



The East Providence Historical Society

Gazette

April 2023

Volume XXXV No. 5

April

Sunday, April 16

12:30pm

**Unveiling of the New
Welcome Sign!**

1:00 - 3:30 pm

Hunt House Museum
open

65 Hunt's Mills Road,
Rumford, RI

1:30 pm

Hikes at Hunts
Meet at the Gazebo
1:00 - 3:00 pm
Family Games

Saturday, April 29

8:30 - 9:30 am

Audubon Bird Walk
Meet at Hunt House

May

Sunday, May 14

1:00 - 3:30 pm

Hunt House Museum
open

**Plant Give-Away for
Moms!**

65 Hunt's Mills Road,
Rumford, RI

CONTACT US AT:

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Historical Society
P.O. Box 4774
East Providence, RI
02916-4774
Tel. (401) 473-0677
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**Dedicated to Preserving the Heritage and Enjoying the
History of Our City**

President's Letter

by Cheryl Faria and Jeff Faria, Co-Presidents

Welcome to spring! Here are some of the highlights of things that have been going on since our last Gazette was published.

John Hunt House Museum

The last Open House was on Sunday, March 12. Many people came for guided tours of the museum, to take the monthly hike led by Ernie Germani and visit the research center in the Education Center. Our researchers, Sandra Turgeon and Tom Warzeka, again used Ancestry, Family Search and Find a Grave in the Education Center to help visitors with genealogical research. And Rickard Smith of HomeSmart Professional Real Estate sponsored a 'Coffee and Hot Chocolate Bar' in the Gazebo!

We will do all of this again during the April 16 Open House.



New Welcome Sign



We will be unveiling the new Welcome Sign at the entrance to Hunt's Mills at 12:30pm on Sunday, April 16. This sign was paid for with funds from the Len Iannacone Legacy Fund that was established a year ago in Len's honor. The Hunt's Mills Heritage Park and the John Hunt House Museum are located on 44 acres at the beginning of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor.

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The Gazette

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MEMBERSHIP

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O
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**In Memory Of
Caroline Chick**
Sadly missed...fondly remembered

Dates to Remember

April 16 Open House

The April Open House falls on Easter this year. So Open House will be the 3rd Sunday, April 16
12:30 pm Unveiling of New Welcome Sign at Entrance
1:00-3:30 pm Museum open
1:30 pm at the Gazebo Hikes at Hunt's
1:00-3:00 pm Family Games

April 29 Audubon Bird Walk

8:30-9:30 am Meet at Hunt House



**Audubon Society
of Rhode Island**

May 14 Open House

1:00-3:30 pm Museum open and **Plant Give-Away for Moms**
1:30 pm at the Gazebo Hikes at Hunt's
1:00-3:00 pm Family Games

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 \$25 individual, \$35
family or business, or a Life
Membership for \$250.

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: _____

\$25 Individual

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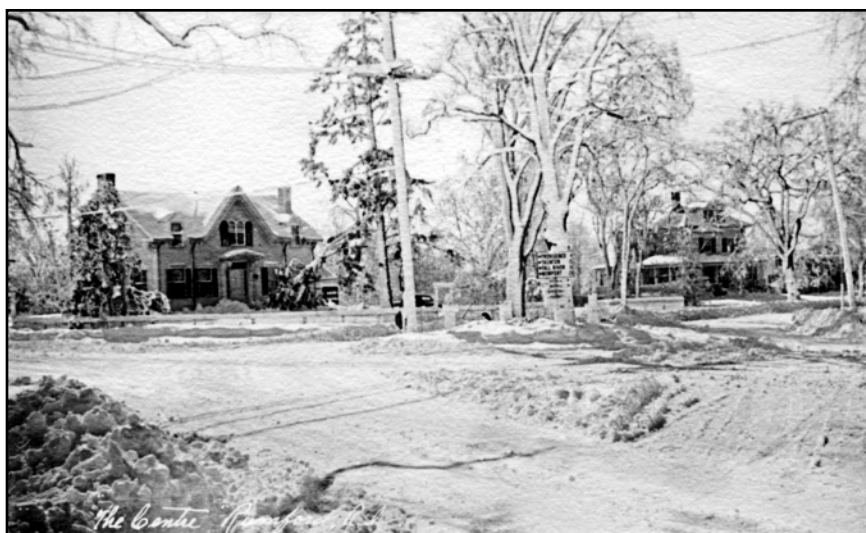
\$250 Life

Walking down Memory Lane

by Reinhard Wohlgemuth

It has been almost 14 years since I started putting the Gazette together to keep our membership informed about the events of their Historical Society and presenting some historical information of their city. Much help over the years came from my chief editor, Nancy Moore, and many different contributors who spent time researching and writing articles to make this newsletter possible. Thanks to all of you. Today I am presenting you with a couple of written and visual items that came across my desk (well, the laptop really) over the years that I especially enjoyed.

Rumford Center



After this past winter we might need a little reminder of ‘real’ New England winter weather. This undated postcard is marked *The Centre - Rumford RI* and I published it in February 2010. While I am sometimes quick to wish for the good old days I never relished cleaning the car and driveway on Sunday morning to make my way to church on poorly plowed roads like this. Or even farther back in history: hitching the horse to the sleigh to make the trip under layers of blankets.

The Star Diner

Aka Keenan’s Diner – China Star – Star Diner – Persy’s Place

Although I consider East Providence my home town now, I was only transplanted here from Germany in 1972, just about 50 years ago. My wife spent a few years of her life in Rumford growing up in the ‘Rumford High House’ by the reservoir since her father worked for Rumford Chemical. So it was only natural that I became acquainted with the Star Diner or China Star at that time. We enjoyed the food there whenever we visited, but... For me the atmosphere was just not right.

Presidents’ Letter

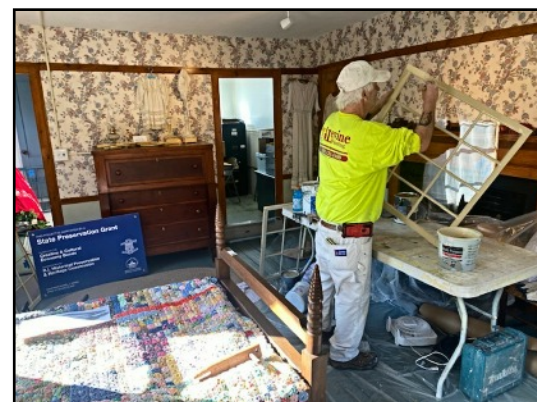
From page 1

Americana Corner Grant

We recently received the good news that our Preserving America Grant proposal to the Americana Corner was approved. We have been awarded \$5,000 to preserve and replace education signage about the 1750’s era Museum and the 44 acres, preserve Samuel Newman’s 1672 Concordance, create educational signage with QR codes and transfer VHS Tapes and Slides to DVD’s and to post on our website.

State Preservation Grant

Last year we received a grant from the RI Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission for some historical preservation projects. Under the leadership of Paul Barnum, Buildings Chair, we hired Levine Painting to reglaze and repaint 39 windows in the Hunt House Museum. We are now soliciting bids from companies to paint the Research and Education Center.



In November 2009 we ran an article about the history of the diner under its various names. The reason: it had changed hands and names from China Star to Star Diner and after a total restoration reopened in February of that year. The article is reprinted on the next page.

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Diner

From page 3

Sadly, although a total success with the public the Star Diner was short lived. Due to unfortunate family circumstances the diner went back up for sale in 2010 and we posted this photo, taken by Dot Thornley, in the October 2010 issue.



Diner for Sale Oct. 2010

But it seems that diners don't die easily; after being closed for some time it

Keenans sold the diner to the Chin family, who served Chinese fare here at the China Star until 2000. When a potential sale—for the land only—fell through, the Sanford family stepped in to save the building.

Star Diner

Preservation Project

Editor's Note: this article is a reprint from our November 2009 Gazette.

In less than sixty years, this storied diner has lived three lives. In 1951, the Keenan family placed an order with the DeRaffele Diner Manufacturing Company of New Rochelle, New York. Installed on suburban Newport Avenue, Keenan's Diner became a favorite haunt of jockeys and horse trainers from the nearby Narragansett Park racetrack. In 1964, the



Persy's place at night

Quentin and Beatrice Sanford Sr. and their children Quentin Sanford Jr. and Bethany Smith carefully refurbished the diner inside and out. They removed a new metal awning from the front, changed out the tinted interior lighting, and undertook a major cleaning. Then the owners restored the diner's finer details, including the existing metal Venetian blinds, porcelain enamel surfaces, and stainless steel "sunburst" panels. From the basement they salvaged original booths, tables, and chairs; those missing were replicated by the original manufacturer.

The Star Diner became an immediate success upon its reopening in February 2009. Serving up traditional diner fare from meatloaf to milkshakes in an authentic 1950s setting, the

reopened again in 2012 under a new name: Persy's Place. Serving breakfast and lunch in a historic diner the business was poised to succeed. And succeed it did, at least for about 10 years until this spring. Management of the Persy's Place chain has closed two restaurants and unfortunately the Rumford location was one of them. So once again, in February 2023 the For Sale signs went up.

Nobody really knows what the future holds for the historic diner. My favorite meal is breakfast and I just love a good omelette or some hash and eggs. While we have our share of good diners in East Providence, I am still hoping that once again somebody will 'pick up the tab' and breathe new life into this one.

meticulously restored Star Diner is a well-preserved icon of the American roadside.



Photos and article from RHODE ISLAND PRESERVATION CELEBRATION.

Photos by Denise J.R Bass



The Historian's Circle

Thank you to those who donated to our Annual Fund. With your Historian's Circle gift, you are helping the Historical Society meet our annual, strategic and endowment goals for the 2023 calendar year.

Hunt's Mills Park: \$1,000+

Angel Cabral	Dotty Thornley
Cheryl and Jeff Faria	James N. Viara
Laurie and Bill McWeeney	Lois Williams
Barbara Rix	

Crescent Park: \$500-\$999

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Nancy and Dan Moore	

Vanity Fair Park: \$200-\$499

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Michele H. Kazarian	Jean and Gary Zunda

Thank You!!

If there are any errors or omissions in this list, please let Cheryl Faria know so we can correct it for the next issue of The Gazette.

Call 401-419-8682 or email cherylafaria@verizon.net

Gardening Tips

By Jeff Faria, Master Gardener

Start seeds of tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant indoors in either a sunny window, or on a heat mat. Use fluorescent grow lights if seedlings cannot be located in the south facing window. Set transplants out in May.

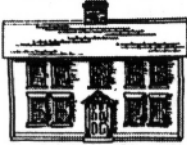
Some early season crops can be directly sewn into the garden. If nighttime temperatures fall below 30°, you can cover the seedlings with a towel or sheet. Be careful if we have too much rain in April with wet spill. I always have a back up plan and save some seeds for starting a week or two later. Transplant them into the garden in May!

Sow some of your packages of peas early this month and save some to seed later in case of too much April rain.

The use of floating row covers allow sunlight and water to nourish seedlings like brassicas, (broccoli and cauliflower), and deter caterpillar pest problems.



When transplanting seedlings into the garden, try to hold them by the leaves, not the stem. Discard any seedlings if they break along the stem.



John Hunt House


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