

The GREEN

LIGHT



BULLETIN OF THE POINT ASSOCIATION OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

VOL. XIII

JANUARY 1968

No. 1

JANUARY GENERAL MEETING

The January General Membership Meeting will be held on Thursday, January 25th at 8 o'clock at the St. Johns Guild Hall on Poplar Street. Because of the vital interest of the Point in the access roads to the new bridge, three men are going to discuss them, with the help of a large map. They will be: a representative of the State Highway Department, Mr. John Gieb, the new City Planner of Newport, and Mr. David Fenton of the City Council. Each will give a brief talk, and then there will be a question period.

OCTOBER QUARTERLY MEETING

The October Quarterly Meeting of the Point Association of Newport was held on October 26, 1967, at 8 P.M. at St. Johns Guild Hall, with a large and interested number present. The Secretary's report was read and approved, and the Treasurer reported the total assets are \$5,445.64. There was a lively discussion of three major points:

1. The roads leading off the new bridge to the Redevelopment Area.
2. The possibility of having the Point made a national historic landmark.
3. The access road to Goat Island.

Anyone interested in further details can consult the Secretary's records.

The Nominating Committee reported the slate of officers for 1967-1968:

President - Admiral Henry Eccles

2nd Vice President - Mrs. John Howard Benson

Recording Secretary - Mrs. George Weaver

Treasurer - (Pro Tem) Mrs. Francis P. Carr, Jr.

Mr. Harold E. Watson has now consented to be the Treasurer.

Nominating Committee for 1968-1969:

Mrs. John Howard Benson

Mrs. Gordon A. Bates

Miss Ann Hagerty

(Two additional members are chosen by

the Executive Board at their next meeting, and Mrs. Jane Lewellan and Mr. William Fullerton were elected. The President appointed Mr. Fullerton the Chairman of the Committee.)

Presented by the 1967-1968 Nominating Committee:

Mr. William Fullerton, Chairman

Mrs. Walter Whitley

Mrs. William P. Canole

Mrs. Robert Foley

Mrs. John Howard Benson

The business meeting was adjourned.

Professor Norris Hoyt of St. George's School then gave an interesting and illustrated talk on "Sailing Around the Year." Winter was in the Caribbean, spring in the Pacific and San Francisco, summer spent in a Trans-Atlantic crossing to England for the Fastnet races. They covered the same route taken by the original America when she won the Cup from England. He then came back to Newport, and showed some of the Cup Races this last fall. Everyone enjoyed the pictures, and Mr. Hoyt makes racing sound so easy.

Refreshments were served by Mrs. James.

CHRISTMAS ON THE POINT

Our Christmas party was the most successful yet, and nearly 200 people must

have come. The Sunday before Christmas suits everyone better, and by having our tree planted in a protected place in St. John's yard, no one gets quite so cold, though hot cocoa does taste very good. After the lighting of the tree, the carols, with Arthur Newell and King Covell directing, were sung with great enthusiasm and feeling. Everyone adjourned to the Guild Hall, and had cocoa and Christmas cake, and every bit of food vanished. We were especially glad to see all the children who came, and how well they behaved.

On Christmas Eve a large group went carolling, and it was good to see so many young enthusiasts. We sang the old favorite carols that everyone loves, and by singing only two at each house, and usually outside, we went to many more houses on Washington, Second, and Third Streets, stopping to serenade several new friends, as well as the old. The Eccles' hot punch tasted delicious, and warmed us so that we started off with renewed vigor - it really sounded beautiful. (That, of course, is an unprejudiced opinion.) Art Newell and King Covell can certainly inspire people to sing, and Elbert Holbrook with his recorder was a great support. It is wonderful to hear all ages singing away with such joy, and next year we should be even better.

The decorations all over the Point, with many of the newly restored houses added to our old faithfuls, were beautiful.

The third musical event at Christmas was King Covell's carolling party, with the organ and the recorder helping the singing. It was the worst night of the vacation, snow, and then driving rain, so that not so many as usual were able to come. But the brave made up in volume and enthusiasm, and it was great fun. We sang many of the less familiar carols as well as the old faithfuls. Mary Newell had made platters of delicious sandwiches and cookies, and with a nice strong punch, it was most festive, and so we went back and sang a lot more.

THE PITTS HEAD TAVERN

Captain and Mrs. Rommel, who just bought the Pitts Head Tavern, gave a before restoration party - no heat, no lights, luckily on a warm day, but no one noticed any lack. It was disconcerting to see the enormous hole in the center where the chimney once was, but to replace the chimney is their first project, and the rest will follow in time. The house has a surprising lot of things left in it, and will be beautiful.

THE BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE

Mr. Fullerton is beginning to think of the Spring planting. Any Pointers who would like a tree or shrub for their yards, should discuss it with him soon. Although our budget is limited, it is sufficient to get a good number of trees, and Spring is not that far away.

NOTICE! The Historical Society has five beds to sell, and they at once thought of all the houses being restored all over Newport, especially on the Point. Two are Victorian spool beds, two are maple and older, and one, also older, is a child's bed. Call the Historical Society at 846-0813.

The Advisory Committee, after being dormant for 21 months, is now coming to life, and the Point is represented on it by Mr. and Mrs. Richard Weiss. The alternates are: Mrs. Lewellan and Miss Ann Canole.

The Improvement Committee of West Broadway with the New Visions for Newport has finally opened the Kingston Kiddie Corner, dedicated on January 7th.

OLD HOUSES IN NEW SURROUNDINGS - HOUSE MOVING ON THE POINT

The influx of new owners to a number of old colonial houses on the Point has tempted me to rewrite a paper I read about ten years ago at a meeting of the Point Association.

Many of these new owners have no conception of the New Englander, especially those individuals of the "Pint", as it was called, who were in more ways than one, a class unto themselves. These former owners were an independent people, self sufficient, proud and unique. Many of them had been former members of crews of whalers, privateers, clipper ships, and a few had actually participated in some small acts of piracy. Others had survived the rigors of the California gold rush. They were a friendly people aiding one another in times of misfortune. Wives were always willing to aid on short notice, or a fisherman who lived a few houses down the street would silently hang a large fish or a freshly caught string of lobsters on the back door knob of some ailing friend.

Now doomed to "putter around", their lives became humdrum, occasionally relieved from this monotony by summer fishing or lobstering. Others hired out their catboats to summer tourists, while others attended the grounds and gardens of various estates in the area. Most of the older men sat around the shore and told stories. Incredible as some of these stories sounded, it was a shame that no one took the time to record them, for many historic facts have been lost through such neglect.

Our forefathers had a peculiar knack of securing information and purchasing old colonial homes, which, for various reasons, known only to the town planners, had to be relocated or demolished. Others found it more practical to move their homes, furniture and wherewithal to a new location, and it is to these various movings I would like to direct your attention.

The Mumford map of 1712 shows no property owners, only the streets of Newport. The map made by the Reverend Dr. Ezra Stiles shows the size of houses, that is, whether the house was one or two storeys, or whether it had one or two chimneys. Again the property owners are not shown. The Blaskowitz map of 1776 shows us many unusually named streets, but it is likewise useless in finding property owners. Not until the Drippe's map of 1859 was there an attempt to place owners' names on some of the plots. It is to the Atlas of 1876 that we have to go to find who owned property. This does not mean that these early maps are completely useless, for they show the growth of the town from its beginning.

Starting at the south end of Washington Street, it is almost an impossible task to know what stood below Marsh Street. So many houses and buildings have been either demolished or moved from both sides of the street that the puzzle is insoluble.

Mrs. Sarah Kendall, the widow of Isaac Kendall, a New York merchant and philanthropist, was one of the earliest known persons to have moved a number of houses in the Point area. She bought the property on the southeast corner of Elm and Washington, where she resided. Eventually she purchased all the property on the south side of Elm Street, except the lot on the southwest corner of Second and Elm Streets. She also purchased the property on the east side of Washington between Elm and Poplar Streets, and obtained a tract of land just south of the Fowler-Tourgee house on Second Street. Here she began a game of checkers, so to speak, with various houses on or near her property.

Her first move was to place the Rivera-Minturn house back on the lot, swinging it endwise to Washington Street. She then moved the Philips' house from the southeast corner of Poplar and Washington Streets and placed it on the south side of Elm Street next west to the corner of Second Street. The house that formerly stood to the east of her house, was put on the corner where the Philips house formerly stood. She next moved a small house that stood south of her house on the east side of Washington Street, to the northeast corner of Elm and Washington. She then built a large addition to it, thus making the large house that is still standing on that corner. At one time the four corners of Elm and Washington Streets were called the "Shore Cottages." South of the Tourgee house on Second Street, stands an old house with a glass piazza. This house is supposed to have been moved from farther up Second Street near Willow, while the house in the rear of this dwelling stood on some unknown location on Elm Street. This, so far as is known, was Mrs. Kendall's alteration on the Point.

At one time the house now in the rear of the Sweet-Lord house, 39 Second Street, came from the southeast corner of DuFrey's lot, now known as Katzman Place off Third Street.

Washington Street was, at one time, blocked by a large house that stood just north of the present Bethune House. It was moved back into the Cenacle property when it was decided to extend Washington Street. It has again been recently moved, and is now incorporated into the Cenacle buildings, standing on Battery Street.

On the property now occupied by Battery Park stood several houses. One, belonging to Daniel Austin, was moved from this area to some unknown location. It is quite possible that this old house is still standing, unknown, on the Point. Mrs. Mary Wing's house was taken over and built into the fortification but was burned by the British during their occupation of the Island. The General Assembly of 1786 paid Mrs. Wing thirty pounds for the loss of her house.

One of the French engineering officers that was here during the Revolution was Major Louis Tousard. He was placed in charge of strengthening the fortifications of the Island, the North Battery, as the park was then called, among them. Much of the stone work that we see today at the park was constructed under the direction of this distinguished officer. He was placed in command of the left wing of Sullivan's army at the battle of Rhode Island, and during this engagement, his right arm was so shattered by a cannon ball that amputation was necessary. He was also instrumental in presenting to the town a number of Lombardy poplars, which were planted around Washington Square (Eisenhower Park) after this property was levelled off to be used as a park.

Across the street from Battery Park stood a small house which was used in the early days as a tavern. It was called "the Butterfly" and was moved from this location to a street off lower Thames Street.

At one time, in the memory of the old Pointers, the elite boarding house known as "the Faisneau" occupied the northeast corner of Washington and Chestnut Streets. This boarding house was attached to the old Topham-Bigelow house, and was built by Mrs. Batcheller, a granddaughter of Etienne Faisneau, a Frenchman who came to Newport with (Count) William Vernon. When the boarding house was torn down, the old Topham house was moved to the northeast corner of Washington and Bridge Streets, where it still stands.

On the southeast corner of Washington and Chestnut Streets stood a large house once known as the Paul house. In later years this house was moved to the northwest corner of Washington and Cherry Streets where it still stands. Just below the site of the Paul house was the foundation of a house that once belonged to the Goddard family. This house furnished quarters to several British officers, and was one of the many that was demolished by them during their occupation of the Island.

The Southwick house on the southeast corner of Walnut and Washington Street was built about fifteen years prior to the Revolution. It was greatly altered by Mr. Edward Angel of Providence, a former owner. It was here that Solomon Southwick, the editor of the Newport Mercury, once resided. Another Southwick house stood on the north side of Walnut Street about half way between Second and Washington Street. This building was moved to the northeast side of Bridge Street just west of the Hannah Robinson house. The little house that had formerly stood out to the street was pushed back to the rear of the lot to make room for the larger house. Recently the house in the rear was moved, and is now standing to the east of the Robinson house. A large lumber shed that formerly stood on the north side of Bridge Street, close to the railroad tracks, was moved to the southwest side of the tracks, and is still being used as a lumber shed.

Just south of the Finch-Brownell house on the west side of Washington Street stood the Audinet house, that was moved to the northwest corner of Guerne Court and Cherry Street. This house was recently demolished. The Goddard house and workshop stood next on Washington Street. These two houses were moved, the main house to 81 Second Street, and the workshop, now demolished, to Smith Court off Poplar Street. Just across the street at the northeast corner of Willow and Washington, stood an old house once owned by James Townsend. This residence was moved to the south side of Walnut Street, west of Martin's liquor store.

The St. John's rectory once stood out to the corner of Poplar and Washington Streets. This old dwelling was pushed back to its present location and greatly altered

both inside and out. The carved pineapple doorway once stood on the west side of the Hunter House.

To the east of the present location of the Topham house on Bridge Street stood at one time a large house known as the Medical Center. This term was applied to the house when it stood on or near the southeast corner of Touro and Thames Street. This large tract of land was once the inheritance of Walter Clarke, a son of Governor Jeremy Clarke. Walter Clarke's daughter Hannah married Thomas Rodman, who at one time, was the owner of this early mansion. On its original site it served as a private dwelling for many years, until it began to deteriorate, and was converted from a dwelling house to offices for a number of celebrated physicians. Among these men were Dr. Isaac Center, who was with Benedict Arnold at Quebec, Dr. William Hunter, the noted Scotch physician and anatomist, and many others. Another house that was moved from the Thames and Touro Street area was a Clarke house. This old house was moved to the south side of Elm Street, near Cross. The daybook of Mr. Isaac Gould, another of the many descendants of Walter Clarke, states "February 1st, 1853 - began moving 70 Thames Street." The daybook further states that the dining room was moved on the 11th and the 14th of February, and placed on the same lot. Recently, when this house was demolished, the two sections mentioned were plainly visible. The two dwellings standing on the southwest corner of Cross and Elm were converted from city barns.

To clear off a lot of land on Farewell Street to make room for a low rent housing project, a number of houses were moved. Three of these are now located near the corners of Elm and Cross, while the fourth now stands at the corner of Bridge and Third Streets.

The most recent addition to the Point is the celebrated "Pitts Head Tavern." It once stood on Washington Square on the present site of the Plantations Bank.

The Barker house on the north side of Elm Street was moved from the west side of the lot, turned around and placed on the east side of the same lot. It is unknown who moved this house. A deed dated 1719 states that Nathaniel Sheffield gave one half, the west side, to his son James. The deed does not mention what he did with the east half. It is quite possible that this house so divided, was the Barker house. At one time it belonged to Dr. Theodore Steele; it was given to him by Mrs. Sanford for taking care of her husband. Mrs. Sanford built, and for many years occupied the present William K. Covell house.

Mathias Petzka moved the Lady Southwick house from lower Washington Street to its present location at 77 Third Street.

I can remember the barn where my father and his brother started the express business now known as Manuel Brothers. This barn faced Second Street, being on the southeast corner of Pine. It was later purchased, moved back on the lot, and reconstructed into a cottage now 6 Pine Street. My father and his brother had moved to a stable that stood in the rear of the Old Ladies Home. This building they bought and moved to its present location on the north side of Cherry Street and the railroad tracks.

R. L. Maitland once owned a large tract of land that extended north from Cypress Street nearly to the Training Station Road. When the Government decided to expand their property in Newport, they purchased his property. His Victorian dwelling house was moved from the vicinity of the present Naval Hospital to a lot on the northeast corner of Sycamore and Bayside Avenue. It was reconstructed into apartments, and was recently demolished to make room for the approaches to the Newport Jamestown bridge. The house facing Washington extension now owned by Mr. Robert Covell was moved from the south side of Willow Street, rear of St. John's church, to its present location.

An old house that once stood on the northwest corner of Second and Walnut Streets was purchased by Arthur Leslie Greene, and moved to Training Station Road. Mr. Greene also purchased the land on the north side of Training Station Road, once known as Cloyne School. He caused to be built several new houses on the south side of the road, incorporating into these houses many fine colonial fireplaces and panelling, which were taken from various demolished colonial houses. Mr. Greene purchased colonial architectural objects and sold them throughout the United States. Through his efforts, one of Newport's colonial doorways is now displayed in the city museum in St. Louis, Missouri. This doorway formerly stood in some unknown house on Mary Street.

It would be an impossibility to locate every old house that has been moved through the years, and these are only a few. The history of Newport between 1870 - 1900 was a period of house moving not restricted to the Point alone, but throughout the whole town. Even water presented no obstacle, as the "Bay Voyage" now standing in Jamestown, Rhode Island, once stood in Portsmouth, Rhode Island. One could spend a great amount of time in attempting to locate some of the homes of our ancestors.

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Let's all work the year around to keep the Point clean and beautiful. Try
to teach children to respect the trees, and to pick up paper, not throw it down.

Faint, mostly illegible text, possibly bleed-through from the reverse side of the page. Some words like "ASSOCIATION" and "NEWPORT" are faintly visible.



THE GREEN LIGHT
THE POINT ASSOCIATION
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Jan 68