

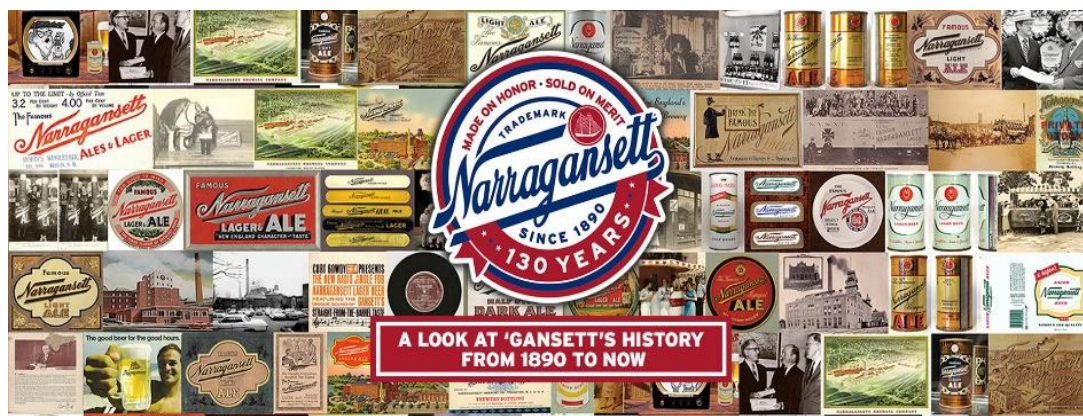


# CHS Newsletter

Spring 2024

**APRIL 16 Tuesday 7pm CHS Membership Meeting**

**“Hi Neighbor” ~ Have a ‘Gansett  
Narragansett Brewery's Incredible 133+ Year History  
Speaker: James Crooks, Vice President of Sales at  
Narragansett Brewing Company**



## Up Coming Events

**April 13 Spring Cleanup**

**April 28 American Girl Tea at the Mansion**

**June 18 Rochambeau Strawberry Biscuit Tea at Joy Homestead**

**June 22 & July 20 Music at the Gazebo: Gaspee Celtic Jam**



# President's Message

By  
Sandra Moyer

This year is the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Cranston Historical Society. We plan to celebrate in the fall and are currently working on a short history of the organization to present at that time. If anyone has any artifacts or photos from our past, please call 944-9226 and let us photograph or copy them. Make sure you use the enclosed membership materials to join or renew your membership for our anniversary year.



One of our continuing goals is to promote Cranston's history to as many members of our city as possible. Whether it is conducting tours of our properties, answering residents' questions, hosting guest speakers on historical topics, or offering our venue for community events, we want Cranstonians to think of our Society as vital to the welfare of the city. Check out page 5 for some of the activities we have done since our last newsletter.



Besides continuing our collaboration with Cranston's administration, libraries and schools, we are holding a new event this year. On April 28<sup>th</sup>, the Sprague Mansion will be the site of the American Girls Doll Tea. We hope to attract girls and their parents from inside and outside our city and introduce them to our lovely Victorian mansion as they share their interest in these dolls set in various historical periods.

Our speaker for the general meeting on April 16 is James Crook, VP of Sales from the Narragansett Brewery, a company that had its roots in a huge site just down Cranston Street from the Sprague Mansion. For 91 years, this brewery was an important part of Cranston's history (even though it was often publicized as being in the better known city of Providence).

Come learn more about the brewery's history as well as how this famous brand is being resurrected today. You will read more about the Narragansett Brewery's history as well as beer in general in later pages of this newsletter.



# Membership

## New Members

Tracy Miller & Joseph Wallace-Warwick; Raymond & Claudia Santilli Family-Cranston

## Membership Dues — Reminder

Please fill out and return the membership card for your 2024 dues.

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

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

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)

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

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

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

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

Edgar's Lawn Maintenance & Snow Plowing-Johnston  
[edgars.lawnmaintenance.ri@gmail.com](mailto:edgars.lawnmaintenance.ri@gmail.com)

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

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

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***The printing of CHS Newsletters is done by All The Answers, Warwick  
Mailing, Printing & Design Services***



# Calendar Of Upcoming Events

**April 2 Tuesday Noon at Sprague Mansion. CHS Board Meeting.**

**April 13 Saturday Noon to 2:30pm Sprague Mansion. Spring Grounds Beautification/Clean-Up** (weather permitting). Bring gloves, rake, & clippers. (A chain saw/leaf blower would be helpful.)



**April 16 Tuesday 7pm at Sprague Mansion. Free.** General Membership meeting. **Speaker: James Crooks, Vice President of Sales at Narragansett Brewing Company.** “Hi Neighbor ~ Have a ‘Gansett’” -- **Presentation: “Narragansett Brewery's Incredible 133+ Year History”.**

**April 28 2 to 4pm at Sprague Mansion. American Girl Tea ~ Grand Ballroom.** Young folks can bring an American Girl doll or favorite doll along with an adult. Pianist Andrew Kaplan will play a selection of tunes on CHS rare 1880s grand Steinway. By Reservation Only: (401) 944-9226: \$20 per person. Payable by April 22 to Cranston Historical Society, 1351 Cranston St., Cranston 02920. Accessible/parking in back. Call Mary 944-9226 to volunteer.



**May 17 and July 26 6:00pm Early Evening Tour with Tea at Sprague Mansion.** Enjoy a relaxing evening on either of these 2 dates: tea & special sweet served in Sprague dining room. A&W Sprague Manufacturing Co. presentation w/Mansion tour. Must RSVP/Seating 10 only. Call 944-9226 (specify date). \$18 nonmembers; \$16 members, payable by May 11 or July 20 to Cranston Historical Society, 1351 Cranston St., Cranston 02920.

**June 18 6pm at Joy Homestead.** 156 Scituate Ave. **Annual Rochambeau Strawberry Biscuit Tea.** Donation: \$5



**June 22 & July 20 6:00pm Enjoy Celtic Music Under the Stars at Sprague Gazebo.** The **Gaspee Celtic Jam** group will be the first musical entertainment at the new Sprague Gazebo. Visit <https://gaspeecelticjam.org/> ahead of dates for their announcement on scheduled songs for the evening. Bring along an instrument and join the group in song! Tickets: \$13 each night. Attend 2-Series Tickets: \$23. Must

RSVP 944-9226. Specify date(s). Bring lawn chair or lawn blanket. Note: ABCD Brothers Kitchen Food Truck will set up at 5pm.

## **Save these Dates in the Fall/Winter**

**October 25 Friday 7:00 pm at the Spooooooky Sprague Mansion.** Charlie the Butler Ghost Party features Jared the Magician & Mentalist

**Holiday Open House: December 1 Sunday 3:00pm - 5:00 pm with 4:30pm Outdoor Tree lighting**

# April 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting



**Cranston  
Historical Society  
invites you to a  
special  
presentation:**

**"Hi Neighbor ~ Have a 'Gansett'  
Narragansett Brewery's Incredible  
133+ Year History"**

**April 16 at 7:00pm  
Governor Sprague Mansion Museum  
1351 Cranston Street**

General Membership Meeting open to the public with Guest Speaker: James Crooks, Vice President of Sales at Narragansett Brewing Company. Hear the story about how "Hi Neighbor ~ Have a 'Gansett'" became the 1890s world-wide Cranston company's signature slogan and Narragansett beer, still being processed today, had its beginnings as a small local craft brewer that became N.E.'s largest brewery. Accessible entrance and parking in back of Mansion. There is no fee to attend.



# Fall / Winter Happenings

Oct. CHS Mtg  
guest speaker  
Jim Ignasher:  
"The Corpse  
That Drove a  
Hearse & Other  
True Tales of  
New England  
Macabre"



**Cranston Family  
Services Halloween  
Fun at the Mansion**



**Fall  
Clean  
Up  
with  
Volun-  
teers**



**October 20 Charlie  
the Butler Ghost  
Party with Jared the  
Magician!**



**Decorating the Tree & Mansion Holiday Open House**





# Fall / Winter Happenings

**Dec. 3rd Holiday  
Open House with  
Scrooge!**



**Thank you, City of Cranston  
for the Gazebo and your  
financial support.**



**Lisa from Cranston Public  
Library presents "Where in  
Cranston?"**



**Trivia Night Fundraiser at  
the Thirsty Beaver. (Left)  
1<sup>st</sup> place winners Cranston  
Historic Cemeteries  
Comm. and (Right) 2<sup>nd</sup>  
place winners The  
Spraguers.**



# Yarns of Yesteryear

## Early Years of the Narragansett Brewery

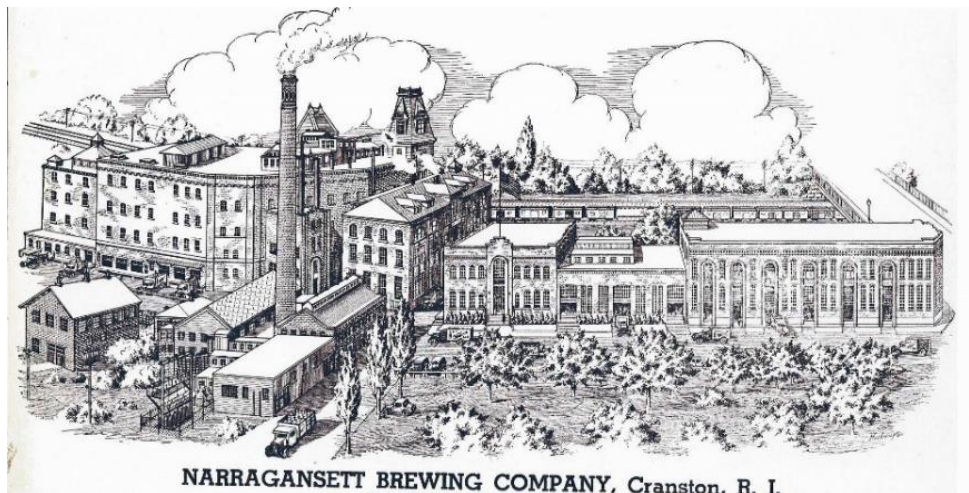
By Sandra Moyer

Arlington, a section of Cranston bordering on Providence, was once home to two great industries. One, of course, is the textile empire situated on Cranston Street that started as the A&W Sprague Print Works and later became the Cranston Print Works. But further down Cranston Street was another industrial giant, the Narragansett Brewery. At one time it was one of New England's largest and most technically advanced breweries. Its innovative marketing strategy aligned the company with Boston's baseball teams and the Jimmy Fund. The slogan "Hi Neighbor, Have a 'Gansett" had national recognition.

The idea of starting the company came about in 1888, when six German American businessmen raised \$150,000 of capital and began planning their company as a local craft brewery. Its name came from Narragansett Bay and the RI tribe of Indians. They selected Arlington as their site because it was conveniently located near railroad tracks for bringing in supplies and shipping out the finished product. Another plus was the Tongue Pond and nearby wells since brewing takes a lot of clean water. The pond was also used for producing ice, an allied business.

Construction started the next year and by 1890, the brewery was ready for production. The property included a barn, stable, blacksmith and an icehouse as well as the building for brewing the beer. In the first year, the brewery produced 397 barrels of beer but by the second year 27,887 barrels were made. Their lager was even credited as being healthy and an 1893 ad in a medical magazine claimed that doctors prescribed it as a wholesome invigorator.

At first, they depended on other companies to do the bottling but by 1897, the company starting doing at least some of its own bottling. Horse drawn wagons did the local distribution and trains shipped to the rest of the US and Canada. By 1898, the Narragansett Brewery was the largest in NE. The company's



phenomenal growth continued until Prohibition was enacted in 1920. In the next 13 years, the brewery turned to making soda and 'near beer', a concoction whose alcohol content of one half of one percent made it legal. With the end of prohibition, the Narragansett Brewery was once more able to brew beer and the company went on to greater success.



# Curator's Corner

## Skunked Beer, yuck!

By James Hall, Curator

It was a sunny day and you were finishing the last bottle of your Gansett six-pack. The muted sun peeked through the bottom of your upraised bottle interrupting your melancholy by an observation—the glass had a rich brown color. Of course because of your having had some modest experience with these things you knew that already but then again, weren't they green? You may philosophize that it is just one more thing you don't know—but I do.

"Skunking" is why. When beer is exposed to strong light a chemical reaction occurs. You may have already guessed from the word "skunking" that it makes the beer taste bad. Brewers found that making the glass brown prevents skunking. Yes, some beer bottles are green but that is only for marketing. It makes the bottle pretty--but doesn't help the skunking. Of course some guilty brewers make the walls of their six-pack carriers higher to keep the light off the bottles.



Bottle from  
our collection

Gansett and other brewers used to make the glass thicker to prevent breakage and chipping so the bottles could be cleaned and reused. And how about the necks? After prohibition most brewers opted for "steinies", or short necks, and compensated by making the bottles fatter. This was because they could then be packed into smaller spaces reducing shipping and handling. After the 50's the necks got longer and still are because buyers prefer them. Of course that made for "glassing" in bar rooms. Glassing is when a bloke smashes a bottle over another bloke's head. Morticians say that a beer bottle can break a human skull.

Then there are the lids or caps to keep the beer fresh--and accessible. So, you have your screw tops, flip-tops (beugels), corks (muselets), crown caps, and twist offs. Before the twist-offs you had your pry-offs. Did you know that loyal beer drinkers (you know who you are) actually collect them? They come in all colors, all brands, complexities and prices.

If you go on eBay you can buy old Narragansett beer bottles and caps from a few to hundreds of dollars. The caps actually make pretty displays and can be made into coasters and other decorative objects. But, as unlikely as it is, you may not want to buy old beer bottles. In that case you can make the ones you have into candle holders, vases, and herb planters. Lastly, for those who are not satisfied with just collecting bottles and caps there are old Narragansett beer crates but they go for up to \$500. Not for nothin' but you can buy a lot of beer for that.



## Prohibition in Rhode Island

By Jan Ragno

In 1920, US Constitutional Amendment #18 was passed. All of the states but Rhode Island and Connecticut ratified it. Don't mess with Rhode Islanders and their beer!

The 18th Amendment to the Constitution prohibited the production, sale and transportation of alcoholic beverages. But our coast became a popular site for bootlegging, bringing in alcohol from other countries for distribution. RI became a "wet state," creating our own rules and regulations on alcohol sales, transportation and consumption. Although the law was not ratified here, the state government went along with some of the restrictions of the Volstead Act.



"Near beer" was a fermented beverage with less than 0.5% alcohol. It was produced by local breweries and was consumed by families, including pregnant and nursing women. The alcohol content was in compliance with the law and local breweries, including Narragansett Brewery and the Hanley Brewing Company produced variations. The Hanley Company was not as successful in selling their near beer and did not diversify as Narragansett did. Hanley's American Brewing Company, one of 17 local breweries at the time, closed in 1922 and reopened in 1934, after Prohibition was repealed. It remained in business until 1957.

Narragansett survived because it had an ice delivery business with its own icehouse, ice pond and refrigeration machines. Narragansett continued to deliver ice through Prohibition. They also obtained a license to brew and sell porter, named "Narragansett Dark" for medicinal purposes. Narragansett also survived by turning its pilsner into a near beer with an alcohol by volume content of less than 0.5 percent.

In 1928 Bill and Eva DeAngelus opened a speakeasy to sell alcohol in their Cranston home. They served food and alcohol until 1933, coincidentally the year that Prohibition was repealed. Their still was destroyed by the feds but the business survived and thrived. The speakeasy is now named Twin Oaks and continues as a popular Rhode Island restaurant to this day. The original building is still there and is used to store liquor.



## Hi Neighbor! Have a 'Gansett By Mary Mierka

Around the 1880s, as a medicinal aid, Narragansett Brewing Company first promoted their malt extract for druggists to sell. Malt extract is very thick and sweet, like molasses and contains many minerals including magnesium, amino & folic acids, and vitamin B, therefore useful in beer making, cooking, and digestive/heart health issues, stimulates good mood/improves mental health as well. The company begins processing their successful lager beer in the 1890s and its history after that!

One of the original Narragansett Beer's brand is considered an American Lager – it's a "refreshing, crisp flavor. Lager interacts well with a variety of cuisines – it "complements, cleanses and contrasts". Some snacking items like olives, salted beer nuts, mini wrapped 'hot dogs' with mustard are excellent pairing choices for lager, as well as very sweet desserts likes cheesecake, Crème Brule, truffles, chocolate cake – the sweeter the better.

According to beer aficionados, the "flavor of Narragansett is slightly sweet, malty, and comes from a combination of 2-row, American and Munich malts. This beer is then outfitted with Columbus and Simcoe hops, resulting in a pleasant bitterness and a pleasant aroma." And, it is gluten free. You gotta have a 'Gansett Neighbor!



**In The Kitchen:**  
Bing Crosby's 'commemorative' Clambake Recipe Cans of the Narragansett Brewery. From 1937 to 1977, Bing held Pro Golf tournaments & his infamous clam-bakes after. It was so popular, Narragansett made a commemorative recipe can in his honor. Bing loved the idea & promoted Narragansett Beer since he

used beer as a main ingredient in his bakes & liked to promote friendship. He sang a song honoring his Clambakes called "Anthem of the Clams".

## Bing Crosby's Pro Golf Clambake 1937-1977

Ingredients: 4 small red potatoes, 1/2 lb Chourico sausage sliced, 4 breakfast sausage, 4 onions peeled, 2 ears sweet corn cut in qtrs., 2 bay leaves, salt/pepper/ crushed red peppers, 3 tbsp chopped green onion, 1 qt fresh steamers, 1 12 oz. Narragansett Lager, 3 qts water

Combine in pot: potatoes, Chourico sausage, breakfast sausage, onions, corn, 2 bay leaves, salt/pepper/crushed red peppers, cover with 3 qts water, 'Gansett Lager – bring to boil. Reduce heat, simmer 20 min. Add clams--cover & cook until they open, about 15 min. Serve from pot. Garnish with green onions/parsley.

# American Girl Tea Fundraiser

The Cranston Historical Society Invites you to:

## American Girl Doll *Afternoon Tea*

Come and be the guest of Samantha Parkington at Governor Sprague Mansion (1351 Cranston St.) and experience an authentic tea! Bring your doll, or borrow one of ours! This event is perfect for kids and parents or adults looking for some nostalgic fun!

**28th**  
**April 2024**  
**2pm**

**Book Now!**  
Registration open until April 19th

**\$20 a person**

Call (401) 944-9226 to make a reservation



There will be a raffle to win an American Girl Doll and other items!  
All proceeds go to the Cranston Historical Society



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address/City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

# of Guests: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Ck #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I am unable to attend--Here is a donation to support the fundraising event.  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_



**Inside:**

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