

# MUSEUM PIECES

The Newsletter of The Peace Dale Museum of Art and Culture

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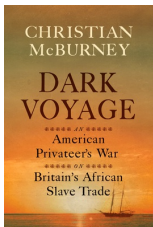
Fall 2022

## Revolutionary War Privateers and the British Slave Trade

Before the American Revolution, Britain dominated the worldwide trade in enslaved human beings. In a move intended to strike an economic blow to Great Britain, the American colonies agreed to stop participation in the slave trade. In April of 1776, the colonies resolved to stop trading with Great Britain and all of its territories, and to prohibit the importation of slaves.

John Brown of Providence was a wealthy and powerful merchant. He had financed slaving voyages. He also had experience financing privateers—privately-owned vessels licensed by the government to capture and sell enemy vessels and their contents.

Brown's audacious response to the resolves of the Continental Congress was to send a privateer to the coast of Africa, where British slavers continued to operate but where Great Britain, otherwise occupied with the Revolutionary War, was unable

**MONDAY  
OCTOBER 10  
7:00 P.M.**

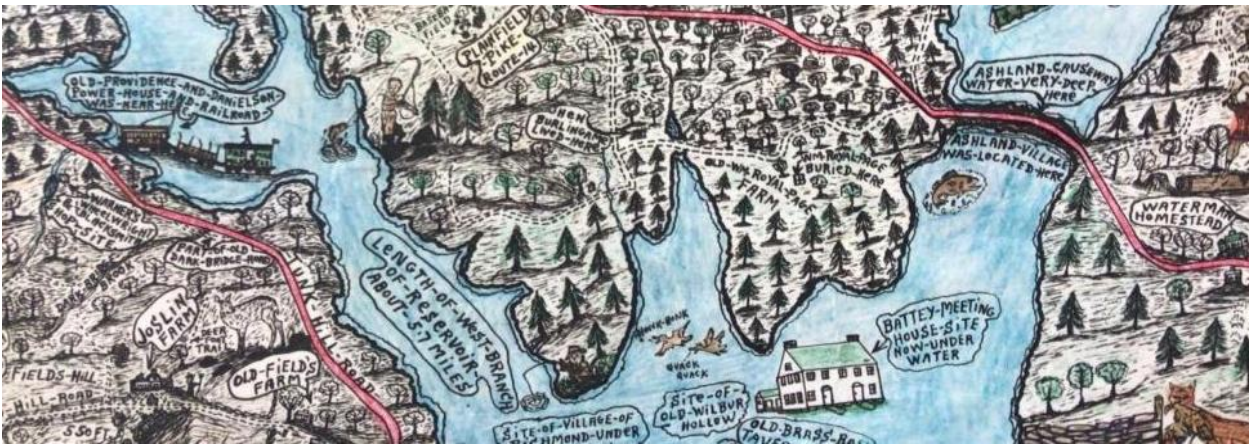
to protect her merchant ships. Brown's aim was to inflict harm on the British economy while making money for himself.

Privateers were bound to treat people on captured vessels as prisoners of war. But to John Brown and others of his time, enslaved humans were not people—they were property that could be sold for a profit.

In early 1777, Brown commissioned the construction of the privateer he named the *Marlborough*, a 250-ton, square-rigged brig with twenty guns. In late December of 1777, the *Marlborough*, commanded by George Waite Babcock of North Kingstown, ran the Royal Navy blockade of the Sakonnet Channel and began its maiden voyage to Africa.

Christian McBurney's new book, *Dark Voyage: An American Privateer's War on Britain's Slave Trade*, is the story of the *Marlborough*, the man who built it, man who commanded it, and the men who sailed it.

On Monday, October 10 at 7:00 p.m., the author will be in our Museum Gallery to tell us about the *Marlborough* and the effect American privateers had on the British slave trade.



## George E. Matteson: The Man and His Maps

George Everett Matteson was a woodsman, a truck driver, a soldier, a police officer, and, for most of his adult life, a forest ranger. He was also a national officer in the Matteson Historical Congress of America, an organization of descendants of Henry Matteson, who arrived in Rhode Island in 1666. But he was best known as a surveyor, historian and map maker who embedded the folklore of rural Rhode Island into his precise and exquisitely-detailed maps.

Born in Scituate in 1902, Matteson spent many hours in the woods with his father learning to hunt, trap, and fish. He learned to make maps in a military training program. Years later, when he could not find a map of Scituate, he decided to make his own. He enjoyed the process so much that he kept on making maps. He spent many hours traveling on foot through the back woods with his dog, surveying, talking to old timers, and

taking notes. The dozens of maps he created capture life in rural Rhode Island as people born in the 19th century remembered it.

**Thursday  
November 3  
7:00 p.m.**

Paul St. Amand of Coventry, George Matteson's grandson, is the keeper of his grandfather's maps and map-making tools. Steven and Linda Kornatz,

members of the Scituate Preservation Society, have used St. Amand's collection to create a program about George Matteson and his map-making. The Kornatzes and St. Amand will be in our Museum Gallery on Thursday, November 3 at 7:00 p.m. to tell us about Matteson's fascinating life and his maps. They will show us about two dozen original maps and many of Matteson's surveying and map-making tools.

### **We're back in the Museum Gallery for our Fall Lecture Series**

Our Fall 2022 Lecture Series will take place in-person in our Museum Gallery.

The programs also will be live-streamed and recorded. Our members and friends will be able to watch the programs live on a computer or other device. Each program also will be available to view later by opening a link that will be posted on our website. If you would like to watch a program from home, please send an e-mail to Julie Wardwell, our Museum Administrator, at [pdmoac@aol.com](mailto:pdmoac@aol.com). She will send you the link to the live stream.

## The Peace Dale Museum of Art and Culture

1058 Kingstown Road • Peace Dale, Rhode Island 02879 • (401) 783-5711

[www.peacedalemuseum.org](http://www.peacedalemuseum.org) [pdmoac@aol.com](mailto:pdmoac@aol.com)

*Julie Wardwell, Museum Administrator • Louise Weaver, Administrative Assistant • Mary Cocroft Brown, Educator*



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## The Memory Pile Tradition

In *Travels in New-England and New-York*, Rev. Timothy Dwight, the president of Yale College, recalled a trip through western Massachusetts in 1798:

"From Barrington, on our way to Stockbridge, we crossed Monument mountain: a spur from the Green Mountain range. The name is derived from a pile of stones, about six or eight feet in diameter, circular at its base, and raised in the form of an obtuse cone over the grave of one of the aborigines. The manner, in which it has been formed, is the following. Every Indian, who passes by the place, throws a stone upon the tomb of his countryman. By this slow method of accumulation, the heap has risen in a long series of years to its present size. The same mode of raising monuments for the dead, except in one particular, has existed among other nations. . . . By the natives of America it seems to be an expression of peculiar reverence, and an act of obedience to the dictates of their religion."

Since early colonial days and perhaps before, Native American travelers have left a stone, stick, or

other object at specific roadside locations. While local beliefs varied, securing good fortune through an act of remembrance appears to have been a common goal. Travelers, historians, and ethnographers have variously referred to the objects of this practice as memory piles, sacrifice rocks, stone heaps, or taverns.

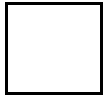
Although European-Americans did not record many Native American cultural practices, they did describe and record memory piles. Written accounts of the memory pile tradition span the past four centuries. Some of those records include the Native Americans' own explanations of this ritual.

On Thursday, December 1, anthropologist Timothy Ives will talk about the many historical written descriptions of memory piles and their implications for archaeology.

Dr. Ives, formerly the Rhode Island state archaeologist, will consider why this practice has long fascinated European-American observers.

The program will take place in the Museum Gallery at 7:00 p.m. It will also be live-streamed. If you would like to watch on your computer or other device, please send an e-mail to our Museum Administrator, Julie Wardwell, at [pdmoac@aol.com](mailto:pdmoac@aol.com) so she can send you the link.

**Thursday,  
December 1  
7:00 p.m.**



**It's the Museum's 130th Anniversary  
and South Kingstown's 300th Anniversary!**



The Town of South Kingstown, established in 1723 when it separated from North Kingstown, is celebrating its 300th anniversary next year. The 300th Anniversary Steering Committee, made up of residents, students, and representatives of businesses and cultural, educational, faith-based, civic, and nonprofit organizations appointed by the Town Council, is planning a number of commemorative programs and events. The Steering Committee has asked the Museum to participate by hosting an event and participating in the parade on June 17, 2023. No firm plans have been made yet. We will keep you posted!