



John Hunt House

Vol. VIII No. 9

## G A Z E T T E

RIGHT ON.

November 1996

## “IT ALL COMES OUT IN THE WASH” HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR ANTIQUE TEXTILES

Riverside Congregational Church is the location of our November 25<sup>th</sup> Members Meeting beginning at 7:30 p.m. Our speaker will be our volunteer curator, **Edna Anness**.

Edna retired from the teaching profession and changed careers. While studying for her Master's Degree in Historic Textiles and Decorative Arts at the University of Rhode Island, she obtained training in the conservation and preservation of historic textiles. These textiles were used in such articles as quilts, samplers and antique clothing. She will discuss what items can be or should not be washed, safe methods for washing, bleaching, storage and safe display.

Edna has lectured at handicraft clubs, antique dealer associations and at the University of Rhode Island Historic Textile Department. She also serves as a private consultant and conservator. If you have a problem piece, please bring it with you and maybe she can solve your problem.



# Board Briefs

We have long known that this Society is filled with talented people with many varied interests, so it was no surprise when member **Helen King** offered to speak on her work with natural dyes and fibers. But it certainly was a surprise when she treated us to a peek into her dye pot! After telling us about some fascinating bugs from South America, she disclosed that those very same bugs were now brewing in the vat, about to turn natural colored wool to beautiful red. Helen has been experimenting with dyestuffs and mordents for some years now and has lectured at Slater Mill and to other groups. She provided us with a brief, pithy history of the coloring of fabric and showed us examples of her own work using plant material found in this area. Thank you Helen for sharing your love of this subject with us.

And along that skein of thought, **Edna Anness**, our museum curator, will take the woven fabric idea a step further by instructing us in ways to care for our handmade heirlooms and favorite family pieces. Come hear Edna (bring an heirloom for us to see?) at the November 25<sup>th</sup> meeting at Riverside Congregational.

At the October meeting, the group decided to hold our annual holiday party at Newman Church. It seems we really have outgrown the Hunt House for our meetings. Please note on your calendars that the party is December 17<sup>th</sup>, one week earlier than usual, to avoid the hectic pace of Christmas week.

Happy to report that **Jewel Drickamer** has been found! We lost touch with her after she left the hospital in June. She is now living in Greenville, RI and doing very well. Also, **Howard Mersereau** is home after several weeks at St. Joseph's Rehab. Center. We missed his home-baked pie at the Ham and Bean Supper, but he had an opportunity to bake an apple pie for his new-found friends at the Center. The Potluck Supper is coming up in January, Howard!

The **Hospitality Committee Chairman** is vital to our group. That person secures the goodies consumed after meetings and other functions and serves as official greeter when needed. Mona Breault found us the best...

**Pat Henry**. Not only does Pat cook and greet expertly, she's involved in arts & crafts and who knows what else. Say "yes" when she requests.

## The GAZETTE

is published monthly by the  
**EAST•PROVIDENCE•HISTORICAL•SOCIETY**

EAST PROVIDENCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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Museum Curator	Edna Anness

## The GAZETTE

is printed at



1062 Willett Avenue, Riverside

## IN MEMORIAM

A donation was made to the Society's Memorial Fund in memory of **Hiram Wood**, who passed away in October. Hiram was a long-time member and former Vice-president of the Society.

*Sadly missed, fondly remembered.*

# AROUND THE HOUSE

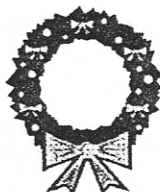
## Museum Committee

Virginia Berwick, Chairman

As was reported in the October Gazette, the Museum Committee has decided to have a decorating contest open to members and the East Providence community at large. If interested, call the Hunt House to make an appointment to select your decorating "spot" (438-1750). Selections may be made between November 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>.

You will set up the display on Saturday morning, December 7<sup>th</sup>. The entries will be judged by an impartial jury that afternoon. Ribbon awards will be made at a Tea and Reception on Sunday, December 8<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. The display will be open every Tuesday and Thursday for the rest of December from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, and on Sunday afternoons from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

We will need people to sit in the rooms on these days. If you can help, please call Virginia Berwick at 434-0998 or Edna Anness at 434-3347. You may also call the Hunt House at 438-1750. Please help! We need you and you might meet an old friend...like I did. One I hadn't seen since grammar school. *What fun we had reminiscing!*



## MEMORIAL FUND

The Society's Memorial Fund was established in 1993 in memory of past members for "the betterment of the Society and with no specific purpose." The Memorial Fund is a qualified endowment administered by the executive committee.

Members and friends wishing to contribute may make checks payable to the

East Providence Historical Society  
and mail to the Society at:

Box 4774  
East Providence, RI 02916

## Accessions - Gifts

### RECENT GIFTS TO THE MUSEUM:

Virginia Ripley - Large coffee-table size book: "Open House in America"

**THANK YOU!**

## NEW MEMBERS

Warm Welcome to Our New Member

Katherine Perkins



## Getting Acquainted

Doreen Bonney, Newsletter

My first reactions when asked to take over the duties of the Gazette from George Adams were "I'd love to, but I don't think I'll have the time." "I'll never fill George's shoes." "I'm not savvy enough about the history of East Providence."

But I took the job anyway. Why? Because I was born and raised in East Providence and have lived here for most of my life, and yet I know very little about it's history. I have become fascinated by the knowledge that the members of the Historical Society have accumulated over the years. I suddenly realized that if everyone excused themselves because of time restraints or lack of confidence there would be no one to continue the goals of the Historical Society. I'm sure there are many residents of this city who love to read about the people, places and events of the past that have made East Providence what it is today. My hope is to be able to present the Historical Society's information to you in a manner that will peak your interest. Will I fill George's shoes? Probably not. The important thing is that I got involved...and I love it.

# NOVEMBER

## Events

Monday, November 25, 7:30 p.m.  
 Member's Meeting  
 Riverside Congregational Church  
**Program: Edna Anness**  
**"It All Comes Out in the Wash" - How to**  
**Care For Your Antique Textiles.**



*Happy Thanksgiving*

# DECEMBER

## Events

Wednesday, December 4, 7:30 p.m.  
 Board Meeting, Hunt House

Sunday, December 8, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.  
**Christmas at Hunt House**  
 Tea and Reception

Tuesday, December 17, 7:00 p.m.  
 Newman Congregational Church  
**Members/Friends Christmas Party**



We wish to extend thanks to the people who helped with the Christmas Bazaar:

<b>Craft Workers:</b> Lura Sellow, Ginney Berwick, Helen Smith, Gladys Panzarella, Alice Hurd, Mona Breault, Doreen Bonney	<b>Bakery:</b> Pat Henry, Ruth Peirce
<b>Upstairs Sitters:</b> Kit Rodman, David Kelleher, Thelma Clark, Fran Gross, Fales Peirce	<b>Chances:</b> Lois Driscoll
<b>Servers:</b> Edward "Ned" Clark, Billie Arden	<b>Plants:</b> Sophie Allen
<b>Kitchen:</b> Florence Adams	<b>Grabs:</b> Lisa Berwick, Abby James
	<b>Played Santa in the rain:</b> Andy Valerio

And a great big THANK YOU to all who donated gifts of food or in any other way who helped with the Bazaar!



### 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, individual or \$15, family. Please make your check payable to East Providence Historical Society, and mail with coupon below to:

**MONA BREault**  
 34 Josephine Avenue  
 Rumford, RI 02916

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STREET \_\_\_\_\_

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# The Three Railroads of East Providence

By Brookes Porter

[This is a continuation from the October Gazette of an article written by Brookes Porter, who resides in Rumford]

The Providence & Worcester Railroad The second railroad to be chartered was the **Providence & Worcester Railroad**, formed in 1844. This was the railroad that built the Providence Union Station on the land that was filled into the cove at the basin of the Woonasquatucket and Moshassuck Rivers in Providence (now Water Place Park). Originally, the P & W was not interested in what is now East Providence, but some thirty years later it discovered a "golden nugget" that was located on the Providence River near Watchemoket Square. The railroad was so anxious to obtain this "nugget" that it built the East Providence extension from Valley Falls through Pawtucket and what is now the Phillipsdale section of East Providence. This "nugget" was the **Wilkes-Barre Pier at Bold Point**, which was across the Seekonk River from Fox Point.

Why was the Pier so important to the Providence & Worcester Railroad? **COAL!** The Pier was extremely successful and was the chief reason for the wealthy state of the railroad. In 1880 alone, 473 ships docked at the Wilkes-Barre Pier to unload coal, most of which was carried by the Providence & Worcester to inland parts of New England. Another report for the year 1913 stated that 530 ships carrying 10,000,000 tons of coal docked at the Pier and again the railroad did a tremendous business carrying the coal inland.

The P & W Railroad was also very important to the Town of East Providence (by now, that part of Seekonk just east of the Seekonk and Providence Rivers had been transferred to Rhode Island and named East Providence). Just north of Omega Pond and between the Seekonk River and the railroad were wire mills, steel mills and textile mills, all of which became excellent customers of the railroad. Because the **Phillips family** owned the steel and wire mills, the area became known as **Phillipsdale**.

## THE CONSOLIDATED RAILROAD

The third railroad to operate in the City of East Providence was the **Providence, Warren & Bristol Railroad** which was chartered in 1850 and began service on January 18, 1855. The **Fall River, Warren & Providence Railroad** began operations in 1865 with a line from Fall River joining the Providence, Warren and Bristol tracks in Warren. The two railroads operated joint trains and merged into one company known from that time on as the **Consolidated Railroad**.

The Providence station was at India Point, in the same location as the first Boston & Providence Railroad station. The railroad crossed the Seekonk River on the India Point Bridge and followed the Providence River and Narragansett Bay shore lines through East Providence to the Barrington town line. According to the 1892 engineers map of East Providence, the Consolidated served the following stations within the Town:

- (1) unnamed station at the foot of Juniper Street
- (2) Kettle Point Station
- (3) Squantum Station
- (4) Silver Spring Station
- (5) Unnamed Station

- (6) Pomham Station
- (7) Riverside Station (Lewis Station)
- (8) Bullocks Point Station (later Crescent Park Station)

The trains were drawn by small steam locomotives and the round house (engine house) was located at the foot of Mauran Avenue.

Later, during the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the **Seekonk River Bridge** and the **East Side Tunnel** were built and the railroad was electrified from Providence Union Station to Fall River and Bristol. It was at this time that the East Providence passenger station was built at **Watchemoket Square**.

In the south end of East Providence was a station called Lewis Station. With the coming of the railroad, developers arrived and the first summer recreation facilities appeared in the 1860's. The station's name was changed to **Riverside** and this three to four mile strip of land along the Bay from Silver Spring to Bullocks Point became known as the "**Coney Island of New England**".

[Historical Society note: This area was known as Cedar Grove]

In 1907, **Vanity Fair** was opened close by the Silver Spring Station. On opening day, over 25,000 people came to the new fabulous amusement park by boat or by the Consolidated trains. When completed, **Vanity Fair would become the largest amusement park in the world**. Unfortunately the park soon ran into financial difficulties and it was never completed. In 1912 it was destroyed by fire. In 1915, Socony Oil Company (now Mobil Oil Company) purchased the Vanity Fair site and established its refinery, storage tanks and dock. By then, the Consolidated Railroad was owned by the **New Haven Railroad** which built a spare track under Pawtucket Avenue to the refinery. In 1996 the dock and most of the tanks are still there and the land between the dock and Pawtucket Avenue is owned by Silver Spring Golf Course.

The Consolidated division of the New Haven Railroad no longer exists. Trains to Fall River ended in the late 1920's when the bridge over the Taunton River was damaged by a stray steamship and was never repaired. Service continued to Bristol until World War II but in the 1930's the electric trains were discontinued and the passenger trains were diesel rail cars with one or two trailers.

## THE RAILROADS TODAY

All three railroads became part of the New Haven Railroad system about 1888 and for many years the railroad was the largest tax payer in East Providence. Today the New Haven no longer exists - along with the Boston & Providence Railroad and the Consolidated Railroad. The Providence & Worcester Railroad, however, existed as a corporation and was only leased by the New Haven Railroad. The P & W is the sole operator of freight service in East Providence as well as the entire State of Rhode Island. The State owns the old Boston & Providence line through East Providence to the Massachusetts state line, and has recently been upgrading it. The Consolidated Railroad right-of-way is now the **East Bay Bike Path**. The Wilkes-Barre Pier is still in use by the **Getty Oil Company**.

[Mr. Porter thanks the Providence and E.P. Public Libraries, City and Town Clerks of Seekonk and E.P. and Dr. Erhardt.]



## *Annual Christmas Party*

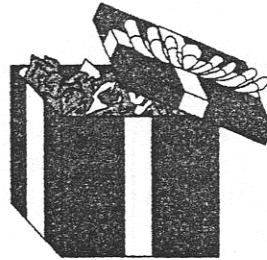
*Tuesday, December 17<sup>th</sup> .....7:00 p.m.*

*Newman Congregational Church*

*Refreshments*

*Yankee Swap*

*(bring a wrapped gift to participate)*



*If you'd like to you may bring a gift for the Hunt House:*

Paper Towels	Toilet Paper	Hand Soap
Small Paper Pads	Paper Napkins	4X6 File Cards
Paper/Plastic Coffee Cups	Metal Bookends	Spic 'n Span
Old Clean White Sheets	Cotton Batting	Air Freshener
Unbleached Cotton	Trash Bags	Pens (Bic Clic)
\$\$ For Museum Supplies	Paper Clips	Rubber Gloves
Large Green Felt Cover for Library Table		... Etc...



*Members and Friends of the Society Welcome*

**EAST•PROVIDENCE•HISTORICAL•SOCIETY**  
**MARKER PROGRAM**

Your Home May Be Eligible for a MARKER



Any building in the City of East Providence which contributes to the historical development or architectural character of the City is eligible to be considered for a historical marker.

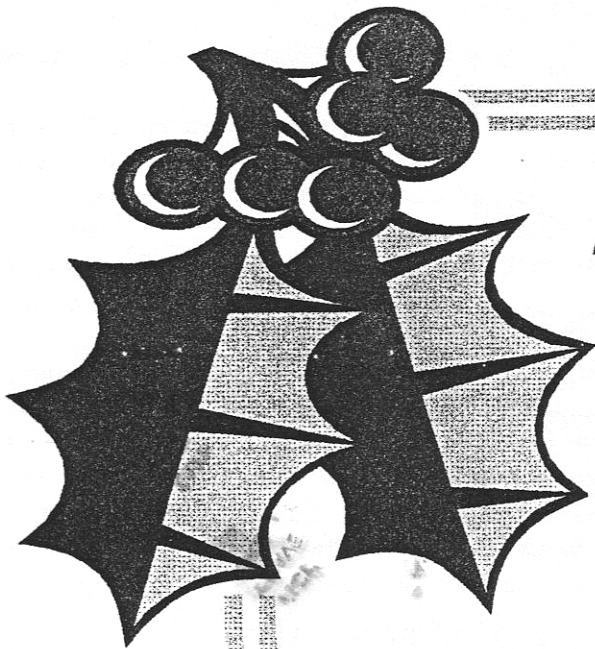
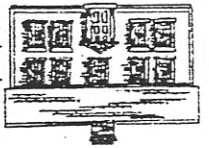
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The Marker Program  
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P.O. Box 4774  
East Providence, RI 02916-4774

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*Come Join us for*  
**“Christmas at the Hunt House”**  
*Help us decorate.*  
**You could win an award!**  
*(details inside in Museum Committee Column)*  
**Awards will be given at a Tea and Reception**  
**Sunday, December 8, 1-4 pm at the Hunt House**  
*The House will be on display*  
**Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9-12**  
**& Sundays from 1-4 through December.**