

NEWSLETTER

JULY, 2018

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Elections were held at the Arnold House on June 16th.

President: Felicia Gardella

Vice President: Henry A.L. Brown

Treasurer: Bob Chorney

Secretary: Pegee Malcolm

Board Members: Ron Barnes, Cindy Corkum, Ken Gilbert, Roberta Humble, Trish Woodard

We are all looking forward to another successful year.

TEXTILE INVENTORY

Our inventory is almost complete. In the course of going through 63 storage boxes we came across these items of interest.



This is a WW I uniform once worn by Judy Jencks great grandfather.



This is the hat that went with the uniform.



These are wool trousers from a naval uniform. Donor unknown.

We will continue to highlight items of interest from our various collections in future newsletters.

MEMORIAL BRICKS

We are again accepting orders for Memorial Bricks. We need a minimum number to place an order. See below for an application. The small bricks are \$50 and the large bricks are \$75. Fill out the application and return it with your payment to our address above.

FUND RAISER

WINE TASTING AND VINEYARD TOUR Thursday July 26th at 6 pm [rain date August 2].

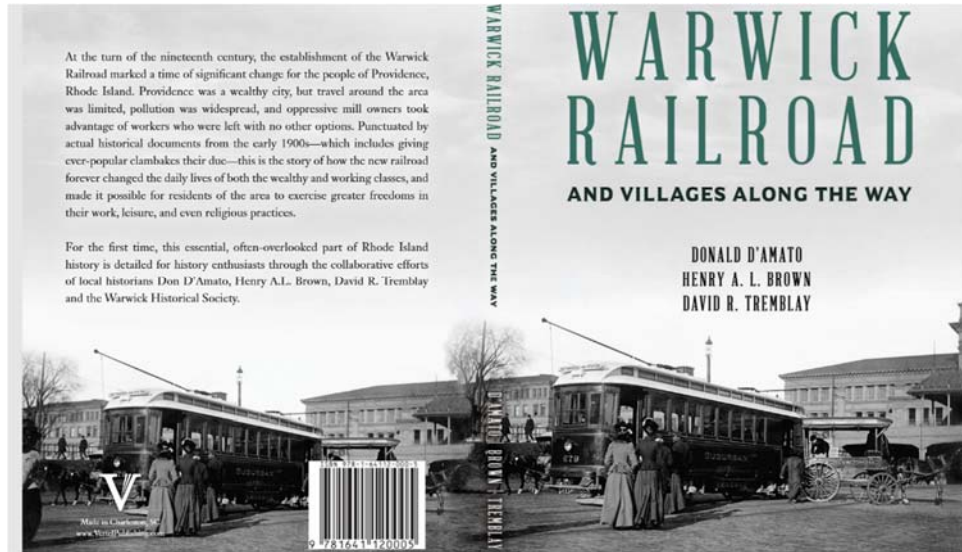
VERDE VINEYARDS 50 Hopkins Rd Johnston Go to www.verdevineyardsri.com for further information about the vineyard. Everyone is welcome. Space is limited so you must make a reservation and send your payment of \$25. per person to our address above to save your place. Light refreshments will be served.

MEMBERSHIPS

Our thanks to members who have paid their dues. We appreciate your support for the fiscal year beginning July 1st.

RAILROAD BOOK

We still have copies available at Arnold House.

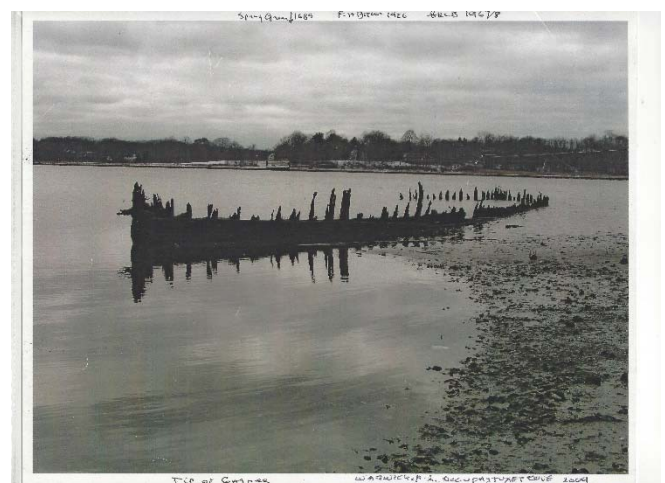


WARWICK'S BARGES

In response to recent interest in the sunken barge seen by a drone off of Oakland Beach and posted on facebook see Henry Brown's account of the barges of Gaspee Point below. There was another barge in Oakland Beach in the 40's in Warwick Cove off of Sheffield St that this editor remembers seeing and being chased off by a concerned parent. The photo at the right is the one off of Greene's Island



This scene of Oakland Beach features an abandoned barge which rested in the water for years. Photographer Ted Pickering says the city fought with the barge's owner for years to have the old vessel removed. Only court intervention got the barge out of the water, he recalls.



COAL BARGES AT GASPEE POINT

A question often posed to me: Is this the wreck of the HMS GASPEE?

Off the shore of the Gaspee Point peninsular at the foot of Namquid Drive is the skeletal remains of a wooden ship, adjacent to the shore, exposed at a moon low tide. [a wonderful place to catch blue crabs & stripe bass in the summer and a natural blind for duck hunting]. To the south east some 2000 feet is another barge, the bow, partially exposed lying buried in the sandy beach of what was Greene's Island. The island formerly owned by Surgeon ^{Dorset's ship 1759 - 1658 - D. W. ...} John Greene [purchased from Narragansett sachem Miantonomo October 1642] . Surveyed by Benjamin West in 1783 it contained 13+ acres, extending far into Narragansett Bay, for the new owner the wealthy Providence merchant, John Brown--- known as the ring leader who burned the HMS Gaspee in June 1772. The island embraced an area of 13 acres, but by yearly erosion was reduced to 5 acres of upland meadow, barren and sandy, as a survey revealed in 1898 by my great uncle Charles Francis¹ brother of the owner his sister Alice Francis Brown² my grandmother.

The inland shore facing Coles's farm on Occupastuxet Cove contained a small inlet where the barge came to rest about 84 years ago.

As World War 1 (1914-1918) was winding down the city Providence witnessed an extremely cold period. During the winter of 1917-8 Narragansett Bay was frozen

¹ Charles Francis son of Charles Willing and Eulalie (McGuire) Francis, born St Louis, Missouri 1868. Noting the erosion of the island in 1889 he spoke to his sister expressing his concerns of seasonal island washing. He made some proposal to slow the erosion whereupon she is alleged to have said---"well Charlie we will be long gone so we aren't going to worry our selves". He purchased and planted locust trees to reduce the erosion.

² Alice Francis daughter of Charles Willing and Eulalie (McGuire) Francis, born Saint Louis, Missouri 1867. Adopted by their first cousin's Elizabeth and Sally Francis daughters of the late Governor John Brown and Elizabeth Francis in 1874.

6 Feb 26
1869
D Dec 2, 1936

6 1571 Aug 1
D Eddy 1939

solid to Newport thereby closing Narragansett Bay to the shipments of coal so necessary for industry and home owners, furthermore German submarines continue to take a dreadful toll of USA shipping. To off set the losses of ships the United States Government war work began with the construction by Bethlehem Shipbuilding Corporation of a fleet of ocean-going wooden vessels known as "Victory" ships. The first one was delivered to Field's Point to be outfitted for service was May 20, 1918.

The European conflict came to an end on November 11, 1918. The construction of a fleet of wooden ship came to an abrupt end. Field's Point in Providence had outfitted a number of ships that lay at anchor-----coal was no longer a distressed commodity----the "victory" fleet became surplus property and purchased for the price of scrap metal. Once stripped the barges became a liability to its owners. By 1924-5 several of the victory wooden ships were moved down river from there anchorage in the upper river to Occupastuxet Cove and run up into the shoal water of the "High Banks" [Gaspee Point] at Spring Green farm and one into the fish hook inlet of Greene's Island-----abandoned. Within a few years the ships were occupied by drifters-----the barges dog house became a summer residence. The barge adjacent to the peninsular had a long wooden plank allowing the resident to have newspaper delivery as related to me by Tom Campbell [World War 2 U. S. army Air Force captain] a former paper boy. On the evening in early December 1941 my brother Francis & I watched the ship burn to the waterline. We heard the barge was torched by irate neighbors.

The grounded barge at the shoals of Greene's Island was burned by "the toughs living at Mark Rock" on the evening of July 3, 1935-----Independence day July 4th was celebrated in grand fashion. Whispers of smoke continue for days. I being a small boy yet recall standing with my father in the meadow over looking the cove viewing the scene of the burning.

During the summers we often rowed or sailed out to Greene's Island fishing for crabs or catching mummy chogs. Walking bare foot on the sunken barge was hazardous as an enormous coil of rusting cable with sharp frayed cable ends were an exposed hazard. Storms and hurricanes buried the barge with sand for 40 years now slowly revealed today as erosion uncovers the rotting shell.

As the island today only a tiny fraction of its past has extensive mud flat that were home to the finest soft shell clams and conch in upper Narragansett Bay. An old time clammer Harry Austin related to me of digging 100's of bushels of clams with his father for the Rocky Point Shore Amusement Park.

Henry A. L. Brown

Spring Green farm 2008

