

# Island Opinion

## • EDITORIAL •

### Help keep our island history alive

Our local history is important. The legacy of this land — our home — defines who we are. Without doubt, the history of Conanicut Island is as varied and colorful as any in New England.

The island has changed dramatically over the centuries. There were the first inhabitants of this chunk of rock, those who we refer to today as the Native Americans. Then came the white settlers, the colonists. There was a revolution. A new nation was established. Peace resumed and the island remained mostly agrarian through the early 1800s.

By the turn of the century, Jamestown had become a haven for tourists seeking to summer next to the ocean. Some 1,000 hotel rooms could be found here and the wealthiest had built themselves impressive summer cottages.

Then came the world wars. What remains of those military fortifications are now island landmarks.

Most recently, we've seen the island change yet again as bridges replaced the ferries, and then a new bridge replaced an old bridge.

Now, the island is again popular with the summer crowd.

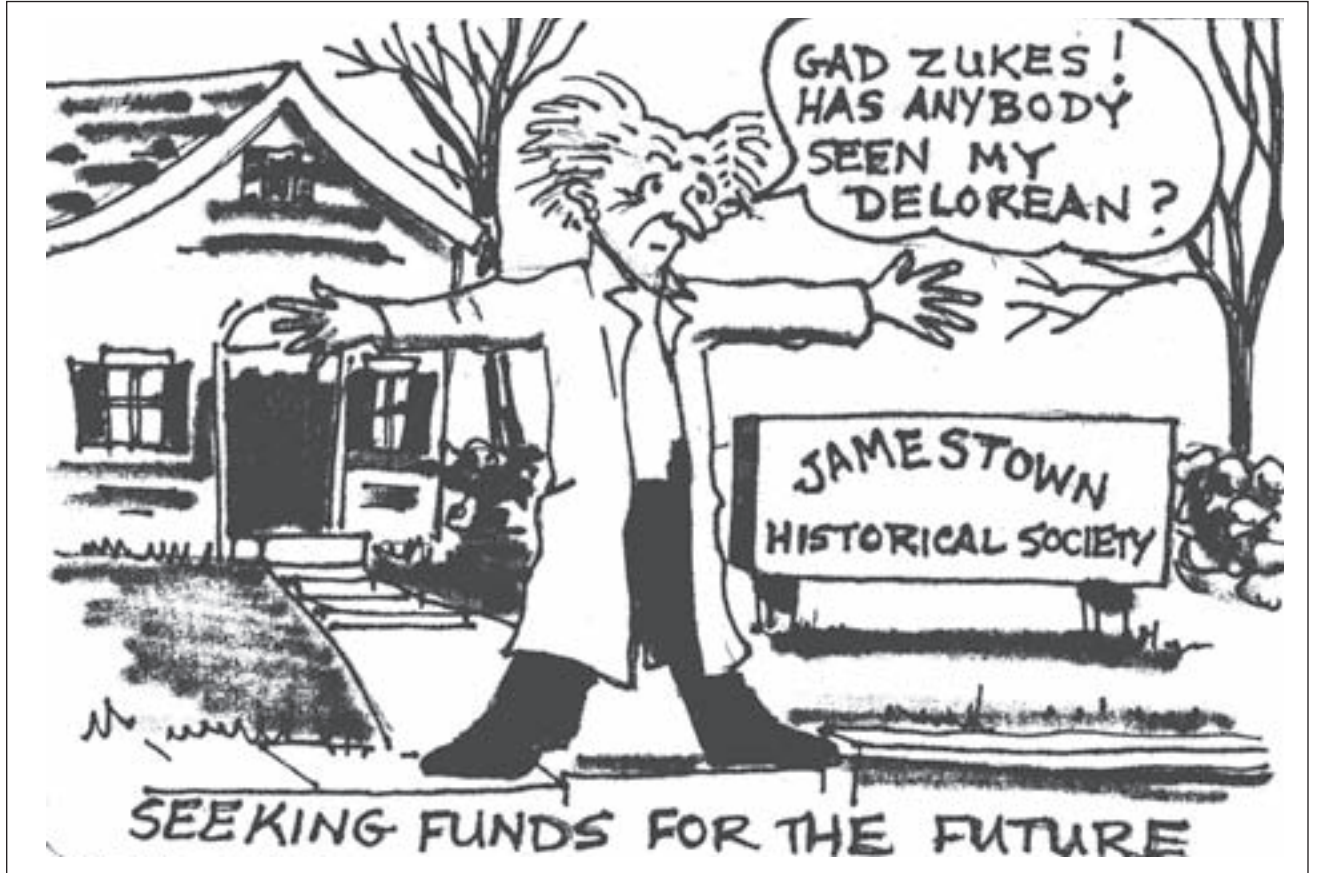
The Jamestown Historical Society is the keeper of all this local history. It safeguards the artifacts and preserves the lore that make Jamestown unique. Besides the local museum, the society maintains the windmill, the Quaker meetinghouse, and Conanicut Battery.

The society is asking that islanders contribute to its capital campaign now underway. The money will be used for several purposes. The society will restore the museum on Narragansett Avenue. A secure vault will be constructed to house artifacts in the basement of the new town hall. And a special room will be created at the school where local history caught be shared with our youngsters.

Finally, the society will create an endowment fund to maintain its assets.

The historical society is planning a number of events this spring and summer. Take the opportunity to learn about our island. Please do your share to help finance this worthwhile cause. You can help preserve history for the future.

— Jeff McDonough



### A light station for the people

In response to your Feb. 15, editorial "Maybe we should put the lighthouse to work," I am happy to offer our experience at Rose Island as just one example that might shed some light on the future management of the Beavertail Light Station.

First, I would like to correct one misnomer. Call it semantics if you like, but the Rose Island Lighthouse is NOT an inn or B&B! It is a self-sufficient, operating light station that welcomes people from all walks of life to learn, first-hand, about being a lighthouse keeper. Because we're a mile offshore with no connections to

public utilities, we generate electricity with wind, gather rainwater off the roof, and show people by example and by practice how to conserve.

If you must call it a "B&B," you would have to call it a "do-it-yourself B&B." One New York Times travel writer described it succinctly: "They take you out, show you how things work, and leave you to fend for yourself," for when you stay overnight in our first floor, turn-of-the-century museum, you must bring and prepare your own food, change the linens on your bed, and do any neces-

sary "light-housekeeping" to make it spotless when the doors open to welcome the public at 10 a.m.

As you said in your editorial, lighthouse lovers are numerous. We find those interested in our kind of "volunteer vacation" are the finest kind, and it follows that the families who become our keepers for a whole week are a cut above those. According to our local Chambers of Commerce and the Newport County Convention and Visitor's Bureau, voluntourism, ecotourism and heritage tourism are the fastest growing segments of the tourist industry.

Our overnights and keeper weeks get booked solid during the summer months, and it would please us greatly to share the bounty with Beavertail.

Since we began our program in 1992, Rose Island has been a model for lighthouses around the country that have been turned over to local non-profit organizations and city/town governments to be operated and maintained for public benefit. The various programs of utilization (which must be approved by the Secretary of the Interior, National Park Service) are as different as the characteristics of the lighthouses themselves

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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, February 20, 1907:

The local fishermen were able to get their trawls yesterday after a protracted spell of rough weather, and nearly all secured a good catch.

##### From the Newport Daily News, February 22, 1907:

A large number from here attended the matinee at the Opera House in Newport today.

##### From the Newport Daily News, February 23, 1907:

A portion of Clarke's pond Southwest avenue has been cleared of snow by the younger people, for skating purposes.

##### From the Newport Daily News, February 25, 1907:

Mr. John Martin and a party of friends from Newport spent Washington's birthday at the Peckham camp at Beavertail duck shooting. Lightkeeper Wales states that it is the only time in twenty years that visitors have been at the point on the twenty-second of February.

##### From the Newport Daily News, February 26, 1907:

An act to be brought before the General Assembly establishing a permanent police and the election of a chief of police for Jamestown was read and approved.

#### 75 years ago

##### From the Newport Daily News, February 26, 1932:

(Section 1 of new bathing ordinance passed by the Town Council): No person over the age of 12 years attired in a bathing suit shall travel along or upon any of



the streets, highways, lanes or alleys, or upon the sides of streets thereof in the town of Jamestown unless such person shall be attired with some form of sandal, slippers, shoes or other footwear, and be clothed with a covering, cloak or wrap, reaching from the shoulders to the knees, and which cloak or wrap shall be kept buttoned while so worn.

The members of the fire department will hold a social and smoke at the new engine house on Narragansett avenue this evening, and Walter Marley will serve one of his famous oyster stews.

The pupils of grades one, two and three at the Carr school were entertained with a radio program on Thursday afternoon.

#### 50 years ago

##### From the Newport Daily News, February 19, 1957:

Continued hitches in drawing up final recommendations for a lower bay hurricane barrier at Newport were reported here last night by representatives of the Army Corp of Engineers.

##### From the Newport Daily News, February 22, 1957:

The Newport County Chamber of Commerce last night joined the organizations opposing erection of a \$39,000,000 oil refinery in Jamestown.

##### From the Newport Daily News, February 25, 1957:

Fifty couples attended the Snow Shuffle dance Saturday night at the Grange Hall on West Street.

#### 25 years ago

##### From the Newport Daily News, February 23, 1982:

The Town Council Monday night rejected the proposed statewide reapportionment that would include Conanicut Island with Newport's 98th Congressional District.

##### From the Newport Daily News, February 26, 1982:

Nineteen building permits were issued since Jan. 1.

#### 15 years ago

##### From the Jamestown Press, February 21, 1992:

Sixty-five fifth grade students last week graduated from Jamestown's first DARE program. DARE, which stands for Drug Abuse Resistance Education, teaches youngsters how to say no to drug and alcohol abuse.

In an effort to maintain a balance of housing for all income groups, an Affordable Housing Committee was established in Jamestown in 1988. The committee was reorganized in 1990 and now has seven members who meet monthly to discuss housing issues and make recommendations to the Town Council and other town boards and commissions relative to affordable housing.

#### 10 years ago

##### From the Jamestown Press, February 20, 1997:

Town officials will not rescind their decision to grant town water hookups to a subdivision with nine lots outside the municipal water district, but they may require borderline landowners to prove a need for town water before granting tie-ins in the future.

Of the state's 39 communities, Jamestown and 21 other municipalities will receive no increase in state aid for education for the 1998 fiscal year.