



John Hunt House

Vol. IX No. 1

RIGHT ON.

January 1997

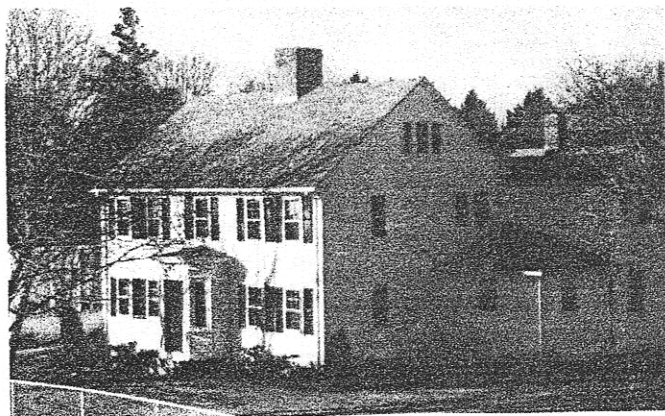
Pot Luck Supper & Business Meeting

According to Bergan Evans, word usage authority, pot luck is a useful contraction for “if you are willing to eat whatever happens to be prepared for supper, knowing that since you are not expected it may be plain fare. It would be tedious and a little pompous to say it that way. None the less, the triteness of ‘take potluck’ may belie the heartiness with which the invitation is usually extended.”

To paraphrase: If you are willing to eat whatever happens to be prepared for supper, knowing that since you are expected to bring your special dish it will be anything but plain fare, we offer a hearty invitation to you and your friends to join us on Monday, January 27, 6 p.m., Newman Church to take “potluck”.

The telephone committee will be calling the membership for a main dish, salad or dessert AND the number of people in your party.

A lively business meeting will follow starring President Les Haworth, the Board of Directors and.....YOU! Bring your ideas and questions.



Pictured above is the **IDE HOUSE** c.1780, which is on the recently purchased Providence Country Day School property. The building was repaired and painted last fall through the efforts of the City Manager, Parks Dept. and Fanja Painting.

Historic House Receives Marker

by Kris Rose, Chairman, Markers Committee

The Marker Committee is pleased to report that the house at 18 Fourth Street is the first to receive a Historical Society Marker in 1997. **Leslie L. O'Brien** and **James A. Cook** are the owners of the house, also known as the **Charles Pierce House** (Pierce Field).

The house was built between 1882 and 1893 and has simple **Queen Anne Revival** details. The owners painted and did repair work during the summer of 1996.

Congratulations to Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Cook for their foresight in preserving this important piece of East Providence history.

More About the Railroads

My daughter, Mrs. Tamiko Stumpe of Rumford, sent me copies of the interesting railroad articles in the October and November issues of the *Gazette*. The author, Mr. Brookes Porter, correctly and interestingly presented his well-researched “The Three Railroads of East Providence”, but erred in correcting the author of an earlier article about Crescent Park – that he had not seen “trolleys” crossing the trestle to the east of Crescent Park, but saw the trains of the then New Haven Railroad. It is a sure bet that the earlier author **did** see trolleys on trestles across Bullock Cove from the Park. There were two opportunities to do so. First was the Consolidated Railroad, which Mr. Porter describes, while the New Haven Railroad operated it electrically from 1901 until 1938. The interurban trolleys of this line drew their electric power from overhead copper wires (the *trolley wire*) through steel roof-mounted poles (the *trolley poles*) with grooved bronze wheels at their ends (the *trolley wheel*). Some of the cars were rebuilt as trolley cars from former railroad coaches and others were built anew as trolley cars by the J.G.Brill Co. of Philadelphia. These ran from Providence through East Providence to Bristol and to Fall River, the line branching at Warren. The other opportunity to see trolleys from Crescent Park was the Rhode Island Company’s competing trolley line to the same places, Bristol and Fall River. The track crossed Bullock Cove on a trestle which later served for many years as a pedestrian bridge after the trolley service was discontinued.

The three railroads were not the only tracks that traversed East Providence. The Rhode Island Company and several cross-country trolley companies served the city, too. Leaving Providence on the now-closed Waterman Ave. Bridge, tracks continued on Waterman Ave. through Six Corners to Luthers Corner at the state line, and the Providence and Fall River Railway Company continued from there to Fall River. A branch turned immediately northeast from the Waterman Ave. Bridge and followed Massasoit Ave, No. Broadway, Newman Ave. through Rumford, Pawtucket Ave. to East Providence Station, and Pleasant St. to Hunt’s Mills with a continuation on private right-of-way to Taunton Ave. at the state line. (continued on pg. 2: **Railroads**)

Board Briefs

Great thanks to our hospitality crew of Pat Henry, Mona Breault and Mary McManus for a beautiful and delicious light supper at the Christmas party. We're not sure if it was the food or the singing which brought about a visit from Santa himself, but the venerable fellow appeared for the infamous Yankee Swap. For a while it seemed that most people were quite content to keep the package they had opened. But then the Seagrams package was opened and the fun began. Soon, a bottle of wine and some lottery tickets heightened the excitement. But, the best was yet to come: a wooden rocking horse patriotic plaque, the hot item of the night. Hope you got something you really liked!

MONEY REALLY DOES GROW ON TREES

The Society has the opportunity to use the sale of the **Rhode Island Notable Tree Calendar** as a fundraiser and it is available through March. This gorgeous calendar has special appeal to East Providence residents because the huge white oak at the historic Bridgham Farm Conservation Land is the featured tree for December. The calendar has 12 color plates of exceptional trees from all over Rhode Island along with an informational piece about each tree type and lore about the specific tree. This calendar is one to keep for future reference as you plan trips around the state searching these trees out. Each calendar is \$10.00 with \$4.00 going to the Society. We hope you will tell your friends about this chance to support this project and the Society. Please call Nancy Moore at 438-4299 to order your calendar.

Railroads (continued from pg. 1)

Leaving Providence on the since-replaced Warren Ave. Bridge, tracks turned northeast via Taunton Ave. through Six Corners to the state line and the Old Colony St. Railway Co./Bay State St. Railway Co. continued east to Taunton. From the Warren Ave. Bridge, another line continued in Warren Ave, Pawtucket Ave. and Bullocks Point Rd. to Crescent Park. Branching from this line on private right-of-way (including the trestle over Bullocks Cove), then Willits Ave. out of East Providence on its way to Bristol with a branch from Barrington due east toward Fall River. From Warren Ave., a crosstown line ran north in No. Broadway through Six Corners, in Roger Williams Ave. through Phillipsdale, and in Pawtucket Ave./Prospect St. into Pawtucket. Perhaps Mr. Porter would be interested in similarly researching these street railways.

The New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad's trolley service from Providence to Bristol and Fall River was an early-day version of what we today call "light-rail transit" (LRT), the versatile mode of transportation enjoyed by nearly 30 North American cities, including Buffalo. The lightly-used and abandoned railroads of metropolitan Providence afford excellent opportunities to introduce LRT relatively inexpensively compared with having to build all new alignments from scratch. In cities such as Portland, Sacramento and San Jose, local historical organizations find great interest in the operation of vintage trolley cars on the LRT tracks. Of course many other places, such as Lowell, operate vintage trolleys in the absence of LRT systems. Best Wishes!

Gordon J. Thompson,

Urban Transportation Planner/Consultant

32 Highgate Ave, University Heights., Buffalo, NY 14214

The GAZETTE

is published monthly by the

EAST•PROVIDENCE•HISTORICAL•SOCIETY

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The
GAZETTE
is printed at



1062 Willett Avenue, Riverside

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
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New Members

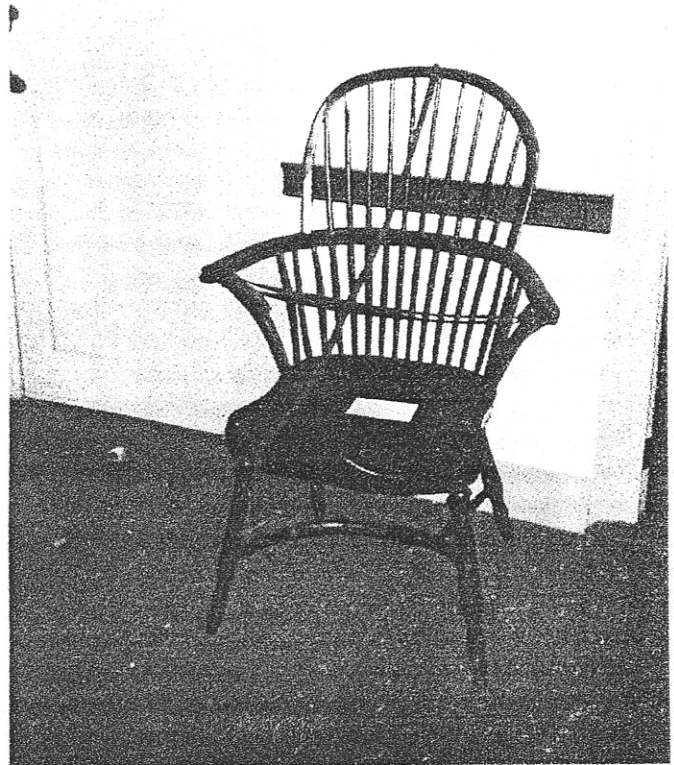
Warm Welcome to Our New Member
Charlene Underhill

From the Attic *Edna Anness, Museum Curator*

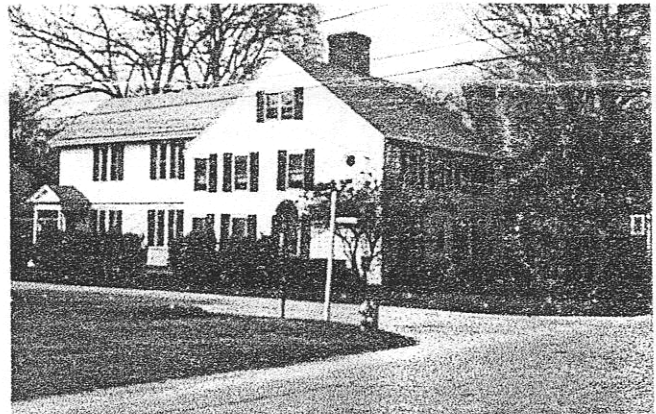
A piece of history arrived at the museum last month in the form of the beautiful early 18th century Windsor armchair pictured here. The donor, **Elsie Bushnell Williams**, remarked that "it was time that the chair came back home to Rehoboth". For you see, when it first arrived in Rehoboth after the Revolutionary War it was located in the **Abell House** on the corner of what is today Huntington Drive and Greenwood Avenue. During the Revolutionary War, sea captains were licensed as privateers to take British goods as prizes of war. Captain Zebediah Shepardson, who was sailing on the sloop "The Resolute", received this English-style Windsor chair from a British merchantman. Captain Shepardson's daughter, Elona, married Caleb Abell of Rehoboth and the chair was in her home on Greenwood Avenue. It has passed down through the family for five generations until it reached Mrs. Williams, who decided to return the chair to "Rehoboth".

Some of you may wonder, "Where is the Abell House?" The first Abell House was built by Preserved Abell on the Ring of the Green in the early years of the Town of Rehoboth. King Philip of the Wampanoag Indian Tribe was a close friend of Preserved and visited his home often. According to legend, King Philip sat in a chair taken from the Abell House in 1676 and watched the Ring of the Green burn. That chair is in a Boston museum today. According to the Providence Sunday Journal article dated January 26, 1902, the house was probably rebuilt in c. 1702 and the Abell family continued to live there. "In 1802 Caleb Abell was elected Town Clerk of Rehoboth. When Rehoboth became Seekonk in 1812, Caleb Abell was elected Town Clerk of Seekonk and retained the office as long as he lived." He was succeeded by his son Preserved Thompson Abell who held the post until 1851. It was Caleb's wife who brought the chair to Greenwood Avenue. The Abell House was bought by William and Ruth Arnold in c. 1855 for her nephew Harrison Hill and his wife Anna. It has remained in the Hill family to this day. Huntington Drive was originally the driveway to the barn behind the Abell House. The original foundation from the 17th century house is intact and the huge stones used to build the foundation and several interior cellar walls which still stand are most interesting. The rear addition was added in 1881.

The Society is so fortunate that Mrs. Williams so generously donated the chair to our Museum. Who knows... Caleb probably used this chair to preside as Town Clerk, for it was not uncommon in those days to hold town meetings in private homes.



18th Century Windsor Chair Donated by Elsie Williams



The Abell House located on Greenwood Avenue

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 check payable to:

East Providence Historical Society
Mail to: Mona Breault
34 Josephine Avenue
Rumford, RI 02916

New Renewal Amount Enclosed \$ _____

Name(s) _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

ACCESSIONS - GIFTS

Elsie Williams - 18th Century Windsor armchair which once was in the Abell House at 66 Greenwood Ave.

Gloria Meservey - Research on buildings in Riverside.

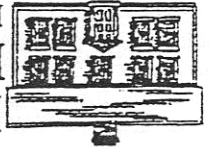
Paul and Helen Nelson - Bride doll which was used for many years in the June wedding floral display at Gilmore Florist Shop; three Hunt's Mills postcards.

Dorothy Marshall - Antique rug beater.

Marilyn Brewer - East Providence High School band picture from 1942.

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P.O. Box 4774, EAST PROVIDENCE, RI 02916



JANUARY

Events

Monday, January 27, 6:00 p.m.
Pot Luck/Members Meeting, Newman
Church

FEBRUARY

Events

Wednesday, February 5, 7:30 p.m.
Board Meeting, Hunt House
Newsletter Deadline
Monday, February 24, 7:30 p.m.
Members Meeting, Riverside Cong'l
Church

Mark Zelonis,
Exec. Director Heritage Trust of R.I.
Subject: *Philip Walker House*
No. Broadway/Massasoit Ave.
East Providence, R.I.

888

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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East Providence Historical Society
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