



REHOBOTH ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY SPRING 2024 NEWSLETTER

SPOTLIGHT ON THE RAS BOARD: OTTER BROWN



Rob “Otter” Brown grew up in Ithaca, New York with his father, a professor of architecture at Cornell, his mother, an artist and professional puppeteer, and older brother. While both boys said they would never become teachers, watching their father toil while marking exams, Otter’s brother became a college philosophy professor and Otter, after a college major in geology, taught 5th grade natural sciences while working for the Massachusetts Audubon Society, public middle school science for three years and, after coming to Rehoboth in 1980, 9th grade Environmental Science at the Wheeler School in Providence. He also did his civilian service as a college librarian for two years as a conscientious objector.

Otter came to Rehoboth from Petersham, Mass on his wife’s coattails, as she was the newly appointed R.I. Audubon Caratunk Sanctuary Director in Seekonk in 1980. His wife, Suzy Williams, followed Otter to the Wheeler School in 1984 to teach 4th and 5th grade science. They had their daughters Lily in 1984 and Larkin in 1988. They attended the Providence Quaker Friends Meeting while their daughters were growing up, widening their friend network. Raised during the 50s and 60s, Otter and Suzy continued their back-to-the-land lifestyle, maple sugaring, raising bees, minding a large garden and building additions to their house at Perry’s Corners.

UPCOMING CARPENTER MUSEUM EVENTS

**Palmer River Elementary 3rd Graders
Visit the Carpenter Museum**
Continuing a long tradition of celebrating local history with PRE, 3rd grade students will join us this May and June.

**First Saturday of the Month Carpenter
Museum and Dyer Research Center
Open 1-4PM**
*June 1st
July 6th
August 3rd*

**Annual Strawberry Festival
Sunday June 2nd 1-5PM**
Free to Enter / Free to Park

Join us for this family friendly festival with strawberry shortcake, hearth cooking, and over a dozen other early American handcraft demonstrations!

**First Day of Passport to History Program
Saturday June 1st**

Pick up your passport for free entry into participating museums across the Old Plymouth Colony all summer long! In partnership with the Old Colony History Museum and 14 other area museums.
Program ends September 1st.

**Genealogy Group Meetings
3rd Wednesdays of the Month 7PM
Tilton Room (LL of the Carpenter
Museum, enter at back door)**

All are welcome to attend! Beginners and expert genealogists alike. Meetings often have guest speakers.

rehobothantiquarian.org/carpenter-museum

UPCOMING BLANDING PUBLIC LIBRARY EVENTS

Hank Coleman's History Discussion
Wednesdays, 11AM-12PM
Come chat about history!

Book Club for Kids Grades K - 4
Monday Nights 6:30 -7:30PM
Join us in the children's area for fun
crafts, yummy snacks, games, and an
entertaining spin on reading!
Led by DRRHS Students

Baby / Toddler Story Time Tuesdays,
10:30-11AM
Children & caregivers are invited to join
us in our hall for a fun interactive
program of movement, books, music,
games & more. Please register.
0-4 / siblings welcome

Story and Craft Time
Thursdays, 10:30-11:15AM
Join us for a story or two! A simple craft
will be available to make or take home.
Please register for this event.
3+ / siblings welcome

Larchmont: Rhode Island's Most
Horrific Seas Disaster
Thursday, May 2, 6:30-7:30PM
Come learn about the Larchmont with
Providence Journal Columnist Daniel
Harrington.

Mother's Day Afternoon Tea 1908
Saturday, May 11, 2-3PM
You are hereby invited to enjoy afternoon
tea with Mrs. Michael Gordon, a fictional
middle-class housewife from 1908.
Please register (508)252-4236

Songs and Stories of the
American Folk Revival
Wednesday, May 15, 6:30-8PM
In their 75-minute show, Andrew Lewis
and Michael Shea present a history of the
Folk Revival, highlighting the most
influential songs of the period.
Free

rebothantiquarian.org/blanding-library

When Otter retired in 2015 at age 69, he realized he didn't know very much about his hometown and knew the best way to get to know Rehoboth's people and land was through service. He joined John Rourke's trail crew building a boardwalk at Rehoboth Land Trust's Pond Street property and then joined the Land Trust Board. He also became addicted to pickleball, qualifying for the National Senior Games twice. He joined the Friends of the Palmer River because of his love of rivers, river geology courses, white water kayaking, and interest in the local watershed. Today, Otter runs hikes for the Friends and oversees trails at the Pemmerl / Pernoyer property on Danforth Street for the Rehoboth Conservation Commission.

When Wayne Taylor, treasurer and nominating committee member of the Rehoboth Antiquarian Society, called two years ago, Otter again realized he didn't know very much about the Carpenter Museum and Blanding Library, and willingly joined the R.A.S. Board. He only knew the Goff Hall side from being a contra dancer and one of the founders of the Rehoboth Contra Dance in 1982. What has amazed him is how knowledgeable and hard-working the staff are at both the museum and library. Lende McMullen, the research librarian at the museum, shepherded him through a Full Moon Memories of Rehoboth at Burial Place Hill Cemetery, a character re-enactment from the 1700 and 1800s by current Rehoboth citizens.

When Otter and Suzy moved to Rehoboth, it was a rural sleepy town of 5,000 with very few regulations and lots of open space, with the most golf courses and horses this side of the Mississippi. It now is a suburban town, still with few regulations, lots of traffic, no grocery store or real center, and way less golf courses, horses and open space. His wish for Rehoboth is that it wakes up to its future, being gobbled up by suburban sprawl. He thinks its smart to celebrate its past through the Carpenter Museum and the whole wide world through its Blanding Library, but it has to wake up to its future before it's too late.

Rehoboth Antiquarian Society Scholarship

Apply now for a
2024-25 scholarship!

Open to those studying Library Science, History,
Museum Studies, and related majors.

Applications due June 21st

Find you application here:
rebothantiquarian.org/ras-scholarship



NEW GEMS IN THE COLLECTION - PEARLWARE

The Carpenter Museum recently accepted the donation of several pieces of early 19th century Pearlware used at the Lewis Tavern. This exciting acquisition was kindly donated by Elizabeth Carpenter Summer Wilkinson in memory of her mother, Mary Carpenter Ettlign Summer. Read on to learn more about the Lewis Tavern and the dishware used by its patrons in the 1810s. Visit the Carpenter Museum to see the Pearlware in person.



Anawan Inn

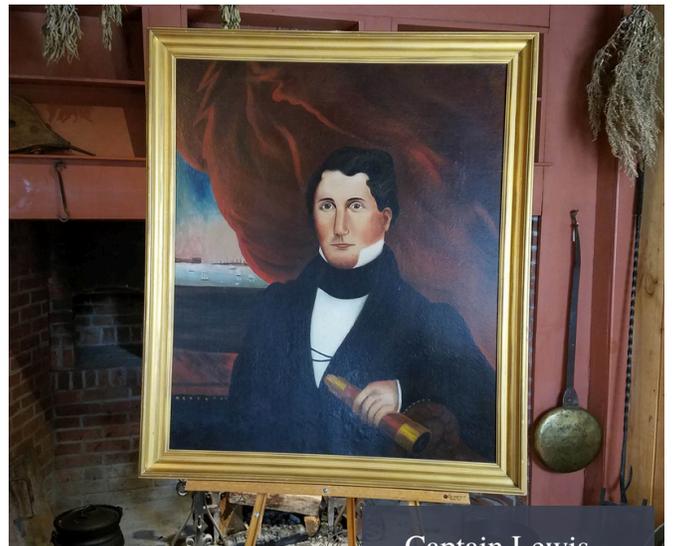
LEWIS TAVERN AND ANAWAN HOUSE

One of the most well known landmarks in town, the Lewis Tavern within the Anawan House once stood at the junction of Routes 44 and 118. Little is known about the beginnings of the Lewis Tavern, named after its proprietor, as was the custom. Some town historians speculate that it existed as a tavern as early as 1730. The Lewis family certainly owned the parcel of land at that time. There was an original, older part of the large building with at least one major addition. We do have enough early records to know the building operated as a toll station by 1793 as well as a hotel for travelers along the Taunton-Providence Turnpike, now Route 44.

The hotel was named Anawan House (also known as Anawan Inn) after the Pokanoket Chieftain forced to surrender at the end of King Philip's War in 1676. The Inn was located a mile and a half west of the point of surrender at "Anawan Rock" which was a popular 19th century sight-seeing spot. Travelers and townspeople alike gathered at the Anawan House and Lewis Tavern to socialize, rest, refuel, and even be entertained when a dance hall was added to the second story. The building eventually fell into disrepair and was sold to Exxon Mobile in 1970. In spite of an attempt to save the structure it was torn down in the winter of 1971. The building materials were burned in an enormous bonfire to melt the ground frost so the fueling station that took its place could be built as soon as possible.

CAPTAIN TIMOTHY LEWIS

Captain Lewis of Rehoboth owned the Lewis Tavern at the time these dishes were used. He died at sea in 1839 and left the tavern to his wife, Louisa Horton Lewis who is the great-great grandmother of the dishware's donor.



Captain Lewis

PEARLWARE

Conceived as a utilitarian slipware in the 1780s, Pearlware was fashionable among the wealthy for around twenty years. It is a refinement of Creamware that by the early nineteenth century was greatly associated with pubs and taverns as it is superior looking but holds up well to many uses and washes.

Pearlware is made by dipping the vessel in colored slip and then firing it. The dish then gets a glaze and a second, final firing. Pearlware gets its whiteness from adding cobalt to the lead glaze. The blue tricks the eye into seeing a very pure looking white. The blue is sometimes noticeable on the underside of the dishes where the glaze has pooled.

This dish set was most likely transfer-printed with its decorative blue leaf motifs. The decoration appears as fresh today as it did the day it was applied. This is because the painting is done under the glaze and therefore permanently sealed, protected from scratching, flaking, or fading. Pearlware was economical as well. It required only two firings while other decorative dishes needed three or more. Pearlware was produced through the 1810s until it was replaced by the development of Whitewares like porcelain.



The Lewis Tavern's Pearlware on display at the Carpenter Museum

VENDOR APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN!

CRAFTERS,



MARKETPLACE

SATURDAY
OCT
19

9AM-4PM

Located in the historic Rehoboth Village

Find your application on our website at rebothantiquarian.org/crafters-marketplace

The Carpenter Museum's Annual
STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL!
Sunday June 2nd / 1-5PM
Free to Enter

SPRING EVENTS AT THE BLANDING PUBLIC LIBRARY

You are invited to enjoy afternoon tea with Mrs. Michael Gordon, a fictional middle-class housewife from 1908. Mrs. Gordon, an amusing and astute storyteller, will talk about different aspects of her life. Through her observations and humor, she will paint a picture of what life was like at the turn of the 20th century. Her observations are historic facts which have been extensively researched using primary sources, such as period magazines, and well researched secondary sources. This is an interactive show where the audience is free to ask questions of Mrs. Gordon and can share their own stories and offer their own 2 cents if they wish. The audience will definitely feel as if they are speaking to a woman from the turn of the 20th century. Bring your mother, your daughter, or a friend to enjoy this immersive, educational, and delicious experience, just in time for Mother's Day! **Saturday, May 11 at 2:00 p.m. in Goff Hall.** Please call the Library to register at (508) 252-4236.

We're rigging up for our Summer 2024 Ocean theme with a talk about Larchmont: Rhode Island's most horrific sea disaster, with *Providence Journal* Columnist Daniel Harrington. Of all the subjects he has explored, the sinking of the Larchmont and his accompanying piece "John Anson, what have you done?" haunted him throughout the years and prompted him to continue his research. This presentation is the fruit of that haunting. A self-described "recovering politician", Mr. Harrington is a former East Providence City Councilor, a long-time featured monthly columnist for the *Providence Journal*,

and serves as a Director for the Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame. **Thursday, May 2 at 6:30 p.m. in Goff Hall.** Other Ocean-related programs and activities throughout the summer will include a sea shanty sing-along, a Sailor's Valentine craft, and much, much more. Details can be found on the library website's Programs and Events Calendar.

The library has two music performances coming up soon. On **Wednesday, May 15 at 6:30 p.m. in Goff Hall**, Andrew Lewis and Michael Shea will perform Songs and Stories of the American Folk Revival. Their 75-minute show will present a history of the Folk Revival, highlighting the most influential songs of the period. A living history of the Folk Revival of the 1960s, they include the audience in their songs as well, telling the stories and singing the songs of the musicians and how each song shares its meaning. **On Sunday, June 9 at 6:30 p.m. in Goff Hall**, country musician and author Matt York will perform the songs of Johnny Cash and tell stories about Cash's career, spanning from his early beginnings in the 1950s to his passing in 2003. York was recently nominated for the Boston Music Award for Best Country Artist and his album *Gently Used* was named one of *Patriot Ledger's* best albums of 2022. This program is supported by a grant from the Rehoboth Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

UPCOMING CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS AT THE LIBRARY

May brings flowers, fun, a spring Story Walk around the library's front garden, as well as fairies and gnomes! All month, *Seek & Find* "Elusive Fairies & Roaming Gnomes" hiding in various places downstairs in the library. Find them all for a prize. They'll be moving about, so be sure to look hard. Stop by the Children's area to build your own garden gate fit for a fairy or gnome. Supplies will be provided to make here or take home this wee craft.

Mental Health Awareness Month has been observed in May in the United States since 1949. A display of books for various age levels will be in the Young Adult area featuring topics such as understanding feelings and the importance of taking care of ourselves and others. No one is too young to begin learning and talking about emotions. Visitors are invited to expand their imaginations and focus on the positive.

The Mass Teen Choice Book Award 2024 nominees are also on display in the Young Adult area. This Bay State award invites students in grades 7-12 to select their top new books of the year. The list of 21 nominees has been curated by a committee of public librarians, school library media specialists, and educators. Readers are invited to select and read titles throughout the summer, voting for their favorites in September. Check out the nominees, and remember: every vote counts!

Looking ahead to summer, the 2024 Summer Reading Program's theme "Read, Renew, Repeat!" features the idea of conservation. Be prepared for waves of fun activities, programs, and a visit with a whale! Our library summer kick-off starts June 26 with indoor LED Miniature Golf presented by OneUpGames, then Miss Frizzle brings Dinosaurs in July, followed by more programs throughout the summer for all ages. All program dates will be posted on our library website's Programs and Event Calendar as the summer approaches.

