



# Swing Into Spring

Monday, April 26, 7:30 p.m.

Post 10 American Legion, 830 Willett Avenue, Riverside

The *Strictly Sentimental Swing Band* of Riverside, Ed Madden, Leader, will play for our dancing and listening pleasure.

**ADMISSION IS BY TICKET ONLY.**  
And donation is \$5.00 per person

The telephone committee will call the membership to take reservations and ask for donations of home baked cookies or bars to be served with punch. Tickets will be held at the door for payment. Reservations may also be made by calling the society at 438-1750.

We thank Don and Annette Akers and the Post 10 members for their continued support and enthusiasm for this affair.



## MORE ON THE STREETS

Two more families memorialized by street names, Holmes and Dexter. Then George Page came along with his "Fiction and Fact from George Page's Almanac" and adds the family-named streets of Luther, Knowlton, Little, Leonard, Mason, Wheeler, Weldon, Webster, Williams, Winslow, Winsor, and Medbury. Also, the ABC streets off Taunton Avenue, Ayr, Berry, Clee, Dey. Fay and Gould were platted but never built. Any more?

EAST • PROVIDENCE • HISTORICAL • SOCIETY

*Evening of  
Alhambra*

*Ballroom  
Memories*

*Dance to the music of the thirties, forties & fifties  
with the seventeen piece*

**Strictly Sentimental Swing Band**

*Playing the arrangements of Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Duke Ellington and all Your Favorites  
in the magnificent ballroom high atop*

*Post 10 American Legion  
830 Willett Avenue, Riverside*

*Monday April 26, 7:30 p.m.*

*Donation, \$5.00 per person*

*Tickets on sale at Post 10*

LIMITED number of tickets available ...for reservations telephone the E.P. Historical Society at (401) 438-1750 ...or Post 10 at (401) 433-9859

## Board Briefs

A nominating committee will be in place shortly to seek out members considering running for elective office. We are searching for candidates for all six positions. Nominations from the floor will also be accepted at the May meeting only. Elections will be held at the annual meeting in June.



### School tours will be resuming soon.

May 11	Orlo Avenue School
May 18	Hennessey School
May 19	Whitenacht School
May 25	Whitenacht School
May 27	Kent Heights School

We will be contacting the docents in May

## 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

### COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Buildings	Earl Berwick
Grounds	Ray Anderson
Markers	Kris Rose
Membership	Mona Breault
Museum	Virginia Berwick
Museum Curator	Edna Anness
Newsletter	Doreen Bonney
Preservation	Les Haworth
Publicity	Florence Adams

The  
**GAZETTE**  
 is printed at



3 Crescent View Avenue, Riverside

## New Members

Warm Welcome to Our New Member  
**George Rodericks**



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 with form below to:

**Mona Breault**

**34 Josephine Avenue**

**Rumford, RI 02916**

New  Renewal

Amount Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

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**

## From the Attic

by Edna Anness, Museum Curator

As spring weather approaches and we begin our pastoral walks along the banks of the **Turner Reservoir**, let us pause to recall the man for whom the reservoir was named. The reservoir was just called "the reservoir" until 1962, having been created by the Town of East Providence in 1930 when the large dam was built on the Ten Mile River to improve the water supply for East Providence.

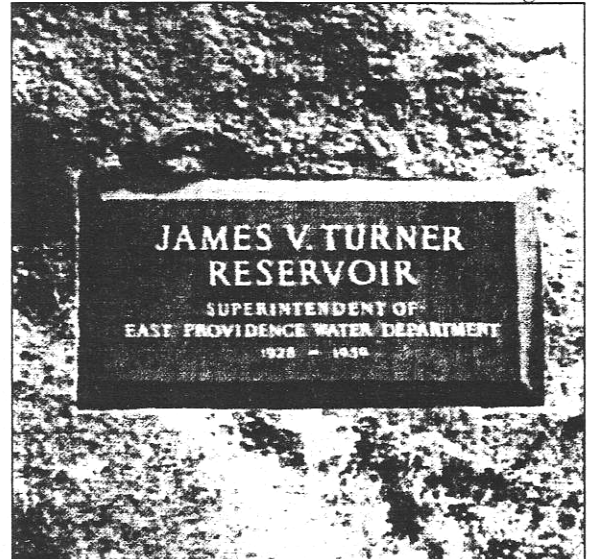


*James Varnum Turner 1884 - 1962*

**James Varnum Turner** started work for the Town of East Providence shortly after the Town had bought some forty acres from the private East Providence Water Company in 1928 (the area now known as Hunt's Mills). He served as the **Superintendent of the Water Department** for thirty-one years. He had graduated from Brown University in 1909 and served for twenty-one years as a Professional Civil Engineer with the U. S. Geodetic Survey Service and as Resident Engineer for the construction of the Scituate Reservoir.

He was a member of numerous historical and civic groups and in the 1950's he served on the **Rhode Island Water Resources Commission** by appointment of **Governor Dennis J. Roberts**. Mr. Turner died in 1962, two years after retirement.

On June 8, 1963 a large group assembled on the banks of the Reservoir to dedicate the reservoir to the memory of Mr. Turner. **Senator Claiborne Pell** gave the address. **Councilman Daniel Marso** was Master of Ceremonies and the Mayor then was **Raymond L. Murray, Jr.** Since that day the reservoir is always referred to as the **Turner Reservoir**.



*Marker dedicating the Turner Reservoir in 1963*

*Information and photos of the marker and of James V. Turner came from the dedication program which was donated to the Museum by Len Erickson.*

## Gifts to the Museum

**Robert Moravec** - Rhode Island Manual and a postcard of St. Mark's Church

**Marjorie Welt** - Girl Scout collectibles

**Virginia Ripley** - Collection of political pins and pamphlets.

**George Chalko** - Plat map of Rumford, ca.1895.

**George Page** - Box of East Providence Town tax records; two framed class photos from Riverside Junior High-1944 and 1946; horse collar; hay sickle; small display case; grinder; antique mirror scope; two Narragansett Park gate cards; antique fire extinguisher; framed news picture on the Carousel; wooden beater; newspaper story on the 1978 blizzard. **The rest of George's gift will appear next month.**



*Thank you.*

*Your generosity is greatly appreciated!*

## James Dennis House example of Victorian Country Villa

By David Kelleher

The **James Dennis House** at 3120 Pawtucket Avenue stands on the crest of a ridge of high ground that drops off toward Narragansett Bay on the west. It is a two-and-one-half story, end-gable-roofed frame dwelling with a three-and-one-half story pyramidal-roofed tower on the south side and a turned-post verandah around the north, west (front) and south sides of the building.

Exterior walls are clapboarded, with some stick-style articulation on the tower and an overhanging gable at the front of the house that rests on a second story bay window and brackets. An 1882 map of the area shows a rectangular structure without the verandah or tower on the property; these features, however, appear on an 1895 map. This would appear to indicate that the tower and porch are 1880's additions to an 1870's building, but the tower and verandah are so well integrated it seems more likely they are part of the original fabric of the house.

The main entrance (now augmented by other doorways), located just west of the base of the tower, opens into a stair hall and corridor along the south side of the house. The house, operated as a rooming house at one time, has been altered inside but retains many original features, such as marble mantels on the parlor and dining room fireplaces, and plaster cornices and ceiling medallions in the principal rooms.

The James Dennis House is historically and architecturally significant as East Providence's chief surviving example of a Victorian country villa. It is the primary relic of an important phase in local history that reflected a nationwide trend. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, a romantic view of rural life and improvements in transportation - most notably the development of rail transport - led to a suburban movement in America that was a precursor of the suburban boom in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The construction of suburban homes in the last century, however, was at first limited to those wealthy enough to afford the expense of commuting by steam-powered train.

In the Providence area, country houses were erected by the well-to-do in towns such as Warwick and East

Providence, agricultural communities with plenty of open land not far from the city.

One of the prime areas in the Providence metropolitan area was a section of East Providence where the Providence-Warren road ran along a high ridge. This ridge rose above the Providence, Warren and Bristol Railroad and offered a fine view of Narragansett Bay. This section - present day Pawtucket Avenue from Veterans Memorial Parkway to Silver Spring Golf Course - was first the site of a resort hotel, the Vue de L'Eau (built 1840's, destroyed by fire 1870's) and was later built up with several notable country villas. Among these was the James Dennis House.

The other imposing Victorian houses that were erected along this stretch of Pawtucket Avenue have since been destroyed or drastically remodeled.

The Dennis House is the only dwelling in East Providence that best exemplifies the suburban migration of the upper classes in 19<sup>th</sup> century America.

*Re-printed from the August 27, 1998 "East Providence Post".*

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

Your Home May Be Eligible for a **MARKER**



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

Send the form below to:

**The Marker Program**

**East Providence Historical Society**

**P.O. Box 4774**

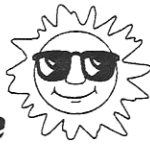
**East Providence, RI 02916-4774**

**I am interested in receiving information about the  
East Providence Marker Program**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Rain or Shine YARD SALE

*It's been a while since we've had a yard sale.  
We are ready!*

Linda Young, society member and yard sale doyenne has volunteered to oversee this affair to be held on **Saturday, April 17, Newman Church and grounds** (weather permitting) from **9 a.m. to 2 p.m.** Tables, 6 and 8 feet long, can be rented for \$15. Space is available for \$10 for those who bring their own tables. **Beverages and hot dogs with all the fixings will be offered at a modest fee.** To make table or space reservations, call **Linda, 438-0612**, or the **Historical Society, 438-1750**.

## Grounds Committee

*by Ray Anderson, Chairman*

The much overgrown right rear of the Hunt House has had some needed brush clearings. The Parks Department is doing some pre-work for Phase III. Two large trees that have grown into the bridge at the rear of the Hunt House also will be removed.

Although **Phase III, development of the rear yard of the Hunt House**, is slated for the fall of 2000, the Parks Department wants to start this before the mowing season begins. - Also, expect to see greener and taller grass on our new front lawn. (**Weeders needed! Please call Ray at 438-2464**).

The following names are added to our **Memorial Garden Fund** for plant materials:

**George and Nan Breault  
Carl and Ann Hurd  
Harry and Delia Hurd**

We now have \$200 towards the estimated \$630 cost of the **Cottage/Rock Garden** plants. Should you wish to memorialize a friend or relative, checks should be made payable to the

**East Providence Historical Society**  
*and mailed to the society at*  
**Box 4774, E. Providence, RI 02916**  
**Attention: Ray Anderson**

## East Providence Oddfellows Hall constructed in 1889

*by David Kelleher*

The **Oddfellows Hall** was erected in 1889 at 63-67 Warren Avenue. The Oddfellows Hall stands in the same block as Saint Mary's Episcopal Church. Erected in 1889, the hall is a two-and one-half story, shingled wood-frame structure covered by a hip roof with a rear gable.

An octagonal, louvered cupola with a tall, flared conical roof originally rose from the center of the roof, but it has been removed. Several Ariel-like bays project from the contained rectilinear mass of the building. They rise from the second floor level and break through the structure's bracketed eaves.

One bay, at the center of the façade (north side) is polygonal in form and is capped with a hip roof. Supported by curving brackets flanking the entrance to the stair hall to the upper floors, this bay contains a triple window at the upper level and over the central second floor window, a semicircular carved panel with the legend "I.O.O.F. 1889" surrounded by elaborate foliate ornament. The remaining bays, three on each side of the building, are supported by consoles and topped with gable roofs.

The first floor façade of the hall is taken up by a storefront that extends around the corner along part of the east side. It is topped by an entablature-like band with a broad frieze and heavy cornice moldings. Except for the installation of larger panes of plate glass, the storefront is virtually unaltered from its original state. The upper floors contain a large meeting hall and some office space.

The hall and St. Mary's Episcopal Church are the only surviving Victorian public buildings near the site of Watchemoket Square, once the focus of the Watchemoket neighborhood, which became East Providence's new civic center in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The buildings that occupied the square were all cleared away in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to permit construction of Washington Bridge and Interstate 195. The hall is thus an important indicator of this area's former status.

The Oddfellows Hall is architecturally noteworthy for the high quality of its design. A distinguished structure by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Providence architectural firm Gould & Angell, it is an excellent example of a small shingle style public building.





EAST • PROVIDENCE • HISTORICAL • SOCIETY  
P.O. BOX 4774  
EAST PROVIDENCE, RI 02916

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Providence, RI  
Permit # 2712

RETURN  
SERVICE  
REQUESTED

## Events Calendar

### APRIL



Saturday, April 17, 9 to 2 p.m.  
*E. Providence Historical Society*  
***Rain or Shine Yard Sale***  
Newman Church & Grounds, Rumford

Monday, April 26, 7:30 p.m.  
Members Meeting  
*Strictly Sentimental Swing Band*  
Post 10 American Legion  
830 Willett Ave., Riverside  
Donation \$5.00



### MAY

Wednesday, May 5, 7:30 p.m.  
**BOARD MEETING** (*Members Welcome*)  
John Hunt House, Hunts Mills Rd.

Monday, May 24, 7:30 p.m.  
Members Meeting  
Newman Church  
*Emma is Coming!?!?*

?