

THE SCITUATE ART FESTIVAL AND ITS PLACE IN THE COMMUNITY

The Scituate Art Festival began with a Church and, of course, residents of our Town.

SCITUATE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

On March 24, 1830, fourteen residents of North Scituate Village and the surrounding area met at an inn owned by one of the residents and raised \$3,000 by subscription to build Scituate's third house of worship. Two days later, the group chose a site near the Academy School House, now the North Scituate Community House and on May 20, William Smith, one of the founders, sold the site for \$75. Later that month, the Rhode Island General Assembly granted a charter to the Smithville Society. Late in May, Clark Sayles of Pawtucket, a member of the world-famous Rhode Island textile family, agreed to construct the church for \$2,360. The building was dedicated on July 4, 1831.

The Smithville Society was composed of Congregationalists and Baptists and the pulpit was shared on alternate Sundays by an elder from each faith. But that arrangement ended a year later by a vote of 17 to 9 when the Baptist elder was denied the pulpit. From that day, the Church was Congregationalist.

The Congregation flourished throughout the mid-1800s until attendance began to decline; and regular services were suspended about 1897 or 1898. The First Congregational Church and Society continued to preserve the building, occasionally opening it for special services. On May 27, 1940 the Society deeded the property to the Town of Scituate to be used for religious and historical meetings and purposes.

SCITUATE ART FESTIVAL: THE BEGINNINGS

The Church building had fallen into disrepair from the 1940's to the 1960's. The first Scituate Art Festival began as a one-day event in 1967 with the hope of raising \$500 to put toward restoring the building. In 1968, the Town Council appointed a Citizens' Church Restoration Committee to raise funds and undertake the restoration project. When completed, the building would be available for public use on a non-denominational, non-sectarian basis.

According to a Providence Journal article dated October 13, 1968, Mrs. Wallace McTammany and Mrs. Donald Drew were co-chairs of the day-long art show. The second Scituate Art Festival had raised \$600 for the restoration of the Town-owned Scituate Congregational Church. "There was a constant crowd of about 500 persons," Mrs. McTammany was quoted as saying, "The event, which will likely become an annual affair, was a great success." The event took place on the lawn across the street from the Church with artists from across the State of Rhode Island and it included two dozen

paintings by artists serving sentences at the Adult Correctional Institutions. Also exhibited were wood sculptures, ceramic sculptures and pictures burned in wood. Several antique dealers ringed the art displays. Money was raised through the sale of food as well. The Committee received a commission of 10% on the sale of each painting.

On March 26, 1975, the Scituate Art Festival Committee met with local attorney, John Gorham, for the purpose of incorporating as a nonprofit organization. With Mr. Gorham's help, the group drew up a charter and by-laws. A vote was taken and it was decided that the organization would be named Scituate Art Festival, Inc. Richard Gaddes was voted as the first President of the new Corporation and on June 4, 1975, the first meeting of the Scituate Art Festival, Inc. took place for the signing of the Articles of Association. The signers were Richard V. Gaddes, Forrest R. Sprague, Elizabeth S. Dexter, Lilly B. Zarli, Elaine R. Birrell, M. Elizabeth Moffat, George H. Moffat, Georgia V. Burgess, Edythe M. Whitford, Charlotte E. Blaine, and Marion King Wieselquist. The purpose of the Corporation was to encourage arts and crafts, to conduct art festivals and exhibitions and to use the proceeds thereof for civic, cultural, artistic, educational and other charitable purposes.

SCITUATE ART FESTIVAL: IN THE COMMUNITY TODAY

Each year, the Scituate Art Festival Committee collects exhibitor fees from participating artists, crafters and antique dealers as well as 10 percent of the net proceeds from the nonprofit food vendors. First, the Committee uses those proceeds to pay its expenses such as trash removal and portable restrooms for the entire Village (both on and off the Art Festival grounds), advertising, entertainment, insurance, hospitality, water supply for the food vendors and general supplies. Operating costs average around \$25,000 a year. The Art Festival Board sets aside a portion of the remaining proceeds for future Church restoration projects and then funds its Grants Program annually with anywhere from \$5,000 to \$15,000.

Over the past 45 years, the Scituate Art Festival has awarded grants totaling more than \$200,000 to many organizations in support of a variety of programs. These programs and organizations are right here in Scituate, Rhode Island. Past Scituate Art Festival Grant recipients include: the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Future Farmers of America, Scituate Scholarship Foundation, Scituate Ambulance Corps, Scituate Food Pantry, Trinity Church Food Closet, Scituate Fire Departments, Scituate High School Music Department, Scituate Animal Shelter, Scituate Police Explorers, North Scituate, Clayville and Hope Elementary Schools, the Scituate Middle and High Schools and various historic cemeteries. Many years ago, the Art Festival even purchased tables and chairs for the North Scituate Community House. Many times the Art Festival has been able to contribute monies to the Town of Scituate for the upkeep of the Church's heating and air-conditioning systems, as well as interior and exterior painting projects. Almost every picnic table available for public use in various locations around Town, as well as 55-

gallon garbage barrels, were originally purchased by the Scituate Art Festival for its use and then shared with the Town throughout the rest of the year.

The Art Festival also supports the Community by offering vendor booths in its food court exclusively to Scituate nonprofit organizations. The 12 groups currently included are: Potterville Fire Department, Shepherd of the Valley, Scituate High School Music Association, Scituate Rotary Club, Scituate High School Athletic Boosters, Scituate Lions Club, Boy Scout Troop 2 North Scituate, Scituate Ambulance Corps, Scituate Preservation Society, Hope Library, Boy Scout Troop 102 Chopmist, Boy Scout Troop 1 Scituate. Other Scituate nonprofit groups are allotted space to hold fundraising bake sales and these include Hope PTA, North Scituate PTA, the SAAD Program and Cub Scouts, to name a few. It takes hundreds of volunteers for these nonprofit groups to have a successful weekend and many consider this event to be their main fundraising opportunity of the year. It is common to find the same volunteers working for one group on Saturday, a different group on Sunday and yet again a completely different group on Monday. It is truly a Community effort.

There are other nonprofit groups outside of the Art Festival grounds which also benefit from the event. Over the Art Festival weekend, the North Scituate Baptist Church supports a number of groups, as does St. Joseph's Church and its Knights of Columbus Organization. Trinity Church holds a very successful Turkey Supper on Sunday, which the Art Festival Committee has always promoted with notices to all its vendors. Various Fire Departments make arrangements to park cars for a small fee.

Each year, starting immediately after the Art Festival, the over 50 volunteer members of the Scituate Art Festival Committee and their family and friends start working on the following year's show. Many sub-committees work tirelessly throughout the year to make each Art Festival a safe and successful event. The success of the Art Festival is measured not only on its financial contribution to the Community but also in how the Committee makes this event look easy. It is anything but easy. Many members meet several times a year and they answer e-mails, work on updating the website, communicating with hundreds of applicants and various other tasks throughout the year. As Columbus Day weekend nears, everyone in Town can feel the event build. This is known as set-up week. It takes several days for set up to be completed and, most typically, by the following Tuesday or Wednesday no one would have any idea that over 200,000 people had visited the Community. An event of this size doesn't just happen. It takes a lot of time and effort by many volunteers.

In 2007, it became apparent that the Scituate Congregational Church was starting to show signs that it needed a complete exterior paint job. The Art Festival began working with (then) Town Council President Budway, Building Inspector Provonsil, and Director of Public Works Langlais reviewing several options as to how best to restore the exterior of the Church. It was decided that the prescribed method would be the removal of loose paint, proper priming and a final coat of exterior paint. The specifications were developed by the Town and put out to bid. As the exterior contained lead paint, the contractor would have to be lead paint certified by the State and a specialist in the

process. This project was so costly that the Art Festival Committee would have to break it up into two, very expensive phases totaling \$68,062 and started saving and budgeting for this project a few years ago. Last year was phase one with the south and east sides along with the steeple being worked on. The cost of phase one was \$36,789 and the Art Festival was happy to assist the Town by covering this cost during hard economic times. Phase two, which included the north and west sides of the Church, was recently carried out at a cost of \$31,273, completing the latest chapter of the Scituate Art Festival's work on the Town-owned Scituate Congregational Church. Many comments could be heard by the people attending the 2011 Festival and also from our own Town's citizens on how great the Church looked this year, completely painted. The Committee is already planning on working with the Town to fund other, much smaller, projects for the interior of the Church.

The Scituate Art Festival Committee is proud of its accomplishments and grateful for the Town Council's continued support of its efforts to give back to this Community.

Adapted from a Presentation to the Scituate Town Council
By Christopher S. Caluori, President and 20+ Year Active Member
Scituate Art Festival, Inc.
October 13, 2011