

PRIMITIVE PIECES

The Newsletter of The Museum of Primitive Art and Culture

1058 Kingstown Road, Room 5

Peace Dale, R.I. 02879 ♦ (401) 783-5711 ♦ www.primitiveartmuseum.org

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Who built the Newport Tower?

For the past 200 years, the origin of the Newport Tower, the 28-foot-high stone and mortar structure in Touro Park in Newport, has been the subject of controversy.

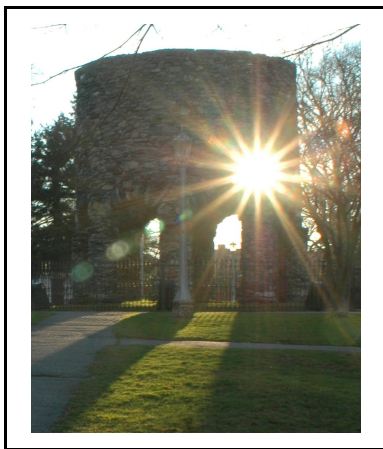
Benedict Arnold, President of Providence Plantations and later Governor of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations under the royal charter of 1663, referred to the tower in his will as "my stone built wind-mill." It was located behind his Newport home.

In 1837, Danish archaeologist Carl Christian Rafn suggested that the tower had been built by Viking explorers before 1000 A.D.

About a hundred years ago, Brown psychology professor Edmund B. Delabarre asserted that the tower was built by lost Portuguese navigators Miguel Corte-Real and his brother Gaspar. His theory later gained support from, among others, Herbert Pell, father of the late Senator Claiborne Pell, who served as U.S. Minister to Portugal

from 1937 to 1941.

British author Rowan Gavin Paton Menzies speculated in a book published in 2002 that the tower was a lighthouse built by a colony of Chinese sailors and concubines from the junks of Admiral Zheng He's voyages between 1421 and 1423.



Prolific British writer Andrew Sinclair has theorized that medieval Scottish Templars, led by the Scottish earl Henry Sinclair, built the tower about 1398 during an alleged voyage to New England.

Jim Egan, a professional photographer and the curator of the Newport Tower Museum, has a new theory. He believes the tower was built in 1583 by explorers taking part in a failed effort to colonize North America. Egan believes the tower was a horologium — a building that keeps track of time, with three internal camera-obscura solar-disc calendar-rooms.

He also believes it was the creation of the one person in Elizabethan England capable of such a design: John Dee, mathematician, astronomer, astrologer, occult philosopher, and adviser to Queen Elizabeth I.

On Thursday, October 29, Jim Egan will tell us how he developed his theory, and he will explain the evidence that supports it. His talk will take place in the Museum Gallery at 7:00 p.m. Refreshments will be served. Admission is free, but a small donation from non-museum members is appreciated.

Our Fall Lecture Series begins on Thursday, October 1st

The Curator's Corner

By Sarah Peabody Turnbaugh

As we weather the dog days of August (and September) and try to ignore the gradually shortening days, my thoughts return to autumn activities. Soon, Beth and Louise will be gearing up the museum's outreach for the 2015-2016 season, and our wonderful museum educator, Mary Brown, will be scheduling programs for youth and school groups. Her subjects, which include Native American cultures and art, and fossils, and dinosaurs, remind me of one of the more humorous events in our educational outreach programming.

When the museum launched our fossils and dinosaurs outreach programs, we had no actual examples for



hands-on and exhibit purposes. Since that time, the museum has acquired a useful set of actual fossils, models, and to-scale casts of specimens. But back then, we were casting around for examples and were

gratified to receive help, in the form of temporary loans, from members of our community.

One morning, we received a phone call in the museum office. To our surprise, the well-known Rhode Island philanthropist Alan Shawn Feinstein was on the other end. Mr. Feinstein had read of our plight in our newsletter and was aware that we were seeking fossils for a temporary museum exhibit. He offered the museum the loan of his very own dinosaur egg. The fossilized egg was many tens of millions of years old, it sounded like a “catchy” draw for generating public interest, and we delightedly said, “Yes, by all means.”

We arranged a pick-up date at his foundation's office in Cranston. One of our most devoted volunteers (now our museum president) Virginia Williams and I drove to Cranston to pick up the egg. We dressed in our work clothes— blue jeans and such— and Virginia drove her new red pickup truck, with the back emptied out.

We drove to Cranston, climbed out of Virginia's truck, rolled up our shirtsleeves and entered Mr. Feinstein's office. After we introduced ourselves, Mr. Feinstein

went to another room to retrieve the egg. We thought he would be returning with a large box and a crew to help him. Mr. Feinstein reappeared holding a modestly-sized oval rock that was perhaps about six inches long. Imagine our surprise. I'm sure Virginia managed to keep a straighter face than I did. We carried it back to the museum on my lap (instead of in Virginia's flatbed). In spite of its size, which surprised many folks, children and adults alike, the fossil dinosaur egg was a great hit.

Today, Mary has some casts to work with as she presents her fossils and dinosaurs outreach programming. And her new generation of programs is more popular than ever. We hope to see you this fall at the exhibit gallery and at some of our programs.

A curious group

As the educator at the museum, I lead the children's programming with the help of many talented volunteers. The people who make their way to the museum are a curious group. Some visitors find us through our recently redesigned website, but others have their own ways of finding us.

We see the locals who haven't visited since their third grade field trip, RISD students researching projects, and tour groups who show up without warning. But I'd like to tell you about some of our more unusual recent visitors:

- The woman who came in and discovered that our primitive mask collection includes masks from her African ancestors' tribe.
- The two graduating Brown students, one from Germany and one from India, who decided to really see Rhode Island before they graduated. They chose one place to visit in each city or town. The place they chose to see in South Kingstown was our museum.
- The little boy who had an appointment with the doctor downstairs and asked his mom to please take him to the museum. Up they came, he loved it ! I was setting up for a school field trip program, so he tried all the hands-on activities and helped me set up for the program, all the while talking a blue streak. Occasionally he stopped to ask a question, and he absorbed the answer at a rapid pace. I hope he comes again.

The museum is full of stories, and our visitors are full of stories, too.

– Mary Brown

The Museum of Primitive Art and Culture

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www.primitiveartmuseum.org

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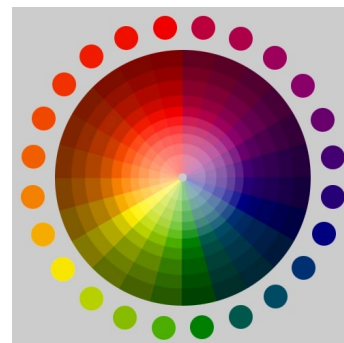
The Museum Gallery is open Wednesdays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and by appointment.

Thursday, October 1

Color Theory in the West: Principles and Psychology

On Thursday, October 1, visual artist Robin Tagliaferri will talk to us about color theory. She'll explain basic color principles and explore the psychology of color.

Robin's presentation will feature hands-on activity that will enable us to experience the science and changeability of color by using Color-aid, a system of silk-screened swatches used by graphic illustrators, fashion designers, interior designers, artists, and art instructors. We'll also study paintings by traditional and contemporary artists who effectively used color to create unforgettable works of art.



Robin Tagliaferri, who lives in Cranston, earned a Bachelor of Fine Art degree and a Master of Arts degree in Museum Studies and Art Education from the Rhode Island School of Design. She has twenty-five years' experience as a non-profit administrator and museum educator.

Thursday, October 15

The Art of Falconry



Falconry, the hunting of wild quarry in its natural habitat using a trained bird of prey, is an ancient sport wrapped in myth and romance. Chinese records from about 680 B.C. describe falconry, which until modern times has been almost exclusively a pastime of nobles.

Vivian Maxson and her red tailed hawk, "Red," will be in the Museum Gallery on Thursday, October 15 to tell us more about the sport of falconry and how American falconers have played a significant role in the conservation of birds of prey.

Each program in our Fall Lecture Series begins at 7:00 p.m. in the Museum Gallery on the second floor of the Peace Dale Office Building, 1058 Kingstown Road, across from the Peace Dale Library. Refreshments will be served.

Admission is free for Museum members. A donation from non-members is appreciated.

Museum of Primitive Art and Culture
1058 Kingstown Road, Room 5
Peace Dale, RI 02879



Return Service Requested

Our Annual
"Trash or Treasure" Event
is on Sunday, October 4th
at The Dunes Club in Narragansett

Your invitation is enclosed.



The Trustees of the Museum of Primitive Art and Culture
proudly invite you to join us for our annual

“Trash or Treasure” Event

Sunday, October 4, 2015

The Dunes Club, Narragansett

Professional appraisals by Stuart Whitehurst!

Cocktails and open forum appraisals at 5:00 p.m., buffet supper at 6:00 p.m.

Cash bar. Business casual attire.

Your ticket entitles you to one appraisal. Additional items are \$10 each.

No coins, musical instruments, stamps, watches, or jewelry please!

PLEASE CUT HERE AND RETURN LOWER PORTION WITH YOUR CHECK

I would love to attend the Museum of Primitive Art and Culture fundraiser on Sunday, October 4.
Please reserve _____ tickets in my name at \$75 each. Enclosed is a check for \$ _____.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

I cannot attend but wish to contribute \$ _____ to the Museum.

Please make your check payable to the Museum of Primitive Art and Culture and mail it with this form to
Museum of Primitive Art and Culture, 1058 Kingstown Rd., Room 5, Peace Dale, RI 02879.