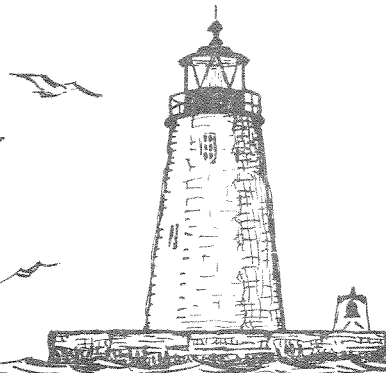


The GREEN

LIGHT



BULLETIN OF THE POINT ASSOCIATION OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

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ANNUAL MEETING -- OCTOBER 24, 1963

The Annual Meeting of the Point Association of Newport, Rhode Island, will be held on October 24, 1963, at eight o'clock in the Guild Hall of St. John's Church on Poplar Street. This year the various committee reports will be combined in an annual report by the President; last year this proved so successful that it will be continued. The Nominating Committee will give its report -- the First Vice President, Treasurer, and Corresponding Secretary are to be elected, as well as three members of the new Nominating Committee. King Covell will show a few slides he has taken at the clamcakes. Mr. Robert Woodruff, the Director of the Norman Bird Sanctuary, will talk about the relation of the Norman Bird Sanctuary to the Newport community, with colored slides he has taken. Girls from the Concentric Teens LH Club will serve cider and doughnuts.

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING, July 1963

The July general membership meeting was held in St. John's Guild Hall on July 25th, with a good attendance.

The report of the Secretary was read and approved, and the report of the Treasurer, showing a balance on hand of \$4,051.40, was read and approved.

Mrs. Bates reported that the Treasured Collections will clear about \$160, and about 250 people came. For a more detailed report, see later page.

The Executive Board has hired a boy to clean up Battery Park and surrounding areas; he is paid \$5 a week for 1-1/2 hours a day, and Admiral Eccles will supervise his work. Mr. Weisbrod, the City Manager, will cooperate with the clean-up, and furnish all extra barrels needed.

The Executive Board recommended that the Point Association give \$100 to Dollars for Scholars, to be used by a Point child if

possible. After discussion about giving the money specifically for a Point child, it was voted unanimously that the Point Association give \$100 for Dollars for Scholars with no strings attached.

Admiral Eccles reported on a Redevelopment discussion with Mr. Oakley at the Executive Board meeting, mostly about the highway access system, of vital interest to the Point. A highway along the railroad tracks would be extremely expensive, built by the state, and would depend on the consent of the railroad and the businesses served. The Point Association voted in favor of this highway a year ago.

The meeting was adjourned, and Admiral Eccles showed some beautiful pictures taken on his travels to Spain and the Mediterranean.

Mrs. Duffy and her committee served refreshments.

Point Clean-Up Campaign

This summer the general membership voted at the April meeting to hire a man two hours a day to clean up the sidewalks and gutters. Jim Griffin worked faithfully all summer, but found it took so many hours to cover the area that parts were littered sometimes. The general effect was much better, and several visitors mentioned it. Finally the Board hired a boy, supervised by Admiral Eccles, to clean Battery Park and the surrounding areas and the improvement was noticeable. Perhaps the solution next summer might be to get several boys to clean different areas. The trouble would be to get men to supervise them, as Admiral Eccles did so nobly this summer.

The tubs of red geraniums at Battery Park bloomed all summer and were greatly enjoyed. A few plants were removed, but most were left alone.

All this talk of cleaning up has inspired many people to repair and paint their houses, so that the whole Point is getting spruced up. Several people have bought old houses and are fixing them up, and while some of our old friends have had to move away, new friends are moving into their houses, and we feel hopeful. In spite of the killing winter and the hot dry summer, the gardens were lovely. Next year we'll hope to manage an open garden day in the spring. King Covell has taken many pictures of different gardens; remember when your garden is at its best to call King Covell or Marian Galvin and have it immortalized. The maple trees are thriving, and were helped by spring fertilizing, which we shall continue. It may be time to plant some more, as our visitors admire them, and the vistas down the streets are getting leafier by the year.

Here are a few of the houses we have noticed on our walks. There are many more -- so tell us about your redecorated mansions, and we'll have another list in the next Green Light, complete with names if you want.

The house at Bridge and Cross is getting all fixed up by the owners, and the old store attached to it is now a children's playroom.

A store attached to the house at 53 Third Street has been taken down.

The house at Third and Walnut has been all repaired, and painted red.

The old Lawton house on Walnut Street has been bought by the Weisses, and completely renovated.

Two houses at Poplar and Second have been painted, which gives three good houses at that corner.

The Newport Gas Light Company, with the help of the Preservation Society, is restoring the Goddard House on Second Street, and we are all looking forward to seeing the results.

Mr. Howe of the Naval Base Red Cross has bought two houses on Willow Street, and will live in the one on the street.

Edward Kelly has bought two houses on Second Street, the west side near Walnut, and is living in the rear one.

Remember to tell us of your beautified houses so that we can add them to this short list.

There are more boats and their owners to be added to the Newport Cats but we'll wait until Spring to publish them, as it's too chilly for sailing now -- Fall came early this year.

Rose Island Clambake

The annual clambake of the Point Association was a great success. There were about the same number as last year, but fewer adults and more teen-agers and children, and all ages found things to do -- swimming, boating, water skiing, walking around the island, admiring the light house, or just relaxing. The Kelly chowder vanished by the gallon, and when the bake was ready, that vanished too, better than ever, and everyone sat around happily. Jimmy Douglas got all excited when he found a bottle with a Florida address inside, but alas! it was thrown overboard from the Jamestown ferry by a Florida boy who studied at St. George's this summer. Many thanks to all the men who labored so hard to make the clambake a success, and also to the women's committee. The men at the end of the day said they thought next year they would have to have the bake in the Covell yard, but by next summer they'll be full of vim and vigah.

Attention, Please!

The Point Association dues of \$1.00 per year are due at the annual meeting of the Association in October.

"The Peril" on the Point

It was September 13, 1915, and all roads led to the north end of the Point. In cars of all kinds from chauffeured automobiles of Newport's society to the humble "tin Lizzie," by horse and buggy, by trolley car, on foot and on horse back, a tide of people surged onto the Point to witness the filming of a war story known simply as "The Peril." An additional number of people in all manner of boats from luxurious yachts to lowly row boats lined the harbor alongside the Naval Hospital grounds.

Along the shore "Lubin Street" stretched out from the Naval Hospital grounds to Training Station Road. The houses on Lubin Street were fully constructed on two sides with permanent type roofs. The background houses were realistically painted on canvas frames, but to the camera's eye would reveal a street and homes like any other town, U.S.A. Lubin Street, the street that never was, was ready for destruction.

Since May of 1915, the Lubin Company had been busy selecting locations, arranging talent and taking advantage of Newport's wealth of scenery. A fire which had occurred on Green Street was duly recorded on film, and the Brownstone fire would also be seen as part of the growing epic. During the five months of filming, battleships, destroyers, submarines and hundreds of Navy personnel were used. A yacht had been sunk by gunfire and several old buildings had been blown up with mines. For weeks booms had been heard, and Newporters mindful of the war raging overseas, paused and worried a bit, then shook their heads and perhaps mumbled "those crazy movie people." Newport's fairest were eager to respond to the need for damsels in distress, who would flee their homes in advance of the enemy. The hero of "The Peril" was Earl Metcalf. During the summer occupation by the moving picture company, the handsome Mr. Metcalf in his dashing Naval Lieutenant uniform had become a familiar figure in and about Newport. He was entertained aboard the Constellation and at society functions, and made several appearances at the Colonial Theatre on Thames Street, entertaining with character sketches. The interest in Newport in the film making and growing crowd that thronged to each day's filming was noted by Mrs. French Vanderbilt, one of Newport's leading society members. She arranged to have an admission charge to the grounds for the benefit of the Ambulance Fund for France. Dr. Huntington arranged an entrance gate from Third Street to a field near the Naval Hospital for parking automobiles. A charge of \$2.00 was made for parking automobiles, pedestrians paid 25¢ to enter the grounds, and children were admitted for 10¢. A number of Newport policemen were on hand for emergencies. As on all occasions of this kind, there were gate crashers and trouble makers. Some evaded the collection points and found ways to enter from the shore. Several were heard loudly claiming "fisherman's rights" though they were several yards from the shore and not a fish pole in sight. For a time the mob threatened to invade the barricaded area and destroy the carefully prepared set. The policemen were frankly outnumbered and admittedly unable to cope with the situation. At this point Lieutenant Commander Frank T. Evans of the Naval Training Station came to the rescue. Companies of apprentice seamen were marched against the threatening billows of human beings, and literally pushed them back so that the scheduled scenes might be taken. The leading malefactors were led to the guard house, and the rest ejected, and the show went on. Naval Reservists portrayed both the defenders and the enemy. Some in white and some in khaki, they represented the Naval and Infantry forces. The enemy landed and proceeded up Lubin Street. The Newport girls fled into the street, and portraying all the horror of an actual invasion were caught by the camera's eye. Fires broke out in the houses, our brave men advanced through smoke and flame in pursuit of the enemy, met and fought them from house to house and forced the enemy to retreat. General Director Terwilliger said later that when viewed on the screen through red film, the public would wonder how they were able to escape unscorched by the flames that would appear from every side. (Remember the old-time movies and the red film that was used in fire scenes? One could almost feel the heat of the flames.)

During the filming a horse owned by the Illuminating Gas Company staged an unrehearsed scene of its own. Unused to such commotion, it enjoyed a brief runaway until it was controlled by the police.

And now it was over. Lubin Street was destroyed, the enemy was vanquished, the cameras stopped grinding, the actors retired from the scene, the crowd withdrew, and the Point became again a quiet orderly part of Newport. The company next moved on to film scenes at the Lily Pond area, and finally departed from the city. The local girls relinquished their dreams of stardom, and Newport returned to normal.

Louise C. Sherman

Treasured Collections

The Guild Hall was transformed for the Treasured Collections, exhibited on July 20th and 21st. Hooked rugs and pieces of weaving were hung on the walls, and the arrangement of the tables divided the hall into areas for special displays, and everyone was amazed at what interesting variety we could bring together, with help from a few non-Pointers. China and glass of all kinds, Madonnas, silver, trays and teapots, brass and prints, china shoes, lace, uniforms and books of pictures of uniforms, pictures of old Newport, especially the Point, apple head dolls, earrings, scrimshaw, pewter, Fall River Line mementoes, wood figurines, beaded bags, paper weights, coin collections, ivory, and of special interest to the young, the Victorian kitchen, the circus, and toys, dolls, children's furniture and clothes. Mrs. Carry, who has several scrap books of interest to the Point, has given the one showing the first Old Fort days to the Point Association. (It will be on exhibition at the annual meeting on October 24th.)

About 250 people came to the exhibit, and were most interested, spending a long time looking at all the displays. The total receipts from entrance fees, chances on the Liberty pitcher (won by Mr. Bart Larsen of New York) and sale of "Here and There on the Point", were \$288.51, and when the insurance, policeman, printing, and small items were subtracted, a balance of \$160 was left.

How many would be interested in making wreaths and decorations of various kinds for Christmas? Call Alice Fitzpatrick, and be ready with your favorite ideas.

Craft Classes

Many people are interested in the craft work of all kinds mentioned in the last Green Light by Alice Fitzpatrick, and we are now trying to find a good place to meet. Mrs. Fitzpatrick investigated the former Burt Little shop on Poplar Street, but found it not suited for our purposes. So now we are thinking of trying meetings at the houses of the crafters, hoping their work is small enough to move around each week. Many were inspired by Mrs. Wilbour's hooked rugs at the collections, and would like to start a small design. Others would like to begin crewel work, and small bags were suggested. Furniture refinishing is very popular, but that will have to wait until a suitable place can be found. A few were interested in painting tiles, and knitting is always popular. Mrs. Fitzpatrick welcomes any suggestions, so call her with your ideas -- 847-5395 -- so that we can get a good start before the holidays.

From Mrs. Briggs of San Bruno, California:

I remember June and all the other months in Newport and I used to think "Wouldn't it be lovely to be where it was warm and sunny all the time?" Well, I have lived here 43 years and I can tell you there is simply nothing that is more monotonous than continued sunshine, though I imagine you will find that statement hard to believe. Green grass, green trees and lots of flowers at Christmas time does a thorough job of spoiling that holiday for anyone that likes a white Christmas -- seems much more like the Fourth of July.

Yes, the Point Hummers are just the same, and I pray they never change.

THE JAMESTOWN FERRY

We need not be concerned here with the sail ferry boats which served Newport and Jamestown in Colonial times and indeed up to about a hundred years ago. Such boats and the services which they furnished are well documented. The late Judge Levy did considerable research in this field. More recently, Miss Susan Franklin, whose sudden violent death we still deplore, whose eminence in classical scholarship did not preclude her from devoting equal attention to the humbler subject of local history, contributed much to what is known of the early history of Jamestown as well as of Newport. It was she who pointed out to the writer a significant survival of the early ferries in the form of the little harbor or landing place, protected by a short breakwater of loosely piled stones, which, despite hurricanes, may still be seen at Saunderstown at the foot of the road leading to the shore from the little white church on the hill. And, in Newport we have one other record: a model of a sailing ferry, one of a group now in the Historical Society which was made by the late Mr. Richardson and given to the Society by its devoted President of so many years, the late Dr. Roderick Terry.

But the ferry of our time is another matter. The idea of having a steam ferryboat, running independently of wind and weather on a regular schedule, had been proposed before the Civil War but only in 1873 was it realized when the first steamer "Jamestown" was built at East Boston for that purpose. She was a small sidewheel boat, with a single driveway through the center, uncovered by an upper deck, and carrying the smokestack and a pilot house at either end well over toward one side. It is said that her power was not great and that, therefore, her progress in stormy weather was not rapid. I have heard it said that, in stormy weather, when under weigh, she would sometimes pick up a wave at whichever end was serving as the bow, only to have the water flow through the driveway, the entire length of the boat, and run out at the other end. Men used to stand in the driveway, holding the horses by the bridle, to steady them when undergoing such an experience. In winter, when standing knee-deep in cold salt water, such a passage on the ferry must have been strenuous indeed. Nevertheless, the old "Jamestown" served both Jamestown and Newport well for over twenty years. For the first thirteen of those years she was the only steam ferry in these waters, but in 1886 she was joined by the "Conanicut" and then withdrew to the west side of Jamestown to open a steam ferry service across the west passage to Saunderstown. With the coming of the "Beaver Tail" in 1896, she was replaced on that run as well, being broken up after serving a few years as a spare boat. Her hull sank at a wharf in Newport, and later was buried there as a new dock was built right across the site. Apparently, her engine and boiler were removed for salvage: at any rate, the engine builder's brass plate still exists, being given to me a year or two ago by Owen Conroy, a classmate at Rogers in the early 1920's. Should it go back to Jamestown? Perhaps, if the town or the Jamestown Historical Society would like to have it! Some day it may again cross the bay, once more and finally, in a state of honorable retirement, just before being handed over to some appreciative custodian for safe-keeping there.

The Jamestown ferry, even in those days of horse-drawn vehicles and, in comparison with our times, little traffic, soon came to need another boat, especially for summer service. As a result, a contract was made with the Pusey and Jones Company, of Wilmington, Delaware, for building a new and larger steam ferryboat. This was the "Conanicut," so long in operation and so pleasantly remembered by the many who travelled upon her. The contracting company sublet the building of the hull to a wood shipbuilding yard nearby at Wilmington but they built and installed the engine and boiler. The steamer was completed in the spring of 1886 and, after coming up the coast under her own power, she reached here and began service on the Jamestown ferry early in the same summer. She was considerably larger than the "Jamestown" and was faster as well, being equipped with a beam engine (familiarily known as a "walking beam") of considerable power for a hull of her size: having a cylinder 36" in diameter with a piston stroke of 9'. Not only did she have an upper deck, open to passengers, with a light shade deck just above it, but she also had considerable sheer to her lines, her ends rising appreciably above the mid-center point in contrast to normal ferryboat design which called for low ends and the

high point at the wheels, amidships. This unusual characteristic not only gave her a much finer appearance but it also precluded the cold-water winter experience for man and beast which was mentioned in connection with the older boat. The "Conanicut" was most successful in the service for which she was designed. Many people today, in spite of the much larger and faster boats built or purchased for the line in later years, still think of the "Conanicut" as the finest of all the Jamestown ferries. Her service was mainly in summer, being replaced during the winter months at first by the "Jamestown" and later by the "Beaver Tail" and later boats. She experienced only one major accident, her partial destruction by fire in October, 1914. Although the superstructure was largely burned away, her hull and engine escaped serious damage. She was towed to New London where she was rebuilt, similar in general shape but quite different in detail from what she had been originally, and returned to Narragansett Bay to resume service in the spring of 1915. She still had 12 years of useful life ahead of her, for she continued to run between Jamestown and Newport until the "Governor Carr," just finished as her successor, arrived from her builder's yard at Quincy, Massachusetts. The "Conanicut" was not finished, however. The Mount Hope Bridge was then under construction. Mr. Vanderbilt had started the Short Line bus service, originally as a successor to the trolley cars that used to operate from Washington Square out the west road to Bristol Ferry, and he built a new ferry slip at Bristol near the lighthouse there, close to where the N. W. tower of the bridge now stands so as to shorten both the length of the ferry run and also the time involved in the crossing in comparison to what it had been with the run around to the older ferry slip in Bristol harbor. The sidewheel ferry "Bristol," also with a beam engine and built, as had been the "Conanicut," by the Fusey and Jones Company at Wilmington, Delaware, was put in service on the shorter Bristol run, and the "Conanicut," being retired from the Jamestown ferry, was chartered to run there with her to provide a two-boat service. For another two years, until the bridge was opened in 1929, the "Conanicut" ran on that short passage. But with the opening of the bridge, her services were needed no longer. She went back to Jamestown, to be laid up. A short time later she was sold, and was taken to Portland, Maine, where it was planned to run her from the City of Portland to the many islands of Casco Bay. This plan never materialized. After being tied up at Portland for several years, the "Conanicut" was dismantled: her machinery was removed and broken up for sale as old metal and her hull, with its superstructure removed, was beached on mud flats at the southern end of Portland harbor where, for another fifteen years or more, it could be seen from passenger trains approaching Portland from the south. Whether it still remains there I cannot say. Perhaps someone who has travelled to Portland in recent years by train may know. But for a long time her hull was an unmistakable reminder, to those who knew and remembered, of her earlier and happier days when actively at work running back and forth across lower Narragansett Bay. Her whistle, it is said, was removed before she left here and was kept by some appreciative Jamestown. We may hope that it will always be kept and held in affectionate regard.

Next in the succession comes the "Beaver Tail." Smaller than the "Conanicut" but considerably longer than the original "Jamestown," she was built at Wilmington, Delaware, by the same builder as the "Conanicut" and was intended to run in summer on the west ferry, from West Jamestown to the mainland, and in winter on the east ferry, between Jamestown and Newport, in the place of the "Conanicut." As a measure of economy, and also because winter service need not be so rapid as service in summer, she was given a much smaller engine -- one with a 28" cylinder, by 6' stroke. This engine, also, differed from the beam engine of the "Conanicut" in being horizontal, or "inclined," being installed for the most part in the hold, below the main deck. The lesser power together with slower turning made for less speed, which, years later, was to prove her undoing. Her lines were more nearly those of the normal ferryboat, being flat and straight from end to end. Being heavily built, and having rudders at each end of solid build, she could, and did, face rough water and even occasional ice without trouble. For example, during our one winter at war (1917-1918) during World War I, she ran back and forth across the bay during the thick ice of that unusually cold winter with only occasional interruptions. It is true that she was, for a time, limited to a single crossing per day, but she managed to get the mails to and from the island and to carry across such

passengers as had to make the trip without interruption. Being of more recent build, she survived the "Conanicut" by some nine years of active service. In the mid-1930's, she was thought in sufficiently good general condition to warrant the expense of removing her original boiler and installing in its place a boiler built to order for her use. This was done at Newport, at the wharves of the New England Steamship Company. But the expected new lease on life proved to be short. She was caught in the hurricane of September, 1938, when struggling to make the run up the east side of Jamestown so as to reach the more protected waters of the west side, when her power failed her and she was driven ashore and wrecked on Conanicut Island (Jamestown) not far below the old Conanicut Park wharf. Since her hull was shattered, her equipment was removed and what remained was burned where she lay on the shore, her back broken by a large rock on which she had settled during the fury of the storm.

William King Covell

