



Gazette

April 2018

Volume XXX No. 5

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

April

Sunday, April 8

1:00 - 3:30pm

Hunt House Museum
open

Hunts Mills Road,
Rumford, RI

Monday, April 23

7:00pm

General Meeting -
Public invited

"Made It!"

by **Bernie Mulligan**

Weaver Memorial
Library

41 Grove Avenue,
East Providence, RI

May

Sunday, May 13

1:00 - 3:30pm

Hunt House Museum
open

Hunts Mills Road,
Rumford, RI

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Historical Society

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Presidents' Letter

By Nancy More

Well, we had a "soft opening" for the Rumford tools exhibit and it was a very busy afternoon. Perhaps the smell of those tasty Rumford recipes drew people in? We realized as we anchored croze planes and hung travelers that we really are in need of a "cooper" or barrel maker to give a demonstration of how these tools are used. Visitors have already given us insights but we have six different planes for coopering alone. And there is one interesting piece that we may have to have a contest to name. Imagine our surprise to find that 4 planes had "Geo. Wilson" stamped on them. Add woodworking to his list of credits. And perhaps only the American Chemical Society can tell us how that retort is supposed to be supported.

Continued on page 6



The Gazette

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The Historical Society received this e-mail in February:

Feb. 15, 2018

Thank you for your support of the Andrews Brothers exit sign.

Although Mr. Joseph F. Andrews Jr. did not live long enough to know of its existence, I can see him smiling with pleasure.

Thank you for remembering and honoring those who have served our country.

Thank you for all you do to promote and preserve EP history.

*Sincerely,
Susan Cady (digsEPhistory@hotmail.com)*



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

Exhibit:**"It's Back! The Rumford Baking Powder Company Original Museum Collection"**

If you are into old tools, really old tools, then you won't want to miss this exhibit. But then if you collect crockery jugs, you won't want to miss it either. Or maybe you are into chemistry? Well there's something for everyone in this early (1860 - 1990) manufacturing display of how to get baking powder into a barrel. And it is all at the wondrous Hunt's Mills site, complete with samples of pastry from original early Rumford recipes.

Exhibit:**"All Quiet on the Rappahannock Tonight: The Civil War Service of Lt. Peter"**

The descendants of the brothers of Lt. Peter Hunt have been so pleased with the public's response to this exhibit that they have agreed to lend his personal Civil War possessions for another season: his battle sword made in Providence, his Bible and stamp/money holder, pieces of his battle uniform and original letters written by him and his family. Also on display are the family china and quilts made before the Civil War. The EPHS award winning book "All Quiet on the Rappahannock Tonight" will be available for sale and signing by the editor.

General Meeting**Monday, April 23 @ 7:00pm****Weaver Library****41 Grove Avenue - East Providence 02914****"Made It!"****by Bernie Mulligan**

With a focus on all things "Rumford" this spring, we have a very special talk by a writer raised on Ruth Avenue, in the newly designated historic mill village of Phillipsdale. If any of you have already read "Made It!" by Bernie Mulligan, you know about the terror that the word "polio" spread through a neighborhood in the 1950's. And for you who lived in that area and knew the Mulligans, this is a chance to relive their amazing and inspirational story, Green Stamps and all. Bernie now lives in Warren so we hope to hear more from him. As always, refreshments at 6:30pm.

**2nd Sunday
Spring Open
Houses****April 8, May 13
(Mother's Day)****The John Hunt House
1:00pm - 3:30pm****"Hikes at Hunt's"****1:30pm at the Gazebo -
March - December****Master Gardeners' Talk
May 13 - Composting
and Soil Testing****Bring a soil sample to be
tested****New Members**

- Jayne Poland
- James A. Skillings

New Life Member

- Romeo DaSilva

In Memory Of**Bruce B. Chick
Frances M. Gross*****Sadly missed...fondly
remembered***

The First Providence Airport In Seekonk

by Leo Caisse

One does not normally associate Seekonk with aviation but there is an association nevertheless. On October 25, 1925, the Miss Essex, a twin engine cargo/passenger plane lost power in both of its 550 hp engines at about 2000 feet over Seekonk, Mass. The 10,000 lb plane was capable of carrying up to thirty passengers but that day carried only seven with a cargo of



an Essex automobile. It was enroute from Hartford to Boston when the engine trouble developed. The British born pilot, George Pond, had extensive combat airtime as a veteran of the Great War and was an experienced aviator. Spotting an open field, he aimed for that field which turned out to be part of a farm owned by Calvin Peck on Lincoln Street. The plane executed a crash landing in

the field with injury only to one passenger. Mr. and Mrs. Peck rushed to the scene and Mr. Peck drove the injured passenger to RI Hospital where he received four stitches in his chin. Patrolmen Edward Hilton and Lyman Chaffee arrived on the scene and proceeded to guard the wreckage from the many onlookers who were seeking souvenirs from the crash site. The pilot speculated to reporters that the engine failures were due to, "Bad gas." The plane was eventually repaired on site and resumed its journey to Boston in a takeoff from the same field. The crash made national headlines at the time because it was either the first, or among the first, cargo planes to transport an automobile.

A little after 1:00pm on November 25, 1928, tragedy struck again when seventeen year old Edward Cole witnessed a sightseeing plane, which had taken off from nearby What Cheer Airport in East Providence, lose power, go into a tailspin and crash on his family's farm. Two on board were killed instantly and a third was critically injured. That passenger was transported to Pawtucket Memorial Hospital but perished from his injuries. According to the Woonsocket Call report, thousands of local spectators descended on the scene of this crash site.

According to a RI State Planning Department Report of 1934, the Providence Airport Corporation was chartered on May 19, 1928. Interestingly enough, the man who was the catalyst for its development was Clifton Badlam Thompson who was born on November 9th, 1892, and a Dartmouth College graduate, class of 1917. By that time America was at war with Germany and he joined the French Army. He trained and became a member of the Flying Escadrille where he earned the Croix de Guerre with a star in aerial combat. After the war and a stint in business, he returned to his first love, aviation. He became an instructor for, and general manager of the Providence Flying Club. It ought to be borne in mind that aviation was all the rage in those days. In 1927, Lindbergh flew his famous transatlantic flight. In 1928, he conducted a nationwide goodwill tour and RI was one of his stops at what would become Quonset Point. Almost half of the population of the state turned out to see him. When a charter was granted on May 24, 1928 for what was to be the first Providence



View of early cargo loading operation

Municipal Airport in Seekonk, Thompson was named its chief pilot, a perfect match. Unfortunately, Thompson died in a plane crash at Pothier Field in the Buttonwoods section of Warwick on July 26 of the same year.



The first Providence Airport consisted of 140 acres with a 1400 foot sod runway and was actually in Seekonk. It was owned and operated by the Providence-Fall River Airline Transport Inc. and first shows up on a Rand McNally map

dated 1929. (see map) It was described as a commercial airport on Route 6 and served as the RI municipal airport until one was established there. The airport at this time had two 90 x 40 steel hangars with Providence - Fall River Airlines painted on the roof. It advertised a flight school open to the public and the Providence Air Corp. held its first flight school class on January 20, 1929, at the Biltmore Hotel. A November 1934 issue of the Providence Magazine carried a story about the airport and its flight school. That article described the airport as having 105 acres along with a North/South runway of 2100 feet and an East/West runway of 1900 feet. The story went on to say that the airport had two hangars, twelve planes, an office, dining room, workshop, and photo room. Its plane inventory consisted of Kitty Hawk bi -planes and one Aeronca monoplane. At that time, PAC claimed to have to have carried over 11,000 passengers without incident and given flying lessons to over 100 students, forty-five of whom actually got their pilot license. The youngest had been sixteen years old and two ladies from RI earned their wings at Seekonk. The PAT also sponsored a flying club at the airport and had sold twelve Aeronca monoplanes which they had introduced to New England.

The airport appeared on a Navy aeronautical chart in 1934, and again in an Army Air Force directory in 1945. By 1950, it was appearing on an aeronautical chart showing a single 1700 foot runway and in 1951,

a USGS topographical map referred to it as an airport with one hanger, a few small buildings and no runway. Sometime between 1951 and 1954, it closed and was no longer shown on any maps that I can find. It remained a vacant parcel of land in an aerial photograph taken in 1963. Redevelopment of the area between 1963 and 1995 has left no trace of the airport whatsoever that was located SW of the intersection of Route 6 and Industrial Way.

But in 1993, Seekonk figured in yet another air crash. According to the Woonsocket Call, on November 14, at 12:26am, a small plane enroute from Pontiac, Michigan crashed in a wooded area about a mile from Read Street killing its two passengers.



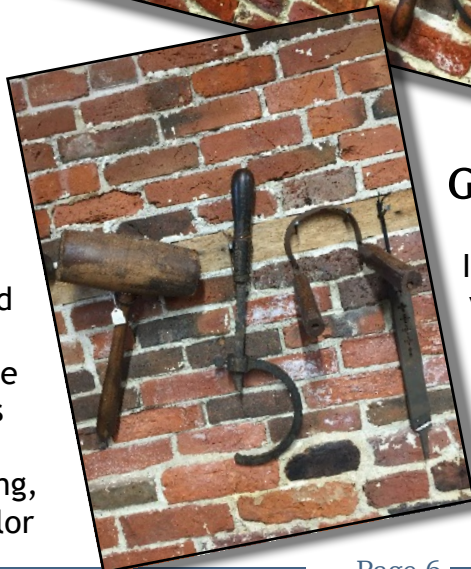
1951 aerial view of the airport with two planes visible in the upper left. The road at the top of the photo is Rt. 6 with the Seekonk Speedway located on the other side.

President's Letter

Continued from page 1

April is upon us. I know that because yesterday (March 12) a pair of great blues flew over my head at Hunt's. It is time to head down behind Home Depot on Route 6 for the great blue air show - our very own heron airport in Seekonk! And if the heron are circling, the blue herring are schooling not far from the Bay. We have learned to expect them by April open house but Mother Nature keeps us guessing. Come on down to the fish ladder and see for yourselves. The three storms have kept the river roaring this month. And did you catch the photo of the Swan Queen on Hunt's Pond? She had her very own private place for just a little while.

This Monday I opened the Pro Jo to find that two of our long time members had died over the weekend. Both of them have been staunch supporters of the HS and we have benefited greatly from their advice and time. Frances Gross was a docent at Hunt House from the beginning, preferring the Hunt parlor



of course, since she had married into that family.

It was she who insisted that a copy of the Lt. Peter Hunt letters come to the Society and she got to read the editor's proofing copy, hot off the press. It was wonderful to have Fran's input on the publishing of "All Quiet" (we had our first meeting at her apartment at Brookdale), and we hope she was as pleased with the final product as we are. Thank you Frances.

Bruce Chick, along with his wife Caroline, was ALWAYS at Council meetings to be counted as a concerned citizen. Back when I first met the Chicks, there was the coal fired plant to be derailed, Bridgham Farm condos to be quashed, and a host of smaller issues to be kept track of. Because of the constancy of people like Bruce who watched and cared, there is no coal plant on the Seekonk River and there is a beautiful farm meadow open to the public on the Reservoir. It was always a dependable sight: the Chicks in the first few rows, ready to speak up if they thought they needed to. Our thanks Bruce! (And Caroline too!)

Green Jacket Shoal Update

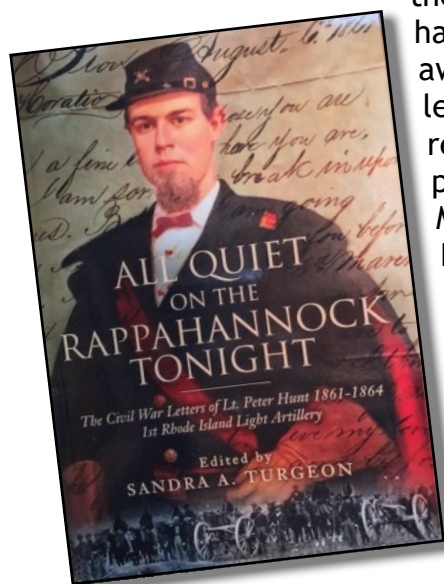
If you are an Upper Bay boater, you are very familiar with the shoal off Bold Point. Three years ago, Dave Robinson, senior researcher at the URI Grad School of Oceanography, pointed out to the EPHS just what IS on the bottom of what is known as Green Jacket Shoal: a marine historic treasury of 29 vessels, including

the *Mount Hope* and the *Bay Queen*. They are scuttled relics, but the nature of the Shoal has preserved them for over 100 years. In February, the EP Hist. Dist. Com. (EPHDC) began discussions with RI State Preservation/Archeology about the Shoal. Members of the commission, some of whom also represented the Society and the Pomham Rocks group, along with researcher Robinson, made a strong case for a marine historic designation site. The State has taken the idea seriously and has suggested that the HDC begin to garner support from other groups in the Bay area. That process has begun and our networking pays off handsomely at a time like this. We should have a full list of supporting groups for you next month. Spread the word please!

A Hat Trick for "All Quiet"?

Three possible awards for one project? Well it has been done before by this group. In 1994-5, the HS won a national award for volunteerism from AASLH (Amer. Assn for State and Local History) a State award for the restoration of Hunt House at the 1995 conference, and a local citation from the City for

the same. This year, the Society has again applied for the AASLH award for the Lt. Peter Hunt letters project, and for the regional book award for 2017 publications from the NE Museum Assn. based in Boston. The hat trick is the award we will receive on April 6: Sandra Turgeon will receive, on behalf of the Society, an award for her work as editor from the RI Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War!



Master Gardeners' 2018 "Walks and Talks"

May 13

- "Composting and Soil Testing"

Bring a soil sample and have it tested for free.

June 10

- "Historic Garden Tour"

Open to the public and promoted through URI mastergardener@uri.edu

August 12

- "Medicinal and Culinary Plants"

October 14

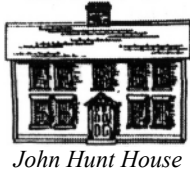
- "Harvesting and Preparing for Winter"

Wine and Weeding 2018 Schedule

Volunteers meet on the first Tuesday of the month at 4:00pm at the Hunt House for a couple hours of gardening and weeding. This is followed by a potluck meal in the gazebo, hence the name "Wine and Weeding". You are welcome to join them!

This year's dates are:

- April 3
- May 1
- June 5
- July 3
- August 7
- September 4
- October 2
- November 6



East Providence Historical Society
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John Hunt House

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Gardening Tips

By Jeff Faria, Master Gardener

As the days grow longer and the season changes into spring, we start to look at the plants that we have in our yard. Evaluating plants that have out-served their usefulness is something that we should look into. Non-native plants that do not naturally grow in our environment may be an area that you can address this season. By removing invasive plants, and adding native plants, you will bring back the natural ecosystem and harmony to the landscape.

Now is a good time to peruse seed catalogs and start seeds indoors for a jump on the season. You will need grow lights to maximize the strength potential of seedlings, so be careful not to get carried away.



As you venture out into your gardens, notice invasive weeds that have started to emerge. Some of these, like chickweed, carpet weed and pigweed, are edible and you can enjoy them in salads! An hour of weeding now will save 10 hours of weeding in June!

It is important to have your soil tested so that you know the pH level. Having the correct pH level will allow your plants to absorb the nutrients that are vital to their success.

Amending the soil with compost, lime and organic fertilizers will help bring your soil to its optimum level.

Pruning. Look at your perennials and focus on removing dead, diseased, damaged or crushed branches. Then look at the plant for its overall shape. Many plants will benefit from pruning "haircuts" before the growing season commences!