

# EAST • PROVIDENCE • HISTORICAL • SOCIETY



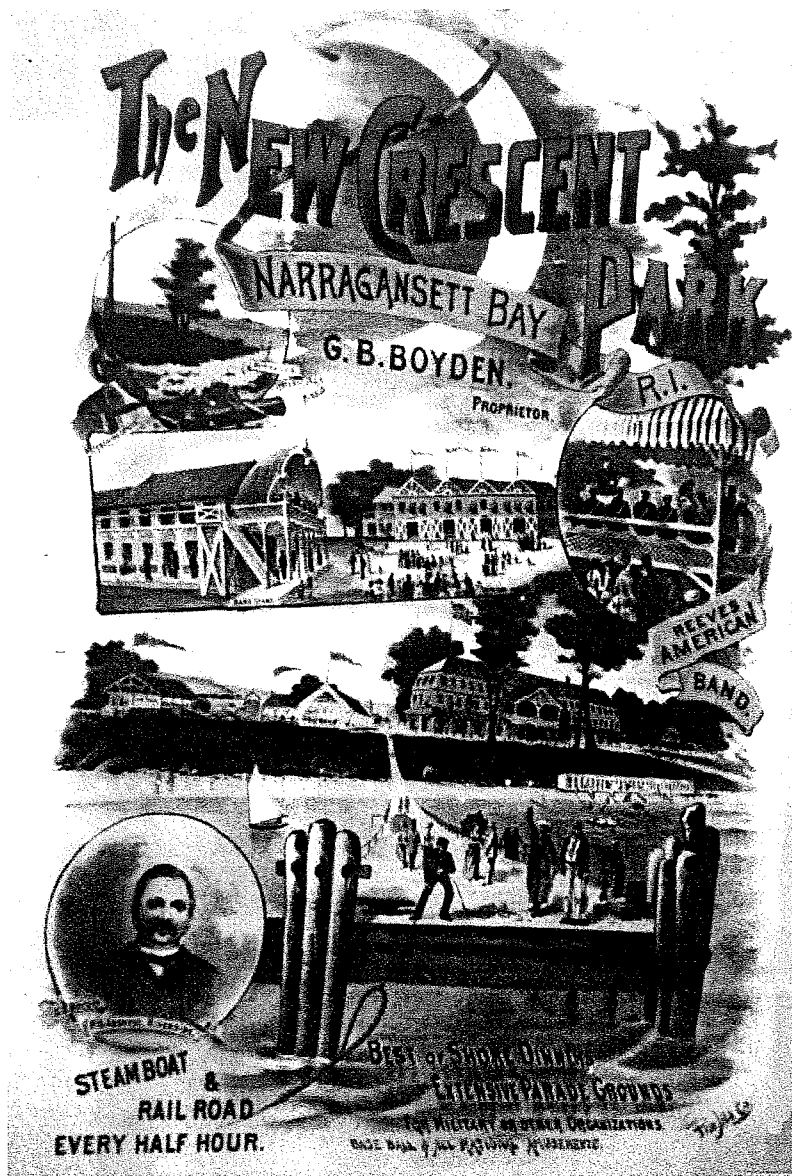
# G A Z E T T E

John Hunt House

Vol. IX No. 15

RIGHT ON.

May 1998



**From the Attic** *Edna Anness, Museum Curator*

Good news! The reproductions of the wonderful lithograph of **George Boyden's Crescent Park** c. 1886 are coming in this month. They are 16 X 20, smaller in size than the original, and will sell for \$20.00. The donor of the original, **Richmond Day**, even wants a copy for he misses the original on his living room wall. Our members have first choice and can reserve a copy by calling the Hunt House and leaving name and phone number. *(continued on page 3)*

**"RIVERSIDE:  
FROM FARMLAND  
TO CONEY ISLAND"**

**MAY  
MEMBERS MEETING**

Join Dave Kelleher and Edna Anness  
on **May 18, 7:30 pm** at  
**Newman Church, Rumford**  
as they combine to present a slide  
presentation entitled "*Riverside: From  
Farmland to Coney Island*".

They will explain what Crescent  
Park did for Riverside and what  
Riverside had to do to support the  
operation of the Park. After the Park  
arrived, this farming area by the  
crescent-shaped beach would never be  
the same.

## Nominating Committee

*Florence Adams, Chairman*

"The Nominating Committee shall be responsible for presenting a slate of candidates for elected office for the ensuing year at the May members meeting. **NOMINATIONS FROM THE FLOOR SHALL BE ACCEPTED AT THE MAY MEETING ONLY.**" (Section IV, Standing Rules and Procedures)

Be sure to attend the May 18 members meeting for the Nominating Committee's report and to nominate your choices. **Elections will be held at the Annual Meeting/Family Picnic, Monday, June 22, 5:00 pm, John Hunt House, Hunts Mills Rd., Rumford.**

# Museum Committee

*Virginia Berwick, Chairman*

The Hunt House will be open on Sundays during the summer from 1 to 4 p.m. So far we have two volunteers:

**Marion Kent - July 12 and 19, and Diana McLean - August 9 and 23.** It would be nice to hear from some more members to help us out. It's interesting to talk to visitors. If we find that there are not many visitors coming by, the hours will be cut back to 1 to 3 p.m. We can give it a try.

**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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New  Renewal  Amount Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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

Street \_\_\_\_\_

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

✂

## 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.

Example: 9808 translates to August 1998  
 9811 is November, 1998

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

*Mona Breault, Membership Chairman, thanks you.*



The book, "Images of America: East Providence" can be purchased at the Hunt House. The House is open Tuesdays and Thursdays 9 to noon.

# 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/ 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

## East Providence Historic Properties Study Commission

*David Kelleher, Chairman*

The E. Providence Historic Properties Study Commission will honor some community residents who have preserved and restored historic properties in the city.

On Tuesday evening, May 19<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 p.m. in the city council chamber the following will receive appreciation certificates from the Commission, following a slide presentation of the properties:

**Philip & Kelly Zexter**, 98 Greenwood Ave., Rumford, restored a handsome example of simple mid-19<sup>th</sup> century end gable house type with Italianate details.

**James Cook & Leslie O'Brien**, 18 Fourth St., East Providence, restored a handsome Queen Anne Revival house.

**Mobil Corp., the City of East Providence and Riverside Council-Girl Scouts of America** maintained and improved the District #6 School House, 351 Willett Ave., Riverside.

Also, the fifth graders from Orlo Avenue School will be given a bus tour of historic sites by **David Kelleher** on May 28<sup>th</sup>. The tour will include 25 sites across the city and will end at the Carousel where the students will hear a lecture about the Carousel and have some rides.

## From the Attic *Edna Anness* (continued from page 1)

We are repeating our list of desired loans for the exhibition:

Postcards - family photographs taken at the Park - tickets - signs - prizes - commemorative cups - ruby glass etched with "Crescent Park" and a date - posters - fans - canes - hats - brass rings - plain rings - hot dog holders - paper cups - marked spoons - parts of displays - dance tickets - menus - dangling celluloid toys hanging from sticks - programs - advertisements - matchbook covers - napkins - glasses from the Alhambra - chowder buckets - dinner hall dishes.

We won't pick them up until the first week in September. Let Virginia Berwick or me know.

SEE OUR JUNE NEWSLETTER FOR A COMPLETE LISTING OF FALL PROGRAMS AND EVENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE EXHIBITION WHICH IS BEING CO-SPONSORED BY THE EAST PROVIDENCE CAROUSEL COMMISSION.

## ACCESSIONS - GIFTS

**Dave Kelleher** - Crescent Park midway sign and park postcard in a straw dish.

**Judy Duhamel** - watercolor of Newman Cemetery done by Hope Browning.

**Mildred Nyberg** - framed photo of the mill at Hunts Mills dam.

**Estate of Isabel Rich** - Crimsons, scrapbook of alumni serving during WWII, high school scrapbook, 1942 class reunion photos

**Mrs. Reginald Whitcomb**, in memory of her husband, Reginald - two ladder back chairs and a nail from the Whitcomb Farm and a miniature bust of Herbert Hoover. Eight chairs from the third floor auditorium of the former Ray Building on Taunton Ave., (Mrs. Whitcomb is the granddaughter of the builder, Thomas Ray). Thomas Ray's enlistment paper for the Civil War-1862.

**Clint Sellew** - two filing cabinets for the museum office.

**Henry Stad** - three Alhambra Ballroom postcards

**Len Erickson** - assorted pamphlets and papers relating to East Providence history.

**Elizabeth Wilson** - two DAR meeting notebooks.

**Alice Benson** - booklet "The Finest of the Wheat", used in Armington Corners Sunday School class.

**Beverly Simmons** - copies of Crescent Park photos of the Alhambra and catalog of the Second Annual Industrial Arts Expo at the Alhambra in 1903.

Bathing Beach, Crescent Park, R. I.



Postcard of the Bathing Beach at Crescent Park

- donated by John Agren

## History of Crescent Park *by Amelia Cabral*

Crescent Park, also known as "The Coney Island of the East", was once the most popular summer resort east of New York<sup>1</sup>. George Byron Boyden started this resort in 1886 with the ambition of being the originator of the greatest summer resort in New England. He acquired a lease from John W. Davis and started the park with a few simple attractions such as the famous Rhode Island clambake dinner, summer cottages, bath houses and a hotel. Boyden then added other attractions including a bicycle track, merry-go-rounds, Cromwell's Russian Toboggan, rifle ranges, bowling alleys, and Loeff's Parisian Carousel.<sup>2</sup> By 1896 Boyden had the reputation of being the king of the largest summer resort in the world operated by just one man.

Boyden sold the park to the HopeLand Company in October, 1901, and William Dexter, the company's president took over the park. The park continued to thrive during the first decade of 1900. At this time Charles I.D. Loeff built the first roller coaster and the tunnel of love, called the "Flying Toboggan Ride" and the "Rivers of Venice" respectively. On January 9, 1902 Fred Dexter, the Vice-president of HopeLand Company, announced the construction of an Exhibition Hall for the forthcoming meeting of the New England Association of Arts and Crafts. This building later became the famous Alhambra Ballroom.

When Fred Dexter died in 1906 the HopeLand Company gave management duties to Colonel Randall A. Harrington. In 1919 Loeff negotiated a contract with HopeLand Company to have first rights to purchase the resort since he was eager to own the entire park. There were two other buyers interested in the land. One was the Standard Oil Company

(continued on page 4)

## History of Crescent Park (continued from page 3)

of New York who wanted the land to build an oil refinery. The other was Beacon Manufacturing of Fall River who wanted to build a blanket manufacturing factory in the area. Beacon feared having its factory near an oil refinery and decided to mortgage the park to Charles Loeff, who took control of the park on Sept. 20, 1920. When Loeff died in 1926 Beacon took over the park and appointed John T. Clair as the manager of the park.

During World War II the park was the main source of entertainment for the navy stationed in Newport. After the war the park began to decline for the following reasons. People were getting bored with amusement parks and the car made it possible to travel to other forms of entertainment. In addition, theme parks were becoming very popular and it was expensive to renovate some of the old rides. Finally, the polluted waters were making the resort an unhealthy and unattractive place to swim.

On March 28, 1951, Arthur R. Simmons, president of the Crescent Park Realty Co. purchased the park for \$300,000. Both Simmons and his partner Fred McCusker managed the park until 1966 when Melvin T. Berry became the sixth owner. Berry bought the park with the intentions of converting it into a theme park. Although he did put in new thrill rides, he was never able to fulfill his dream and on April 22, 1969 he put the park up for sale. The next owner was Fairbanks Industries, formed by the Crescent Park Recreation Corp. who acquired it for \$350,000. Unfortunately, they ran out of money to operate the park and it was put up for auction on March 18, 1976. The Crescent Park Amusement Co. purchased it for \$490,000 and gave Gilbane Properties, Inc. management duties. The final owner of the park was the City of East Providence who obtained it for \$500,000 in 1979 because its former owner could not generate enough money to run the park. Crescent Park closed for the first time in the spring of 1979. After its acquisition, the city planned to put up housing in the area which angered many people for fear of losing the Loeff Carousel. As a result of this, two organizations, "Save Our Carousel" and the Carousel Park Commission were formed to repair and reuse the carousel. Their efforts made it possible to reopen the Loeff Carousel on July 28, 1984 allowing thousands of people the enjoyment of riding the flying horses once again.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Arts & Crafts Official Souvenir of the Exposition of the New England Association of Arts and Crafts. First Edition. Providence, A.M. Thomas 1902 p.9

<sup>2</sup>Providence Journal of Commerce. 1893 - 1895 P.178.

<sup>3</sup>Echoes of Summer: The Lives and Times of Crescent Park produced by Cable TV of East Providence



## GROUNDS COMMITTEE

Ray Anderson, Chairman

As I reported last month, the East Providence Historical Society Executive Board met with **Lala Searle** and **Greg Gammel** to review the new landscaping plan and hear what the Parks Department can contribute. A few days later, **Edna Anness found an available grant from the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor** that would fund a project like ours. The application had to be in by May 1. Edna and I had to get all kinds of supporting documentation. This included City Manager and Parks Department support letters, East Providence Beautification Committee letter, maps, pictures, awards and commendations, and newspaper and *EPHS Gazette* copies. This required several meetings with the city officials.

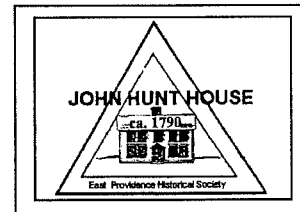
The Parks Department anticipates \$11,082 of in kind labor over a three-year plan. A total of \$9,670 worth of building supplies are needed, and the landscape plan will cost \$4,450. Our application to the "Blackstone Corridor" asks for \$14,020 to cover our expected expenses.

Our letters of support from City Manager **Paul Lamont**, Superintendent of Parks **Greg Gammel**, and Chair of the East Providence Beautification Committee **Billy Arden** are most encouraging. Now let's sit back, keep our fingers crossed, and hope for the best.

### 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 the coupon 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 \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

# Håkan Carlson Hammarlund

by John W. Agren

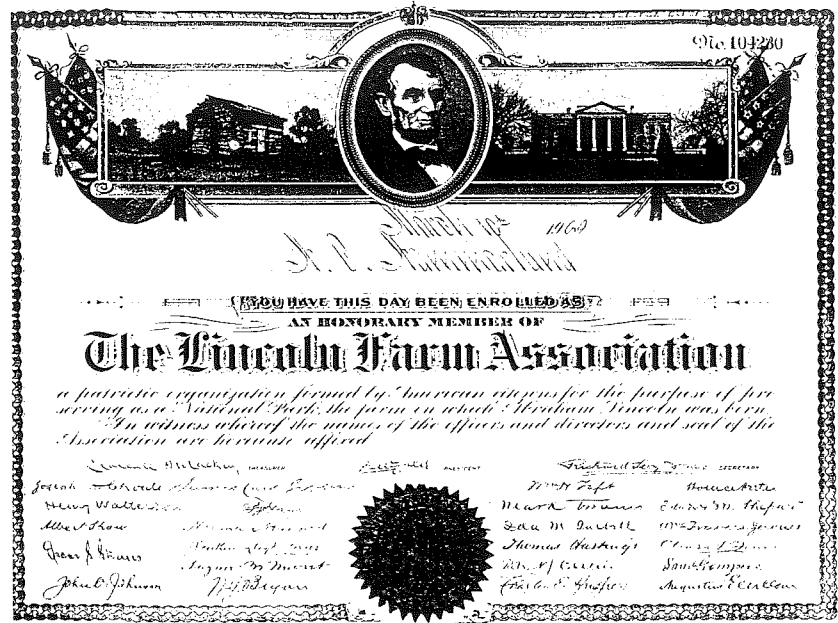
My mother's father was Håkan Carlson Hammarlund. He was born in Småland, Sweden on October 11, 1846 and came to this country in 1873. Christine Magnuson, my mother's mother was born on May 5, 1851 and came to America from Småland in 1874. They were married November 6, 1875. There were eight children born between 1877 and 1893. Håkan died June 24, 1917, Christine on April 15, 1942. Håkan worked for the Rumford Chemical Works. Records indicate that in 1895 he earned \$644.10.

A numbered certificate states: "You have this day (March 10, 1909) been enrolled as an Honorary member of **THE LINCOLN FARM ASSOCIATION**, a patriotic organization formed by American citizens for the purpose of preserving as a National Park the farm on which Abraham Lincoln was born.

In witness whereof the names of the officers and directors and seal of the Association are here unto affixed". There follows a number of impressive American names, including Charles E. Hughes, Mark Twain, William H. Taft and others.

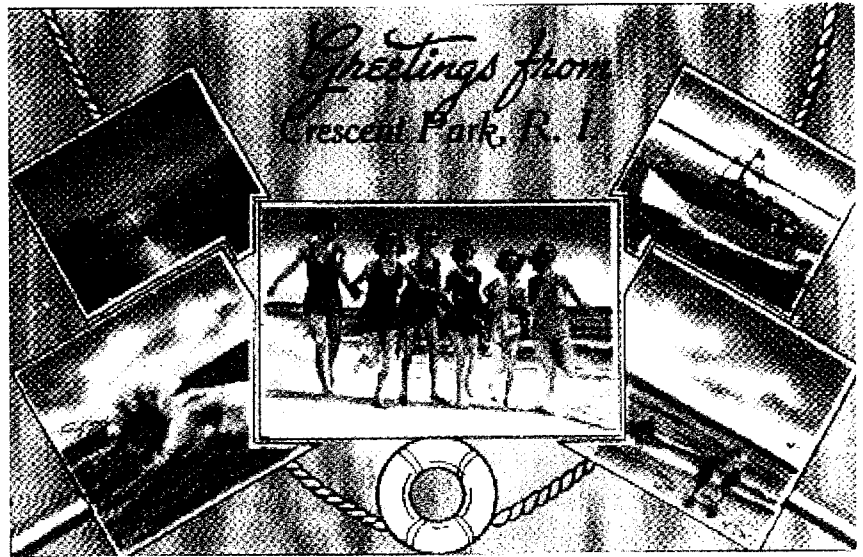
My grandfather, an immigrant with eight children, working for \$644.10 a year, thought enough of his new country to make a donation to preserve an American institution! Fantastic!

The **Håkan Hammarlund House**, an East Providence Historical House, is at 251 Newman Avenue, Rumford.




Certificate received by Håkan Carlson Hammarlund when he contributed to preserve the farm where Abraham Lincoln was born.

 **COMING SOON!**



**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

**The "Crescent Park Exhibition"**   
 See Edna's "From the Attic" column for details on how you can be a part of this great event!



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P.O. BOX 4774  
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*Events Calendar*

**MAY**

Wednesday, May 13, 7:30 p.m.  
**Crescent Park Exhibition Committee**  
*Open to all interested in the planning*  
John Hunt House  
Hunts Mills Road, Rumford

Monday, May 18, 7:30 p.m.  
**Members Meeting**  
Newman Church.  
Rumford  
**PROGRAM:**

"Riverside: From Farmland to Coney Island"  
**Presenters:** Edna Anness and David Kelleher

**JUNE**

Wednesday, June 3, 7:30 p.m.  
**Board Meeting**  
John Hunt House  
*Newsletter Deadline*

Thursday June 4, 7:00 p.m.  
*East Providence Historic  
Properties Study Commission*  
Carousel, Crescent Park,  
Riverside

Monday, June 22, 5:00 p.m.  
**Annual Meeting/Election of Officers**  
**Family Picnic**  
John Hunt House  
Hunts Mills Road