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STONE ENDER TALK AT REDWOOD LIBRARY REVEALS NEW DETAILS ON UNIQUE RHODE ISLAND ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

Preserve Rhode Island presented new research on Stone Enders to a crowded audience at the Redwood Library on Wednesday evening. Stone Enders are an early colonial architectural style almost exclusively found in Rhode Island. Their most unique characteristic is one side of the building is made up of a massive stone wall and chimney, while the other three sides are made of wood. Preserve RI undertook this research in conjunction with the rehabilitation of a Stone Ender in Lincoln, RI, the Valentine Whitman Jr. House.

Shantia Anderhagen of Preservation Strategies, who conducted a literature search and preliminary field study for Preserve RI, presented her findings. Among the noteworthy discoveries:

- Before the study, it was commonly thought among preservation experts that there were fewer than a dozen Stone Enders remaining in Rhode Island. Preserve RI's research confirmed that at least 14 Stone Enders are still standing today and there may be as many as 24. More research is required, as many of these buildings have had additions or other alterations that conceal the Stone End of the building.
- Stone Enders are unique to Rhode Island not only due to plentiful supplies of quality stone and timber, but to lime which was used in colonial times to make mortar—essential to building the massive stone walls and hearths. The first lime quarries in the colonies were established in Rhode Island.
- One theory as to why this style was so prevalent in Rhode Island, but not in neighboring Massachusetts and Connecticut, is that the first settlers in the Rhode Island colony came from the western part of England, and adapted building styles familiar to them using local materials.
- Stone Enders existed both in the northern and southern part of the state. While those in the north used limestone from the quarries nearby, in the southern part of the state they used shell mortar, making lime from the refuse piles of oyster shells left by Native Americans.
- Just one Stone Ender remains in its original location in Newport, the John Bliss House. At least six others have been demolished. Two other Stone Enders were moved to Newport in the 20th Century, but architectural historians do not consider these as existing Stone Enders given that much of their original material was lost with the move.

Valerie Talmage of Preserve RI said, "We're delighted to be able to shed new light on Rhode Island's Stone Enders. These buildings are an important part of our early colonial history. The fact that so many remain more than 300 years later shows that generations of Rhode Islanders valued preserving our past and found ways to keep these buildings in active use. We're proud to continue that tradition with the recent rehabilitation of the Valentine Whitman House in Lincoln into a home suitable for 21st Century living."

Over 80 people signed up to attend the lecture in person at the Redwood Library and Athenaeum, and an additional 50 joined virtually. The Redwood Library's lecture series runs throughout the year on Wednesday evenings. Preserve RI's research on Stone Enders was made possible by a grant from the Kane Wallace Foundation.

For more information about Preserve RI's research on Stone Enders, please visit [Preserve Rhode Island | Stone Ender Report \(preserveri.org\)](https://www.preserveri.org/Stone-Enders-Report)

About Preserve Rhode Island

Preserve Rhode Island is Rhode Island's statewide advocate for historic places. The 65-year-old nonprofit provides guidance for local preservation groups, finds productive and adaptive reuses for threatened buildings, advocates for the revitalization of historic places to stimulate local economies and engages the community through public programs at Lippitt House Museum.

Images are available on request.

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