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Calendar of Events January 1941

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COMMUNITY ART PROJECT



CALENDAR
of
ART EVENTS

JANUARY
1941

Volume Eight

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THE GENERAL VARNUM HOUSE

IN 1773, James Mitchell Varnum, then a young attorney, erected a large frame dwelling on the terraced hill just west of that section of the Post Road, which is the main street of East Greenwich, Rhode Island. It stands in the midst of a fine walled garden: From the upper rooms, Greenwich Bay, and beyond, the Narragansett, can be seen to the eastward.

More pretentious than its fellows of the pre-Revolutionary period, the residents of that day, shook their heads dubiously at what they considered the owner's extravagance, and called it "Varnum's Folly." But Varnum was, by his subsequent brief, brilliant career, destined to attract far greater attention to himself.

The house, which is of Georgian colonial architecture has a hipped gable roof, a novelty in this section except for the nearby Dr. Eldredge house, built later in the same year. This characteristic is reminiscent of old Newport. The porch with its columned pediment, and the flanking ells to the west are later additions, but in keeping with the details of the original structure.

The interior of the mansion is a thing of beauty of detail and proportion. A spacious central hall running through the house terminates at its west end in a graceful staircase with turned balusters. To the north side of the hall are the parlor and dining room while the library and the reception are to the south of the hall. All of the main rooms contain beautiful mantels, the north parlor having one of a broken pediment type, which was copied by the late Sanford White for the Rhode Island Building at the St. Louis Building at the St. Louis Exposition in 1904. Both halls, and the main stairway are part wainscotted, the woodwork of this, as well as all cornices, are of the type found in Ionic and Corinthian designs.

There is a central hall on the second floor, flanked by four chambers. Lafayette is known to have once occupied the southeast one, and there is an unverified tradition that Gen. Washington once slept in the northeast room. The southwest chamber, directly at the head of the staircase was used by General Varnum.

The spacious lawn comprising about an acre and a half, shaded by stately trees and adorned with much fine old box and simple, old-fashioned gardens, contains the coach house as well. The property now surrounded on three sides, by a high, cement-laid, stone wall, is shielded from the streets, in a restricted area of the residential district.



Varnum was Born in Dracutt, Massachusetts, December 17th, 1748, and graduated from Brown University, (then known as Rhode Island College), with honors, in 1769. This was the first class to be graduated from the Providence institution. In the following year he married Miss Martha, daughter of Oliver Cromwell Child of Warren, R. I., better known as "Patty" Varnum. She was a beautiful woman, much admired in her time, the gracious hostess at many of the memorable entertainments at her East Greenwich home. Famed for her hospitality, she was no less celebrated for her skill in the tempting products of the kitchen.

Mr. Varnum had been admitted to the Rhode Island Bar in 1771, and soon after settled in East Greenwich. His intense interest in military affairs began with the formation of the Kentish Guards, which has been justly famed as the training of the Rhode Island Line in the Continental Army. On the organization of this Command, on October 16th, 1774 he became the first commandant, with rank of Colonel. In 1775, Varnum received his commission as Colonel of the 1st Regiment of Infantry in the Brigade of Observation, and in 1777, he was appointed a Brigadier General in the Continental Army. In 1779 he was made Major General of the Rhode Island Militia. He served with distinction at Red Bank and at Valley Forge; in action at Roxbury, the Siege of Boston, the battles of Long Island, White Plains and Rhode Island. With his appointment by President Washington as Federal Judge of the Northwest Territory in 1781, Varnum attained to the highest office of his legal career. He had already won renown by his

brilliant and successful defence of Weeden in the case brought by Trevett, which established the precedent that the authority of the Courts can not be subverted to the interference of legislative bodies. The journey, made on horseback to his new judicial post, at Marietta, Ohio, undermined his health, and he succumbed to consumption, in that place, October 10th, 1789. He was twenty-seven when he entered army service; resigned his commission at thirty-one. He was a member of Congress the same year, resumed his practice at thirty-three, was elected to Congress at thirty-seven. He was but forty years old at the time of his death.

He was the second President of the Rhode Island Society of the Cincinnati, succeeding his friend, Gen. Nathanael Greene in that office, on the death of the latter.

Impetuous by temperament, Varnum was hospitable by nature. Of distinguished appearance, he possessed poise and courtly manners to a notable degree. He was one of the most noted orators of his day.

Something of General Varnum's personality seems to have survived in the old house at East Greenwich, rich with its associations of the great leaders of the Revolution who met there, Rochambeau, Greene, Lafayette, Sullivan, D'Estaing and others, while "Patty" Varnum is recalled by the surviving trees that she planted on the grounds, and the flower gardens that once knew her care.

Following General Varnum's death the East Greenwich property passed successfully to the ownership of the Clarkes', Braytons', Bowens', and Harts', each in turn adding to its beauty and interest. It is now a part of the holdings of the Varnum Continentals, an incorporated patriotic military command, organized October 1, 1907, with headquarters in the Varnum Memorial Armory, East Greenwich. This group has thus insured the preservation of a notable piece of Colonial architecture, with the intention of recreating and demonstrating the life and customs of the period and to offer public facilities for architectural and historical research from available material. This already includes historic, period furniture, and, conveniently arranged on both of the floors of the ell, a large and interesting historical collection, in part that of the former East Greenwich Historical Society.

Henry G. Jackson

EXHIBITIONS OUTSIDE OF RHODE ISLAND

Andover, Mass., Addison Gallery, Phillips Academy

Dec. 11-Jan. 7—Figures in Bronze.
Jan. 10-Feb. 17—Regional Exhibition of Water colors.

Boston, Mass., Museum of Fine Arts

Dec. 4-Feb. 2—Miniature Rooms by Mrs. James Ward Thorne.
Dec. 4-Feb. 2—Cartoons by David Low.
Dec. 4-Jan. 5—Water color drawings by William Blake for illustrations to Bunyan's "Pilgrim Progress." Lent by the Marquess of Crewe.

Boston, Mass., The Build of Boston Artists

Jan. 6-Jan. 18—Water colors by Philip Little.
Jan. 20-Feb. 1—Paintings of Flowers by Henry H. Brooks.

Pittsfield, Mass., The Berkshire Museum

Jan. 1-Jan. 31—The Plan of a Painting. (Manhattan Bridge Loop) by Edward Hopper. Lent by the Addison Gallery, Andover, Mass.

Northampton, Mass., Smith College Museum of Art

Jan. 1-Jan. 31—A Memorial Show of the work of Paul Klee. Lent by the Museum of Modern Art.

Springfield, Mass., The Springfield Museum of Fine Arts

Jan. 20-Feb. 20—Modern Plastics and their use.

Wellesley, Mass., Farnsworth Museum, Wellesley College

Jan. 9-Jan. 30—Paintings by Alison M. Kingsbury.

New York, N. Y., The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Jan. 1-Jan. 12—Prints by Living Americans. Gallery A 23.
Jan. 1-Jan. 19—Carriage Designs. Gallery E 15.
Jan. 1-Jan. 26—The Art of the Jeweler. Gallery D 6.
Jan. 1-Feb. 2—Old Nantucket Houses: Water colors by Edgar W. Jenney. Assembly Room, American Wing.
Jan. 1-Jan. 31—Islamic Miniature Paintings and Drawings. Lent by Mrs. George D. Pratt.

At the Cloisters, Metropolitan Museum

Jan. 1-Jan. 12—The Christmas Story in Mediaeval Art. Special Exhibition Room.
Jan. 1—Mediaeval Arms and Armor. Late Gothic Hall.
Jan. 1—The Mediaeval Knight and His Fortress. Spanish Room.

EXHIBITIONS IN RHODE ISLAND

Faunce House Art Gallery, Brown University

Jan. 27-Feb. 10—Poland Memorial Picture Lending Library.

Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design

Jan. 1-Jan. 31—Prints showing different techniques.
Jan. 1-Jan. 31—Painting and Tapestries from the Museum collection.

The Providence Art Club, Thomas Street

Dec. 31-Jan. 12—Paintings by Hope Smith and Edith Jackson Green.
Jan. 14-Jan. 26—Paintings by Helena C. Strickler.
Jan. 28-Feb. 9—Paintings by Frederick R. Sisson.

Armour Gallery, Arcade, 3rd Floor

Jan. 1-Jan. 13—Paintings and Water colors by John Fontaine.
Jan. 13-Jan. 31—Drawings by Wesley Noble.

Tilden-Thurber Gallery.

Jan. 1-Jan. 6—Reproductions and Originals in Oils and Watercolors.

Jan. 1-Jan. 6—Etchings by Soderberg, Heintzelman, and Nesbit.

CALENDAR OF ART EVENTS

Sunday, January 5

Gallery talk, "The Invention of Money" by Adelaide M. Davidson. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, 3:30 P. M.

Monday, January 6

Basement Studio Group: dramatic reading of "Paolo and Francesca" by Stephen Phillips. Tea. 80 Benefit Street. 8:10 P. M.

Friday, January 10

*John Ralph Geddis and Francois Martin present "Rip Van Winkle." Geddis-Martin Puppet Theatre, Shepley Library, Benefit St. 8:45 P. M.

Saturday, January 11

*John Ralph Geddis and Francois Martin present "Rip Van Winkle." Geddis-Martin Puppet Theatre, Shepley Library, Benefit St. Matinee and evening performance at 2:45 and 8:45 P. M.

Sunday, January 12

Gallery talk, "Demonstration of Bronze Casting" by John Howard Benson and Randolph W. Johnston. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, 3:30 P. M.

*Concert by the Rhode Island W.P.A. Symphony Orchestra. Edouard Caffier conducting. Gilbert Stuart Jr. High School, 8:15 P. M.

Monday, January 13

Basement Studio Group: dramatic reading of "The Iron Master" by Georges Ohnet. Tea. 80 Benefit St. 8:10 P. M.

Tuesday, January 14

*The Providence Community Concert Association presents Igor Gorin, baritone. Metropolitan Theatre, 8:30 P. M.

Wednesday, January 15

*The Community Art Project Wednesday Evening Talk. Professor James H. Shoemaker will speak on "The War and Economic Change." Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, 8:15 P. M.

Friday, January 17

Lecture by John B. Archer on the concert program of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, 3:30 P. M.

Sunday, January 19

Gallery talk, "Medieval Pilgrimage Roads" by John Nicholas Brown. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, 3:30 P. M.

*Admission charged.

*Concert by the Rhode Island W.P.A. Symphony Orchestra. Edouard Caffier conducting. Gilbert Stuart Jr. High School, 8:15 P. M.

*Sock and Buskin presents "My Heart's in the Highlands" by William Saroyan. Faunce House Theatre. Three performances: 3:00, 5:30, and 9:00 P. M.

Monday, January 20

Student Audition at the Music Department, Brown University. Alumni Hall, 8:00 P. M.

*The Players present "Escape" by John Galsworthy. Barker Playhouse, 8:30 P. M. Tickets may be obtained through members.

Basement Studio Group: dramatic reading of two one-act plays. Tea. 80 Benefit St. 8:10 P. M.

Tuesday, January 21

*Concert by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Metropolitan Theatre, 8:30 P. M.

*The Players present "Escape" by John Galsworthy. Barker Playhouse, 8:30 P. M.

Open house at the Handicraft Club. 10:00 A. M. to 5:00 P. M. Classes in operation.

Wednesday, January 22

*The Players present "Escape" by John Galsworthy. Barker Playhouse, 8:30 P. M.

Thursday, January 23

*The Players present "Escape" by John Galsworthy. Barker Playhouse, 8:30 P. M.

Friday, January 24

*John Ralph Geddis and Francois Martin present "A Midsummer-Night's Dream" as performed with puppets in Shakespeare's time on an Elizabethan stage with music of the period. Geddis-Martin Puppet Theatre, Shepley Library, Benefit St. 8:45 P. M.

*The Players present "Escape" by John Galsworthy. Barker Playhouse, 8:30 P. M.

Saturday, January 25

*John Ralph Geddis and Francois Martin present "A Midsummer-Night's Dream." Geddis-Martin Puppet Theatre Shepley Library, Benefit St. Matinee and evening performances, 2:45 and 8:45 P. M.

Sunday, January 26

Gallery talk, "Education for the Artist" by Dr. Royal B. Farnum. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, 3:30 P. M.

*Concert by the Rhode Island W.P.A. Symphony Orchestra. Edouard Caffier conducting. Gilbert Stuart Jr. High School, 8:15 P. M.

Monday, January 27

Basement Studio: dramatic reading of "Herod" by Stephen Phillips. Tea. 80 Benefit St. 8:10 P. M.

Tuesday, January 28

*The Providence Community Concert Association presents Emanuel Feuermann, 'cellist. Metropolitan Theatre, 8:30 P. M.