



OLDE NEWS

EAST ■ PROVIDENCE ■ HISTORICAL ■ SOCIETY
■ NEWSLETTER ■

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Many thanks to the GFWC Rumford Junior Women's Club for their donation of Carnations and Canterbury Bells, and to Ginny Berwick and Lura Sellew who have planted them in front of the Hunt House.

It seems that historic preservation is under siege in the State of Rhode Island. There is proposed state legislation by (supposedly) Mayor Cianci and his supporters that will destroy historic district designation and the preservation of structures. This, combined with the new DEM regulations pertaining to painting of older

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MEETING

THE ANNUAL MEETING
OF THE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
will be held June 22, 1992
at the Girl Scout House, 347
Willett Avenue, Riverside
at 7:30 p.m.

Election of Officers for 1992/93

IMPORTANT PICNIC ALERT!

*The Annual Picnic has been
re-scheduled for June 20.
See pg. 6 & call 438-0623
for further details.*

PRESIDENT'S LETTER cont.

structures, which some say will triple the cost of painting houses that have been tested and found to have lead paint, is a major attack on historic preservation.

It seems awfully coincidental that both of these measures are coming out at the same time. Some "hifalutin" politician must own some property in a historic district and would prefer to gut historic district zoning rather than comply with the regulations. And there must be some big vinyl siding suppliers that want to cover up the rest of RI with their products. I wonder if decision makers in DEM have stock in some vinyl siding companies? Maybe the Journal can do an article on it for next week's deliveries.

Granted, lead poisoning is not an issue to treat lightly. However, the process to safely remove loose and peeling paint is quite simple. When it is scraped off and falls on drop cloths or within 3 to 4 feet of a structure, the paint

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Departing Editor George Field, IV
Arriving Editor Michael Charves

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

OFFICERS

President	Scott Booth
First Vice-President	Nancy Moore
Second Vice-President	Patricia Millette
Secretary	Kris Rose
Corresponding Secretary	Lura Sellew
Treasurer	Rose Marie Sirenski
Board Members-at-Large	Virginia Berwick Virginia Solitto Nancy Stevens

*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.*

PRESIDENTS LETTER cont.

chips can be cleaned up easily by any good painter's helper with a decent outdoor vacuum. I know, because I painted many houses throughout high school and college during the summers.

This seems to be another situation of government's intrusion on the individual and our society's preoccupation with trying to make life risk free. Does the DEM really think that these regulations are going to prevent children from becoming exposed to lead paint FROM THE EXTERIOR OF A BUILDING? Somehow I think the problem may still exist inside the house. All these regulations are going to do is probably increase the rate of lead poisoning among children. Why do I say this? Because the house that was cleaned and painted every 5 to 8 years and kept in good repair at the cost of \$3,000 to \$6,000 is going to remain in disrepair, blistering and peeling for 8 to 10 years, and be repainted only as a last resort at a cost of

approximately \$8,000 to \$15,000 or vinyl sided. And some of those home owners can have major repair work done because of "shoddy" siding installation work.

We will try to find out more on these issues and keep you informed.

Scott Booth

MUSEUM COMMITTEE

The Donor display in the Museum is being taken down gradually, but there are still some articles which will remain on display until the end of June. Recent donations which will be accepted in the next few weeks by the Museum Committee include the following:

Charles F. Chapman - numerous carousel rings, a spoon and assorted pieces of iron scrap which he dug up around the back of the Hunt House.

Anna del Pozzo- a black iron cooking pot and stand which arrived in time to decorate the parlor fireplace during the Open House.

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PRESER VATION

It's always nice to be able to end the year on an upbeat note, and we can do just that! Even as this is written, Bud Plummer's "awesome" model of Union Primary sits in a booth in Charlotte North Carolina as part of East Providence's bid to be a 1992 All-American City. Along with the model went photos of the workers at Hint House, proof of the great contributions volunteers are making to this city. Our great thanks to you all, and especially to Jim Rose and Dan Moore who learned they had three days to construct a travelling see-through case for the model! And thanks also to Bill Simpson and Nancy Moore for setting up a table showcasing the Historical Society at the send-off party at the Loof Carrousel.

And yet more good news! The E.P. Neighborhood Housing Service has announced that the former Goff property on Willett Avenue will be saved after all. Both the neighborhood and this Society

agree that the house is an important part of the historic fabric of the area and well deserves to be renovated/restored. Just how to do that wisely and well (and cost effectively) remains to be worked out, but with the expertise the Society has to offer plus community interest, we just bet there's a way to do it! When you attend the annual meeting at the Girl Scout House, take time to walk over to the property which is next to the Post Office.

And, in the cause of paying for affordable housing such as the above house, one bill that this committee reported on last month, the funding bill for the RI Housing and Conservation Trust Fund has left committee intact and appears slated for the November ballot. This is excellent news! (No word on the bill to tamper with Historic District powers.)

And lastly, we're sure that someone else will take space to rave about last month's speaker, but just let us go on a bit also! Wasn't Maximilian Ferro splen-

did? Let's put him on our mailing list and invite him back again next year. Most likely we'll have to move to a bigger room when the word gets out. It certainly was a big pat on the back for our excellent restoration crew and the entire Society to know we've done so well by Hunt House.

Thanks for your great support this year. Please call if there's an issue which needs attention during the summer- we'll do our best.

Nancy Moore

MEMBERSHIP

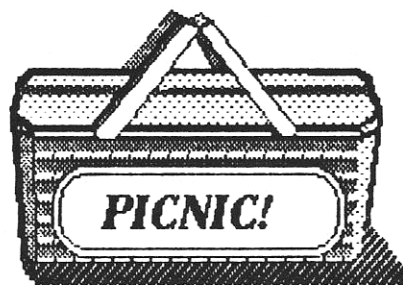
Our Annual Meeting and election of officers, along with other reports, also means dues are due. Why not pay your dues at this time and be able to relax as we this will be our last get together and then our summer months will involve us in other activities.

I'll be accepting memberships anytime either

through the mail at 45 Priscilla Avenue or P.O. Box 4774, or of course, at our meeting to be held at the Girl Scout House on the 22nd.

When our newsletter resumes in the fall, please look for our "Program of the Month."

Madeline H. Vincent



Remember we said the Picnic was June 28? We lied! * It's really June 20th! Honest!!

And as an extra bonus, we're having a yard sale that morning. Come early! Spend the day!

**There was a scheduling conflict at Hunts Mills on the 28th, so we didn't lie, exactly.*

HUNT HOUSE UPDATE

As Nancy Moore has mentioned in her column, those of us who heard Max Ferro were privileged to witness a fascinating exposition of the detective work involved in dating old buildings. Mr. Ferro first gave us an illustrated primer on the various styles of American buildings of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. He then proceeded to develop a very convincing case for dating the Hunt House as not earlier than 1790 and likely as recent as 1815, the heart of the Federal period.

As many E.P. Historical Society members realize, there is no consensus among experts over the exact date the Hunt House was built, and with good reason. Mr Ferro mentioned many of the details that he felt make the Hunt House a Federal era structure. A few of them: The delicate detail of the fan light over the front door, the detail-



ing of the railing and newel post in the front stairway, the decoration on the parlor fireplace, the keystone shaped details over the windows, and then the most interesting of the details: the manner in which laths were made for backing the plaster walls.

According to Ferro, laths originally were just that: literally sticks attached to the inner walls, with a rough coat of plaster laid over them. The laths in the Hunt House are created by taking a plank of wood and slitting it, then expanding it slightly like a concertina. This practice wasn't common until sawn planks were readily available, and this wasn't generally the case until the early 1800s. (Unless you happened to live near a saw mill like the Hunts did) Mr. Ferro's case seems pretty convincing.

There are, however, some equally compelling features

about the Hunt House which would tend to date it earlier. The first one is the massing of the house. Even Mr. Ferro admitted that the Hunt House has more of the "feel" of an earlier Georgian house in its overall proportions. He cited one distinguishing feature of a Federal house as the presence of "6 over 6" windows. Yet we are pretty sure from the proportions of the original window frames, and from the few remaining windows in the attic that the original windows in the Hunt House were probably 12 over 12. We also know that at least some of the windows were single hung, another indication of an older period than the Federal. Other details in the attic, arguably the most original part of the house, are Georgian as well, especially the planked doors, and the dividing wall between the two rooms.

The entryway details, which have been cited as having distinguishing Federal details, can

also be identified as having Georgian characteristics as well: flanking pilasters, a six paneled door, and no flanking side lights on either side of the door.

And what are we to make of the obviously Adamesque details in the front parlor? Is it not possible that one of the Mrs. Hunts grew tired of the fusty old parlor and had it redecorated to the latest style, perhaps guided by Asher Benjamin's 1806 book "The American Builder's Companion"? (And more to the point, could not the ruinous bills from some later redecoration program provide another explanation for Allyn Hunt's mysterious "dive" into the Ten Mile River years later?)

The result of all this conflicting evidence? The Hunt House could well have been built much earlier than the Federal period indicated by the parlor decorations, and have been the subject of some substantial redecoration and rebuilding.

MUSEUM COMMITTEE cont.

Anonymous donor - pictures of Count Rumford's bust now in the Rumford library, a Championship cooking contest held by the Rumford Baking Powder Co. in 1945 and an early picture of Newman Church.

Virginia Goff - Newspaper articles and genealogical notes and papers from her husband Dixwell Goff's term as President of the Historical Society.

Gladys Panzerella- a school chair from the 1920's.

Genvieve Sanford - 1926 Crimson, 16 individual class pictures from the High School Class of 1924, picture of the 1929 cast of Roger Williams Players play "Who Wouldn't be Crazy?", a picture of a 1911 class from Miss Pegny's School in Armington's Corners, and a 1924 EPHS graduation invitation and program.

Our Treasurer, Rose Marie Sirenski, found in papers which she received last fall a notebook of minutes and fire calls from the Silver Spring Volunteer Fire

Dept., #4, Hose #4. We sent them to Warren Ivers to review as he had been a member in the early '20's, and it brought back many memories. The notebook is now in the Archives. A reminder: all of the reference materials collected at the Hunt House are available at anytime to anyone. It is best to call ahead (438-1750) and make an appointment so that someone will be there to get them out for you, especially during the summer months.

A 25th Anniversary "Did you know that..."

Did you know that the organization of the E.P. Historical Society took place when Harold Flint of Riverside expressed the hope that residents of East Providence would like to join together to form a Historical Society. An organizational meeting was held in January of 1966 at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Allen Usher. Attending also were Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Howland, Mr. and Mrs. Leroy Flint, Harold and Ruth Flint, Lura and Clint Sellew, Isa-

bel Izzo, Mrs. Reginald Whitcomb, and Mr. and Mrs. C. Dexter Potter. A meeting was set for April 25 at the old Community Center on Greenwood Ave. (the old Rumford store). All members who attended this meeting were to be regarded as Charter Members. Somewhere, someplace there must be a list of the Charter Members; there were about forty people who attended that meeting. The First Annual Meeting for the election of officers was held Sept. 16, 1966 at the Grange Hall in Kent Heights. And, as they say, "The rest is history!" (E.P. Post- Feb. 3, 1966 and papers from Virginia Berwick)

Edna Anness

NOMINATIONS

At the May member's meeting, the Nominating Committee submitted the names of the following candidates to serve the Society in '92/'93: President, Scott Booth; 1st Vice President, Nancy Moore; 2nd Vice President, Bud Plum-

mer; Recording Secretary, Kris Rose; Corresponding Secretary, Lura Sellow; Treasurer, Rose Marie Sirenski. In compliance with the by-laws, nominations were requested from the floor. None came forth. The election will be held at the annual meeting on Monday, June 22nd, 8:30 p.m. at the Girl Scout House, 347 Willett Avenue, Riverside. We urge you to attend the meeting to show support for next year's leadership.

Nominating Committee:

*Florence Adams
Lew Allen
Jewel Drickamer
Bud Plummer
Walter Vincent*

And as if elections weren't enough: Bill Simpson proudly announces the **2nd Annual Strawberry Festival** to take place at the annual meeting. A \$1.00 donation is requested to defray expenses; featured will be hand-picked strawberries, and shortcake baked by Bill. It doesn't get much better than this, folks. Elections and strawberries: an E.P. Historical Society tradition.

IMPORTANT DATES

- June 20 **E.P. HISTORICAL SOCIETY** YARD SALE
(10 a.m. to 12 p.m.) & ANNUAL PICNIC (2p.m. til
dusk). See this issue of OLDE NEWS for details.
- June 22 **E.P. HISTORICAL SOCIETY** ANNUAL
MEETING Girl Scout House, Willet Ave. in
Riverside 7:30 p.m.
- July 25-26 **E.P. HISTORICAL SOCIETY** Deadline
for July/August OLDE NEWS
- Sept. 28 **E.P. HISTORICAL SOCIETY** Sept. Meeting

OLDE NEWS

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

*Gearse - Sat. morn.
u. Primary
N.H.S. - Hoff House*
