

The

GREEN

LIGHT



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OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

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APRIL GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING.

The April General Membership Meeting of the Point Association of Newport will be held Thursday, April 27th, at 8 o'clock at St. John's Guild Hall on Poplar Street. Mr. David U. Warren, the Managing Director of Key Newport, Inc., who are developing Goat Island, will speak on their plans for the island and the progress they are making.

January General Membership Meeting.

The January General Membership meeting of the Point Association of Newport was held in the Guild Hall on January 27th. To our deep regret, William Fullerton resigned as President due to pressure of business. We are happy that his business is expanding, but we shall miss him greatly. Our Vice President, Admiral Henry Eccles, then took the chair, and will serve as President until the next election in October. As previously planned, Admiral Eccles showed some of his slides of Newport, and everyone enjoyed seeing the Point in its various seasons and activities. Mrs. James as always served delicious refreshments.

Many who have not been able to come to the meetings lately expressed their delight in being back in the Guild Hall again.

Point Clean-Up Committee.

The Point Clean-Up Committee, Mrs. Walter Whitley, Chairman, is planning a clean-up day on Saturday, May 6th, postponed a week if it rains. Boy Scouts from Mr. Faust's Troop 16 will be helping, and the Boys Club will also send boys willing to work. The city will donate one truck for the day, with the possibility of a second one if there are enough workers. The city has also promised to put out new trash barrels between Bridge and Walnut streets, where so many have vanished. The

week after the general city clean up in May, the Point Association will pay boys, under supervision, a nominal sum to pick up trash and put it in the barrels. Mrs. Whitley's plan is to start in the most unsightly places, and work in a small area with a small group, on a trial basis.

Some Coming Activities.

Operation Clapboard is having an Open House on July 8th from 11 to 6. There will probably be at least 12 houses, many open for the first time.

The Old Port Association has sold two more houses.

A challenging project is the winterizing of the Van Alen Casino Theatre which is being undertaken by the Newport Players Guild. They hope that it will be used eventually as a center for the performing arts, and they need the support of everyone to make this a success.

The Apple Blossom Morning Coffee and Plant Sale at the Eccles', 101 Washington Street, will be held on Saturday, May 20th, from 11 to 12. We hope that everyone who has seedlings, cuttings, or divisions of perennials, etc., will bring his contributions. The proceeds will go toward planting the flower boxes in Battery Park.

Beautification Committee

To our sorrow, Mr. Joseph Sullivan was obliged to retire from the Beautification Committee, after years of improving the appearance of many streets and gardens. But we are fortunate that Mr. Fullerton is willing to be the new chairman. He has been talking to the new tree warden, Mr. James Halleck, who is most willing to plant some trees for us, probably in three or four weeks. They will not be the kind of maples we have had before, and they will be good sized trees that will have a better chance of surviving. Mr. Fullerton is planning to start with Bridge Street, one of the access roads to the Point, and one that has had the most damage, from house movings, vandals, and accidents.

In its resolution of October 27th the Point Association stated that: "... it is probable that Newport will be faced by a cultural-economic disaster when the Bridge opens, for people in search of high grade recreation will ... find themselves in the midst of a filthy, confused, and disorderly community."

In support of this stand the last issue of the Green Light said: "We must achieve a better sense of island-wide cooperation in many areas. This island community must have a consolidated refuse and garbage disposal facility.... This is an inevitable and necessary development. The sooner specific planning starts, the cheaper it will be to construct the facility.

As this Green Light goes to press, we are gratified to note that the Newport Daily News has published an excellent series of informative articles and an editorial pointing out the enormous damage done by the current primitive methods of trash and garbage dumping.

Mayor Dennis F. Shea of Newport called a public meeting for April 13th to hear an industry representative discuss the possibility of a modern efficient clean disposal plant. This meeting included members of the Aquidneck Island Joint Council Committee, and senior representatives of the Navy.

The Point Association is happy to applaud this initiative by our public officials, and feels sure that as the public becomes more aware of the problem we face, other similar constructive cooperation can be developed.

STORER PARK

Plans for Storer Park (south of the Hunter House on Washington Street) include a colonial garden to be planted by the Preservation Society at the north side. South of this, there will be a park maintained by the city, and extending to the causeway. While the bridge construction is going on, this property has been leased to the contractors. In the meantime fishing from the pier is going on full force.

FLEA MARKET AND STREET FAIR

The Point Association's summer project will be a Flea Market and Street Fair. It will be held on Willow Street between Washington and Second Streets on Saturday, August 19th, from 10 to 5.

A partial list of the participants, who each rent a table, is:

The Old Fashioned Shop	Arthur Newell's Antique Clock Shop
The Old Colony Shop	William Fullerton Fabrics
The What Not Shop	Senior Citizens' Apple Head Dolls
The Antique Shop	Brian Pelletier Photographs
The Victorian Shop	Mrs. Orville Ross
St. Leo's Shop	The Gallery

Mrs. Clara Jarvis - Embroidery and Crewel

There is still room for more tables, at \$10 each. Please call Mrs. Eccles at 847-5863 if you are interested.

There will be a flower table and garden accessories.

The Girl Scouts will serve tea from 2:30 to 4:30 and the 4H girls will make things to sell for the benefit of the Point Association.

The Players Guild will have a food table.

There will be a snack bar, sandwiches and coffee, from 12 to 2.

THERAPEUTIC VALUE OF SEA BATHING ON THE POINT.

Newport Evening Mercury
Tuesday Evening, September 20, 1853

Newport Water Cure

This Establishment, situated on the Point is now open for the reception of Patients. Arrangements have also been made to accommodate persons who only wish to take treatment at the Establishment. Dr. Reli will continue to attend patients in town.

Terms - For treatment and board \$10 per week; for treatment alone, from \$3 to \$5 per week, both to be paid weekly. For consultation and prescriptions from \$3 to \$5. Single visit \$1.00, deductions being made where a number of visits are necessary and also according to the circumstances of patients. The poor will be treated without charge.

Dr. W. F. Reli

Newport Daily News - June 29, 1854

Ad - Dr. W. F. Reli's Floating
Sea Baths

These baths containing private apartments with bath tubs sunk in the water - and a large open place for swimming in the water - and moored off in deep clear water - directly in rear of the Newport "Water Cure" on the Point - Washington, foot of Bridge Street. Hours for Ladies from 9 to 12 a.m.

Prices the same as on the Beach.

ROWLAND ROBINSON

Rowland Robinson was the only one of Quaker Tom Robinson's four sons to take to the sea. Just what preparation he had had for this life we do not know, other than the fact that he was raised in the house at 64 Washington Street in Newport, where the garden ran down to his father's wharf on the Narragansett Bay shore. We do, however, have a pretty good idea of the home atmosphere. Born on May 8, 1763, Rowland was still a boy during the fateful years of the Revolution and probably was there at the time the angry mob attacked the house because of his father's loyalist leanings. As his two elder brothers had early left home to start careers at a distance, upon Rowland was lavished the special care of his parents and of two older sisters. These sisters, Mary and Abby, were well educated for their time, widely read, and with an excellent command of the English language. In later years both were to become respected speakers in Friends' Meetings and acknowledged leaders. The family's outlook was such that its members were on easy terms with the British officers stationed in Newport, and then later, with the Vicomte de Noailles who was quartered in their home and whose lack of English was no barrier to them, for they had become proficient in French. All the brothers and sisters of Rowland Robinson, to the end of their lives felt a strong bond with the home circle and hence the letters written home by them which form the main source for this article. These letters clearly show the growth of Rowland's character from that of a surprised tourist to a sea captain carrying his many responsibilities and ever keeping his mind on the things ahead.

Rowland's sea-going career must have begun before 1785 when he was twenty-two years of age, for in the first definite information we find about him he is already mate on a trans-Atlantic ship. In mid October 1788 Rowland wrote to one of his sisters telling how his ship had been detained in the Norwegian port of Humber Sound for two weeks, due to bad weather.

Rowland's account of the stop-over in Norway shows much interest in the different ways of a foreign country and as yet his position seems to have carried with it little sense of responsibility. The villagers of the small town where Rowland's ship, and two other flying the American flag, had sought shelter, had never before met any Americans; at first they had been mistaken for Britishers and the result of the mistake was cool treatment. But when the true nationality of the seamen had been made known they were all greeted with warm hospitality. Presently the mother of one of the friendly Norwegians died and the captains and mates of all three American ships were invited to the home of the bereaved. To Rowland's amazement it turned out to be an occasion for feasting and merriment among the elders, the quality and the captains, who sat in an upstairs chamber, as well as for the younger people who made merry in the downstairs room where the corpse lay. When Rowland looked sober as he thought the occasion warranted even the granddaughters of the deceased laughed at him and asked him why he looked so dull. Soon a feast was served up with plenty of brandy and to Rowland's mind some of the guests drank too freely. Six or seven young girls seated at the table with the mates were very attentive and glad to see the strangers enjoying themselves and evidently pleased with the Norway victuals. When the time came for the memorial service to begin, more than half the company had become drunk and it was only by thumping on the table with his case knife that the clerk got sufficient silence for hymn singing. "Thee may judge," wrote Rowland in amusement "of the solemnity of it." By the time they were to take the corpse to the nearby church, the mourners were in such a state that the coffin fell short of the sled and overturned. Fortunately there were still some sober members of the party and they managed to lash the coffin to the sled. The mates would have gone along to the church but the girls, in some of whose eyes tears at last appeared, persuaded them not to do so. Instead, coffee and pipes were served to the guests. When the church-goers returned there was more drinking and some partook so plentifully that they had to be lugged home by their wives. Others fought but these people were soon separated for, as Rowland observed, "It is a great shame in Norway to fight at a funeral." When it grew dark the remaining guests began to dance, although there was no fiddle allowed for "It is a great shame in Norway to have a fiddle so soon after one of the family's death." Things grew still merrier and Rowland wrote, "Now we was

as good as the captains and the girls as bold as us. But we sung and danced until we was tired and at nine or ten o'clock the three mates drew off and left the company, but could not go without taking leave of the girls, for it is a great shame in Norway, to dance with girls and not kiss them, and so we were obliged to take 3 kisses from each of them, and some of them would not let us come off so, for instead of three they would have a dozen. But for my part I would not mind giving some of them twenty."

It does not seem hard to imagine the reaction of Rowland's Quaker family to such behavior as he described in this letter from Norway. A hint of this can be seen in the worried note of his mother to Molly who was visiting relatives in New York in October 1789 when Rowland was due back from another voyage. Sarah Robinson wrote "Has poor Rowland arrived or not? What do they think of him?" From this time on it seems that a sister is always sent to New York to be with Rowland so that his time in port may be passed more discreetly. This fact shows up clearly in a letter from Molly which seems to have been written in reply to her mother's plaintive inquiry.

Molly's letter, dated 6th of December, 1789, seems to show a very different Rowland for this one is a man of responsibility: "Second day morning John rapped at my chamber door and awoke me with the joyful tidings of our dear Rowland's arrival. My heart was permeated with the sweet sentiment of gratitude for the favor and the little girls were wild with joy.... I dressed myself and the children as soon as possible and when we got to the parlor we found him there ... he met an affectionate reception from his sister; you may judge of my feelings when I embraced a brother I had but a few days before suffered many painful apprehensions for.... He left Liverpool, I think, early in September bound to Baltimore and the night after a gale came on which with the uncommon strength of tide in that place, was near casting the vessel on a cluster of rocks called St. David's Head. To avoid this they threw out both anchors, which not proving effectual, they cut away both masts, and then lay till morning, when they was taken in tow by a Custom House cutter, who carried them in to Haverford West and charged £600 sterling for the business. Haverford West is not a place of much trade and they were obliged to procure the necessaries to refit from Bristol, Liverpool, etc., which was dispiriting. The enormous demand of the cutter took a great deal of time and delayed his arrival to this late period. The judge told Rowland that as it was a King's vessel they had not right to demand anything and that ten guineas to the sailors would have been ample compensation for their trouble. I think they allowed 100£. Uncle and brother both approve Rowland's conduct throughout the affair, though I can see he is hurt by it - though they all say he has no reason to fear the implication of imprudence from any person acquainted with the place and the circumstances. It is the spot in which Uncle Franklin lost a ship just before the late war."

On Christmas Eve, just 18 days after Molly had written the account of Rowland's return, she wrote home again and the picture she gives of him is that of a very busy man - probably already a captain: "Rowland," she writes, "has been uncommonly engaged since his arrival with the customary business of discharging and lading; they have been occupied in altering his schooner into a brigantine - a change he is much pleased with. But it has so engrossed so much of his time that he has little to spare to his friends." And then she goes on to tell of his departure. "This morning, a little after daybreak, he came into my chamber to take leave of me. The weather is very serene and pleasant, the wind fair and the prospect of an agreeable passage to Charleston very good; then he expects to have more leisure than he had here and promises to employ much of it in writing to us all."

On January 31, 1790, Rowland fulfills his promise by writing from Charleston to his sister, Molly. In this letter he tells of a plan that would have made a great difference to his life as well as to that of the beloved family in Newport: "Dear Sister," he writes, "I received thy very affectionate letter of the 2nd of this month... We are now ready for sea and shall sail on 3rd day if the wind permits, perhaps for my last European voyage. Rowland Hasard and I talk of getting a vessel in the fall to coast it between Newport and New York, which I shall like very much better than European voyages for two reasons; one is I shall see you oftener, and the other is, I shall make more money."

Fate, however, decreed differently. That was not to be his last European voyage. Nor was he to become a coaster. On April 18, 1791, we find a very sad Rowland sailing for Bristol, England, on the ship Birmingham. His sister Abby seems close to the point of death and the demand of his ship are such that he cannot even go up to Newport to see her once more. The day before his sailing he writes to Molly; "I suppose there is no hope of seeing her again in this world, and to be torn from her when she lies at the point of death, and sent to sea in such an uncertainty, requires all the fortitude I am master of to endure, but it must be so, and I must never see her again." In this last prediction he was strangely right - he never did see Abby again. But Abby lived and it was Rowland who died!

Amy, the youngest of the three Robinson girls, had a portentous dream in the fall of 1791. In the dream she saw a great wave rise up and wash over Rowland's ship. He called to her from the seas as he went down to his watery grave. The facts of the tragedy which took place off Halifax are clearly given in the Newport Mercury of Saturday, September 24, 1791:

"Boston, September 21st - Arrived at Marblehead, last Wednesday, the ship Birmingham from Bristol (from whence she had sailed on the 1st of August) bound for New York, John Kent, present master, being a perfect wreck, and was towed in by a south shore fisherman. It appears by the Log Book that on the 7th instant in Latitude 40,40,N. Long. 63,4W she met with a violent gale from the south, a heavy sea struck her on the larboard beam, and turned her entirely over, carried away all her masts and bowsprit, leaving only the stump of her fore-mast standing, and washed the captain (whose name was Rowland Robinson) and four of the people overboard, together with all her boats, and everything on deck, and the rudder was greatly damaged. There were now left on board two mates (the first of whom took the command), three men and a boy. They soon cleared the wreck, got the pumps to work, which after nine hours incessant pumping, sucked. On the ninth they got up jury masts, made what sail they could and steered for Boston. She is a fine Philadelphia built ship of 207 tons and her cargo, consisting chiefly of hardware, is estimated by the master at 30 or 40,000L."

Among the survivors to reach Boston, although not referred to in the newspaper account, was one woman, Ann Smith, by name. On her way to New York she stopped at Newport and spent several days with the Robinson family. With her she brought the only relics she had been able to snatch from Rowland's cabin before she left the ship - a pair of garters that his sisters had knit for him and his watch. Ann Smith wept as she spoke of Rowland's kindness during the terrible gale. He came down to her as she lay "deluged in her berth" to say he still hoped and gave her wine and some biscuit, tried to cheer her and spoke of his ever adored mother. (From notes by B. R. Smith)

Rowland's sea chest finally got to Newport, doubtless sent down from the wrecked vessel after she reached Boston. The contents was divided and the chest sent to his brother, Thomas R. Robinson of Vermont. On April 6, 1792, Molly sent Thomas a note along with the key to the chest: "How often have we seen this chest come into the house with pleasure. How often have our hearts throbbd with anguish and our eyes overflowed with tears at seeing it depart. It now leaves us for the last time; it is painful to see it go, but not such pain as it used to excite; its departure is now unconnected with the idea of suffering and dangers of its amiable Master. My dearest brother! Thou art removed, I trust, beyond the reach of danger; above the sense of suffering through the Infinite Mercy of Him who called Light from darkness and has made, I firmly believe, all the former sufferings subservient to this blessed purpose."

Among the relics in the sea chest were a number of silver coins. These were sent to John Vernon, New York silversmith, and by him made into a cream pitcher. This was given to Rowland's sister Molly, whose initials were engraved on it just below the spout. And then followed an engraving of a funeral urn with the initials R. R. and below the urn the date of Captain Rowland Robinson's tragic death. It is still owned by one of the descendants of Molly Robinson.

Sarah A. G. Smith