



THE LANDMARK

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Affiliate Associations

Preservation Society of Pawtucket ♦ Great Road Historical District

SAVE THESE DATES

Wed. evening March 10
7:00 PM

Al Klyberg will talk on
*One Hundred Years of
Rhode Island State Parks*

Sunday afternoon, April 18
1:30 PM

Dan Bethel, Lincoln resident &
noted collector

Blackstone Valley Ephemera

Featuring calendars from Arnold's
Bakery, milk bottles, maps, bottle
caps, and much more

Sunday afternoon, May 16
1:30 PM

**Blackstone Valley Historical
Society Elections**

And a talk by
Ranger Chuck Arning of the
National Park Service

All Events at North Gate Toll House 1873
Old Louisquisset Pike (Rte 246) Lincoln, RI

Al Klyberg will speak from his recent book highlighting 100 years of RI State Park System Wed. March 10, 7 PM North Gate Upstairs Hall

Wednesday, March 10 at 7 pm the story of the 100 Years of Parks will be the subject of a talk at the Blackstone Valley Historical Society. The Society will meet in the upstairs hall at its headquarters, North Gate, at 1873 Old Louisquisset Pike (Rt. 246) near the junction of Wilbur Road in Lincoln, adjacent to Route 146.

In 1909 on Abraham Lincoln's Birthday at the Hearthside Mansion in Lincoln, the Rhode Island State Park System was born. The newly formed Metropolitan Park Commission purchased Lincoln Woods. A hundred years later, the Rhode Island State Park System numbers 123 sites and 60,000 acres of public recreation areas. From bike-ways and beaches, ball fields and woodlands, the purpose of the park system has been to provide the average Rhode Islander the same scenic vistas and outdoor advantages available to the wealthiest country club member and sportsman among us.

Albert T. Klyberg will speak from his recently published history of state parks. Klyberg, Director Emeritus of the Rhode Island Historical Society, has been a seasonal park ranger at the Captain Wilber Kelly House Museum

Beavertail State Parks • Brenton Point State Parks • Blackstone River Bikeway • Blackstone River Visitor Center • Burlingame State Park and Campground • Charlestown Breachway • Colt State Park • Dame Farm • East Bay Bike Path • East Beach • East Matunick State Beach • Fisherman's State Park • Fort Adams State Park • Fort Wetherill State Park • Goddard State Park • Hanes Memorial State Park • John H. Chafee Nature Preserve • Lincoln Woods State Parks • Misquamicut State Beach • Roger Wheeler State Beach • Salty Brine State Beach • Scarborough State Beach Complex • Snake Den State Park

How many of these Rhode Island State Parks and sites have you visited?

on the bikeway of the Blackstone River State Park in Lincoln during its first seven years. Klyberg was also the manager who opened the Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket a dozen years ago and has been intimately involved in the design of the

RI State Parks (Cont'd on Page 2)

Big Idea of Blackstone Valley History #4: The Crucial Role of Transportation

Throughout history there's a commonplace assumption that business developments took place along rivers because, in the days before trucks, trains, and planes, rivers were a natural aid to moving goods and services. It's a surprise of history, therefore, that the

Blackstone River itself was a hindrance to commerce and trade, but nonetheless became America's first industrial success story.

The very element that hindered transportation: a swift, one-way flow over

rapids and waterfalls was a key ingredient to water power to run machines. It meant, however, there had to be other means to bring raw supplies to the mills along its banks and to take away the products they made.

Big Idea (Cont'd on Page 2)

proposed Heritage Harbor Museum in Providence. More recently he served as Vice President of the Blackstone Valley Historical Society.

The evolution of the 'people's park story', from a ring of parks on the periphery of Providence linked by scenic parkways radiating out from the city to the buffet of beaches along our Atlantic coastline, has been a long time interest of his.

For directions go to the BVHS website at www.bvhsri.org.

BVHS Member Marian Sherman Celebrates 100 Years

As a child, and the only girl with nine brothers, **Marian Sherman** was a tomboy. She still loves to tell tales of her adventures from playing in the quarry on Diamond Hill Road to picking wild mushrooms in the fall.

Her memories span time: Silent movies at the Stadium Theater; getting electricity and inside plumbing, trolleys, surviving the depression.

Still living in her 1914 family home near Sherman Avenue - named after her family - she fondly remembers a time gone by when "everyone knew everyone else."



Photo Courtesy of Bruce McCabe

Blackstone Valley Historical Society receives \$15,000 bequest from Saylesville native Virginia L. Duke

A bequest of \$15,000 from the late Virginia L. Doris to the Blackstone Valley Historical Society will preserve her historical research files on Rhode Island history while enabling the Society to transfer its library to a safer and more accessible facility.

Mrs. Doris, a native of the Saylesville section of Lincoln, spent a good deal of her life challenging the conventional accounts of Rhode Island history and through diligence and perseverance caused many under-represented stories to see the light of day. The body of her work is preserved in more than thirty-five archival boxes now at the Blackstone Valley Historical Society. Instead of residing in the cramped second floor library room of the North Gate Toll House that is now more than 200 years old, her collection and the rest of the Society's research holdings will be housed in the adjacent historic Lime Rock Fire Station, with proper steel shelving, atmospheric controls, and building security.

Mrs. Doris, a local fashion model and compulsive writer of letters to the editor of area papers for more than fifty years died at the age of 90 in her home at Governor Francis Farms, Warwick at the end of 2008.

Among the local stories she documented was the Blackstone Valley contribution to World War II embodied in the manufacture of an anti-

aircraft cannon. The American Oerlikon Gun was the chief defense against air attack for Liberty Ships, the vital cargo carriers of World War II. Parts for 23,000 of these weapons were machined at various locations throughout the Valley and test fired at a special range at Diamond Hill before being turned over to the U.S. Navy. The business office for this secret operation was 100 Fountain Street in Providence. The inventor behind this weapon was an Austrian refugee by the name of Antoine Gazda, who was met in New York by William Slater Allen, a descendent of Samuel Slater, and brought to Rhode Island, much the same way Samuel Slater was recruited to Rhode Island by Moses Brown to start the textile industry over 200 years ago.

As a draftsman at AOG, Mrs. Doris was in on the ground floor of history, and she assembled the particulars fifty years after the war to make sure the story was not lost. Her collection, which includes many salutes to the American Bicentennial Celebration of 1976, will be at the Blackstone Valley Historical Society.

Her bequest insures that the other collections of the Society, including a recently revived collection of Slater Family Papers will be better preserved for future researchers. The library rehousing will take place later this spring and into the summer.

Big Idea (Cont'd from Page 1)

For the most part because the lands along the river were stony and sandy, there were few farms on the banks and floodplains and little by way of roads or paths there before the mills arrived. The farms were largely on the hilltops overlooking the river. Mill owners, therefore, not only had to tame the river by dams, erect mills and supporting villages but also had to provide ways to connect their enterprise to the outside world. Toll roads in the form of turnpikes was one answer; the period of 1795 to the 1830s saw a series of these pay-as-you-go roads, mostly spokes into the hinterland, with the port town of Providence as the hub.

A more specific Blackstone enterprise was the canal between Worcester and Providence, built over three years from 1825 to 1828 by Irish workers drawn directly from the just completed Erie Canal. The Blackstone's forty-eight locks raised and lowered boats hauling nearly thirty tons of goods up and down the 430 feet of height separating the two towns, connecting the nearly fifty mill villages along the 45 mile waterway. The round trip consumed four days.

In 1847, when the new Providence and Worcester Railroad accomplished the same feat in four or five hours, without the concerns of high, low, or frozen water, the fate of the canal was sealed. Half a century later, electric trolley cars further wove a web of connections, and by the 1920's autos, buses, and trucks made the network even tighter.