

The GREEN

LIGHT



BULLETIN OF THE POINT ASSOCIATION OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

VOL. IX

JULY 1965

No. 3

JULY QUARTERLY MEETING

The July general membership quarterly meeting of the Point Association will be held on July 29th - a picnic on Mrs. MacLeod's lawn, 78 Washington Street at 6 - SIX O'CLOCK. Bring your own sandwiches, and something to sit on. Coffee and cake will be provided. Come and enjoy a summer evening on the waterfront. Rain or shine.

ANNUAL MEETING IN OCTOBER

At the October annual meeting, we are having a tenth anniversary celebration, with ~~William G. Harrington~~, the chairman. We are planning to make this a memorable occasion. If you have any particular ideas and suggestions for this anniversary, do get in touch with the chairman or any of the officers. Also any reminiscences for the Green Light. We can't find out what everyone would enjoy unless you tell us.

APRIL QUARTERLY MEETING

The April general membership meeting was held at Mumford School on April 29, 1965, with a good attendance. Cleaning of the Point was discussed, the Auction sale, tree planting, acquiring a flag pole from Goat Island if one is available, the park at Thames and Cross Street which the Association will offer to plant when a suitable fence is erected, but as most of these matters are discussed later, we'll go on to the pictures of Point gardens taken by King Covell with the help of Marion Galvin, which made the gardens look even more beautiful, and were much enjoyed by all. James Douglas then introduced the Sandune Singers and the Wanderers, who entertained us with folk songs. Mrs. Duffy and her committee served refreshments.

THE OLD FASHIONED AUCTION

The Old Fashioned Auction will be held

on Mrs. Benson's lawn, 62 Washington Street on August 7th from 10 to 2, with John Lyons as auctioneer. Leave any contributions with Mrs. Carr at 55 Washington Street, or call her at 847-2989, to make arrangements for picking it up.

In order to make this auction successful, Empty your attic and cellar with zestful. Go to your closets and cupboards and drawers
Dump everything out in heaps on the floors. Quick! Call up Barbara - she'll come in a trice
She'll take it all and put it on ice, Until the great day comes, the 7th of August
Choose all sorts of treasures, regardless of rust.
The breeze will be cooling; come sit on the lawn
And hark to the Lyons roar -- going, going, gone.

APPLE BLOSSOM COFFEE

The Eccles' Apple Blossom Coffee and plant sale was most successful in every way, in spite of cold and fog. The garden was beautiful, the food delicious, all kinds of plants and flowers from seedlings up were brought by every one, and from the amounts that were sold, the Point gardens should be superb this year. The party was to start a fund for planting the park at the corner of Cross and Thames Streets, and \$56 was collected - a good start.

POINT BEAUTIFICATION

This year Mr. Sullivan, our garden expert, was authorized at the April general membership meeting to spend \$100 on trees. He not only got all the trees, but planted them all himself, and protected them with stakes and wire. Six black pines, which grow in such an exposed location, were planted north of the Bethune's house on Washington Street. A ginko and a linden tree were planted near Poplar Street at St. John's rectory, a linden tree in John Barton's yard, and a pagoda tree in John Mazza's yard. For years Mr. Sullivan has wanted to plant trees near the sidewalks, but in private yards with more room to grow, and seeing that six of these trees are off the sidewalk, we should be able to tell in a few years if this is an improvement. The maples planted on the sidewalks in past years continue to do well (except for the ones deceased) and add greatly to the vistas down the streets. The Bridge Street maples have had a radical pruning since parking was changed to the north side, and the big trucks have broken off all the low branches on the south side.

Three of the big tubs at Battery Park were tipped over one night, but our cleaner put the plants back and watered them, and they continue to bloom.

The Point Association has hired a man to clean the area two hours a day for five days a week, and he is doing nobly. We hope to get the trash cans on the brows replaced soon.

The Preservation Society sponsored a tour of eleven Point houses on June 26th, and it was most successful. Over seven hundred people came, and enjoyed seeing our 18th century houses, and all the restoration that Operation Clapboard has done, and is doing. Incidentally, the Public Works Department did an excellent job of cleaning the Fleet Landing for parking, and cleaning all the streets as well.

OPERATION CLAPBOARD

Operation Clapboard is one year old this month - in the last year I feel safe in saying quite a lot has been accomplished. Since the last report in the Green Light, the physical side of Operation Clapboard has changed very little, whereas the goings on within the organization have greatly increased. There always comes a point in a project of this type where what has been done and what is to be done must be examined. In the case of Operation Clapboard, we have the houses; now we must do right by them, and this is the most demanding part. The demands of restoration are manifold. To begin with this is so because we in Operation Clapboard have our own definition of the word restoration. We believe that to restore is to rehabilitate, to be oriented in our thinking to the age of the houses, and yet to have as our goal re-useability. The houses with which we are involved must remain houses, dwelling places for people. In the case of neighborhoods, we feel that the worst thing we could do would be to upset the valuable character of the Point, and we continue to look toward the Point Association for guidance and help in our over-all endeavors. As work progresses on our various houses, Operation Clapboard becomes more and more aware of the future, and how, together with the Point Association we are quite close to making our chosen area the most unified section of the city.

As far as specifics of recent work are concerned, much worth looking at has been accomplished. With no intent to insult, I shall mention a few things, knowing that most Point Association members have probably seen them already.

Mrs. Margaretta W. Potter and Mr. Clarkson N. Potter have removed the store from their house at 44 Thames Street, in place of which they will in time plant a garden. The removal of this building has changed Thames Street greatly, and has opened things up in a truly remarkable way. Also, now that the store is down, there can be seen on 44 the mark left by the small 18th century inn which was torn down (1890's) to make way for the recently removed store.

Commander and Mrs. George Ackley have taken down the porch and begun to strip the siding from the William Claggett house at 16 Bridge Street, a very interesting and early building (c.1725) containing wonderful simple detail, which should prove a great asset to the street. (Notice the early clapboards left on the front of the house under the asbestos shingle.)

Mr. John Ettinger, who owns four houses on Third Street, has removed the additions from the Thomas Townsend house at Number 14 Third Street, so that now it is back in its

original shape, and has regained a back yard.

Commander and Mrs. Nicholas Brown are very near to the long awaited Collins House (Pitts Head Tavern) move. This great undertaking should occur the week of the 12th of July, and in a very short time the house will be on its new foundation on lower Bridge Street. Incidentally, it is worth noticing that the new site for this building is within a few feet of where the old Redwood house stood, and when the new foundation hole was being dug, some of the Redwood house foundation was uncovered.

All in all these are some of the things which have recently taken place. We have hopes that there are many more to come, and promise to report them to the Green Light as they occur.

Thomas Benson

BRIDGE STREET

Since the last Green Light, another house on the north side of Bridge Street has been demolished to make room for Pitt's Head Tavern, which is to be moved from Charles Street and located where Trilby lived.

Another transaction has taken place. Mr. Henry St. Clair's grocery store, at the corner of Washington and Bridge Streets, has been bought by Mrs. Catherine W. O'Leary. Another improvement is the new fences on the Green estate that the Goddards now own.

Now, we will be on our way, as the gates are going up by Tom Wood, a big jolly man known by all the Pointers. On the north side of Bridge, near the tracks, we pass Tom Freeborn's cottage, which looks nice with its recent coat of paint and new fence. The quaint little cottage in the rear has recently been moved to the corner of Stoddard Court. It is a wonderful addition to the neighborhood with its new foundation, paint, shingles and clapboards. Next came the "Unfortunate Hannah Robinson House." This was a three apartment house, and one was occupied by Henry Crowell's family for many years, and recently by the Brownell family. This is now being restored and has a new fence. On the opposite corner of Stoddard's Court, where the cottage has been moved to, once stood an old Colonial house. A store was next to it, I believe a plumber shop. Both of these were demolished, and the land made into a garden by the Brownells. Next, where Mrs. Addison now lives and has the most attractive garden and patio, once stood another cottage with a piazza, where Harold Wright lived. The next was a tenement house close to the sidewalk where Charles Barnum's family lived, and a James family lived in the white cottage next to it. There was another low house close to the sidewalk, and a garage is now here. The Lyon's family occupied the next big house with the piazza. The Hurley family lived at the corner of Cross Street, and conducted a paint and paper shop that was attached to the house. I believe this too is going to be restored.

Going back to the tracks, on the south side was a cottage occupied by a King family; this is now the Tots' Lot. There was a well, known as the Jones well, that was closed due to some epidemic. Where the billboard is now stood another big white Colonial house, with a dim gas light on the sidewalk. At this point there is a bend in Bridge Street. The Tripp house now occupied by Mrs. Esther Bates has recently been restored, and she too has a lovely old-fashioned garden. The next three houses at this time had no piazzas, and were occupied by the Ticomb, Kelley, and Florence Sullivan's families. The next house still looks the same. On the corner facing Thames Street was Ramlose's shoe store, and across the street at the corner of North Baptist was White and Gladding's grocery store. This was a busy intersection. Opposite Hurley's on the corner of Thames stood the BIJOU, conducted by Margie Stevens. This has been torn down, and the Point Association is planning a garden here. As you stand here, you can see what a marvelous job Operation Clapboard has undertaken restoring the old Colonial homes on upper Thames Street and with the new gardens and the historical LIBERTY TREE at the corner of Farewell Street, I think the POINT area will be better and more attractive than ever.

Carrie Ericson

THE LIBERTY TREE

The Stamp Act had been repealed! In all the thirteen states along the Atlantic coast, in towns and villages, in mansions and humble cottages, the news of the repeal of the Stamp Act was received with jubilation mixed with varying degrees of gratitude to the English sovereign, King George III. The Stamp Act had become law on February 27, 1765, and dictated that all bills, bonds, leases, insurance policies, marriage certificates, vessel clearances, newspapers, broadsides and legal documents of all kinds should be written on stamped paper. Stamps at varying prices were to be sold by public officials.

In vain England awaited the money from the colonies, "but not a stamp was to be seen in America." The stamp distributors disappeared by magic - some resigned, some were forced out by popular wrath. The law courts were closed, and business virtually suspended. The colonial governors then allowed non-compliance with the act because stamps were not to be had. Newport's own governor, Samuel Ward, stood alone among the governors of the thirteen colonies in his refusal to take a solemn oath to support the Stamp Act. The Sons of Liberty were active in all these efforts; their acts left no doubt that King George was losing the respect of his American subjects. The more passive but most effective means of protest had been to refuse use of British imports, especially their most lucrative export - British woolens. Americans refrained from eating lamb to save the wool crop. Rich and poor wore their own homespun clothes. English trade with the American colonies dropped to a low ebb, and finally after belated sober deliberation, King George repealed the Stamp Act on February 22, 1766. At the same time a Declaratory Act was passed reaffirming the right to tax America. This threat was overlooked in the extravagant joy over the repeal.

To celebrate this repeal, Liberty Trees were planted by true Sons of Liberty, while some trees already growing were rededicated as Liberty Trees. The oldest of these was in Boston. This old tree had been planted in 1646 and was long associated with patriotic gatherings. On February 14, 1766, it was rededicated by the Sons of Liberty as the Liberty Tree. Newport's Liberty Tree was the second to be so dedicated and was already a "large buttonwood tree", indicating years of growth. It was noted on Dr. Ezra Stiles' map, when he measured off the last 500 paces to the tree at the head of Thames Street on August 9, 1785.

The gift of this tree and the lot on which it stood was made by the generous and patriotic deed which appears below.

Deed of Liberty Tree

This deed was drawn by Henry Marchant, Esquire, and copied by William Ellery, Esquire

To all people to whom these presents shall come - Greetings.

I, William Read, of Newport in the County of Newport in the English Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England in America, merchant, For and in consideration of the love of my country and an ardent desire to perpetuate to the latest Posterity the Liberties and Privileges handed down by my glorious Ancestors and also for the further consideration of Five Shillings, Lawful money to me in hand paid by William Ellery, John Collins, Robert Crook and Samuel Fowler, Merchants and all of said Newport, the receipt whereof I do hereby acknowledge that in this Deed may be held good and sufficient in our constructions of law, have given, granted, sold, and conveyed and do hereby give, grant, bargain, sell and convey to them the said William Ellery, John Collins, Robert Crook and Samuel Fowler, and to such other person or persons as shall or may be chosen by the Survivors of them, upon the decease of either of them forever in such succession, a certain Large Button Wood tree standing at the North End of Thames Street aforesaid and at the North End of my Lott of Land, there being with the Land on which it stands, bounded as follows: Easterly on Farewell Street about twenty-six feet, Southerly by my said Lott of Land about eleven feet and Westerly on Thames Street making a Point to the North and lying in the form of a triangle with the Appurtenances. To have and to hold the same to them the said William Ellery, John Collins, Robert Crook and Samuel Fowler and their Successors as aforesaid to and for the uses, Intents and designs as following, Viz: That the said tree forever hereafter be known by the name of the Tree of Liberty and be set apart to and for the use of the Sons of Liberty and that the same

stand as a Monument of the Spirited and Noble Opposition made to the Stamp Act in the Year One Thousand Seven Hundred and Sixty-Five by the Sons of Liberty in Newport, Rhode Island and throughout the Continent of North America and be considered as Emblematical of Publick Liberty and of her taking deep root in English America, Of her Strength and Spreading Protection, by her benign Influences, refreshing her Sons in all their Struggles against the Attempts of Tyranny and Oppression. And furthermore the said Tree of Liberty is destined and set apart for exposing to the Publick Ignominy and Reproach all offenders against the Liberties of their Country and Abettors and Approvers of such as would enslave her.

And that the same may be repaired to upon all Rejoicings on account of the Rescue and Deliverance of Liberty from any danger she may have been in of being Subverted and overthrown, and furthermore that the said Tree of Liberty stand as a Memorial of the firm and unshaken Loyalty of the American Sons of Liberty to his Majesty King George the Third and their Inviolable Attachment to the Happy Establishment of the Protestant Succession in the Illustrious House of Hanover and in General said Tree is hereby conveyed to and set apart for such other uses as they, the True Born Sons of Liberty, shall from time to time, from age to age, and in all times and ages forever hereafter apprehend, Judge and Resolve may subserve the Glorious Cause of Publick Liberty. And I the said William Read do hereby covenant to and with the said William Ellery, John Collins, Robert Crook and Samuel Fowler and their Successors as aforesaid that I am the true and Lawful Owner of Said bargained Premises, that I have good Authority and full Power to dispose, Grant, Sell and Convey the same as aforesaid, and that I will Warrant and defend the same to them the said William Ellery, John Collins, Robert Crook and Samuel Fowler, and their Successors as aforesaid against the Lawful Claims and Demands of all persons forever hereafter.

In Witness whereof, I the said William Read have hereunto set my hand and seal this Fourteenth day of April in the Sixth year of his Majesty's Reign, George the Third, King of Great Britain, etc., Anno que Domine One Thousand Seven Hundred and Sixty-Six.

Signed and Sealed and Delivered in the presence of us (each in his own handwriting)

Joseph G. Wanton
Gideon Wanton
Jacob Richardson
Benjamin Hall
Henry Marchaud
Benjamin Ellery
Samuel Henshaw
David Anthony
Ebe Davenport
William Merriss (? sp)
Robert Hull
Paul Coffin
Phillip Peckham
John Barker
Lewis Bulliod
John Stanton
John Read
----- Scott

Dan'l Dunham, Jr.
Charles Conens (? sp)

William Read

SEAL

Tim (?) Balch
Constant Baley
Christopher Townsend, Jun.
Robt. Say Sherman
Joshua Sayer, Jun.
Jeremiah Child, Jr.
Benjamin Stanton
Henry Ward
Samuel Weeden

Colony of Rhode Island Vo.
Newport
April 14, 1766

Recorded in the Book of Evidence of
Newport, No. 15 513 & 514
Newport, April 14, 1766
Witness Wm. Coddington, Town Clerk

Personally appeared Capt. William Read and
acknowledged the foregoing Instrument to be
his voluntary Act and Deed
Before Henry Ward, Just. Peace.

In the years to follow, the repeal of the Stamp Act was celebrated on March 18th as Liberty Day. Dr. Ezra Stiles in his diary kept an account of these celebrations - "March 18, 1769, this is Liberty Day, the anniversary of the repeal of the Stamp Act, 1766. The anniversary was celebrated at Newport by Sons of Liberty. At dawn of day

colors or a large flag was hoisted and displayed on the top of the Tree of Liberty, and another on the Mast of Liberty on the Point. At the same time my bell began and continued ringing till sunrise. About nine o'clock A.M. the bell of the first Congregational Church began to ring and rang an hour or two. The Episcopal Church bell struck a few strokes and then stopped, the Episcopalians being averse to the celebration. At noon the cannon were discharged at the Point near the Liberty Pole or Mast. The colors were also displayed at the Fort all day, and on some vessels. Toward night my bell rang again and ended at sunset, when all the colors were struck. The committee of the Sons of Liberty met and supped with John Collins."

Dr. Ezra Stiles noted similar celebrations in his diary from 1770-1774, but with lessening enthusiasm, as the war with England seemed imminent. On March 18, 1775, he wrote "the celebration of this anniversary designedly neglected here this day, as we have found the repeal of the Stamp Act 1766, was not done on generous fraternal principles, as America at first conceived. No flag on the Liberty Tree, nor any other demonstration of joy. A few boys jingled a few bells but were soon stopped." (This was just a month before the Battle of Lexington.) The Liberty Tree at Boston was cut down by order of British General Gage in 1775 and Newport's own Liberty Tree suffered the same fate, as if by destroying the symbol of Liberty, they could also destroy the will to resist tyranny.

There followed years of occupation; finally when the British evacuated Newport not a tree was standing in the town. On April 25, 1783, all hostilities ended in victory for America. On that date several Newport citizens were gathered at the grocery of Thomas Stevens. Talking over the events of the war and the lamentable loss of the Liberty Tree, they decided to get another tree and plant it in its place. It was finally agreed that the farm of George Irish (now Boulevard Nurseries), beyond the town limits in Middletown was the most likely place so under cover of darkness 13 men proceeded to Mr. Irish's farm, took from it a young tree, carried it into town on their backs and planted it on the site of the original Liberty Tree on April 25, 1783.

In 1823, an oval plate of copper nearly 2 feet in its longest diameter was engraved by William S. Nichols, a prominent Newport silversmith, and nailed to the tree. The inscription was as follows:

Tree of Liberty, planted April 25, 1783, by

John Williams
Walter Johnson
Thomas Mumford
Thomas Stevens

John Stevens
Samuel Simpson
Job Townsend
Benjamin Lawton

John Henshaw
George Perry
Noah Barker
Robert Taylor
William Doderick

In the years that followed, it was to become as beloved as the original, for it was planted on the free and independent soil of the United States of America and was a symbol of the struggle for independence and the final victory.

Louise C. Sherman

(To be continued)