



## OLDE NEWS

EAST • PROVIDENCE • HISTORICAL • SOCIETY  
• NEWSLETTER •

### NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

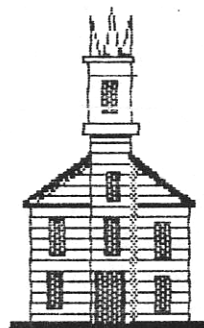
#### **LIVE ONE FOUND!**

It seems that P.T. Barnum was right when he said, "There's a sucker born every minute". We have been fortunate enough to have an extremely qualified volunteer to respond to last month's OLDE NEWS want ad for a new editor. Mike Charves, who has been active in the Society for years, expressed an interest in the position. Yr. obd. editor accepted his offer with a speed that should have made Mike suspicious immediately.

Mike is well qualified to be editor: he has been taking design courses at RISD Extension School

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### MEETING



THE NEXT MEETING  
OF THE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
will be held January 27, 1992  
at 7:30 pm  
at Newman Congregational  
Church.

**NOTES FROM THE EDITOR,****cont**

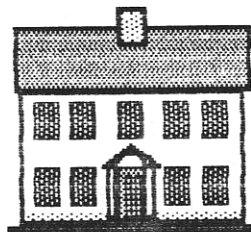
and while there gained exposure to Macintosh computers and much of the software we use to produce OLDE NEWS. In addition, he is working in the printing biz, is an accomplished amateur photographer, and is even working on a book of his own about the Boston Bruins.

Mike will start editing the newsletter after a rigorous training program under the stern, yet avuncular eye of yr. obd. editor. ("Well, uh, here's the computer, Mike, and uh, any questions, well, you know where to reach me. See ya, bye.")

My hope is that you will soon start seeing some changes, both large and small in the newsletter as he gains confidence and experience. I also hope that the Society will give Mike the same great support they have given me as editor, and that the Committee Chairpeople continue supplying the newsletter with their timely and scintillating committee reports, which of course are the heart of OLDE NEWS.

Since this is not my last issue, I will not subject you to an emo-

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**OLDE NEWS**

is published monthly by The East  
Providence Historical Society

Editor George Field, IV  
Printer's Devil Michael Charves

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

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*The  
East Providence  
Historical Society meets every  
month on the fourth Monday  
except for holidays and the  
months of July and August.*

*Meetings are free to all and  
all are welcome.*

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## MUSEUM COMMITTEE

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A Mini Report for 1991: Since January of 1991 the Museum has received donations to the collection from 71 individual donors. The total number of artifacts added to the collection by these gifts amounted to some 356 pieces. Not included in this total are those artifacts found in the attic and behind the basement fire wall. This number represents an increase of some 30% in donations over the previous year. The total number of artifacts in the collection of papers, books, jewellery, kitchen utensils, furniture, framed and un-framed pictures, textiles, etc. comes to approximately 865 objects. All of these are individually numbered for easy location or are in the process of being so numbered. This year we were fortunate to have shelving installed in a second storage room. There is also a rug for the Museum room floor. And of course with the new heating system ready to be turned on (12/31), the collection will finally be in a heat and humidity

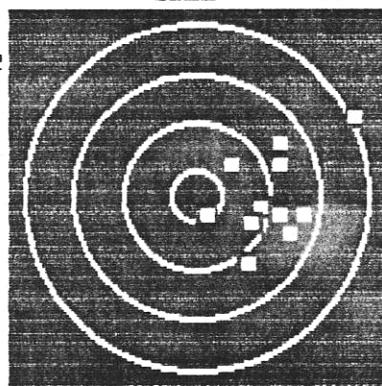
controlled environment suitable for museum storage. This heating and air-cooling system combined with the excellent fire, water and burglary alarm system provides the Hunt House and its collection with facilities that many curators would "die for." The Society is very fortunate that the preservation of the House and collection is starting at the same time that modern, efficient preservation-oriented equipment is being installed.

The House was open for tours, meetings or casual browsing for some 355 hours. This is by no means a complete report, but does give us some idea of where we stand at the end of 1991 in the Museum area. Many thanks to the Museum Committee of some seven core members who have "hung in there" since the Committee began in February of 1989. The help and support of these members, the help of Walter and his committee of volunteer restorers, the donations from Society members and friends of

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**RIFLE****THE****RANGE**

*John Agren's memoirs of the rifle range is the last of his series of reminiscences about growing up in Rumford in the '30s. His account below has been condensed from*



*two of his manuscripts. Any discontinuities of style and content must be laid at my feet, not John's. (Sorry, John!)*

The "Old Rifle Range" in Rumford consisted of several square miles of land on the Rhode Island side of the Ten Mile River (now the John Turner Reservoir). It extended from the north end of Redland and Barney Streets and Ferris Avenue at the Railroad tracks to the point where a stream from Slater Park in Pawtucket empties into the Ten Mile. The range was used from before World War I until after World War II by the U.S. Army and the National Guard for rifle practice and as a camping area.

I can remember the pup tents that were erected in an area which would now be between Wildwood Avenue and the Thompson School on Ferris Avenue. There

was a building where the Little League basketball court is now which was used by the soldiers to store their rifles, pistols, ammunition, targets and other rifle range paraphernalia. Having the opportunity just to look into this building was like being granted the chance to use Alladin's lamp. There you could view the row on row of neatly polished rifles; you could see the big sargent as he barked out his orders to the quick response of privates. Visiting here on a Saturday morning was the treat of the week. No youngster as able to stay there for very long. We were often told to "get the hell out of here." This reprimand was deeply appreciated; it made the place that much more

enticing!

The range house was later purchased by Louis Gunther who had it moved to Wildwood Avenue where it became the core of his lovely home.

There were several different kinds of practice ranges within the rifle range. There was a pistol pit located in the southwest corner, remnants of which can still be seen. Targets as the silhouette of a man appeared here at distances of 1000 or 2000 inches.

On the southeast side, nearer to the railroad tracks, was a .22 caliber range. The main rifle range targets and their attendant bunkers were between the pistol pit and the .22 caliber range. Targets were at ranges of 100, 200, 500, 600 or 1000 yards.

Bunkers in the range were constructed in the form of a prism that ran from east to west. The base rectangle was constructed of huge railroad ties and into this base sand was piled high.

The 600 yard bunker was the highest of all; from the top of this bunker you could see for several

miles in every direction. It was about 400 feet long and fifty feet wide at the base. The ridge of the bunker ran the length and was about 60-80 feet high. This was one huge pile of sand!

On the east side of the range was the beautiful Ten Mile River, the home of many pickerel, perch and other fish. To the south were the range houses, other bunkers, and beyond them were our houses on Redland or Pavilion Avenues. To the west were the railroad tracks and the trains as they carried their passengers to Narragansett Race Track and

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Join the Historical  
Society today! Send this  
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**DANGER EDITOR'S LAST CASE?**

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It had been a hard night, just starting to work its way into an even harder morning when the call came from Jaycor. It was the usual: suspicious activity at the Hunt House. That could mean anything from a mouse looking for a warm spot to the return of Allyn Hunt's ghost seeking revenge on the living. You never know when you're...Danger Editor.

"That's an administrative detail. I'll hand you over to my people," I told my caller. "Friday, it's someone for you. Handle it." I passed off the problem to Friday's capable hands and headed back to bed. Seconds later, Friday kicked me awake. "Get up, shamus. We're needed."

"Not tonight, sweetheart, I've got a headache," I mumbled against my pillow.

"Move it, you burnt out cheap flatfoot," Friday murmured softly, "or I'll set fire to your favorite blanket."

"But I'm under my favorite blanket right now," I protested.

"You don't miss a trick, do you?" she responded. "Do you prefer gasoline or charcoal

lighter as an accelerator?"

I can never resist Friday when she sweet talks me like that, and I soon found myself outside the Hunt House in the company of some of East Providence's finest, who seemed unduly jolly considering that the only things that should be up and about at that time would be creatures of the night: either vicious criminal types or vampires. Did I mention that it was cold? The night was as cold as an IRS auditor's heart, and the wind sliced through us as though we weren't even there.

We all went inside, foolishly thinking it would be warmer, and stood around while Friday tickled the keys of the alarm system, coaxing the truth of this latest caper out of its little brain of silicone. "Cellar door open," she announced with a calm certainty.

We stumbled into the keeping room, the police fanning out with their flashlights at the ready, preparing to stun any intruder with a brilliant flash of light. The closet door to the right of the fireplace was ajar, and I whipped it open while I crouched low, my Walther PPK at the ready. Where

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there used to be a closet there was now nothing but a gaping hole, ending eight feet down in the cellar. I reeled back in stunned amazement. "Great Scott," I cried, "the fiends have stolen the floor!"

"Chill out, shamus," said Friday, "They took out the floor to put in a new stairway, remember?"

I rested my head against the door jamb, weariness closing in on me. Was I getting too old for this business? "Sleepy-bye," I murmured, "Want my blankey."

The boys in blue returned, with nothing to report. Friday latched the cellar door shut, pushed me none to gently back outside and re-armed the alarm. We got back into my trusty coupe' (the one with the spare roscoe hidden in the glove box) and made tracks out of there.

"Well, you were absolutely no help at all," said Friday.

"What do you want from me? I didn't drop the flashlight or shoot myself in the foot did I?" Dames! They're never happy.

"You know, flatfoot, you may be getting past it. Ever think about retiring?"

It sounded good to me, and once home that's exactly what I did. Me and my blankey.

## NOTES FROM THE EDITOR, cont.

tional good-bye yet. But be warned: it's coming!

### CORRECTION

Last month's Building Committee report failed to give proper credit to Edna Anness for her research efforts on the proper color and finish of the chair rail in the parlor. It was Edna's enquiries into the types of finish common in the period, combined with the restorers' finding of traces of stain in the actual chair rail that lead the Committee to decide to stain rather than paint.

*Yr. Obd. Editor, George Field*

**The deadline for the  
February issue of  
OLDE NEWS is  
February 7, 1992.  
Committee Chairs please  
take note.**

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**MUSEUM COMMITTEE cont.**

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the Society, the interest expressed by visitors- all these things made the work of the committee an enjoyable experience.

Recent gifts to the collection since the last newsletter include the sign that once hung on the front of the Grange Hall in Kent Heights which reads ROGER WILLIAMS GRANGE from the Grange, a dough-raising pan from Louise Healey, two Hood bottle caps from Madeline Vincent, a picture of the old High School on Grove Avenue from Ruth MacDougald, a volume "History of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations" from Paula Duarte, an anonymous donation which includes an aerial view of Rumford Baking Powder Plant c. 1935, a Rumford cigarette lighter, a bottle of acid phosphate and a Munroe Calculator from the Baking Powder Dept. at the plant.

**Happy New Year,**

*Edna Anness*

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**THE RIFLE RANGE cont.**

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beyond. In the northwest you could see the grandstand with its thousands of patrons.

Uniformed soldiers came in jeeps or other army vehicles very early in the morning to set up targets, establish telephone lines between the bunkers and to assign rifles and ammunition.

The greatest action at the rifle range was when there was "rapid fire" going on and when the soldiers were in one of the three different shooting positions: prone, sitting or standing. The shooting instructor was a big sargent who had everyone's attention with his strong voice and commanding presence.

One single row of seats was available in back of the riflemen so some of us youngsters made sure that we were there in plenty of time to get a seat. Visitors had to have a seat since standing was not permitted. We knew how to keep score and it was fun to watch the targets go up and down to get marked. They were large (about 4' by 6') and were raised

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and lowered by men in concrete revetments. To indicate the location of the bullet hole in the target a man raised a round pointer to the spot of penetration. A bullseye was red; a missed target (maggie's drawers) was a waving back and forth of the pointer.

The excitement of the rifle range included the noise of the shooting, the acrid odor from the burning of ammunition and instructors constantly correcting or applauding their pupils. Our little games of "my guy" against "your guy", keeping the score (in our heads) and the movements of targets and changing positions added to the excitement.

When the soldiers were gone we were there with out empty five pound sugar bags looking to fill them up with spent shells. These treasures were highly valued as they could be traded, and they could be sold to "Joe, the rag man." Joe came around the town with his horse and wagon twice a week, and we might have as much as 20¢ worth of copper shells after saving it up for

awhile.

The top of the bunker at 600 yards provided a young Rumfordian with a view that encompassed a great deal of his world. Beyond the race track was "the trestle," a railroad bridge over the stream running from Slater Park to the Ten Mile River. This was one of our favorite swimming holes. The games we played on and near the 600 yard bunker frequently followed a day of swimming at the trestle. The water at the trestle was clean and clear, the bottom was sandy and there were challenging places from which to dive, one of which was the trestle itself. Occasionally freight trains were parked on the trestle so, if you were really brave, you would run along the top of the railroad car, dive over the ends of the trestle after clearing a fence and then hit the water. At the time it seemed like a 100 foot plunge. It was probably only a 35 footer.

*John Agren*

# CALENDAR

January 27, 1992

**E. P. Historical Society:** January Meeting at Newman Church, 7:30 p.m.

♥ February 14, 1992

*St. Valentines Day.* Time to say "I Wuv Oo!" to your Woogums.

February 25, 1992

**E. P. Historical Society:** February Meeting at Newman Church, 7:30 p.m.

## OLDE NEWS

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

