

A Look Back – The Great Weathervane Heist

Controversy invites theft, and one of the more fascinating chapters in the Barn's 25 years is written

March 15, 2012

As faculty member Kevin Jordan and his team of historic preservation students transformed two old barns from Gloucester, R.I., into *the Barn* at Roger Williams in the early 1980s – see feature in the Spring 2012 issue of [RWU Magazine](#) – the new performing arts center featured a picturesque cupola at its apex, but not the weathervane you might expect to see atop.

The original, it turns out, had been stolen by helicopter in the early 1970s when the barns sat in Gloucester. According to Jordan, the age and the scarcity of historic weathervanes prompted a wave of thefts in the late 1960s and '70s:

“People would rent a helicopter for \$200 an hour, head out to rural areas and steal 50, 60, 70 weathervanes at a time. They could be worth anywhere from \$5,000 to \$50,000 each at the time.”

After the Barn's debut on campus, Jordan came across an unused weathervane that depicted Metacomet, the Wampanoag sachem who played a major role in King Philip's War. Jordan an

