



The Settling of Spring Green Farm and the Evolution of Governor Francis Farms



By Henry A.L. Brown and Daniel H. Brown

Governor Francis Farms is not only a beautiful enclave of Warwick, but an area steeped with history and rich ties to both the Brown and Francis families and American Independence. Turning the clock back to 1772 and then moving the hands forward to the early 20th century provide a lens into the inspirational acts of heroism and the ensuing controversy over the area's eventual development.

Time has eclipsed knowledge of the first real estate plat entitled "Spring Green Acres," a portion later developed as "Governor Francis Farms." The parcel was purchased in the spring of 1782 by John Brown, merchant of Providence known for his bold decision on the evening of June 10, 1772, to rid Narragansett Bay of the hated British revenue vessel HMS *Gaspee*.

Less than ten years after that fateful night, John Brown purchased the Surgeon John Greene farm then known as "Greenshold" and whose ancestors had purchased the land from the Narragansett Indian Chief Sachem Miantonomo on October 3, 1642. The 660-acre parcel, now dubbed Spring Green, was used for farming and other utilitarian ventures. The property eventually passed to John Brown's daughter Abby who married John Francis (John Brown's



GOVERNOR FRANCIS continued on page 10

Building Identity: The Bank Cafe



By Virginia Ruth



Photo by Jim Turner

Buildings are like families — full of history, stories, and recollections; stories are told and retold, sometimes with new discoveries. Both provide a place of belonging and identity. And as there are many roles in a family, so too with buildings. One such building in the Village is the Bank Cafe.

During its 210 years of existence the three-storied, brick, mansard-roofed structure has been a bank, school, private residence, hotel, restaurant, and gathering place for the villagers. It has withstood natural disasters, multiple owners and occupants, and even address changes.

Built in 1814, it was to house the newly founded Pawtuxet Bank. Brothers Christopher and Williams Rhodes purchased the property from Jeremiah Randall. The Rhodes brothers needed a financial institution to help with their textile mill company, which was built along the banks of the Pawtuxet River.

In October 1814, they chartered the bank, with their brother James serving as the president. Over the next 31 years the bank was in this location. According to various newspaper articles during the time, the bank had to contend with rumors of closure, counterfeit bank notes

BANK CAFE continued on page 18



The Pawtuxet Village Association is committed to the preservation of our National Register Historic District. We strive to stay abreast of issues affecting the District and encourage proper management of period architecture. We seek to protect our natural resources, improve important sites, and foster good community relations.

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Meet Our Board!

As part of a short series of profiles, we are introducing the great people who donate their time and interest to be on the board of the PVA. All board members are volunteers who give their time and talent to the community through our organization. We're thankful to have them, hope you are too!

Katie Flynn

I am celebrating ten years of home ownership in the Gaspee section of Warwick. There are so many reasons that I enjoy living here and being a part of the PVA. The proximity to water views and the beauty of the trees changing colors along Narragansett Parkway in the fall are two favorites. The variety and overall excellence in our local restaurant scene also ranks high.

I volunteer for the PVA as a means of giving back to our historic neighborhood. I was a history major in college so the stories of the Village, the fight for independence and our little Village's part in it is inspiring. I appreciate the dedication of this group to preserve the history, structures and community of the National Historic District. I have served as secretary and now focus on managing distribution for *The Bridge*.



Felicia Gardella

I have been a member and treasurer of the PVA since 2016 and am also President and Treasurer for the Warwick Historical Society since 2009 as well as a trustee for the Oakland Beach Association.



I became a history devotee in 2007 when I learned from the then-president of the Warwick Historical Society that they had in their archives material that once belonged to Rocky Point Park. Since two of my great uncles owned Rocky Point from 1918-1938 I was intrigued to know what they had. I began my search at that time and have been researching Warwick history ever since. I think it is increasingly important to do what I can to preserve our history for future generations in an ever changing world.

I retired in 2010 after a 50-year nursing career as Assistant Director of Nursing at RI Hospital and currently reside in the Oakland Beach area of Warwick.

Get Connected

If you haven't visited the PVA website recently, you should check us out. Go online to www.pawtuxetvillageassociation.org for news, photos, and back issues of *The Bridge*.

SHARE WITH US! Link to our Facebook page and post your photos and news of the village.



Katie Flynn at the Pawtuxet Farmers Market.

PVA Garden Group Update

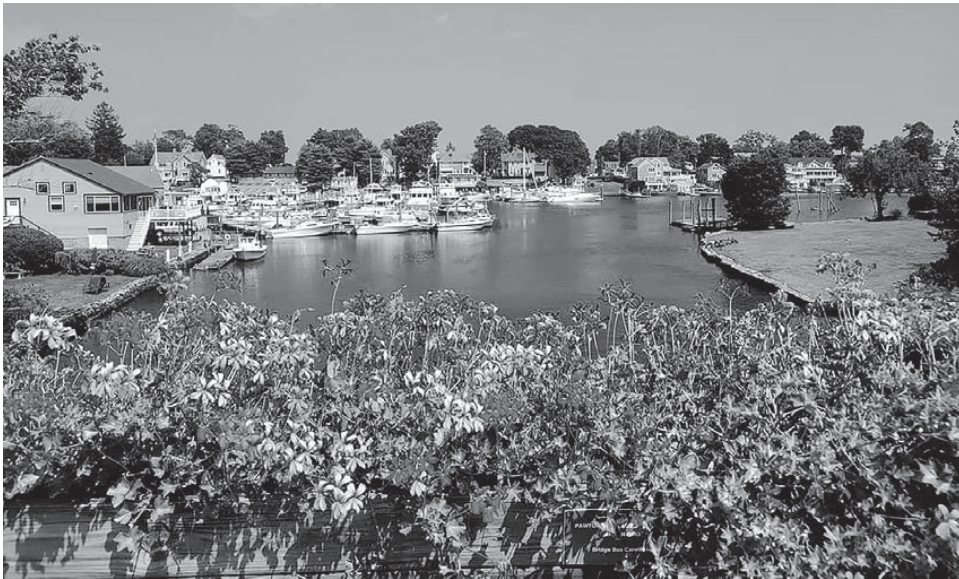
AUTUMN IS UPON US



By VICTORIA DLUGOS OTTO

Though none of us likes to see the flowers fade, now in place of flowers colorful leaves brighten each day as they turn magnificent orange, red and yellow. Mother Nature gives us a different look each day as the seasons change and fill us with hope for the year ahead of us.

It's been a spring and summer of maintaining the park, keeping the flower gardens well groomed, and showing how much this Garden Group cares about the park and the community. I must say this great group of people has been absolutely wonderful in helping every way. In spite of summer travel and vacations, they have dedicated as much free time as possible to help keep the park looking its very best.



Thank you to my fabulous volunteers: Lindsay Neagle, Ginny Simms, Ginny McGovern, Anthony Deramo, Chris Hannifan, Marilee Simonian, Cathryn Moskow, and myself for all the wonderful work that was done over the spring and summer months. You are very much appreciated.

We added a beautiful combination of shrubs by the entrance on the north side which will eventually hide the mechanical equipment and enhance the bird bath garden. Local landscaping company Yardworks did so much fantastic work for us — not only planting the shrubs and mulching, but also cleaning up the hedges at the bottom half of the north fence, grooming the trees, mulching the raised bed, and more. A big thank you to Kevin Fox, the architect/landscaper and his hard-working crew of men and women. A job so very well done.

As for the boxes on the bridge, thanks to Bridget, who plants the ivy geraniums for us in late spring. They were absolutely gorgeous this year. The wonderful volunteers who took care of them did a fabulous job. A big thank you to Ruthie Spellman, Angie Gladioux, George and Joe from Classic Barber, Amber Wood, Brianna Rodrigues, and Harmony Hadley. What beauty for all to enjoy!

The PVA Garden Group has a lot of things for everyone to get involved with. It makes many people happy to see the beauty grow over the summer months and to see the volunteers at work doing their very best at all they do. Everyone loves having a clean park, and a place to go to feel the peacefulness of any given day for all!

I have a saying: "We live in a world where you can make anything look beautiful. With a set of hands that work hard, a creative mind that never stops thinking of new things to create, people who love and enjoy what they do, and at the end of the day we can all find peace when the sun sets on the horizon." ❖



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Pawtuxet Park Work Continues



By ROY EVANS

There are many improvement projects going on in Pawtuxet Park.

As you may have seen, a large weeping willow on the water's edge collapsed into the cove recently. It took city crews days to pull the bulk out of the cove, as well as the portion on dry land, drag it into the park, cut it up and remove it. Miraculously, although a large part fell toward the Aspray Boathouse, it missed one of the new lamp posts. While we appreciate the city's response, this event demonstrates the fragile nature of so many of the trees in the park.

The Planning Department of the City of Warwick continues to develop the Master Plan for the park. Stay tuned as there will be another public meeting to review and discuss the Plan. Input from local groups and residents is encouraged as we all want a sustainable and beautiful park for coming generations. When asked if the trees in the park would be part of the Master Plan, the Planning Department said "no," because the upkeep of trees is considered to be routine maintenance item.

Given that the park's trees need urgent and ongoing maintenance, the Pawtuxet Village Association has engaged David Schwartz, of Schwartz Tree Care Inc., to complete a survey of all trees in the park and make recommendations that we can share with the City regarding what should be pruned, cabled, or removed. The Association has also asked Mr. Schwartz to suggest specific tree species and optimal locations for them in order to ensure a healthy and safe park for the future. As a licensed Arborist, Member of the RI Nursery and Landscape Association and a member of the American Society of Consulting Arborists, David Schwartz is eminently qualified to conduct this survey.

Finally, you may have noticed that the area around the chain-link fence near the playground has been beautifully landscaped by the Association and Yardworks. The object was to beautify an otherwise unsightly industrial-looking area of the park where the city's mechanicals are located. ❖

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You can sponsor a wreath in memory or in honor of a family member or loved one. All donations will be acknowledged on our website and in the spring issue of *The Bridge*.

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The Quahogging Chronicles, Part III: Sweeping for Eels



By RONALD CHECK

It was the autumn of 1955, and I went down to the cove off of Namquid Drive to check up on my quahog skiff, as I did daily. Though I had only owned my boat for a year or so at that time, I immediately noticed that my neighbor George's skiff was not in its usual spot, which seemed a little strange. I looked across Occupasstuxet Cove and saw the "master bayman" (as I called him later in life because he seemed to know all of the tricks of the trade when it came to living by the bay) across the way. He seemed to be paddling his skiff towards the northwest corner of the cove.

I rowed across the cove to see what was happening, and when I got close to George's skiff I asked him what he was doing. I was about 15 years old then and, unlike many teens, I openly acknowledged that I had many things to learn about being "on the water" as many local folks termed it. He replied that he was "sweeping for eels". I had never heard of such a thing, and I was fascinated, so I paid very close attention.

George had a 12-foot piece of fir wood with a vertical grain for stiffness that tapered from three to four inches in width to about one and one half inches at the top end. The end that "swept" the eels from the cove bottom had an L-shaped piece of iron that held and gave some protection to around 12 ice pick type tines that were mounted in the upper leg of the L (see illustration). The tines were therefore protected from Rhode Island's stony cove bottoms as the sweep was moved along. I would estimate that the tines were about 3/4 of an inch apart. The iron and steel part was fastened to the narrow edge of the wooden handle. The eel fisherman would sweep through an arc beginning on one side of the bow of the boat and continue around the front to finish on the other side. He stood in the bow of the skiff and moved the sweep about ten feet through the arc. The tide was fairly low and only about three to four feet in depth, and any snagged eels were dumped into the skiff. I watched a bit mystified as George caught about 75 pounds of eels this way. I must add that between the sediment, seaweed, and eels, his skiff was quite a mess afterwards!

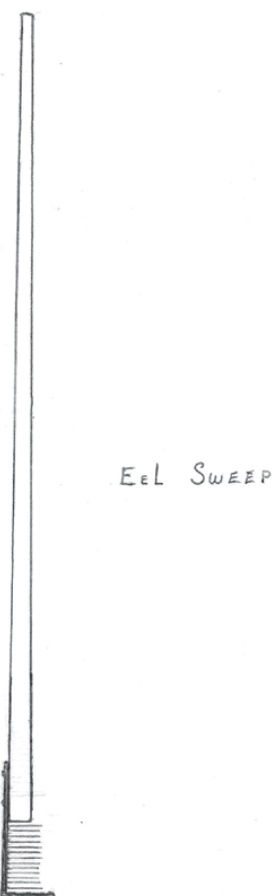
We headed back across the cove to where we kept our skiffs. When we reached the shore, he sorted out the eel catch of the day and put them into a bushel basket. They were quite lively and constantly in motion and I wondered what he would do with such an unruly bunch. I remember him saying, "Watch this!" as he sprinkled some tobacco snuff over the eels. He then said, "They will be all quiet in about 15 minutes" and, sure enough, it worked. He was then able to hold each subdued eel and dress it for market quite easily.

George told me that the eels would bring about 30¢ per pound, and I think that would be equivalent to about three to four dollars today, as this was in the mid-1950's. (I don't know

if he received the 30¢ per pound himself, or if that was the retail market price then.) Most eels were caught back then using a wire "eel pot", which was regularly attended by folks along the shore to provide a good, tasty dish when properly prepared. I also heard that special eel spears were used through ice covered ponds and coves to catch eels during the winter. However, I only saw this method of "eel sweeping" once in my life on that pleasant fall day and I have never seen it done again in almost 70 years. If that brief window of time had not presented itself to me, I would never have known about this spellbinding secret for harvesting eels from Narragansett Bay.

When I think back upon this encounter, it is not just nostalgia but a wonder, curiosity, and lifelong desire to learn that take me back to the fall of 1955. It is my hope to always retain that open and inquisitive spirit that I had as a teen, as people of all ages can observe and learn amazing things if we only take the time and inclination to do so. ❖

Many thanks to Liz Ruggieri for her support in producing this article for her father.



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The Many Lives of 23 Peck Lane



By DR. JOHN CONCANNON
HISTORIAN, GASPEE DAYS COMMITTEE

One of the most prominent buildings in Pawtuxet Village is presently O'Rourke's Bar & Grill at 23 Peck Lane. This mansard-roofed, three-story structure near the southeast corner of the Pawtuxet Bridge has a long and colorful history.

Peck Lane itself is one of the oldest residential roads on the Warwick side of the Village, stretching from the old main road down to Pawtuxet Cove. Early maps called it Green Lane, at the foot of which lived a C. Peck, for whom, presumably, the street was renamed. In later days this area was called "Fish Hill" for the fish markets and fishing boats that lined the cove's shore. Benjamin Smith owned a boatyard at the cove where ships were built from the early 1700s until 1850 for southern coastal and West Indies trade.



On the night of June 10, 1772, at the foot of this narrow street, the captured crewmen from the HMS *Gaspee* were brought ashore and held in the cellar of a house, to be released the next day. There is a monument to that episode in American history nearby. Sadly, many of the Peck Lane structures were replaced by a gas station prior to the evolution of historic preservation movements. In an ironic twist, the old and (in our humble opinion) rather ugly filling station has itself been replaced by a pair of very attractive colonial style condominium buildings.

What is now the triangular traffic island at the split between Post Road and Narragansett Parkway, was the original site of what is now O'Rourke's. George H. Arnold built a structure there in 1873 where he operated a general store for a number of years. The property passed into the hands of the White Brother's Grocery Store by 1890, where it is depicted on a Duncan & Currie advertiser's map of Pawtuxet Village. Situated next to the White Brothers was the Pawtuxet Customs House-Post Office.

Between 1917 and 1923 the State of Rhode Island exercised its power of eminent domain to take the land underlying both buildings in order to construct Narragansett Parkway. The old post office was truncated into the smaller structure that now houses the local business Noon. Apparently, the White Brothers store was moved east along Peck Lane and pivoted some 90 degrees into its present position. The first floor was used for commercial businesses, with apartment rooms above.

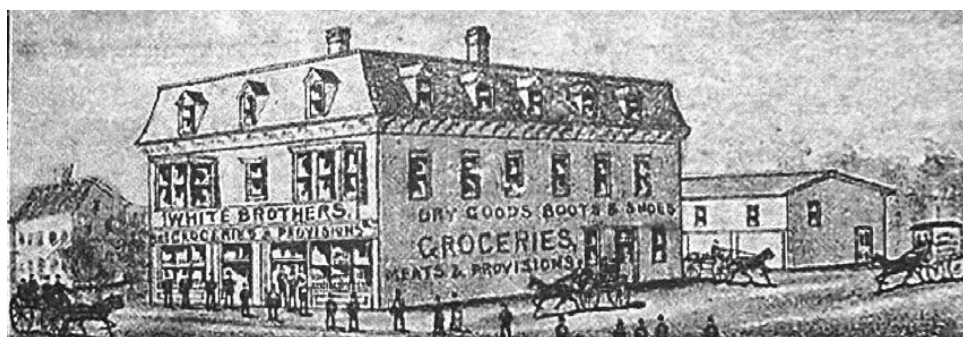
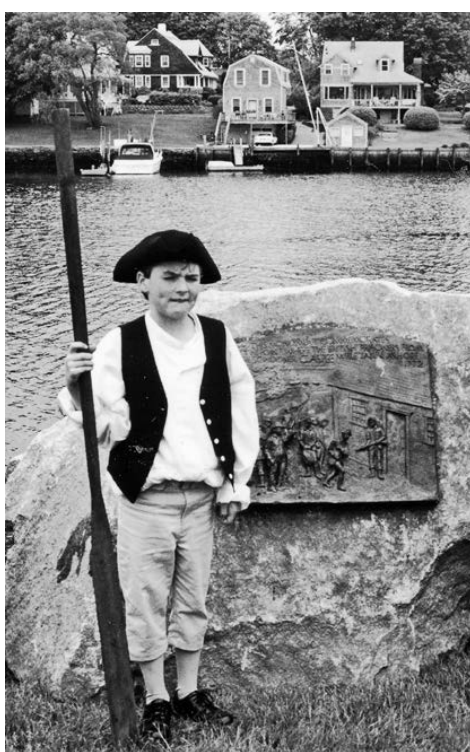
Reconstruction undoubtedly took some time, but by the 1933 repeal of Prohibition, the Parkway Tavern opened at the new site and, according to local historian Henry A. L. Brown, was known for family dining and lively piano music. The famed "Maurice" was known to play the piano regularly and is known for his organ performances at Lowe's Theatre in Providence,



TOP TO BOTTOM: O'Rourke's Bar & Grill in 2023, photo by John Concannon; and the Gaspee Lounge from the PVA Archives, c1980.

now Providence Performing Arts Center. The Parkway Tavern closed in the mid-1960s, and in February 1971 the deed was transferred to “Gaspee Lounge, a Rhode Island corporation.” The Lounge catered to an “interesting” clientele, who not only enjoyed alcohol there, but also gambling, illicit drugs, and prostitution. Smoke filled the dark rooms, and tales are told of overdosed dead bodies being carried out across the snow-covered Narragansett Parkway to be dumped on the other side of Post Road. Many neighborhood children of the time were sternly warned to cross the street so as to avoid walking in front of the Gaspee Lounge.

By the turn into the 21st century, the lounge was in a dilapidated condition. The aging walls were bulging out and the lower exterior was covered with



unsightly plywood panels. In 2003 a hero appeared in the form of Michael O'Rourke, a Pawtuxet native and home builder with particular expertise in historical renovation. The vast majority of local citizens thought the Gaspee Lounge would be best suited by a wrecking ball, but a bell went off in Mike's head and he saw potential. He undertook an extensive project that gutted and restored the structure to the grand establishment that it is today. Sadly, Michael O'Rourke passed away in 2012. In many ways, the transformation from the Gaspee Lounge to O'Rourke's reminds us of



Mike's favorite movie, “It’s a Wonderful Life,” and what Zuzu says happens every time a bell rings. Because it is here that an angel did indeed get his wings. ❖

CLOCKWISE FROM CENTER, LEFT: *The White Brothers' Grocery Store (courtesy of Duncan & Currie advertiser's map, 1890); the Gaspee memorial at the end of Peck Lane; two old postcards of Peck Lane; and the Gaspee Lounge in the 1970s.*



Pawtuxet Green Revival Update



BY ANDY DE LONG

The quiet hiatus of activities in reaction to a planned storage facility at 175 Post Rd. (“the industrial park”) may be over. The owners, Lee Beausoleil and Artak Avagyan, have posted an advertisement on a Coldwell Banker Realty page for 20 units of parking for “tractor trailers, construction vehicles, boats, RV units, vehicles, dump trucks, flatbeds, you name it” at the vacant site. The ad runs as follows, with an overhead picture of the site:

“Welcome to Pawtuxet Industrial Park where we have 20 units available for exterior parking. Perfect for tractor trailers, construction vehicles, boats, RV’s, vehicles, dump trucks, flatbeds, you name it. Private fenced in property. Each unit is 12’ x 80’ with easy access in and out for long term storage or daily use. Other parking sizes may be available so please inquire. There will be no storage of materials or supplies allowed to be left on the premises. Feel free to drive by and have a look, all access is located on Venturi Ave.”

At the time of this writing, the Planning Department of Warwick has only sketchy information about the plan and said that on the face of it the plan was “consistent” with the zoning for “light industrial” equipment.

According to Tom Kravitz, head of the Warwick Planning Department, “They do have limited by right uses that they could take advantage of without having to construct a building; one of which being Use Table Section 604 – Truck, bus, taxi, or other commercial vehicle terminal yard or building for storage and servicing of such. Their advertisement is consistent with that use. As part of creating the parking, if they bulldozed over wetlands with

fill material, then that would certainly be a problem with DEM wetland’s division.”

R.I. Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) had been advised by the owners that they planned for parking on the lot. But the representative, Jeff Crawford, said that they believed it was parking for the owners and were not aware that it was a business they were embarking upon. He remarked that the RIDEM criteria included that any business would have to be built on the concrete pads of the lot left there years ago by previous owners to cover chemicals that had leached into the soil. The owners are also responsible for making sure that the pads are maintained.

This parking lot information is new as of this writing and at this time there has been no meeting yet of the Pawtuxet Green Revival, which was formed last year to protest the previous plans for storage units at the site. That plan was shelved by the owners in response to the huge public outcry opposing it. Jeff Sutton, a spokesperson for PGR, stated that the parking plan poses the same risks as the contractor storage units with regard to the pollution of gas and oil products, not to mention clutter that can gather, as it does around other storage facilities. Noise pollution could be an issue, depending on the density of business.

At this time, with various authorities alerted, more must be learned about the intentions of the owners and how citizens of the area will be impacted. It is worth staying on top of the issue, lest our historical corner of Warwick and its surrounding wetlands find themselves even more constricted. ❖

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Duby's Grove



BY ANDY DE LONG

It was a place that helped immortalize Warwick, and Rhode Island as a capital of clam bakes and family fun, located on the banks of the Pawtuxet, just outside the Village. Duby's Grove, the family business of Thomas William "Bill" Duby of Warwick, opened in 1909 and continued operation until its closing and sale in 1960.

It had sumptuous food and services for a day of relaxation, recreation, and engagement with family, friends, and fellow workers. There were baseball fields, horseshoe pits, boating services along the Pawtuxet, and unplanned, unscripted games of fun and chance. (Francine Connolly, a cousin who worked there, remembers snapping turtles the size of a child's backpack, which were pulled from the river and raced!)

Richard Inman, Bill Duby's grandson, remembers the Grove well, as his mother Grace and her husband Everett inherited it. Bill had come from Canada, a French-Canadian lumberjack, and settled in Warwick with a job working on the railroad. He was a man born to work and make a place in the world for his family. ("He never slept: he survived on catnaps.")

The Grove was born at a time when other groves were also becoming popular. It catered to large events: company galas (Nicholson File, Brown and Sharpe) to treat workers to a summer day of fun and food, and gatherings of fraternal groups such as the Knights of Columbus and the Odd Fellows.

The Grove was located on land across Warwick Avenue from the current Shaw's market next to the river, which framed its northern side. On the west side of the property ran the old Warwick Railroad, which brought in vacationing crowds from Providence in the summer. There was a trolley stop named Duby's Grove just off the edge of their property.

Huge trees shaded the complex of buildings: an open-air, porched dining hall, a large kitchen, and a lower fieldhouse. The facility was big enough to hold parties of a few hundred. The fieldhouse served overflow crowds and housed the "walk-in box." This was a large icehouse that cooled the seafood all summer. In the winter, it was emptied and fresh ice from the river was cut and stored in preparation for the following summer.

It was a huge family enterprise: Grace, born a few years before the Grove opened, served in many capacities and became the proprietor when World War II ended. (The Grove shut down during the war.) She lived with her husband, Everett Inman, and three children on the grounds for many years. Her children and her own siblings, their aunts and uncles, as well as cousins and their children, participated in many ways — as waitresses, kitchen help, and setting up facilities.

Huge quantities of fish were trucked in by Rhode Island Fish Co., and Confreda's Farm and Garabedian's Market in Providence supplied vegetables, such as corn and potatoes. In the early days, bartering was part of running a business. and Duby's had trade arrangements for much of their produce and work. Leftover scraps of food, for example, were given to pig farmers. Johnson's Ice supplemented whatever was stored from the winter.

Friends and neighbors made up the staff as well. Marge Rathbun, of the large Rathbun family in the Village, was head chef — remembered for her diligence standing over cauldrons of chowder on those hot summer days. Bill loved to invent labor-saving devices and had a number of ingenious, homemade gadgets. For clam shuckers, he invented a cutter out of a sawblade with no teeth that sliced into clams on a board, halving them in seconds.

After the War, Grace would get a city permit to sell beer and liquor for one day at a time. Thus, ample beer was provided for the mostly male crowds (the corporations attending didn't hire many women in those days). Although there was a lot of drinking, there was very little rowdiness — Grace hired a cop for the day to make sure! There were ballgames and many other impromptu contests and games.

Lunch was served, and then festivities would continue all afternoon. But the day's highlight was the clambake. Eddie Kinnicum was the bakemaster. In the old days, rocks were heated in a

fire and put on a cement base, with everything else piled in succession on top. In later years, iron balls were used as the base. Seaweed went on, then a wire screen to prevent food from falling on the balls, then clams, fish, bockwurst, potatoes, and corn and then a soaked canvas tarp to cover the whole. It was baked for a prescribed time depending on the size. I get hungry just thinking about it!

The Grove continued into the '50s, but in 1954 Hurricane Carol struck. The massive oak trees shading the dining hall and lower fieldhouse were blown down, destroying the property. The land was flooded. Insurance wasn't enough to cover the damage and the Inmans had to sell it. They sold it to a realtor, who in turn sold it to Ciba-Geigy. It is now but a shining memory of a time long ago when hard work made for strong families, fellowship, and fun. ❖

Recipe found in an old notebook for the Grove:

Clam chowder for 100

Clam opened	1 gal.
Quahogs	1 bus.
Potatoes diced	6 gals.
Pork fat	2 lbs.
Chopped onions	1 gal.
Tomatoes	4 qts.
Butter	1 lb.
Flour	1 qt.
Salt	6 Tbsp.
Pepper	2 Tbsp.
Thyme	1 Tbsp.
Allspice	1 Tbsp.

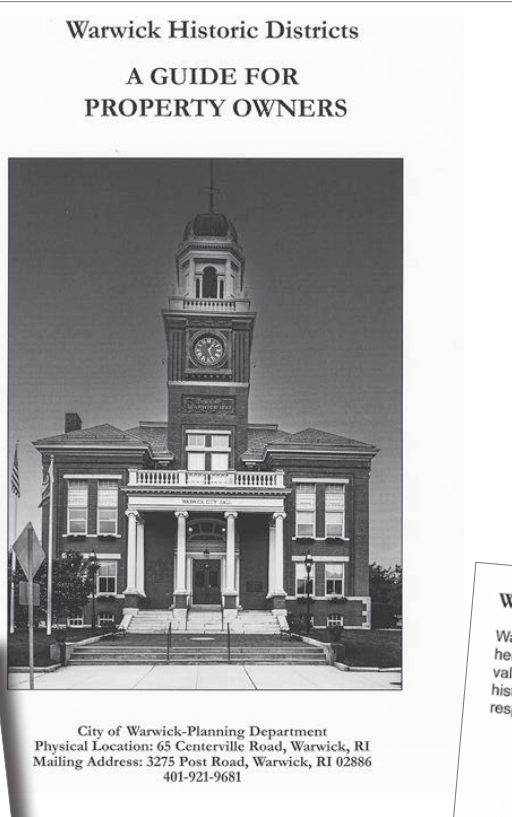
Add water or milk enough to make 15 gals.

Warwick Historic District Commission Publishes a Guide for Property Owners

In September of this year, the Warwick Planning Department mailed a copy of their new booklet, *A Guide for Property Owners*, to all those who own a home in the Pawtuxet Village National Historic District. As the Warwick side has local protection through the city Planning Department, it's important that property owners understand the guidelines that govern the exterior of the structure.

We applaud the notification sent and the details provided in this new booklet which can be obtained from the Planning Department. The booklet also covers the other two historic districts in Warwick: Pontiac Village and Apponaug.

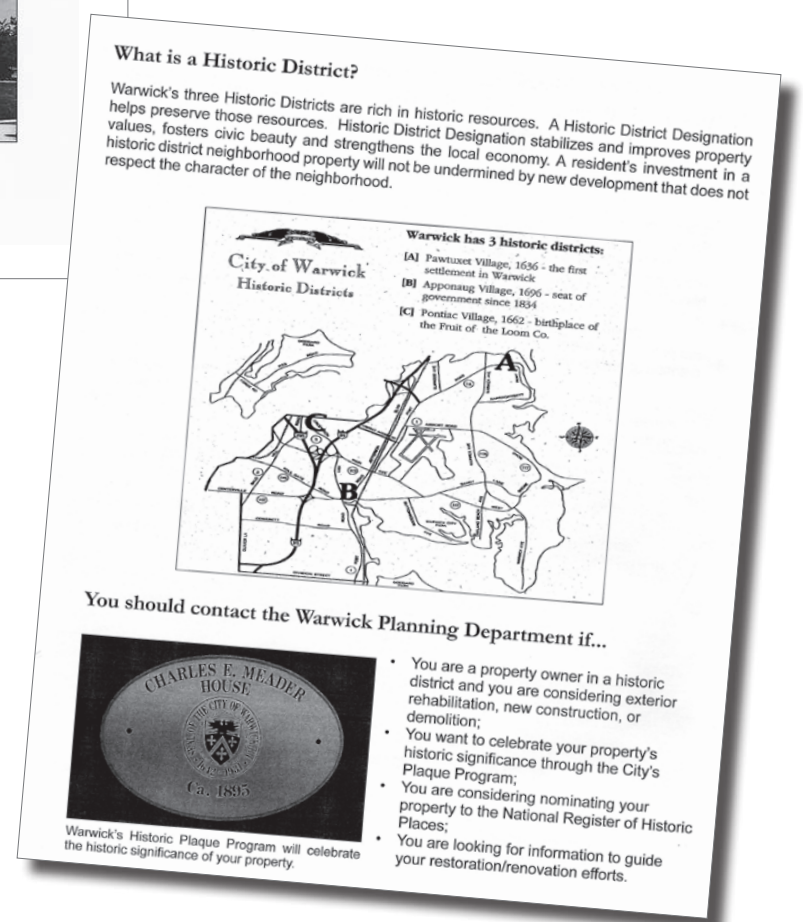
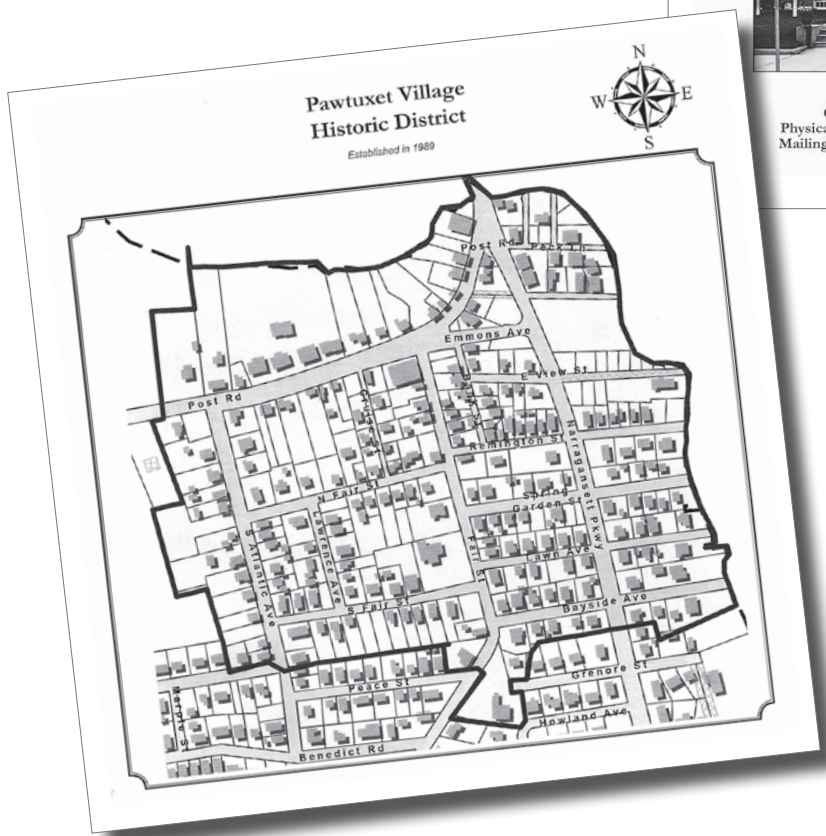
"Studies have shown that historic preservation has tangible and intangible benefits. Some have



found that property values are higher in designated historic districts than in similar neighborhoods that are not in an historic district. Houses that were built in the different styles that were popular during the last two centuries have character...and present an atmosphere that connects us with where we live and gives us a sense of heritage."

The booklet provides information on guidelines for repair, renovation and construction, applying for the historic home plaques, standards for rehabilitation, and special financial incentives that are available.

Contact the Warwick Planning office at City Hall if you'd like to obtain a copy of this important booklet. ❖



Attics to Archives
PHOTOGRAPHS of PAWTUXET

PVA
PAWTUXET VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

A special collection of Pawtuxet Village photos available in an online archive. Encouraged in partnership with the Providence Public Library. ©2021 PawtuxetVillageAssociation.org

Archives of Pawtuxet Village Photos and *The Bridge* Issues Online!

The PVA launched an online archive of **over 700 images** collected from donations provided to us by individuals around the community. In collaboration with the **Providence Public Library**, these are now available for public search and download through their online archive.

We also have a full catalog of back issues of *The Bridge* from the past 40 years, also accessible via an online site. You can search by author name, topic, or timeframe and find articles and news since we first published.

The links to access the photo archives can be found on our website:
<http://pawtuxetvillageassociation.org/pva-photo-archive>

The link to access *The Bridge* archives is found through the Warwick Beacon online as well as: <http://thebridge.warwickonline.com/>

Governor Francis CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

business partner). Their son, John Brown Francis, was elected Rhode Island's Governor and later Senator. Under the Governor's watch, the parcel not only maintained livestock, corn, produce and hay but also served as an encampment during the Civil War for soldiers passing on the way to Washington DC.

The small town of Warwick grew slowly during the first part of the 19th century until the shore resorts became a mecca for city dwellers to refresh themselves from their labor and partake of the cool breezes, salt water bathing, and an opportunity to dig a bushel of clams from the mud flats abutting upper Narragansett Bay. Numerous campgrounds including Warwick Downs, Gaspee Point, Cole's Farm, Mark Rock, Conimicut, Oakland Beach and Buttonwoods lined the Warwick shore and were conveniently accessed by horse and wagon. So great was the desire of city dwellers to escape the manufactories of the greater Providence area to the Warwick shoreline, that steamboat routes were developed to provide inexpensive transportation to Mark Rock, Rocky Point, and Oakland Beach resorts.

In 1873, the Warwick Railroad began construction to provide cheap transportation to the Warwick coastal communities, gradually ending the nostalgic steamboat era. Eventually these steam locomotives were replaced by the electric trolley system in 1902.

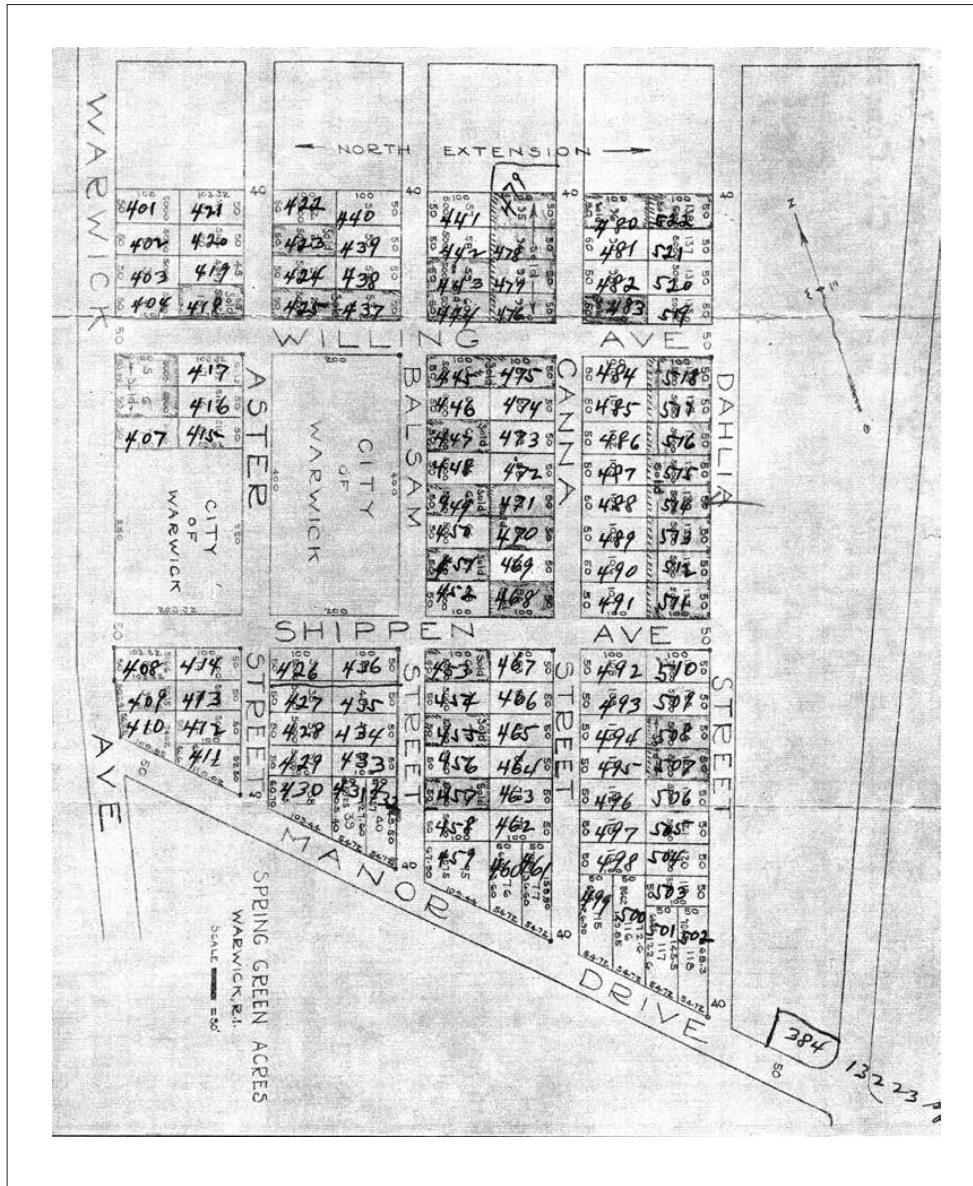
Farmland in the villages of Hoxsie, Conimicut, Shawomet and Meadowview was inexpensive and therefore rapidly platted and developed adjacent to the Warwick Railroad line. The town services were expanded to provide gravel roads, new schools, police and fire protection. Massive tax hikes were sought to fund the development projects by the town, however one square mile of farmland south of Pawtuxet Village laid undeveloped, namely Spring Green Farm. With the transportation expansions and a need for increased tax base in the city, pressure was starting to mount by the town officials on Alice (Francis) Brown to "plat your farm!" The issue of land rights by the town had raised its ugly head.

The first interest came in 1905 when the State of Rhode Island Parks Commission looked at the Gaspee Point peninsula for open space. This idea was later replaced by interest in 1927 to acquire the farm for the new state airport. That decision faltered when it came down to land value. Spring Green's value far exceeded the state's bond issue of \$300,000, thus the land at Hillsgrove in Warwick was purchased instead for development of the eventual Greene Airport.

Henry's memory: The spring of 1928 marked a pivotal year for my grandparents. Moving day was at hand for my grandmother Alice Francis Brown and grandfather Frank Hail Brown, affectionately

known as Mopsie and Popsie. The Angell Street house in Providence was closed on May 17 and the return trek to Spring Green for the summer was afoot. Cady Moving & Storage's orange van squeezed through the yellow entrance stanchions transporting worn pieces of furniture and ancestral oil paintings wrapped in heavy green blankets. It was a truly exciting time of year, however this particular year was clouded with heavy decisions for the future of the farm.

as "Camp Ames." The camp was located where the Spring Green Memorial Church stands today on Warwick Avenue. In the 1970s, the church expanded to take over the lot behind and adjacent to it for parking, and the schoolhouse that had been on the adjoining lot was moved back onto Shippen Avenue. This church had been started by Elizabeth and Sally Francis in 1881 and catered to the local families of the community.



Henry's memory: The "border pasture" had been platted and roads cut and paved with the installation of water mains. During the four years of World War II, the family maintained the vacant plat cutting the sidewalks areas. Being 14 years old, I was enlisted to spend hours raking up the cut hay using a long handle rake with wooden teeth that periodically snapped off from snagged briars. The farm foreman was not pleased when he had to repair the toothless rakes. As a note of interest the "border lot" was bound on the east by Spring Green Road, west by Squantum, south by Namquid Drive, and north again by Squantum as it joins Spring Green Road.

The layout of the first plat mirrored a grid form similar to the original design used in Philadelphia by William Penn in 1682. Alice Brown then named the streets running north and south for flowers that were the favorites of her wards, Elizabeth and Sally Francis, growing in abundance in the English and French gardens of the 19th century; the family made numerous European excursions and viewed several gardens. The streets running east and west were named after family ancestors. (See page 13 for a sidebar on street names.)

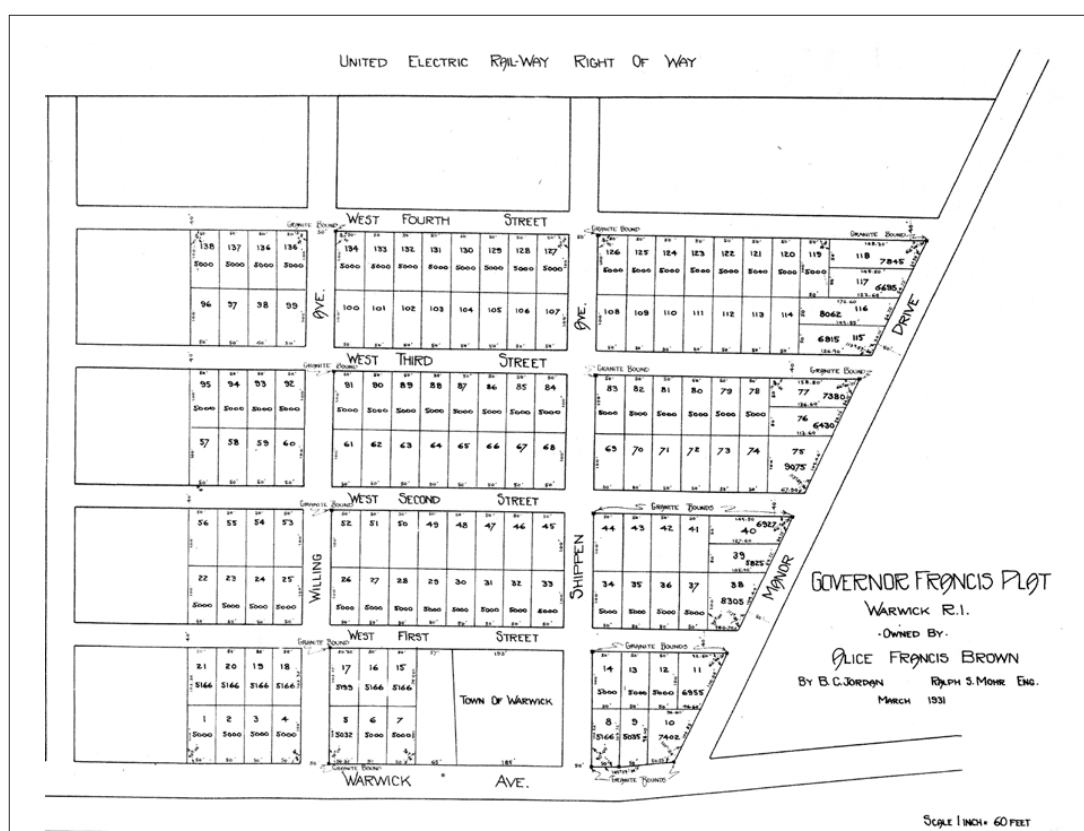
The plat was eventually finished and land sales began in 1932, unfortunately near the bottom of the Great Depression. Despite all the touted luxury

The first priority after arriving to the ancient Spring Green summer home was cleaning and dusting. Doors to the piazza were flung open to admit fresh air and rid the house of stale dampness and mildew. A group of ladies including Hazel Crandall and Irene Crowley from Hoxsie Four Corners did the honors of housekeeping. The farm men were busy at work hoisting 15 potted tubs of hydrangeas from the cellar. These were plugged with copper nails to foster blue coloring and then carefully positioned around the front circular driveway with one tub set upon a half mill stone that in earlier years had seen use as a carriage stepping stone for mounting saddled horses.

Mopsie and Popsie had officially moved in for the summer but the dust hadn't settled. Other looming priorities took the stage with mounting pressure from the State and town of Warwick to develop Spring Green's 660 acre parcel. Earlier pressure from the railroad and associated taxes had compounded into other interests.

In 1929, with the pressure of potential seizure and growing tax burden, Alice and Frank decided to break off a portion of the lot for development. It was at this point that Frank hired surveyor-engineer Ralph S. Mohr, a Providence engineer, to develop a small piece of overgrown pasture land that had formerly been the Civil War camp ground of the Rhode Island Third Heavy Artillery, known





was impressed with the planning and quality of work, and so he hired him to further the development of the plat at Spring Green.

The development office operated by Liscomb and the Brown family was a beehive of activity in the further planning of the Governor Francis Shopping Center, a site for a grocery store, and the expansion from Sweetfern Road to Warwick Avenue joining Spring Green Acres. They developed the area adjacent to Spring Green Memorial Church and the 1918 Warwick Grammar School. Fronting Warwick Avenue adjacent to the present west end of the Newport Creamery, stood a Dutchland Farm ice cream parlor with its familiar windmill tower that served vehicular traffic returning from a day's outing at Rocky Point Amusement Park. The proprietor was a French chef by the name of Armand Dore, who in addition to selling ice cream specialized in delicious deep fried vegetables.

Liscomb was the plat agent during all the ensuing development of the properties in Governor Francis Farms until 1964 when the 18 subdivisions had been completed. At the time the lots were 10,000 square feet in size and had a defined colonial style design. Following the last of the main subdivisions, the newer homes that were built after 1968 have brought in other contemporary styles of design, some of which were built on

and conveniences, very few lots were sold with not more than a dozen houses erected. Eventually financing improved and development went in waves with only small sections developed and sold at a time only to be interrupted by the poor economy and World War II.

On May 30, 1931, the *Providence Journal* ran an advertisement for the sale of lots in advance of their completion at prices of \$175 and up. The new development was marketed as a suburban area with city conveniences and offered "Ten Cardinal Points of Value," as shown in the image below. In addition, access to Gaspee Point and its magnificent beach, unparalleled in the upper Narragansett Bay and only a 10 minute drive by auto.

It's interesting to note that at this time, the railroad and trolley car line that ran across the current farm from Narragansett Parkway to West Shore Road transporting riders across the city was coming to an end. The last trains on this line ran in 1934 and by 1935 the tracks were being torn up. This provided the groundwork for a permanent road to be installed named Lansdowne Road and the houses were developed around it.

Henry's memory: *For a short time I was a substitute paperboy in the area. I sold papers and eggs to different customers, one of them being two maiden ladies that lived in a house at Algonquin and Saint George Court. They wore long black dresses and one of them had snow white hair. They were lovely ladies and very kind and went on to start a business school in Rhode Island. They were Miss Johnson and Miss Wales.*

The second Governor Francis Farms plat was designed in 1939 by Edwin Prellwitz, a graduate of Cornell University. He came to Rhode Island after employment with the Olmsted Brothers in Brookline, MA to begin a career in landscape architecture and to teach landscape engineering at the Rhode Island School of Design. His conceptual influence and architectural design of Governor Francis Farms was inspired by Frederick Law Olmsted, the designer of New York's Central Park. The new plat incorporated classic park themes from road layout to landscape and strategic tree planting and design. Specific home designs were selected, lot sizes were clearly defined, and for a while strict guidelines were in place regarding any large vehicles, fencing, and protection of vistas.

Unfortunately, this additional development came to an abrupt halt as a result of wartime economics by the United States Government following the outbreak of World War II which changed access to and availability of the necessary lumber, cement, plumbing and electrical wares.

In 1939, a new real estate manager was hired by Francis Brown. He was Roswell B. Liscomb and his development office was located on Warwick Avenue in a small "house" situated on the main road at the entrance to Sweetfern Road. Liscomb had been involved in the development of the Greenwood area of Warwick, subdividing properties and creating the new community there. Francis Brown visited the site and



smaller lot sizes. Throughout any of the ensuing development, the landscape, scale and attractiveness of the neighborhoods have never been compromised.

Protection of the natural environment and access to the waterfront has also been of great importance to the Brown family. In 1954-55, land was deeded to the Audubon Society for the preservation of five acres called Doakes Hollow where the fresh water stream runs along Narragansett Parkway. This was done to save that land space and the ancient Sassafras tree that exists on the property. This is acreage that dates back to John Greene's time of original ownership prior to the Browns' acquisition and they were determined to avoid any threat of development that might change the stretch, so it was deeded and protected in perpetuity. (In that same vicinity at the top of Spring Green Road at the corner of the Parkway is a small graveyard with a handful of headstones from the Greene family.)

Waterfront was also rapidly being developed during this time, so a 25-foot strip along the saltwater marsh and a third of Occupasstuxet Cove waterways facing the bay were also completely protected to avoid any changes to those natural areas.

Over the many decades, Governor Francis Farms has developed into a beautiful residential area surrounded in rich Rhode Island history which outlines dynamics ranging from American independence to the overall development and growth of Warwick. It has traversed a Great Depression and a World War to emerge as a beloved part of the city and remains for all time a sentimental and enduring representation of the Brown and Francis families' ties and affection for this area. ❖



Ten Cardinal Points of Value

1. All Lots—5000 Square Feet—some larger.
2. Lots sold to selected people to protect your investment.
3. Streets graded and heavily gravelled.
4. Streets wide and spacious.
5. City grammar school on premises.
6. Little children not obliged to cross any main highways to school.
7. Free mail delivery.
8. City gas and city water. Electricity and telephone at your command.
9. Prices low and terms reasonable.
10. Telephone in Providence exchange.



OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM: The first Governor Francis Farms plat development, similar to William Penn's design for Philadelphia, was finished and ready for land sales in 1932; John Brown (from Henry Brown archives); and a 1931 advertisement from the *Providence Journal*. THIS PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM: The second plat development, designed in 1939 and inspired by Olmsted's New York Central Park; and the Narragansett office of Roswell Liscomb on Warwick Ave.

C. Gordon Harris in Pawtuxet



By JANET HUDON HARTMAN

Do you remember the murals at the Driftwood? The Driftwood Restaurant was a popular spot in Pawtuxet for many years, predating Basta in the same location. In the 1950's it was the place to go for seafood, drinks, and local chatter. Deep leather booths lined the walls, and Bob Kazoian managed it with grace, visiting every patron, table to table. He knew everybody. Sitting at the bar, you'd be sure to see locals you knew. It was the place to be after a Gaspee Days meeting or the end of a business day.

Not everyone remembers, but the walls of the restaurant were lined with a mural that ran above the wood paneling and encircled the entire dining room. The murals depicted Pawtuxet Cove – all of it. You could see the old stone walls of the waterfront from the bridge and chowder house, past the PAC, Pawtuxet Neck, to the house at the end of the Neck, then around to the bottom of Bayside Avenue, Lawn Avenue, Spring Garden Street and Remington Street, then back to the last section of houses before returning to the bridge again. It was popular to find your house, or a friend's, pointing out familiar rooftops and the spire of the Baptist Church.

The artist who paddled his boat out to the middle of the cove to photograph and later paint all of this was C. Gordon Harris, although we still don't know what possessed him to do such a thing. We were all happy he did it, and the murals were a conversation piece for many years. They're still fondly remembered by anyone who has been around the Village for a long time.

When the Driftwood was sold, the murals were removed from the restaurant walls and saved



ABOVE Emmons Avenue bait shop. BELOW: The cove at the end of George Street.

them somewhere in the Village, but before anything materialized, Norton passed away and the idea was dropped. A recent search proved fruitless, as the email I had for one of the partners is no longer valid.

Fast forward to this summer, and a friend who is an antiques dealer got in touch with me to tell me about a painting by C. Gordon Harris going up for auction online. His information and advice paid off when I won the bid for the painting, done in the 1950s. When I saw it, I couldn't miss his style, which someone described as "hackneyed," but it's exactly right for our waterfront community. The scene is an old house (no longer standing) at the end of Emmons Avenue next to the park. I'm happy to now have the painting hanging in my old house.

Harris was born in Providence in 1891, and studied at Rhode Island School of Design with Frank Mathewson, Stacy Tolman, Cyrus Farnum, and George A. Hayes. He worked as a jewelry designer, associated with J. M. Fraser Company, but eventually devoted all his time to painting and teaching. He was a member of the Providence Art Club, South County Art Association, Providence Water Color Club, and East Greenwich Art Association among others, winning numerous awards.

He painted outdoor subjects all around New England, landscapes of every season and seacoast scenes. Although his paintings of Pawtuxet were

not among those discussed in news articles and critiques of his work, he has certainly captured the essence of our village atmosphere and the cove.

We welcome any further information on the Driftwood murals or other paintings found in private collections.

He painted outdoor subjects all around New England, landscapes of every season and seacoast scenes. Although his paintings of Pawtuxet were not among those discussed in news articles and critiques of his work, he has certainly captured the essence of our village atmosphere and the cove.

continued on next page

Reprint from Providence Journal article, June 26, 1987

Two city artists are carefully restoring a nearly 40-year-old mural of the Pawtuxet /River and Cove that shows sailboats and fishing vessels plying vibrant blue water just offshore of homes and businesses.

The scene is depicted in a mural at the Driftwood Restaurant, 2195 Broad St., in Pawtuxet Village. The late C. Gordon Harris recreated the Cove on canvas as it looked in 1949, and the village hasn't changed dramatically since.

But until recently, the painting was a sea of indistinguishable greenish-brown murk. It was showing the wear caused by years of smoke and alcohol stains. The restaurant's roof leaked this summer, causing the painting to buckle and crack in areas.

This month, James Vendetti and Richard Blinkhorn, the restaurant's new owners, came to the rescue.

Although some people opt to tear down "the old in favor of the new," Blinkhorn said recently, he and his partner thought the mural was part of the area's history and should be preserved. "People come in here and they can pick out their houses or the old buildings that they remember."

So they hired Robert Pailthorpe, 61, of Shaw Avenue [Edgewood] and Donald Mello, 61, of 154 Crescent Ave., [Riverside] to break the smoke's hold on the painting. The artists agreed to see what they could do and ended up spending five days this month carefully cleaning the aging mural.

The mural is made up of canvas panels varying from two to four feet in width and from 10 to 42 feet in length. From end to end, the panoramic view of Pawtuxet is nearly 300 feet.



End of Pawtuxet Neck.

To remove the brown cigarette and alcohol filth from the paintings, "We used a secret formula that we transported from Milan," Mello joked.

But he added that the cleaning agent they used to remove the film was so strong that it could have cut through the canvas if used improperly. Mello, who restores murals, paintings, and statues for a living, said they had to wash the paintings three times before the scenes of the tiny community on the Cranston-Warwick line were clearly visible.

They washed all but four of the panels, but where the water had buckled the canvas, the sections had to be peeled from the walls and cleaned and scraped while the wall was repaired.

Both artists said they have enjoyed seeing the scenic view of Pawtuxet emerge.

"I couldn't believe what was coming off of these walls," Mello said. "The colors underneath are beautiful. This is art that people can really relate to."

Pailthorpe, who describes himself as a historian, as a book illustrator and painter, said Harris supposedly paddled his boat out into the Cove and took photographs on which to base his painting. He said that for artistic reasons, Harris may have added some buildings or boats to the landscape, but for the most part, the painting shows the village as it was in 1949.

The next step in the restoration will be to retouch sections of the mural that have deteriorated. Pailthorpe, who is a part-time muralist, will do that.

He said the most difficult part of retouching is making the new colors match the old. ♦

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

Governor Francis Farms — How Were the Streets Named?

This gives us some reference as to how some popular streets were named in the new development of Governor Francis Farms and represents a mix of history, nature, and family tradition for their inspiration.

Spring Green Road The 660-acre farm purchased in the Spring of 1782 by John Brown from the heirs of Surgeon John Greene. Brown wrote to his son James, "I call our new farm Spring Green Farm, our farm is spring green owing to the abundance of springs & purchased in the Spring time, and in the possession of the Greene family for 141 years and very green."

Saint George Court Old English folk lore about St. George slaying the dragon, named by Frank Hail Brown.

Westfield Road Formerly known as the border pasture where the Providence Coal Company (1880 to 1902) pastured their horses for the summer—the meadow west of Spring Green Road.

Sweet Fern Road A low growing shrub native to much of New England and Rhode Island.

Namquid Drive Indian chief of the Narragansett & Wampanoag Federation.

King Phillip Circle Sachem of the Wampanoag Indians whose Indian name was Metacomet but he adopted the name King Philip.

Black Creek Road A town in Missouri, home of Eunice (Whittamore) Brown's family (the wife of John Francis Brown).

Streets Named After the Favorite Flowers of Elizabeth and Sally Francis:

Aster [Aster novae angliae] - the Greek word meaning "Star," referring to the flower's star like appearance

Balsam [Impatiens balsamina] or Touch-Me-Not. When the ripe pods are touched, they burst suddenly and seeds scatter, as if impatient.

Canna [Canna species] Canna Lily, or Indian Shot - native to South and Central America and the West Indies, by 1906 these lilies became the rage of Europe with over 1100 varieties

Dahlia [Dahlia species] Dahlias are a very ancient plant. The flower grew in such popularity that 62 types were cultivated in England by 1841.

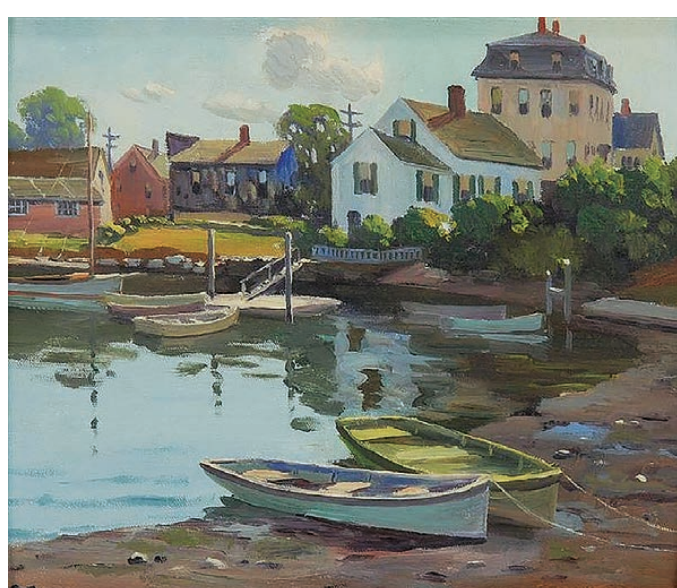
Francis Family Street Names:

Shippen Avenue An ancestor Edward Shippen was named in the Pennsylvania Charter by the founder of Pennsylvania William Penn;

first elected mayor of Philadelphia in 1701. His daughter Margaret married General Benedict Arnold, American hero at Saratoga and villainous traitor. (You can choose your friends but not your relatives!)

Willing Avenue Named after ancestor Thomas Willing whose outstanding activities were in the financial field, as a leader in the organization of the Pennsylvania Bank which sustained General George Washington's army during the dark days of the encampment at Valley Forge. President of the first chartered Bank of America guiding the country through the critical days following the Revolution.

His official services included being Mayor of Philadelphia, Representative in the general assembly, President of the Provincial Congress, and delegate to the Congress of the Confederation. Thomas Willing's mother was Anne Shippen; a portrait of this woman by Robert Feke, famous American 18th century artist, is displayed at the DuPont Museum at Winterthur, Wilmington, Delaware. A woman well educated and refined, she raised a family of thirteen whose daughters married merchants, military leaders, a man of science and politics. Her sons became merchants and lawyers. Her grandson John Francis, merchant of Philadelphia, married John Brown's daughter Abby Brown, the mother of Governor John Brown Francis.



by two men, who rolled them up and kept them unprotected in the basement of someone's home. I went on a search for them years ago and located the men who had saved them. They brought them to a PVA meeting for a very brief visit and then they were gone again. Norton Salk, a local architect, wanted to help me find a way to install

The Hidden Destruction of Our Park: Saving Stillhouse Cove Salt Marsh and Park From the Next Storm

BY MELISSA CARDEN, DAVID A. GOLDENBERG
AND BARBARA RUBINE

On any given day, our neighbors and friends from the surrounding communities enjoy Stillhouse Cove. They participate in yoga classes, walk dogs, take prom pictures, and access Narragansett Bay via the boat ramp. The popularity of the park and salt marsh grows each year, safeguarded by environmental restorations and landscape improvements made over the years.

Most visitors don't see the hidden damage to the shoreline and marsh, caused by increasingly common extreme weather. Coastal erosion is putting our salt marsh and Cove at risk. As stewards of Stillhouse Cove for almost three decades, the Edgewood Waterfront Preservation Association (EWPA) wants you to know about it and to ask for your help.

In December of 2022, an extreme storm that flooded the RI Yacht Club and lower Ocean Avenue pounded the salt marsh. Waves crashed against the banks of the park, topped the seawall recently installed by the Yacht Club, flooded the eastern end of the park at Ocean Avenue, and caused extensive hidden damage to the embankment and the underlying infrastructure that preserves it.

Some history: In 2013 the EWPA obtained Federal funding to repair damage from Superstorm Sandy, which had washed away ten feet of the park shoreline the previous year. With technical input from the Coastal Resources Management Council and Save the Bay, these funds were used as part of a pilot project to change the slope of the embankments and stabilize the area with custom designed coir envelopes that project partners hoped would protect the area from worsening erosion.



In this project, custom designed, sand-filled envelopes of coir, a biodegradable material made from coconut fibers, were strategically contoured along the shoreline. Starting at the level of the marsh, each of these “burritos” (as we called them) were stacked one upon another with a setback of a few feet, creating a staircase-like slope that was a stronger defense against wind-driven waves and rising tides.

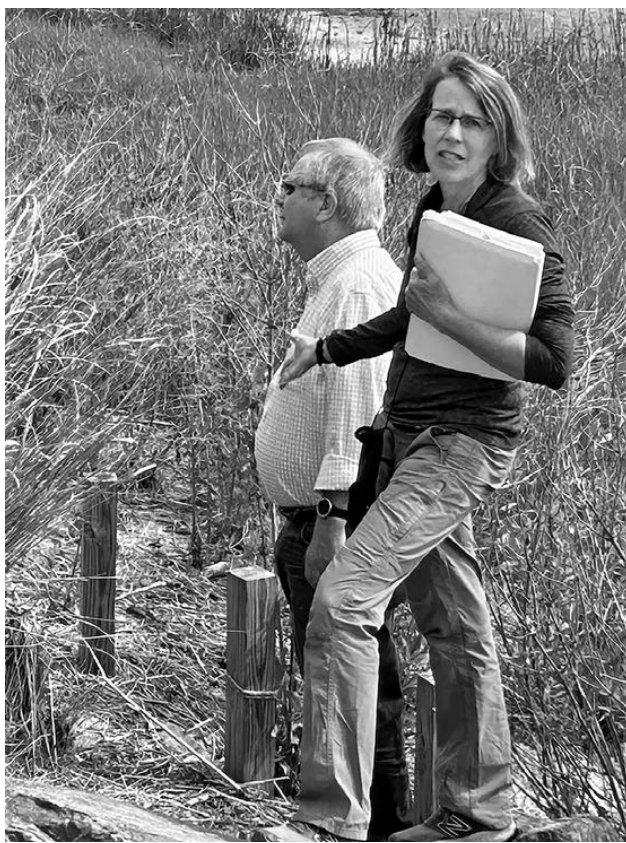
This solution worked for ten years – then it didn't.

Two years ago, when a Nor'easter was predicted, the EWPA tried to shore up the bottom of the embankment by adding coir logs. The logs, bought in New Hampshire and transported by Ray Mooney of Pawtuxet Cove Marina, were installed by a contractor hired by EWPA. The logs were subsequently dislodged during a severe storm and reinstalled by EWPA volunteers and neighbors during a shoreline cleanup, but they were no match for the storm on December 23, 2022: This storm washed away the bottom step of our hidden staircase, which now puts the entire embankment holding up the park at risk. To save it, we need to create a new “bottom step” that is secure enough not to wash away.

This past spring, the contractor who installed the coir envelopes in 2013 came to the site to meet with us and Save the Bay to assess the impacted areas. Together we came up with a plan to repair the embankment as soon as possible, and an estimate to do the work – the costs will be significant. The work will be more challenging this time, because the slopes are already vegetated and no machinery is allowed in the tidal zone of the marsh. New coir material will need to be installed in front of what remains of the coir envelopes, and secured with stronger supports.

Because coir is biodegradable and sunlight hastens its deterioration, covering the new structures with soil and installing plants will help prolong their effective life. All this work must be done by hand or done with machinery positioned at the top of the bank. We will not know until construction begins how much of the park will be impacted from this repair. It is safe to assume from our previous experience that there will be damage to the lawn and that some portion of the park will be off limits for a while.

Although we don't know when the next severe storm is coming, we know it is inevitable, and we have an obligation to do all we can to save this beautiful spot. Please visit www.stillhousecove.org to follow the work being done by your neighbors to protect this historic property that is so environmentally fragile. Consider volunteering with us, we welcome everyone! ❖



TOP TO BOTTOM: Aerial view of Stillhouse Cove Park and salt marsh; Wenley Ferguson of Save the Bay and Dave Lager, Team Leader at SUMco, assess the damage; and 2012 damage due to Super Storm Sandy.

You Rock Neighborhood Music Festival



By ADRIAN BEAULIEU

Is there anyone living in Pawtuxet Village who doesn't enjoy Pawtuxet Park? Whether walking your dog, taking your kids to the swing set, or just having a quiet moment at the gazebo or at one of the picnic tables, the Park draws more people than anywhere else in the Village.

Yet, the Park is now facing "mid-life" challenges. The shoreline is eroding, many of the trees are deteriorating and in danger of toppling over, as happened to a large tree this past June near the Boathouse. And the rain runoff down the sloping drive to the Cove feeds the invasive phragmites that are concealing what is a Winslow Homer-like beautiful view of the Cove.

While the PVA board waits for a Master Plan in early 2024 from the City of Warwick Planning Department, we were approached with a fundraising initiative for the Park from Selene Byron, associated with the You Rock School of Music located on Broad Street in Cranston. Along with director Seth Rogan, Selene approached several members of the PVA board with the idea of a fundraiser called the "You Rock Neighborhood Music Festival".



On Sunday, September 17, a cavalcade of 15 bands performed. An ice cream and several other food trucks, along with cornhole for kids plus a raffle of various prizes donated by many in the Village business community, made for an enjoyable fun afternoon in the park for everyone.

The Festival raised \$3,300 which will be used by the PVA to hire an arborist for a comprehensive survey of the state of the trees in the Park. The arborist will chart their condition, recommend any remedial action needed to protect the trees and develop a plan for planting new trees to replace those that may need to be taken down.

The You Rock School of Music plans to make the Festival an annual fundraising event for the park, working together with the PVA and Gaspee Days Committee. Special thanks in getting the Park ready for the Festival go to Jerry Peshka and Steve Miller, respectively the newly inducted and the former president of the Gaspee Days Committee, for their help in providing and setting up the concert stage and also in coordinating other logistics in the Park to make this a successful kick-off event to save our Park.

We hope to see you at the Festival in 2024! ❖



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Counting on Trees



By DAVID A. GOLDENBERG

The presence of healthy trees is vital to the quality of life in a neighborhood. They absorb pollutants, sustain wildlife, intercept storm water, and help reduce energy use. Neighborhoods with a widespread tree canopy are much cooler and counter the rising temperatures due to climate change. As intense rain events increase, the presence of trees becomes all the more vital because of the amount of storm water they absorb. This reduces runoff and the amount of pollution entering rivers, ponds, the Bay, and other bodies of water.

Federal funds are available to municipalities like Cranston and Warwick for urban reforestation, but only if the individual city administration submits an application requesting a detailed assessment of their tree canopy. This assessment, together with a street tree inventory, can help the community determine the percentage of coverage their community has and how much it needs to increase. Several different federally financed programs are available to help municipalities plant trees once these assessments are completed. Barbara Rubine, president of the Edgewood Waterfront Preservation Association (EWPA), has noted that across the Bay, Barrington, Warren, and Bristol are well on their way to carrying out a coordinated tree canopy assessment and inventory with Federal and State support. To gather the required data, neighborhood volunteers are in the process of conduct-

tree planting and management program. It will also serve as a baseline for assessing future trends of the city's tree canopy.

The survey is restricted to publicly owned trees located between the sidewalk and the curb. It does not include shrubs. However, it does include trees

as they cover their assigned blocks. Each individual was provided with a species Identification "Leaf Key" sheet. During the initial training, Doug Still reviewed the leaf patterns, "habit" or shape, fruit, and bark of the most common street trees. A suggested tree identification shortcut was to first determine if the tree had an opposite or alternate leaf pattern. The second day of training took the surveyors out on nearby streets to try out their use of the tree identification sheet and the process of entering the data in the application.

Subsequent to the initial training, Doug Still followed up with most of the teams to help with the use of the recording application on their phones. This seemed to represent the greatest initial challenge. Surveyors were also confused when they had to differentiate between primary and secondary power lines under the "Conflicts" entry. A number of volunteers have used a second phone application called "Picture This" for tree identification during the early stages, but Doug feels that after they become familiar with the area's common tree species, they will no longer need it. Occasionally, a rare tree will surface and be marked "unknown" until it can be reviewed.

Using the survey app, the census takers are entering the following for each tree:

- Location (using GPS)
- Species
- Diameter (at 4.5 feet height)
- Tree Condition
- The Growing Space
- Conflicts such as power lines, infrastructure
- Special notes
- A photo of the entire tree

The neighborhood has been broken up into nine zones to be covered by two person teams. Generally, one surveyor will handle the measurement, identification, and rating with the other entering the data. Donna Fieldman, an EWPA board member, was surprised to find that her zone included an industrial area. Each volunteer will be spending approximately 18-20 hours conducting the survey.

The Zone 6 team, Andrea Klimt and Maria Medeiros Wall, is covering the area between Glen Avenue and Shaw Avenue. Maria recalls that when she moved onto Glen Avenue years ago, it had a full canopy of trees, but they have disappeared over the years due to storm damage and city policies.

Andrea said that participation in the survey had afforded her the opportunity to meet like-minded environmentalists in the neighborhood. ❖



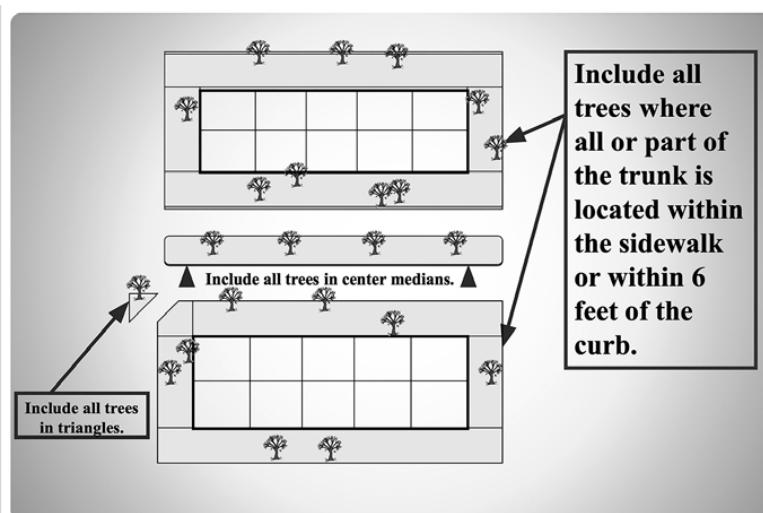
around parks that meet the "street tree" definition. It also can include lawn trees within eight feet of an adjoining street where there is no sidewalk. Tree stumps will be measured and noted. The volunteers have approximately six weeks to complete their task before the leaves fall. It is the first complete



ing a census of the location, species, and condition of Edgewood's street trees, in the area between Narragansett Bay and Interstate 95. If time allows, the survey will be expanded to include Cranston's Auburn neighborhood. The census is a pilot project organized by the EWPA with an Urban and Community Forestry grant from the R.I. Department of Environmental Management. Hopefully, it will provide a model for subsequent surveys in all Cranston neighborhoods that will inform the city's

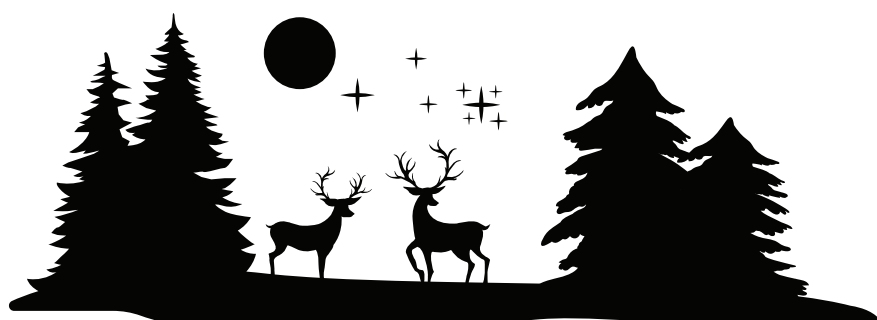
census of Cranston trees. A previous effort sampled only six per cent of city trees.

On September 20 -21, eighteen volunteers (and Cranston Tree Warden John Skorupski) attended a training at William Hall Library and in the nearby streets. Doug Still, former Providence City Forester, reviewed the data points that surveyors should enter into an application on their mobile phones

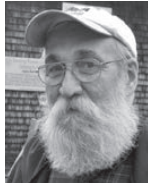


ABOVE: Volunteers getting instructions; and examples of tree identification and record.

HAPPY
Holidays



Prohibition Comes to Pawtuxet!



BY DAVE ASPRAY

On January 17, 1920, the 18th amendment to the U.S. Constitution, known as the Volstead Act, became the law of the land. Called by some the “Noble Experiment,” Prohibition had a profound effect on the entire country, Pawtuxet Village being no exception. As a maritime community, our local alcohol smuggling was done via the water, and the rumrunner was born. Most of the boats were converted pleasure boats — altered to better serve their illicit purpose. The major modification was to the choice of engines. These boats needed to be fast to outrun the Coast Guard who, rather than make their boats speedier, opted instead to arm their boats with machine guns. The rumrunners never carried guns, fearing extra penalties if they were caught.

The engine of choice was the Liberty v-12 aircraft engine. During World War I, the Wilson administration ordered the manufacture of bomber planes for a 1918 spring offensive made with a single engine design for the entire aerial armada. England and France produced dozens of designs. Rumor had it that the US-made engine was designed and developed within the course of a week. The 400 horsepower aircraft engine had the highest power-to-weight ratio of any internal combustion engine to date, and was designed for efficient mass production. Over twenty-thousand engines were manufactured and, with the end of the war, many were soon available as surplus, much to the delight of the rumrunners. How sad it takes conflict to foster such brilliant innovations.

One of the boats we took care of at the Aspray Boatyard was a purpose-built 50-foot rumrunner named the *Barracuda*. An old timer owned her and never did much beyond maintaining what was there. The *Barracuda* was definitely built for one purpose — to smuggle booze. The boat was very lightly built, her framing and planking dimensions were for a boat half her size. Down below was just one big open space with two engines (not the original Libertys) and a fuel tank way too small for the size of the boat — but just enough for short trips. There was no evidence of any galley, bunks, or living quarters. Originally she would have had a very small pilothouse, more than likely armored. The decks were flush and she had a deckhouse that had been added later when someone started to convert her to a pleasure boat, a project that never got too far. The *Barracuda* was so light that after all our boats were hauled we’d leave her on the railway for winter storage. In all my years growing up there, she never left the dock.


After the boatyard closed, I spent a few years working on the New Bedford fishing fleet. The biggest marine welding company there had gotten its start building armored pilot houses for the local rumrunners. Those pilot houses consisted of two steel plates packed with sand between layers. The Coast Guard wasn’t messing around, instead of trying to shoot out the engine rooms to disable the rumrunners, they went right for the jugular. Make no mistake about it, these guys were out for blood!

Aspray’s boatyard also profited from prohibition legally. Early on the government hired my grandfather Dave to haul and store seized rumrunners. Occasionally they’d auction them off and the same bunch of nondescript men would show up and buy them back. No one said a word; it was a time to mind your own business. Grandpa Dave just hauled, stored, and launched for the Feds.

As in any other city or town, hooch could be had in Pawtuxet. Once it hit the streets there were plenty of bootleggers to move it along. It would magically appear at any gathering or celebration. There is no telling if the village had any speakeasies. Considering New York City had 30,000 of them, you take a guess. Plenty of people got involved, if for no other reason than desperation. The end of the War and the start of the Great Depression made for some tough times, and people who ordinarily would never break the law often took chances. A buck was hard to come by. Prohibition lasted until December 5, 1933, when the Volstead Act was repealed with the 21st Amendment. Like many social experiments forced on us by the government, the Volstead Act was a disaster. The big winner was organized crime, raking in millions of dollars, while a lot of ordinary hard working people paid the price. The government doesn’t always know what’s best and is best when governing least. So let’s raise a glass to our freedom and never forget how fragile democracy really is! ❖



When proofreading this article, copyeditor Annie Talbot remembered some strange items she found in the second floor of her Arnold Avenue carriage house when she first moved in. “We found these whiskey labels and a wooden corking device (left) along with a mysterious three-hole bottle holder. We’ve always assumed they dated back to the Stillhouse Cove bootlegging days.”



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REVOLUTION
AMERICAN BISTRO

Bank Cafe CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and forged checks. Occasionally they offered stock options for individuals to purchase through announcements in such newspapers as the Literary Cadet and Rhode Island Statesman. Around 1845, the bank moved from the Pawtuxet location to Westminster Street in Providence. The bank remained in business until an announcement in *The Providence Press*, June 6, 1882, "The Pawtuxet Bank has decided to close business, not because it is unsound, but because the business is not profitable."



At the same time the bank was in operation on the first floor, a private school for girls, Pawtuxet Union Academy, was in operation on the second. Not much is known about the academy, except that it was mentioned as a school entity in the minutes for the Harmony Hall Masonic Lodge. The lodge held a meeting at the school on December 15, 1848. When the school disbanded is not known.

The history of what took place in the building for the next thirty-plus years, after the bank and school left, is somewhat murky and mostly absent from historical records. In the 1973 National Register of Historic Places description, it states that the building was expanded with a mansard roof and veranda in 1866. According to local historians, the Civil War veteran Dr. George W. Carr lived in the building using it as a private residence. In the 1870 census, George W. Carr is listed as physician and surgeon, age 35, living under his father's roof – John Carr, age 76, retired manufacturer, but doesn't state their home's location. Whether they actually occupied the building is uncertain.

In the 1870's, James Tinker purchased the building and used the first floor as a restaurant, calling it the Bank Cafe as a tribute to the original use of the building. The introduction to the community of the fried cornbread Rhode Island "johnnycake" has been attributed to Mr. Tinker.

In January 1893, James and his wife Ellen Tinker sold the building to Joseph L. and Elizabeth Smith who ran the restaurant and "Smith's Hotel."

10

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According to *The Providence News*, electricity was introduced to the building in 1896. The Smiths ran the restaurant and hotel until Elizabeth sold the property to Annie and Michel Vogel in 1913. During the Vogels' tenure they called it Smith's Bank Cafe. By 1920 Annie Vogel is listed as the sole proprietor.

For most of the twentieth century the building remained a restaurant, serving johnnycakes, steaks and dinners. The Vogels sold to the Hulls, who eventually sold to the LaCasio brothers. Along the way, the street address changed three times and some additional parcels of land were conveyed and reconfigured to meet the needs of the growing Village.

The LaCasios incorporated the Bank Cafe, with Gene as President/Treasurer and brother Frank as Vice President/Secretary. When Gene retired after a couple years, Frank's wife Pauline became the President/Treasurer. According to local historians, when the LaCasios ran the place, they decorated the restaurant with a nod to the local history: Colonial pieces and pictures of old banknote currency hung on the walls. Two of the upstairs dining rooms were named for local residents: Hazel Wade Kennedy (local historian and descendant of Roger Williams and William Arnold) and David Stackhouse (founder of Gaspee Days). As a longtime resident stated, "It was my recollection that the Bank Cafe was some place

you would go to celebrate something special."

The restaurant was sold in bankruptcy in the 1980s. After extensive renovations by the new owners, the restaurant was reopened and ran for a couple of years until it was sold to the current owner. It has been a private residence since.

Famed preservationist/economist Donovan Rypkema has said, "Historic preservation is not just about saving old buildings; it is about fostering a sense of place, identity, and community." The Bank Cafe building embodies that sense of place. It has been preserved over the years through the efforts of those who lived, worked, dined or met there and has added to the identity of the Village since its first brick was laid. ❖

JONNYCAKE RECIPE

- 1 cup cornmeal
- Dash salt
- 1 level teaspoon sugar
- 1 1/3 cups boiling water
- Cream or milk
- 1 tablespoon melted butter

Mix corn meal, salt and sugar. Add boiling water. Mix thoroughly and let stand 5 minutes, covered, to steam.

Add cream or milk to about the consistency of mashed potatoes. Stir in melted butter.

Drop large tablespoons lightly onto a smoking hot greased griddle (or skillet). Cook until brown, about 5 minutes, then turn cook other side about 4-5 minutes longer. Serve piping hot (with butter and/or maple sugar.)



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP, RIGHT: Smith's Hotel, circa 1900; a 1920 Warwick telephone directory advertisement for the Bank Cafe; and a Pawtuxet \$1 Bank Note, January 7, 1818, counterfeit with forged signatures for James Rhodes, president and Samuel Gardiner, cashier.

Harbingers

BY MAIZY PENROSE

As I sit down and focus on the upcoming deadline for The Bridge (though really, who can be expected to focus what with the ongoing political drama?), apparently another year has dribbled past. Where does time fly, where go the mislaid planning lists? Whence the good intentions; now just paving stones on the road to Hell, with inexorably narrowing paths through a house increasingly cluttered with DIY decluttering manuals. Whole rooms yearning to be freed-up for a slight chance at gracious living. Closets calling out for a modicum of reorganization. Shelves begging to be dusted and disentangled. While just outside, in desperate need of serious editing, garden beds languish.



Suddenly a possibility for end-of-year redemption: The Edgewood Garden Club was having a yard sale and the call went out for donations, which notably included pick-up! I bagged up a hefty poundage of gardening and floral design books, wrapped up a few pieces of art decor and sundry extraneous household items. These had barely left the premises before I regretted my folly. The books I didn't mind, as in many cases I had duplicates, but I questioned my sanity over the needless, heedless shedding of the few small vases and other irreplaceable knickknackery. I had to stop and examine my haste to divest possessions in order to gain a square foot or two of empty space, now already fully refilled to overflowing.

I had firmly resolved not to attend the event itself but was going to the Farmers Market anyway and wanted to appear supportive. Just some idle chit chat and a little camaraderie, but no buying. Nothing.

And I did it: home again with nary an item, not even ones previously mine, not even a much-coveted Thalictrum, the lovely native perennial, the so bee-loved meadow rue. Nothing. By week's end I had uncovered a whole box of misplaced bud vases and a kind sister clubber, having noticed my obvious Thalictrum lust, left one on my porch along with some other choice plant specimens. I'll find a place for each somewhere – bright but not too sunny, damp but not too damp, dry but not dusty, and above all, out of the way of the lawn crew – they from the huge “why weed when you can whack” school of landscaping. It's remarkable how many cherished plants can't survive being hacked off at the ankles and how many of the less desirables thrive.

Another cheerful advance against my premature burial was finding a proper home for a teetering stack of National Geographic magazines. A goodhearted neighbor donates them to the state prison along with paperbacks, which I am very careful to screen before sending off. Please, no criminally inclined inspirational reading, nothing that might ignite incident, incite riot, cause undue, debilitating depression, or be heavy enough to be used as a bludgeoning device. My very own reading profile as it happens, and so off they went.

Onward. It's a slow process. I do have my idiosyncrasies, my boundaries. My personal fights to the death. That which is sacrosanct, non-negotiable. For example, my enviable collection of colorful net produce bags. Over the years I have sacrificed a few for the birds. They make effective recycled yarn dispensers for their nesting chores. But this was my own choice without any arm twisting or unpleasant coercion and I don't begrudge the personal sacrifice. Someday if space gets tight, and all manner of stop-gap solutions fail I may have to resort to... ❖

Pawtuxet Village Park

A POEM BY
DONALD MACDONALD

How do I love this park? Let me count the ways.
I love to come for the grand entrance below the tree leaves trembling.
For chess tables that cause concentration.
For a rock garden that causes contemplation.
For children swinging and screaming. I feel their exultation.
For the gazebo where I ponder for inspiration.
For benches to rest, stare, or conversations.
For picnic tables to lunch and celebration.
For two little free libraries, books to enlighten and relaxation.

I love the lush and lusty green lawn that soothes, makes me yawn.
I love the flowers, bright, always a delight.
I love the sea oats, soldiers at attention, need a mention.
I love to walk the boat ramp. No boat! I have hope.
I love the cove, elegant herons, majestic swans. Ducks, heads down, tails up.
Not to worry, they never drown.
I pause to reflect on Aspray boathouse and boatyard.
Now Aspray boathouse and park.

Always a community landmark.
I imagine the skiff is a fairy garden.
I'm certain I heard a voice say joyful and clear.
I come here to lose the memory of my discomfort and rest or play to keep stress away.
A good idea for me, too.
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Edgewood Garden Club Celebrates Its 90th Anniversary of Civic Beautification, Conservation and Gardening Education

By KATHLEEN YANITY

Tornadoes touching down elsewhere in the state did not deter 60 members and guests from marking the 90th Anniversary of Edgewood Garden Club on September 13. A festive dinner at the Rhode Island Yacht Club celebrated past and present members and the work of the Club throughout the decades. Local organizations have come and gone, but the Edgewood Garden Club has persisted through the Great Depression, World War II, the 1960s social revolution, economic upheavals of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, terrorism, and a pandemic.

A slide show highlighting activities from the 1950s onward played throughout the evening. Anniversary remembrances by Alice Barrows and Beverly Dugan were read. Alice, an Edgewood native, lived across from Stillhouse Cove for many years with her husband Chet until their retirement to Florida. Bev, now 95, was originally from Edgewood and moved to her home off Fair Street with her husband Martin and young family in 1961.

Alice and Bev mentioned events typically associated with garden clubs, such as flower shows (many held at the William H. Hall Free Library),



and house and garden tours staged throughout the neighborhood, but both stressed that the club was civic minded from the beginning. A silver tea service may have been omnipresent at lunches and teas for the first 50 years or so, but Alice noted that the club “was never home to blue-haired ladies” interested only in floral design and socializing. Over the years, the Club initiated or contributed to many local beautification and environmental projects.

Twenty-one women established the Club in June 1933, with Co-Presidents Mrs. Bradford Kenyon and Mrs. Raymond L. Webster of Saunterstown. (The 1940 U.S. Census shows an Emily Kenyon living at 55 Circuit Drive.)

In the April 2018 edition of *The Bridge*, former EGC President Carol Hills wrote that the Club’s first long-range improvement effort was adding shrubs, trees, and plants to the grounds of



the new William H. Hall Free Library. That work is ongoing. Yet another tree, a McDowell dogwood, was added to mark Arbor Day 2022, with assistance from St. Paul School students. Each year the Club decorates the library for the holiday season and tends a Sensory Garden it planted at the back entrance in 2017.

Part of the Club’s mission is education. Each year it holds open meetings at the library, offering the public a chance to hear talks on gardening, conservation, and related topics such as beekeeping, mushroom foraging, and indoor plant care. It has aided many schools over the years with teaching programs and community service projects. Recent contributions include funding raised garden beds and hydroponic gardening equipment at E.S. Rhodes School and organizing student tree plantings at Edgewood Highlands and Park View Middle School.

The riverbank of Pawtuxet Village would not look as it does today if not for the Edgewood Garden Club. Under the leadership of Jackie Turner and the late Patty Cottrill and Margaret Thielsch, trees and shrubs were planted along the river in the 1970s, including many on the river banks, to control erosion and beautify the area. They also endorsed the Pawtuxet Village Association’s plan that sought community development funds resulting in new trees, brick sidewalks and colonial-style lanterns along Broad Street. “It was quite a big undertaking,” recalled Bev, who joined the club in 1969. Planting the bushes required rappelling down the banks of the Pawtuxet, with ropes tied to the then-existent billboards for support.

Each year, flower boxes that had graced the exteriors of Cameron’s Pharmacy and other businesses were filled with holiday greens. When the Village playground on Commercial Street was renovated in 2005, the Club planted a tree and created a front garden with native and hardy plants. The Club cares for it each year and fills flower boxes with colorful red dragon-wing begonia and greenery to further welcome all who come to play or

keep watch over their charges.

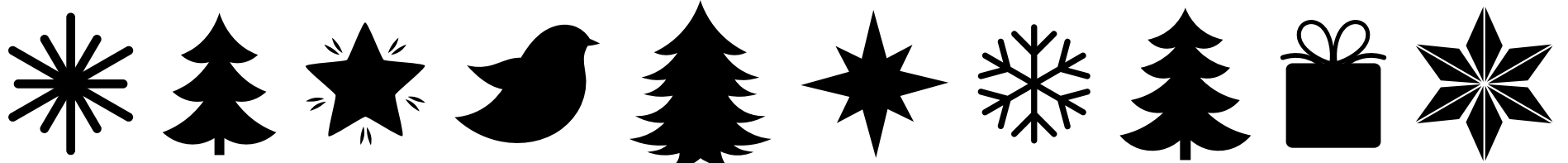
The Club was an early supporter of the Edgewood Waterfront Preservation Association’s campaign to restore the Stillhouse Cove salt marsh. During cove clean-ups, members once again climbed down banks to remove invasive species to make room for native grasses to better hold them together.

The Gaspee Monument Rock was installed in 1976. Some years later, the Club planted roses and other bushes at its front. In 2012, it created a pollinator-friendly native garden there that attracts bees and other beneficial insects and provides food and shelter for over-wintering birds. With help from Rhodes second graders, a new red maple was planted near the rock to mark this year’s Arbor Day in April, replacing one lost recently to insect infestation.

At the turn of the 21st century, “the Club knew it would have to grow or it would die out,” said Bev, who was then serving her second stint as President, along with Jackie Turner. It recruited men, including Bernie Larivee, a Past President (and Master of Ceremonies at the 90th Anniversary Dinner). It also reached out to neighbors with notable gardens and asked if they or their friends were interested in joining. In about a decade, membership grew from roughly 40 to 70. To accommodate work schedules, it switched from day activities to holding half of its meetings and events in the evenings or on weekends.

“The club has evolved over time and that is what kept it going,” Bev said. “We were very happy to let younger people take over and it has worked out well, both now and for the future.” ❖

TOP: Steven Johnson, Joyce Fleischer, Cheryl Wilkes, Karen Calkins and Bev Dugan at the 90th Anniversary Dinner. LEFT: Michael Seebeck and current EGC President Sarah Kales Lee with one of the many baskets raffled off at the dinner. Photos by Kathy Schnabel.



The Purple Heart and Its Revolutionary History



By COLONEL RONALD W. BARNES,
COMMANDANT, PAWTUXET RANGERS, RIM



Many of us know someone who was wounded or killed in combat and received the Purple Heart. The modern-day Purple Heart was established on February 22, 1932, which was also the 200th anniversary of the birth of George Washington. The Purple Heart, per the regulations, is awarded in the name of the President of the United States to any member of the Armed Forces of the United States who, while serving under competent authority in any capacity with one of the U.S. Armed Services after April 5, 1917, has been wounded, killed, or died after being wounded.

But did you know that the Purple Heart traces its roots to an award that George Washington instituted during the Revolutionary War? The modern-day establishment of the Purple Heart comes from General Order 3: "By order of the President of the United States, the Purple Heart, established by George Washington at Newburgh, August 7, 1782, during the War of the Revolution is hereby revived out of respect to his memory and military achievements." This order was from Douglas MacArthur, Secretary of War, General, Chief of Staff.

Washington had been forbidden by Congress to grant commissions to soldiers as a reward for merit. Washington believed that an enlisted soldier should be recognized for his service. On August 7, 1782 from his Newburgh headquarters, Washington created the Badge of Military Merit: "...The General ever desirous to cherish virtuous ambition in his soldiers, as well as to foster and encourage every species of Military merit, directs that whenever any singularly meritorious action is performed, the author of it shall be permitted to wear on his facings over the left breast, the figure of a heart in purple cloth, or silk, edged with narrow lace or binding. Not only instances of unusual gallantry, but also of extraordinary fidelity and essential service in any way shall meet with due reward. Before this favour can be conferred on any man, the particular fact, or facts, on which it is to be grounded must be set forth to the Commander in chief accompanied with certificates from the Commanding officers of the regiment and brigade to which the Candidate for reward belonged, or other incontestable proofs, and upon granting it, the name and regiment of the person with the action so certified are to be enrolled in the book of merit which will be kept at the orderly office. Men who have merited this last distinction to be suffered to pass all guards and sentinels which officers are permitted to do." Only soldiers and non-commissioned officers (Privates, Corporals and Sergeants) were eligible for the award.

There are but three known New England soldiers who received the Badge of Military Merit:

- Sergeant Elijah Churchill, 2nd Continental Dragoons
- Sergeant William Brown, 5th Connecticut, Continental Line
- Sergeant Daniel Bissel, 2nd Connecticut, Continental Line

The Badge of Military Merit ended with the conclusion of the American Revolution. In 1918 General John Pershing suggested an award was needed for acts of merit. But the Purple Heart was not established until 1932. The Purple Heart is the oldest active military award in the United States. According to the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor, some 1.8 million Purple Hearts have been awarded since 1782. ♦



On Saturday, September 9, the Pawtuxet Rangers took part in a ceremony for the travelling Vietnam Wall which was at Rocky Point from September 8-10. There are over 58,000 names on the wall. Photo: Col. Ronald Barnes

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Paul Lotito... *In honor of the LaButti family*

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Pawtuxet Rangers

Ann Marie Richards... *In memory of Americo Richards, Lewis Richards and Vincent Richards (WWII veterans)*

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Ida Zecco... *In honor of Vincent Della Cioppa*

Maura Zimmer... *In honor of Maura Zimmer and Tom Hazard*



PRESERVATION CORNER

Eight Sides is Enough



By VIRGINIA RUTH

Ask a child to draw a picture of a house and most generally the child will draw a square. In the 1850's amateur architect, phrenologist, lecturer, publisher and author, Orson Squire Fowler was the champion for a different type of housing structure: the octagon house.

The octagon house, as the name suggests, is designed in the shape of an octagon as a two or three-storied home. Fowler didn't originate this type of shape for a building. In 1153 Diotisalvi designed an octagonal baptistry in Pisa and Palladio, the Italian Renaissance architect, built octagonal wings on his structures. In Colonial America an eight-sided arsenal was built in Williamsburg, Virginia, and Thomas Jefferson's private retreat, Poplar Forest, was built in an octagonal shape.

While the idea was nothing new, it is hard to separate the octagon style from the man. Fowler had very definitive opinions on the subject. He felt the octagon house embodied a design for the common man that was affordable and elevated one's wellbeing.



Pawtuxet octagon house at 27 South Fair Street.

By all accounts Orson Squire Fowler was an eccentric. Born in 1809 in Cohocton, NY, he was educated at Amherst College graduating in 1834. He became a well-known phrenologist ("reading" the bumps on one's head), lecturer and author of all sorts of topics: health, sex, education, lifestyle behavior and social reform. He and his brother (also a phrenologist) established a publishing company, Fowlers and Wells, that produced all his scientific and philosophical pamphlets.

In 1848, Orson Squire Fowler wrote and published the book, *A Home for All: A New, Cheap, Convenient and Superior Mode of Building*, which described the benefits of an octagon home. Within the manuscript he noted not only the practical how-to build the home but also his personal views on domesticity.

According to Fowler, "[The Octagon house] delineates a new mode of inclosing public edifices and private residences, far better, every way, and several hundred per cent, cheaper, than any other; and will enable the poor but ingenious man to erect a comfortable dwelling at a trifling cost..."

He believed that the optimal shape for a home for efficiency and ease of living was the sphere. While spheres were impractical to build, the octagon was the next best shape. In his book he lays out his argument for the geometrical and mathematical superiority of an octagon shape versus a square or rectangular shaped home. He also argues for the use of on-site materials, namely gravel to reduce building expenses.

An octagon design allowed for central heating (a furnace in the basement with a central chimney ascending in the middle of the home) and more light throughout the home as the angled windows would continually capture the daylight. The design would eliminate the dead space of hallways as each of the rooms radiated from the center and could be easily accessed.

Fowler's proposed octagon house and subsequent gravel/concrete construction material would allow for ventilation shafts to be built directly into the walls, bringing fresh air from the bottom and taking "stale air" away through the roof. He was a proponent of using glass, similar to the newly introduced Crystal Palace plate glass, for the roof. He also believed in cisterns in the roof which would provide water to the upstairs rooms, thus allowing for indoor plumbing. He described how to filter the water using sand and activated charcoal. Because of the shape of the individual rooms, triangular-shaped closets could be erected in each room, a rare feature at the time.

He was an advocate for every household member to have his/her own room especially children and for the home to have first floor guest rooms. In addition, "most desirable, in every really good house, is a playroom for children, a gymnastic room for females, and a dancing room."

Fowler used his own octagon home in Fishkill, NY to exemplify his building features. The home was quite large four stories and allegedly 100 rooms (reception rooms, two gymnasiums, dumb waiters, speaking tubes for inter-house communication, solarium). Sadly, due to debts and the sale of the property, the home was eventually condemned and demolished approximately forty years after it was built.

continued on next page



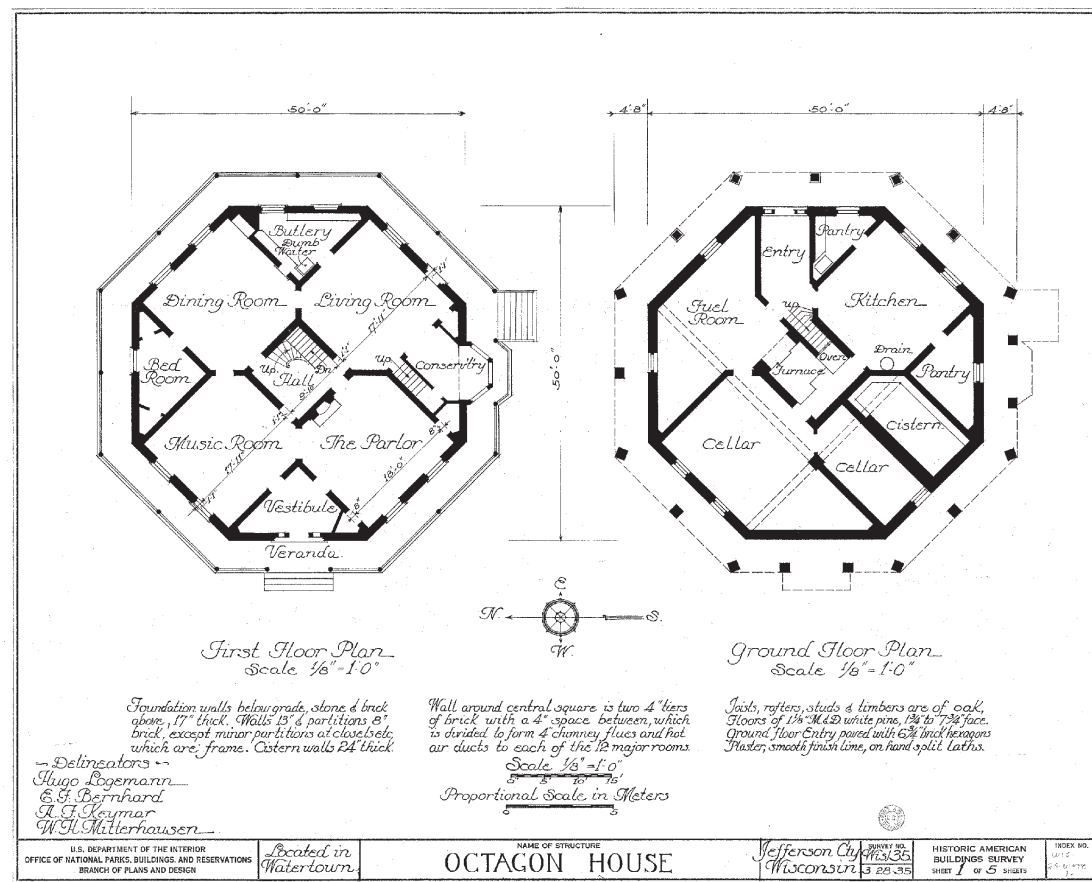
RESIDENCE OF O. S. FOWLER, FISHKILL, N. Y.

Fowler home, Fishkill, NY.

Yet Fowler's octagon idea captured the imagination of the American public in the 1850's. The book went into nine editions and inspired not only thousands of octagon houses to be built in the Midwest, East Coast and Canada but also the building of schools, churches, barns, factories as well as octagon-shaped gazebos and bandstands.

Here in the Village we have an octagon house at 27 South Fair Street. While there have been modifications since its original build, one can still see the original shape and imagine Mr. Fowler's approval.

As he wrote in the introduction to his book, a home should be "an abode for life, enjoyment and development." Of course, the best abode, according to him, would be an octagon one. ❖



First Floor Plan
Scale 1/8" = 1'-0"

Ground Floor Plan
Scale 1/8" = 1'-0"

Foundation walls below grade, stone & brick above, 17" thick. Walls 8" partitions 8" brick, except minor partitions at close beds, which are 4" frames. Cistern walls 24" thick.

Wall around central square is two 4" tiers of brick with a 4" space between, which is divided to form 4 chimney flues and hot air ducts to each of the 12 major rooms.

Joist, rafters, studs & timbers are of oak. Floors of 1 1/2" x 4" white pine, 1 1/2" to 7/8" face. Ground floor Entry paved with 6" x 6" brick hexagons. Plaster, smooth finish lime, on hand split lath.

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November Days

A POEM BY FREDERICK FULLERTON

Many people view November mostly mired in gloom punctuated by fog and rain when darkness conquers light

Fall's prismatic splendor now past mighty oaks stand bare and exposed wind drops their foliage dead and muted as a carpet on frozen ground

This odd between-season purgatory wintry cold seesaws with mild days whether balmy or snowing, dressing right is a tricky wardrobe challenge

Burdened under the murk some days magically escape when the sun grins brightly above in a sparkling cerulean sky

Life mimics the seasons you emerge in one but then fade to disappear in another with no clue what follows.



The Bridge

Newspaper of the
Pawtuxet Village Association



Fall 2023

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The Bridge is the official publication of the Pawtuxet Village Association and serves to communicate local news and information, and to record new and old history of Pawtuxet Village and its residents.

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Lots of creative, clever scarecrows for Halloween were seen around the Village this past October!



Photos: Gene Whalen

Christmas in Pawtuxet



Photo by Jim Turner

**Join us for the 44th Annual
 Christmas in Pawtuxet
 Sunday, December 10th at 4:00 p.m.**

Join us this year as we start off our holiday at Trinity Church with an Ecumenical Service—everyone is welcome! We'll then gather outside to form the procession led by the Pawtuxet Rangers to Pawtuxet Park for the lighting of the tree. Bring your lanterns, flashlights, and singing voices as we march through the Village.

Ecumenical Service - 4:00 p.m.

at Trinity Episcopal Church, Ocean Avenue (all are welcome!)
Also streaming live on Facebook

Procession of the Pawtuxet Rangers - 4:45 p.m.

Lighting of the big tree in Pawtuxet Park - 5:00 p.m.

Join the Rangers for the firing of the cannon, the Victorian Singers as they lead us in songs, and join your neighbors for some holiday cheer!

Contact us for more information:
pawtuxetvillageassociation@gmail.com

