

And so we come to 1981 with the Circus in Providence this year at the Civic Center instead of under canvas and minus its lone rare animal exhibit --- quite a change from the "Real Lyon" exhibit of 1720.

Au revoir till September!

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CRANSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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NEWSLETTER

Next Meeting
Tuesday, September 15, 1981
6:00 P. M.

MESCHANTICUT PARK
BAPTIST CHURCH
180 Oaklawn Avenue

SUPPER MEETING

Welcome to a new season starting with the usual Supper Meeting at 6:00 p.m. but at a different location — Meshanticut Park. Baptist Church.

This Fall we'll be trying a different caterer to stimulate the interests of those members whose tastes may have become a bit jaded by too much familiarity with the usual menu. Of course, for \$5.50 per person, you won't need a lobster bib, but you may find the choices a little different. The assortment will include three hot dishes, four cold dishes, a cheese and condiment tray, rolls, coffee and a variety of HOMEMADE pastries.

Reservations must be made by calling — Ethel Murphy at 944-7720 by Sunday, Sept. 13th, 1981 at the very latest.

For the benefit of those new members who may have joined us over the summer, we generally dispense with a business meeting and just enjoy the food and friendship of the evening.

There will be a short entertainment by a group of senior citizens who call themselves the "Kitchen Notes". You probably have the potential of your kitchen utensils as being limited to rolling, straining, measuring or cooking. Not so, according to these seniors! Come and see what they do with the things you so meticulously hide in your drawers and cupboards.

Welcome to the following New Members:

Charles W. Livingstone
1331 New London Ave., Cranston, RI 02920
Mr. and Mrs. Vincent R. Deignan
156 Shaw Ave., Cranston, RI 02905
Mrs. Helen E. Kirk
38 Selkirk Rd., Cranston, RI 02905
Mr. and Mrs. John G. Sambain
221 Beckwith St., Cranston, RI 02910

IN MEMORIAM

Mr. Arthur H. W. Lewis
Box 152, Wakefield, RI 02880

Our Plans for the Future are not dead — Just Incomplete.

Because there has been no Board Meeting at the time of this printing and because so many people are still on vacation, we can't give you a reliable preview of our plans for the Fall — but we do have some, so watch for the October Newsletter!

Curator's Corner . . .

A ROCKING CHAIR TRIP to some of Rhode Island's HISTORIC ROCKS

by

Gladys W. Brayton

Not too far from us here in Cranston within sight of the western foot of Neutaconkanut Hill is Hipses Rock, an original bound of the town of Providence. It was the westernmost bound of Roger William's Grand Purchase from the Indians made in 1636 as set by the Indian Chief Miantonomi. Strangely enough, Hipses is not an Indian word, we learn, but is of Greek origin, the meaning of which has escaped us to date. We can only suspect it to be a name prompted at the time by the more learned Williams.

Another large rock in the same vicinity, called the Canonicus Boulder, was where tradition says Sachem Canonicus once used to hold Councils of War and Peace.

Equally interesting is a very old stone dug up on a farm in present Oak Lawn which at present serves as a most interesting doorstep at Westcote, the home of members of the Westcote family for many years. Its markings show that it evidently marked the way (as an ancient road sign) from a nearby watering place toward the shore.

All old historic rocks have not fared as well, however, as we learn from the story of the so-called Dead Man's Rock, once located near the new Reservoir at Fiskeville Four Corners. It was blasted for use at the Reservoir in 1888. At the time of the Revolution a young lad of this section left his farm home and enlisted in the Army. After a time, however, he deserted and started for his home. Tired, he stopped to rest under the shelter of this familiar great rock. But he had been followed on his return trip and was shot as a deserter and buried here where he fell. Tradition says his mother, noticing the approach of men, stood shading her eyes and saw him fall. Three or four other graves of members of this family were nearby. In the 1850's part of this rock was used for the underpinning of a house still standing, built by Israel Brayton, and in 1888 the remaining portion was blasted for use in the construction of the Reservoir.

Drum Rock in the Apponaug area is a balancing boulder which was the trysting signal and meeting place of the Cowesett Indians and their kindred Narragansetts. It is composed of a long narrow rock teetering atop another boulder, and the hill behind it acted as a sounding board. A ship Captain once heard the rumble off Warwick Point, six miles away. In 1837 villagers collected funds for the preservation of this rock and in 1908 a plate was placed upon it to preserve its historic heritage.

On the King Tom Farm in Charlestown is Coronation Rock where Queen Esther, the last ruler of the Narragansetts, was crowned in 1770. Twenty Indian soldiers with guns marched her to this rock and Indians nearest to the royal blood placed a crown upon her head. It was made of cloth covered with blue and white wampum. As it was placed upon her head the soldiers fired a royal salute and then elevated her to the top of the rock so that all might see her. It is sometimes called Esther's Rock but is marked as Coronation Rock.

Another natural stone monument dedicated to Indian history of the State is Pettaquamscutt Rock overlooking Narrow River several miles south of Saunterstown. Here it was that land transactions were conducted most often, which gave it the name of Treaty Rock as well as Pettaquamscutt Rock.

Among the other Rhode Island rocks affiliated with Indian lore is King Phillip's Chair at Bristol at the top of Mount Hope. It is a hollowed out rock formation where King Phillip is said to have sat while holding council with his tribesmen.

We cannot here in Rhode Island boast of an Old Man of the Mountain as famous as New Hampshire's, but on Route 295 Joseph a Russo, head of Public Works, discovered a rocky profile, which he called the Old Man of Cumberland, on a 20 foot ledge between Diamond Hill and Mendon Rd. You might be interested to be on the lookout for it when traveling that way.

As early as 1819 there is record of an interesting rock on the Post Road between the village of Wickford and East Greenwich known as Devil's Foot Rock for in this rock is a hole in the shape of a human foot 20 inches long --- surely no human foot -- so must have been the Devil's. The rock has other holes in the shape of the human foot but of lesser size. Of other interesting impressions there is one of a dog. But the Devil's Foot impression, of course, prevailed in interest and gave this great rock its name. will the little gitt engendered.

Hannah's Rock, or the Hannah Robinson Rock, on McSparron Hill in South County lies almost at the foot of the Observation Tower at Tower Hill on Route 138. It acquired its name through the tragic romance of the beautiful and talented daughter of a rich Narragansett planter with her tutor in dancing and music, a young Frenchman, Peter Simons. Legend says her lover had signalled her from this rock and that they had held trysts there. Her father violently opposed this romance and all but disowned her when his anger finally drove the young couple to an elopement. But the young husband seeing that Hannah would likely be disinherited, is said to have begun to indulge in his naturally dissipated propensities, which broke Hannah's heart and health. She finally allowed her father to return her to his home. When she reached the rock which held so many memories for her she asked to stop that she might rest for awhile, and from her litter she once more viewed her old home in its broad cultivated fields and sheep meadows, the green hills of South County and the great Atlantic in the distance. She stayed for some time before moving on. It is said that Hannah died the next morning. This piece of real estate in later years was given to the Heritage Foundation of Rhode Island by John H. Wells. A rough lane runs to it from Post Road but in 1966 this spot of romance and natural beauty remained unmarked.

Many a local rock has had its pleasant or tragic associations that have for a time given it a name --- forgotten by later generations.

I often round a busy corner near my home where stands a great rock with modern homes behind it and a commercial strip at the side. To me it is Black Rock, or Dead Man's Rock, for there, I was told as a child, a murder was committed. The event is all but forgotten now by its new neighbors as is the more pleasant memory of a great flat rock in another section where some dear old lady took advantage of its great warm surface to dry her sliced apples to be "laid by" for delicious winter treats. It, too, joined the group of name rocks, some marked and some just memories for a few --- but what memories! Does it start you reminiscing, too?