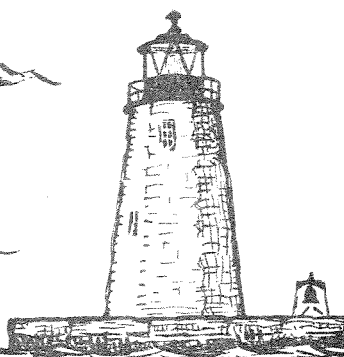


The GREEN

LIGHT



BULLETIN OF THE POINT ASSOCIATION OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

VOL. X

JANUARY 1966

NO. 1

JANUARY GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

ALL MEMBERS - BE SURE TO COME - THURSDAY EVENING - JANUARY 27TH - AT MUMFORD SCHOOL
8:00 P.M.

OCTOBER ANNUAL MEETING

The October annual meeting, our tenth anniversary celebration, was held at Mumford School on October 28, 1965. The Treasurer's report, showing a balance on hand of \$4,571.23, was read and approved.

Mr. George Weaver reported one of the Thames Street bars was moving to the corner of Marlborough and West Broadway streets. Admiral Eccles said that he thought the general meeting should pass a resolution unanimously stating our position. He moved: That the Executive Board be directed to take such action as may be necessary to prevent the establishment of, or transfer to the Point area of any bars or package stores. The motion was seconded, and passed unanimously.

Mr. Fullerton will check on the park at Thames and Cross Streets, where the city was supposed to put top soil and seed.

The report of the Nominating Committee was read:

1st Vice President - Rear Admiral Henry E. Eccles

Treasurer - Mrs. Francis P. Carr, Jr.

Recording Secretary - Miss Ann B. Canole
Nominating Committee for 1965 - 66:

Mrs. Harold Arnold

Mrs. Walter Whitley

Mrs. Peter Bolhouse

Presented by the 1964-65 Nominating Committee:

Mrs. Harold Arnold

Mrs. Louise Sherman

Mrs. William MacLeod

Mr. M. Joseph Sullivan

Miss Ann Hagerty, Chairman

The secretary was directed to cast one vote for each of these officers.

Mr. Fullerton gave a brief review of the most important financial facts for the ten year period, as the history was covered in the October Green Light. About \$12,000 has been taken in, and over \$7,000 spent on expenses for the meetings, publishing the Green Light, planting trees, cleaning the area, scholarships, etc. If anyone wants details, the books are available.

Mr. Emil Jemal then described his trip to Lebanon, the Holy Land, and Greece most interestingly, especially Jerusalem, and showed the movies he had taken.

The refreshments, served by the Board, were birthday cakes decorated by one of our members, Mrs. Shaffell, and her masterpiece had on it a copy of the Point Association seal (the Green Light itself, designed by Edith Ballinger Price), with a big candle to grow on - blown out by the President, Bill Fullerton.

CHRISTMAS ON THE POINT

This year instead of putting our tree in Battery Park, and carol singing on Christmas eve, we put the tree on the lawn of St. John's church, between the rectory and Grafton House. Mr. Harry Groff generously decorated it with lights, and it was most beautiful in a more protected place. There we sang carols at 5 on the Sunday before Christmas, the 19th, and many more people came than for years. It was cold, but we sang with spirit, even though some

words were forgotten, and the young set would have gone on singing much longer. After the caroling, we had cocoa and cookies in the Guild Hall, and never did cocoa taste so good. Mrs. Curtis James was in charge of the refreshments, helped by several young girls.

The night after Christmas came the judging of the Christmas decorations all over the Point. The judges were: Mayor Dennis Shea, Mrs. Gardner Dunton, and Mrs. Daniel Carlson. The awards were:

Spirit of Christmas - 1st Prize: Mr. Howard Nagle, 16 Battery Street; Honorable Mention: Mr. Arthur Hull, 60 Third Street.

Christmas Cheer - 1st Prize: Mr. Patrick Mahoney, 5 Bayside Avenue; Honorable Mention: Mr. William Fullerton, 41 Washington Street.

Special Lighting - 1st Prize: St. John's Rectory and Grafton House (Rev. Henry Turnbull); Honorable Mention: Mr. Kenneth Cornell, 6 Bayside Ave.

The decorations this year were not so spectacular, although there were many beautiful small ones. Perhaps next year the Point can blossom out all over as it used to do. The committee in charge was: Mrs. John H. Benson, Miss Ann Canole, and Mrs. Gordon Bates.

TWO LECTURES

The Point Association was one of the sponsors of the lecture Professor Rudy Favretti, of the University of Connecticut, gave on Colonial Gardens. He designed the gardens at Sturbridge, and described how the small informal gardens, known as the Plymouth Plantation type, were planted around the first houses. As the houses became more elaborate, so did the gardens, until the formal Manor type was developed. He showed slides of the popular Colonial flowers, and described their modern developments and names.

To celebrate our 10th anniversary, the Point Association invited all interested to hear Mr. Henry Flynt tell about the Restoration of Old Deerfield, with beautiful slides of the exteriors and interiors of the houses. Several of these old houses have been moved long distances, making an impressive and unique main street. It was of great interest to all on the Point, where there are still so

many houses from the 18th century left, and it gives an ideal toward which we can strive.

The Art Association was filled to capacity, and a birthday cake was served.

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The Point Association was all prepared to fight the application of a cafe on Long Wharf to transfer to an empty store at Bridge and Thames Street. As this area is zoned for business, it meant having a petition protesting this transferal signed by all the property owners within 200 yards of the store. Furnished with a map and all the names, members of the Point Association collected signatures from all but three of the owners. The application was withdrawn before the council meeting. Our lawyer mentioned that he had done a lot of work on this petition, and said the Point Association would oppose any application for a liquor license change in that area. The city solicitor advised us that each application that comes before the Council would have to be handled separately.

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The Point Association was invited to join the League of Rhode Island historical societies, and sent Mrs. MacLeod and Mrs. Bates to their fall meeting at the Squantum Club. The talks by several societies on the work they are planning was unusually interesting, especially the programs they are developing to encourage young people to take an active part in the work, and visit the various houses and museums where guides will explain the history to them, and the artifacts, etc.

Where the primary interests of our association are not historical, this may not be where we belong, but it was a fascinating meeting.

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Mrs. Carr received a letter from Care, Inc., thanking the Teen agers for giving a dance for the benefit of Care, and saying the \$17 will be spent for Food Crusade packages to needy people in India, Dominican Republic, and Hong Kong.

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RESTORATION ON THE POINT

While the Point restoration is not as spectacular as it was at first, it is proceeding apace, and some houses are completed or nearly so, and others are still in a very interesting state. It really takes a special kind of craziness for a house owner to see the walls and ceilings he has been counting on using, come tumbling down at crucial times, and yet go on with the work. Mrs. J. H. Potter, with the house on Thames Street opposite Bridge, had tremendous discouragements, but it is beginning to look beautiful, and let's hope the inside will be easier. The Cozzens house, the big double one at the corner of Warner and Farewell Streets, is nearly finished, and looks most impressive as you walk up Thames Street. The Ackley's house, formerly belonging to William Claggett, on Bridge Street, was another discouraging house, but they had a new chimney put in, the interior all rearranged, and did much of the work themselves. Their four boys are a great help - the young ones especially enjoy throwing rubbish out the windows. Mr. Reynolds took down an old Tripp house in Providence, moved it to Newport, and has reassembled it on the former Feltham lot on Washington Street. He and all his family come down every possible week end to work on it. Dr. Frucht's house on the southwest corner of Willow and Second Streets looked hopeless, but already new clapboards and fresh paint have changed the whole outlook. The house west of the Potter School on Elm Street has been restored by the Fentons, and they have moved in. The Whitleys' house on Elm Street once more has its entrance on the side, where a beautiful doorway is in place. The inside still needs a terrific amount of work to show off its beauty. Mr. Alexander Nesbit has transformed the house at the northeast corner of Elm and Third Streets, where Fran Chase used to live, into a most attractive studio.

This is just a few of the houses that are being worked on now, and in the spring there will be many more to report, as several have changed owners lately. We shall have another report in April.

DUES !

Here we go about membership again!

We had the best year yet last year, and are getting new members all the time - BUT - those dollar renewals come in very slowly. The off island members are nearly all paid already, sixty of them (lucky for the membership committee, as collecting dues would hardly be a valid reason to go to California), but about 125 local families have forgotten to pay. So if you have a renewal slip in this issue, do please remember your dues, and give the committee an easy New Year. We think \$1 is a real bargain, considering you get for it 4 issues of the Green Light, 4 general meetings, as well as extra events each year. Also we should greatly appreciate all zip code numbers except 02840.

A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR TO EACH ONE OF YOU!

WASHINGTON STREET

Many changes are beginning to take place on the west side of Washington Street, from the Fleet Landing to the Hunter House, and again it brings back memories.

At the end of the Fleet Landing, or New York dock, the fish boats arrived and great activity took place. The fish were unloaded, packed in barrels and stored in the freight house. Every night the New York boat left from here with its cargo of passengers and freight. Many people gathered to watch a bridal couple get a shower of rice or confetti and a rousing send-off; to watch the men truck the fish barrels aboard and to wait for the arrival of the boat-train from Boston with more passengers. We were allowed to stay out until the boat turned around the Green Light, and the broad stern with its many twinkling lights was a beautiful sight. On Sunday an excursion boat arrived from New London. The crowds headed for the beaches, or for the buses or carriages that took them around the Drive. On their return the boys were kept busy selling peanuts, popcorn, post cards, souvenirs and shells. There was always the late arrival just as the gang-plank was being pulled in, and some missed the boat.

Down in this area many things were available. Fresh fish could be bought for a small fee. At the Round House, where the engine unloaded, coal and coke could be obtained, while from the empty freight cars ice and sometimes watermelons or bananas were quickly gathered up.

The Old Colony was a busy place and employed many men and some women. It consisted of many buildings, including boiler repair shops, machine, upholstery, paint, office building, a tall chimney, high black fence and boats tied up to the docks. Mike McLaughlin was the watchman and a terror to the kids. At noon boys and girls brought their father's lunch pails; other men went home to their meal, while others headed for the boarding houses. Keeley's boarding house stood opposite the Old Colony where the junk heap is now. It was a big house with the long center hall-way. Another famous eating place was the Brigg's House, at the corner of Brigg's Wharf and conducted by Mrs. Patrick Devlin. High stone steps lead into a beautiful paneled hall-way with a lovely broad stairway. Through the center of the house was a dark secret stairway. In the long dining room the white covered long table was all set with its old-fashioned cruets. There was an enormous fireplace with a tall black mantel, where two Old English China white Spaniel dogs with gold spots sat. The yard with its cherry tree, and pear trees, extended to the shore line.

Going down the wharf in the evening and on Sunday morning lively games of horse-shoe were held by the young and older men. On the north side of the wharf was a row of fish houses privately owned by Fletcher Lawton and Ned Gladding. Here the fish was unloaded, packed, iced and salted in barrels, covered with burlap and hooped for shipping. In the afternoon the men could be seen mending their nets. A New York boat was always tied up here for repairs and paint jobs. From the bow of the boat the young boys would jump into the shallow water below. An immense coal bin was on the wharf, and from the end fishing was another sport the young enjoyed. Seems, Brigg's Wharf then was a bigger place than it is today.

On both sides of the street were many nice homes and tenement houses. Those on the west side had lovely flower and vegetable gardens that extended to the shore and caught the afternoon sun. There was an alley-way or short-cut to the shore. At the corner of this, Mrs. Maggie Clancy, who was a dressmaker and milliner, ran a small candy shop. The shore curved at Brigg's Wharf and extended to Elm Street pier. There were no play-grounds or swimming instructors -- and there were few drownings or accidents. This area was our play-ground, which was kept clean by an older group. The shore was raked, old dry seaweed and driftwood burned, tin cans and glass collected and dumped in deeper water. At the corner of the pier and the Hunter House grounds, we called Sandy Bottom, where we swam and caught the waves from the Mt. Hope, General, or from the destroyers that tied up at the Torpedo Station piers. Mothers spent pleasant afternoons here while the children went crabbing, wading, swimming, or cooking mussels in tin cans. A few Greek families lived here, so there was always a skiff or rowboat available. Every child could row or sail a boat and could swim. The big

test was to swim either from Brigg's Wharf or Elm Street pier to the Green Light accompanied by a rowboat in case someone tired. While at the shore you gathered up the driftwood to dry, and this you carried home at the end of the day. On Sunday afternoon you could hire a boat for fifteen cents an hour or twenty-five cents for two hours at Gladding's Boat House, where Leo's Tavern is now.

Opposite Bridge Street stood the Wilbur House. This big structure had a wide front door with a long hall that extended through to a rear piazza, and a side front door on the south side. A secret passage was said to run out into the water. There were the lilac trees, picket fence, a big gate that opened into the yard that extended to the shore, and in the center stood the biggest cherry tree. Mr. Edward Dunn of Washington Street lived here when a boy with his family. Other families were Malleys, Tarpey, Shaffell, and Axiotes. Next came the Hunter House, the property of Dr. Storer and once used as a convalescent home and later the St. Joseph's Convent.

Elm Street pier was a dignified place for the older people. Along the fence of the Hunter House was a long bench, where the older men gathered, smoked their pipes and swapped old tales. After supper, the women, with their white aprons on, strolled down and each family seemed to occupy their own favorite seat, enjoyed the sea air and watched the many Navy boats go by.

The streets were kept clean by the old men of the highway department, who dug up every weed, and there was little traffic. Many games were played at the corner of Bridge and Washington Street, and I'm sure the street light was brighter. It is almost unbelievable so much enjoyment could be derived from hop-scotch, jacks, marbles, jump-rope, hoop rolling, top spinning, kite flying, stilt walking and roller skating (wooden rollers), hide and seek and many more. During the winter the shore still held its attraction, the kids jumped from one cake of ice to another, or swung from the heavy ropes that tied the New York boat to the dock. In the evening you studied, read, sewed or did embroidery and sometimes you made fudge or molasses candy. There was always a Valentine box in your school room. You made Valentines from wallpaper, and the paste with flour and water to stick on hearts, flowers and cupids that came in sheets bought at Margie Steven's, where you could buy a special lacy one for a few cents. Your classroom also held sleigh rides, which were much enjoyed. After school you had chores to do, such as clean lamp chimneys, run to the store to do errands, and most important see that the coal and wood was in.

Another active place on the Point was St. John's Guild hall, which was more like a Community Center, for the children of the neighborhood. On Saturdays a sewing class was held with the two old Misses Wilbur in charge assisted by young Mrs. Wilbur, who taught embroidery. After school, gym classes and basketball was held. At the end of the season a big entertainment was held with all the neighborhood children performing.

Come Easter Sunday we watched for a black covered bus and when we spied it we ran so fast up to Battery Park. Here, people gathered on the Blue Rocks and around the rail to watch the colored people get baptized. The minister stood in the cold water and held an iron staff, and the people in white robes were ducked under the water, and came out crying and shivering while the gathering sang, "We Shall Meet By The River."

After school closed in June, the big attraction was the CIRCUS. You retired early and all spare beds were filled with your friends, who were awake half the night talking and listening for the first squeak of the circus trains. Everyone was up before dawn and out to see the animals unloaded. The boys worked at the circus lot feeding and watering the animals to earn a pass to the Big Show. At 11 A.M. we went to Washington Square to see the big parade -- and what a thrill. It was a big event and Mothers always bought peanuts and a big bag of bananas for the children. In the evening we went to Long Wharf where torches lighted the way from the tracks to the circus lot and again we watched the performers, caged animals and elephants load up.

Some memories of home life were: early in the morning windows thrown open and bed clothes put to air; carpets and rugs put out in the yard to be beat and swept; stairs to be swept and washed; clothes to be taken from the line and ironed with the old heating irons on the coal stove; wonderful smells of ginger bread, steamed apple or blueberry slump, bread or rice pudding and always cups of custard; fresh baked bread and on Saturday without fail the old stove was again put to use baking beans.

One other thing we always had -- that was a Christmas Tree. It was trimmed with colored ornaments, bright tinsel, and colored twisted candles held in clip-on holders. Carols were sung, hot cocoa and cookies served, and your friends departed with an orange and a box of Christmas candies.

World War I came along and the peace and quiet gone as well as this way of living. Some of the old Point family names were: Allen, Albro, Bachellor, Carr, Dennis, James, Gladding, Lawton and many others. Walking up Washington Street you passed the Southwick house, Curry's, Luth's, Wilbur's, Dr. Storer's, and Smith's. Opposite St. John's Church and rectory with the beautiful elm trees on both sides of the street, Miss Esther Smith, who rode her bicycle or walked with an armful of wild flowers, resided in the "Tom Robinson" house. There was Covell's, the Finch house, Angell's, Dyer's, Chaplain Nichol's, Miss Paul's, Horan's, Norman's, and Belnap's with its wisteria covered veranda. St. John's Minister resided at The Faisneau House, which was attached to the fashionable Bachellor's boarding house. This house had a big open veranda with a border of nasturtiums. You ran fast when you came to Stella Maris, which was vacant and regarded as a haunted house. Finally, there was Battery Park with its band stand in the center, near the flag pole, where concerts were enjoyed on summer evenings.

Carrie Ericson

Correction -- Dr. Ezra Stiles' map of Newport was of course 1758 and not 1785 as printed in the July issue of The Green Light.

THE LIBERTY TREE - Part 2

In the triangular plot at the junction of Thames and Farewell Streets, the second Liberty Tree had taken firm root in the free soil of America. Since the evening of April 23, 1783, when 12 stalwart Newport men had brought it from Irish Farm near the Two Mile Corner and planted it on the site of the first Liberty Tree, it had stood at the head of Thames Street as beloved as its predecessor. The same trustees, who had guarded the original Liberty Tree now continued guardianship to this one.

As the years passed, these patriotic trustees went on to their heavenly reward and as each one passed away, another was chosen to succeed him by legal deeds duly recorded in the Land Evidence Books of Newport. On October 4, 1800, the surviving original trustees, William Ellery and Robert Crook, did appoint John Avery Collins and Christopher Fowler "in the room of" John Collins and Samuel Fowler, deceased. Thus we see that the proud guardianship, whenever possible passed to their sons. On August 11, 1818, the survivors appointed William Crook in the place of Robert Crook, deceased. On February 15, 1820, the last surviving trustee of the first Liberty Tree, William Ellery, died in his home, which stood facing the Liberty Tree lot (where Gamage's store and the billboard now stand). It was a low square Colonial house of three stories with four rooms on each floor. In the northeast chamber on the second floor, the Honorable William Ellery passed away. He was beloved and respected by all who knew him. William Ellery was a native of Newport, born on December 22, 1727. He graduated from Harvard in 1747 and for a time was a merchant. In 1770, being admitted to the bar, he entered into the practice of law. His first Public Office was as Naval Officer of the Colony in 1769, and later he served as Clerk of the General Assembly. In 1776, having been elected delegate to the Continental Congress to succeed Samuel Ward, who had died, Ellery entered upon his duties in Philadelphia just in time to sign his name to the most celebrated of all historical documents, the Declaration of Independence. Until the end of his life, William Ellery continued to hold positions of trust in the State and Nation.

On August 2, 1820, William Ellery was appointed trustee of the Liberty Tree in the room of his respected father, William Ellery, Esquire, deceased.

On May 25, 1830, Benjamin Hazard and Samuel Fowler Gardner were appointed trustees in the room and place of Christopher Fowler and William Crook, deceased,

John F. Townsend was appointed trustee in place of John Avery Collins, deceased on June 20, 1834, and on April 26, 1849, John F. Townsend in turn appointed William A. Clarke, William Gardner and George W. Ellery in the places of William Ellery, Samuel Fowler Gardner and Benjamin Hazard, all deceased. This was the last conveyance of the deed of the Liberty Tree.

George W. Ellery, son of Hon. William Ellery, wrote during the later years of his life that on one festive occasion the Liberty Tree was illuminated by 356 glass lanterns, one for each day in the year. At the time of this memoir, G. Stevens observed that one of these lanterns was then in the possession of Mrs. Stevens at the Ellery house, near the head of Thames Street. This lantern was about 15 inches high and 9 inches wide and contained, as did all the rest, 3 sockets for 3 candles, so there were at that time no less than 1095 candles used in the illumination. Mr. Ellery continued, "At the firing of the salute on the occasion of the anniversary of the repeal of the Stamp Act, Mr. Carl Wurzel of this city lost a leg." The story of the planting of the second Liberty Tree was substantiated by the handwriting of Hon. William Ellery as follows: "The present Liberty Tree was set out April 23, 1783, by private persons, without consulting the grantees of the land on which it stands. This information was given by John Williams, keeper of the Marine, December 24, 1819." John Williams was one of the participants in that patriotic escapade.

In the jubilee year 1826, the grand celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the American Independence, the Liberty Tree came in for a share of the honors of the glorious Fourth of July. From this time until 1850 the tree was decorated on gala days and honors paid to it.

It may be noted, however, that it was the scene of a very different affair in June of 1833, when Rev. Ephraim Avery of Bristol, R. I., was acquitted of the charge of murdering Sarah Cornell, whose body was found hanging in the barn at the Richard Durfee Farm in Tiverton, late in December of 1832. The long and stormy trial, which was held in Newport, lasted four weeks and the jury, after long deliberation, brought in a verdict of not guilty but certain irate citizens expressed their own verdict by hanging an effigy of Avery on the Liberty Tree. Rev. Avery returned to his pastorate in Bristol.

The years passed quietly by. The old tree, which had withstood the lightning stroke, the winter blasts and the Great Storm of September 23, 1815, was now falling prey to the ravages of time and decay. By 1849 it was evident to all that the venerable Liberty Tree was indeed dying, but at the least suggestion of destroying it, a legion of Newporters rose indignantly to defend it. On one occasion, a Frenchman, who resided at the north end of Thames Street came very near to losing his life for having cut off some of the branches of the tree which obstructed his view, thus incurring the rage of several self-appointed protectors. -- And so we leave the Liberty Tree for the time being, in the care of the trustees and a legion of defenders.

Louise C. Sherman

(To be continued)