



# The Compass

## Message from the Site Manager

Welcome to *The Compass*, the first official newsletter of the Roger Williams National Memorial.

This is an exciting time at the memorial and the staff is ready to roll out the red carpet for the thousands of visitors who will come to the visitor center and attend our programs throughout the spring, summer, and fall.

We have been very busy over the winter developing new programs, tidying up the landscape, and updating our non-personal services such as brochures, interpretive displays and the park's website. The staff is also looking beyond the next several months and is working with NPS support staff, contractors, and partners on the development and updating of several of the site's guiding documents. These include reviewing the first draft of a Cultural Landscape Report, finalizing a wayfinding plan, and updating the park's Long Range Interpretive Plan.

As I look out my window onto the beautiful 4.5 acre greenspace that is *Welcome* (cont. on page 3)

## New Site Manager Joins the Roger Williams National Memorial



Site Manager Jennifer Gonsalves of the Roger Williams National Memorial

In December 2008, Jan Reitsma, superintendent of the Roger Williams National Memorial, announced that a new employee would be joining the staff in downtown Providence.

"We are very pleased to welcome Jennifer Gonsalves to Roger Williams National Memorial," Reitsma said. "She is the first full-time site manager at the memorial and brings a great deal of creative energy as well as diverse experience from New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park, where she most recently served as the acting superintendent."

"We are looking to Jennifer to help us enhance the memorial as a destination and experience for visitors from near and far, in particular by working in partnership with the City of Providence and other institutions in the City," Reitsma added.

"She is the first full-time site manager at the Memorial and brings a great deal of creative energy as well as diverse experience."

Superintendent Jan Reitsma

Gonsalves' career with the National Park Service began with the dedication of New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park (MA) in 1998. She is a New Bedford resident with three children. She holds a B.A. in English Literature from UMass Dartmouth and a Masters degree in Community Planning from the University of Rhode Island.

*New Site* (cont. on page 3)

*"The sovereign, original and foundation of civil power lies in the people."*

R. Williams, 1644

## Paul's Corner

by Paul Coletta  
Maintenance Worker

Spring is here...or so they say. This past winter was one of those old fashioned ones with plenty of snow and many cold days and nights. The season's first snow fell December 16, dropping a little over a foot of light, fluffy powder on the park, and seemed to continue right through to the last big storm the area received the first week of March. The entire park staff worked very hard during and after every storm to ensure that the park remained open and accessible. It is obvious, however, that the weather is about to change because the daffodils are starting to pop out of the ground. I saw a few of them in one of the mulch beds a couple of days before the last snow storm. It won't be long until we start to get the park ready for the upcoming spring and summer seasons.

The park has seen a couple of notable improvements during the past year. The first, completed in September, was the repaving of the parking lot. The lot had gone almost thirty years without any major repairs or upgrades. Now it looks like it should last another thirty years! The other improvement, also completed in the fall, was the installation of six additional replica gaslights. The parking lot and the Hahn Memorial were two places that received more lighting. The lights match the ones already in place in the park as well as those found along nearby Benefit Street, creating a unified historic look and feel for this, the oldest part of the city.

Finally, I want to welcome a new addition to the maintenance crew, Carl Swanlund. Carl was hired as a Centennial Seasonal to assist with the many maintenance projects completed over the winter and planned for the upcoming months. The entire staff at the Memorial welcomes Carl to the team.

Please take some time this spring and summer to visit your National Parks, especially Roger Williams National Memorial.

## Volunteer Spotlight



**Name:** Anthony "Tony" F. Custodio Jr.

**Occupation:** Retired

**Special Interests/Hobbies:** Reading books about the Civil War.

**How long have you been a volunteer?** 6 years.

**Why did you become a volunteer?** I'd just retired from the US Postal Service after 17 years of service and was looking for something to do.

**What do you like about volunteering for the NPS?** I like meeting different people from all over the United States and different countries. I enjoy helping visitors by answering their questions about the site, the story we present or the items we have for sale in the bookstore. I also like giving directions and answering questions about things to do in the city of Providence.

**What are some interesting things you've done in your life so far?** There are a couple of things. Working for the USPS as a letter carrier until I got injured and then working behind the scenes handling passport applications, tracing packages, and answering various questions about the post office. I enjoyed going on a cruise to Alaska, sailing from Anchorage to Vancouver, British Columbia. I'd always wanted to go there. The landscapes are beautiful. I have also cruised around the Caribbean, seeing the different islands and learning about the different cultures.

## Volunteers in Parks

Roger Williams National Memorial is looking to expand its volunteer program and is seeking new volunteers to assist in the visitor center, with maintenance projects, and with special events. Volunteering at Roger Williams National Memorial is a great opportunity for retirees, students, adults, kids, and others to become involved in the National Park Service as well as their own community. If you have a love of history, meeting new people, and having fun, then this is the place for you!

Roger Williams National Memorial is located on North Main Street, the old "Towne Street", in downtown Providence, Rhode Island. The memorial tells the story of Roger Williams, founder of the first English settlement with complete religious freedom.

The memorial's visitor center, located in the historic Antram-Gray House, houses interpretive exhibits, a 5-minute audio/visual program, and an Eastern National bookstore. The 4.5 acre memorial is one of the few public greenspaces in the downtown area. Visitors come to the memorial to eat their lunch, walk around the park, learn

about Roger Williams, and simply to have fun. Volunteers of all ages, backgrounds, and skills are encouraged to contribute their talents and enthusiasm.

Volunteers in Parks (VIPs) at Roger Williams National Memorial provide valuable support to the park staff, working behind the scenes performing administrative duties as well as helping visitors in the visitor center and out in the park grounds. VIPs conduct research, present interpretive programs, and staff special events. Volunteering at Roger Williams National Memorial is both a rewarding and beneficial experience.

The staff at Roger Williams National Memorial appreciates the contributions of all of our volunteers. Their support keeps the memorial's visitor center open seven days a week, year round and has contributed to stellar visitor satisfaction results on the park's annual survey year after year. Please join us in telling the story of Roger Williams and his important contributions to the foundation of American freedom and the ideals he put forth—liberty of conscience and separation of Church and State.

# Celebrate National Junior Ranger Day April 25th

One day each year, the National Park Service takes time to celebrate Junior Rangers past and present.

The Roger Williams National Memorial will celebrate National Junior Ranger Day Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, with the debut of its new Junior Ranger Activity Booklet. This free activity booklet is a fun way for kids to learn about Roger Williams, Rhode Island and the National Park Service. Activities include trivia questions, mazes, scavenger hunts, and more. Once the activities are completed, children will receive a certificate of achievement and an official Junior Ranger badge.

After 12 years of using the same activity booklet, the staff at the memorial



thought it was time to update and add new activities to its Junior Ranger program. “We’ll have a great time. Kids and their families can come to the memorial and learn about Roger Williams, and have fun while doing it,” said Park Ranger Sparkle Bryant.

In addition to earning a Junior Ranger badge on National Junior Ranger Day, kids will also be able to play games and participate in hands-on activities.

There will also be a park-wide scavenger hunt. “It will almost be like a party to celebrate Roger Williams,” said Ranger Bryant.

The National Park Service Junior Ranger program began in the late 1960s, modeled after a similar program in the California State Park System. The NPS program allows children to discover and interact with the parks at their own level. The Junior Ranger program is flexible; children have options in the type of activities they do and the number of activities they complete.

There are close to 400 national park service sites throughout the U.S. and most have Junior Ranger programs. The brand new Junior Ranger activity booklet at the Roger Williams National Memorial is an exciting and fun opportunity for kids to explore the history and legacy of Roger Williams.

---

## New Site Manager

(cont. from page 1)

Gonsalves feels that her background will serve her well at the Roger Williams National Memorial. “The story of Roger Williams – religious freedom, social consciousness and constitutional rights – they are so relevant today,” Gonsalves explained. “I am intrigued by the challenge to translate those profound concepts to the general public and Providence is such a dynamic city in which to synthesize this history and culture. “

*“Boast not, proud  
English, of thy birth and  
blood,  
Thy brother Indian is by  
birth as good.”*

R. Williams, 1643

## Welcome (cont. from page 1)

the memorial, I see people walking their dogs, joggers getting their daily run in, and college students making their way to class at any one of the many educational institutions located within blocks of the site. Snowdrops and crocuses are pushing their way through the cold, hard dirt. Buses that brought schoolchildren to the city to visit the park and many of the adjacent cultural and historical institutions sit idle in the parking lot. Soon, the air will be filled with the chatter and laughter of the students as they take over the park’s picnic tables to have their lunch while soaking up the early spring sunshine.

The park maintenance crew is trimming the crabapple tress, raking the leaves recently exposed by the melting snow, and tuning up the landscaping equipment. The interpretation and education team is developing new public programs, getting ready to roll out a new Junior Ranger activity booklet, and visiting schools to talk about Roger Williams and his impact on the foundation of American government. And, finally, calls are coming in weekly from partner organizations, civic groups, and city entities inquiring about use of the site for special events.

Yes, it is an exciting time at the Roger Williams National Memorial. The park, located in the center of Providence, is one of the many jewels in the crown of this beautiful and vibrant city. There is much to see, do, and experience. Please join us on a walk down historic Benefit Street, become a Junior Ranger, or, simply, sit and contemplate the ideals of Roger Williams in this urban oasis by the Moshassuck River.

Jennifer Gonsalves, Site Manager



**National Park Service**  
**U.S. Department of the Interior**

**Roger Williams National Memorial**  
 282 North Main Street  
 Providence, RI 02903

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

## Roger Williams National Memorial Staff

**Superintendent**  
 Jan Reitsma

**Site Manager**  
 Jennifer Gonsalves

**Administrative Officer**  
 William Maurer

**Budget Analyst**  
 Diane Angell

**Maintenance Team**  
 Paul Coletta  
 Carl Swanlund

**Interpretation and Education Team**  
 Sparkle Bryant  
 Maria Levesque  
 John McNiff

**Newsletter Comments?**

**Write to:**  
 John McNiff  
 Roger Williams National Memorial  
 282 North Main Street  
 Providence, RI 02903



*The Compass* is the newsletter for the Roger Williams National Memorial. The image above is the compass and sundial of Roger Williams. It is one of the very few tangible artifacts of his that remain. By its nature a compass tells direction—where you are going and where you have been. It’s the perfect name for our newsletter.



**National Park Service**  
**U.S. Department of the Interior**

Roger Williams National Memorial commemorates the life of the founder of Rhode Island and a champion of the ideal of religious freedom. Williams, banished from Massachusetts for his beliefs, founded Providence in 1636. This colony served as a refuge where all could come to worship as their conscience dictated without interference from the state. The memorial is located on a common lot of the original settlement of Providence and includes 4.5 acres of landscaped park.

**Roger Williams National Memorial**  
 282 North Main Street  
 Providence, RI 02903

**Phone**  
 401-521-7266

**E-mail**  
[jennifer\\_gonsalves@nps.gov](mailto:jennifer_gonsalves@nps.gov)

**The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.**