



# The East Providence Historical Society

# Gazette

Summer 2018

Volume XXX No. 6

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

## May

Sunday, May 13  
1:00 - 3:30 pm  
Hunt House open

Monday, May 21  
6:00pm Tours  
7:00 pm  
General Meeting -  
*Public invited*

**“Welcome to the USS Rumford” – The Rumford Rifle Range**  
By Leo Caisse

Wolf School  
215 Ferris Avenue  
Rumford, RI

## June

Saturday, June 2  
National Trails Day

Sunday, June 10  
1:00pm - 3:30pm  
Hunt House open

Monday, June 25  
6:00pm  
Picnic and elections

### CONTACT US AT:

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

## Presidents' Letter

By Nancy More

I have just returned from the RI Preservation Conference and once again am very impressed with the organization of that whole day. The special significance of going this year was that I was scoping out how things looked from an organizational standpoint, not as a participant, because EAST PROVIDENCE WILL BE THE SITE OF THE 2019 PRESERVATION CONFERENCE!! This exciting news will be announced soon and we have already begun to think in those terms here at the Historical Society. An application to the Champlin Foundation went off this week for sprucing up Hunt House and a grant request to the RI Foundation has gone off for a strategic planning consultant to help the Board set up a 5 year plan for the Society. What's 5 years? 50 have already flown by. Cheryl Faria deserves a great big thank you for getting those grants out the door.

And did you catch "Made It" at the Weaver Library with Bernie Mulligan? Outstanding! Who knew we had a stand-up comic in the group! Bernie showed us a side of Rumford that we're sure still exists: a caring, compassionate, neighborhood of people who rallied to help his mom, stricken with polio. Bernie and his wife brought many friends and made lots of new ones. He sold out of "Made It" but we will have copies available at the picnic - he has promised to come and sign them. A portion of the proceeds benefits the EPHS. Thank you Bernie!

Since our last Gazette, we have had a surprise visit from two siblings, Gail Aubin-Fischer and her brother Everett who were raised on Washburn Ave. They spent an early afternoon exploring the house and made us a donation of a framed rubbing of the gravestone we have in the Hunt parlor. Everett made this many years ago and when he returned to the cemetery he could no longer find the stone and thought it vandalized or stolen. Both were amazed and delighted to see it leaning against the fireplace.

On the morning of April Open House, we welcomed a group of volunteer photographers to Hunt House from the Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor National Park for which we anchor the southernmost end. Led by Carol Dandrade, these new "eyes" in and around the house caught striking pictures of the things we see daily. And, best of all, we are free to use these images to supplement the great photos our own members take for us. You will see some of those spotlighted over the next issues. Our great thanks to these BVHC volunteers!

**Please note:  
This is the last Gazette until September!**

Continued on page 5

**The Gazette**

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East Providence  
Historical Society

P.O. Box 4774, East Providence, RI  
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**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*  
Nancy Allen *Museum*  
Deborah Ormerod *Curator*  
Sandra Turgeon *Marker Program*  
Reinhard Wohlgemuth *Newsletter*  
Nancy Moore *Preservation*  
Nancy Moore *Programs*  
Nancy Moore *Publicity*  
Becky Ellis *Website Manager*

**Award photos**



Sandra Turgeon, editor of the Lt. Peter Hunt letters, receives an award from the Sons of RI Civil War Veterans on April 6 for her work on behalf of the Society. More photos of the event can be found on our Facebook page.

**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

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P.O. Box 4774  
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**Membership Form**

New  
 Renewal/Change

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

\$15 Individual

\$25 Family/Business

\$150 Life

## Dates to Remember This Summer

### Saturday, May 12

Carpenter Museum Genealogy Day, rescheduled from March 3. See your March issue for details.

### Sunday, May 13 from 1:00pm - 3:30pm

Open house at Hunt House Museum  
 "Hikes at Hunt's" - 1:30pm at the Gazebo  
 "Master Gardener Talks" – Composting and Soil Testing  
 2:30pm in front of the house

### Monday, May 21 at 7:00pm

General meeting at Wolf School (215 Ferris Avenue 02916)  
 "Welcome to the USS Rumford" – The Rumford Rifle Range  
 Tours at 6:00pm - Talk at 7:00pm

### Saturday, June 2

National Trails Day. Help groom the Hunt's Mills trails. For more information email <egermani4@gmail.com>

### Wednesday, June 6 at 2:00pm

375th celebration of the history of Rehoboth - Seekonk, including Lt. Peter Hunt at the Seekonk Senior Center. Talk by David Norton

### Sunday, June 10 from 1:00pm - 3:30pm

Open house at Hunt House Museum  
 "Hikes at Hunt's" - 1:30pm at the Gazebo  
 "Master Gardener Talks" – Historic Garden Tour  
 2:30pm in front of the house

### Saturday, June 23 from 10:am to 1:00pm

URI Mastergardener Project open house at Hunt House. There will be many public gardens throughout the state on display that day.

### Monday, June 25 at 6:00pm

Annual picnic and elections at Hunt House

### Sunday, July 8 from 1:00pm - 3:30pm

Open house at Hunt House Museum  
 "Hikes at Hunt's" - 1:30pm at the Gazebo

### Sunday, August 12 from 1:00pm - 3:30pm

Open house at Hunt House Museum  
 "Hikes at Hunt's" - 1:30pm at the Gazebo  
 "Master Gardener Talks" – Medicinal and Culinary Plants  
 2:30pm in front of the house

## General Meeting

Monday, May 21 @ 7:00pm

Wolf School  
 215 Ferris Avenue  
 East Providence 02916

## "Welcome to the USS Rumford" The Rumford Rifle Range by Leo Caisse



Exactly one year ago, Leo Caisse authored a piece for the Gazette entitled "Welcome Aboard the USS Rumford." (Look it up at [ephist.org](http://ephist.org) - Summer 2017) It was so well received that Leo, with tech help from Reinhard Wohlgermuth, will present a program based on that article. The obvious place to have the program was on site and the Wolf School (former Thompson School) will graciously welcome us. Our great thanks to Anna Johnson and her crew! Leo and friends will lead tours of the old Rumford Rifle Range, starting at 6:00pm. Please meet them in the Kimberly Ann Rock Ball Field parking lot.

Dessert will be ready at 6:30pm in the Wolf gym and the presentation starts at 7:00pm.





# Remembering Private First Class Eugene A. Fontes

by Susan Cady



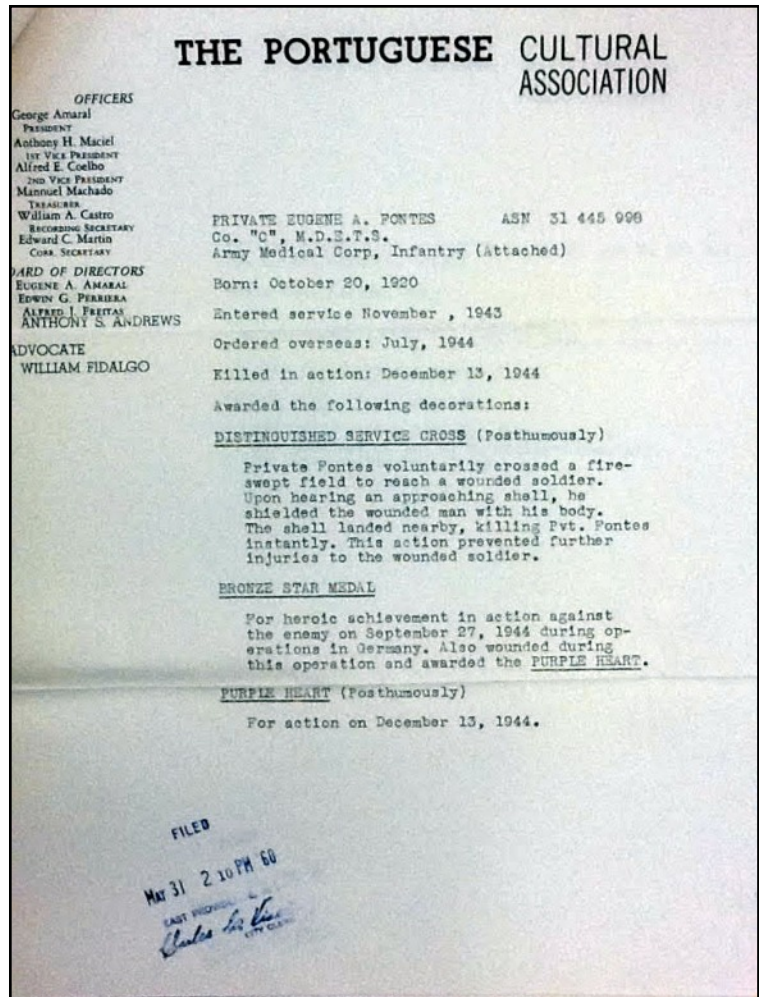
Walking home from Weaver Memorial Library, often with my nose in a book, I would stop when I reached the corner of Freeborn and Lyon Avenues before I walked south along

Lyon Ave. to cross over Interstate 195. I had to look up to avoid colliding with two signs on posts: a stop sign and the Fontes-Gracie Memorial Bridge sign. The second sign has been there for over 56 years, yet I did not know why it was there or who these men were. Similar signs exist at the three other I-195 bridges at Potter St., Purchase St., and Pawtucket Ave. and also at the Broadway overpass.

In the mid-1950s, houses, businesses, and schools were demolished or moved to new locations to get out of the path of the construction of Route 195 from the Washington Bridge to the Mass. state line. In Dec. 1959, Governor Del Sesto authorized the Council to "name the bridges along the expressway in honor of individual service men and women of East Providence who have sacrificed their lives in World War II or in Korea." On Nov. 11, 1961, flags were lowered to half-mast at the City Hall. The families gathered at their relative's bridge for the dedication of the bridge and a metal sign posted nearby. Seven veterans served in the U.S. Army with one each in the U. S. Navy, U. S. Air Force, and U. S. Marine Corps. Recently I learned more about one of these ten men.

Eugene A. Fontes was the son of Manuel and Sadie Fontes and brother of Alice Huff, Mildred Moniz, Shirley White, Elizabeth Vanner, Patricia Fontes, Jackie Fontes, and Lawrence, Robert, and William Fontes. (You might

know Eugene's brother. Robert Fontes is a retired history teacher of East Providence High School and hockey coach.) During the 1930s and 1940s, the children attended Brightridge Ave. School and went on to Central Junior High and East Providence High School. Eugene liked to watch baseball but often you could find him on Saturday nights dancing at the Alhambra Ballroom at Crescent Park. He worked with his father at a wholesale meat business on Canal St. in Providence, delivering meat to small stores in the East Bay area. When the second draft for World War II was called in November 1943, Eugene joined the army and left behind his wife Sadie and toddler daughter Judith. After basic training, Eugene went overseas in July 1944 to serve as a medic in the 60<sup>th</sup> Combat team, Ninth U.S. Infantry Division. He received a Bronze Star medal "for heroic achievement in action against the enemy on September 27, 1944" and a Purple Heart because he had been wounded. Later in December, two military men visited Eugene's wife. They informed Sadie that medic Eugene Fontes was killed while saving the life of a wounded sergeant.



His widow was presented with his Distinguished Service Cross, the Bronze Star, and Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster. Posthumously,

he received another Purple Heart for action on Dec. 13, 1944. Eugene's body rests with other American soldiers in the Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery in Belgium. Members of the Fontes family have traveled there several times to visit his grave site. After the war ended, the sergeant Eugene saved traveled to RI to meet Eugene's parents. They were grateful for this veteran's visit.

I appreciate Millie, Betty and Pat sharing their memories of Eugene's life. Now I know more about the young 24 year old man behind the Lyon Ave. memorial bridge sign. During 2018, the RI DOT shall reconstruct those three bridges over 195 as they are too weak for heavy truckloads. The missing pairs of memorial bridge signs may also be replaced. As I travel on or over I-195, the EP Veterans' Memorial Expressway, the stop sign reminds me to stop and thank EP veterans and all past and current members of the military for their service and sacrifice.

*\*\* Editor's note: a message has been sent to the DOT from the EPHS asking that the signs be restored to the bridges.*

## President's Letter

Continued from page 1

The fish flag is flying! The herring missed the April Open House by 2 weeks this year and the rushing waters of this week have held them back a bit but they have arrived. Perhaps there will be a few stragglers to greet guests on Mother's Day.

The Ed Center walls have been plastered and the flooring delivered - all good signs that we are nearing completion. The handicap lift goes in just before May Open House and that is an exciting piece as it frees up the last of the RISCA grant monies to us. We still have the water service and heating system to install but we are moving right along. Our great thanks to Brian Turgeon and the crew!

For all you new members out there, please note that this Gazette says SUMMER issue. That means that we will not communicate with you again until September. So this issue has all the dates for that time frame: May meeting / picnic/ open houses plus a few community dates of interest.

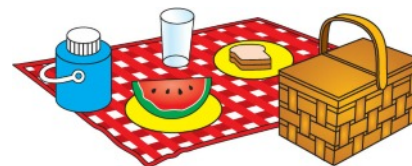
- May 12th: Carpenter Museum genealogy day rescheduled from March 3rd. See your March issue for details
- National Trails Day - Sat. June 2nd - help groom the Hunt's Mills trails <egermani4@gmail.com>
- June 6th : Seekonk Senior Center 2:00pm - talk by David Norton - the 375th celebration of the history of Rehoboth - Seekonk, including Lt. Peter Hunt

Details for the picnic, elections, and some other housekeeping details are also in this issue. We will need to take a couple of votes at the picnic. We hope to have all who attended last year (75) plus new members as well. It's a great time to check out the Ed Center and how the Rumford basement is shaping up.

## Picnic

Please mark your calendars for Monday evening June 25. We will gather for our annual meeting on the Hunt House lawn. Food is served at 6:00pm but come early to look around and just enjoy the beauty of Hunt's. Bring your own chair and appetite! There will be no calling of members for the picnic but a call to 438-1750 or email to <nancykmmoore@gmail.com> would be appreciated. As always, you are welcome to bring a salad or side dish to share to add variety to the menu of hotdogs/hamburgers and strawberry shortcake, with Rumford biscuits of course.

Members \$4 - Guests \$6. There is no rain date.



## Election

With the Preservation Conference in the works and the Ed Center about to open, the Board feels strongly that the present team should stay in place, although by the by-laws, this team has had its 2 year run. If you feel strongly otherwise, we need to hear from you.

### The slate as presented:

**Co-Presidents:**  
Cheryl Faria and Nancy Moore

**Vice President:**  
Deborah Ormerod

**Secretary:**  
Nancy Allen

**Corresponding Secretary:**  
Pat Henry

**Treasurer:**  
Dorothy Thornley

## Issues for Discussion at Picnic

### Dues:

For the 1<sup>st</sup> 25 years, membership dues for the HS were \$10. For the 2<sup>nd</sup> 25 years it has been \$15. The Board has been discussing what membership might be for the next 25 years. Most groups we have looked at have a fee of \$25 and we're leaning towards that amount. If we follow the pattern of 25 year increments, that amount should take us through year 100! So, for discussion at the picnic: Single membership \$25 / dual to one household \$35/ corporate \$35 and life \$250 (the formula there is 10 times the single membership.)

### E-Gazettes:

This discussion has taken place before - paper Gazettes vs. email Gazettes. In the past, members overwhelmingly wished to keep to the mailed copy. However, we are sensing that the scales may have tipped: many of you have become computer literate (yes, you can teach old dogs new tricks!) and may no longer care which format you receive. For the HS, the color printing costs are quite hefty and we've even gone to 6 issues instead of 8 to hold costs down. An increase in dues will cover these costs but an e-gazette format would do even more as each copy costs \$1.30 to print, \$1.85 to print/mail. We need to look closely at our expenses right now as we take on the running of the ED Center along with Hunt House.

Please feel free to weigh in on either issue at : <nancykmmoore@gmail.com>

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

Our exhibit/ program focus for this year is the Rumford Chemical Company and its effect on the northern part of East Providence. The Museum Committee continues to make good headway in the "Rumford basement" sorting out the non-Rumford items and moving artifacts into that space from other parts of the building. The tool exhibit has been very popular and perhaps you will smell hot biscuits cooking in the summer kitchen at some point. There is always a tasty new Rumford recipe being tested upstairs at the main exhibit.

## Museum Exhibit: "All Quiet on the Rappahannock Tonight: the Civil War Service of Lt. Peter Hunt"

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.

## The Curious Curator

An interested citizen has a stick marked with Fred B. Halliday-Hardware and Seeds-Sherwin-Williams Paint for 46 Years Opp. Town Hall, East Providence, R. I.

From research, it seems they were in business in 1896 but no info about what eventually happened to them or if they moved from their original location on Taunton Avenue. A manufacturer stamp says AMER. MFG. CONCERN. Falconer, NY

Anyone have any information??  
Email info@ephist.org with any info





**Buy Now**

## PayPal Button



The East Providence Historical Society now has a PayPal button

on our web page (ephist.org) for membership payment and donations. It is now just a click away to sign up for another year of membership and to make a donation.

Your membership dues help us run the building! We are fortunate to be able to rent the building from The City of East Providence! (Thank you!) But, we are responsible for all things inside! So...we paint the rooms, maintain the gardens, put on monthly public meetings and educational programs. We pay for the insurance, the phone, and any repairs and maintenance to the building (how many times has the screen been replaced in the screen door??). We also print and send out the Gazette to all members.

This year's projects include painting the upstairs and two rooms downstairs.

So, THAT is a quick run-down of what your dues goes toward. It's expensive to keep our old house in shape, but we love every square inch of it!

Please visit our website to renew your membership and make a donation.

Thank you!  
Deb Ormerod  
Vice President



## Notice regarding July Dues Payments

Some members have dues expiring in July, 2018.

Renewals can be paid at the annual picnic in June, OR can be mailed in to the post office address found on page 2 of the GAZETTE. The third option is to pay electronically using PayPal (see article above)

This reminder will save us considerable postage, and we will be able to spend more of our funds on programs for you!

We look forward to your continued support. If you have any questions about your dues, please contact me at (401) 434-9462 or miriamkenney@aol.com

Miriam Kenney  
Membership Chair

**\*\* Editor's note: I just tried the PayPal button on our website and it worked!**

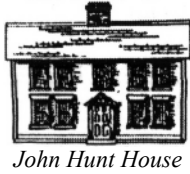
## Welcome to Our New Members!

- Everett Aubin
- Doug Blum
- Bridget Bourne
- Mary Harrall

## John Hunt House Heritage Gardens

### URI Master Gardener Program 2018 Project Plan

- Period gardens on grounds of the John Hunt House Museum, a manor home built in the 1750's and filled with artifacts from that period.
- The museum is located in a designated national park in East Providence, RI and is included in the Blackstone River Historic Corridor.
- MG's work with Historical Society members to design, maintain and educate the public about the three period gardens.
- MG's Work in the gardens and serve as garden docents during museum open houses.
- The three gardens are:
  - 1.) Lura's Kitchen garden with herbs and medicinal plants from the 1700's;
  - 2.) Susannah's Victorian garden to the right of the museum;
  - 3.) The contemporary gardens at the Gazebo and sign.
- Project Leaders: Cheryl Faria and Jeff Faria
- Contact Info:  
cherylafaria@verizon.net  
401-419-8682



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

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## Gardening Tips

By Jeff Faria, Master Gardener

- Cut back foliage from spring bulbs such as daffodils and tulips only after they have weathered.
- Keep an eye out for bright red Lily Leaf Beetles on Asiatic lilies, also their eggs, which are orange in a group of 5 to 9, and are laid on the underside of the leaves. The adult Beetles are very quick in warm temperatures, so try to catch them in the early morning and drop them into soapy water, or just squeeze them!
- Prune spring blooming shrubs after flowering and before they set next year's buds.
- Shearing many ground covers like creeping phlox, lavender and dianthus will give bushier plants.
- Wait until about Memorial Day, when the soil has warmed up, before planting tomatoes, egg-plant and peppers.
- We hope you have taken advantages of our URI seed program this season at an open house or member meeting, and when planting green beans, plant one row every Saturday morning for 6 to 10 weeks. This will give you a nice "wave" of greens and a long harvest period.
- When working in your garden early in the season, watch for vegetables and flowers like lettuce, lupine, violets, scallions, leeks or parsnips that set seeds last fall and have already sprouted in your garden. These little guys may be hard to spot, but if saved, will give you a jump on the season.
- Remember to keep ahead of your weeds! Try to remove them before they flower and set their seeds.

