OLDE NEWS

EAST ❤ PROVIDENCE ❤ HISTORICAL ❤ SOCIETY
❤ NEWSLETTER ❤

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

All our attention was focused on the state's banking crisis when the war in the gulf began. Not only do we have members with accounts in closed credit unions, we have others with relatives in the gulf. Even for those of us who have neither, the events of early 1991 have touched all our lives in subtle and not so subtle ways.

People are being forced to reassess various aspects of their lives and make necessary adjustments. Perhaps it's time the Historical Society did the same.

The timing is certainly right for some much needed introspection. Some of this reassessment has already begun; the By-Laws

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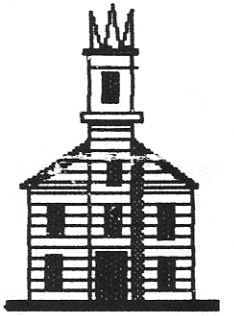
MEETING



THE NEXT MEETING
OF THE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
will be held February 25, 1991
from 7:15 pm
at Newman Congregational
Church.
Pot Luck Dinner & (at no extra cost) George Dononvan's Bike Path video

PRESIDENT'S LETTER (cont.)

Committee has been meeting since last spring to completely revamp the existing by-laws. More soul searching will begin next month when the Nominating Committee is appointed.

These committees have an important mission. They must plot a course for the Society which will enable the group to navigate through whatever new turmoil the future may bring.

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Edna Anness and I took an impromptu field trip to the Nathaniel Porter Inn in Warren late one Friday afternoon in February research chair rails.

This is the kind of minutiae you get caught up in while trying to find precedents for questions arising from the restoration process.

Mrs. Lynch, the mother of the owner of the Inn and herself the inhabitant of an eighteenth century house, is a consultant for the Providence Preservation Society. She took us on a tour of the house

The chair rail molding in the left front parlor of the Inn *is* remarkably similar to the one in the parlor of the Hunt House. Not

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Editor George Field, IV

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

MUSEUM COMMITTEE

The museum Committee met on February 7 and accepted the following gifts:

- News articles and a collection of Rumford Chemical Co. memorabilia and a book by Hope Smith from the Berwicks
- an oil lamp from Anna Del Pozzo
- a linen table cloth from June Goff
- news articles from the Unkuskis
- drawings by Hope Smith from Marjorie Angell
- war letters from Joseph MacDougold's brother, who died in WWII
- Old Union Primary School diplomas from John Agren
- four prints of pencil drawings from local artist Len Iannacone
- a coal stove flat iron warmer and a pair of tin candlesticks from Helen Brush
- postcards of scenes of East Providence from Elizabeth Smith
- an 1896 East Providence tax list, a ledger of canoe rental receipts, East Providence High yearbooks and Rumford Juniors mementoes from the Annesses,
- a desk for the computer from Charles Peirce.

Remember that the Museum is open for tours by appointment until February 28, and we have one already scheduled for that day. The new display going up the next week will be a collection of papers, wall plaques, etc. accumulated over the years by the Rumford Junior Women's Club. The month long display is in honor of the Juniors who are having a meeting at Hunt House om March 11.

We now have EP HIgh School yearbooks from 1921 to 1935. We would love to have a complete set if there are any old yearbooks sitting in your attics and cellars.

Spring yard sales are coming, so be on the alert for anything of significance to East Providence whether you are running the sale or attending one.

Edna Anness

PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

It has been a quiet beginning to the year, but a few projects have an up-date:

MOORE FARM: Developer Ken Kazarian reports that his own house has been sold and his family is looking forward to moving into the restored Moore homestead. He also reports that there is great tangible interest in his project and that new construction should begin soon.

GREENWOOD MANOR: This project (the site of the old Burlingame property) is now under a "cease and desist" order from the City because of a lapsed permit. An appeal to the state Builder's Association has been made by the developer who claims that work was in progress at the expiration date.

410 NORTH BROADWAY: Owner Bob Haig has reached an agreement with the EP Historical Society and the RI Historical Preservation Comission to be the first business in East Providence to place an historical easement on his property. Mr. Haig is applying to the Planning Board and Council for a zone change from R3 to C1. (Residential, multi-family to Commercial) Ordinarily, the EP Historical Society would oppose any change from R to C. However, because of this new opportunity to use a historical easement, the EP Historical Society is no longer challenging the change.

The easement works this way: Mr. Haig agrees to an easement, held by the RIHPC, on all of his property (including the parking lot and grounds) facing the Philip Walker House. This easement states that these facades and grounds will remain exactly the same, in perpetuity, regardless of the owner. The RIHPC administers all checks and balances and sues any owner who violates the easement. The important gain for the EP Historical Society is that the Philip Walker property is protected from further encroachment, and 410 N. Broadway, itself a 19th century structure of note, is also preserved. (Under the present R-3 status, if the building were damaged, it could be taken down and any type of residential building put in its place.) Mr Haig has other serious issues to resolve

pertaining to the zoning change, but this historical issue has been well resolved and we thank Mr. Haig for considering this possibility.

THAT *LIGHT*: It seems that an error in computing the stress levels of the arc of *that* light have sent it back to the drawing board. (*We are speaking here of the traffic light on the corner of Pleasant Street and Pawtucket Avenue, so beloved of Fr. Obd. Editor*) The DOT assures us that they are as anxious as we are to have the new light in place and are expediting all matters. (It couldn't be that they're getting tired of our phone calls - we're always *so* pleasant!)

And, on a sad note, this committee has learned that Dr. James Goff of Riverside, who had such high hopes for the restoration of a 19th century farmhouse on Willett Avenue, has abandoned that project because the expense of bringing the building up to commercial office use code became prohibitive. (It is a very expensive proposition.) As of now, Dr. Goff has an agreement to sell the building to the city's housing authority for $1. It will be moved to the back of the lot and restored as a two family home. The front of the lot is now up for sale and this committee hopes that it will be developed sensitively, keeping in mind the older building and other buildings in the area.

Nancy Moore

Join the Historical Society today! Send this coupon (with money) to
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East Providence, RI
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GRANT WRITING

Initial research is being done on the project East Providence- a Center for Recreation . This should include not only such places as Crescent Park, but boating, fishing, trolley lines and celebrations. Anyone recall any great picnic places? Places to dance?

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HUNT HOUSE UPDATE

THE WORD FROM WALTER

Our hard work of scraping and sanding of the parlor and front hall, which we hope to be our showcase of the Hunt House restoration, is moving right along with the help of our two new volunteers Lou Allen and Len Iannacone.

Earl Berwick and his magic touch has been restoring the front hall bannister by replacing broken chips of walnut and, as usual, doing a great job. Charlie Jackson is back on one (or two) of his favorite jobs: making and replacing a threshold and lengthening a door to the back hall. (Right Charlie?)

Even if you cannot volunteer your services we would like to have you stop by and see how the crew is progressing. Our workdays are Tuesday and Thursdays 8a.m. to 12 p.m. Our volunteers have been very dedicated to this project.

Walter Vincent

OF ROSETTES, HUSKS AND URNS

Now that the chair rail in the parlor is complete, thanks to Earl Berwick's fine reproduction of the missing sections, the debate has started on how to finish it. Was it stained or was it painted? Edna Anness and Claudette have been doing some research, including a trip to the Nathanial Porter Inn in Warren (it was a dirty job, but someone had to do it, right ladies?) and it appears that the answer to the great chair rail debate is "Both of the above." There is ample documentation and examples in homes of the same approximate period as the Hunt House parlor which indicate that the *entablature* (the shelf-like part) of the chair rail was stained or left natural and the frieze underneath was painted.

Inquiries have also been made with the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities and Sturbridge Village over the best way to proceed with the restoration of the elaborate Adams type mantle in the parlor. The chief conservator from Sturbridge is strongly of the opinion that the restoration is best left to a professional, and

gave us two names to contact.

The mantle is graced with some elaborate decoration (in the language of ornamentation we have *urns, husks* and *rosettes*), probably done in gesso or plaster, which is covered with coats of paint and is very fragile. In some places, the decoration is missing and in need of replacement with an accurate reproduction, hence the need for an expert.

HOT AIR

A copy of the plans for the Hunt house forced hot air heating system was sent to Don Faxon at the RIHPC for his perusal and comment. (Even though the Preservation Commission has no real say in this aspect of the project since they are not funding it, we are obligated by the terms of our lease to insure that any major change to the house meet with their approval.) Don and a historian from the RIPHC came to visit the Hunt House on Valentine's Day and voiced some concerns about the effect of the installation of the second heating unit in the attic, which theycalled a "virgin space." (We think that is Preservation Speak for "not much has been done up here for two hundred years, so we don't want *you* messing it up now!") They had several (costly) suggestions which would minimize the impact of the heating system on the attic, but which would also defeat our attempts to provide the museum space with a year-round climate controlled area for the collection.

It points up a difference in philosophies: they are the

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MARKERS COMMITTEE

The Marker Committee, (formerly the Plaque Committee) most recently met on January 31 and reported that it should have recommendations to submit to the Board shortly on criteria for the awarding of markers and on the design and make-up of the markers. The Committee is a small one and is making a plea for additional members, particularly those interested in checking information on buildings that would be considered for markers. The Committee is also interested in hearing from Society members who could suggest sources for the actual construction of the markers.

Kit Rodman

GRANT S (cont.)

Band concerts? All help is welcome.

Jewel Drickamer

MEMBERSHIP

Since our "Open House" December 2 we have fourteen new members on the list. Sure is nice to see the membership growing. Our president's wishes are for a goal of 500 memberships and at the present time we have 119 paid memberships with 29 more in arrears for 1990-91 dues.

For those who have not yet received their membership cards, be patient please, we are having a new design made up and hopefully will have them available at our February 25 meeting and "Pot Luck Supper".

Madeline Vincent

PRESIDENT'S LETTER (cont.)

only is it approximately the same width but the design is almost identical, the main difference being in the spaces between the fluting. The top part of the rail even forms the window sills, exactly like the one at the Hunt House.

Edna and I were trying to determine whether a portion of the Hunt House chair rail was once stained as opposed to being painted. An old issue of Colonial Homes with a feature on the Nathaniel Porter Inn showed such a treatment. If this was an authentic period style it is possible that it was also used at the Hunt House.

The object of our curiosity was a bit disappointing. The top of the molding had been painted to look like mahogany but the whole piece is actually pine. In our parlor the window sills and the top of the molding are supposedly walnut, only the intricate fluting is pine.

While the trip could not prove conclusively that such a treatment ever existed at the Hunt House, it did establish a precedent for this kind of finish. Further research has shown that there were other houses of the period outside of Rhode Island with similar chair rail treatments.

Claudette Field

IMPORTANT DATES

Thursday, Feb. 14	*St. Valentine's Day*
Wednesday, Feb. 20	**E.P. Historical Society**: Board Meeting 7:30 at Hunt House
Monday, Feb. 25	**E.P. Historical Society**: February Meeting and Pot Luck Dinner 7:15 pm. at Newman Church. Call 431-0257 if attending.
Monday, March 11	**GFWC Rumford Junior Women's Club**: Meeting at Hunt House
Sunday, March 17	St. Patrick's Day
Saturday, March 23	**E.P. Historical Society**: Spring Pasta Supper
Monday, March 25	**E.P. Historical Society**: March Meeting. 7:15 pm. at Newman Church

Dont forget: Workdays at the Hunt house every Tuesday and Thursday, from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm.

HUNT HOUSE (cont.)

Historical *Preservation* Commission after all, and we are are trying to restore and adapt the Hunt House to serve as our headquarters and to house and preserve the Society's collection.

After we receive Don's written suggestions, the building Committee and our heating system designer, Paul Millette, will try to respond to the Commissions concerns while still trying to accomplish our goal of a climate controlled environment for the Hunt House.

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