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Slater Park: “A Perfect Union of Art and Nature” Learn about the history of Slater Park and the Loeff Carousal

By Marie George

On Sunday May 15 at 2:00 PM, the Christine Nowak Lecture series will present Donna Houle of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. Houle will give a talk on Slater Park entitled “*A Visual Presentation of the History of Slater Park – A Perfect Union of Art and Nature.*”

In the late 1890s, the city of Pawtucket purchased the area around what was then known as the Daggett Farm. Several years later, work began on this swampy and wooded area, transforming it into the oldest and largest park in Pawtucket. The park is named after Samuel Slater, the famous industrialist who created America’s first textile mill.

In the early 1900s, the initial work was begun to create paths, drives, ponds and bridges, making the previously unreachable areas of the park accessible to the walking and motoring public. The Daggett House was preserved



The Loeff Carousel, moved to Pawtucket in 1910, is open again after a \$2.5 million restoration.

and is one of the oldest buildings in the state, having been built around 1685. Over the next decades, several buildings were added.

In her capacity as a special projects manager for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Houle has amassed a wealth of knowledge on the history of Slater Park. Over the years, she has collected postcards and pictures of the park, and has used them to create her presentation portraying the art and nature that are combined in its history. Among the many features of the

Park about which Houle will speak are the carousel, zoo, bandstand and boat-house (which houses the R.I. Watercolor Society), as well as the Marconi and Friendship Gardens, and

Come to the Annual Meeting

The BVHS Annual Meeting and Election will take place at 1:30 pm May 15 at North Gate on Louisquisset Pike, just before the Christine Nowak Annual Lecture, presented by Donna Houle.

The Nominating Committee for the BVHS, Don

**Slater Park and
Loeff Carousel
The Christine Nowak
Lecture Series
2:00 pm, Sunday,
May 15
Annual Meeting at
1:30 p.m.
Downstairs at BVHS**

Daggett House. She will also discuss the seasonal programs such as summer Arts in the Park, October’s Pumpkins in the Park, and December’s Winter Wonderland.

Of particular interest is the Slater Park Loeff Carousel, built in New
(continued on p. 2)

Coelho, Robert Ferri, Richard Walker, Kevin Heskin and Kristina Guadagni, led by Chairman Bob Ferri, announces that the slate of officers/nominees for 2022-2023 remains the same:

(continued on p. 4)

Slater Park: “A Perfect Union of Art and Nature”



The Loeff Caroussel won the “Historic Carousel of the Year” Award in 2018.

(continued from p. 1)

York in 1895 by famed carousel designer Charles I.D. Loeff, who also created more than 40 carousels around the country, including at New York’s Coney Island. It was moved to

Pawtucket in 1910. At one time, it was in peril of being sold for parts until grassroots efforts rescued the carousel, known locally as “The Darby Horses.”

More recently, \$2.5 million in restoration has the carousel up and running and open to the public.

In 2018, the National Carousel Association held its annual convention in Rhode Island and awarded the Slater Park Loeff Carousel “Historic Carousel of the Year.”

Houle is currently working on a documentary on Loeff and the history

and restoration of the carousel, which is over 125 years old.

Houle encourages all who attend her lecture to bring photos or memorabilia they may wish to share during a question-and-answer period following the presentation. She will also display Slater Park keepsake items, which are for sale, including

Christmas ornaments, coasters and trivets.

Houle, a Pawtucket resident, has worked as a special projects manager for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council for 34 years. She is a member of the National Carousel Association and previously received an Arts Grant from the City of Pawtucket to create this multimedia presentation, *A Visual Presentation of the History of Slater Park – A Perfect Union of Art and Nature*. Houle has lectured and shown the presentation to many civic and community groups over the years.

In 2009, Houle received the William Blackstone Society Award from the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council for her work in the community. She was inducted into the Pawtucket Hall of Fame in 2018 as Person of the Year for her work with the carousel. With Janice McHale and Jean Stizpeck, she founded Friends of the Loeff Carousel to protect, promote and preserve the carousel.

Limerock Fire Station Sign Restored

Don Coelho has recreated the Limerock Grange No. 22 Volunteer Fire Department sign on the fire station. The original sign was peeling and cracking badly. Coelho, who made the new Blackstone Valley Historical Society sign that hangs

on the side of the building facing the highway (put up in 2020), also volunteered to reproduce this smaller historical sign. He came by to hang it on April 23. Look for the new sign at the annual meeting and Christine Nowak Lecture.



Don Coelho hangs the completed sign on the fire station.



Honoring Veterans at St. Francis Cemetery



On May 7, a group of volunteers including Joseph Zabek, Mel Newfield, Tim Schey, Corrine Brown Walker, Buddy Thayer, and Les, Dawn and Sophie joined BVHS Cemetery Coordinator Ken Postle to put flags on veterans' graves at St. Francis Cemetery in Pawtucket.

They posted 504 flags in three and a half hours, and were able to do the whole lower area of the graveyard, which contains Civil War, Spanish American, World Wars I and II, Korean and Vietnam War veterans.



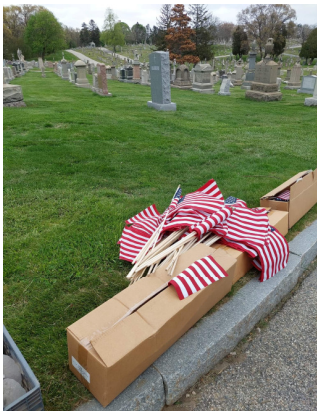
Top left: The group sets out with armloads of flags.

Middle left: The boxes of flags, and Corrine Brown Walker putting a flag on a grave.

Bottom left: Newly flagged graves included those of Martin C. Fallon, Chf. Mach. U. S. Navy, Spanish American War, and Patrick O'Brien, 3rd. R. I. H. Artillery, Civil War.

Right: Volunteers at work placed more than 500 flags on graves.

Bottom: Ken Postle demonstrates how to place a flag.



Upcoming Events

**Most events are free.
Everyone is welcome.
Donations are gratefully accepted.**

2:00 pm, Sunday, May 15 (Christine Nowak Lecture): **Donna Houle**, of the Friends of the Loeff Carousels at Slater Park, will give a presentation about the carousel. The BVHS annual meeting will take place at 1:30 pm before the talk.

3:00 pm, Sunday, June 12 Concert: *Americana: The Sensational 70's* by **Michael DiMucci**.



'The Sensational Seventies' Michael DiMucci Concert June 12



Michael DiMucci

On June 12 Michael DiMucci, tenor and pianist, will present a concert of songs and their stories from America's past at the Blackstone Valley Historical Society. This concert is part of his Americana se-

ries. The program features well-known melodies from what he dubs "The Sensational 70s!"

Come celebrate with the music that defined the decade from country to pop to soul to singer-songwriter pieces and more.

This concert is a fundraiser for BVHS. Tickets are \$15 and will be available on BrownPaperTickets.com and at the door. Watch the website for more information. Buy tickets at <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/5450701>.

Don't forget to renew your membership!

Donations are always welcome to help keep up North Gate, the Fire Station and the Bakery!
www.bvhsri.org/join

Annual Meeting, continued.

(continued from p. 1)

Jason Dionne: President
Lori Melucci: Vice President
Francine Jackson: Secretary
John Houghton: Treasurer
Members at large:
Gail Harris
Bob Ferri
Don Coelho

If you are interested in joining the board, which organizes history-related activities, lectures and exhibits,

cares for North Gate and its artifacts and collections, and works to build awareness and community around the historical origins of the Blackstone Valley, please contact Bob Ferri: bob_ferri1@aol.com.

Nominations also will be taken from the floor during the annual meeting, which begins at 1:30 pm. We hope to see you there.

BVHS Executive Board

President: Jason Dionne

401-862-4202

Email: jjhdio70@gmail.com

Vice President: Lori Melucci

Secretary: Francine Jackson

Treasurer/Property Manager:
John Houghton

Members-at-Large

Gail Harris, Bob Ferri, Don Coelho

Membership Director

Kristina Guadagni



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