



# CHS Newsletter

August 2024



## Come Join Us & Make CHS History at 75<sup>th</sup> CHS Anniversary Celebrations

### In September

*Mark your Calendar & Attend these Festivities.*

**Sept. 6<sup>th</sup> from 5 to 7pm, CHS 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala & will honor 9 Cranston Residents**

**Sept. 7<sup>th</sup> 4 to 9pm, Sprague Mansion Grounds: Night Market At the Mansion – food trucks, vendors.**

**Family starts at 7pm. Bring lawn chairs & blankets.**

**Sept. 8<sup>th</sup> at a 3pm Ceremony in Carriage House, the Cranston Civil War Cannons will be returned by the RI National Guard to the City of Cranston**

**Sept. 17<sup>th</sup> at 7pm, our open membership meeting will feature a presentation on the history of CHS**

Joy  
Homestead



Governor Sprague  
Mansion



## OFFICERS

**Sandra Moyer**  
President

**John O'Leary**  
Vice President

**Mary Mierka**  
Secretary

**Tristan Poirier**  
Treasurer

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John O'Leary (Nominations)

(Joy Homestead)

Herbert Zakrison (Buildings and Grounds)

### Directors at Large

John Hill

Ann Sasso

*The Cranston Historical Society's mission is to protect, document,  
interpret and expand understanding of Cranston history.*

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# President's Message

By  
**Sandra Moyer**

During the month of September, we will be celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Cranston Historical Society. The festivities begin during the weekend of Sept 6 – 8 on the grounds of the Governor Sprague Mansion. The Friday night Gala will honor nine people whose lifelong work has made a difference to our city. Refreshments, including wine and beer, will be served under tents as we thank these honorees. Saturday night will be a family event that will feature entertainment and food trucks. Sunday afternoon will officially welcome the Sprague cannons to Cranston. Then on September 17 at 7 pm we will have our regular membership meeting featuring an illustrated presentation of the Society's 75 year history. For more information on all of these events, please refer to pages x to x in this newsletter.



Our anniversary committee has worked very hard on these events and we hope that you will be able to join us. I'd like to thank John O'Leary for chairing the Friday evening gala, Grace Swinski for chairing the Saturday event and Gregg Mierka for chairing the Sunday afternoon event. The other committee members are: Linda Casey, John Hill, Mary Mierka, Sandra Moyer, Barbara Polichetti, and Ann Sasso. If you are interesting in volunteering to help at any of these events, please call Mary at 401 944-9226

These events will join others that have made use of our spacious grounds. Recently, we have had a Celtic band concert and a wedding, as well as programs organized by the Cranston Public Library and family events sponsored by COZY of the Cranston Public Schools. They have all made use of our tent and gazebo. These amenities are also available to the general public when they rent the Sprague Mansion for their own celebrations.



# Membership

## New Member

Cranston: Maureen Greaves; Lolly & Frank Iacabbo

## Membership Dues — Reminder

It is not too late to send in your membership dues for 2024-25 dues.

### **Please support our Other Business Members and Donors:**

ABCD Brothers Kitchen Food Truck-Cranston [\(401\)497-7481](tel:(401)497-7481)

All The Answers, Inc.-Warwick, Mailing & Printing Services [alltheanswersinc.com](http://alltheanswersinc.com)

Cranston West Area Career & Tech Center

EMC (Energy Management & Control Services)-Cranston, providers of building control/energy & integrated facility management systems [emccontrols.net](http://emccontrols.net)

Forest Hills Nurseries Inc.-Cranston, Retail/Wholesale plants/nursery [foresthillsnurseries.com](http://foresthillsnurseries.com)

JTN Landscaping Services-Central Falls [jtnlandscapingservices@gmail.com](mailto:jtnlandscapingservices@gmail.com)

North Eastern Tree Services-Cranston [northeasterntree.com](http://northeasterntree.com)

PPA, LLP-Certified Public Accounts [info@ppallp.com](mailto:info@ppallp.com)

Rhode Island Civil War Round Table-RIs premier Civil War discussion group [ricwrt.com](http://ricwrt.com)

Rhode Island Dental Arts-Cranston, All dental services [ridentists.com](http://ridentists.com)

Tasca Auto Group-Pontiac Ave.-Cranston [tasca.com](http://tasca.com)

North Eastern Tree Services-Cranston [northeasterntree.com](http://northeasterntree.com)

Seasons of New England Garden Shop-Warwick [SeasonsofNewEngland.com](http://SeasonsofNewEngland.com)

Vonsol Construction Management-Cranston [vonsolpartners.com](http://vonsolpartners.com)

Wilscape Nursery & Garden Center-Warwick [treesdelivered.com](http://treesdelivered.com)



# Spring/Summer Events



**Hi Neighbor! April  
CHS Membership  
Meeting with Jim  
Crooks-VP,  
Narragansett  
Brewing Co.**



**April 28 American Girl Doll Tea**



**Spring Grounds  
Beautification at the Mansion**



**Cranston West Tech Students on Tour &  
Work on Handicap Rail Project.**



**Cranston Cem. Comm.  
Presentation. Training  
School Cemetery by  
CHCC/CHS members  
John Hill & Sandra Moyer**



**Gaspee Celtic Jam  
Performs at Mansion**

**CELTIC MUSIC JAM**  
[www.gaspeecelticjam.org](http://www.gaspeecelticjam.org)



**June 14 Time Travel  
Book Fair**



**CHS Members Wed  
at the Gazebo in  
June – Congrats!**





# 75<sup>th</sup> CHS Anniversary Celebrations

## Gala Reception

**Sept. 6<sup>th</sup> Friday night from 5 – 7 pm** – A Gala Reception will be held on the grounds of the Governor Sprague Mansion from 5 – 7 pm. Hors d'oeuvres, dessert, wine and beer will be served. Mario Hilario will be the master of ceremonies and awards will be given out to our nine honorees. Each has been selected in recognition of their contribution to the city of Cranston.

Lt. General Reginald Centracchio (ret.)

John Howell

Hon. Frank Lombardi

Hon. Nicholas Mattiello

Joanne McGunagle

Henry Polichetti

U.S Senator Jack Reed

Hon. Chief Justice Frank Williams (ret.)

The White Family Foundation

There will be remarks by our honorary co-chairs Mayor Kenneth Hopkins and Council President Jessica Marino.

Tickets are \$50 and can be purchased by calling 401 944-9226 or mailing a check to 1351 Cranston Street, Cranston, RI 02920 by August 28 with your name, phone number and/or email.



# 75<sup>th</sup> CHS Anniversary Celebrations-2

## Night Market at the Mansion

**Sept. 7<sup>th</sup> Saturday afternoon and evening from 4 to 9pm** - A family fun event will be held on the grounds of the Governor Sprague Mansion. This event is free to the public and will feature food trucks, over 60 vendors, live music, and lawn games. At 7 pm, the movie, National Treasure, will be shown.



## Civil War Cannon Rededicated

**Sept. 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday afternoon starting at 3 pm** - An event will be held in the Sprague Carriage House during which the Sprague Civil War cannons will be turned over by the RI National Guard to the City of Cranston. These two historic cannons will be on display along with Civil War memorabilia.



## Membership Meeting



**Sept. 17<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm in the Governor Sprague Mansion** – Our membership meeting, which is free and open to the public, will feature a 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary cake. There will also be an illustrated presentation on the history of the Cranston Historical Society.

# Timeline of CHS History

By Sandra Moyer

May 26, 1949 - The Cranston Historical Society is started with the goal of receiving and caring for relics of historical interest and someday having a museum to display them.

June 23, 1949 - John Stuart is elected first president

April 5, 1950 – Articles of Association are filed with the state

Nov. 1950 - A weekly column, called 'Echoes of Cranston', written by CHS members begins to appear weekly in Cranston newspapers and continue until 1958 - 221 articles in all.

1954 - Bicentennial (1754 – 1954) is celebrated and CHS members contribute to the commemorative program with numerous articles on Cranston's history

1959 - The Society takes out a \$4,000 mortgage to buy the Joy Homestead, a house dating back to the 1770's. Many years of renovation follow.

1966 - Upset by plans to demolish the Governor Sprague Mansion, a group of CHS members led by Virginia Lynch spring into action to raise the \$100,000 needed to buy the property

Feb. 6, 1966 - Providence Sunday Journal runs article on the Society's attempts to save the Sprague Mansion using interior photos of the current residence of J. Harold May, general superintendent of the Cranston Print Works, and his wife.

Feb. 8, 1966 - Evening Bulletin article details how the community is helping to save the Sprague Mansion, including school children who are raising money, building models out of sugar cubes and writing letters and essays.

June 1, 1966 - CHS officially owns the Governor Sprague Mansion

May 1967 - Historical Trail maps are distributed to all Cranston students in Grades 5 – 12, encouraging them to visit the Joy Homestead, the Sprague Mansion and the Windsor's Azalea Gardens

1968 - Mr. and Mrs. James Scott become resident managers of the Sprague Mansion and stay for 8 years.

1975 -The Society publishes *Other Ways and Other Days*, a collection of historical articles written by Gladys Brayton.

April 1975- CHS holds Pops Concert at the Chateau de Ville to benefit the Joy Homestead

July 1976 As part of the country's bicentennial, CHS rents a bus and offers guide tours of historical sites in Cranston

August 1976 - Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Kelly become resident managers of the Sprague Mansion. After her husband died, Mabel stays on until 2008

1999 - Lydia Rapoza and Bette Miller write *Images of America: Cranston* featuring photos from the society's collection



# Timeline of CHS History-2

1999 - The society celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a series of special events.

Oct. 2003 - The Charlie the Butler Ghost Party debuts and continues every Halloween to this day, featuring first Rory Raven and then Jared the Mentalist as entertainment.

June 18, 2005 – The first Rochambeau Strawberry Biscuit Tea is held, marking the date when General Rochambeau marched past the Joy Homestead on the way to Yorktown to join Washington in winning the American Revolution.

June 2006 – Joy Homestead is designated as a local historic district.

April 2008 - Gregg and Mary Mierka become the new resident managers.

Oct. 16, 2010 CHS celebrates the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the city with a wine and cheese reception featuring a visual presentation entitled “Remembering Cranston 100 Years Ago”

Late Summer 2011 – Began CHS first bus tour/entertainment with dinner or Sprague punch program at Sprague Mansion--visitors from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Maine, Cape Cod, & Canada

Feb. 2013 – CHS uses a House Legislative grant to buy a computer, software and storage units that allow us to better store and keep track of our collections.

2014 - *Images of America: Cranston Revisited* is written by Sandra Moyer and Tom Worthington, using more photos from the Society's collection.

April 2014 - ABC News does a segment on their *Our Neighborhood, Our Lives* series that features Cranston. The program included an extensive interview with the Society's president and a tour of the Sprague Mansion.

April 2015 - The first Victorian Tea is held featuring Patricia Perry on Victorian etiquette.

March 2017 - The CHS newsletter debuts a new format featuring color photos and several original articles on local historical topics in each issue.

April 19, 2017 – The Cranston Discovery Network, a series of historical informational signs using information and photos from the CHS collection, dedicates its first sign entitled Spragueville. Seven other signs follow.

2019 - *Cranston Through Time*, written by Sandra Moyer and Jan Ragno, uses current photos of Cranston landmarks to contrast them with old photos.

2020 - Tour with Tea program developed during pandemic--limited/intimate seating in Sprague Dining Room--successfully continues today.

2021 - The CHS begins a concerted effort to work together with other Cranston nonprofits and government agencies to benefit our city. The Sprague Mansion and its grounds became the site of Mayor's Picnics, library summer reading kickoffs, and events hosted by organizations like Cranston Family Center/COZ and One Cranston Health Equity Zone.

April 2024 – First American Girl Doll Afternoon Tea for young folks & families fundraising event

September 6-8, 2024 and September 17- CHS will celebrate its 75 Anniversary

# Lifestyles of Long Ago

## 1949 Household Costs & New Products

By Mary Mierka

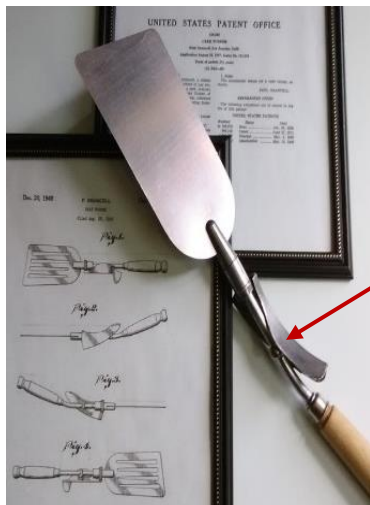
In the U.S., after World War II, a 'recession' started at the end of 1948, lasting almost a year and ending in October 1949. It still was a time of frugality for citizens. Households would use what they had available in the pantry to feed the family. Although these prices would seem low to us, food took up a greater part of one's income than it does now. The price of milk could be up to 84 or 92cents a gallon, dozen eggs cost 49-70 cents,(79 ) butter was 69 cents per pound, a loaf of bread cost 14 cents, and 2 pounds of coffee cost 85 cents.) In Cranston, First National Super Market Stores and A&P were featuring rib roast at 59 cents a pound and pork loin at 39 cents a pound.

Creating more modern household tools for the kitchen was becoming more prevalent, like the invention of the self-defrosting refrigerator. Many new foods were available. Kraft developed sliced American cheese & Velveeta. Fritos Corn Chips were introduced and products such as Sara Lee Cheese Cake, Junior Mints, Smarties & Jolly Ranchers, Jell-O/Jell-O Pudding, Karo Syrup, McCormick Pure Vanilla Extract, V-8 Juice, Mott's, Planter's Peanuts, Franco-American Beef Gravy, Underwood Deviled Ham, canned Campbell's Chicken Noodle & Tomato soups were popular. Can you believe most of these products are still available decades later!



Try this moist chocolate Wacky Cake recipe from 1949 using no milk, eggs or butter (now known as Dump Cake). Feel free to substitute ingredients by using what's in your own pantry!

### In the Kitchen . . .



"Suzie Flipper"  
Kinetic Spatula  
(thumb driven,  
mechanical,  
rotates 150  
degrees & flips  
by pressing side)  
1949 Patent.

### Wacky Cake

(Recipe of Mrs. Adam, Detroit, MI 1949)

1 ½ c sifted flour	1 c sugar
3 tbls cocoa	1 tsp baking soda
½ tsp salt	5 tbls shortening
1 tbl vinegar	1 tsp vanilla (or any flavor)
1 c cold water	

Sift flour, sugar, cocoa soda and salt into bowl. Add remaining ingredients including water, beat until smooth. Pour into greased/waxed paper-lined 9x9x2in. pan. Bake 350 degree for 25-30 min. Optional: Dust with powdered sugar.  
Printed from NYT, Nov. 1949.



# Calendar of Events



Sprague Mansion: Events payable to Cranston Historical Society, 1351 Cranston St, Cranston, RI 02920. Parking & accessible access in back -- enter at Cranston Street (across from McShawn's Pub).

**Sept. 6 5pm-7pm 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala of the Cranston Historical Society/Special honorees.**

Fundraising event. Music at the Gazebo. Limited seating/reserve today: \$50 payable to Cranston Historical Society by August 28. **Must RSVP 944-9226. See p.6.**



**Sept. 7 4 to 9pm. 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Special Night Market at the Mansion. Family fun on the grounds of the Sprague Mansion – Music – Entertainment - Vendors. Free movie at 7pm. Fundraising event. No entrance fee. See p. 7.**

**Sept. 8 3pm CHS 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration: Return of Cranston Cannons Ceremony at Sprague Mansion Carriage House.**

**Special Guests:** Adjutant Major General Callahan guest-RING & Major General Reginald Centracchio (ret.). **Donation \$3.00. See p. 7.**

**Sept. 17 7pm 75<sup>th</sup> Cranston Historical Society Celebration Special Presentation/Social Event.**

Special Recognitions/Light refreshments. **Limited seating. Must RSVP 944-9226. See p. 7.**



**Sept. 27 6pm Early Evening Tour with Tea at Sprague Mansion.** Take pleasure in a relaxing tea of the evening/special sweet served in the Sprague. **Must RSVP/Seating 10 only. Call to reserve 944-9226.** \$18 nonmembers; \$16 members, payable by Sept. 21 to Cranston Historical Society, 1351 Cranston St., Cranston 02920.

**October 25 7pm at the Spooooooky Sprague Mansion. Charlie the Butler Ghost Party features Jared the Magician & Mentalist -- A ghostly good time! \$20.00 nonmembers; \$17.00 for CHS members, payable to Cranston Historical Society by October 20. Reserve/Limited Seating (401)944-9226. Age appropriate 14.**



**Holiday Open House ~ Governor Sprague Mansion: December 1 Sunday 3pm - 5pm AND 11am to 1pm at Joy Homestead, 156 Scituate Ave.**

**4:30pm Outdoor Mansion Tree lighting sponsored by Councilman John Donegan.** Bain Middle School Chorus to perform at Gazebo. Details TBA.

Call: 944-9226 to volunteer. No Charge.

**Call to Volunteer at any of our events (401) 944-9226.**



Cranston Historical Society  
1351 Cranston Street  
Cranston, RI 02920

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  - Sept. 6<sup>th</sup> from 5 to 7pm 75<sup>th</sup> CHS Fundraising Gala, honoring Cranston Residents. See p. 6.
  - Sept. 7<sup>th</sup> 4 to 9pm. Night Market at Gov. Sprague Mansion. Family Fun. Vendors, Food Trucks, Entertainment. Free Movie at 7pm. See p. 7.
  - Sept. 8<sup>th</sup> 3pm Civil War Cannons Returned to City of Cranston Ceremony -- at Sprague Carriage House w/RI National Guard, City/State Officials. Color Guard. See p. 7.
  - Sept. 17<sup>th</sup> at 7pm, Open Membership Meeting: CHS History Presentation. See p. 7.
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