



## ROGER WILLIAMS FAMILY ASSOCIATION

INCORPORATED 1906

December 1951

No. 21

As your new President I extend greetings and best wishes to all Officers and Members of our Family Association. May the year 1952 be a year of Peace and Good Feeling among all Nations and all People.

A lot has happened since I accepted the gavel on September sixth, last, and I'm happy to say the regular attendance at our meetings is steadily increasing. At the December meeting there were eighty-one present including our

*Honorary President*

MRS. ANNIE STEERE IRONS

Mrs. Irons is the eighth generation from Roger Williams (descended from Mercy Williams.) She was born in the Mohegan village of Burrillville May 19, 1865. She recalls her early days when, "We'd have small parties at each other's home; candy pulls sometimes . . . We'd go sliding in the winter and in May we'd go to the woods looking for arbutus. We'd find big solid blossoms and didn't mind a mile or longer walk to get it."

She liked to visit her Great-grandfather's farm on Sandy Brook Road in Gloucester to watch the grist mill and the stave mill. Mrs. Irons and her brother and three sisters loved to visit their Aunt Lydia, who lived at this farm with Great Grandfather William T. Steere, because Aunt Lydia let them play with a set of toy furniture she possessed. The set, including a one-and-a-half-inch pink wooden table, three upholstered chairs and a love seat, came from the general store in Harmony, Rhode Island.

Mrs. Irons attended the Normal School, then located on Benefit Street in Providence (later became the Rhode Island College of Education). She taught in a one room school in Burrillville before

her marriage April 26, 1886 to Edwin B. Irons of Webster, Massachusetts. She remembers she wore a brown silk dress and a straw bonnet for the simple home ceremony. Mrs. Irons is a member of the Community Church at Pascoag which she joined at the age of eighteen years when it was the Free Will Baptist Church. She is a member of the Steere Family Association of Chepachet and for thirty-four years has been affiliated with Providence Chapter of O. E. S.

Our *Corresponding Secretary*, MRS. CHARLES W. ANTHONY, 23 Oakland Avenue, Cranston, Rhode Island has heard from our

*Honorary Vice President*

MR. FRANK LATHAM BROMLEY

Mr. Frank Latham Bromley (descended from Joseph Williams) of Detroit, Michigan. Mr. Bromley was active in Community life of Bloomfield Hills — served on the City Commission and in the organization and development of the Vaughn Public School. Served as Secretary for nine years of Christ Church, Cranbrook, which although an Episcopal Church was also the Community Church for the district. At the same time he served as Treasurer of the Woodward Avenue Baptist Church in Detroit. He pioneered in making castings for many of the first automobiles, Ford, Buick, Chevrolet, etc.; and at one time had four foundries in Detroit and Flint. At present he is interested in Real Estate.

*Second Honorary Vice President*, MRS. J. H. BOOTH (Bertha Cranston, descended from Freeborn Williams) of Paris, Kentucky. Mrs. Booth was born in Cincinnati, Ohio on August 15, 1866 and was educated at the Woodward High School and Bartlett's Business College. She did secretarial work and for many years taught a Sunday School Class which is now called the Bertha Booth Bible Class. Mr. and Mrs. Booth celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary on March 14, 1950.

*Third Honorary Vice President*, MRS. DWIGHT S. WHITEMORE (Mary Williams, descended from Joseph Williams), 53 West Street, Brockton, Massachusetts. Mrs. Whittemore was born November 18, 1866 in Providence, Rhode Island — daughter of John Spence Williams and wife Enice Hubbard Williams. Mrs. Whittemore married Dr. Dwight S. Whittemore in 1887 and moved to Brockton, Massachusetts where she still makes her home. She is very musical, having taught piano for many years and is Honorary Past President of the Massachusetts Federation of Music Clubs; Past President of Music Lover's Club of Boston and the Mendelssohn Club of Brockton. Also, Mrs. Whittemore is Honorary Past Regent of Deborah Sampson Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution.

*Fourth Honorary Vice President*, MR. OSCAR BECKWITH HARRIS of 28 Harrison Avenue, Lakewood, Rhode Island. (descended from

Mercy Williams — Waterman). Mr. Harris was born February 10, 1868 on Burnside Street in Providence, Rhode Island and remembers attending the early meetings of this Association. During those years Mr. Harris served as Secretary and later as Treasurer of the Roger Williams Family Association. Mr. Harris is still active and is Superintendent of the Highland Cemetery in Lakewood, Rhode Island.

Our *Recording Secretary*, MRS. WINTHROP H. SAUNDERS, 255 Alabama Avenue, Providence, Rhode Island has recorded:

At our October meeting, Mr. Charles Tapley of Boston spoke on "The Heritage of New England." He traced the growth of our country from feeble colonies who settled along the Atlantic sea-board with their struggles for existence, to their rapid expansion across the United States and even beyond the seas. The growth along cultural and economic lines was stressed, as new inventions promoted manufacture and ship building developed commerce the world around. The rock ribbed hills of New England were reflected in the honest, forthright and sturdy character of the New England Yankees who carried these characteristics into all fields of life, near and far.

At our November meeting two of our own members, Miss Faith Shedd and Mrs. Louis Remington told of the fine Old Houses in which they live, one built in 1679 and the other in 1792. These are known as the Walker Houses and except for a very brief period for each homestead, have been occupied by successive generations of Walkers. The old time hand-construction was described, and the houses were built to last. The fact that in one house lives an eleventh generation descendant, while in the other is a sixth generation descendant, attests the sturdy and honest construction of Rhode Island Yankee dwelling houses of the early days.

The December meeting was in the evening at which Mr. and Mrs. Herman Petzold of Methuen, Massachusetts showed slides of their recent trip to Hawaii. These pictures were all in color and showed us the wondrous beauty of the Islands. Mrs. Petzold described the pictures in a most interesting manner.

Our *Treasurer*, MRS. HAROLD C. MACDONALD, Chopmist Hill Road, North Scituate, Rhode Island reported a few members have neglected to mail their dues to her. I know these are trying times and that all are very busy, but please send them before the notices go out in January. It helps us save postage.

The *Registrar*, MRS. CHARLES E. HURDIS, 109 Smithfield Road, North Providence, Rhode Island is very interested in genealogy and ever ready to help in tracing out our ancestral lines. Call on her if you need any assistance, being sure to send to her what you have of all dates and places of births, marriages and deaths, that our files

may be brought up to date. She reports twelve new members so far this year.

MISS ANNE ROELKER KESSLER  
MRS. GLADYS WILLIAM BRAYTON  
MISS LOIS EVELYN STEERE  
MR. JAMES SPAULDING HARDMAN  
MRS. MILDRED PRICE EDMUNDS  
MRS. MARY PRICE SHAW

MR. GEORGE OLNEY STEERE  
MRS. KATHRYN G. STEERE  
MR. CLIFFORD W. BROWN  
MR. WINTHROP H. SAUNDERS  
MRS. WILLIAM P. HALLORAN  
MRS. PAUL R. RYAN

Our *Librarian*, MRS. JOHNSON M. COX, 1196 Cranston Street, Cranston, Rhode Island has arranged a Book Review for our March meeting. Miss Marion Bonner, Librarian at the Arlington Library will review "Diligence in Love" by Daisy Newman. This should prove interesting as the setting is in Westerly, Rhode Island and relates Quaker customs and their influence, thus linking Roger Williams with the Quakers.

Our *Hostess* for the year is MRS. HARRY BEDSON, 285 Woodbine Street, Cranston, Rhode Island who secures the hospitality and refreshment committees for each meeting and has general supervision of the dining room and table settings in the beautiful dining room of the historic "John Brown House." Those of us who attend the meetings appreciate the efforts Mrs. Bedson and her committees are making to entertain us.

Our *Entertainment Chairman* is MRS. HAROLD WILLIAMS, 35 Hodsell Street, Cranston, Rhode Island who introduces the speakers and any special features of our meetings. She welcomes suggestions as to interesting subjects for the monthly meetings and speakers to bring us new ideas or old ones in a new form.

Our *Vice President*, MRS. MYRON HAWKINS, R.F.D. Chepachet, Rhode Island is working on a project which will need the assistance of every member throughout the country. This project is to compile some human interest stories about descendants of Roger Williams. This information, as well as any vital records, family Bible records, family traditions or unwritten history, is the sort of material we want, even though it may seem trivial to you. Please take this as an individual, personal request in order to make this project as complete as possible.

Our *Historian*, MISS EMILY PAINE, 887 Elmwood Avenue, Providence, Rhode Island is most efficient in finding items of births, marriages, deaths and other news accounts in our newspapers referring to the descendants of Roger Williams. All these go into our Scrap Book for preservation and future reference. If you have any thing in this line in your local papers please forward to her. Any such items should be accompanied by name of paper and date. The scrap book is a valuable part of our properties. She has handed me the following information:

---

## IN MEMORIAM

### MRS. MANDILLA MELISSA HUNT

Born January 15, 1855

Died September 30, 1951

Mrs. Hunt was for many years the Honorary President of the Roger Williams Family Association, a title conferred on the oldest living member of the Society.

She always took a lively interest in its activities, and years ago was hostess to the members in her home. She had a keen memory, especially for names and addresses. In paying her dues, she always enclosed a donation for the Sunshine Fund.

Mrs. Hunt was the daughter of Robert and Anna (Clarke) Steere, and married George Hunt. They had no children. Mrs. Hunt was in the ninth generation from Roger Williams, tracing her descent back through his daughter Mary, who married John Sayles. Mrs. Hunt was also a member of the Steere Family Association of Chepachet, Rhode Island.

### MISS LOUISE ADELIA READ

Died February 14, 1951

### MISS ANNA ELIZABETH SESSIONS

Died October 12, 1951

### ARTHUR RICE POTTER

Born January 24, 1874

Died August 23, 1951

Mr. Potter, president of the Roger Williams Family Association from September 1945 to September 1948, was born in Providence, son of William K. and Anna (Rice) Potter. Besides his Roger Williams ancestry, he was also descended from three of the original proprietors of Providence, Thomas Olney, Stukely Westcott and Ezekiel Holyman. Also, from George Potter, one of the founders of Portsmouth, Rhode Island. He was well known in his earlier life as an actor, and for nineteen years played in the Albee Stock Company at the Old Keith Theatre in this city.

In 1902 he married Mrs. Lena Schneider, a native of Switzerland. They had no children. He was more recently engaged in the work of installing and repairing pipe-organs with his brother, Ralph B. Potter. He is also survived by two other brothers, Archibald B. and William K. Potter.

Mr. Potter was in the ninth generation from Roger Williams, being descended from his son Joseph who married Mary Olney.

---

Our *Sunshine Committee*, MRS. CHARLES ROFFEE, 457 Farmington Avenue, Cranston, Rhode Island is busy sending cards and making calls on our members who are ill or shut-in. Please notify her of any member who is ill.

Our *Publicity Committee* this year is MRS. EDWARD COLEMAN, 40 Wesleyan Avenue, Providence, Rhode Island.

Our *Chaplain* is MISS BESSIE PAINE, 887 Elmwood Avenue, Providence, Rhode Island.

Our *Directors*, MRS. HOWARD W. STEERE, Gleaner Chapel Road, North Scituate, Rhode Island, and MISS CLARA P. DYER, Box 204, Olneyville Station, Rhode Island, as well as two other members, are preparing to entertain us at the February meeting. Their topic will be "Interesting Old Houses in Rhode Island."

You may be interested in the following description of Roger Williams home in Salem, sent in by Mrs. Charles W. Anthony.

#### ROGER WILLIAMS HOME IN SALEM

Salem was founded by Gov. Endicott in 1628, in the midst of the wilderness. One year later there were six houses and in 1632 there were but 40 families. However, in 1634 people came from other vicinities and it began to flourish. In this year Roger Williams built a large and commodious house, second only to the one built for the Governor. Roger's house was built on the western corner of Essex and North Streets, known in the annals of Salem witchcraft as the "Witch House." This house was altered in 1746 and repaired, a new roof built, the back part of the house raised to two stories and the porch taken away. It was still standing at the close of the last century.

A Mr. Upham made a report on the history of this remarkable house to the Essex Institute and stated: "The original rooms measure as follows: Eastern room on the first floor 18 x 21½ ft; room over it 20 x 21½ ft; western room on first floor 16½ x 18 ft; room over it 16 x 20 ft. The chimney is 8 x 12 ft. Within the spacious fireplaces were formerly placed huge logs, the ruddy blaze of which diffused light and heat, and contributed to the cheerfulness of the groups so often gathered beneath the hospitable roof to hear the gifted Williams tell of his eatly trials in Old England, and to discuss the duties of magistrates, and the power of the law over the "first table." In each of the eastern rooms three stout hewn timbers, one foot in thickness, of solid oak, so hard that a nail breaks on their unyielding surface, cross the ceiling. Two like timbers cross the ceilings of the western rooms. The line of the old roof is plainly visible on the eastern face of the chimney in the garret, and shows that the pitch of the roof

was very steep. The only part of the house which retains its original appearance is the western part of the front on Essex Street with its projecting upper story. The bricks covered with clay, with which its sides were originally filled, still remain, giving evidence that there was at first no plastering. Just west of the house was the owner's ten acre lot or cornfield."

Mr. Upham closes his report as follows: "Here then, within these very walls, lived that remarkable and truly heroic man, who, in his devotion to the principle of free conscience, and liberty of religious belief, untrammelled by civil power, penetrated in midwinter the depths of an unknown wilderness to seek a new home; a home which he could find only among savages, whose respect for the benevolence and truthfulness of his character made them then, and ever afterwards, his constant friends. From this spacious and pleasant mansion, he fled through the deep snow of a New England forest, leaving his wife and young children to the care of Providence, whose silent "voice," speaking thru the conscience was his only support and guide. The State which he founded may ever look back with a just pride upon the history of Roger Williams."

---

Through this bulletin you have been introduced to the new officers and may well recognize the efforts being made on their part to fulfill our obligations as set forth in our charter; "Honoring and preserving the memory of Roger Williams, the preparation and preservation of an authentic genealogy of his descendants, and the promotion of friendship and social intercourse among them."

MRS. CLIFFORD W. BROWN  
*President*