



— May —

Sunday, May 14

1:00pm - 3:30pm

Hunt House Museum
open

1:30pm at the Gazebo
“Hikes at Hunt’s”

2:30pm in the Garden
“Talks and Walks”
Flowers for Moms

Monday, May 22

7:00pm

**Blackstone National
Park**
Ranger Kevin Klyberg

The Tockwotton Home
500 Waterfront Drive
East Providence, RI

— June —

Sunday, June 11

1:00pm - 3:30pm

Hunt House Museum
open

Monday, June 26

6:00pm

**Annual
Picnic/Election**

CONTACT US AT:

East Providence
Historical Society
P.O. Box 4774

East Providence, RI
02916-4774

Tel. (401) 438-1750

Email: info@ephist.org

Web Site: ephist.org

50 EAST PROVIDENCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Summer 2017

Volume XXIX No. 6

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

President’s Letter

By Nancy More

I am inspired to write earlier this month after having attended (with many others!) the wonderful musical program by Aubrey Atwater and Elwood Donnelly. The music flowed joyously, as does our river these days, and the songs served to remind us that the Blackstone Corridor evoked music like this and people clogged and played pennywhistles as part of their leisure time. It was a magical mixture of instruments and voices with much laughter and keeping time with heads and feet. Thanks to Joyce May of the Weaver staff for the idea of "Corridor Music."

Hopefully, by the time we go to press, the new basement room will be ready to house the Rumford artifacts and the Summer Kitchen will have been set to rights. It has seemed strange to have this area off limits for such a long time. It may take us some time to get the displays tweaked and showing to the best advantage, but it will be so gratifying to have the early Rumford tools on display after 55 years away. Just the planes themselves are an education in the woodworking world. And we were so pleased with the masonry work that we went ahead and had the chimney fixed (one corner was coming apart) and the exterior stonework repointed. Who knows when that was done last - not by us!

As Leo Caisse was finishing up his piece on the Rumford Rifle Range (Welcome to the USS Rumford) we received from Patrick Hanner, EP Sr. Planner, a link to the Pawtucket Times explaining the Army presence at that site in late April.



Continued on page 3

The Gazette

Is published by the
East Providence
Historical Society

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

OFFICERS

Nancy Moore/Cheryl Faria *Co-Presidents*
Deborah Ormerod *Vice President*
Nancy Allen *Recording Secretary*
Pat Henry *Corresponding Secretary*
Dorothy Thornley *Treasurer*

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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

2nd Sunday Summer Open Houses

May 14, June 11, July 9, August 13
1:00 - 3:30pm
The John Hunt House

Hikes: 1:30pm at the Gazebo
March through December
National Trails Day at Hunt's: Saturday June 3

"Walks & Talks": 2:30pm in the Gardens
Master Gardener Presentations - always
free seeds and free advice
May-"Planning and Planting Your Garden"
Plants for Moms
June - "Historic Grounds" tour
July - "Planning Your 2nd Harvest"
August - "Medicinal/Culinary Plants"

Exhibit: HUNT'S MILLS - A PHOTOGRAPHY
RETROSPECTIVE - 1905 - 2016

In the early 1900's, Hunt's Mills was a mecca for artists and photographers of all kinds. We know this from our extensive postcard collection of the area and professional photographs from which the post cards were made. Hunt's Mills Amusement Park was the "place to be seen" on the weekends with its midway, acclaimed orchestra and Looff carousel. But even as early as the 1870s, people had begun to use Hunt's as a

**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

destination, not solely as an industrial/farming area. (That may be because the Hunt families had sold the property by 1870.) It is said that Gen. Burnside spent many hours here.

Lately, there have been photographers working here again and a group of artists meets in the gazebo from time to time. Six local amateur photographers have submitted their works for this exhibit and some of the photos feature the bird life which has flocked to the river for the April herring run. Of new interest is a set of drone photographs which capture an intriguing bird's eye look at the Pump House and dam area. Our thanks and appreciation for their work go to these new eyes at Hunt's: Wayne Barnes, Becky Ellis, Ernest Germani, Keith Gonsalves, Dwayne Hall and Dave Tantarelli.

President's Letter

Continued from page 1

(Times - April 23, 2017) The National Guard's Military Munitions Response Program (MMRP) is responsible for conducting site inspections for possible surface and sub-surface munitions as well as soil and water samples, principally concerned with lead from small firearms munitions. A similar inspection was conducted in 2011, but as we have seen with the Case Cemetery site, new developments in soil penetration technology can find previously hidden objects. The children of Ferris Avenue most likely did an excellent job in their own "site inspections" through the years in pursuit of penny candy money. We wonder how much candy the "finds" would bring today.

Picnic

Mark your calendars for June 26th. We'll be on the Hunt house lawn again, a re-ally nice spot to have a picnic. You'll be able to inspect the basement work up close also. Hopefully the mason, Romeo Da Silva, can be there to give us all a personal tour. There will be no calling of members for the picnic, but you know that we appreciate a call at 438-1750 to let us know that you are coming. And side salads are always welcome to add variety to the menu of hamburgers/hotdogs and strawberry shortcake. Members \$3 - Guests \$6

Elinora St. Marker

When the Historic District Commission applied to the National Park Service for National Historic District status for Roseland and Elm plats, it sparked a wonderful rebirth of a bungalow at 30 Elinora Street. The owners, Melissa and

Continued on page 7




We welcome our newest members:

- Raymond Anderson
- Helen Archibald
- Romeo Da Silva
- Melissa & Jeremy Spurr

In Memory Of

Cecilia Beckett



Sadly missed...fondly remembered

Elm Tree Plat

**WALTER & MARJORIE
TURNER HOUSE**

1928

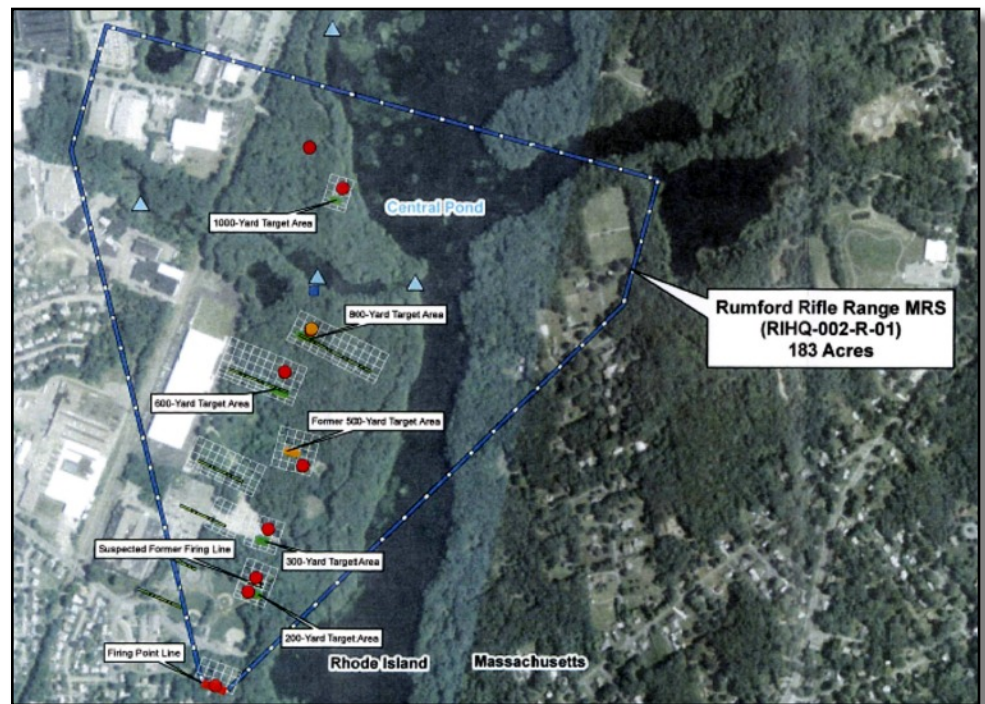
East Providence Historical Society

Welcome Aboard the USS Rumford

By Leo Caisse

When the United States declared war on the Axis powers on April 6th, 1917 and entered the Great War, it created an urgent need to train members of the armed forces. Under the powers granted by the National Defense Act of 1917, the armed forces sought out pre-existing firing ranges in order to expedite the training of riflemen. One such firing range, a small one, had been built in Rumford by the Rumford Chemical Company and was being leased to the state guard for training purposes. In accordance with the powers granted it by Federal Decree, the U.S. Navy quickly executed a lease with the state guard to take over the Rumford Range. The Navy wasted no time in setting up operations at the Rifle Range. On April 30th, 1917, the first contingent of thirty-five sailors arrived to start setting up operations.

A single building existed at the site which would serve as their mess hall, administrative building, barracks, and storehouse until buildings for those specific purposes could be erected. The first thing the sailors had to address was to build sanitary facilities and a fireplace for the purpose of cooking. On May 1st, in accordance with Federal

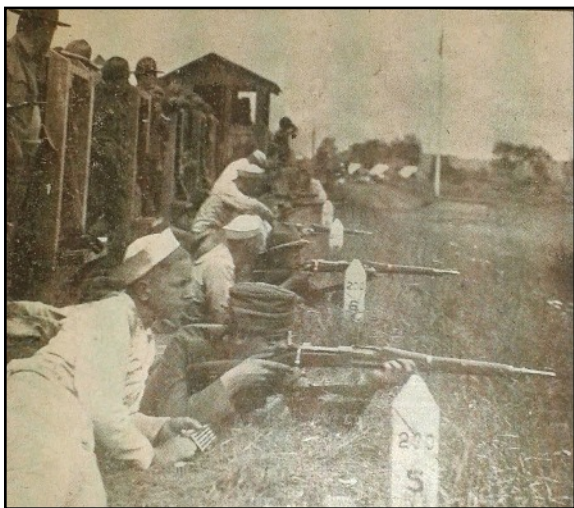


blueprints, work began by hand on what would eventually become 200, 300, 500, and 600 yard firing ranges. Thirty-two were built with steel target frames and electrically operated targets which included rifle, pistol, and machine gun ranges. Eventually more sailors arrived bringing the total to fifty-five who were expert riflemen, instructors and range builders, what we would probably call today "SeaBees." They set up a canvas tent city until buildings could be erected. By doing so, Rumford became one of the first Navy training ranges to train men with rifles, pistols and Lewis & Browning machine guns. An assignment to the Rumford Rifle Range for a sailor was referred to as "temporary additional duty" (TAD) to the USS Rumford.

It seems that the local community really went out of their way to welcome and entertain the USS Rumford sailors. The sailors published a bi-monthly gazette called *The Trigger*, which contained interesting stories and a wealth of local advertising. The Knights of Columbus erected a 80 X 40 building for the permanent force at Rumford, which was dedicated with much fanfare. Speakers at the dedication were Lt. Governor San Souci, the president of the town council of East Providence and the pastor of St. Margaret's. The dedication was held on November 10th, 1918, the day before the Armistice was declared. Within the building, sailors could read, write letters, play games, play music, watch silent movies, and hold dances. It seemed like all kinds of

organizations within a twenty mile radius vied to provide activities for the Rifle Rangers ie. St. Margaret's Church, the Gladiola Club, and the Hunts Mills Amusement Park. When the Navy departed, the recreation hall built by the Knights of Columbus was moved to property owned by St. Margaret's Church and used for youth activities until it was dismantled in 1936.

The Navy eventually built three large barracks on the site, a mess hall near the pond capable of accommodating four hundred sailors at a time, officers' quarters, a range house, and an administrative office building, along with a state of the art hospital complete with a medical staff and headed by Navy Doctor, Lt. C.C. Emery MD. The hospital included a dispensary, reception rooms, an office, wards, a storeroom, and a large sunporch overlooking the rifle range. It was a one story building described as having white enamel walls throughout. Telephone booths were eventually built on site for the convenience of the sailors. This fine facility was put to good use when the range was stricken, as was the rest of the world, with the Spanish flu, part of the worldwide pandemic. Seventeen cases broke out there which were treated and moved to R.I. Hospital and St. Joseph's Hospital in Providence. The Newport Naval Hospital was plagued with their own outbreak.



The Navy was operating eleven ranges throughout the country. Virtually all of the sailors from the command of the Second Naval District were rotated through the Rumford Range for training. Rumford became one of the first Navy ranges to offer training with a rifle, pistols, and machine guns. On a typical day, the Rumford Range was training upwards of

500 sailors at a time, along with state guardsmen. Each man had his own instructor coaching him in all aspects of the Springfield service rifle. It held twenty rounds and five shots were to be taken in each of the following positions: sitting, squatting, prone and kneeling. It ought to be borne in mind that each man did this on the 200, 300, 500, 600, 800, and 1000 yard ranges, with a rifle, pistol, and machine guns. The training regimen at Rumford was typically ten days before they rotated out, always leaving a permanent force of 300 sailors. Munitions used at the range were .22, .30, .38, .45, and .50 caliber bullets, along with tear gas grenades (Mk II) and rifle grenades (white phosphorus smoke Mk I). Construction

seems to have been an ongoing process at the range, not only on all the buildings, but the total number of targets was increased to 60. The target range was operational weekdays from 7:30am to 5:00pm and open part time on Saturdays and Sundays.

In May 1918, R.I. Governor Beekman said that he was so pleased to have the Navy available to train members of the state guard and the police constabularies, that he announced that any male private citizen who would like to avail themselves of the instruction at the range could do so at absolutely no charge. The training would be on the very latest Springfield and Enfield rifles. Take note: MALE citizens only. This was still 1918, and women still did not have the right to vote.

The USS Rumford sailors commonly expressed the opinion that their training period at Rumford was, "Having the time of their lives." They also had one universal complaint about



Continued on page 6

USS Rumford

Continued from page 5

their stay - the infernal plague of mosquitoes! While they were there, members of the permanent force formed a football team which seemed to have been quite good. According to one article, they played against Brown University and also against the Providence Steamrollers, a local professional football team. They won that game! And according to the Pawtucket Times, they also had a drill team that put on demonstrations for charity fund raisers

The Great War came to an end on November 11th, 1918. The permanent force of Rumford sailors received their orders to pack their seabags and demobilize by December 31st. A special commemorative edition of *The Trigger* was produced about their stay at Rumford. Among the accolades that the sailors heaped on Rumford and R.I. in *The Trigger* was this lengthy and endearing quotation: "We could not leave this town where we have spent the most pleasant eighteen months of our lives without first saying to this town and its people, good bye Little Rhody, good bye Rumford, friends of our early manhood. The permanent force bids you farewell."

But the Navy did not entirely abandon Rumford. They relinquished control of it to

the state guard for training purposes. On Thursday June 2nd, 1920, the Navy returned once more when a boat arrived at Phillipsdale Landing from Newport Training Station with 250 members of the crew of the USS Tennessee battleship for rifle training at Rumford. It was reported that they marched from the dock to the range. Here I speculate on the shortest route to march: from Phillipsdale up Bourne Avenue to Hoyt, down to and across Pawtucket Ave to what is now Ferris Ave and the range. Perhaps this story might also address the question as to how all prior sailors arrived and departed from Rumford - by boat. They were, after all, the Navy.



In May, 1922, the lease on the range property expired and renewal was declined. The General Assembly allocated \$27,500 for the outright purchase of the 101.7 acres and the range became state property. The state militia, soon to be known as the National Guard, used it for training purposes until 1946. According to Frank Titus, 87, a lifelong resident of that Rumford neighborhood, the state guard used the site for training purposes and for practice using Molotov cocktails on wrecked and abandoned cars brought to the site as targets. Frank also remembers that anti-aircraft guns along with searchlights were used at the range for training during WWII. Between 1896 (the earliest record I have seen for state guard use) and the range's final closure in 1946, it is fair to say that literally tens of thousands of rounds of ammunition were expended at this site. The ordinance that was strewn over the target fields became a treasure trove of sorts for the local kids. Michael Reynolds and Ann Linde who grew up in the neighborhood of the range played there as children. They would collect lead and brass shell casings which in turn were purchased by the local junk man, thus providing the kids with candy money.

In 1949, the state owned rifle range was recommended by the site subcommittee of the East Providence School Board as a suitable location for a new elementary school and so it was to become the site of Thompson School. Much of the target range later became the Kimberly Rock playing fields.

Mike Reynolds has been very helpful in identifying the range site and my thanks go to him, Frank and Anne for their help in researching this story.

Members Meeting

Monday, May 22 @ 7:00pm

The Tockwotton Home
500 Waterfront Drive - East Providence 02914

Blackstone National Park

Head Ranger Kevin Klyberg

We chose the Tockwotton Home as our venue this month because it overlooks the bottom of the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor at India Point. Our focus this spring has been the Corridor and we wrap things up with Ranger Kevin Klyberg, a 20 year veteran of the BVNHC and now head ranger in the brand new Blackstone National Park. His long association with the Corridor/Park will take us through the founding of both and the exciting possibilities of living within a nationally recognized area. His talk may inspire you to explore the whole valley!

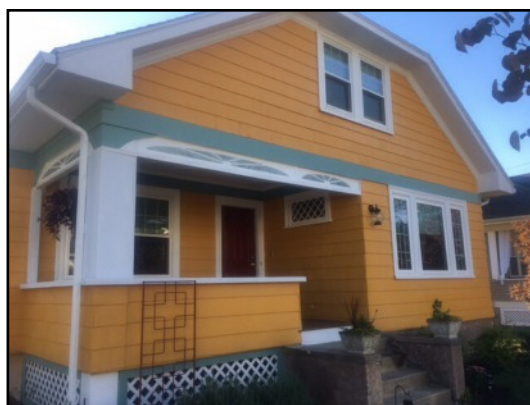
President's Letter

Continued from page 3

Jeremy Spurr, have lived there a little over a year and the transformation is astounding. (The pictures say it all!) Congratulations to Melissa and Jeremy for recognizing that a charming house lay underneath the vinyl. This is definitely a "ride-by."

If you have a marker-worthy house, visit our web site or use the new marker email ephsmarker@gmail.com. Our marker chair, Sandra Turgeon, has made it very easy for you to inquire about/apply to our marker program.

You may have noted that this is the "Summer" edition of the Gazette. That means that everything you need to know about events through August are in this issue. Please save it for reference! We look forward to seeing many of you at the picnic!



Plant of the Month

By Jeff Faria, master gardener

Plant of the month: Comfrey



Comfrey is a hardy upright leafy perennial that dies down in the fall and comes back in the spring. The rhizomes are an inch thick and black on the outside with white in the middle. They contain a mucilaginous substance that explains comfrey's nickname of slippery root. It was considered a great healer to stop bleeding and heal wounds and was also used for bronchial conditions. Although it was consumed by the Irish in the 1800s during the potato famine, leaves were used in stews and salads, studies in the 1970s found that rats developed liver tumors after eating comfrey for six months. External use of comfrey is considered safe and it is a poultice for bruises, wounds and sores. It contains allantoin, which helps regeneration of tissue and is good for burns as well.



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

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Providence, RI
Permit #2712

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Gardening Tips

By Jeff Faria, Master Gardener

- Leave the green foliage of early spring bulbs like daffodils and tulips until they turn brown, and then cut them back. They nourish the bulb to energize it's flower for next season.
- Please allow dandelions to thrive somewhere in your yard! They are one of the earliest sources of nectar for bees and pollinators in the spring. Try using a bagging lawnmower to collect the spent flowers before their seeds drift all over your property.
- Gypsy moths will be prevalent again this year. Use Bt, (*Bacillus thuringiensis*), on the young larvae to kill them. Also, rolling duct tape backwards two or three times around



- the tree trunk will slow the caterpillars from re-climbing or migrating to your tree.
- Prune lilacs immediately after blooming for even more flowers next year. Lilac petals are edible! Try them in salad.
- By mid-May, check the 15 day forecast for any frost protection. You may be able to plant or transplant some vegetables early, if the forecast is good.
- There is still time to keep up with flowering weeds, to prevent them from setting seeds!