The GREEN LIGHT

BULLETIN OF THE POINT ASSOCIATION OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

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APRIL QUARTERLY MEETING

The April quarterly meeting of the Point Association of Newport was held on April 23, 1970, at eight o'clock at St. John's Guild Hall. The Secretary's and Treasurer's report were read and accepted. Admiral Eccles said we should be planning a major project for the summer of 1971, and especially we should find a Chairman who can manage it successfully.

It was voted to give $100 to Dollars for Scholars.

It was voted to give $100 to the statewide survey that is being conducted in Newport; this will mean that there will be a permanent record of the Point section in Newport's Historic District. Operation Clapboard is giving the same amount.

The resolution approved by the Executive board at its last meeting was then read:

RESOLVED: In order to express its faith and confidence in the Newport Council, the City Manager, the Police, and the black citizens of our community in a period of dangerous and unwarranted disorder, the Point Association pledges $100 to the Police Benevolent Association Reward for the apprehension of the persons who attempted to assassinate Police Officer Clapper. Furthermore, since there is an urgent need for improved low income housing in this city, especially for those Point residents who must be relocated by reason of redevelopment and the Highway construction, the Executive Committee of the Point Association of Newport hereby pledges $500 to the Church Community Corporation to assist in getting this greatly needed work started.

Mr. Arnold moved that the resolution be approved; Mr. Nesbitt seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

Miss Ade Bethune then introduced the other panel members - Dr. Stocklin and Mr. Carter, all members of the Board of the Church Community Corporation, who discussed the difficulties of finding any low income housing anywhere in the city, and what the Church Community Corporation hopes to do about it. Their goal is to raise $60,000 in three years. The membership expressed much interest, as shown by our gift of $500.

The meeting was then adjourned, and refreshments were served by Mrs. Curtiss James and some of the teen-agers.

THE JULY PICNIC

The July Picnic will be held on July 23rd at 6 o'clock on Mrs. Benson's lawn at 62 Washington Street. Bring your own sandwiches, and chair and blanket. There will be some entertainment (in addition to all our gabbling) but it is not definite yet. The Point Association will furnish coffee and cake. If it is raining, the picnic will be Friday evening, and if Friday is also raining, the picnic will be cancelled.

NOTICE

The management of the Newport Music Festival is very anxious to find more private rooms for their patrons from July 20th to August 8th. If you have a room or rooms available, will you please write to the Festival Box Office, telling the location, the facilities, the price, and the dates available.

TOUR OF SMALL GARDENS

The small garden tour of the Point, Chairman - Mrs. MacLeod, will be on Saturday, July 18th, from 11 to 4. It is suggested you start at Mrs. Bates' house, 22 Bridge Street, where there will be a list of the other houses. Each house will have a red ribbon on the gate.

Here is the list of gardens:

Mrs. Gordon Bates	22 Bridge Street
Mr. and Mrs. Nathaniel Addison	15 Bridge Street
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Foley	25 Bridge Street
Mr. and Mrs. William Cooke	84 Bridge Street
Mr. and Mrs. William Fullerton	41 Washington Street
Miss Carrie Ericson	43 Washington Street
Mr. and Mrs. Leo Sullivan	44 Elm Street
Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Nesbitt	29 Elm Street
Mrs. Ogden Younger	17 Third Street
Mr. and Mrs. John Murphy	36 Second Street
Mrs. William MacLeod	78 Washington Street
Mrs. Harold Watson	75 Washington Street
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Reynolds	88 Washington Street
Mr. and Mrs. Reginald Bryer	24 Van Zandt Avenue
Mrs. James Lawton	81 Third Street
Admiral and Mrs. Henry Eccles	101 Washington Street

Mrs. MacLeod will serve lemonade on her porch, and contributions toward the beautification of the Point will be welcomed. We hope you will be pleased to see what variety and beauty our gardeners can grow in a small space.

OCTOBER MEETING

At the annual meeting in October, there will be the election of officers and usual business, followed by a pot luck supper. Mrs. Elster will be the Chairman, and she and her committee will call as many of the members as possible. We hope to meet our old and new neighbors, especially many of the men who are usually too busy to come. Mrs. Elster, having had pot luck suppers all over the world, says she is an expert at planning them with the least effort, and greatest enjoyment. You will be given plenty of dishes to choose from, so be thinking of your favorite concoctions.

THE PLANT SALE AND COFFEE HOUR

The plant sale was held on May 23rd around the Eccles' garden, a rather threatening day, but cool and pleasant. There were the usual collections of seedlings and plants from the Pointers. Mr. Mazza brought a large flat of his delicious tomatoes; and everyone hurried to get a few. Mr. Thomas Spooner brought a large variety of annuals, and they vanished fast. It's like a rummage sale -- you clean out your garden, and fill it again with your friends' offerings. This year we also had several mama-san aprons made by Mrs. Elster, and chances on two items. Dr. Stanley Hart gave the book "Oldport Days" by Thomas Wentworth Higginson; it was won by Mrs. Frances (Edgar) Briggs, of San Bruno, California, who grew up on the Point, and was delighted to have it. The painting of flowers by Bill Fullerton was won by Mrs. Mary Rommel. Altogether the sale netted $160.43, which was used to renew the boxes of geraniums in Battery Park. Mrs. Eccles served coffee and donuts in her always gracious manner, and everyone had a delightful time, thanks to the Eccles.

SWIMMING CLASS FOR BEGINNERS

Robert Elster is having a swimming class for beginners every Monday and Thursday afternoon at 5 o'clock on Mrs. MacLeod's beach. Any Point child who is interested, call Lt. Elster at 847-0563 or come to the next meeting.

THE JAMESTOWN - NEWPORT FERRY

The ferry ride usually began with a wait which mattered little in earlier and more peaceful times. The traveler to Newport had driven up from New York on Route #1, and then to the ferry dock in Jamestown. If after this there was no boat at the dock, it was a relief to turn off the engine, buy a ticket from the attendant, whose nautically inspired uniform showed that the ferry was a sea-going institution, and then relax.

The silence of the wait was ended by the piercing creak of a pile grazed by the ferry as she slipped into the dock. The mooring lines were thrown from boat to dock, with two dull thuds, then a melodic ringing noise of the spinning ratchets and pawls as the deck hands tightened these lines, next a short toot on the whistle. Cars began moving off the boat, each making a bump as it drove across the gangplank. Now the engines of the cars on shore were started. When your turn came, you drove down a ramp through a portal-like gate, with hoists which adjusted the height of the ramp, always changing with the tide. The purser took your ticket, a deck hand showed you the lane to take, and rapped for you to stop. The first in lane drove to the outer edge of the boat, and it was a relief to have the deck hand throw a wooden chock under the front wheels to stop further advance toward the water.

The air was refreshingly different, and water swished lazily through the piles of the nearby dock. Passengers quickly went to the forward end of the upper deck where they enjoyed the sea breeze - Narragansett Bay spread before them. A short toot of the whistle, quickly followed by the rumble of the screws, signaled the start of the trip. Many hurried back to the stern of the boat and found the water in the ferry slip churned to a seething froth as the boat moved out.

The city of Newport lay at the opposite side of the two and a half mile stretch of water, partially obscured by Goat Island. To the left, north of Newport, the buildings of the War College were prominent. To the right, south, lay the gun-ported ramparts of Fort Adams. Rose Island stood midway across the bay, with its water tower and light house. From the dock the shore of Conanicut Island led to the Dumpling Islands. Set solidly on the largest of the Dumplings, was Clingstone, which, with Fort Adams on the opposite shore, marked the channel from the bay out to sea.

Narragansett Bay has always been a major shipping artery, providing access for deep water vessels to the industrial districts of Rhode Island, and southern Massachusetts. The ferries met and crossed paths with them all - tramp steamers from Norway, picking up any cargo; bulkcarriers coming to load a cargo of scrap automobiles for Hamburg or Gothenburg; passenger liners from Portugal; freighters from Africa; tankers of many flags, carrying petroleum from Louisiana, Venezuela or the Middle East; battleships, fishing boats, aircraft carriers, steam yachts, cruisers, motor yachts, destroyers, mine sweepers, tugboats, submarines, fleet tankers, attack transports - name any imaginable type vessel, and be sure that passengers of the Jamestown-Newport ferry saw them all.

To maintain regular schedules in all sorts of weather, the ferry boat captains exercised considerable skill. The direct course varied to suit the circumstances. A large tanker or naval vessel coming in the channel would make the ferry hug the Jamestown shore line as far as the Dumplings bell buoy, where she would scoot across just passing Permanent Wharf to the north of Fort Adams. A tug moving down the bay with a string of barges stretched out on thousand foot tow ropes might cause the ferry to sneak by the final barge just in time to clear Rose Island.

In summer, sailboats were a nuisance, especially when leaving the dock at Jamestown. Their young helmsmen, who had just learned the rights of a sailboat over powered vessels, were quick to challenge the ferry for right of way. The ferry captains grew expert in judging the position, course, and speed of sail boats, and could move the ferry through a fleet of them with incredible ease.

The ferry by now is off Rose Island, and we have a clear view to the south out the channel. On the tip of Conanicut the Beaver Tail Lighthouse is in view and we can see a row of stately houses on the Newport shore, leading to the Agassiz house on Castle Hill. On a sunny summer afternoon, the mixed odor here of sea breezes and the "smell

of the land" coming off Newport, was something to remember. In winter, old greybeard seas rolling up the channel made this a rough spot, and the ferry would pitch and roll like a ship at sea. On rare occasions a wave would break over the bow, saturating the front cars with salt water.

The ferry now enters the passage between Fort Adams and Goat Island. Ahead lies the Ida Lewis Yacht Club, around which the yachting fleet is at anchor, not many large yachts now, but many smaller ones. West of Goat Island, the outer harbor, was the anchorage for Navy ships, many of which came to collect their allotment of torpedoes from the U. S. Naval Torpedo Station on Goat Island. Few who saw them, will ever forget the destroyers with four smokestacks which used to lie moored here between the two World Wars, rafted in groups of four or five to giant white buoys.

The south end of Goat Island is marked by a small bell buoy. Little did the average passenger realize that the sand bar running from this buoy to the island was the principle hazard of the entire trip, and that the bottoms of all the ferry boats had at one time or another touched the soft sand. It was the heavy fog with no wind, silencing the bell buoy, that caused the grounding. But it was so gentle, that the boat backed off easily, and few passengers knew what had happened.

Fog, which was to be expected, especially in June and July, made a trip across the bay a memorable experience. When a passenger on a ferry running through fog gazed ahead, it was awesome to note the speed the boat maintained with no visible landmarks. His confidence would be inspired by the whistle which sounded strong and penetrating at short regular intervals. When an answering whistle came back through the fog, it was as though you had been challenged. The exchange of whistle that followed, marked with each successive blast the progress of the two vehicles. If they passed close, the passengers had a few anxious moments, and when the final whistle showed them clear, they frequently breathed sighs of relief.

Both the Torpedo Station and Fort Adams were abandoned after World War II. The fort was allowed to stand as a historical landmark, but the torpedo station buildings were knocked down. Finally the Navy sold the whole island, and a causeway was built from the Point to Goat Island. Until then, the ferries had been able to go to the north of the island, or the south, depending on the weather conditions; after the causeway, they had to go to the south always.

Newport is now in plain view, and the ferry enters its dock. Again there are the creaking piles, the ringing noise of the spinning rachets and pawls, and the automobiles start their engines, and drive off with the familiar slapping bump. The trip took about twenty minutes. Today's traveler on the Newport bridge may take five minutes if he drives slowly. One Newport resident who truly loved the ferries put it this way: "All sentiments aside, to wait hours to ride a ferry was maddening."

Edward W. Smith, Jr.

The Jamestown - Newport Ferry

July 1970

Wm. King Covell