



# OLDE NEWS

EAST • PROVIDENCE • HISTORICAL • SOCIETY  
• NEWSLETTER •

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

As the year winds down we can look back on 1988 as an interesting transitional year for the Historical Society. We took the first important steps toward the Society's longtime goal of restoring Hunt House.

We widened the scope of our interest to include preservation and waged a campaign to save the historically valuable Weaver House

from the wrecker's ball.

Our membership tripled; and we began a newsletter to keep the growing membership better informed.

As 1989 approaches the Board is setting new goals and hopes to accomplish even more in the coming year. With your help anything is possible!!

Season's Greetings and a healthy and prosperous New Year to you all.

*Claudette Field*



**!! COOKIES !!**

Once again the December meeting will feature a Christmas cookie exchange. If you wish to participate here are the rules:

- Each participant should bring at least three dozen cookies to swap.
- Wrap your cookies in bundles of a half dozen cookies. (If your cookies are tiny, be fair and throw a couple extra in each bundle!)
- After the meeting you get to choose a different bundle for each one you've provided.

**FREE PUBLICITY**

I hope everyone reads our local newspaper *The East Providence Post*. The December 8 issue featured a long article on the Hunt House written by our publicity person, Florence Adams. Florence has been working hard since she answered our call for someone to do publicity. Her meeting notices are interesting and informative. If this keeps up there won't be anyone left in EP who won't know about the

Historical Society. Good job, Florence!

*Claudette Field*



**SEE YOU IN  
DECEMBER?**

The Rumford Grange will serve one of its world-renowned dinners before the East Providence Historical Society's December meeting.

Date of meeting: **December 19, 1988**  
 Time of dinner: **6:30 pm**  
 Entree this month: **Ham**  
 Time of meeting: **7:15 pm**  
 Guest Speaker: **Mark Zelonis**, Director of the Heritage Trust of R.I, and Director of Blithewold Gardens and Aboretum.  
 Price : **\$4.00**  
 For reservations call:  
**Martha Wade at 433-2237**  
 or **Ellen O'Hare at 434-7134**  
 by **December 14.**

**Reminder: Those reserving a dinner are responsible for the cost even if they cannot attend**



## BOARD MEETING

At its December 4<sup>th</sup> meeting the Board discussed the importance of setting goals for the Hunt House restoration for the coming year. We decided that the following goals are attainable if everyone who expressed an interest in working on the house follows through.

By December 1989 we would like:

- The ell to be demolished and the back wall of the building repaired using hired help paid for with grant money.
- The chimney repaired.
- The facade of the house painted in the original color(s).
- The bathroom near the back stairway to be remodeled into a small kitchen using the 1900 vintage kitchen cabinets from the keeping room and the upstairs kitchen.
- The front hallway painted and the fanlight over the front door repaired.
- Work begun on the complete restoration of the keeping room.

## A NEW LEASE ON LIFE

On Wednesday December 14, Fales Peirce and I have an appointment to see James Beeley, the East Providence City Manager. At that time we hope to clarify the Hunt House lease and get the city's permission to demolish the brick ell which is damaging the house. Everyone from Jack Renshaw to Antoinette Downing has warned that without a long term lease it would be virtually impossible for the Society to secure outside funding to restore Hunt House. No organization or foundation would be willing to subsidize the rehabilitation of a property that could revert back to the city at any time. A long term lease, even a conditional one, is a necessity if we are to carry on our ambitious goals.

*Claudette Field*

### TREASURER'S REPORT AS OF DECEMBER 4, 1988.

|              |                    |
|--------------|--------------------|
| General Fund | 714.71             |
| Savings      | 7,427.63           |
| C.D.         | 2711.30            |
| Credit Union | 5.00               |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>\$10,883.64</b> |

## DO YOU JUST BELONG?

One of our members, who has had extensive experience with various organizations, sent in the following poem. It could probably be subtitled "Universal Complaint" because the goals of the individual organizations might be different, but they all seem to share this common problem.

Are you an active member  
The kind that would be missed  
Or are you just contented  
That your name is on the List?

Do you attend the meetings  
And mingle with the crowd  
Or do you stay at home  
And crab both long and loud?

Do you take an active part  
To make the Society strong  
Or are you satisfied to be  
The kind that just belong?

Do you ever really pitch in  
Or come and go real quick  
And leave the work for just a  
few  
then talk about the "clique"?

There is quite a program  
scheduled  
That means success if done  
And it can be accomplished  
With the help of everyone.

So attend your meetings faith-  
fully  
And help with hand and heart  
Don't just be a member  
But take an active part.

Think this over member  
Are we right or wrong?  
Are you an Active Member  
Or...do you just belong?

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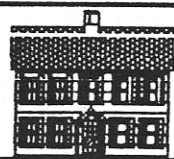
## JANUARY DINNER

On January 23, 1989 the Historical Society will sponsor a Pot Luck Supper for our members at Newman Congregational Church. We will invite the members of the Grange who do such a good job cooking for us to be *our* guests for a change. The dinner will start at 6:30 pm and be followed by a short business meeting.

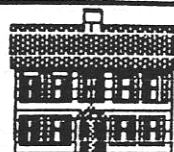
Instead of a guest speaker, we plan to hold a "mystery penny social." Participating members will bring a tastefully wrapped, yet bizarre or funny, item to the meeting. Deceptive packaging is encouraged. Members will take chances on these mysterious bundles using numbered tickets. The winner of each of these treasures will be selected by a drawing. We hope to raise a little money for the Society by selling the tickets, but mostly have some fun. (The donation of animals and/or children is not encouraged.)

A sign up sheet will be passed around at the December meeting. Think about what you would like to bring to the dinner. If you cannot attend the December meeting a volunteer will call you in early January to remind you about the meeting.

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## HUNT HOUSE UPDATE



### HUNT HOUSE RESTORATION

Clifford (Jack) Renshaw, in his extensive and interesting presentation at the November meeting mentioned two possible routes the Society could consider in the restoration of the Hunt House.

One way would be the careful and authentic restoration of the entire house, with every room being brought back to its original condition, all of the floors and fireplaces restored, etc. The other way would be a more adaptive reuse of the Hunt House, with perhaps only one large room completely restored and the rest of the house refurbished to reflect the Society's needs ( meeting room, museum space etc.).

The important thing in either approach, Renshaw emphasized, was careful planning before starting any major project. While many aspects of the restoration work could be performed by Society members, he cautioned against starting a project the magnitude of which may exceed the enthusiasm of the group per-

forming it.

He was impressed with the general condition of the house. There were only two items of concern, neither of which were of an emergency nature. One was the bad leak in the roof joint between the main house and the brick ell added by the city. The other was the settling of the floor beams caused by a poorly supported wall hole in the side of the central chimney. There were many other considerations of a more cosmetic nature: crown moldings near the gutters to be replaced, the metal tracery on the fan light over the entrance to be restored, and other matters of a detail nature.

Renshaw discussed some of the "nuts and bolts" aspects of the house. Due to the construction of the walls, there are few cavities through which to run electric or plumbing lines, and which also makes insulating the walls impossible as well, although insulation of the attic is possible.

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**HUNT HOUSE UPDATE (ctd.)**

He felt any "modern" improvements (such as bathrooms or kitchens) should be as inconspicuous as possible, and not intrude on the existing floor plan. One possibility discussed was the conversion of the downstairs bathroom near the back stairs into a small kitchen.

**THE SECURITIES COMMISSION**

Ray Anderson suggested at the November meeting that a committee be formed to study improvements to the existing security system at Hunt House in an attempt to curb vandalism. Ray and Bob Soderlund volunteered to serve and are searching for a third member to complete the committee. Their intent is to contact security firms and investigate alternatives to present to the Board and to the Society. Anyone who wishes to help these two gentlemen in their search for security should contact Ray, who was appointed chairman of the Security Committee..

*George Field*

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**NOVEMBER MEETING**

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Attendance at the November meeting rebounded from the dismal showing of October. Some cynics at October's meeting suggested that the reason for the lower than usual turnout was that there was no meal prepared by the Grange to tempt people out of their homes. Apparently there was some truth to this as many were lured out into a windy, rainy, dismal November night (but surely not just by the promise of a meatloaf dinner?). November's meeting featured a talk and a question and answer session with Clifford Renshaw, the restoration architect who prepared the preliminary survey of the Hunt House for the Society. (For more details on Renshaw's remarks see **Hunt House Update.**)

A Security Study Committee was formed to consider what efforts could be taken to better secure the Hunt House from future break-in/vandalism attacks. City Councilmen Leo Sullivan and Jerry Lynch attended and hopefully learned a great deal about this important city-owned building and the Society's efforts

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**NOVEMBER'S MEETING** (cont.)

to restore it.

December's meeting (Dec. 19 at 7:15pm) will feature Mark Zelonis, Executive Director of the Heritage Trust of R.I. and Director of Blithewold Gardens and Aboretum in Bristol. Mr Zelonis will speak about the Heritage Trust's plans for the Phillip Walker House, and seek the Society's advice on how best to use this important and very old building. He will also discuss the evolution of the Christmas display at historic Blithewold.

**A FREE RIDE**

A great service for the members of the Historical Society will begin. Thanks to our Treasurer Martha Rivas, manager of the Old Stone Bank in Bristol, we learned that there is a non-profit organization providing transportation to the handicapped and elderly citizens of East Providence. The East Providence Handicap Inner City Transportation Service Inc. has been providing a van to transport senior citizens to the Old Stone Bank on Taunton Avenue.

Martha was able to line up a car and driver to transport our senior members to our monthly meetings. If you would like to attend our meetings

but can no longer drive at night, the Transportation Service will pick you up and take you home. The service is free. Call 431-0257 for details.

**Letters and Comments**

Producing this newsletter is an entertaining job but some of it is simple drudgery. In the time

honored tradition of managers everywhere, your Faithful Newsletter Staff would like to delegate some of the job to a (yes, you guessed it!) Committee!

We are looking for someone willing to take the completed newsletter master and to coordinate the printing and the mailing. It's that simple! And it's fun!! (Actually it's fun for those people who enjoy organizing things. Then this may well be the most fun you can have that's not illegal, immoral or fattening.)

We already have a fine group of folding, stapling and mailing volunteers, and we thank them from the bottom of our editorial heart. What we need is someone to take control of the newsletter "from desktop to post office." Someone, perhaps just like YOU!

If you feel you qualify, contact us here at the OLDE NEWS Editorial Suite, 431-0257.

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