Two “Snow people” Watch the Winter Sunset at Battery Park

*The Green Light*
The Green Light
LXV No. 2  Winter/Spring 2021

FROM THE EDITOR

This issue celebrates our busy Newport Harbor and our beautiful Narragansett Bay. These give us year round pleasure. Battery Park is a popular vantage point for watching the sunset over the Bay, not unlike our snow people on the cover.

Many Pointers have boats on moorings off the Point, or smaller craft stacked in the dinghy docks or pulled up on the sand of our unique driftways. Boating, swimming or just sitting, we enjoy our unparalleled neighborhood waterfront.

There have been dramatic moments – the burning of the Fall River Line luxury ship Bristol or the explosion of the excursion boat Mackinac right off our shore or the mishap that left a Navy torpedo boat half sunken off of Walnut Street.

The Green Light is grateful for the photography of Bill Shea and Dave Reed in the story of the Frostbiters that bring this hardy activity to life.

See you ‘round the ‘Hood.

Ann McMahon
Greenlight@thepointassociation.org

Connor Frisbie - 6 and Ellen Frisbie - 4, grandchildren of Richard and Nancy Abbinanti, rolled the snowpeople while their parents, Amanda and Zach Frisbie did the heavy lifting of the snowpeople onto the bench. Many residents reported that this was a Covid spirit lifter.

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Back Cover: Acrylics on canvas; Painting: “Nantucket Lightship” by Jessica Paiva.
Dear Neighbors,

As we look back at 2020, we will remember the year of a pandemic where our lives were changed. Even in these tough times, there are heartwarming examples of how our community rose to the occasion to help others in need.

No example speaks more loudly than the generous donation our neighbor and friend, Jane Mead Timken, made by gifting her home and property at 8-10 Willow St to the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center. The sale of Jane’s home allowed the creation of a $1.7 million endowment fund for this organization. This is a transformational gift, a milestone that ensures the Center’s future.

Giving is nothing new to Jane, as many of you have seen first-hand. As she stated in her gift: “I’ve been a big fan of the MLK Center for some time…I’ve been amazed by their work before and even more so during COVID-19. I can’t imagine a time when giving to the MLK wasn’t more important or more necessary. I’m sharing this news not so anyone thinks I did a good thing, but so it will inspire others to do good things for the center.” Bravo to Jane!

Jane’s gift was one of many generous works from our neighborhood. In 2020, the PA members and neighbors once again stood up to support our community even in these difficult times. Our annual fundraising on behalf of the MLK Center, led by John Broughan and Bill Rauch, collected a record $17,230 in donations. Since initiating the MLK Center holiday campaign seven years ago, the Point Association has raised more than $74,000 to help the Center to continue and expand services.

The year-end activities of the Point Association also included a coat drive and additional programs that helped boost the spirits of the community during the holiday season. The PA sponsored the annual Christmas Tree lighting in Storer Park and embarked on two new efforts to help bring joy to the community during this difficult year. Volunteers placed Christmas wreaths and ribbons on the 41 historic gas street lamps in the neighborhood and sponsored “Light Up the Point,” a call for all neighbors to brighten their homes with decorations, lights, window candles and Christmas trees to celebrate the holidays. Over 150 homes participated in this effort.

None of this could have happened without the support of our members, and for that we are immensely grateful. The Point Association has been serving the neighborhood and community for over 60 years, and we take pride in making our neighborhood a better place to live. Jane’s generous donation to the MLK Center -- and all of your contributions, volunteer efforts, and work with the Point Association -- are once again a shining example for our community.

Best Regards,

[Signature]

Tom Hochulay
Wreaths Brighten the Holiday by Maureen Cronin & Mark Marosits, Co-chairs Beautification Committee

The Beautification Committee and other neighborhood volunteers placed over 30 wreaths on gas lamps throughout the Point in early December. The wreaths were purchased with a generous donation made by Point resident Ken Snyder – thank you Ken!

Wreaths are rings of flowers, leaves, branches, fruits and other natural objects. And they are so much more than that. Wreaths have been used since ancient times to celebrate special occasions. Wreaths have also brightened the Point during the short winter days and show the special community spirit of our Point neighborhood!

The wreaths came down at the end of January, but they will be back next season!

Already, the Beautification Committee has an eye toward spring projects that will usher in the warmer weather and brighter days. If you have ideas for spring, please share.

Lighting Up the Point by The Beautification Committee

The Tree Lighting this year was a subdued affair compared to former years due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The small group counted down to the lighting of our little holiday tree in Storer Park. Prior to this event, neighbors were encouraged to put up as many lights on their homes and in windows. Point residents responded with decorations that did much to cheer up a challenging season. A nice trend this year was placing live evergreen trees outside on the lovely “Newport Porches”.

Maureen Cronin, Ken Snyder and Mark Marosits count down to the lighting.

A spectator is bundled up. Is that you Barbara?

This gaslight in Storer Park was a Dickensian vision at the low-key Tree Lighting in early December.

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Welcome New Members

We are happy to have you in the Point Association.

Jennifer & Paul Matthiue Coste  57 Second St.
Lauren Keane Dowley          30 Oxford St MA
Noah Duffey                   1 Guerney Ct
Doris Geary                   51 Bridge St
Eric Gilbert                  77 Third St
Paul and Ginny Gilman        17 Hilltop Rd NJ
Alexia L Gordon               7 Marsh St
Maria Hoffmann               16 Bridge St
Anthony Iaccono               15 Poplar St
Mary B Walker & Peter Jenkins 36 Third St
Andrew Julia                 7 LaSalle Pl
Alicia McGowan               12 Sunshine Ct
Ron McVicar                   351 Clayton Dr
Kevin Michaud               39 Touro St
Sarah Mongan                 39 Elm St
Sue Pedro                    5 Sunshine Ct
Alison & Rob Minaglia        58 Poplar St
Paul & Cynthia La Schiazza   55 Second St
Robert Schildt              5 Marsh St
Julianne Stapleton           32 Walnut St
Laura Treonze                69 1/2 Third St
Nancy Walters                19 Third St
Kurt Weaver                  88 Third St
Jeremy Wintersteen           58 Third St
Jack & Kathy Zins            67 Bridge St

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Alexis Renewed
by David Sharp

After an extensive search for the right boat, I found a classic little wooden sloop in Christmas Cove, Maine. The boat was beautifully built to the highest standards, but her lack of maintenance over the last several years meant I could actually afford her, and the spring of 1979 I bought Alexis and sailed her down the coast to my homeport of Newport, Rhode Island. My intention was to take a few years to leisurely restore the boat while doing some day-sailing and coastal cruising. But this plan took an unforeseen tack, and by that fall Alexis was not just a hobby, but my home.

However, living on an old wooden 28-foot sailboat on a mooring was a little more than even I could pretend to enjoy. I needed to move Alexis to a marina where I could use all the facilities, and the ideal marina for that was near where I worked. The facility was new and nearly empty, so the rent was reasonable. The yard’s management was happy to give me a one-year lease on a slip without inspecting my boat, and by early fall I was settled aboard Alexis in a slip.

Now some of the boat’s flaws, like the leaks in the deck and around the port lights, were real problems and could no longer be done at a leisurely pace. I dove into the repair work, and soon one of Alexis’s two settee berths and both forward V-births were covered with tools, paint, varnish, bedding compound, and various other pungent goops and glops. Even the decks and cockpit were piled with new deck planks, and nautical supplies - all valuable and interesting stuff which I thought would add a little character to the sterile marina. The small, dorm-sized fridge perched on one of the berths was about the only evidence that someone was actually living aboard, and the “galley” and the starboard berth were the only non-workshop areas left on the whole boat.

One of my first chores was to replace some punky deck planks, and as usual, when one removes a little wood in a suspect area on an old boat, there’s more than hoped for underneath it. So as winter approached, more pieces of Alexis showed up on the dock, and while my sander was humming away, and paint and varnish fumes wafted about, I noticed that some of my new neighbors were cringing and rolling their eyes, and that maybe Alexis and I had gradually become a bit out of place on Dock C. I had envisioned my restoration project proceeding among wooden boat enthusiasts like those at the funky yard where I bought Alexis, sailors who would appreciate my classic little boat and me as her savior. But this new marina started to fill up with mostly shiny new yachts and their shiny owners. These neighbors had no wet socks drying on the steering wheel, no paint cans piled in the cockpit, no sawdust and wood shavings blowing around the decks. Even working down below became an annoyance to nearby yachts because I was told that my power tools interfered with their TV reception!

As winter deepened and I saw icicles inside the cabin caused by deck leaks, I was really a man on a mission, and by the time snow was on Alexis’s decks, they were at least watertight. The marina used underwater bubblers to prevent seawater from freezing around the boats left in the water over the winter, so Alexis’s hull was safe from ice. But, for safety reasons my little electric cabin heater had to be turned off during the day while I was at work, and coming “home” in the dark to the damp, freezing boat was a bit harsh, not to mentions having to tramp up the long, icy dock in the early morning to use the marina’s musty shower facility before work. And, yes, wet hair can freeze on a short walk down a dock! More than once during this ordeal, while in a meeting with my straight-laced colleagues, someone would wonder out loud about the musty smell in the conference room. I would feign ignorance while trying to stuff my feet with my moldy socks further under my chair.

Alexis and I survived the winter, and by late spring the boat’s decks were restored, her port lights and hatches replaced, she had fresh paint and varnish and she was beginning to look her old self again. But, as respectable as Alexis looked, it was quite clear that we just did not fit the slick, high-end image the yacht facility was now trying to portray. Still, the convenience of being at a dock kept me trying hard to blend in, if not fit in, at the marina.
Alexis Renewed (continued)

Now in June the tenant’s lease ran out on the house I owned in Newport and I wanted to move back into my home ashore and to put Alexis on my nearby mooring. The problem with this plan was the year’s lease I had signed with the marina last fall. So I approached the yard’s management saying that Alexis and I had enjoyed our stay, but that we would like to leave before my lease was up, and might it be possible to get a reprieve from some of my remaining financial obligation? A look of great relief came over the marina manager’s face, and all the remaining months of my lease were instantly voided with no charge. His only question was how soon could we be underway?

Alexis’s sails were soon bent on, she was made seaworthy again and we were headed off down the bay, having a romping good sail while taking the long way back to Newport. We tied up at my mooring near the Walnut Street driftway, and as I rowed ashore I looked back at the boat bobbing on her pendant and thought how fresh and optimistic she looked after having such a bleak future a year ago. Maybe Alexis was looking over her stern rail at me thinking the same thing!

RIP Barbara Tortoloni

As if the pandemic and an icy winter were not bad enough, the Point lost a gentle and welcoming neighbor on January 21, 2021. You were fortunate indeed if you were invited to her porch at 52 Third Street for tea, cookies and conversation. Her gardens brought a lot of beauty to our neighborhood. Her front circular garden won first prize from Newport in Bloom this summer as well as Best Residential Garden in Newport last summer. She leaves her husband Joe Tortolani and her many friends to mourn her passing.

We will miss seeing Barbara Tortoloni relaxing on her Newport porch on Third Street.

Tea and cookies were always on the menu on Barbara’s porch.

Barbara’s garden brought a lot of beauty to the Point.
Successful 7th Annual Fundraising Campaign for MLK
Charitable Committee

The Point Association of Newport capped off its 2020 year of activities with their seventh annual fundraising drive to benefit the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center. The campaign was led by John Broughan and Bill Rauch, who have led this effort since its start.

This year, the neighborhood association collected a record $17,230 in donations from Point neighbors for the MLK Center. Since its inception, the PA Charitable Fund has raised an impressive $74,000 to help Newport neighbors in need.

“We are humbled, honored, and beyond grateful to the Point Association for rising to the occasion to back the MLK Community Center in such a big way during these uncertain times,” said Heather Hole Strout, Executive Director of the Center. “The Point Association has been incredible friends of the Center, from their Mobile Food Pantry sponsorship to their recent coat drive. The Center honored the Point Association as our Keeper of the Dream: Community Partner in 2019, and that honor still could not hold more true to us. We so value their dedication to the MLK Community Center’s mission and their steadfast support.”

“We are proud and deeply appreciative of the members of the association and our neighbors who generously came forth with their enthusiastic support for the MLK Center and this fundraising drive,” said Tom Hockaday, President of the Point Association. “We are strong supporters of the MLK Center and the wonderful work they do for our community, especially the ongoing work they have done for those in need during this pandemic.

Our neighbors know that every dollar raised goes right to work for those in need in our community—feeding the hungry, providing high quality educational programs for children, engaging seniors, and much more. We look forward to continuing our work and support for the MLK Center and their programs in 2021.”

In addition to the MLK Center, the Association has contributed over $93,000 in the last ten years to other local organizations and charities that serve our community.

The Point Association of Newport has been serving the neighborhood and community for over 60 years. We pride ourselves in making our neighborhood a better place to live.
Frostbitten
by Joy Scott

Frostbite sailing is not for the faint of heart, but dozens of hearty sailors rig small boats and head into Newport Harbor once a week all winter long because they love the sport.
The Newport Yacht Club frostbite racing series begins on New Year’s Day and runs every Sunday through mid April except Easter Sunday. Up to 30 men and women participate in two classes each week, sailing in Turnabouts which are just under ten feet long.
On the south end of the harbor, as many as 40 Laser sailors from Fleet 413 launch their boats from Sail Newport every Sunday from November through April. Founded in 1983 by Pete Milnes, they stored the 14-foot boats in the basement of the Newport Armory and launched from the beach by the Ann Street Pier for many years before moving to Fort Adams.
Frostbite racing enables passionate sailors to be on the water year round - competing and grabbing a beer at the end of a frigid afternoon.
In addition to Charlie Shoemaker, other intrepid sailors from the Point are Pam Kelley and Ian Scott.

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“BOATING MADE SIMPLE”
Maritime Disasters Off of Newport

Looking out from your Adirondack chair while sipping your espresso at the end of Bannister’s Wharf today is not much like what you would have seen in the not too distant past. Our present harbor, now mostly filled with pleasure water-craft, cruise ships and sightseeing ferries, are nothing like the elaborate steamboats, fishing boats and Naval ships that would have been your view one hundred or so years ago. The most elaborate of these were steamships from the Old Fall River Line which ran from Newport, Fall River and New York City.

The following account is from: THE BURNING OF THE’ BRISTOL. (from the notes of W.K. Covell 1904 - 1972

“In the early morning of December 30,1888, the Fall River Line pier on Washington Street and Long Wharf was the scene of a spectacular fire. The steamer Bristol had just discharged her Newport passengers and was preparing to leave for the run to Fall River, when a fire was discovered in the galley. The Bristol was one of the largest wooden hull boats built for Long Island Sound. It was a “three-decker,” having two complete tiers of staterooms above the main deck - there were 240 staterooms in all - and a high open gallery in the main saloon, which increased the spaciousness and attractiveness of the passenger accommodations. Because of this open area, the small fire in the galley spread rapidly and was soon out of control. Deep snow delayed the arrival of the fire engines, and the steamer’s crew was unable to check the flames. The remaining passengers were hastily awakened and escorted ashore, but the fire, aided by a southwest wind, spread throughout the superstructure, and in a few hours practically everything above the hull was burned away. The ornamental wooden boxes over the paddle wheels were so saturated by salt water that the fire passed them by. Later the same day, what was left of the Bristol sank to the bottom, thus extinguishing the last of the fire.

DEATH TOLL MAY REACH 60 IN STEAMER EXPLOSION Excursion Boat Blows Up—34 Bodies Are Recovered, Forty-four Injured in Hospitals as Result of Merrymakers Disaster Off Newport, Rhode Island

By United Press

Heraldstown Tribune Issue  242 August 19, 1925

NEWPORT, R. L, Aug. 19.—The bursting of a mud drum on the bottom of a boiler of the excursion steamer Mackinac was given today as the cause of the explosion last night, which cost 34 lives. George J. Kelley, general manager of the company which operates the vessel, gave that explanation in a statement after he made a survey of the ship.

A state investigation was in progress all day. No statement of its findings was given out. Inspector General George Uhler of the United States Department of Commerce, ordered here by Secretary Hoover, will take charge of the investigation tomorrow, when officers of the ship will be questioned about the condition of the boilers.
Mackinac (continued)

NEWPORT, R. I, Aug. 19.—Once more death has reached out and penned a tragic chapter in the history of excursion steamer disasters. A terrific boiler explosion on the steamboat Mackinac, near here, last night, has left death, injury and destruction in the wake of a party of 700 merrymakers. Thirty-four persons are known to be dead. According to naval hospital officials, the death toll may reach sixty. Forty-four victims are at the Newport and naval hospitals here. Of these 11 are said to be dangerously injured.

The Mackinac, in charge of Captain George McVey, was homeward bound from an excursion to Newport, when the disaster occurred last evening. She was steaming slowly through Coddington Cove, about a mile from shore, which she had left about 15 minutes before. Merriment among the passengers was undiminished by the sight of the lights of the city, which presaged an end to the day’s outing. To many of those aboard the excursion was an annual event and they were enjoying themselves accordingly. Suddenly there was a terrific roar, The vessel seemed to lift itself out of the water and rest, suspended for a moment in midair. Then it sank back, with a rolling movement that threw the passengers into a panic. Many, who only a few moments before had been singing and dancing, were struck down by the blast. They lay prostrate on the decks, while panic-stricken excursionists trampled over them in a stampede for the lifeboats. Blinded temporarily by the waves of steam that were loosened by the explosion, frantic passengers, screaming and weeping, battled with each other in the semi-darkness, seeking their loved ones, from whom they had become separated in the excitement. The explosion hurled many passengers into the water. Shrieks of the injured added to the bedlam as the burning vapor swept the decks.

A section of the deck abaft the smokestack was stripped off like a piece of pasteboard by the tremendous blast, which shook the steamer from stem to stern. Several passengers in this part of the ship were catapulted into the sea. Others leaped into the water voluntarily to escape the sizzling inferno of steam, which penetrated every hatch and bulkhead. Captain McVey ordered an S. O. S. broadcast and turned his ship toward shore. The Macinac’s radio crackled out its appeal and its whistle shrieked a distress signal as the wrecked craft limped toward the long rim of lights that marked the shore.

The myriad vessels in the harbor responded nobly to the crisis. Speedboats, pleasure yachts, every variety of craft had seen the Mackinac’s plight and gone to her assistance. Scores of naval vessels were among those which raced to heed the stricken vessel’s appeal and its whistle shrieked a distress signal as the wrecked craft limped toward the long rim of lights that marked the shore. Scared to death by the explosion, the passengers, screaming and weeping, battled with each other in the semi-darkness, seeking their loved ones, from whom they had become separated in the excitement. The explosion hurled many passengers into the water. Shrieks of the injured added to the bedlam as the burning vapor swept the decks.

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Scenes about the naval hospital were of indescribable pity and horror. News of the disaster spread rapidly and brought hundreds of friends and relatives of those who had been aboard the doomed vessel. Denied admittance to the naval hospital, they stood about the building throughout the night, crying piteously and imploring the guards to admit them. As this request was denied a group surged toward the doors thus to force entrance. To thwart such a plan, naval guards were called out and they kept an effective patrol. While the cause of the disaster has not yet been officially determined, it was learned that the Mackinac was delayed with engine trouble for an hour before leaving Pawtucket.
Damaged in Collision
Reprinted from the Newport Mercury 23 May, 1908

The old torpedo boat Stiletto and the government launch Breaker were in collision off Breakwater Light Monday morning and the former received injuries which necessitated landing her ashore as quickly as might be. She was beached near the foot of Walnut Street but so rapidly was the vessel filling that all hands were summoned on deck to be ready to take to the water in case she should sink. The torpedo boat had a hole in her side about four feet high, which pretty nearly cut her in two.

The Breaker was coming from Rose Island and the Stiletto was going to Coddington Cove and the former came around the breakwater and crashed into the side of the torpedo boat. The Stiletto was immediately headed for shore and the inrushing water put out the fires and she reached the beach before enough water had entered to sink her.

Runaway Torpedo: Dave Moore, former Pointer and contributor to the Green Light, recalled a funny thing that happened in Newport Harbor with a torpedo. “As you know Newport was manufacturing them on Goat Island. They would test fire them (without explosives) from Gould Island into nets. They were having trouble with the gyros and this one went full speed into Newport Harbor and went plunging into the beautiful lawn of Harbor Court (now New York Yacht Club) with propeller spinning wildly. It scared the .....out of two gardeners there.”

Polar Bear Plunge Undeterred by the freezing temperatures, these young men took a dive off of the Van Zandt Pier on the day before Christmas, 2020.

Photos by Ann McMahon
Our Point Neighborhood, especially our waterfront views, have a different kind of beauty in winter.

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**Recent Home Sales on the Point**

(November 1, 2020 - March 1, 2021)

- 78 Washington St. (Waterfront/5 Bedrms/2.5 Baths) $3,450,000
- 43 Elm St. (4 Bedrooms/4.5 Baths) $2,350,000
- 8/10 Willow St. (4 Bedrooms/2 Bathrooms) $1,970,000
- 34 Elm St. (4 Bedrooms/4.5 Baths) $1,350,000
- 81 Second St. (4 Bedrooms, 4.5 Baths) $1,055,000
- 71 Third St. (2 Bedrooms/2.5 Baths) $875,000
- 16 Walnut St. (4 Bedrooms/3 Baths) $857,000
- 5/5.5 Gladding Ct. (4 Bedrooms/3 Baths) $877,000
- 55 Third St. (2 Bedrooms/2 Baths) $720,000
- 7 La Salle Pl. (3 Bedrooms/2 Baths) $585,000
- 10.5 Maitland Ct. (3 Bedrooms/1 Bath) $522,700

If you are thinking of selling - or buying - a home on the Point, no one knows the distinct charms of your neighborhood quite like Gladys Barbosa.

With over 17 years of experience in the luxury real estate market, combined with family ties going back more than 6 generations on the Point, it seems kind of pointless to look any further!

For a free market analysis of your home’s current value, contact Gladys...

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**The Point is ON FIRE!!!**

Homes are selling in record time and for record prices this year.

*For sellers - the time has never been better!*
RI Historic Cemetery Day Clean-up

There is no better way to enjoy our early spring than to help clean up the beautiful graveyards abutting our neighborhood. All day activities are planned. Bring your favorite pruner, rake or loppers.

Last fall, volunteers armed with gloves, masks, buckets and pruners, succeeded in making major improvements to the Island Cemetery grounds in a short period of time, planted 500 bulbs and raised $2,000 in donations. As many of the volunteers were grateful dog walkers, some funds were used to purchase a dog bag dispenser.

April 10: 9:30 AM: Island Cemetery, 30 Warner Street
11:00 AM: Common Burying Ground (entrance on Farewell Street)

Rain Date April 11

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The Lightship Nantucket had intermittent duty in waters around Newport including the Brenton Point Shoals. This painting is by Jessica Paiva, known to most residents as our very popular USPS letter carrier.

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