



# CHS Newsletter

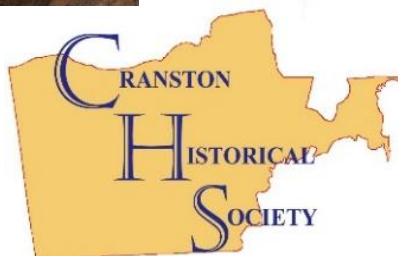
April 2023



**April 18 at 7pm**  
**CHS Membership Meeting**  
**Speaker: Drake Patten of Hurricane Hill Farm, Natick Ave, Cranston**

***From Sheep to Finished Product:  
The Tradition of Fiber Farming on  
a Cranston Farm***

**Ms. Patten raises Leicester Longwool sheep on her 48 acre historic conservation farm which can be booked for events and overnight stays**



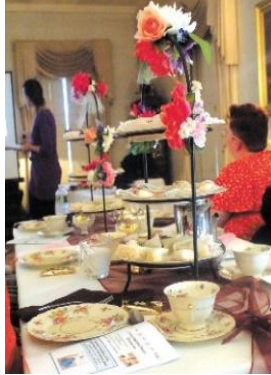
**Please renew your Cranston Historical Society membership this month. You might consider becoming a Life Member.**

***The printing of CHS Newsletters is done by All The Answers, Warwick ~  
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# Picture Gallery of



**Oct. Tea with  
Speaker Maria  
Vazquez**



**Fall Cranston  
Through  
Time Library Book  
Signing**



**November Meeting:  
Chester Loves Mabel  
By Nina Dillon**



**Ghost Party: Jared  
the Magician &  
Mentalist & Friends**



**Mansion Fall Clean  
Stop by April 15 for  
the Spring Clean Up  
Day!**



# Fall and Winter Events

## December 4 Sprague Mansion Holiday Open House



Left: Councilman Donegan, Rep. Magaziner. Right: Mayor O'Leary, Lt. Gov. Matos, Mayor Hopkins



Left: Sprague Family

Right: West Cranston Garden Club



**Poor Paul Filmed  
partly in Sprague  
Mansion  
Red Carpet RI  
Premiere March 5**

**Surprise Visit the Day  
before premiere.  
Executive Director &  
Writer: Sean Michael  
Beyer, California.  
Producer/Actor Nick  
Pasqual; Producers  
Susan Pasqual & H. Paul  
Pasqual, PA; &  
Producer, Writer/Actor:  
Adam Carbone of  
Cranston, RI**



**Actor Richard Riehle**



# President's Note

**By Sandra Moyer**

Welcome back to the 74<sup>th</sup> year of the Cranston Historical Society. To save postage costs, we are doing one mailing to include this newsletter, a flyer for our next general membership meeting and the materials for paying your annual dues. Instructions for the latter are included in Mary's letter which also gives you an idea of some of the things the Society have been doing as well as the benefits of membership.

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, April 18<sup>th</sup> when we will host a talk by a Cranston fiber farmer. Drake Patten of Hurricane Hill Farm will tell us about the sheep she raises and how their fleece is made into yarn and then finished products. If you are interested in local history, local farming and/or local crafts, this meeting will be of interest. Feel free to bring interested friends.



As is our tradition, the articles in this newsletter mirror our speaker's theme. Jim, our curator, writes about spinning wheels in our collection, Jan informs us on how dyeing fiber has changed and Mary has a recipe for lamb. We also highlight some of our past activities including photos of events and an article describing a movie that was shot in the Sprague Mansion.

We would like to thank Mayor Hopkins and the Cranston City Council for their financial support of the Society as well as House Representatives Jackie Baginski, Charlene Lima, Brandon Potter and Barbara Fenton-Fung who jointly sponsored The Cranston Historical Society for a Legislative Grant. The check, which was recently sent to us by Rep. Baginski, will enable the Society to continue using our property for community nonprofits' and the city's events at no or little cost to them.



Left photo: The Mayor's Picnic in August.



Right photo: The Mayor awarding the city donation to CHS



# Membership

**New Member** – Donna M. Campbell, Cranston

**In Memoriam:** Frieda Hervey (Martin Family), 99 yrs. ~ Cranston/Warwick

**Membership Dues Reminder:** Still not too late to send your 2022-23 dues! The 2023-24 Dues Letter is enclosed with this April Newsletter mailing.

**Thank You:** We greatly thank Volunteers helping with 2022 events including: Jared Dubois, Joe Wallace, All the Answers, Falvey Linen, Denise Foggo-Moretti, Debb Brown, Brian Danser, Barbie Sajche, Diane Reisman, Maria Vasquez, Linda Casey, Sandra Moyer, John O'Leary, Mike Sepe, Gregg & Mary Mierka, Councilman John Donegan, Mayor Kenneth Hopkins, Grace Swinski/Cranston Family Services, Ivy Swinski/OneCranston, PTGs Stadium, Arlington & Gladstone, Mikes Xmas Tree Farm, Western Cranston Garden Club, Hattoy's, The UPS Store, Print World, Stop & Shop, Dave's, Seven Star Bakery, DeLuise Bakery, Shaw's, Texas Rd House, Domino's

**Donations to CHS Collections:** Mary Mallory—Photos/Objects "Tumbleweed Trotters", local trick horse group 1940-50; George Fischer—Cranston Fire Dept. photo/badge 1920s; Jim Ignasher—Cranston Fire Dept. photos/photo of water pumping house at Sockanosset.

## Calendar

### Meetings & Events

**March 23 6:30 pm Tour with Tea Evening at Sprague Mansion.** Enjoy a relaxing intimate evening--tea and a special sweet. Presentation on A&W Sprague Manufacturing Co. with Mansion tour. Seating of 10 only by reservation 944-9226. \$18 nonmembers; \$16 members.

**April 15 Noon to 3 pm Sprague Mansion. Spring Grounds Beautification/Clean-Up (weather permitting).** Bring gloves, rake, & clippers, leaf blower.

**April 17 7 pm at Sprague Mansion.** General Membership meeting. Speaker Drake Patten, Hurricane Hill Farm, Cranston to present a lively discussion on the history of wool and resurgence for a climate change-conscious future.

**June 29 6:30 pm Tour with Tea Evening at Sprague Mansion.** Enjoy a relaxing intimate evening--tea and a special sweet. Presentation on A&W Sprague Manufacturing Co. with Mansion tour. Seating of 10 only by reservation 944-9226. \$18 nonmembers; \$16 members, payable by June 25 to Cranston Historical Society, 1351 Cranston St., Cranston 02920. After June 25, call to inquire if seating is available.

**Oct. 20 7 pm In Sprague Mansion. Charlie the Butler Ghost Party with Jared the Magician and Mentalist.**

**Nov. 24 3:30 to 5 pm Stop by Sprague Mansion to help decorate the holiday tree!**

**Holiday Open House: Dec. 3rd 3 pm - 5 pm.** Governor Sprague Mansion Holiday Open House with pianist Andrew Kaplan. Enjoy wassail & treats. (Donations for holiday trees for inside & outside – checks to Cranston Historical Society.) **4 pm Greetings from Mayor Kenneth Hopkins.** Decorated by the Western Cranston Garden Club. **5 pm Tree Lighting Collaboration w/Ward 3 Councilman John Donegan** and Cranston Historical Society. Bain School Choir. Visit OneCranston Health Equity Zone Info Table at the Carriage House.

**Dec. 9 Saturday 12 noon to 3 pm Fall Sprague Mansion Beautification/Clean Up (weather permitting)** Bring gloves, rake, and clippers, leaf blower.

# Mansion's Movies

## The Sprague Mansion Stars in *Poor Paul*

Several years ago, a production company rented the Carriage House at the Sprague Mansion to use as a set for *Bleed for This*, a movie based on the life story of Vinnie Pazienza. The company converted the top floor into a gym where Vinnie practiced in the early days of his career. If you saw the movie, the scene didn't last long and the only clue that it was our Carriage House were the arched windows in the background.



In 2021, the Sprague Mansion was once again used as a set for the movie, *Poor Paul*, but this time it was the setting for a major part of the film. RI native Adam Carbone was the producer, cowriter and star. On March 5<sup>th</sup>, the movie premiered at the CW Theater in the Lincoln Mall.

The plot centers on a socially awkward college student, named Paul, who inherits 500,000 frequent flyer miles and decides to take his two roommates on a trip around the world. In their travels, they meet an Italian father who is obsessed with finding an American to marry his daughter. The Sprague Mansion stands in for his villa. After dinner (in our dining room), the young Americans are talked into spending the night (in several of our bedrooms). There are also scenes in our ballroom, kitchen and 1790 room. The young men are not allowed to leave and Paul is coerced into almost marrying the daughter by the arbor behind the mansion. Our Carriage House is later used as the home of a Mid-Eastern family.



The movie used several RI actors as well as some people that you may recognize from TV and film. Much of the crew was also local. Amazingly, the film was shot in about two weeks using only iPhones. Helicopters, submarines and terrorists figure into this zany action-comedy, but for the Cranston Historical Society, the Sprague Mansion is clearly the star.

# Lifestyles of Long Ago

## Lancashire Hot Pot

By Mary Mierka

The well-to-do Victorians loved food, sometimes serving a 9-course selection of entrees at breakfast and dinner. They were experimenting with imported spices and herbs such as mint, curry, mace, pepper, cinnamon. It was prestigious to attend culinary schools in Europe and US.



A popular year-round English lamb stew – from the Lancashire region -- Lancashire Hot Pot, was a hearty and aromatic meal and could be served warm or cold. Imported exotic and piquant herbs and spices were revered by Victorian ladies/cooks in the kitchen. Some of these herbs are used in this recipe below. The lesser expensive cut of lamb, mutton, was also used. When included in a ‘hot pot’, the process would soften the mutton. Hot Pot was the

name of the baking vessel and also refers to “hodgepodge” – a mixture of ingredients, including root vegetables or oysters. Hot pots have been used for at least 4,000 yrs. in China. You can find 21<sup>st</sup> century electric hot pots for sale today. The hot pot meal was also enjoyed by textile laborers, like those who worked for the A&W Sprague Manufacturing Co. (Cranston Print Works). It was affordable, filling and considered a hearty and aromatic meal. Formally, the meal would be served with a side of pickled red cabbage. Enjoy this simple recipe for Lancashire Lamb Hot Pot from *The English Cookery Book, 1859*.

### In the Kitchen . . .



A scene of people having **hot pot** was found on a mural depicting life of the Khitan people in the Liao Dynasty. Discovered in North China's Inner Mongolia in 1984.



### Lancashire Hot Pot

*The English Cookery Book, 1859*

Oven 375 degrees

1 tbsp vegetable oil	2 medium onions sliced thin
1 ½ lbs cubed lamb meat	2 ½ lbs potatoes, peeled /
2 tbsp chopped thyme or	sliced thin
2 bay leaves	salt/pepper
2 cups chicken or vegetable stock	2 tbsp butter
Optional: 2 medium carrots sliced thin	

In large pan, brown onions in vegetable oil. Add lamb, and brown. Add salt & pepper to taste, herbs and add flour -- stirring until flour is smooth. Spread potato slices on bottom of large baking dish; fill with meat mixture. Top with potato slices – add salt, pepper, sprinkle add'l herbs, then dot with butter. Add stock. Bake in oven for 1 1/2 to 2 hrs., until potatoes are tender and top is browned

## A Time for Spinning

By James Hall, Curator

It may be hard to imagine but throughout history until fairly recently there were no fabric stores--no Michael's, Joann's, or Walmart's where beautiful fabrics are sold ready to be fashioned into that perfect dress or top. Instead you had to go out to the barn where your sheep, alpacas, and goats looked up at you wary and apprehensive since it is humiliating to have your nice lanoline rich coat lopped off with great sheep shears leaving you pink and naked and the cows pretending not to notice.



A sheep shears found at the Joy Homestead and our hero

So, now you have an armful of raw wool which must be processed to get it ready for the spinning wheel where it will be transformed into yarn and hence to the loom or knitting needles. You look around for one of the kids and find the house suddenly quiet and empty. But the slowest kid is found under the bed and made to boil, strain, pull, dry, card and other operations to yield nice fluffy wool ready to be made into yarn. This is where the spinning wheel comes in.

Depending on the source and condition of the finished wool and the number of spinning wheels in the parlor, mama commenced to make yarn. It was mama because she found it to be peaceful and rewarding (uh huh). Let's look at the spinning wheel. The large or great wheel is the driver which turns a bobbin or whorl that holds the finished twisted thread. The bobbin turns much faster than the drive wheel according to a ratio such as 3:1 where the bobbin turns three times and the drive wheel once. The larger the drive wheel the more momentum and the easier it is on your feet while pedaling the treadle. It also provides for faster thread production. However, if the wool is fragile or not carded right then a smaller and slower drive wheel is selected. A Miner's head driver at the bobbin makes the great wheel even more efficient achieving ratios of up to 230:1 or more. Some spinning wheels have no treadle requiring the spinner to use just one hand to twist and feed while the other turns the drive wheel--a more labor intensive work. Having finished making the yarns and perhaps dyeing them some pretty colors the finished yarn is moved to a small loom found in most farm houses.



# Corner

The parts of a spinning wheel include wheels, treadles, flyer assemblies, maidens, bearings, tension screws and on and on and cannot all be described in this brief article and it is suggested you go to YouTube and your search engine for more information.

The Joy Homestead boasts five different spinning wheels, some with and without treadles and some with Miner's heads. The drive wheels range from 20" to 44".



A hand-turned 42" spinning wheel with a Miner's head shown on the right.



A 22" spinning wheel with a treadle



A 20" spinning wheel with the treadle intact

## Wool Dyeing

By Jan Ragno

The modern synthetic dyes used today weren't discovered until the mid-19th century. So how did people dye fabric before this? Dyers used a variety of plants, lichens, fungi and insects to create dye recipes that made good colors. Over time, dyers learned which plants gave better colors than others.

Natural dyeing was a complicated, time consuming, and usually smelly chemical process. Mordants, natural chemical binding agents, were used to help the dye bond to the fibers of the fabric. They could also alter the colors of the dye, so a variety of shades could be created. Mordants could be metals, nuts, pinecones, acorns and many other substances. 18th century dye sample books and fabric sample books show a variety of bright vibrant colors derived from natural sources.

Deep browns could be made from black walnuts gathered around a farm or village. Many other trees, including chestnut and oak, could be used. Most parts of the trees, including the bark and nuts, gave different shades of brown. Yellows, tans and oranges are the most common dyes from plants. The most popular yellow dye came from the weld plant, also called the dyer's weed. Goldenrod, turmeric, and marigolds produce shades of orange, tan and yellow and are easy to find. Oranges could be derived from henna, madder root, and carrots, along with many other natural sources.



European woad, from the cabbage family, was the main source of blue until the importation of the indigofera plant from tropical areas. Dyeing with indigo is quite different from traditional dyes. The fabric will not turn blue until exposed to oxygen. When removed from the dye pot the fabric looks yellow but rapidly changes color to blue. To get a very dark blue, repeated dips in the dye bath and exposure to oxygen are necessary. Natural sources of blue which could be grown locally included blueberries, blackberries and purple cabbage.



# Yesteryear

Oddly, there was no good source for deep green dye because the chlorophyll that makes plants green does not convert to dye. Shades of green can be made but a true deep green needs the fabric to be dyed first in yellow, then blue. In Victorian times, green became a popular color with the invention of a new dye that caused the green dye to be vibrant. It was so bright that it was named emerald green and used in fabrics, paint and wallpaper. Unfortunately, this dye color was created with arsenic. Close proximity to this dye caused sores and ulcers on the skin, vomiting and hair loss. Eventually many died from exposure to this dye color.

Red came mainly from the madder plant which can be grown in our area but plenty of roots were needed and it tended to fade. The discovery of cochineal insects in Mexico was a tremendous revolution in dye. The dried, ground cochineal created a vibrant, colorfast and popular red. It became an important source of wealth in Mexico and was very popular in dyeing.

Many plants, vegetables, trees, and grasses were used with varying results. Dyers would pick the item, dry them and create packets to be ready for dyeing day. Many households shared dye packets or traded them to obtain a variety of colors and shades. Dyeing was a meticulous job; it was important to have everything in place before starting. It was necessary to have a fire or stove with numerous pots, usually copper, perching directly above the heat source. Each pot would be filled with hot, but not boiling, water into which would be added a packet of prepared dye. Different dye colors could be added to change colors and shades.

Skeins of wool were added to the pots and generally would have to remain in the solution for 1 to 2 hours, according to the individual's color shade preference. Usually, 2 hours in the dye would produce the full color of the dye. Finished yarn skeins would be hung to dry, then made ready for bundling and storage.



In 1856, eighteen year old William Henry Perkins was searching for a cure for malaria when he discovered the first synthetic dye. He was trying to create a synthetic quinine when he found a sticky, bright purple colored substance in the bottom of his test tube. Within the next few years, his invention would lead to a new era in the history of fabric dyeing. After Perkin's accidental discovery, scientists around the world began developing colors for dyeing fabrics from chemicals. Dyed garments became more affordable and accessible to more people.

Cranston Historical Society  
1351 Cranston Street  
Cranston, RI 02920

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