

# RHODE ISLAND STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS

## 1999

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Historical Society, The Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage  
Commission, West Broadway Neighborhood Association



**RHODE ISLAND  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
& HERITAGE  
COMMISSION**

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## Introduction

*The Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission's annual State Historic Preservation Awards honor individuals, organizations, and projects for their contributions to the preservation of Rhode Island's historic resources.*

*The Commission has named two awards in tribute to individuals who exemplify Rhode Islanders' commitment to historic preservation. They are the highest honors which the Commission bestows.*

*Antoinette F. Downing served in the volunteer position of Commission Chairman for twenty-seven years, from 1968 to 1995. She has contributed her time, her knowledge, and, most importantly, her vision to shape Rhode Island's state historic preservation program. At the same time, she has generously lent her counsel and support to numerous organizations and projects throughout the state. In her honor, the Commission created the Antoinette F. Downing Award for Volunteer Service to Preservation.*

*Frederick C. Williamson was appointed State Historic Preservation Officer in 1969. Today, he is the dean of SHPOs, having served longer than any other in the nation. His professional expertise in government relations and his skill in promoting effective state and local government partnerships are invaluable in advancing historic preservation in Rhode Island. When Mrs. Downing retired as Chairman of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission in 1995, the Commission members elected Mr. Williamson as the new Chairman. In his honor, the Commission established the Frederick C. Williamson Award for Professional Leadership in Preservation.*

*We salute all the recipients of the 1999 State Historic Preservation Awards.*

## *Antoinette F. Downing Volunteer Service Award*



Ralph Emerson Carpenter, Jr

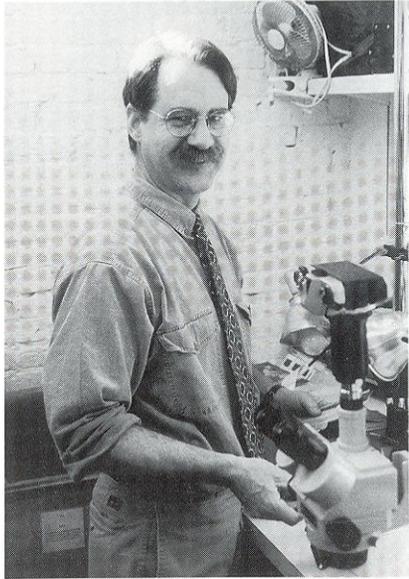
Mr. Newport, Ralph Carpenter, has devoted more than half a century toward the preservation and interpretation of the architecture and decorative arts of his adopted city.

In the 1940's, Carpenter was among the small group of individuals who formed the Preservation Society of Newport County specifically to save Hunter House. He oversaw the restoration of this mid-eighteenth century masterpiece, which opened to the public in 1953. In conjunction with the opening of Hunter House was the appearance of his book, *The Arts and Crafts of Newport, Rhode Island, 1640-1820*, a book which established his reputation as a decorative-arts scholar and remains the standard reference work on the topic.

More recently, Carpenter has worked to breathe new life into Newport history. As he likes to point out, a time traveler from eighteenth century Newport could today worship at Trinity Church or Touro Synagogue, visit the Brick Market House, read at the Redwood Library, dine at the White Horse Tavern, and go home to Hunter House—all preservation projects intimately linked with Carpenter. Through the Newport Symposium, which he helped to found in 1993, collectors and scholars create a convivial atmosphere to study and enjoy the company of people with common interests.

In all his interests, Ralph Carpenter has consistently sought to make history come alive for present and future generations.

### *Frederick C. Williamson Professional Leadership Award*



Charles Jeffers Moore

Chief Conservator for the Preservation Society of Newport County, Jeff Moore's professional contributions to historic preservation extend well beyond mere maintenance of historic materials. His accomplishments set high standards of performance, introduce innovative approaches and techniques, and disseminate information to a variety of audiences.

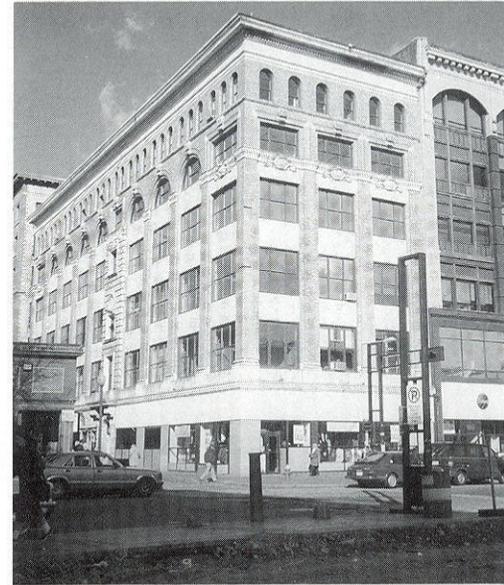
Whether the project is fine art, or architectural detail and the material wood, glass, porcelain, or plaster, Jeff draws on a vast knowledge of design history, construction techniques, and physical properties of the constituent materials to ensure the best care for the object.

Uncommon problems elicit Jeff's creative solutions: a silkscreening process to restore the ceiling paintings in Marble House's Gothic Room or the adaptation of fine-arts conservation techniques to identify and preserve decorative painting in the Isaac Bell House.

Beyond the work itself, Jeff shares his knowledge and discoveries with a variety of audiences by developing post-project interpretive panels, by making the conservation project itself a part of the museum interpretation, by internship training programs that disseminate his expertise more widely.

Practitioner, innovator, educator, Jeff Moore elevates and humanizes important but little understood aspects of historic preservation.

### *Historic Preservation Award*



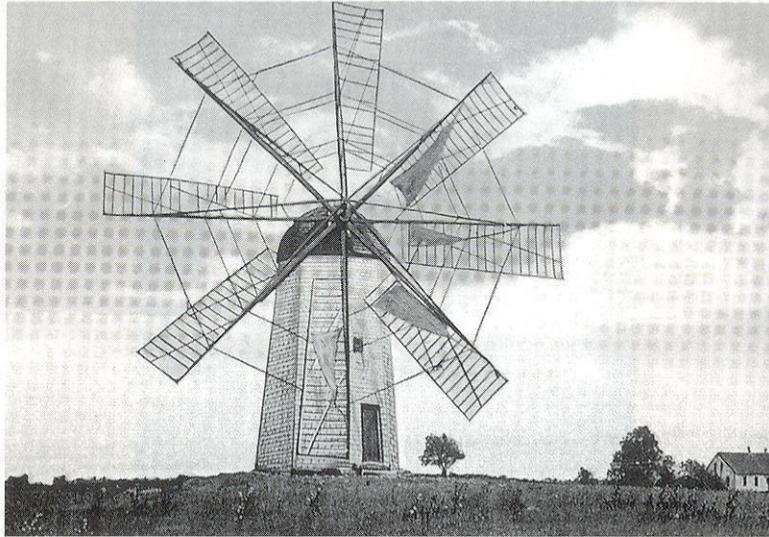
Fletcher Building

Resurgent interest in Downcity Providence has begun to encourage the conversion of commercial buildings into new uses, many requiring more stringent building and fire codes. Meeting up-to-date code requirements, especially for residential use, challenges the owners and architects of historic commercial buildings. The most obvious solutions often result in drastic changes to their character, especially on the interiors.

In his recent rehabilitation of the Fletcher Building (1895, 1903; Clark & Spalding, Clark & Howe, architects), prominently located at the corner of Mathewson and Weybosset Streets, Stanley Weiss took a different approach. He asked his architects, Newport Collaborative Architects (Michael Abbott, supervising architect), to maintain both historic character and the highest safety standards. As now converted to studio space, the building retains significant amounts of original interior finishes as well as historic spatial configuration - and fully meets its code requirements.

The joined forces of a creative and determined developer and talented architects in the rehabilitation of the Fletcher Building demonstrate that historic commercial buildings can be successfully converted to new uses while still maintaining historic character.

### *Historic Preservation Award*



Boyd's Gristmill

The Middletown Historical Society's (MHS) rescue of the eight-vaned Boyd's Grist Mill represents an exemplary endeavor to save and restore a wonder of another age intimately associated with local history. What makes their efforts so valuable is the link the community makes between past and present.

Wind powered mills were once a common sight on windswept Aquidneck Island. John Peterson built this mill in 1810 near the corner of West Main Road and Mill Lane. William Boyd acquired the mill in 1815, and six generations of the Boyd family kept it in operation until just after World War II. By the early 1990's, the Boyd family could no longer maintain the structure, bereft of its windshaft and vanes. They donated it to the MHS, which moved it to Paradise Valley Park, adjacent to the Paradise School, and reconstructed it to working order, including a new shaft and vanes.

Boyd's Grist Mill is now the focus of the Wonderful Old Mill (WOW) program, part of "Those Dear Old Golden Rule Days," an important local-history component in Middletown's fourth-grade curriculum. By preserving and interpreting the country's only eight-vane windmill, the Middletown Historical Society has created a vital link to the past for those who will guide our future.

### *Historic Preservation Award*



West Broadway Neighborhood Association Headquarters

As the West Broadway Neighborhood Association (WBNA) grew in size and effectiveness as an advocacy group for protecting quality of life and preserving Victorian architecture in a low-income neighborhood on Providence's West Side, its need for a permanent headquarters became apparent. Their solution combines flair and practicality.

In 1996 WBNA purchased a streamlined 1930's Texaco gas station, conceived by industrial designer Walter Dorwin Teague, at the corner of Sycamore and Westminster Streets, a highly visible location at the heart of the neighborhood. Neighborhood architects provided renovation and landscape plans, and volunteers provided help with clean up, demolition, painting, and planting. Replacement enamel panels were installed where necessary, and a restored 1950's gas pump was placed in front of the building. A neighborhood graphic artist provided the finishing touch: the WBNA sign in the same type face as the original Texaco logo and red stars.

The renovated headquarters establishes a highly visible presence for an important neighborhood group, preserves a rapidly disappearing historic resource, and sets a fine example for future redevelopment along the spine of Westminster Street. Both the project and the product symbolize the focus that characterizes successful neighborhood-advocacy organizations.

### *Historic Preservation Award*



Crompton Free Library

Long a gathering spot for citizens of the "Velvet Village," the Crompton Free Library (1876, Stone & Carpenter, architects) was redundant by 1992. The Pawtuxet Valley Preservation and Historical Society's (PVPHS) ingenuity and commitment have refocused the use of this local landmark for continued community service.

Established as a private library for workers at the Crompton textile mills, the library was absorbed into the public library system in 1945. After library use ceased here, the PVPHS discovered that a trust established by town librarian Anne Mary Livsey (1864-1950) provided funds for establishing and maintaining an historic property and acquired a long-term lease on the building for use as the PVPHS headquarters. Using the modest funds from the Livsey trust and income from yard sales, book sales, calender sales, craft sales, and antique appraisal fairs, the PVPHS has gradually raised money to provide delayed maintenance and relieve long neglect. Volunteer efforts included everything from selected demolition to gently cleaning the buildings cherished sculpture collection with toothbrushes.

Now with its exterior tight to the weather and its interior heated by a new furnace, the Crompton Free Library moves usefully into the future thanks to the thoughtful guidance of its stewards, the Pawtuxet Valley Preservation and Historical Society.

### *Historic Preservation Award*



Westery Railroad Station

A stunning example of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture, the only one of its style in the state, Westery's 1912 railroad station was seriously deteriorated and neglected by the mid-1990's. Today, however, it stands as a once-again proud part of the town's reviving Downtown.

The Town of Westery applied to the state Department of Transportation for Transportation Enhancement funding from the Federal Highway Administration to restore the station. Architect William D. Warner oversaw the project. Extensive repairs carried out by Commonwealth Engineers, Inc. were needed for exterior stucco work, including the piers that support the arcaded waiting-area pavilions. The elaborate pantile roofs were largely deteriorated and in need of replacement. The interior, though little altered, was shabby and in need of freshening; the passenger waiting room benefited from paint analysis by Roger Williams University's Philip Marshall.

As Westery undergoes significant long-term efforts to revitalize one of the state's most impressive Downtowns, the station stands as a major step forward in those efforts.

### *Historic Preservation Award*



Mount Hope Farm

"Save Mount Hope Farm" was the simple cry that galvanized the Town of Bristol into one of the most ambitious, complex, and precedent-setting preservation projects ever conceived in the state.

Overlooking Mount Hope Bay, Mount Hope Farm spreads east from a rambling wooden house begun in 1745 and includes numerous outbuildings, exquisite landscaping, and 200 acres of farmland-the largest private parcel of open space in town. Bristol's Comprehensive Plan had emphasized the importance of the property's preservation. When the owner died in 1997 leaving no provision for the farm's preservation and the property was put up for sale, Mount Hope Farm became a critically threatened resource.

The town sprang into action. The Town Council approved a \$1.5 million bond-issue referendum to provide acquisition funds. Professional architects and planners donated their services to plan the property's future. St Michael's Church provided a \$500,000 loan. The Department of Environmental Management granted \$400,000 in open space funds. An anonymous donor offered \$1 million, contingent on passage of the referendum. A non-profit Trust was established. Open houses gave citizens a firsthand - and often first-time - look at the property. In November 1998, the grassroots effort paid off: voters approved the referendum by 83%.

The effort to "Save Mount Hope Farm" epitomizes community cooperation and vision in preserving history and quality of life.

### *Historic Preservation Award*



Washington Square Advisory Commission

After Steven Spielberg transformed Newport's Washington Square for several weeks into a nineteenth-century set in his motion picture "Amistad", several members of the community decided that the time had come to recapture the historic character more permanently. In the spring of 1997, the Washington Square Advisory Commission was formed to advocate for changes to the Square, to facilitate its use and appreciation, to prepare an integrated, feasible plan, and to raise funds for construction. As a broad-based citizens effort, the WSAC engaged property owners, city officials, historians, and designers in the process.

After lengthy review based on historical evidence, the Commission recommended restoration of the Square to the period between 1830 and 1850, a period both easily recaptured and accommodating of contemporary uses and requirements. The Commission developed a phased plan to improve vehicular and pedestrian circulation, signage, street furniture, and landscaping. Now in the second phase of implementation, the Square is beginning to realize the vision initiated only two years ago.

The WSAC's thorough, deliberate, and timely process serves as a model for other communities to emulate in planning, organizing, and implementation.



# Ground Truth



The Newsletter of the Rhode Island Marine Archaeology Project Spring 1998

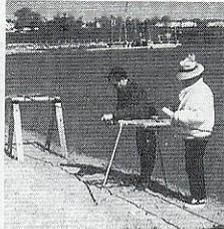
## RIMAP COMPLETES BEST SEASON YET

More than 40 RIMAP volunteers participate in 1997 field work

The year 1997 was an incredibly busy one! In our *INTRODUCTION TO UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGY* course, RIMAP trained the largest number of potential volunteers yet, bringing the total to more than 160. Completion of this one-day seminar is required of all RIMAP members who intend to participate in the field work. The other training classes are optional and each year we have added a new one, to make four different sessions. In addition to the *INTRODUCTION* class, we offered *SITE MAPPING IN UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGY*, and *SHIP CONSTRUCTION FOR UNDERWATER*



It's a big thumbs up from this RIMAP volunteer after completing a dive during this summer's record-setting field season.



Dr. Abbass helps a volunteer from Bateau Below set up a photomosaic fixture to be used on the reputed slave ship GEM. Photo by Bateau Below

### Rhode Island Marine Archaeology Project D. K. Abbass

The attraction of shipwreck diving for many sport divers is hunting for souvenirs, but such behavior destroys underwater archaeological resources. In 1992 Kathy Abbass engaged the sport-diving community in a constructive partnership to survey Rhode Island's shipwrecks and to give divers the opportunity to explore shipwrecks from an archaeological perspective. The Rhode Island Marine Archaeological Project (RIMAP) is an effective approach to the protection and investigation of the state's submerged cultural resources.

RIMAP trains volunteer divers in the basics of nondestructive underwater archaeology and then puts its enthusiastic labor force to work in locating and mapping shipwrecks. Survey information is disseminated through "Ground Truth," the RIMAP newsletter, which reaches hundreds of readers across the state.

RIMAP is the direct result of Kathy Abbass's vision, energy, and enthusiasm. It becomes more successful every year as larger number of divers become educated about archaeology and preservation and more information is gathered, analyzed, and interpreted. Recently, RIMAP announced the discovery of Captain Cook's ship "Endeavor". RIMAP's influence now extends beyond the waters of Rhode Island to other states, which have begun to emulate this partnership between sport divers and historic preservation.



### Newport Fire Department

When fire broke out in the Newport Casino on the morning of Thursday, 4 June 1998, the Newport Fire Department sprang to the rescue—with a plan already in place for fighting the fire. The department's quick response and strategic approach ensured that damage to the Casino by both the fire and the fire fighting was minimized.

Newport, home to an exceptionally large concentration of historic properties, is favored with a fire department that has long been keenly aware of this legacy. For many decades the department has developed and updated plans for disaster management at hundreds of the city's historic buildings and sites. At the Casino, the department was able to contain the fire to a small area, to extinguish the fire within little more than an hour, and to evacuate portions of the International Tennis Hall of Fame below the fire-afflicted area to avoid damage to the museum collections.

The Newport Fire Department's rapid response to the 1998 fire is commendable, and their careful planning far in advance was the critical element in saving a key Bellevue Avenue landmark.

*Past Award Recipients*

**Antoinette F. Downing Volunteer Service Award**

*Awarded to an individual volunteer preservationist who has made a contribution to community or statewide preservation through lifetime effort or a single significant project*

**1998**

Robert Merriam, East Greenwich

**1997**

Ruth Joslin, Scituate  
William Metz, South Kingstown

**1996**

Elizabeth Johnson, Pawtucket  
Helene Lee Tessler, Bristol

**1995**

Issac G. Smith, Jr, Westerly

**1994**

Ruth Lebeck, Smithfield

**Frederick C. Williamson Professional Service Award**

*Awarded to a professional individual or organization that has made a contribution to preservation over a period of years or in a single significant project*

**1998**

Lombard John Pozzi, Bristol

**1997**

Alan Leveille and the Public Archaeology Laboratory

**1996**

B. Clarkson Schoettle

**1995**

William D. Warner, FAIA

**1994**

Albert T. Klyberg

*Past State Historic Preservation Award Recipients*

**1998**

Providence Art Club, Providence  
Kingston Railroad Station, Kingston  
Ledge Point Cottage, Newport  
Woonsocket Neighborhood Development Corporation  
Valley Falls Heritage Park, Cumberland  
Historic Preservation Program, Roger Williams University  
Rhode Island State House Rotunda  
Redwood Library and Anthenaeum, Newport

**1997**

Cocumscussoc Association, North Kingstown  
Candace Allen House, Providence  
St Anthony's Home, Providence  
Bridge Mill Power Station Museum, Pawtucket  
Ewa Orzechowska, Newport  
Warren Preservation Society

**1996**

Slater Mill, Pawtucket  
Kit Matteson Tavern, West Greenwich  
City of Providence Preservation Planning  
Old Kent County Courthouse, East Greenwich  
King's County Courthouse, South Kingstown  
Shepard's, Providence  
Samuel B. Conant House, Central Falls

**1995**

Rhode Island School of Design, Providence  
Southeast Lighthouse, Block Island  
Winsor Blacksmith Shop, Foster  
576 Broad Street and 39-41 Harvard Street, Providence  
John Hunt House, East Providence  
Preservation Society of Pawtucket Children's Education Program

**1994**

Wetherbee School, Middletown  
Memorial and Library Association of Westerly  
Nicholas Brown, John Carter Brown, Angela Brown Fischer  
West End Preservation Apartments, Providence  
Newport Army-Navy YMCA  
Elmwood Foundation for Architectural and Historical Preservation, Providence  
The Museum of Newport History at Brick Market House