

"Save your Magazines." — See Inside Page Rear Cover.  
"The Finest Trip in the World" — See Supplement

# PROVIDENCE MAGAZINE

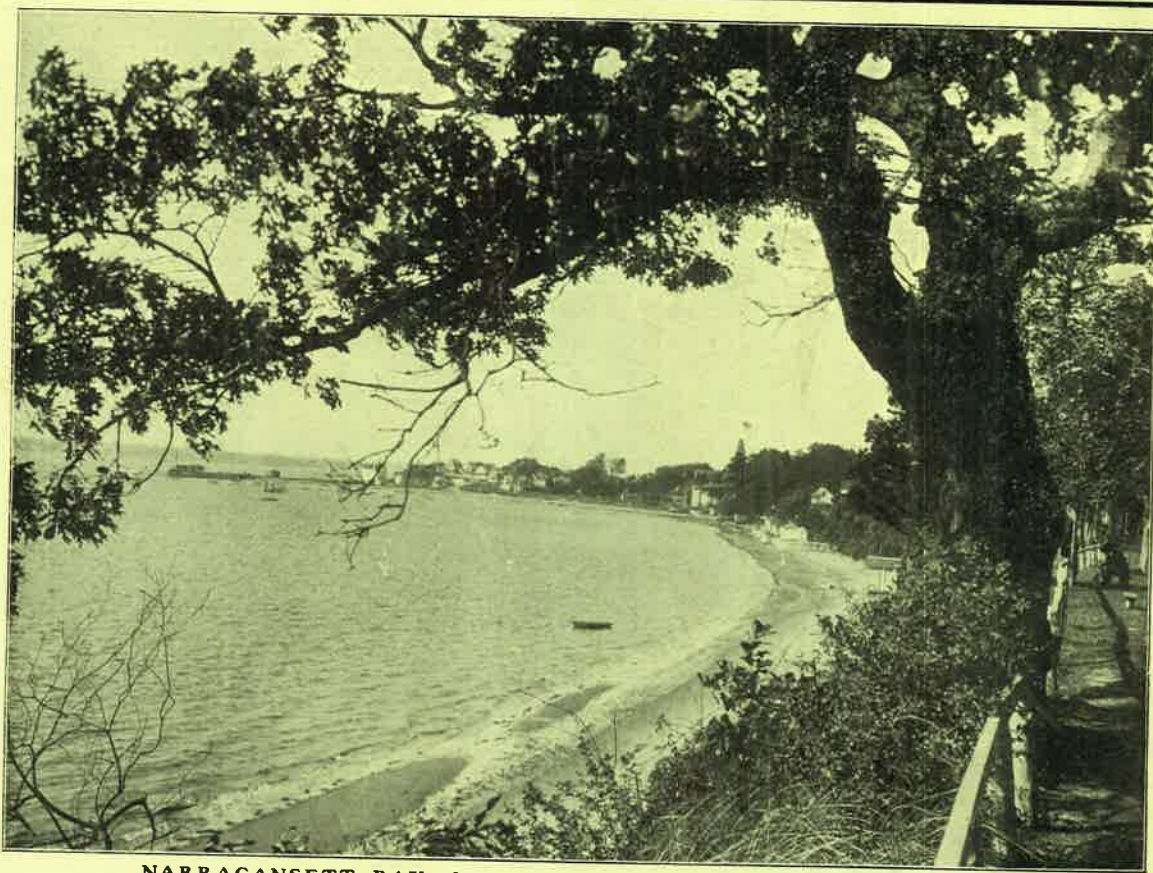
The Board of Trade Journal

*Devoted to the Interests of the Metropolitan District of Providence*

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NARRAGANSETT BAY, from Bluff below Sabin's Point, East Providence.

Little Rhody's Varied Attractions — Continued — Greater Providence Series, Part VI  
Gasolene Route — Centre of New England — Some Worth-While Tours.  
The Theatre — Building Era. "Ship it via Providence."





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UPPER HARBOR FROM POINT-STREET BRIDGE.

### EARLY STEAMBOATING ON NARRAGANSETT BAY

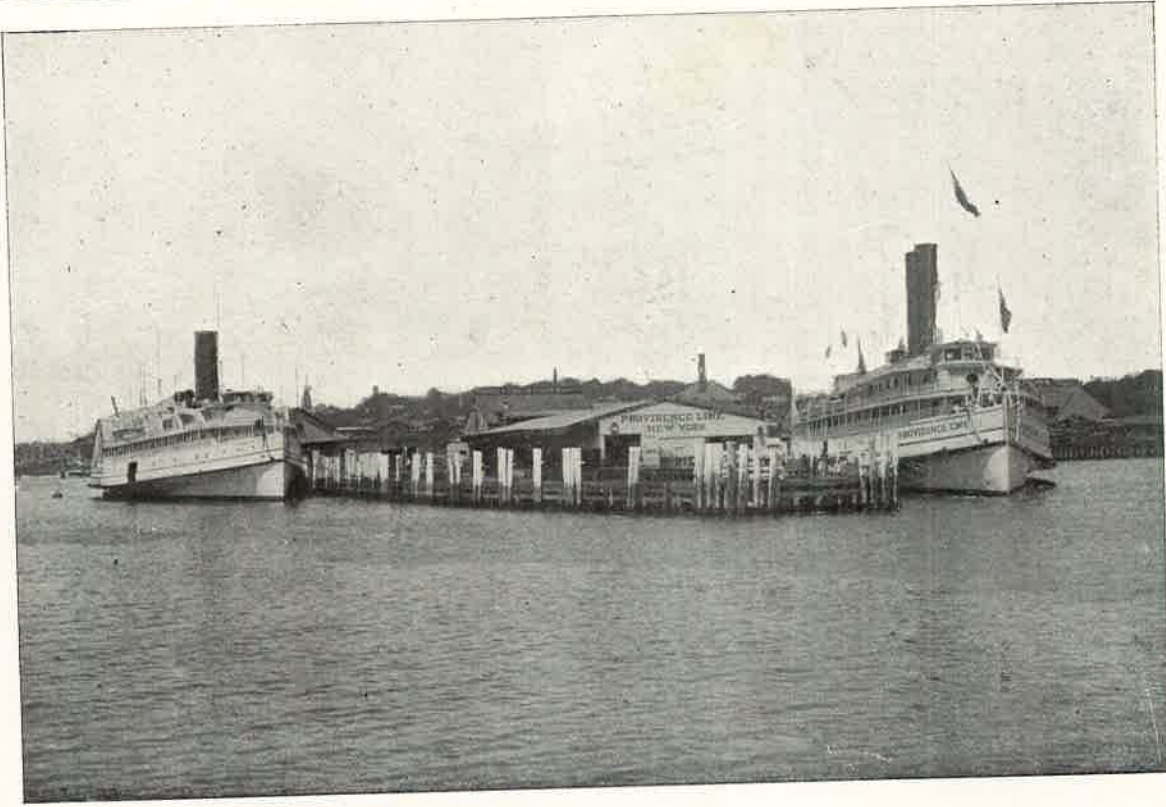
The Development of the Bay and River Traffic Harks Back to the Firefly, Whose First Excursion Was to Fall River in 1817.—Rocky Point Discovered in 1848.—Various Lines and Crafts Have Covered the Providence-Newport Route.

Narragansett Bay and Providence river were conspicuous in the early commercial steamboat history pertaining to Long Island sound and the port of New York. Of this particular subject more later. The strictly bay and river commercial and pleasure business is the more opportune.

The first steamboat appearing in these waters and catering to local business was the Firefly, which as early as 1817 made a "Cherry" excursion trip to Fall River. In 1822 the steamer Bristol was making two trips daily between Providence and Newport. That year the Providence was built, a 137-ton boat, which made the run from this city to Newport in two hours. Next came a freak steamboat, the Babcock, built in 1825. She had no boiler, but obtained steam generated by forcing water through perforated sheet iron, causing it to drop on a red-hot pan. The Babcock made the run to Newport in no better than three and one-half hours.

In 1826 Dr. John A. Wadsworth invented a coil boiler similar to that the Herreshoffs brought out for their first torpedo boats. With Dr. John W. Richmond, Earl Carpenter, Stephen Phillips, Roger W. Potter and Richmond Brownell, he built on the Pawcatuck river, Westerly, the steamer Wadsworth of 72 tons burden. She was launched in September, 1828, and ran as rival to the Rushlight, recently built for the Providence-Newport traffic, beating her out by a few minutes on each trip. The Wadsworth was sold in June, 1831, and was run on the North river, between Albany and Troy. The Rushlight, Capt. North, was 104 feet long and could make Newport in no quicker time than three hours. She was sold in 1836, in which year the Narragansett Bay Steamboat Company built the Kingston, whose first trip was made April 28, 1837. She was a marvel, being 138 feet long, of 200 tons burden, propelled by an engine built by the Providence Steam





MODERN NEW YORK STEAMERS AT FOX POINT WHARF.

Engine Co., captained by Roger W. Potter, and covered the run to Newport in two hours.

In May, 1840, Daniel Drew sent the Balloon here from New York, for daily trips to Newport, which were continued up to October. The next season Capt. B. F. Woolsey, with N. M. Allen as his pilot, put the Balloon over the course in one hour and 28 minutes. Even with a stop at Bristol to take on and leave freight, the old wood-burner made the run in an hour and 50 minutes.

The Iolas, a Vanderbilt boat, was on the Newport run from 1842 to 1845. In 1846 the Roger Williams, built at

Brooklyn, L. I., for B. F. Woolsey, put in her appearance. She was 200 feet long, and finely furnished. This boat quickly established the low record for Narragansett bay, making the Newport run in an hour and a half. She was too fine a craft for the limited patronage given her and was withdrawn to be operated elsewhere.

That same year, 1846, the Perry, a boat inseparably connected with the history of Narragansett bay, was built at Brooklyn. She was of 255 tons burden and a "hummer." The Perry made three trips a week from Newport to Providence and three from Newport to Fall River. She ran daily



"PUTTING ON" THE CLAMBAKE.



CHARLES E. LYON  
Maker of Rhode Island Clambakes.



"OPENING" THE CLAMBAKE.

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STEAMER MOUNT HOPE—A WELL-KNOWN EXCURSION STEAMER.

between this city and Newport in later years and was continued in the service until the latter part of the Civil War, when she was sold to the Government.

The Eagle's Wing, Capt. B. C. Cromwell, was to have come on the bay service in 1846. She sailed from New Bedford to take her first excursion party to Block Island, but when off Pawtuxet she burst into flames and was destroyed.

1864, purchasing the Perry and Newport, and building the Bay Queen in 1865. It took on the What Cheer in 1870, when Rocky Point was purchased and developed by the company, as noted in another article in this issue of the PROVIDENCE MAGAZINE. The River Belle was added to the fleet in 1872, the Day Star in 1873 and the Crystal Wave in 1875. All were very popular with the excursionists. Then came on the steamboat war incident to the opening of Oakland Beach, established as a rival of Rocky Point, in which the Ironsides and other big boats were involved in "scraps" with those of the American Steamboat Company, with particular reference to attempts, sometimes futile, oftener successful, to make landings at Rocky Point.

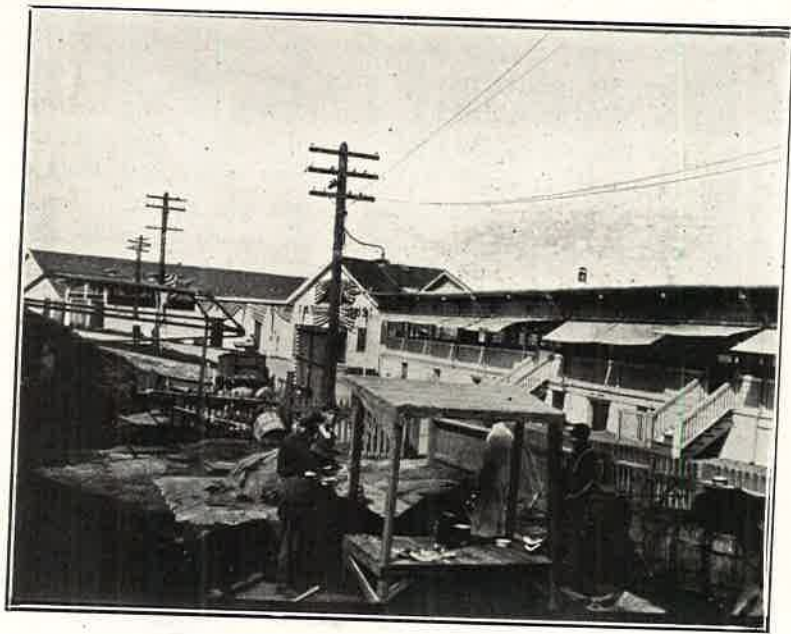
Oakland Beach was a failure as an excursion attraction and the opposition boats eventually disappeared. Later came the Baltimore and Squantum, built for the shorter bay runs in opposition to the Whatcheer and the Day Star. These were eventually sold to the older company. The River Belle was sold, so was the Crystal Wave. The Day Star was lengthened, broadened and built over as the Warwick of to-day.



HUNGRY THROG ENTERS THE DINING HALL.

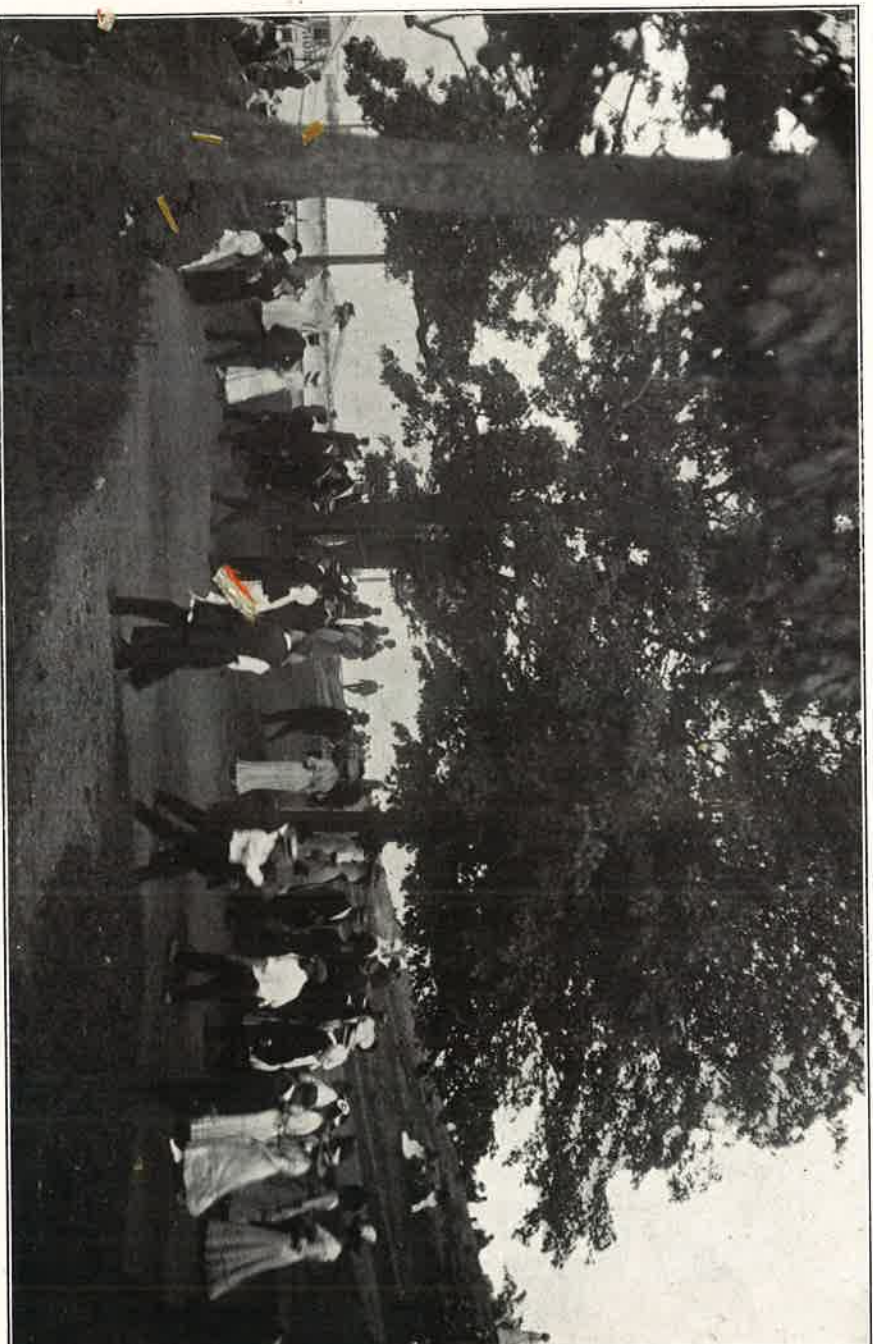
The Perry had the Newport and Rocky Point business, the latter beginning in 1848, practically all to herself until 1863, when Benjamin Buffum, Frank Mauran and James T. Rhodes bought the Montpelier in New York and started her as an opposition boat. The other company bought the City of Newport, made her a sister ship of the Perry and opened up a traffic war, which was conducted so vigorously that round-trip tickets were selling for 50 cents. To meet this business the Buffum party brought the River Queen here late in 1863 and ran her in connection with the Montpelier. The River Queen was sold to the Government in 1864 and became President Lincoln's private yacht.

The American Steamboat Company was chartered in



GETTING READY TO LAY THE BAKE.





OVER THE HILL TO THE DINING HALLS AT ROCKY POINT.  
A portion of one of the Bathing Houses is visible at the extreme left of the picture.

The Fall River line was opened with the steamer Hancock, Capt. Thomas Borden, in 1828. She was so slow that it took her three hours to make the run from this city. In 1832 the King Philip was put on, followed by the Bradford Durfee in 1845. The Canonicus, Capt. Benjamin Brayton, built in 1849, was sold to the Government and used as a transport on the Potomac river until 1865, when the Fall River Iron Works Company re-purchased her. The Metacomel came on the line in 1854 and the Richard Borden in 1874. The latter was a double-ender, fast, but so "cranky" that she was never considered safe. On her first excursion trip, with the Providence Police Association on board bound for New Bedford, she nearly turned turtle when below Fort Adams and was with great difficulty brought back to Newport, where her passengers were landed. After this her guards were built out to make her more stable, but this was of so little advantage that she rocked almost as much as before. Her finish came when she was put in the hands of professional wreckers for the old junk there was in her. The Bradford

Durfee was likewise retired by wreckers at Noank, Conn., in January, 1885.

Among the other old boats on the bay were the Experiment, which in 1829 ran between Taunton and Newport and often came to Providence. The John R. Vinton was on the Providence and Warren line in 1847. The Narragansett Brick Company brought out the Massasoit in 1849 to run between Providence and Nayatt. The Rhode Island Steamboat Company put the W. H. Herrick on as a bay transport in 1850. The Miantonomi was run between Warren and Nayatt in 1850, and the Canonchet in 1851. The Barroso in 1852 was run between Providence and Bristol, and made trips to Rocky Point and Vieud l'Eau. The old Syph was put on the Providence-Nayatt service in 1854 and was run there until she was burned off Pawtuxet twenty-odd years ago. A rattle sidewheeler, the Chippewa, was also on the Rocky Point and near shore resorts in the '60s, and way back of this was a stern-wheeler, known as the Grasshopper because of her engine and the side bars that turned the wheel with a kick similar to the action of the hind legs of the hopper.



NEWPORT HARBOR.