

Johnston Historical Society

Historical Notes

Volume VI #2 November 1990

Pat Macari, Vice President

Lou McGowan, Editor
Bob Burford, Assist.

THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL, THURSDAY,
APRIL 30, 1925

KING OBSERVATION TOWER IS BURNED

Neutaconkanut Hill Structure Ruined by
Spectacular Afternoon Blaze

VANDAL BLAMED FOR FIRE

Firemen Called by Three Boxes Are Powerless
to Fight Flames Because of Lack of Water.
Cupola Collapses

The King observation tower on the crest of Neutaconkanut hill at the Providence-Johnston boundary was ruined by fire yesterday afternoon, the blaze undoubtedly being of incendiary origin. With no water available, the firemen responding to alarms from three boxes in the community had to stand by and watch the destruction of the building.

The observatory was erected by the late Abbey King, about a dozen years ago, as a memorial to the King family, one of the oldest in that section. It was constructed of cement and stood about 60 feet high on the crest of the hill, one of the highest in the State.

Its commanding position attracted much attention, and when the fire broke through the roof yesterday afternoon the flames and smoke could be seen for miles around. While the walls were of cement, there was considerable woodwork inside. The cupola had a wooden roof and the walls were of wood with a plaster covering. At the height of the fire, the roof and the cupola collapsed. The fall was immediately followed by an unusually heavy black smoke that rolled to the westward in great volumes.

Immediately following the alarm from box 497, one was received from box 48, Killingly street and Sun-set avenue. Battalion Chief Dyer responded with second alarm companies and went to the top of the hill, but they returned to their stations immediately. A third alarm was sounded from box 475, Daniel avenue and Ethan street. Three times apparatus went through Olneyville business centre and the siren giving warnings of their approach aroused the locality.

continued page 9

KING MEMORIAL OBSERVATORY, BURNS AT NEUTACONKANUT PARK

Incendiary Fire Yesterday Afternoon Destroys Tower
on Crest of Neutaconkanut Hill at the Providence-
Johnston Boundary, and Causes Alarms from Three
Boxes in This City. Firemen Without Water Unable
to Check Flames.

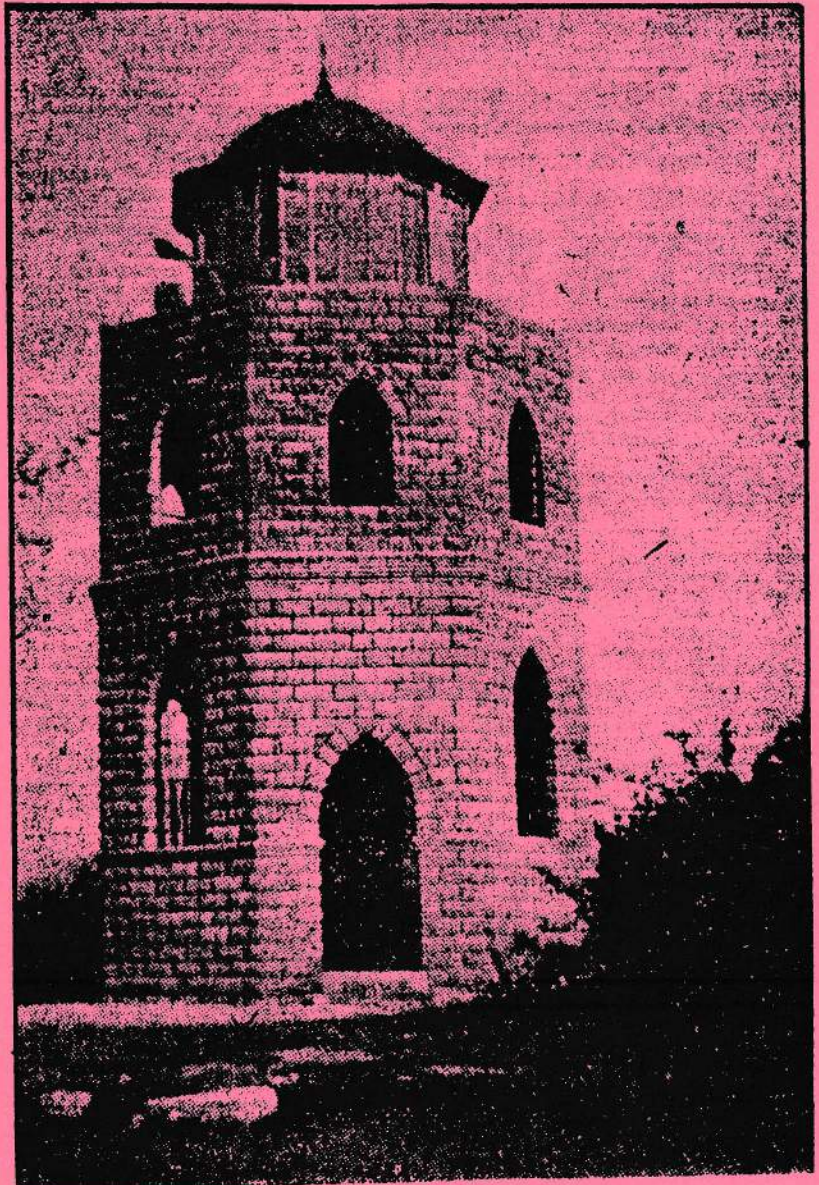


**Table of Contents from Back Issues
of**

**Johnston Historical Society
Historical Notes**

1984 - 1990

I #1 (Sept 1984) [p.1-4] Activities of Society: Farnum House deeded to Society; flea market, Thanksgiving dinner, and Christmas party plans - Oak Swamp Dam - Deacon Abel Thornton house - Olneyville Annex, 1898 - Caesarville, a forgotten village.

I #2 (Jan 1985) [p.5-10] Mohr Libr'y new books - Hughesdale Flood (JB reprint of 5/15/1865) - Four genealogical pages of Dr. Moses Mowry's DayBook transcribed - Graniteville's old water system - Israel Angell, Revolutionary War officer - William A. Carroll, first police chief.

I#3 (Mar 1985) p.11-16 Gen. Zenas Bliss, Civil War hero - early schools - Sampson Army's pond - Powdermill TP - WWI street names - Annex - "Buried Treasure in Your Back Yard" (archaeology) - Graniteville Baptist mss transcription - Society News

I #4 (May 1985) p.17-22 Mathewson farm w/ photo - Frog City streets & Angelico Pezzullo - Zenas Bliss bibliog. - Chart of Representatives to General Assembly, 1759-1779 - Hipses Rock - Society News.

I #5 (Jul 1985) p.23-28 Gunpowder Mill revisited - Mathewson cemetery - Streets named for Italian kings: Vittorio Emanuel & Umberto Primo - Town House - Thornton Fire Dept. - High School 1st graduating class, 1963 - JHS Plaqued Houses list - Schools 1880-1909 w/ photo - Gov. King's birthplace - Society News.

II #1 (Sep 1985) p.1-4 National Register of Historic Places list - R.I. Heritage Preservation Bond - Barker-Chadsey in British Hosiery mill - Gallows Bridge - Kimball Reservoir - Society News - Schools & Superintendents.

II #2 (Nov 1985) p.5-12 Thornton-LaFazia House - Graniteville Fire Station - R.I. Heritage Preservation Bond - First Town Clerk: Thomas Owens - "Death & Funerary Art in New England" - Oliver Wendell Holmes & The Johnston Elm Tree - William Gill & Pocasset Worsted Mill (photo) - Annexation - Society News.

II #3 (Jan 1986) p.13-18 Teasers: Post Offices; Pocasset Worsted; First High School - Daniel Thornton's genealogy - Place Names in Lippincott 1880 Gazetteer - Thornton-LaFazia house research - Society News.

II #4 (Mar 1986) p.19-28 Simmonsville Flood, 1840 & Victims (cemetery sites) - Hartford Pike stagecoach - Society News - Fire in Thornton - Teasers: The Fenner Stand, Plainfield St.; three destroyed churches (photos); Horatio Angell and Ochee Spring soapstone quarry - INDEX to "Newsletter" Volume I.

II #5 (May 1986) p.29-34 An Old Church (Chapel of the Good Shepherd, Brown Ave) - Hughesdale Industrial Plat (19th Cent. dams & mills) - Graniteville School - 1780 Warrant for Town Meeting - Society News - Teasers: Hartford Pike tollbooth; Henry D. Sharpe & Clemence-Irons House (SPNEA).

II #6 (Jul 1986) p.35-40 "Grand Army of the Republic Highway" (US Rt.6) - Society News & President's Letter - Teasers: Rush City; cricket fields - Letter-to- the-editor - Civil War Veterans list - Manton parade c.1935 (3 labeled photos).

III #1 (Sep 1986) p.1-4 Brown Family - "Grand Army Highway Revisited" (50th anniversary ceremony) - Seven-Mile Line - Iron Rolling & Slitting Mill - Society News - Triptown - Kelley/Kiley/White House - Judge Dunn Building update.

III #2 (Nov 1986) p.5-8 In Memorium: John Nanni - Providence & Danielson RR - Society News - Tar Bridge - Rev. Abel Thornton.

III #3 (Jan 1987) p.9-14 Upon Johnston's Hills (pt.I), reprint from newspaper JB 7/27/1890 - Merino - Railroads & Trolley Lines - "Balanced Rock" - Hanton City, Smithfield's lost village - Book Review of Stagecoach East.... (O.W.Holmes, 1983) with bibliog. of stagecoach cites.

III#4 (Mar 1987) p.15-20 Upon Johnston's Hills (pt.II), reprint of newspaper JB 7/27/1890 - Gen. Marquis de Lafayette - Morgan Mills - Town Halls - Streets - "Tradition and an Old Time Feast" (Our Lady of Grace Church) - G.A.R. Highway - William H. Mathewson.



III #5 (May 1987) p.21-8 Upon Johnston's Hills (pt.III), reprint of newspaper JB 7/27/1890 - Society News: demonstration of antique clothing, Cable TV course - "Walking Along the Old P&D" (Providence & Danielson railroad) - Bradford Soap - Driftways - Plant Preservation (RI Wild Plant Society) - Streets Named for Women

III #6 (Jul 1987) p.29-34 Forgotten Glory of Fountain Spring (village) - P&D Railroad: 1920 - Col. Christopher Harris in French & Indian Wars - Society News.

IV #1 (Sep 1987) p.1-4 Revolutionary War Gun Powder Mill in Johnston near Centerdale - "Gunpowder", manufacturing methods and history reprinted from The Great Industries... (1872).

IV #2 (Nov 1987) p.5-12 "Old Johnston Meeting Houses" (Samuel Winsor and the Baptists) - Norfolk Latch - James Arnold original mss. "Vital Records" - Belknap genealogy - Christopher Harris genealogy - Society News: calendar; Farnum-Angell House restoration.

IV #3 (Jan 1988) p.13-18 "A Trip Down Memory Lane" (Our Lady of Grace Church) - William Almy Pirce - Pocasset Falls - Winsor's Ice Cream - Farnum/Angell House - In Memoriam: Exilda Pearl Steppo - 18th Cent. Daniel Thornton House (aka Thornton-LaFazia) moved to Greenville, Darke Co., Ohio - More Col. Christopher Harris notes.

IV #4 - #5 - #6 NOT PUBLISHED

V #1 (Sep 1989) p.1-6 "The Car-Line: Buses & Carts" (Manton) - "Captain Arthur Fenner", reprint from History of the Fenner Family (1908) - Society News: State of JHS; Farnum/Angell headquarters house restoration progress.

V #2 (Nov 1989) p.7-12 "Italian Farmers" reprint of JB 10/18/1891 (pt.1 of 2) - Hiram Kimball Jr. - Society News.

V#3 (Jan 1990) p.13-16 "Italian Farmers" reprint of JB 10/18/1891 (pt.2 of 2) - Letter-to-the editor: Dr. Jeremiah Jackson Cole's lap desk.

V #4 (Mar 1990) p.17-24 Moses Mowry's medical DayBook (pt.1 of 3): transcribed excerpts, 1812-13; description of the physical manuscript - "Indoor Bocchia Court" - Farnum/Angell House restoration

V #5 (May 1990) p.25-28 Moses Mowry's medical DayBook (pt.2 of 3): analysis - Clemence-Irons House repair work.

V #6 (Jul 1990) p.29-36 Moses Mowry's medical DayBook (pt.3 of 3): dictionary of medicines - Streets: Presidentials & other notables - Book Review: The Comfortable House (1986).



King Fire (continued from page 7)

The fire was seen from Union avenue and Ethel street at 3 o'clock and someone sent in an alarm from box 497. The firemen going to the box found they were more than a mile away from the scene of the fire and when Hose Company 19, the first to arrive, reached the top of the hill by a circuitous route over Sunset avenue, the blaze had reached such proportion that nothing could be accomplished with chemicals. Battalion Chief McDonald followed with other pieces of apparatus, but when the walls cracked and it seemed that the structure was about to collapse, he ordered his men away. They extinguished a grass fire that resulted.

The King observatory was at one time used considerably by sightseers who visited Neutaconkanut hill, from which point a fine view of the entire city and a great part of the State may be had. Rowdies, however, in the last few years, had severely defaced the structure and committed various nuisances, spoiling the tower for the use for which it was erected. It stood about 20 feet west of the boundary in Johnston and was on the land donated to the city of Providence by Miss Abbey King, to become city property for park purposes upon the death of the present heir, John Hendricks. The fire burned for two hours and now only the cement walls stand, the interior containing a mass of debris.

We're back!
- L. H. M.
11/10/92

Honey, did you remember to renew our membership in the Johnston Historical Society? I'd hate to miss the next issue of their Historical Notes !

Johnston Directory, 1893-1894

JAMES CRAWSHAW,

— **FLORIST.** —

Cut Flowers and Floral Work a Specialty.

ALSO SEEDS, BULBS, ETC.

Special Attention given to Laying Out and Taking Care of Lawns.

Store, **TABERNACLE BUILDING,**

OLNEYVILLE SQ.,

Greenhouses, 243 PLAINFIELD ST.,

JOHNSTON, R. I.

ALMY BROS.,

✦ Florists ✦

Roses and Cut Flowers

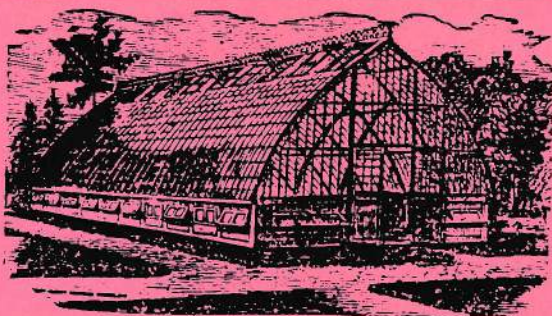
A Specialty.

UPPER SIMMONSVILLE

Johnston, R. I.

P. O. Address Box 61.

Prov., R. I.



Johnston Historical Society
101 Putnam Avenue
Johnston, R. I. 02919

