

EAST • PROVIDENCE • HISTORICAL • SOCIETY



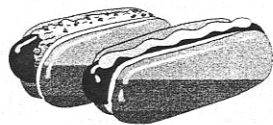
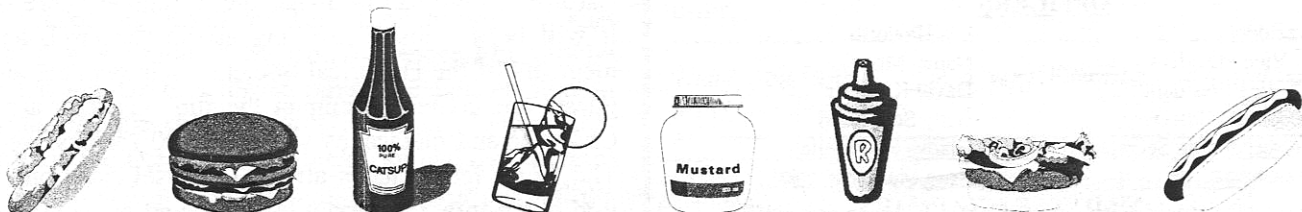
GAZETTE

John Hunt House

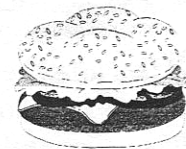
Vol. IX No. 16

RIGHT ON.

June 1998



ANNUAL PICNIC



MONDAY, JUNE 22, 1998

HUNTS MILLS, RUMFORD

(Off Pawtucket Ave. before the Seekonk line)

“DOORS” OPEN AT 5:00 PM

Dinner served at 5:30 pm



HOT DOGS, HAMBURGERS, ASSORTED SALADS

...and



Strawberry Shortcake!!!

Members \$\$\$3.00

Non-members \$\$\$6.00

The Telephone Committee will call members for salads and reservations

## Board Briefs

Many thanks to **Mary McManus, Pat Henry and Mona Breault** for the goodies they baked for the May meeting.

### The GAZETTE

is published monthly by the

**EAST•PROVIDENCE•HISTORICAL•SOCIETY**

P.O. Box 4774, East Providence, RI 02916-4774

(401) 438-1750

#### OFFICERS

President	Les Haworth
1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President	Nancy Moore
2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice President	David Kelleher
Recording Secretary	Betty Soderlund
Corresponding Secretary	Gladys Panzarella
Treasurer	Rose Marie Sirenski

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Museum	Mona Breault
Museum Curator	Virginia Berwick
Newsletter	Edna Anness
Preservation	Doreen Bonney
Publicity	Les Haworth
	Florence Adams

The  
GAZETTE  
is printed at



3 Crescent View Avenue, Riverside

## From the Attic

*Edna Anness, Museum Curator*

Because this is the last newsletter before next September, we include an explanation of September's meeting on Sept. 28<sup>th</sup> at the Carousel. We are attempting to recreate a typical 1930/1940 visit to Crescent Park, which always included chowder and clamcakes and rides on the Carousel. (We can no longer get a regular shore dinner.) It will be a "closed" evening at the Carousel, and only members of the Historical Society, their families and their guests are invited to join in the fun. Tickets are \$5.00. Chowder and clamcakes will be \$3.00 (drinks are extra). The \$2.00 fee includes all the Carousel rides one can fit into two hours, (while not eating!), and covers the cost of operating the Carousel for two hours. No profit will be made from the evening. If you do not care to eat, the charge is \$2.00.

We will be selling tickets at the Hunt House in September, or taking reservations. The cooks need to have some idea of the number of "eaters" to expect.

This evening will be the closest thing we can get to an old-fashioned visit to the "Park". Come join the fun - either to participate or observe. Ron Joynes will explain the operation of the Carousel during a brief intermission.



Keep looking through your closets for remnants of the Park. **Dave Kelleher** is re-stuffing his JAILHOUSE dummy and **Rep. Weygand** is loaning us his grandfather's violin and photos of Charlie Weygand's Band. **George Adams** is putting together a spectacular video of Crescent Park with music, which will be shown during exhibition hours at the Museum. We will be collecting the mementos in September to prepare the displays.



The 1886 poster of George Boyden's Crescent Park will be for sale at the PICNIC - \$20.00 plus tax. Limited Edition/numbered.

## ACCESSIONS - GIFTS

**Fred and Alice Reinhardt** - Barber's Dairy cream can and advertising brochures for Bromage and Tuthill.

**John Agren** - His grandfather's framed membership in the Lincoln Society and several xeroxed photos of the Rumford Oleo Factory.



*Thank you.*

*Your generosity is greatly appreciated!*

## Election of Officers

*Florence Adams, Chairman, Nominating Committee*

The following officers will be elected by a vote of the recording secretary at the June 22 Annual Meeting/Picnic. They are the Nominating Committee's recommendations. No candidates were nominated from the floor at the May members meeting.

<b>President</b>	<b>Les Haworth</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Vice President</b>	<b>Nancy Moore</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President</b>	<b>Dave Kelleher</b>
<b>Recording Secretary</b>	<b>Betty Soderlund</b>
<b>Corresponding Secretary</b>	<b>Gladys Panzarella</b>
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Rose Marie Sirenski</b>

Thanks to **Billie Arden, Mona Breault and Marjorie Welt** for serving on the committee.

## New Members

**Warm Welcome to Our New Members**

**Pat Paulson McGrail**  
**Althea McAleer**

The • East • Providence • Historical • Society

*In cooperation with*

**The East Providence Carousel Commission**

*announce the Exhibition Entitled*

**"CRESCENT PARK: CONEY ISLAND OF THE EAST"**

**LIST OF FALL PROGRAMS**

*September 27, 1998*

**THE OPENING OF THE EXHIBITION**

*Sunday from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the*

*John Hunt House Museum*

*Hunts Mills Road, Rumford*

**The exhibition will continue until December 27, 1998**

**Tues. and Thurs., 9 a.m. - 12 noon, Sundays, 1 - 3 p.m.**

*September 28, 1998*

**Members Night at the Crescent Park Carousel**

*An Old-Fashioned Evening of Chowder and Clamcakes*

*and Riding the Carousel*

**Commentary on Carousel Operation by Ron Joynes**

*6:00 to 8:00 p.m. General Admission \$5.00--- without chowder & clamcakes \$2.00*

*October 6, 1998*

**Slide/Lecture "The History of Amusement Parks"**

*By Dr. Don Wilmetb of Brown University*

**Riverside Congregational Church 7:30 p.m. Refreshments**

*November 23, 1998*

**Slide Presentation on Crescent Park** *By Edward Serowik*

**E. P. Senior Center, Pawtucket Ave. 7:30 p.m. Refreshments**

**Across from the new Providence Country Day Campus - Ample Parking**

## Riverside Square

by Althea Hall McAleer

Riverside Square was a lively place in the 20's and 30's. There were stores, shops, services, train and trolley lines. Everyone knew his neighbors and news and gossip circulated freely. It was before the invasion of supermarket chains, before anyone had imagined a shopping mall, and before automobiles (called "machines" by some of us) had created traffic jams. Its mix of small stores and services gave surrounding residents most necessities except for furniture. For that you had to go "up city". I didn't realize then that its seeming prosperity was a hold-over from the days when Riverside was a summer resort, and that the Square was already doomed when I was a child.

The buildings in the Square were mostly of two stories and of wood. The upper, shabby with peeling paint, had projecting bay windows, while the lower had fairly well maintained store fronts and show windows. My father had a store in the Square, the Riverside News Company, one of two distribution points for the Providence Journal, Evening Bulletin, Providence Tribune, Providence News Tribune and other papers of the past as well as Boston and New York papers. He also carried a fascinating (forbidden to be looked at by me) line of pulp magazines with garishly illustrated covers.

The store was frequently the destination of my mother, sister and me as we walked from our home on Pawtucket Ave. to the Square. Our route took us past druggist Jim Johnson's Dutch colonial house, the "lightening splitter" house with its sharply pointed roof, the Hurley's house on the left, the Read Dairy business outlet presided over by Mr. And Mrs. Perez Read (the cows were in Seekonk), the Riverside Grammar School (before it became Riverside Junior High) where our neighbor Miss Hannah Read taught, past the brick Gas House, the Downey estate, and finally to the New Haven Railroad tracks which bisected the Square. This was a grade crossing with double gates and a crossing tender whose days were spent in a tiny shack-like building. As a train approached he would emerge, crank down the gates and hold up a round sign with "STOP" lettered on it. Trains ran frequently from Providence to Bristol with many local stops. The newspapers came in on the 3:30 p.m. train, and we paper carriers struggled with the bundles across the Square to the News Company where we picked up our loads for delivery. This train route is now the East Bay Bike Path.

At the end of Pawtucket Ave., where Turner Ave. came in from the east, was a large iron horse trough, though by my time it was no longer used. Bruseny's Cobbler Shop, smelling of leather and shoe polish, its floor sloping gently eastward, stood where St. Mark's Church parking lot now lies. "Old" St. Mark's Church, shingled, with round

pointed-roof bell tower, stood on the site of the present church. At a later date Babcock's Variety Store stood north of the cobbler shop, selling notions and sundries and much more from its somewhat chaotic inventory.

Crossing the railroad tracks we were then in the Square proper. Here was a second set of tracks, the trolley line running from Providence to the loop at Crescent Park and the return to Providence. At one time, trolleys ran to Fall River, crossing Bullocks Cove on the terrifying wooden "trestle". (In later years we even dared to cross it - I once did it in the mid-40's while pushing a baby in a stroller. Numerous planks in the rickety walk were missing, giving me a fine scary view of the water below.)

Riverside had two drug stores, Johnson's on the corner of Lincoln Ave., south of the News Company, and McGowan's to the north. Between the News Company and McGowan's was a door with a stairway leading to rooms above the stores where mysterious men lived. Beyond McGowan's was an airy, high-ceilinged place with tile floors, wire-backed chairs, a few tables and, I think, a soda fountain. Johnson's seems, in retrospect, more like today's drug store.

On Lincoln Ave., Penniman's Market, with sawdust on the floor, supplied meats and produce. The cashier was enclosed in a wire cage containing a lethal spindle for impaling orders. Next to Penniman's was the tiny brick post office. Farther down the street on the opposite side was the Chinese laundry, where we took men's detachable collars to be washed and starched. Later, Trombley's moved next door. The Riverside Library, the Square's other brick building, with its hoard of musty-smelling old books and modest supply of new ones, was just beyond Trombley's. Upstairs was a meeting room.

The south corner of Bullocks Point and Lincoln Avenues had a succession of occupants. In my childhood, the Misses Burke ran a dry goods store there, followed by King's Drug Store, and Phyllis Hudson's dress shop. Burke's had moved across the street. Frank Raymond's hardware store was just south of Burke's original location. Much later it became a Five-and Ten, then the New York wiener store, still there. Next, south, Mr. Bucci ran a tailoring and men's furnishings shop. Around the corner on Maple Ave. stood the Lyric Theater. (We were not allowed to go there until our early teens because our mother was sure our minds would be warped by immoral movie scenes.)

Across from Bucci's, Kenneth Roberts remembers Buck's Gulf Station, which sold a delightful-smelling NoNox Ethyl. The hose was hung from a boom which swung out over the sidewalk. Much later in the 50's a small fish market occupied the space.

The old railroad station, still standing, took on new character as a Laundromat and is now a restaurant. North of

(continued on Page 5)

**Riverside Square** (continued from page 4)

the station was the Curran & Burton Coal Company office with Railway Express in the rear, reincarnated as the Bee Hive Gift Shop. The building has since disappeared.

Across Bullocks Point Ave. was "The Maze". Originally a summer tent colony, its streets were laid out in curves and circles impossible to figure where one street ended and another began. In my childhood, tents had been replaced by small houses. According to Ken Roberts, it was designed by Col. Lysander Flagg, who modeled it similar to a development he had created in California. At the entrance to "The Maze", Riverside's lumber yard, the Diamond Match Co., spread over several acres. This was a favorite shopping place for me, since I was into carpentry at that time - bird houses, wooden tool boxes and other articles inflicted on my parents and grandparents. McConnell - Watson Funeral Home was once in the square, in what had been a picturesque one-story house just north of A.D. Trombley.

A traffic beacon stood in the square at one time, the precise spot escapes me. In the 30's at Christmas time a huge electric candle was put up where the horse trough once stood, and local church choirs gathered 'round to sing carols in the early evening.

Gradually, almost imperceptibly, in the 30's the Square began its inevitable decline. My father sold the news store and moved to a "hole in the wall" on Lincoln Ave. Penniman's had closed earlier, the space taken by Piggly-Wiggly. Across the street a narrow Mayflower Grocery came in, becoming the First National Store. McGowan's demise was probably in the late 20's, while Johnson's was still viable in the early 50's. Trombley, after moving to Lincoln Ave., ceased business in the early 40's. The post office moved first to Pawtucket Ave., and much later to Willet Ave. The Riverside branch of the E. P. Public Library moved to the Jr. High building, which in turn moved into a new building off Forbes St.

Recently I passed through the Square and noticed a few survivors from the past: the wiener hot dog place, and Bucci's tailoring store. I missed the town clock which was once on the south side of the railroad crossing, but Ken told me it lives just north of the merry-go-round at Crescent Park. There were many other businesses on the streets branching from the Square, names familiar but no longer vivid in memory as to location. Brownell & Hinman, plumbers, Miner's barber shop, Henry Tyler's restaurant, Dr. Theodore Haskell's home and office. (He was the physician who pulled me through bronchial pneumonia in 1925). I remember at age twelve, Estes Knight, the village policeman dressing me down for careening around the corner in my wagon. I was reduced

to tears, and my father came out and dressed Officer Knight down!

I look back with fondness to that Square of the late 20's and early 30's. Those of my generation who may read this will doubtless have different and additional memories of the Square. I am much indebted to Kenneth Roberts who still lives in Riverside and remembers the Square from roughly the same era. He refreshed my memory on a number of items, and gently corrected me when I was in error.

*Thank you, Althea, for a very interesting and well-written article.*  
-The Gazette

**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


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Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_



**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**



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## Events Calendar

### JULY

Wednesday, July 8, 7:30 p.m.  
**Board Meeting**  
John Hunt House

### SEPT.

Wednesday, September 2, 7:30 p.m.  
**Board Meeting**  
John Hunt House

## SCHOOL PROGRAMS PRESENTED IN MAY AND JUNE

Edna Anness and Virginia Berwick:

Myron Francis School, Bus Tour, Grade 4  
Meadowcrest School, House Tour, Grade 4

Dave Kelleher:

Orlo Ave. School, Bus Tour and Slides, Grade 5

Edna, Virginia, Diana McLean, Dave, and Charlotte Underhill:

Orlo 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Tour of Hunt House and  
Conservation Walk, Slides

*Have a Super Summer!*

