

# MUSEUM PIECES

The Newsletter of The Peace Dale Museum of Art and Culture

Vol. 35, No. 2

Spring 2023

## The Jewelry Capital of America

It all started in Providence with Seril Dodge, a clockmaker and silversmith from Pomfret, Conn., and his nephew Nehemiah Dodge. Seril's shop, near the corner of North Main and Thomas Streets in Providence, was one of the first in Rhode Island to sell jewelry. When Seril returned to Pomfret in the late 1790s, he turned his shop over to Nehemiah, who invented a process for coating less expensive metals such as copper with gold and silver. The fashion jewelry industry was born.

From the mid-1800s through the 1980s, Rhode Island was known as the jewelry capital of the country. The Depression of the 1930s aided the growth of the industry, as the demand grew for less expensive jewelry made of gold-plated or silver-plated metals and synthetic stones.

Rhode Island manufacturers such as Cohn & Rosenberg (Coro), Trifari, Little Nemo, Monet, Swank and Speidel and jewelry designers such as Gene Verrecchia of Coro and Alfred Philippe of Trifari became internationally recognized. By 1986, Rhode Island produced eighty percent of the jewelry



**Thursday, June 1  
at 7:00 P.M.**



made in the United States. The annual revenue of Rhode Island's approximately 900 jewelry firms was estimated at \$1.5 billion.

What made the Rhode Island jewelry industry such an explosive success? Find out on Thursday, June 1, when Tom Tomaszek, the newest member of our Board of Trustees, will talk about Rhode Island's role as the jewelry capital of America, the major manufacturers, and the designers who worked for them. The program will take place in our Gallery at 7:00 p.m. If you will join us in person, feel free to bring a piece of jewelry for Tom to discuss.

Tom has been buying, selling, and appraising antiques and collectables for almost forty years, and has traveled extensively in Europe, Japan and Singapore.

Tom exhibits at East Coast shows, including the Brimfield Antique Flea Market, and sells at cooperative shops in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine.

Tom has a degree in history and anthropology from Rhode Island College. He and his wife Joyce live in Blackstone, Mass.

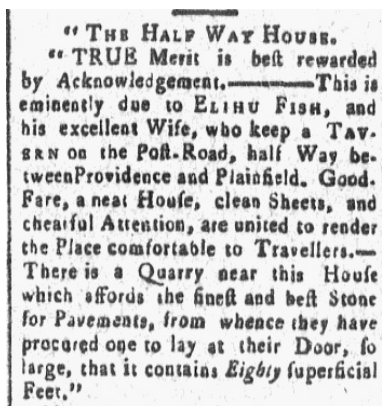
# Made By Hand

Mark Luzio was looking around for a place to set up a wood-working shop when he came upon the Potter House, a massive colonial building with two huge central chimneys on Old Plainfield Pike in Scituate.

Luzio had been creating custom millwork in New York City shops for years, and he had done restoration work on a number of old houses, but he was astonished when he saw the interior of the Potter House. It had more original, untouched 18th century woodwork than he had ever seen in one building.

Luzio bought the house in 1990 and spent the next ten years restoring it, creating new millwork by hand with 18th and 19th century tools. The original part of the Potter House is believed to date to 1711. Starting in 1731, it was used as a tavern. The house was expanded

in about 1783. Elihu Fish, a veteran of the Revolutionary War, took over the tavern in 1798, bought the property in 1800, and doubled the size of the building.



Luzio immediately recognized the interior of the Potter House as the work of a master joiner. He learned later that Elihu Fish was no ordinary tavernkeeper. Before the

war, Fish was apprenticed to Edmund Townsend of Newport, a master joiner who learned his trade from his father Job, one of the founders of the Townsend and Goddard furniture-making empire. The only piece Edmund is known to have labeled is now in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Luzio is certain that Fish himself was responsible for the Potter House's exquisite interior workmanship.

On Thursday, May 4, at 7:00 p.m., Mark Luzio will be in our Museum Gallery to tell us where he found the tools he used to replicate Fish's work, how he knew what the millwork should look like, and how he managed to seamlessly meld new with old.

A native of Ohio, Luzio attended Case Western Reserve University. His shop and his home are now in Brooklyn, Connecticut.

**Thursday, May 4 at 7:00 P.M.**



## Our Spring Lecture Series begins on Thursday, May 4

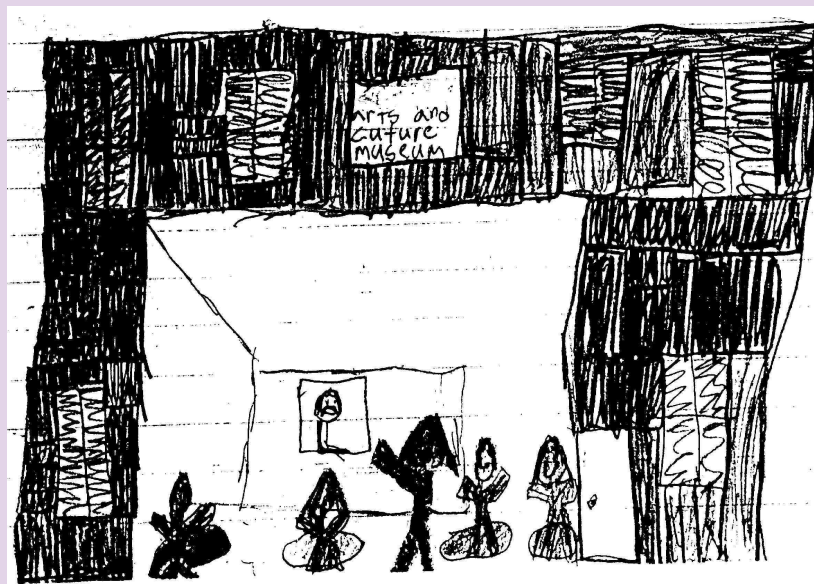
Our Spring 2023 Lecture Series will take place in-person in our Museum Gallery. The programs also will be live-streamed so our members and friends will be able to watch the programs live on a computer or other device. To watch the live stream, go to our YouTube page at

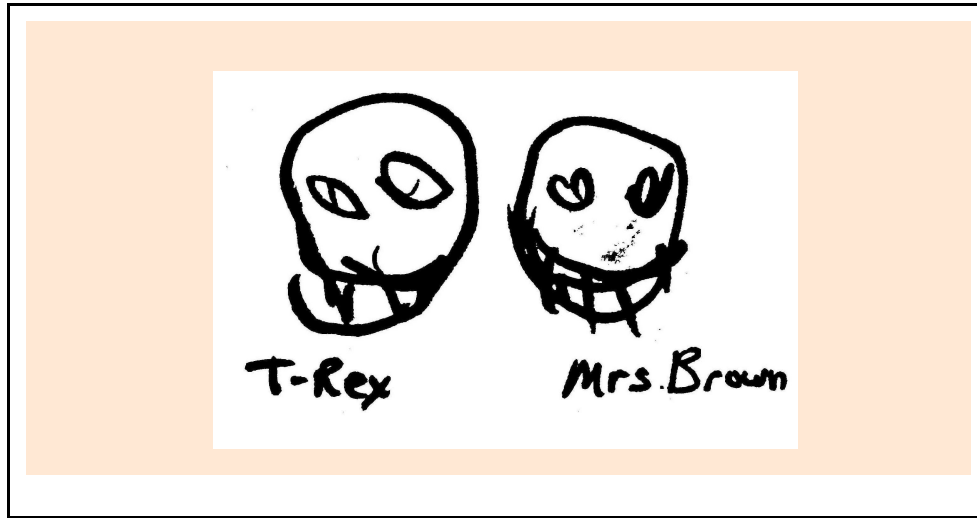
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQZtR6kjyDMO1v0AKQoYrHA>

# T. Rex and Mrs. Brown

Mary Brown is the Museum's Educator. Assisted by Louise Weaver and Julie Wardwell, she leads programs for school students. Occasionally Mary, Louise and Julie receive thank-you notes from enthusiastic visitors. A few recent samples are shown below and on page 4.

Dear Museum / our guide volunteers  
thank you for your best. i love  
MUSEUMS and history IM sorry for  
shouting answers out loud when you  
didn't call on me. It is nice  
that you take most of your time  
and effort in the Peace Dale  
MUSEUM it is sooo! Fasinating.  
I hope this makes up for what  
i did. hope you have a good  
day! from: ryan





Dear Museum/Tour Guide Volunteers, thank you so so much for planning are field trip! It was amazing! I learned so much, and it was really fun! I did not know that you could learn so much from only one museum and a little walking around Peace Dale. I am so grateful that you put this field trip together, and I will never forget it!!!

Sincerely, Arden

## What's in Your Attic?



**Save the date! Our annual "Trash or Treasure" Fundraiser is on Sunday, September 17, 2023.**

## The Peace Dale Museum of Art and Culture

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

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



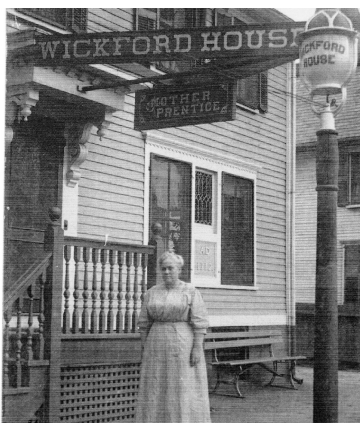
### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Lisa Fiore, President • Mary Cocroft Brown, Vice President • Linda Hennessey, Secretary • Betsy Cook, Treasurer  
Karen R. Ellsworth • Donna Grady • Margaret G. Leeson • Tom Tomaszek • Louise Weaver

*Virginia Williams, Past President • Sarah Peabody Turnbaugh, Director Emerita*

# Women of Wickford

Ellen D. Lucas of Provincetown, Mass. probably expected to spend her life the way her mother did, as the wife of a fisherman, in the seaside town where she grew up. But fate took her to a different seaside town, where she became renown for her culinary skills and her hospitality.



Mother Prentice

Ellen and her husband George Prentice opened Wickford House, on Main Street, shortly after their marriage in 1881. It started as a small inn and stable serving people traveling through Wickford, but it quickly grew to a multi-room hotel and dining room. Mother Prentice and her husband— and their chicken pies, strawberry shortcake, chowder, biscuits, and jonny-

cakes— put Wickford on the map. As one admirer said in 1952, “Main Street wouldn’t begin to hold the cars that would try to park at her door if she were alive today.”



Maria Hammond's sampler

You can learn about the life of Ellen Prentice and many other women from North Kingstown—the unknown, the famous, and the infamous— on Thursday, May 18, when Tim Cranston will be in our Museum Gallery to talk about the Women of Wickford. Tim, who is North Kingstown’s Town Historian, probably knows more past and present North Kingstown residents than anyone else in town. He especially enjoys learning about women whom history seems to have forgotten.

They include Maria Hammond Champlin, who as a girl stitched the beautiful sampler now owned by the North Kingstown Free

Library; “Blind Betsey” Briggs, a fiercely independent woman who supported herself as a peddler and was the sexton, treasurer, and janitor at the Stoney Lane Six Principle Baptist Church; and Susan Northup Ennis, a renown weaver, crafter of rag rugs, and tatter of lace whose hand-churned butter was served on the tables of the Newport elite.



The Avis Block

And let’s not forget Avis Ann Smith Spink, who owned most of the commercial real estate in Wickford as well as a farm that extended all the way up West Main Street to Post Road, and who petitioned the General Assembly to resume using her late first husband’s name after she divorced her second husband.

Please join us for this fascinating and inspiring program.

**Thursday, May 18 at 7:00 P.M.**

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



Once again this year, the Peace Dale Museum of Art and Culture will take part in 401Gives, an event that gives Rhode Islanders an opportunity to unite around causes in which they truly believe. We hope that you, your family, and your friends will make a donation to help us continue our educational work. To donate, please go to <https://www.401gives.org/organizations/peace-dale-museum-of-art-culture>