

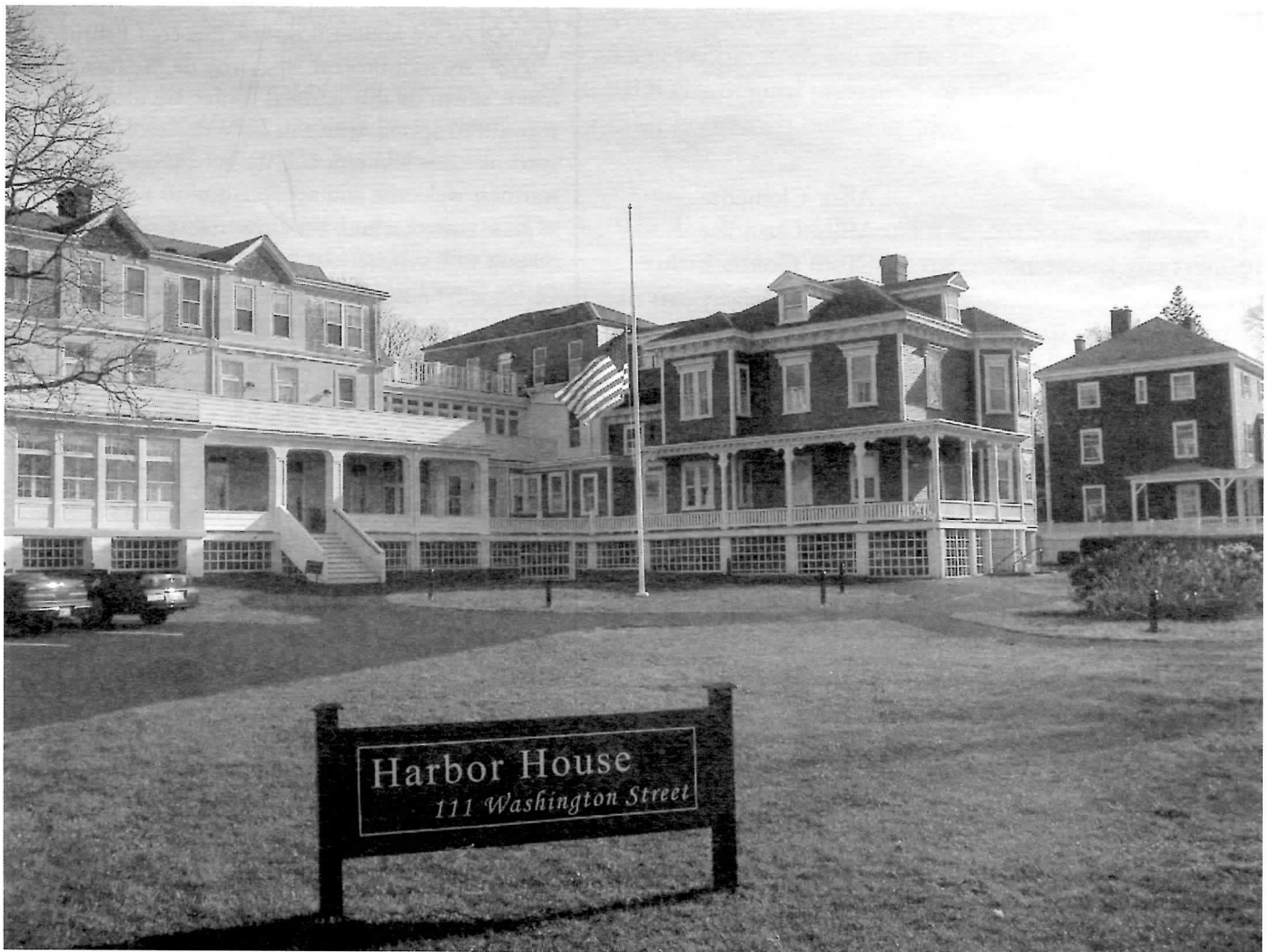
*The*  
GREEN



LIGHT

BULLETIN OF THE POINT ASSOCIATION  
OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

SPRING 2007



# The GREEN LIGHT

LII No. 1

SPRING 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 Image:** Harbor House "just after the new flagpole was put in place" - Photo courtesy of John Byrne.



As we hunker down on this cold February morning for what may be the first major storm of this unusual winter, we look forward to spring, with this issue dedicated to gardens, trees and renewal. We extend our warmest welcome and appreciation to a group of new writers who have answered our call, joining with our stalwart "oldies" to give new life to *The Green Light* as the journal approaches its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this coming April.

Our plan is to celebrate our anniversary with a book—a picture book primarily, with just a few articles that will look back over these five decades at the way we were and the way we are now. We urge you to come to the Point Association's membership meeting in April to learn more about it and, in the meantime, to look through your own albums and scrapbooks for material we might use. We hope this will be a communal effort.

Finally, we remember three people who have left us—Elizabeth Covell Ramsey, Michael Weidemann, and Roxy Ernsberger—and celebrate the gift of their extraordinary lives. They will be missed.

*Alice*

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

At the last PA Executive Committee meeting February 5, we decided there is so much going on in our neighborhood that we just don't have time for a party right now. We are BUSY! With concerts, Book Light discussion groups, a contest to design a Point flag, and a book to commemorate 50 years of *The Green Light*, among others. Check it all out in this issue of *The Green Light* and plan to attend our annual spring meeting in April for all the latest.

Support for our efforts to cancel any plans for a new road through the Point has been gratifying. I appeared before the City Council in the fall and spoke about our resolution objecting to the road. We seemed to be well received, thanks to Charles Duncan, who has been so helpful with this matter. David Pedrick continues to work on an alternative plan for traffic coming off the Pell Bridge and he is currently circulating it to various people and groups who might be helpful to us.

At the last RIDOT meeting on January 26 in Providence, after a review of comments about their plans for roads and ramps, it was decided that RIDOT and the Bridge and Turnpike Authority must solicit additional input from the public. They are focusing on four areas of concern: satellite parking/shuttle service, the road through the Point, drainage, and signage. They plan to expand membership of their working committee by adding people from the communities most affected by these issues. Some of you who responded to RIDOT's original presentations in September and October of last year will be receiving a letter from Bob Smith outlining "next steps." So...it's not over, yet, but we are hopeful for the future.

I was delighted to be part of a meeting at the Van Zandt Pier in December where Scott Wheeler of the City's Parks and Recreation Department explained to us the plans for restoration of the pier. The restoration has been broken down into five stages. Qualified contractors are invited to present "design-build" proposals for one or more of the stages, the first of which will stabilize the main portion of the pier. How refreshing in a year when consultants and PowerPoint presentations seem to be the main course in city planning, to hear that the Department of Parks and Recreation is encouraging contractors to be "creative" and "come up with solutions" in the designs they will cost out and then build.

Efforts have begun to establish a website for the Point Association. When it is up and running it promises to be a great way to post information and keep up with issues that have impact on Pointers. It may even take the place of our postcard reminders for those who are in the habit of checking out the latest news on their computers. But, it will never take the place of the personal encounters that make the Point such a wonderful place to live!



# THIS VERY OLD HOUSE

by Pieter N. Roos

It's a pleasure to be writing this column once again and, as always, it is an exciting time to be involved with preservation in Newport. There are positive things happening both publicly and privately to aid preservation in a town that we all care for very much, and there are challenges and threats as well.

I first came to Newport almost fifteen years ago because, in my field, I saw this town as the promised land. As a museum professional and a preservationist, I was right. Newport has yet to disappoint me. In the years since I arrived, Richard Moe, the President of the National Trust, called Newport and Charleston the bookends of Historic Preservation in America. That is a compliment of which we should all be proud, not least, the residents of the Point. It also means that we have a great responsibility to uphold some pretty high standards. The Point's architectural heritage is extraordinarily rich—while it remains one of the best preserved 18<sup>th</sup>-century neighborhoods in the country, it is also home to an extensive assortment of architectural gems from every later time period moving right up through the present day.

What makes us want to preserve our neighborhood and our home? What attracts us to places like Newport and the Point? There are probably as many answers to that question as the number of words that I'm allowed to use in the column, but let me suggest a few of my own motivations.

- For me, and I think for many others, it is not only that we love the history, but we also love character and uniqueness. This is no housing development—the Cookie Cutter Construction Company never came here, and neither you nor I want it to.
- We love underdogs. History is an underdog. Heck, mere survival is against the odds. That any of these houses should have survived rot, fire, demolition, four major hurricanes, and more than their fair share of less than benign neglect is remarkable. That so many houses from so many eras should not only have sur-

vived, but ultimately come to be so lovingly looked after is a very rare phenomenon. We root for them and rightly so.

We like diversity. The United States prides itself on being a melting pot, and our neighborhoods in Newport are an architectural melting pot of styles and history.

For all of the wonderful things that preservation is, there is one thing that it is not, and that is "finished". The buildings themselves, and attitudes of the public and the government are always changing. It is the nature of both buildings and vigilance to deteriorate. We must always be on the lookout for all manner of threats to the neighborhoods and the city of which we are residents and for which we are stewards. All of these things are part of the makeup of preservation and we will touch on these and many more subjects in future columns.

I will write the first two of these columns but after that I will be joined by two colleagues from the Newport Restoration Foundation. Robert Foley, Director of Preservation, and Lisa Dady, Director of Education, will be sharing this column and we will write about everything from windows in your own house to the larger issues of preservation in your neighborhood and around the city and across the country. All of us would love to have input on the subjects you would like discussed. If you have suggestions please let the editor know.



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## TRANSFORMATION OF 68 THIRD STREET

by Marcia Mallory

"This house is not for the faint of heart." These were the words realtor Rich Carrubba used when showing the house at 68 Third Street to potential buyers, Loretta and Don Roy. The Roys had moved to Newport 11 years ago, when they opened their store "Custom Canvas" on Bowen's Wharf. In looking for a house to buy on the Point, they found most were out of their price range. 68 Third Street had the right price, but it needed an enormous amount of work.

Many of us on the Point remember Louise Sherman—an unofficial historian of the Point and editorial writer for *The Green Light*. She and her husband Clifford bought the house in 1946 and lived there with their two sons. Clifford died in 1983. When Louise's health began to decline, her son Glenn and his wife Patricia moved from Alaska to live in the house and to help take care of Louise. Louise died in 2001, and Glenn sold the house to the Roys in 2002.

According to the records at the Newport Historical Society, the house was built between 1876 and 1883 by Samuel Young, a carpenter. His other claim to fame was that he was the superintendent of Bailey's Beach. In keeping with the tradition of the time, the house was named after Samuel's wife and was called the "Martha Young" house. Don Roy's research found that the house was originally built in the Greek Revival style with a double front door and a stoop leading to the sidewalk. Sometime in the early 1900's, the porch with decorative spindles and other "gingerbread" was added, turning the house into a Queen Anne Victorian. The steps now came up from the side.

During the early 1900's a couple of small additions were added to the rear of the house, and the toilet was brought inside, into a small enclosure in the kitchen. In the early 1940's the house was divided into two apartments—one upstairs and one down. The porch was enclosed with glass windows and divided in two.



The upstairs was rented to navy personnel during the Second World War.

In applying to the Historic District Commission for the proposed changes to restore the house, Don had to remove enough of the shingles to convince the Commission that clapboards were the original siding. Coincidentally, Don is now a member of the Historic District Commission and its vice-chairman.



The Roys have been working on their house for four years and, except for the kitchen, the restoration is now almost complete. They completely gutted the inside of the house to restore it to its original floor plan as a one family house. Working as their own contractors, they did some of the work themselves and hired craftspeople to do the rest. One of their happiest moments was when they removed the enclosure on

*Continued on page 20*

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## A FLAG FOR THE POINT

Flags. They're wonderful.

Take a walk around the Point, and you'll soon find this is a flag waving community.

American flags of all vintages, national flags, house flags and some unfamiliar flags, too, crackle in the strong winds that blow our way. There is just one thing missing: the Point's own flag. To that end, the Point Association is sponsoring a contest to design a two by three foot flag. Open to everyone, the winner will receive one hundred dollars. Artwork should be designed so that the flag and details can be seen readily from afar, and can be easily reproduced.

Computer artwork can be saved in either Illustrator (.ai) or .eps format.

Deadline: April 30, 2007. Please send entries to  
FLAG, PO Box 491 Newport RI 02840.

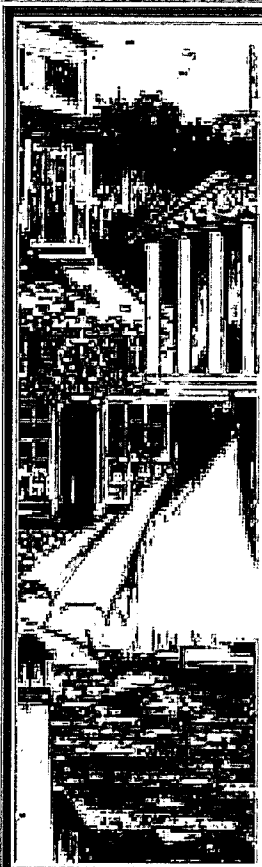
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## A CHORE BECOMES A DELIGHT

by Ed Madden

Ever since I can remember, it was my job to take out the garbage. As an only child there was never any question of whose job it was. For many years, my mother and I lived on the top floor of one of the well known three-deckers in Worcester, Mass. So it was up and down the stairs plus the hike out to the garbage cans daily. In graduate school, I roomed with two other classmates, so there was some distribution of labor. Later, raising 6 children, sometimes, but not always, brought assistance. 18 years ago, when Dorothy and I bought Stella Maris Inn, new challenges loomed on the horizon. In the busy tourist season, the quantity of garbage increased exponentially. The location of the barrel depository was at the end of a 100 foot walkway starting from the kitchen door and ending at Cherry Street. The path also traversed a contemplated significant garden renovation plan. A few years before, we were much taken with the "allées" as part of the garden landscaping in the French chateaux country of the Loire Valley. We thought that it might be possible to reproduce along the backyard walkway a mini "allée" of our own. This would consist of a covered archway with parallel plantings, a sort of tunnel effect. I had a metal craftsman construct 9 metal arches which I spaced about 10 feet apart and anchored in concrete. Ralph Sabetta, our landscape consultant, suggested using Kousa (Korean) dogwood which would be disease resistant. 18 of these paired up on either side of the 9 arches, standing about 5 feet tall, gave the desired effect. All we needed was several years of growth to fill in the sides and tops of the arches and voilà, there was our French allée!

In the chateaux country, the allées gently ramble through the garden to a lovely reflecting pool and/or exquisite garden sculpture. In my yard the allée goes to the garbage cans! It may be one of a kind. The point of the story is that sometimes a little ingenuity can change an unpleasant chore into a delight. Now taking out the garbage is always a pleasure.




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## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

by Patricia and Rich Carrubba

Herb Armstrong

Susan Habaj

Pamela and Ross Meurer

Mary Jane Rodman has graciously volunteered to call on new members whenever possible, and provide them with information about our organization and the Point neighborhood. Thank You Mary Jane.

## BORN ON THE POINT

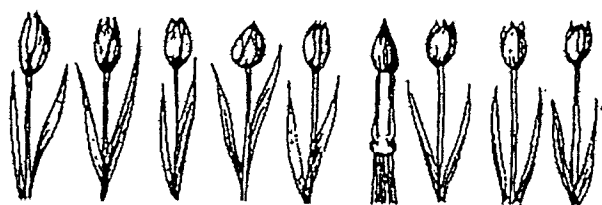
by Bill Hall, History and Archives

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

The next round of Born on the Point certificates will be readied for the April 2007 membership meeting. Applications must be submitted by March 25. Anyone interested in information or an application may contact Bill Hall at 846-4159.

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## HISTORY AND ARCHIVES COMMITTEE REPORT

by Joan Bartram

The History and Archives Committee will be undertaking a project to formally organize the archives of the Point Association. The goal of the project is to create a well organized collection that is an accurate portrait of our neighborhood in word and photograph. The group is working with Joan Bartram, Point resident and Special Collections Librarian at Salve Regina University, to bring this about. Following some initial work by the History and Archives Committee the plan is to recruit an intern from either the Cultural or Historic Preservation Program at Salve Regina or from the Archives program at the University of Rhode Island to actually create the lists and records of the unique items in the collection.



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# IN MEMORIAM

## ELIZABETH COVELL RAMSEY

1909-2007

by Jane MacLeod Walsh

Another cherished Pointer has succumbed to the ravages of time. Betty, as she was known to all, died on January 17, just four months short of her 98<sup>th</sup> birthday, after a long and full life. She enjoyed a happy childhood on the Point at "Villa Marina" (72 Washington Street, familiar to Pointers today as the site of the annual Point Association Cocktail Party) with her parents and her two brothers, King and Rob (William King Covell and Robert Covell). Unlike her brothers, who remained in Newport, Betty followed her husband Donald Ramsey to Naval duty stations throughout the U.S. until they settled in Alexandria, Virginia, just across the Potomac from Washington, D.C. However, her love for Newport and the Point was undiminished; at the start of every summer, when her three daughters Timmy (Elizabeth), Anne and Audie (Allison) were old enough, Betty would pile them all (with assorted pets) into the family car to begin the LONG (in those days) drive to Newport to stay with her Washington Street family until September. Our family, who lived right next door at #78, was always so happy when they arrived; it meant that summer had really begun! Betty always loved music, and would join us lustily, whenever the occasion arose, around our piano or theirs, in singing our favorite old Scottish songs.

She also loved history, languages and literature, and was wonderful about sharing her knowledge, but always modestly, and often with great humor. She'd had a good classical education, starting with Rogers High School, where she felt that several of her teachers were outstandingly good. Betty loved to reminisce

about those school days and her various teachers, two of whom were fondly nicknamed "Tiptoe Sal" and "Ducky Waddles". She went on to Vassar College, where her love of learning grew, a love which nourished her (and those around her) for the rest of her life. She had a prodigious amount of knowledge, and, even in her very

last years, remembered almost everything she had ever read and could quote passages from the loftiest of literature (including Greek, Latin and even Aramaic) to the silliest of childhood doggerel. To spend an hour with her was invariably to come away with a quotable gem or two.



Betty was absolutely thrilled to be able to return to Newport for her last few years, and what's more, to be living back on Washington Street at the Nina Lynette Home, just up the street from her daughter Anne Cuvelier, who was running the old Victorian family home as a Bed and Breakfast. She relished every sunset over the bay from her west-facing room until she finally had to go into a nursing home. But even there her mind and memory remained keen. I would try to stump her occasionally with challenging crossword puzzles, but she usually came through with flying colors. One clue I remember was "The writing on the wall", and without a second's hesitation Betty declared jubilantly, "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin"! How many people would remember that at age 96? She will be truly missed.

## WE REMEMBER MIKE

by Kay O'Brien

Last November, twenty-three year old Michael Weidemann was killed in Iraq. As his story was revealed, some of us realized that Michael had lived here on the Point. After his mother died, Michael came to live in the group home on Katzman Place. He enrolled in the Newport Area Career and Technical Center affiliated with Rogers High School. He joined the school's ROTC program and after graduation in 2001, enlisted in the Army. Michael served a tour in Iraq and reenlisted for another four years: he was nearing the end of his second tour.





*Here is Michael helping us on a Storer Park cleanup.*

*We join the many who will remember Michael Weidemann.*

## ROXY ERNSBERGER

by Carol Tea

On February 2nd the Point lost a good neighbor when Roxy Ernsberger passed away. He and his wife Claire have been longtime Newport residents and Roxy was Secretary of the Point Association. We felt *The Green Light* would be a good way to say goodbye.

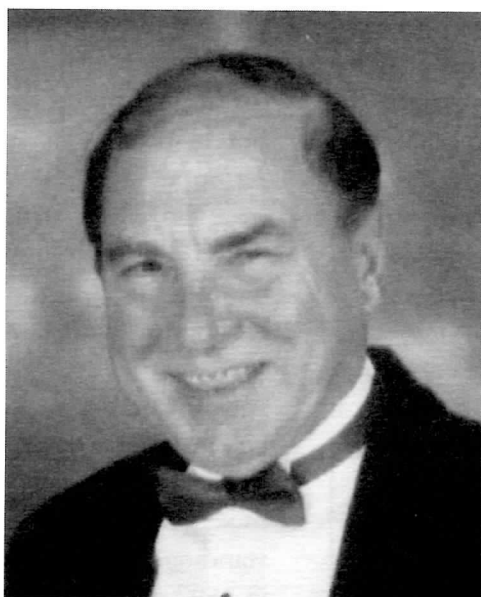
Roxy had an array of personal interests and an impressive resume of accomplishments that would make writing this article an easy task for anyone. One could tell the story of a husband, proud parent of three and grandparent of nine. The fact that he earned an Electrical Engineering degree from MIT and later worked with NASA on the original design of the Space Shuttle Columbia would be equally as notable. One might be interested in Roxy and Claire's world travels. Locals might like to know of his volunteer work in Newport which included work with Trinity Church and as Vice President of the Friends of Newport Library – to name just a few. His well attended and beautifully held ceremony at Trinity Church on February 6th would tell of the many people who knew and loved Roxy. But I'd like to share some other observations that tell what kind of man Roxy was.

I remember first seeing Roxy and Clyde walking the waterfront one cloudless day – a gentle man and a mountain of a dog. This vision struck me as odd and I began to wonder

why. After all, how often does one see a man walking his dog in this neighborhood? I thought about it and realized that Roxy did not appear to walk Clyde – but rather he walked with Clyde. A companion and a friend – Roxy was both of these things.

When my husband Peter and I purchased the Ernsbergers' home 2 years ago, we learned that the 'good neighbors bar' had been raised in an unusual way. Roxy knew that his was one of a few homes in this area with benefit of a garage—and a large ladder. He declared that his ladder was to be the neighborhood ladder and that it could be retrieved when

needed. Our new neighbors described many friendly gestures between the houses, and 'the keeper of the ladder' was one they fondly remembered—they had a good neighbor in Roxy and he will be especially missed here on Second Street.



Being involved with so much is a bit of an understatement where Roxy is concerned. Member of the Newport Yacht Club, the Maryville Tennessee Ski Club, the Wanumetonomy Golf Club, as well as the above mentioned activities, can keep one fairly busy. So, I wondered, why would one make a decision to renovate not just one but two homes on the Point within a 4 year period? "You must really love Claire," said a friend to Roxy one afternoon. He was her "Fixer Upper" and with all that he had accomplished in his life, I think this was probably one of his most rewarding jobs. I think Claire said it best when she fondly recalled a sunset cruise Roxy and she had taken from Bowens Wharf one beautiful evening. "We passed Aquidneck Lobster and I saw a big old dilapidated boat," she said. Claire recounted Roxy saying that when they got their own boat, it would be that very dilapidated boat she would want. He added that he knew this because it was a 'fixer upper' and who better to do that than him. I think Roxy's secret ingredient was the amount of TLC he put into it.

Roxy will be greatly missed here on the Point.

## TREES OF THE POINT – THE EUROPEAN BEECH

by Ed Madden

One of the interesting things about the Point is the nomenclature of many of the streets based on a variety of trees. This custom originated with William Penn in Philadelphia in the 1700's, naming East-West streets after trees and North-South streets numerically. 1<sup>st</sup> Street was later renamed Water Street and finally Washington Street to honor our first president.

In 1992, Newport was designated as the recipient of a Tree City USA award from the Arbor Day Foundation based in Lincoln, Nebraska. This award is given to those cities and towns that have supported the mission of the Arbor Day Foundation to plant, nurture and celebrate trees throughout the country. This award has been continuously renewed thanks to the good work of Scott Wheeler, our Trees and Park Supervisor, his crew and all interested tree huggers.

In the latest journal of the Arbor Day Foundation, there was a rousing salute to Enterprise Rent-A-Car

for a pledge to financially support the Arbor Day Foundation in planting one million trees in our national forests each year for the next 50 years. This was in celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Enterprise. Seems like a good reason to rent my next car from Enterprise!

To home in on one specific species, I have selected the European Beech tree. This beauty is very common in England; it grows to a height of more than 80 feet and can live under ideal conditions for a few hundred years. Its root system, however, tends to be rather shallow. So at full growth with a full mantle of leaves, it can be subject to uprooting in heavy gales.

Beeches thrive in Newport because of the climate, soil conditions and moisture. There are 3 major varieties: the Copper Beech, the Weeping Beech, and the Fernleaf Beech. On the Cherry Street side of Stella Maris Inn are 2 Copper Beeches, each one probably more than 150 years old. These stand out quite characteristically when viewed approaching Newport on the Pell Bridge. All the other trees in this area are green providing a background for the rustic copper color of the two beeches.

In front of the Redwood Library is a Fernleaf Beech known to have been planted in 1835. Richard Champlin, in his book *Trees of Newport*, considers it the finest and most venerable specimen in America. The other outstanding Fernleaf Beech is the "Liberty Tree" planted in 1897 and located in Liberty Park, the small triangular enclosed park at the corner of Thames and Farewell Streets. This is the fourth Liberty Tree located here—the original being a buttonwood planted in 1766 by the Sons of Liberty to symbolize resistance to Britain.

Unfortunately, I haven't been able to find an example of a Weeping Beech in the Point area. They are present at some of the Preservation Mansions.

For those interested in furthering a worthy cause, I would recommend joining the National Arbor Day Foundation, 211 N. 12<sup>th</sup> St., Lincoln, NE 68508 (tel. 888-448-7337). They have an informative small magazine every other month featuring a different tree in each edition. Remember, trees help to eliminate CO2 from the atmosphere, which is one decisive step in slowing down global warming!



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## SPRING PLANT SALE

This year our Plant Sale will be held on Saturday, May 19, from 8:30 to 11:30 at Isabel's house, 22 Walnut Street. People seemed really to like this location, so please plan to join us there.

As the Point Association's ONLY fundraiser, the Plant Sale is so important to our neighborhood. It pays for trees the City plants on the Point as well as spring bulbs for our parks. We always need more volunteers and welcome non-gardeners who are a wonderful help picking up donations from local nurseries and helping with the setup during the week of the sale. We hope you will stop by the Sale to pick up pots of herbs or pansies. And, as usual, we will have a generous variety of Point perennials from our own gardens.

Last year was the best year we have had since I started working for the Plant Sale. It was because we had terrific donations from neighborhood gardens. We will sell what you give us, and we will help collect your plants. We also welcome garden ornaments, baskets, pretty pots, and houseplants.

To volunteer, even if only for an hour, or to donate plants, please call Isabel at 849-6444.

Isabel Griffith • Marcia Mallory • Jennifer Hall

## WALKING ON THE POINT

by Kay O'Brien

Winter's cold, summer's heat; spring and fall are seasons in transition. If you're a full time resident of the Point, you must adjust to whatever weather comes along.

With our unusual, mild winter, and no snow, in late January, we found bulbs and blooms almost ready to show off. However, with a sudden free fall of temperatures paired with a howling Northwest wind, we were trying to fend off the wild beast of winter. It tried to get inside our old Point houses, screaming down chimneys, rattling windows, and finding unknown cracks along the floors. As we shivered and moaned, we wondered how life in the past was tolerable without heating systems. Our worst nightmare today is facing a power outage for a short time. How would we

survive a blizzard or an ice storm? Hopefully, we won't be tested.

What do we see in winter that's spectacular – gorgeous sunsets over the bay when the whole sky turns orange with silhouettes or dark clouds and bare branches painted in. It's reassuring to watch the sun then travel north to promise longer daylight. Exciting, too, is being treated to unexpected vistas of sea smoke on the bay, as frigid air temperature meets the warmer seawater. We miss chats with neighbors while walking as sometimes they are not outdoors or are disguised with hats, scarves, and mittens.

More "For Sale" signs are added than subtracted. Construction continued in many locations with interesting sights and sounds and angles, with noisy too-banging machinery, rumbling delivery trucks, full and empty dumpsters changing places. As we spend time indoors, we make plans and promises for warmer weather. No one admires trashy, weedy, dirty sidewalks. We plan to sweep and keep clean our walkways and be good stewards of our property, but need 100 percent cooperation from part-timers. Spring catalogs have arrived, and we're imagining adding color to our gray landscape as the sun gets overhead.

Already summer activities are lining up – Tall Ships in late June, work on seawall and pier repairs, a town full of tourists. We all agree we have the best spot in town. Each has favorite views, so how about picking a bench and painting your own picture. It can be past, present, or future in your dreams. The most unwelcome guest would be a hurricane.



# A GARDEN IN BALANCE

by Miles Chandler

Chuck DiTucci is passionate about the environment. In our discussion over coffee, he explained his views on the environment, and what he sees as our human role as stewards. He loves our Point neighborhood and has strong feelings about how we can best serve the long-term health of our local environment. our lawns and gardens. Chuck begins: *"To create an environmentally friendly garden, we first need to view it in context. The environment is the entire universe: the air, the elements, the water, soil, insects, birds, animals, sea life, and us, the humans. We are all related and all contribute to the balance of nature. Rainforests, oceans, deserts, farms, forests, and our own little landscapes are part of that equilibrium. An environmentally friendly garden is one that is in balance and allows for the health of all nature. Our backyards are mini-environments that give us pleasure through gardening, nice lawns, recreation areas and restful places. When we treat them kindly they will return the favor in the form of healthy vegetables, plants and a peace of mind that we are doing the right thing."* Stewardship is a recurring theme with DiTucci. *"Good stewardship is to adopt the strategy of sustainable landscaping. This means that you must take the time to learn about your yard, the soil and composition, sun or shade areas, wind, and moisture. Once you know the personality of your yard or mini-environment you should choose native plants that are adapted to the area you live in and will be less susceptible to disease, insects, drought and temperature extremes. Consider perennial plants and shrubs suitable to zone 5 and 6 for hardiness. Many gardeners are impulse buyers and can't resist a pretty plant. It may look great at the nursery, but may be a poor choice for their garden. Remember, "the right plant in the right place". Plan your garden and research the plants that you like before you buy them."*

I asked Chuck what to do when problems arise, even after we've planned well. He suggests a strategy of Integrated Pest Management (IPM). This strategy is a commitment to the least toxic approach to control pests, weeds, and disease. Before you reach for a chemical fix, determine symptoms, diagnose the problem, research the problem, ask questions, bring a sample leaf or cutting to a reputable nursery, or call the Master Gardener hotline at URI cooperative ex-

tension, and get two opinions before you act. Chuck gave me a great example. Every year he plants broccoli rabe, a green leafed vegetable. When he first started planting in early spring, the flea beetles showed up and ate his leaves. Instead of trying to kill the beetles, he did some research, and discovered that if he waited until later in the spring to plant the flea beetles, which flourished early in the year, and feasted on tender new leaves, were no longer a problem. It was also important to keep the garden free of weeds and debris to eliminate sheltered areas. Some recommendations for a natural and healthy approach to gardening are to make or buy a compost bin and re-cycle kitchen and garden scraps for rich, natural nutrients instead of buying fertilizer. There are also many good organic fertilizers on the market which are not harmful as runoff into the bay. Companion planting works very well. Mix flowers and herbs throughout your gardens. They attract beneficial insects and discourage the bad guys. Fewer than 2% of insects can be considered pests, the rest are beneficial. Invite them into your garden by choosing plants that they like. Encourage birds with a bird bath, they are predators and help control insects. Never kill a spider, earthworm, bee, or ladybug. Consider rotating crops in your vegetable garden to discourage pests and disease. *"A healthy, chemical free garden is the right approach for the responsible steward. Keep things in balance to promote an environment that will remain healthy for humans, pets, wildlife, and connected to all of nature."*

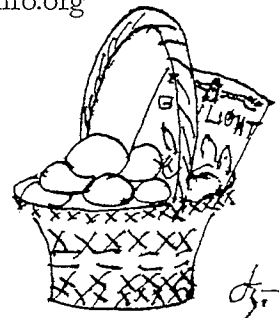
Chuck DiTucci, Garden & Landscapes, can be reached at 846-6576 or [gardenandlandscapes@yahoo.com](mailto:gardenandlandscapes@yahoo.com) See also the following websites recommended by Joan Simmons.

URI Master Gardeners hotline:

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## WHERE HAVE ALL THE FLOWERS GONE?

by Jane Groff Marchi

Once Newport enjoyed the advantages of two discrete worlds: the amenities of the city on the one hand, the environmental benefits of rural greenery on the other. Little by little this legacy has eroded over time. Nothing is more emblematic of these changes than the closing of the last greenhouses located within the city limits this past year.

If we look back to the turn of the last century, Newport boasted more than one such enterprise. In 1898, John and Maude Chase went into business as the John F. Chase Market Gardens and Florist. They located their greenhouses up the hill on a piece of land between Vicksburg Place and Tilley Avenue, just east of City Cemetery and Island Cemetery. Here the Chases initially raised and sold vegetables, poultry, and eggs — as well as fresh flowers, mainly carnations, for the wholesale florist market. Three years later, in 1901, William Jurgens opened his large greenhouses not far away, off what is now called Van Zandt Avenue (then called Gibbs), between Butler and Evarts Streets. This is probably the site of the present Island Cemetery Annex. His specialty was raising Lilies-of-the-Valley, grown from pips imported from northern regions (Holland, Germany and Denmark) of his native Europe. The lilies were then shipped to wholesale and retail markets in Providence, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington by ship or by train.

Both businesses prospered for many years, although both were destined to fall afoul of changing standards, often defined as “progress” or, today, globalization. The first to feel the pressure was William Jurgens. He was dealt a severe blow in the 1940s when the U.S. Government decreed that he could no longer import his all-season Lily-of-the-Valley pips as rootstock due to fears it might serve as host to a parasite capable of infecting other crops. The distinctive characteristic of this species was that, unlike our native domestic variety, it could bloom during virtually every month of the year, thus affording florists with an almost constant supply of the popular flower. Although he was able to continue for some years, the business never

fully recovered from this blow, and he was forced to close his doors in 1972.

More fortunate were the Chases, with what became a family-run business, passing from father to son to grandson down to the fourth generation. John and Maude Chase, founders of the business, not only worked long, hard hours to raise and sell their produce but also expanded their reach by delivering to customers as far afield as Fall River and New Bedford, a considerable distance in those days. The business evolved into a wholesale cut-flower operation, specializing in growing carnations, a popular choice much in demand as it was considered appropriate for every occasion. In the 1930s, when John Chase Jr. and his wife Hope took over the reins, they opted to move from a wholesale cut-flower to a retail plant and flower operation, expanding the number of greenhouses, and renaming the business Tilley Avenue Greenhouses. Then, when John Jr. became ill in the 1970s, his son Larry Chase, and wife Lynn, decided to move back to Newport to help his parents with the family florist business, gradually taking on more varied roles and greater responsibilities. After John Jr. died in 1982, the couple opened a small retail shop on Tilley Avenue in 1986, renaming the business Chase's Greenhouses.

But Larry and Lynn Chase have also had to contend with the changes wrought by time: changes in tastes as well as in the flower business itself. For example, carnations are no longer the mainstay they once were, nor are cut flowers necessarily grown locally but are now an international big business. Colombia is now a major supplier to the cut flower business. Furthermore, there has been a proliferation of venues where flowers and plants can be purchased, from supermarkets to “big box” stores to chain garden centers. These considerations pose both a challenge to and a dilemma for David Chase, who, with a degree in horticulture, would otherwise be poised to become the fourth-generation Chase to carry on the business. So it was with a heavy heart that the family decided to close its doors at the end of the 2006 holiday season.

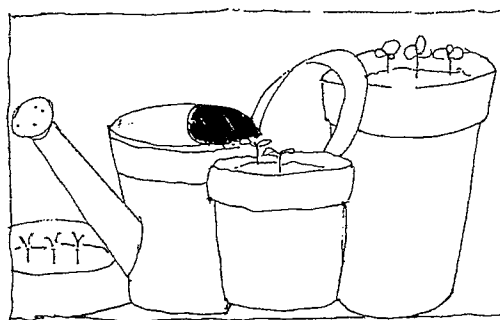
The retail shop is closed, the phone disconnected, but the greenhouses are still there. For the time being, at least, Chase's Greenhouses have closed their doors for good. It is a loss for all of us.

# WINDOW BOXES AND CONTAINER GARDENING

by Sue Brandon

Container gardening has never been as popular as it is today. A large part of its popularity is due to the fact that it fits in with so many aspects of our daily lives. In neighborhoods such as the Point where space is at a premium, a terrace, or a window box can become a miniature garden. Where land is at a premium, plants take on a special value and the only way for a gardener to grow them is in containers. Aside from being miniature gardens, containers and window boxes soften the appearance of the house, lending color and texture to create a transition between sidewalks and architecture. If well thought out, they can be an inexpensive way to draw attention to windows, entrances and steps. Containers and window boxes can be an invaluable way to provide screening material and give necessary privacy to homeowners. They can also be attached to railings of balconies and front entrances to lend valuable color at that height without taking up valuable ground.

Eighteen months ago our family moved from a suburban neighborhood outside of Philadelphia to the Point in Newport. I left a large garden and downsized to what can be described as a courtyard garden, sharing what little space I had with our standard Poodle. The only way to successfully garden was to use containers, keeping all flowers and delicate plant material up out of the reach of the dog. It allowed for not only experimentation with plants, but also the flexibility to move containers around in the garden, much like one would move furniture in a room. Light and color could illuminate shady corners; groupings of pots define eating areas and give privacy to the street. Window boxes were placed in the front of the house to soften the architecture and visually connect the front of the property with the back garden.



To start, there are excellent choices of window boxes available in various styles, materials and sizes through local nurseries, catalogs and home building supply stores, including some hand-thrown terra cotta planters. The Farmer's Daughter, Chaves Gardens and Sweet Berry Farm are local nurseries that often carry an interesting and unusual selection of containers from the sophisticated to the rustic. Smith & Hawken, Gardener's Supply Company and Frontgate are just a few of the mail order supply sources available over the internet that sell garden accessories. Even inexpensive white plastic window boxes can be distressed and painted to blend with the surrounding architecture. Custom window boxes, although a more expensive alternative, can be

the perfect answer for some gardeners. They can be built to exact measurements, extending the width to equal that of the windows and increasing the depth to give preference to plant material. The design of the box can insure a seamless blend with the style and color of the architecture. If custom wooden boxes are chosen, it is essential that the interior of the box be lined with a material

that will protect the wood and prevent it from rotting and that weep holes be drilled in the bottom to allow for proper drainage.

When starting with new plants in the spring, it's a good idea to scour out the containers or boxes and cover the weep holes with either pottery shards or some type of screening material. Then cover the bottom with a 1-2" layer of gravel to create adequate drainage and fill the container about half full with a commercial potting mix that is light, contains a slow release fertilizer, and has a good balance of nutrients. With the container half full of potting mix, and without removing the plants from their pots, arrange them so that they are displayed to their best effect. Once they are in position, remove the pots and finish filling the container with potting mix to within an inch of the rim. If the window box is wooden and unlined it would be advantageous to plant inside a rigid plastic liner to prolong the life of the box. With frequent changes of plant material in window boxes it may be more efficient to have two rigid liners for each

*Continued on page 17*



## HARBOR HOUSE CELEBRATES ITS FIFTH

by Loretta Goldrick

*"A place is not a place until people have been born in it, have grown up in it, known it, and died in it — have both experienced and shaped it as individuals, families, neighborhoods, and communities over more than one generation."*

*Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs*

Wallace Stegner

This could be said about any number of places on earth. But the late Pulitzer prize winning author's words, on rereading, seem to best describe Harbor House, its past and its present, and all those who live and have lived and worked in it over the years.

This local landmark, a broad scattering of five historic buildings at 111 Washington St., marks this, its fifth year as an independent living community. As I left my house to talk to a small gathering of residents, some of whom have lived there since it opened, I said to my husband, "What would you like to know about it?" The Brits would call us pensioners "Ask what it's like to live there, what they do, and ask about the food," he answered. So I did.

We all sat around the library table at Harbor House one sunny, wintry morning to talk about life in an independent living community, and what it's like. Seated close by was Andre de Bethune, whose late "big" sister Ade was the spark who, in 1991, began the Star of the Sea non profit corporation, "to establish and maintain a center for elders who seek to focus on personal growth and mutual help in a lifestyle of simplicity." Today sociologists would describe this as "affinity housing"—people drawn to a site by common interests and backgrounds.

One of the first to move into Harbor House on a frigid January day in 2002 was Marilyn Slominski. She had just quit her job and had sold her condo in Florida to be closer to her son, Robert Mastin, a Middletown resident and businessman. She especially enjoys yoga and the art classes offered there and knew it was where she wanted to be after a brief visit the year before.

A rarity among the residents is Liz Mathinos, a Newport native and staff writer for *The Green Light*, who finds Harbor House, "a safe haven in my favorite neighborhood. It's a short walk to see my family and grandchildren or to cross the street to watch a spectacular sunset on the bay. There is always something to do here, and someone to talk to," she said.

My library companions, among them two active ninety year olds, then spoke about the gradual adjustments that had to be made in their lives, since most had been unaccustomed to smaller, closer quarters. "You can't get up and sing an aria at 3 o'clock in the morning," one said. As with any group, some are larks and others owls and gradually occupants become familiar with the daily routines of their neighbors in this close knit community, and in time learn not to breach thresholds of privacy. This being in Ade's words, "a center of mutual help," residents can be away from Harbor House for no longer than two months. The minimum age for residents, who hail from a variety of places, is sixty two, and some still head out to work each day.

Since the complex was a conversion, all thirty eight one bedroom and efficiency units are different. Some have sweeping harbor views, some interesting architectural features, others porches and sun filled spaces, while others look out over the roofs of the Point.

A new front sidewalk, just completed, runs the length of the complex. It is a gift of neighbor Jonathan Shattuck, who will soon be living in what had been Ade Bethune's house across the street, now almost completely restored after a disastrous fire in December 2005.

With the arrival of Rita Brissette last April, noontime meals have become healthier, and more appetizing. Food is prepared by a Newport restaurant/caterer and delivered to Harbor House, where it is served to residents in a pretty dining room for \$6.00 per person. Visitors and guests are welcome to dine at the same rate Monday to Friday. A mid-January menu offered beef barley soup and roast beef and swiss cheese sandwiches or shrimp and crab casserole. Rita, lunch time coordinator and geriatric specialist, first fell in love with Newport in the sixties when she and her husband came to what was then the Carmelite Nuns Center to make a retreat. *Continued on page 18*

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

An article in the January 21, 2007 issue of the *Providence Journal* began: "Young college-educated professionals are not staying in Rhode Island, according to an estimate released by the U.S. Census Bureau..." The picture accompanying the article was of Talia Leary, originally from Newport. This article confirmed a problem that we have heard discussed on the Point and so we decided to look at the careers of some young people with ties to the neighborhood, beginning this time with Kyle Hence, son of *The Green Light* contributor Jane Hence. Our aim in this series will be to address such questions as: What have young people found elsewhere that was missing here? In this age of the computer is it not possible to work from a Newport base? Kyle Hence's career is illuminating with respect to the latter.

Kyle Hence attended St. George's School. He left Newport to attend college but it was a passion for sailing that consumed him. He left school, obtained a captain's license in England, on the Isle of Man, and spent the next years sailing the world. He crewed on Shamrock V and Endeavor, both British entries in the America's Cup race. He captained a privately owned sloop from England to Fiji and Tahiti – with perilous moments along the way. Some fifteen years ago, he returned to Newport to become head sailing instructor (1995-1996) and sailing director (1998) for Shake-A-Leg, the Newport-based program that provides sailing opportunities for the physically handicapped. Among the highlights of that experience was a day of sailing with actor Christopher Reeve and his family. But with September 11, 2001, Kyle Hence's life and life's work experienced an abrupt change.

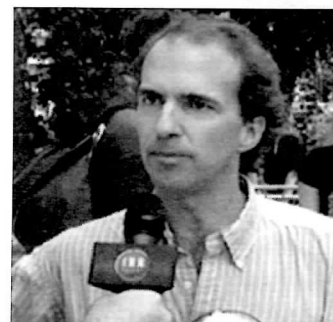
Stunned like the rest of this grieving nation, Kyle be-

came obsessed with the national tragedy. Why had it happened? How could it have happened? With the passion earlier reserved for sailing, he pursued the answers to his questions. In collaboration with the 9/11 widows and other committed citizens throughout the nation, he pressed for the official 9/11 Commission investigation and, when that commission's report failed to provide satisfactory answers, continued to press the case. He became Executive Director of 9/11 Citizens Watch: "...a citizen-led watchdog network established to support independent investigation, research and analysis into the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> and its political and economic aftermath." (911citizenswatch.org). That organization is supported by the 9/11 Families Advisory Group and "an increasingly active network of researchers, scholars, investigative journalists and concerned citizens."

Kyle's position has launched him into a stream of national and international radio, television and institutional appearances as spokesman and advocate, which he has managed for long periods from his Newport base.

The high point of Kyle Hence's advocacy to date is the documentary film *9/11: Press for Truth* of which he was co-author and Executive Producer. It has been selected for screening at the 12th International Documentary Film Festival, March 22 to April 1, 2007, in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

*We are compiling a list of young people to be featured in future issues. Any input from our readers would be welcome.*



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From page 14

box so that one could be planted while the other is stored in anticipation of the next season. If a terra cotta planter or trough is used, a plastic sheet liner may be useful to slow down water loss.

Spring window box displays can be planted in the fall using spring flowering bulbs such as crocuses, daffodils, narcissi, hyacinths, and scillas and can be combined with primrose, pansies and spring lettuces to create an abundance of color. Many variations can be introduced by using dwarf shrubs and trailing ivies for a long-term arrangement or for making several changes of plantings from spring through fall. If taken care of, small evergreens will last for several years in a container and provide background structure and height throughout the year. With seasonal changes, surrounding plants can be replaced and new designs and colors can be introduced. When deciding on plant material, consider exposure, length of daylight and plant hardiness, as well as a preference for formal or casual plantings.

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*From page 15*

Residents Pat and Malcolm Glazzard describe living at Harbor House “like a movable feast.” Along with entertaining family and friends there Pat often has her bridge club come for lunch. She has sat on the residents’ council which meets monthly to plan trips and social events and to listen to concerns raised by tenants. Last year she was chair of the annual Strawberry Festival, a major fund raiser for the group.

As we sat in the library talking, a sudden peal of organ music burst from the chapel behind us, a practice riff by a keyboard artist about to give a concert there that weekend. Seating as many as one hundred, the non-denominational chapel was the setting for a recent fall/winter concert series. Used very occasionally for weddings, it serves as the site for a Roman Catholic Mass offered weekly by Caedmon Holmes OSB, a monk from Portsmouth Abbey. The chapel, built along with the former convent and chaplain’s house in 1914, is one of the newest spaces in the complex.

The oldest and earliest structure was the summer estate of wealthy New Yorker John Auchincloss, built around 1850 for his wife and their nine children. His descendants include lawyer and novelist

Louis Auchincloss, who wrote about the lives of New York City’s elite, and Hugh Auchincloss, a Newport resident and relative of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis.

Later that morning, walking through the buildings with John Byrne, senior property manager, a visitor can’t help but to be impressed by all that is available to this active community. Those with green thumbs will soon start seedlings in the ground-level greenhouse for the vegetable garden. There’s a workshop and north-facing studio for crafters and artists, an exercise room, a laundry room, hair salon, and lots of comfortable common rooms to sit and enjoy TV and DVDs. There are any number of porches and sheltered courtyards for breathing the salt air. In this, our clamorous world, a peaceful restorative place.

Most Harbor House residents would no doubt agree with Stegner’s strong sense of “rootedness to place,” when he says: “It is probably time we settled down,—time we looked around us instead of looking ahead. Neither the country nor the society we build out of it can be healthy until we stop raiding and running, and learn to be quiet part of the time, and acquire the sense not of owning but of belonging.”



*The new Harbor House sidewalk and other Point improvements.*

Photos by Liz Mathinos

## POINTERS ARE BRIEFED ON VAN ZANDT PIER RESTORATION

Scott Wheeler from the City talks with Councilman Charlie Duncan and other interested Pointers: Mike & Beth Cullen, Coles Mallory, Isabel Griffith, Kay O'Brien, Hillar Sarepera and Bill Hall.



Photos by Liz Mathinos



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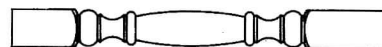
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*From page 5*

the porch—they found the original railing with its elegant spindles. After finding the original molding around the two front windows, Don was able to have replicas milled to use throughout the house. In keeping with the building methods of the late nineteenth century, the center chimney was not straight but made several jogs. One of the jogs had the

chimney sticking out into the upstairs hall—one had to walk around it to get into the master bedroom. The Roys had the chimney completely rebuilt, and now it is tucked away so as not to obstruct passage. Loretta and Don were also able to find the original hole in the chimney for the living room fireplace, which they plan to connect to an antique cast iron fireplace.

Walking into the Roys' house today, you see a lovely, livable three-bedroom Newport cottage. While keeping the architectural details of the original house (the wide pine floors, the original windows, and cast iron radiators), the Roys have also added some modern features. In place of the solitary toilet walled off from the kitchen, the upstairs bathroom is one "to die for"—complete with a Jacuzzi surrounded by original pine flooring and a spectacular shower. A second floor balcony has a view down Pine Street to the water.

Loretta and Don have put four years of hard work into turning the house at 68 Third Street into their dream. They have succeeded in keeping the house's architectural heritage while also creating a warm and inviting home for today.



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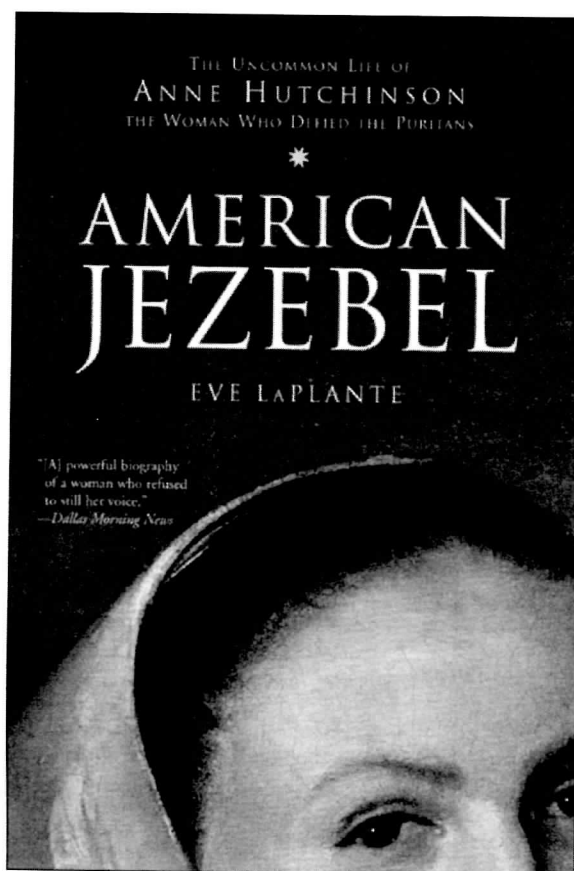
## THE BOOK LIGHT

by Suzanne Varisco

The first winter assembly of Point Readers gathered at Loretta Goldrick's home for a lively discussion of Geraldine Brooks' novel *March*, with widely varying and insightful opinions about this tale of a marriage—the parents of Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy—that is interrupted by the Civil War. Over tea and delicious home-baked cookies, we also explored several possibilities for spring reading.

The unanimous non-fiction choice is *American Jezebel* (HarperCollins 2005, ISBN: 0060750561), Boston author Eve LaPlante's biography of her illustrious ancestor, Anne Hutchinson, that outspoken feminist and mother of 15, who was charged with sedition and heresy by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, acquitted by the General Court in 1637, but then banished to Rhode Island a year later.

The *Boston Globe* described *American Jezebel* as “a powerful and fascinating book that deserves wide reading”; *Salon* adjudged it “a valiant and remarkably successful effort to explain the doctrinal differences between Hutchinson and her accusers.”



### Point Readers Spring 2007

#### *Summer*

Wednesday, April 25, 2:00 p.m.

Hostess, Patricia Carrubba, 123 Washington

#### *American Jezebel*

Wednesday, May 16, 2:00 p.m.

Hostess, Liz Mathinos, Harbor House

For fiction, we decided to return to the “classics” with Edith Wharton, one of this city’s many fashionable visitors during Newport’s Golden Age. Our choice is one of her shorter novels, *Summer*, which, like the better known *Ethan Frome*, is also set in rural western Massachusetts.

As an early exploration of a young woman’s sexual awakening, *Summer* was initially controversial, creating a sensation when it was published in 1917; yet it was also praised for its candor by others—notably her friend and mentor Henry James. Credited as one of Wharton’s favorites, *Summer* is available in paperback editions from several publishers.

Please join us to talk about these books. We are open to all and welcome everyone. For further information and/or to let us know you will be attending, contact me at 841-5220 or [srvarisco@aol.com](mailto:srvarisco@aol.com).

Of added interest: Dr. Eve LaPlante, the author of *American Jezebel*, will be speaking about Anne Hutchinson at 7:00 p.m., Tuesday, March 13, at Ochre Court, Salve Regina University, as part of the Touro Synagogue Foundation’s public lecture series. The program is free and open to the public but reservations are suggested. Contact Robin Kaufman at the Touro Synagogue Foundation 401-847-4794x14 or [robin@tourosynagogue.org](mailto:robin@tourosynagogue.org).

# ST. JOHN'S READING ROOM

by Liz Mathinos

As you walk along our Point streets, have you ever wondered about the history of a house? The rather plain house at 52 Poplar Street is one such house for me. Looking back in past *Green Light* issues, I found the following short article about its beginnings, as written in the Monday, November 17, 1877 issue of *The Newport Daily News and Mercury*:



"New Reading Room in the Point"

"The building on Poplar Street to be used as a free reading room, called the St. John's Reading Room is completed and is now being furnished ready for occupancy. The room is to be formally opened in about a week. The building situated nearly opposite the Chapel of St. John the Evangelist, is a neat and tasteful structure, painted with a handsome shade of brown. It is 45 feet long and 25 feet broad. The posts are 12 feet high while the peak of the room is 23 feet above the floor of the building. The building is adorned with a Gothic roof which gives it an exceedingly pretty aspect. The one story building is divided into three apartments. The first which occupies the front part is to be used as the reading room. Back of this are two small rooms, one which is to serve as a general store room, while the other will be employed as a kitchen whenever entertainment will be held in the building. It is designed to admit any persons who behave themselves in a seemly and orderly manner, tickets to all such applicants will be issued. All contributions of newspapers, periodicals, etc. will be gratefully received. The reading room will supply a long felt want in the region of the city in which it is located and great praise is due its originators for their forethought in establishing it."

In the one hundredth anniversary brochure of St. John's Church, *A Century on the Point, 1875-1975*, it was noted that in 1877, the Rev. Mr. Magill "interested Mrs. John Jacob Astor in his work and she gave

\$1,200 for a small hall to be built on rented land across from the Chapel. They called it the Reading Room and used it for meetings. It is still there on Poplar Street but does not belong to St. John's."

In the Winter 1994-95 issue of *The Green Light*, Peggy Vranesh, who lived in the house with her artist husband, George, relates the rest of the history of this intriguing building.

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*If you're coming ~ Just call and leave a message at 8 4 7 - 5 4 6 7 or 8 4 9 - 4 3 9 5*

*and tell us how many guests & what you plan to bring ~*

*THANKS, Carol Tea & Donna Maytum*

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## 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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# SAVE THE DATES

POTLUCK SUPPER — Sunday, March 25, 6:00 p.m., Harbor House

MEMBERS MEETING — Thursday, April 19, 7:00 p.m., Harbor House

SPRING CLEANUP — Saturday, April 21, 9:00 a.m., Storer Park

PLANT SALE — Saturday, May 19, 8:30-11:30 a.m., 22 Walnut Street

## POINT READERS BOOK DISCUSSIONS

*Summer*, Wednesday, April 25, 2:00 p.m., 123 Washington Street

*American Jezebel*, Wednesday, May 16, 2:00 p.m., Harbor House

## THE GREEN LIGHT

The Point Association

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