

Gazette

MONROE DAIRY

Members Meeting

Monday, May 22, 7:30 p.m.
Newman Church, Rumford

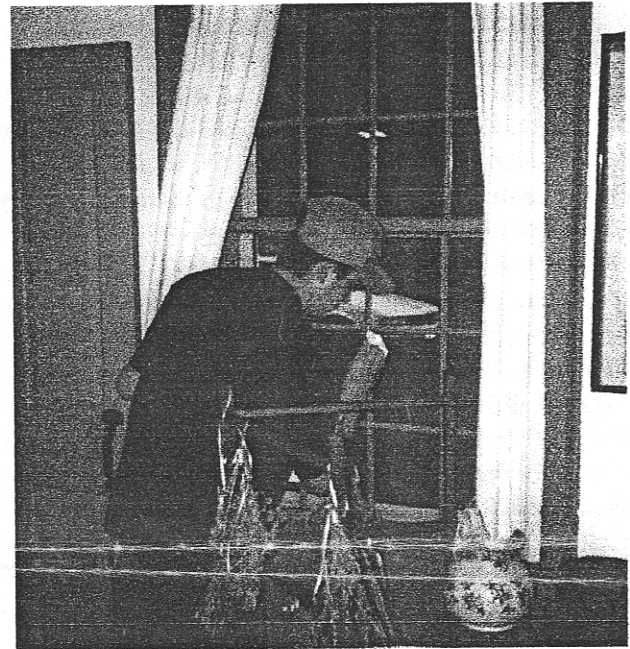


Monroe Dairy has been an East Providence based dairy since 1881. For 119 years it has conducted business at the same location. **John Viall, Jr.** (related to the old **Viall's Dairy**) will give a presentation on Monroe Dairy home delivery, show pictures, bottles and other items associated with Monroe's dairy operations.

Remember the whipped cream on the strawberry shortcake at the Hunt's Mills Annual Picnic? That was compliments of Monroe Dairy! They will provide other samplings at the presentation. Bring your interest and a thirst.



First Hope Congregational Church, when new.
(See FROM THE ATTIC by Edna Anness)



David Billow washing Keeping Room window.

- Photo by Virginia Berwick

HUNT HOUSE GETS A MUCH NEEDED CLEANING!

Eric Ouellette of Boy Scout Troop 5 needed a project for his Eagle Scout Badge. John Hunt House needed a cleaning. The Museum Committee needed help putting up the photograph display and needed advertising flyers and distribution of same. **Twenty boys from Troop 5**, leaders, **Ed Serowik Jr.** and **Serge Silvera**, plus several parents converged on the Hunt House the evening of April 26. They will return next week to finish the outside windows and set up the display.

Virginia Berwick and **Earl** have been the sole volunteers since March 18th, keeping the Museum in operation. So Eric's project was a Godsend. The boys will also host the Open House on May 21st.

Board Briefs

The Nominating Committee, **Virginia Berwick, Les Haworth, Nancy Wolf**, will present a slate of candidates for elected office at the May 22 members meeting as stated in the society's *Standing Rules and Procedures*. Nominations from the floor will also be accepted at the May meeting ONLY. Members are encouraged to attend this meeting. Elections will be held at the June 26th Annual Meeting.

On April 24, ballroom dancers once again created a scene from the Alhambra Ballroom, formerly at Crescent Park. The *Strictly Sentimental Swing Band* of Riverside was roundly applauded from both dancers and listeners. Thanks to all the bakers who provided goodies, most especially **Diana McLean, Virginia Ripley, and Bob and Betty Soderlund**. They couldn't attend but sent along a donation and cookies, too. **Kris Rose, Nancy Moore, and Barbara Flynn** had the kitchen duty. **Florence Adams and Billie Arden** dealt with reservations. The society also made a *financial contribution* to the **Legion's Gilbert/Kremp Scholarship Fund**. **Don and Annette Akers**, hard working Legion members, were in the hospital as patients on the night of the dance. Different hospitals at that. They are loyal fans of this affair. Happy to report that they're home and on the mend.

The Gazette

is published monthly by the

EAST•PROVIDENCE•HISTORICAL•SOCIETY

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

(401) 438-1750

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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:

Keith Costa

The John Hunt House is open Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9 am until noon, or by appointment.

The *Gazette* welcomes "letters to the editor" and articles of historic interest, especially personal reminiscences. Deadline: first Friday of the month. Mail Attention **Doreen Bonney**, East Providence Historical Society, P.O. Box 4774, East Providence, RI 02916

MARKER COMMITTEE

By Kris Rose, Chairman

In honor of **MAY IS MUSEUM MONTH!**, the historical society will have a **photo display at City Hall** promoting the marker program. Currently there are 11 homes with the society's new marker and many more with older markers. *We invite you to view the display.*

EAST PROVIDENCE HISTORICAL PROPERTIES STUDY COMMISSION ANNUAL PRESERVATION AWARDS

The East Providence Historical Properties Study Commission will be presenting the annual *Preservation Awards* to the owners of three historic properties. The Preservation Award is presented to the owners of a piece of property that has been restored or maintained in its original design. The awards this year go to:

Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Pineau

36 Willett Avenue

The Whitcomb Farm House, ca 1790's

Mark Fillion and Sheri Hannan

338 Pleasant St.

Thomas Aspinwall House

Mr. Robert Brady, Esq.

1 Grove Ave.

Late 19th Century Home

The awards will be presented at the May 16th East Providence City Council meeting.

FROM THE ATTIC

by Edna Anness, Museum Curator

THE GROWTH OF RELIGION IN 20TH CENTURY EAST PROVIDENCE AS INDICATED BY NEW CHURCH CONSTRUCTION.

This article is not meant to be a general litany of new churches built in the last century, but more a story of freedom of religion, the industrial revolution, immigration and changing demographics occurring in our town/city since 1900. It will reflect generosity, sacrifice, fading dreams, fire and tragedy and buildings in which we celebrate the important events in our lives: birth, marriage and death. It is a story of the changing face of religion and lastly the architectural beauty, which these churches have brought into our community.

In the years before 1700 there was only one religious entity in what is now East Providence – that of the Congregational Church. Our forefathers came here to build their own church and farming community and named their successive houses of worship (also the meeting place of town government) the Newman Meeting House and finally in 1812 the Newman Congregational Church. They were mostly Anglo-Saxons. Keep in mind in this story we are talking only about that area of Rehoboth and later Seekonk, which eventually became East Providence in 1862. During the early years the Newman Church was financially supported and attended by all the members of the village of Rehoboth. It was not until 1663 that Baptists who could not get a foothold in the community finally established the first Baptist church in Swansea. And it was not until 1793 that Baptists were allowed to organize the First Baptist Church of Seekonk at Pawtucket Avenue and Pleasant Street. (It became known as the First Baptist Church of East Providence in 1862). No longer were all residents obliged to support one church, but were free to spread their wings to worship where they pleased.

Between 1800 and 1900 eleven new churches had been built made up of Baptists, Catholics, Methodists, Episcopalians, Universalists and the Swedish Free Missionary Church where only Swedish was spoken until 1937. St. Margaret's Church and the Swedish Church reflect the influx of Irish Catholics and Swedish Lutherans who moved here to work at the Rumford Chemical factory. As we moved into the twentieth century the pastoral farming community of East Providence was changing. People wanted to move out of Providence into a more countrified setting. Home building in Riverside, the center of the City and out in Rumford began to encroach on the farms. The farm owners relented and sold large masses of land to developers, which gradually increased the density of the population. 1900 also saw the factory boom in the area, which was to become known as Phillipsdale.

Italians settled the area between the eastern ends of Warren and Waterman Avenues and Portuguese moved across the river from Fox Point to work in the mills and further develop the central area of East Providence. Shipping, the need for longshoremen and railroad workers plus the mills attracted Cape Verdeans who settled in the center of the city. The development of Riverside as the summer resort area encouraged hundreds of people to settle near the beaches and Crescent Park.

Early in the last century Catholics who lived in Riverside had to travel to the Mission Church of Sacred Heart, St. Joseph's Church in Providence or to St. Mary's in Warren for worship on Sunday. In 1905 the first Catholic service in Riverside was held in Winchester Hall on Lincoln Avenue. Soon a small church named St. Brendan's was built on Sprague Avenue, followed by a new shingled church on Turner Avenue in 1931. That church burned with the loss of a firefighter in 1957 and was replaced with a new modern building which still stands.

At the turn of the twentieth century, A.J. Kent of Kent Farm history began developing house lots from his vast land holdings in the Armington's Corners area. In 1903 Charlotte Slocum suggested a need for a Congregational Church in the area instead of having to travel to central East Providence or Rumford. In 1905 Mr. Kent gave land and funds for the building of the first Hope Congregational Church on Hazard Avenue (see photo). It was dedicated in 1912. A new church was built in 1956 on land donated by Jessie Kent on the Wampanoag Trail. With the breakup of the Ide and Kent Farms on both sides of Pawtucket Avenue, new houses multiplied rapidly and in 1956 the architect, Traficante, who designed Hope Church, designed the new St. Martha's Church located on a parcel of the Ide Farm. The historic Ide Farmhouse is next door.

Eugene Phillips, President of Washburn Wire Company decided to donate land on Roger Williams Avenue for a church, which would be dedicated in memory of his daughter Grace who had died in 1882. The year was 1903. At first Mr. Phillips deemed that the Church would be a community church which would eventually belong to whichever sect predominated in the neighborhood where his workers dwelled in his mill houses. In 1904 the Church opened and in 1905 became a Mission Church of the Episcopal diocese and was named Grace Episcopal Church. The Glenlyon Print and Dye Company paid the church's heating bill until the factory closed in 1957. In 1990 Grace Church united with St. Michael and All Angels Church on Pawtucket Avenue and Grace Church is now a Baptist church – totally fitting with Mr. Phillips' original concept of a community church.

Meanwhile in the center of the city enough Portuguese families had settled to create a need for a Portuguese

(continued on page 4)

FROM THE ATTIC by Edna Anness

(continued from page 3)

Catholic Church where their culture and language could flourish. A new church was dedicated on May 21, 1916 as the Church of St. Francis Xavier, which still flourishes today although it is not attended by only Portuguese families. In 1920 after a petition by the Italian immigrants who had settled between Warren Avenue and Waterman Avenue, Catholic Bishop Matthew Harkins established the Parish of Our Lady of Loreto to be staffed by the Missionary Order of Scalabrini Fathers who were to serve the needs of Italian immigrants. Through much hard work and sacrifice the first church was built in 1921. The parish grew and a new larger church was built in 1970. This church continues to grow and serves more than just the Italian population today.

By 1922 Cape Verdean employees of the Rumford Chemical Works asked the company for a parcel of land at the corner of Chaffee Street and Pawtucket Avenue across from Union Primary School on which to build their own church. The company donated the land and a small church was built and at first was named the Rumford Holiness Mission in 1927. In 1942 the church name was changed to the Church of the Nazarene. When Hulman Corporation, who bought the Rumford Company, gave the Church a second parcel of land in 1955 an addition was added on to the church and a rectory was built. It is now known as the Bethany Church of the Nazarene and still flourishes.

Early on, across the street from the Church of the Nazarene was a forest of trees extending from Pawtucket Avenue to Pleasant Street and from Newman Avenue to Bridgham Street. It was owned by the Bridgham Family and called Bridgham Woods. In 1941 an Episcopal Mission was formed in Rumford and met in the homes of Ida Bridgham and Eliza Bridgham Appleton. Earlier in the century prayer groups had met in these two ladies' homes and in the old Rumford Town Hall and were led by visiting Episcopal priests. In 1944 Ida and Eliza each donated a one half acre of land on Pawtucket Avenue for the construction of a church. In 1953 ground-breaking services were held for the new St. Michael and All Angels Church, which began as a basement church. It was completed with a second floor in 1954. The upstairs church was modified and an addition added in 1969, which created the church as we know it today. It is now known as St. Michael and Grace Church (1990).

Earlier in the century a new church was formed and joined the R. I. Congregational Conference in 1944. It was called the Kent Corners Congregational Church as was located in the southern section of Riverside, off Willett Avenue. It was founded by Rev. S. Gerald Gordon who died recently, thus causing the church to close. It is from this church that we have recently received a pew.

In 1950 the Zion Gospel Temple was built on Gurney Street in the Six Corners area. It was combined with a bible school, which eventually became part of the Barrington Bible College. Services are still held in the Temple.

During the last century tragic fires caused the rebuilding of some earlier churches. They were the Haven Methodist Church which burned in 1929 and was rebuilt in 1931; St. Mark's Church which burned in 1957 and was rebuilt; St. Brendan's (previously noted) and St. Margaret's which had been replaced with a new building in 1936, burned in 1988 and was rebuilt and rededicated in 1990.

The 1900s saw the demise of a few churches such as the United Congregational Church on North Broadway, which closed in 1976 and reopened for a brief time as the Chinese Christian Church, and the First Universalist Church on Taunton Avenue, which closed in 1944. The Swedish Church in Rumford is now the Colonial Baptist Church. During this period some older churches updated their appearance. They are: the Second Baptist Church which was enlarged structurally in 1903; the Sacred Heart Church on Taunton Avenue which was torn down and rebuilt in 1950; and the Riverside Congregational Church which was replaced by a new building in 1988.

During the last fifteen years of the century several new churches with new denominations were built: the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Evangelical Covenant Church in Riverside, and the Church of Christ on the Wampanoag Trail. I would love some history on these new churches. As of yet there are no Jewish Synagogues in East Providence.

All of our churches are beautiful examples of a variety of architectural styles, beginning with the Greek Revival style of Newman Congregational Church, the Victorian styles of First Baptist Church and St. Mary's Episcopal Church, to the modern concept of St. Margaret's Church. The R.I. Historic Preservation Commission in 1976 described the former United Congregational building on North Broadway as "the handsomest local example of shingle style Colonial Revival architecture in East Providence". Drive around the city some quiet Sunday morning and see how busy these churches are and note the diversity that they offer. Freedom to worship as one chooses is alive and well in East Providence. Quite a change in the last three centuries!

Note: Many thanks to all who have donated historic pamphlets and programs and stories about our local churches which I have used for this article. You are too numerous to mention here, but are greatly appreciated.

MEMBERS' MEMORIES

Six Corners

by Michael and Virginia Sollitto

Michael Sollitto remembers Six Corners from 1920 when he first came to live in East Providence. They lived at 332 Taunton Avenue in a three-story house on a 200 X 200 piece of land which was always occupied with vegetable gardens, grape vines and about 17 pear trees. Michael and his twin brother Domenic hated working in the garden, especially because their father gave a lot away!

"Dolly" and Paul Sollitto worked in Cox Drug for many years. Before it was Cox it was Connors, and before that it was an A & P Store. Across the street on the corner of Waterman Avenue and Taunton Avenue was Burns Restaurant. Behind Burns' was an ice house owned by people named Lake.

On the corner of Broadway and Waterman was a building housing a doctor's office named Dawson, and people lived in upstairs apartments. This was across the street from what was later the Jr. High School, now apartments for Seniors. At Taunton Ave. and Broadway was a building with Colt's Hardware. Upstairs were apartments and Harmony Hall where movies were shown, sponsored by Lady of Loreto Church. Next to Cox Drug was a barber shop run by "Red" Rendine. Ken Murphy owned two of the Six Corners' buildings and used to sell hundreds of turkeys from this site at Thanksgiving.

On Taunton Avenue just inside Six Corners was a building that housed a Peerless Dealership run by Joseph McCormick, a contractor who later built Standard Oil on the "Trail". Behind the dealership were three barns that housed horses, a blacksmith shop, and a truck garage. Mr. Sollitto's father was the blacksmith, Francisco Sollitto (see photo) and his eldest son, "Tony" was the water boy while they were building Standard Oil. The corner that later held the Mountain Diner had houses and an empty lot where carnivals were held. Horton's Sea Food came along in the 40's. Murphy's other building across from Cox Drug had a very small variety store called Gateley's.

Six Corners was the local "meeting place" to discuss everything and anything – but especially baseball: Yankees and Red Sox. Some things never change!

20TH Century East Providence in Pictures
Open House and Tea
Sunday, May 21, 1 – 4 p.m.
John Hunt House
Hunts Mills Rd., Rumford

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

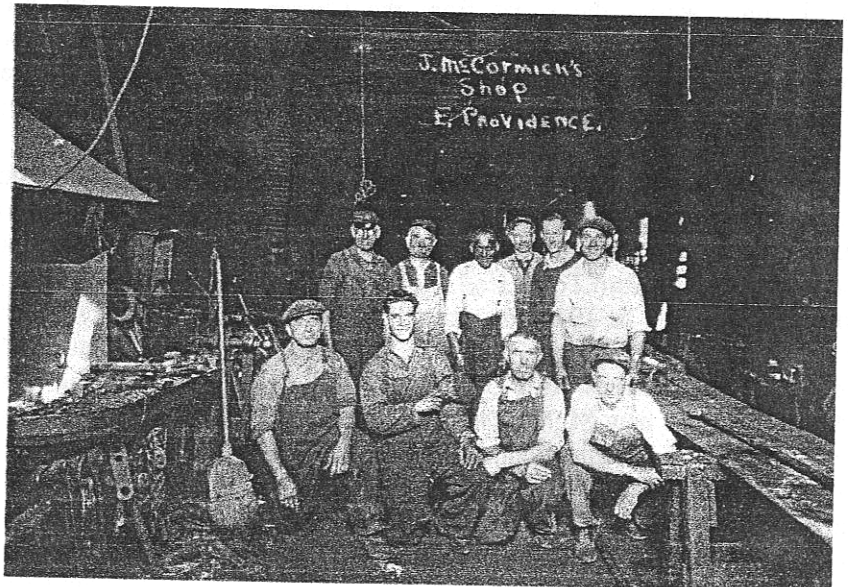
Mail to: Mona Breault
34 Josephine Avenue
Rumford, RI 02916

New Renewal Amount Enclosed \$ _____

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Street _____

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This photo represents three trades – Blacksmith Francisco Sollitto; helper Domenic; truck mechanics A. Barbary, Bemes, Mendoza and Roberts; carpenter L. Grimaldi. Blacksmith forges are on left of picture.



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Events Calendar

May

MAY IS MUSEUM MONTH!

Photo Display of Houses with Historical Society Markers
East Providence City Hall

Sunday, May 21, 1 to 4 pm
Open House and Tea

20th Century in East Providence in Photos
John Hunt House, Rumford

Monday, May 22, 7:30 pm
Members Meeting/Nominating Committee Report
Newman Church, Rumford
Program: Monroe Dairy 119 Years

June

Wednesday, June 7, 7:30 pm
Board Meeting (*members welcome*)
John Hunt House, Hunts Mills Rd., Rumford

Monday, June 26, 7:30 pm
Annual Meeting/Election of Officers/Picnic
Hunts Mills, Rumford
Details in June *Gazette*

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.

Send coupon to:

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

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