

## “THE ISLAND CONNECTION: CAPE VERDE - RHODE ISLAND”

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION LAUNCHES 3 MONTH EXHIBITION AND PROGRAMS AT HUNT HOUSE, OBSERVING 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF CAPE VERDE INDEPENDENCE



The Republic of Cape Verde, an area off the western tip of Africa is only slightly larger than Rhode Island. It was discovered in 1456 by Portuguese navigator Luigi da Cadamosto. Portuguese settlers began to settle in the islands and began importing West African natives as slaves. It is from that mix of Portuguese and Africans that present day Cape Verdeans are descended.

Cape Verde gained its independence in 1975, the 20th anniversary being observed this year.

Society Board members **Edna Anness** and **Virginia Berwick** attended a roundtable discussion by some of the Cape Verdeans in East Providence in 1994, and recommended that the Historical Society sponsor a similar event and an exhibition to acquaint the membership with the history, culture and customs of some of our friends and neighbors.

The exhibition will open on December 3 and will continue for three months until February 29, 1996. There will be six rooms of a display of pictures, crafts, costumes, etc., relating to Cape Verde culture.

On December 3, the exhibition will open from 1 to 4 p.m. The **Gomes Brothers** will perform Cape Verdean music and **Vicki Viera** will sing native folk songs.

As an introduction to the exhibition the regular meeting on Monday, November 27th will be a roundtable discussion, with **Peter Coelho**, **Mindy Carvalho DaGraca**, **Virginia Gonsalves**, **Oona Moniz**, **Dr. Isadore Ramos**, **Yvonne Smart**, **Tony Spencer** and others of Cape Verde birth or descent. The meeting will be at 7:30 at Weaver Library and is open to all.

At the January 22, 1996 meeting, noted author and historian **Raymond Almeida** of Washington, D.C., will speak on “Cape Verdeans in America”.

In February East Providence fifth graders will visit the exhibition. A handbook about Cape Verde is being prepared for distribution before their visit.

We urge all our members and friends to take this opportunity to learn about the history and experiences of the Cape Verdeans among us.

IF YOU WANTED A COP . . . .  
YOU CALLED. “TAGGART” !

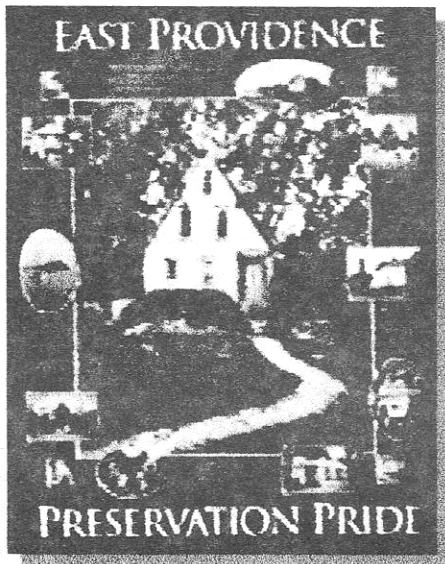
(SEE PAGE 4)



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## the GAZETTE

Welcomes articles, reminiscences and recollections, commentary, poetry, photographs, drawings, etc. relating to East Providence and East Providence history, for publication in our newsletter.

**Original** material is preferred....**Re-prints** will be considered only if they are in the *public domain* or with the *written* consent of the copyright owner.

Text may be submitted on a 3.5" 'floppy' disk, DOS, Windows or Mac ....  
...or neatly typed on a clean, non-textured 8 1/2 x 11 sheet of paper.

Photos and art work may be in color or black and white, negative or slide. VHS or normal 8mm videotape from which a still frame may be captured is acceptable also.

Please call the editor, George Adams, at (401) 437-1530 to discuss the material that you would like to submit...or take a chance and mail it to:

3632 Pawtucket Av., Riverside, RI 02915-4215

# CALENDAR

## NOVEMBER

Monday, November 27, 7:30 p.m. Monthly Meeting  
The ISLAND CONNECTION  
CAPE VERDE - RHODE ISLAND  
Roundtable discussion  
Weaver Library

## DECEMBER

Sunday, December 3, 1 - 4 p.m., Hunt House  
"THE ISLAND CONNECTION"  
exhibit opening and reception

also in December ...

"The Hunt House Restoration"  
lecture and slides by Edna Anness  
East Providence Rotary Meeting, December 4.

"The Historic Rumford Company"  
lecture and slides by Edna Anness  
Weaver Library December 13, 7:30 p.m.

## the GAZETTE

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# AROUND THE HOUSE...MUSEUM ACTIVITY

## From the Attic

Edna Anness

Museum Curator

## Accessions - Gifts

Virginia Berwick

Museum Chairman



Pictured is a new gift received at the Museum this fall. In case you do not recognize it, it is a wooden washing machine patented in 1890. This was a big step forward in modernizing the way the wash was done by the housewife. Instead of scrubbing the clothes on a

washboard, she would put the laundry inside, close the cover (which must weigh twenty pounds) and then she would spend the next ten minutes cranking the iron wheel on the side. This cranking would turn two wooden sawtooth drums inside creating an agitation which would clean the clothes. There was even a small chamber for hankies and the like. I hope the housewife was smart enough to have her children doing the cranking or this method of doing laundry was almost as tiring as using the washtub and washboard method. Water was poured in at the top and drained from a hole in the bottom.

This new bonanza to the house wife was named GLORY and was manufactured by the W.E.... Barret Co. of Providence, RI. The owner's name, **SETH WOOD** is stenciled on the side. Wood is a very well known family in town who at that time lived at Moore's Corners (the intersection of Pawtucket Avenue and Warren Avenue) the present location of **Wood's Service Station**. The donors are Seth Wood and his wife Frances-he is the son of the original washing machine owner.

Artifacts such as this are great examples of early housekeeping and will fit right into the summer kitchen which is now being restored. Does anyone out there have an old drysink that we could borrow to put in the keeping room? Or an old plank worktable? Santa, are you listening?

### GIFTS RECEIVED IN OCTOBER

- Robert Tetreault** - 3 large maps of the 3 sections of East Providence ca. 1895, collection of postcards of Hunts Mills and area.
- Seth and Frances Wood** - Wooden washing machine and a hayrake.
- Paul Nelson** - Postcard of entrance to Boyden Heights.
- Laurel Ravenell** - "Townie" pennant.
- Judith Sharpe** - Antique mahogany bookcase.
- Donald Bowden** - Two photos: Town Hall and Rumford Co. building.

### THANKS to ALL

(Note: Will the person who gave the 1936 Tercentennial program on October 21 please call Virginia at 434-0998 we need to know your name)

## JOHN'S CHRISTMAS LIST

If you cant decide what to give *John* (Hunt House) for Christmas this year . . . . .here is his "Wish List"!

- paper towels
- toilet paper
- hand soap
- dish soap
- Windex
- Bab-o
- message pads
- small note paper pads
- coffee stirrers
- white paper napkins
- 4 x 6 file cards
- clean , old white sheets
- dish cloths
- paper coffee cups
- office style metal bookends
- large green felt cover for library table
- dust cloths - any type

# Bridge Cop for 46 Years

## Walter Taggart Began Sending Traffic Over Old Covered Washington Span — New Structure His Third Bridge

The headline reproduced above and the text that follows were published in the *Providence Journal Magazine* on December 29, 1929. TAGGART, as he was always known was a familiar sight on Watchemoket Square in the late 1800's and early 1900's. The text, presented exactly as it was published in 1929, is an example of a style that was typical of earlier times. TAGGART himself also represented a style of earlier times.

"To Washington Bridge, This Way!" If there is anybody who will appreciate the completion of the new Washington Bridge to East Providence, it will be Policeman Walter Taggart of Watchemoket Square. He has been watching and directing traffic and giving it the instruction above for 46 years, or to measure it in terms of bridges, since three bridges ago. He saw the old covered bridge terminate its career with the completion of the present span, now antiquated, in 1886. And ere many months have passed now he hopes to blow his whistle and send the first traffic stream over the enormous new creation that is rapidly throwing its arches across the Seekonk.

It will be a happy day for him when he sees the inauguration of travel over this, his third drawbridge across the river. And may, he thinks, be glory enough for one bridge-end cop, for at 75, he can hardly hope to remain on duty long enough to see the gigantic new structure outgrown.

It was in 1883 that Policeman Taggart, young and with youthful vigor in his powerful frame, first enlisted under the arm of the law and took up policing in the Watchemoket district. It can hardly be said that he donned the policeman's blue, for at that time the force had no uniform, its only official designation being a badge and the necessary pocket arms of the policeman's calling.

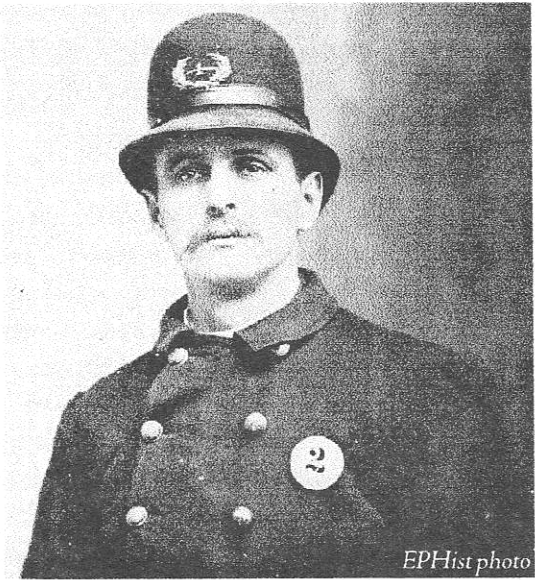
Indeed, the entire force of 1883 consisted of only two men besides its commanding officer. And that officer did not boast of the title of chief for at least two years more. He carried his modest authority and performed his multifarious duties under the designation of Town Sergeant.

### TWO COVERED THE TOWN

The two policemen covered the entire compact part of the town during the night. The compact part was the section adjoining the Watchemoket Square, and it was not considered necessary to patrol the rest of the territory. There were special policemen - unsalaried officers - who might be called upon in any emergency, but these two constituted the organized force, with the Town Sergeant himself acting as the sole day patrolman.

Patrolman Taggart's first partner in this arrangement was William Viall. One officer was supposed to remain at the square while the other went patrolling. Taggart's beat took him southward along the waterfront to Wilkesbarre Pier and other points, while Viall's was northward. This was their "stunt" from six at night to five the next morning. The town remained technically unguarded for two hours, until the Sergeant took up the job at seven.

A later partner in this job with Taggart was Charles Pierce, who afterwards became Chief of Police and was later Superintendent of the Water Works. In more recent years the force was multiplied in numbers and the intimate camaraderie of early days was lost. The town has now 21



Young Patrolman Taggart ca. 1884

policemen, the Chief, Deputy Chief, four sergeants and 15 patrolmen ... a great change in 46 years.

Patrolman Taggart has lived through it all until now. Nestor of the force, he still patrols the square and its immediate vicinity, directing traffic to and from the bridge. It's an easy job on dull days, but in the late afternoon there is generally plenty to do, and on Sundays and holidays the bridge approaches are a maelstrom of traffic. What it will be when the new bridge gets into action, with a connecting boulevard to Point St., no one can say. There may be many more vehicles, although as a problem, traffic may be easier.

### HOW TRAFFIC HAS GROWN

"Traffic ... why there wasn't any traffic in those early days," says this veteran officer. "It was all made up of farmers and their teams who drove across the bridge from 3 o'clock on, as they went into Providence to market. You could lie down in the street and a farmer would drive around you, but you couldn't say that in these days of automobiles."

Showing the number of farmers in the old days, Mr. Taggart says that one summer the *Journal* correspondent, the late Lewis Walker, asked the policeman to stop the farmers with their loads of strawberries, and ask how many they had on hand. They found there were 1750 crates, and a bushel to a crate, making 1750 bushels on a single morning.

Mr. Taggart recalls that when he first became a policeman, the Ingraham Building, standing at the junction between Taunton and Warren Avenue, was new. It had a grand entrance at the apex of the angle and the staircase led upstairs to an immense hall, where there was a stage for giving theatricals. The hall was also used for town meetings and for dances. The Ray Block opposite on Taunton Avenue was also a new and handsome and up to date building.

On the Warren Avenue side of the Ingraham Building the sidewalk was lined with hitching posts and hitching rails, and even feeding troughs for the horses. Their owners might shop away around the stores for hours at a time. "Parking", says Mr. Taggart, "why it wasn't anything at all in those days. Nobody would have cared if a man

had hitched his horse for a week, if he wanted to."

Although there were no uniforms when this officer took up his duties, it wasn't long before designating attire came to be worn.

"First", he says, "we had straw hats ... this was in summer ... and they were of yellow straw, bound with leather braid. We used to shellac them to keep out the rain, and my, weren't they hot!"

"In winter we wore a cap, but it wasn't like the policeman's cap of later years. It was known as a Scotch cap. Then we had a second straw contraption, shaped something like a helmet."

### THOSE SPIKED HELMETS

"Then we had those helmets of black felt, with a steel spike at the top. They were supposed to protect the head of a policeman from a blow. But they have passed out of use in this country, although I believe they are still worn in England."

The old policeman also recalls the first real uniform he had. He told where he had bought it ... second hand ... of a Providence policeman, and that was a common practice in the towns around this city.

"It had tails", he said, "and a skirted bottom almost like a woman's dress. And where it had been found too short, a strip of cloth had been sewed around to make it longer." Thus the veteran describes his appearance in his first policeman's togs. Truly, fashions in police uniforms have changed as much as those in anything else.

Even if there was no traffic problem, there was excitement enough in those early days, according to this dean of the force. The harbor front just to the south of Watchemoket Square was busy with coal vessels, and naturally many sailors would come ashore. There would be some quarrelsome souls among them ... enough in fact to account for many a harried call for the police, and Officer Taggart got his share.

The old police station was in the Ingraham Block, on the Taunton Avenue side, where there is now a tire repair shop. There were six cells into which he often put prisoners ... often with a strong arm. The offenders were brought into court next morning, before the late Judge George N. Bliss, for half a century head of the District Court in East Providence.

### SOME REAL ENCOUNTERS

Sometimes there would be a real out-and-out encounter right out in the publicity of the square. Policeman Taggart says he would rather these stories be told by someone else, and witnesses are hard to find. Fred Halliday, who has been a storekeeper in the Ray Building for many years, says he has seen Mr. Taggart "take in" a prisoner under very trying circumstances.

"Once," says he, "a violent man of great size and broiling temper defied Taggart to take him in. He went just the same, and Taggart did not have to use his gun. I saw him again one day when he had forced a great big strapping fellow into submission and made him walk before him to the station."

Chief of Police Everett W. Adams also pays a tribute to the record of Patrolman Taggart. He recalled some of the same incidents as Mr. Halliday and another when the officer nabbed a murderer, almost red-handed, although he had to make a stiff run to Fort Hill to get him.

Such a man as Policeman Taggart often harks back to a militant ancestry for a part of his prowess. His father was a veteran of both the Mexican and Civil Wars, and his ancestry on both sides fought in the

Revolution. The memory of the deeds told by these was enough to put a mettle into any strong young fellow who wanted to join and grow up with the infant police force of a rapidly growing town.

Policeman Taggart has served under all the Chiefs of Police East Providence has had. The first was Rufus W. Adams, the father of the present Chief, who had been Town Sergeant, but held the newly created office of Chief for 27 years. The other Chiefs have been Charles E. Peirce, once Taggart's companion in arms, and George Fred Wilcox. The present Chief Adams has held the office 25 years.

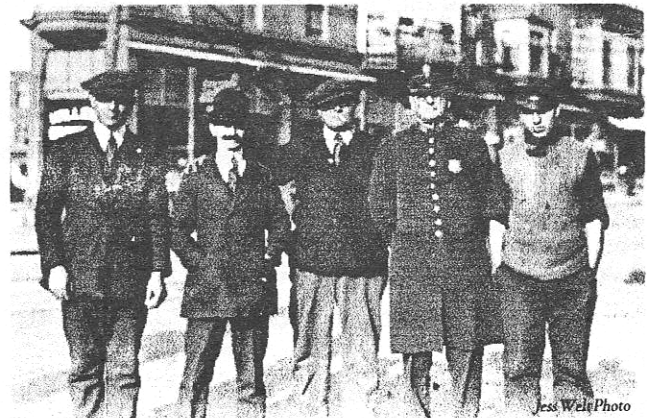
### OFFICER HAS HOBBIES

But this veteran policeman has his hobbies, too. His life is not all made up of nabbing murderers or shooting down crooks. And often it is surprising to find the avocations to which the fingers of the strong will turn in moments of ease.

Policeman Taggart's hobbies are two: amateur photography and painting. In the latter line, his house is filled with pictures ... paintings of children, animals, mothers ... anything. There is one excellent study of an Arab in full war paint, and another showing a scene on the east side of the Seekonk River where the old covered bridge used to be, with oyster houses that have long since been demolished.

In photography, he is much more than a novice ... he is at least an advanced amateur, and for skill and results might claim a ranking with professionals. He has photos of his own taking that go away back to the days of the covered bridge itself ... good negatives, too. And in recent years, armed with a modern reflecting camera and fast lenses, he has kept up a collection of bridge pictures by following photographically construction of the new bridge.

At the same time his major interest has been the one he has maintained day in and day out for 46 years ... that of being Patrolman Walter Taggart. He could have retired if he wanted to, but who wants to be retired when there is a brand new Washington Bridge to look forward to? Not every traffic cop can show such a record as he, for whom they build new bridges just to bring traffic over where he can direct it.



Taggart and Watchemoket citizens in front of Ray Block 1928

Walter Taggart was born on September 13, 1853 in Providence in a house that stood where the Providence County Court House is located on South Main Street. He served on the East Providence Police Force for 49 years. He died at his home in East Providence on October 17, 1932 at the age of 79.

Thanks to: **Clint Sellev** for the suggestion and background; to genealogist/historian **Christine Lamar** for locating the article; to the **Providence Journal-Bulletin** for permission to reprint the article.

Ed.

# AROUND THE HOUSE... MEMBERS AND FRIENDS



## OPPORTUNITIES FOR OCCUPATION



Virginia Berwick ready to sign YOU up

ALSO ..... the museum staff needs help with the *accessioning* of the artifacts and documents that must be recorded. (Oh *that's* what it means!) An opportunity to learn the technique from experts ..... as well as a chance to examine a lot of very interesting historical materials.

The volunteers at the Hunt House don't participate because they are *compelled to*... that's not how all those awards were won ... they ENJOY it. You will, too.

Avoid those winter doldrums ...

Come on over to our house ... it's yours, too!

and Walt really does make a g o o o o d cup of coffee!

Have you called yet?!

DOCENTS

&

ACCESSIONAL AMANUENSES  
NEEDED IMMEDIATELY!

Museum Chairman Virginia Berwick has positions available for DOCENTS (tour guides), especially for December, January and February during the Cape Verde Project. The museum will be open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:00 a.m. until noon, and on Sundays from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

If YOU are available during any of those times .. please call Ginnie Berwick at 434-0998, Edna Anness at 434-3347 or the Hunt House at 438-1750



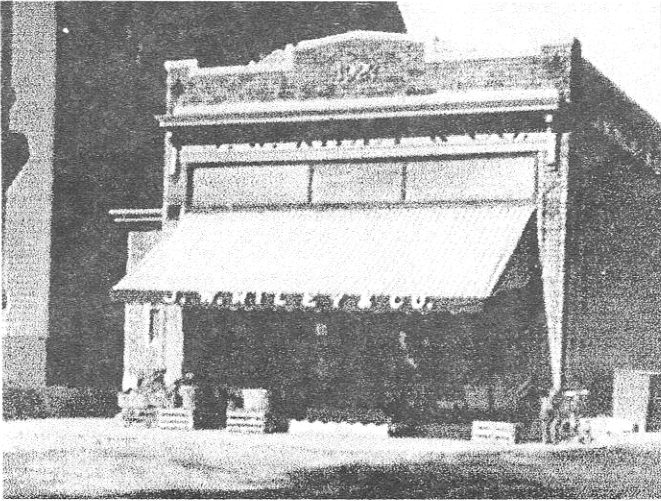
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# THEN ..... AND NOW

## 809 Broadway



1925 ... Riley's Market

*Jess Welt Photo*



1995 ... Horton's Seafood

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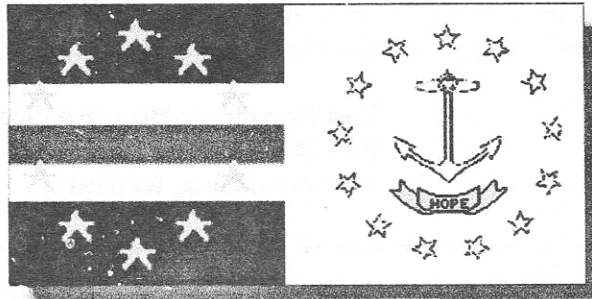
EAST PROVIDENCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

GAZETTE

THE EAST PROVIDENCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PRESENTS THE

# ISLAND CONNECTION



**A ROUNDABLE DISCUSSION ABOUT CAPE VERDEANS IN  
EAST PROVIDENCE AND RHODE ISLAND  
AT THE MONTHLY MEETING MONDAY NOVEMBER 27 AT 7:30 P.M.  
WEAVER LIBRARY**

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