



50 EAST PROVIDENCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1966-2016

October 2016

Volume XXIX No. 2

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

— October —

Monday, October 24

7:00pm

Members' Meeting

Public invited

Prof. D. Robinson:
What Lies Beneath
Part II

Tockwotton Theater
500 Waterfront Dr.
East Providence

— November —

Sunday, November 13

1:00pm - 3:30pm

Hunt House Museum
open

1:30pm at the Gazebo
"Hikes at Hunt's"

Tuesday, November 15

6:00pm

The Oldest Houses in
Seekonk

Seekonk Library

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President's Notes

By Nancy More

Early Days in the EP Volunteer/Paid Fire Dept 1880s -1930s

What a great response we have had to the Fire Department exhibit, both at City Hall and at WSD! Joe Donato, department historian was on hand for WSD to answer your questions and even gave an impromptu mini session for an appreciative crowd in the Tockwotton theater. Now the exhibit has opened at Hunt House with a few surprise included. We were grateful for the additional knowledge of George Donovan, Dan Pion and Joe Croshaw at WSD.



Becky Ellis Photo

Part of the Fire Department exhibit at Tockwotton during Watchemoket Square Day

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The Gazette

Is published by the
East Providence
Historical Society

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Nancy Moore *Publicity*
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President's Notes – continued from page 1

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!)

Watchemoket Square Day

Another day of rain and wind for this event but history buffs appear to be extra hardy as we had a very good turn out and excellent response to our offerings. Dave Robinson (URI professor - school of oceanography), Bill Fazioli (chair of the Waterfront Commission) and Alex Dias (URI senior and Pomham Rocks Lighthouse volunteer extraordinaire) gave impressive mini sessions in the Tockwotton theater and Dave braved Bold Point with a number of interested people. Our Fire Department exhibit was very well received and it was great to have FD historian Joe Donato and videographer/member George Donovan on hand to talk with visitors who were a very diverse group. Our thanks go to: Alex Dias, Joe Donato, George Donovan, Bill Fazioli, Dave Robinson, the City Clerk's office, Tockwotton staff Carrie Amaral and Tim Anderson, Friends of Pomham Light, and not the least our own team : Nancy Allen, Becky Ellis, walking tour guide Kara Evans, Pat Henry, Miriam Kenney, Nancy Moore, Deb Ormerod and Dot Thornley.

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**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

President's Notes – continued from page 2



The Historical Society's presence at Tockwotton during Watchemoket Square Day

"Keep Me Warm One Night" - a Fond Farewell Weaver Library Sept. 27th

If one quilt can be a symbol of friendship, co-operation, and respect for the art of needle work, what does a gathering of over 50 quilts mean, brought by the people who made them or a family heirloom? In the instance of our heartwarming final evening with the Hunt House quilt collection, those quilts stood for exactly the same things. The admiration and appreciation of the group for each piece cemented friendships and created new ones. And the artistry ran the gamut from new quilters to master quilters. Some work was truly breathtaking and this person would have loved to have had more time to appreciate each quilt. We thanked the Piecemaker Group for their work with us over length of

the exhibit and enjoyed a presentation by Linda Welters of the URI Textile Department about the early important contributions which the RI textile industry made to cloth manufacturing. Both Linda and Margaret Ordonez, editors and contributors to the book "Down By the Old Mill Stream" were on hand to talk with the large crowd.

Over the seven months the quilts were on exhibit more than 700 people stopped in to admire and learn from them. The Blackstone Valley quilt (thanks to Diane Colvano of Spencer MA) and the Carousel quilt (thanks to Beverly Simpson) were excellent additions. We also received gifts of four very fine quilts during the exhibit. Our thanks to the many, many people who passed on the word about this exhibit and for the excellent press we received. The final word comes from Count Rumford when asked if he had ever tried his hand at quilting, "No, but I surely have loved sleeping under one."

Tuesday - October 18th - 7:00pm EP City Hall

David Kelleher Gets Honored by the City Council and EP Citizens

The press is out: our own Mr. Preservation has garnered the RI's top volunteer award, the Antoinette Downing Award! He will be regaled on Sunday, Oct. 16th at Rosecliff and again on the 18th in the City Council chamber. Let's spill the crowd out the doors and show everyone how much this wonderful man means to preservation in East Providence. See you there, everyone!



Moments in Time

By Andy Valerio

The Ragman (Part II)

Editor's note: I hope you enjoyed Andy's story about the beginning of his "career" as a dump picker in the last Gazette as much as I did. This is the second and final part of the story.

After selling rags to the Ragman throughout the summer, I noticed that in his truck he had not only rags but some iron water pipe and even some pots and pans that he had purchased. So while I was looking for rags I would look for iron I could find in the dump and elsewhere. One place I thought I might find iron was down along the railroad tracks that ran along the river and by the Gulf Oil Company which ran trains of oil tank cars. The tank cars were big cans, lying on their sides and with four wheels under them. At times, the tracks that the railroad engines and tank cars rolled on had to be repaired. They replaced the old ties with new ties and also with new plates and new spikes that nailed through the plates into the new ties. Most of the time, they would leave the old iron plates and spikes behind. I had seen these items along the railroad tracks at other times when walking. When I picked up the iron and realized the weight of it, I realized that I would need a wagon if I wanted to pick up enough iron. It was too heavy to carry in a 6 year old's hands. My older brother had built a wagon out of material he found in the dump and this was going to transport my iron.



One summer morning, right after breakfast, all by myself, I got the wagon and headed down Lyon Ave. to the Gulf Oil Company to look for iron. I left the wagon on the top of the hill and walked down the sandy hill until I reached the railroad tracks. I walked in one direction and in the other direction looking for spikes and plates and any other iron. Within a little while, I had an iron pile. Now, because the iron was heavy, I had to take a few pieces at a time and climb the sandy

hill to the wagon, put the iron in the wagon and go back down. I don't remember how many times I walked up and down the hill but after a time, all the iron I had collected was in the wagon and it was time to head home. The wagon was half full and was heavy to pull by the steering rope. I know it was after lunch, which I had missed. It was

hot and I was thirsty but I was on my way with my iron. After what seemed like a long time and I was a little more than half way home, the wagon broke. I looked at the wagon and looked around. There was nobody to help me. I just stood there and cried. The tears and sweat rolled down my face and I could taste the salt on my lips. I remember thinking, "What do I do now?!" The crying stopped. I pulled the iron out of the wagon, looked for a stone and banged the wagon box back onto the 2X4. I put the iron back in the wagon and slowly started pulling the wagon until I finally got home. I sold the iron that week and got my reward for all my work. I learned a lesson about the weight of iron and never filled the wagon that much again. The load I had was too much for that wagon.

On one of my iron gathering trips, I was aware of the big warehouse building that was on the water's edge. It was big enough that the steam engines ran the tank cars in and out of the building. I believe they repaired the tank cars inside. One time I was down in that area and I

noticed a man came out of the building pushing a wheelbarrow. When he got near the river bank, he dumped his load. I seemed to notice that bits of iron poured out with lots of sand and dust. "Oh boy," I thought, "some iron mixed in with the sand." After the man went back into the building, I started sifting through the dust and dirt for any iron, like nuts or bolts and such. As I sifted, I didn't notice that the sand and dirt covered my arms and clothes like black flour. I worked the pile of sand, had my fill of iron, put it in the wagon and started home. When I pulled into the yard, my mother came out of the house, looked at me covered from head to toe with black dust and dirt, threw her hands in the air and yelled in her high pitched voice, "Andy - how did you get SO dirty!" In my 6 year old innocent voice I said, "But Ma, I'm making money." I knew from my mother's voice that she was upset with me. Her immediate reaction was to get me in the house, pull those dirty clothes off me and give me a bath before the neighbors saw me. I never went into the pile of dust and dirt again.

When I was 6 or 7 years old, I met a kid while attending Mauran School (that corner lot is now a playground). I don't recall how the conversation went, but he said there were some iron pipes in his backyard that I could have so I went over to his house with my wagon. He helped me put the pipes on the wagon, but they couldn't go in the box because they were too long (about 4 feet) so they rested on top of the box. As we came down his driveway to cross the sidewalk to the street, the bump of the wagon on the driveway made the wagon break. Well, we couldn't carry the pipes to my house because they were long and heavy and we couldn't leave them in the driveway. So, one pipe at a time, we put them back behind the house. The plan was that I would fix the wagon and come back another day. While we were moving the pipes, I heard my name called several times. I then realized it was Sunday and my friend Al, who lived in the apartment building with me, was having a birthday party and I had been invited. In my excitement about collecting iron pipe to make money, I had forgotten about the birthday. We put the pipes back and I dragged the broken wagon home. When I got to the birthday party it was all over. No ice cream, no cake. NUTS!

I consoled myself by saying, "I'll fix the wagon and go get the pipes, and when I sell them, I'll have made some money." Within a few days, I fixed the wagon and

went over to get the pipes. When I got there, there were no pipes. I asked the kid, "Where are the pipes?" He said, "My father put them in his car and took them to the junk yard and sold them." So I missed out on the party and I didn't make any money! I never forgot that. I wanted too much and I got nothing but disappointment.

I did business with the Ragman from the time I was 6 years old up until I went to work at 16. Then I went to work in a factory and our relationship ceased. I never saw him again. I next heard about him when my mother said he stopped and talked to her that day in 1949. The Ragman said we were good kids even though I tried to cheat him. He was kind and generous to me and treated us all with fairness. Although I cannot remember his face and I never knew his name, I remembered the Ragman throughout my life. He was a good man to me and I want to thank him for that. I learned to be an honest person from him.

Even though I ceased doing business with the Ragman, I never stopped being a dump picker, even when I was married with children. At times, I collected newspapers, aluminum cans, lead, and metals. I learned where the junkyards were and drove my junk there. No amount of money was too small for me to earn. At 78 years old, I made my last transaction of selling lead to the bait shop for cash. (They use the lead to make weights (sinkers) for fishing.) And so I ended that part of my life as a dump picker.



In Honor of Dave Kelleher

By Sarah Zurier (HPHC)



David J. Kelleher of Riverside will receive the Antoinette F. Downing Volunteer Service Award. For more than 40 years, Dave has educated the people of East

Providence about local history and historic preservation. As principal at six East Providence elementary schools, Dave nurtured his students' interest in history. It began with a Riverside slide show he presented at Oldham School in 1975. Presentations on additional neighborhoods from Rumford to Watchemoket Square soon followed.

Local preservation causes became school projects. He led Kent Heights students to raise \$5000 towards saving the Crescent Park Carousel. When Union Primary School closed, Dave ensured that the historic building would be preserved. As a board member of the East Providence Historical Society, he organized field trips to the John Hunt House and Bridgham Farm for the city's fourth and fifth graders.

Dave volunteered for extracurricular history and preservation projects. He

participated in the society's efforts to preserve a historic amusement park building and the pumping station at Hunt's Mills. With the East Providence Land Conservation Trust, Dave helped to save historic Bridgham Farm. His skills as an educator and communicator made him an ideal choice for the city's Historic Properties Commission and he emerged as the liaison to City Council about historic preservation issues. Dave worked on several initiatives such as a demolition

delay ordinance, saving historic Weaver House, and establishing the new Historic District Commission (yes, he is a member of that, too). The East Providence Chamber of Commerce engaged Dave to give citywide tours.

Having graduated from his career as a principal in 2002, Dave has turned his focus to Pomham



Dave near the beginning of his career as an educator in the east Providence school system

Rocks Lighthouse. He and Don Doucette established the Friends of Pomham Rocks in 2004, and Dave has chaired its every committee. Dave shines as an interpreter of the light's history. He developed an education program for Rhode Island's fourth grade history curriculum on lighthouses, and he guides tours for Save the Bay and Providence River



The Keeper of Pomham Rocks Light

Boat Company in exchange for donations to Pomham Rocks. Dave is mentoring a new generation of lighthouse preservationists.

Nancy Moore, a colleague at the East Providence Historical Society, writes that Dave’s “ability to galvanize a group, lead it fairly, and handle thorny problems quickly has made him sought after as a leader here in the City.” Whether he is educating second graders or the City Council, there’s no better interpreter of Townie Pride than Dave Kelleher.



Dave loves to share his knowledge with you!

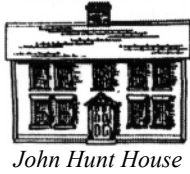
On the boat, on the bus or on the ground – there is always something he can and wants to educate you about.

Notice Regarding Dues

Here is a last call for dues that were payable in July. Several individuals have not responded to the bill that was sent. This "Gazette" will have to be the final one unless we hear from you. Obviously, we value your membership and are looking forward to your renewals!

For any questions, please contact me. Thank you in advance for taking care of this.

Miriam Kenney
 Membership Chair
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Gardening Tips

By Jeff Faria, Master Gardener

- Continue to water evergreens and perennials as our drought has challenged their survival.
- Continue to remove weeds such as crabgrass and pokeweed so that you will minimize the spread of seeds for years to come.
- Cutback perennial plants that have died back and spread their seed heads for next season.
- Lift and divide overcrowded perennials while the soil is still warm.
- Plant spring flowering bulbs like Daffodils, tulips, hyacinth and crocus.
- Prune climbing roses after their blooms have passed and secure the stems before winter damage.
- Remember to close outdoor water and blowout irrigation lines before a hard freeze.
- Dig up and pot special herbs like basil, sage and thyme, for use indoors during the winter.

