

# The GREEN

# LIGHT

## BULLETIN of the POINT ASSOCIATION

NEWPORT

SEPTEMBER 1959

RHODE ISLAND

### CONTINUATION: AUGUST BOARD MEETING

In order to complete a lengthy agenda, the Executive Committee met again on Aug. 20, at the home of Mrs. H. E. Watson, Recording Sec'y.

Correspondence with Dr. Richard Howland, Pres. of the National Trust for Historic Preservation was read, relative to the President of The Point Association being named a member of the Nat'l Trust. Dr. Howland also stated his intention of protesting the demolition of St. Paul's parish house.

In regard to this matter, it was voted to send letters of protest to Bishops Lord and Oxenham of the Methodist Church, and also to the President of the Board of Trustees of St. Paul's and to the Chairman of the Building Committee, expressing the concern of The Point Ass'n over the destruction of so important a building within the area.

VOTED: that Mr. John L. Murphy be allocated \$15 to \$25 and provided with a list of youths who might weed around the trees and help to repair them.

VOTED: to ask some members of the Middletown orchestra if they will provide "country music" as a feature of the Annual Meeting in October.

VOTED: to hold an Oldport Day next summer, if possible, and to attempt to find a chairman for such an event.

Dr. Nemptzow suggested that people who have attractive gardens be asked if they would act as consultants to those who would like to improve their yards by raising flowers. A plant exchange was also suggested.

It was stated that the Walnut St. bridge has a loose board. It is planned to write to the NY NH & H RR Co. complaining of the condition of the bridge and also the state of the grade crossings at Bridge and Poplar Streets.

Various suggestions were brought up regarding the inclusion of all Annual Reports in the November GREEN LIGHT; the possibility of sending out reply postcards soliciting volunteers for youth projects, etc.

A few long-range items were still left on the agenda at the close of this meeting.

THE HOBBY SHOW came off pleasantly on the afternoon of August 29, in the flower-bordered back yard of Mr & Mrs R. S. Weiss at 42 Walnut St. Nine children exhibited widely varying hobbies, and a good number of grown-ups came to admire the exhibits and enjoy cooling lemonade under the willow.

Steven Weaver: antique guns.

Dennis Nine: wood-craft items.

Charles Fortier: a comprehensive stamp collection, well arranged.

Trudy Duffy: excellent examples of sewing, including the dress she wore.

Pat Carr: Miniature military vehicles.

Caleb Carr: skin-diving equipment and an array of articles found off the Poplar St. brow.

Charles Eccles: a shore collection of named shells.

Lydia Eccles: (age 5) a sampler of stitches.

Richard Weiss: a montage showing stamp collecting procedures.

*duplicates*

*F*

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20<sup>th</sup> - '59*

POINT OF VIEW (Editorial Comment)

The demolition of St. Paul's parish house on Marlborough St., in the face of sincere and widespread protest and valid offers to move it in order, at least, to preserve it, strikes a disheartening blow at the concept of planning for a restored Newport. It is difficult to believe that the whole congregation sought the destruction not only of the fine old house, but of the architecturally important entity of which it was a part - a setting vital to the church structure itself. If Newport is to preserve what remains to it, and build its future upon that remnant, there needs to be far more vision, and the courage to implement it, than was displayed in this disastrous example of shortsighted planning.

Commenting on a recent editorial in The Daily News, we would beg to disagree with the statement that "we have no compact area of old buildings, such as has Wickford". Wickford, it seems, boasts sixty-five 18th century houses. We have over 300 pre-Revolutionary houses, of which 119 are on the Point - surely a "compact area". We also disagree with the notion that Newport can do nicely without a municipal historic zoning ordinance. The recently passed State enabling act opens the way for such an ordinance. Let us hope that Newport, with a far greater heritage than Wickford, will soon wake up and pass such a law.

In encouraging contrast to all this, we are happy to learn that our president's father-in-law, Mr. Howard Shivers, is buying the house at 3 Pine St., long a source of anxiety - and that S. Joseph Weaver, an ex-president of the Point Ass'n, has finally completed negotiations for the historic Prescott house at the corner of Spring and Pelham, and plans to restore it. This, John Bannister's town house, is the last of the large pre-Revolutionary mansions and has great significance. It is good that the influence of the Point Ass'n should extend to benefit another part of Newport.

EXPANSION: At this very moment we have 384 members, which is getting quite close to 400 - a rather large body of taxpayers and voters, whose voice should be able to speak with more and more authority in the community.

This splendid figure, of course, can only be maintained if our 260 old members continue their support of the Point Association. The Annual Meeting will be coming along in October - and all dues which have not already been paid (as renewals or new memberships) will become due and payable. We hope that every old member will renew promptly; these dues will assure membership till October 1960.

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THE PENALTIES OF PROGRESS. . .

The green light out in the harbor  
Shines with a baleful gleam,  
As the paper goes through the  
mimeograph  
Ream after ream after REAM.

The Editor's clothes are ragged,  
The soot lies deep on the floor,  
The weeds grow high in the garden,  
The cobwebs hang by the door.

The Editor's hands are inky,  
The Editor's thoughts are dark,  
As the Green Light's circulation  
Nears the four hundred mark !!!

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APOLOGY: Half our subscribers will find the last page of this GREEN LIGHT upside down, or wrong side up. Please blame the Hot Weather, a gremlin, old Cap'n Scuttlebutt, or what-have-you. A sea-gull stole our spectacles . . . or something.

ITEM: In July, the Editor addressed the Jamestown Historical Soc'y and on Sept. 14 the Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, and in October will speak to the D.A.R. Subject? Three guesses. No - no - no. Well, naturally, THE POINT. (And a few Pointed remarks about Newport's assets.)

A BROKEN ROMANCE  
++ By William MacLeod +++

When we were very young, we were told that in the old house at 78 Washington Street was an underground tunnel leading to the shore, through which the old privateering Finchs carried their dubious spoils into their cellar. Also, we believed that the remains of an ancient, abandoned eight-foot chimney in one corner of the cellar wall was a remnant of the first Nicholas Easton's original house. And then, there were two back stairways - one off the dining-room and one behind the kitchen. The door to the dining-room stair was supposed to have been concealed by a corner china-closet which no longer exists, so that it was once a real secret staircase.

Unfortunately, more mature research leads us to believe that when the first ell was built in the early 1800's, the first (and then the only) back stairs were erected; and that when, about 1850, the ell was extended to accomodate the expanding Finch family, the second staircase was added.

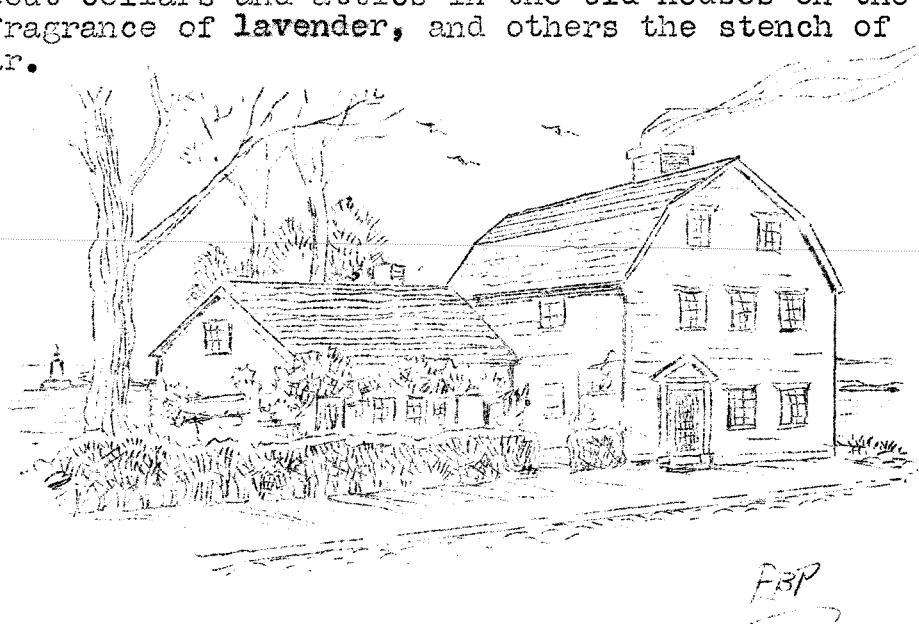
Originally, there was no high earth bank against the water side of the house, so that the doorway in the west wall of the cellar, now filled in with loose masonry, led directly to the shore, with no earth behind it. The ancient hearth and eight-foot chimneypiece in the southwest corner of the cellar was evidently a chimney half in and half out of the house, and taken down when the porch and the bay-window of the living-room were added by Captain Brownell about 1860.

The old cellar door was used by William Finch, house-joiner and candle-maker, to take in whale oil, which was boiled down in the great fireplace in the cellar and cooled off at the well in the cellar floor, which then stood tangent to the hearth. An advertisement in the Newport Mercury of that time shows that William Finch was selling spermacetti candles at his house on the Point, like his neighbor Quaker Tom Robinson and numerous others in this area.

Many romances linger about cellars and attics in the old houses on the Point. Some have the fragrance of lavender, and others the stench of slavery, piracy, and war.

THE  
FINCH  
HOUSE

1770



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 SUMMER IS HARD ON COMPLEXIONS !  
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 THE CORNER CUPBOARD VI 6-2894  
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 58 Bridge Street  
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 THE JOHN STEVENS SHOP VI 6-0566  
 29 Thames St. Founded in 1705  
 Letter Carving on Wood and Stone  
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 SPIERS' CLOVER FARM GROCERY  
 103 Second Street VI 7-1668  
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 64 Thames Street  
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 9 Thames Street  
 Candy, Cigars, Cold Cuts  
 Ice Cream, Newspapers, Magazines  
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 PETE'S CANTEEN 74 1/2 Third Street  
 Bakery, Dairy and Canned Goods  
 Daily Newspapers -- Magazines  
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 TELEVOICE - VI 6-3144  
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 AS WELL AS YOUR GARBAGE ! This  
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