



# 50 EAST PROVIDENCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1966-2016

November/December 2016

Volume XXIX No. 3

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

## November

**Monday, November 28**  
6:30 pm  
Members' Meeting -  
*Public invited*

**East Providence  
Fire Department  
1880-1930**

Riverside Library  
475 Bullockspoint Ave,  
Riverside, RI

## December

**Sunday, December 11**  
1:00 - 3:30 pm  
Hunt House Museum  
open  
1:00 - 3:00 pm  
**Hayrides at Hunt's**



### CONTACT US AT:

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## President's letter

By Nancy Moore, President



A warm welcome to all the new members and corporations who have joined us since the summer - we have enjoyed meeting you! And a special thanks to some of the old members who have become life members - your steadfast support is much appreciated. **Please note that this Nov/Dec issue is the last before our Jan/Feb hiatus.** Your next issue will come in March with news of more 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

We are so pleased to be partnering with Councilman Britto's family for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Hayride, now at Hunt's Mills (formerly on Centre St) The Hayride is the perfect way to leave the cares of the world out on Pleasant Street. Come down the lane and enjoy this FREE family event.

You can see that most of this issue is devoted to the work of URI researcher and oceanographer David Robinson. Dave has spoken in EP four times over the past year and his grant report is excerpted here with his permission. Dave, senior researcher for the URI Graduate School of Oceanography has become convinced that Green Jacket Shoal meets the guidelines for consideration for National Register status as a marine archeology site. To that end both the EP Historic District Commission and this group have sent letters to the RIHPHC in support of discussion for this nomination.

Dave, whose mom's family is buried in the Hunt Cemetery in Rumford, has worked on projects all over the world in his 25 year career and finds it amazing that he has found a premier site in his own backyard. So, for those of you who are beyond RI or couldn't attend the talks, we print a brief synopsis of Dave's work here (beginning on page 4) and hope you learn as much as his listeners have this year. You can email your thoughts on the subject to [<info@ephist.org>](mailto:info@ephist.org)

### The Gazette

Is published by the  
East Providence  
Historical Society

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Web Site: ephist.org

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## A Reminder

There are a few members who,  
at certain times of the year, go  
away for several months.

Because of this, Gazettes are  
often returned to us with  
postage due. If you are going  
away, please let me know your  
temporary address. Your  
Gazette can follow you  
directly!

Thank you.

Miriam Kenney  
Membership Chair

[miriamkenney@aol.com](mailto:miriamkenney@aol.com) or  
(401) 434-9462



We welcome our newest  
members:

- LeRoy Anderson
- Diane Bedrosian
- Mary Ann Stroupe
- Patricia Wilds

Thank for upgrading your  
membership to Life:

Gordon & Wendy L. Wood  
Hubbard



### 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**

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**P.O. Box 4774**

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#### Membership Form

New

Renewal/Change

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

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

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

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

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

\$15 Individual

\$25 Family/Business

\$150 Life

## FALL "2<sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY" Open House

November 13  
December 11

Open House Exhibit:  
East Providence Early Fire Department:  
1880 - 1930

Make a Sunday afternoon of it with a walk through Hunt's Mills, with or without a guided tour, and a look through the Fire Department exhibits, both inside and out. Joe Donato, department historian, will be on hand to answer your questions and trade stories with you. If the weather permits, Dan Pion will bring the department's antique truck and our own Jim Viara and family will arrive driving their splendidly restored fire engines. The 10 Mile River group will be on hand to give tours of the Training Grounds behind Hunt House and Ernie Germani will lead "Hikes at Hunt's," his famous walking tours. (Good news has traveled fast!)

**December: Free Family Fun!!**  
**Hayrides at Hunt's 1:00 - 3:00 pm**

Councilman Bob Britto and his family offer another community hayride this year at Hunt's Mills instead of down Centre Street. Join the Brittos and the EPHS for a leisurely ride through the back lane and refreshments at the Gazebo. Get into the spirit of the season - bring your jingle bells! Hunt House will be decorated for the season and all the exhibits will be open. Parking is available in the upper field.



## November Members' Meeting

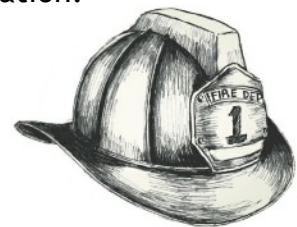
Monday, November 28  
6:30 pm

Riverside Library

## East Providence Fire Department

Did you know that the old City Hall which was destroyed by fire in 1976 had its tower destroyed by fire in 1926? The Fire Department exhibit currently at Hunt House will go "on the road" for this evening. Artifacts from the 1870s - 1930 will be on display along with early photos and postcards from that time. Visit with some of the Station 2 crew and swap stories about fire fighting here in East Providence.

**Please note the 6:30 pm time.**  
Refreshments before the presentation.



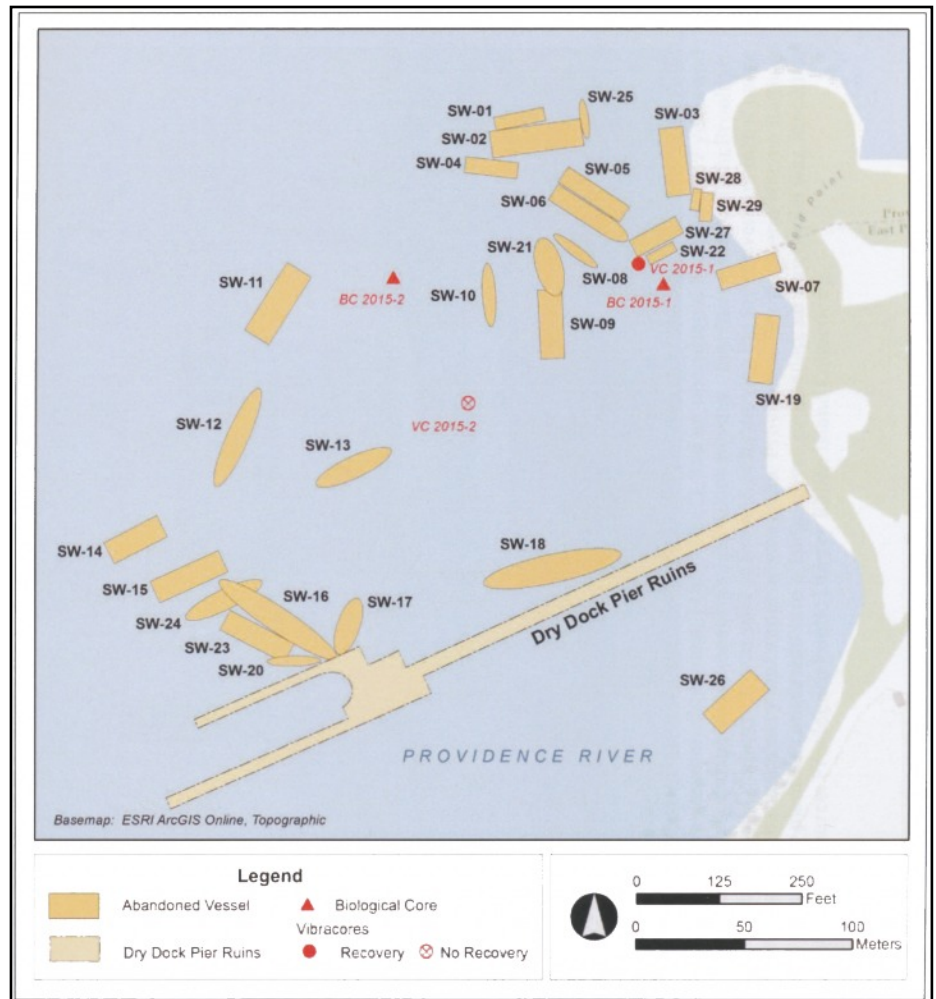
Part of the current exhibit of fire department artifacts is this gun. We have all seen large water or foam guns on top of fire trucks, but what do firemen need a gun like this for?

If you don't know and are curious about it, come to the open house at the museum or the November presentation at Riverside Library.

## “Green Jacket Shoal: The Case for National Register Status”

*Excerpted with permission from the SEA Grant Report by David Robinson,  
Researcher/Oceanographer - URI Graduate School of Oceanography*

The Green Jacket Shoal study area's location at the head of Narragansett Bay, one of the region's largest estuaries, and at the confluence of multiple rivers connecting tidewater to the interior, has made Providence Harbor and its surrounding environs, including Green Jacket Shoal and Bold Point, a culturally important place for intensive human use and habitation for thousands of years spanning the entirety of the region's archaeologically-documented human history. During this time, Green Jacket Shoal's environment underwent a dramatic transformation, from a glacial outwash plain, to a flood plain within a major river valley, to a marsh, then an intertidal mud flat, and finally a sub-tidal shoal. Map evidence indicates that the horizontal shoreline position on the west side of Bold Point adjacent to Green Jacket Shoal has not changed significantly since ca. 1700 and that the harbor's repeated and extensive dredging operations did not extend onto the central portion of Green Jacket Shoal, but were, instead, limited to the western and northern margins of the shoal. These factors suggest that there is a greater likelihood for cultural deposits, especially larger ones associated with the post-contact period, such as shipwrecks, to have remained

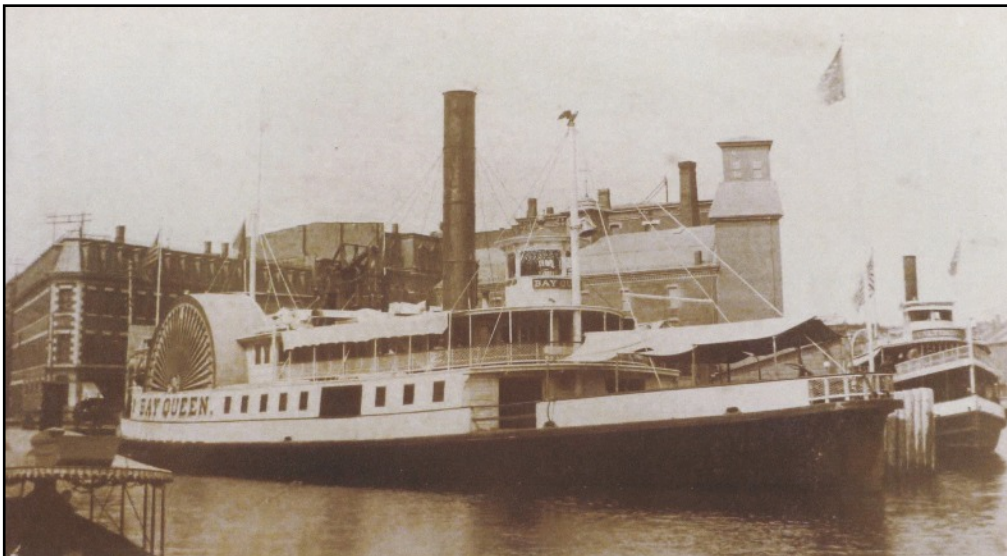


Plot of the locations of CML-identified and mapped submerged cultural resources, and the locations of CML's geological sampling completed in 2015. The identities and histories of just two of the 29 shipwrecks in the study are presently known – those of the side-wheel steamers Bay Queen (SW2-18) and Mount Hope (SW-16).

essentially undisturbed since their deposition into the archaeological record. However, this is not to say that they have not been impacted by the industrialization of Providence and East Providence. The health of the water and sediments in Providence Harbor and the Seekonk River degraded dramatically beginning in about the middle nineteenth century. While the degraded biological health of the sediments and waters of the study area are a concern, they are also part

of the reason the identified sites on the shoal and along the shoreline of Bold Point have been preserved. Situated outside of the navigation channel in essentially unnavigable waters for commercial water traffic, in an area long-neglected after the Providence Dry Dock and Marine Railway Company's dissolution, with polluted water and sediments that were long unattractive for use or development, the submerged cultural resources of Green Jacket Shoal and Bold Point have received very little notice or attention as anything other than harbor clutter and debris. The extraordinary preservation of the wooden fabric of the ship's hulls may be because the poor water quality prevented their colonization by wood-boring animals that normally thrive in healthier temperate inland waters.

It was during the nineteenth century that Providence and its surrounding communities grew to become cities of national and regional prominence and important centers of cultural, financial, technological, commercial, industrial and maritime activities. This development reached its zenith during the late 1800s and early 1900s - precisely the same time period from which a majority of the submerged cultural resources in the study area date. East Providence's village of Watchemoket rose to prominence as the city's cultural center during this period



The Narragansett Bay excursion steamer, *Bay Queen* (1865-1902), had an operational lifespan of 37 years and was one of the most popular vessels on the bay during steam-boating's late 1800s heyday.

In 1902, *Bay Queen* was stripped of its machinery and upper-works at the Providence Dry Dock and Marine Railway Company's dry dock pier at Bold Point. The planned conversion into a barge never proceeded, so *Bay Queen* was moved to the north side of the pier and abandoned.

as well, and had a direct link to the development and activities that took place at Bold Point. The establishment of the Wilkes-Barre Coal Company pier and the Providence Dry Dock and Marine Railway Company's shipyard on Bold Point after resolution of the 1862 state border dispute settlement between Rhode Island and Massachusetts brought significant maritime activity to this area and were among the most important harbor-side facilities and centers of commercial maritime activity in Providence Harbor at that time.

Major components found within the study area include: a) the 29 wooden ships comprising six classes of vessel including multiple types and sizes of scow-barges, sailing vessels, screw-propelled harbor steamers, large

side-wheel bay and sound steamers, possible steam or diesel-motor screw-propelled vessels; b) archaeological remains of the massive pier that served as the slip for Rhode Island's first floating dry dock; and c) other associated infrastructure related to the 35 year-long operation of the last shipyard in Providence to build wooden merchant sailing vessels - the Providence Dry Dock and Marine Railway Company at Bold Point. The vast majority of these finds were engaged in the work and commerce that led to Providence's development into a regionally and

## Green Jacket Shoal

Continued from page 5

nationally important port city. The diverse collection of vessel types are reflective of the broad range of port activities, commerce, transportation and recreation that was being conducted at the time and of the rapid and transformational technological advancements that were happening in transportation and in shipbuilding and ship propulsion at that time.

Analysis of historical photographs and field survey performed for this study provided compelling evidence that the onshore activities of the Providence Dry Dock and Marine Railway Company influenced and may have directly resulted in the accumulation of most of the derelict vessels on Green jacket Shoal. Absent from Green Jacket Shoal's waters in a photograph taken just six years after the shipyard was established, within 20 years of the shipyard's operation there were multiple derelict vessels visible in subsequent photographs, including the steamer Bay Queen, for which photo-documentation exists of it being cut-down at the shipyard's dry dock pier prior to its abandonment alongside the pier on the shoal.

This apparent relationship between the varied assortment of derelict vessels comprising the largest component of the submerged cultural resources identified thus far on Green

Jacket Shoal, and the floating dry dock pier and other shipyard-related shoreline infrastructure on land and in the intertidal zone at Bold Point, together form a unique "maritime cultural landscape" spanning land and water in which is preserved in a remarkably comprehensive way the maritime aspect of Providence's "Golden Era" just prior to and after the turn of the twentieth century. The cultural activities that took place at Bold Point, and in Providence and Providence Harbor, occurred at the height of the city's long-ascendant cultural, industrial, and economic development, and for this reason the archaeological vestiges of those activities that are preserved both on land and in the water represent a unique and significant situation and opportunity.



Visible remains of the Bay Queen: a significant portion of the framing from its overhanging main deck.

Photo by David Robinson, CML

## Gardening Tips

By Jeff Faria, Master Gardener

Finish planting spring flowering bulbs before the ground freezes. Try layering daffodil, tulip and crocus on top in the same hole! Check the planting depth guide for each bulb.

Cut back perennials and mulch after the ground freezes. Also keep debris and wood piles away from your home. These tips will help keep mice away.

Do not cut back ornamental grasses until spring. The foliage helps insulate the crown during the winter and adds height and winter interest to your garden.

Prune dead, diseased and damaged branches from trees and shrubs. Continue to water, if dry, until the ground freezes.

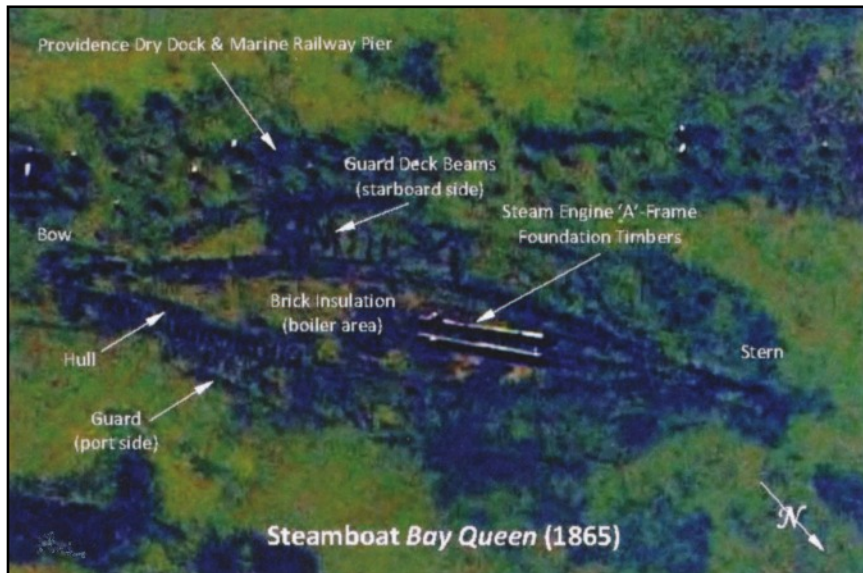
Try vacuuming gypsy moth larva with a shop-vac. The tan clusters of eggs are located on the undersides of branches and along the tree trunks of many oaks, maples and other trees.

Set up bird feeders so you can access them all winter long, especially when it snows.

Clean and coat your hand tools with oil. Painting the handles with brightly colored paint will help keep you from losing your tools next year.

Scrub used clay and plastic pots with a 10% bleach solution before drying and storing inside.

Collect pruned grape vines, holly and evergreen bows for holiday decorating. Both indoors and out!!

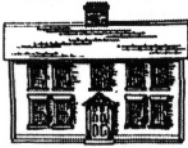


The well-preserved remains of the 1865 side-wheel steamer Bay Queen (SW-18, page 4) consist of the full-length of the entire bottom of its hull.

Base photograph by Glenn Anderson

Although the archaeological deposits identified within the Green Jacket Shoal study area are not the oldest in and around the Providence/East Providence area, the collection of cultural resources comprising this site, captures the city at its apex of cultural, industrial, maritime, and commercial development. In many ways, the Green Jacket Shoal/Bold Point site represents the last chapter in the development and growth of the region's industry, a history that extends along the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor and Historical Park and includes the birthplace of industry in the United States - Slater Mill.

Consideration of the cultural resources present at Bold Point and on Green Jacket Shoal will benefit from an approach to the study of coastal heritage that is holistic. Rather than looking at terrestrial and submerged resources as separate domains, they should be considered as parts of a single integrated system - a maritime cultural landscape. Using such a framework means that it is impossible to interpret the significance of cultural materials in the terrestrial, intertidal or sub-tidal zones without referencing the others. While this approach is relatively new to marine archaeology, its application to the interpretation of the significance of the Bold Point/Green Jacket Shoal maritime cultural landscape is essential. This study raised a number of questions, which were not possible to address within the time and budgetary constraints of this initial phase of archaeological investigation. Consequently, the preliminary archaeological assessment performed as part of this study should not be seen as an end unto itself, but instead as the basis for planning the more intensive archaeological work that this archaeologically extraordinary site warrants.



*John Hunt House*

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