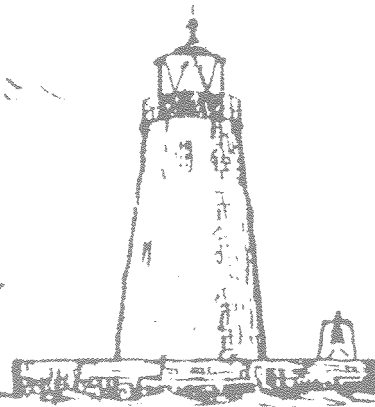


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The
GREEN

LIGHT



BULLETIN OF THE POINT ASSOCIATION
OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

SPRING 1999



Can you identify this building?



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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

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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 strenghten all of Newport's neighborhoods.

The Point Association Board

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Nancy Espersen	(846-2907)	Mike Cullen	(848-2945)
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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

The President's Letter

Dear Neighbors,

Last month, I served on a committee that helped select an architect for the middle school project. The School Committee is off to a good start with this project. The architect has built a number of middle schools in urban environments and is sensitive to Newport's particular needs. More important, the process established by the School Committee has been open and I think that will help bring the community together. As a representative of a residential neighborhood, I found myself in complete agreement with the ideas raised by the representative of the Chamber of Commerce.

In my opinion, replacing Thompson Middle School is the most important issue facing our city. There is no question that we are losing young families because of Thompson's current disrepair. If we are to remain a strong residential area we need excellent schools. We all should participate in the process that will develop the specific proposal to renovate Thompson so we can all support the November bond issue. The committee that I serve on will continue to be involved. If you have any suggestions or comments, please call me.

At the spring meeting on April 8th, I'll turn the gavel over to a new president. I've enjoyed my term as president and together we've had some successes. Thanks to all of you for your help and support.



Dear Friends,

There are some very positive things happening in the First Ward.

The new owners of the American Shipyard plan to continue its use as a maritime facility in keeping with the wishes of the City Council. I recently heard one of the new owners, Mr. Charles Dana, speak. He expressed a desire to be an active participant in such events as The Volvo Ocean Race (formerly known as The Whitbread) for Newport. The presence of an active shipyard should lend appeal for bringing such events to the Newport area. Mr. Dana also predicted an increase in employment at the facility, continued cleaning up of the shipyard, and the desire of the new owners to be good neighbors on the Point. Let's wish them well in their new venture.

Another major development is the revitalization of the North End. It is envisioned as an area of revitalized housing, restaurants, hotels and movie theatres. Additionally, a community college campus (on land presently owned by the Navy) and mixed-income housing developments are envisioned. Calthorpe Associates, Berkeley, Calif., has been hired by the City to explore "new urbanism," which focuses on creating foot traffic and city centers versus suburban "sprawl." Further, Connell Highway would be reconnected from Farewell Street to the Traffic Circle. The rail right-of-way may be used for a shuttle system in and out of town. It is likely that many revisions will be made to the proposal. Watch for announcements of public forums in the next year, where public input will be encouraged.

I hope that as an aware citizen you will involve yourself in active participation regarding the above activities and others that affect the quality of life here on the Point.



First Ward Councilman

To solve the puzzle of the photo on the cover look back at the story on page 18 of your winter copy. It's twice as fascinating now, as these photos from the Newport Historical Society show. The cover shows Fire Station #2, built in 1880, at the southeast corner of Bridge and Third streets.

Letters to the Editor

A copy of the Green Light winter issue 1998-1999 found its way from sea (Atlantic) to shining sea (Pacific). Here's the letter that came back:

Dear Mr. Dery:

I read a copy of your publication that I receive from my grandmother, Mrs. George W. F. Sherman, who used to live in Newport. The article on Fire Station No. 2 that was re-published in the Winter 1998-99 issue I thought very interesting.

I have taken the liberty of editing the article and with your permission, publishing it in my fire department's newsletter, "Smoke Signals."

— Lt. David Stebor, 41C
Fire District 15
Bremerton, WA 98311

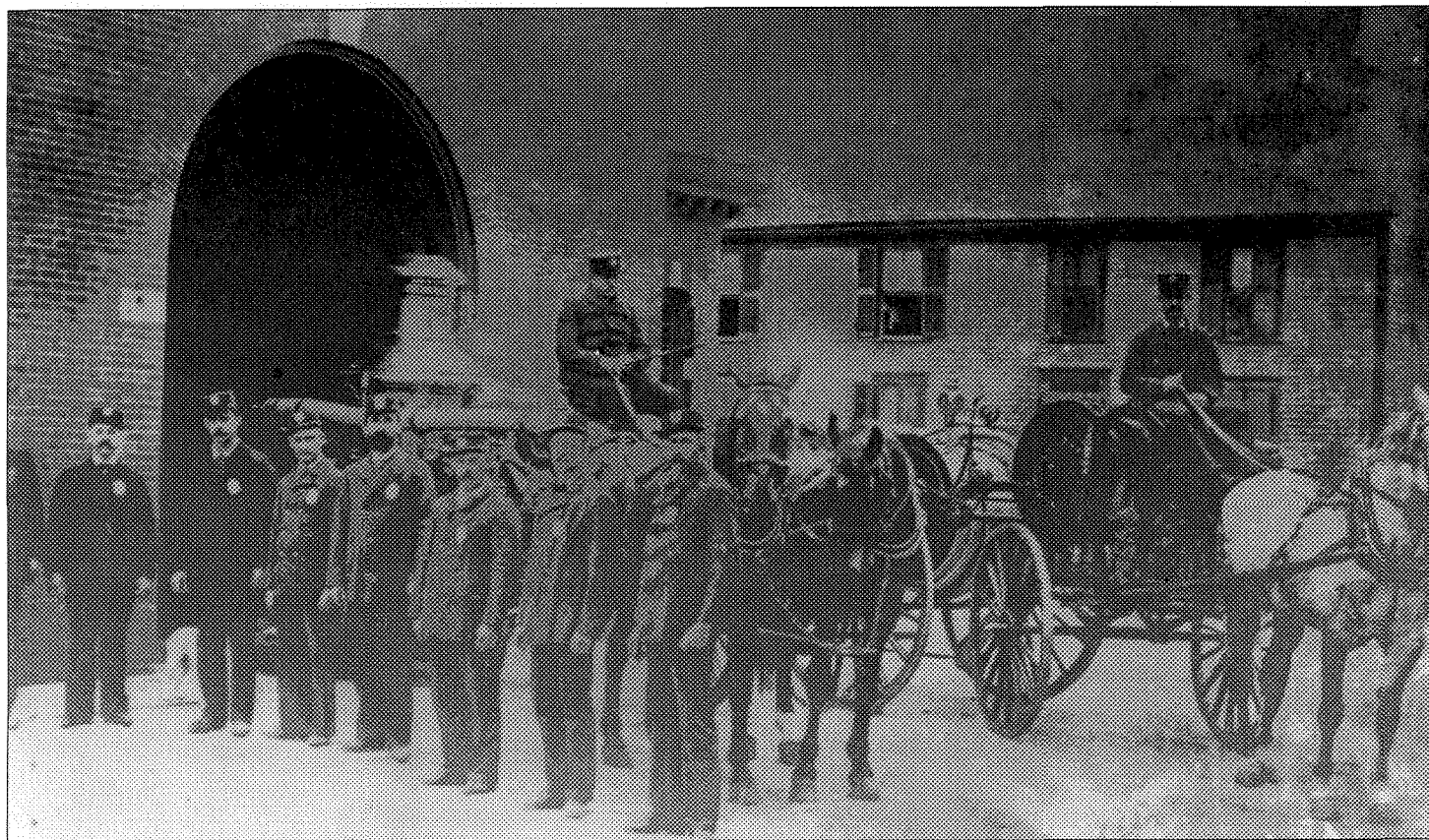
Dear Green Light staff,

Further to the article in the Winter '98 issue of the Green Light on the special Master Gardeners' Tour of Point gardens, I would like to honor those Point residents whose exceptional gardens were featured on the tour:

Al and Pat Lowe, 67 Bridge Street
Ilse Nesbitt, 29 Elm Street
Patti Murphy, 87 Willow Street
Janice and Charley Wiseman, 45 Second Street
Anne Cuvelier, 72 Washington Street
Toni & Pete Peters, 53 Washington Street

It takes talent to keep a garden looking good for a whole season!

— Anne Bidstrup



In the photo above you can pick out the ever-ready white horse "General." Can anyone identify the firemen?

Spring Membership Meeting

Plans for the redevelopment of the north end of the City—a geographic area of considerable interest to Point residents—will be discussed at The Point Association's Spring Membership meeting on Thursday, April 8 at 7 p.m., at St. John's Guild Hall.

Our speaker, Keith Stokes, Executive Director of the Newport County Chamber of Commerce, will make a detailed presentation on the long-range plans for the rotary at Connell Highway, the connection of Connell Highway with Farewell Street, the completion of Newport Towne Center (the revitalized shopping mall), and the embellishment of retail, office and parking facilities along Connell Highway.

Also on the agenda is important Association business; the election of new officers, postponed from last Fall, as well as a treasurer's report and brief committee reports.

Refreshments will be served.

—Don Dery

Waterfront Update

The Newport Shipyard on Washington Street at the Goat Island Connector has undergone substantial change in the last few months. Virtually all of the buildings have been painted, rusted fencing and an old oil tank have been removed, derelict boats are gone, some landscaping has been accomplished, and the toxic waste materials stored by prior owners are history.

Charles A. Dana, one of four business partners who bought the shipyard last July, told a packed meeting of the Maritime Preservation Alliance that he and his associates have charted a course to preserve the city's last remaining shipyard, and "at the same time we intend to be very good neighbors. We are committed to running a first class shipyard."

Dana outlined plans for refurbishing the shipyard's docks and expanding them outward to accommodate additional vessels requiring work. The partners intend to open discussions with officials of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation about using some of the State Pier space, and also plan to work with the

commercial fishermen who currently use the pier.

Dana also said he is interested in an on-going dialog with The Point Association to keep Point residents abreast of the shipyard's plans. "We don't want any surprises, and I'm sure you don't," he said.

* * * *

Construction on the intermodal water taxi and ferry landing at Perrotti Park will finally get under way in late March.

At the request of the City and a number of public interest groups, including The Point Association, the construction timetable will be escalated so that most of the work will be completed between April and September of this year. The new terminal and dockmaster's building most likely will not be completed until Spring 2000.

* * * *

In a related move, the state Coastal Resource Management Council (CRMC) has been given jurisdiction over Bolender's marina at Long Wharf, and was granted a permanent injunction in February to halt Bolender's marina operation and order it removed. The City has been at odds with Bolender for years, and has actively sought the removal of his marina since 1996.

—Don Dery

* * * *

Traffic Update

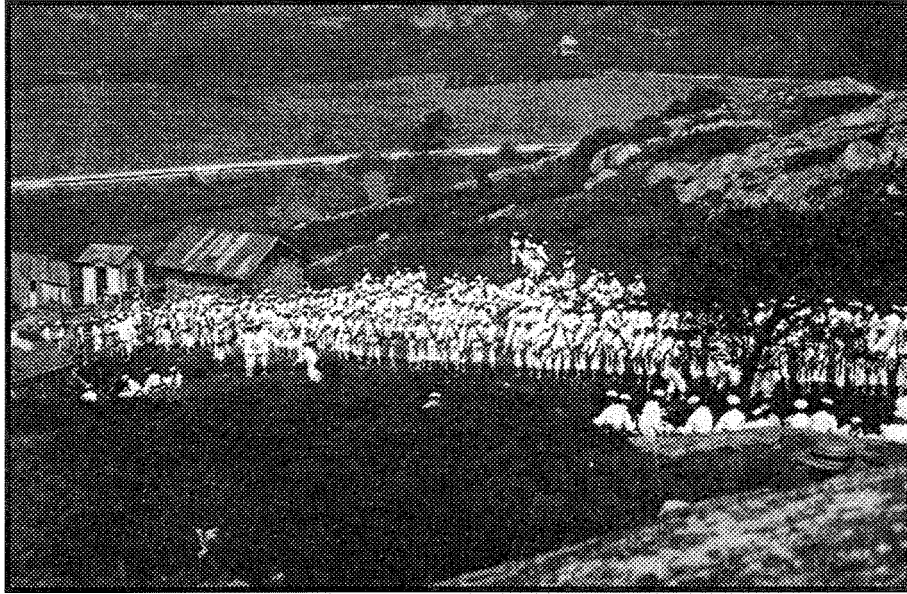
With any luck, this spring the barricade blocking the free right turn from Washington Street onto the Goat Island Connector will be removed and replaced with some large cement planters.

The Traffic Committee is discussing with the City the removal of the barricade and the loan and placement of planters, which the Point Association will be responsible for landscaping.

The City also will place small "Weekday Only" signs under the "No Left Turn" signs prohibiting north-bound traffic on America's Cup Avenue from turning into Elm or Poplar streets between 6 and 9 a.m.



Movie Making on the Point



Extras in a scene
from *A Nation's
Peril*, 1915

We Point residents, whether recent arrivals, experienced veterans, or those oh-so-rare "Hummers," share our other Newport neighbors' reverence for history and that all-American love of the movies. Our most recent brush with movie madness here occurred in the spring of 1997, when Steven Spielberg and his Dreamworks production of *Amistad* came to town. As the set of a stone fort took shape in Queen Anne Square and the streets surrounding the Colony House disappeared under truckloads of dry asphalt, Newporters lined up along the barriers with autograph books and cameras at the ready to watch New England history recreated and, if we were lucky, to shake the hand of Matthew McConaughey or maybe even Morgan Freeman.

We reveled in the stories of Spielberg sightings in local restaurants and enjoyed vicariously the anecdotes of those intrepid souls who stood in line for the opportunity to serve as extras in crowd scenes. And we reminisced about earlier filming experiences. "Remember the ice pond on the lawn of Ochre Court?" we asked, as we relived Arnold Schwarzenegger's nighttime foray, viewed months later from our theater seats. "Yes, that was good, but what about . . ."

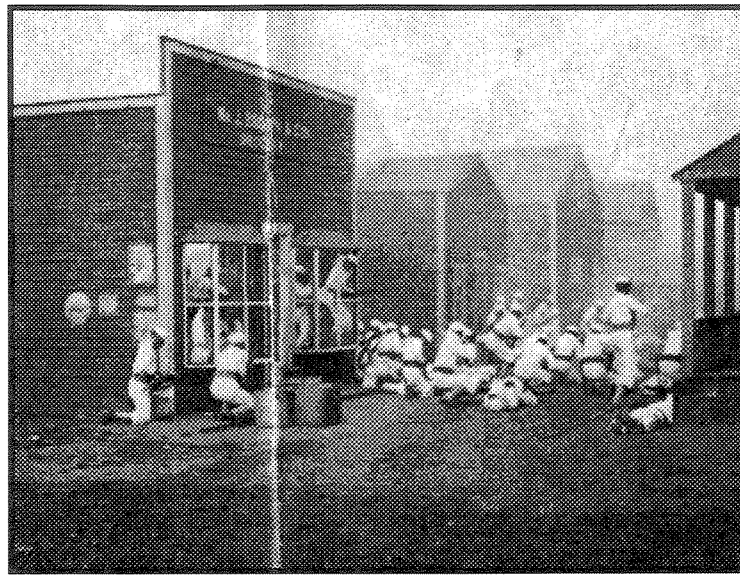
And so it went. Depending on the day (and the ages of our fellow star watchers), we shared fond memories

with other fans who had witnessed film crews creating movies like *High Society*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Betsy*, *Mr. North*, and *Wind*. We also traded firsthand viewer accounts of television productions like *The Adams Chronicles*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Bostonians*, and *Dark Shadows* as we stood together in the cold. Our favorite stories involved the triumphant retelling of encounters with the stars, such as Robert Redford (sent back to his car for shoes, when he arrived barefoot at the Newport Creamery), Grace Kelly (never barefoot in public), Sir Laurence Olivier... or was it Christopher Reeve?

As we listened to these eagerly shared stories, it became clear that many more scenes had been filmed in Newport's beautiful settings than we had realized. Bellevue Avenue, the Wharf, the Square, even the Harbor, had witnessed famous moments in movie history. At the end of all this fun, when we waved good-bye to the *Amistad* cast and crews, content with our memories and looking forward to opening night, few of us realized that most of these famous creations on celluloid were true Johnny-Come-Latelies compared to the Point's long-ago moments in the spotlight.

In fact, three small productions, judged to compare favorably in quality with their major contemporaries, were filmed in and around Newport between 1913 and

1915: *Partners of the Tide*, *Patricia*, and *Life Saving Station*. This new activity was such an interesting concept for Newporters to contemplate that Rugen's Weekly filmed the casts and crews at work for inclusion in its newsreel, then a regular feature at the Newport Opera House. But it was the fourth film during



Climax of *A Nation's Peril*, filmed in Newport

this period, *A Nation's Peril*, that put our Point in the limelight during the summer of 1915. Mounted by the Lubin Company, under the direction of George Terwilliger, this production starred Mr. Earl Metcalf and featured Miss Ormi Hawley and Mr. J. Allen Boone in supporting roles. It cost a whopping \$40,000—unusually high for the period.

About to enter the Great War, America was increasingly interested in stories about that conflict, and so audiences flocked to see the battle scenes and their realistic depictions of conflagration on land and sea, staged on the grounds of the present Naval Hospital and in the adjacent harbor. Named Lubin Street, the on-land set contained rows of houses hastily built of wood and canvas, but indistinguishable to the film viewer from the more conventionally constructed Point homes just a few streets away. The most interesting aspect of these scenes, however, concerns a battle between an unruly crowd of locals and a group of young enlisted men.

It seems that, in the weeks preceding the actual filming, Newport's patriotic social doyenne, Mrs. Cornelius (Elsie French) Vanderbilt, conceived of the movie production as a good fund-raising opportunity to benefit the Ambulance Fund for France. However, by roping off the previously open area and then charging for admission (25 cents for adults and 10 cents for children) and parking (\$2), the organizers of this noble plan angered the crowd of local watchers, who objected loudly to their now restricted access to the spectacle.

Shouting "Fisherman's rights!" in defiance, the rowdies stormed the barricades with neither pole nor pail

in sight, and nearly destroyed the carefully constructed set. Suddenly, they were effectively repelled by two companies of Army infantry and apprentice seamen, marching under the command of a quick-thinking Lieutenant Commander Frank T. Evans of the Naval Training Station. When

the intruders had been turned away, the filming resumed and spectators were rewarded with the sights of military battle scenes complete with billowing smoke, crashing timbers, and beautiful maidens in distress, many of whom were Newporters who had been recruited as extras. Oh, doesn't that sound familiar, and don't we wish we had been there?

If we had been among those lined up for tickets on opening night at the Opera House a few months later we would have proceeded into the lobby and received a small section of red film to hold before our eyes. This standard accessory for moviegoers in 1915, which served to create a more realistic view of the black and white fire scenes, reminds those of us from a later generation of the cardboard glasses we wore to watch Technicolor 3-D films in the 1950's. And as our imagination takes hold, we shiver in delight at the prospect of sitting in the darkened theater, clutching our red film and listening to the piano's crashing chords, as the scenes whose creation we witnessed flicker on the screen.

Ah, reader—were you one of those intrepid extras, those charmed viewers, those awful rowdies? Was your mother or your aunt or your older brother? If so, there are many of your fellow Green Light readers, history lovers and film buffs all, who would think it great fun to hear about this event from you, first hand. In fact, the Green Light's mailbox is open wide and eager to receive your account.

— Suzanne Reasoner Varisco