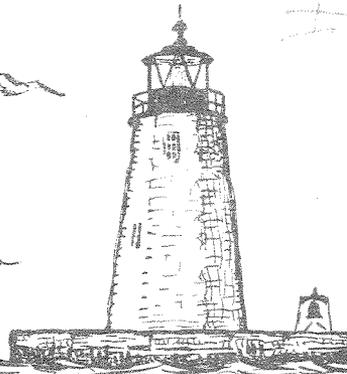


The GREEN

LIGHT



BULLETIN OF THE POINT ASSOCIATION OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

VOL. VI

JULY 1962

No. 3

JULY GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The July general membership quarterly meeting will be held in St. John's Guild Hall on Thursday, July 26th, at eight o'clock. The speaker will be Mr. Antonio Ponvert, the Executive Director of the Preservation Society, and his subject will be: Historic Zoning, and what influence it would have on the Point.

Persuade a neighbor to come with you, and join the Association.

April Quarterly Meeting

The April Quarterly Meeting of the Point Association was held in St. John's Hall on Thursday, April 26th, with an unusually large attendance.

The reports of the secretary and treasurer were read and approved; the treasurer reported a balance on hand of \$2,952.09.

The Green Light had a circulation of 330, a sad drop since Miss Price resigned as editor. Of this number 280 are Newport residents, with under 400 members of the Point Association.

Mr. Sullivan, Beautification Chairman, reported that he has fliers for the window box and garden contests. He has seeds to distribute, and is also giving out his own lily bulbs. The flower boxes will be on the street side of Battery Park by June, and the window boxes on the stores soon after.

Miss Bethune reported for the Advisory Committee on both short and long term projects suggested, and hopes to have a definite report ready for the annual meeting. They welcome any ideas from members. It is the Association money, and each one should be interested in using it for the greatest benefit to the Point.

Mrs. Eccles, Chairman of the Afternoon on the Point on July 21, reported the gift of a hooked rug by Mrs. Wilbour; Mrs. Weaver is selling chances on it. A booklet of historical sketches from the Green Light with illustrations by Edith Ballinger Price, and called "Here and There on the Point" is being prepared, and will be ready for sale at the Afternoon on the Point.

Mr. William Leys, the Executive Director of the Newport Redevelopment Agency, then gave a most interesting and lucid explanation of the plans for

redevelopment. Mr. Leys had a model of the proposed area west of Thames Street, and he and Mr. William Corcoran answered many questions.

The meeting was adjourned, and everyone enjoyed the birthday party for Edith Ballinger Price. On behalf of the Association, Mr. Harrington presented Miss Price with a wrist watch, which pleased her greatly, and she thanked us all in her inimitable fashion.

Point Association Clambake

Our President, Bill Harrington, has been wanting a clambake for members for a long time. The men who keep their boats on the driftways off Washington Street have suggested having a clambake on Rose Island, where they had a most successful one last summer. The men are willing to make several trips in their boats to ferry people over. This first clambake should not be too big, not more than one hundred. It will probably be in August, and full details will be given at the July General Meeting, such as the time, the place to meet, the price, and ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT what everyone can do to help in the preparations.

May Morning Coffee

On a beautiful warm morning in May, Mrs. Eccles invited all interested friends to come to a coffee party in her garden. The garden was in its prime -- apple blossoms, dogwood, cherry, and lovely spring flowers -- all this and visits with neighbors for the purchase of chances on Mrs. Wilbour's hooked rug. Twenty-five dollars were raised, which brings the total of chances sold to seventy dollars already.

Battery Park Seawall

The city is doing a good job on repairs to the seawall at Battery Park, and really doing it the right way, to the gratification of the Association. Old Fort Greene is one of our early landmarks, and it would be a shame to neglect it.

Redevelopment

Many people have thought that the Point Association has not in the past taken a strong enough stand on redevelopment, and we are at last trying to clarify our ideas and publish them. We have appointed a redevelopment committee, and the chairman, Admiral Henry Eccles, has written a Plan for the Point, setting forth our views. A special meeting of members was called the end of May to discuss this plan, some changes were made, and it was voted to send copies to members of the city government and interested organizations. This plan is especially for the Point, but a city wide enforcement of the existing laws relative to minimum housing and health, sanitation, and cleanliness is vital for any permanent accomplishment.

The Point Association enthusiastically supports the plans drawn up by the Redevelopment Agency, and will do all in its power to further them. But we emphasize that we will vigorously oppose any cheap short term solution that injures an important area of the Point. The survival of our city rests on redevelopment, and each of us must follow the reports and be ready with suggestions.

Point Beautification

Let us look once more at the general improvement of the Point. We mentioned how very well the trees planted by the Association are taking hold, and this has been a splendid growing year for them (as well as the weeds), so that we really look handsome in spots. The roses along the Fleet Landing fence are blossoming out, especially the field grown plants -- we had some trouble with the nursery grown roses vanishing -- and there are even some seedlings now to fill in the gaps. More people than usual are painting and sprucing up their houses; our own private back yard variety of gardens, small and select, are beautiful. Mr. Sullivan's boxes of cheerful red geraniums are now in place in Battery Park, near the street for everyone to enjoy -- we can only hope not to destroy. Only ten children have entered the garden or window box contest as yet, but Mr. Sullivan hopes for

more. The adult window box contest has even fewer entries, but there are some nice boxes on display, so the Board voted to have the three judges drive around and pick out the three best boxes for the prizes. Judging will be the middle of July.

The Point Association

Since it was founded in 1954, the Point Association has many notable accomplishments to its credit. It has stimulated a sense of community pride and improvement. It has checked a dangerous trend toward civic neglect in our neighborhood. It has brought neighbors together in rewarding friendly cooperation. It has beautified many areas which were neglected. It has set a good example to the rest of our city. Perhaps most important of all, it has shown how much good can be accomplished by the patient day to day work of people who love their homes and are willing to work quietly to improve them. It has stimulated and extended the interest of many persons in our American heritage.

How have all these worthwhile accomplishments been attained? The following factors have been most important.

The Association was formed as an almost spontaneous action of a few unselfish persons, who wanted to do something positive rather than merely lament the sad fact that the world and our city are both imperfect. The Association has always represented a great variety of people, with different backgrounds and different opinions. The Association has provided an opportunity for differing opinions to be fully discussed. Unity of action has been brought about because we all understood that by helping each other we were helping ourselves. We did not try to do everything at once. We did not try to do everything on a grand scale, but were willing to work on many small things which have added up to something big.

This year will be of great importance for the Point and for the whole City of Newport. We have informed all of the City officials and cooperating agencies of our hearty endorsement of the principle and general plans for Redevelopment and Historic

Zoning, and have presented well considered proposals for their application to the Point. There is much work still to be done in helping our friends and neighbors here and in other parts of the city to understand the great benefits which we and the generations to come can gain by supporting this work in the critical year of 1962.

In the meantime we can keep up our day to day work in our own homes and streets to keep the Point ever becoming a better place to live and to work. Help us with our Membership Drive so that more and more of our neighbors can join us.

Membership Drive

The voice of five hundred members carries great weight -- we are planning a membership drive. Invite your neighbor to come to the next Quarterly meeting in July to get acquainted with us and join the organization, or come to the Afternoon on the Point. In this connection, you will be interested in Admiral Eccles' letter of appreciation.

The Green Light Becomes The Leaning Tower

We decided nothing was too good for Edith Price, and made her a Green Light Lighthouse, under the clever supervision of Janet Brownell. First of all, never use angel food cake if you want a firm tower. We had grand ideas of a nine layer lighthouse, but after the first four, they all slipped every which way, and the bottom ones squashed flat, so we quickly took them apart and started again with lower aims. This time the layers leaned, but stuck together, so we finished it with a green light, and Edith appreciated it.

FIRE STATION NO. 2

Those of us who remember the old Fire Station No. 2 on the corner of Bridge and Third Streets can hardly bear to look at it now all ramshackle and neglected, filled by a Pacific Oil Company truck. The Fire Station used to be a neighborhood center for all ages, and was always so clean and polished that everything shone, the wooden floor, the walls, the brass. The doors were always open in warm weather, and when not busy, the firemen sat outside in captains chairs. They welcomed visitors, and sometimes even allowed a few children to climb up to the second floor and slide down the pole -- there was a rubber mat on the floor to break their fall. In those days, the fire station was one of the voting places, and you can still see the door on Third Street that led to the voting booth. There were three stalls for horses and a boiler room downstairs. Upstairs there were two bedrooms in front, in one of which Fletcher Lawton slept for many years. Then came a big pool room where the firemen and friends had great games, and a hayloft. The Point Hummers and the Point Social Club used to meet here too. Outside there was a hitching post, and a fire alarm box which needed a key to open it; the key was kept at the Tripp house on Walnut Street. The corner was a popular place for rallies, soap box oratory, torchlight parades, and political speeches.

When the firehouse was built in 1880, Thomas Tew who lived on Elm Street was the first captain, and the children called it Tommy Tew's house. The most well known member of the staff was General, the white horse trained by Tew. When an alarm rang, Tew pushed a button that opened the door of General's stall. General went to his harness, suspended from the ceiling, raised his head under his collar, jerked it down, and the whole harness fell in place, so that all it needed was to have the buckles fastened. He drew the one horse hose reel, that Henry Tripp drove later. General was put out to pasture on a lot on Third Street, and whenever he heard an alarm, he jumped the fence and galloped back to the fire station. When Tew died, General was covered with a dark blue blanket, and walked up to the cemetery. He finally got too old to work, but Henry Tripp was so devoted to him that they waited until Tripp had a vacation to end General's life.

Beside the one horse hose reel, there was a steamer run by Simeon and Robert Pike, brothers, who when an alarm blew went to Marsh's grain store on Marsh Street, and took two of his horses to pull the steamer, a great sight with the horses galloping, and sparks billowing out of the chimney. Solon Weaver was the captain after Tew, and Henry Tripp drove the one horse hose reel, as mentioned. At first he stayed day and night in the fire station, with half a day off a week, and the pay was \$13.50 a week. Later the firemen had two days off a month. By the time Mr. Tripp retired after several injuries, the first man to retire, he was given a pension of \$17 a week.

The indicator for the fire alarm had to be pulled by hand for every ring or it was not accurate, and all the time signals were hand operated. In winter the firemen had clam boils, which Mrs. Tripp cooked at Walnut Street, and the men carried down to the station. Later the firemen became much interested in radio, and put together one of the first sets in Newport, six or seven feet long, and everyone put on earphones and listened to it.

When Newport had an Old Home Week, the station was all decorated, and everyone was very proud of it. It was a social center for the whole Point until the city sold it, and nothing has taken its place.

THE COVE

Many readers have expressed an interest in the Cove, so let us see the Cove as it used to be in Colonial days, and was until the railroad came to Newport one hundred years ago. One needs only imagination to erase the railroad spur and junk yard and piles of lumber, and cover the tract with water. Along Washington Street from Long Wharf to Marsh Street, the shore of the Cove curved east behind four houses, then north to Bridge Street. The Point Bridge spanned a stream deep enough for fishing at the place where the railroad tracks now cross. This stream continued north along the present track almost to Poplar Street, so that a shallow bridge was necessary there for unusually high tides.

The east end of Bridge Street was called Shipwright Street and many of Newport's earliest shipbuilders lived and worked at their trade here on the shores of the cove. Imagine Cardines Field with water deep enough for launching ships from the piers that extended into it. Long Wharf was built over the entrance to the Cove. At its deepest point, a draw-bridge opened to allow ships of considerable size to enter.

After the railroad was built, the Cove was divided into two basins, and the west part was filled in 1891. From the Newport Mercury of December 19, 1891:- "The work of filling in the Basin, so called, near the Old Colony passenger station was completed yesterday, and now, in place of that noxious body of water, the company has a handsome tract of several acres of land. The work of filling the Basin was begun on the 10th of September last, and 10,000 carloads of dirt were required to complete it. This dirt was taken from Lawton's, Chase's, and McAllister's Cuts so called in Newport and Middletown, and brought to the place of deposit in dump cars."

The east part of the Basin, the site of Cardines Field, was filled in after 1900. Until then the neighborhood children skated and swam there, and every Fourth of July borrowed their mothers' wash tubs, and had tub races.

When the waves beat against the sea wall at Long Wharf, it seems as if the tides are fighting to reclaim the land they once covered.