

The Historian

BURRILLVILLE HISTORICAL & PRESERVATION SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2010

1895 Murder at a Burrillville Roadhouse

"1895 Murder at a Burrillville Roadhouse" was a special program at the October meeting presented by Betty Mencucci and a special guest. To begin the program, Betty gave a slideshow about the life of Jim Taylor, the owner of a roadhouse on the corner of East Ironstone Road and Buxton Street. This man led an interesting life: working in a cotton mill at age 6; traveling with a circus; learning scythe-making in Burrillville; going west during the Gold Rush; returning home with a small fortune and finally going into the saloon business, where he was constantly at odds with authorities for selling alcohol illegally.

Following the slideshow, Betty left the

building to find the special guest. While she was gone, Kerry and Ashley Hopkins entertained the



Betty Mencucci re-enacting the part of Maggie McNulty.

audience with Halloween jokes and stories. Then the lights were turned off and a black shadowy figure knocked at the back door and entered with a lantern. It was a woman dressed in black saying that she was Maggie McNulty and had come from another time and another place to tell the story of the murder. She gave a riveting account of events leading up to the killing and the dreadful night the murder took place. It was an eyewitness account told in her own words. When she arrived, she claimed that she could tell the story better than anybody because, "I was there!"

President's Message

Our two annual fundraising events (Yard Sale and Holiday Bazaar) were successful this year raising over \$2000. This would not have been possible without the generosity of Ken Hopkins of Affordable Tent Rentals. He set up a large tent on the front lawn for the Yard Sale and also let us borrow 30 tables. There was a lot of stuff put on all those tables

and the volunteers were greatly appreciated.

We happily report that the Society has received an Ocean State grant in the amount of \$1500 to continue its cemetery work.

If you have ideas for future programs, activities or fundraising, please contact me.

Nancy Greene will serve as one of our Directors. Thanks, Nancy, for volunteering.

Betty Mencucci

Upcoming Meetings/Events

Jan. 25 - 7:00 p.m. Linda Straube will talk about her book titled, "Remember Me – True Stories of a Haunted New England Town."

Feb. 22 – 7:00 p.m. TBA
(look for Bargain Buyer ad)

Mar. 22 - Lost Villages of Scituate
presented by Ray Wolf, 7:00 p.m.
Election of officers

April 26 - Old films of Spring Lake

BH&PS at the Pumpkin Festival

BH&PS had a booth at the Downtown Pascoag Pumpkin Festival to create awareness about our organization. Denice Mitchell cleverly designed a gravestone costume that attracted much attention and conversation about our neglected cemeteries. Besides having fun, we received donations for the Cemetery Fund and raised a little money selling Halloween desserts.



Betty Mencucci, in devil costume and Denice Mitchell in gravestone costume at the Downtown Pascoag Pumpkin Festival.

Rhode Island Foundation Joseph O'Neil Ott Fund Grant

Thanks to a small grant of \$120 we were able to purchase protective mylar sleeves and an archival box to house some very old documents dating back to the 1700s. The name Eber Smith appears on some of the documents when he was Justice of the Peace for the town. Also mentioned is John Smith, son of Benjamin. There is also testimony from Phidelia Smith about the 1831 murders of John Burk and Hannah Frank.

Ocean State Power Grant

BH&PS will be receiving a \$1500 grant from Ocean State Power to purchase new cemetery signs and posts. It will also be used to make gravestone repairs and to fix a cemetery fence.

Passing of Three BH&PS Members

With heavy hearts we report the passing of three of our members. Donald Mehrrens, former BH&PS vice-president died Sept 19, 2010. He was the Building Committee Chairman when the Society acquired the Bridgeton School and was instrumental in raising money and overseeing renovations. Besides belonging to the Historical Society, he was also a member of the Lions Club, the Knights of Columbus, the Republican Town Committee and the Harrisville Fire District. He also served as Emergency Management Director for 13 years. Prior to his service in Burrillville, he served in the military for 36 years.



On October 4th Jennie Saletnik, a longtime member, passed away at the age of 91. She was a 1937 graduate of Burrillville High School and operated Jennie's Beauty Shop in Providence from 1944 to 1989. She was a former member of the Board of Directors of the Pascoag Ladies Free Public Library as well as numerous other organizations. She will be sorely missed by her sister Elza as well as all who knew her.

And just recently, on December 26th we sadly report the passing of Geoff Gaebe, owner of Addieville East Farm in Mapleville. His 1,000-acre Game Preserve has drawn international attention as a premier hunting, fishing and sporting clay facility. He was an advocate of land conservation and was interested in the history of his farm. In the late 1800s his land was a large dairy farm owned by Jason Olney. He also generously donated to BH&PS.



Rehabilitation of Pascoag Bridge No. 198

R.I.D.O.T. plans to repair the bridge on High Street near CVS. Previous plans called for the removal of the top 18" of masonry in the sidewalls in order to install a new concrete slab deck. It was determined that this would adversely affect the historic nature of this bridge. They now propose, instead of the masonry removal, to install a series of 1" diameter stainless steel anchors into the arches to strengthen the structure.

Donations

Robert G. Huckins from Escondido, CA – 3 old Nasonville bottles

Meredith Smith and Ann Prokopowicz - Stillwater News: 1950, 1953, 1957, 1958

Nancy Prendergast – letters, financial papers pertaining to the Prendergast Mill and house

Shirley Richard – 2 old Christmas candy boxes

Charlene Brisette– collection of tax books

Pat and Bill Mageau– two Bridgeton School photos

Ray Breault let us scan an old photo of the John Eddy house on Reservoir Road

The Brothers – photo of the Hunter White house

Eunice Sayles Escoffrey – 2 photocopies of school pictures; Bridgeton and Pascoag Grammar

NEW ACQUISITION – ebay purchase

Laurel Hill Methodist Church poster saying that the church was in debt \$350 after building a new vestry at a cost of \$1500 and also for installing a Barstow Furnace in the basement to heat the church. It advertised, “There’s to be an OYSTER SUPPER in this church (M. E. Church, Laurel Hill) on SATURDAY EVENING, November 21, 1874 where you may buy Oysters, cooked or raw, Ice Cream, Cake, Candy and a variety of Useful and Fancy Articles. Admission 10 Cents. The proceeds to be devoted towards paying that \$350.”

BH&PS earns money from DINO'S and IGA slips; also Ink Cartridges!

BH&PS receives a percentage of the total. Drop them off at the Jesse M. Smith Library, mail them or bring them to a meeting. Proceeds are used to preserve our archives! Remember, we are also collecting used ink and toner cartridges.

Fall Cemetery Cleaning

The BH&PS Cemetery Committee has been working hard this fall cleaning several cemeteries. The first cemetery cleaned was #78 on Joslin Road in Glendale. During the cleaning we unearthed about 12 fallen and buried gravestones. Next, the group tackled #17 on Reservoir Road in Pascoag and spent several mornings and afternoons there. This is a large cemetery with several separate fenced-in plots. It was very overgrown, requiring a brush cutter and many human “brush haulers.” About 10 gravestones were discovered buried deep in the leaf litter. This cemetery has two inscribed fieldstones which are still readable. The Watermans tackled #18, the Lackey Lot on Jackson Schoolhouse Road. A large pine tree had snapped off in a windstorm and fallen into this cemetery miraculously missing every gravestone.



Inscribed fieldstone for Israel Sayles
Cemetery #17



Cemetery #18, the Lackey Lot

1895 MURDER at a BURRILLVILLE ROADHOUSE

by Betty Mencucci



Jim Taylor's roadhouse as it looks today

A woman by the name of Maggie McNulty was the reason behind the problem at Jim Taylor's roadhouse. She was a young woman who had worked at a number of bordellos including Jim Taylor's roadhouse, but then drifted into Providence and worked in an Armenian house of ill fame owned by Paul Thompson on 197 North Main Street. They loved Maggie because she had an attractive personality and was a big money-maker. Eventually Maggie wanted to leave, and

Jim Taylor's wife went to Providence to bring her back. When Maggie told Paul she wanted to leave, he threatened to kill her. The two women left in a hurry on the 8 P.M. train from Providence to Millville, MA; from there they hired a team to Jim's roadhouse. Little did they know that 5 Armenians had been sent to follow them to bring Maggie back or kill her. The Armenians arrived at Jim Taylor's place that evening and asked for liquor. Jim Taylor served them. Then they began to act hostile and asked Jim to bring the girls downstairs. Jim told them he didn't have any girls. They saw Maggie's hat on a chair and demanded that Jim turn the girl over to them. Jim refused. The mood of the gang became ugly and very threatening. Suddenly the Armenians flashed out knives and revolvers and one of them said, "Me kill you." One of them thrust a revolver into Jim's face and pulled the trigger, but the weapon failed to fire. As he repeatedly pulled the trigger, Jim managed to step backwards until he could grab a repeating rifle he kept at the bar. Jim fired the weapon as the Armenian lunged across the bar with a large knife. The bullet struck the Armenian in the throat and he crashed to the floor. Jim tried to shoot the others, but his weapon failed to fire a second time. The Armenians ran out of the building. Immediately, Jim sent for the coroner and the sheriff and proceeded to barricade the door.

When the sheriff arrived, he placed everyone under arrest until he could figure out what had happened. Dr. Wilcox examined the Armenian that had been shot. His name was Sampod Hintian. He was lying in a pool of blood on top of his gun, (the one that failed to go off). A foot-long double edged knife was discovered near him. He was still alive even though the bullet had gone through his throat, smashing vertebrae and exiting through the back of his neck. The doctor could do nothing for him and left him where he was. The following night some of his Armenian friends came to Jim's place and peeked in the windows and banged on the door wanting to see their friend before he died. Later, a woman showed up at Jim's place threatening to kill Maggie. She screamed, "Maggie McNulty, you were to blame for my man being killed! Come out here and there'll be a double murder!" No one was allowed to enter. Finally on Sunday morning at 2:00 a.m. Sampod Hintian died; he had lived 27 hours after the shooting. His body was brought to Harrisville where the inquest was held; the officials determined that Jim had acted in self defense.

After that there was talk that the Armenians wanted revenge and would kill Jim Taylor. About a month later, Jim auctioned off his farm and personal property and moved. Some say it wasn't the threats that made him sell out and move. They said he was getting tired of the roadhouse business and this incident made him act more quickly. In Jim's own words, he said "I have got too old to stay up all night and laugh with every fool who thinks he is smart."

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