



The East Providence Historical Society

Gazette

October 2018

Volume XXXI No. 2

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

October

Sunday, October 14
1:00 - 3:30 pm
Hunt House open

Monday, Oct. 22
7:00 pm
Public Meeting

“Crossing to Sowams” with Dr. David Weed

The Tockwotton Theater
500 Waterfront Drive,
East Providence 02914

November

Sunday, Nov. 11
1:00 - 3:30 pm
Hunt House open

December

Sunday, Sept. 9
1:00 - 3:30 pm
Hayride Day
Hunt House open

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

Three-Year Strategic Plan!!

By Cheryl Faria, Co-President

The East Providence Historical Society is proud to announce that we have recently completed a three-year Strategic Plan. We were fortunate to have the expert guidance of David Karoff, Professional Strategic Planning Consultant and Madison (Maddie) Mott, a Master’s Degree Candidate in Public Humanities at Brown University.

Our process began in January of this year when the Board performed a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. This gave us good information about what the board thought were priorities to include in the plan. In May, Maddie Mott led three focus groups with prominent members of our community which gave us excellent information about what the community thought were priorities to include in the plan.

Over the summer, David Karoff and Maddie led three strategic planning sessions with the Board where we pulled everything together and came up with goals and targets for the next three years. We’re very proud of what we came up with and feel energized and motivated to make the East Providence Historical Society a well-known and well-utilized resource for the East Providence and surrounding communities.

How You Can Get Involved

With our newly completed three-year Strategic Plan, we have lots of ideas and plans for new initiatives and we welcome your help as we move forward. Your help can be on an as needed basis for specific projects or as an active member of one of our committees, or somewhere in between!

Below is a list of needs:

MUSEUM

- **Museum Docents** - 1:00-3:30pm on the 2nd Sunday of month. One to greet and invite donations, two on each of three floors. Docents will be given information packages and provided with docent training. Also need someone to help create and design the docent packages and schedule and train docents.

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The Gazette
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P.O. Box 4774, East Providence, RI
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OFFICERS

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Nancy Allen *Recording Secretary*
Pat Henry *Corresponding Secretary*
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Jeffrey Faria *Grounds*
Miriam Kenney *Membership*
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Deborah Ormerod *Curator*
Sandra Turgeon *Marker Program*
Reinhard Wohlgenuth *Newsletter*
Nancy Moore *Preservation*
Nancy Moore *Programs*
Nancy Moore *Publicity*
Becky Ellis *Website Manager*



- John FitzGerald
- Michael Green & Carol Auer

Thank you to the following members who upgraded their membership level to LIFE

- John C. Dufresne
- Ralph & Elaine Viara

Dues Notice

There are several members who still owe dues that were payable in July! If you received a bill and have not yet paid, please use the form below OR go to our website (ephist.org) and use PayPal. Any questions can be directed to miriamkenney@aol.com or 401-434-9462.

Thank you in advance for your continued support of our organization!

Miriam Kenney, Membership Chair

Membership List Update

Members:

We are updating our membership lists. If you have not already done so, please send us your email: info@ephist.org

If you would like to become a member, visit our web page and download a membership form. Mail the form with a check to the address listed. We also accept direct payment for memberships through PayPal. ephist.org

Thank you!



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

Three-Year Strategic Plan!!

Continued from page 1

- **Museum Committee** - Need new members to help with displays, maintain a clean museum and manage the gift shop.
- **Building Committee** - Need new members to help with maintenance and upgrades to the Museum and Education Center.
- **Fundraising Committee** - New committee to oversee annual giving appeal; outreach for Open House Corporate sponsors; outreach for planned giving; and raise \$10,000 to establish an endowment at the Rhode Island Foundation.
- **Marketing** - Need help creating and producing outreach marketing materials for new membership and volunteers. Also to develop a system and implementation plan to share information with Senior Center and Libraries in East Providence and surrounding areas.
- **Technology** - Need help maintaining/updating our website. Also need help utilizing email campaign software, streamlining social media posts, implementing an e-mail Gazette, etc.
- **Volunteer Coordinator** - Need someone to help identify and coordinate volunteer groups and be on site as needed for volunteer groups of corporate employees and students.
- **Attorney** - Provide legal advice as needed eg. Disclaimer for outside groups to sign when using our Ed Center. Provide counsel for updating bylaws.
- **Accountant** - Provide counsel and oversight for budget.

EDUCATION

- **Education Center Committee** - New committee to determine rules and procedures for using the Education Center; maintain a calendar; and ID upgrades as needed.
- **School Education Programs Committee** - New committee to develop a curriculum and implementation plan; Identify and train 3 teachers; and outreach to one school to pilot next fall.

COMMUNITY

- **Community Events Committee** - New committee to manage the logistics of special events such as WSD and events held during museum open houses. Identify and pilot one paid event and one sponsored signature event.
- **Marker Program** - Need new members to help with deed research and identifying architectural details and historical significance of buildings.

- **Liaison for RI Historical Society** - Be the main contact and attend meetings.
- **Liaison for Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor** - Be the main contact.

If you would like a copy of our Strategic Plan, or want to explore some of the volunteer opportunities, please contact me directly at 401-419-8682 or cherylafaria@verizon.net.
We look forward to hearing from you!



2nd Sunday Fall Open Houses

October 14

November 11

December 9
Hayride Day

The John Hunt House
65 Hunt's Mills Road
Rumford, RI 02916

1:00 pm - 3:30 pm

"Hikes at Hunt's"

With Ernie Germani
1:30 pm at the Gazebo
October - December

Master Gardeners' Talk

October 14 @ 2:30 pm in
front of the House
"Harvesting and Preparing
for Winter"

The Great Gale of 1938

by Leo Caisse

This story represents an attempt to relate the eyewitness accounts of some people who lived through the hurricane in Barrington and East Providence eighty years ago.

September 21, 1938 dawned like any other day but by day's end, death and destruction would wreak havoc over Rhode Island. It would leave indelible memories on those who lived through it much like the blizzard of '78 did for another generation forty years later. Later generations must bear in mind the sheer magnitude of the cleanup task that faced the people at the time. There were no power tools. The tools available were saws, axes and hatchets- backbreaking work to say the least. Among the people who were instrumental in search and rescue operations and later cleanup were members of the Civil Conservation Corps. Indeed, they cut and cleared so many trees that they built saw mills to process and store the lumber. That lumber would enable the military to build its many installations in RI and New England when World War II broke out.

At Crescent Park, the pier and the Comet Roller Coaster suffered the most damage

but they were both later repaired. The Sabin Point Light stood its ground well, save for the living quarters which were closest to sea level and were flooded. The lighthouse keeper himself was not present when the storm struck but his wife was. In a noteworthy demonstration of these lighthouse keepers' dedication to their work, she was swept into the water three times and somehow managed to get herself back on board and never let the light go out. According to Dave Kelleher, the Pomham Rocks Lighthouse, being higher up on the rock, did not suffer any damage save for a fallen tree.

An oil tanker was blown aground on the shore of the Squantum Club. At least part of the Barrington Parkway (now the Veterans Parkway) was flooded and at least two people were washed away trying to cross it. Along the Riverside shoreline, docks and railroad tracks were washed into the bay. The old gas tank on First Street burst open with a huge roar. A chimney toppled over at the old Town Hall through the roof and fractured the skull of a policeman.

James Donovan and his family made their home in the Fort Hill section of East Providence and it was there that they rode out the great hurricane of 1938. For some forty years James made his living as caretaker and chauffeur for two well-to-do sisters, Miss Peckham and her widowed sister Mrs. Carpenter on the East Side of Providence. They also maintained a summer home at the beginning of Rumstick Road in Barrington. They rode out the storm there. The day after the storm, James gathered up his twin sons George and James into the family car and they set off to check on his employers' well being. Making their way down Pawtucket Avenue and onto the old Wampanoag Trail, they traveled without significant problems until they reached the vicinity where they

started to run into more significant debris. On County Road south, beyond the White Church, travel by car was impossible so the trio set off on foot. Before them lay a continuous forest of fallen trees. At what is now the Barrington Shopping Center they were astounded to find the old Chellel's Market open for business. The family and owners of the business lived upstairs. Continuing on their trek, they finally arrived at their destination, to find the two elderly ladies and their maid and housekeeper, Irish sisters, all well, but the well was contaminated with salt water. So off Mr. Donovan and his sons went to find fresh water. Back to Chellel's they went to get glass jugs, and set off towards the Tyler Point bridges and Warren in search of fresh water. Crossing the bridges was an obstacle course unto itself. Both bridges over the Barrington and Palmer Rivers were covered



The Crescent Park steamer pier before the hurricane

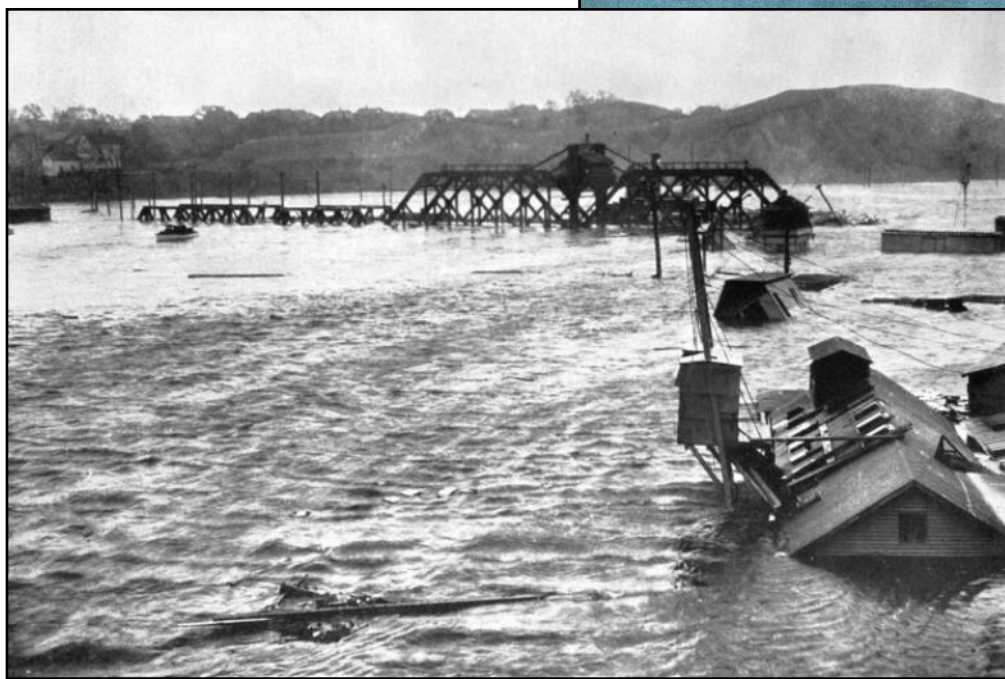
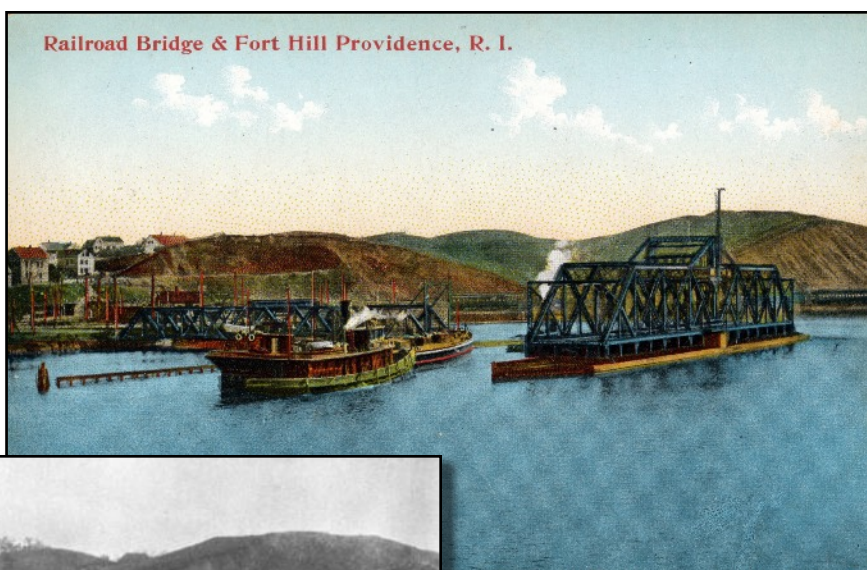
with debris and boats which had come to rest on their roadways. Over, under, and around the debris the father and sons made their way until they finally reached the Warren side, and shortly thereafter, a small store open with a source of safe drinking water.

George Donovan remembers that the water that had poured in the day before with the tidal surge was now still rushing back out in a scene reminiscent of Colorado rapids. He said the water almost reached the top of the arches and the bridges were vibrating from the pounding of flotsam hitting the structure and would for days to come. The hurricane surge had poured tons of water up the Barrington River towards Hundred Acre Cove and up the Palmer River towards Swansea. One sight stood out in his mind: that of what appeared to be a raft but was the floor of a house with four walls still attached. It struck the bridge with a thud and appeared on the other side as so much splintered lumber.

In 1938, Ralph Rivers and his wife and nine children had been living in a cabin on a barge anchored alongside a dock at Sabin Point for six years. Mr. Rivers was working in Taunton and saw the storm gathering steam and having been a seafaring man, recognized it was going to be a bad one. By the time he reached their barge home at Sabin, he estimated the wind was already up to 90 mph. He announced to his wife and six of their nine children present that they would have to abandon ship, but by then the dock boards were ripping away in the wind and they would not be able to do so that way. Rivers shuttled his wife and children to the pilot house where there were six life preservers. He put the jackets on five of the children and his wife. She would

have to hold the baby. Everything being pushed by wind and tide was dashing the barge and its pilot house apart. Just then a large mass of flotsam smashed into the barge and was threatening the pilot house itself. Rivers went out into the wind and somehow dislodged it. He thinks it was the Crescent Park dock. As the last remaining bits of the barge were being broken apart they prepared to enter the cauldron of water below. Just then the storm began to subside and the water receded, saving their lives. They would never live on the barge again.

Leo Caisse's original piece also had tales about the Barrington/Bay Spring area. This article was printed in its entirety in the Post —Sept 13th.



The colored postcard view of the railroad bridge between Fox Point and Bold Point shows the rotary bridge in normal operation. The East Providence railroad yard is located behind the bridge below Fort Hill.

Just imagine the amount of water the force of the wind pushed up Narragansett Bay. It had to fill the bay and also raised the level of the Seekonk river enough to flood the railroad yard and the tracks on top of the bridge.

Fall Open Houses

These are the last few times that the extensive Rumford collection will be on view - don't miss it! And if you haven't taken the "Hikes at Hunt's" tour with Ernie Germani, plan to do that also. The MG group has one last time to be available to help you with gardening questions and soil testing. And put "Hayride Day" on your calendar now.



Becky Ellis Photo

Sowams Launch

The new preservation group known as Sowams which is focused on educating the public about the remaining fifty 17th century sites/buildings in 8 towns in the "south country" formally announced its presence at Hunt's Mills, one of those 50 sites, on Second Sunday, Sept 9. Dr. David Weed of the Warren Preservation Society welcomed an enthusiastic group which included interested parties from each of the towns and members of the Pokanoket, Seaconke Wampanoag, and Narragansett tribes. The intent of this group to get at both sides of the 1600's story was reiterated by Dr. Weed, Nancy Moore and Sachem William Guy. Sowams will be featured at WSD with emphasis on the fording place site at India Pt/Bold Pt. Our next public meeting at Tockwotton (see blurb) will feature "Crossing to Sowams."



Public Meeting

The Tockwotton Theater

500 Waterfront Drive, East Providence 02914

Monday October 22

7:00 pm

"Crossing to Sowams"

Dr. David Weed of the Warren Preservation Society

Our annual October meeting at Tockwotton again features a piece of EP Watchemoket waterfront history: the Native American fording place between India point and Bold Point close to where Tockwotton itself stands. This site is one of more than 50 17th century sites in the new Sowams Heritage Area. These places are Native American and colonial sites dotting the landscape in the area known to the Native Americans as "Sowams." Dr. David Weed of the Warren Preservation Society will take us back in time to the early 1600's, the areas which are open to the public, and the history behind some of these sites.



Becky Ellis Photo



Deb Ormerod Photo

Dr. Weed giving his introductory speech about the goals of the new Sowams preservation group followed by Sachem William Guy.



Deb Ormerod Photo

“How the Rumford Company “barreled” its Baking Powder”

by Reinhard Wohlgemuth



On September 24th I had the great pleasure to attend a presentation by Tom Kelleher, master cooper from Old Sturbridge village. Nancy Moore had picked out some tools and barrels from our Rumford collection and Tom brought along some of his items.

He used a video as an outline for his talk and explained in detail the



steps and tools involved in the process of creating a barrel. It was amazing to see what these craftsmen can do with their specialized tools of their trade. There was no assembly line work, a cooper would fashion a complete barrel from start to finish.

Besides his knowledge of barrel-making, Tom also shared with us a wealth of information about the history and use of various barrels. The names were different based on the use and size of the barrel, some barrels were charred inside to give the contents



a certain flavor (think bourbon), others were made to “breathe” (shipping barrels for apples and potatoes).

And we learned that the gray barrel from our collection (see photo left) is technically not a barrel but a well bucket. The hardware is bolted to the wood part so you couldn’t lose the bucket in the well and there is a flapper valve in the bottom. If you didn’t drop the bucket correctly (upside down) it would still fill and the valve closed on the way up.

2019 Conference Update

September 18 Masonic Lodge

A group of nearly 40 residents and preservationists gathered at the Masonic Lodge on Taunton Ave. to brainstorm about their favorite historical places in East Providence. The organizers, Sarah Zurier and Janet Balletto, remarked that they have never had such a large turnout for pre-conference planning from any community. Ideas floated covered all of the City and Sarah and Janet have the difficult job to try to fit them all into bus and trolley tours, boat rides, walking and hiking tours, and just plain informational presentations about how to make preservation come alive in a community.

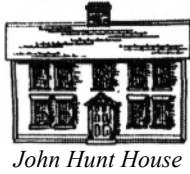
Our great thanks to the Masons for hosting the group and for a guided tour of that beautiful building.

Gardening Tips

By Jeff Faria, Master Gardener

- Mow your lawn one last time to make Leaf raking easier.
- Build a compost pile with leaves, grass, vegetable scraps and coffee grounds.
- Now is a great time to plant spring flowering bulbs. Try stacking tulip, daffodil and crocus bulbs in the same hole for a great trio effect.
- Leave some areas of your property for pollinator overwintering habitat. Leaf litter and fallen branches can be a good winter home for many varieties of beneficial insects.

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East Providence Historical Society
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Gardening Tips

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- The first quarter moon on October 16 is the beginning planting time for your seed garlic. Plant before the full moon on the 24th. Using straw or salt marsh hay is better than grass hay as mulch. Apply it later on, after the garlic has sprouted.
- Many green leafy vegetables like kale, collards and Swiss chard are sweeter after a light frost.
- After a rain, keep a lookout for Hen of the woods, or Chicken of the woods mushrooms at the base of oak trees. Be sure not to trespass on private property, like MINE!! There are several people who try to steal my mushrooms every year.



A nice young specimen of Hen of the woods!