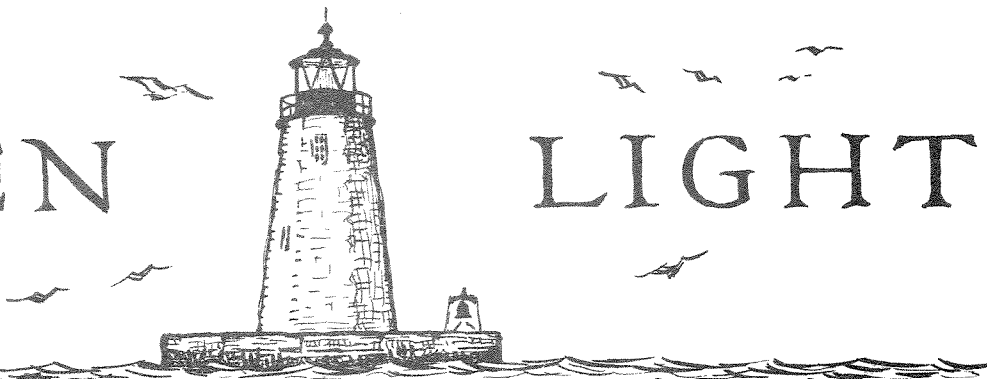


The
GREEN

LIGHT



BULLETIN OF THE POINT ASSOCIATION
OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

VOL. V

OCTOBER 1961

No. 10

ANNUAL MEETING
THURSDAY OCT, 26th

ST. JOHN'S GUILD HALL, POPLAR STREET
8:00 P.M.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

MOVIE
"The Making of a Pen"

JOHN HOWARD BENSON, filmed by ROBERT FLAHERTY

Refreshments

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THE ANNUAL MEETING is doubly important. We elect a First Vice President, a Treasurer, and a Corresponding Secretary. And we are privileged to see an unusual film. The late Robert Flaherty will be remembered for such outstanding motion pictures as "Man of Arran" and "Nanook of the North". The documentary film he made of that internationally known artist and master craftsman, John Howard Benson, has not been generally shown. Whether or not one understands or is interested in calligraphy, we feel certain that a great many people will welcome this rare opportunity to see once again the gifted friend and neighbor who lived and worked on The Point. Come! And bring your friends.

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DUES, PLEASE!

THIS IS THE BEGINNING of The Point Association's fiscal year, when practically everyone's membership falls due. PLEASE, PLEASE be prompt in paying your dues. You cannot imagine how much trouble the delays give to the Treasurer - and especially to the Editor of The Green Light, who has to keep the mailing list up-to-date. Come to the Meeting and pay your dues then; or get them in as soon as possible.

IF YOU FIND A MEMBERSHIP BLANK attached to this copy of the Green Light, it means that your dues are due right now !!! PLEASE!

*** THE JOHN STEVENS SHOP ***

In connection with a film to be shown at the Annual Meeting, it may be appropriate to recall the long history of the oldest shop in this country still engaged in the same work at the same location. Founded 1705.

The first John Stevens, born in England in 1646, came from the village of Thame in Oxfordshire, to Boston in the year 1700. He was already 53 years old - but he married him a young wife, Mercy, and fathered ten children before his death at the age of 89. He came to Newport in 1705, built the house which still stands (in sad condition) opposite the Shop, in 1709, and practised his trade of stone-mason. But soon he began to supply the need for gravestones, as Newport then had no stone-carver. It is interesting to trace his style from his first crudely scratched skulls and primitive lettering, to the richly carved winged heads and fruited borders of his later work. A man of extraordinary vigor and original genius.

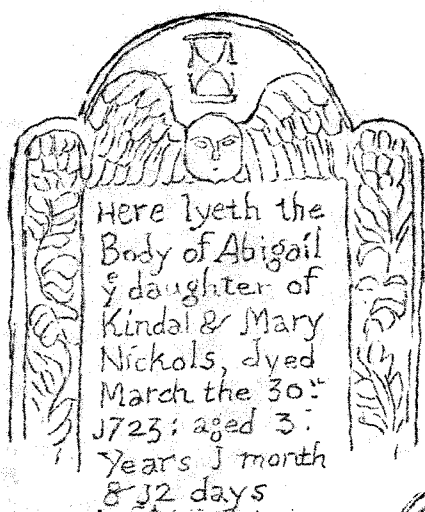
The second John was born in Boston in 1702, the eldest child of the ten. He styled himself a bricklayer - and he worked on the Touro Synagogue, the foundation of the Redwood Library, the old Congregational Church, the Almshouse - and he must have had a hand in the Brick Market. Half the fine central chimneys that thrust above old Newport houses are his work. But he carved a prodigious number of gravestones - calm winged heads between graceful acanthus borders; but his large flat tombstones enriched with the armorial bearings of his aristocratic clients are outstanding and gave play to his especial talent. Like his father, he married rather late for an 18th century man - age 43; and had been for many years associated with his father in their varied work. Setting of brickwork in the galleys and try-works of armed sloops and whalers added to the masonry required in houses and public buildings, and one marvels that there was time to carve the prodigious number of gravestones that came from the Shop.

The third John was the youngest child of John the second, born in 1754. He was something of a prodigy. Unfitted either by taste or physique for the principal trade of his forebears, he confined himself to carving. So far as we know, all his finest work was done in his 'teens - possibly beginning as early as age 13. He was inquiring, lively, precocious, imaginative. Passionate and Puritanical; merry and melancholy; grave and gay. His "portrait stones", done in his 'teens, show the most delicate imagination and a well-developed technical skill, coupled with a fanciful originality. His later work, shadowed by the Revolution, the care of his widowed mother and his own young family, is less inspired, though he was always a master of lettering. He was an ardent Patriot, and was one of the young men who brought the Liberty Tree in by night from Portsmouth.

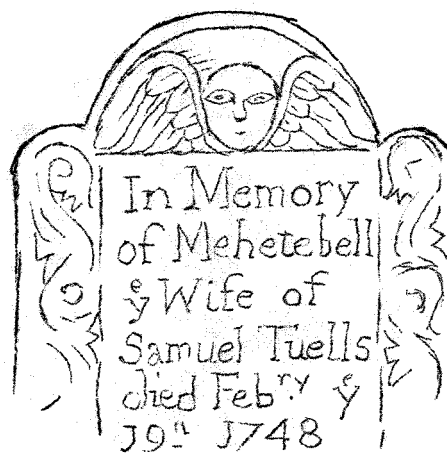
One likes to think of John Howard Benson as the fourth John in the line of masters - who kept the tradition alive and brought it to a consummate height known far and wide. And now a fifth John, Benson's son, is working in this Shop which embodies the best of Newport's cultural heritage.

Wander in the old Common Burying-Ground some day - and trace not only Newport's stirring history, but the prolific examples of early American sculpture. It is to be found only in the gravestones.

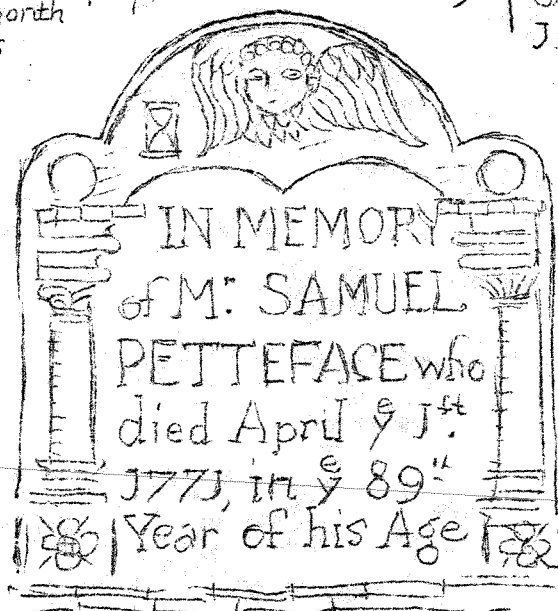
A mimeograph stencil is certainly the worst possible medium with which to attempt a reproduction of stone-carving - nor is the skill of Ye Editor comparable to that of the Three Johns. However, perhaps this sadly crude scratching will serve in some small measure as a rough guide for those who, wandering in our old burying-grounds, may wish they had a vague idea of "which was which".



John Stevens I



John Stevens II



John Stevens III

THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE met on September 26, at the residence of the Chairman, Kenneth V. Stein.

The following slate will be presented at the Annual Meeting:

First Vice President:

Mrs. Harold E. Watson
75 Washington Street

Treasurer:

Miss Ann Abbott Hardy
3 Cypress Street

Corresponding Secretary:

Mrs. Henry E. Eccles
101 Washington Street

The terms of the President, Second Vice President, and Recording Secretary run for another year.

Nominations may be made from the floor.

Three members of the new Nominating Committee are also proposed:

Mrs. John Howard Benson
Mrs. Frederick Morrissey
Mrs. Kenneth V. Stein

IT IS GOOD NEWS indeed that the White Horse Tavern - the oldest in America - is to re-open early in November.

The occasion has especial interest and significance for the Point, for not only is the tavern located on the outer fringes of the Point district, but the new manager, John Bickford, has a very definite connection with the Point.

Mrs. Bickford is a daughter of Esther Morton Bates (Mrs. Gordon) and a niece of Henry Austin Wood. This family represents the sixth and seventh generation of Robinson House descendants. Mr. Wood is the present owner of the historic house, and Mrs. Bates has saved and restored another important house - the Caleb Claggett house on Bridge Street. All success to the Bickfords in their new enterprise on ancestral soil!

Let every loyal Pointer patronize the White Horse! Mr. Bickford is highly experienced, and the old tavern is indeed needed, to fill a unique position in the community.

WE HAVE RECEIVED the following charming poem from George Franklin Merritt of 73-B Second Street. Mr. Merritt is the author of much published verse.

HERE ON THE POINT

Here on the Point my memory
Brings childhood's hours back to me;
A little boy along the shore
Watching the seagulls dip and
soar,
Harkening the south wind's melody.

The moonbeams riding brilliantly
Upon the waves which rippled free
Over a peaceful mirrored floor,
Here on the Point.

Time marches on continuously,
No one escapes age's decree;
But as I watch this fair scene
o'er

In spirit I'm a boy once more;
I'm grateful I'm allowed to be
Here on the Point.

-George Franklin Merritt

IT IS NOT OUR HABIT to single out individual property improvement for commendation, though much is to be seen. But we cannot refrain from mentioning two places which in the past have caused many of us concern because of their deplorable condition. These are 33 Poplar St. and 47 Third St. The transformation is outstanding, and the owners and occupants are to be congratulated. What a change!

THE DOG CONSTABLE, Mr. Sanfilippo will be working around the Point at this time. He has requested us to ask that all dog owners see to it that their pets are wearing their license tags, and that they know where their dogs are. Otherwise, they might be picked up, if they are running at large without collars.