



OLDE NEWS

EAST • PROVIDENCE • HISTORICAL • SOCIETY
• NEWSLETTER •

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

The secret is out!

Only it wasn't much of a secret because I've never tried to hide the fact that as of May, 1990 I've been the President of the Rumford Junior Women's Club in addition to being President of the Historical Society. In fact, it was one of the reasons I mentioned for wanting someone else to take over the Historical Society.

Well it didn't happen. So here I am. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to understand that a person can't have a personal life, a professional life, a second career, volunteer commitments and still be all things to all people. It's impossible. There will inevitably be conflicts. What that means for the Historical Society is that this month Scott Booth will have

MEETING



THE NEXT MEETING
OF THE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
will be held September 24,
1990
from 7:15 pm
at Newman Congregational
Church.

Slides of Coventry historical
sites taken on our pilgrimage.

to preside over the general meeting while I'm at a conference in Vermont. But that's not so bad. Scott is more than capable of handling the task.

I don't want anyone to forget that we still need a Chairman for the Ways and Means Committee just because I won't be at the meeting. Now I know that the only people who are feeling the slightest bit guilty about our lack of a Chair are the same people who are already over-committed. Which is a shame because it would be a great job for someone new who wanted to get to know a lot of nice people. We have plenty of indians willing to help we just need a Chief! Nor does being a Chairman have to be the horrendous commitment everyone thinks it is. As a matter of fact, I will gladly take over Ways and Means if someone else will be President!

Surprise me -volunteer while I'm away!

Claudette

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

Lura Sellew will instruct us on ways of finding our roots (as in forbears not trees) in October instead of September.

This will give Lura, who has spent most of August and September pondering Pilgrims, more time to prepare.



OLDE NEWS

published monthly by

The East Providence Historical Society
Editor George Field, IV

EAST PROVIDENCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 4774
East Providence, Rhode Island 02916
438-1750

OFFICERS

President	Claudette Field
First Vice-President	Scott Booth
Second Vice-President	Ginny Berwick
Secretary	Rose Marie Sirenski
Corresponding Secretary	Lura Sellew
Treasurer	Martha Rivas
Board Members-at-Large	Billie Arden Ellen O'Hare Nancy Stevens

SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Building	C. Field
Hunt House Restoration	Walter Vincent, Earl Berwick

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Artifacts	Edna Anness
Grant Writing	Jewel Drickamer
Membership	Madeline Vincent
Newsletter	George Field, IV
Mailing subcommittee	F. Adams
Preservation	Nancy Moore
Publicity	Florence Adams

MUSEUM COMMITTEE

We have received three pictures from Lura Sellew, one a very good early shot of the Philipsdale Store and one of Walter Taggart in his East Providence police uniform. He served from 1885 to 1930. Also a RI manual signed by George Bliss, an East Providence state senator in 1872, from Lowell Anness.

If you have a few hours to spare and enjoy visiting, we need volunteers to visit Evergreen Nursing Home to interview and record visits with some very interesting long time residents of East Providence. We will be starting in October and will have a little training session with printed questions to go over first.

If you are interested in the history of the Hunt House and enjoy talking to people, we need some volunteers to be tour guides at the house. If enough volunteer, their commitment would be a few hours once a month. We also will have a training session with interesting information to give our visitors.

If you are interested, please call me at 434-3347.

The Rhode Island League of Historical Societies, of which our Society is a member, is having a tea- all E. P. Historical Society Members are welcome. It will be Sunday, Sept. 23 from 3-5 p.m. at the Aldrich House, 110 Benevolent St.- the RI Historical Society's Main Office and Museum. It is a chance to meet other Historical Societies and exchange ideas and meet people with mutual interests and similar goals for their Societies.

And a late breaking bit of exciting news: the Museum some time ago accessioned copies of letters to and from Peter Hunt, who fought and died in the Civil War. One of our new members has volunteered to edit and annotate the collection with the intent of getting them published. The donors of the letters and the Museum Committee have both endorsed this proposal. The letters provide a fascinating glimpse into an important period of our history from the unusual perspective of one of the thousands who fought the war.

Edna Anness

PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

It's been a quiet summer for the Preservation Committee. We've watched with delight as the Moore house on Pleasant Street received new landscaping, restored ornamentation, and a partial coat of paint. (It sure looks like the Kazarians are having great fun with the color scheme!)

Down the road, at the infamous intersection, the metal pole remains. But the DOT assures us that the FEDS have given their blessing to the change and that the new pole has gone out to bid. This committee promises to continue to call the DOT regularly about this issue!

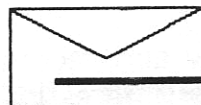
Even further down the road on Pleasant Street, the Bridgham Farm property (and that 450 year old English oak) remains in limbo. The RI DEM did not approve the grant application submitted by the EP Land Conservation Trust but did offer a loan program. At this present time the property is still in discussion by the courts and it is not known when the issue of ownership will be resolved. Meanwhile, the state of the economy seems to protect this land, a tenuous arrangement at best.

And down on Greenwood Avenue, another little piece of Rumford Chemical history has literally bitten the dust. One of the complex of out buildings that

date back to (at least) the 1850's has fallen to the bulldozers of progress. (For a glimpse of what is no longer with us, see page 30 of the RI Historic Preservation Commission's 1976 survey of East Providence.)

If you have a preservation matter that this committee should look into please give us a call at 438-4299. And, if you'd like to be part of this committee, just give us a call at the same number.

Nancy Moore



Letters

Dear OLDE NEWS readers:

I am trying to research the history of each school in the East Providence School System —past and present, even the ones which no longer exist.

I need the following facts: names of principals and teachers, past and present; age of school; information about the school name; grade levels in each school; any unusual facts about the school and pictures of the building then and now.

I would like to put a book (East Providence School History) in the libraries of the city so everyone will know their schools' history for facts and fun.

Please call me if you have any information to add to this project.

Gladys Panzarella

434-5116

RETURN OF THE DAY TRIPPERS

The Second E.P. Historical Society Magical Mystery Tour (Bill Simpson your tour guide and organizer) will take place on Saturday, Oct. 13 and will take us to the uttermost ends of the earth: exotic and far-distant South County! This time, the itinerary is short: a visit to Smith's Castle where they are at present making some interesting archeological findings, lunch, and then to the Gilbert Stuart Gristmill. The schedule looks like this:

9:00 a.m. Meet at Hunt's Mills and car pool. Maps and directions will be provided.

10:30 a.m. Visit Smith's Castle.

12:00 p.m. Lunch at the Carriage Inn

1:30 p.m. Visit Gilbert Stuart Mill.

Since this is a short tour, Bill thought that we could then disperse and enjoy the tawdry pleasures of Wickford before staggering home to a well earned rest.

A \$5 contribution (payable to the E.P. Historical Society) is required which will cover admission to the two sites. Lunch at the Carriage Inn will be on you. If you

want to come along, call Bill Simpson at 438-0623 before Wednesday, October 10. And remember, there *is* intelligent life on the West Bay.

**YOU TOO CAN JOIN
OUR MERRY BAND OF
PRANKSTERS AS WE
FROLIC OUR WAY
THROUGH HISTORY!**

Join the Historical
Society today! Send this
coupon (with money) to
E.P.H.S.

P.O.Box 4774
East Providence, RI
02916

NAME (S) _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

Single (\$10) Family (\$15)

Volunteer!

It's been shown to have positive effects on your health!

THE WATER CLOSET CAPER

ANOTHER DANGER EDITOR ADVENTURE

It always starts with a phone call, but usually it's in the middle of the night when the twisted side of our world comes out to play. That's where I come in: I'm their playmate. Call me Danger Editor.

It was J-Cor Security, again, but this time it was broad daylight. We've become regular phone buddies. I ask about his family, he tells me there's something moving in the Hunt House. It's not much of a relationship, but you take what you can get.

This time there was no mistake: the door to the old place was wide open, and the alarm was honking loud enough to wake up any stiff that might have had the bad taste to be sprawled on the floor. My girl Friday and I waited for the local heat to show up before we went in: they get surly when you try to crack a case without them.

The cop who showed up looked skeptical. You could see he was thinking: who would be nuts enough to break into this old

dump? We checked the front door carefully. No signs of forcible entry, and the dead bolt was locked open. A real pro, I thought, he had a key. Must be an inside job.

But there was nobody inside. We checked high and low, even down in the basement with the icky cobwebs.

Friday was fiddling with the alarm keypad. "He came in, went right, then went towards the back of the house," she said smugly.

"That dingus tells you all that does it?" I replied. I never believed in all this high tech nonsense. Just give me a couple of solid clues: a good footprint, maybe some cigar ash, and I'll do just fine, thanks.

The cop was anxious to be on the road; he figured he had some *real* crooks to catch somewhere else. It was up to Friday and me.

"Here's how it went down, sister I said, as I leaned up against a door jamb, stuck a smoke in my face and lit a match off the sole of

cont. on pg. 8

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BAY

We intrepid explorers have returned from the far off reaches of Coventry, and we bring tales of exotic places and quaint customs of the inhabitants of that far-off land.

First, we visited the Nathanael Greene Homestead in Anthony, which is part of Coventry. (No, don't ask me to explain). Greene ran the family iron works from this pleasant house until the American Revolution called him away, and he became an authentic hero in the struggle against the British crown. He returned briefly after the war, but ultimately moved his family to Savannah GA, where he died.

The Greene house is undergoing its first major renovation since the 1920's, and a tour of the basement showed that the years had not been kind to it. Virtually every floor joist has been either replaced or reinforced with new wood. The massive main beams have had perhaps fully 1/3 of their volume eaten by insects. It was a sobering sight.

The Nathanael Greene house is a much grander dwelling than the

Hunt House, with a large center hall running the full depth of the house, and two massive granite chimneys, resulting in a floor plan that is quite different from the Hunt house. In addition, the Greene house has an ingeniously constructed second staircase that the Greenes' slaves used to move through the house without disturbing their masters. Judging from the rooms in the attic, they must have been very short slaves indeed.

The next stop (after lunch) was the Paine house, operated by the Western Rhode Island Civic Historical Society. The Paine house is one of those dwellings that grew in strange twists and turns during its approximately 250 year history, and now every room is filled to overflowing with goodies that the Society has collected over the years. There is also a barn full of "stuff" ranging from antique farm equipment to fire engines. While perhaps not as architecturally distinguished as its aristocratic neighbor in Anthony, the Paine House showed us what a wonderful resource a house museum can be.

Our last stop was the the Read

cont. on pg. 8

OTHER SIDE, cont.

School, the last one room school house in Coventry, built in 1860 and finally closed up as a school in 1951. The President of the Coventry Historical Society, Guy Levesque, talked to us at length about the school house and the last teacher there, Mrs. Ethel Palmer, who taught eight grades in this little building for 29 years.

Exhausted, we managed to struggle home, safe and unharmed from our adventure on the Other Side of the Bay.

DANGER EDITOR cont.

my shoe. "International spies were using this place as a safe house. They arranged a meet, but something went wrong. Somebody got offed, they had to clean up the mess in a hurry, got sloppy and set off the alarm. They're gone now, and gone for good. Their feet won't touch the ground until they're on the far side of Bucharest, take it from me."

Friday smirked. She does that a lot. "Get real, you has-been flatfoot. Somebody from the Water Department had a key and wanted to use the bathroom. The

alarm went off, scared the hell out of him and he ran away. Without, I might add, availing himself of the facilities. It makes sense. It's all here on the readout."

"Friday," I said, "I've been in this racket for years. Read my lips: international spies."

"Sure, shamus," she smirked again. "Whatever you say."

Everybody's a detective I thought. But you learn to deal with it all when you're...Danger Editor.

And remember: Danger Editor says, "Make it easy on yourself, chump, and pay your dues now. They're pro-rated if you joined in 1990, you know"

If your Dues are
overdue, send them in today!

NAME (S) _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

Single (\$10) Family (\$15)

IMPORTANT DATES

- Monday, Sept. 24 **E.P. Historical Society:** September Meeting at Newman Church, 7:15 pm
Deadline for Kitchen from Hell Contest
- Saturday, Oct. 6 **Rhode Island Historical Society:**
Historical Publications Fair, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
at Aldrich House
- Saturday, Oct. 13 **Carpenter Museum, Rehoboth, MA:**
"Graven Images" Tour of Gravestone Art,
9:00 a.m.
Gravestone Rubbing Workshop, 1:00 pm
E.P. Historical Society: Magical
Mystery Tour of South County (see details
in this issue)
- Monday, Oct. 22 **E.P. Historical Society:** October Meeting
at Newman Church, 7:15 pm
- Saturday, Oct. 27 **Carpenter Museum, Rehoboth, MA:**
Gravestone Rubbing workshop for
children. 10:00 am
- Friday, Nov. 2 **Carpenter Museum, Rehoboth, MA:** Folk
& Saturday, Nov. 3 Art, Antique and Craft Show
- Saturday, Nov. 10 **E.P. Historical Society:** Harvest Supper
at Newman Church (see ad on back page)
- Don't forget: Workdays at the Hunt House are Tuesdays and Thursdays
8:00 a.m. to 12 noon.
-

The East Providence Historical Society presents

The 4th Annual

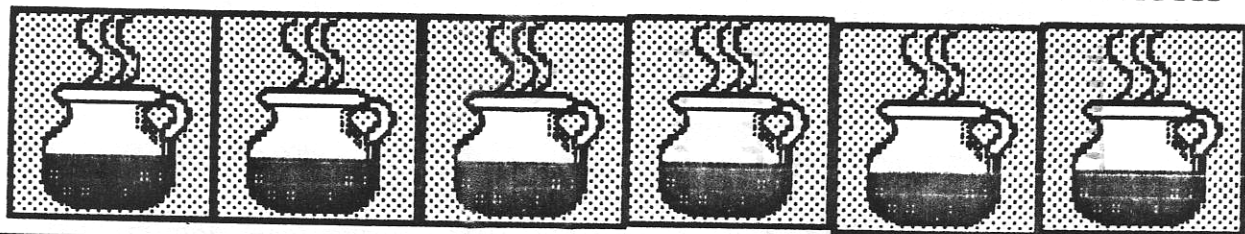
Harvest Supper

to benefit the Hunt House Restoration

Saturday November 10, 1990 at 6PM

at Newman Congregational Church

Call 434-0481 or 438-1750 for ticket information



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

