

PRIMITIVE PIECES

The Newsletter of The Museum of Primitive Art and Culture

1058 Kingstown Road, Room 5
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www.primitiveartmuseum.org

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Fall 2009

Scottish Country Dancing:

Elizabethan courtliness in a modern form

Scottish Country Dancing, a form of dance with roots in Elizabethan England, is undergoing a popularity explosion today.

In this very sociable dance, groups of couples begin in two facing lines or in a square, and dance a sequence of formations that will bring them back to their starting positions. There are thousands of different dances that vary considerably in complexity and ease of dancing.

Violins, pianos, and sometimes bagpipes provide the music. Depending on the type and tempo of the accompanying music, the dances can be energetic reels or jigs, or stately strathspeys. As the dancers often say, "The music will tell you what to do."

At the English Court of Elizabeth I, country dances—figure dances of the countryside set to Scottish or Irish music—were all the rage. But the greatest flowering of this form of dance was in the assembly rooms of the 18th Century. In Edinburgh, and later throughout Scotland, the elegance of country dancing was combined with the energy and precision of the older Scottish dance traditions, including reels, rants, and jigs, to create a new style of dance—Scottish Country Dancing.

After country dance died out in England, it continued to flourish in Scotland. But after World War I it had all but disappeared. It was rescued by two women, one a member of a distinguished Argyll family and the other a physical education teacher, who placed an ad in a Glasgow newspaper and in 1923, convened the first meeting of what would later become the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society.



Burns Night, Royal Scottish Country Dance Society Boston Branch.

Today, the RSCDS has more than 165 branches and affiliates throughout the world, and groups of Scottish Country Dance enthusiasts, Scots and non-Scots alike, can be found nearly everywhere.

The Mystic, Conn. Scottish Country Dancers meet each Friday evening at St. Andrew Presbyterian Church in Groton, Conn. Beginners are always welcome and lessons are held from 7 to 8 p.m. On Thursday, October 22, some of the members will demonstrate the choreography patterns of this refined but friendly form of dance. They will also teach us a few simple steps.

The program begins at 7 p.m. in the third-floor studio at the Peace Dale Office Building, 1058 Kingstown Road.

Our Founders' Evening Lecture Series Begins October 22nd

Wednesday, November 4th

My Bali

When Elaine Rusk first visited Bali more than ten years ago, she fell in love with the Balinese people and their magical culture.

One of Indonesia's 33 provinces, Bali is home to the vast majority of Indonesia's small Hindu minority. Temples are everywhere, and religion is interwoven into daily life. Bali also is the principal tourist destination in Indonesia.

Bali is renowned for its diverse and sophisticated art forms, including painting, sculpture, woodcarving, handcrafts, and performing arts. Elaine's shop in Newport, Creative Works International, sells handcrafted fair-trade jewelry, baskets, sandals, sculpture, and other works created by indigenous artisans in Bali and other developing countries.

When she is visiting Bali to work with local artists, Elaine lives with a Balinese family in their extended family compound in the jungle, taking part in their cultural, religious and family events.

Elaine will tell us about the magical place halfway around the world that is her second home.



Each program begins at 7 p.m. in the Museum Gallery on the second floor of the Peace Dale Office Building, 1058 Kingstown Road, across from the Peace Dale Library. Refreshments will be served. Admission is free for Museum members; donations are appreciated.

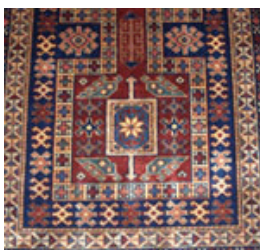
Thursday, December 3rd

Choosing and caring for Oriental rugs

Last May, Roz Rustigian, who operates V. George Rustigian Rugs, Inc., in Providence, shared with us some of her extensive knowledge about the history of Oriental rugs and how they are made. On December 3, Roz will return with her colleague Patti Watson to discuss the more practical aspects of Oriental rug ownership.

Roz will talk about rug selection and maintenance, focusing on how lifestyle, house style, pets, children, and traffic patterns should be considered when choosing the right floor covering for one's taste and budget.

Patti, who is an award-winning interior designer and RISD grad, will guide us on how to select an area rug to enhance existing décor and how to launch a new interior scheme based on a favorite rug.



The Museum of Primitive Art and Culture

1958 Kingstown Road, Suite 5 • Peace Dale, Rhode Island 02879 • (401) 783-5711

Beth Hogan, Museum Administrator

Louise Weaver, Administrative Assistant

Mary Brown, Educator • Marjorie Burston, Grants Administrator

The Museum Gallery is open Wednesdays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and by appointment.

Another successful “trash or treasure” Museum fundraiser

About eighty guests enjoyed a buffet dinner and watched as their “trash” and “treasures” were professionally appraised at the Museum’s Sixth Annual Fundraiser at the Dunes Club on Sunday, September 27th.

Once again, our appraiser was Stuart Whitehurst of Skinner, Inc. of Boston, one of the nation's premier auction houses. An associate member of the International Society of Appraisers, Stuart is a regular on a popular PBS television show.

Stuart found some junk and some gems. One lucky guest was delighted to discover that a little English pottery jug purchased at the Jonnycake Center in Peace Dale for 50¢ is worth \$50.

The net proceeds from the evening total about \$4,000. All of it will go toward the museum's operating budget.



Stuart Whitehurst of Skinner, Inc. appraises a wooden chest for Trustee Peggy Leeson.

Currently on display in the Museum Gallery

New England Splint Baskets

The museum is currently exhibiting Native New England baskets from the 19th and 20th centuries. These are usually fashioned by plaiting together very thin wooden ash splints. Baskets from throughout New England are included for viewing.



In Northern New England, thin plaited ash splints with interwoven sweetgrass have been a popular choice of Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Micmac, and Abenaki basketmakers. Today, baskets by current Native basketmakers can be viewed at other museums such as the Abbe Museum and Hudson Museum in Maine and retail outlets like the Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance in Old Town.

In Southern New England, the Connecticut and Rhode Island Native groups generally have favored the use of wider splints. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Nipmuck, Mohegan, Pequot, and Narragansett peoples often have hand-painted their basket designs, while western Connecticut peoples like the Schaghticoke and Mahican have used block stamped design elements on their creations. Examples of the complex and varied products of these Native New England traditions may be viewed in our gallery through June 2010. — *Sarah Peabody Turnbaugh*

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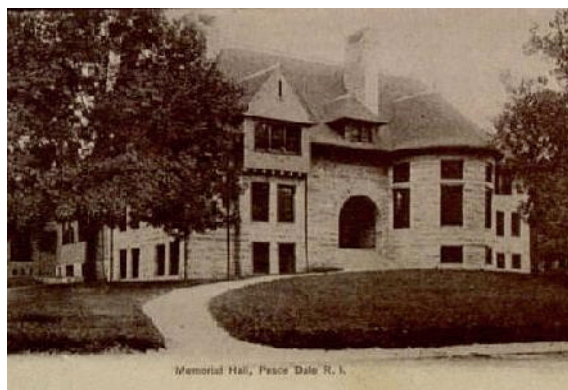
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Memorial Hall, now the Peace Dale Library