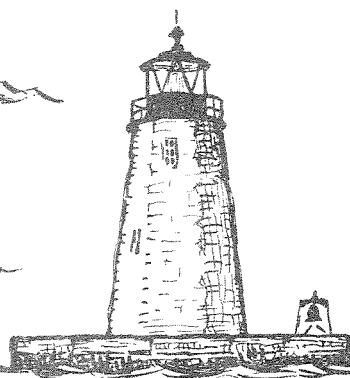


The GREEN

LIGHT



BULLETIN OF THE POINT ASSOCIATION OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

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No. 1

P R E S I D E N T ' S G R E E T I N G

It is a privilege to extend "Best Wishes to all Members, New and Old of the Point Association for the Coming Year." Unlimited opportunity lies ahead for all of us to work together so that the Association can make greater strides toward fulfilling the aims of our Charter. For the next few years the Point area will undergo many changes -- some not to our liking, but for the most part we are delighted to be a part of protecting our Heritage and improvement of our area.

The Christmas party was a huge success, thanks to our committee and volunteers, without whose able assistance I am sure it would not have ended with such a festive air. The All City String Orchestra, under the direction of Mr. Charles Budesheim, never played more harmoniously. Several members of the orchestra are children from the Point area. To support them will more than benefit the future Point Association. Senator Claiborne Pell was welcomed as guest speaker, and was most enthusiastic. No Christmas party would be a success without the reading of the poem "'Twas the Night Before Christmas."

I observed very closely the carol singing, and was overwhelmed that everyone was singing as if they truly enjoyed it. It is my wish that this sort of affair becomes our Annual Christmas Celebration.

A great many more members should and must take part in the activities and committees of our organization. We can accomplish only as much as the few members who work. But 12 to 15 members cannot carry the ball when we have a membership of over 350. We need more help from all of you. When you are asked to serve on committees, please do not turn us down. We need workers from all areas; this will assure your own block of getting the attention it needs.

It is indeed an honor to serve as your President, once again, and you can rest assured I will be calling on all of the members for support of our projects this summer.

William H. Fullerton
President

JANUARY GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The January meeting will be held on January 28th at 8 o'clock at Mumford School. There will be a discussion of the Jazz Festival site on Connell Highway. Some of the slides of Point gardens taken by King Covell in 1963, with the help of Marion Galvin, will be shown; you have been waiting for some time to see these slides, and what better time to see them than in the middle of winter?

Also: An Artist's View of the Trees on the Point; An Illustrated Lecture by Ade Bethune.

Annual Meeting -- October 22, 1964.

The annual meeting of the Point Association of Newport was held on October 22 at Mumford School, with a large and enthusiastic attendance. The Rogers High School band, directed by Mr. Durgin, started our new year with great enthusiasm and spirit, playing popular TV music, and best of all, the Rogers High School song. Our members came on time to hear them, and enjoyed it greatly.

The Secretary's report, and the Treasurer's report, showing a balance on hand of \$3,865.23, were read and approved. A letter from Ann Quarry, thanking the Point Association for her scholarship, was read.

Mr. William C. Harrington read a report of his four years in office, showing a total spent in that time of \$1,872. Our bank balance stays remarkably the same, between \$3,700 and \$3,900. Some of the expenditures include:

Three years ago we voted to give \$100 scholarship to a Point boy or girl and have done so each year since.

We have tubs of red geraniums each year in Battery Park, at about \$40 each year.

We planted three trees in Battery Park for \$51, and one was promptly pulled up.

We spend between \$50 and \$30 for Christmas decorations and prizes yearly.

For legal services mostly rendered in connection with the proposed transfer of the Lobster Claw, we spent \$53.

One year we hired a man part time to clean up sidewalks and gutters, etc., in the area, for \$290, but that does not seem to be the answer to litter.

We gave camperships of \$87 to the Con-centric Teens LH girls, and they have been making cookies for our quarterly meetings.

Since we moved our meetings to Mumford School, we pay \$13 a meeting, and we bought a large coffee urn for \$31 to use for the meetings.

The Green Light has cost around \$150 a year since Miss Edith Price left, for paper, printing, mimeographing, and stamps.

The report of the nominating committee was then read:

President - William Fullerton

1st Vice President for 1 year to fill Mrs. Bickford's unexpired term - Mrs. John Howard Benson

2nd Vice President - Mrs. James Douglas
Nominating Committee for 1 year, 1964-5

Mrs. Harold Arnold, Miss Ann Hagerty, and Mrs. Louise Sherman

Presented by the nominating committee: Mrs. Henry Eccles, Miss Anna Groff, Miss Eleanor Peckham, Miss Ann Hagerty, and Mr. M. Joseph Sullivan, Chairman.

The Secretary was instructed to cast one ballot for the slate.

Tom Benson and Robert Foley gave a most interesting talk on Operation Clapboard, with illustrations, but as Tom Benson is writing the latest report in this issue, turn to that for details. Robert Foley described the moving of the little house to the empty lot next to the Peter Simon house with illustrations of the whole operation.

The meeting was adjourned, and everyone enjoyed the refreshments, and also a chance to talk to the speakers. Altogether, it was one of the best meetings we have ever had.

Christmas on the Point

Instead of singing Christmas Carols at Battery Park this year, with not even a flag pole to decorate, we had a Christmas party at Mumford School on the 18th. The All City String Orchestra played some delightful music under the direction of Mr. Budesheim. We all appreciated Senator Claiborne Pell's reading of "The Night Before Christmas," simple and eloquent. After that, we sang a few carols, which sounded well in the hall, and then we had refreshments. About fifty of our members came, but with the orchestra all staying, we had a gay time, and no one hurried home.

The judging for the Christmas decorations was held on Saturday, December 26th, with the judges: Mayor Hambly, Mr. Robert Brown, and Commander Rex Coryell of the USS Arcadia.

1st prize - The Nagles, 16 Battery Street
2nd prize - The Bryers, 24 Van Zandt Avenue
3rd prize - The Cornells, 6 Bayside Avenue
Honorable Mention - John Scott, Bayside Avenue; Arthur Hull, Third Street; The Hunter House, Preservation Society; Patrick Mahoney, Bayside Avenue; Francis Carr, Jr., Washington Street; and St. John's Rectory, Poplar Street.

Historic Zoning

On Wednesday, January 20th, at 8, there will be a hearing before the Council, on Historic Zoning. This is of vital interest to the Point, so please try to come, and be ready with your questions and objections.

Operation Clapboard

Operation Clapboard was first thought of during the summer of 1963 when 3 or 4 Newporters decided that something definite must be done to save the rapidly diminishing number of Colonial houses in our city. In June of 1964 a group was formed, consisting of Mrs. C. Pepys, Tom Benson, and Lloyd Hyde. It was through Lloyd Hyde's help that a grant was procured to the Preservation Society, covering a salary for Tom Benson. The object of Operation Clapboard is a practical two-fold one; to save old houses and to strengthen the Point community with more people who will take a hand in Newport's future. The upper Thames Street area seemed a logical starting place, since here there is a great concentration of 18th Century houses still standing, mostly in their original locations, on streets laid down before 1700.

It was decided at the first meeting of Operation Clapboard that, since there were some 8 or 10 people who had expressed interest in doing something with a part of Newport or in buying an old house to restore, these people should be brought together for purposes of discussion. This was done early in June at 62 Washington Street. At that meeting capital was raised of \$7,000.00, a legal group was formed, and it was decided to buy houses. Unfortunately \$7,000.00 only buys about 1-1/2 houses; therefore the track taken was that of buying contracts of sale on pieces of property which spread over a period of months. These contracts would then in the intervening space of time between acquisition and actual deed exchange, be sold by Operation Clapboard to a person who wanted to restore a house. In effect Operation Clapboard was buying houses without ever actually owning them.

In other cases, people within the initial group, those who originally joined because they wanted to buy a house, would simply purchase outright one of the area buildings when it came on the market.

Thus far the dodges have worked. Operation Clapboard has been somehow involved in the placing of 21 houses. The people who have purchased them make up a wonderful variety of Newporters, Jamestowners, full-time residents, part-time residents and investors, each one with a dedicated interest in Newport. As to Operation Clapboard's success, there are many reasons for it, the most important of which is real cooperation between all of the people involved, including buyers, sellers, tradesmen, professional men, organizations, and the City government.

Tom Benson

Random Remarks

Moving to Mumford School in January was quite a wrench, but this year has proved that if people are interested in the programs, they will come, and we have had some of our most successful meetings. The 4H girls make cookies that everyone appreciates, and many stay later talking to their friends.

The Point Association has at present a paid membership of one 248, but we have our annual follow-up on members in January, and should have an encouraging total by April. We are glad to report many new young members, some from Operation Clapboard, and they come to meetings, and should give us new life. We are trying hard this year to get more men interested, as we do not want to turn into a woman's club, and an elderly one, at that. You notice we had three men judging the Christmas decorations this year, and our new President, Bill Fullerton, has all sorts of other good ideas.

The annual cost of the Green Light (see President's report) may shock our members, but remember that Edith Price did all the printing herself, and the Sea Gull delivered many copies of the Green Light, and how we miss them both! Also the price of stamps has risen. Thanks to Mrs. Whitman, we get excellent mimeographing, however, and even special rates on paper. For the last year we have tried sending the Point Association membership cards with the Green Light, but as that comes out only quarterly now, we shall after this send out cards as dues are paid. If we have missed recording your dues, we are sure you will tell us.

This summer we are planning an auction on August 7th, with Barbara Carr, Chairman, and the time and place will be announced in the next Green Light. So start saving your white elephants, bibelots, dust collectors, and what-have-yous; they will be welcome.

We are hoping to plant more trees this spring, fewer, but bigger ones, as they survive the many vicissitudes better than small ones.

Reverend Ezra Stiles Takes A Walk.

The good Reverend Dr. Ezra Stiles, who was Pastor of Second Congregational Church on Clarke Street from 1755 to 1776, and later President of Yale College, took many walks along the streets of Newport in 1758. Carrying a paper, Reverend Stiles sketched in roughly but faithfully every street that existed at that time. As he went along, Stiles carefully noted down each house, indicating by numerals whether one or two story houses. With the symbol 2 he designated two story houses with two chimneys, and with the large S he indicated Stores, Still houses, Shops, and Stables. One can almost picture him as he walked along, his somber black attire relieved only by a white crossed neckpiece of that period, his learned head topped by a wide brimmed black hat, and his face a study of concentration as he paced off the long straight mile from his starting place near Extension Street to the Liberty tree at the head of Thames Street.

We know the exact day on which he paced off this measured mile, because of a notation which he placed in the lower right hand corner of the map. He wrote: "August 9, 1758. I walked from the Bars below Capt. Allen's" (the Bars so called being a gate or barricade across Thames Street) "to the tree at upper end of the Main Street and found it just 1900 Paces. I suppose about 6 of my paces go to a Rod and that gives the length just 320 Rods or One Mile. From where I set out to the Street by Gov. Scott, Esq. was 800 Paces; from thence to Wm. Otis Shop 400; from thence to upper Watch House 200; thence to L. tree 500." As he walked north along Thames Street, he sketched in the wharves that jutted into the harbor and carefully noted down the names of their owners -- Overings, Giles, Coggeshall, John Brown, Malbone, B. Wickham, Josiah Brown, Redwood, Peleg Thurston, Jona. Thurston, Mabone, (another) Scott, Chapman, Taylor, Pease, Bannister, Cowly, Freebody, Ferry W., Brown, Ayrault, Tillinghast, Freebody, Almy, Tweedy, Avery, Anthony, Gardner, Gibbs, Cranston, Collector & Gideon Wanton (Names given to the best of ability to read them). In a graph along side this section he wrote "17 wharves to the Ferry Wharf."

Continuing north along Thames Street, Reverend Stiles passed the entrance to Long Wharf or "Queen's Hithe" as it was then called. He was now on the Point. The shore line of the Cove began at the north side of Long Wharf and gradually curved in close to Thames Street. Along this waterfront area, dwelling houses and shops backed up to the Cove, and behind them 9 wharves and piers of varying lengths vied with each other in the activity of this busy seaport town. The largest of these wharves extended into the cove from Thames Street at the foot of Marlborough. From this wharf the shoreline of the cove began a gradual curve westward toward Shipwright Street (or Bridge Street, as we know it today). Of this area Reverend Stiles wrote along the left hand edge of the map "On the Point are 188 Dwelling Houses plus 110 stores, etc., including buildings on the W. Side of Thames Street lying N. of the Point Bridge Street and around on the Long Wharf to the West Side of the Draw Bridge. That is 140 Dwelling Houses 2 stories high, 48 one story high, 110 stores, Still houses, Stables, etc."

Reverend Stiles continued his pacing to the Liberty Tree. Here in a park at the head of Thames and Poplar Streets stands its twentieth century counterpart, a living growing symbol of our lasting regard for liberty. From here, Reverend Stiles could see the long mile stretching in a straight line back to his starting place at "Miles End."

Perhaps on this same day, August 9, 1758, Reverend Stiles turned into Shipwright Street and made his survey of this uniquely different thoroughfare which was as colorful as its given name. Along the south side of this street the houses back up to the Cove, which came within a few feet of their back doors. Here along the north shore of the cove lived with their families men of every seafaring occupation. Here beside the furniture makers, the bakers and candlestick makers, lived sea captains and shipwrights, mariners and merchants, provisioners and privateers, and secretly maybe a pirate or two. Shipwright Street in 1758 was one of the most thickly housed streets in the town; 4 one story houses, eleven 2 story houses, and 5 S on the south side, while on the north side were 19 two story houses, 3 one story houses and nine S to indicate shops, etc.

Reverend Stiles passed over the Point Bridge, and from this vantage point he could see the whole cove spread out before him -- the Draw Bridge on Long Wharf, and maybe a ship sailing into the cove from the outer harbor to one of the wharves along

Thames Street. There was always a bustle of activity with ships of all sizes sailing in and out, or at anchor there. Even at the North Side of the Point Bridge the water at high tide was deep enough for fishing, and continued north in a stream for several hundred yards to Poplar Street, where it ended in a narrow rill.

From the Point Bridge he continued west to Water Street (now Washington Street), jotting down the dwellings and other buildings along the way. He counted in all 30 two story houses, 7 one story houses, and 22 stores, etc., including those on the wharf at the west end of the street.

On the north side of Shipwright Street, fronting the east end of the Point Bridge, Reverend Stiles indicated a one-story house. This was the little gambrel roofed house that stood on the street line in 1758. Before 1799 the house belonged to James Gardner, goldsmith. It was sold by his heirs on September 25, 1799, to Robert Dunham, Jr., a baker, and remained in the Dunham family until October 25, 1863, when it was sold to George A. Simmons. On December 1, 1871, George Simmons sold the house and property to Thomas Freeborn, and the house remained on the street for thirteen more years. On August 9, 1884, Thomas Freeborn petitioned the City Council for permit to move a house from Walnut Street to Bridge Street. The little gambrel roofed house was moved back on the lot, and the Mercury of October 11, 1884, records that Thomas Freeborn moved a house from Walnut Street where it stood on lots #134 and #137 in the first division of Easton's Point. These lots were situated on the north side of Walnut Street mid way between Second and Washington Streets.

Previous to 1790 this Walnut Street house had belonged to one John Goddard of Newport, Esquire, deceased, and had been mortgaged by him to Stephen Ayrault. The mortgage probably dated from 1790 as the records show that Stephen Ayrault paid the annual quit rent fee to the Friends from that date to 1796. The rental fee had already been paid for that year when the heirs of Stephen Ayrault sold it on August 1, 1795 -- the deed reads: "John Bours, executor of the last will and testament of Stephen Ayrault, merchant of Newport, deceased, sells to Josiah Southwick for the sum of \$201.00 a certain dwelling house situate, lying and being on Easton's Point and standing on two lots of land", etc. It was set down on the street line on Bridge Street as the little house had been moved to the rear.

For years only those who really knew it was there noticed the little house numbered 29 Bridge Street that stood in the rear of Mrs. Kane's house, number 31 Bridge Street. Here it remained for 80 years until September of the year 1964. It had been condemned, but luckily Robert Foley had just bought the Peter Simon house at 25 Bridge, and he decided to move the gambrel roofed cottage to the vacant lot next door where an old Colonial house had been torn down. Mr. Tom Preece moved it deftly onto its new foundation, where it adds greatly to the Colonial aspect of Bridge Street.

One wonders what Reverend Stiles would think if he could retrace his walks along the Newport streets. He would find many familiar houses, but would certainly be confused to discover that some of them are not where they were in 1758.

Cardines Field, the Water Works, the Northam Lane parking lot, also the railroad and lumber yards and the junk yard on Washington Street have replaced the cove. The Standard Wholesale building stands over the site of the Draw Bridge on Long Wharf. The railroad crossing has replaced the Point Bridge, and the tracks have replaced the stream to the north of it, but several of the houses which were noted on Stiles' map of 1758 still remain on Bridge Street. These houses, together with a few other houses of later Colonial period, still make this street one of the most historically interesting in Newport today.

Louise C. Sherman