

# The GREEN

# LIGHT

F  
Feb-1959  
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## BULLETIN of the POINT ASSOCIATION

FEBRUARY 1959

THE QUARTERLY General Membership Meeting was held on Thursday, Jan. 29, in St. John's Guild Hall, with a gratifying number present. The President, E.H. Brownell was in the chair. The minutes of the last General Meeting were read and approved, and the Treasurer, R.S. Weiss, reported a balance on hand of \$2117.70, of which, however, the greater part is in the savings account. . . David L Smith submitted his resignation as Recording Sec'y and Mrs Harold Watson was appointed in his place. . . William H. Fullerton, Chairman of the Beautification Committee, reported on the Christmas program and outlined plans for a garden contest and Flower Show, and a general clean-up drive. . . Dr. David Nemtzow spoke of the aims of his Protection Committee - to promote the health, welfare and happiness of the neighborhood by eliminating nuisances. Attention will be paid to unsafe and unsanitary conditions, rat and refuse control, etc. He again stressed the importance of complaints being sent to his committee signed and IN WRITING

**NEW BUSINESS:** The meeting was notified of the intention to amend the By-laws, establishing the Fiscal Year of the Point Association from October to October, to coincide with the Annual Meeting.

**SEAL:** A seal showing the lighthouse in a lettered circle was displayed by Miss E.B. Price, this to be used on stationery, membership cards, etc.

**LIGHTING:** On a motion of Arthur Lewis, it was voted that the Point Ass'n should request a survey by the Newport Electric Corp. or qualified expert, with a view to improvement of street lighting on the Point.

**TREES:** There was some discussion of the present obscure status of the tree program.

**GREEN LIGHT:** Miss Price reported a mailing list of about 220 for the Bulletin, and stressed the fact that about 75 persons are receiving it who are still in arrears with 1958 dues.

### MR. KERR'S ADDRESS

The meeting was addressed by Mr. Robert J. Kerr III, Executive Director of the Preservation Society on "The HOW of Historic Preservation." He brought out two possible approaches to the problem.

1. The preservation of single, isolated units of historic or architectural significance. This method, though least expensive in upkeep, custodial care, etc. is limited in scope, less influential in its sphere of influence, and may result in loss of important material in other areas.

2. A better effort is that of expending all energies and resources in a major restoration program for Newport - saving complete areas, major portions of the town. There is a better chance, with a larger exhibit, of interesting national trusts or securing federal funds. Better staff facilities, more assistance to individual property owners and, overall, a more pleasant and valuable environment and a firmer economic base would be created by this approach.

Mr. Kerr stated that a survey of the city is soon to be made by the Yale Department of City Planning; on the basis of the significance of its findings, a program will be recommended. Based on

attendance at The Breakers alone, exclusive of admissions, \$1,300,000 new money was brought into Newport last season. Williamsburg takes in an average of 20 million. This is a reality we could have, the speaker said, if our exhibit were increased to fulfil its potential. Unlike Williamsburg, which is mainly a reconstruction, Newport preserves its original city plan, and is the only one of the 13 Colonial capitals to show its early structure. Mr. Kerr urged the thoughtful support of all Newport citizens to any program designed to capitalize on the city's unique and priceless assets.

After the meeting, several new members were welcomed. Refreshments under the direction of Mrs Wm Kitts were of superior quality!

**FEBRUARY BOARD MEETING:** The Executive Committee met at the home of Wm H Fullerton on Tuesday, Feb. 3. Most of the business was concerned with matters brought up at the General Meeting. The title of the Beautification Committee was changed to Improvement and Beautification. The appointment of Mrs Harold Watson as Recording Sec'y was ratified. . . David L Smith reported for the Protection Committee that there is to be contact with the Health Inspector in regard to a rat control program. . . Supervision on the city piers, a possible waterfront project for Point children, improvement of street lighting, and the condition of the seawall were also discussed.

**SEAWALL AND SEWER:** The Sycamore Street sewer is still very much alive, though it was supposed to have been diverted several years ago into the system which carries sewage to the Treatment Plant. Now, a large piece of mortar and aggregate has fallen away at the foot of the steps to the shore at Sycamore St. pulling with it a rusted piece of the old sewer pipe. Raw sewage runs in a sluggish stream across the beach at low tide, and fouls the in-shore water when the tide is in. At its meeting on Wednesday night

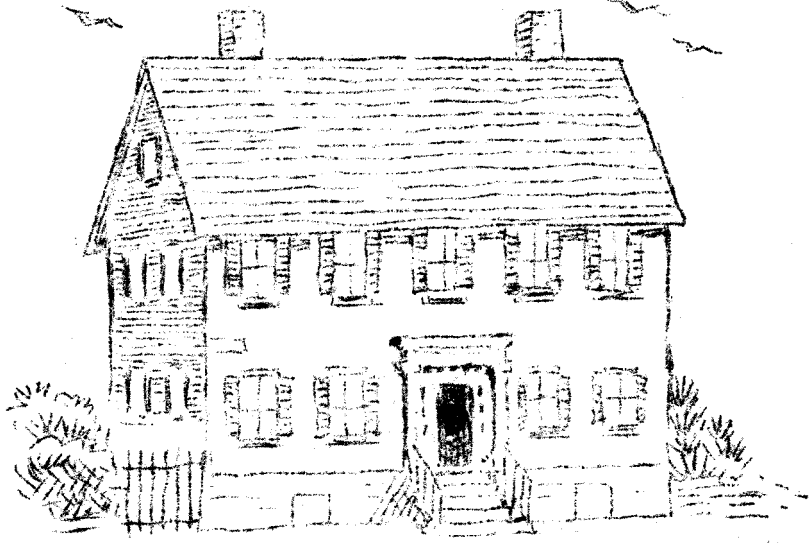
February 11, the City Council took action, apparently in response to a letter of protest from the Point Ass'n and a complaint made by Judge Walter Curry, and authorized Metcalf & Eddy to seek bids for the Washington St. and Wellington Ave. sewer jobs, with Washington Street being given priority. A danger sign and barrier has been placed across the top of the Sycamore St. steps, and it is to be hoped that drastic remedial action will be taken the moment the weather permits.

**MEMBERSHIP:** There was not very much response to the S.O.S. in the last Bulletin. A lot of people seem to be still in arrears with 1958 dues. Please! We don't want to lose you! **TREASURER:** R.S. Weiss. VI 6-9457  
42 Walnut Street

**DISCOUNT TO MEMBERS OF POINT ASS'N**  
The Sherwin-Williams Co. at 128 Broadway will give a 10% discount to Point Ass'n members in good standing. Be sure you can show your 1958 membership card, and take advantage of this generous discount to lay in your paint for the spring clean-up !

**FAR-AWAY PLACES:** We now have eager readers of The Green Light in Boston New York, Providence, Long Island, Minneapolis, Alabama, Washington and California. Home is where the heart

**FINE FEATHERED FRIENDS:**  
The editorial window commands a splendid view of the bird-feeding activities of our good neighbor to westward. Ever since late January a Redwing Blackbird has felt spring is near enough for him to give out his welcome "Chip-churrr". A flock of Evening Grosbeaks are a stunning sight - their golden sides and their black-and-white backs flashing out against the blue water beyond. A Purple Finch (or could it be a Redpoll?) flits like a dash of rose-red. Moreover, on Sunday, Feb. 8, appeared the **FIRST ROBIN** - yes, indeed. And, we suppose, the early worm. Spring bulbs are sproutin' up, too !



## A HOUSE AND ITS LADY

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In our ignorance, we assumed in the January number that the "Lady" Southwick house was gone, along with everything else at the south end of Washington Street. To our surprise and delight, we find that we see it every day -- for it is the house mentioned in the last Green Light, belonging to Mr. and Mrs. John J. Lyons, and has been standing at 77 Third Street since 1862, when one Matthias Petska, a Hungarian gardener, moved it there at the time the Cove was filled and the railroad came to town.

Mrs. Clifford Sherman and Mrs. Lyons have done a great deal of research on the ownership of the house since 1796, both at the Historical Society and the City Hall, and have kindly sent us much material. We only wish that we had space to print it all.

Lots 97 and 98 in the first division of the Point by the Easton Proprietors were just about where the junkyard is now located. The site of the house was bounded east by the Cove and west by Washington Street, and in 1796 it seems to have been owned by George Southwick -- though it was built earlier than that; some time around 1750. The property passed through various hands until in 1829 it was purchased by Joseph Southwick (again from the Easton Proprietors, though its occupant had been Jonathan Maxson).

Mrs. Sherman amusingly notes: "Funny about dower rights. If you bought a house, you might also get a widow too, if you didn't read the fine print carefully." And Joseph Southwick did get the Widow Maxson -- though she did not turn up until thirty years later when, in 1859, she exercised her right of dower, was awarded a fine of \$40 and the privilege of using the south part of the house, going in and out the front door, and passing up and down the front stairs. She might also use the south part of the yard, the well, and the "outdoor plumbing". The Southwicks had not long to be inconvenienced by the old lady, for three years later "progress" invaded the Point, and lower Washington Street was laid waste.

Joseph Southwick, boat-builder, born in 1780, was a grand-nephew of the patriot printer Solomon Southwick, and a brother of Pitts, who lived up the street in the house on the corner of Walnut now owned and occupied by the Arthur Lewises. Joseph was twice married -- first to Dorcas Easton, then to Dorcas Sweet. (At any rate, he could go right on saying "Dorcas, my dear.")

The second Dorcas was known as "Lady" Southwick. But why the title? Did she give herself airs? Was she a beloved lady bountiful? Did she have a private fortune? What earned her the soubriquet? We know that her eldest son, Christopher, built the quaint Round House, lately the scene of a tragic fire. And "Southwick's Grove", in which it stood, was the setting

of Ward McAllister's fabulous "picnics" in the heyday of the Four Hundred.

Somehow one imagines "Lady" Southwick flaunting finer India shawls and more Lowestoft china than her neighbors. Let us think that she was gracious, lovely, and admired. And let us be grateful that the old house still faces the harbor, looking the full length of Battery Street to the blue water - snug and handsome in its new red paint. It does not vie with the Hunter house in architecture, nor the Robinson house in history - and "Lady" Southwick was Victorian rather than colonial - but it does preserve for us one more link with the vanished past of southernmost Washington Street and the good folk who lived around the Cove.

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