

HISTORICAL NOTES

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HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING TO BE HELD SATURDAY, JULY 28, 2012 AT 11:00 A.M. AT THE UNION CHURCH

REMEMBERING LOUIE DELPAPA



On April 7, 2012, the island lost “a good man” – a man whose warmth, generosity and perpetual smile touched the fabric of the island for over seventy years. Lou DelPapa, or Louie as many islanders referred to him, spent all his summers on the island in

the family house on Narragansett Ave. As children, Louie and his brother Bobby relished their summers on the island where they hung out with the Sand Point gang. In the mid fifties, after the devastation of Hurricane Carol, Louie and Bobby helped their parents operate the Sand Point Coffee Shop.

Louie’s mother, Margaret was Irish and his father, Lou, Sr., was Italian – an interesting blend that shown through in Louie’s personality. He could be seen at the dock gesturing with his hands as he recounted a story with a little Italian accent then quietly, with a twinkle in his eye, punctuating the story with a subtle but funny punch line that revealed his Irish wit.

Louie married his high school sweetheart, Margie Magill, and introduced her to Prudence Island, which she grew to love and cherish. Louie took over the family home when his parents died and he and Margie continued to enjoy the island together. After their marriage, Louie left the textile business and returned to school while Margie worked as a math teacher. It was during this period that Louie started doing the grocery shopping and cooking meals. Soon Margie was relegated to cleaning up the kitchen as Louie developed his culinary skills. Who can forget Louie’s delicious calzones and Johnnycakes? Even after Louie

received his degree and began working for the Rhode Island Department of Education, he maintained his role in the kitchen and delighted in serving Margie his latest culinary exploits.

In addition to his work as Director of Teacher Preparation, Certification, and Professional Development for the State of Rhode Island, Louie was a major influence on the island up until Margie developed ALS in the early 2000s when his attention turned to her welfare. During that era Louie was often referred to as the unofficial “Mayor of Prudence Island.” Louie was an active member of Prudence Island Volunteer Fire Department, Prudence Conservancy, Prudence Improvement Association, Prudence Island Historical & Preservation Society and Our Lady Of Prudence Chapel. He could always be counted on for help in the projects and events of those organizations. He served the island well as a major figure on the Water Board and Prudence Island Planning Commission. In his latter capacity he often had to navigate the sometimes-strained negotiations between the Town of Portsmouth officials and islanders. He was a man of integrity, an effective negotiator, and an ambassador for the island to the broader Rhode Island community.

In 2009, Louie gave a gift to the island. He considered the donation of a building and land to the historical society as a way to give something back to the island by creating a place to preserve island history and rendering that history accessible to the community. His donation was made in memory of his beloved Margie. It will now become for us all a gift in both Louie and Margie’s memory and a continual reminder of their love and generosity for our island. Please join us and Louie and Margie’s families at our annual meeting on July 28, 2012 to honor their memory. By Judi Foster

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From The Archives

It won't be long now; soon the PIHPS Museum will be opening. We have all sorts of plans for the museum including information sessions, research areas, displays, and storage of our historical collections. I am most excited about the displays and the safe keeping of our collections.

We have a lot of wonderful ideas for our displays. Some of these include; ferries of the island, early maps, post cards depicting the island, family photographs, and a display dedicated to Margaret M. (Margie) DelPapa. Margie was the wife of Lou DelPapa whose generous donation of the Sandy Point Coffee shop made the museum possible. Margie loved the island and was instrumental in an effort that led to the granting of a license from the Coast Guard for the Prudence Conservancy to officially take over the care of the lighthouse in 2001. This ensured that future generations of islanders will be able to enjoy the stately structure. We are planning a display showing the history of the lighthouse, dedicated in memory of Margie. Have you ever seen a photograph of the lighthouse without the Mt. Hope Bridge behind it? We have one and you will be able to see it in the Margaret Del Papa Lighthouse display.

One room of the museum will be dedicated to the storage of our historical collections. The room will be a secure, climate controlled area to protect our fragile historical records. While all members of the society will have access to our collections, only the museum staff will have direct access to the archive room. Upon request, the staff will retrieve any records that are requested by the membership for viewing in the museum. How will you know what we have? Well, all our collections will be electronically cataloged. This catalog will be available on the society's computers. But don't expect this feature to be available on opening day! We have many artifacts that have to be cataloged.

What's in our collections? Our collections are made up of historical records of the island. These records are unique, normally unpublished documents that provide us with facts, opinions, view points of the island, items that cannot be found anywhere else. These records include photographs, postcards, maps, land deeds, transcripts of stories told by islanders and more. These records will be managed in groups called collections. Each collection could contain many records, but they will be all related to each other. Some of our existing collections include:

The Grayson Collection –

Donated by Dorothy Grayson in 1988, this collection consists of many old photographs and post cards, most dating from the early to mid-20th century. Also included

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are many rare original editions of The Prudence Island Beacon, a summer newspaper published on the island during the 1920s & 1930s

The Atwood Donation –

Donated by Helen & Robert Atwood in 1989, this collection consists of a large scrapbook and a separate photograph/post card album compiled by the Atwood family during their many summers at Prudence Island. Included is a large collection of ferry tickets and schedules of the Prudence Island Navigation Company from the 1920s through the 1960s.

The McGrath Collection –

During the 1990s, Florence Clark McGrath was preparing to move to an assisted living apartment. As she cleaned out her home, she discovered a collection of family photographs and paper materials related to Prudence Island. She donated the materials to PIHPS. Her family owned land and a cottage on Lombardy Camp Plat from about 1915 until about the late 1940s.

Other General Collections - These include items such as postcards, photographs, manuscripts, maps and more.

One may wonder with all these collections how is anyone going to research a specific topic? That's the purpose of our future electronic catalog. The catalog will not only record the location in the archives of each collection but record each item in the collection and be tagged with a search keyword. For example, if you were looking for information on the old ferries of the island, you would search using the keyword 'ferry'. You would find that there have been over ten ferries used to get back and forth to the island, dating as far back as the 1740's. In fact, you might also learn that the town of Newport enacted a bill to place guards at the ferry landing sites to prevent travelers from infectious places from landing. Can you image a guard attempting that task on a Fourth of July weekend – mission impossible!

The society is really excited about the opening of the museum. We are proud to be able to provide a place that will safely store and protect our island history. We are also looking forward to being able to display these treasures to visitors of the museum. While the society does have a number of items we are always looking to expand our collection. We would welcome donations of island artifacts. These artifacts might be photographs, diaries, personal letters, postcards, early minutes of the various island organizations, ferry schedules and more. So please check your attics, closets, and cellars, you never know what you might find. So stop on by and share one of your stories or maybe even learn something new about the little island we all love. By Rick Buckley

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

When Louie DelPapa donated the "Coffee Shop" to the historical society in 2009, we were full of excitement for obtaining a building where we could safely store, display and share our island-history with our community. However, the Board of Directors were also aware of the difficult task ahead in raising money to fund the necessary renovations for transforming the building into an island museum.

At the time, our organization had an annual income of less than \$1,000 and a membership of 98.

Today we are happy to announce that we have raised \$116,607 for renovations, \$6,190 for an Endowment Account and increased our membership to 230. Despite the economic hard times and the many worthy requests from other island organizations, you have given us the means to create a site for housing and sharing our island's history. Thank you for your continued support.

The museum renovations have gone more slowly than we anticipated due to various town inspection and permit delays and some unexpected construction problems. Although we are still a little short in money to complete the interior work, including furnishings and equipment, later this summer we will be at a stage where we can open the building for your inspection and enjoyment. In anticipation of the opening of the museum for the general public, we will be having an open house for members.

Special receptions for Louie and Margie's families and major donors of our Capital Drive will be held prior to the open house. Because of occupancy restrictions (30 people) and our concern for traffic and parking on Narragansett Avenue, we are going to invite our members to visit the museum at specified times based on alphabetical order of last names. Specifics of the opening dates and times will be sent to our members and announced at our annual meeting on July 28, 2012.

History is not a static body of documents, pictures and artifacts, but a dynamic collection that grows in size and significance as it is shared and enriched. As pointed out by Rick Buckley in his article, "From The Archives," the museum will offer many levels of community participation from viewing historical displays to interactive research sessions and workshops. We intend to take full advantage of current technology to render our history accessible to you. Toward this end, we have developed an active website and social networking site on Facebook to communicate our activities and share our collections. Currently, we are developing an App that will allow mobile access to narratives describing important historical sites on the island. We will be combining the power of GPS/Google Maps with the expertise of island historians, to allow on

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site narratives of island sites. The museum will be equipped with an interactive, internet-connected audio/visual system that will allow viewing of the Society's vast digital collection of photos as well as simultaneous broadcasts of pertinent regional and national history seminars.

As some of you may realize, we are mailing our newsletter and membership forms out earlier than in past years. As noted above, we are short of money to accomplish all we had planned for this year. In addition to increased capital costs, we have incurred a number of professional and filing fees as well as insurance increases for liability and building improvements. Because of these increases, we are asking you to send in your 2012 membership and donation earlier than usual. Meanwhile, the Board will be submitting grant applications for funds to purchase computer hardware and software programs, specialized display cases and office/archive furniture and cabinets.

When you visit the museum this summer, we hope that you will be pleased with what we have accomplished and will continue to support our future plans. Again, thank you for bringing us this far. By Judi Foster



The Union Church Cornerstone*

Author's note: This article, with a few revisions, was from a talk I gave at the Union Church cornerstone rededication on August 7, 2011, as part of the

church's 85th Anniversary celebration. The Rev. Larry Nichols had just blessed it. The day before this event, Johann Bjurman painted the cornerstone to highlight its unique design: a gold circle and cross with "Union Church 1927," with the year in painted in red. This circle is surrounded by a dark blue border. The artist also added a gold cross on a blue background to the cornerstone on the side facing the street.

On July 24, 1927, one year after the founding of the church, the cornerstone was laid. About 700 people attended the great ceremony conducted by the masons 85 years ago. Another big event had just occurred three days earlier (and makes more significant the inclusion of the Lindbergh postage stamp among the items placed inside the cornerstone): On Thursday, July 21, Col. Charles A. Lindbergh came to Providence by motorcade after landing his plane, the Spirit of St. Louis, at the airfield at the National Guard camping grounds at Quonset Point. This

was part of his tour of the country after he completed the first solo nonstop flight from New York to Paris in May. No doubt many on Prudence Island saw his plane after it circled Providence and flew along the west side of Narragansett Bay, to land at Quonset Point.

In July 1926, James McCaughey and Sydney Davidson went blueberry picking. During the walk back, they discussed their desire to have Sunday worship services on Prudence Island. They spread the word and had others do the same. Sydney Davidson conducted that first service at 9:15 on Sunday morning, August 1, 1926 at the Homestead Casino. 97 people were in attendance, sitting on boards placed on top of tonic boxes. The group also voted to organize and eventually build a church. For a couple of years, until the church was built, Victor Miller and Clarence Palmer, the proprietors of the casino, donated the use of the hall from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. The service had to be concluded and the congregation had to be out of there before the 10:30 ferry arrived. After 85 years, one thing remains the same: To this day, we still aim to conclude the service by 10:00 o'clock.

Later that August, Sydney Davidson was voted the first Chairman, James McCaughey, the first Deacon, Herbert Newman, Secretary, and Thomas Bains, Treasurer. By the end of the season, \$660 dollars was raised toward the construction of a building.

There was much progress in the next year: In May 1927, three offers of land were considered: two lots located about 200 feet south of Pier Road, two lots down at Midway behind the Bridgeview house, and two lots on Pier Road offered by Rachel Cram. The offer for the Pier Road lots was accepted. Ground was broken for the church building on July 5, the church was incorporated on July 13, proposed bylaws were accepted on July 17, and Madison Cram presented the deed for the two lots, on July 24, as a memorial to his father-in-law Daniel Chase, Rachel Cram's father.

Laying of the Cornerstone

The laying of the cornerstone took place on Sunday July 24, 1927. By that time, the piers and sub floor of the church were completed. A platform about 20 feet square was also built next to the cornerstone to accommodate the people officiating. Victor Miller, one of the trustees of this church, designed the cornerstone. He was a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, and he was an art teacher in the Bristol school system, with the title "Supervisor of Drawing." He was also a member of St. Albans Lodge No. 6, of Bristol, and the vice president of the Prudence Improvement Association.

The ceremony was quite an elaborate event, with over 700 people attending. The exercises were conducted by the Grand Lodge of Rhode Island, with lodges from Warren, Bristol, and Portsmouth escorting, along with masons from many other lodges attending – about 200 masons in all.

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The event actually started in Bristol, where the masons assembled at the Masonic Temple on Hope Street at 2 o'clock. Then, led by the Square Club Band of Providence, they paraded down Church Street and boarded the Prudence for the trip to the island. After landing at Sand Point, they reformed the parade and marched one mile north to the church site.

The ceremony began after the placing of the colors and the Grand Wardens taking their stations, with the singing of the Star Spangled Banner. The Doric Quartet sang the opening anthem "Praise the Lord." After a flourish of trumpets, and the reading of the proclamation by Grand Marshal Howard Arnold, Sydney Davidson, the church's chairman and member of the Paul Revere Lodge in Brockton, requested the laying of the cornerstone. Grand Master Winfield Scott Solomon and other officers from the Grand Lodge of Rhode Island conducted the ritual.

In his request to the Grand Master to lay the cornerstone, Sydney Davidson said, in part:

"One year ago we asked friends to come and worship with us and now on the first anniversary we take especial pride in having faith enough to ask the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Rhode Island, with Most Worshipful Master Winfield Scott Solomon in charge, to lay the cornerstone of our humble beginning of a monument to God and His Son, Jesus Christ, who died that we might live. Do this in His name and in due form Most Worshipful, and may God's blessing be with us all." Speakers included Major General John A. Lejeune, the Commanding General of the United States Marine Corps, and member of the Overseas Lodge No. 40 of Providence, and Reverend Levi B. Edwards, the Past Master of St. John's Lodge No. 1 of Providence and the Past Grand Chaplain, and also one of the founders of the Church of the Holy Ghost at Prudence Park. General Lejeune spoke about his induction into the Masonic order. Reverend Edwards spoke about the church as an institution and how he found Masonry exemplified around the world. He also talked about the history of Prudence Island and how his wife was related to the Allen family, one of the earliest settlers on the island.

Grand Secretary Harold McAuslan read a list of the contents of the cornerstone box, and then Grand Treasurer Sylvester Budlong placed the box inside the cornerstone to be sealed. The contents of the box were:

Holy Bible

Copy of the records of the first meeting, August 1, 1926;

List of present officers and committee members;

List of contributors to date;

Prudence Island Beacon of July 2 and 23, 1927;

Bristol Phoenix of July 23, 1927;

Official program of the laying of the cornerstone;

Clippings from the *Providence Journal* and the *Brockton Enterprise*;

Masonic notices of participating lodges;

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Picture of Rachel Cram, donor of the land;
Picture of Madison H. Cram, Chairman of the Building Committee;
Picture of Sydney A. Davidson, Chairman of the Standing Committee
Lindbergh postage stamp (he had visited Providence 3 days earlier);
Picture of Homestead Casino;
Postcards, views of the island;
Card notices of the first and other Church services;
Names of Speakers to date;
Timetable of the Prudence boats;
Arrowhead found on island by Clifton H. Holbrook;
Silk United States flag

Master Architect Victor Miller presented the working tools to the Grand Master, who then lowered and laid the cornerstone. At each step in the ritual, the masons bowed several times: Deputy Grand Master J. Irving Shepley tried the cornerstone with the Square, Senior Grand Warden Arthur Whitehead tried it with the Level, and Junior Grand Warden Augustus Rose tried it with the Plumb. In the same order, the three officers consecrated the cornerstone with corn, wine, and oil. After the Doric Quartet sang an anthem of Psalm 122 (“I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the house of the Lord. . .”), the Grand Master returned the working tools to the Master Architect and read a proclamation. After a flourish of trumpets and the singing of the closing hymn (“Make this, O Lord, Thine own abode; . . .”), Grand Chaplain Hugh Carpenter read the Benediction. After the ceremony, the ladies of the church entertained the masons with chowder, sandwiches and pie. By John Thresher

* Cornerstone, painted by Johann Bjurman on Aug. 6, 2011.

Sources:

Union Church, Incorporated of Prudence Island: Fiftieth Anniversary Year. 1976, pp.1-12.
Ceremony for the Laying of the Corner Stone of the Union Church, Prudence Island, R.I., Sunday July 24, 1927. (In a scrapbook, from the collection of Steve Butler.)
Churchill, James E., Ed. *Milestones of the 20th Century.* New York: Atlas Editions, 1999, p. 16.
Providence Journal July 16, 1927
Providence Journal July 22, 1927
Providence Journal July 23, 1927
Providence Journal July 25, 1927
Providence Evening Bulletin, July 25, 1927

Annual Meeting – Saturday July 28th at the Union Church, 11 AM

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Please join us for our annual meeting on July 28th at the Union Church. We are now collecting photos of Prudence Islanders from the 1980s for viewing at the meeting. Email digitized photos to pihpsociety@verizon.net or give to either Judi Foster or Anna Levesque for scanning.

Annual Meeting Agenda

Secretary & Treasurer Report
Election of Officers
Old & New Business
Museum Opening Plans
Video Presentations from the 1980's
Tribute to Louie DePapa

Helping Out

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, or in helping out at the new museum, 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 28th.

Prudence Cooks: Then & Now

There are still some copies of The Prudence Island Historical Society's recent cookbook, "Prudence Cooks – Then & Now." Copies can be purchased at Marcy's Store as well as at our annual meeting on July 28th. 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 2012 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.

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The Third Annual Prudence Island Progressive Dinner Fundraiser - May 19 2012

The third annual Progressive Dinner will be held on May 19, 2012. This promises to be another great time. In addition, it will raise money for the new PIHPS Museum. Be sure to check out the photos from the 2011 Progressive Dinner on the Event Page of our web site -



Our Thanks

We would like to thank Allan Bearse (lead contractor); Billy Silvia; Ricky Brooks, Rodney & Paul Santos and John & Shannon Cubellis for their donation of time and/or reduced prices; Paul Collette and Jim Lyons for cleaning out the building and to others helping including Stevie Butler, Frank Jurnak, Bob Elser and Bob Lund; Donna Bains and Pat Richard for the Prudence Island Cookbook; Johan Bjurman for restoring the interior mural; David Brewster for the architectural design; Tim Reed of New England Home Design for fire inspection plan drawings; Rep. Raymond Gallison for procuring legislation to exempt the property from taxation; and, Attorney Cort Chappell, for obtaining variances and special use permits for the building.

Also, we would like to take this opportunity to thank Mary & Ed Bishop, Sharon & Dave Homan and Kathy &

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Jim Sohar for conceiving and organizing the three progressive dinners and the Prudence Island Quilters Guild for the donation of a quilt that will be raffled to raise funds for the museum.

Last, but not least, we acknowledge the eleven members of the Board of Directors (Joe & Donna Bains, Rick Buckley, Paul Collette, Bobby DePalo, Judi Foster, Sharon Homan, Anna Levesque, Therese Marzullo, Theckla Snell and John Thresher), who have donated countless hours of personal time and contributed a total of \$32,025 for the museum renovation and furnishings as well as procuring \$42,500 in grants, corporate funds and cookbook sales.

