

PROVIDENCE



Valerie Haggerty-Silva, a graphic designer, hangs portraits in the Story Center room of the "Coming to Rhode Island" exhibit. The subjects are all Rhode Islanders photographed by Lucas Foglia.



Museum exhibits developer Jessica Neuwirth surveys work on the new Fort Adams Gallery, which opens Friday.



Laborers, circa the 1850s, are depicted in the new Fort Adams gallery. -PROVIDENCE JOURNAL PHOTOS/DAVID DELPOIO

Children's Museum to unveil new gallery

By Peter C.T. Elsworth
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The Providence Children's Museum opens its renovated "Coming to Rhode Island" exhibit on Friday, and it now includes a new gallery focusing on a replica of a part of Fort Adams in Newport that was under construction in 1835. It tells the story through John Quigley, an Irish immigrant who contracted to work on the huge project.

The Quigley family still lives in Rhode Island and curators were granted access to documents, including John Quigley's original contract, signed in 1831.

"We design and build our own exhibits," said Megan Fischer, the museum's associate director, adding that the four exhibits in "Coming to Rhode Island" focus on "real stories, real people." The three other exhibits have not changed, but have been refurbished. They are a 1640 farmhouse belonging to a Scots-Irish family, the popular packet boat "Nellie May," dating to 1892 and owned by Antonio Coelho from the Cape Verde islands, and Josefina Rosario of the Dominican Republic in



Jessica Neuwirth puts some finishing touches on the Scots-Irish Gallery, one of four galleries that make up the Children's Museum's "Coming to Rhode Island" exhibit.

If you go ...

The Providence Children's Museum is open Tuesday to Sunday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and select Fridays until 8 p.m. Admission is \$9 for adults and children, under 12 months free. 100 South St., Providence. 273-5437. childrenmuseum.org.

1961 in the bodega and cafe she established in South Providence.

The new Fort Adams exhibit includes two levels for children to explore, focusing on the brick and granite masonry. A mural artist has created images of the boardinghouse that

Quigley and his wife ran for the workers. There is also a garden with lifelike vegetables and even a cannon, which faces out through a slit in the ramparts.

"The target group are 4- to 11-year-olds," said Robin Meisner, director of exhibits. "Through

pretend-play they learn social skills, especially empathy, and make sense of history." She said ideally the children get to play without a lot of adult intervention.

The exhibits, connected by a time tunnel, were researched by Jessica Neuwirth, exhibits developer. The Fort Adams exhibit has foam bricks — she said 10 million were used — tools and even a wheelbarrow for kids to use as they pretend to join in the work.

Neuwirth said she had researched the project with the help of the Fort Adams Trust and the Museum of Newport Irish History.

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