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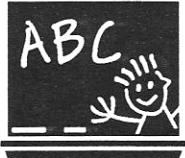
G A Z E T T E



John Hunt House

Vol. X No. 7

March 1999



"Rhode Island Education in the Nineteenth Century"

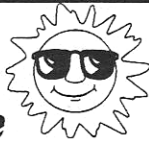
Members Meeting

Monday, March 22, 1999 7:30 p.m.

At this month's members meeting **Mr. Forrest Avila**, Legal Council to the Rhode Island Commissioner of Education, will speak about "**Rhode Island Education in The Nineteenth Century.**"

Mr. Avila is currently doing research for a new book on school law which has not been updated in thirty years. He has uncovered some interesting facts which he will share with us.

Please join us at the **East Providence Community Center** (formerly Historic Union Primary School), 1320 Pawtucket Ave., Rumford, RI.



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.** At press time, 6 tables had already been reserved. To make table or space reservations, call **Linda, 438-0612**, or the **Historical Society, 438-1750.**



Special Notice



Amendment to the Bylaws

The Board of Directors recommends to the membership the establishment of a **Grounds Committee**. Officially, we have a Buildings and Grounds Committee, **Earl Berwick**, Chairman. The elaborate landscaping plans underway for the grounds (the City owned John Hunt House is currently the only property that the society maintains) and the long term maintenance required suggests the need for a separate committee. **Ray Anderson** has been overseeing the grounds project and would serve as chairman.

According to Article VII, Section 3 of the bylaws entitled Amendments:

A vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the members in good standing, present and voting at a regular meeting, shall be required for passage of any amendment(s), provided that a notice of such amendment(s) shall have been mailed first class, postage prepaid, to each member at least two (2) weeks before the meeting when such amendment(s) is to be acted upon.

This notice, mailed first class, covers the bylaws requirement. The membership will be asked to vote on the matter at the March 22nd meeting.

STREETS OF THE CITY UPDATE

Clint Sellew checked in with the story of more streets. **Allerton, Cushman** and **Tilley** in the Kent Heights plat are also Pilgrim names. Last month, **Holland** should have been spelled "**Howland**".

Clint has a wonderful story in this month's newsletter about **Maxfield Avenue** and the famous artists whom it commemorates.

Board Briefs

Every March the society is required to put out the call for members to consider running for elective office. A nominating committee will be in place soon to seek out 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.

Les Haworth, President, will represent the society at the 14th Annual Rhode Island Statewide Historic Preservation Conference to be held Saturday, April 10, Naval War College, 686 Cushing Road, Newport. Registration is required by April 2nd. The conference is open to the public. Call 222-2678 for a brochure.

Many thanks to Mona Breault, Pat Henry and the O'Connell family and Helen Smith for the goodies they baked for the February meeting.

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 _____



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 st Vice President | Nancy Moore |
| 2 nd Vice President | David Kelleher |
| Recording Secretary | Betty Soderlund |
| Corresponding Secretary | Gladys Panzarella |
| Treasurer | Rose Marie Sirenski |

COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| Buildings/
Grounds | Earl Berwick |
| Markers | Ray Anderson |
| Membership | Kris Rose |
| 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

Annual Memberships

Annual memberships are due the anniversary month that each member joined. We suggest that you check the mailing label on your newsletter for that date. (Because of the year 2000, our system has been changed).

Example: 1907 translates to July, 1999

Your prompt payment will reduce the cost and labor involved in mailing reminders.

Mona Breault, Membership Chairman, thanks you.

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

New Members

Warm Welcome to Our New Member
Agnes Choiniere



From the Attic by Edna Anness

Happy Tenth Birthday to our Museum! Can you believe that it has been **ten years?** On January 23, 1989 volunteers were sought to serve on a committee to start a museum. **Rose Marie Sirenski, Kris Rose, Lura Sellew, Nancy Stevens and Kit Rodman** signed up to help **yours truly** and **Virginia Berwick** get started.

Our first meeting to organize was held in March that year. On Saturday, April 12th a large group met to clean and wash down the interior of the John Hunt House. On May 12th office furniture no longer in use at City Hall was delivered to the House and is still very much in use. During the rest of the year, until October, work continued on writing a Museum Collection Policy which was approved by the membership that November. And, our first pieces of historic furniture arrived - a drop leaf table from **Ann Bannister** and a rope bed from **Marian McNiff**. We were off and running.

That December we held our first open house and we decorated the newly restored back room and borrowed eighteenth century furniture to create an early "keeping room" as it might have looked in the Hunt House. What a milestone! Since that year we have two new members of the committee - **Bob Tewksbury** and **Sophie Allen**. If anyone else would care to join us on the committee we would love it! We will be updating our Museum Policy as we start this eleventh year. Seven hundred and ten donors have made gifts to the museum. Many donations include several artifacts and one donation numbered 2000 pieces. And yes - we still have lots of room for more!



- photo by Virginia Berwick

The first Hunt House Museum exhibition in 1989.

ACCESSIONS - GIFTS

Dr. John Erhardt - His new "History of Seekonk, MA and East Providence, RI 1812 - 1900"

G. Fales Peirce - CRIMSON yearbook - 1951

Nancy Wolfe - RUMFORD cookbook - 1918

Virginia Ripley - An invitation to Harriett Briggs' showing of her illustrated collection of children's books - 1977

 **Thank you.**

Your generosity is greatly appreciated!

Would whoever gave to Virginia Berwick at a meeting the two Bartlett matchbooks please check with us by phone { 438-1750 }

Grounds Committee

by Ray Anderson, Chairman

Sometime this fall the East Providence Parks Department will begin Phase II of the Hunt House landscape project. Now that the front and part of the right side are complete, the left side will be improved. Searle and Searle, landscape architects, have proposed a **stone walk through a cottage/rock garden** down to the "summer Kitchen". Appropriate late 18th century plants will be set in along the walk and above the stone wall at the cellar level. Sun-tolerant plants will be used.

If you would like to become part of this project, consider giving a plant or more by making a memorial donation.

Checks should be made payable to the

East Providence Historical Society

and mailed to the society at

Box 4774, E. Providence, RI 02916.

For information call

Ray Anderson at 438-2464.

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 _____

Clara L. (Maxfield) Arnold 1879-1959 and John Nelson Arnold 1834-1909

By Clinton Sellew

Clara M. Arnold, artist, one of seven siblings, was born at East Providence, Rhode Island, the daughter of James A. and Ellen S. (Dodge) Maxfield.

At the age of nine, Clara won first prize in free hand drawing for her portrait head of George Washington at an art exhibit held by the Rhode Island State Fair, and in succeeding years she won first prizes for her work in pastels, oils and her favorite medium, water color. During this later period she was a pupil of Providence artists and her work attracted the attention of the late John Nelson Arnold, a well known R.I. portrait painter. She became his pupil and later his wife. She attended A.P. Hoyt Grammar School (now gone) and upon graduation, turned her total concentration on her art.

On Maxfield Avenue in East Providence, a street where she and her family lived, the studio home of Clara M. Arnold still stands, a very interesting structure. Formerly the studio proper occupied practically all of the ground floor. A cozy apartment of several rooms was overhead but, as the years passed, new rooms, stairways and balconies were added here and there until there are at present (1973) three apartments. Eventually Mrs. Arnold occupied the original studio portion and the upper floor was occupied by a school teacher friend. Almost all parts of the house bear evidence of actual work of its owner, who, surprising as it may seem, designed the quaint Dutch fireplace and actually built it. The studio, with its large window filled with plants, the fireplace at one end and the appropriately old-fashioned pieces of furniture scattered about formed an attractive setting for Mrs. Arnold's paintings.



*Clara Maxfield
Arnold
1879 - 1959*

Beginning her drawing and painting in childhood with no instruction other than criticism from her father, Clara Maxfield at the age of sixteen gave her first exhibition of water colors in her father's paint shop in the Gaspee Building on South Main St., Providence. All the subjects, thirty-two in number, were still life and fourteen were sold. Not long after this she established her own studio in the Conrad Building, where she taught painting to many pupils. Several of her pictures were reproduced by Prang and other widely known art dealers of the day. Although fundamentally a self-taught artist, Miss Maxfield was practically a pupil for several years of the oldest living artist in the state at that time, John Nelson Arnold.

It may be of interest to know that Clara came by her artistry quite naturally. Her grandfather, James Ingram Maxfield, traveled around "the Horn" to California during the Gold Rush days, having formed a company that produced and erected prefabricated buildings. The letters received by him often had sketches on them showing various scenes of the area. Clara's father, James A. Maxfield, along with his brother, Charles B. Maxfield, had a shop where they carried on their work consisting of painting scenery for theaters, murals for churches and public buildings and fancy decorating of cars. They also did commercial signs. One of the more popular ones was a black whale partially washed white, advertising Soapine (a Providence, RI product). Her Uncle Charles, who died at 28, painted many scenes of the West with Indians, horses and prairie. Clara's father did many paintings and was well known for his rapid sketches of Block Island scenes that were sold to people from all over the United States. His son, James E., built a studio for him which still stands on Corn Neck Rd., Block Island.

Perhaps the most popular of Mrs. Arnold's subjects have been paintings of roses (in later life she was commissioned to paint a rose that was named for the late Arthur Curtiss James of Newport). Compositions of red raspberries, old colonial doorways and fireplaces proved equally successful. Some of these have been found at the reservation near Butterfly Factory in Lincoln, RI, some in East Providence and still others at Block Island. The author at the present time has three water color paintings: a large rendering of several roses, a smaller one of a basket of red raspberries and one of the same size showing the doorway of the old Humphrey homestead on South Broadway in East Providence.

For thirty-five years she did art work for the Providence Lithograph Company, working out of her home studio. She retired about a year before her death. The Maxfield homestead is still across the street from her home studio. About two years before her marriage, in 1908, she built a studio in her "country home" on Highland Avenue, now Maxfield Avenue, East Providence (name changed 1935).

(Continued on next page)

She held her first exhibition in October of 1908. Here she was married, on March 10th, to John Nelson Arnold at a ceremony witnessed by about fifty relatives, friends and pupils of both artists.

The street just east of Maxfield Avenue is called Dodge Street, so named for her mother's family, she being the former Ellen S. Dodge. Both of these streets run off Martin Street, near South Broadway.

She was a member for many years of the Providence Art Club and the Providence Water Color Club. In George L. Miner's Angell's Lane - 1948, she is listed as an artist; also in the American Art Manual of 1933, vol. 30, page 412. She is rated as being one of the finest still life painters the State of Rhode Island has ever produced.

Mrs. Arnold's husband, John Nelson Arnold, was born in Nasonville, now Grosvernordale, Thompson, Connecticut, the son of Benjamin and Therza (Whitford) Arnold. His father's family were of the Warwick, RI Arnolds, and he was a descendant in the seventh generation from Roger Williams. His mother's family was from Sterling, CT. His parents came to Providence in 1836. He received his early education in the public schools, and graduated from the Elm Street Grammar School, Caleb Farnum master, in 1850. He was then apprenticed to the jewelry firm of Stone and Weaver to learn engraving. He studied art by himself, as opportunity offered, and at the expiration of his term of apprenticeship began to teach himself painting. In 1856 he opened a studio in the Woods Building in Providence where he remained for thirty years or more, following the profession of portrait painting. He never had any instruction in art, but after he had opened his studio, he received many valuable suggestions from James S. Lincoln, who was then the leading portrait artist in the city. He continued to be helpful to John N. Arnold until his death; Mr. Lincoln never took any pupils, but was always kind to young artists, ready to criticize and suggest improvements, and in a certain sense he always considered him his master. Mr. Lincoln was the first president of the Providence Art Club.

Mr. Arnold's studio was the resort of all the artists who came to Providence, and it was here that he painted the portrait of Clara Maxfield, a popular young flower artist. This portrait of Clara now hangs on her studio wall where she placed it on Maxfield Avenue, East Providence.

He was an avid reader of Shakespeare and a thoroughly informed man of a philosophical and kindly turn of mind. He painted still life with marked ability in addition to his portrait work and painted a successful picture illustrating a scene from Scott's Bride of Lammermoor. In 1905, under the auspices of a General Assembly of Rhode Island, he was author of and published a most valuable book, Art and Artists in Rhode Island.

Among the portraits of prominent men he has painted are, in the State House: Gov. Francis (after Healy), Governors Anthony and Lippitt; at Brown University: Pres. Sears, Judge Pitman, Gen. Varnum and Dr. Alvah Woods; at the City Hall: Mayors Doyle, Clarke and Potter; at the Public Library: Henry L. Kendall and John Wilson Smith; at the Masonic Temple: Past Grand Master N. VanSlyck and E.L. Freeman; at the R.I. Historical Society: E.R. Young, Gov. H.W. King and Hon. Thomas Davis; at the Warwick City Hall: Hon. Enos Lapham, Bishop Clark, Christopher Robinson and Henry Steeres; for the Old Men's Home: Amos Perry, Gov. John W. Davis; and many others.

He was Chairman of the School Committee of Johnston from 1892 to 1895. He was a member of the Physical Research Society and of the Royal Society of Good Fellows.

He married first, in 1856, Miss Rose Potter of Johnston, who died in 1890. They had two children: Ernest F., who died in 1875, aged seventeen, and Herbert Percy Arnold, who became master mechanic of one of the Howland Mills in New Bedford, MA.

John Nelson Arnold died in 1909 in East Providence at the age of 74. He is buried in Grace Church Cemetery, Trinity Square, Providence.

Clara Maxfield Arnold died in 1959 at her home, 21 Maxfield Ave., East Providence at the age of 79. She is buried in the Carpenter Cemetery in Rumford.

Excerpted from a 1973 article written by Clinton Sellew.



A Night of

Ballroom Dancing & Listening
featuring the

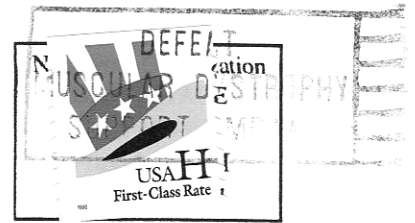
Strictly Sentimental Swing Band

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

**Post 10 American Legion,
830 Willett Ave., Riverside**



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Events Calendar

MARCH

Monday, March 22, 7:30 p.m.

Members Meeting

E.P. Community Center

(formerly Union Primary School)

1320 Pawtucket Ave., Rumford

"R.I. Education in the 19th Century"

Speaker: Mr. Forrest Avila



APRIL

Wednesday, April 7, 7:30 p.m.

BOARD MEETING (Members Welcome)

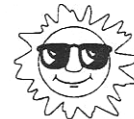
John Hunt House, Hunts Mills Rd.

Saturday, April 10

14th Annual R.I. Statewide Historic
 Preservation Conference

Naval War College, Newport

Brochure: 222-2678



Saturday, April 17

E.Providence Historical Society

Rain or Shine Yard Sale

Newman Church & Grounds, Rumford

Table and space reservations: 438-1750

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

Members Meeting

Strictly Sentimental Swing Band

Post 10, American Legion

830 Willett Ave., Riverside

