



John Hunt House

Gazette

Vol. XVI No. 5

February 2004

SHADOWS OF PROVIDENCE

February Members Meeting
Monday, February 23
Newman Church, Rumford
Pot Luck Supper 6 pm
Program 7 pm

Sparkle Bryant, a ranger for the National Parks Service at the **Roger Williams National Monument**, North Main Street, Providence, will deliver an illustrated presentation of **Roger Williams'** early beginnings including the spring on Roger Williams Avenue, East Providence.

I need a winter break, do you? Join us!

A business meeting will follow. The Telephone Committee will call the membership for Pot Luck main dishes, salads and desserts.



Dissenters like Roger Williams who published their beliefs risked having their works burned—at the least.
-Illustration from 'Curious Punishments of Bygone Days', Alice Morse Earle, 1896.

Preservation Committee

David Kelleher, Chairman

Hal Welch of the **John Chaffee Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor Commission** was given a tour of the Phillipsdale area on January 20th. The **East Providence Historic Properties Commission** is beginning to investigate the possibility of having that area designated as a historic district and is looking for advice and help from the Blackstone Valley Commission. Assurances have been given to the commission that some signage and other indicators of the past history of the **Washburn Wire Company** will be included in the design of the open space in the **Geo Nova Project** in Phillipsdale.

Contact has been made with the **R.I. Preservation Commission** to have an evaluation of the **Brown/Williams cottage**, Hunts Mills Road, Rumford. There is some evidence that the cottage may be dated 1710.

Work continues to be done to the **Weaver House**. As spring approaches, more progress will be evident on the exterior of the house.

Along with many communities in Rhode Island, East Providence is applying to be part of a national grant program called **Preserve America**. This will give the city an opportunity to receive money for restoration projects. This application is through the **Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor** office.

The Historical Society is considering applying for a grant from the state **Preservation Commission** to help with restoration projects for the **John Hunt House Museum** and the **Meter House** next to the museum.

David Kelleher

The Gazette

Is published monthly by the
EAST ● PROVIDENCE ● HISTORICAL ● SOCIETY
 P. O. Box 4774, East Providence, RI 02916-4774
 Tel: (401) 438-1750 Web Site: ephist.org

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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 \$15 individual, \$25 family, or a Life Membership for \$150.

Please make check payable to:
East Providence Historical Society
 and mail with form below to:
**Mona Breault, 34 Josephine Avenue,
 Rumford, RI 02916-3018**

Membership Form New Renewal /Change

Name(s) _____
 Street _____
 City _____ State ____ Zip _____
 Phone # _____

Amount Enclosed:
 \$25 Family \$15 Individual \$150 Life

Gifts to the Museum

Nancy Fredericks of Ruth Falkinburg's Doll and Toy shop, Taunton Ave., Seekonk
 - restringing of our Armand Marseille Doll

Thank You. Your generosity is greatly appreciated.



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 02916-4774

*Warm Welcome To
 Our New Members:
 Eric & Paula Fillion
 Andrew &
 Douglas DeCastro*

JOHN HUNT HOUSE MUSEUM

The John Hunt House Museum,
 Hunts Mills Road, Rumford,
 is open to the public the
 second Sunday of the month, 1 to 4 pm.
 Admission: \$3. East Providence Residents, \$1:
 Society Members, free.

PRESERVE RHODE ISLAND

Winter 2003

PRI's PHILIP WALKER HOUSE BECOMES A CENTER FOR PRESERVATION EDUCATION

A Preservation Learning Laboratory is a place of discovery. It is a place for the community to come together to learn about their heritage. It tells us how our ancestors lived - how they built their homes, how they lived in their homes, how their homes changed as sensibilities changed or families grew. Today, by studying a house we can learn a lot about a particular time in history. We can determine what types of paint colors were available, when a particular decorative treatment made its way to New England, how different rooms' functions evolved, how early 18th century walls were "wallpapered" and much, much more. Preserve Rhode Island's goal is to preserve not only the original fabric of the Philip Walker House but also the layers of history that tell us how the house has been adapted over its nearly 300 year history.

PRI will use the Philip Walker House as a center for learning that will provide opportunities for laymen and professionals alike to learn hands-on restoration and conservation techniques, early American trades and craftsmanship and to teach historic homeowners how to maintain a "healthy" house.

DENDROCHRONOLOGY STUDY HELPS SHED LIGHT ON THE PHILIP WALKER HOUSE

Anne A. Grady is an Architectural Historian. The following is excerpted from her most recent report of her research on the Philip Walker House.

The oldest part of the Philip Walker House in East Providence was recently dated with scientific accuracy to 1724 by the tree-ring patterns in its timbers. This date places the house

among the earliest known examples of the square plan, a plan type recently described for the first time by Myron Stachiw and others.

(The method of dating known as dendrochronology) relies on the fact that, in most species of trees in temperate climates, the width of yearly growth rings varies from year to year depending on the amount of rainfall and other climate factors in a given region. The pattern of ring width variations is likely to be specific enough that overall patterns of "master" reference chronologies can be identified for related species in the region. Then tree-ring patterns in an historic timber of unknown date can be compared to the master chronology and the timber can be dated.

For more information on the Philip Walker House as a Learning Laboratory, visit the PRI website at www.preserveri.org and click on 'Properties.'



Did You Know...

In 1663 England's Charles II granted Rhode Island a charter confirming that no one would be "molested, punished, disquieted, or called in question, for difference in opinion in matters of religion." England's 1689 Act of Toleration took a step in that direction allowing all forms of Protestant worship that recognized the Holy Trinity. Public worship by Catholics and members of other religious groups was still banned.

Roger Williams likened Rhode Island to "many a Hundred Souls in one ship." The captain should punish those who "refuse to obey the common laws and orders of the ship," but "none of the Papists, Protestants, Jews, or Turks [should] be forced to come to the Ship's Prayers or Worship; nor, secondly, compelled from their own particular Prayers or Worship, if they practice any." This compelling image defining the role of the state set the pattern for a nation.

Come to the **February Members Meeting** where you will hear more about **Roger Williams**.

THE ICE MAN

By John Agren

This is part two of an excerpt from "RUMFORD" copyrighted 1996 (not yet published) Part one was published in the January Gazette.

Ice was delivered all over East Providence including Rumford and Phillipsdale. At five o'clock in the morning I would often meet Ross Bailey (Bailey Ice Company) at Oggs Diner at the railroad crossing near Kennebec and Washburn Wire Companies, Phillipsdale. At the other end of the day, people would be waiting up for us until twelve, and sometimes later, in the New Road section of Rumford.

We put out a lot of ice. It was physically demanding but never boring. The main vehicle for delivery was a 1939 Ford stake body truck which Mr. Bailey had adapted to his ice business. The body was all enclosed, insulated and rigged so that it could carry 36 blocks of ice each of which weighed just a little over 300 pounds. There was a smaller truck, a 1933 Chevrolet pickup that we called 'The Jeep'. It could carry only six or seven blocks depending on the cut. The big blue Ford had pockets on both sides for ice paraphernalia: ice picks, ice cards, tongs, bags, etc. Often the pockets were where we rode from one stop to the next. It was grand to see the big blue Ford truck and its icemen heading in all directions to deliver ice to anxious customers.

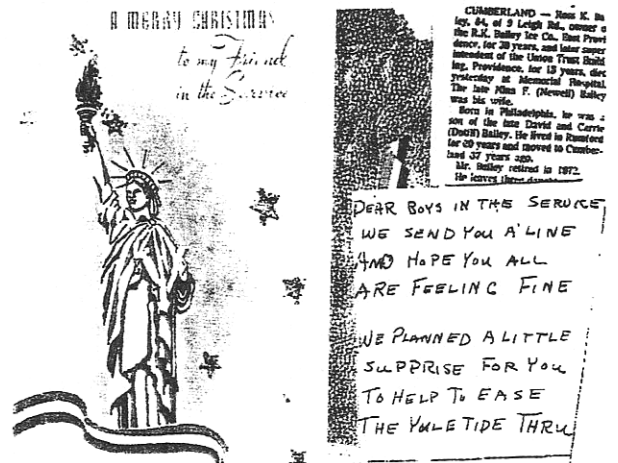
Around noontime, when our 'Big Blue' was empty of its load and in need of a 36-block refill, we stopped at Jacques Diner. Jacques was at the junction of South Main, Benefit and Wickenden Streets in Providence. Here, in the company of many other area workers, one could enjoy a good meal for 40 or 50 cents. The service was prompt, the food was hot, the generous portions were exceeded only by the amount of sawdust on the black and white tiled floors. It was a great place to enjoy a piece of pie and a great cup of coffee along with a good meal.

After our stomachs were filled, it was time to fill the 'Big Blue'. We headed over to the Washington Bridge where men at the Rhode Island Ice Company promptly greeted us. We backed the 'Big Blue' up to the loading platform and their men helped us to refill the truck for our afternoon customers.

After graduating from high school, the ice truck was a full time job for me. Mr. Bailey worked a 125-hour week and while we never worked those hours, I had some long days. I sometimes met Mr. Bailey at Oggs Diner at five in the morning and was still aboard at twelve or one the next morning when we were finishing up the route on New Road. Can you see people waiting up until midnight for ice? They did and they had no choice. If scarce and expensive meat or butter was in the icebox, it had to be kept cool. Many people had refrigerators but their availability during the war was scarce. If you hadn't bought one before the

war you were out of luck. You'd have to depend on the iceman! Manufacturing plants were not making refrigerators. They were making tanks and airplanes and guns. The production of refrigerators would not be resumed until after the war was over. They would not be available in quantity until 1946 or '47 so the ice business flourished during the war. A block of ice cost the company 50 cents. In retail, it sold for at least three times that amount.

When July turned to August, we all knew my time was at hand. Uncle Sam would soon call me to report and serve him. There was plenty of kidding on the ice truck. I heard "You'll be sorry" often and the fellows often said "Don't worry about Miss so and so. We'll take care of her for you." Mr. Bailey, much wiser than the rest, advised as to how she would take care of herself without either John or any of the ice truck gang. While in the service, I often wrote to everyone on the truck. The Christmas card and message photocopied for this article is the one I received from Mr. Bailey and the boys in 1943. I framed it and placed it on a wall in my barn a long time ago. It is a message from Mr. Bailey that I have long cherished. Mr. Bailey was a kind and gentle man. One worthy for any man to emulate. He had a loving spirit and knowledge that surpassed many of the more "learned men" that I have known.



A GIFT I WAS
GIVEN TO MAKE
AND SOME STARTED
TO FEEL THE PAIN
AND LITTLE BY LITTLE
IT BEGAN TO GROW
A LITTLE TIE HERE
A LITTLE TIE THERE
FROM SOME OF THE
December, 1943

IN SERVICE AND DOES
JOHN AND GENE
A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS
WITH THIS BIT OF GREEN
David
Claus

**East ● Providence ● Historical ● Society
Historical 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**.

Request information by sending your name, address and phone number to the

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

CALENDAR OF EVENTS



FEBRUARY

**Monday, February 23, 7 pm
Members Meeting *Public Invited*
Newman Church, Rumford
6 pm Pot Luck Supper
7 pm Program: *Shadows of Providence*
Guest Speaker: *Sparkle Bryant, Ranger,*
*Roger Williams National Monument***

MARCH

**Wednesday, March 3, 7 pm
Board Meeting *Members Welcome*
John Hunt House Museum
Hunts Mills Road, Rumford**

MARCH (continued)

**Sunday, March 14, 1-4 pm
John Hunt House Museum
Hunts Mills Road, Rumford
Admission, \$3; EP Residents, \$1;
Members, Free**

**Monday, March 22, 7 pm
Members Meeting *Public Invited*
Newman Church, Rumford
Program:
Early New England Clockmakers
Guest Speaker: *Cynthia Dias-Reid***



East • Providence • Historical • Society
P.O. Box 4774
East Providence, RI 02916

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arrangement with the Post Office.
*There is a **CHARGE** every
time we retrieve an undeliverable
mailing.....* Please advise the
Society of all changes, temporary
or permanent.
Thank you for helping us save money.

