



NORTH SMITHFIELD HERITAGE ASSOCIATION MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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A Different Kind of Appeal

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, NSHA has suspended its Annual Appeal fundraising effort, which the association relies upon greatly in normal times to fund its programs and building preservation. While donations are always appreciated, we are in historic times, and therefore we are making a different kind of “appeal” to the members of NSHA and to the residents of North Smithfield:

TELL US YOUR STORY.

NSHA is a historical organization, and some of the most useful information and resources that we have about the history of North Smithfield has come from personal recorded histories and diaries. NSHA appeals to you to share *your* story by writing about your life before, during, and (eventually) after the pandemic. Your piece can be as long or as short as you wish, and you should feel free to contribute and share as often as you would like. We would like to hear about your challenges, your comforts, and your hopes during this time. How has your daily life changed? What has not changed? Will you be forever changed? NSHA will compile these accounts as part of our history to educate and inform those who come after us about what it was like in North Smithfield during this historic era. We are excited to share the first story, by Freya Hainley, on page two of this newsletter! Share your story with us at our email address: nsha@nsheritageassn.org. Thank you!



An Interesting Idea

By Freya R. Hainley

It was Friday, March 13, 2020. Braving the supermarket that day to pick up groceries for my mother in law brought a realization. The combination of increased, crowded business with the concerned faces around me made me make a mental pact in the back of my mind; “I will be avoiding the super market for as long as possible in the future.” I don’t think I was alone in that pact, and the first order of business in many households across the country that evening was to take stock in their cupboards.

A universal question circulated through many pantries that night, “What can I make with what I’ve got, and how long can I make what I have stretch?” Despite reassurances that the markets had plenty of food, I feel sure that no one relished making that trip anytime in the near future. The universal puzzle materialized across countertops in America as people began formulating the most interesting ideas to meet their challenges. A dinner needed to be created that offered comfort, used items that were nearly forgotten in a pantry, and needed to last as long and inexpensively as possible.

My mind went to work combing my internal database. I thought of the Depression Era literature my Great Grandmother handed down to me with useful tips to save eggs. I remembered how she used her teabags three times before composting them for the entirety of her life. I tried to remember where I had put my cookbook, “How To Cook A Wolf” by M.K.F. Fisher, a most useful wartime volume about economical cooking. I went back to my college years of creative ramen. I thought about how I had conserved food during my service as a Coast Guard cook.

I scanned my counters and spotted a bag of stuffing, forgotten since Thanksgiving and a bag of potatoes with enough eyes sprouted to look judgmentally at me. Christmas had left behind a package of frozen, ground pork in the freezer. A badly closed bag of frozen corn nestled against the freezer wall. Several carrots rested in their refrigerated bin. I caught a glimpse of a turnip on the kitchen island. I had my plan.....a renegade shepherd’s pie.

I pressed prepared stuffing into a baking dish. Roasted root vegetables with onions on a baking sheet perfumed the kitchen and soon accompanied layers of corn, mashed potatoes and gravy. The whole ensemble was baked with all the hope and comfort this cook could muster. It lasted 3 days divided amongst six people. It was the best shepherd’s pie I have ever set on my table.



Upcoming Events

Be sure to like our Facebook page to receive updates about upcoming events

Wednesday, May 6, 2020 ~ 4 p.m.

Virtual Valley Talks

Facebook Event

email to register: mowc@rihs.org

Monday, May 11, 2020 ~ 6:30 p.m.

TEST NSHA Board Meeting

Zoom Video Conference

email nsha@nsheritageassn.org for access information

Tuesday, May 12, 2020 ~ 6:30 p.m.

NSHA Board Meeting

Zoom Video Conference

~ open to all members ~

email nsha@nsheritageassn.org for access information

Ongoing — *Historic Cemetery Cleanup*

Follow Governor's Social Distance Guidelines

See Facebook page for information

Friday, June 5, 2020 ~ 6:30 p.m.

Presentation: Burning of the Gaspee by John McNiff

Format TBD

Friday, June 26, 2020

NSHA Annual Meeting of the Members

Format TBD

Voting on new officers and By Laws amendments.

~ open to all members ~



MAY HISTORY SPOTLIGHT: **AIR FORCE JET CRASHES IN N. SMITHFIELD**

Recently, NSHA Archives Group member Al Menard was scanning Woonsocket Call newspaper articles about North Smithfield when he came across a dramatic story of an Air Force fighter jet crash in North Smithfield 61 years ago, on May 19, 1959.

On that day, 17-year-old Roland Ruge was working at the Precious Blood Cemetery in Northern Woonsocket when he watched a parachute descending in the wind over the cemetery and land in nearby Harris Pond. He dove into the pond and swam 200 feet to reach Captain Arthur Canella, then age 29, who had just moments before ejected from a U.S. Air Force F-89 Scorpion jet. Unbeknownst to Roland at the time, the jet had crashed in a massive fireball in North Smithfield, at a location about 200 yards west of Greenville Road, south of the intersection with Providence Street.



F-89 Scorpion
U.S. Air Force Photo

Also unbeknownst to Roland was that the second airman who had departed Otis Air Force Base in Falmouth, Massachusetts with Capt. Canella earlier on that fateful day, Lieutenant Robert J. Searce, Jr., age 26, had landed on the roof of the U.S. Rubber Company at 85 Fairmont Street in the city. Employees had climbed to the roof using a fire escape, and Dorothy Kane, the nurse for the company, administered first aid until help arrived. Lt. Searce was admitted to the hospital with serious injuries and released 11 days later.



Back in Harris Pond, Roland had struggled to pull Capt. Canella to shore while keeping his head above water. Luckily, as he neared the shore he was thrown a rope. Capt. Canella survived, and Roland was hailed a hero by the Air Force for saving his life. Roland received an award from the Air Force and was given a tour of Otis Air Force Base, at which time he viewed the remains of the wrecked F-89 and was presented with the jet's cockpit compass as a keepsake.

The wreckage at the crash site in North Smithfield is said to have been a half-mile long and about 300 feet wide, and both engines were found intact approximately 300 feet past where the initial impact occurred. The ejection seat belonging to Lt. Searce was later recovered at Wright's Dairy Farm, several miles from Fairmount Street where he landed!

We would like to thank Al for sharing this story, and point the readers to credits on page 4. *Do you or your family members remember this event from May 1959? If so, let us know!*



Things To Do: *At Home Edition*



Thank you to Christian de Rezendes for sharing information about *SLATERSVILLE: America's First Mill Village*, which he has been directing since 2012. What started out as a feature length project has grown into a limited historical documentary series that he intends to premiere in the Fall of 2021.

For 2020, Christian had planned a *SLATERSVILLE-In-Progress* Screening Tour consisting of special monthly events at a variety of locations to highlight sections of the film currently in post-production. The first two screenings in October of 2019 and this past February were successful. However, due to COVID-19 and the stay-at-home order, the tour has been canceled. As a result, Christian has happily shared these two online event opportunities for our members and the public to enjoy:

Public access to the first two screenings

~ Special access to works-in-progress ~

Screening #1 - 10.25.19 (45 mins.) - <https://vimeo.com/369006304>

Screening #2 - 02.20.20 (25 mins.) - <https://vimeo.com/392722528>

Virtual Valley Talks

The Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket will be holding an installment of their *Virtual Valley Talks* on Wednesday, May 6, 2020 at 4 p.m. Originally planned for March 22, Christian will present a NEW section of the film on the influence of French-Canadian immigration in the mill village and the founding of St. John's the Evangelist Church, followed by a Q&A discussion.

To register for this event, email mowc@rihs.org. You can also visit our Facebook event page (<https://www.facebook.com/events/2278948272398747/>). A new link will be provided for viewing at the time of the event. A heartfelt thanks to the Museum of Work and Culture for making this event possible. To learn more, visit www.firstmillvillage.com



HISTORIC CEMETERY OF THE MONTH: **HOTCHKISS CEMETERY**

The more than two-acre so-called “Hotchkiss Cemetery” is the largest abandoned historic cemetery in town. It is bounded by the Union Cemetery and Smithfield Road. According to the Rhode Island Historic Cemetery Commission, it is actually three cemeteries: Old Town Burial Ground (NS031); Old Aldrich Burial Ground (NS037); and Hotchkiss Cemetery (NS036). NSHA is unable to determine where one cemetery ends and the others begin. Also, the information we do have reflects different names for the cemeteries, including the “Union Cemetery Annex.” Anyone interested in researching land records to determine the history of this special cemetery is welcome to do so! We know that James Hotchkiss, who lived from 1842 to 1917 and was a member of the Union Cemetery corporation, was originally buried in Old Aldrich Burial Grounds, but his remains were removed and re-interred at Union Cemetery in 1926. It appears other burials were moved as well.

At some point, the organization responsible for the care and upkeep of the cemetery became defunct and the cemetery became overgrown with trees, bushes, and litter. Vandals, deer, and trees knocked over gravestones. Part of the cemetery was cleaned about 15 years ago as part of a Boy Scout Eagle Project, but the cemetery soon became overgrown again. In August 2017, Christine MacWilliams and Rich Keene began to clean the cemetery. Soon after, more volunteers joined them. Several months later, NSHA adopted the volunteers and began to buy tools and materials for them. They continue to maintain the grounds year-round. Once they complete spring cleanup, volunteers will begin to repair and reset the fallen gravestones for the first time. The NSHA recently built a small dirt parking lot off of Smithfield Road, which volunteers and visitors are welcome to use.

Webmaster Wanted!

NSHA is in search of a volunteer webmaster who will have free reign to be creative on design and formatting for the NSHA website.

The NSHA board and committees will provide the webmaster content intended to share information with our members and the public. No certifications or prior experience required.





~ Word of the Month ~





ANOTHER WAY TO SUPPORT NSHA

Although we have delayed our Annual Appeal, we do encourage members to renew their annual dues (they were due on April 1!) before June 1, 2020 at the current \$10 per member rate. The dues NSHA receives from its members support all our historical preservation efforts. Also, do you know anyone who might be interested in joining NSHA? Spread the word!



LIKE our Facebook Page today!

CONTACT NSHA

Email: nsha@nsheritageassn.org ~ By Phone: (401) 477-6394
By Mail: PO Box 413, Slatersville, RI 02876

VISIT US AT

Website: www.nsheritageassn.org
Facebook: [@northsmithfieldheritage](https://www.facebook.com/northsmithfieldheritage)

MAY SPOTLIGHT credits: *AF Pilot's Wife Pour Thanks On Hero Ruge*, Woonsocket Call, May 21, 1959; *Two Bail Out Safely As AF Jet Crashes In North Smithfield*, Woonsocket Call, May 19, 1959; newenglandaviationhistory.com.