

THE RHODE ISLAND PRESERVATION CELEBRATION

featuring

*The Rhody Awards
for Historic Preservation*



2015

Presented by
Preserve Rhode Island
and
Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission

Welcome

Preserve Rhode Island and the Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission welcome you to the seventh annual Rhode Island Preservation Celebration featuring the 2015 Rhody Awards for Historic Preservation. Tonight, Rhode Island’s preservationists join together to celebrate the enormous positive impact preservation has made throughout the state.

The Rhody Awards

Tonight, we recognize many people for their outstanding preservation projects and a city archive that has brought new life to an indispensable community resource. Two Rhody Awards pay tribute to individuals who exemplify Rhode Island’s commitment to historic preservation. They will be recognized with the highest honors we bestow. The Frederick C. Williamson Professional Leadership Award is named in honor of the longest serving State Historic Preservation Officer in the nation and the Antoinette F. Downing Volunteer Service Award honors Rhode Island’s founding Commission Chair.

Cheers to each of our eleven Rhody Award winners for their dedication and passion to preserve our heritage, enhance our communities, and care for the historic structures that make us feel at home. So let’s mingle, applaud, and have a great time. America’s smallest state has a lot to cheer for!

Welcoming Remarks

Jeffery Emidy, Deputy Director, Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission
Valerie Talmage, Executive Director, Preserve Rhode Island

To Order a Rhody Award

If you played a supporting role in one of tonight’s award-winning projects and would like to purchase a framed award for \$50, please contact Susanna Prull at sprull@preserveri.org or (401) 272-5101.

Special Thanks

Thank you to our dedicated and generous Host Committee Members — especially our talented co-chairs Betty Capozzi and Sheryl Amaral.

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2015 Rhody Awards for Historic Preservation

COMMUNITY AWARD

Providence City Archives

PRESERVATION PROJECT AWARDS

Reuben and Emily Sweet House

Providence Revolving Fund
DaSilva Painting | WR Construction

James L. Hazard House

John Shea of Hammond Residential Real Estate
Hardwood Designs, Inc. | Neville Architecture

Providence G

Vince Geoffroy
Allied Fire Protection | Desimone Electric | Premier Development | Providence Revolving Fund
Studio MEJA | TriMark United East | Valley Plumbing & Heating

Wakefield Branch Company Building

Arnold Lumber
Sign Guild, Inc. | Sweenor Builders, Inc.

Old Slater Mill

Champlin Foundations | Haynes / de Boer Architecture + Preservation
Martone Service Company | City of Pawtucket

Audrain Building

American Realty Capital
Camera O’Neill Consulting Engineers, Inc. | Ben Jacobsen | Light Insight Design Studio
Northeast Collaborative Architects | Parker Construction

Beaman & Smith Co. Mill

Providence Community Health Centers
Central Healthcare Initiatives | Edward Connors & Associates
Creative Environment Corp. | Gilbane Building Company | Providence Revolving Fund
Structures North Consulting Engineers, Inc. | Vision 3 Architects

Rumford Library

Rita Danielle Steele

FREDERICK C. WILLIAMSON PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP AWARD

Sheila Deming Brush

ANTOINETTE F. DOWNING VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD

Varoujan Karentz

About the Preservation Celebration Hosts



Preserve Rhode Island is the statewide non-profit advocate for historic places supported by your charitable contributions. We are active stewards of our own properties and assist other owners in caring for their historic places. We carry out our mission through advocacy, stewardship, and preservation programs.

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The Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission is the state agency for historical preservation and heritage programs. The Commission operates a statewide historical preservation program that identifies and protects historic buildings, districts, structures, and archaeological sites. The Commission also develops and carries out programs to document and celebrate the rich cultural heritage of Rhode Island’s people.

www.preservation.ri.gov

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Community Award

Providence City Archives

As part of the 1978 centennial celebrations of City Hall, the City of Providence established an official City Archives. An archivist set about collecting and organizing manuscripts, printed material, maps, blueprints, vital and probate records, deed books, and photographic images that spanned the city’s history from 1636 to the present.

Although revered by researchers, the facility languished over the years. In 2009, Providence’s most significant historic record—the original 1637 deed conveying land from sachems Canonicus and Miantonomi to Roger Williams—was found misfiled. The City Council responded by creating a commission to study existing conditions and make recommendations for improvement.

In 2010, the City hired Paul Campbell, a professional archivist with a deep understanding of local history and resources. Under his leadership, the City of Providence has slowly but surely transformed how it collects, preserves, and makes its records available to the public. Paul and his team of professional staff consolidated archival materials from other departments and conducted a major reorganization of the collections. By implementing a municipal records management program, Providence has reduced the amount of records storage space required. The staff has cleaned storage areas and the reading room, adding more than 2000 linear feet of shelving. New security measures and a disaster plan ensure that records are safe. In-house conservation projects and an off-site binding program are stabilizing fragile collections. The mayoral portrait collection was restored by a professional conservator.

Providence City Archives now has a robust public presence online: a facebook page with 1583 friends, a flickr site with more than a thousand images, and an extensive website with finding aids for major collections. An ongoing digitization initiative is expanding access to records and images. The Archives is also user-friendly to visitors who use the collections and view historical exhibits. The staff oversees college student interns as well as clients from social service agencies in carrying out key projects. Committed to its collections and its users, Providence City Archives ensures that the past is present at City Hall.



Historic Preservation Project Award

Reuben and Emily Sweet House, Providence

With a leap of faith, the Providence Revolving Fund purchased the Reuben and Emily Sweet House (1877-78) in Providence’s Elmwood neighborhood two years ago. The building was in deplorable condition. Termites had chewed the sills and framing up to the second floor, and hungry squirrels ran free in the cornice. Subdivided into eleven apartments, the run-down house was crowded with flimsy modern partitions and dangerously outdated utilities. Revolving Fund staff agreed that this was “the worst house we’ve ever bought.”

Fortunately, the Sweet House had loads of potential. Most of the interior trim was intact, and the exterior had survived with minimal alteration. DaSilva Painting went to work on the exterior rehab. The chimney, roofs, and 70% of the sills were replaced. Rotted brackets were replicated and replaced beneath the rebuilt cornice with built-in gutters. The porch’s distinctive sawn balusters were put back in place, and a set of vintage double doors was installed in the original opening. The crew disassembled the granite stairs and rebuilt them on poured concrete supports. The entire exterior was scraped, sanded, primed, and painted.

WR Construction completed the interior renovation, starting with structural repairs. A new staircase with salvaged newel posts and balusters was installed from the second to third floor, where the previous staircase had been removed. All of the utilities—plumbing, electric, and water—were replaced, and the building was insulated. Original walls and trim were repaired and new walls built to create an apartment on the first floor and a spacious owner’s unit on the second and third floors. Floors were refinished and the entire interior painted.

Outside, the sidewalks and driveway were replaced, and the landscape was improved. The Revolving Fund found one extended family for the newly restored two-family house. Adeola Oredola purchased the property, moved in upstairs, and rented the downstairs apartment to some familiar folks—her parents Moshood and Genese Oredola. Home (Reuben and Emily) Sweet Home.



Historic Preservation Project Award

James L. Hazard House, Newport

The James L. Hazard House occupies a prominent lot at the southwest end of Kay Street, not far from Bellevue Avenue. Built ca. 1855 for a furniture maker, the home was remodeled ca. 1875, when the locally prominent architect Dudley Newton installed one of his patented roofs. Newton’s design, which he called “a new and useful Improved Curb-Roof,” featured a distinctive break where the roof met the building, allowing for better water run-off and creating a fascia that, if ornamented, would provide “a second or additional complete line of finish above and independent of the cornice proper.” Newton’s remodeling also included the addition of a wraparound porch.

In April of 2012, a devastating fire broke out on the third floor of the Hazard House. The interior, which had been carved into six apartments, suffered extensive fire and water damage. The exterior, already compromised by unsympathetic changes like the removal of Newton’s porch, was also damaged. The building remained a key element of the Kay Street streetscape, however, and many feared it would be razed. Fortunately, John Shea of Hammond Residential Real Estate saw an opportunity. He purchased the property in 2013, commissioned the Newport Historical Society to produce a report on its history, and, with plans by Neville Architecture, completed an extensive rehabilitation. On the exterior, Shea replaced the siding, repaired the slate roof, and re-established the original fenestration pattern. The historic wood window surrounds were restored where possible; custom replicas were created by Hardwood Designs, Inc., where necessary. Perhaps most significantly, the team created a new wraparound porch, using physical evidence and research to approximate the original. A single surviving chamfered pilaster revealed the historic column profile, while porches at other Newton buildings informed the overall design. Inside, Shea created a spacious and elegant single-family home.

Neglected for decades and left uninhabitable by the 2012 fire, the James L. Hazard House has risen from the ashes – and Kay Street and Newport are the better for it.



Historic Preservation Project Award

Providence G, Providence

Gazing at the underused cluster of buildings at the corner of Dorrance and Weybosset streets in Downtown Providence, Vince Geoffroy had a vision for a dynamic mixed-use complex. He looked past the crumbling stucco and infilled windows of the Narragansett Hotel Garage (1923). He sized up the vacant Teste Block (1860), long considered unusable due to its 12-foot deep footprint. He reimagined the Providence Gas Company Building (1924) and its 1984 addition.

Architect Studio Meja, structural engineer Yoder Tidwell, and the Providence Revolving Fund collaborated on the plan. David Corsetti of Premier Development led a team of contractors to carry out the rehab project, which used State and Federal preservation tax credits. At the garage, the façade received a facelift with blocked-in windows opened up, the deteriorated sheet metal cornice and sign repaired, and missing brackets duplicated. Structural improvements, car stacking equipment, and a reconfiguration of the plan created 60 parking spaces and 10 apartments. The Teste Block underwent structural repair and a dramatic exterior restoration that cleaned and repaired damaged brownstone, repointed and rebuilt brick walls, and rehabbed the storefront. A small addition that fills an adjacent alley provides extra space for a French-inspired seafood restaurant, Garde de la Mer, to anchor this important downtown corner.

Inside Providence Gas, dropped ceilings, office partitions, and wall-to-wall carpet were removed to uncover original finishes like marble floors and plaster walls. Ornate woodwork in the former president’s office and boardroom was restored. The upper floors accommodated 40 apartments, reserving the first floor for an elegant ballroom available for special events. The developers spied two opportunities to transform underused utility spaces into new restaurants. The cavernous but cozy G Pub nestles among the rugged concrete columns in the basement, and the all-season Rooftop at the Providence G crowns the Gas Company Building, while remaining invisible from the street.

The visionary rehabilitation of the Providence Gas complex has brought new life to Downtown Providence. Glamour plus grit equals glory at the Providence G.



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Warmest Congratulations to the 2015 Award Winners!



Historic Preservation Project Award

Wakefield Branch Company, South Kingstown

In 1874, William C. Caswell established a lumber and coal business on Wakefield’s Main Street adjacent to the Narragansett Pier Railroad. The complex expanded to include sheds, yards, and a two-story building with crisply corbelled brickwork, an inviting recessed entrance, and a handsome parapet atop the roof. For generations, “The Branch” served as a social center for local farmers, builders, and neighbors.

When Arnold Lumber purchased the property in 1990, the old storefront had already been modernized beyond recognition. The distinctive parapet had been removed to install a wood-shake mansard, while the rest of the storefront was hidden behind aluminum panels, vertical board siding, and a relocated aluminum-and-glass entryway.

An anonymous letter from a neighbor prompted the Arnold family to begin renovating their Wakefield property. Architect Frank Karpowicz drew up plans for refurbishing the Main Street storefront, but the project was put aside. At last in 2013, Arnold Lumber engaged local contractor Sweenor Builders to remove the 1960s storefront. Under the wood siding, they discovered the old brickwork—largely intact but covered with canary yellow paint.

Guided by historic photographs, the contractors removed the paint, repointed the bricks, and replicated missing elements. The aluminum doors were replaced with a custom-made mahogany entryway set back in the original location. Wood sash were installed on the second floor to match the original windows. As a crowning touch, Sweenor Builders painstakingly recreated the parapet, installing antique lettering designed by the Sign Guild as well as Arnold Lumber’s logos.

When the project was complete, the neighbor—no longer anonymous—wrote a second letter to thank Arnold Lumber for a job well done. The restored storefront not only enhances the historic village streetscape but also showcases Arnold Lumber’s products and the work of local tradespeople. What’s good for the neighborhood is also good for business.



Historic Preservation Project Award

Old Slater Mill, Pawtucket

Slater Mill – the first successful water-powered cotton mill in America – is unquestionably one of Rhode Island’s most significant historic buildings. It was among the first properties to be recognized with National Historic Landmark status, in 1966, and is one of the key elements of the newly-designated Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park, which tells the story of the industrial revolution in America.

Built in 1793 on the west bank of the Blackstone River, Slater Mill was expanded several times over the course of the 19th century and has housed a variety of enterprises, from jewelry-tool manufacturing to the production of coffin trimmings. In the 1890s, a bicycle-riding rink operated on the third floor, beneath the monitor roof. When the last business vacated the property in 1920, Slater Mill was threatened with demolition. A group of local businessmen came to the rescue, founding the Old Slater Mill Association, purchasing the property, restoring it to its ca. 1830 appearance, and operating it as one of the first industrial museums in the country.

In 2014, the Old Slater Mill Association embarked on a comprehensive exterior restoration of the building, with funding from the Champlin Foundations and the City of Pawtucket. Haynes/de Boer Architecture + Preservation drew up the plans and the Martone Service Company completed the job. Over 9,100 linear feet (that’s nearly 1.75 miles) of deteriorated wood clapboard were replaced, and over 130 historic wood window sash were restored. The hoisting beam and gates at the bell tower were repaired, along with wood window and door surrounds. Parts of the brick foundation were repointed and a new cedar-shingle roof was installed. About the only building element left untouched was the cupola, which had been restored by E.F. O’Donnell & Sons in 2011. The final step was a complete re-painting of the building in its signature rich, yellow hue. Old Slater Mill is now good as new.




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Historic Preservation Project Award

Audrain Building, Newport

In 1902, Adolphe Audrain hired A-list architect Bruce Price to design a commercial building on Bellevue Avenue. Price created a two-story brick block with eight double-height arched openings for six shops on the first floor and eleven offices above. Exuberant polychrome terracotta decoration evoking Renaissance Florence wrapped around the façade, and extended to the cornice, which was crowned by a dozen terracotta lion statuettes. Opened in 1903, the Audrain Building was an extremely desirable address. Early tenants included genteel shops like Audrain’s art supply and Brooks Brothers clothiers, financial firms like Harriman & Co., the Hodgkins Gallery (fine art), and the Frances Fox Institute for the Scientific Care of the Hair.

Over time, the building’s exterior suffered. The terracotta lions and balustrade were removed, and other decorative elements were chipped and cracked. Some of the window openings were filled with awning sash, and tenants lodged air conditioner units in the transoms.

American Realty Capital purchased the property in 2013 and hired Northeast Collaborative Architects and Parker Construction for an ambitious adaptive reuse project to restore the exterior, install an office suite on the upper story, and create a museum for Nicholas Schorsch’s world-class collection of vintage automobiles below. A new two-story arched opening on the south elevation evokes



Price’s windows yet simplifies the details to signal that it is an alteration. The lower half of the window opens up to allow for moving collections—in other words, driving cars—in and out of the museum space.

Camera-O’Neill Consulting Engineers ensured that the building could sustain the new program and an increased load of terracotta ornament. The balustrade and a pride of lions were replicated and installed along the building’s roofline. Restored and refreshed, the Audrain Building once again punctuates a remarkable Gilded Age streetscape that includes the Travers Block, Newport Casino, and King Block, all along Bellevue Avenue.

Historic Preservation Project Award

Beaman & Smith Company Mill, Providence

The rehabilitation of the Beaman & Smith Co. Mill in Upper South Providence is a story of extraordinary vision and persistence. The site posed numerous challenges — including groundwater contamination, hazardous building materials, and severely neglected structures — but Providence Community Health Centers (PCHC), which provides medical services to patients regardless of their ability to pay, saw its potential. PCHC purchased the site in 2003, demolished several non-historic buildings, completed site remediation, and constructed a new 40,000 square foot clinic. Then, PCHC set its sights on rehabilitating two badly deteriorated historic buildings at the site’s northwest corner.

The buildings had been erected by the Beaman & Smith Co., a manufacturer of precision machine tools. Designed by the Berlin Iron Bridge Co., the two-story machine shop (1898) was one of the first electrically powered factories in Rhode Island and an early example of steel-frame construction. Many of its steel columns were rotted and required extensive repair or replacement, and the brick spandrels on two elevations had to be disassembled and rebuilt. The four-story, reinforced-concrete structure (1917) was so badly spalled that the re-bar was visible in some locations; exterior walls were patched and treated with a breathable masonry coating. New aluminum windows were designed to replicate the original sash. The design team, led by Vision 3 Architects, maintained the open, industrial character of the buildings while accommodating a complex program that includes a PCHC dental clinic, medical training facilities operated by Lifespan, and offices. Historic features, like the hoist mechanism and steel roof trusses, were incorporated into the design. Gilbane Building Company served as the general contractor. The project was supported by Federal and State historic tax credits.

Twelve years after purchasing the former Beaman & Smith Co. Mill site, PCHC’s vision has been stunningly realized. A once abandoned and derelict city block has been reborn and two historic buildings are back in service – providing health care, economic opportunity, and hope to one of Providence’s most distressed neighborhoods.



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Historic Preservation Project Award

Rumford Library, East Providence

In 1811, the Young Ladies’ Reading and Charitable Society was established in Rumford. Meetings reportedly consisted of one member reading aloud while the others did needlework. By the end of the 19th century, the Society had become the East Providence Free Library Association, with a collection housed at the Town Hall. In 1905, Samuel W. Bridgham, a summer resident, funded the construction of a dedicated library building in Rumford, designed by the Providence architectural firm of Hilton and Jackson. The handsome building, with its classical façade, pedimented vestibule, Doric columns and central entry surmounted by a large fanlight, served the citizens of East Providence for over 100 years.

In 2012, faced with severe budget cuts, the City of East Providence closed the Rumford Branch Library and offered the building for sale. Rita Steele, who had at age 8 announced to her parents that she would one day own a library, seized the opportunity. With the help of family and friends, Rita transformed the library into a stylish, modern residence that retains the building’s historic character and bookish charm. The library’s open floor plan remains, now with a kitchen and living room – each graced with a brick fireplace – on either side of the central hallway. Two bedrooms and two baths are tucked into the back of the building, in a 1950s addition. The original brick rear elevation (now an interior wall) was repaired and repointed by Rita’s father, a mason. Rita’s sister became an expert in wood window restoration. Fluorescent lights gave way to period fixtures. Original wood flooring, concealed under drab carpet, was brought to life again. And, fittingly, the old library bookshelves still line the walls.



Frederick C. Williamson Professional Leadership Award

Sheila Deming Brush of North Kingstown

Dedicated. Methodical. Resourceful. Visionary. Brilliant. These are a few of the words Sheila Deming Brush’s colleagues use to describe her. For nearly 30 years, Sheila has applied these qualities to the causes of historic preservation and smart growth in Rhode Island, helping elected officials, advocates, and the general public understand the connections between the two.

Sheila joined the preservation movement in Rhode Island in the 1980s, volunteering at the Providence Preservation Society and later serving as its Director of Development. In 1997, while working at the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission, Sheila organized a conference that brought preservationists, environmentalists, land conservationists, and business leaders together to tackle the problem of haphazard development in Rhode Island. Titled “Preserving Place, Growing Smart,” the conference attracted 600 people and led directly to the establishment of Grow Smart Rhode Island, the statewide leader in promoting sustainable and equitable economic growth.

Shelia spent the next 18 years at Grow Smart, providing operational support and strategic planning, securing the organization’s initial funding, and serving as its first staff person. She has applied her coalition-building skills to a wide range of programs and initiatives, from expanding housing affordability to strengthening food systems. In 2001, Sheila worked with a team of over 20 organizations and agencies to establish Grow Smart’s award-winning Land Use Training Collaborative, which has delivered workshops to more than 3,000 municipal officials, land-use practitioners, and historic district commission members. Sheila was instrumental in establishing Rhode Island’s Historic Preservation Tax Credit, a powerful tool for preservation and economic revitalization. When the tax credit was suspended, Sheila was critical to its reinstatement – mobilizing advocates, organizing testimony before legislative committees, and analyzing the program’s fiscal impact. Sheila retired from Grow Smart earlier this year.



When Sheila moved to Rhode Island, she was attracted to the sense of history, the mix of urban centers and rural countryside, and the ocean. It was here, she says, that she found a sense of belonging. Sheila’s career has been dedicated to ensuring that future generations may continue to find those special qualities that, fortunately for us, drew her to the Ocean State.

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Roger Williams University is pleased to join Preserve Rhode Island and the Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission in congratulating all of this year’s Rhody Award winners.

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Roger Williams University

A black and white photograph of a man standing on a small boat in a harbor. He is pointing towards a large, historic stone archway that frames the background. The scene is set in a historic harbor with other boats and buildings visible in the distance.

The Hope Foundation

Antoinette F. Downing Volunteer Service Award

Varoujan Karentz of Jamestown

Upon his retirement, Varoujan Karentz sought a diversion for his spare time. At his daughter’s suggestion, he joined the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association (BLMA), stewards of the historic lighthouse complex at the southern tip of Jamestown. Not only was Varoujan a sailor, but he had been a corporate executive at the Raytheon Company. Volunteering at Beavertail would allow him to indulge his love of the sea—as well as to use his professional background in electronic and digital systems, contract negotiations, and project management.

In 2000, Varoujan began to volunteer as a museum docent and tour guide. Three years later, he was tapped to form a subcommittee to envision how BLMA could expand its ownership, operation, and maintenance of the lighthouse complex. Varoujan got input from a wide array of private and public stakeholders on a specialized business plan and won a grant to support the preparation of a Master Plan (2006) that continues to guide activities on site.

For the past 15 years, Varoujan has demonstrated that when it comes to Beavertail Lighthouse, there is nothing he can’t or won’t do. He has written or co-written grant proposals that have brought in more than \$560,000 worth of grants for capital projects, planning, repairs, and exhibits. He has served as project manager for everything from surveys to building restoration, new exhibits to mechanical and electrical systems upgrades. He became the chief interpreter at Beavertail, having published *Beavertail Light Station* (2008) and *The Life Savers: Rhode Island’s Forgotten Service* (2012), and authored many of the exhibits on site. Not surprisingly, Varoujan has held numerous leadership positions in the BLMA.

As Varoujan’s long-term colleague Richard Sullivan says, “Keeping up with him is no easy task. The successes experienced by Beavertail Light Station. . .are largely due to his vision of what can be and willingness to oversee to completion a complex project with the many unanticipated issues that accompany such an undertaking.”



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