
HISTORICAL NOTES

Volume 17 Issue 1

JULY 2011

**HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING TO BE HELD
SATURDAY, JULY 30, 2011 AT 11:00 A.M. AT THE UNION CHURCH**

Saturday, July 30th,
2011 - 11:00 AM At
The Union Church
PIHPS Annual
Meeting

Join us for our Annual Meeting followed by a Celebration of the 1970s featuring period music, plus hotdogs & sodas for lunch

At 11:00 A.M., on Saturday, July 30th, PIHPS will hold a brief business meeting, including the election of officers and directors, an update on the progress at the new headquarters and museum, information on other Society activities, and a brief video presentation.

Immediately following the meeting a celebration focusing on the 1970s will take place outside, with hotdogs and sodas for lunch. Please join us for what promises to be an interesting and entertaining event. You will not want to miss it. Inside, on page 2, are a tentative agenda and some additional information. The Society also will display some recent additions to its collection at the meeting plus many photos from the 1970s.

FROM THE PRESIDENT



By Joe Bains

It has been another exciting year for our historical society with many activities, some completed and others ongoing. In November 2010, the Society received a grant from the Champlin Foundations that will help to fund the renovations needed at our new headquarters and museum. During the same time period, the Society conducted a fundraising campaign among our members and friends

within the greater Prudence Island Community which provided the matching funds needed for the Champlin grant that was awarded. We have been compiling photographs from the 1970s for the planned celebration at the annual meeting on July 30th. My sincere thanks go out to everyone who loaned or donated pictures for this event.

Over the winter, an additional printing of "Prudence Cooks Then & Now," was done. Copies of the cook book will be available at the Annual Meeting. Be sure to pick up a copy. See inside for more information.

I wish to express my thanks to those who planned, conducted, hosted, or participated in the Second Annual Progressive Dinner fundraiser, especially Ed & Mary Bishop, Dave & Sharon Homan, and Jim & Kathy Sohar. By all accounts, it was a great time for everyone who participated.

Helping Out

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There are many ways in which you can participate in our Society's activities, from visiting our web site to helping us collect and preserve island memorabilia. Also, you can donate old photos or other island related items, or lend them to the Historical Society to copy.

If you are interested in being active in our organization, let us know at the annual meeting, or e-mail us at: PIHPSociety@verizon.net.

We look forward to seeing you at the annual meeting and celebration on the 30th.

Annual Meeting – Saturday July 30th at the Union Church, 11 AM

Annual Meeting Agenda

- **Secretary's & Treasurer's Reports**
- **Election of Officers & Directors**
- **Old & New Business**
- **Capital Campaign**
- **Video & Slide Presentation**
- **1970s Celebration**

Prudence Cooks: Then & Now

The Prudence Island Historical Society's recent cookbook, "Prudence Cooks – Then & Now," has been reprinted and copies can be purchased at Marcy's Store as well as at our annual meeting on July 30th. Last year's printing was completely sold out and we had so many requests from islanders for more books that additional copies were printed over the winter. The book, published by the Morris Cookbook Company, contains more than 400 recipes from island kitchens past and present; and

includes many dishes that are very popular at Prudence parties and potluck suppers. Each section of the cookbook contains a photograph of early life on Prudence Island gleaned from the historical society's collection. Recipe pages are also seasoned with tidbits of island history. The cookbook is priced at \$16 which includes RI sales tax. Mail orders can be obtained for an additional \$5.00 per book by writing to PIHPS, P.O. Box 193, Prudence Island, RI 02872.

Dues Reminder

Please take a moment to complete the enclosed 2011 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.

Or contact us via email at: PIHPSociety@verizon.net.

Progress At Our New Headquarters

There has been much progress at our new headquarters in the past year. Thanks to our crew of volunteers the building has been cleaned out and the interior has been prepared for the renovation work that is to come. The mural that decorated the south wall of the dining room has been removed for restoration. The required special use permit and zoning variance have been obtained from the Town and the new septic system installation is nearly completed.

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The Second Annual Prudence Island Progressive Dinner Fundraiser - May 21 2011

The second annual Progressive Dinner on May 21 2011 was an enjoyable event for all 87 participants. The event raised more than \$3,000 for the renovation of the Prudence Island Historical Museum. Be sure to check out the photos of the event on the Event Page of our web site - www.prudencehistory.com.

Ferry Prudence I Turns 100 Years Old

By

Donna Bains

The Prudence I was the longest running passenger ferry operated by the Prudence Island Navigation Company. She carried passengers and freight between Bristol and Prudence from 1921 to 1962. She was the favorite ferry of many long time Prudence Islanders and everyone has fond memories of her.

The Cape Cod Maritime Museum in Hyannis, MA, in conjunction with her current owners, Hy-Line Cruises are celebrating the Prudence's 100th birthday with an exhibit honoring her service from her construction in Boothbay Harbor, Maine, through her current service in Hyannis Harbor. She was purchased by Hy-Line from the Prudence Island Navigation Company and has operated as a tour boat in Hyannis Harbor ever since. She is the oldest continuous operating passenger vessel in America.

The exhibit includes artifacts, pictures, newspaper articles and a film documentary. One of the people interviewed for the film was Prudence historian Joe Bains.

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Many of the old photographs are of her service to Prudence.

The exhibit will run from May 24th through September 25th. The museum is located at 135 South Street, right next to the ferry landing where Prudence is docked. Take a day trip to Hyannis, see the exhibit and take a ride on the Prudence I. It will bring back great memories for old time islanders and will build wonderful memories for those who came to Prudence Island after 1962.



Ferry Prudence I c. 1921

What In The World Is An Archivist And Why Does The Society Need One?

By
Rick Buckley

This July the PIHPS membership will be asked to change the By Laws to add the new position of Archivist. You may be wondering, why the society needs someone to be digging up old island sites – no that's an archaeologist not an Archivist. The Society's Archivist will collect, preserve and make all those wonderful Island historical records available for all to enjoy. The historical records the Archivist will work with take many forms – photographs, personal journals, correspondence, island organization meeting notes, recorded personal experiences and so much more. These are one of kind non-published materials that would be lost forever, if it were not for the Archivist.

The Archivist will have many responsibilities ranging from acquiring, preserving, describing, allowing accessibility to the many artifacts the society currently has and will obtain in the future. He/she will provide access to the island yesterdays and capture the island of today for tomorrow. Organizing and describing the island's historical records will be some of the duties of the position. This is done by arranging them in a logical order and documenting all known information concerning the artifacts. He/she will write descriptions of the artifact so it can be discovered by the membership. Through the descriptions as well as phone calls, emails and personal discussions he/she will provide a connection between the membership and the many collections the society maintains.

The Archivist will make all attempts to preserve the historical records. If the preservation is beyond the scope of the society's limited experience, the Archivist will ensure the appropriate resources complete the preservation. He/she will ensure the safety and security of the records at all times, while encouraging them to be accessible for research and educational purposes.

Promoting the historical records of the island through displays at the Prudence Island Historical Museum will be an important duty. These displays will increase the membership's knowledge of the rich diversity of our small island's culture. While initially the displays will be at the museum, the society is looking into the means and methods to allow our collections to be displayed on the web.

Prudence Island has a very rich and interesting history locked up in many personal collections, attics, basements and personal memories. It is the responsibility of the Societies Archivist to unlock those records, preserve them and make

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them available for this and future generations.

Prudence Island in the Old Days

A Brief Biography of Victor I. Miller

By
John C. Thresher

Last year, I wrote about Clarence and Amey Palmer, and Clarence's second wife Elizabeth "Betsy" Palmer. This year, I'll provide a brief biography of Clarence's business partner Victor I. Miller. Victor Irving Miller, son of James W. Miller and Jennie E. Miller, was born in Riverside on September 2, 1892. He was a World War I veteran, and he also graduated with honors from the Rhode Island School of Design, ending up working in the Bristol school system as Supervisor of Drawing. Earlier, he lived in Attleboro "where he was engaged in jewelry manufacturing."

He lived in Bristol from about 1916 or 1917 until his death at his home on 460 Hope Street in 1929. The 1920 U.S. Census listed Victor I. Miller as with his mother Jennie E. Miller. His occupation was listed as a painter at a ship yard. This might have been a summer job, or a job previous to his teaching job. He was also a special police officer for several years. Miller's obituary also stated that his father lived in California. He belonged to several fraternal organizations, including the Masons, Knights of Pythias, the American Legion, and was also a member "of Thomas Bains Corp., decorators, of Providence." (Incidentally, the 1920 census form listed Joseph A. Maytum as a boarder with the Millers; he was listed as a carpenter at a ship yard. He became the captain of the Prudence in the first year of its operation in 1921. In 1927, he

advertised in the Prudence Island Beacon as a carpenter, and he lived at Cross Tides.)

On Prudence, Victor Miller co-owned four lots with Amey Palmer on the south side of Pier Road. He also owned a house on the Lombardy Camp Plat, south of Homestead Pier, on the top of the hill on the north side of Allen Lane, bordered by Hillside Ave. above, and Winthrop Road below.

Miller was a trustee of the Union Church in 1927. When it was founded in August 1926, he donated the use of the Homestead Casino for the church to conduct services while the building was being built. He also designed the cornerstone for the church. He was planning on a memorial window at Union Church, even working on the stained glass color design, to honor his mother, who died sometime in 1928 or 1929. Unfortunately, he died before he was able to complete it. As a result, the window behind the pulpit was given in memory of both Victor and Jennie Miller by his aunts Margaret L. Squire and Martha Gould.; it was dedicated in August 1932.

Miller died on August 12, 1929 after becoming seriously ill from septic poisoning after having his tonsils removed. His death shocked and saddened his many friends and acquaintances. His death was still being mourned by many on Prudence Island in 1931. In his "Tribute to 'Vic' Miller" published in the Phoenix August 16, 1929, Sydney Davidson wrote in part:

"He was looking forward to a bigger and better Prudence. It was his ambition to make Bristol school children, and through them, their parents, truly appreciative of art, harmony and beauty in art and design. ...

"For Prudence, he visioned many things. He was in on the ground floor in planning for the Union Church, ... The proposed 'Aldrich' tower will in part fulfill his

ambition for a 'churchy' church, a beacon to all comers to the island. "He would have gone a long way in art. He had talent for interpreting the beauties of nature in flowers or scenery. He could sketch face or figure and his designs were much sought and many a home or building has evidence of his skill. His sense of humor shown in his cartoons brought a whole some smile.

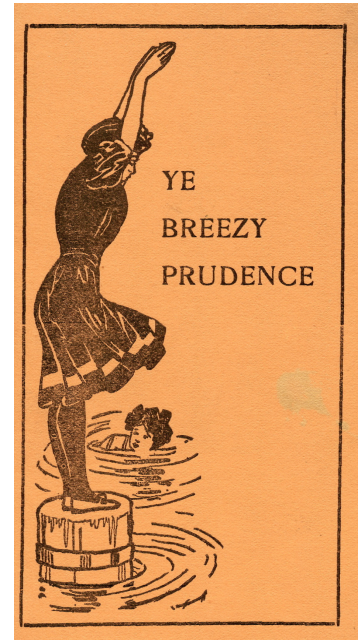
"Children loved him and young people never ceased to care for him and no one senses a true friend any more quickly and surer than youth. Sweat shirts and slickers all over Rhode Island and Massachusetts are adorned with his handiwork and they were always clean and good to look at."

"Victor was optimistic to the end. 'I am not licked yet' he said to friends during his all too brief period on the island after his tonsil operation and he was not licked for he died with his face to the front. ..."

Sources:

Tax book for the Town of Portsmouth (various years); Maytum, Charles G. Paragraphs on early Prudence Island, privately published, 1964; HeritageQuest Online (1920 U.S. Census); Prudence Island Beacon Aug. 20, 1927; Bristol Phoenix August 13, 1929, August 16, 1929, and July 14, 1931; Union Church, Incorporated of Prudence Island: Fiftieth anniversary Year ... 1926-1976.

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Cover of Prudence Souvenir Booklet, c. 1910

From The Prudence Island Beacon July 30, 1927

News Jottings

- Oscar Sands of Homestead, who is summering at his cottage, showed his superiority as a fisherman by catching an eight and a half pound Tautog off the Homestead Pier on Sunday.
- On Thursday, the "Prudence" ran an excursion to Quonset Point so that islanders who were interested might get a glimpse of Colonel Lindbergh as he landed. The young flier is very popular here as the Prudence not only took her full limit of 160, but had to leave about 25 disappointed persons on the dock.
- Mr. and Mrs. Martin Thompson are entertaining their daughters and sons-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. William Foley of Milton, MA and Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Homan and son Charles of Providence, RI.