

John Hunt House
Vol. VIII No.6

GAZETTE

RIGHT ON.

MAY 1996

“RECOLLECTION” EXHIBIT OPENED AT SPECIAL RECEPTION 30TH ANNIVERSARY EVENT ATTENDED BY PAST PRESIDENTS AND CHARTER MEMBERS



Museum staffers, Curator **Edna Anness** (l.) and Chairman **Virginia Berwick** put the finishing touches on the exhibit.

“RECOLLECTION”, the special 30th anniversary exhibition of Hunt House treasures, opened on Sunday, May 5 with a reception and Tea. The event was attended by many charter members, as well as recent members and visitors, who were served tea by past presidents and given a first look at the collection of artifacts, photos, documents, tools and etceteras which will be on display through the end of June.

Virginia Berwick’s colorful photographic history of Society events attracted a lot of attention from folks who wanted to see if *their* picture was included. (It probably was.)

This is the first time that the Hunt House collection has been on public display. Representing 30 years of gifts to the Society, in the restored rooms of the Hunt House, the RECOLLECTION exhibition is a walk through East Providence history.

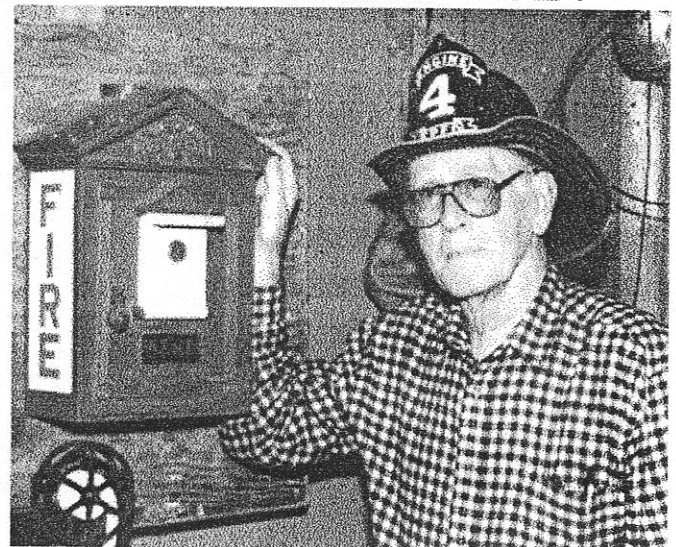
The museum will be open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to noon, and by special arrangement.

Telephone (401) 438-1750 for information.



Andy Valerio guards the entrance with musket and in authentic 18th century military finery.

Dont Call Him a FIREMAN*



Norman E. Gladding, retired fire fighter, has been preparing a history of the East Providence Fire Department. An excerpt from the book, a history of the Fire Alarm System is on page 3. Norm retired in 1978 as Assistant Chief and Superintendent of Police and Fire Signals. He is seen here with a Gamewell Fire Signal Box, also retired. * (“Firemen *build* fires, we put ‘em out”)

From the Editor

What's In A Name....

East Providence is our first name ...
Historical is our middle name and ...
Society is our last name, our FAMILY name.
I looked it up:

society (se-si-tê) noun

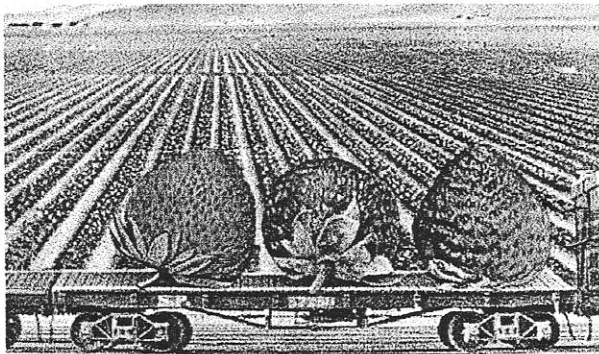
1. a. The totality of social relationships among human beings. b. A group of human beings broadly distinguished from other groups by mutual interests, participation in characteristic relationships, shared institutions, and a common culture. c. The institutions and culture of a distinct self-perpetuating group.
2. An organization or association of persons engaged in a common profession, activity, or interest.

I see words and phrases such as *participation, shared, engaged in, activity, etc.*, all of which imply **involvement**.

Those that thought, as I did, that participation in Society activities was limited to a select half dozen by Divine Right, will be glad to know that it is open to ALL members by definition. Good news!

PLEASE call NOW to find out what can be done to let YOU get in on the action ... if we get enough volunteers, we can open the museum for longer hours, continue publishing the GAZETTE, restore the Hunt's Mills area and have a lot of fun, too. Don't miss out....call (401) 438-1750 and find out what needs doing.

(You haven't called yet)



Strawberries Being Shipped for the Family Picnic

CALENDAR

MAY

Monday, May 13, 7:30 p.m.
Board Meeting, Hunt House

Monday, May 20, 7:30 p.m.
Member's Meeting

RECOLLECTION MEMORIES ROUNDTABLE
Panel discussion with past presidents and charter members, moderated by past president, **Nancy Moore**.
Newman Congregational Church

JUNE

Monday, June 3, 7:30 p.m.
Board Meeting, Hunt House

Sunday, June 23, 1 to 5 p.m.
ANNUAL HUNTS MILLS FAMILY PICNIC

the GAZETTE

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Editor.....George Adams

EAST PROVIDENCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 4774
East Providence, RI 02916
(401) 438-1750

OFFICERS

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| President | L. Diana McLean |
| 1st Vice President | Leslie Haworth |
| 2nd Vice President | Lura Sellew |
| Recording Secretary | Elizabeth Soderlund |
| Corresponding Secretary | Gladys Panzarella |
| Treasurer | Rose Marie Sirenski |

the GAZETTE

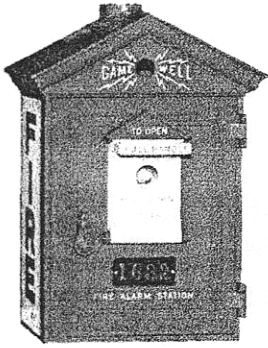
is printed
at

PRONTO PRINT

1062 Willett Avenue, Riverside

History of The East Providence Fire Alarm System

Norman E. Gladding



The original fire alarm system in East Providence which was installed before the advent of a permanent Fire Department in 1915, covered an area of about one square mile in the Watchemoket area, and was powered by storage batteries located in the basement of the Town Hall. There were only 9 boxes on the streets, and 3 privately owned boxes at industrial locations. A large bell in the Town Hall tower was used to alert the volunteer firefighters who responded from their homes or business places to the fire station at the Town Hall, to take the apparatus to the scene of a fire.

The other volunteer companies in outlying areas of the Town relied on hand operated bells on their stations or a neighborhood Church bell. A more extensive street box system was later installed, this being owned and rented from the Providence Telephone Company. This system also was limited in coverage mostly to the center of East Providence. Small bells, known as "tappers" were installed in firefighters' homes as they were required when off duty but "on call" to respond to the fire station after any first alarms.

As time went on, more boxes were added, and in 1921 a large (5 h. p.) double ended siren was installed on the Town Hall roof which could be heard for several miles. This siren was used for fires until the new stations were built, and was part of the air raid warning system for WWII.

The building of new stations and other improvements made in 1931 included installation of a modern "Gamewell 3-fold" telegraph fire alarm system with 100 street boxes connected by many miles of overhead open wires and cables to a central "office" at the new Fire Headquarters building on Broadway. Dispatching of apparatus was by bells and tape registers in the stations, augmented by a voice speaker system designed by the then Superintendent of Fire Alarm Horace Smith. This was a forerunner of the modern "Vocalarm" systems used in many cities prior to radio dispatch. An air operated Diaphone horn was installed at Fire Station No. 2 in Riverside to alert the volunteers of the Narragansett Engine Co. No. 2.

Following a major fire that partially destroyed the A. P. Hoyt School at the corner of Lyon Avenue and Freeborn Avenue in 1940, all public schools were furnished with interior fire detecting and warning systems connected to "master" fire alarm boxes. These systems, as well as those in other public buildings were for many years maintained by fire alarm technicians of the Fire Department. During World War II a town wide air raid warning system was installed and controlled from the Fire Alarm office. This air raid siren system was also used for multiple alarm notification until the practice of using outside sirens was discontinued.

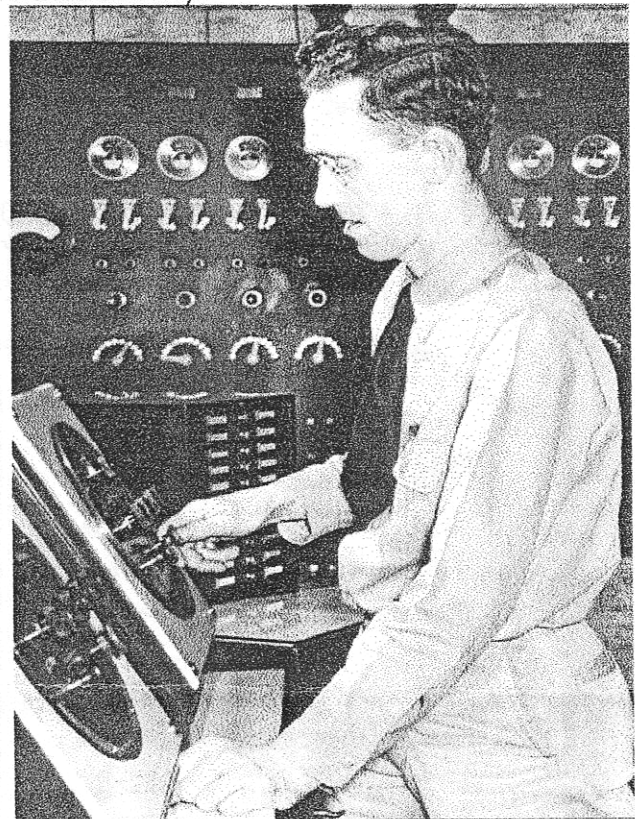
In May 1942, connections were made to the Police radio equipment at the Town Hall, remotely controlled from the Fire Alarm office, and two way radio communications were established with the Fire Chief's car. During the following years many added

miles of underground cables and overhead construction were installed by the Fire Alarm line crew to service added street and master boxes, and the central office equipment became badly overloaded with more than 375 fire alarm boxes on the circuits designed to carry half that amount.

Because of rising costs in maintenance and the necessity of replacing the existing office equipment, it was decided to discontinue the telegraph type system, and in May, 1977 a completely new radio type system was purchased from the Solid State Technology Company. In January of the following year the old Gamewell system was put out of service and dismantled. The new "SST" system did not require any "hard-wire" connections outside, and could transmit its own test signals once a day by radio signals received by printers and visible indication on receivers located in the central office, it can also designate separate buildings or locations where alarms might originate.

With the advantage of "9-1-1" to report fires or emergencies and the fact that almost 80% of alarms from the old alarm box system were false, only 50 street boxes were installed, mostly located on heavily travelled main highways. These can be used to summon either fire, police or rescue services. Radio tones now alert the stations and dispatchers are located in the Communications center at the Police Station on Waterman Avenue.

Many locations other than schools in East Providence are now required by the Rhode Island State Fire Code to have interior fire detection and alarm systems, connected to master boxes, and there are approximately 275 of these privately owned and maintained systems now in use in our City.



The author in 1942, using manually operated transmitter to send a "still alarm" over the Fire Alarm System.

AROUND THE HOUSE



OFFICIAL BUSINESS

Report of the Nominating Committee

Florence Adams, *Chairman*
 George Amaral
 Mona Breault
 Nancy Moore
 George Page

"The Nominating Committee shall be responsible for presenting a slate of candidates for elected office at the May members meeting for the ensuing year. NOMINATIONS FROM the FLOOR SHALL BE ACCEPTED AT THE MAY MEETING ONLY."

(Section IV, Standing Rules and Procedures)

The Nominating Committee recommends the following candidates for your consideration:

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| L. Diana McLean | <i>President</i> |
| Leslie Haworth | <i>1st Vice President</i> |
| Lura Sellew | <i>2nd Vice President</i> |
| Rose Marie Sirenski | <i>Treasurer</i> |
| Elizabeth Soderlund | <i>Recording Secretary</i> |
| Gladys Panzarella | <i>Corresponding Secretary</i> |

ELECTION WILL BE HELD AT THE ANNUAL MEETING / FAMILY PICNIC ON SUNDAY, JUNE 23, 1996 AT THE JOHN HUNT HOUSE

RECOLLECTION
MEMORIES ROUNDTABLE
 Past Presidents and Charter Members
 30 years of the Historical Society

Monday, May 20, 7:30 p.m.
 Newman Congregational Church

Regular Member's Meeting
 All Are Welcome

Accessions - Gifts

Virginia Berwick
Museum Chairman

GIFTS RECEIVED SINCE FEBRUARY

Lura Sellew - 1936 Central Jr. High "Blue Star" covers (which she had designed)
Isabelle Rich - 2 books, autographed by author, Burt Shurtleff.
Kit Rodman - Photograph of herself in a canoe at Crescent Park.
Filomena Bucci - 2 copies of East Providence "Community News"
Elizabeth Horton - Child's clothing, antique slippers, pants and socks; envelope from *Agawam Candy Shoppe*.
John Donahue - Autographed photograph of Theodore Francis Green.
Alfred Rezendes - 4 photos of postcards.
Virginia Whitcomb - Iron muffin pan.
Sidney Paine - Copy of book that he authored, "Stanley Paine I", story of builder of first mill at Hunt's Mills.
Lowell and Edna Anness - Antique *Ansonia* 30 day time and strike shelf clock.
George and Beverly Chalko - Antique yarn winder and covered earthenware 1/2 gal. baking pot.
Everett Enos - *Rumford Co.* photographs.
Ned and Thelma Clark - Wooden *Rumford Co.* box.
Antonio Braga - Photograph of old Phillipsdale store.

THANKS TO ALL!

NEW MEMBERS

WARM WELCOME TO OUR RECENT NEW MEMBERS:

Frances Miller
 Rita Cirella
 Mary M. McCusker
 Leslie L. O'Brien
 Dorothy E. Marshall
 Diane E. Bass

THEN and NOW

Waterman Avenue at Six Corners



ca. 1930



1996

If you are reading someone else's copy of the GAZETTE and you are interested in our activities and programs we invite you to become a member and enjoy the Society from the inside .. just fill out the coupon below and send it with your check.

If you are a MEMBER, today would be a good day to renew your membership, especially if you are one of the "June" members. By renewing now you assure your continued participation, as well as save the cost and labor of renewal notices and earning the affection of the Membership Chairman!

THE EAST•PROVIDENCE•HISTORICAL•SOCIETY

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

If you are not a member, we invite you to join now. Annual dues are \$10.00, individual or \$15.00, family. Please make your check payable to **East Providence Historical Society**, and mail with coupon below to:

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

EAST•PROVIDENCE•HISTORICAL•SOCIETY

NEW RENEWAL

NAME (s)

STREET

CITY

STATE

ZIP

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EAST PROVIDENCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

GAZETTE

ANNUAL
**HUNT'S MILLS
FAMILY
PICNIC**
Sunday, June 23, 1 to 5 p.m.

WIDE SELECTION OF GOURMET FOODS (HAMBURGERS & HOT DOGS)

AND FEATURING THE FAMOUS HUNT HOUSE STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE

Brass Band Concert from 2 to 4

&

RECOLLECTION

30TH ANNIVERSARY EXHIBIT AT THE HUNT HOUSE MUSEUM

All are WELCOME
Donation:
Members \$3.00
Guests \$6.00