

PRIMITIVE PIECES

The Newsletter of The Peace Dale Museum of Art and Culture

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Fall 2021

Who was Mary Williams?

If you live in Rhode Island, you know who Roger Williams was. But you probably know little or nothing about his wife Mary, who lived in a time when the vast majority of women left no trace of themselves other than their children.

Charlotte Carrington-Farmer, associate professor of history at Roger Williams University, is using documents from two continents—and everything she knows about Roger Williams, whom she has studied for twenty years—to paint a portrait of this mostly-forgotten woman.

On Thursday, November 18, Dr. Carrington-Farmer will tell us what she has learned, and reveal her most recent discoveries, including a document in Mary's handwriting and details about her life in England.

Mary Bernard was born in 1509 in Nottinghamshire, the daughter of a prominent Puritan clergyman. She was a maid and companion in a wealthy Essex household when she met Roger, a chaplain in the same household. He had become ill and she nursed him back to health. They married on December 15, 1629, and about a year later, they

boarded a ship bound for the Massachusetts Bay Colony.



**THURSDAY
NOVEMBER 18
7:00 P.M.**

Could Mary have guessed what her life would be like? Did she willingly trade comfortable surroundings for a life in the most primitive of places? Did she know her husband would be away for months or years at a time?

She was pregnant with her son Joseph when Roger left on his first

trip back to England. She did not see her husband again until Joseph was nine months old.

The second time Roger left for England, their eldest child was 18 and their youngest only 8. Roger was away for almost three years.

Mary died in 1676, leaving six children and at least twenty grandchildren. She died during King Philip's War, in the same year that Narragansett Indians set fire to most of the homes in Providence. The Williams home, near what is now North Main Street, was burned to the ground, destroying documents that may have told us more about Roger and Mary.

"Mary Williams was more than Roger's wife—her experience matters and her place in history matters," says Dr. Carrington-Farmer. "It's clear from trying to piece together Mary's life that doing women's history is hard. You have to be creative with the sources that you use to shed light on their lives."

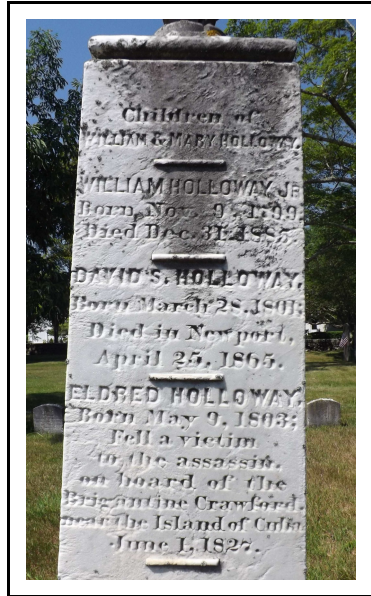
Please join us on Thursday, November 18 at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom for "Writing Mary Williams into the Historical Record."

The Stories Behind the Stones

Most people who hear the words “repository of history” imagine a library, a museum, or a university. They don’t think of the historical cemetery they pass almost every day, but that, too, might be a collection of information about the history of their community.

Elm Grove Cemetery, opened in 1851, was North Kingstown’s first public cemetery. As South County grew and family farms became neighborhoods, the old family burial grounds on many of those farms were moved to Elm Grove, which now covers 44 acres and holds more than 10,000 graves. Some of the first white settlers of North Kingstown are buried there.

**THURSDAY,
OCTOBER 28**



Each stone marking a grave is physical evidence of a person who once lived, and the words on those stones are like Haiku—each word was carefully chosen to tell us why the person remembered was important.

Behind those carefully-chosen words are tales of intrigue, unbearable sorrow, and monumental triumph; tales of lives well-lived and lives cruelly cut short.

On Thursday, October 28, North Kingstown Town Historian Tim Cranston will tell the stories behind some of the stones in Elm Grove. The stories he tells will teach us about the history of South County. Please join us!



Detail, Map of the city of Providence and town of North Providence (1835), Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division

The Lost Neighborhood of Snowtown

Before there was Waterplace Park, there was the Great Salt Cove, and before there was the Rhode Island State House, there was Snowtown—a mixed-race working-class neighborhood known as a haven for brothels, gambling houses and other unsavory enterprises that occupied Smith Hill in the 1830s.

A massive archaeological project in Providence in the early 1980s uncovered thousands of artifacts. In

**THURSDAY,
DECEMBER 2**

2013, archaeologists at the Public Archaeology Laboratory (PAL) began to catalog and study those artifacts. Many of the items revealed exciting new information about life in the lost neighborhood known as Snowtown.

Heather Olson, PAL laboratory

manager, is a member of the Snowtown Project research team, an independent group of archaeologists and historians who are studying the artifacts from Snowtown to recover a picture of what life there was like.

On Thursday, December 2, she will show us some of those lost-and-found items and tell us about the project’s most recent discoveries.

The Peace Dale Museum of Art and Culture

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We're on Zoom again this fall

For our Fall 2021 Lecture Series, we had planned to resume live programs in our Museum Gallery. However, the resurgence of the COVID virus has forced us to reconsider. The Board of Trustees has decided that to protect everyone's health and safety, we will offer our fall programs on the Zoom internet platform, as we did last fall and last spring. For the future, we are exploring the feasibility of offering "hybrid" programs that can be attended either in person or virtually on line.

Our virtual fall 2021 programs will be broadcast live on Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. If you would like to attend a program, please send an e-mail to our Administrator, Julie Wardwell, at pdmoac@aol.com. Include the date of the program on the subject line of your e-mail. A few days before each program, she will send you a link to the Zoom program. Please make a separate reservation for each program.

Hope to see you on Zoom!

Lisa Fiore

President, Board of Trustees



Meet the newest member of our Board of Trustees

Donna Grady is the newest member of our Board of Trustees. Donna received her bachelor's degree in anthropology from URI in 1977. She applied for a job at the Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc. in 1986. Because PAL had no openings in field work, she took a part-time position as a laboratory assistant. Donna soon became laboratory supervisor, directing a full-time staff and gaining experience in cultural material identification, computer data analysis, collections management and curation. She subsequently became PAL's information systems manager, retiring in April after 33 years at PAL. We are delighted to have a trustee with Donna's breadth of experience and expertise on our Board of Trustees.

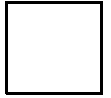
Please let us know where you are!

We are updating our mailing lists— our old-fashioned snail mail mailing list and our e-mail list.

If we don't have your correct addresses, please send them to our office at

pdmoac@aol.com. We need your permission to send you copies of our periodic e-mails.

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



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

“Trash or Treasure” Fundraiser

Sunday, September 26, 2021



The Dunes Club, Narragansett

Professional appraisals by Tom Tomaszek

Cocktails and open forum appraisals at 4:00 p.m. • Buffet supper at 6:00 p.m.

Cash bar. Business casual attire.

Your ticket entitles you to one appraisal. Additional items are \$10 each.

To reserve your ticket, please contact the Museum Office by phone at (401) 783-5711
or by e-mail at pdmoac@aol.com