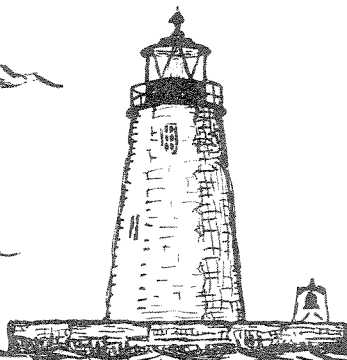


The GREEN

LIGHT



BULLETIN OF THE POINT ASSOCIATION OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

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No. 2

JANUARY GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING.

The January general membership meeting of the Point Association of Newport was held on January 26, 1968, at St. John's Guild Hall on Poplar Street. There was a real blizzard at the time, but over 100 people braved the snow, showing how interested the Point is in the access roads from the bridge. The Secretary's and Treasurer's reports were referred to the Executive Board for approval. David Nemtzw made a motion to omit a summer activity in 1968, and concentrate on a full scale event in 1969. This was seconded by Arthur Newell, and unanimously carried. Arthur Newell resigned as first vice president, and his resignation was accepted with regret.

The speakers were then introduced: Mr. Isidore D'Orsi, Highway Information Officer for the Rhode Island Public Works Department, Mr. John Geib, the Newport City Planner, and Mr. David Fenton, City Councilman for the First Ward, who led the discussion of the state highway roads south from the bridge to the city, with frequent additions from the other two speakers, and with the help of a very faint map. There was some confusion at first, and many people asked questions and discussed the various changes.

The meeting adjourned, and Mrs. James and her committee served refreshments, while everyone went on talking about the new roads.

APRIL GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING.

The April General Membership Meeting of the Point Association of Newport will be held in St. John's Guild Hall on Thursday, April 25th, at 8:00 P.M. This is the meeting where we plan to discuss the dog situation, so please be sure to come, and have your suggestions ready. The speaker will be Mrs. Delphine Washburn, who wrote "The Newport Woman," a novel enjoyed by so many. As she says the Newport Woman was the main reason she was able to take her trip around the world, she is beginning her talk by describing the book. Then she will go on to her trip, which she says was mostly in the Orient. She rode on various animals such as elephants and camels, and altogether it should be a fascinating talk.

BOARD MEETINGS, ETC.

Admiral and Mrs. Eccles have gone to Portugal until June; Mrs. Benson was elected President pro tem., and David Nemtzw

was elected Second Vice President.

A letter was read from Roy Appelman, Acting Chief Historian of the U. S. Department of the Interior, giving the necessary specifications to qualify a district for National Historic Landmark recognition. Admiral Eccles appointed a committee, consisting of Elinor Weaver, Chairman, Esther Benson, and Jane Lewellen to investigate this whole subject.

The Board approved a letter to the City Manager asking for action on the abandoned cars on the Point, especially along the railroad tracks, and Bridge Street.

A letter was also sent to the State Department of Public Works, the City Council, City Planner, Planning Board Chairman, and City Manager, explaining the Point Association stand on:

1. The Causeway access road coming through Marsh Street rather than Bridge
2. A pedestrian overpass at Poplar Street
3. A sidewalk under the bridge at Third

Street to the Naval Hospital.

David Nemptzow, who has just returned to the Board after several years, feels we should make a great effort to stimulate an active interest of all the members, and he suggests we urge everyone to write their suggestions and complaints to the Board (Mrs. George Weaver, Secretary) and the most vital ones will be brought up at the next meeting. For a start, Dr. Nemptzow proposed a twenty minute discussion on the dog law and how to enforce it.

George Weaver reported the latest developments on Storer Park. The Council must decide at the April 10th Council Meeting whether to buy the land north of the causeway, now zoned residential, or allow the Redevelopment Agency to sell it for some business use. The Point Association has for many years been interested in having a park in this area. We are distributing leaflets to all Point residents a few days before this meeting, and hope to have a big turn out.

BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE

Mr. Fullerton, the Chairman for another year, is still waiting for calls from Point residents who would like a tree or bushes. Last fall he did not plant all he hoped to do, but this spring with the City's help, he should be able to get the trees on the streets planted, a major job, and also take care of several trees badly in need of pruning. Call him now so that your tree can be planted before it is too late this spring.

The Cross Street Park looks very well now. The City added soil and levelled it off, and planted grass seed. The wooden posts were set in place, and snow fence put around to protect the seeded area. (Have you noticed how plump the Point pigeons look?) The spruce tree, the hawthorne tree and the four magnolias are flourishing, and when the rest of the planting is done, and the stone bench is added by the John Stevens Shop, it will be even more attractive.

Although the Eccles are away, we are having our annual plant sale. We'll have an advertisement in the Daily News later when we find out about the place, and the time best for the sale. So all you gardeners start your seeds, and make cuttings of your favorite plants, and join us for coffee some Saturday morning in May.

CLEAN UP COMMITTEE

Mrs. Walter Whitley is Chairman of the clean up again this year, and she will be using teen agers to get the whole area picked up at the start of the season. Mr. Garcia will have a city truck to collect the rubbish on the first good Saturday in May. Later, for any special events, the area will be cleaned again. Remember, if each resident will take care of the street in front of his house, we'll make a good start.

NEWPORT PUBLIC LIBRARY BOOKMOBILE

Your Newport Public Library's Bookmobile will make a weekly stop on the Point beginning Tuesday, March 26, 1968. The main purpose is to bring books to people who are unable to get to the main Library, but anyone in the city is welcome to use the Bookmobile whenever or wherever it is open. From 10:30-11:30 A.M., and from 3:15-5:15 P.M. every Tuesday, Mrs. Karoli, Bookmobile Librarian, will be at the corner of Third Street and Katzman Place. Please pay her a visit.

A SPECIAL GIRL SCOUT BADGE

Mrs. John Mathinos, the leader of Troop 756 of Girl Scouts, has permission for her girls to earn a special Girl Scout badge - the Historic Point. Mrs. Mathinos had to write to Providence and New York to be allowed to add this badge, and the badge consultant is Elinor Weaver. She will tell the girls about the history of the Point, and the many things that have happened here. The girls are especially interested in the old houses, their history, and present owners; so do not be surprised if a Scout comes to your door for information. Of course if you feel expansive, you can show her the house briefly, but that is not necessary.

PARTIES ON THE POINT

A Party on the Back Steps.

One hot August afternoon, Ollie Easton, whose family had recently moved to a cottage at the corner of our street, had a party in her back yard. She and I were both about nine, but we didn't yet know each other, so I wasn't invited to her party. In fact none of the kids in our neighborhood had been invited, so we climbed her high board fence and watched Ollie and her friends play "Blind Man's Buff", "London Bridge", "Go-in-and-out-the window" and other similar games. There were about ten girls at the party. They wore pretty dimity or lawn dresses in various colors, and they were having a wonderful time. Ollie's mother came out and served them sandwiches and lemonade. I asked what kind of sandwiches they were, and she said, "They're blackberry jelly sandwiches, but it's none of your beeswax." I thought her answer was very funny, and planned to use it myself the first chance I got.

She recited a doggerel poem which simply fascinated me; later I learned it by heart, as us kids used to say. It went as follows:

Reuben, Reuben, have you heard?
Ma's going to buy me a mocking bird.
If that mocking bird don't sing.
Ma's going to buy me a diamond ring.
If that diamond ring turns brass,
Ma's going to buy me a looking glass.
If that looking glass don't see,
Ma's going to buy me a bumble bee.
If that bumble bee don't hum,
Ma's going to buy me some chewing gum.
If that chewing gum don't chew,
Ma's going to say "23 skidoo!"

I sat on the fence in an old dress that was soiled from playing mud pies, and slippers on my feet that were hand-me-downs. They'd originally had high heels which my grandfather had cut down to about an inch and a half, but I still felt self-conscious wearing grown up shoes.

"Beat it," Ollie said as more kids climbed her fence to see the party.

"Beat what?" I asked innocently. "What do you mean?"

She laughed and said, "I mean for every one of you kids to get off my fence." I got down, but already I admired Ollie immensely. She knew so many funny expressions like "Beat it," "None of your beeswax" and "23 skidoo" which were very popular slang expressions back in 1906, but completely new to me. I thought to myself, "She's awfully fresh, but she's smart."

My two kid sisters and I went back home, and I asked my mother if we could have a party on the back steps. She said, "Sure you can, if you don't mind the remains of a boiled dinner for refreshments." "Couldn't you just make us some jelly sandwiches and lemonade?" I asked pleadingly. "There's no jelly or lemonade in the house," she answered, and I knew from the tone of her voice that the matter for her was ended.

With a let down feeling, I took the broom and swept the long wooden steps by the kitchen door free of the dried mud pies we'd been making before we left to peek at Ollie's party. Then I brought out three saucers, a plate of corned beef, potatoes, carrots and beets, and three glasses of water. I arranged them as well as I could on the top step. "Did every child have such a party as this," I thought. The sun poured down on the steps as I started to serve the cold boiled dinner. Then I thought of those other girls eating dainty sandwiches and drinking cool lemonade, and the contrast was just too much for me. I gathered up the plates, food and drink, and took them back in the house. I can't remember what I did after that, but I learned that afternoon what it meant to be envious of someone else.

Surprise Parties

Every winter from 1905 until 1909 I attended surprise parties. Shortly after the

New Year when the glow of the Christmas holiday had begun to fade, a couple of us girls would begin to wonder which of the mothers would raise the least objections to a surprise party in her house. Having weighed the pros and cons of each mother, we'd make a selection and then with great secrecy approach the victim - I mean the mother. Some were easier to persuade than others. They didn't all relish having a crowd of young folks invading their homes, but most of them were good sports. Having over-ruled all the objections and received permission, we'd dash home to write the invitations. There was nothing fancy about these. They were written on half a sheet of note paper which was then folded, and the guest's name written on the outside. There was no "Dear so and so" - we got right down to business as follows:

You are cordially invited to attend a surprise party in honor of Susie Smith at her home on 94 Bridge Street, Thursday evening, January 15th. Meet at the corner of Bridge and Second Streets at 7 P.M. Refreshments solicited.

The invitations would be given out a week in advance, with each guest on his or her honor to keep the party a secret from Susie Smith. It was truly amazing how, most of the time, the party was a complete surprise.

By quarter of seven Thursday evening, no matter how cold the weather or how deep the snow, all the kids would be assembled at the corner of Bridge and Second Streets, the girls in their Sunday best dresses, most of them made of "Danish cloth," which was very popular winter material in the early 1900's. It came in most every color and was only twenty-five cents a yard. Practically all the girls' dresses were made either by their mothers or a dressmaker, as the dresses sold in the stores weren't made well at this time. The boys wore their best clothes too, mostly blue serge suits with short pants called knickers. Each guest brought a donation toward the refreshments - cake, cookies, fruit or candy. Sometimes the family exchequer being low, I brought a bag of apples - they were cheap at that time. Some of the boys brought pound boxes of chocolates.

All sixteen kids - eight boys and eight girls having shown up, we'd head for Susie Smith's house. Walking on tiptoe up the steps to the piazza, and trying our best not to giggle, one of us would ring the bell. Susie, urged by her mother I suppose, would open the door, truly surprised when she saw us standing there and shouting at the top of our lungs "Surprise party on Susie Smith." After scuffing off our rubbers in the front hall, and putting the refreshments we'd brought on the kitchen table, we'd dash up the stairs to Susie's room and throw our hats and coats in a jumble on her bed. The boys put theirs in a downstairs bedroom.

Then we'd all congregate in the parlor to play games. First we'd choose a doortender, usually a girl, who then whispered even numbers to the girls, and uneven to the boys. Clap-in and Clap-out having been chosen for the first game, each boy would stand behind a straight backed dining room chair, while the girls waited outside with the door closed. A boy whispered an even number to the doortender who relayed it to the girls, and the one who had been given this number walked sheepishly into the parlor. Each of the boys tried to persuade her to sit in his chair. If she sat in the wrong one, the boys clapped, and back to the hall she'd go, but if she sat in the chair of the boy who'd called her number, he kissed her. It usually landed on her neck, chin or hair but it was a kiss, after a fashion. The next boy whispered a number, and the same procedure was repeated.

In quick succession we played musical chairs, forfeits, and spin-the-pan. Then tiring of these games, we'd play hide the thimble, button button, who's got the button? By the time the games had grown tiresome, Susie's mother or one of the other mothers who had come to help her, played the piano and we'd gather around it and sing. We all knew the latest songs like "Moonlight Bay," "Down by the Old Mill Stream," or "Meet me tonight in Dreamland." We learned them at the movies which had just recently come to our town. They'd flash illustrated pictures of the song and the words on the screen and everybody in the audience would sing. Nearly every family I knew, when I was a kid, had a piano, and most of the women were excellent pianists. Some of them played by ear, but they sounded just as good as those who played by note.

At 9 P.M. supper was served and we'd make a bee line for the kitchen or dining room and sit boy, girl - boy, girl - around the table. There was usually a large

platter of deviled ham sandwiches - seldom any other kind, cake, and beside each plate a cup of cocoa with a marshmallow floating on top. However, we were a hungry crowd after playing all those games, and no matter how simple the food, we thoroughly enjoyed it.

Supper over, back to the parlor we'd go, and although feeling a bit stuffed, start to play another kissing game called post office which I needn't explain because I guess most every grown up has played it. After post office, we might play Wink, which was my favorite. Four chairs were placed on one side of the room and four on the other, with a boy in back of each chair facing each other. Girls sat in seven of the chairs, and the boy behind the empty chair did his best to lure one of the girls into it by winking at her. It was up to the boy to keep the girl winked at from leaving his chair. However, if she got away, he winked at another girl. I make it sound complicated, but it really wasn't. It was fun.

Ten o'clock and time to go home - the party is over all too soon, so we climb the stairs slowly to Susie's room, put on our coats and hats, then go back downstairs to unscramble our rubbers. As we started to leave, after thanking Susie for the nice time, her mother handed each of us a paper napkin wrapped package, containing leftovers from the party - cookies, candy, an apple or an orange.

Until we were thirteen, a couple of our mothers would see to it that we all got home safely. This wasn't too difficult, as most of us lived in the same neighborhood, and the fathers of the girls who lived farther up town, came for them. The boys walked home together.

Surprise parties ended when we were thirteen.

More of Mrs. Booth's Memoirs will come later.

(This is an excerpt from Memories of the Point, by Gladys Booth, who has given a copy to the Point Association, and given us permission to publish parts of it in The Green Light.)

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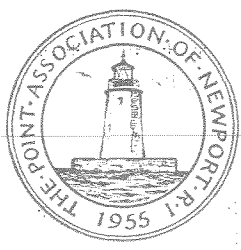
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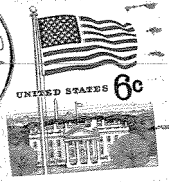
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Let's all work the year around to keep the Point clean and beautiful. Try
to teach children to respect the trees, and to pick up paper, not throw it down.

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