

John Hunt House

SOCIETY WINS RHODE ISLAND STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD



Society officers and Hunt House volunteers display the Preservation Award received on April 1.

ANOTHER AWARD! At ceremonies on April 1, the Hunt House Restoration Team added another trophy to the collection. The PRESERVATION AWARD of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission. The citation in the program read:

Since 1987, the members of the East Providence Historical Society have dedicated themselves, individually and collectively, to rescuing the John Hunt House.

The Hunt House, built around 1790 by a well-to-do miller and landowner, is a handsome example of Federal architecture. Owned by the City of East Providence and used for fifty years as municipal office space, it had fallen into disrepair by 1979. The City boarded up the building, and for several years it stood vacant, prone to decay and a ready target for vandals.

What the City of East Providence dismissed as surplus, the East Providence Historical Society recognized as treasure. In 1987, the group, which had been seeking a site for a local history museum, obtained a 25-year lease on the building. Over the next seven years, the Society undertook a painstaking restoration project characterized by careful research and planning, meticulous respect for original materials and detailing, an extraordinary commitment of volunteer labor, and a healthy dose of New England thrift. Today, the restoration of the building's main rooms is complete — ahead of schedule and under budget.

The Society's restoration project has not only preserved an important community landmark, but has stimulated local interest in preservation. And the Society's energetic volunteers have already begun to use the building for local history programming for children and adults.

WHAT MAKES AN AWARD WINNER . .

When you next visit the John Hunt house, you will see a new railing along the wall of the stairs. This was thought necessary for the safety of travellers to the second floor.

The new railing was hand shaped of oak by **Earl Berwick**, member of the awards winning Hunt House Restoration Team.

Earl, a retired electrician (after fifty years in the business), has crafted many of the materials used in Hunt House displays. He figured we could save money if he made the railing himself. Not only did he save money ... he created an *exact duplicate* of the other rail, no factory milling could do that!



Earl Berwick, reconstructive craftsman, shapes the rail.

President's Letter

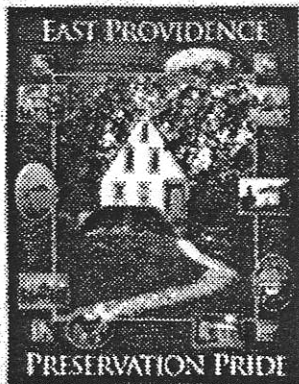
Nancy Moore

Oh, the thunderous applause! The exhilaration of being on the same stage with Antoinette Downing and Fred Williamson! Walter and I were quite weak in the knees, but we managed to hold onto that State Preservation Award and make it safely off the stage. It was truly a wonderful moment when Ted Sanderson asked our crew to stand and be recognized. We were all so proud! We were sorry that Charlie, Madeline, Martha, and Don were all under the weather that day, but Earl, Ginny, Harold, Andy, Rose Marie, Tom, and Les stood and bathed in the glory. So, for all of you who have ever swung a hammer, baked a cake, manned the phones, cooked a hamburger, or bought a raffle ticket: this award's for you. It takes all of us to keep Hunt House operating and give the restoration crew the support they need.

Ginny Berwick and I participated in a panel discussion called "Big Dreams, Small Budgets" along with the restorers of the East Greenwich Odium. The focus was on volunteers, and it was most interesting to hear about the different projects going on. Our introduction by Pawtucket's Denise Paniches included this statement, "When I think of historical society volunteers in Rhode Island, I think East Providence." That's a nice compliment to you all.

So join us for a celebration at the April meeting where we'll just have a good time and enjoy being with each other and listening to great music. And, I'd be willing to bet that there are some great dancers in this group too. Come strut your stuff!

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the GAZETTE

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EAST•PROVIDENCE•HISTORICAL•SOCIETY
Editor.....George Adams

EAST PROVIDENCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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COMING EVENTS

APRIL

Wednesday, April 12
Board Meeting 7:30 p.m. Hunt House

Monday April 24
"Evening of Ballroom Memories"
Post 10 American Legion

MAY

Wednesday, May 10
Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m. Hunt House

Sunday, May 7, 1:00 p.m.
Opening of "Jess Welt's Watchemoket"
Hunt House

Monday, May 22
Member's Meeting 7:30 p.m.
Riverside Congregational Church
"From Pilgrims to Powwows"

the GAZETTE

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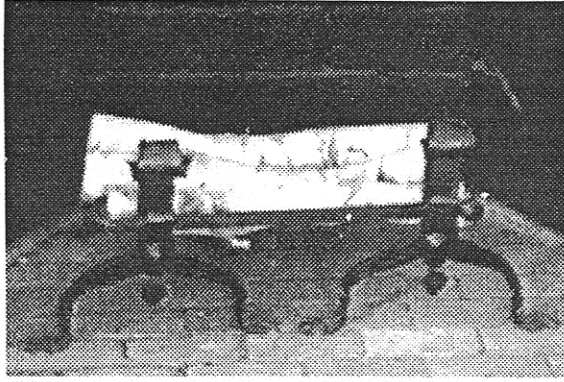


1062 Willett Avenue, Riverside

From the Attic

Edna Anness

Museum Curator



Longfellow wrote that his village smithy stood "under a spreading chestnut tree". The village smithy represented in our Museum had a forge on the corner of Pawtucket Avenue and Taunton Avenue, probably under some elm trees which were prevalent in that area. Joseph Butterworth ran this forge in addition to a second on Water Street in Providence and we have a picture of him, standing in front with his helpers. This was at the turn of our century. He died in 1925. These magnificent andirons were made by Joseph, and grace the fireplace of the Hunt House Parlor.

In addition to the andirons, Joseph's grandson, Austin Butterworth, donated the blacksmith's anvil and handwrought ice tongs, iron barndoor hinges and straps, fireplace tongs and horseshoe all made in Joseph's blacksmith shop. It is very rare in this day and age to be able to identify the maker of such antique artifacts, and to have the artisan a "local boy" is surely a plus. Come visit our parlor and see John's picture and his work.

MUSEUM REPORT

Virginia Berwick

Museum Chairman

MUSEUM GIFTS

Received in March

- Marion Hopkins** - Memorabilia from East Providence High School classes of 1923 and '46, "News of the Old Home Town", Tercentenary pin, 1936.
- Isabel Rich** - Memorabilia from United Congregational Church and Haven Methodist Church.
- Elizabeth Smith** - Glass slide of Hunts Mills, booklet about Hunts Mills.
- Sam and Nell Adams** - 1912 5th grade report card from Potter Street School, signed by teacher, A.B. Hennesy, egg beater from 1920's.
- Howard Mersereau** - Clipping about Crescent Park and Carousel.

THANKS to ALL!

East Providence Scrapbook

Clint Sellew

The McManus Homestead



The **McManus House** was at 281 Newport Avenue, the present location of the "Wishing Well"

The McManus farm, built by Terence McManus in the early 1800's, was on both sides of Newport Avenue. The farm buildings were behind the house and pastures were across Newport Avenue, which was a dirt road. The house was unique in that it had 2 large interior chimneys.

The house was razed in May, 1971, to make room for the present structures.

The East Providence Historical Society

Cordially Invites You

to the Opening of

A Special Exhibition of Photographs

"Jess Welt's Watchemoket"

Sunday May 7, 1995

Tea and Reception 1 to 4 p.m.

John Hunt House, Hunts Mills Road, East Providence



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Jess Welt's WATCHEMOKET

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of
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in the 1920's & 30's

John Hunt House
May 7 - June 29
Tuesday & Thursdays
9 a.m. - noon

Opening Tea & Reception Sunday, May 7, 1 - 4 p.m.



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Reminiscences & Recollections

The Town Hall Movies

Ruth Marsden MacDougald

In 1920-24 we lived at 128 Taunton Avenue in East Providence, R.I. Our three-storied, turreted Victorian house (later razed to make room for the Hollywood Theater) was right across the street from the Town Hall, a most important building in our young lives, not because of the town offices and the police and fire stations located there, but because of the SATURDAY AFTERNOON MOVIES!! How well I remember those magical afternoons.

First of all came the big decision. Each of the younger kids in our large family was given ten cents per week, doled out when we had completed our Saturday chores; cleaning our bedrooms, raking, shoveling, dusting, making beds - whatever they were. Now should we spend the whole thing on the movies that afternoon, or save five cents of it to spend for candy, one cent per day Monday thru Friday, and save five cents towards next week's movie? A most difficult decision. The movies usually won out.

We would get there at least a half hour early, clattering up the wooden stairs to insure getting our choice seats. The boys usually went for the first rows where they sat gazing upwards for two hours and came out with cricks in their necks. We girls were (as usual) much smarter and chose seats about half way back. We'd laugh and talk and run back and forth under the watchful eye of Mr. Chase. I don't know who he was or what connection he had to the movies or the town hall, but remember him as an amply-bellied man who tried to keep some semblance of order. At last some the lights would be turned out and we'd know it was getting close to show time. The pianist would arrive to a burst of applause and whistles and foot stamping. She'd take her place at the piano, light the little lamp just above the music rack, arrange the sheets and then - it would start!

There were approximately five tunes that were played each week. One very sad song to accompany the old couple limping up the hill to the poor house, or the child dying, or the young maiden weeping over a lost love. This was a song I believe was called "The Maiden's Prayer" and while I can still remember the tune, I don't think I've heard it in sixty years. There was an Indian-type, tom-toms thumping song played when the braves came riding to attack covered wagons: parts of "The William Tell Overture" or "Sabers and Spurs" when the cavalry came riding to the rescue; a patriotic song, usually "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" or "The Stars and Stripes" when some victory had been won: soft indiscriminate music to fill in between the action scenes and light, popcorn-y music for the comedies. The pianist would sit with one eye on the screen ready to change the music to fit the act ion.

Ah, the movies themselves! We had first a short comedy, either "Our Gang", Ben Turpin, Charlie Chaplin or Fatty Arbuckle, as I recall, then a newsreel, Pathe's "The Eyes and Ears of the World", which we didn't care too much about. Then came a chapter of the



Jess Welt Photo of Town Hall 1924 (note movie posters)
Could that girl possibly be.....?

serial, where the beautiful young girl had been left tied to the railroad tracks just as the 7:04 came steaming around the bend, then the previews of next week's attraction, and finally - the big picture. I remember seeing Peter Pan there, and a movie which made a big impression on me, it was called "Glorious Betsy" and was about the Civil War. We loved Mary Pickford with her long golden curls and big eyes and the older girls sighed over the handsome Rudolph Valentino and Charles Bickford. Our dimes were well spent, indeed.

One day there was a particularly sad scene being played, and one of my sisters hid her eyes and said, "I can't watch!" Another older sister poked her in the ribs and whispered loudly, "You watch! You paid your dime!" So we watched and cried a lot. Usually the kids from our family numbered at least six; four sisters Ann, Grace, Eleanor and I and our twin brothers, Norman and Gene. Usually the oldest one present had the job of reading the captions or dialogue aloud, and all over the theater you could hear people whispering a soft, sibilant shishing sound I'll never forget.

The movies usually ended close to four o'clock and we'd rush home to tell our mother all about the wonderful things we had seen. We never disliked a movie that I can recall. Every one was a wonderful experience and we'd all look forward to next Saturday and another two hours of enchantment at the old town hall.

Society members, Joe and Ruth MacDougald are frequent contributors to the GAZETTE. They both grew up in East Providence and now live in Wrentham. Joe is president of the Wrentham Historic Commission.

The GAZETTE welcomes *reminiscences and recollections* and all material relating to East Providence history, for publication in our newsletter.

Please submit text typed on clean, untextured 8 1/2 x 11 paper. Photos may be black and white or color, print, negative or slide.

Mail material to the editor:

George Adams
3632 Pawtucket Ave.
Riverside, RI 02915-4215

HOW DOES the GAZETTE HAPPEN?

Most people have their GAZETTE delivered by a uniformed representative of the United States Government and have no idea of how it gets to that point. Here is Part I of HOW IT HAPPENS. Some of the people involved in the process



< Virginia Berwick provides news of the Museum.....and takes many of the photos that appear in the GAZETTE

> Clint Sellw, historian, researcher, genealogist authors East Providence Scrapbook



< Editor, George "Somebody" Adams edits and composes the GAZETTE at computer workstation.

*(as in 'Somebody' has to do it)



> Melissa Carbone, owner and manager of Pronto Print a little girl with the heart of a pressmanassures the quality of the GAZETTE. She selected the special paper which now improves the appearance and readability.



NEXT MONTH ..Part II : more, including some grunted P.O. employees.

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is dedicated to preserving the heritage and enjoying the history of our city.

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EAST PROVIDENCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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RHODE ISLAND
HISTORICAL PRESERVATION
COMMISSION

PRESERVATION AWARD

John Hunt House

Since 1987, members of the East Providence Historical Society have dedicated themselves to painstakingly restoring the late eighteenth-century John Hunt House. Their individual and collective efforts have reclaimed a long-neglected building, stimulated community interest in preservation activity, and created a focus for local heritage education.

Antoinette F. Downing
CHAIR

1 April 1995 *Frederick R. Williamson*
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

CONGRATULATIONSThe Hunt House Restoration Team Wins Again.