

September is supposed to be a time for winding down from a busy summer. This September seems to be busier than the summer itself.

**House tour weekend**

Our annual house tour fundraiser is a weekend affair this year. On Friday, Sept. 12, members of the society are invited to a preview party at Birdview, 28 Newport St., from 5 to 7 p.m. Built in 1888, this large shingled house has a huge porch that looks north and east toward the Newport Bridge. The preview party is open to JHS members only (you can join at the door, if you're not a member), and will be your only chance to visit Birdview, since it will not be on the public tour. To make a reservation, call 423-0784 and leave a message with your name, telephone number, and the number in your party or send an email to [jhs@jamestownri.com](mailto:jhs@jamestownri.com). The \$40 per person donation includes entry to the houses on Saturday's public tour, which is described below.

Two historic homes will open their doors for the public tour on Saturday, Sept. 13, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Riven Rock, at 113 Melrose Ave., was built in 1911 and is a classic Jamestown summer home overlooking the West Passage. It recently received national attention as the home where the major motion picture "Dan in Real Life" was filmed. If you've seen the movie, you'll recognize both the interior and the exterior of this homey summer cottage. The architect is unknown, but may well have been J.D. Johnston, the builder of Clingstone, which he had designed just a few years earlier.

Onarock, at 105 Walcott Ave., was built in 1896 and is definitely the work of J. D. Johnston. The house rises above Walcott Ave-



**Jamestown Historical Society News**

By Rosemary Enright

nue on a rocky point and has two large wings visually hinged at a half-round tower. Onarock has undergone many transformations over the years, but Johnston's design retains its original grandeur.

For those unable to attend the preview party, the public tour costs \$20. Tickets will be on sale in advance at Baker's Pharmacy. You can also buy tickets at the door at either house, but may have to wait for entry. Prepaid tickets move you to the front of the line.

**Land agreement wall dedication**

The 1657 Conanicut Island Land Agreement—the pre-purchase contract among the men who were negotiating to buy Conanicut and Dutch islands from the Narragansetts—is now on view in the Town Hall. The specially designed case containing the document, purchased for the JHS and the town by the McDonough family, is the centerpiece of a 30-foot long display on the west wall between the offices of the Town Clerk and the Finance Department.

The JHS and the town will dedicate the Land Agreement display on Thursday, Sept. 18, at 6:30 p.m. The short ceremony will be followed by a reception. Everyone is invited to attend and see this fascinating piece of island history.

**The 1938 hurricane**  
Sept. 21 is the 70th anniversa-



Riven Rock, featured in the movie "Dan in Real Life," is one of two houses featured in this year's Jamestown Historical Society house tour.

ry of the most devastating hurricane to hit Jamestown in recorded history. Letters, books, and pictures of the hurricane are on display in the JHS exhibit case in the Jamestown Philomenian Library entry.

The JHS and the Friends of the Library are sponsoring "Memories of the 1938 Hurricane," a program of reminiscences about the event, at the library at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 17. Jane Bentley, a member of the Friends' board and former member of the JHS board, organized the event. Her interviews with 10 Jamestowners who lived through the storm—Alcina Blair, Dee Christman, Fred Clarke, Mary Clarke, Maxine Clarke, Roselyn Fraley, Mary Jawor, Marge Moran, Donald Richardson, and Victor Richardson—will be available on DVD after the program.

The hurricane anniversary

will also be remembered at the Beavertail Lighthouse. On Sunday, Sept. 21, at 1 p.m., the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association (BLMA), the Foundation for Coast Guard History, and the Friends of Whale Rock Light will dedicate a plaque at Beavertail to the memory of Walter Eberle, the assistant lightkeeper at the Whale Rock light, who died in the storm. Remnants of the Whale Rock light can still be seen in the West Passage between Beavertail and Narragansett, looking rather like an almost submerged submarine tower.

**Saving the 1749 lighthouse foundation**

Efforts are ongoing to preserve one of the oldest evidences of colonial life on the island. The first lighthouse at Beavertail was built in 1749 and rebuilt on the same foundation after a fire in 1753. The current lighthouse was

built further inland in 1856 and a fog signal building was later built on the old foundation. The 1938 hurricane destroyed the fog signal building and revealed the original lighthouse foundation. The JHS put up a plaque, which is now in the BLMA museum, in 1951.

The old lighthouse base is in imminent danger of being destroyed. The seaward section has been undercut by storms and the soil has been eroded so much that stones have started falling away. The BLMA, with support from the JHS, is raising money to pay for a radar imaging study that will help it evaluate options for saving the stone base. A boat ride to see the foundation from the water side, scheduled for today, Sept. 4, has raised over \$4,000 to cover the cost of the initial survey.

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**JHS: WE ARE HISTORY**

**"Owning roller skates guaranteed you two skateboards and at least one friend."**

*We made our skateboards from roller skates, so one pair gave you the wheels for two boards – enough fun for you and a friend. Wheeling around the island from dawn to dusk, every day brought a new adventure.*

*- Kathy Brownell, Island Photographer*

**Be a part of history:**  
**Join the Jamestown Historical Society**

Your tax-deductible dues support JHS operations and public programs at the Windmill, the Jamestown Museum, the Quaker Meetinghouse and the Conanicut Battery.

Join now: The first 100 new members receive a sterling silver windmill charm.

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student \$15       individual \$25       family \$40  
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Please mail with payment to JHS P.O. Box 156, Jamestown RI 02835  
or go to [www.jamestownhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.jamestownhistoricalsociety.org)

**JHS: PEOPLE, PLACES, PRESERVATION**