Guide to the Newport Historical Society’s Old Stone Mill Collection
Newport Historical Society, Newport, Rhode Island
Last update on 2015 August 13

Descriptive Summary

Repository
Newport Historical Society, Newport, Rhode Island

Location
Newport Historical Society

Call No.
MS.1854.8

Creators
Newport Historical Society

Title
Newport Historical Society’s Old Stone Mill Collection

Date(s)
Approx. 1677-2010, undated

Abstract
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.

Extent
4 boxes (1.67 linear feet)

Accession Info
Collected by the Newport Historical Society from various sources, 1854-present.

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
4. Arnold Family Wills, 1674 – 1955
5. Miscellaneous, 1788 - 1998

Restrictions

There are no restrictions on physical access to this material. This collection is housed onsite at the Newport Historical Society. Researchers can make an appointment to see the collection during normal library hours by calling the Newport Historical Society.

Subject Access

Personal Name Subject
Arnold, Benedict, 1615-1678
Arnold, Benedict (Sr.)
Arnoll, Rebecca
Bannister, Christian
Blaine, Joseph W.
Bolthouse, Gladys Carr (Mrs.)
Brigham, Herbert O.
Byers, Douglas S.
Catherwood, Frederick
Downing, Philip B.
Gilpin, William B.
Gilpin, John Bernard
Godfrey, William S.
Hattendorf, Ingrid
Jackson, Henry (Rev.)
Johnson, Robert G.
Leland, Waldo G.
Lippincott, Bertram (Jr.)
Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth, 1807-1882
Luce, Stephen B.
Mallery, Arlington Humphrey
Means, Philip Ainsworth, 1892-1944
Morison, S.E.
Mumford, John
O’Loughlin, Kathleen
Pell, Claiborne, 1918-2009
Pell, Herbert
Penhallow, William S.
Potvin, Ron
Robson, Lloyd
Siemonsen, Jorgen
Touro, Judah, 1775-1854
Welch, Dan
Wright, Harrison M.

**Corporate Bodies**
American Antiquarian Society
Art Association of Newport, RI
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
**Subject**
Old Stone Mill (Newport, R.I.)
Newport (R.I.)--Antiquities
Newport (R.I.)--Buildings, structures, etc.
Newport (R.I.)--History
Newport (R.I.)--History--Anecdotes
Newport (R.I.)--History--Colonial period, ca. 1600-1775
Newport (R.I.)--History--Exhibitions
Newport, R.I. Old stone mill
Archaeology
Pre-Columbian archaeology

**Form/Genre**
Architectural drawings (visual works)
Architectural surveys
Articles
Booklets
Books
Brochures
Clippings (information artifacts)
Correspondence
Essays
Exhibit scripts
Land surveys
Legal documents
Manuscripts (document genre)
Maps (documents)
Menus
Pamphlets
Photographs
Postcards
Sketches
Stats (copies)
Typescripts
Wills

**Administrative Information**

Processor  
Finding aid prepared by Michelle Montalbano

Processing Note  
This collection is part of a larger run of subject-based files created by Gladys Bolthouse, 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.
Descriptive Rules
Finding aid based on Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS)

Citation
Newport Historical Society’s Old Stone Mill Collection, MS.1854.8, Box Number, Folder Number, Newport Historical Society

Inventory

Correspondence

Box 7, Folder 1 - Correspondence, 1847-1867

Correspondence regarding a spurious newspaper article, which claimed that the Royal Society of Antiquities in Copenhagen had sponsored an archaeological excavation at the Old Stone Mill and discovered irrefutable proof of its Norse origins. As per Melville's letter, "The report is false and groundless in every particular." Signage from Old Stone Mill exhibition. Originals and transcriptions.

Box 7, Folder 2 - Correspondence, 1835-1965

Correspondence regarding the excavation of the Old Stone Mill site and the establishment of Touro Park, with a dedicated lot for the Stone Mill. Includes list of contributors who covered the balance remaining after Mr. Touro's bequest of $10,000 to purchase the Stone Mill lot for the Public Park as well as the letter to his executors. Later correspondence between Philip Ainsworth Means and the Rhode Island and Newport Historical Societies regarding book in process and opinions on planned excavation.

Box 7, Folder 3 - Correspondence, 1938-1942

Correspondence regarding the history of the Old Stone Mill, Easton's beach, and the Mumford Plan of Newport (1711). Reference to correspondence between the "Antiquarian" and his opponent, "One of the Oldest Inhabitants of Newport". Letter from Philip Ainsworth Means to the people of Newport appealing to them to stop the widening of Mill Street to preserve the Mill and proposing an alternative traffic route. Planned exhibition at the NHS timed in accordance with the publication of Means' book The Newport Tower.

Box 7, Folder 4 - Correspondence, 1942-1944

Western Union telegram regarding John Mumford maps. Correspondence between Herbert O. Brigham and various individuals.

Box 7, Folder 5 - Correspondence, 1946-1948

Correspondence between Herbert O. Brigham and various individuals regarding mill inspection and theories of origin. Letter to the editor of the New York Times.

Box 7, Folder 6 - Correspondence, 1948-1985

Correspondence regarding Barbados theory, 1948 excavation of the site.
Box 7, Folder 7 - Correspondence, 1950-1960

Correspondence regarding excavation and uncovered artifacts. Includes various articles, scholarly and otherwise, and press debating/making assertions about the mill.

Box 7, Folder 8 - Correspondence, 1960-1973

Correspondence regarding articles and publications. Further enumeration of theories, including those suggested by psychic mediums.

Box 7, Folder 9 - Correspondence, 1932-1982

More correspondence regarding possible theories of origin, new information discovered by Gladys Bolhouse. Includes runes, cryptography, paintings, and infrared photographs suggesting previously adjoining structures.

Box 7B, Folder 32 - Accounts, 1954

Photocopies and typescripts of articles about the excavation of the Mill. Statements of accounts. Memorandums. Correspondence regarding research. Contains separate folder labeled "Iron Bracelet Found at Idlewild."

Box 7B, Folder 33 - Miscellaneous, 1946-1981

Contains typewritten account entitled "Comments made by Lloyd Robson in Newport Tower," list of clippings pertaining to Old Stone Mill, and comments on Sister Ann Nelson lecture, all by Joseph W. Blaine.

Box 7B, Folder 34 - Touro Park (Removed from Newport History Vert File), 1825-1953

Letterhead from Robert H. Green, Old Colony Trust company regarding the estate of Philip B. Downing. Agreement. Correspondence from Collins & Collins regarding said estate. Photostat of proposed plans for marker in Touro park commemorating contributors to park's purchase, as per Downing's bequest. Typewritten history of the purchase of Touro Park.

Box 7B, Folder 36 - Correspondence, 1877-1986

Correspondence between Joseph W. Blaine and others. Typescripts of published works. Photocopies of published articles.

Box 7B, Folder 37 - Joe Blaine, Edward Limmer Article, 1984-1999

Correspondence between Joseph W. Blaine and others. Postcards. Photographs. Photocopies of published works, including articles. Manuscripts of published, scholarly works.
Box 7C - Correspondence regarding Menzie's 1421, undated

Menzie's 1421 includes chapter entitled "The Newport Tower and Dighton Rock" pp. 281-294. Wright observes, "Arguments have been made that one or the other of them [Dighton Rock and the Newport Tower] provides conclusive evidence of the early presence here of the lost tribes of Israel, the Phoenecians, escaping Trojans, the lost Roman legions, early Irish exploration (especially St. Brendon), crusaders of the 12th and 13th centuries either lost or with nothing better to do on their way back from the Middle East, Norse explorers of various centuries, and so on down to the Portuguese explorer Miguel Cortereal, who left Portugal in 1501 and was never heard from again. And now the Chinese?" (para. 3).

Box 7C, Folder 46 - Correspondence, 1997 -

Correspondence involving Jorgen Siemonsen, Millar, Ron Potvin and others.

Publications

Box 7, Folder 10 - Reports: 1944, Waldo Leland; 1948, William Godfrey; 1955, Arlington Mallery

Contains a copy of "The Old Mill at Newport" with a note that it was reprinted by permission from The Century, March, 1879. Reports of findings during excavations. Clipping from "The Pageant of the Vikings" by “MHE”, including duplicates. Special Interim report from 1955 by Mallery, Easton and Howieson.

Box 7, Folder 11 - Architectural Drawings, 1878-1941


Box 7, Folder 12 - Booklets, 1901-1948


Box 7, Folder 13 - Booklets, 1949-1954

Copy of Summer 1950 issue of Archaeology containing Godfrey's article "Newport Tower II." Bound reprint of "Plaster Under the Newport Tower" by Pohl and "Answer to Plaster Under the Tower" by Godfrey from American Antiquity. "The Newport Tower: Norse or English" from The American-Scandinavian Review, Volume XXXVII.
Box 7, Folder 14 - Booklets, 1948-1983


Box 7, Folder 19 - Poetry, undated

Box 7, Folder 20 - Miscellaneous, 1854-1982


Box 7A, Folder 21 - Miscellaneous, 1767-1981

Research and publications about the Old Stone Mill. Includes both published and unpublished materials. Also includes typescript with extracts from Rev. Henry Jackson's map (1856-7) and Christian Bannister's will (1767).

Box 7A, Folder 24 - Miscellaneous, undated

Miscellaneous handwritten notes, timelines, and typescripts of articles and reviews.

Box 7A, Folder 25 - Miscellaneous Notes - Old Stone Mill, undated

Typed note cards, photocopies of handwritten notes with diagrams, handwritten notes and timelines.

Box 7A, Folder 26 - Miscellaneous Research - Handwritten, 1968, undated

Handwritten notes, notecards, typed and handwritten research notes, copies of correspondence.

Box 7A, Folder 27 - Clippings, 1916-1974

Newspaper and magazine clippings, notecards. Typescripts.

Box 7A, Folder 28A - Clippings P.A. Means, Book Reviews, etc. Portuguese Theories, 1942-1964

Newspaper clippings and reviews regarding the Philip Ainsworth Means book, lecture, and planned excavations

Box 7A, Folder 28B - Clippings, Arlington Mallery Digs, 1954

Newspaper clippings reporting on the excavation of the Mill performed by Arlington Mallery and his findings. Includes photocopies.
Box 7A, Folder 28 - Clippings, Godfrey Excavation, 1948

Newspaper clippings reporting on the excavation of the Mill performed by William S. Godfrey and his findings.

Box 7B, Folder 35 - 1979 Paper, 1880-1986


Box 7B, Folder 38 - 1991-1997


Box 7B, Folder 39 - Pamphlets, 1948-1949


Box 7B, Folder 40 - "Archaeoastronomy" of the Old Stone Tower, William S. Penhallow, 1991-2010

Transferred from library 6/97. E-mail correspondence and manuscript copies of papers. Includes drawings and diagrams.

Box 7B, Folder 41 - Pamphlets, 1882, undated

Transferred from library 6/97. Includes "The Viking Cross" (Huntley); "The Visit of the Vikings" (Higginson, 2 copies)

Box 7B, Folder 42 - Pamphlets, 1916-1949

Transferred from library 6/97. "The Kensington Runestone"; "Three Stories of the Old Stone Mill" (Thomas); "More Light on the Old Mill" (Shelton).

Box 7B, Folder 43 - Pamphlets, 1865-1938

Transferred from library 6/97. Verazzano as a Discoverer"; "The Old Mill at Newport" (Hatfield); "Did the Norsemen Erect the Newport Round Tower" (Wick); "The Viking Ship" (White)

Box 7C - Report of the Ground-Penetrating Radar Survey Touro Park, Newport, Rhode Island, 2001

Box 7C - Photocopy of article entitled "Did British knights of the Holy Grail really beat Columbus to America?" in the column The Secret Scroll, December 11, 2000

Gift of Capt. Herbert Rommell, April, 2001; published December 11, 2000

Box 7C - Correspondence regarding The Kensington Runestone: A Historical Perspective by Robert G. Johnson, University of Minnesota, attached to final version of essay.

Box 7C, Folder 45 - Clippings, 1997 -

Clippings and photocopies of newspaper and magazine articles

Box 7C, Folder 47 - Brochures, Pamphlets, Articles, 1997 -

Includes Newport History #235, inscribed by the author. Photocopies of published articles, notecards, invitations to exhibits and lectures. Typescrpts of articles from the Newport Mercury. Bound printed reports.

Box 7C, Folder 48 - Frederick Catherwood, Architect of a Theory, 1997

Box 7C, Folder 49 - "The True Date of the Discovery of the American Continent Under John and Sebastian Cabot", 1870


Box 7C, Folder 52 - “Builder of the Newport Tower” by Edward A. Richardson, 1960

Essay for the American Society of Civil Engineers

Box 7C - 2006 Excavation - Chronognostic Research Foundation, 2007

Includes correspondence, photocopies, clippings, and bound report entitled "Discovery Under Touro Park: Overview and Research" by Jan Barstad

Box 7C - Jorgen Siemonsen, 2010

Includes clippings, photocopies, and ephemera.

Maps and Visual Materials

Box 7, Folder 15 - Maps, 1634-1955

Contains reproduction of the 1634 map in New England Prospect: "The South Part of New-England, as it is Planted this yeare, 1634” and copy of “A drought of the Town of Newport Taken and Drawn by John Mumford, Jan 3, 1712-13,” traced from photostat in Newport City Hall, Oct 8, 1955.

Box 7, Folder 16 - Prints, Drawings, Etchings, undated
Contains postcards of Old Stone ruins and Commodore Perry statue, as well as sketches, illustrations, and architectural drawings.

*Box 7, Folder 17 - Prints, Drawings, Etchings (Mills + Towers other than Old Stone Mill, Newport), 1956*

*Box 7A, Folder 29 - Photostat - Newport Ruin, undated*

*Box 7A, Folder 30 - Photos - Fireplaces - Hammett Building Bull House, 1898-1982*

Includes photocopy of sketch of the Mill with handwritten note, added later, "'From my father's sketch book. We was together when this was taken. W.B.G.' Before 1832 (as early as 1814?) =Wm. B. Gilpin, Father was John Bernard Gilpin, British consul at Newport. Original in scrapbook. NHS #1280 (red)" and photograph of possible remains of Bull House, with handwritten note from Joseph W. Blaine in 1982.

*Box 7A, Folder 31 - Photographs, undated*

*Box 7C - Archaeological Plans, Land Surveys, undated*

**Arnold Family Wills**

*Box 7A, Folder 22 - Miscellaneous: Arnold Family Data, 1674-1955*

Contains typescript of extracts from the will of Rebecca Arnoll and (2) photostats of Benedict Arnold Senior's will.

*Box 7A, Folder 22A - Benedict Arnold Will, 2 copies, 1677*

Contains two original copies of Benedict Arnold's will

**Miscellaneous**

*Box 7, Folder 18 - Mills (Other than "Old Stone Mill"), 1898-1966*

Contains materials regarding the Stafford Hill Memorial and Chesterton Windmill

*Box 7A, Folder 23 - Miscellaneous, 1788-1955*

Front matter from J&P Coats' Exhibit at the Cotton Centennial and the Story of the Old Stone Mill; note cards; 2 copies of invitation to lecture given by Philip Ainsworth Means; poster with text about a cottage complex in Warwickshire called Juxta Pacem; clipping from Popular Science; Notecard with typed extracts from Ezra Stiles' literary diary. Copy of *The Newporter*. Playbill. Menu from New Haven Railroad (cover features image of the Old stone Mill).

Contains clipping and photocopies, one of playbill for "Sounds from the Old Stone Mill." Includes handwritten notes from Joseph W. Blaine in 1982.
Box 7B, Folder 44 - Sinclair Association, 1983-1994


Box 7C, Folder 50 - Comment Forms, Exhibit, the Old Stone Mill in Perspective, 1997-1998

Box 7C, Folder 51 - "OSM in Perspective" Exhibit, label text, 1997-1998