today known for its glass flowers. She became private secretary to Alexander Agassiz, curator of the museum. A series of letters shows that Clark made decisions about acquisitions and loans for the museum while Agassiz traveled for extended periods. Later, when Agassiz established a base at Castle Hill, he suggested to Clark that she purchase land and build in Jamestown.

"It is really a pleasure to see a house being continually loved by generations of Clark family women," McGuirl added.

The historical society extends a heartfelt thanks to the Kent and Beuwkes families for sharing their home and family documents, and invites all on Saturday to celebrate a unique snapshot of Jamestown's past.

Beating the cost of heat this winter

By Sam Bari

Supply and demand appears to be the catch phrase indicating the cost of oil related products. For the last few weeks, the price of gasoline has dropped dramatically in most areas. The price of heating oil, however, is anywhere from 35 to 50 percent higher than last year, depending on geographic location according to the Energy Information Administration, an agency of the federal government.

"Demand for gasoline has diminished, and production is high, driving prices down," said Jamestown resident Larry Bonier, owner of Seaway Oil. "Now that winter is around the corner, demand for heating oil is high and production is low, driving the price up. Also, China and other countries with emerging economies are demanding more product, and that can seriously affect prices," he added.

"I just wish people would stop blaming the retailers for the cost of heating oil. It's like shooting the messenger. We do not control the prices. Retailers make the same amount of money per gallon whether the price to the consumer is \$1.50 per gallon or \$2.50 per gallon. Actually, our percentage of profit goes down as prices go up," he said.

Bonier also said that many consumers are not doing the "common sense" things to heat their homes efficiently. He listed inadequate insulation, not keeping homes at moderate temperatures, and heating spaces that are not being used as common causes of high heating bills. "Breaking the heating system up into zones, so that rooms not being used can be shut off from the heat can save a tremendous amount of money over the course of a winter," he said. "Also, using a secondary source of heat, like a fireplace or wood burning stove can save dollars."

The EIA also said that the price of heating oil can change with the weather, and it is likely to do so. A moderate winter will reduce consumption, which will drive prices down due to high inventories, while a severe winter or even a long cold snap can have

the opposite effect.

Jamestown resident Bill Bucklin said that modern technology offers many ways to heat homes economically. He heats his 2,600-square-foot home for under a \$1,000 a year with a small, clean-burning propane furnace that uses less than three tanks of fuel per season.

"I have solar panels and a windmill that provide all the electricity I need. My electric bill is \$5 per month because the power company charges \$2.50 per meter and I have two meters," Bucklin said. "Sometimes they owe me money that is reflected in my bill because I produce more electricity than I use. The electricity I produce but don't use goes into the system for use by other consumers," he added.

"Hot water solar panels that run water through flexible tubing for radiant heat is another way to save a tremendous amount of money. However, I think energy efficiency begins with insulation. The higher the R rating in the walls and roof, the less heat needs to be generated," he said. Prefabricated 7.25-inch-thick Styrofoam walls provide an insulation rating of R30. I used 1-inch-thick roof panels and Styrofoam and insulated my roof to a rating of R50," he said.

In addition, the federal government offers tax breaks through the Department of Energy and the

Energy Policy Act of 2005 for installing energy-efficient materials, appliances, and products in homes and businesses. For instance, a direct tax deduction of up to \$500 or 10 percent of the cost of an energy-efficient exterior garage door is available through this program. Any purchases that are applicable to this program must be made during the years 2006 and 2007. Receipts indicating date of purchase or installation are required to be eligible for the deduction. Information regarding the Energy Policy Act of 2005 can be found on the DOE Web site at www.doe.gov/taxbreaks.htm.

State plans are also available that offer tax incentives and low-interest financing for building or converting houses and businesses that use energy-efficient products, appliances, and systems. State incentive plans for energy efficiency vary from state to state.

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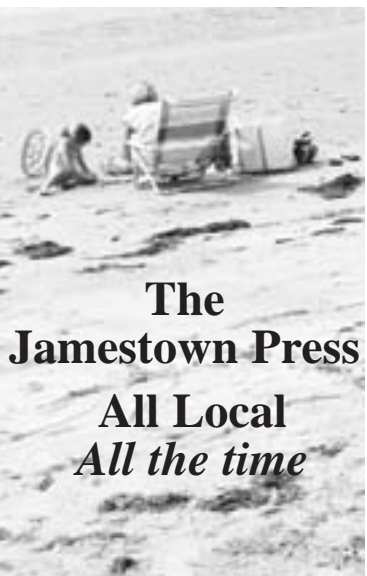
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