

# The GREEN

# LIGHT



## BULLETIN OF THE POINT ASSOCIATION OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

VOL. VII

APRIL 1963

No. 2

### APRIL QUARTERLY MEETING

The April Quarterly Meeting of the Point Association will be held at St. John's Guild Hall on April 25th at 8:00 P.M. The program will be about gardens, with special emphasis on our small Point gardens, and slides of several will be shown. We hope to have a speaker as well.

Don't forget that the question box, with pencil and paper, will be at the entrance to the hall, and we hope to have some helpful comments. Remember, the Executive Board cannot please you unless we know your ideas.

### JANUARY QUARTERLY MEETING

The January Quarterly Meeting of the Point Association was held on January 24th at St. John's Guild Hall, with a good attendance in spite of the cold. The reports of the Secretary and Treasurer were read and approved. The suggestion box, made by Mrs. Francis Carr, Jr., was presented, and we hope to have many valuable suggestions. Mr. Janus Luth has been appointed Chairman of the Nuisance Committee. Miss Bethune reported for the Advisory Committee, which is debating several new ideas.

The speaker of the evening, introduced by Mrs. J. H. Benson, was Mr. Norris Hoyt, who spoke on his cruise to Norway, with photographs. His pictures were extremely beautiful and stirring; his lecture was most entertaining, and it was a privilege to hear him.

Mrs. Charles Barker served delicious refreshments.

### SPRING GARDEN TOUR

We are planning a Spring Garden Tour, probably the end of May, but the weather is

so uncertain, we shall have to send out a flyer later to give full details -- the day, the gardens open, the chairman, etc. There will also be tea served, where, depends on the weather, and there will be a small entrance fee. We have had gardens open in summer, but never in spring, when many of them are at their most beautiful.

### COLLECTORS' TREASURES

Our summer activity this year will be an exhibition of Collectors' Treasures on July 20th and 21st at St. John's Guild Hall. Mrs. Gordon Bates is Chairman of this event and reports that there are some most interesting collections already promised. They do not need to be large or formal; some suggestions, for instance, have been mementos of the Fall River Line, both photographs and objects, scrimshaw, old pewter, quilts, wood carvings, and many others. If you have any unusual collections, please get in touch with Mrs. Bates, 22 Bridge Street.

We are starting the Spring season

with several ideas to improve the Point. The maple trees, which are growing so well, have all been carefully fertilized, and we plan to weed around them.

We are deeply concerned this year about our dirty streets and sidewalks (not to mention the vacant lots, and some not so vacant), and we are planning a continual effort to tidy up the whole Point. When the City announces the Clean Up Week, usually in May, we shall try to get the trash from the vacant lots out for collection. Then we are going to hire a man part time to keep the sidewalks and gutters picked up, and the Nuisance Inspector will report any bad conditions. The wind and the dogs, chief barrel upsetters, will always be with us; however, this summer we are making a concerted, continual effort to keep the Point neat and clean.

The sea wall at Battery Park has been finished, and it looks substantial enough to withstand the sea for many years. The city worked on this wall all winter in spite of some bitter cold, and when one section was finished, moved the mold to the next section until all were done. Many old timers feel it was awful to cover the beautiful old stone work, but they must remember that many of the stones had come out completely, and the cost of replacing them would be prohibitive. We'll have to try to imagine what it used to look like from the original stone work above the concrete. We are very curious to know where the big piece of brain coral came from that appeared on the path leading up to the street -- it must have been under water for a long time from its condition.

#### LETTERS

Mrs. Briggs writes from California that she hopes other old Pointers will write some of their childhood experiences, and she asks: Does anyone remember a gum and candy vending machine that was called the Yellow Kid? On the lower front part of the machine there were two slots for coins, one side for gum, the other for a tiny bar of chocolate. When a penny was inserted, it started the mechanism, and the Yellow Kid with hand outstretched, turned completely around, and your choice of candy or gum fell into the outside cup. They were very intriguing, and I can remember we children used to beg for pennies so we could watch the Yellow Kid turn around.

Pigeons!

Perpetually present, and propagating profusely.

Love all the little feathered friends. They whirr up from the street just under your car wheels, grasping a hunk of bread in their all-devouring beaks. They bill everywhere, and coo on all the gutters, and bomb us as we go under their nests.

They are so messy, and rats come to gobble up the crumbs they leave.

Pigeons, so beautiful, and so all pervasive.

Have they come from Boston Common to Rhode Island, like Roger Williams, in search of greater freedom?

A Point Bird Watcher.

#### WILDLIFE ON THE POINT

A pair of pheasants have taken up residence in the empty lot on Pine Street. Early in March a cock was seen emerging from there and flying across to the roof of a shed on the Stella Maris grounds. On March 26th, his wife wandered into the Burke's yard on Washington Street. Her leg appeared to have been hurt as she scrambled back into the lot.

During one of the very few snowy nights this winter, a rabbit crossed the Eccles' front lawn and was seen racing down the middle of Washington Street.

On March 24th at about seven in the morning, some late Sunday sleepers were awakened by the sound of honking geese. The Point Goose Counter stated there were forty-nine in the flock.

#### RECOLLECTIONS

Before the Revolutionary War there was a factory on the Point which made sheepskin gloves. Most of these were dyed blue and were exported to all parts of the Colonies. Those made of soft white leather commanded a high price.

Gladys Bacheller Booth

RECOLLECTIONS

An old writer has said, "The Point is one of the most delightful parts of Newport."

For almost a hundred years the folks who have lived in this part of town have been called "Point Hummers." Although there is no record of how this name originated, my mother, who is nearly 92 and was born and lived on the Point for most of her life, says it was the name of a boy's club that Willie Hamilton organized in the early 1880's. He lived in a house on Bridge Street that is still standing almost opposite the old fire house.

There is an old ditty that was used by Newport boys in the early 1800's. At that time, the Point boys, probably including both Oliver Hazard Perry of Lake Erie fame and Mathew, his brother, who opened up the ports of Japan in 1847, sang or shouted the following:

Up town bullies,  
Down town brats,  
Over the Point gentlemen,  
And Long Wharf rats.

To which the up town boys replied:

Over the Point bullies,  
Down town brats,  
Up town gentlemen  
And Long Wharf rats.

To which the Long Wharf boys replied:

Long Wharf gentlemen,  
Up town brats,  
Over the Point bullies,  
And down town rats.

The down town boys then took up the chant thusly:

Down town gentlemen,  
Over the Point brats,  
Up town bullies,  
And Long Wharf rats.

An old writer says that these insulting verses usually ended in a free-for-all; and it was these fights that gave Oliver Hazard Perry his training for his victory at the battle of Lake Erie on September 10, 1813.

Oliver, Mathew, Alexander and two other Perry boys besides three of their sisters lived in the house at the corner of Walnut and Second Street on the Point for a few years. It is said that Mathew, the youngest brother, was born there.

Gladys Bacheller Booth

## WILLIAM AND MARY DYRE -- FIRST FAMILY ON THE POINT

William Dyre was born in England September 19, 1609. He married Mary Barrett on October 27, 1633, at St. Martins in the Field, London, England. "A grave woman of comely stature and countenance of goodly personage and report." A son, William, was born and died in infancy in October, 1634, and in 1635 William and Mary emigrated to Boston, Massachusetts. They joined the First Church of Boston, and here a son, Samuel, was baptised on December 20, 1635, by Reverend John Wilson.

The Dyres joined in open support of Anne Hutchinson and John Wheelwright, who were seeking to reform the religious laws of church and state, and when Anne Hutchinson was expelled from the Church of Boston, Mary rose and followed her. William Dyre was disenfranchised, disarmed, and expelled from the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Together with Anne Hutchinson and other seekers of religious freedom, William Coddington purchased Aquidneck Island from Canonibus and Miantonomi, chief sachems of Narragansett. Prior to leaving Boston, William Dyre was a signer of the Portsmouth Compact, and was elected Clerke on March 7, 1638. The first settlement on Aquidneck Island began at Pocassett (Portsmouth). One hundred families came the first year; the town was becoming overcrowded.

On April 28, 1638, Dyre was a signer of a Compact preparatory to settlement of Newport, and was one of four selected to apportion the land and lay out the town. William Dyre was granted 87 acres of land including 10 acres for access highways. The deed of March 10, 1640, is recorded thus: "to begin at river's mouth opposite Coaster Harbor Island and so by the sea to run (north) up to a marked stake at Coddington's corner from thence to a marked tree by the Great Swamp and so two rods within the swamp," etc. The river (now a creek) still exists, curves south under Connell Highway, north of the rotary, and ends in the swamp ditches. At that time it meandered along for a greater distance. Connell Highway closely follows the eastern boundary of Dyre's land grant to the junction of what is now Van Zandt Avenue. The southern boundary ran a diagonal course to the shore north of Blue Rocks, which was given the name Dyre's Point and back by the sea to the river's mouth. Like other Points along Aquidneck Island -- Easton's Point, Coddington Point, and Carr's Point, they mark to this day early grants and their owners.

Dyre chose for his home lot the present grounds of the Naval Hospital and here he built his home. His neighbor to the north was William Coddington, and to the south, Nicholas Easton was granted the rest of the section we now call the Point. Coddington and Easton were given additional grants in the town and built their homesteads there, so William and Mary Dyre and their growing family became indeed the first family to settle on the Point. A son was born in 1640 and also named William, followed in 1643 by a son who was given the Biblical name MAHERSHALLAL HASHBEZ -- he was mercifully called Maher. Henry was born about 1647 and Charles in 1650.

We may be sure the Dyre boys enjoyed the Point in all its wild natural beauty, fishing and boating in the harbor, and hunting in the woods that surrounded their home. Perhaps they made trips to Dyre's Island between Prudence Island and Carr's Point. It was given to Dyre by the purchasers about March 28, 1638, and still bears his name. Very soon in the development of the home lot, the need for fencing it, and a gate to allow access to their home brought about the introduction of a gate in the area we know today as Dyre's Gate. Farewell Street and Long Lane were highways with a byway ending at Dyre's Gate and Third Street, in those early days known as the "Road to Dyre's Farm."

William Dyre was secretary of Portsmouth and Newport from 1640-47, General Recorder in 1648, and Attorney General from 1650-53. Early in 1653 William and Mary Dyre returned to England with John Clarke and Roger William to obtain revocation of Governor Coddington's power. When William returned that same year, Mary remained in England. On May 18, 1635, Dyre was commissioned by the Assembly to act against the Dutch and was appointed Commander in Chief Upon the Seas. In 1655 he was made a freeman.

In 1657 Mary Dyre returned to America. She had become a Quaker and a minister of the Society. Mary disembarked in Boston and was promptly imprisoned. Persecution of Quakers had begun; during this period scores of Quakers suffered imprisonment, lashings, mutilation and death. William secured his wife's release on promise to return her to Rhode Island. She spent a quiet time with her family, and then despite the edict against her, returned to Boston in 1659 to plead for Marmaduke Stephenson and William Robinson, two Quaker friends from Rhode Island, who had been jailed for their Quaker beliefs and were under sentence of death. Mary was arrested, tried, and condemned to death. On October 30, 1659, with the rope already around her neck, she witnessed the execution of her friends, and was then reprieved on petition of her son, William. She was later put upon horseback and escorted 15 miles toward Rhode Island with the admonition to stay out of Massachusetts on pain of death. She preached in New Hampshire and was expelled, then journeyed to Long Island, and on May 21, 1660, Mary returned to Boston still determined to force Massachusetts to repeal its cruel laws against the Quakers, or by her death to force public indignation to repeal them. She was seized and again sentenced to hang. William Dyre, who was not a Quaker, wrote a lengthy desperate appeal to Governor Endicott to spare his wife's life, but on June 1, 1660, with drums beating to hide her last words she was taken to Boston Common and there hanged, refusing a final offer of her life if she would return to the safety of her home. Her former pastor, Reverend John Wilson gave his handkerchief to bind her eyes. Edward Wanton, an official at the gallows, was so affected by her courage he became a Quaker convert. Her death and the resulting public indignation accomplished the end of Quaker persecution by order of King Charles. William Dyre later married Catherine, and a daughter Elizabeth was born in 1662.

Dyre continued in Newport affairs, served as Commissioner from 1661-62, Deputy 1664-66, Solicitor 1665-68, Secretary to the Council 1669. On August 5, 1670, he deeded Dyre's Island to his son, William, as a free gift, and in 1676, he died. The property was left to his son, Samuel, who died in 1678. It then went to his sons, Charles, Henry and Maher. Henry was deeded the north end of the Dyre property with the exception of Maher's tobacco farm near the river's mouth, and Charles received the southern portion including the home and farm. On April 30, 1684, at the Quarterly Meeting of freemen, Charles obtained "liberty to hang a gate at ye end of ye highway" to be placed "within a rod of ye gate, Dyre's Gate, for one year's time so yt he have gate convenient for men to pass and repass."

The property was later sold to Godfrey Malbone, and in September, 1761, Dyre's Gate was the scene of the first theatre production in Rhode Island. Despite the opposition of the Newport clergy, who believed the theatre was sinful, the Royalists permitted a playhouse to be built at Dyre's Gate, and "The Rivals" was staged there by a group of players called the American Company. The play enjoyed a successful run of eight weeks.

In 1853 Robert L. Maitland built his mansion within 70 feet of the site of the old Dyre house, and until the late 1800's the remains of the foundation and portions of stone wall were still visible. In 1889, while laying out a cross street on the Maitland estate, it became necessary to remove the Dyre family cemetery from what is now the entrance gate to the Naval Hospital grounds. A permit was granted to Bowen B. Sweet, Superintendent of the city cemetery, to remove the remains to the former plot of William Card in the Old Common Burial Ground. The removal of remains and headstones took place on Saturday, October 25, 1889. Today Dyre's Gate and Dyre Street are the only reminders of William and Mary Dyre and their family, who lived on the Point over 300 years ago.

Louise C. Sherman

With thanks to the Newport  
Historical Society for assistance.

WARD LINE

LONG LANE



W-BROOK ST

OLD COLONY R. R.

THIRD ST "ROAD TO DYERS FARM"

DYER'S GATE

NOW VAN

MAITLAND CT

FROM ATLAS OF NEWPORT

1876

and

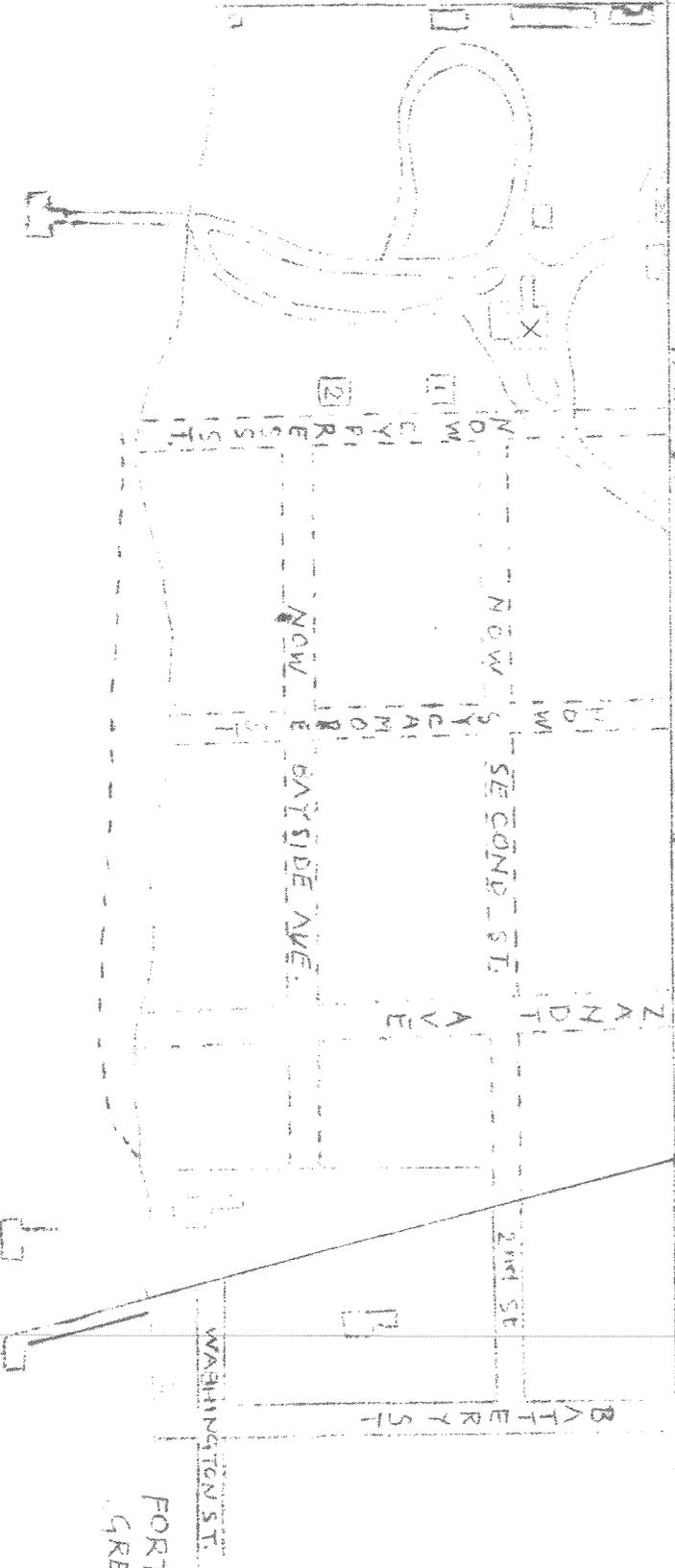
SKETCH OF DYRE FARM N.H.S.

1. DYRE HOUSE

2. DYRE FAMILY CEMETERY

X MAITLAND HOUSE

1" = 200"



FORT GREENE

WASHINGTON ST

BATTERY ST

2nd ST

1

NOW BAYSIDE AVE

SECOND ST

ZANDT AVE

2nd ST

NOW

NOW

NOW

1

2

X

WASHINGTON ST

FORT GREENE