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Annual Reports

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Annual Reports

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Bradford A. Becken; Daniel Snydacker Jr., Ph.D.; Pieter N. Roos; Bertram Lippincott III, C.G.; Ronald M. Potvin; and M Joan Youngken

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ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE NEWPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Report of the President, Bradford A. Beeken
Presented at the Annual Meeting, May 30, 1994

Most of you are aware, I believe, of our goal to create a Center for Newport History to coincide with the 150th anniversary of the founding of this organization. This is a very ambitious undertaking, which will require, among other things, an awareness and appreciation by our community of the value that this organization provides.

I suspect that the average person driving down Touro Street has little understanding of the beehive of activity that takes place in the staid brick building at number 82 and its importance to Newport County. If we are going to be successful in our undertaking we will need your support in helping to inform our neighbors of the contribution of the Newport Historical Society to our lives. Toward that end, in preparing for this meeting, I asked our Executive Director, Dan Snydacker, to provide me with some facts and figures that I could ask you to carry away, and as opportunities present themselves, to share this information with your friends and neighbors.

The Society has a Mission Statement, which reduced to its basic elements, includes the phrases, “to collect and preserve the artifacts, photographs, documents, publications, and genealogical records that relate to the history of Newport County,” and “to make these materials readily available for both research and enjoyment, and to act as a resource center for the education of the public about the history of Newport County.” Consider the following:

• To collect: our collection has grown approximately 20% over the past five years and there were more than 300 new accessions this year.

• To preserve: 2500 photographs were rehoused in conservation-quality materials. 100 pieces of porcelain were rehoused. 4000 manuscripts were rehoused.

• To make these collections readily available for both research and enjoyment: 1400 people visited our headquarters for research purposes. 2600 phone queries were received and answered. 900 mail requests for information were received and answered.

• To act as a resource center for the education of the public: Attendance at the Museum of Newport History and special programs totaled over 15,000 people, including 800 children in our school-age educational program. 115 groups visited the Museum, which usually included a walking tour as well.

Add to the above statistics that 178 new members joined the Newport Historical...
Society this past year, bringing our total to 1325, a 7% increase; 83 volunteers worked as guides, curatorial assistants, and other positions; and eight interns from Salve Regina University, the University of Rhode Island, and Appalachian State University had a memorable learning experience while assisting various staff members.

This building may appear staid and inactive, but that is far from the fact. I trust that you will help us spread this gospel.


Education and Programs
- Museum and program attendance of over 15,000 individuals, including over 1100 children in our school-age educational programs
- 115 groups visited the museum and/or took walking tours

Research Services
- 1400 people visited our headquarters for research purposes
- 2600 telephone queries were received
- 900 mail requests for information received

Acquisition
- The collection has grown approximately 20% over the past five years. In addition, there have been approximately 300 accessions this year.

Conservation
- 2500 photographs rehoused in conservation quality materials
- 100 pieces of porcelain rehoused
- 4000 manuscripts rehoused

New Members
- There were 178 new members at the Society this past year bringing our total to 1325, an increase of 7%

Volunteers and Interns
- 8 interns from Salve Regina University, URI, and Appalachian State University
- 83 total volunteers working as guides, curatorial assistants, and other positions

Report of the Executive Director
Daniel Snydacker, Jr., Ph.D.

Every year, as I prepare my report for the annual meeting, I always seem to begin with “It has been a remarkable year at the Newport Historical Society.” This year is no different. This dull repetition is, in fact, an indication of our lively, energetic pace as we strive to give Newport County the kind of historical agency it deserves. This year
has been remarkable in that we have had the honor to help so many groups and individuals from all over all Newport County and across the country. It has been, in short, a year of community service. It has been a chance for us to return some of the many favors done for the Society as we installed the Museum of Newport History.

The Society always serves the community by preserving its heritage through our collections, and educating its citizens and children about our collective past. We also serve the community by coordinating and facilitating the work of countless individuals and groups and by collaborating with other historical agencies in the area. This has been especially true this year. Tonight, representatives from three community projects facilitated by the Newport Historical Society will present reports on the Rhode Island Marine Archaeology Project, the surveying of the Common Burying Ground, and A State of Hope: a play about Irish immigration during the potato famine.

Besides these groups, the Society has also worked closely with the following efforts: the Newport Preservation Alliance by planning and coordinating a major architectural survey of historic districts in Newport; Richard Youngken by providing many photographs, helping with the research and editing of his book African Americans in Newport: 1700-1945, and celebrating its publication with the exhibit titled “African Americans in Newport,” the Norman Bird Sanctuary by helping them research and plan for the future of Paradise Farm and the property and buildings immediately adjacent to its present facilities; the Broadway Improvement group by serving on the Advisory Council for the Planning Charrett, which has produced a comprehensive plan for enhancing the design of the area and stimulating economic development; the Religious Heritage Weekend by conducting walking tours of the many historic congregations in Newport and by giving the key note lecture for the event; the Point Association by providing information on the cataloging and storage of archival material; Trinity Church by accepting many of their historic records on deposit and coordinating their cataloging and conservation; the United Congregational church in Middletown by providing them the use of the Seventh Day Baptist Meeting House beginning June 14 for the display of their exhibit on the history of congregational worship on Aquidneck Island; and many other groups and individuals too numerous to mention.

Besides the work we have been doing in the community, we have also been building on our strengths and securing gains we have made in education, collection management, and exhibitions. We attracted thousands of people to the Museum of Newport History, conducted an exciting series of educational programs, worked with and preserved our collections, and planned for the long term future of the society.

The audience for the Museum of Newport History continues to grow. As the number of visitors to the Museum swells, the one constant from the day of our opening preview reception to today has been the overwhelmingly positive response of visitors. Former Newport Mayor Robert McKenna said that he had recently been to the Museum of the City of San Francisco and that ours was just as good or better. Publicity for the Museum continues to grow as well. We have had feature articles in Newport’s Best Read Guide and Newport Magazine, we were featured with a large
photograph in the section about the best new attractions in *New England Magazine*, and we have learned that *Humanities* magazine, published by the National Endowment for the Humanities, will feature us with several photographs in an upcoming issue.

Besides our walk-in visitors, we have had hundreds of groups visit the Museum over the past year. A number of local groups have used the Museum for meetings and receptions. These include the teachers groups Delta Kappa Gamma and the Sakonnet Reading Council, the Newport Bed and Breakfast Association, and the members of the Downtown Marketplace Association, just to name a few. We have had other groups from around the country and beyond. We hosted a group of the country's most distinguished early American historians in a Liberty Fund Conference. We had visitors from the Montreal Art Museum, the San Francisco Historical Association, the Bayou Bend Museum of the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, and most of the attendees of the Preservation Society's Newport Symposium—again, just to name a few.

As wonderful as all these accomplishments are, it pales in my estimation to the gains our educational programs have made in reaching school age children. Since May 1, 1995, alone, we have had almost 750 school children in our various programs and we estimate that figure will be over 1000 by the end of the 1994-1995 school year. These children have come from every town on the Island and from afar as well. We have just finished a multi-visit program with most of the Middletown 7th graders and are just about to begin a similar program with their 5th graders. Newport's public and private schools alike have been taking our programs, visiting the Museum of Newport History and going on walking tours with us. These gains have been made thanks to the hard work of Pieter Roos, our Director of Education. Not only has he designed and run the programs with help from Ron Potvin and myself, he has been working hard to contact schools and teachers. After his first year, during which he suffered some disappointments in this area, this year he is close to being overwhelmed with success.

Mercedes Coulombe, the new superintendent of Newport Schools, assisted us in these efforts. She gave us a wonderful opportunity to meet with all her principals at an administrator's meeting. Out of that meeting we began to form our own Education Committee, which will help with this process and advise us on new programs and opportunities. This is our future. Many of these children will grow up to become members of the Society itself and help carry us forward into the next generation. Most important of all, however, these children are the future of the community. Anything we can do to teach them about its history and show them the significance of what surrounds them helps to ensure that future.

The flagship of our educational program is our annual Winter Series. This year's series was entitled *Masterpieces of Simplicity: The Art and Industry of Newport Furniture Makers*. With our stellar list of speakers, it again clearly established the national significance of Newport Furniture. We have used the occasion of the Winter series to launch our Townsend-Goddard Guild. Members of the Guild will be invited
to special programs at least twice a year, which will focus on Newport’s furniture and other decorative arts. They will help us keep alive the in-depth inquiry into these artisans who produced some of America’s finest, most enduring art. They will help with the work of building a national database to document the masterpieces of simplicity these craftsmen produced. The very generous annual contributions from members of the Townsend-Goddard Guild will help us care for the furniture and the related materials in our collections.

This year we initiated many other programs. We have begun a series of monthly programs throughout the year ranging from the informal and fun, like the presentation by Mary Staley, to the more scholarly, like the lecture by Myra Beth Young Armstead, which was part of the educational programs conducted in association with the African-American history exhibit. Our Artisans of Newport program in October in the small park next to the Brick Market attracted thousands of passers-by and helped increase attendance at the Museum considerably.

There was much more going on behind the scenes at the Society this year as well. We converted the Newport Room into a Manuscript Reading Room, which patrons will use to view many of our special collections. We had to make a hard decision to take down the Newport Room. The Board and its Committees all felt, however, that the exhibit at the Museum of Newport History did a much better job of interpreting a colonial parlor than the Newport Room. We also desperately needed the space for our researchers. In addition, we had a large class of interns from many colleges and Universities, including Salve Regina University, the University of Rhode Island, Appalachian State University, Providence College, and others.

This was, of course, the year we moved the Loftus House. Who can forget the amazing sight of that house that had been sitting vacant so long riding up Broadway on the bed of a truck this fall? We purchased the house several years ago to obtain the land on which it sits to give us as much flexibility as possible in designing our new building. We tried for some time to sell it for removal from the site, and we even went as far as to investigate demolishing it. Fortunately, Steve Ostiguy, from the Church Community Corporation stepped forward and offered us the perfect solution. In the end, we donated the building to them and they found a suitable lot where it could be relocated. Church Community Corporation raised the money to rehabilitate it for affordable housing and organized the entire move, and it proved an ideal solution. I still cannot drive down Admiral Kalbfus Road and not marvel at the sight of the Loftus House sitting there restored and now the snug home of some lucky family.

We have also made enormous strides in our collection management and care thanks to the work of Joan Youngken, our Curator of the Museum and Collection Manager. Joan wrote a successful Conservation Survey grant to the Institute for Museum Services, a Federal agency that supplies support for conservation and operating support to museums. This grant enabled us to purchase computerized temperature and humidity monitors and hire a museum and architectural conservator to survey our collections and our buildings. These surveys have become a driving engine of our long-range planning and for the short term steps we need to take to make the best
out of our current facilities.

Besides all this work on the collections, Joan has researched, designed and installed two very important and entertaining exhibits. They were “Cool and Articulate: Fans from the Society’s Collections,” and “African Americans in Newport: 1850 to 1950.” We had a third exhibit planned, but because of popular demand we had to keep extending the closing of the exhibit on African American history until after the close of our fiscal year.

In the midst of all this activity, while pushing our small budget to the limit (and sometimes beyond) came a completely unexpected act of extraordinary generosity. Patrick O’Neill Hayes, Sr., notified us that one of his clients, Claire Tracy Wells, who had recently passed away, had left the Society a substantial bequest that has come to more than $350,000. Claire T. Wells’s mother was a member of the Maher family, a prominent and well-known Newport family. She married a Navy officer named George Wells, who passed away several years before her death. In the 1970s, Mrs. Wells returned to the Newport area with her husband and lived quietly in Portsmouth and Middletown until her death.

Before her death, she made no indication of her intention to make this bequest, so we can only surmise what her intentions were. A bequest of this magnitude means so much on several levels. First it helped us clean up some overdue accounts. Second, it enabled us to make a major contribution to the endowment. Finally, it is an indication of the esteem in which she held the Newport Historical Society. She must have believed that the Society warranted and was worthy of a gift of this size. She must have had confidence in the Board of Directors and the staff to make good use of her bequest. She must have been aware of the society’s activities and wanted to support them. It is an example of philanthropy at the highest level. My only regret was not being able to thank her personally for a gift that will help the Society for generations to come.

These activities in one way or another are all drawing toward what we are calling Project 2004. This ambitious ten-year plan will provide the Society with the high quality facilities it desperately needs to accomplish the mission it has been pursuing since 1854. The ultimate goal of this ambitious project is the construction of a new headquarters building for the Society on the grounds of the Friends Meeting House. The Building Planning Committee is leading the way in planning for that new building. It has been working diligently on its three-part mission: to develop the aesthetic criteria for the new building; to prepare a preliminary program for the building working in conjunction with the Library, Museum, and Development Committees; and, finally, to select an architect and for the design of the new building.

The committee will also be presenting a long series of “Focus Groups” to involve the community in our planning process. These presentations make information about the Society and its plans available and solicit opinions on our ideas. In organizing these presentations, we developed a simple list of our collections, a copy of which is appended to this report. They would be astounding for a museum twice our size. Our collections are truly national treasures and they are at the heart of all we do at the
Society. The building will provide for the storage, use, and display of the collections. It will protect the collections, maximize patron access to them, and facilitate the work of the staff in achieving both these goals. It will also provide well-designed, handsome public spaces for our membership and the public to enjoy exhibits, programs, and other events.

In all that the Society does, it is guided by the Board of Directors and supported by the membership and the community. Ultimately, it is the staff that is at the heart of it all. They are hard at work both helping to shape and implement the long-range plans of the Society. They bring professional standards to the work and are dedicated and committed to the community they serve. They are as follows in order of their length of service:

- Cynthia Kenney, Administrative Assistant
- Bertram Lippincott, Librarian
- Joan Youngken, Curator and Collections Manager
- Ron Potvin, Library Special Collections Manager, Editor of Newport History
- Pieter Roos, Director of Education
- Kate Sexton, Executive Assistant and Membership Secretary
- Ralph Bowers, Maintenance Supervisor

Our wonderful cadre of volunteers work with the staff and deserve much of the credit for all that we have accomplished this year. They show an incredible level of commitment. They are willing to donate countless numbers of hours to caring for the collections or sharing the richness of Newport’s history with our visitors. We depend on and are extremely grateful to them all. They are listed separately below.

In conclusion, with our collections, programs, professional staff, supportive membership, distinguished Board of Directors, and dedicated volunteers, the Society truly serves the community as the Center for Newport History. The Society’s Museum of Newport History at the Brick Market, its collections, educational programs, and knowledgeable and responsive staff help residents and visitors understand and appreciate all aspects of Newport County’s rich, diverse history.
Volunteers at the Newport Historical Society June 1994-1995

Sam Barker
Denise Bastien
Pamela Bradford
Dr. Howard S. Brown
Mary Buell
Jane Bunn
Helen Burke
Karen Capraro
Jane Carey
Margaret Causey
Virginia Clark
Sue Coen
Elizabeth B. Connelly
Robert Connelly
Robert Crump
Constance F. Dealy
Valerie Debrule
Joann Dolan
Michael Dwyer
Beth Everett
Peter Fagan
Charles Picke
Kathy Foulke
Sylvia Ganem
Joanne Garroway
Theodore L. Gatchel
Vance Gatchel
Steve Gilman
Lorretta Goldrick
Richard Grosvenor
Nancy Hay
John B. Hattendorf
Nancy Heer
Esther Heffernan
Elisa Horseman
John Horseman
Elizabeth Huggins
Betsy Jauss
William Jordy
Bernie Kusinitz
Curtis LaFrance
Elizabeth Long

Jackie Lydon
Jennifer Lutke
Curtis Magee
Thomas Michie
Mary Miner
Audrey Moncrieff
Joyce Morgenthaler
Geraldine Nagle
Joe Neil
Charlie Neimeyer
Maureen O’Neil
Ronald J. Onorato
Dorothy Palmer
Richard Palmer
Leonard Panaggio
Sylvia Peabody
Winnie Peabody
Brian Pelletier
Nancy Pendleton
Brent Powell
Catherine Radcliffe
Betsy Ray
John Richmond
Brooke Roberts
Dorothy Sacrey
Toni Schuller
Emily Sherman
Virginia D. Skinger
Mary Beth Smith
William Smith
Sarah Snydacker
Frank Snyder
Virginia Tate
Ruth Taylor
Madeleine Telfeyan
Lisa Themistos
Anne Toll
Stephanie Tournier
Carolyn Wheat
Brooke Williams
Mark Young
The Collections of the Newport Historical Society

Museum

- 5000 total objects
- 500 Portraits, landscapes, and other graphics
- 106 in National Gallery's Catalog of American Portraits
- Works by W.T. Richards, Robert Feke, and others
- 29 pieces of Townsend-Goddard furniture
- 200 pieces of silver and pewter
- 12 tall clocks
- 500 historic costumes, clothing, and other textiles
- 17th century to the present
- 100,000 historic photographs
- Prints, architectural drawings, ship models

Library and Special Collections

- 9000 volumes of secondary publications
- The second largest genealogical collection in Rhode Island
- 1500 volumes of rare and historical imprints
- Newport Newspapers, 1758 to the present
- 1000 shelf feet of manuscripts and archives
  - Correspondence, account books, bible records, deeds and wills
  - Robinson Papers, Williams Collection
  - Records of 18 congregations and religious organizations
- Broadsides, institutional archives, maps, atlases, city records

Historic Properties

- The Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House (ca. 1670)
- The Great Friends Meeting House (1699)
- The Seventh Day Baptist Meeting House (1730)

Other Collections

- Archival films from private donors
Report of the Director of Education
Pieter N. Roos

1994 was a year of rapid expansion for the education department. New programs were launched for schools, adults, and families. October saw the beginning of our Artisan series with demonstrations of woodworking and stonecutting, as well as demonstrations at the Norman Bird Sanctuary’s fair.

*Masterpieces of Simplicity: the Art and Industry of Newport Furniture Makers,* this year’s winter Lecture Series, was highly successful in bringing together local and distant scholars from around the country. Our lectures were filled to capacity almost every night and the audience and staff of the Historical Society gained valuable new insights on one of the nation’s finest decorative arts traditions. Research by Ron Potvin into the Point Section yielded a fine new walking tour of that section of the city and the diverse cabinetmakers and craftsmen who resided there. That first walking tour of the point was the inauguration of regular walking tours through the neighborhood that have continued on a bi-weekly basis ever since.

Walking tours have expanded to include Friday afternoons and the end of the walking tour season has also been extended to the middle of October to take advantage of the trend towards fall tourist visitation in the city. There are plans in the works to offer walking tours on more days of the week and other parts of the city for the 1996 season.

In its second season attendance at the Museum of Newport History grew to new heights, especially during the fruitful summer tourist season. Explorations into group tour business have proved successful and this will be a growing part of the museum’s visitation. We are also trying to avail ourselves of a number of interesting marketing and publicity opportunities that should further increase visitation. School group visitation hit record highs as over 1100 public school students from around the state toured various Historical Society facilities and learned about topics of local history that ranged from timekeeping to African American history. The busy spring season alone saw over 750 student visitors who ranged in age from first graders right up through college. Finally, the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House had a good season with visitors from all over the United States touring Newport’s oldest house.

As always, innumerable thanks are owed to the department’s most valuable resource—its volunteers. The people who staff the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House through thick and thin, take walking tours out on the hottest summer days, and serve the museum’s varied audiences perform a labor of love and offer a service to the Historical Society which makes possible in every sense the wide range of programs that we offer. Either directly or indirectly, new programs are only possible with their help and we are indebted to their dedication and time.
### Partial List of Groups Participating in Newport Historical Society Programs, June 1994-1995

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<tr>
<th>Group Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gaudet Middle School</td>
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<td>Cranston Calvert School</td>
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<td>St. Philomena’s School</td>
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<td>St. Michael’s School</td>
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<td>Roger’s High School</td>
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<td>Thompson Jr. High School</td>
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<td>R.I. College Summer Program Students</td>
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<td>Carey School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wickford Middle School</td>
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<td>Aquidneck School</td>
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<td>Pennfield School</td>
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<td>Kennedy School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elderhostel Programs</td>
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<td>284th Combat Engineers Reunion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nantucket Preservation Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rectory School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newport Art Museum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duxbury Historical Society Museum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Every Tuesday Club</td>
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<td>Western Historical Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biltmore Estate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appalachian State University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Hills Garden Club</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heatherwood Nursing Home</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rhode Island Urological Society</td>
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### Report of the Librarian

**Bertram Lippincott III, C.G.**

The publication of important works by members of the Newport Historical Society heads the list of Library accomplishments during the last fiscal year. Of the 1043 registered researchers who used the collections, a small number published their findings and a few of those published works have reached our attention. This year, familiar library patrons published unique books and articles on local history, art, and genealogy. Among them were *African Americans in Newport* by Richard Youngken; *Nature Vivante: The Still Lifes of John LaFarge* and *John LaFarge in Paradise: The Painter and His Muse*, both by James Yarnall; and groundbreaking studies of the James families of Newport by Marya Myers and Don James, published in the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*.

The variety of projects by casual and professional researchers has been very impressive during the last year. It demonstrates the vast scope of the library collection and its influence locally and worldwide. We receive many draft and finished works on local history, genealogy, architecture, and decorative arts by students from all over the country. We also receive the finished products of professional researchers who travel great distances to access our collections. For example, the Arts and Entertainment Network and the British Broadcasting Company used our collections to research broadcast films on the Vanderbilts and Edith Wharton, respectively. Also, the crew and research staff of the film *The Buccaneers* used our collections.
It is the generosity of members, authors, and publishers that makes the collections so rich and varied. A vast majority of library accessions during the last year were donated. Without such dedication it would be impossible to purchase these often expensive works at market value. A junior high schooler's report on a neighborhood carriage house is possibly the only study of such a structure ever to be undertaken and the information is rare and valuable. The Society welcomes all gifts of books, periodicals, articles, and reports and no gift is too small.

**Library Accessions, June 1994-1995**

*Denotes use of NHS collections or staff research*


“Trinity Church, Newport” [Visitor’s brochure].


U.S. Department of Transportation, Documents relating to the repairs to the Cliff Walk (1994). Gift of RI Dept. of Transportation.

Bernard Kusinitz, “Newport Jewish Cemetery Commission Documents and Reports.”


Peabody & Stearns, “House For Miss Foster” [Architectural Drawings of Ridgemere ca. 1898]. 1995 blueprint copies gift of Mr. and Mrs. Jay Schochet.

*The General Alphabetical Index to the Townlands and Towns, Parishes and Baronies of Ireland. Based on the Census of Ireland, 1851. (1861 [Reprint 1995]).


The year 1994-1995 in the Library Special Collections department has been one of getting back to basics. While much of last year for me was spent learning the richness of the collection under my care, the majority of this year has been spent in efforts to ensure that the collection would be just as vital and useful to generations that will follow.

This year alone, based on updated figures, approximately 4000 manuscripts were re-housed in fresh folders and boxes appropriate for the storage of historical documents. As items were rehoused they were carefully accessioned and recorded on computer. This computerized information is the beginning of a project that probably will take several years to complete: the complete computerization of all manuscript and archive collections. In the meantime, all current finding aids have been updated and simplified for easier use by patrons.

The rehousing of these library special collections is a vital function that is done on a regular basis. However, this time it allows us to prepare for a long-anticipated grant that will provide us with funds to install compact storage shelving units, which would nearly double library special collections storage capacity. Upon notification that we have been awarded the grant, I will be putting out a call for a squad of willing volunteers to assist in the process of transferring the manuscript collection to these new storage units.

Of course, all of this year’s accomplishments in library special collections would not have been possible without the capable and willing volunteers that have worked in the collection. Brent Powell, who taught a class at St. George’s this summer, came for a brief but productive stint of volunteering in which he rehoused and cataloged hundreds of documents. Nancy Heer has been a dependable weekly volunteer who greatly enjoys perusing documents as she sorts and rehouses them. Robert Connelly
offered his services this year with the Trinity Church collection, placed on deposit here last year. He was followed by Catherine Radcliffe, who often comes in several times a week. Their combined efforts have led to a very detailed cataloging of these documents as the process of rehousing moves slowly but surely forward. Peter Ramee, an intern from Salve Regina University, worked extensively with the manuscript collection, doing curatorial work and research. Finally, Mary Miner has come in several times to work on the papers of the Greene family of Jamestown. She recently gave me a detailed inventory of this collection. All of these people have found their efforts rewarding and productive.

This year also saw the conversion of the “Newport Room” to a library special collections reading room. The congenial atmosphere of this resource room has attracted manuscript researchers in far greater numbers this year than last. Researchers have included interpreters from Historic Charleston exploring the eighteenth century connections between their city and ours. The Winter Series on Newport furniture brought several nationally known scholars who, due to our efforts to rehouse and catalog, were able to examine previously overlooked documents. This year there has been an unusual amount of interest in meteorological diaries, of which we have many. Library special collections have been a help to the guides at the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House, who are revitalizing the garden, and to the Conservation Technology Group, which is preparing a report that will aid the Society in the maintenance of the house. The Society of Colonial Wars has located a document in our collection that they will reproduce next year, and there has been renewed interest in our materials on Fort Adams, spurred by the re-opening of the Fort to the public. In addition, there have been dozens of researchers of genealogy and local history.

Library Special Collections Accessions, June 1994-1995

Leases and mortgages for the United States Hotel, 1846, 1856, 1857, 1858, 1863; dissolution of partnership between George S. Lewis & George W. Tilley, 7 & 9 May 1889; United States and Canada patents for finger bar for mowing machines to George A. Weaver, 1886. Gift of Clement W. Brown.

Scrapbook, containing articles and papers of Elizabeth DuFais, author (d. 1954). Gift of the Newport School Department, via Mary Ellen Burns of Rogers High School, Newport.

Genealogical notes and copy letters from the Hunter, Malbone, and Birckhead families. Gift of the Redwood Library and Athenaeum.

Agreement between Obadiah Williams and shipwrights Bela Jacobs and Constant Bowen for the construction of a ship, 1792. Gift of Marion Hoffmire added to the Williams Collection.

Pew deed for Trinity Church from the estate of Alfred Hazard to Nancy Hazard, 1882. Added to the collection on long-term loan from Trinity Church. Donated to Trinity Church by Michael Dupré.


Documents related to the restoration of Bellevue Avenue, 1985-1989, including newspaper clippings; plans and drawings; Bellevue Avenue Advisory Committee notes, minutes, and correspondence; technical leaflets; information on trees; work plans and specifications; correspondence from City Hall; and miscellaneous correspondence. Gift of Alexander G. Walsh, Law Offices of Alexander G. Walsh.

Rhode Island Gazette, January 11, 1733; February 22, 1733; January 25, 1733; March 1, 1733. Gift of Albert Sherman and Edward Sherman.

Newport Restoration Foundation Records originated by Francis A. Comstock, including progress reports and descriptions of houses being restored; miscellaneous notes, diaries, and correspondence; drafts of memoranda from Comstock to Doris Duke. Gift of Adelaide C. Roberts and Alexandra C. Dane.


Collection of papers from the estate of Henry A. Curtis, including mortgage papers, insurance documents and estate papers of Ann Anthony; an invitation to a Thanksgiving ball in Scituate in 1853; and the calling card of Henry A. Curtis. Gift of Marilyn Curtis.

Report of the Curator

M. Joan Youngken

Of all the projects the Museum has undertaken this year, two are of special significance. First, the in-depth survey of our J. D. Johnston architectural plans and drawings has been completed. Volunteers Karen Capraro, Elizabeth Huggins, Mary Miner, and Mary Beth Smith, working under the supervision of architectural historian Ronald Onorato, have cataloged over one thousand items and stored them according to archival standards. Support from the Champlin Foundations provided cabinets and other storage materials. Items that require conservation treatment have been identified, and we now have the information needed to seek funding for their stabilization. Ron will present his findings from this project to the Society in a public program to be held this fall.

The Society is especially pleased to have played a role in the research and production of the book African Americans in Newport by Richard Youngken of the Newport Collaborative. Our photograph library contributed most of the images that made the book so visually engaging and benefited after the publication by the donation of many photographs of Newport’s African American families and businesses. The Society celebrated the publication of the book in April with the opening of an exhibit exclusively from our own collections, including many images that had not been used in the book. Planned as a six-week exhibition, it was held over for an additional eight
weeks in response to public interest and so that a maximum number of school children could take part in educational programs developed by Pieter Roos.

Much of the Museum's most important work goes on behind the scenes. For example, in addition to the fascinating public presentations offered by this year's Winter Series, Masterpieces of Simplicity: The Art and Industry of Newport Furniture Makers, we added considerably to our knowledge of our own collections. Without exception, our visiting scholars generously took the time to examine both our well-known pieces and those less studied and shared their observations with the staff. As we focus more intensely on our fine furniture collection, with the generous support of the Townsend-Goddard Guild, we know we can depend on many interested scholars and collectors to continue to add to our knowledge of these remarkable pieces.

The photograph collection, always in demand by researchers and publishers, was used heavily this year and substantial additions have been made by means of gifts both large and small. Users in this fiscal year included Albert Whitman and Company, Publishers; Arnold Art; The British Broadcasting Corporation Television (Edith Wharton); The Clambake Club of Newport; The Conservation Technology Group; D. C. Heath and Company, Publishers; Eerdman Publishing Company; The Fort Adams Foundation; HarperCollins Publishers; Morven Estate; The National Endowment for the Humanities; The Newport Yacht Club; The Preservation Society of Newport County; Spur Magazine; Third Wave Films; William Vareika Fine Arts; The Viking Hotel; WGBH Television; WJAR Television; James. L. Yarnall, John LaFarge in Paradise: The Painter and His Muse.

Work in other parts of the collection continues, largely due to the commitment of dedicated volunteers and interns. The records-keeping, research, cataloging, photography, safe storage, and documentation of our holdings are endless tasks that require the variety of skills and special interests that our volunteers bring to the work. I would like to extend my personal thanks to each of them for devoting countless hours to collections work in photographs, drawings and plans, and museum objects. Without their continued interest, this department would have considerably less progress to report. Thank you to Jane Bunn, Jane Carey, Richard Grosvenor, Tara Luisi, Jennifer Lutke, Mary Miner, Lisa Themistos, and Stephanie Tournier.

**Museum Accessions, June 1994-1995**

Collection of seven fans. Gift of Miss Nancy Hay.

Souvenir Coke bottle, fans, postcards. Gift of Samuel M. C. Barker and Virginia Tate.


Photograph. Gift of Mary Ciavarini.

Photographs. Gift of Mrs. H. W. Harding, Jr.
Photographs and cut paper silhouettes. Gift of Marilyn and Henry Curtis.

Assorted business memorabilia from Newport businesses. Gift of Patrick Kirby.

Two dolls, costumes, and accessories. Gift of Lilias G. Johnson.

Souvenir plate and two vases. Gift of anonymous donor.

Photograph of Masons at Newport Beach. Gift of Helen Hazard Harpin.

Post cards. Gift of Mrs. Fairy Huffine.

Photographs. Gift of Bernice Cross Ramseur.


Prints of Newport sites and activities. Museum Purchase.

Souvenir scarf, silver spoons, paintings, slides, photographs. Gift of Mary Stuley.

Paperweight: The Old Stone Mill. Museum Purchase.

Engraving by John Howard Benson. Gift of Virginia Tate.

Circus posters. Gift of Collette Bernard.