



50 EAST PROVIDENCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1966-2016

October 2017

Volume XXX No. 2

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

— October —

Monday, October 23
7:00pm

The Hunts of Hunt's Mills Send a Son to War - 1861-1864

Tockwotton Theater
500 Waterfront Drive
East Providence, RI

— November —

Sunday, November 12
1:00pm - 3:30pm

Hunt House Museum
open

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

— December —

Sunday, December 10
1:00pm - 3:30pm

Hunt House Museum
open

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



Hayrides

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President's Letter

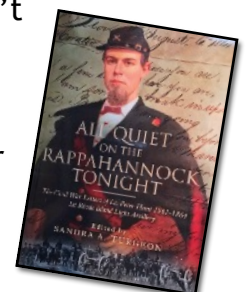
By Nancy More

It was wonderful to see so many friends and members out for WSD! The weather was its usual quirky self and the heavens opened just as Dave Robinson took a group out to the Shoal. They came back wet but enthusiastic. Green Jacket Shoal continues to capture the interest of local people three years after our first presentation. Our great thanks goes to Dave for continuing to believe that we have our own RI sunken treasure out there. He has contributed hours of time and his tremendous knowledge to the project.

And the Waterfront minis continue to be very popular also. This year Bill Fazioli was joined by Pam Sherrill of the Waterfront Commission and there was a good discussion about Kettle Point, new traffic patterns, the new Bold Pt. concert venue, the status of the now defunct "Village on the Waterfront," the power towers and other issues. EP people care about what happens on the waterfront and we greatly appreciate Bill and Pam spending time with residents.

Our exhibits about Lt. Peter Hunt and the Rumford connection to the Civil War were well received but the star of the show still remains the old photos of what was once a thriving waterfront business community. It's probably time to revisit our first exhibits? We did revisit our first WSD walking tour with Mr. RI Preservation 2017 himself as guide. Dave Kelleher is in his element in a bus, boat or on foot. It was interesting to see the changes in the houses after 7 years. The Pierce house at #18 Fourth Street has a beautifully restored front porch! Don't forget that you can download all the WSD tours and take the walks yourself anytime.

We hope you were with us on Monday, Sept 25 at Weaver Library for the formal presentation to the public of "All Quiet on the Rappahannock Tonight: the Civil War letters of Lt. Peter Hunt".



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The Gazette

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East Providence
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President's Letter

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Our panel of speakers and readers included

- 1) Peter Gross, descendant of Horatio, Lt. Peter Hunt's brother
- 2) Sandra Turgeon, the editor
- 3) Karen Antonowicz who read the part of Nancy Hunt, Peter's mother
- 4) Jeff Howe, reader of Peter's letters
- 5) Philip DiMaria, Captain of Battery B , RI Light Artillery.

The different voices and period costuming added much to the evening and we will continue the discussion of Peter's life at Second Sunday open houses at Hunt House.

We have two more open houses this fall and the December 10 date reprises the highly successful collaboration between Councilman Britto's family and the EPHS. Once again those beautiful Percherons will carry wagon loads of carolers. Hope you will be among them!

Membership Update

Welcome to our new member

- Jenette Moravec

Dues Notice



If you are not current with dues, the November issue of the

GAZETTE will be your last. We appreciate what you have done in the past and hope you wish to continue membership. We value your time, talent and support of our organization. Thank you!

For questions you can contact Miriam Kenney, Membership Chair at 401-434-9462 or miriamkenney@aol.com

Miriam Kenney
Membership Chair

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

Current Museum Exhibit: "All Quiet on the Rappahannock Tonight: the Civil War Letters of Peter Hunt"

Step into the Hunt parlor at the John Hunt house and you will learn about the Civil War service of John's great grandson, Peter Hunt, and the history of the whole Hunt clan. Peter grew up in and out of that house, running back and forth across the 10 Mile over a wooden footbridge which connected Hunt House with his own house across the water which is now known as Hearthstone House. His father, Daniel, and Uncle Allin ran the mill complex together. But both men met untimely ends, leaving their families with the responsibility of running the mills. When Peter was 5 years old, his mother, Nancy Waterman Winsor Hunt, sold her share to Allin's family and moved to Warren and then Providence. At age 18, Peter insisted upon enlisting in the RI Artillery division, and went off to war in August of 1861. Peter wrote home to his family every Sunday evening whenever possible and his 171 letters were saved and treasured. The Hunt families (Gross and Philbrick) which still reside in Rumford and Wakefield have loaned Peter's Civil War personal effects for this exhibit. Other family pieces will also be on display as well as EPHS Civil War era quilts and artifacts. The book will be for sale and can be autographed by the editor, Sandra Turgeon.

WORK DAYS! WE NEED YOU!

Saturdays: October 14 and 21: 10:00am - 2:00pm

At the pace we get things done at Hunt House, we've decided to start early getting spruced up for the 2019 preservation conference. So your Building Committee has scheduled 2 Fall Saturday workdays and we'll keep going until we're done. Both the house and the Ed Center need attention and we know you have talents to share! Bring gloves, tools like scrapers: we'll supply refreshments/lunch.



2nd Sunday Fall Open Houses

Nov. 12. Dec. 10

The John Hunt House
1:00pm - 3:30pm

"Hikes at Hunt's"

1:30 at the Gazebo -
November through
December

"Walks and Talks"

2:30 in the gardens -
Master Gardener
presentations - always
free seeds and free advice

October: the last MG
program for the season:
"Putting the Garden to
Bed"

Ed Center Update

The exterior work of the two well designed entry ways is nearly finished! Both side entries allow for generous access and the larger deck on the back side will accommodate the ADA compliant lift and doorway. The Saturday work crews will be getting the windows buttoned up for winter with new storms and the original windows are in the process of being restored. Come by for a look or to help.



Trading Places

By Leo Caisse

Roger Williams believed so vehemently in religious freedom and fair treatment of the Indians that he crossed swords with the Massachusetts Bay Colony's hierarchy. They ordered him deported back to England in 1635. He became ill and continued to preach, what was in their opinion, dangerous heresies, but not from the pulpit. He sought a delay in his deportation which was granted. He took that opportunity and with little or nothing fled and took refuge with Massasoit in a rock shelter at his winter quarters in Sowams believed to be what is now known as Barrington.

As the winter wore on and spring arrived, Massasoit agreed to make a deal with Williams for some of HIS land so that he could set up his own settlement. That land is in what we know today as the Phillipsdale section of East Providence. Herein lies the beginning of the border dispute problem: was it Massasoit's land or was it still part of the Massachusetts Bay Colony's territory and a bone of contention for 226 years? Where exactly did he set up his first settlement? We know it was near the spring on Roger Williams Avenue that bears his name, on what is now Omega Pond. Being a natural spring it was more desirable than a well and

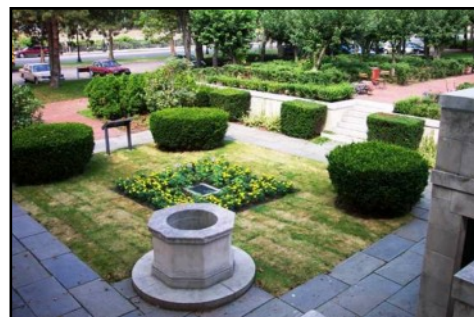
vital to the daily life of any settlers. No one drew a map of the settlement but we know it was in that vicinity. He was advised by Governor Winslow of the Plymouth Bay Colony that he was still within their jurisdiction and subject to arrest (and urged to cross the river into Narragansett country). Williams and his followers heeded the warning and left what was at best, a rudimentary home and growing crops and they sought refuge across the Seekonk River into what we now call Providence. Before that adventure, let's look more closely at where that first settlement may have been. Williams must have believed that he had legitimately bargained for his land from Massasoit or he wouldn't have been there but when he received a warning from his friend, Governor Winslow from the Plymouth Colony, that he may have still been in Massachusetts Bay territory and be subject to arrest, prudence dictated that they cross the river into Providence, Narragansett Indian land, and seek a safer haven. Winslow may have had an ulterior motive in issuing the warning to Williams. If Williams settled in the Narragansett country he would surely befriend them and Plymouth would have an Indian ally.

In selecting his original site to settle upon, first and foremost they had to have water, preferably spring water as I said before, over well water and then fast running water, some river falls at which a mill might be built to grind their produce into usable flour. Near

this Roger Williams Avenue site were some small falls where the Ten Mile River emptied into the Seekonk Cove. Omega Pond would not come into being until the 19th century. These falls would be ideally situated to the new community and that may have been their plan. These falls did exist (see map) in what is now downstream from the Sunshine Creamery at Roger Williams Avenue and Broadway where the RR tracks are today. So an educated guess would be that his small settlement would have been in perhaps a triangular space of land between the spring, the cove and the falls. To demonstrate the viability of these falls for such a mill we should note that the Rev. Newman actually built a saw mill at these falls a mere seven years later in 1643.



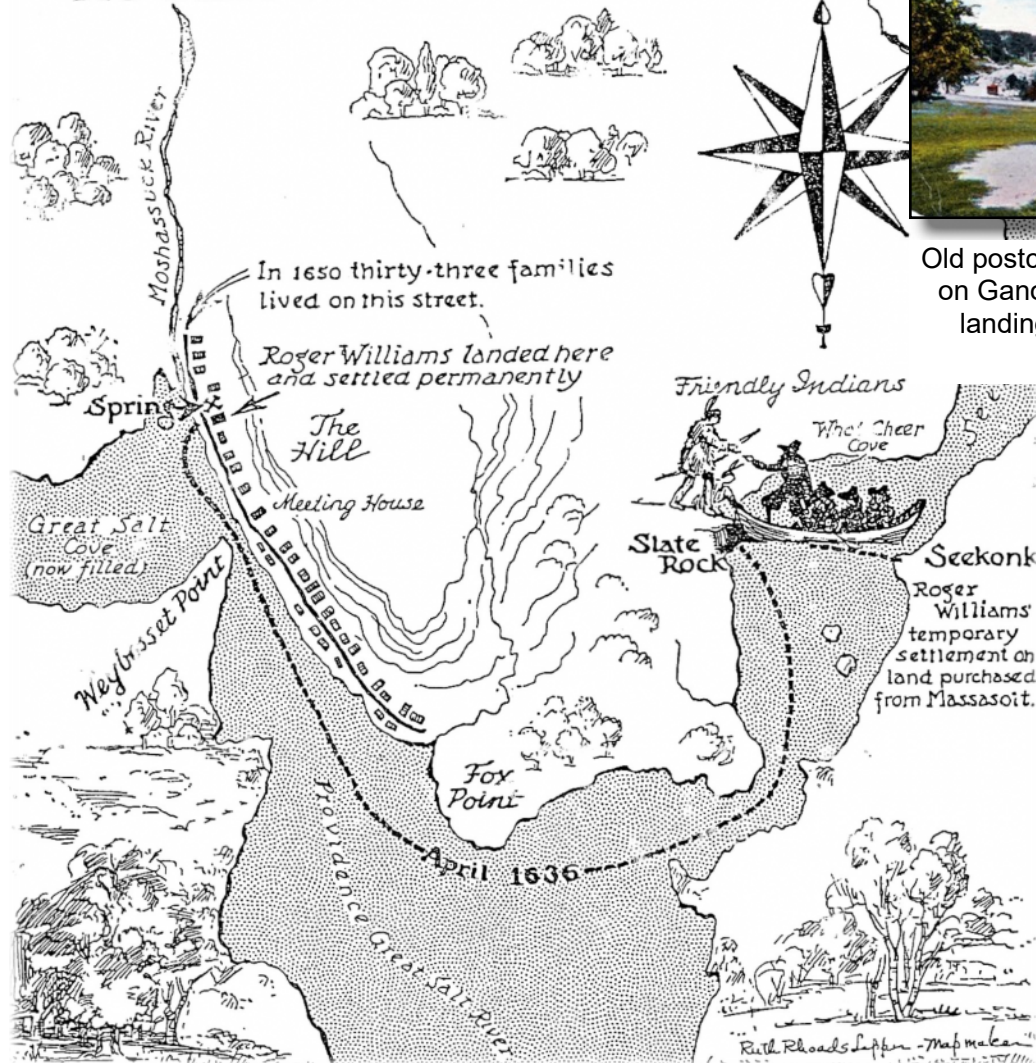
Williams, upon receiving the warning, packed up his little band and crossed the river landing at first at what came to be called Slate Rock alongside what is now Gano Street in Providence. He and his men rowed around the point and up the river to find, once again, a suitable place to settle, which is marked by the Roger Williams Memorial National Park in Providence where he founded the town of the same name and later the state. It ought to be noted that the criteria used to pick his settlement spot in Providence would have been the same as in his first settlement: water, spring water preferably, which he located, and falls nearby for a mill which can be found a third of a mile north of the Providence spring on the Moshasuck River where a mill was built and we all know the rest of that story.



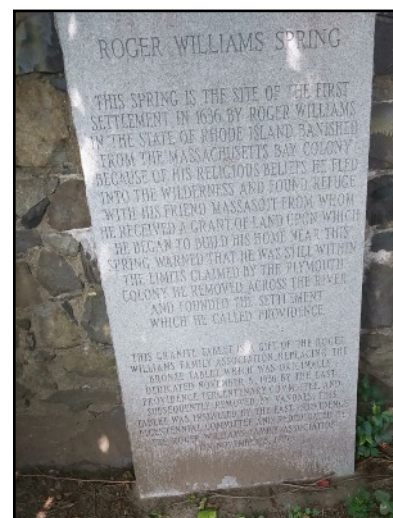
This well, located in the Roger Williams Memorial National Park in Providence, once was in the heart of Williams' final settlement.

PROVIDENCE Settled in 1636

IN THE TIME OF ROGER WILLIAMS.



Old postcard view of the Slate Rock marker on Gano Street, location of Williams' first landing on the Providence side of the Seekonk River.



Stone marker at Roger Williams Spring in East Providence, Williams' first settlement.

And now back to the story of Slate Rock, where he originally landed and came to be known as the Plymouth Rock of RI. It's location is marked today by a small park on Gano Street with a monument noting the rocks riverside location. Flash forward to the 19th century, 1874, to be exact. The town fathers in Providence in their infinite wisdom decided that the Plymouth Rock of RI ought to be enshrined properly and could become a tourist attraction. It was decided to dislodge Slate Rock from its shoreline location and move it to a suitable location. It was further decided to dislodge it by using explosives and in the process, blew it to pieces. Today there are a few pieces, allegedly, still about in some unusual locations like the pedestal holding the erect Brown Bear off Hope Street.

The boundary disputes between RI and Mass. went on and on. Roger Williams sought a patent to protect his Providence Plantations from the crown in 1643 and secured it in 1644. The patent included that part of Rehoboth we now call Seekonk and East Providence including the Indian lands he purchased from the Indians. Still Massachusetts disputed the boundary. Once again Williams and John Clark, a Newport leader, sailed for England and returned with a charter in 1664, granting RI more freedom than any other



A sign on Roger Williams Ave. helps visitors to find the spring in East Providence

colony from King Charles II. The disputes raged on however into 1705, 1729, 1738, 1741, 1747, and 1791, you get the picture, but they continued onward. By 1852, Massachusetts reopened the border dispute in an effort to overturn the 1747 decision. Eventually, Congress authorized the U.S. Attorney General Edwin Stanton to get involved and finally end this political ordeal. He involved the Army Corps of Engineers who submitted their finding to the U.S. Supreme Court and as a result issued their final decree on December 16th, 1861, to become effective March 1st, 1862, settling the border dispute once and for all. It ought to be noted that the Supreme Court pretty much agreed with the patent of 1644 that Roger Williams had obtained. He had been vindicated.

As a result of their decision, Fall River, RI became Fall River, Massachusetts, settling yet another long simmering border dispute in that neck of the woods. Pawtucket, Massachusetts, which had previously been formed when a chunk of the Town of Seekonk had been broken off, from that town, would become Pawtucket, RI, at least the part east of the Blackstone River.

Its birth on March 1st was celebrated with ceremonies, military and civic, and a parade. And last but not least, we saw the birth of an entirely new town which chose to call itself East Providence with boundaries on Pawtucket, Seekonk, and Barrington as we know them today.

East Providence was, in my opinion, the greatest beneficiary. It inherited the Seekonk Town Hall which became the East Providence Town Hall, an industrial base, the Rumford Chemical Works, a school, the Potter School, as well as, a number of churches, all up and running. The RI governor welcomed the new citizens and territory in ceremonies on the Washington Bridge. Canons were fired in celebration from Fort Hill. A ball was held in the Vue de L'Eau Hotel and election of new town officials were held at a town meeting.

Seekonk on the other hand, lost all of those things, along with access to the riverfront and Providence. They lost half of their

General Meeting

Monday, October 23 @ 7:00pm

Tockwotton Theater

500 Waterfront Drive, East Providence

"The Hunts of Hunt's Mills Send a Son to War - 1861-1864"

We continue with the 2nd of our Civil War trilogy. Lt. Peter Hunt volunteered for the RI Light Artillery in August 1861, and was assigned to Battery C. As the war progressed, batteries were reformed as needed, and eventually he found himself with Battery A.

In conjunction with the publication of "All Quiet on the Rappahannock Tonight", historian Dave Norton has done a 4 part series on Peter Hunt and his participation in the important battles from 1862-64. This series is part of his cable show "Discovering NE History" (Tuesday 7:30pm on your cable station)



In 1986, Battery B of the RILA was reactivated. We will present Part 1 of the Norton series with Philip DeMaria, Captain of Battery B, giving commentary.

Trading Places

Continued from previous page



Boundary marker near the Turner Reservoir.

real estate and along with that a very significant portion of their tax revenue. All of these were nothing short of disastrous. Needless to say, the remaining Seekonk residents were universally disgruntled and engaged in some minor public protest such as digging up and destroying the new state boundary markers. But, as they say, time heals.

And after 226 years of border disputes starting with Roger Williams the U.S. Supreme Court settled them and gave birth to the Town of East Providence, by trading places.

Gardening Tips

By Jeff Faria, Master Gardener

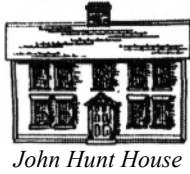
- At this time of year, we think about putting our gardens to bed. I think most importantly, we should think about plant health, like you would think about food handling. Observe your plants and deal with their health issues all season long, but especially at the end of the season.



Getting a trash bag and discarding any diseased or sickly leaves, infested plants and rotten produce will help your garden be more productive next season.

- There is still time to think about season extenders, such as cold frames and solar pods or domes, which can be used this fall to allow you to sow cool weather crops or transplant leafy greens and extend your season.
- As you clean up garden and flower beds, adding organic matter, such as animal manures, peat moss, compost or shredded leaves, will lighten your soil and give it time to regenerate before its long winter's nap.

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Gardening Tips

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- It is also recommended that you test your soil for pH balance before amending. Usually 50 pounds of lime per 1000 ft² of garden or lawn area is recommended to maintain proper pH levels for most plants.
- Take notes on what went well and what you'd like to change for next year. Also keep up with the final weeding so that the task will be less challenging next year.
- Make a plan to learn more about edible weeds! Many weeds, such as lambs quarter, purslane and chickweed are very nutritious and are productive in your garden, close to 10 months out of

the year. Knowing when to pick them for maximum flavor is something you can challenge yourself with this winter!

- Finally, get some bright spray paint from Benny's, before they close, and spray paint the handles of your tools, especially small ones, which are easily lost.

