

The Salem Preservationist

Reporting historic preservation developments in the greater Salem area

"Looking backward and forward to a Greater Salem"

SALEM PRESERVATION INC.

Salem 1630: Pioneer Village - Summer 2006



Traditional English thatching tools are illustrated here.

Photo courtesy <http://www.rainhill-civic-society.org.uk/images/thatchtools.jpg>

LATE BREAKING NEWS: Re-thatching Project begins at Salem 1630: Pioneer Village!

by John Goff and David Goss

COME SEE THE THATCH!! Salem Preservation, Inc. is exceedingly pleased to announce that on Saturday August 5, 2006, between 10:00am and 4:00pm, Salem 1630: Pioneer Village will be opened to the public to allow interested persons to watch the roof re-thatching process going on.

William Cahill from County Galway, Ireland, who last worked on the Village roofs in 1989 with his brother Michael, will return in 2006 to give the crowns of the roofs of three replica 17th century English colonial cottages a major rebuilding.

While the time-honored tradition of thatching goes back centuries in England, Ireland and the British Isles, the Cahills are some of the few living people in the United States today who have been professionally trained in all the complexities associated with converting straw, water reed, and other agricultural materials into a durable and natural, thermally efficient roofing material.

William Cahill now normally resides in Ohio, where he runs Custom Roof Thatch, Ltd. < <http://www.roofthatch.com> > providing thatched roofs for properties across the United States. He will be bringing most of the needed water reed to Salem, although some thatching materials may also be locally harvested.

In the 17th century, natural thatch beds were kept and maintained not far from the Salem 1630: Pioneer Village site.

Saturday, August 5th will mark the first day of Salem's Heritage Days this summer. Come to the Village then!

Admission will be free, but donations encouraged to help fund a major new program of Village repairs and improvements.



Pioneer Village Thatched Roofing, Lady Arbella House
Photo courtesy http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/fnart/fa267/17house.html

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Pioneer Village's Governor's House

Photo courtesy http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/fnart/fa267/17house.html

Funding Sought for Intern to Build Architectural Model

by Gay Roland

Salem Preservation Inc. is pleased to announce the arrival of a student intern from Montserrat College of Art Sculpture Department who will create a three dimensional scale model of Salem 1630: Pioneer Village during the summer of 2006. Shawn-Paul Filtranti, an architectural major, comes highly recommended from his college and we are sure he will do a superb job.

A scale model is needed to plan and coordinate the Village reconstruction, to support planning for future theater and film events, and to help with major fundraising.

We are turning to our wonderful friends for monetary donations to fund this internship. Please help.

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Pioneer Village Thatched Roofing

Photo courtesy http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/fnart/fa267/17house.html

Pioneer Village Thatching Project Being Planned

By John Goff and David Goss

In recent years, eight buildings at Pioneer Village have been most enjoyed by visitors and film groups. These are The Governor's House, four scenery cottages, the Blacksmith's Shop, the Long House, and the English wigwam. When the Village was first designed in 1930, the intent was to accurately show the variety of 17th century house types constructed by Naumkeag and Salem's first settlers. Consequently, the Village was built to display the rudest of some house types (such as dugouts and English wigwams) with better built houses for young families including small timber frame cottages, mostly roofed with thatch, and the Governor's House, roofed with hand split wood shakes. Much of the Village's historic English character derives from the thatched roofing on three of the four scenery cottages, as well as the cat-tail thatching now on the English wigwam.

When the Village was last restored in a major way in the late 1980s and early 1990s, all of the thatched roofs were replaced. Yet they are in need of repairs once again. The tops, or crowns of the roofs have degraded on all of the cottages as well as the wigwam, primarily as a function of tree branches falling on, and animals (such as squirrels) getting into the thatch. Good thatchers are hard to find, as the Old World technology is ancient, and was almost lost completely in the 20th century. Yet in the 1980s, the Cahill Brothers from Ireland were engaged to re-thatch the Village, and they did a very fine job. Salem Preservation, Inc. is committed to repairing the Village's thatched roofs in 2006.

Stay tuned for further developments.

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The Village on the silver screen

Salem News, Viewpoint, Published July 14, 2006

Over the last two years, Salem Preservation Inc. has been renting the Village for new film and theater productions to help pay for needed repairs. Four new films and TV productions were made at the Village between December 2005 and June 2006:

- * "A Town Called Winslor," produced by Wayne (Robbie) Roberts, a senior thesis film student at New York University;
 - * "The Plague Year," produced by PS Films of Nahant, is headed for the Sundance Film Festival;
 - * "Gluttonous Goody Goforth," a comedic portrayal of 17th-century Puritan life, was conceived, designed and produced in April by Bait & Tackle Productions of Gloucester for the nationally renowned 48 Hour Film Festival. It won third place for the Boston area as well as three other prestigious awards.
 - * Engel Entertainment of New York City also came to the Village in April to film segments of a new two-hour TV documentary on exorcism. This documentary will be aired on the History Channel in October. The Engel piece will detail the history of possession and exorcism from before the time of Christ to the present. Two segments were shot at Pioneer Village, including footage relating to Salem in 1692. The documentary also used some North Shore actors.
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