

HISTORICAL NOTES

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HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING TO BE HELD SATURDAY, JUNE 28, 2014 AT 11:00 A.M. AT THE UNION CHURCH. JOE BAINS WILL SPEAK ON "LOST PRUDENCE"



Bay Ave., looking north at the pavilion, probably around 1900. Walpole Lodge can be seen up the road, and the Wood's cottage is on the hill behind the bath houses.

The Clark and Wood Families at Prudence Park

By John C. Thresher

In the northern part of Prudence Park, two related families from Washington, D.C. built two houses on Bay Avenue at the intersection of Hereshoff [sic.] Street. According to Charles Maytum, William C. Wood's house was the first of the two, built in 1886 on the south corner, followed in 1887 by Wood's father-in-law, Reuben B. Clark, on the north corner, where Maguire's house is located today. In the few photographs I've seen, they appeared to be large 2 ½ -story buildings with dormers, with porches wrapping around the front and sides, and each with a unique turret or tower on the left front corner above the second story, their peak slightly higher than the peak of the roof of each house. Unfortunately, these houses were among the cottages at the northern part of the plat that burned to the ground in 1917.

Reuben B. Clark. Reuben Bacon Clark was born in May 1818, either in Massachusetts, or New Hampshire, depending on the source, but it appears he most likely was born in Townsend, Mass. His first cousin was Helen

(Bacon) Barrett, the wife of William Emerson Barrett, one of the founders of Prudence Park. Helen was the daughter of Reuben Bacon and Sarah Clark; Sarah's brother, Benjamin Ager Clark and his wife Martha Hosmer, were Reuben B. Clark's parents. Reuben moved to Washington, D.C. around 1845, and opened a grocery store. He married Margaret E. Thomas on December 26, 1848, and they had a daughter, Ida M. Clark, who was born in November 1849. A second daughter, Mary, was born December 26, 1850, but she was still a baby when she died on July 2 1852.

Margaret was a D.C. native who was born in 1823. She had inherited a slave, Rebecca Plowden, who was her housekeeper. Later, Arthur Plowden, Rebecca's son, was born about 1849, and Reuben inherited both by marriage. In 1862, Congress passed "An act for the release of certain persons held to service or labor in the District of Columbia." As a result, Reuben had petitioned the government for \$1,300 in compensation for their freedom. In 1870, Rebecca and Arthur were still employed as a domestic servant and a coachman, respectively, and living at the Clark's residence, along with another domestic servant.

Reuben's business "prospered and grew with the city," according to his obituary. He also invested in real estate, which probably accounted for a good portion of his wealth. The 1860 Census lists the value of his real estate at \$20,500 and his personal estate at \$13,000. In 1870, the Census showed these values at \$60,000 and \$20,000, respectively. Clark also held various positions in Washington, including D.C. jail commissioner, a director of Center Market Co., and a director of the Anacostia and Potomac Railroad.

Margaret died on September 19, 1873 at the age of 50. Reuben married for the second time on October 2, 1878, when he was 60 years old. He married Louise Maria Dinsmore, who was 25 years old and living in Walpole, N.H., the ceremony taking place in Walpole. Their son, Reuben B. Clark, Jr., was born on July 22, 1879, in Walpole, N.H. as well. This would explain why the name of the house on Prudence Island was "Walpole Lodge."

A photo taken almost a decade later appears to show Reuben, Louise, and a young Reuben on the porch of their house; the photo was labeled “Walpole Lodge” in one of the Williams’ family scrapbooks. Louise died on July 14, 1927 at the age of 74.



“Walpole Lodge,” probably in 1887, with (right to left) Reuben B. Clark, Louise, and their son, Reuben B., Jr.

Reuben was 62 years old in 1880, and by then he had retired from his business due to poor health. For about the last five years of his life, he spent most of the year on Prudence Island, only living in Washington during the winter. According to his obituary, he was suffering from an illness for several weeks before dying on Saturday, September 8, 1894, “surrounded by the members of his family, his wife, daughter and a son.”

Sometime after Reuben’s death, Robert B. Little, who owned the Crow’s Nest cottage, became the owner of Walpole Lodge. However, Little died on June 24, 1906, and by 1910, the house was listed as being owned by Oscar F. Lee. According to the U.S. Census, Lee was a brick and stone mason from Providence in 1880, a contractor in 1900, and he was self-employed in the real estate business by 1910. He was married to Ellen N. (Adams) Lee, and it appears they had no children. Oscar Lee died on April 20, 1915, at the age of 63. The property, which became a vacant lot after the fire in 1917, was listed as being owned by the estate and then the Trustee of Oscar F. Lee, until 1975, when it was conveyed to Miriam Pierce Lee Stam. Joe DiMeglio purchased the lot in 1982, and then sold it to John Cubellis in 1995, who then sold it to Joel and Jane Maguire in 1997, who then built their house (which was designed, if I recall correctly, by architect and Prudence Islander, Chris Curry).

William C. Wood. William Chester Wood was born in Providence in 1839, the son of Chester S. Wood a stone cutter, and Maria Jane (Hathaway) Wood. He served in the Civil War from May to August 1861 as a private in Company C of the First Rhode Island Infantry, and then in October, he was mustered in as a first lieutenant in Company K of the Fourth Rhode Island Infantry and promoted to captain one month later. He resigned in August 1862 and was honorably discharged by order.

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According to his obituary, he later served as paymaster in the west.

After the war, William ended up living in Washington, D.C., eventually becoming a patent attorney; his obituary stated that he “was considered the sage of the Patent Office.” In 1870, he was listed as a patent agent living with Charles F. Wood and his family (apparently no immediate relation, although it is unknown whether there was any distant relation between them as of this writing). Later that year, on October 7, he married Ida M. Clark, the daughter of Reuben B. and Margaret E. (Thomas) Clark.

William and Ida’s first son, Chester Clark Wood, was born in 1873. Not much information could be found about him, except that he died in Providence on September 11, 1895 and was buried at Grace Church Cemetery, on Elmwood Avenue.

William Reuben Clark Wood (who should be the subject of another article) was born on April 15, 1875. As a youth, W.R.C. Wood liked to sketch landscapes and similar scenes around his home, and even then he was praised by critics. He attended Cornell University from 1892 to 1895, studying naval architecture. He worked in that profession for nine years after he was graduated, before he decided to become a full-time artist. As of 1900, he was living in Brooklyn, N.Y. with his parents; William was employed as a patent attorney. W.R.C. Wood married Florence Hyman in New York City in 1902 (she was born between January and April 1883) and had three children: Chester Clark Wood, born July 5, 1903; William Reuben Clark Wood, born in mid- to late-1904; and Margaret Elizabeth Wood, born in 1912 or before January 12, 1913.

The Wood family moved to Baltimore, apparently in mid-1903: William C. became counsel for the Crown Cork and Seal Company, a fast growing company which by 1906 had factories producing bottle caps in Europe, Asia, and South America, in addition to Baltimore. W.R.C. Wood ended up becoming a well-known landscape and marine artist, who exhibited his works in Baltimore and other cities, including Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, New York, Hartford, Conn., and Worcester, Mass. Sadly, he only lived to age 40—he died on April 29, 1915, the result of influenza and pneumonia. William C. Wood died on March 18, 1916, at the age of 76, and he was buried at Arlington National Cemetery. His wife, Ida was buried there as well after she died in 1945, at age 95 or 96.

On Prudence, William C. Wood was a founding member of the Prudence Park Club, organized in 1886. Reuben B. Clark, and Gardner Taber Swarts, M.D., Wood’s nephew, were also among the founding members (Wood’s sister, Harriet, was married to Dr. Swarts’ father, Gardner Taber Swarts).

Apparently, William C. Wood’s house was much smaller originally than it appeared in several photographs taken around 1900: The property was listed in the Portsmouth Tax Books with a \$500 valuation through the

early 1890s. By 1895, Wood's house, now listed under Ida M. C. Wood, had a \$1,700 valuation, so the house was probably enlarged by then to the size shown in the photos. By 1906, the valuation dropped to \$1,200 (Clark's valuation was consistently listed at \$1,200 from 1887 through the 1910s). Further research is needed to determine why: perhaps the Woods owned a couple more lots than was shown when the lot numbers began to be listed in 1913, or there might have been another building on the property, removed later. Ida M. C. Wood owned the property, which was two vacant lots after 1917, through 1938. Her grandson, William R. C. Wood, owned the lots until 1952, when he conveyed them to Henry Cipriano. Cipriano was the owner through the 1960s, most likely until 1971, when Edgar and Marcy Dunbar purchased these lots. John and Lori Cubellis became the owners in 1985, and they built their house there soon afterward. They sold the house to Michael and Donna Conners in 1996, who sold it to Anthony Victoria in 2004.

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Historian's Corner

From The Prudence Island Beacon – July 23, 1932

Compiled and Edited by: Joe Bains

The news items below were painstakingly transcribed from the 7/23/32 edition of *The Prudence Island Beacon*. This appears to have been the last edition of the old Beacon ever published.

Prudence Park News

-Mr. and Mrs. Ernest A. Pape (Editor's Note: name possibly Page or Pope?) and family have opened up their cottage, the Aldersea, for the summer.

-U.S. Naval Reserve boats have been cruising around the Prudence Park shores for the last week. The sailors have been marking off courses for target practice. (Editor's Note: Courses for US Navy target practice at Prudence Park? Yikes!)

-Miss Cynthia Metzger, a resident of the French Cottage, is visiting her cousin, Miss Mary Tabor of Providence.

-Edward B. Williams, who has been staying with his mother, Mrs. Edward Williams, has gone to the R.O.T.C. camp as a student at Fort Ethan Allen, Vermont.

-Mrs. Arthur Brown is entertaining Nolten H. Bigelow of Providence for the week.

-Mrs. Ralph W. Eaton of Bristol Highlands was the recent guest of Mr. and Mrs. Aylsworth Brown.

-Mr. and Mrs. William Hill have returned to their home in Norfolk, Mass.

-Mr. and Mrs. Walcott Williams and daughter Mary Joan of Brooklyn, N.Y. were entertained by Mr. and Mrs. George Little over the weekend.

-Miss Evelyn Bartlett of Yonkers, N.Y. is visiting Mr. and Mrs. S. O. Yeames at their cottage.

"Horse Ruins Garden Party"

What would have been an enjoyable and attractive garden party at the home of Mr. A. Ellsworth Brown (Editor's note: probably Aylsworth Brown) last weekend was suddenly interrupted and eventually eradicated by the unexpected appearance of a horse owned by Mr. G. Little. Before the garden party had time to progress, the horse had consumed all vegetation in the vicinity; and of what was once full grown corn stalks only the stubs met the eye of the helpless host.

Prudence Island Fifty Years Ago. by Joe Bains

The year was 1964. President John F. Kennedy had been assassinated the previous November. The "Cold War" was at its height and American troops were being sent to a small country in Southeast Asia called Vietnam. Huntley, Brinkley and Cronkite were popular icons of

television news. Americans were listening to the sounds of the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, the Beach Boys and the Miracles.

The ferry Prudence II was in its third year of service operating out of Bristol, Rhode Island, with scheduled trips to Prudence Island five days a week until late May. There was no service on Tuesday or Thursday, except during the summer months. The service included stops at Homestead as well as Sandy Point. Stops at Hog Island were added during the summer, also.



The Garland Mansion was built ca. 1906.

In April, a terrible fire destroyed part of the Garland mansion as it was being readied to re-open as a summer camp for children, known as Ranch Island Camp. The fire caused between \$50,000 and \$75,000 in damage mostly to the center part of the mansion. Somehow, the camp managed to open on time, although on a limited scale. The center part of the mansion was never re-built and joined the growing list of "Lost Prudence."

Later that year, Charles G. Maytum published his magnum opus, *Paragraphs on Early Prudence Island*, in a very limited edition of 40 hard-bound copies. This was the first history of Prudence Island to be published. Although a second edition of about 300 copies was published in 1976, the book is much in demand, even today. Occasional copies of Mr. Maytum's book that show up in on-line auctions have sold for more than \$300.

As summer arrived at Prudence, Islanders anticipated the usual events and activities including swimming, fishing, clamming, and eating at the Sand Point Coffee Shop. During the course of the summer many Islanders enjoyed the Prudence Improvement Association's Chicken Barbeque, plus the annual boat trip to Rocky Point, the PIVFD Fireman's Ball, and the Homestead Plat Improvement Association's Ham & Bean Dinner, known to many folks just as the annual "Bean."

From the President

By Judi Foster

In keeping with the mission of the Historical Society to foster an appreciation and understanding of local island history, the 2014 museum season offers two major photographic displays covering "Lost Prudence" and

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"Prudence Park". These displays focus on the period from 1870 to 1950 and cover the establishment of island neighbor communities and recreation centers. The In 1874, the Prudence Land Company purchased 380 acres on the west shore for development and recreation. The land, referred to as Prudence Park, was plotted into house lots and a stone wharf built to accommodate arriving vacationers. Development of the east shore of the island began in the early 1900's. Owners of large tracts of land began dividing and selling their properties as small lots. The groups of people buying property on this side of the island were very diverse in origin and their settling was grouped into colonies that remain to the current time. The establishment of a ferry service from the east shore to Bristol aided the development of this area.

In addition to the museum displays, the Society is sponsoring a number of workshops and tours spanning genealogy research to historical perspective of various island neighborhoods. (see Table below for dates and times). Joe Bains will give a talk on "Lost Prudence" at our Annual Meeting to set the stage for the museum's major exhibit.

The Board of Directors thanks all of the islanders who have given of their time and support to make our history available. We hope to see you at the museum.

Workshop/Tour*	Presenter	Date	Time
Genealogy 101	Joyce Lower	Wed., July 9	3 to 5 pm
Prudence Park Tour	Shawen Williams	Sat., July 12	11 am to 12 pm
Homestead Tour	Joe Bains	Sat., July 19	11 am to 12 pm
Sand Point Tour	Joe Bains	Sat. August 2	11 am to 12 pm
Prudence Park – "Founders and Early Residents"	Donna Bains & John Thresher	Wed., August 6	3 to 5 pm
Genealogy (Intermediate)	Joyce Lower	Wed., August 13	3 to 5 pm

* Fee is \$5 for members & \$10 for non-members

Dues Reminder

Please take a moment to complete the enclosed 2013 PIHPS membership renewal form. Individual memberships are \$15. Family memberships are \$25. A Sponsor level membership is available for \$50. Your dues help to fund the Society's activities and programs. Please help us to preserve Prudence Island's rich history by returning the enclosed form along with your check today. Membership information is also available at our web site: www.prudencehistory.com.

2014

Prudence Island Historical & Preservation Society Membership

Mail to: PIHPS, P.O. Box 193, Prudence Island, R.I. 02872

Name & Name Of Family Members (if applicable)				
Email Address & addresses of family members (if applicable)				
Mailing Address	Main:			
Phone #	Island:		Winter:	
Circle Membership Category	Youth (12-18 yrs) \$5.00	Individual \$15.00	Family \$25.00	Sponsor \$50.00
Donation to Museum operation & maintenance	Amount \$ _____			
Volunteer Circle 1 or more	Museum Housekeeping	Museum Docent	Annual meeting preparations	
Total Amount	Amount enclosed \$ _____			

Thank You!

-----cut here for receipt-----

Keep this part for your records

-Receipt-

PIHPS, P.O. Box 193, Prudence Island, R.I. 02872

PIHPS registered under the name "Prudence Island Historical & Preservation Society" is a publicly-supported 501c3 organization. Contributions are tax-deductible.

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Date	Amount \$
For	