



Wyoming, Rhode Island 02898

## RHS Newsletter

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 Patricia A. Millar, President  
 Hillsdale Road, West Kingston  
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### NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, February 16, 1988

7:30 P. M.

Richmond Town Hall  
Second Floor Conference Room

In celebration of Presidents' Day, we are honored to have our own member, Frank J. Williams, Esq., present "Abraham Lincoln on the Occasion of the Bicentennial of the Constitution."

Frank will have just returned from attending the annual meeting of the Abraham Lincoln Association in Springfield, Illinois. Being president of that organization, Frank will no doubt have additional exciting bits of historical information to share with us.

Those of you who have had an opportunity to hear Frank make Lincoln presentations in the past know that this will be an excellent program. Guests and those of you who have not had such an opportunity certainly have a treat in store.

### Guests

This is a public meeting and guests are urged to attend.

We are taking this opportunity to host the newly formed - and very active - Southern League of Historical Societies. Representatives from member societies, Pettaquamscutt, Narragansett, Charlestown, Westerly, Pawcatuck, North Stonington, and Hopkinton have been invited to attend. Let us make a substantial effort to show them a warm welcome.

GUEST SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY-IN-BRIEF

Frank J. Williams is President of the Abraham Lincoln Association. For years he has served also as President of the Lincoln Group of Boston. In addition, Mr. Williams writes the annual review of Lincolniana for the Papers of the Abraham Lincoln Association, and lectures widely, most recently at the "Lincoln Family" symposium at Hildene in Manchester, Vermont. He serves on numerous Lincoln-related advisory committees and boards and was principal organizer of several recent symposiums, most notably "Lincoln and the American Political Tradition" at Brown University (June 7-9, 1984), for which Mr. Williams won a special Barondess-Lincoln Award from the Civil War Round Table of New York, and the Fourteenth Annual Symposium of the Abraham Lincoln Association and Illinois State Historical Library entitled "Lincoln, the Law and the Constitution," at Springfield, Illinois (February 12-13, 1987). Mr. Williams is also an avid and important collector, with one of the largest privately-held Lincoln libraries in the country.

At attorney by profession, Mr. Williams is listed in "Who's Who in American Law," as well as "Community Leaders of the World" and "The directory of Distinguished Americans." He has served as Judge of Probate and Solicitor for the Rhode Island towns of Hopkinton and West Greenwich, among other public posts, and was recently elected a delegate to the 1986 Rhode Island Constitutional Convention. Mr. Williams has lectured on business and legal practices at the Rhode Island School of Design. He is a member of the Panel of Arbitrators of the American Arbitration Association, and the state attorney general's Consumer Arbitration Board.

Mr. Williams was born in Providence in 1940, and attended Boston University, where he earned his A.B. in government and history in 1962. He then served for five years in the United States Army, including active duty in Vietnam, and rose to the rank of captain, earning such decorations as the Bronze Star and three air medals, as well as the Silver Star of Valor from the Republic of Vietnam. After completing his military service, Mr. Williams studied law (J.D., Boston University Law School, 1970; M.A. in Taxation, Bryant College, 1986) and began his practice in Providence.

For his work, Lincoln College honored Mr. Williams by presenting him the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters at its May 9, 1987 commencement.

Mr. Williams is married to Virginia Elizabeth Williams. The couple resides in Hope Valley, Rhode Island.

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IN MEMORIAM

During 1987 the Town of Richmond lost two people who were quietly significant contributors to town welfare. They were also contributors to the Richmond Historical Society.

It is fitting that we offer recognition to them here in this Newsletter.

## Lawrence Hoxsie Edwards

Lawrence H. Edwards, son of Hilda Hoxsie Edwards and Leonard E. Edwards, was born December 8, 1926, in Wakefield, Rhode Island, at South County Cottage Hospital. This was the home of Dr. and Mrs. John Paul Jones in a large house on Kenyon Avenue, a short distance up the hill from the Church of the Ascension. The Cottage Hospital was the nucleus of South County Hospital to follow.

Within a few years, construction began on the new hospital. Theakston deCoppet, a patron of the new facility, became intrigued by a little boy who travelled 'round and 'round the site on his tricycle. The little boy was Lawrence Edwards who soon affectionately named Mr. deCoppet "Uncle Teddy."

Mr. deCoppet was an enthusiastic nature conservationist and owned a large home and acreage in Richmond, Rhode Island, where Larry was privileged to spend much time in his growing years, learning a deep appreciation for the good earth and all living things in, on, around, and above it.

The boy's formal education began in the Richmond school system which included attendance at Bell School. Later, he transferred to Narragansett Elementary School. He went on to Choate's Preparatory School where his education was interrupted in 1945 by his enlistment in the United States Navy. He was trained as a tail-gunner and saw action on Guam. At war's end, he worked at Quonset Naval Air Base, then left for Westerly Airport where he worked for the next thirty years.

Larry married Hope Merla Monteith in 1954. Three children issued from this marriage: Laurene, Judith, and Brian. They lived in Westerly, but for several years, spent summers at the deCoppet Estate in Hillsdale, Richmond. In 1970, the family moved here permanently and established a tree farm under the Estate name.

This entailed cutting and removal of damaged trees to be replaced with young seedlings; preservation of healthy trees; clearing of forest debris and construction of fire lanes to accessible water sources in case of the awful possibility of forest fire. The hundreds of acres of forest required a master plan for forest management to take place over a number of years. The Division of Forestry under the state Department of Environmental Management cooperated with advice and personnel. Several Boy Scout Troops learned camping and forestry skills here.

A corps of Larry's friends, devoted to labor in the woods, worked with him continually throughout the years. The work done here will produce a healthy forest which, in turn, benefits the surrounding forests. The vital fire lanes are of potential aide to adjoining lands and homes. Larry was to see the master plan essentially completed: a dream come true.

This forest treasure is to be maintained and preserved forever for conservation purposes.

Larry loved children. To the boys who always hung around the Airport, he transmitted his love for flying and taught them everyday uses of flying. As a member of Civil Air Patrol, he took them up and showed them the search and rescue missions, the fire and trouble-spotting carried on by CAP. Many of these boys became private pilots or entered Air Force branches of the United States Services or became commercial pilots, some of whom work at Westerly Airport.

Richmond Historical Society was the grateful recipient of Larry's thoughtfulness and generosity when he donated ice-cutting equipment which had been used on the pond at the Hillsdale Estate. After the death of his grandmother, Florence Goodhue Hoxsie, Larry and Hope presented to the Society a large box of photographs from Florence's personal collection, along with as much information as could be recalled.

Lawrence Hoxsie Edward died on April 22, 1987, and rests in peace on the land he loved. (c) EHS

Sarah Elizabeth Barber Smith

Sarah Elizabeth Barber was born October 20, 1902, to Ray L. and Christie (Robertson) Barber. Her birthplace still stands on a farm in Richmond off the Old Switch Road, Hope Valley, known at that time as the Rocky Hill Farm

The elementary school she attended was in Hope Valley, 2 1/2 miles from her home. She was transported by horse and wagon until she was old enough to walk the distance.

In March, 1919, Srah Elizabeth Barber married Fred W. Smith of Richmond. They came to live in the Cape Cod style house on the "Tefft Farm" in the center of Richmond, diagonally opposite Richmond Town Hall. This farm consisted of about 100 acres and stretched clear to Wilbur Hill Road. The house was later renovated, painted white and still sits gracefully on broad green lawns.

Fred brought to the marriage a young son by a first marriage: Fred Whipple Smith, Jr. Children born to Elizabeth and Fred were: Arthur Ray, Robert Oliver, Hope Elizabeth, and Carol Ann.

Elizabeth became well-known for her ministrations and social activities with children and adults. A cousin relates, "Elizabeth was a devoted wife and mother. She always had a young character and she was a good mixer. We had lots of fun! One time I especially remember is the trip over Mohawk Trail. She took three of us friends; she did the driving. We had a wonderful time! Going over the Mohawk Trail was a BIG event in those days."

Elizabeth was a lifelong member of Wood River Six Principle Baptist Church where she served as Treasurer for more than thirty years. She was deeply involved in activities of the Church's Ladies Aid Society.

Socials, suppers, lawn parties, entertaining programs planned by the Society and open to the public were held at the Mission Rooms, a small building on Main Street, Wyoming. Within recent years the building was reconstructed to house the Chariho Credit Union.

As a member of Hope Chapter, Order of Eastern Star, for well over fifty years, Elizabeth was remembered as "a very nice lady."

The long marriage of Elizabeth and Fred came to an end with his death in 1970.

Elizabeth passed away on April 22, 1987. She was predeceased by their daughter Hope, Mrs. George F. Morin, in 1978, and her stepson Fred Whipple, Jr., in 1971.

Surviving her are sons Arthur R., of Fort Meyers Beach, Florida; Robert O., of Wakefield, Rhode Island, and daughter Carol, Mrs. Richard A. Greene, of Wyoming, Rhode Island. She also leaves thirteen grandchildren and twelve great-grandchildren.

After a long life of caring and sharing with family and friends, Elizabeth rests in peace in the family plot at Wood River Cemetery. (c) EHS

-These articles were researched and written by Eleanor H. Smith, Archivist for the Richmond Historical Society.

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#### NEWS FROM ELSEWHERE

##### Narragansett-

The South County Museum is gearing up to help Narragansett celebrate its 100th birthday in 1988. Ms. Janet Brown, a new volunteer at the Museum, is serving as Exhibit Co-ordinator for the Centennial Celebration. She is interested in locating and displaying "pieces of Narragansett history" for the Memorabilia Exhibit. If you have any items (glassware, paper, china, etc.) that you would like to share with the community for the 1988 season (complete security provided, of course), please contact Ms. Brown at the Museum. (783-5400).

##### Westerly-

The Southern League of Historical Societies will welcome a new member in February. The Narragansett Historical Society will be included in our poster and, hopefully, we will include information on a Speaker's Forum and saleable publications by different Historical Societies. The Publications Committee has been in recess for the past month but will be going full steam ahead in anticipation of reporting our progress in the next month.

#### SCHOLARSHIP

As many of you know, we have had a very small scholarship fund on our books for many years, but have not made an effort to make it grow, or to use it.

Last year it was voted that we take into consideration the interest that has accrued on that particular sum and decide on a scholarship offering to students from Richmond. Virginia Williams was named chair of the Scholarship Committee. Virginia's proposal was that an appropriate gift be given to a student in Richmond School who had shown outstanding achievement in the area of local history; the gift to be awarded at commencement. Implementation of this proposal was voted in the affirmative. The first awarding of this scholarship will be in June of this year.

#### WORK PARTY

Picnic anyone? Building Maintenance Chairman, Ray Bader, says that this year the protective screens must come down from the windows for scraping and painting and that the windows need new putty.

The Executive Board agreed that this was not a one-man job, particularly since we would like to have the work done in one day in order to get the screens back up on the windows as quickly as possible. Vandalism is always a threat as are stray missiles from the golf course!

It was decided to plan a day, complete with picnic, and hold a good old-fashioned work party. Since weather is a factor, the date hasn't been set yet, but be prepared!

#### COOKBOOK

You have been hearing about this for years. We are actually working on the project, thanks to the help of now available computers, and are weaving history and recipes into a fabrication worthy of sale (and we hope a story page in Yankee Magazine).

If you would like to be a part of this activity. Please bring, send, call in your favorite recipes and the family or town history that makes them special to you. We are being selective, but will use as many of your contributions as possible.

The Cookbook Committee

#### DUES

Did you remember to send in your dues for 1988? They are still \$3.00 per family. That's a great bargain considering the wealth of Richmond Town and genealogical history that is available to you in our archives.



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### NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, April 19, 1988

7:00 P. M.

Richmond Town Hall

Guest speaker: Mr. Lawrence Webster

Remember the days of sand buckets in the basement in case of incendiary bombs and blackouts which had nothing to do with an overdraw on available electric power? Remember when the skies were falling over South County--young pilots in training who for reasons unknown could not make it to their planned destination or back to base?

Larry Webster of Charlestown has made a scientific research project of locating sites of downed planes in the South County area. His documentation, an excellent example of research methods, is proving a history of this era which is not only of local interest, but of considerable value to the US Military as well.

You may have read Scott Cramer's article about "The Crash Hunter" in the March, 1988 issue of Yankee magazine. In the article, Larry describes his hobby as "aviation archaeology."

Son of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Webster, Larry will speak to us about his hobby, share some of his research techniques, and perhaps show us a relic or two from his collection.

Anyone who has their own collection of fragments from any of these downed planes is invited to bring them to share on the Show and Tell table. Photographs will also be welcome. Identified items will add to Larry's historical notebook as well as add nostalgic input to the program.

You know of someone else who would be interested? Bring them along. Everyone is welcome to this public meeting.



## THOMAS ALEXANDER TEFFT

Two independent but related exhibits were recently featured at Providence museums. These exhibits featured the works of Richmond born architect Thomas Tefft, and items made or owned in Rhode Island that might have been found in a mid-19th century home that Tefft designed.

An early edition of this Newsletter featured a brief history of Thomas Tefft. In the wake of these current exhibits, several articles have appeared relative to his background and history.

Following are some excerpts from the Westerly Sun, the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, and The Reporter - newsletter of the Pettaquamscutt Historical Society. In the latter, among other credits, Jean Bradley and Marjorie W. Schunke (a long standing member of the Richmond Historical Society) were recognized as contributors.

"Architect Thomas Alexander Tefft was born in Richmond on the old Tefft farm east of the Carolina-Townhouse Road south of Quarrelsome Corners near the Washington County Fairgrounds in 1826. He attended the district school at Quarrelsome Corners and at the age of 17 moved into the teacher's chair. It was there that Henry Barnard, Rhode Island's first Superintendent of Schools discovered Tefft and his talents and urged Tefft to go to Providence to study architecture at the architectural firm of Tallman and Bucklin. He enrolled in Brown University, and while still an undergraduate there in 1847 was hired by the Providence and Worcester Railroad to design its depot planned for the city of Providence. He graduated from Brown in 1851 with a degree in philosophy.

Tefft's philosophical ideas were incorporated into his structural designs. He was famous for rounded arch windows and running arcades, but believed that architectural decoration should be integral to construction, making superficially attached ornaments an undesirable option. He believed that flexible interiors were very important in a design.

The Providence railroad station, Union Depot, included the freight station and other buildings and was the largest railroad station in the United States at that time. Built in an elaborate Romanesque style, it was considered to be one of the nation's twenty best designed buildings. It burned in 1896.

The public meeting kick-off for the Richmond Historical Society Heritage Month exhibit in May is to be a surprise recognition for all the work that Ray and Ida Bader have done on preservation and maintenance of the Bell School, and their work on behalf of the Society's purposes.

We ask that anyone with pictures showing Ray and Ida and their family at work and play share them with us for the occasion, that cards and letters of appreciation be sent in care of the president or secretary (addresses on head of Newsletter), and that all who can come do so. We would like this to be a "this is you life" kind of thing and well as a living genealogical exhibit in honor of these good people.

Anyone who has worked with Ray or Ida is asked to participate and to urge others who have been part of their life story to do so as well. Let's make this a great party!

We will be in touch!

*Thanks for your help!  
Patty*

In 1856 Tefft went to Europe not only to study the architecture, but to revive a universal currency system. He died in Florence, Italy in 1859.

Whether Tefft was a great architect remains moot because his career was so short-lived. However, within those 33 short years he was very productive. For example, St. Thomas Church, on Putnam Pike, Smithfield, recently entered on the National Register of Historic Places, was designed by Tefft. Built in 1851, the church was cited for its architectural distinction as one of the best small-scale Gothic Revival churches in Rhode Island. His other designs include Wakefield Baptist Church, South Ferry Church in Narragansett, Central Congregational Church on Benefit Street, Providence, and various 'conservative' private homes."

Articles in more detail can be found in the Richmond Historical Society Archives.

Needed: more research into Tefft's life and career for our own archives and genealogical research on the Tefft's of Richmond.

#### MAY HERITAGE MONTH

It has been our schedule for many years to hold an open house at the Bell School Museum during the latter part of May, with a public meeting to kick off the exhibit.

This year I am suggesting a genealogical display featuring family histories, recorded genealogies, and best of all, family picture groupings showing a pictorial lineage.

Think about this, and begin gathering those family pictures and documents of descendency and ascendancy! This should be great fun!

Dates will be announced in the next Newsletter.



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## 20TH ANNUAL MEETING

Come celebrate our 20th years of Richmond History research and documentation. A BIRTHDAY PARTY is in order!

Wednesday, June 22, 1988

Dinner will be served at 7:00 P. M. at the Larchwood Inn in Wakefield.

NOTE: This is a change from our usual date so that we could be accommodated at the Inn. We will be ordering from the menu, but the Inn needs to know a count so that the room can be properly set up. So PLEASE CALL either Roberta Whelan at 364-3208 or Eleanor Smith at 539-7683 so that a count can be turned in by June 20th. Thank you.

### PROGRAM

Dr. William Metz, Professor Emeritus of History at The University of Rhode Island and member of the Pettequamscutt Historical Society will welcome us to the Town of South Kingstown and perform a brief installation ceremony for our new officers.

Mr. Paul Drumm from Kenyon Corn Meal of Usquepaugh will give a talk on the history of the mill, its modern growth, and present day activities (including a shortage of grain!). Paul has some fascinating experiences to relate and some nostalgic moments to share. As he himself says, he loves to talk!

Don't miss this important celebration of history in and around Richmond.

*Roberta - would you please check with mother re final count for Larchwood and let Virginia Williams know? I shall be in Baltimore at a conference. Have a good time. Thank you*