



Newport Historical Society

Guide to the Old Stone Mill Collection, 1677 – 2010

Newport Historical Society
82 Touro Street
Newport, Rhode Island 02840
(401) 846-0813
www.newporthistory.org

Descriptive Summary

<i>Collection Identifier</i>	MS.1854.8
<i>Title</i>	Old Stone Mill Collection
<i>Creator</i>	Newport Historical Society
<i>Date</i>	1677 – 2010
<i>Extent</i>	4 boxes
<i>Abstract</i>	This collection contains correspondence, booklets, published works, archaeological land surveys, and other materials related to the origin, history, and lore surrounding the Old Stone Mill in Newport.

Historical Note

This collection was assembled by Newport Historical Society staff and added to over the years.

Scope and Content

This collection documents the debate surrounding the contested origins of the Old Stone Mill in Touro Park and comprises a wide range of materials that span the 17th-20th centuries. The earliest of these are copies of Governor Benedict Arnold's will, in which he makes reference to "my stone-built wind-mill." Correspondence in the collection mentions that there were no printed citations of the Mill prior to 1819, though recordings in local documents such as wills and a resolution at a town meeting appear in 1752 and 1756.

The bulk of the correspondence dating from the 1940s-1950s represents the flurry of scholarship and activity that surrounded archaeological excavations of the site in Touro Park between 1944, 1948, and 1954, completed by Waldo Leland, William Godfrey, and Arlington Mallery, respectively.

Many of the pieces are in conversation with one another, and serve to substantiate or refute extant theories. Most notably, scholars and enthusiasts have purported that the Mill is evidence of Pre-Columbian voyages to the Americas by the Norse, the Chinese, the lost tribes of Israel, Crusaders of the 12th and 13th centuries, the Knights Templar, early Irish explorers such as St. Brendon, the Phoenicians, and the Portuguese. Some claim Masonic ties, others believe that the Mill's walls bear Runic inscriptions and that there is archaeoastronomical significance to its design. A handful of scholars, including representatives of the Newport Historical Society, believe that the Mill was built by early Colonists in Newport, and offer Nicholas Easton, a builder who is known to have created other circular stone structures in the area, as its architect. Connections have also been drawn between similar mills in Chesterton, England and Barbados, where relatives of Benedict Arnold are believed to have lived. The supposed uses for the mill are equally dizzying in their array, and range from Catholic church, mill, watchtower, fortress and lighthouse to refuge from wild animals, temple of pagan worship, and even an early prototype of Newport's summer cottages.

All together, this collection demonstrates the enduring mystery and importance of the Mill and provides researchers with insight into the theories and conversations that have made this structure central to the lore and allure of Newport, Rhode Island.

Organization

The series is separated into four boxes. Within each box, folders are organized in loose alphabetical order. Below the folder level, there is no apparent system of organization.

This collection is arranged into five series:

1. Correspondence, 1847 - 1999
2. Publications, 1767 - 2010
3. Maps and Visual Materials, 1634 - 1982
4. Arnold Family Wills, 1674 - 1955
5. Miscellaneous, 1788 - 1998

Subject Access

People

Arnold, Benedict, 1615-1678
Arnoll, Rebecca
Bannister, Christian
Blaine, Joseph W.
Bolhouse, Gladys Carr, Mrs.
Brigham, Herbert O.
Byers, Douglas S.
Catherwood, Frederick
Downing, Philip B.
Gilpin, John Bernard
Gilpin, William
Godfrey, William S.
Hattendorf, Ingrid
Jackson, Henry, Rev.
Leland, Waldo G.
Lippincott, Bertram
Longfellow, Henry W.
Luce, Stephen B., Dr.
Mallery, Arlington H.
Means, Philip A.
Morison, Samuel Eliot, Rear Admiral
Mumford, John
O'Loughlin, Kathleen
Pell, Claiborne, Senator
Pell, Herbert
Penhallow, William S.
Potvin, Ronald
Robson, Lloyd

Siemonson, Jorgen
Touro, Judah
Welch, Dan
Wright, Harrison M.

Organizations

American Antiquarian Society
Art Association of Newport, The
Birmingham Weekly Post
Boston Herald
Harper's Magazine
New England Antiquities Research Association
New Haven Railroad
Newport Daily News
Newport Historical Society
Newport Museum Of Irish History
Popular Science Magazine
Providence Journal-Bulletin
Record American
Rhode Island Historical Society
Scribner's Magazine
Sinclair Association
Society For The Protection Of Ancient Buildings
The Daily Mail
University Of Minnesota
Warwickshire City Council
Yankee Magazine

Subjects

Archaeology

Form/Genre

architectural drawings (visual works)
architectural surveys
articles
booklets
brochures
clippings (information artifacts)
correspondence

essays
exhibit scripts
land surveys
legal documents
manuscripts (documents)
maps (documents)
menus
pamphlets
postcards
sketches
stats (copies)
typescripts
wills

Access and Use

Physical Access

This collection is housed on site at the Newport Historical Society. Researchers can be seen by appointment during operating hours.

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Citation

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Newport, Rhode Island

Administrative Information

<i>Descriptive Rules</i>	Finding aid based on <i>Describing Archives: A Content Standard</i> (DACS)
<i>Processing Note</i>	This collection is part of a larger run of subject-based files created by Gladys Bolhouse, executive secretary and curator of manuscripts at the Newport Historical Society between 1946-1992, and has been added to by subsequent librarians and archivists over the years. As such, the provenance of the content is largely undocumented.
<i>Accession Info</i>	Collected by the Newport Historical Society from various sources, 1854-present.

Inventory