The Green Light
Bulletin of the Point Association of Newport, Rhode Island

Summer 1999

Telephoto shot of the bridge on the Newport side

Jerry Taylor photo, courtesy of Joan Calcutt
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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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Traffic
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Walking Tour Signs
Anne Bidstrup  (849-1354)
Waterfront
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Board meetings are generally scheduled for the first Monday of the month and are open to Association members. If you have a concern you would like the board to address, please call Suzanne for time, date and location of the meeting.
The President's Letter

Dear Neighbors,

In assuming this new post, I wish to offer my sincere thanks to the many past presidents, officers, committee chairs, and committee members who have labored on behalf of all Point residents to maintain this neighborhood, which we all love. Through their unstinting efforts, these volunteers have beautified the parks we enjoy strolling through on summer evenings, diverted unnecessary traffic from our narrow streets and discouraged entrepreneurs who would ply their trade to the detriment of this quiet corner of the city.

Most recent among our past leaders is Coles Mallory, who has presided over the Point Association's governing board for the past two-and-a-half years. I know you join me in extending congratulations and appreciation to him for a job well done and in welcoming his return to the Board of the Point Association in a new capacity. As Chair of the newly created Past Presidents Advisory Committee, he will coordinate the invaluable resources that abound here on the Point in the persons of such individuals as Christine Montanaro, Pete Peters, Joe Vars, and many others. In this way, we hope to build on our Association's tradition of community service, the longest and perhaps most active among all of our neighborhoods.

As we move together into the late spring and early summer, enjoying the Plant Sale, Harbor Cruise, Picnic and Cocktail Party, our Point Association will thrive if it is revitalized through the support of the community it seeks to serve. With this goal in mind, I invite you to attend Board meetings on the first Monday of each month; share your ideas, concerns, and questions with Board members (we're all in the phone book); and get better acquainted with your neighbors, while contributing your time and energy to the many projects and events that are planned with you in mind. We look forward to hearing from you.

[Signature]

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POINT PICNIC!

Everyone's invited. Friends, families and children provide the food and fun. The bay and boats provide the scenery. Anne Reynolds’ lovely garden at 88 Washington Street is the address, on Thursday, June 24th at 6:00 p.m. Bring your own picnic supper and drinks along with blanket or chairs. Coffee and fellowship await you. Invite your neighbor and enjoy the arrival of long summer days. (Rain date – July 1).

GREETINGS FROM
THE ADVENTURE CLUB

The Adventure Club met on sunny Saturday, May 1st and then the children dispersed throughout the neighborhood for delivery of May Baskets – a fun and cheerful way for all to greet spring (and a delightful surprise for the old folks).

While no specific plans have been made for summer activities, we certainly welcome any suggestions or volunteers. Our next planned gathering will be in the fall for the Halloween parade. Any questions about the Adventure Club can be directed to Pat Lowe at 847-5853, or Jill Spohn at 849-2155. Happy summer!

The Tradition Continues at the
POINT ASSOCIATION’S
ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP COCKTAIL PARTY

Thursday August 19th
6 to 8 pm

Celebrate summer with your neighbors while watching the sunset from the beautiful veranda at the
Sanford-Covell Villa Marina
72 Washington Street

If It’s Wednesday...

You’ll find the Newport Library Bookmobile in St. John’s parking lot on Willow Street, from 4:00 to 4:30 p.m. This wonderful community asset has something for all ages.

Summer hours will be 11:00 to 11:30 a.m., starting July 12th. Come check out all the friendly, helpful services offered and chat with Mary Barrett and Kelly McKenna. No traffic, no parking problems.

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The Green Light ~ Summer 1999
Point Association
Spring Membership Meeting
and Election of Officers

Point Association members attending the Spring Meeting on April 8th received the new slate of officers from Nominating Committee Chairman, Mary Lynn Rook, and enthusiastically elected the following for the term beginning April 8, 1999 and ending at the annual meeting in October, 2000:

President          Suzanne Varisco
Second Vice President   Alberto Coll
Corresponding Secretary  Loretta Goldrick

Outgoing President Coles Mallory was honored for his leadership and many accomplishments during his tenure. Mike Cullen presented to Coles an Ilse Nesbitt framed print of the Newport waterfront.

Our new president, Suzanne, an enthusiastic and involved resident of the Point for a number of years, teaches a course in writing at Salve and has contributed articles to the Green Light. She most recently served on the Board as Recording Secretary. We look forward to being in her capable hands.

Alberto will retain his role as Traffic Committee Chair in addition to his duties as Second Vice President and Loretta will continue to be responsible for ongoing communications with the membership.

A special note of thanks goes to the following members of the Nominating Committee for their commitment and enthusiasm to the nominating process - Brian Babcock, Nancy Espersen, Bob Peck and former member Suzanne Varisco.

Chairman Mary Lynn Rook reports that when the committee reconvenes to begin work anew, they will be seeking individuals to fill the positions of first vice president, treasurer and recording secretary. These are two year terms of office beginning in October, 1999.

All members of the Association are encouraged to be part of the nominating process by contacting members of the committee to contribute your ideas and the names of potential candidates for consideration.

Keith Stokes, guest speaker at the membership meeting is Executive Director of the Newport County Chamber of Commerce. He delivered a riveting presentation on the city's north end development plans at the Spring Membership Meeting.

Stokes told a crowd of more than 100 Point residents that the ambitious redevelopment program includes plans developed by the city of Newport, the Chamber of Commerce, the state of Rhode Island and the Foundation for Newport.

A housing redevelopment initiative, supported by a Hope 6 grant from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development expected this spring, will involve the upgrading and replacement of much of the subsidized housing in the city's north end.

The new Newport Town Center shopping mall on Connell Highway, officially opening this spring, is the first step in the economic development plan, Stokes said. Other plans include a 10-screen cinemaplex on parking land behind the J'ai alai Fronton, a possible hotel or two on land either side of Admiral Kalfus Road, plus an attended multi-story parking garage to encourage visitors coming off the Newport Bridge to park outside the center of town and take shuttle trolleys into the city center.

Stokes was careful to emphasize that some of the plans are long-range, "but we have a wonderful window of opportunity now to develop the plans and commence the efforts required to secure funding from the appropriate federal, state and local entities."

The Plant Sale Committee would like to thank everyone who helped make this year's sale a huge success - especially Anita McAndrews and her son Shawn for once again hosting the event, the many gardeners who dug, divided, potted and delivered plants to the sale, and the generosity of the following local nurseries and florists:

Broadway Florist
Carlone Florist
Chase's Greenhouse
Chaves Gardens
Island Garden Shop
James L. Maher Center
Mello's Flower Center
Rhode Island Nursery
Water's Edge Flowers

Thank You

The Green Light ~ Summer 1999
Waterfront Roundup

At long last, construction of the water taxi and ferry landing at Perrotti Park gets under way. Work in the park itself commenced this spring, and placement of pilings for the new docks will start in July.

In anticipation of that work, Carl Bolender was finally ordered to move his barge and marina out of the northeast corner of the harbor adjacent to Perrotti Park where he had been operating for years without city permission. His two-story barge is now tethered to Goat Island Marina on the southwest side of the causeway.

Bolender’s docks have been moved into the middle of Sail Newport’s facility at Fort Adams, and his 26 concrete block moorings will be moved elsewhere within Newport harbor at state expense. Additionally, the city and DOT officials have been ordered to help Bolender file the necessary state and federal permits which will enable him to place either 13 50-foot floats or 26 25-foot floats within the relocated mooring field, wherever that may be.

It’s almost a certainty that local commercial fishermen will retain full use of the State Fishing Pier at the south end of Washington Street for the next 99 years. That’s just part of the deal about to be initialed by Rhode Island economic development officials in exchange for General Assembly permission to transfer control of the pier from the Department of Environmental Management to the R.I. Economic Development Corporation (EDC).

The EDC also has promised to make substantial improvements to the pier, and to provide 24-hour security guards to protect fishing equipment. A committee of commercial fishermen will determine whether portions of the pier could ever be used for other purposes, such as a temporary berth for a Tall Ship.

Right across the street from the pier, at the corner of Washington Street and Long Wharf, bulldozers have broken down the cement wall that encircled the corner lot. The lot has been graded, but the purpose for this is unknown. A park would be nice.

The City has under review its two-tiered parking garage next to the Visitors Center plus the street level parking lot behind it, as well as the Gateway Center; the property totals about eight acres of prime harborside real estate. Questions are being asked regarding the most effective use of the property. The study commissioned by the city is being funded by federal urban-development grants, and should be completed by this summer. The outcome could lead to the construction of an office building or other commercial building, something Point residents should watch closely.

And finally, this year there will be no high-speed ferry test between Providence and Newport, which was to have begun this month. The project is delayed until . . .?

—Don Dery

Down the ways. American Shipyard on Washington St.

North bulkhead along Long Wharf.
Welcome to All Our New Point Association Members

JOAN BARTRAM
Sarah & Tony Gill
Kim Holcombe & Thomas Chiginsky
SALLY JENKINS
RICHARD & SALLIE LATIMER
CHRISTOPHER & PHYLLIS MOY
LESLIE HENRY & JOHN OAKLEY, JR.
RICHARD & BARBARA O'NEILL
RUTH PAIGE

Update on Walking Tour Signs

The Walking Tour Committee, composed of ten Point Association members from different areas of the neighborhood, and with varying perspectives, met in January with Dan Snydacker of the Historical Society to discuss further the prospect of Walking Tour signs on the Point. A well-publicized open meeting for residents, originally planned for February 25, had to be canceled due to bad weather. The rescheduled meeting was held on March 4, and attended by a modest crowd. The overall consensus was favorable, with a few reservations.

Following this meeting the committee met to discuss all responses and formulate a recommendation, which has since been presented to the board, and subsequently to the membership at the spring meeting. The committee, with the help of the Historical Society's staff, will first establish criteria for homes to be listed on the signs. Because of an ongoing commitment to a similar program on Historic Hill, the Historical Society's joint venture with the Point is presently delayed.

It is expected that the Point Association will “sponsor” a sign, as can individuals and businesses. All will contribute an annual maintenance fee. Each sign will also have a “guardian.” A booklet and note cards may be created as well. Owners of houses included on the tour will be thoroughly involved in the process. City approvals and major funding grants will be handled by the Historical Society.

If you wish to discuss the project further or join the committee, call 849-1354.

—Anne Bidstrup
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Spring Cleanup

More than 30 Point residents turned out at Storer and Battery parks for the Spring cleanup organized by Beautification co-chairs Glenn and Ellen Secrest.

The volunteers filled countless numbers of large leaf bags with branches, weeds, beach trash and residue, sticks, logs, plastic refuse and whatever. They also spread a gazillion wheelbarrows full of bark mulch around trees and in the gardens.

Scott Wheeler, Newport's Tree Warden, pruned and shaped the lower branches of many trees, and talked about plans to plant a large number of flowering bulbs in the parks next Fall. He'll need Point Association assistance.

Suzanne Varisco endeared herself as the incoming President by providing a supply of donuts and coffee, and Bryan Babcock provided two huge bags of freshly baked bagels. So, the leaf bags weren't the only things that got stuffed!
The Forgotten Point Movie

Our cozy bayside hamlet has become a mecca for the bright lights of Hollywood. In April, the Point's very own Green Light served as a backdrop for a dream sequence in the acclaimed new television show Providence. A month later, St. John's was descended upon by more movie-making types, including Jim Carrey. Will our neighborhood ever be the same?

Suzanne Varisco, in her article “Movie Making on the Point” (Spring 1999 Green Light) reminded us of the many times over the years that Newport has hosted crews creating feature and television films. Location directors come to Newport to scout out just the right locale to frame their productions. With the ever growing list of productions filmed locally, they obviously find what they are looking for in our city's many historic and scenic venues.

All the talk of area film making brings to mind one movie seldom included on any local film roster. It too used St. John's for exterior and interior scenes. The famous cast included Kevin Bacon, Cloris Leachman, Eddie Albert, Andy Griffith and Ken Kershible. A significant amount of money was left behind to bolster our economy, and many locals (including myself) were hired as extras. So why is this brush with fame stricken from the annals? Perhaps because the movie was a tremendous flop! In fact, TV Guide elected it the worst television movie of the year!

Demon Murders monopolized much of the local scene during the fall of 1982. An off year for the Cup races, the restless natives not yet ready to settle in for a long Newport winter needed something to occupy themselves. This ambitious attempt to recreate The Exorcist into an ABC Movie of the Week fit the bill.

Celebrities were sighted all over town. Everyone was talking about it. So why has this movie faded from our community's collective memory? Though the locations were charming, everything else was a disappointment. The editing and camera work were terrible, the experienced actors struggled with a frightful script, and the story line was truly an embarrassment.

The Point assuredly will continue to be a desirable movie setting. Let's hope the caliber will surpass that of the long forgotten Demon Murders. Good luck at the box office, Jim Carrey. We're glad you left our cozy hamlet as you found it, pristine and appealing, to suit the next Hollywood crew that comes calling.

—Beth Cullen
Thirty years ago, the State of Rhode Island embarked on a project that would forever change the nature of life in Newport. Serious talk of a bridge between Newport and Jamestown began after the Jamestown Bridge opened in 1940, but it wasn’t until 1963 that the Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority contracted the engineering firm, Parsons, Brinckerhoff, Quade and Douglas (which also designed the Jamestown Bridge), to study and design a bay crossing. After three years of engineering design, construction on the Newport Bridge began in January 1966.

At the time the bridge was built, the Navy was the biggest economic influence in Newport. In 1973, the Pentagon announced that the Atlantic Fleet would be removed from Newport. At that time, there were 60,000 Navy personnel stationed here, and by 1974 unemployment in the city had reached 20 percent. The bridge would help change that.

The America’s Cup races in 1974 with Ted Turner skippering Courageous, and the Tall Ships in 1976, helped to begin defining Newport as a tourist destination. The bridge made it easier and quicker for summer visitors to reach the island by the thousands. A new era in Newport’s economy was born.

The impact of the Newport Bridge was felt most intimately here on the Point, the landing spot being in its northern reaches. Eighteen families were forced to give up their homes for the greater good of the community and progress. Though there were concerns about traffic, noise and the loss of homes, Pointers realized that the bridge was necessary for Newport and have learned to live with it.

Joan Calcutt, who lives at the base of the bridge on the corner of Sycamore and Third streets, said she rarely hears the traffic noise from the bridge. Occasionally, steel plates on the overpass will become loose and clang around, but Joan says she makes one phone call to bridge workers and they come right in to fix the offending plates, leaving it quiet again.

Obviously bridge construction during 1966-1969 made a great impact in this neighborhood, cutting a path through Washington, Bayside and Second streets, with houses moved or torn down, materials stored and transported. Watching changes on the water was interesting, but changes ashore were painful for some. Do let us hear your stories if those years bring back memories.

—Brian Comfort

The Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority has approved spending about $80,000 to plant flowers and shrubs in the grassy areas at both ends of the Newport Bridge, according to Paul M. Eckhart, Newport’s representative on the Authority.

The plantings should be completed this spring. The work will be done in the grassy areas near the tollbooths in Jamestown and around both exits leading into Newport.

Paul said the improvements are compatible with the overall plan to spruce up Newport’s north end, and will also serve as a sound buffer for those who live on The Point.
Building the Newpc

Newport abutment and eight spans of concrete beams

Business as usual in the main navigation channel.

Structural steel storage and assembly yards at Fleet Landing

Completed east tower, looking south
t Bridge, 1966 - 1969

eel storage on the east shore of Goat Island
By Their Baggage
They Shall be Known

With talk of rejuvenating the Old Colony Railroad line to reach Fall River once again, we were fortunate to receive some timely family history from native Newporter, Geraldine Nagle, concerning her maternal grandfather and lifelong Pointer, Charles Edgar Brice. For 54 years Brice, dressed in a crisp white uniform, served the Old Colony and later the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad as Newport’s “baggage master.”

Opened in 1863, The Old Colony Railroad carried passengers and freight from Fall River to Newport’s station at West Marlborough Street. Passengers arrived from New York, Providence, Boston and many other locations to enjoy Newport’s cooler climes. Photographs from the early 1900’s show the long station roof extending across the property where the Marriott Hotel and the Visitor’s Center stand today. (Currently, the Dinner Train uses these same tracks, but they have been truncated to begin at the corner of America’s Cup Avenue and Bridge Street.)

Born in Newport on September 20, 1868, son of Thomas and Mary Brice, Charles grew up at 33 Third Street. From this house, baby Charles could hear the bustling new railroad that had been built only five years before. The rail cars and commotion fascinated him, and, as Mrs. Nagle learned, “when he was still in knee britches and at age 12, he dropped out of school and went to work for the railroad.” His first job was as a “halter holder” and his duties included holding the halter of patrons’ horses while they conducted business inside the station.

Because his supervisors liked his work, Charles soon became head of the baggage room at the Fall River Line dock at Long Wharf. After seven years there, he was promoted to baggage master at the West Marlborough Street Station where he remained for the rest of his career. While working at Long Wharf he met a young Irish woman named Mary Jane Riley, who was visiting Newport from Providence on one of her summer boat trips. They married at The Church of The Holy Name in Providence and settled in at 33 Third Street. Anna Brice, Mrs. Nagle’s mother, was among their four children.

After business slowed because of the Great Depression and the dominance of the automobile, the railroad significantly reduced the train schedule. In early May of 1933, Charles Brice wrote to his daughter Edith in New York, “We have hardly anything to do with passengers. Freight is fair, but not any too good. Hope something picks up soon.” To pass the time at the station, Charles and several railroad pals started “The Wrangle Club.” According to a 1933 “Grist Mill” column in The Newport Daily News, annual membership dues consisted of one pumpkin pie that “MUST be homemade.” According to the column, “Any member trying to pass over anything other than a homemade pie on these expert pie eaters will be tied to the tracks in front of a fast freight.”

In 1969, Charles Brice is mentioned by Green Light scribe Carrie Ericson in her childhood memories of “going down street” from the Point to visit the busy railroad depot:

...the railroad depot with its covered platform, a busy place with the passengers boarding the trains and the baggage being loaded. A newsstand with papers, magazines and candy; here we stopped to put a penny in the gum machine for a square of gum. There was a waiting room, with Dennis O’Brien in a caged office selling tickets. Next came the freight and baggage room with Charles Brice in command. He lived on Third Street, was patient, friendly, happy and never too busy to weigh us kids on the big black scales (none of us weighed over a hundred pounds).
Charles Brice, whose favorite saying serves as title for this story, died on May 26, 1933, after a short illness. His obituary states that he had been at his desk at the station not ten days before he became ill. He had seen both the heyday of America’s railroads and their swift decline due to Henry Ford’s machine. Three years before his death, the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad recognized Charles’ 50 years of service and awarded him a diamond encrusted stickpin. In his acceptance speech, he recalled the days when he and an assistant would handle up to 1500 pieces of luggage per day. By the time he passed away his office handled less than 400 pieces a month.

Mrs. Nagle never knew her grandfather because she was born only weeks before his death. However, she has developed a strong bond with him through her years of thorough genealogical research. Many thanks to her for sharing her photos and discoveries with the Green Light.

—Betty Cares

History & Archives

The History & Archives Committee’s “Evening of Restoration Stories” on May 13 was a walloping success. About 65 people, PAN members and non-members, listened attentively as Pieter Roos described the early philosophy and actions of the Newport Restoration Foundation, particularly in connection with the Point. He also outlined plans for the future which include the possible sale of some of the non-colonial properties and acquisition of other properties. The slides were interesting, the refreshments delicious, the ambience warm and friendly. Nancy Espersen and her committee deserve our thanks and congratulations. Also our support for the coming “Strolls on Washington St.” Call her for more information.

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The Green Light ~ Summer 1999
June in Newport, like June everywhere, stands on the threshold of summer, with all its flower-filled days. In June, the daffodil and tulip are no more than a memory, while the brilliant hydrangea and daylily of hot July have yet to arrive. In June, we pause in the dooryard to enjoy the last sweet scent of May’s late lilac and the falling petals of her bowed peony, then stoop in a shaded corner to spy the graceful lily of the valley, whose “white coral bells upon a slender stalk” signal to all sentimental souls that we are now in the month of weddings. The story of a very particular wedding in June comes to us from the Point’s own Rowan Howard, whose important role as one of the four-year-old flower girls has been preserved in the pages of the family album.

This wedding tale, which begins on June 27, 1922, is told by none other than the father of the bride, then-Commodore Reginald R. Belknap, a much decorated and greatly revered naval hero, as he pens a four-page thank-you “note” to his naval comrades from the celebrated North Sea Mine Force of World War I. Wherever possible, the Commodore will step forward to speak in his own words, recreating the festivities of that happy day, in an unmistakable tone of parental affection, for the benefit of his absentee captains and executives.

Commodore and Mrs. Belknap bought their Newport home on the Point at 94 Washington Street between Chestnut and Cherry streets, and named it Bel’napoli, half punning, half affectionately for the Italian port of Naples.

Draped in bunting for the occasion, the large house with its open porches sat on a wide lawn that sloped down to the pier, providing the perfect setting for an outdoor reception, just a few blocks away from the ceremony in St. John’s Church, which, according to the Commodore, was “well suited for weddings and generally does things well.” Attend, then, the proud father’s tender description of his family.

“Colonel Louis McCarthy Little directed the ushering business with the tact you would expect of him, finally escorting Mrs. Belknap to her place, and after the service escorting out Mrs. Mack, the groom’s mother. The rest of the Belknap family, except little Barberie (10 weeks old), were in the procession. Rexane in white leading the bridesmaids, who were in blue organdie with hats to match and pink sweet peas—Emilia, Margaret Sims, Helen Jenkins (cousin), and Mary Joslin. Next, Georgiana as maid of honor, in tea colored organdie and hat to match, with yellow roses; then the bride with me, and on our quarters followed Mary [Rowan] and another 4-year-old, the groom’s cousin, little Jennie Whittemore, in white organdie and hats and formal bouquets, and bare knees—one of the most difficult things to insure presentable for the wedding day, in view of Mary’s athletic and tumbling activity. They were officially train-bearers but had strict injunctions under no circumstances to touch or step on the train, which instructions they duly observed, with sufficient but not overpowering gravity.
"My own opinion that Averill was a very beautiful bride is confirmed from many sources, some of them comparative strangers. She wore her maternal grandmother’s wedding dress of organdie and old lace, with seed-pearl earrings and ornaments, carrying lilies of the valley. She has always been a graceful girl, of good carriage, and as she came down from the altar, her calm, high beauty and look of serene happiness made a deep, stirring impression not soon dimmed. Lieutenant Mack is a good-looking young officer, tall and slender, with good features and expression and a dignified carriage, making a well-balanced couple.

"After they had passed under the sword arch, Georgiana followed between the two best men, Mack’s brother and Lieutenant Senn, and Rexane followed, leading the 4-year-olds out by either hand. As the bride reached the door, the chimes rang out in joy bells." Following this loving description of the recession, the Commodore paints an equally poignant picture of his eldest daughter as she cuts her wedding cake, one that places a catch in the reader’s throat: “She cut two slices—enough for all in her world at that time; leaving the rest of us to cut for ourselves.”

Later, as the moment of departure arrives for the young Lieutenant and his bride, the Commodore relates the mischievous getaway, supplying vivid, yet sometimes surprising details, to the amusement and delight of his modern readers: “Without too much difficulty and with the help of the two best men, Lieutenant Senn being a husky one, the couple got through to the boat. Back of Rose Island, out of sight of the house, a torpedo chaser range-boat was waiting. They shifted to that unobserved [and] made for the N. Y. Yacht Club landing, [while] the ushers and bridesmaids [were] misdirected] to the R. R. station. At the landing, an out-of-town friend was waiting with a Packard car, [to drive] them to Fall River and the boat there. He says he never looked behind once. Having only breakfasted at 5, they had to dine at 7:30, and were still at it on board the COMMONWEALTH, until she left Newport. Meantime we in the family, about 30, had supper and played bridge until time to illuminate and serenade (Georgiana on the bugle) when the boat went out.” At this point, we can only imagine the young men’s chuckles, as they read about this scene of hilarity on the lawn of stately Bel’napoli.

Finally, the Commodore comes to the purpose of his letter, having saved the best for last: the gift, itself. “As for presents, today’s count is about 300; the range in character and source is wide; and individually and together, the collection is uncommonly handsome and full of association . . . . But among them all, the Mine Squadron pitcher stands up serene and supreme, with its inscription that we like even more than the pitcher, The Captains and Executives of Mine Squadron One to the Commodore’s Daughter, 1918-1922.” In closing his note of appreciation, the Commodore quotes his mother-in-law, who definitely approved of her favorite granddaughter’s important day: “How beautiful and successful it all was! What a lovely wedding! My loftiest wishes for the sweet child—wedding, friends, and presents—more than realized.”

This remarkable record is clearly a family treasure, shared with us by the very generous former flower girl. It would require an unwise editor to tamper with the eloquent and gracious prose of this doting father, whose long and illustrious career brought honor to his country and distinction to his wife and six daughters. And so, we leave the Commodore, seated at his old desk in the quiet study of Bel’napoli, overlooking his harbor and dreaming of the young honeymooners’ safe return.

—Suzanne R. Varisco

Editor’s note: The parenthetical explanations in the Commodore’s story are his own, while the material in brackets reflects this editor’s reluctant attempt to clarify a few of the details for modern readers.

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The Green Light ~ Summer 1999
Celebration of British Cathedral Music V

This summer the church of St. John the Evangelist will be privileged to host another of the great choirs of Britain – the choir of the Roman Catholic Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King, Liverpool.

Some 54 choir members and staff will arrive Wednesday, July 28, and will be in residence until Monday, August 2. Housing for approximately one-third of the visitors has been arranged, but there is a great need for more host families. If you would enjoy participating in this venture, please contact Mary Jane Rodman (846-9199); Jane Landolo (847-4437); Barbara Peters (846-8611); or the church office (848-2561).

In any case, come hear this glorious music! The schedule is listed on the back page calendar.

Battery Park News

Thirteen memorial benches have been installed along the water at Battery Park. This will be the limit. According to Scott Wheeler, any future benches donated will replace the green benches along the street side of the park. The 13 benches honor: Molly and Kathleen Dowd; Willie; George and Eleanor Weaver; Jane E. Barton; Monroe Adler; Mrs. C. Nana; Dr. William Marler Russell; Gladys Carr Bolhouse; Elizabeth B. Sant; Barbara Capron Jordon; Brian T. Lynch; Captain William Nimmo Jr; Mr. and Mrs. Robert S. Hayes.

— Beverly Adler

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When Leaving the Point
Come to the Southwest

The Green Light ~ Summer 1999
Historical Discovery in Our Harbor: Part II

Long-time readers of the Green Light may recall that the February 1988 issue featured an article by Esther Fisher Benson entitled: “Historical Discovery in Our Harbor.” Mrs. Benson’s article told the story of how in 1778, the British sank a number of transports in the outer harbor during the Siege of Newport; what prompted her to write was the fact that one of these vessels had just been discovered.

In the 11 years since the publication of that article, the Rhode Island Marine Archaeology Project has continued the search for more of these transports and has made a major historical discovery about the identity of one.

Documents found at the Public Records Office in London indicate that of the ten transports known to have been sunk in Newport’s outer harbor in 1778, one was very large and had been in the East India service; the other nine were much smaller and generally in poor condition. One of them, probably in worse condition than the others, had been HMB Endeavour or Endeavour Bark the vessel that took Captain James Cook on his first voyage around the world. The history of Endeavour is recounted in detail in a forthcoming issue of Newport History (the quarterly journal of the Newport Historical Society). The general outline of how the vessel came to end her days in Newport was easy to trace from documents found in the British Admiralty archives.

The Earl of Pembroke was built at Whitby, England in 1764, and served as a collier (carrying coal and other heavy cargoes). In 1768, she was bought by the Royal Navy, and her name changed to Endeavour. Cook chose this vessel because he had apprenticed as a seaman on this type of ship and knew of its advantages. After Cook finished his circumnavigation, Endeavour carried supplies to the Falkland Islands. In late 1775, she was sold to a private owner who changed her name to Lord Sandwich and then offered to charter her back to the transport service to carry troops and equipment to North America. Conditions in the colonies were starting to heat up, leading to the Revolutionary War, and the British needed more troops there.

In 1776, Lord Sandwich carried a German regiment to New York, and in December of that year, to Newport when the British occupied the city. By early 1777, Lord Sandwich was in use as a prison ship in Newport’s outer harbor, keeping suspected “rebel” sympathizers aboard. In early 1778, the French agreed to send a large fleet to North America. In late July and early August of 1778, this fleet was in Narragansett Bay, threatening the British troops occupying the city of Newport.

In response to the French threat, the British burned and sank four of their own frigates, a sloop of war, and two galleys in the waters around Aquidneck Island, in order to avoid capture. In Newport’s inner harbor, they sank another frigate, a sloop of war, and more than 30 small craft. At the same time they sank at least 10 transports in Newport’s outer harbor. These transports were sunk so as to block access to the city, and prevented the large French ships from getting close enough to bombard Newport with any success.

Based on the documents found at the Public Records Office in London, there is not a doubt that Lord Sandwich, which had been HMB Endeavour, was one of the transports sunk in Newport in 1778.

Local lore in Newport has always been that Endeavour ended her days here, but the story claimed that she came here under the name La Liberte in 1793, after working in the French whale fishery. She was abandoned at a wharf in the inner harbor and artifacts taken from her became part of the Newport Historical Society collection. In 1997, two amateur historians from Australia produced evidence suggesting that this vessel was Resolution, Captain Cook’s ship from his second and third voyages.

It appears that Newport is the final port for two of the four vessels that went around the world with Captain Cook in the 18th century.

The Rhode Island Marine Archaeology Project now plans to continue its study of those transports we have already identified in Newport’s outer harbor; we also will continue to search for the remainder we think are still there. We particularly hope to determine which of them is HMB Endeavour.

The State of Rhode Island has taken positive steps to protect these historic sites, but it will take public involvement to monitor the waters of the outer harbor and to see that artifact seekers do not further vandalize the area. Unusual diving situations should be reported to me at 847-8951. The lost British ships of 1778, with Endeavour among them, are of international importance. With the help of the Point Association and residents of the area, we can share their history with the world.

—D. K. Abbass, Ph.D.
RIMAP Project Director

The Green Light ~ Summer 1999
Point Photographer

When Alexander “Sandy” Nesbitt was growing up in the '70s and '80s, the Point was a different place than it is now. Though his parents’ shop and home, the Third and Elm Press, remains a neighborhood fixture, the Point was more blue-collar back then. And, it seems to Sandy, there were kids running around, lots of them. He estimates that 25 kids his age were growing up within a few blocks of his home.

He recalls playing kick-the-can on Elm Street and capture-the-flag throughout the neighborhood, where teams from different streets would compete against one another and run through all the backyards in the area. He knew every square inch of every yard from Washington Street to the railroad tracks, from Marsh to Walnut streets.

Sandy grew up among artists. His father started and ran the graphic design program at U. Mass.-Dartmouth and his mother was busy running the press. But Sandy says this didn’t have much of an effect upon him. “I never paid any attention to the graphic design” all around him, the tall and lanky Sandy said.

Sandy originally went to the University of Maine to study engineering physics. While there he took some art classes and soon found himself in New York City at the Pratt Institute pursuing a BFA. He enrolled in a photography course and his interest blossomed.

Sandy credits the relationships he formed in childhood as the biggest asset to the art he now practices. Growing up with so many different types of kids instilled friendliness and the ability to get along with people that serves him well as a photographer. “I can hang out with anybody,” he claims.

In his photography Sandy tries to capture people living their lives. He wants to convey the things he sees about humanity to the rest of the world. A large factor in achieving this is having the trust of his subjects, which he gains by “hanging out” with them.

Sandy’s photography has taken him around the world. Most recently, he went to Egypt to photograph an archeological dig. His brother, Rupert, who draws these artifacts for the archeologists, helped Sandy get the assignment. While there, Sandy also took some pictures of the surrounding area, including the City of the Dead and the Great Sand Sea. He held an exhibit last December in a building on Thames Street, which he recently purchased, to bring his work home to Newport.

In addition to that exhibit, Sandy has shown his work at many other galleries in Rhode Island. He won first place in photography at the 1998 Newport Art Museum’s Annual Juried Members Show. Other credits include showings at the Hera Gallery in Wakefield, and in Newport at Channing Memo-

rial Church, the Congregational Church, DeBlois Gallery, Kulchur Modern Art, Island Art, and Ben Butler Gallery. He has been featured in Newport This Week and the Providence Journal-Bulletin.

Sandy’s work is not limited to photography. He has a graphic design business, and two inventions to his credit: a rear entry snowboard binding and an alternative CD case. With other local artists, he founded the Project One banner project, which last winter hung its second showing along America’s Cup Avenue. Sandy said that community artists are trying to provide for Newport “the push the arts have had in Providence.”

But photography is Sandy’s calling. He has taken a circuitous route to get where he is now. For years, photography was just an avocation, something he did on the side while concentrating on the steadier income of graphic design. He said that photography is a building process, learned by doing it. And now he feels comfortable enough with his skills to make a living from it. Judging by his most recent exhibit of photographs from Egypt, Sandy should do just fine.

— Brian Comfort

Fireman from Station 2

The March issue of the Green Light had hardly hit the “newsstands” when the editors received a telephone call with an identification of one of the firemen pictured in the page 4 photograph of Fire Station No. 2.

Ralph Plumb of the Brick Alley Pub, a Point Association member, called to say the fireman standing in the center of the photograph (at the right end of the line of men) was his great-grandfather, William Harrison Barker. Ralph’s mother, Sarah (Barker) Plumb, who currently lives at 9 Pine Street, spotted the picture of her grandfather when she opened her copy of the Green Light.

Ralph says Mr. Barker was a Civil War veteran, and in retirement he manned a railroad crossing shack which stood near the tracks that once ran down Long Wharf. His job was to manually raise and lower the crossing guard.

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I Remember

Twenty years ago this June, my husband, myself and two sons, ages 13 and 10 purchased 53 Washington Street. We tore out old plumbing, false ceilings, extra walls and bricked-in fireplaces for one month, and then let the experts take over.

Pete went back to work and I still had my teenage destroyer crew the rest of the summer. This is actually an article on “Hedge Pruning.” We chopped down a 15-foot privet (ligustrum) hedge to 18 inches – old hedges do benefit from drastic pruning. The bottom fills in the first two to three months. Ours was three feet tall again in one year and now stands about 4+ feet, wider at the bottom, narrower at the top to take full advantage of the sun. The best way to prune a hedge!

In closing – the week we opened up five fireplaces and were covered in soot mess, Mrs. Benson came over and offered us a swim from her pier. “You really shouldn’t subject your plumbing to all that coat dust.” The boys fell in love with Narragansett Bay, and Pete and I received a wonderful oral history of our new home and neighborhood those long summer evenings when we took our “first wash” from her pier. Thank you, and good-bye, Mrs. B.

—Toni Peters

From the First Ward

Dear Friends:

Lots of good things are happening in our part of Newport. The North End Development plan is well under way with near completion of the renovated shopping center. Other elements of the plan will be developed in the near future.

We are closely monitoring the turnover of the State Fishing Pier from the DEM to the Department of Economic Development. The fishermen’s rights to use the pier must be protected.

I’d like to take note of the change in leadership of the Point Association. Coles Mallory has done an outstanding job as president, and I’m sure Suzanne Varisco will do as well. Thanks to Coles, and welcome, Suzanne.

First Ward Councilman

The Point Association Membership Form

Name: __________________________ Phone: __________________________

Mailing address: __________________________

Fax: __________________________ E-mail (if applicable) ________________

Committees & Activities

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

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
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>June 18-20</td>
<td>Secret Garden Tour</td>
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<td>June 24</td>
<td>Point Picnic</td>
<td>6:00 PM ~ Anne Reynolds' 88 Washington Street (Rain date July 1)</td>
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<td>July 7</td>
<td>History &amp; Archives Meeting</td>
<td>9:30 AM Nancy Espersen's 27 Walnut St</td>
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<td>July 29</td>
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<td>August 1</td>
<td>St John the Evangelist Church</td>
<td>Thursday 10AM &amp; 6PM</td>
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<td>August 19</td>
<td>Point Association Membership Cocktail Party</td>
<td>Thursday 10AM, 6PM &amp; 10 PM Saturday 5 PM Sunday 9 AM, 10:30 AM, 3 PM</td>
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<td>Point Association Membership</td>
<td>6 PM Sanford-Covell Villa Marina 72 Washington St.</td>
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T.B.A. Free Cruise on Schooner Aurora from Goat Island ~ Invitations will be mailed