The GREEN LIGHT

Bulletin of the Point Association of Newport, Rhode Island

Winter 2001

Old Glory Displayed on the Point in September by Kate Mouligné
Greetings from the Editor

As another year closes, The Green Light is grateful for an enthusiastic editorial, production, and writing staff of more than 20 volunteers—both veterans and new recruits—contributing new feature columns, more photographs, an updated bookkeeping system, and computerized archives. To our readers, the most noticeable addition is our multi-talented layout artist Patty MacLeish, who moved onto the Point just last year and rolled up her sleeves. We are grateful to Patty for the generosity of her spirit and the quality of her work. Moving toward the holiday season with its Chanukah menorahs and Christmas lights, we are sobered by the tragedies of September and the new threats materializing almost daily. We are also grateful, however, for the freedom to worship as we choose and express our opinions openly, whether to affirm or question. Kate Mouligné’s splendid cover picture reminds us of the symbol of those freedoms. With this gratitude in mind, your Green Light wishes you a blessed, peaceful, and brighter new year.

Suzanne Varisco

The Green Light

Winter 2001

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.

The Green Light

Winter 2001

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Walking on the Point ......................... Kay O’Brien

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.
Dear Neighbors:

Having just completed one year as your Point Association president, I believe it is appropriate to share with you my perspective of the state of our community. Overall, our neighborhood is withstanding the numerous pressures associated with Newport’s ever-changing environment.

The Point continues to attract new residents who are seeking a relatively tranquil residential neighborhood consisting of a diverse population residing in well-kept properties, all in close proximity to the center of Newport with its attendant commercial, cultural, and recreational activities.

However, there are serious issues facing our neighborhood, of which Property Taxes, Nuisance Noise, and Apathy immediately come to mind.

As a member of a Special Tax Commission formed by the Newport City Council to increase city revenues without increasing property taxes, I have been participating in many meetings to address this issue. Although several recommendations have been presented, at this time the outlook is not promising. And, with the imminent completion of the ongoing citywide property re-evaluation, I anticipate serious potential repercussions related to our property taxes.

With respect to bothersome noise, in my previous letter I informed you of a special task force formed by the Newport City Council for the purpose of proposing recommendations to eliminate or substantially reduce our noise problems. Bothersome noise is becoming more of a problem for Point residents than ever before. As the Point Association representative on the task force, I’ll keep you apprised of our progress.

If you share in my concerns regarding these issues, it’s time for you to get actively involved with your Point Association. As a start, make your position on these matters known in writing to me or to any of the other members of the Executive Committee. My mailing address is 123 Washington Street, and my email address is richardcarrubba@msn.com.

I’m counting on your support. Thank you.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Point Association Elects Officers

At its annual meeting in October, attending members elected a slate of three officers to a term of two years:

Carole Clark, Recording Secretary
Al Lowe, First Vice President
Hillar Sarepera, Treasurer

Al and Carole, who have been performing these roles as appointees, were elected to their first terms. Hillar, who assumed this post in October 1999, was re-elected to his second term.

In addition, three nominating committee members were re-elected to a second one-year term.

Following the business meeting, President Rich Carrubba introduced the Aquidneck Island Land Trust's Land Protection Director, Ted Clement, and Trustee Sam Howell, who serves on the Board's Land Management Committee and chairs the Merritt Neighborhood Fund. After providing an overview of the Trust, the presenters discussed its Acquisition and Stewardship programs. The Trust's purpose is “to provide modest ($100 to $2,500) grants to the Island's residential neighborhood groups to support the preservation of small open spaces, which strengthen their community identity and natural character, and to model the ethic of land conservation and stewardship through community volunteerism.”

Carole Clark, Recording Secretary (2001-2003) Carole (BS, UMass; MBA, Lesley) has done technical writing, public relations, and marketing for a Fortune 500 company in Massachusetts and currently works part time at Middletown Cruise and Travel. Here on the Point, the Clarks enjoy owning and operating their successful Elm Street inn. Carole has served as acting recording secretary since April 2000.

Al Lowe, First Vice President (2001-2003) Al Lowe attended Princeton University and has a background in writing and advertising. He is the author of 4 books and is currently working on a children's CD. Al, a Bridge Street resident, chairs the Underground Wire Committee and has served as acting 1st v-p for the past year.

Report on the City

One issue coming over the horizon during this time of otherwise muted activity is the dreaded property tax revaluation. We were all aware of the folk canvassing the city as part of the every-decade process ensuring that the valuation of our properties stays in proportion with contemporary selling prices. And those prices are often a topic of sidewalk discussions since they have risen sharply of late.

But this often misunderstood process need not be dreaded. As a former municipal treasurer in New York State, I will try to put it in a nutshell. For better or worse, operation of the city is primarily funded by a tax levied in proportion to the value of one’s property. Each year the city hashes out a budget that demands a certain amount of revenue be raised by that tax. The revenue number is divided by the total of the assessed values of all properties in the city (about $1.75 billion at present) to determine the tax rate. Residential property owners simply multiply the assessed value of their property times the rate to determine their tax bill for that year.

There are a few other salient points. First, the assessed valuation is not the expected selling price for a property but a fraction of the price, about 60 percent. Second, increases in city budgets are capped by state law, so the total revenue they must raise cannot increase more than 5 or 6 percent from year to year, if I remember correctly. And third, through a series of fortunate one-time circumstances, the city currently enjoys a budget surplus which would mitigate the need for a significant increase in property tax revenue next year.

Even if property values have risen 50, or even 100, percent in the last ten years, as long as most properties have done so equally, any given owner’s share of the total assessed value of the city property tax bill remains essentially constant. So if the city won’t have to raise much more revenue, and your share of the total assessed value hasn’t changed a lot, your tax bill won’t either.

It is said that no good deed goes unpunished and that is the only potential wrinkle in the scenario I have just laid out. If the Point, by virtue of our individual and collective efforts to beautify our neighborhood, has elevated its property values more than other parts of the city, then our share of the property tax will be higher as well, and that could mean increased tax bills.

I have been in contact with the city and am trying to arrange a neighborhood Q&A session with Mr. Booth, our Tax Assessor, to help us interpret the emerging property assessment picture sometime before the holidays. Once the assessments are published in January, there will be opportunities for property owners to inspect the maps and tax rolls to judge the fairness of the assessments of comparable properties and file a grievance requesting adjustment of the value, if they so desire. This is an important opportunity because that assessment will apply to the next decade of tax years.

John Spohn, City Liaison

Report on Underground Wires

I want to thank Peter Martin for the heads up regarding Cox Communication’s new policy of putting a separate and individual overhead wire into every unit of every multiple-unit dwelling; whenever new tenants move in and request cable connections. Peter stopped Cox from adding new wires at his house this week and insisted that the service man stay with the existing single wire, as before.

Although I have left a voice message at Cox, requesting further information about this new “policy,” I have not received a response, as yet. I suggest that everyone who owns a multiple-unit building on the Point—or lives near one—call Cox at 401-821-1919 and ask to speak to someone with decision-making authority. Be sure to let this person know that you are opposed to additional overhead cable wires in your neighborhood and prefer to see only one cable wire connecting each multiple-unit structure.

I’ll continue to report on this troubling development as new facts emerge, so stay tuned.

Al Lowe, Chair
Report from the State House

The area of State Government that I get the most inquiries about is the Department of Transportation (DOT). With that in mind I thought an update on several projects would be appropriate. The right lane is closed on the Newport Bridge, while crews repair the grates. Work should be completed in December. The design is almost complete for the turn-off lane from Farewell onto America's Cup, including utility work and lane widening, sidewalk upgrading, and landscaping.

A “Stakeholders” meeting, including the Point Association, is scheduled for early November to discuss several traffic-flow improvement projects, which will have public hearings in January. Three of these projects are the Newport Bridge ramp, Connell Highway to West Main Road, and realignment of Connell Highway with East Main Road. The Rhode Island Bridge and Turnpike Authority is funding the design for the Newport Bridge ramp project, which is expected to take a year. The design of the realignment project is being discussed with the Middletown Town Council. I will keep you updated about starting dates.

In an emergency project around the off ramps of the Newport Bridge, DOT has been removing reeds from the swales to reduce the flooding of roadways and homes in the area. This unfunded project has met with several setbacks, but DOT will continue no matter what. Although the swales have produced more material to be removed than originally estimated, proper procedures are being followed and disposal sites identified.

Admiral Kalbfus Road is scheduled for sidewalk and ADA work, along with repaving, from the rotary to One Mile Corner and out West Main Road to Two Mile Corner. Design is funded for 2002, and the project is scheduled for 2003.

I would like to close by saying that I have enjoyed the Point Association meetings. They are always informative, and the people are not shy about voicing their opinions. With redistricting looming on the horizon, I hope to continue serving my Newport communities.

Bill Murphy, State Representative

Report from City Hall

Seasons Greetings and Best Wishes for a healthy and prosperous New Year.

As we approach the New Year and the start of the next Newport City Council three-year-term, it is important that we continue working together to improve the quality of life in our great city. Newport has many opportunities to improve traffic flow away from precious neighborhoods; and there are many projects on the drawing board, which will impact the northern section of the city, especially the Point. The development of the Ranger Road project and the highest and best use of the Gateway Center property are works in progress that we all need to plan properly.

Although our slowing economy and the troubles our nation is facing will dictate how we proceed and what timetables the state will follow on road projects, I am committed to working diligently on your behalf as an effective councilor. Together, we will strive to find alternative sources of revenue that will provide tax relief in our local and state budgets and take the burden off real estate property taxpayers.

The challenges we face can be overcome, if we all continue to be active and involved in our community. I appreciate your support, which enables me to continue as your City Council representative for the coming three years. I welcome your calls and participation as we plan together to make Newport a better community for everyone. You can reach me by phone at 847-9122, e-mail rickfirstward@aol.com, or stop by for a visit at my home at 11 Garfield Street.

Rick O’Neill, First Ward City Councilor

The Green Light Winter 2001
Beautification Committee Report
Successful Fall Cleanup

On October 27, a total of 25 neighbors gathered in Storer Park for the annual fall cleanup, including Hyatt Hotel employees and the young men of Katzman Place. The group planted 300 bulbs provided by the city and removed 20 large yard bags of weeds, which were then carted away in city trucks. Scott Wheeler informs us that the city will shortly plant 2 new elm trees in the north west corner of the park to replace the evergreens that were lost to disease.

Marcia and Coles
Mallory, Co-Chairs

History and Archives Report

We have an ever-growing and exciting collection of Point memorabilia. Now our goal is to “collect the collections” in one spot, so everyone can enjoy and add to them. Our group has been promised a home in Harbor House where everything can be kept together, properly filed and safe. Hopefully, this will also include space for gatherings and good times. There are many aspects of History and Archives, and we’ll get out the word when we’re moved and the fun begins. Meanwhile, keep collecting photos, clippings, etc., from the present and past. For information or to get your name on the list, call Kay O’Brien at 847-7311 or Bill Hall at 846-4159.

Kay O’Brien, Coordinator

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Membership Committee Report

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Amy Garrison and Thomas Emmett
Susan and Joseph Gray
Jessica and Jim Hagen
Douglas Howard
Amity and Benjamin Jackson
Pat and Fred Ludwig
Laura and Geoff Marshall
Marcia and Michael McHugh
Linda and David Nathanson
Christopher Scott
Frank Sheekey
Georgiana and Haraldur Sigurdson
Joan and Michael Simmons
Judith and Neal Smith

Patricia Carrubba, Chair

Louise Sherman, Point Historian

Sadly, Louise died in September. Born on Hawthorne, now Van Zandt Avenue, and later living at Third and Pine Streets, Louise spent her entire life here on the Point, going to our early schools, always an active parishioner at St. John’s Church, and proud to be called a Point Hummer.

Louise was a researcher, writer, and collector, who spent many hours copying early land records at the Historical Society and writing wonderful in-depth stories of people and places that make up the history of our neighborhood. Local garage sales added to her Point memorabilia. While walking the Point, Louise carried her camera to document changes, and she shared her stories with everyone she met. Edith Ballinger Price, our first Green Light editor, was a close friend; and those early copies of the bulletin carry many of Louise’s stories.

One by one, her photos, clippings, and scrapbooks of Point people and activities arrived at my back door over the past ten years. Now, they are part of our Point Association Archives, and each holds memories for us to treasure.

Louise will be missed everywhere: sitting on a bench at Battery Park, standing in front of a house telling its history. She is well remembered by the friends she left behind and will continue to be remembered—for years to come—by many others who never knew her, thanks to her legacy of “The Louise Sherman Collection.”

Kay O’Brien

Holiday Gathering
St. John’s Guild Hall
Sunday, December 16, from four to six
Arts and Crafts Sale to benefit St. John’s Church
Carolining
Dessert Exchange (Bring your favorite to share)
Beverages will be served.

The Green Light Winter 2001
It's official; the Point Association will join Harbor House in its new quarters. Following a formal vote by the board of its parent organization, Star of the Sea, Harbor House has extended an invitation to the Point Association to occupy space in the newly renovated buildings. One of the early supporters of the project, the Point Association will share office space in the main building and be provided with secure storage space for its invaluable historical archives. In addition, communal space will be available for meetings upon request. On behalf of the Point Association, The Green Light wishes to thank Star of the Sea for this generous invitation. We look forward to meeting our new neighbors and working together in the months and years ahead. A proud new chapter for all.

Mary Ferrazzoli Pocket Park

Plans to create a pocket park at the end of Washington Street/Long Wharf were discussed at a Waterfront Commission workshop in September. Interested groups attending were Friends of the Waterfront, who have long planned a park dedicated to former president, Mary Ferrazzoli; the group representing the historical Washington's Landing site; Fall River Line; and the Newport Yacht Club, which hopes to have ramp access to their floats used for sailing classes. Point Association President Rich Carrubba expressed support, as did Bob Gentry of Eastern Resorts. In closing, Workshop Chair Tom Bandoni summarized that all parties are in agreement that a pocket park will be a welcome addition to this waterfront area and that funding through donations from Friends of the Waterfront, other groups, and the City is available. With goodwill from Eastern Resorts and a decision to grant a permanent easement for public access, the plan can go forward.

Liz Mathinos

Nancy Quattrucci, Bill Hall, and Donna Carter at the Horticultural Yard Sale, whose proceeds went to charity.

Tax Credits for Historic Renovation

Point homeowners recently received post cards from the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission carrying welcome news. State income tax credits are available for exterior renovation of historic structures. Credits will equal 20 percent of the cost incurred. The following work qualifies: doors, porch, roof, exterior walls, foundation, window repairs, structural repairs, trim and ornament, and paint. Applications can be downloaded at the organization’s Web site: www.rihpch.state.ri.us. Further information about this opportunity, as well as restoration advice and a loan program, is available by phone at 401-222-4135 and by e-mail at randall@rihpch.state.ri.us.
Kate Mouliné Touches D’ Emotion

If you stopped by the Armchair Sailor on Lower Thames or Papers on Bellevue last year to purchase greeting cards bearing splendid photos of Newport harbor, you probably carried home the work of Kate Mouliné. If you picked up a Burnes of Boston picture frame at Home Goods last month, admiring its photograph of two smiling women, you were probably holding the work of Kate Mouliné. And if you walked into Dr. Plosker’s Fall River waiting room last week, took a seat, and enjoyed the photographic display of flowers, you were definitely viewing the work of Kate Mouliné.

Born in Mississippi and raised in Clinton, Connecticut, Kate returned to her parents’ Ocean State roots, when she enrolled at the University of Rhode Island to earn a B.A. in English. An avid, self-taught photographer throughout high school and college, Kate has since worked closely with two well-known mentors: New York fashion photographer Rob Van Petten and international marine photographer Billy Black of Newport. With their encouragement, Kate has taken her former hobby to a new professional and artistic plain, found her own vision, and even won her first prize when she entered the Alliance Francaise’s “French Kiss” photography contest in San Francisco. Since then, her travels throughout Europe and the United States, both on land and water, have brought her photographs to the attention of the European press and audiences here at home, garnering favorable reviews.

When invited to discuss her work, Kate explains that she is interested primarily in the quiet and simple details of everyday life. Her street scenes tend to close in on such simple architectural details as hidden doorways, shaded flights of stairs, pots of all sizes and shapes, and shutters both open and closed. Kate’s harbor scenes and seascapes are much more active—revealing insight into the colorful details of life at sea, which she has gained through her travels with husband J. P. Perhaps most arresting are the people. Once again concentrating on everyday details, her eye captures the quiet moments of couples of all ages in a poignant and insightful manner.

Kate’s next photographic objective is to return to her earlier successful experience in creating a line of greeting cards with her Touches D’ Emotion trademark, but using her black and white photos this time. Many of these works will be on display with her first one-woman show in the spring at a Newport gallery to be announced. Meanwhile, she carries her Nikon N-50 whenever she leaves the house—just in case. “When I think I’m too busy and leave it behind,” says Kate, “that’s when I see the perfect shot, like the vineyard workers and their donkeys along East Main Road in Portsmouth. Oh, that would have been a great one. But that day my camera was back at home.”
Home for the Moulignés has been the Point, since Kate and J. P. moved to Third Street in 1993 and subsequently purchased a Willow Street colonial in 1995. After an extensive renovation project in 2000 that necessitated moving out, the growing Mouligné family—Kate, J. P., and now little Antoine—are settled in, with baby number two due in February. In addition to raising a family and pursuing her first love of photography, Kate is also a keen gardener, her garden being a picture in itself. In fact, with only three more courses to complete, she will soon earn a B.S. degree in horticulture from the University of Rhode Island.

Asked what she thinks makes the Point so special, Kate’s answer is "Serenity." Indeed, it is this serenity that shines through her work. With one toddler at home, another baby on the way, and a husband who has just started a new company, this student-wife-mother-photographer has certainly found her niche.
Christmas Through the Years

The files of The Green Light show that the Point Association’s first organized Christmas celebration came in 1956, with carols sung around a lighted Christmas tree in Battery Park. In December 1957, The Green Light reported that the Association’s General Improvement committee had “decided to continue with ‘Christmas on the Point’ in the expectation that we may be able to establish a neighborhood Christmas tradition.” The issue listed several of the planned activities, which did indeed become tradition. A Christmas tree would be lighted in Battery Park on Christmas Eve, and carol singers would gather around the tree that evening, led by Mr. W.K. Covell and Mr. Robert Covell. Meanwhile a decoration contest was announced, with prizes to be awarded for the most appropriate to the season, the most original, and the “most effective with least expense.”

December 1958 brought a Christmas poem:

Bare branches creak against the sky,  
Clean lies the snow, the moon sails high;  
Gray in their dreams, old houses sigh  
“The times are out of joint!”

But hark! The bells ring sharp and wide  
Across the frosty harborside;  
And come what may, whate’er betide,  
It’s Christmas on the Point.

Old houses wake, and candles glow;  
Carols ring out across the snow;  
Good days shall come, and ill may go—  
With Christmas on the Point!

Christmas spirit the following year was almost extinguished—but not quite, as was explained in rhyme:

What happened to Christmas on the Point?  
To our great distress, it got out of joint.  
The Sunday before, we lit the tree  
And sang around it happily.

But then our careful plans went “ashew”  
Because of that horrible Hong Kong flu.  
King Covell was smitten and so was his crew.  
What! No caroling? What could we do?  
Our junior members saved the day!  
They sang the carols, and kept Christmas gay.  
Hooray!

In 1972, The Green Light reported that Point Association members made a change to the normal festivities. “This year we tried lighting a human Christmas tree, about eight people at different levels, each with a flashlight and a green bough. One started singing Silent Night and gradually all joined in, until all the flashlights were lit and the hall lights were turned off. Everyone joined in the last verse.”

In the mid-70s, a new tradition was begun: the production of a Christmas play. In 1976, The Green Light described the Twilight on the Point presentation of The Three Beggar Kings, directed by Emilia Cresswell. “Whether it was our bar keeper, the good wife tak-
ing the naughty husband home, the children snowballing or hastening on errands, the pastor rejoicing with his flock or leading them in hymn, the careful housekeeper able to lend the sugar, or any other, all played their parts with humor and wit."

Christmas festivities in 1978 included a wide variety of events on and near the Point, including a Christmas Fair featuring crafts, and a production of *The Feast of Stephen*. As *The Green Light* put it, "The pageant tells of the merry keeping of the Feast of Stephen, Christian martyr, which was particularly celebrated in the Duchy of Bohemia, where Wenceslas ruled. Saint Stephen being the patron saint of that domain. Wenceslas was known as the ‘Good King’ because of his able rule and charity towards all."

In the 1980s, Christmas celebrations on the Point began to be included as part of the broader “Christmas in Newport” festivities. In December 1982, for example, *The Green Light* announced that the Point Association would host a “Holly Tea” in the 18th century manner at Saint John’s Guild Hall: “The committee plans a leisurely afternoon tea, a quiet interlude in the Christmas season with candlelight and soft music.”

The following year, Virginia Covell described the many events scheduled for that season, including “Twilight on the Point” in the Guild Hall, with carols and a pageant; Holly Tea and Candlelight House Tours on the day after Christmas; and several activities not solely involving the Point, including a Doorway Contest, an Outdoor market on Long Wharf; and a slide presentation of Christmas-in-Newport to be shown at the Colony House. “Even Charles Dickens would agree that we are celebrating Christmas well,” Mrs. Covell concluded.

In December 1985 Esther Fisher Benson wrote about her memories of caroling on the Point. The tradition was begun in 1942 by King and Robert Covell, she wrote, with Robert usually leading a vigorous practice session a few days before Christmas, after which “our throats were soothed by Virginia’s delicious cinnamon cocoa. We continued for about 25 years, but life and Christmas changed, becoming frantically busy, with no time for such homely expressions as out singing. Looking back, it seems to me that all of us shared a need to give something of ourselves at Christmas, not a personal gift but one to everybody which the Point represented—and we did love to sing!”

This review of Christmas as recorded in *The Green Light* is a reminder that as times and traditions change, it is only human nature to look back fondly on past celebrations. But it is also a reminder that the sharing of holiday feeling is not unique to any one time or generation. Some aspects of Christmas on the Point have changed over the years, but the tradition of celebrating the season with friends and neighbors has remained.

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Deck the Halls: A Brief Guide to Keeping Christmas in 18th Century Style

On December 25, 1772, Ezra Stiles, minister of the Second Congregational Church in Newport, made the following entry in his diary: "Christmas [was] kept in three congregations in this town. Mr. Kelley has begun it at the first Baptist Church here....His people attended a usual lecture—only that falling on that particular day, he adapted his Sermon to celebrate the Birth and Incarnation of the blessed Saviour." After pointedly remarking that Kelley was "a young minister ordained but a quarter of a year before," Stiles observed that "this looked more like keeping Christmas than any thing that ever before appeared among the Baptists or Congregationalists in New England." Stiles worried that "this will begin the Introduction of Christmas among the Baptist churches, about one hundred and fifty years from the first planting of New England."

More than a century earlier, in 1644, the Puritan Parliament had passed the "Ordinance for the better observation of the Feast of the Nativity of Christ." The act proclaimed that Christmas "be kept with the more solemn humiliation of our forefathers," because others "have turned this Feast, pretending the memory of Christ, into an extreme forgetfulness of him, by giving liberty to carnal and sensual delights." On Christmas day in 1647, the Lord Mayor and City Marshall of London enforced the law by riding through the city burning evergreen branches that had been put out as decorations.

Like Ezra Stiles, many ministers in England and America considered Christmas a day that should be marked with as little fanfare as possible. Part of their fear was that customs derived from pre-Christian winter festivals would surface and obscure the sanctity of the day. The use of greenery as decorations, for instance, probably derives from pre-Christian winter festivals, when evergreen trees represented a sign of life amidst the bleak winter landscape. It is easy to see how Christians could transform this symbol into one that represented the birth of Christ.

Other decorations are more closely tied to pagan mythology. The Norse god Loki used mistletoe to kill his nemesis Balder, and the Druids called the plant "all-healer," believing it increased the fertility of animals. This may be where the tradition of kissing under the mistletoe originates, a custom that seemed to be uniquely English. In Derbyshire, "kissing bunches" were made up of holly, sprigs of greens, apples, and oranges, along with colored paper and ribbon. Attached to this were three small dolls, representing Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Below this whole affair hung a sprig of mistletoe.

The Christmas tree is a German custom, dating back to at least the eighth century. Early Christians believed that on Christmas Eve certain trees sprang briefly back to life bearing fruit. A freshly cut tree lighted with candles and adorned with colorful nuts and berries was a reminder of these beliefs and a magical sight on a bleak winter night. In 1840, England's Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, who was of German descent, erected a Christmas tree, and from there the custom quickly spread to America. The first reference in a Newport newspaper to a Christmas tree appears in "Therese: A Christmas Story," translated from German in the Newport Mercury in 1854. Two Christmases later, the Mercury reported that "the fancy and book stores are now reaping a rich harvest. Daily they are thronged by young and old, in search of gifts, to hang on trees or stuff into stockings."

The ways in which Christmas was observed in Newport in the 18th century were as varied as the religious congregations in town. Some homes in Newport may have displayed sprigs of evergreen along with local and exotic fruits from the West Indies. Other homes may have incorporated candles...
The Beginning of Chanukah

Thousands of years ago, the Syrian king, Antiochus, took over Israel, then known as Judea. He forced all of the inhabitants to believe in Greek gods and idols, which was contrary to the Jewish beliefs. The Maccabees, five brothers along with their father, organized a successful rebellion against the Syrian king. When they came to the Temple, which had been destroyed, they relit the eternal lamp with just enough oil to last one day. Miraculously, the oil burned for eight days.

Today, we continue the Jewish tradition of celebrating Chanukah, which means dedication, by lighting a menorah, a candelabrum, for each of the eight days of the holiday. And, we play dreidel, which is a top. When the Syrians were in power, they did not want the Jews to continue to study their religion. The Jews studied in secret, by using the dreidel, with Hebrew letters on it. At Chanukah, it is customary to eat foods cooked in oil. So, we make latkes, potato pancakes, and serve them with sour cream and applesauce. In Israel, since potatoes are not as plentiful, they make jelly doughnuts. That custom is popular in the U.S. as well. Happy Chanukah!

Ben Pedrick

Deck the Halls, continued

into their observance of the holiday, substituting for the traditional yule log or as part of the St. Lucia’s Day (December 13) celebration, but it is unlikely they would have been displayed in windows.

The Point probably was the least decorated neighborhood in Newport. Quakers were—by nature and doctrine—iconoclasts, and any item evoking religious symbolism would have been shunned. Also, Quakers, like many other Christians, believed that every day should be set aside for the worship of God, not one day above any other. In all of Quaker “Nailer” Tom Hazard’s diary, from 1778 to 1840, there is no mention of Christmas. A typical entry, on Christmas day in 1823, read simply, “I work in the Shop and carried in Coal.”

Chanukah at Our House

Each year in November or December we celebrate the holiday Chanukah. For eight nights we celebrate, eat potato pancakes, light candles, and give gifts. Each night we light one more candle on the menorah. Each candle represents a day, which is how long the holy light burned when only supplied with oil for one day’s quantity. We also exchange gifts and read together as a family. Most nights we light the candles and sing songs, but on one night we have a huge Chanukah party. It’s a blast. Chanukah is not as important a Jewish holiday as Christmas is for Christians, but it is still my favorite.

Davis Spohn

Potato Latkes: A Chanukah Tradition

Those early Point settlers—both the Quakers who landed in 1657 and their Sephardic neighbors who arrived a year later—celebrated religious holidays very quietly. Today on the Point, however, the season of Chanukah and Christmas is a time for family gatherings that include decorating the house, exchanging gifts, and devouring favorite recipes. Like many families, my four grandchildren celebrate both holidays in their homes. One of their favorite treats during the eight days of Chanukah is potato latkes. Here’s the recipe—Yum, yum!

5 pounds potatoes
2 medium sized yellow onions
1/2 cup matzo meal
1 tsp. baking powder (optional)
3 extra large eggs
salt and pepper to taste
vegetable oil for frying

1. Scrub potatoes (skins can be left on or peeled off), then shred or grate potatoes. Squeeze out any juice.
2. Dice onions, strain, and add to potatoes.
3. Add matzo meal, baking powder, eggs, salt, and pepper. Mix well.
4. Heat 1/4 inch oil in large frying pan on medium high. Drop large spoonfuls of batter into the oil and flatten into pancakes with a spatula.
5. Fry until crisp and golden brown, turning once. Remove from the pan and place on paper towels.

Serve the latkes immediately with applesauce and/or sour cream. Delicious!

SRV
Pointers in the News

by Liz Mathinos

Point artist Roberto Julio Bessin, along with Gabriel Warren of Charlestown, set off on a voyage to the Arctic aboard a Canadian Coast Guard ship, the Louis St. Laurent. Keeping journals and sending photographs of new landscapes will heighten their sense of awareness of the Arctic environment. There will also be an educational connection with Rhode Island students K-12 through the RINET website, a statewide program. The pair will write articles for newspapers and magazines, collaborate on some sculptures, and offer exhibits based on this experience upon their return. Roberto's work was also featured in an August 31, 2001, article in the Providence Phoenix, "Height of Absurdity."

The city's commission on noise management has appointed Rich Carrubba, president of the Point Association, as a member. If you have any concerns about bothersome noise on the Point, please send your comments by email directly to Rich at richardcarrubba@msn.com.

Geoffrey Clifford is writing a series of weekly articles on Newport Harbor's history and future for Newport This Week.

Jane Holdsworth, president of the Thames Science Center, was featured in a Providence Journal article about exciting changes since she entered into a partnership with a German publisher, Franckh-Kosmos Verlags-GMBh & Co., to market science education products. Jane will be president of Thames and Kosmos, LLC, a for-profit company, while continuing her role as Founder/President of the newly-named Thames Science Museum. A Fuel Cell Car kit, the first of many innovative science products that will be introduced, is now available at the Long Wharf business.

"Waterfront Watcher," newsletter of the Friends of the Waterfront, has honored Chris Moy of Moy Works for his outstanding volunteer work in caring for the Chestnut Street driftway, in the Adopt-A-Waterfront-Spot program.

Alexander "Sandy" Nesbitt, Point photographer, is selling a photograph of his black-and-white image of the twin towers of the World Trade Center, which he took many years ago, never anticipating the September 11 tragedy. The 40 X 60 inch print, showing the towers slightly shrouded in clouds on a wintry day in March, can be seen in the Visions 2001 Art Show. Donations from the sale will be provided to the American Red Cross.

James Robinson was recently honored with an 80th birthday party—attended by 200 friends, family members, and well-wishers—at St. John's Guild Hall. The city also declared "James Robinson Day," saluting him as a local treasure. Besides being a devoted father and friend and the Church's senior warden for 25 years, Mr. Robinson has volunteered for soup kitchens throughout Newport and is known as the "Chef of all Chefs."

Former Point book seller Andy Rosenzweig, who has now moved his store, Book 'Em, to Lower Thames Street, is the subject of a new book, A Cold Case, by Philip Gourevitch. According to an August 19, 2001, article in the Providence Journal ("Real Life Hero is One for the Books"), Tom Hanks has purchased the movie rights and would like to play Andy's character in the film.

On September 8, 2001, Newport dignitaries gathered for the formal opening of the renovated Newport Public Library and its new wing. Presiding at the ribbon-cutting ceremony and the program that followed, outgoing Board President Dominic Varisco thanked the library's dedicated staff and generous volunteers for the countless hours devoted to this accomplishment.

At the recent opening of the Rue de France outlet store in Portsmouth, Anne Wiley was observed demonstrating fabrics to interested customers by a Daily News photographer.

A July article in the Daily News featured Maggie Vale's new interior design business, ValeDesign. A decorative painter who applies her original designs to furniture and floor cloths on commission, Maggie also helps people find creative ways to organize their homes using the ancient Chinese art of feng shui. She also helps homeowners create a more attractive package for prospective buyers through a technique known as "staging."
**Favorite Recipes**

**Tiramisu**

Here is a great dessert for the holiday season!
Add ½ C. sugar to 8 egg yolks and beat at high speed
Add 1½ lbs. mascarpone cheese and also beat at high speed.
Add 1 T. lemon zest.
Fold in 4 stiffly beaten egg whites.
Set mixture aside.
Prepare 2 Cs. espresso coffee.
Add ½ C. rum or brandy.
Dip 42 lady fingers in coffee and completely line a deep dish with them.
Spread mascarpone mixture on the lady fingers.
Sprinkle with ¼ C. cocoa powder.
Add the rest of the mascarpone mixture and sprinkle with cocoa. Top with shaved bitter-sweet chocolate. Chill overnight.
This festive dish is attractive when prepared in a glass bowl. You can substitute any liquor you prefer, including Amaretto, but be sure to use very good quality cocoa and chocolate.
Enjoy!

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**Bay Sailor**

*An Incredible Transatlantic Record*

*Playstation* is familiar to everybody in Newport. The huge catamaran has been docked all summer at the Newport Hotel and Marina waiting for the right time to take another shot at the famed West to East Transatlantic record. The official course starts at Ambrose light off New York City and finishes at Cape Lizard, which marks the entrance to the English Channel.

Charlie Barr, on board *Atlantic*, established the record of 12 days and 4 hours in 1905. It took 75 years for this record to be broken in 1980, when Frenchman Eric Tabarly crossed in 10 days and 5 hours aboard the trimaran *Paul Ricard*. This record was broken 6 times in 10 years and capped at 6 days and 13 hours by the big catamaran *Jet Service* in 1990. Since then, more than 40 attempts have been made to break the *Jet Service* record—all unsuccessful, until this year.

*Playstation’s* first attempt last year almost ended in disaster. Just after leaving New York, the giant multihull was caught in a sudden squall and almost pitch poled end over end like a beach catamaran.

Steve Fosset and his crew limped into Newport for repair and decided that the boat needed major modifications to make it safer. Back in Newport this season, *Playstation*, now lengthened by more than 20 feet, appeared to any sailor as an awesome but unproven machine.

Determined not to give up, Steve and his crew waited patiently for the right weather window and departed New York on October 5. Riding the same front for 2,925 miles, they reached Cape Lizard in an incredible 4 days and 28 minutes. This represents an average speed of almost 26 knots! For a non-sailor, this might be difficult to appreciate, but for us who love the sea and the wind, it is an amazing achievement.
Trees, Trees, and Christmas Trees

Trees in the cityscape are good for us and make living in an urban area pleasant and healthy. Trees are a vital factor in cleaning the air. They exhale oxygen and inhale carbon dioxide and other pollutants. This is particularly important in cities, small and large. Increasingly dirty air and resultant respiratory problems are directly related to increased automobile traffic. Dirt—including airplane exhaust, pollen, and ash, which would normally float into homes—is collected on leaves and washed off by rain.

Trees are cooling; walk under the canopy of trees at The Elms on a hot day. Water travels up from the roots, evaporates, and cools the surrounding air. Light tree shade keeps grass and flowers from frizzling in our summer dry spells. Cooling performed by trees lessens the need for air conditioning, reducing electricity bills. Reduction in use of electricity saves oil and gas, thus lessening air and water pollution. You don’t need a Linden as large as mine, but it certainly blocks the hot afternoon sun.

In abating noise pollution, it has been calculated a one-hundred-foot-long row of trees cuts noise by up to eight decibels.

We gardeners need tree foliage to give our gardens structure and form. Without them, flower arrangers would be bereft, and Christmas would hardly be Christmas. Trees provide us with a peaceful green setting and enhance the quality of life for all living things. For me, filling my home with the sharp scents of evergreens at Christmas is as important as the turkey.

The Inquiring Photographer

We captured four new neighbors on film this time around. Bowen and Charles Bauer have called New York City, San Francisco, and East Dennis on Cape Cod home before arriving on the Point to hang their hats in their Elm Street colonial. Be sure to stop by to greet them and their fine dog Willard.

An especially happy addition to life on the Point, beautiful Bailey Clark was born on September 7, 2001, to proud parents Sarah and Todd of Willow Street. Welcome, Bailey!
Phases of the Seasons

Each year in my second grade class, there was a large bulletin board called “Our Seasons’ Clock,” with numerals in a circle like a clock face. From one to twelve the name of a month matched each numeral. Here seven-year-olds learned the names of the twelve months and the sequence of the seasons. At 3, 6, 9, and 12, the seasons changed, and we were alerted to differences in the weather, clothing, houses, games, plants, and animals. I’m still geared to that clock and its many lessons and phases as I walk the Point. Our Green Light issues follow the same seasonal pattern.

As fall is now turning into winter, benches in Battery Park empty, boats disappear, leaves fall, and walkers bundle up. Picture yourself back in second grade, preparing your homework of changes in categories mentioned above. It all happens like clockwork here in New England.

Activity at both ends of the Point has been riveting all year. Harbor House is showing its true colors as finishing touches are rushed into place, and applicants are choosing spaces. Everyone who has been peeking through the hedges eagerly awaits an open house. By the end of the year, we should be able to greet our new neighbors.

For a chuckle, check the privet hedge boys with special haircuts in Storer Park. They’ll be losing their hair as the leaves come down.

Fascinating is the array of large yachts moving into and out of their expanded shipyard space south of the causeway. Eastern Resorts at the corner is building to the sidewalk, and it looks like the resort/state pier/shipyard will all be ready for springtime business.

Many houses shine with new paint, flags are flying, and “for sale” signs come and go. Welcome any new neighbors and watch for the moving vans at Harbor House. Daylight hours are decreasing, but when winter comes, remember they soon begin to increase. You can cross yard work off your list, check the spectacular sunsets, and enjoy the fireplace once again.

The Point Association Membership Form

Please make check payable to The Point Association and mail with form to PO Box 491, Newport, RI 02840. A subscription to The Green Light is included with all memberships.

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<th>Type</th>
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Name ____________________________

Phone: ___________________________ Fax: ___________________________ E-Mail ___________________________

Mailing Address: ____________________________

Second Address (if applicable): ____________________________

Committees and Activities

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<td>Program/Event Planning</td>
<td>Plant Sale</td>
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<td>Neighborhood Crime Watch</td>
<td>Membership</td>
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<td>Underground Wires</td>
<td>Publications/Communications/Web</td>
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Your participation is needed. Please check the categories of interest to you.

If you’re not sure, ask your neighbors or go to Harbor House.

Winter 2001 The Green Light
THE GREEN LIGHT
The Point Association
P.O. Box 491
Newport, RI 02840