



# The East Providence Historical Society

# Gazette

September 2014

Volume XXVII No. 1

## September

**Sunday, September 14**

1:00 - 3:30 pm

Hunt House Museum  
open  
Hunts Mills Road,  
Rumford

**Monday, September 22**

7:00 pm

Members' Meeting -  
*Public invited*

**Crescent Park on the  
10 Mile: On the Road**

Weaver Memorial  
Library  
41 Grove Avenue,  
East Providence, RI

**Saturday, September 27**

11:00 am - 3:00 pm

Hunt House Museum  
open

**Smithsonian Day**

## October

**Saturday, October 4**

Watchemoket Square  
Day

### CONTACT US AT:

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Historical Society  
P.O. Box 4774  
East Providence, RI  
02916-4774  
Tel. (401) 438-1750  
Email: info@ephist.org  
Web Site: ephist.org

**Dedicated to Preserving the Heritage and Enjoying the  
History of Our City**

## Meet Your New Officers and Board Members

We welcome a rearranged Board and several new members. Nancy Moore takes the head job for two years; Cheryl Faria switches from Recording Sec. to 1<sup>st</sup> VP; Deb Ormerod stays in place as Curator and 2<sup>nd</sup> VP, Dot Thornley keeps her Treasurer's job and new member Stephanie Poole takes the Recording Secretary spot.



Becky Ellis Photo  
Dot Thornley, Cheryl Faria, Nancy Moore,  
Pat Henry, Deb Ormerod. (Left to right)

Our other change is that Sandra Turgeon has become the chair of the Marker Program and Becky Ellis took over the responsibility to manage the website. We have already met twice as a new Board and this group is as dedicated and active as ever.

## Smithsonian National Free Museum Day

**Saturday -September 27**

**11:00 am – 3:00 pm**

Participating museums all over the country will be open on Sept 27 to celebrate their collections. Hunt House Museum will be open from 11:00 am - 3:00 pm to showcase the Serowik Crescent Park collection, the Rumford Baking Powder collection, and the Hunt and Walker family treasures. The grounds themselves are worth a visit - come visit East Providence's best kept secret.

**The Gazette**

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East Providence  
Historical Society

P.O. Box 4774, East Providence, RI  
02916-4774  
Tel. (401) 438-1750  
Web Site: ephist.org

**OFFICERS**

Nancy Moore *President*  
Cheryl Faria *1st Vice President*  
Deborah Ormerod *2nd Vice President*  
Stephanie Poole *Recording Secretary*  
Pat Henry *Corresponding Secretary*  
Dorothy Thornley *Treasurer*

**COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

Robert Tewksbury *Buildings*  
Jeffrey Faria *Grounds*  
Miriam Kenney *Membership*  
Karen Panzarella *Museum*  
Deborah Ormerod *Curator*  
Sandra Turgeon *Marker Program*  
Reinhard Wohlgemuth *Newsletter*  
Nancy Moore *Preservation*  
Nancy Moore *Programs*  
Nancy Moore *Publicity*  
Becky Ellis *Website Manager*

# September Members' Meeting Crescent Park on the Ten Mile: "On the Road"

EPHS is delighted to be asked back to the library for the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Smithsonian Night at Weaver. The format will be the same:

- a brief talk from the experts, Ed Serowik, Jr and Sr.
- EPHS Board members spotlight their favorite picks from the Crescent Park collection
- a trip down the midway of memory lane. The public is invited to share any of its own Crescent Park memorabilia.

The meeting starts at **7:00 pm on September 22 at the Weaver Library**. Refreshments will be served before the meeting.

**CAN YOU TOP THIS?** "My mom and dad met at Crescent Park but they didn't go there together. My mom's date was not well behaved and my dad wondered if she needed a little help getting out of the situation. He offered to take her up on the Ferris wheel for one ride and then slipped the carny man some money to keep that ride going until he had mom's phone number. The rest is history." If you have a better story we need to hear from you!

These are the kinds of "very RI" stories we have heard at the Crescent Park exhibit this summer and we have decided to extend the exhibit through the Fall. Both Ed Serowik Jr and Sr will be on hand to answer questions and we know that the exhibit will be a big hit with Smithsonian National Museum Day visitors. You are all invited.

## The East Providence Historical Society

is dedicated to preserving the heritage  
and enjoying the history of our city.

**If you are not a member we  
invite you to join now.**

Annual dues are \$15 individual, \$25  
family or business, or a Life  
Membership for \$150.

Please make check payable to:

**East Providence Historical Society**

and mail membership form to

**East Providence Historical Society**

**P.O. Box 4774**

**East Providence, RI 02916-4774**



### Membership Form

New

Renewal/Change

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

\$15 Individual

\$25 Family/Business

\$150 Life

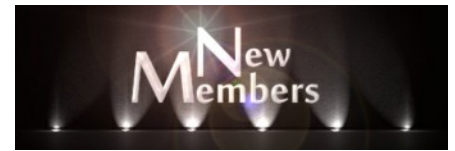
## Historical Marker Program

Your home may be eligible for a marker. Any building in the City of East Providence which contributes to the historical development or architectural character of the City is eligible to be considered for a Historical Marker.

Request information by sending your name, address and phone number to the

### Marker Program

East Providence Historical Society  
P. O. Box 4774  
East Providence, RI 02916-4774



We welcome our newest member:

Jack Richer

## A Reminder . . .

We miss you! If you did not pay your dues in July as we requested, please send them in now to our post office box address. You will find the membership form on page 2 of the GAZETTE. Thank you so much for your continued participation. We hope to see you at our upcoming activities.

Miriam Kenney,  
Membership Chair

## Markers Committee

My name is Sandra Turgeon and I have been asked to chair the Markers Committee for the East Providence Historical Society. My husband and I have owned a historic house in Rumford since 1998. My interest in the history of East Providence began then. I have spent countless hours researching the deed to my own house and in the process have learned a little bit about my neighborhood and the Ring of the Green. As a result, my initial focus will be to add the oldest structures in that area that have maintained their historical integrity to the current list of buildings with a marker and then concentrate on the rest of the city with a focus on the oldest structures first.

I welcome any information you may have about specific buildings and may possibly be able to answer your questions or point you in the right direction for an answer. East Providence has many surviving buildings of historic interest and I would like to do what I can to ensure our citizens are aware of it.

## Life Member Visit

It was a wonderful surprise to have Lifetime member Pat McGrail stop by for the August Open House. She now lives in Chicago and made it a point to check in at Hunt House to see how the EPHS is doing. She loved the exhibit and the gardens.

Thanks for the visit, Pat!



From the Crescent Park collection on display at the Hunt House!

This item was located in the *Rivers of Venice* at the Park. Visitors boarded a boat and traveled through the waterway, viewing different scenes that were on display. This one is believed to be from the Lewis and Clark scene.

Thank you Ed Serowik for saving and keeping it safe!!

# Summer Notes

By Nancy Moore, President

## Picnic Poll

It was a smaller group than usual that gathered at Hunts Mills in June but it was a lively group. We set up on the lawn between the gazebo and the house this year and the response was instantaneous: everyone loved being a part of the house environs! It was easier for set-up, cooking, and seemed cozier. Members of the Planning Board were our guests. We ran a paper poll at the picnic asking whether the March potluck supper should be discontinued and if folks missed being called about the picnic. The response:

- 1) Evenly divided: the March potluck stays but on a smaller scale with dessert/ speaker the main focus.
- 2) Not one responder asked for the telephone calls back! Everyone was happy with the picnic fare as provided by the organizers. But it was noted that the Holiday Dinner needs more attention and an ad hoc telephone committee will be put together for that event. Several people volunteered for that duty - thank you.

If you feel the need to weigh in on these issues, please speak to a Board member.

## Slater Mill Board Trip

Cheryl and Jeff Faria bid on a Curatorial Tour of Slater Mill and won! So, members of the Board gathered at the mill one spring morning to have a tour led by the curators. We saw and heard about the inner workings of the place: favorite artifacts, storage problems, curating issues in general. We felt free to ask all sorts of questions about our specific site and we asked a lot of questions! After a very interesting and informative tour, we were assured by head

curator, Eleanor Langham, that our questions were always welcome and that they would like to have a running dialogue with EPHS. Our great thanks to Cheryl and Jeff for providing this opportunity! (Photos on our new website)

## Carpenter Museum Board Visit

At our July Open House, we noticed a group of people milling about near the gazebo and when we greeted them, we discovered they were from the Carpenter Museum in Rehoboth, bound on a walk of the Ring of the Green. By chance they had decided to drop by Hunts Mills first. They explored the site, then came into the house and stayed until 2:30 pm, during which time we got to know them and their purpose. It so happens that our new marker chair, Sandra Turgeon, lives in a Ring house and she has begun meeting with their curator, Lende McMullen, about a self-guided walking tour of the Ring. We will have a joint Board meeting sometime in the spring to tour their museum and talk about issues common to both groups. As we also meet occasionally with the Seekonk HDC, perhaps a three town meeting will occur.

## Board Thanks

Our gratitude for years of Board service go to Maggie Dooley (outgoing President), Kris Rose (Marker Chair) and Rose Marie Sirenski (1<sup>st</sup> VP). As you may know, last winter Maggie got an excellent job offer in Development from a small college in Arizona and went off to see if the job fit. It did and she was offered a permanent position which she accepted. We wish her all success. But it does mean that her beloved Daggett House (1690) is up for sale - spread the word!

Kris Rose has chaired the Marker Program for years, gathering material about treasured houses, and identifying those places for all of us



to note. She turns the program over to Sandra Turgeon but will still stay active organizing the picnic.

Rose Marie ably jumped into the President’s job when Maggie left for Arizona. She led us well through the spring and we appreciated her professionalism.

## Wow! What a Wonderful Exhibit!

That’s the response we’ve gotten all summer from visitors to “Crescent Park on the Ten Mile”. And the response came both vocally and financially as visitors gave donations far in excess of any expectation. We gained new members and new docents also. SO, our response to this has been to extend the exhibit through the cooler fall days, culminating with a special December event. There are still four Open Houses, plus Smithsonian Saturday for you to bring your family and friends to Hunts Mills. The Serowik men will be on hand to listen to your memories and tell you some of theirs. Much of the success of this exhibit rests on their shoulders: there is no substitute for passion for a subject. Please see the event schedule for times and dates.

## Watchemoket Square Day Volunteer Opportunity - This Could Mean YOU

Why is EPHS so successful in bringing the message of preservation and EP history to the local citizenry? It is very simple really: our members know a great deal about our City and they take every opportunity to get the word out. WSD, Oct 4, is one of those days - we need YOU to come and help at the Farmers’ Market table and at Tockwotton. Please call Nancy Moore to volunteer: 438-4299.

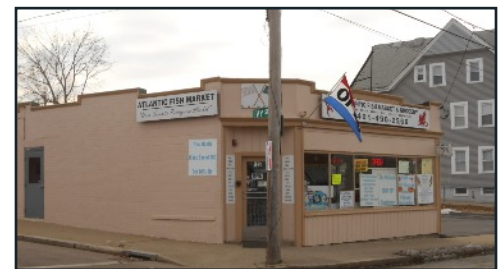


# Memories of Walking to James Street School

by Marilyn (Sinclair) Lewis

In the 1940s, my family lived on Vine Street, which is between Taunton Ave. and Waterman Ave. At age 6, I started attending James Street School and walked there with my mother, Mrs. Madeline Sinclair. From home, we walked away from the Seekonk River, up Waterman Ave., and turned right to walk up James St.

Walking along Waterman Ave., we passed #127, the *Prendergast Variety Store*, owned by Howard J. Prendergast



(until 2005). In the back of the store (now the parking lot on the right) were garages where the newspapers for our area were assembled. We had a morning newspaper, the *Providence Journal*, and an afternoon newspaper, the *Evening Bulletin*. Both newspapers were delivered to individual homes by young boys and girls on bicycles. Payment in cash was made each Saturday morning.

There were no automatic laundry mats in those days. At home, one might own a tall “Hotpoint brand” washing machine with wheels to push it to the sink to attach hoses to the faucet. Wet clothes were placed between two rollers

attached to the top of the machine to wring or squeeze out the water. Most fabrics were cotton and needed ironing to remove the wrinkles. Woolen clothes were dry cleaned. People, who could afford it, dropped off their dirty clothes at #145 *Kent Cleaners* (in business until 1973), and returned later to pick up clean, ironed clothes.

The plant and main office, with launderers and shoe repairers, was owned by Louis Goldstein. The women who worked there were seen ironing men's shirts and removing wrinkles with steam presses. It was always fun to stop in front of the large glass windows (now bricked in) and watch them work. Realizing now it was very hot in there and they were really doing manual labor.



Next on the corner of James Street and Waterman Ave. was #153, John Goodwin's Drug Store

(until 1967). It was one of several family owned and run drug stores in the area that filled prescriptions.

Across the street at #150 Waterman Ave. was Grey's Chevrolet.

On the other corner was a Texaco Gas Station owned by George Northup. Years later, I met and wed his business partner Ken Lewis. In 1957, I bought a 1952 Plymouth for \$700. Unleaded gasoline was about 23-25 cents/gallon.



Of the many stores in the building on the east corner was #157 Colonial Florists.

From here, many years later, we purchased flowers for my wedding.

Turn right on James Street, walk beyond Greene St., and we arrive at school on the left.

James Street Primary School (1958 photo<sup>1</sup> at right) went from first grade to third grade. There was no kindergarten in those days. Only

single females could become teachers. So my first grade teacher was Miss Mary Coffee. (Her sister, Miss Catherine Coffee, was a social studies teacher at Central Junior High School.) My second grade teacher was Miss Sunman and third grade teacher was Miss Marjorie Angel. The other second grade teacher and the school principal, was Miss M. Louise Byers.

Every now and then, a special teacher came for physical education (Marion Oldham) and music. I remember Miss Remington giving a key from her pitch pipe and we sang from music books.

School was 8:30 am to 11:30 am. At that time we were dismissed for lunch and walked home to be back to school around 12:30 pm. Classes were dismissed about 3-3:30 pm in the afternoon.

During recess, the boys played kick ball while the girls played jump rope, jacks, and hopscotch.

After third grade, I attended classes at the (old, pre-1958) Grove Avenue School.

footnote 1: Photo from The Evening Bulletin, December 28, 1958. p.17. Copyright © 2014 The Providence Journal. Reproduced by permission.

Photos of the businesses on Waterman Ave. were taken in February 2014 by Susan Cady.

Share your photos and stories of growing up in East Providence with the EP Historical Society and Susan Cady, [digsEPhistory@hotmail.com](mailto:digsEPhistory@hotmail.com), co-writer of this article and researcher of Pierce Field history.



**EPHS at WHATCHAMACALLIT Square Day**  
**Saturday - Oct. 4**  
**10:00 pm - 3:00 pm at Tockwotton**

A member new to EPHS (not from the area obviously) simply couldn't understand what the word was that people were saying so she blurted "Where is this Watchamacallit Square?" We all know that Watchemoket Square is the place to be on Oct 4 for a parade, vintage car show, historic walking tours, farmers' market, boat tours, special exhibits by the EPHS and Waterfront Commission, and many other good things. Mark the date and tell your friends

Schedule for EPHS events:

**Parade:** 10:00 am - City Hall - east on Grove to Broadway, right on Broadway, right on Warren Avenue, down through the Square to Waterfront Drive/Tockwotton, back through the Square to the car show at Hot Rides.

**Farmers' Market:** 10:00 am - 3:00 pm  
 EPHS will have an informational table \*\*\*\*

**Tockwotton:** 10:00 am - 3:00 pm  
 Main EPHS exhibit in Café area \*\*\*\*

**Tockwotton Theater:**  
 12:15 pm, 1:15 pm, 2:15 pm  
 Waterfront Commission Presentation by Bill Fazioli. A brief look at what's on the drawing board for the EP waterfront - a "must see" for boat tour goers.

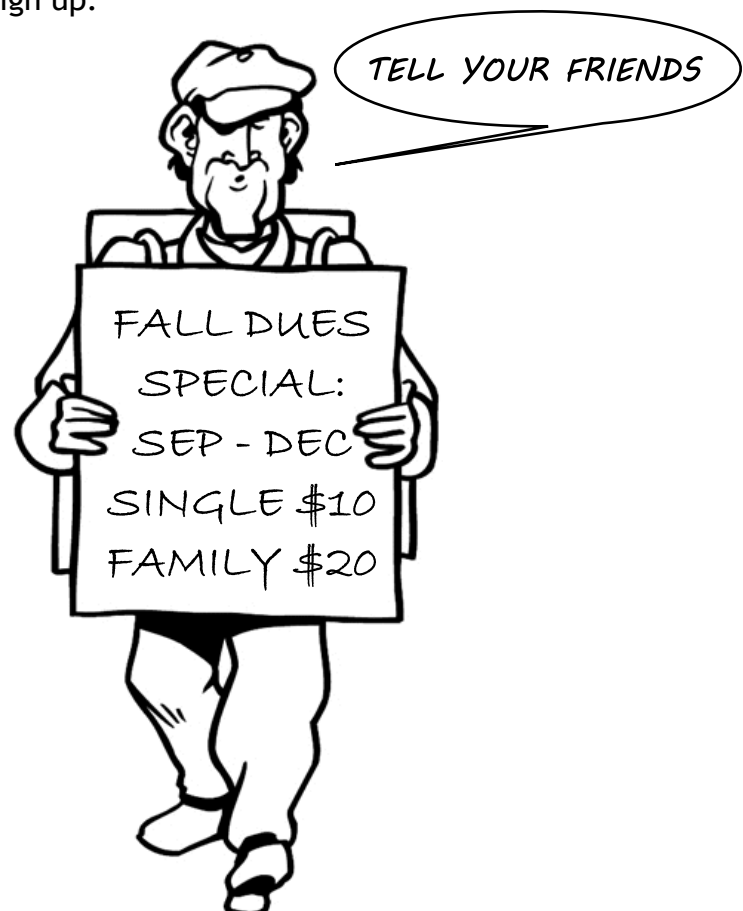
**Walking Tour #3:** 11:00 am and 1:00 pm  
 "Queen Anne Land" - Walnut Street to Cross St to Summit Street. Led by our own David Kelleher, this tour celebrates the late 19<sup>th</sup> century growth of EP and the professional class attracted to the Seekonk heights. Tours leave from Gilmore's Flower Shop - 76 Taunton

Avenue. Meet us there or catch the shuttle from Tockwotton at 10:45 am and 12:45 pm. No reservations required.

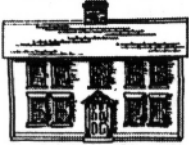
**Boat Tours:**  
 11:00 am, 11:45 am, 12:30 pm, 1:15 pm  
 EP Yacht Club - 9 Pier Rd.

**HEADS UP!** This year the EP Planning Director Jeanne Boyle will lead boat tours north to the Phillipsdale area of the Seekonk to talk about development plans in that area. The river is lush and beautiful and you won't want to miss this tour. **Seating is very limited so reservations are a must. Please call 438-1750 to sign up. If the message machine doesn't pick up (we've been having problems this summer) please call 434-0071.**

\*\*\*\* Hello members. The organizers of this wonderful family day (your EPHS Board) look forward to having you volunteer to help out on this day. We need your time at the Farmers' Market table and to talk with the visitors at our Tockwotton exhibit. Please call 438-4299 to sign up.







*John Hunt House*

East Providence Historical Society  
P.O. Box 4774  
East Providence, RI 02916

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**U.S. POSTAGE PAID**  
**Providence, RI**  
**Permit #2712**

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**



**In case you missed the picnic...**

Becky Ellis took a few pictures to share the event with the rest of us.