

*The*  
GREEN



LIGHT

BULLETIN OF THE POINT ASSOCIATION  
OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

FALL 2007



# The GREEN LIGHT

LII No. 3

FALL 2007

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

Copies of *The Green Light* may be purchased for \$1.00 at Bucci's Convenience Store, Poplar at Thames.



## 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.

COVER: The tall ship GLORIA. Photo by Jane Hence.



## The *Green Light* 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Book – a Progress Report

As all of those who attended the spring membership meeting will recall, *The Green Light* plans to mark its 50<sup>th</sup> birthday by publishing a book that will celebrate its five decades of achievement. It will be not only a history of the journal and of its parent, the Point Association, but a reflection of life on the Point during those fifty years. The tentative publication date is December, 2007, just in time for Christmas.

A group of a dozen or so people has already been working on various aspects of this project, but we would very much welcome additional help. Especially needed now are people interested in tracking down pictures that we could use to enliven our text and others who could scan them onto a computer. We also need help for our dedicated fundraising committee which, as of early July, had raised \$4000 from 20 donors to help defray printing costs, estimated at approximately \$10,000. After a quiet summer, the fundraising campaign will resume its work in September.

If you are willing to help with production or fundraising, or if you have pictures we might use (they will be returned to you, of course), please contact me (Alice Clemente) at (401) 723-8828, or at my email address: [aclemente156@cox.net](mailto:aclemente156@cox.net).

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Congratulations, Point neighborhood! At the July Meeting of the *Citizens Advisory Committee for the Pell Bridge Ramps and Approach Roads* we learned that the concept to be presented to the City Council will NOT include a one-way road along the railroad right-of-way.

There are so many people to thank for this happy conclusion: a dozen neighbors and PA Board members who worked so hard to publicize an important meeting last fall; all of you who rallied at the meeting with RIDOT and City representatives, clearly a "Hey, Wait a minute!!!!" moment for them; David Pedrick who was ready at that meeting with a well-presented alternative plan on very short notice; and sources of wisdom and advice for me – Dom and Suzanne Varisco, Peter Martin, and our Councilman, Charles Duncan. And, I must acknowledge the engineers and representatives from RIDOT and the Turnpike and Bridge Authority who have given hours of time and work in responding to neighborhood concerns from the Point and Off Broadway Associations. They have been patient, willing to listen, and open to all comments and suggestions at our several meetings.

The concept as it now stands calls for a looping ramp, a version of David's alternative plan, to "stack" traffic waiting to exit onto Farewell. We are so lucky to have able, creative, knowledgeable people like David who are willing to give their time to help our neighborhood and all of Newport make the right decisions for the future. In my opinion, a site visit – a walk along the railroad tracks from the rotary to Gateway Center – played an important part in the decision-making process. Clearly, there is not enough space in the railroad right-of-way to accommodate a bike path, trains, AND a road. Sewers and drainage also present a formidable engineering challenge.

The concept plan, a memo of the plan's pros and cons, and some history of the process leading to the plan will be presented for review and comment at the Advisory Committee meeting in September. The final decision about whether to go ahead with the plan rests with the City Council.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Point Association retained an attorney to represent the Association in the matter of an outdoor entertainment license for Belle Mer on Goat Island. We incurred expenses of about \$1,700. We are entirely satisfied with the advice and counsel we received and consider this a good use of PA funds. As I was most closely involved in this matter, I would welcome any questions and concerns you may have and would be happy to speak with you personally. The Point Association is committed to an active role on behalf of Point residents and is especially grateful to those of you who support our Association with your membership.



# A SIX-YEAR-OLD VIEWS THE TALL SHIPS

by Loretta Goldrick

Storer Park is back to normal once again: the grass is green and upright, and the trees cast a welcome shade from the summer's hot sun.

Seeing it now, one would never guess it had been the setting for the Tall Ships International Village: two long rows of gleaming white tents drew hundreds of visitors each day to its often exotic booths in late June and early July. Talking one recent day about the Tall Ships to Liam, a curious six year old from the hills of New Hampshire, one could catch a glimpse of the wide, uncharted world that opened up when the village settled into Storer Park, a five minute walk from his grandparents' house on Second Street.

A daily visitor to the International Village, he was given a booklet and DVD on Indonesia, gummi bear candy to strew over ice cream, and maple leaf shaped lollipops to lick. A beautiful sari-clad woman wrote out his and his brother's names in Hindi and gave him a small "jewel" for his mother's forehead.

Back on Second Street hours were spent building sail boats with his grandfather, with frequent trips to the little beach along side Hunter House to test their seaworthiness. After several unsuccessful launches, a center board was added.

Surprised to learn that old time sailors relied on signal flags and cannon to communicate with other ships, Liam wrote messages in the nautical alphabet and strung them along the masts he had made from chopsticks. With *Tall Ships Fun*, an ASTA (American Sail Training Association) endorsed book for young tars at his elbow, he explored the world of sail.

There were knots to learn, messages to decode, rig-



ging and sails to remember, even a crossword done with some help from a grown-up.

A board game tracing the route of a Gold Rush ship sailing around Cape Horn from Boston to San Francisco proved hairy, its painful progress marked with bright sea glass found at the beach nearby.

Days included visits to the

gleaming Brazilian tall ship *Cisne Branco* and to the *Tarangini* from India. His favorite? The pilot schooner *Virginia*. Never had this little boy seen so many people crowded into Newport. More perhaps than he would see back home in a year's time.

Saturday's parade was a spell binder: Indonesian sailors drumming their way along Thames Street, Indian cadets marching as their arms swung like metronomes, and scary looking pirates, swaggering around Washington Square, throwing gold coins and occasionally drawing their swords to fight.

All told, a wonderful memory to bring back home and think about on a snowy January day.

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## COOL CITIES

by Ed Madden

The Sierra Club is sponsoring a national movement to help curb global warming. A three-pronged effort to develop (1) Green Vehicle Fleets, (2) Energy Efficiency in the home and workplace and (3) Renewable Energy to cut down on dirty fossil fuel burning power plants has become a full court press for this national organization. Their slogan of "Cool Cities" incorporates all of the above measures. The emphasis has been on the mayors and city/town officials to sign on to the concept and push its acceptance. The U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement embraces more than 200 mayors in 38 states and is growing. In Rhode Island, the mayors of Providence and Warwick are on board and substantial savings and improvements have already been realized in these two cities.

In Newport, thanks to the efforts of City Council members Charles Duncan and Stephen Waluk, a resolution was drawn up, presented and passed by the Council to consider Newport as a potential Cool City. A study committee is being appointed to make a recommendation in the near future re Newport getting on board.

What does this mean for residents of the Point? If a new car is on the menu in the near future, consider a gas-electric hybrid. Less pollution and money saving at the gas pump. Replace your incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescents. Walk and/or bike as often as possible. Eat locally grown food and shop at local farmers' markets. It is mind boggling that many of the foods in super markets are shipped part way or all the way across country with the attendant waste of energy!

I have to take one parting shot at the title of the Sierra Club's motto, i.e., "COOL CITIES". In the past several years the verbally challenged youth of America have lost the ability to use clear, concise adjectives in their distorted speech patterns. "Cool" has metamorphosed from a temperature expression to a generic one-size-fits-all description of anything and anyone. I assumed that this would be a passing phase of teen-hood. However, at a recent symposium that I attended, the visiting professor of thirty-something years used the "cool" six times in the hour long erudite lecture. Go figure! I guess that I will have to join them rather than fight them.

## BORN ON THE POINT

by Bill Hall, History and Archives

The Born on the Point program recognizes newborns and others who were Point residents at the time of their birth.

Recipients in April 2007 were Mark Bardorf and children Niall, Maya, and Finn. Certificates were also prepared for Herbert Armstrong and David Gove.

The next round of *Born on the Point* certificates will be readied for the October 2007 membership meeting. Applications must be submitted by October 1. Anyone interested in information or an application may contact Bill Hall at 846-4159

## NEWPORT'S MONUMENTA

by Kay O'Brien

In 1973, fifty-four sculptures by forty artists were delivered and installed on state, city, and private land here in Newport. They were displayed for two months in chosen locations with no cost to the public. Today, you can enjoy this spectacular monumental project by finding all the details (artists, photos, locations, challenges, etc.) in the latest *Bulletin of the Newport Historical Society*, Vol. 26, Spring 2007, Number 256. Diane Patrella, who received her BA in Art History from Salve Regina University in 2006, expanded her senior thesis for this bulletin. The point Association is grateful for the long hours Diane and Dan Titus spent putting all the *Green Lights* in disc format.

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## THE BOOK LIGHT

by Suzanne Varisco

With another summer nearly behind us (Is this possible?), we anticipate those cozy autumn evenings when curling up with a book sounds just about right. And so, we start right off with a non-fiction choice whose appearance in soft cover we've been waiting and watching for: *Sons of Providence*, that tale of Rhode Island's own Brothers Brown by Charles Rappleye.

While John and Moses Brown are best known today as the founders of Rhode Island's entry in the Ivy League, journalist Rappleye has researched a less attractive facet of their lives. Their lucrative slave trade, which made founding a university possible, also provided the Browns with their own slaves. Moses' eventual disavowal of this practice led to a prolonged intra-family struggle.

In reviewing *Sons of Providence*, historian Doris Kearns Goodwin described it as a "profoundly moving story of two brothers—one a slave trader, the other an abolitionist," as well as "a splendid work of history." Fellow historian Henry Wiencek found in it a "powerfully told narrative [that] sheds new light on the Revolutionary era and one man's impassioned struggle to end slavery before it was too late."



This quarter's novel moves away from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the 21<sup>st</sup> with *The Dive from Clausen's Pier*. Anne Packer's award-winning debut novel enters the life of 23-year-old Carrie Bell, who faces a life-changing decision after her fiancé is paralyzed in a diving accident. Both disputable and understandable, her eventual choice

is a difficult one.

"Beguiling" and "an unsettling page-turner," wrote the *New York Times* reviewer about this "humane novel"

with "a generous cast of memorable friends." The *Baltimore Sun's* reviewer praised it as "a powerful and compelling read" that is "fresh, contemporary, and fast paced."

We hope you enjoy these two choices for fall reading, both available in paperback, and join us to talk about them with your neighbors on the dates listed on this page. In the meantime, as always, please contact me (841-5220 and srvarisco@aol.com) with your questions and requests.

*The Sons of Providence* (Simon & Schuster, 2006)

Discussion: October 17 at 2:00 p.m.

Hostess: Jane Hence, 73 Washington Street

*The Dive From Clausen's Pier* (Knopf, 2002)

Discussion: November 14 at 2:00 p.m.

Hostess: Suzanne Varisco, 35 Second Street

## POINT PLANT SALE

by Marcia Mallory and Isabel Griffith

Saturday, May 19, was sort of a rainy day. But are we ever daunted by the weather? Do we ever suggest a rain date? It's part of the Plant Sale tradition, so there we were at 22 Walnut Street. Because of all our wonderful volunteers and enthusiastic customers, it was a successful day for the Point Plant Sale, the only fundraiser for the Point Association.

Thanks to: Jack and Donna Maytum, Jennifer Hall, Kay O'Brien, Debora Kelsey Kelly, Merry Preston, Janet Culkins, Bill Hall, Maureen Toohey, Mary Mang, Elaine Cascio, Trish O'Connell, Connie Heird, Lee Houle, Becky Reynolds, Betsy Glassic and a SPECIAL thank you to Roger Devlin and Lisa Elliot at the cashier's table and Joan and Mike Simmons who were so willing to help in so many ways.

Been thinking about how you can help the Point Association? We would love to have you join us in our Plant Sale efforts - gardening experience not necessary. Look for information in the winter *Green Light*. See you next year.

## WOOD SHINGLES — A CENTURIES OLD SOLUTION

by Robert Foley, Director of Preservation, Newport Restoration Foundation

Roofing materials have seen radical changes over the years; yet one common material has remained the same almost from the start of New England's history. Early 17<sup>th</sup> century settlers made their homes in basic structures that drew heavily on traditional English heritage. They covered these early roofs with thatch made from marsh and sea grasses that were readily available and the technique was widely known. It did not take long however to realize that conditions in New England, particularly the winters, were not kind to thatch. Rain, snow, freezing and thawing tried the roof's integrity and found it wanting.

By 1650 it was obvious that roofs of wooden shingles were the answer. In England such a practice would have been horribly wasteful of wood but here, timber was available in abundance. For Newporters, cedar and pine became the standard well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The colonial roof started with a log nearly three feet long. Wood slices about a ½" thick were split off with a froe and mallet. The bark was trimmed and one end was tapered with a draw knife on a "shaving horse". The extreme length of early shingles came about for at least two reasons: first the horizontal wood strips or purlins applied to the roof rafters for thatching were widely spaced and this traditional measurement was retained, secondly the length allowed three overlapping courses requiring half the nails — two shingles for the nails of one, a significant factor at a time when hand-wrought

nails were more costly than the shingles themselves.

By the middle 19<sup>th</sup> century, machinery and transportation saw wood shingles become available nationally and standardized through mass production. Their availability and price along with inexpensive nails led to new ideas of how to use them. In the Shingle Style Architecture of the 1890s, shingles became the decorative frosting on the cake as well as simple, effective protection against the weather. As design elements shingles appeared on small cottages and grand houses alike, all of which are well-represented in Newport.

Today, cedar shingles are appropriate on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings for both roofs and side walls. A properly applied wood roof should last thirty-five to fifty years. White cedar and Alaskan yellow cedar are best for roofs while red cedar is wall material. Critical for a wood shingle roof is its ability to "breathe" or to allow air circulation on both sides of the shingle, since retaining moisture promotes rot.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings naturally adjusted to temperature and humidity, but today's efforts to save on heating costs and maximize space can result in problems. For instance plywood sheathing and black tar paper do not allow for sufficient breathing; unfortunately insulation inside the building may reduce breathability as well. Careful consideration must be applied when modern building materials and techniques are used with old buildings. It is best to read up in detail on this or to seek advice from *qualified* contractors or experts in the field such as the Restoration Foundation.

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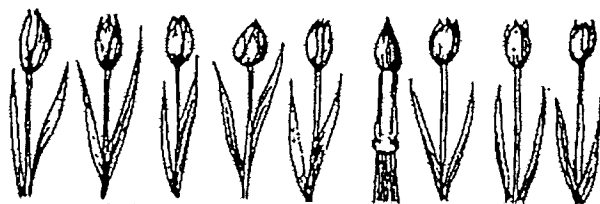
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## HERB ROMMEL

October 27, 1916 – June 9, 2007

by Laurice Shaw

I really miss him. A lot has been written about Herb since he passed away the evening after his “best damn Iris Party ever!” A lot has been written about his experiences at Pearl Harbor and his Naval career. Plenty has been said as well about his extensive civic service to Newport and the State, as well as to such icons of our community as The Seaman’s Church Institute, The Nina Lynette Home, and Trinity Church. He will be dearly missed for all that he was and did. I will dearly miss him because he was my friend.

I first came to know Herb while we were both serving on Boards and Commissions for the City. Herb was on the Zoning Board for over 20 years. He had a reputation for being a force to be reckoned with. A bit fearsome. Just what Newport needed during a time when development pressures were threatening our essential character and fabric. Herb was tough but he was knowledgeable, consistent, and fair. He knew the rules and he stuck to them. That is when I knew Herb as someone to be respected and trusted.

I got to know Herb better when I ran the small restaurant for a year at the Seaman’s Church Institute in Market Square. Herb was on the Board of Directors and Treasurer of the organization. He ran a very tight ship there as well. It was common to hear him greeted by the fisherman and folk that frequented the Seaman’s with a “howdy, Captain” as he would come in. He’d respond sincerely often addressing the individual by name and say “Nice to see you”. When he would have lunch at the counter and we had brief opportunities to chat, I had the chance to learn more about him and catch a glimpse of the Herb that wasn’t all gruffness and clipped orders. It was almost a surprise when I first noticed that hint of a smile hiding just behind a



stern-sounding request or comment to one of the fishermen, almost as if to say “all bark...not so much bite”. The Seaman’s Institute was very, very dear to Herb. His care for the people and what the place represents was more than heartfelt. His presence willed the whole of it to stay afloat and prosper, and thanks in part to him it certainly will.

The next chapter of getting to know Herb came when I became the Director of the Nina Lynette Home at 87 Washington St. Herb was the Presi-

dent of the Board of Directors – a group of a dozen or so individuals many of whom were of an age to be residents. Herb was fond of saying “Never have so many done so much for so few”. He oversaw the finances for that organization as well. He was well known for his thrift, which was true and deserved, but I have never known a more generous person – generous with himself and whatever was needed. Herb had a huge heart.

Herb and Mary’s garden was another place to appreciate that huge heart. What an effort of love that was. While I was at Nina Lynette, I began helping Herb with his garden a bit. Many people reading this will understand first (dirty) hand what an enduring job it was to try to stay ahead of the bindweed and goutweed and keep those beautiful, abundant iris beds relatively clear and open for public enjoyment. Herb was always digging iris up to pass on to folks. It was an important part of ‘the garden’ to him to share it and spread the wealth. He was

## HERB *(continued from page 8)*

also always buying new varieties, and when he would hand me a large paper bag full of new rhizomes saying "Here. I went to an auction. Find a place for them." I'd be hard pressed to know where to put them.

When I returned to Newport after having moved to Connecticut for several years, I had a couple of different jobs — one of which was to work for Herb. I did my best with the garden, helped with what needed doing around the house(s) for him and his daughter Beth Graham, and prepared some meals. Mary had passed away in the time that I had been gone, and I appreciated the opportunity to provide a little care for someone who had provided so much for others over the years.

One aspect of Herb's character that I particularly enjoyed and found inspiring was his competitive nature. Boy did he like to win! Every Wednesday during the season, he and his son Bill would race in the sailing series from the Navy Base. It became sort of a habit to check in with him on Thursday morning to ask, "So how'd you do?" A thunderclap of "We WON!" and a great grin inevitably was the response.

That competitive spirit was just as fierce when he and Beth would play Scrabble or 'Up-words'. The yelps, howls and benign curses — as well as laughter — that would emit from the living room at the Pitt's Head Tavern might cause an unsuspecting passer-by to think someone was getting scalped. It was hilarious.

It was a pleasure and an honor to be Herb's "girl Friday", as he would introduce me in his last days. He was a really good man and really good friend and I will dearly miss him.



**Walter Jenkins Whitley, CRS**  
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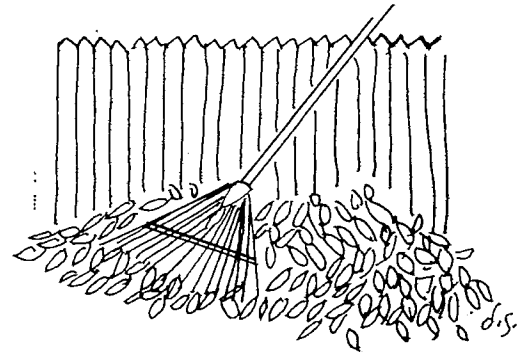
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## MARY FERRAZZOLLI PARK

by Liz Mathinos

Progress is being made on the pocket park at the corner of Washington Street and Long Wharf, to be designated as Mary Ferrazzolli Park. Friends of the Waterfront have been actively lobbying since 1994 to dedicate this pocket park to Mary, the founder of Friends of the Waterfront, for protecting public access to our waterfront. In mid-June, the city awarded a \$200,000 contract to Reagan Construction. \$50,000 of this contract is estimated for remediation work for potentially contaminated soil on the site from fuel lines from past activities in that area. The estimated amount was based on what Inn on Long Wharf had to pay when they found oil-saturated soil during their seawall work, last year. Mr. Reagan said that he "warned the city" that it could be a higher amount for remediation because there is no way of knowing until the work is underway whether it will be less than \$50,000 or more. Reagan plans to drive steel sheeting to contain the soil and then put in granite blocks like those already there. Unfortunately, the historic granite blocks removed from the old fishing pier 9 are no longer available. At the dedication of the Louis Jagschitz Fishing Pier, the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) promised that the historic bollards from the Fall River Line would be returned, to be used in the pocket park. Once paperwork is done for the contract, permit applications have to go before Coastal Resources Management Council and DEM, and construction could possibly begin in September.

Friends of the Waterfront plan a bench and bronze plaque and will contribute towards the city's effort. A future project would be an historic marker showing the significance of Gravelly Point, Washington's Landing, and the Fall River Line, at this southwest corner of the harbor.



# THE MACKINAC DISASTER

by Donal O'Brien

Reprinted from *The Green Light*, August, 1983

In the years following World War I, tourism in Newport was very different from the motorized frenzy which currently afflicts the community. Most of the tourists were day trippers, usually family groups, who immediately headed for Newport Beach via bus or trolley car. At that period, the Beach was a very attractive place with a well-developed board walk and a magnificent Convention Hall. The majority of visitors at that time came by steamboat from Providence and other communities. It is ironic to note this peaceful period produced Newport's greatest maritime disaster – the explosion of the "SS Mackinac" in Newport Harbor. It also should be noted that if it had not been for the outstanding work of the U.S. Navy, this tragedy would have been a veritable holocaust.

On the bright sunny afternoon of August 18, 1925, the "SS Mackinac" left Long Wharf at 1700 hrs. on the return trip to Providence. In the vessel were over 700 women and small children who had spent the day in Newport. This ship was a medium-sized steamer which had sailed on the Great Lakes and was well-known in the trade. It had a coal-fired compound reciprocating steam engine and had passed Federal safety inspection. The vessel was officially seaworthy in every respect.

"SS Mackinac" had passed Gull Rock and was working up to full ahead in a N x W course for Providence when a terrific explosion took place amidships in the engine space. Later investigation determined this blast to be the result of a defective boiler. Two crewmen were lost from the original explosion, but worse was to follow. Immediately a cloud of steam at possibly 400 F poured through the bulkheads, alley ways, and finally onto the crowded decks. The steam caused terrible burns amongst the passengers and crew, and a major disaster was in the making.

Fortunately, the ships of the U.S. Scouting Fleet were anchored in the Bay at this time. The explosion was observed at 1730 hours and all available ships' boats were immediately ordered to the aid of the stricken

vessel. Meanwhile, the master of "Mackinac" had very properly beached his ship which stayed upright and facilitated boarding by the rescue parties. One can well imagine the problems facing the officer-in-charge of the rescue operation – the need for damage control, panic control and the immediate evacuation of casualties.

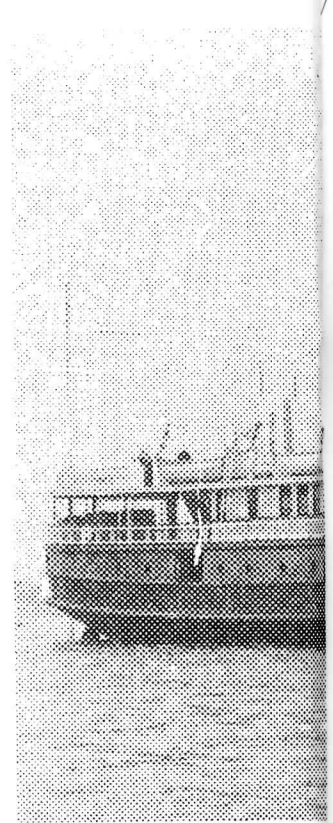
The speed and efficiency of the Fleet rescue operators is shown by the fact that within 45 minutes a motor launch from the light cruiser, "U.S.S. Milwaukee", landed the first serious casualties at the Naval Hospital pier and the Hospital Officer of the Day was informed that at least 100 badly wounded people were en route.

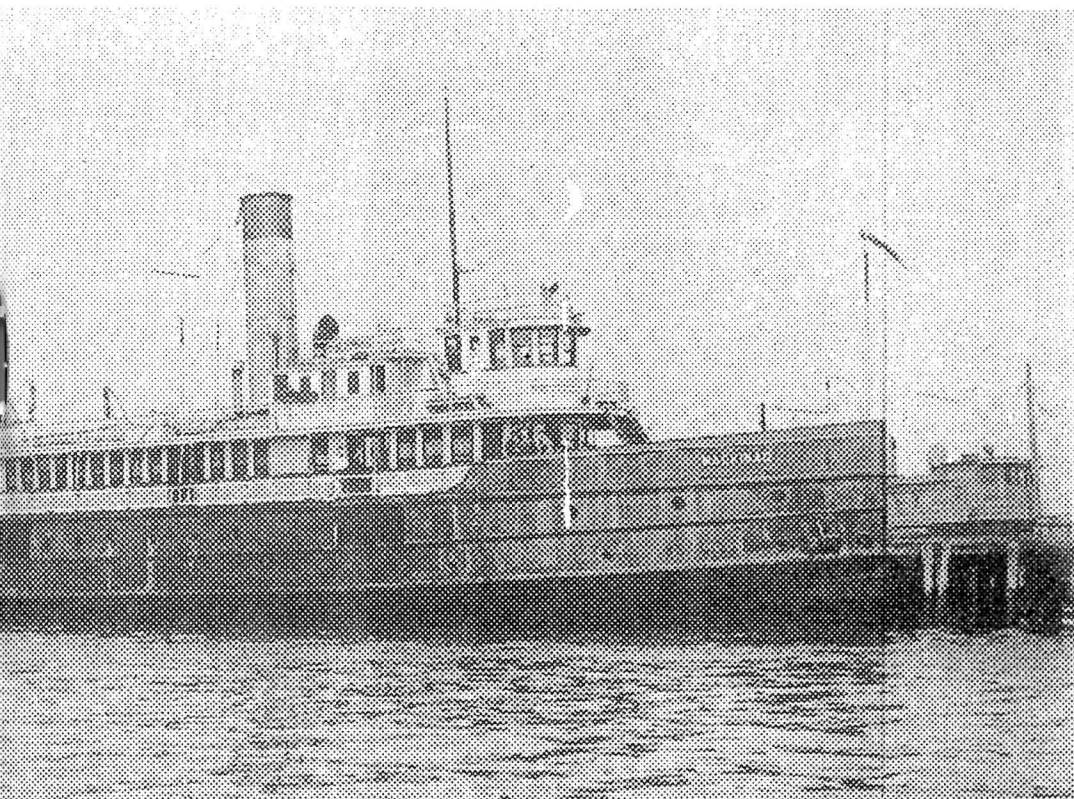
The Commanding Officer of the Hospital immediately realized that no civilian facilities were available to handle a disaster of this magnitude and he placed the Naval Hospital on an emergency alert. It became a Navy operation with all personnel on liberty recalled, additional doctors and corpsmen obtained from the Fleet and Training Station, and the local Red Cross called.

Wards were cleared for casualties and medical and surgical teams carried out standard operating procedures for which they had been well-trained. In the meantime, steady streams of people were being carried in by stretcher parties with small children being carried by sailors. All in all, over 700 people were landed on the Hospital pier by the Fleet boats.

As soon as the extent of the disaster was realized in Newport, the civilian community turned out in force. Mayor Mortimer Sullivan of Newport placed all municipal facilities at the disposal of Naval authorities. The local Red Cross and doctors and nurses were called as was the local clergy.

In addition to the pressing medical problems, the Naval Hospital had to face a heavy administrative burden when





and special railroad trains to their homes. The serious casualties were hospitalized.

In the wards it soon became evident that many of the casualties were fatally burned. Unfortunately, 51 people died of their injuries during the next few days making a total of 53 fatalities in the "Mackinac" explosion.

In reading this part of Newport history, one cannot help but be impressed by the magnificent job done by the U.S. Navy in this tragedy. If the Scouting Fleet had not been here at anchor and there had been no trained and organized Naval Hospital Corps, there would have been a much greater loss

of life. One might reflect that the Naval presence in Newport means much more than jobs and shops.

the news spread and the press and frantic relatives realized what had happened. An information center was organized under the direction of Naval personnel and immediate attention was given to the many problems involving such an unexpected emergency. In addition to the medical treatment, the Naval Hospital had to feed and shelter hundreds of passengers, many of whom were in a state of shock from their terrifying experience. The passengers who were able to travel were sent by taxi

of life. One might reflect that the Naval presence in Newport means much more than jobs and shops.

#### Bibliography:

"Activities at U.S. Naval Hospital, Newport, RI, during Mackinac Disaster", C. E. Riggs, Capt. U.S.N., Government Printing Office 1926.

Photo courtesy of Jim Steel

Susan Genett's

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## THE MAXIES MEET AGAIN

One beautiful sunny day this past June, an uncommon group of old friends came together on the Point. They met at Villa Marina, shared a delightful lunch on the porch, and spoke of days gone by, of the boys they once were, and of the man who marked their lives forever. The “boys” (just a few girls) were all Maxies; the event, the most recent Maxie reunion; the man, William King Covell, III (d. 1975). Those

present that June day: John M. Teves, Tom Leary, Skip Carney and Diane Latham, George M. Gordon, Guy and Margaret Harrington, Jack Lyons, James S. O'Neill, Thayer Donovan, Herb Donovan, Jane M. Walsh, Anne Ramsey Cuvelier, niece of King Covell and our hostess, and Alice Clemente, editor of this journal.

Who are the Maxies? I use “are” instead of “were” because *they* still identify themselves as such. They are (were) an informal club of sorts: “boys” of all ages who, from the 1930's to the 60's, hung out at 72 Washington Street, the home of King Covell and now Villa Marina. The origin of the name was debated. Some said it came from the Maxwell House cans they used to bail out boats. Others claimed for it a more dignified origin, a Latin motto that, they only vaguely remembered, contained the word “maximus”. What left no room for doubt was their devotion to this group that had as its clubhouse the walkout basement of King Covell's home, where they gathered to play board games, cook clams and tell stories, and which they also used as a base for their forays onto the bay. All were welcome to the group back then, though there was an official membership card that got them in the front gate – unless, of course, they chose to creep along the fence that then divided the Covell property from the McCleods' house next door, risking a scolding from King Covell's mother – “boys, boys!”



The boys spent their summers on the bay, literally, swimming, boating, fishing, sailing out to Jamestown or Narragansett for camping, or even just for an ice cream run to Pitcher's on Jamestown. Sometimes they would

sneak on to Rose Island only to be chased off by the caretakers. Not all of them owned boats, but there was always room for anyone who wanted to go along. And not all was play. The boys helped care for the boats along the Point, rescued some when they got loose from their moorings, and a few even crewed on King Covell's boat, the Ethelyn. The Maxies told the story of Melvin Gutman and Eddie Kent who, during the

summer of 1954, went to bail out a boat and ended up stranded on it, having to ride out one of the two hurricanes that hit Newport that year. All this was before the bridge, in the days of the ferries that the Maxies spoke of fondly, each of them by name. “The bridge connected us; the road through town divided us.” They also remembered when they could *row* out to Connell Highway and find blue crabs.

The Maxies spoke about many people that June day: the Furtados, with an amazing number of kids, who lived on 2<sup>nd</sup> and Willow and came to hang storm windows on Covell's house and Ed Corcoran, who practiced law until he was 102, causing his son to lament that he could not retire because he had to drive his father to work. But it was King Covell they spoke of most, the learned Harvard-educated teacher of ancient and medieval history at Rogers High School, a man with a passion for photography, who developed his own pictures, an organist for many years at St. John's Church.

That was the formal side of King Covell, but it was the other side that they really knew and loved: the man who bought an organ from Channing Memorial Church, had the Maxies help him unload the pieces at 72 Washington Street and then, after it was installed by Raymond Wayland, played it so loud that he could be heard for

## A SURPRISE CONNECTION

by Kay O'Brien

Flipping through the pages of my recent Pomona College magazine, my eyes spotted a familiar picture, a field of daffodils with a nearby sign: Newport. There are lots of Newports and lots of daffodils but reading on, here was the connection. I graduated from Pomona in California long ago in '41 just before Pearl Harbor. The article accompanying the daffodils tells of Ronald Fleming, class of '63. Ronald Fleming is founder of Townscape Institute and, it turns out, has been the donor of all the daffodil bulbs on America's Cup in our Newport.

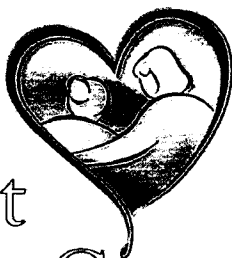
Mr. Fleming is a Newport resident part time, and his latest book is *The Art of Placemaking, Interpreting Community Through Public Art and Urban Design*. The Pomona College magazine will stay in our Point association History and Archive collection. Our thanks to Mr. Fleming for choosing our Newport to share his talent and treasure.

MAXIES (continued from page 12)

blocks. The man who loved chocolate and kept a box hidden to take along when they went out — the boys would invariably find its hiding place. The man with a sense of humor, whose boat, the Ethelyn, had a wheel that worked backwards, much to the consternation of newcomers not yet in on the "joke". The man who saved tinfoil during World War II and eventually donated it to the military where it was made into balls and dropped out of planes to disrupt radar. The man who never learned to drive; Herbie Donovan would drive him off to museums and usually get a flat tire along the way. The man who lived for a lifetime on Narragansett Bay but learned to swim only to pass Harvard's graduation requirement — otherwise, he would get into the water only to clean his boat. The man who, in winter, would organize the Maxies for an all-day trek to his property in Massachusetts to cut Christmas trees which they would then set up in time for the Christmas caroling that he would rehearse and lead.

All of this activity petered out in time, of course. "When you got your license and discovered girls, you were out of here." Yet they were all here that June day to reminisce and to celebrate the man who, more than one of them said, "kept us off the streets and out of jail," and exemplified for them many of the values they carried with them into manhood. To use the words of Thayer Donovan, "Growing up in the Point section of Newport in the 1950's was like growing up in the mystical magic of Camelot or participating in the boyhood adventures of Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer on the Mississippi." But it was not a mythical land; it was the real world of the Maxies. It was a privilege to be asked to share their memories.

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# THE ELM STREET PIER, THEN AND NOW

by Kay O'Brien

In the April 1990 issue of *The Green Light*, the following excerpt dealt with the use of the Elm Street Pier a hundred years earlier.

## "MORE ON ELM STREET PIER"

Mrs. Bolhouse sent a wonderful article about the proud history of the Elm Street Pier. It says in part: "Circa June 1882, the pier was largely used by the steam launches from our own ships and the French vessels when here. Since it was well arranged, clean and in a good neighborhood, the pier was the landing place for all fashionable boating. Two or three carriages of summer residents from the Avenue would wait at the head of the pier for parties returning from their yachts. Being in the Upper Harbor was a decided advantage. Away from the hustle and bustle of the old landings at Kingsley's and Ferry's Wharves 'ladies and young children, even if unattended, were not exposed to the risk of personal annoyances' in striking contrast to the other wharves."

On July 24, 2007, Leonard Panaggio wrote in his Grist Mill column in the *Newport Daily News*: "Years ago, visitors arrived here via steamboats, trains and stage-coaches. Once here they took seats on a drag – a horse-drawn vehicle – and were taken on a tour of the area."

Now, in 2007, Elm Street Pier is used for convenient access to the area boats in the harbor, and the driftway is used for hauling or launching boats from trailers.



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## FAVORITE RECIPE

### PERFECT FALL SOUP

by Kit Weiss

Can you believe it? Summer is OVER!! What happened? (Fill in your favorite cliché here) Oh well. At least we still have that homey kitchen to slump down in and fix our favorite comfort food. I hope that means soup to you. Because soup it is. I have the perfect soup recipe for the on-coming fall. Mind you, I am writing this in June and I am really stretching to picture fall. Ok here is my story – and I am unanimous in this.

I got out my very best eight bean soup recipe and followed the directions very carefully. This was my recipe and for several years in a row I have given as a Christmas gift a package of beans, a small bag of spices and a nicely written direction card. So, last week I made it again just to make sure everything was right for this article. Well .... What can I say? I'm sorry. That's it. If you received one of those Christmas presents, go ahead and throw it away. This morning I opened the refrigerator and checked the two gallon jug of the soup I made last week and it still smelled OK – but I simply could not wait any longer. I tossed it.

Ralph's favorite soup is French onion so let's try that. Slice as many onions as you can and start to brown them in a fry pan with about ½ cup water. Stand by with more water at the ready. Stir. Stir. As the water boils away wait for that last second and then add more water.

Repeat....Repeat....repeat. Do you see the onions starting to brown and you have added no oil (those of you who are nervous about this feel free to use the "cook onions in oil" method). At some point the onions will be just wonderful, brown and ready. Now add as much water as you need soup – 2cups? 4 cups? A gallon? Hold it! How many onions did you cut up? I hope you measured out this last addition of water because here is a real measurement – add beef bouillon cubes to match the water. If you get this wrong, you've pretty much ruined the easiest soup there is.

(Read the bouillon cube bottle. I just bought a new bottle and each cube is for TWO cups of water instead of the old one cube/one cup.) Well that's about it. You all know how to serve it in a crock with a piece of toasted French bread and mozzarella cheese broiled on top. I like to toss a nice tablespoon or so of parmesan in each crock first.

You all know the drill from here. If all fails, call me OR call a neighbor and simply complain to her. Good Luck.

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## MEMBERS' COCKTAIL PARTY ~ AUGUST 16 ~ PHOTOS BY LARRY KRAMAN



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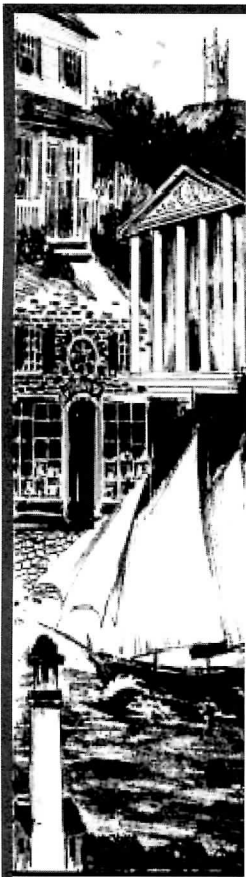


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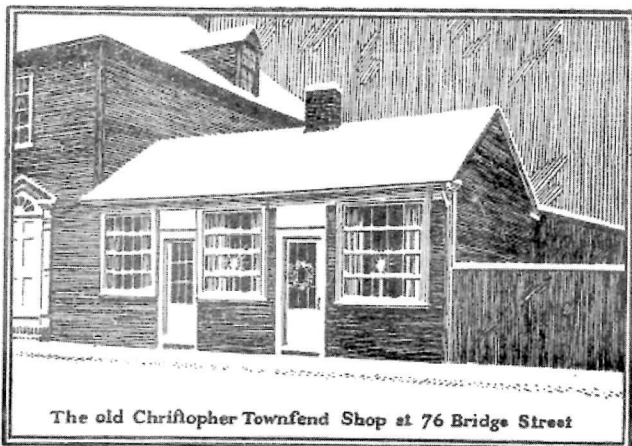
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## EARLY RESTORATION, INC.

by Kay O'Brien



Across the street from Herb Rommel's iris garden is Mrs. Hope Goddard's home where an Operation Clapboard sign reads: Christopher Townsend House – 1725. Attached to the west is a one-story wing where Restorations, Inc. was established in 1948. This shop specialized in paints, fabrics, wallpaper, and kept in stock old hardware, mantels, doors, and iron fireplace equipment from early R.I. houses. By the late 50's, the shop was moved to the Pitt's Head Tavern on Charles Street and later to the Brick Market.

In 1984, the Preservation Society gave Antiquarian Awards to Mabel Watson and Nancy Hay as founders of Restorations, Inc. Mabel was a charter member of the Point Association and served on many boards. Nancy Hay, an interior decorator, worked with Antoinette Downing on the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission.

There's so much more to this early history of restoration but as you walk along Bridge Street, remember the Townsends and Mabel Watson and Nancy Hay.



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## TWO POINT LIGHTHOUSES FEATURED ON FALL CRUISES

Two of the lighthouses that Pointers can see from Washington Street's docks and driftways are going to be featured on the Fall season lighthouse cruises by a new local tour boat, Gansett Cruises. Departing from Bowen's Wharf Ferry Landing, the M/V *Gansett* will take a one-hour and fifteen minute cruise to five historic lighthouses – Ida Lewis' Lime Rock Light, the Castle Hill Light, Beavertail light on Conanicut, plus the two closest to the Point: Rose Island and the famous "Green Light", the Newport Harbor light. The cruises are scheduled as part of the autumn "Coastweeks in R.I. – Celebration of the Coast," an annual program of events all about the state's magnificent shoreline.



*The M/V Gansett, Newport's new tour boat, gives visitors a close-up look at the famous Rose Island lighthouse.*

Did you know that Goat Island's "Green Light" back in the early 1800s was a fixed white light that was visible for 14 nautical miles? Guests on board will hear the facts and fiction about each of these historic light stations, as well as enjoying a small breakfast on board. The crew will be serving brewed coffee, tea, fruit, juices, and oven-warm pastries at the start of the morning runs.

The tours are at 9 AM on the dates listed below and the cost is just \$20, with the beverage and food included. Dress warmly if it's a chilly morning!

Gansett Cruises Historic Lighthouse Cruises 9 AM

September: Thurs 20, Fri 21, Sat 22, Thurs 27,  
Fri 28, Sat 29

October: Thurs 4, Fri 5, Sat 6

## THE SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF SUMMER PAST

by Ed Madden

Working out in the yard on Washington Street from time to time has brought an occasional welcome respite and smile. From the northern end of the street a low distant rumble is heard. This slowly builds in volume and rhythm until a definite cadence beat evolves. Work stops. The head rises and cocks and the eyes alight on a group of young, and sometimes not so young, military men and women, often led by a standard bearer, running to the cadence commands of the drill sergeant. They pass smartly by..."HUT..TWO..THREE..FOUR"—and at times a vocally pleasant form of "MILITARY RAP" (the only kind I can understand and tolerate!) They look healthy, refreshed and alert. All too soon, they have passed and then their sound slowly fades. But be of good cheer. Within a half hour or so, the process reverses itself and the slowly building crescendo reappears. On the way back the runners have lost a little of the spring in their steps but still inspire admiration in this former Navy medical officer. A definite two thumbs up for this special sight and sound of summer.



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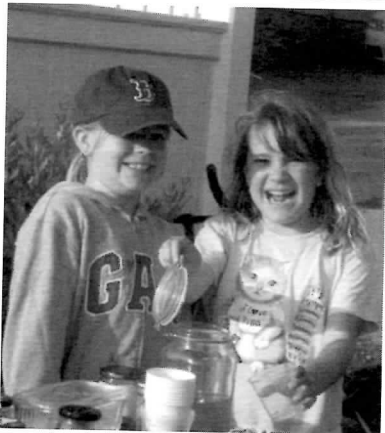
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PHOTOS BY JANE HENCE

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- ☐ Event Planning    ☐ History and Archives    ☐ Activities for children    ☐ Communications

# SAVE THE DATES

Annual Meeting — Thursday, October 18, 7:00 p.m., Harbor House  
Fall Cleanup — Saturday, October 21, 9:00 a.m., Storer Park

## BOOK DISCUSSIONS:

*The Sons of Providence*, October 17, 2:00 p.m., 73 Washington St.  
*The Dive From Clausen's Pier*, November 14, 2:00 p.m., 35 Second St.



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