The GREEN LIGHT

Bulletin of The Point Association of Newport, Rhode Island

WINTER 1998 - 99

Christmas at 78 Washington Street by Edith Ballinger Price
MISSION STATEMENT—The Point Association is a group of neighbors working together to improve the quality of life in our neighborhood by: getting to know each other • preserving our historic heritage • maintaining the Point's residential character • beautifying our parks, streets, and piers • promoting public policies that strengthen all of Newport's neighborhoods

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Copies of the Green Light may be purchased for $1.00 at the following stores:
Bucci's Convenience Store — Poplar and Thames Streets
Aidinoff's Liquor and Gourmet Shop — Warner Street
The Walnut Market — Third and Walnut Streets

Front Cover: post card courtesy of Jane MacLeod Walsh
Art Work by Dorothy Sanschagrin

Board meetings are scheduled for the first Monday of the month, 7:00 p.m. at St. John's Guild Hall and are open to Association members. If you have a concern that you would like the board to address, please call Coles prior to the meeting.
Dear Neighbors,

We are lucky to have eight public parks on the Point.

Most are small with specific uses. Storer, Battery, and Martins parks offer wonderful vistas of the bay, the bridge, and sunsets. The Cardines Field Playlot serves both our neighborhood children and children of baseball fans. Arnold and Ellery parks both provide a neighborhood oasis and a place to sit in the sun. An unnamed park south of Marsh Street is an effective buffer between residential and commercial uses.

Our largest park is Hunter Playfield - north of Van Zandt Avenue by the rail tracks. It is our most diverse park, with a softball field, a basketball hoop, two tennis courts, children’s play equipment, and, this fall, a soccer field. Until recently Hunter was also our most neglected park.

Now, the city is doing a great job improving and maintaining Hunter Playfield. There is a new softball backstop and a new clay infield. The tennis courts have been repaved. Most recently the city has installed a marvelous children’s play area. (The equipment has been tested and approved by my four year-old granddaughter.) Last year the Point Association purchased trees which were planted by the city, and we plan to purchase three more trees this year.

We have been asked by the city to help provide benches and a picnic table between the play equipment and the tennis courts. We need to respond as enthusiastically as we did when asked to help with our other parks. The benches and picnic table are opportunities for memorial gifts, as was done with great success in both Storer and Battery parks. These memorials are a caring and useful way to honor a loved one. We already have received a gift of one bench. If you would like to help, call me at 849-5659.
Letter to the Editor

I enjoyed the article entitled - "Park Bench Philosophers" (the Green Light, Fall, 1998) - immensely, as my father, John G. Bradfield, used to go down to Cherry Street after supper every night. We lived on the corner of Cherry and Third and my father worked for Manuel Bros. 65 years or so.

I got together with Scott Wheeler, the tree warden for Newport, to plant a tree in that section. The city was selling them for $75 and the Point Association agreed to pay $25 (which I appreciated).

It was planted in memory of my father who spent many hours down there.

— Gil Bradfield

"No Parking Either Side"

"No Parking Either Side" signs erected by the Newport Traffic Engineering Department on the Willow Street and Poplar Street driftways resulted in a flurry of letters to The Newport Daily News this Fall from Newport residents who have boats on nearby moorings.

In some cases, the letter writers directed their wrath at the Point and its "elitist" residents, unaware perhaps that neither the Point Association nor residents of the Point had anything to do with erection of the signs. That was entirely a City decision.

Association officers have spoken with several of the letter writers to clarify the situation and to lend support to their contention that the signs should be removed.

— Don Derry

Adventure Club News

The Adventure Club at Battery Park on Halloween.

Battery Park News

Two new benches have been installed at the Battery Park waterfront. Joy and Ian Scott donated a bench in honor of their dog Willie. Debra Lynch donated the other bench in memory of Brian T. Lynch.

A disposable doggie waste bag station provided for the park has made a big difference in keeping the park cleaner for all to enjoy.

— Beverly Adler

Whatever happened to History and Archives?

A planning/organizational meeting was held on Thursday, November 19th. The next meeting will be January 14th, 3:30 pm at Nancy Espersen’s, 27 Walnut Street (846-2907). There is a lot to be done to organize, document and discover what is in our collection. Sound like something you would be interested in?
Point Association Annual Meeting

Dr. Dan Snydacker, Executive Director of the Newport Historical Society, delivered an interesting and informative talk at The Point Association's Annual Meeting on a unique "self-guided walking tour" program currently being implemented by the Hill Association.

The program features the strategic placement of informative sidewalk signs at various locations through the Hill neighborhood. The signs, modeled after those used by the National Park Service, contain illustrations and descriptive text of five-to-six historic homes and other properties within view of each sign, and enable visitors to "guide themselves through an instructional tour of the historic neighborhoods," Snydacker said.

The program was "driven by the Hill Association," Snydacker said. "Our role was as facilitator to help with the design and procurement of the signs, to secure corporate funding to pay for the program, and to assist the Hill Association in deciding how many signs should be involved, where they should be placed, and what properties they should feature."

"Similar programs are already in place in other communities throughout the country, and have proven to be a wonderful vehicle for increasing awareness of both residents and outsiders to the history and architectural treasures of the neighborhood," Snydacker said.

"We also believe this program will encourage visitors to park their cars at the Gateway Center and explore the Hill's hidden treasures on foot," he said.

Six of the signs are currently in place on the Hill, with an additional 20 to be installed now that sponsorship funding has been received from the Bank of Newport, Rockport Shoes, the Viking Hotel, Mill Street Inn, Vanderbilt Hall, and the National Endowment for Historic Preservation. The 26 signs will feature 125 historic properties on the Hill.

Snydacker showed Point residents a mockup of one of the signs, which are attractively designed, constructed of channel aluminum legs with coated paint, and graphics which are laser printed and imbedded in fiberglass for ease of maintenance. Each sign measures 30 inches wide by 20 inches high.

The Point Association Board is exploring the feasibility of implementing a similar self-guided walking tour program on the Point, and has established a committee to investigate the program further. Anne Bidstrup is Chair (849-1354).

Members of the Point Association unanimously voted at the Annual Meeting in October to extend the terms of Coles Mallory, president, Anne Bidstrup, 2nd vice president, and Loretta Goldrick, corresponding secretary, until the Spring Membership Meeting in April 1999 when a special election will be held.

The nominating committee, made up of Bryan Babcock, Nancy Espersen, Bob Peck, Suzanne Varisco and chaired by Mary Lynn Rooke, will be meeting to identify and recruit potential candidates for a slate of officers to be submitted at the April meeting.

Continuing to serve their terms until the Annual Meeting in October 1999 are: Mike Cullen, 1st vice president, Suzanne Varisco, recording secretary, and Art Gudikunst, treasurer.
Holiday Highlights

For over twenty years *Christmas in Newport* has filled the December calendar with special events. For many the most memorable have been the three days following Christmas when each day different houses are open in the early evening for candlelight tours. Being a host or hostess means your assignment is at one house but the rest are yours to enjoy. Vance Gatchell (848-7017) will be happy to hear that you’d like to volunteer for this delightful duty.

Christmas Lights on the Water

Almost all boats have left the harbor by this time of year but some will return for a new holiday event, a boat parade on Saturday, December 5th, starting at 5:30 p.m. A brisk walk down to Long Wharf or Goat Island will put you in a spot for good viewing as the boats with holiday lights and other decorations circle the harbor.

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**OPENING NIGHT**

*Newport's New Year's Eve Arts Celebration*

Beginning at dusk stroll from the Colony House to the Redwood Library and happen upon

*Musicians ~ Actors ~ Artist's performing in magical settings!*

Celebrate the dawning of the New Year by enjoying the best Newport’s cultural community has to offer!

**FIREWORKS over the harbor at 9:15!**

**Buy a Button.* Join the Fun!**

*Buttons cost $5.00, children 6 and younger are free.
Opening Night '99 is sponsored by the Newport Cultural Commission.
All proceeds fund the Chatty Memorial Youth Scholarship Program.

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Mark Your Calendars for The Point Holiday Party

On Sunday, December 13th at 4 p.m., Point residents are invited to gather at St. John’s Guild Hall for the annual Holiday Party and Cookie Exchange. Friends of all ages, denominations, and cultural traditions are welcome.

As always, those wishing to participate in the cookie exchange are asked to bake their favorite holiday cookies and package each dozen in a separate bag to add to the "swap" table. You will go home with a variety of cookies equal to the number that you came with to exchange. That’s all there is to it … except, we encourage you to bring a plate of your treats for all to sample during the party!

This year we hope to have musical entertainment to add to the merriment of the melodious Point voices as they fill the hall with songs of the season!

To find out more about this event, please contact Peggy Comfort, 847-3261 or Beth Cullen, 848-2945. Volunteers are needed to make refreshments, play an instrument, tell a special story, and do a dance…. Whatever talent you can offer! Come share the fun.

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Newport Dinner Train

The Newport Dinner Train will entertain December passengers with a rollicking old-fashioned holiday cabaret show weekends through December 19th. For additional information contact Elaine Chapman, Sales Director, 841-8700.
Walnut Street in September

There are two walnut trees on Walnut Street. The one in front of my house is about a foot from the street, growing out of the sidewalk. I have lived in this house for a year, in the last block of "Upper Walnut Street" where it makes a U-turn at the train tracks.

Walnut trees are messy trees. Their leaves and nuts fall from the end of July right into October leaving a crunchy topping on the sidewalk and street. The walnut tree introduced me to a New England habit of cultivating gardens – Neatness. I first noticed it because of the way bushes, especially hedge bushes, are clipped. They are often made into some version of a geometric shape, sometimes with squared edges, but always with a highly disciplined surface. With the walnut trees there were gentle hints from people living around me and one or two pointed examples. So I bought a rake ... a small one.

One of my neighbors has an industrial style push brush, the kind that looks like a large toothbrush with a stick in the middle. Another has a motor-driven gadget that clips weeds from the seams in the sidewalk. I collected the walnut mess with my little rake and dumped it around the trees in the back yard. I do that now, every weekend. And although I understand that I could get a neater effect with a broom, that is not my style. I don't sweep.

"The Mayor of Walnut Street," that's his unofficial title, lives across the street. I like to show him my garden and everyone counts on his wisdom about life and the weather. Last week we were admiring the flowers while he told me about "real" hurricanes and what they were like in the Point. Looking up at the rampant, twenty-foot hedge surrounding my car space, "You're not going to cut that are you?" he asked. I could tell he likes it the way it is. I'm beginning to feel comfortable in this place and I know lots of the yards in the Point are "messy," with exuberant flowers and undisciplined shrubs. They make a nice contrast to the gardens that are swept.

— Isabel Griffith
Dennis House Re-Restored

According to The Architectural Heritage of Newport, Rhode Island, by Antoinette Downing and Vincent Scully, the Dennis house probably was built between 1740 and 1750 by Thomas Grafton, a sailmaker. Grafton began paying quitrents on this lot, number 68 of the first division of Quaker lands on the Point, in 1739. Interestingly, the Quaker records show that Richard Munday, the master builder of Trinity Church, the Colony House, and the Seventh Day Baptist Meeting House, had been paying rent on this lot one year earlier, in 1738. It would be a great leap of faith to say at this point that there is a connection between Munday and the Dennis House, but this little tidbit is enough to warrant further investigation.

By 1770 the house was in the hands of the Dennis family. John Dennis owned it in that year, and Thomas Dennis owned it in 1797. The house originally stood on the Poplar Street sidewalk, but was moved back on the lot by Benjamin Smith, probably about 1876. About that time, Smith retained a young architect, Charles Follen McKim, to design an addition at the rear of the house and remodel parts of the interior in keeping with a new enthusiasm for colonial American motifs.

Part of this project involved moving the staircase from just inside the front door to the left rear corner of the house. The room at the rear was enlarged with a bay window, and a second floor library added over it, part of which overhung, basically, nothing. Through the years the weight of this addition, which had not been properly cantilevered, put enormous strain on the rest of the house. Important bearing beams were twisted and the floor in the corner dropped alarmingly. Also, lack of maintenance on the rest of the house led to rot in the corner posts and sidings. As a result, the house had to be essentially pulled apart and rebuilt, this time with a couple of steel beams and braces and an outside post in the rear to support the library corner. David LaPrey and his crew worked on the job carefully and lovingly, paying as much attention to small details as to the large problems. One lovely surprise they unearthed is an intricately patterned floor, which had been covered with grime and now shines with the colors of six different woods.

One of the most notable features of the Dennis House is its elaborate door surround, a twin of the doorway of the Hunter House that originally faced west, toward the harbor. When the front and rear entries of the Hunter House were widened in the 1870s, the doorway was discarded, but Benjamin Smith salvaged it and attached it to the north entry of the Dennis House. In 1924, under the direction of the architect Norman Isham, the entire door surround was installed at the Poplar Street entrance. According to Jeff Moore, Furniture Conservator of the Preservation Society. The pineapple and the floral decorations were returned to the Hunter House, restored, and installed on the street side. The remaining parts, pediment and pilasters, were duplicated for that house, and the pineapple and floral decoration copied for the Dennis House. So today both houses share identical doorways.

The current restoration is almost complete, and the house looks like itself again.

— Rowan Howard
Membership Chair
Beth Cullen

Welcome
to Our New Members!

Cathy Bertron
Jan and John Hayes
Jukka and Anja Pennala
Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Secrest
Wendy Stapleton
Margot Winger

Holiday Party
Sunday, December 13th - 4 p.m.
S. John's Guild Hall

Come join your neighbors & friends,
young & old alike,
for a gathering of good cheer!

Cookie Exchange*
Musical Entertainment,
Refreshments and More ....

* see cookie exchange details in Holiday Party
  article within this issue

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is the easy, convenient way
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The Green Light ~ Winter 1998-99
On Christmas Eve our family enjoys a meal cooked on the open hearth. So, about noon, my husband starts the fire in our largest fireplace. We have a "tin oven" that has a spit for roasting, and we tie two Cornish game hens at a time to the spit and push the oven up to the fire. Every once in a while the spit is turned to roast the hens evenly. When the first two are done (about 2 hours) they go in a warming oven and we roast more. The hens are served with a salad of greens, orange slices and red grapes, with a sour cream dressing.

The main dish of the evening is a beef stew cooked in two pots hanging on a crane over the fire. I use the usual recipe – browning the meat with onions and garlic first and then adding beef broth, puréed tomatoes and red wine – and let it simmer. Later I add potatoes, carrots, onions, white turnips, and still later sautéed mushrooms and peas. This may be varied and seasoned according to taste.

Our sons are in charge of the corn bread, which is baked in a cast iron pan set on embers pulled from the fire. The pan has a recessed cover so that more embers may be placed on top. They are even successful at producing bread without burned bottoms. This took some practice!

We’ve tried different desserts, including Christmas pudding, which seems too rich after this meal. I always seem to return to a trifle. Not only is it fairly light but it looks so lovely in its bowl.

We always look forward to this wonderful meal and I always admire the cooks from the past who prepared ALL the family meals on the hearth!

Specifics: Marinate the hens overnight in a mixture of 3 Cups raspberries, 1 Cup raspberry vinegar, 1/4 Cup olive oil, 2 bay leaves, 1 TBS thyme, salt and pepper. Heat the berries and vinegar to boiling and boil for 1 minute. Stir in the rest of the ingredients.

Lois Dickison

Use marinade to baste while roasting.

For the salad dressing, use grated orange rind, nutmeg, honey and sour cream to taste.
Washington Street Christmases

I was somewhat surprised when the *Green Light* asked if I'd write a reminiscence about earlier Christmases on the Point. I didn't think I was old enough yet to be writing about "the good old days," but it seems that being born on the Point over half a century ago gives one license to reminisce. I didn't think our Christmases in the 1940s and '50s were much different, except that I have an impression of more snow then - the National Weather Bureau might disagree - and perhaps we took greater delight in smaller things.

Our drafty old house on Washington Street (#78) got colder and colder as the Christmas season approached, and once those wintry winds began to blow off the Bay from the northwest, there was no way to keep really warm in the rooms on the water side of the house. So we just added more and more layers of clothing and spent more time in the south- and east-facing rooms. Nevertheless, my father always put up the fresh, woody-smelling Christmas tree, with great ceremony, in the big curved bay window in the living room, facing Narragansett Bay and the green light, and although it was the breeziest spot in the house the tree usually managed to remain upright, thanks to his sturdy wooden supports.

We always felt the holiday had really begun when, a day or so before Christmas, Aunt Jessie MacLeod (my father's youngest sister) would arrive with the big fragrant red and white striped candy canes, fresh from Edith Logothets' candy shop on Broadway, to hang on the tree. Down from the attic came the boxes of ornaments, and we'd take turns hanging our old favorites. I loved the green glass cucumber, complete with realistic bumps, and the long transparent icicles that twirled and twinkled in the drafts as they reflected the multi-colored lights strung on the tree. Out would come the old French crèche figures, and although the crèche itself was long gone, we carefully arranged the beloved animals and familiar figures around the swaddled baby. Somewhere along the way a wooden donkey had replaced the original one, but we loved him just as much and hardly noticed that he was smaller than the sheep.

A few weeks earlier, the Christmas carol books had come down from their special shelf in the attic and we'd gather periodically around my mother at the piano in the warmer front room, often joined by Bozyan and Gordon aunts and cousins from next door (#80), and if it was a Sunday, Uncle Norman MacLeod's booming bass voice would complete the harmonies. We usually strayed into our favorite Bach chorale books before the sessions were over.

By the time Christmas Eve rolled around, our voices were all primed for the great annual treat that we all looked forward to - caroling with the Covells and Benson's and, later, Aubois' and assorted other helpful voices, up and down Washington Street and to a few houses, such as the Arnolds' complex, on the side streets. Being the youngest in the family, I felt terribly privileged when I finally was deemed old enough to join the carolers instead of staying in with Aunt Jessie to await their arrival.

Bundled up in our warmest coats and mufflers, lanterns in hand, we would assemble next door at the Covell house (#72), where the well-worn carol books would be handed out, with our itinerary and order of
carols taped inside the front cover. Rob and King Covell led the caroling as we stopped at each house and Howard Benson and Nancy Price (Edith Price’s niece, who worked at the John Steven’s shop) accompanied us on their recorders.

We usually had rehearsed earlier at the Covell house, with King at the organ and Virginia (Mrs. Robert Covell) dispensing her famous cocoa and cookies, and Rob schooled us exactingly in our dynamics, tempo and articulation. When it came to “The Holly and the Ivy,” we always had to pronounce “choir” as “queer” (i.e. “sweet singing in the queer”), to rhyme with “the running of the deer” in the previous line. To this day I can’t sing it any other way.

We sang lustily and joyously for our neighbors and they seemed to enjoy it. At the Nina Lynette Home (#87) the ladies (there were no men there in those days) would be lined up on the stairway awaiting our arrival, some already in their bedtime attire. When the Eccles bought the house at 101 Washington St. they instituted the welcome tradition of serving us hot mulled wine or cider.

There was a special feeling of peaceful camaraderie as we strolled along the cold street under the stars, humming, singing, whistling, chatting and playing, and when it snowed it was particularly magical. By the time we were finished, however, we were all glad to get back home and warm our toes by the fire. My sister and I would hang our stockings on the mantelpiece, put a glass of milk and a plate of sugar cookies on the candlestand for Santa, and climb happily into our beds to await the dawn of Christmas Day.

— Jane MacLeod Walsh

Archeologist on the Point

Jim Garman’s adventures as an archeologist have taken him all across the country. In Colorado, he lived in a tent for three months, which, he admits, was not as glamorous as it may seem. He met many people and unearthed many artifacts, or, as he put it, “I dug a lot of holes.”

However, something was missing. Jim realized that his bachelor’s degree would not be enough to advance him beyond the lower rungs on the archeological ladder. He moved to Amherst where he attained a master’s degree in Anthropology from the University of Massachusetts in 1993. But living in western Massachusetts proved that a higher degree was not the only thing missing from Jim’s life.

As fortune would have it, at the same time Jim received his master’s, a job opened at the Public Archeology Laboratory in Pawtucket. Not only is PAL the biggest archeological firm in southern New England, it is also based in Rhode Island. A job at PAL meant that Jim could fill what was really missing from his earlier forays, a desire to return to Aquidneck Island and the Point.

“For an archeologist, just to walk around the Point and imagine what it looked like even 100 years ago is really fun,” Jim said. “I can’t imagine what must be buried in the Point.”

Jim was born in Portsmouth, where his father teaches history at Portsmouth Abbey. His mother is an administrator at Newport Hospital. Jim grew up on the island and attended high school at the Abbey, where he had his father in two classes. Jim said it wasn’t always easy taking his father’s classes, but he always made sure he had his homework done.

After high school, Jim went to Yale. Although he had been surrounded by and interested in history growing up, Jim originally intended to major in comparative literature. As part of the core requirements, Jim had to take a science class. He had difficulty getting into his first couple of choices to fulfill this requirement and ended up in an archeology course. Several years later, in 1987, Jim graduated with a bachelor’s degree in archeology, one of only four students with this major. Something about that one class which he had never intended to take grabbed hold of Jim and hasn’t let go since.

Yale was good to Jim socially as well. He met his wife Eve Sterne in New Haven. They have been married for three years now and live on the Point. Eve is currently working on her dissertation on labor history.

Jim coordinated the archeological dig for the Newport Historical Society at the Friends Meeting House in June. The Historical Society is planning to build the Center for Newport History at the site. The dig took place in order to learn more about the site before construction begins. The Historical Society had discovered that there was evidence of a Quaker burial
ground at the site. PAL was called in to help delineate those boundaries so that the construction would be mindful of the burial ground. Along the way, the dig also turned up an old carriage house that no one knew was there. The archaeologists estimate that the house was built some time in the 18th century. Jim said they also discovered remnants of an early Native American community at the grounds that could date back as far as 5000 to 6000 years, at which time the site was believed to have been on the waterfront.

Jim’s favorite dig was one in downtown Providence at the location of the new Providence Place Mall. PAL was brought in to unearth the remains of the first Rhode Island prison, which was partially torn down in the 1890s. The excavation took place at an open construction site in the middle of downtown Providence. Needless to say, the logistics of coordinating the dig were complicated. But Jim and his crew managed and were able to uncover entire rooms and cells of the old prison. Jim could walk through the cells and really get a sense of what it was like to be in a 19th century prison, which, he admits, was a chilling experience. As a whole, it was a remarkable experience and Jim felt compelled to write his dissertation on the dig.

Jim is very busy at PAL and hopes to venture underneath Newport again in the future. Presently, Jim can be seen digging up his old stomping ground at Portsmouth Abbey’s Carnegie Club. Also, several possible digs in conjunction with the Historical Society are in the discussion stage, including one at the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House. Jim said he also hopes that one day he might be able to help form an archaeological center in Newport that would serve to ascertain more about Newport’s rich history. Jim believes that under our feet as we walk about town there is a gold mine just waiting to be explored.

"Newport is such an exciting place for archeology,” he said. “We’re digging up these bits and pieces of what people left behind unintentionally.”

It is exactly this sense of filling in the holes of history – of finding the details that slipped through the written record – that keeps Jim’s job interesting for him and for the rest of us.

— Brian Comfort

Beautification

The City of Newport has been working with the Point Association on a variety of projects to enhance the beauty and functionality of Hunter Park, including the planting of trees and bulbs and the installation of brand new playground equipment.

The City now is requesting assistance with the purchase of two memorial benches identical to those already installed at Storer Park, two backless benches to face the tennis courts, and a picnic table. In each case, donors may mount a memorial plaque on the item(s) they donate in honor of loved ones.

The wooden benches cost $467, the backless benches cost $191, and the picnic table will cost $406. The engraved bronze plaques cost about $70 each depending upon the lines of text. For additional information, contact Coles Mallory at 849-5659.

Music Hall Café

When Leaving the Point
Come to the Southwest

Music Hall Café offers tastes that no other Newport restaurant can match... fresh seafood, prime meats, creative vegetarian and healthy Mexican dishes prepared with our Southwestern flair.
So pleased was I to be invited to participate in Newport’s recent Waterfront Homes Tour that I forgot to write down the date. This was a “senior moment” that could have had horrific consequences but for the efficiency of the Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation staff. The Waterfront Homes Tour, proceeds to benefit the Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation, was scheduled for Sunday, October 11th. I had confused lighthouses and Columbus, and decided that Monday, Columbus Day, would be the day over 300 people would march through my house.

“300 people?” I asked, in stunned disbelief.

“Maybe more,” replied Charlotte Johnson, Executive Director of the foundation.

“Rope off the rooms,” ordered my son.

“Pack away every precious ornament – maybe even the art work,” advised a friend.

If Arva Bunting hadn’t come the Thursday before to see what I needed for that Sunday tour, rooms would not have been roped but doors would have been locked and the hostess unavailable, brooding happily in her third floor studio – certainly not expecting 300 visitors. Not until Monday, anyway.

However, forewarned (thanks to those keepers of lights everywhere!), we washed the moss off the front steps, the spiders and webs off the kitchen windows. Light bulbs were replaced, and last month’s magazines, still unread, pushed under this month’s periodicals. I changed all my paintings around. Then put them all back again. Just briefly I considered an art and book sale of my work – spread casually on the coffee table perhaps?

300 expected? Hilary Clinton does this every day of the week. Not by herself though. I wasn’t alone either. Flowers arrived – courtesy of the Victorian Rose.

Plastic runners were laid across my living room rugs. John and Rowan Howard, designated “captains” of my house tour, arrived. John did rope off the stairs – this was to be a downstairs tour only. Rowan ensconced herself in a chair by the front door. “They may look into the dining room,” she said, stern as any docent.

I had thought to remain upstairs, in hiding, but I am a glutton for compliments and when I heard the nice things being said about my house, I came down. I sat as unobtrusively as I could at my desk, my back turned to the visitors but listening hard. I can’t say I didn’t feel smug. It isn’t often 300 people compliment my house all in one day!

It wasn’t long before friends passed through – friends I hadn’t seen in too long. That was one of the tour’s highlights, seeing people I had always wanted to spend time with, and here they were – right in my house! Like Rowan and John Howard – near neighbors, we seldom see each other, never lunch together. Which we did, the day of the tour. A good lunch was provided, catered by Kathleen’s.

I was not aware of any discourtesy. As far as I can tell, nobody slipped anything into his or her pocket. The dining room remained pristine. Nobody fell down, or sneaked up, the stairs.

The tour began at 10:00 a.m. It ended at 4:00 p.m. And if 300 visitors passed through my open door, I wasn’t counting. It was all too easy, it was great fun.

— Anita McAndrews

Ed’s note: Anita had other helpers too: Pat Harper, Pam Giroux, Pat Sherman and Suzy Sturmak. Thanks to all.

An ad from the first December issue, 1957, read:

TELEVOICE INFORMATION SERVICE
Free to the public
Daily, 9 a.m. - 9 p.m.
VI 6-3144

Can anyone remember what this was?
The Rotary, etc.

If you think the construction changes already evident at the Newport Mall on Connell Highway are something, hang onto your seat because you ain’t seen nothing yet!

Plans are afoot to eliminate the rotary at the Shell station and replace it with a four-way intersection, including stop lights. Connell Highway running north in front of the new shopping mall will be widened and divided with a landscaped strip, and Connell Highway heading south (passing Newport Computer and the U-Haul Center) also will be divided, landscaped -- and connected directly to Farewell Street, providing Newport motorists with convenient and fast access to the Navy Base, the shopping mall, and Route 114 out of town. They will no longer feel “obligated” to shortcut their way through The Point!

The bridge access road which crosses over Admiral Kalbfus Road west of the Jai Alai fronton will disappear. Park land will be opened up, and a manned parking garage with shuttle service to downtown Newport may be constructed near where the rotary currently sits.

When does all this happen? The long answer is: The Rhode Island Department of Transportation has already allocated funds to finance the feasibility study. RIDOT, the Newport City Council, the Newport County Chamber of Commerce, and the Friends of Newport have plans on paper and will be scheduling public forums to solicit resident opinions.

The short answer: the project may be completed in as little as three years; five at the outside.

Other news: Ground-breaking is due to begin this Fall on a 10 or 12-screen multiplex cinema to be located on what is now excess parking capacity in the southwest corner of the paved Jai Alai parking lot.

At the Newport Mall, West Marine is already in its new building at the south end, with a newly built traffic access into the parking lot from Admiral Kalbfus Road. The laundromat is already in its new building at the north end of the Mall.

Renovations and new construction on the major Mall building proceed like gangbusters. Steel framework is already in place for a restaurant on Connell Highway, across from the pizza place. A second restaurant will be located within the Mall.

Traffic Calming Update

The traffic calming changes instituted in the Point last Spring by the Newport City Council remain in effect. The six-month trial period ended October 1.

Those changes include the installation of stop signs at Second and Bridge streets, and northbound on Washington Street at Van Zandt; no left turns onto either Poplar or Elm from America’s Cup Avenue between 6 and 9 a.m. weekdays; one-way traffic south-bound on Washington Street between Bridge Street and the Causeway; and elimination of the “free” right turn from Washington Street onto the causeway itself.

The objectives of the Traffic Calming Committee – reduction of the volume of traffic on our neighborhood streets and the speed at which it moves – seem to have been achieved.

— Don Dery
Waterfront Update

Preliminary construction work on the Perrotti park intermodal water taxi and ferry facility is getting underway this fall. Revised landscaping and waterside docks and access ramps are expected to be completed by next Spring. Construction of the new harbormaster’s office, observation deck and water taxi ticket booth will continue next summer, with a Fall 1999 completion date.

The driftways which run between Washington Street and Newport Harbor have been in the news a lot lately — not all of it good.

After months of planning, the City finally repaired the Elm Street driftway, which is used by a lot of commercial and recreational boaters and fishermen to launch and/or retrieve their trailered vessels.

The re-paved ramp looks impressive, but it apparently doesn’t work unless it is almost high tide. The water end of the ramp has been raised almost two feet off the bottom, and the angle of the ramp is extremely gradual. Both situations make it virtually impossible to back a vehicle into the water, either to launch or reclaim a boat, without virtually submerging the car or truck itself. Equally difficult is trying to drive the vehicle and trailer back onto dry land.

Writing in The Newport Daily News (Oct. 3), Tom Darby of the City Engineering Division says the problem was that the old ramp was removed and the new one installed during low tides that “were not as low as anticipated.” As a result, the new ramp is 10 inches higher than proposed. While he terms the job a “success,” boaters and fishermen trying to use the new ramp have found different adjectives to describe it.

Ink was hardly dry on the purchase contract signed by the new owners of American Shipyard when they became embroiled in a federal-state and election-year gunfight over hazardous wastes apparently stored on the property by the previous owners.

New England Boatworks of Portsmouth, the new owners, are the shuttlecock in a verbal badminton game between the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, the federal Environmental Protection Agency, Governor Lincoln Almond, and his Democratic challenger Myrth York.

Most of the rhetoric so far has been finger pointing; there’s been little discussion of how, when, or by whom the site will be cleaned up.

RIPTA, the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority, has awarded a $900,000 contract to U.S. Multi-Hull, Inc., of Stamford, CT, to operate a high-speed ferry between Providence and Newport for a trial run of up to 18 months.

The service is expected to begin in June 1999, about the time the intermodal water taxi facility at Perrotti Park is scheduled to become operational.

U.S. Multi-Hull plans to build an 82-foot catamaran (twin-hulled) vessel, which will carry 149 passengers. It will course down Narragansett Bay at speeds of up to 40 knots, completing the round-trip between Providence and Newport twice each weekday morning and evening. The trip is expected to take 30 to 40 minutes and cost from $6 to $9.

The Point Association’s Noise Abatement Committee, chaired by Mike Cullen (848-2945), is studying the proposal to determine the impact such large vessels are likely to have on the Point neighborhood as they dock and leave Perrotti Park.

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U.S. Master Gardeners Tour

On Saturday, September 26th, the Point hosted a garden tour for a group of Master Gardeners who had attended their regional conference in Cromwell, Connecticut. Their “Day in Newport” was organized by Anne Bidstrup as Master Gardener on behalf of the URI Master Gardeners Association. Amy Peck and Susan Powers acted as assistant hostesses.

What is a Master Gardener, you might ask? A Master Gardener, according to Anne, is a person who has been accepted by an accredited school (in Rhode Island, URI Cooperative Extension) for a one-semester course in soils, insects, planting schedules, etc., who has passed the exam at the end of the course and then gone on to complete 50 hours of volunteer work in horticultural areas acceptable to URI (for students in RI and vicinity). That person is then accredited but must complete 20 hours per year to maintain his/her status.

Anne’s group of approximately 85 Master Gardeners from our own and neighboring states visited six very special Point gardens. They were also treated to a brief address by Dr. Dan Snydacker of the Newport Historical Society on Newport’s history as well as interesting architectural features of some of the homes they might see in passing as they toured the Point.

In gratitude for the chance to visit this remarkable area of unusual houses and exceptional gardens, the Northeast Regional Conference will give a donation to the Point Association and gift certificates to the participating Point gardeners.

Clipper Wine and Spirits

After six and a half years on the Point Clipper Wine and Spirits closed its door on Third Street December 2nd. However, it is scheduled to reopen soon after in the Bellevue Shopping Center as Bellevue Wine and Spirits. We thank them for their generous support of Point activities through the years and wish them well in their new location.

The Newport Spa

The Doubletree Islander Hotel recently opened The Newport Spa, a brand new facility offering a variety of comprehensive spa services, including aromatherapy, full-body wraps, massages and beauty care. Doubletree General Manager Mark Fallon says The Newport Spa will offer special discounts to Point residents.
Those of us who remember the old Fire Station No. 2 on the corner of Bridge and Third Streets can hardly bear to look at it now all ramshackle and neglected, filled by a Pacific Oil Company truck. The Fire Station used to be a neighborhood center for all ages, and was always so clean and polished that everything shone, the wooden floor, the walls, the brass. The doors were always open in warm weather, and when not busy, the firemen sat outside in captains chairs. They welcomed visitors, and sometimes even allowed a few children to climb up to the second floor and slide down the pole – there was a rubber mat on the floor to break their fall. In those days, the fire station was one of the voting places, and you can still see the door on Third Street that led to the voting booth. There were three stalls for horses and a boiler room downstairs. Upstairs there were two bedrooms in front, in one of which Fletcher Lawton slept for many years. Then came a big poolroom where the firemen and friends had great games, and a hayloft. The Point Hummers and the Point Social Club used to meet here too. Outside there was a hitching post, and a fire alarm box, which needed a key to open it; the key was kept at the Tripp house on Walnut Street. The corner was a popular place for rallies, soap box oratory, torchlight parades, and political speeches.

When the firehouse was built in 1880, Thomas Tew who lived on Elm Street was the first captain, and the children called it Tommy Tew’s house. The most well known member of the staff was General, the white horse trained by Tew. When an alarm rang, Tew pushed a button that opened the door of General’s stall. General went to his harness, suspended from the ceiling, raised his head under his collar, jerked it down, and the whole harness fell in place, so that all it needed was to have the buckles fastened. He drew the one horse hose reel that Henry Tripp drove later. General was put out to pasture on a lot on Third Street, and whenever he heard an alarm, he jumped the fence and galloped back to the fire station. When Tew died, General was covered with a dark blue blanket, and walked up to the cemetery. He finally got too old to work, but Henry Tripp was so devoted to him that they waited until Tripp had a vacation to end General’s life.

Beside the one horse hose reel, there was a steamer run by Simeon and Robert Pike, brothers, who when an alarm blew went to Marsh’s grain store on Marsh Street, and took two of his horses to pull the steamer, a great sight with the horses galloping, and sparks billowing out of the chimney. Solon Weaver was the captain after Tew, and Henry Tripp drove the one horse hose reel, as mentioned. At first he stayed day and night in the fire station, with half a day off a week, and the pay was $13.50 a week. Later the firemen had two days off a month. By the time Mr. Tripp retired after several injuries, the first man to retire, he was given a pension of $17 a week.

The indicator for the fire alarm had to be pulled by hand for every ring or it was not accurate, and all the time signals were hand operated. In winter the firemen had clam boils, which Mrs. Tripp cooked at Walnut Street, and the men carried down to the station. Later the firemen became much interested in radio, and put together one of the first sets in Newport, six or seven feet long, and everyone put on earphones and listened to it.

When Newport had an Old Home Week, the station was all decorated and everyone was very proud of it. It was a social center for the whole Point until the city sold it, and nothing has taken its place.
Around the Ward
A Note from Your First Ward Councilman

Dear Friends:
My first year as your Ward councilman has been eventful. Many important actions have been taken over the last twelve months that I have worked on and supported:
• Re-zoning Rose Island to be included in the historic district.
• Implementing a major part of the Point Association’s traffic calming proposal.
• Obtaining a high DOT priority for the re-connection of Connell Highway, thereby lessening cut through traffic on Point streets.
• Endorsing the commercial North End development plan - including the expansion of the shopping center.
• Supporting the approval of the library expansion bond.
• Setting up a city council workshop with the lodging industry.

* I sit on these boards as a liaison for the city council.

During the coming year there are many significant projects to be worked on:
• Thompson Middle School - working with the school committee to ensure that the best solution for re-development is found.
• Washington Square - encouraging the completion of an attractive and appropriate re-design scheme.
• The Newport Public library - ensuring the expansion plan is implemented within sound ecological and aesthetic boundaries.
• The old Naval Hospital - working with the Navy to arrange for proper re-use.
• American Shipyard - developing a positive working relationship with the new owners to make sure that the sins of the past (noise and pollution problems) do not recur.
I look forward to the challenges of the coming year and to working with all of you to make the Point and Newport a better, safer and even more beautiful place to live.

George Perry

The Point Association Membership Form

Name: ____________________________ Phone: _________________________
Mailing address: ______________________________________________________
Fax: _____________________________ E-mail (if applicable) _________________

Committees & Activities

☐ Adventure Club ☐ History & Archives ☐ Plant Sale ☐ Traffic
☐ Beautification ☐ Membership ☐ Potluck Supper ☐ Waterfront
☐ Green Light ☐ Noise Abatement ☐ Programs ☐ Fund Raising

Please check the categories that you would like to learn more about.

Dues Structure

Individual: $7.00 Family: $10.00 Sustaining: $15.00 Patron: $25.00

Please make check payable to The Point Association. Note if new membership or renewal. The membership year runs from October 1 through September 30. A subscription to The Green Light is included with all memberships.

Clip and mail to the Point Association, P. O. Box 491, Newport, RI 02840

The Green Light - Winter 1998-99
Winter Calendar

December 2, Wednesday — 6:00 pm
St. John's— King's College Lessons and Carols for Advent

December 5, Saturday — 10:00 am - 4:00 pm
Newport Garden Club Christmas Boutique, lunch at St. John's Guild Hall— includes house tours of Point B & Bs

December 12, Sunday — 10:00 am - 2:00 pm
St. John's Christmas Bazaar

December 13, Sunday — 4:00 pm
Point Association Holiday Party and Cookie Exchange, St. John's Guild Hall

December 24, Thursday — 10:30 pm
St. John's Carol Sing;
11:00 pm
Sung Midnight Mass

December 31, Thursday
Opening Night Activities

See the Christmas in Newport calendar for other events on or near the Point.

THE GREEN LIGHT
The Point Association
Editor: P. O. Box 491
Newport, RI 02840