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The GREEN LIGHT

BULLETIN OF THE POINT ASSOCIATION
OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

Fall 2001

St. John's on the Point by Ilse Nesbitt, 1979

The
GREEN LIGHT

XLVI No. 3 Fall 2001

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Copies of the *Green Light* may be purchased for $1.00 at Bucci's Convenience Store, Poplar & Thames, and Aidinoff's Liquor & Gourmet Shop, Warner Street.

The Point Association

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; and promoting public policies that strengthen all of Newport's neighborhoods.

Executive Committee Officers

President, Richard Carrubba (847-5815)
First Vice President, Al Lowe (847-5853)
Second Vice President, Martha Marie Grogan (847-4443)
Recording Secretary, Carole Clark (849-5245)
Corresponding Secretary, Isabel Griffith (849-6444)
Treasurer, Hillar Sarepera (848-9906)

Meetings are generally scheduled for the first Monday of the month and are open to Association members. Please call Rich for time, date, and location.

From the Editor

In our last two issues, I have been pleased to highlight the contributions of our regular Green Light staff writers and workers. With the Fall/September issue, I would like to call your attention to the work of two guest authors. While Tony Gill ("Paint the Point") took time off from writing about art, to do some painting and teaching this summer, Point resident, Association member, and professional writer Kristina Baer stepped in and contributed an outstanding tribute to Ilse Nesbitt and her work in "Artists on Point." I hope you enjoy reading Kristina's article as much as I did. In a very different vein, Pointer Gail Gunning has penned a warm reminiscence of her colorful visitors from Japan. With the Black Ships Festival just concluded, this seems a fitting and timely addition to our regular fare. These two diverse pieces are also appropriate reminders that the strength of our *Green Light*, like the Point Association it chronicles, is the continuing support and commitment of talented Pointers, both near and far.

Suzanne

THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Neighbors:

Summer on the Point finds our neighborhood in the midst of change, even as we enjoy the season's many outdoor activities.

Construction is continuing on Washington Street, alongside the Goat Island causeway, and on Long Wharf; and the Van Zandt pier has had a facelift. Point properties continue to change hands and, as usual, several houses are being refurbished or renovated.

The Point Association is participating in several municipal projects: the sale of Potter School, the redesign of the Gateway Center, and modification of the America's Cup-Farewell Street intersection.

Recently, several Point residents have contacted me regarding the frequent and excessively loud noise impacting their areas of our neighborhood. In recognition of the noise problem, the City Council has authorized the formation of a task force to study the issue and make recommendations to eliminate or reduce disturbing noise throughout Newport. The Point Association has agreed to provide a representative to this important task force.

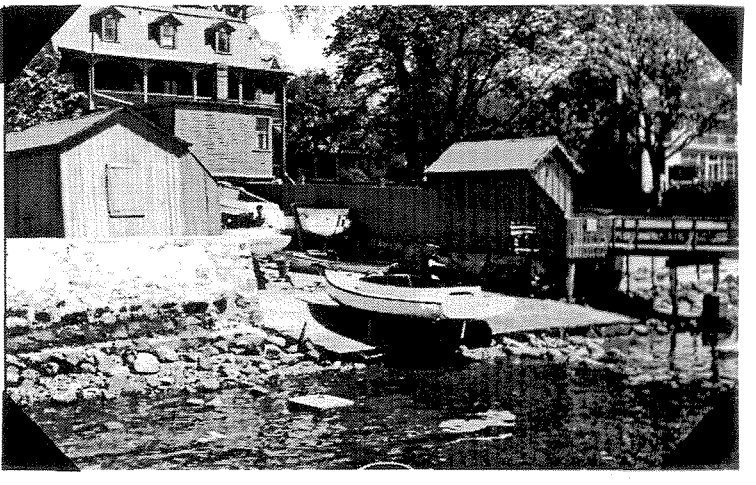
As a consequence of both my work with the Association and weather that is conducive to outdoor conversations, I continue to meet more of my neighbors. With each new acquaintance I am reminded of how fortunate we are to have such wonderful people living on the Point. Our neighbors are a diverse group of people, to say the least. And due to the constant changes in our neighborhood, it shouldn't be a surprise that, like the Point itself, our neighbors continue to change.

I urge you to take the time to meet your neighbors and, if they're new to the Point, welcome them to this wonderful section of Newport. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Rick

From Our Scrapbook



Can you identify this waterfront scene, photographed by William King Covell, May 23, 1937?

Report on the City

For this issue, the news seems to be things that are not happening. A surveying crew initiated a rumor that the **Walnut Street Bridge** was to be reestablished. City officials have said unequivocally that this is not true. The much-discussed dinghy docks are yet to be seen at **Elm Street Pier** (see Waterfront Report for details), and the proposals to build a hotel on Waite's Wharf were withdrawn. The **Yoga classes** that had applied to use Storer Park are not happening, nor are any other commercial uses occurring in our parks, that we know of (legally, at least). Nothing doing at **Potter School** now, but the City is scheduled to issue its Request for Proposals by the time you read this.

The City Council denied the application of the **Rhumb Line Restaurant** to change its zoning to allow the use of "mechanical devices" (i.e., pool tables and video games). At the same time, the menu was curtailed and hours of operation were shifted to those typical of drinking establishments. The Point Association took an active role in opposing this matter in the belief that this request would establish nonconforming use that is not compatible with any residential neighborhood.

Personally, because of the owner's longstanding compatibility with the neighborhood, it was with some regret that I voted to oppose this application, but early reports from neighbors indicated more noise late in the evening. Also, since the property continues to be actively marketed, grave concerns arose about the exploitation of the new nonconforming use by future owners. Once Zoning Officer Guy Weston recommended denial, the choice was clear. I should also mention that the PA explicitly stated that it was not opposed to ongoing restaurant activity on the premises, just the change to a tavern.

Hope you are all enjoying your summer.

John Spohn, City Liaison

Report from City Hall

It doesn't seem possible that my first term on the Newport City Council is nearing completion. In the November 6, 2001, city election you will be choosing a new City Council and School Committee for a three-year term. Although I am running unopposed, my name will still appear on the ballot. If you feel I have been an effective and responsive representative for the First Ward, I would ask for your support and vote on Election Day.

In the summer edition of the *Green Light* I reported on several Department of Transportation (DOT) projects affecting the First Ward. Additionally, the design committee for the **Gateway Center** project is examining two submitted proposals and will forward results to the City Council. The city administration will be preparing an RFP, with First Ward input, for proposals for the highest and best use for the **Potter School**. Work at the **State Pier** on Washington Street is ahead of schedule. A meeting with DEM officials, Point Association representatives, and city officials was held to review the site plans, landscaping, and new restroom facilities.

Other issues worth noting: Plans for the design of the **Ranger Road** property were reviewed and approved by the City Council on July 25 . The site plans are available at city hall planning department. The bid for restroom renovation at **Cardines Field** was awarded to the Damon Company. Work should be completed by the end of the summer. The City Council has asked the Waterfront Commission for the master plan of **Newport Harbor**. The re-paving of **Poplar and Chase Streets** should be done by early fall 2001. The public works staff will work on sidewalk improvements throughout the city. The clean city coordinator has put additional litter barrels at the **Elm Street Pier**.

As you can see there are several irons in the fire. I will continue to keep you informed of any projects that affect the quality of life in the First Ward neighborhoods. If you wish to speak to me on these or any other issues of concerns for the Point and the City in general, call me at 847-9122 or 847-5202 or e-mail rickfirstward@aol.com.

Rick O'Neill, Representative First Ward

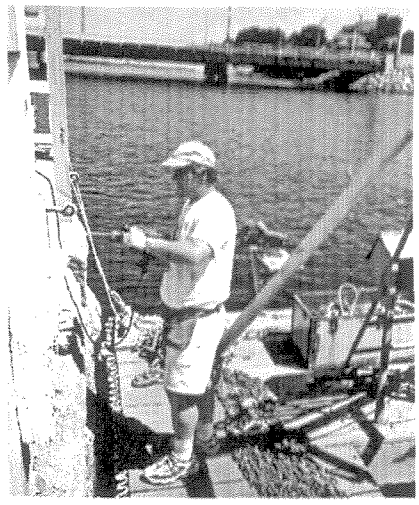
Harbor and Waterfront *Report*

Improvements to the Point waterfront can be seen at several locations.

American Shipyard. Construction projects we reported on in March are well underway and should be ready for the autumn service season, with public access items first. "Superyacht" construction has boomed globally, and with Newport's desirability as a destination, the shipyard will be in a better position to meet the growing demand for maintenance and repair of these vessels. The topless tugboat you may have noticed at the shipyard recently has been commissioned by Monster.com founder Jeff Taylor for conversion into a character yacht for private cruising and for use as an educational vessel by the Junior Achievement organization.

Elm Street Pier. Among the city officials who have guided waterfront improvement is Director of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Sue Cooper, who made a successful application for a federal grant under a new National Boating Infrastructure program administered by the State DEM. The grant covers 75 percent of the cost of qualifying projects and should benefit the city over the next three years. One of the first projects under this grant is the installation of floating docks at the Elm Street Pier. Although a set of docks had been donated, the cost of adapting them structurally was significant. New floats—a cost-effective alternative—will be built once the grant money is in place. This dock space, to be on the north side by the jog in the pier, will be for temporary tie-up of smaller craft for loading and unloading only.

Van Zandt Pier. Because this structure does not qualify for the grant program, the city has designated funds for much-needed repairs and scheduled an engineering assessment before next spring. Meanwhile, thanks to the efforts of the Friends of Van Zandt Pier working together with the city's Scott Wheeler, a summer repair effort was mounted to combat the combined effects of decay and vandalism.

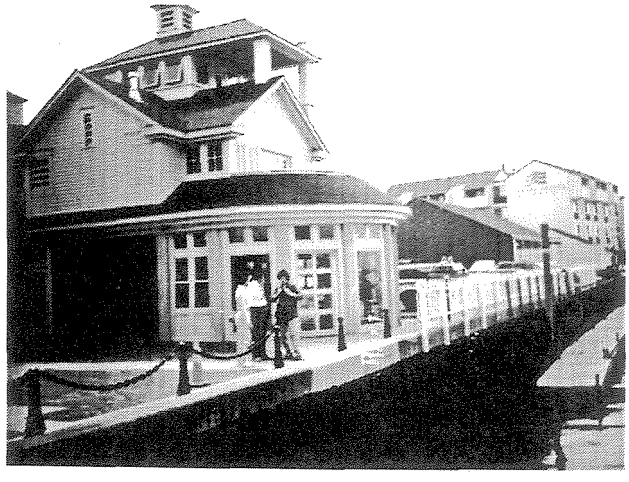


Michael Dennis-Bale of M.D.B. Marine Dock Builders repairing Van Zandt Pier

Perrotti Park. The new Harbormaster's Office was turned over to the City by Governor Almond at a recent ceremony. When you read this, the new facility will be in full operation, including a second-floor viewing deck that is open to the public and critically needed public rest rooms on the ground floor. Public dinghy docks will be added to this site next year.

There is room for improvement in other areas. For example, the driftways along Washington Street could benefit from better management. If you have views to express or information to provide about any harborfront activities, please send them in writing to my attention c/o The Point Association address on the back of this *Green Light.*

David Pedric, Chair



A new office for Newport's Harbor Master at Perrotti Park

To The Point

Horticulture Club

If gardening is a genuine interest, then this new club is for you! Join early—Membership limited. Call Nancy Quatrucci (846-2434) or Donna Carter (846-9478)

The Point Plant Sale

Thanks to a last-minute charge from Herb Rommel and the hard work of enthusiastic volunteers, a successful plant sale was held on May 26. Once again the location was Anita McAndrews' driveway, a lovely setting surrounded by ornamental trees and perennial gardens.

Early bird shoppers line up to purchase their new plants

If you had heard rumors that there would be no plant sale this year, you were almost correct. Herb agreed to chair the sale at the last minute. "At the very least, we are going to have some fun," he said. With less than a month to prepare, experienced pros from previous sales and some new, energetic first-timers worked well together. Indeed, we did have fun! The first customers crowded through the gate at 8:30 and we were very busy for two hours. The most knowledgeable shoppers were looking for choice plants contributed by gardeners throughout the Point. Others stocked up on annuals, herbs, lovely hanging baskets, house plants and an assortment of flowering shrubs and trees. By 11:00 we had reduced prices on the remaining plants by 50 percent; the bargain hunters took over as we welcomed neighborhood friends, dog-walkers, and baby carriages.

We had such a good time and the sale went so well that we are going to get an early start for next year. Reminders of the date (to be announced) and ongoing plans will appear regularly in the *Green Light*. We need volunteers! As it may not be possible to track down all of you who expressed an interest in the Plant Sale on your membership form, we ask that you drop a postcard to Isabel Griffith, 22 Walnut Street, or send an e-mail (igriffith@edu-directions.com). Make sure to include your phone number and/or e-mail address. A fall planning meeting may be scheduled. In the meantime, save your pots for next year and begin deciding what you would like to contribute: time, enthusiasm, hard work, and plants!

Generous donations of plants came from Broadway Florist, Carlone's Florist, Chase Farms, Inc., Chase's Greenhouses, Chaves Garden Center, DeCastro and Sons, Hoogendorn Nurseries, Bruce Howe, Island Garden Shop, James L. Maher Center, Moore Blooms, Portsmouth Nursery, The Potting Shed, Rhode Island Nurseries, Stop & Shop, and Water's Edge Florist.

Thanks also to volunteers David Aguiar, Betty Cares (publicity), Eleanore Flowers, Beth Graham, Diana Hepting, Sally MacKay, Marcia Mallory, Kimberly Murphy, Ilse Nesbitt and Karen Thompson.

Isabel Griffith

Membership *Report*

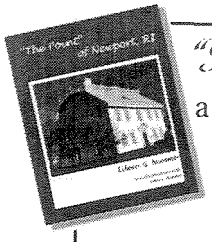
We are pleased to announce several new members since the June issue:

Christina and Robert Agnew
Jean Marie and Claude Aubriot
Kathy and Roger Devlin
Connie Heird
Mary C. Hudson
Kristen and Alex Lanio
Marion and Albert M. Lowe, Sr.
Peter McGeough
Elaine McGeough
Mrs. William A. Sherman

In addition, we offer our apologies for omitting seven Patron names from the June list:

Margaret and Robert Bonney
Marjorie and Don DeAngelis
Mr. And Mrs. Robert Galkin
Mr. And Mrs. Robert Goddard
Gail and Jim Gunning
Peter Martin
Mary and Hillar Sarepera

Judy Leet, Chair



"The Point" of Newport, RI
a pictorial history of Point Houses
by Eileen Nimmo
Now on sale at four island shops:
Island Books • Newport Book Store
Book 'Em • Newport Art Association
and from the author, who has generously offered to donate a portion of the proceeds to the Point Association.

Report on Underground Wires

Two notes since the last issue:

As a member of the **Gateway Center Committee**, I have made every effort to tie the development of the new Center together with an effort to put the 24,000 volt sub-transmission wires on Third Street underground. (According to information we've received there are conduits under Third Street, which can be used for this purpose.) Both developers making proposals for the Gateway site have been made aware that this is something the neighborhood would view very favorably.

PA member Mary Riggs of Farewell Street met with **U. S. Representative Patrick Kennedy** recently and presented the Point Association's case for putting these dangerous and unsightly sub-transmission wires underground. (In a nutshell, these wires are a fire hazard and a detriment to the area's tourist potential.) She reports that the Congressman was receptive. Kudos to Mary for her enthusiasm and initiative.

Al Lowe, Chair

Nominating Committee *Report*

The following Nominating Committee update has been provided by Rich Carrubba.

Elected Members:

Bart Dunbar, Chair
Marybeth Hunte
Mary Jane Rodman

Appointed Executive Committee Representatives:

Coles Mallory
David Pedrick

Proposed Officer Slate for 2001-2003:

First-Vice President, Al Lowe (presently serving as Acting First V-P)
Treasurer, Hillar Sarepera (incumbent)
Recording Secretary, Carole Clark (presently serving as Acting Rec. Sec.)

Names of the complete slate, including three proposed Nominating Committee members for 2001-2002, will be announced by post card prior to the Annual Meeting in October.

A still life composed of trash left behind by visitors to Storer Park

Fall Cleanup

Saturday, October 27
9 a.m.
Storer Park
(Washington & Bridge Streets)

Please bring rakes, trowels, clippers, gloves, etc.
We plan to clean and spruce up Storer Park and other areas of the Point. Refreshments will be provided for all the hard workers.
Our cleanup is a wonderful way for us to get to know each other better and,
at the same time, make our contribution to the beauty of the neighborhood we all love.
For further information, call
Coles or Marcia Mallory, 849-5659.

Point Association Transitions

Two changes have recently come about on the Point Association Executive Committee.

The office of Corresponding Secretary is now occupied by Walnut Street resident Isabel Griffith. Pictured here in front of her Point home, Isabel brings enthusiasm, energy, and lots of talent to her new post.

A second change comes about as our Membership Chair, Judy Leet, prepares to move to Florida. Her role in this crucial responsibility will soon be assumed by Patricia Carrubba, who has graciously volunteered.

Isabel Griffith, ready to work in the garden

Patricia Carrubba smiles for the camera

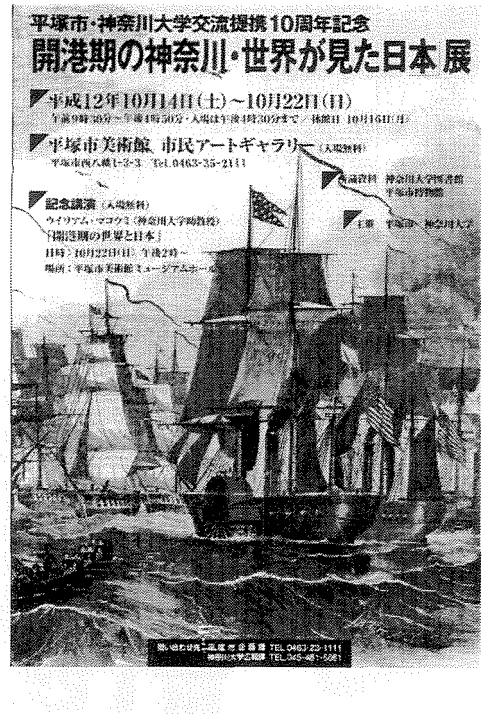
Visitors from Japan

by Gail Gunning

August 16, 2000—how well I remember this day. As my family and I were about to go out the door to celebrate my birthday, I noticed a slightly built Japanese man looking perplexed, while wandering around our neighborhood, and went outside to see if I could be of some assistance. He told me that he and his wife were here in Newport to find Commodore Perry's birthplace. I am ashamed to say I didn't know where it was.

After calling several neighbors unsuccessfully, I reached Joy Scott, who directed me to 31 Walnut Street. I don't know how I could have overlooked the prominent sign on Commodore Perry's birthplace during my 11 years on the Point. Putting dinner plans on hold, I took my surprise visitors to the Commodore's home, where the elation on their faces was beyond description.

When Yoshimi and Yasuko Sagara sent me a letter three months later, I understood the importance of their visit to this landmark. They had read a book by E.W. Williams, entitled *A Journal of Perry's Expedition to Japan*, which illustrates dozens of perfumes that were given as gifts to Japanese officials under Shogunate by Commodore Matthew Perry in 1854,when he came to open Japan to the rest of the world. Yoshimi, an Editor-in-Chief for a flavor/fragrance technical periodical, is searching for material that might be related to these perfumes. He emphasized how important it was for him to find their exact names in preparation for the 150th anniversary of Commodore Perry's arrival.



We continued to correspond, and I am chuckling now as I remember the many 4:00 a.m. faxes that arrived while my husband and I were sound asleep . . . business hours in Japan. When they returned to Newport in April 2001 to continue their research, Kay O'Brien joined us for dinner, bringing many items from her visit to Japan: beautiful paintings, serving dishes, and more. Our guests presented me with two beautiful copies of woodblock prints of the Tokaido Highway by Hiroshige Ando (1797-1858) and, in return, I gave them a Wedgwood plaque of Trinity Episcopal Church, where Commodore Perry was baptized. We had a delightful meal and wonderful camaraderie at the Pier restaurant, where Yoshimi asked our waitress if he could photograph the various entrée presentations. As I watched his keen interest in the final preparation of each dish, I remembered that this was his forte . . . fragrance and flavors.

The next morning, Yoshimi, Yasuko, and I walked over to 31 Walnut Street and received a warm welcome and tour by NRF curator Bruce MacLeish, who had recently moved into this gracious home with his family. Yoshimi was thrilled to learn of its history, to view the original plans and room layout, and to take many photographs. Next, we visited with Rowan and John Howard, who shared their knowledge of Point traditions and gave our guests an old volume of Commodore Perry's family history.

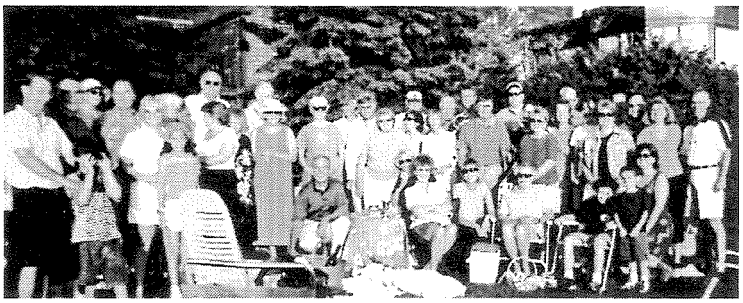
I was sad to say goodbye to this lovely couple, and our correspondence continues, as well as my offer of support with his quest. For the time being, Yoshimi is reading a Japanese translation of *Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan* by Francis L. Hawks, but unfortunately the perfume names are not given. I find his search to be a challenge for me as well and will continue this detective work until we find we can proceed no further. Should anyone have any thoughts or information on this subject, we would be most grateful for your assistance. I look back upon that evening almost one year ago and am thankful that I happened to be the person he found for assistance. Yoshimi and Yasuko have become my friends, and I hope they will remain so throughout our lives.

Special Events

by Patti Lowe

The Point Picnic

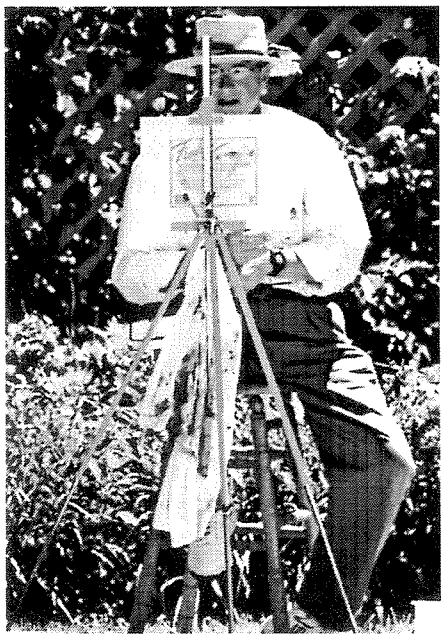
How much fun did people have at the annual Point picnic? How many people were there? A picture (this one taken by Sarah Gill) is, once again, worth a thousand words. Suffice it to say, it was a perfect evening enjoyed by a great crowd with lots of new faces and plenty of kids. All in all, a spectacular time was had by all. For her annual demonstration of hospitality and generosity, we can never thank hostess Ann Reynolds enough.



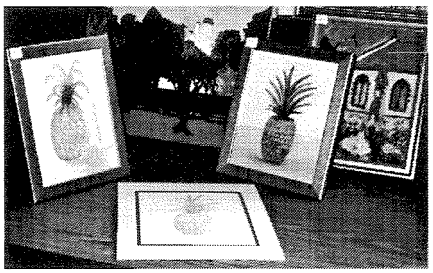
Well-fed Point Picnicers line up for the camera

Paint the Point

The second annual Paint the Point Art Exhibition and Sale was held on July 31 at St. John's Guild Hall. About 250 guests turned out to view the work of 20 emerging local artists ranging in age from under 7 to over 70 years at the conclusion of six weeks of art classes on the Point. Thanks to everyone who supported the event, including Newport Vineyards. A very special thank you to Tony and Sarah Gill for initiating this creative event—a welcome feature of our summer calendar and a growing tradition—and for their generous contribution of 25 percent of all art sales to the Point Association.

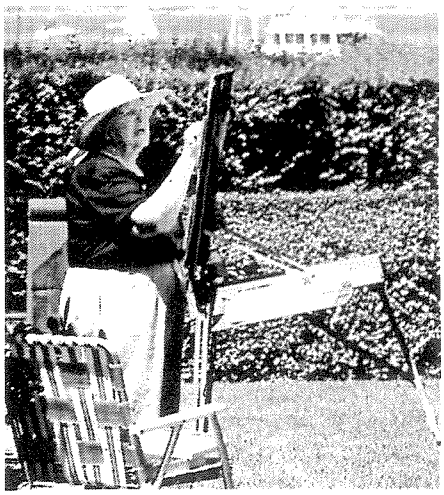


Student artist Dick Poholek (above) sitting down on the job.



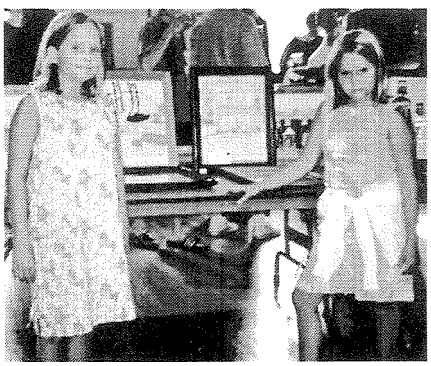
Above, Pineapples by Susanne Reid

Five-year-old Hannah MacAulay (below) of Glenwood Springs, Colorado, holds her drawing of a cat



Student Artist Angela Vars at her easel

Underwood School students Julia and Wesley Ritter, age 8, (below) with their work.



Art lovers also enjoy the refreshments

Gwen Behan: Memories of a Lifetime on the Point

"I can't believe it!" says Gwen Behan, looking back on a lifetime of living on the Point. "Every time I go by Callender School, I say, 'Where are the children?' They used to pile in there when I was a kid!"

During her 91 years, Gwen attended not only Callender School, but also Potter, Mumford, and Rogers. She has seen our community grow from the days of the streetcar line down Third Street, through the introduction of traffic lights in the area, to the Point of today. She shared some of her memories in an oral history a few years ago with Rowan Howard and Marjorie Magruder, and in more recent conversations with *The Green Light.* This article, based on her memories of life on the Point, follows one in the Spring 2001 issue that described the unusual livery stable and stray animal shelter that her father-in-law, Joe Behan, ran on Third Street in the early 1900s.

Gwendolyn Pike Behan, 2001

Gwendolyn Pike was born on Second Street, near where Jesting's grocery store used to be. The Pike family has lived in Newport since about 1690, for the most part on Washington Street; and today the John Pike house, on Washington near Walnut, bears the family name. Gwen has three children: Sister Mary Behan of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Father George Behan, pastor of St. William Church in Warwick, and Julianne Kelly of Fairhaven, Massachusetts, but she is the last of the Pike family.

Although Gwen has moved several times over the years, she has lived on the Point her whole life—except, that is, for a brief period immediately after she and George P. Behan were married in 1929. They moved into an apartment on Harrison Street in the Fifth Ward, but she found she wasn't happy to be away from her old neighborhood. Within several months they had moved back to the Point, this time to stay. Gwen and her husband moved to Third Street in 1938, just in time to experience the big hurricane of that year, and she has lived in that house ever since.

"Living in Newport has always been a joy," Gwen says. While growing up, she and her friends enjoyed playing in the park and listening to band concerts. "Everybody was neighborly. We didn't have TV or radio growing up," so youngsters had to make their own entertainment.

But she remembers there were rules for growing up on the Point, and one of them was that her mother expected her to be back in the house before it was too late. Evidently the deadline was well known, because in the evening the local policeman would come walking by the park and call out to them. "He'd say: 'Hey, you kids! You know what your mother says? You're nine o'clock in the house, not nine o'clock up in the park!' Boy, and we beat it."

Even later, when she was raising her children on Third Street, it was a safe and pleasant place for families to live. "It was wonderful. And somebody said to me, 'You let your kids go over to the playground?' I said, I *pushed* them over!"

One of her most striking memories is of a day at Callender School that still seems remarkable today. The children had the chance to listen to, and shake the hand of, a very special guest speaker: a man who had once shaken the hand of Abraham Lincoln. "I got in line," Gwen says, "and if it was the Pope I couldn't have been more pleased to shake his hand. I really was thrilled—I was just a little kid. Abraham Lincoln, he came alive to me." Even today she enjoys telling this story to visitors, who by shaking her hand are only two lifetimes apart from Abe Lincoln.

A more common memory for Gwen and her daughter Mary is one that many Pointers will find familiar: showing out-of-town visitors around Newport, especially the mansions and Ocean Drive. But after several decades, that can grow tiresome, she says. "If I see that Ocean Drive once more! If I had a penny for that—no, a nickel—Mary, we'd be in Florida now!"

Chief Machinist's Mate Thatcher Thayer Pike

"You know, what I miss is the Point Fair," says Gwen. "They don't have it any more. I know one time when it was in St. John's Hall, I made a cake, and it was a lovely looking cake. I brought it down and handed it to a man behind the counter in St. John's Guild Hall, and he said, 'Well, we ought to get a dollar and a quarter for this.' And I don't think he was being funny! Men, what do they know?"

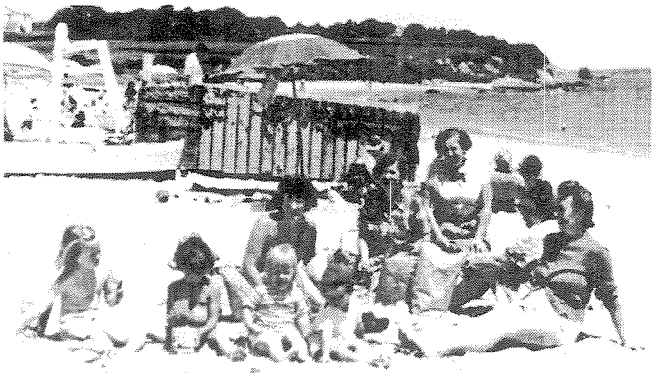
She remembers swimming off the Elm Street pier, which was then called City Pier. Girls swam in large dresses, but one day her sisters returned from a trip to Florida with the newest fashion—the first one-piece wool bathing suit she had ever seen.

But not all innovations immediately seemed to make sense. For example, she remembers seeing her first traffic lights down in New York City. "What do they need those for?" she thought. "I wonder where they got that idea? Probably from France."

Gwen with son George and her father on the porch at 29 Walnut, 1930

Gwen's father, Thatcher Thayer Pike, ran away to join the Navy in 1888 just before his sixteenth birthday, lying about his age in order to enlist. A photo from the time shows a good-looking young man with a long, stylish moustache. He became a Chief Machinist's Mate in the Navy, and after retirement ran the boilers on the ferryboat that traveled between Newport and New York. The boat came in at 9 o'clock in the evening, and when she would meet it "he always came off the boat with a bar of candy for me," Gwen recalls.

Gwen and her son George have fond memories of the many shops and stores that used to exist on the Point. Katzman's grocery store at Second and Walnut, for example, was a place where local residents could go for necessities and even to find credit during the difficult times of the Depression. "Things were very bad then," says Gwen, remembering that Mr. Katzman was always willing to help out a neighbor in need. "There never was a nicer man!"



Three of the Pike sisters, Gwen, Dorothy and Madeline (left to right) with their brood at Third Beach. circa 1951.

George enjoyed visiting several shops that sold children's favorites. Langley's candy store sold big lollipops for a nickel—a lot of money for a youngster in those days, but worth it. And Westall's on Bridge Street was the place for ice cream. "You never had to go off the Point, it was all there," says George. He even remembers walking down to the Gum Factory at the end of Third Street and eating the gum scraps the boys found on the ground. "And it was good!" he says with a smile.

Newport and the Point of today are quite different, Gwen says, largely because today's residents are a mobile, constantly changing population. "You knew everybody, mostly," she remembers. And yet Gwen herself is living testimony that in the midst of change there is still tradition and continuity. By shaking her hand, a visitor can reach back not only through American history to the days of Abraham Lincoln, but through nearly a century of her memories to an era when candy cost a nickel and traffic lights had yet to be invented.

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A Work of Joy: Ilse Buchert Nesbitt and the Third & Elm Press

Late on a warm June afternoon, I stop by 29 Elm Street to visit with Ilse Buchert Nesbitt at the Third & Elm Press. Bearing a tray of tea and biscuits, she invites me into her garden, where a treasure trove of perennials—heaths, heathers, a Mugo pine, a boxwood topiary, blueberry bushes, a rose bush, among others—basks in the filtered light. In this beautiful green space, I feel instantly refreshed. Newport's summer bustle recedes. The Point's calm gathers me in.

One of the Point's resident artists, Ilse has lived here for almost forty years. "This is a real neighborhood, one of the few left in the country," she comments. To her, what makes the Point so special is its size, its historic character, and, of course, the neighbors and friends who stop by to visit with her. As she works on the current year's selection of note-cards featuring Point and Newport scenes or plants and flowers found in her garden, she always makes time to answer questions about her work and the Press itself.

Ilse and her late husband, Alexander Nesbitt, founded the Third & Elm Press in 1965. From the beginning, they published limited edition books, as well as pamphlets, stationery, menus, and posters. Now, Ilse's note cards and unusual woodcut prints constitute an important part of the Press's annual output. Much of the work is on display in the street-level shop and in the recently opened second-floor gallery. In the shop, just inside the door, visitors can admire the Third & Elm's workhorses—an 1830 Acorn Press, the hand press whose distinctive shape is captured in the Press logo, and an 1897 Golding platen press.

In the last ten years, two retrospectives honored the Third & Elm Press. The first took place at the Redwood Library in 1991; the second, at Brown University in 1996. Shows of Ilse's woodcut prints have also been organized at galleries and libraries in the United States (Douglass College, New Brunswick, New Jersey; Mount Wachusett Community College, Gardner, Massachusetts; Deblois Gallery, Newport, Rhode Island) and in Germany (Staats- und Unversitätsbibliotek, Hamburg; Galerie Mare Balticum, Kiel; Galerie L9, Oberursel). Thanks in large measure to Alex and Ilse's shared vision and to their painstaking commitment to each step of the printing process, the Third & Elm Press today occupies a place of distinction among the ranks of small independent presses.

On June 2 this year in the Third & Elm gallery, with her sons and a group of friends, Ilse celebrated the publication of the Third & Elm Press's most recent limited edition book, *Steigendes, Neigendes Leben* (Rising and Ebbing Life). Drawing upon her love of poetry, her skills as a printer, and her artistic gifts, Ilse began to work on the book in 1997, although she had been "stewing over it" for years. In concept and execution, it epitomizes her development as an artist and printer, representing both an astonishing technical achievement and a breathtaking artistic accomplishment. How *Steigendes, Neigendes Leben* came to be is a story that begins with Ilse's discovery of woodcut and book design in 1955.

Ilse at work on one of the presses in her shop

Born in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1932, Ilse Buchert lived in Japan until 1947, when her family returned to Germany and settled once again in Frankfurt. At the university in 1953, she started out as an art history and archeology major, but soon decided that she preferred making

art to talking about it. By chance, once she enrolled in art school in Hamburg, she discovered woodblock printmaking, for which she felt an immediate affinity.

Not long after, she read an article about illustrator Gerhard Marcks and printer Richard von Sichowsky, collaborators in the production of a book illustrated in woodcuts. "Book design and illustration, that was exactly what I wanted," Ilse says today. To pursue this interest, she persuaded von Sichowsky to let her study with him and, over the next several years, mastered printing techniques, book design, and woodblock printing.

A page from Steigendes, Neigendes Leben

In 1960, calligrapher, typographer, and book designer Alexander Nesbitt was teaching typography and graphic arts at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence. Seeking an assistant, he contacted von Sichowsky, who recommended his star, Ilse Buchert. Although her first year at RISD was intended to be the first stage of a trip around the world, she stayed on as Alex's assistant, working with him for the next five years.

Having decided to start their own press, Ilse and Alex found and purchased the Gideon Spooner house at 29 Elm Street in the summer of 1965. There they set up shop and, thanks to an 1830 Acorn Press, a hand press provided by Fisher Benson, produced their first book, *The Fig Tree*, by American poet S. Foster Damon. Married in 1966, the Nesbitts collaborated over the next few years on a series of limited edition projects. For each of these, Ilse created monoprint woodcuts. Then, in the early 70's she began to experiment with color and inking techniques in her woodcuts. In time, she perfected a way to create shading and backlighting, effects more commonly associated with watercolor than with woodcut. Thanks to this process, she began to produce multicolor woodblock prints, which she sold in the shop and in 1988 produced a delightful book on her garden. With its colored woodcut illustrations, *My Garden* is a precursor to *Steigendes, Neigendes Leben*.

Steigendes, Neigendes Leben comprises twelve poems by twelve 19th and 20th century German poets, including Goethe, Eichendorff, and Hölderlin. Organized around the theme of seasonal change, the texts offer compelling commentary on the passage of time, on the ebb and flow of life. The German text of each poem was written out in informal Gothic script, then cut with its illustration into a single block of maple, and printed onto paper. Some of the woodcuts pick up a central image from the poems they illustrate. Others represent land- or skyscapes. All interpret in color and line the poet's vision of a world in transition. For the non-German speaker, Ilse has provided facing-page English translations of each poem.

One hundred copies of the 32-page book were produced on the Press's 1897 Golding platen press and hand-bound with a cover of paper, also made by Ilse. A portfolio of the woodcuts, printed on paper made by the artist, is also available in an edition of twenty numbered and signed copies. Each woodcut is also available as a matted print, numbered and signed. More information about the book, print-, and papermaking processes at the Third & Elm Press is available at the Press's web site, www.thirdandelm.com.

As the light fades from her garden, Ilse points out the sparrows nesting in one of her two birdhouses. "That's another thing about the Point today," she says with a smile. "There are new families moving in, many of them with young children. This is nice to see."

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Windows to the Past

When the settlers of Newport began building houses, window glass was still a relatively new technology. Necessary for ventilation and light, windows formerly took the form of small slits, left open in the summer or covered with drapery in the winter. The ability to fill these openings with a transparent, weather-tight material revolutionized the building trade, altering the form and function of houses. Windows became larger and more prominent, and by the Georgian period, they became essential architectural design elements, providing symmetry and balance to the facades of buildings. People located furnishings and interior decorations within houses to take best advantage of the light and air allowed by larger windows and adjustable casements and sash.

POINT OF FACT

The thick "bulls eye glass" often found in transom windows over doors is from the center of sheets of spun glass, where the glass blower's pipe met the spinning platform. Also, look for concentric ripples or circles on your window panes to see if they are spun glass.

There were limits to this technology, however. In the 17th and 18th centuries, most windows were glazed with spun glass. Molten glass was blown from a tube onto a spinning platform. Centrifugal force spread out and flattened the glass into circular sheets. Glaziers found that these sheets could be cut most efficiently into small diamond-shaped panes and mounted between lead strips in small, usually vertical, casement windows, which swung open like doors. As tastes changed, casement windows gave way to double-hung windows with rectangular panes of glass. The technology improved, panes of glass grew larger, and "twelve-over-twelve" sash (twelve panes of glass in the top and bottom sash) became eight-over-eight and six-over-six into the 19th century.

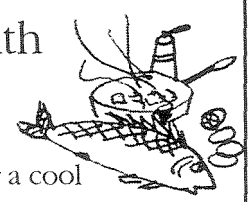
Many of these early windows survive intact on Newport's colonial-era houses. They are important architectural elements, and many homeowners consider it a point of pride that their windows are twelve-over-twelve. However, these homeowners have also discovered that these windows, though weather-tight by eighteenth century standards, are less than efficient when it comes to keeping out the cold today. The Historic District Commission feels that storm windows are appropriate, provided they protect the original windows rather than replace or obscure them. It is never appropriate to remove, replace, or alter an intact period window. Storm windows made of aluminum or other synthetic materials are also not recommended.

One storm window solution, utilized by the Newport Restoration Foundation, is to mount a piece of glass or plexiglass in a wooden frame, which can be secured to the exterior window frame using custom-made hooks or mounts that are minimally invasive. Weatherstripping can be used to create a tighter seal, but it should be replaced often. The NRF also utilizes an innovative interior storm window system that is virtually invisible from the exterior. These are available through Petit Industries of Biddeford, Maine (800-947-3848 or www.petit-industries.com). For more information, contact the NRF, the Newport Historic District Commission at City Hall, or a building professional.

Favorite Recipes

by Lois Dickison

Pork Tenderloin with Apple Cider



Here's a tasty seasonal dish for a cool autumn evening.

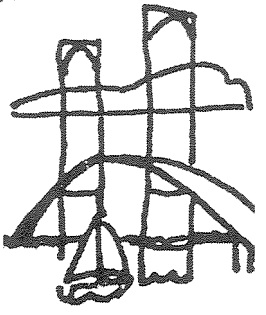
Trim off any fat from the tenderloins. Dredge with flour, salt, and pepper. Saute in a little butter and oil in a large pan till brown on all sides. Reduce heat and pour in apple cider. Cook till done (about 45 minutes), basting with cider frequently.
Slice and serve with roasted vegetables.

To roast veggies, toss carrots, brussels sprouts, butternut squash, peppers, onions, etc, with oil, kosher salt, and ground pepper. Roast in a 400 degree oven till tender (20 to 40 minutes).

A Look at the Yacht Clubs of Newport

Newport has three yacht clubs, each with a distinctive personality.

The most prestigious is, of course, the New York Yacht Club Harbour Court, located in Newport in the former summer home of the Brown family, and headquartered in Manhattan at 37 West 44th Street. Belonging to the New York Yacht Club is a bit of a status symbol, but the club truly offers many privileges to its members: a beautiful location with the best view of Newport harbor, two restaurants—one casual and one very elegant, rooms for guests, launch service, etc. The Club is also active in running many racing events and has a very developed junior sailing program.



The Ida Lewis Yacht Club, named after the famous lighthouse keeper, is the cute little house at the end of a long pier on Wellington Avenue. Ida Lewis is also an exclusive club but with a more local flavor. Chances are that if you have a boat in the harbor, you will know a lot of the members, which is not necessarily the case with the New York Yacht Club. Ida Lewis does not have a formal restaurant but offers "Grill Nights" to its members, a chance to bring your own food and have it cooked in front of you in a casual and relaxed atmosphere. Ida Lewis is also active in organizing and running many regattas, as well as junior programs.

The Newport Yacht Club can be described as the "blue collar club." Located on Long Wharf, it offers parking—a rare commodity in the summer—and has a nice bar with a deck on the first floor, but no restaurant. The club also offers dockage, pump out facility, and youth sailing programs. The Newport Yacht Club organizes some local races and short-handed events, such as the Newport Solo Twin Race and Bermuda One Two.

To join any of these yacht clubs, one must first be sponsored by members, and then the application must be reviewed and approved by the club board. For information contact these numbers: New York Yacht Club (401) 846-1000 or (212) 382-1000; Ida Lewis Yacht Club (401) 846-1969; Newport Yacht Club: (401) 846-9410.

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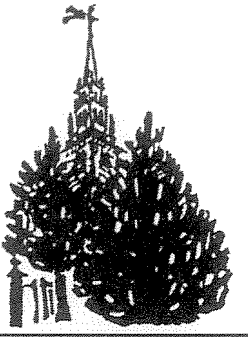

Pointers in the News

by Liz Mathinos

Anita Raphael has written a series of informative articles on the history of various Newport landmarks for Børn ads in the *Providence Phoenix*. Featured weekly, these articles on Washington Square, Brenton Point State Park, etc., are wonderful reading. Be sure to look for them!

Newport This Week columnist Sylvia Smith reviewed the exhibit of Christopher Benson's latest work, a folio of "16 Paintings of California" at the Redwood Library. Something to look forward to will be a Benson family show at the Virginia Lynch Gallery in the Fall.

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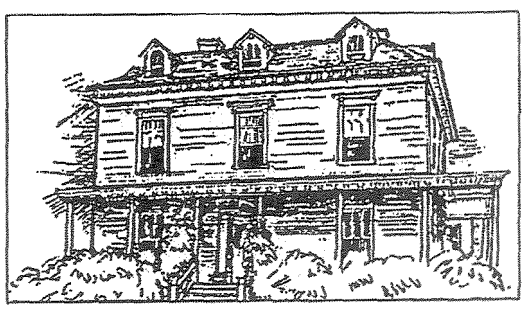

The Nina Lynette Home, founded in 1905, is a private non-profit boarding home for elders.

Room, Board and Housekeeping are provided in this stately Victorian home in Newport's historic "Point" neighborhood.

For information about rates and availability please call:

848-7603 or 846-9276

According to an article in the *Newport Daily News*, Jean-Pierre Mouligné has formed a partnership with Aerodyne Industries of South Africa to market and sell high performance sailboats and other products in the United States.

Wanton Chase's memories of his early boyhood years living on Rose Island with his grandfather, the lighthouse keeper, were chronicled in a wonderful article in the *Newport Daily News*. Mr. Chase was honored by the Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation at their opening day celebration. A collection of stories about Mr. Chase's life at the lighthouse will be published by the Foundation.

Eileen Nimmo has published *The Point*, a limited edition book of historic houses, which was featured in articles in the *Newport Daily News*, *Newport This Week*, and the *Providence Journal*. Featured are many different houses with interesting histories, whose stories are a welcome addition to local lore (see announcement on page 6).

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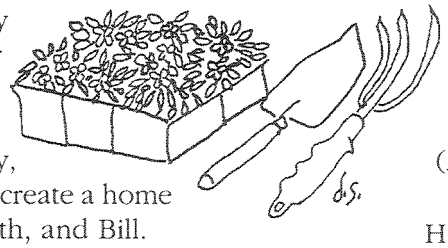
A Gardener Who Has a Passion for Iris

Herb and Mary Rommel moved to the Pitt's Head Tavern on Bridge and Second Streets in 1969—long before many of us arrived on the Point. They appreciated the incredible architecture, recognized the challenge of maintaining Newport's history, and welcomed the opportunity to create a home for their three children: Vicki, Beth, and Bill.



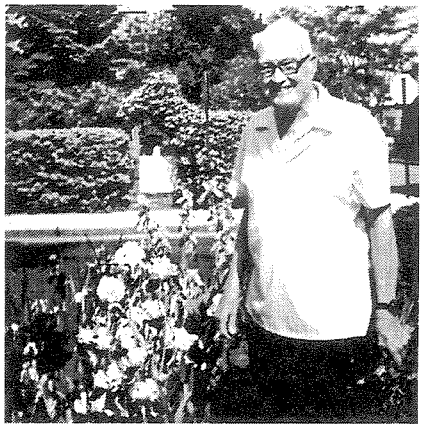
They began gardening immediately. First, Mary planted her faciated willow and dwarf fruit trees: apple and cherry. Then Herb planted raspberries along Bridge Street to discourage two-legged and four legged residents from cutting across his lawn. The iris plantings started with a friend who collected Naval Postmarks, as did Herb. He was an iris propagator and sent Herb a collection as a housewarming gift. Herb planted them all, and they grew happily and splendidly. He was hooked.

Many years ago, I worked with Herb one spring, as he dug his iris after they had bloomed so spectacularly. That is when you dig up any that have risen to the surface to tell you it's time to separate and replant. The part of the rhizome that bloomed is pared away, as it will never bloom again. The rest is treated with a fungicide, if necessary, and replanted. There are basically two kinds of iris, bearded and non-bearded. They grow from 5" to 40" in height. The shorter the iris, the earlier the bloom, very much like tulips.

Herb probably has 200+ varieties of iris in his garden. Many he has hybridized himself but not registered. "A lot of paperwork is involved in that process."

Any Pointer who has iris in the garden and participated in the Point Plant Sale or the Secret Garden Tour probably grows Herb's iris. I don't know a more sharing gardener. His most important advice is, "Grow plants that like your area." (Zone 6)

Herb lost Mary this past winter, and so now, in addition to his specialty, the iris ("more bang for the buck"), he also tends her favorite violets—red and variegated white—with great care. Stop by for a colorful view and a friendly chat.



Plant Sale Chairman Herb Rommel among his iris during the Secret Garden Tour

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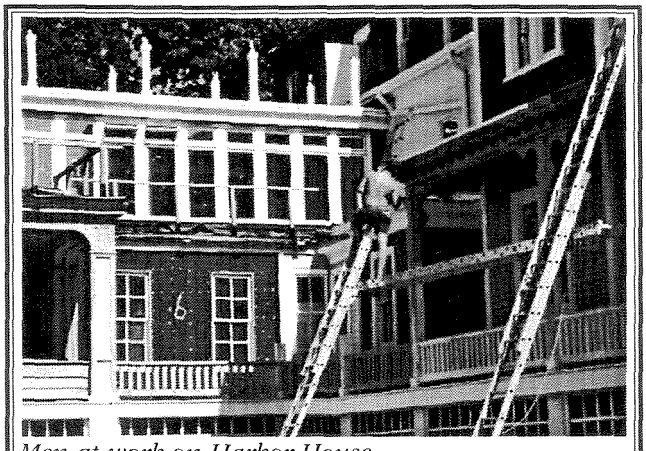
The Inquiring Photographer

by Sarah Gill

Although the Point Association does not sponsor the Secret Garden Tour, the Point's many gardeners open their gates to this annual event each summer. A particularly endearing pair of visitors on tour this year, Kate Mouligné and young Antoine, stopped in one beautiful garden to pose for the camera.



Men at work on Harbor House

Harbor House

a planned community for seniors—sponsored by Star of the Sea, a non-profit corporation—is now accepting applications from prospective residents.
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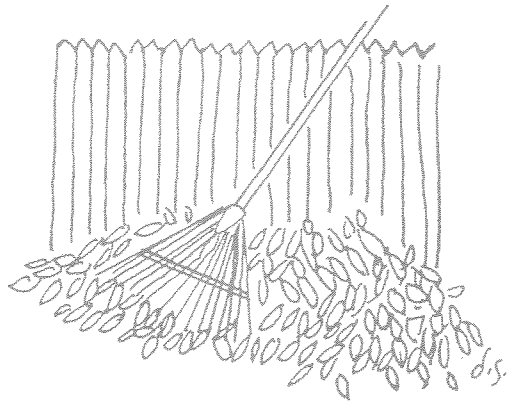

Fall Events

Annual Meeting, **St. John's Guild Hall ..... Thursday, October 18, 7:00 p.m.**

Fall Cleanup, **Storer Park ..... Saturday, October 27, 9:00 a.m.**
Details on page 7

Halloween Parade, **Battery Park ..... Sunday, October 28, 2:30 p.m.**

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