



THE LANDMARK

PUBLICATION OF THE BLACKSTONE VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Vol. 57

May

No. 9

Continuing the Tradition ~ Preserving Our History

bvhsri.org ♦ 1873 Old Louisissett Pike (Rte 246) ♦ PO Box 125, Lincoln RI, 02865

Please
Join
Us ...

Sunday, May 21— North Gate

Annual Meeting
1:30 P.M. Downstairs

5th Annual Christine Nowak Lecture
2 P.M. Upstairs

Featuring Dr. Gail Mohanty
Technology, Industrialization and the Landscape

Nomination Slate

The following slate of officers for the executive board is presented by the Nominating Committee for the Annual Election to be held on May 21, 2017 at Norq th Gate.

Nomination will also be taken from the floor at the Annual Meeting, May 21, 2017.

President:	Jason Dionne
Vice President:	Lori Melucci
Secretary:	Francine Jackson
Treasurer:	John Houghton
Director:	Gail Harris
Director:	Bob Ferri
Director:	Don Coelho

Respectfully,
Pat Armitage
Chair, Nominating Committee

Dr. Mohanty is a native Rhode Islander who returned to the state in 1990, working at Slater Mill Historic Site initially and then turned to teaching in 2001. She is currently an Adjunct Faculty member in the History and Social Studies Department at Bryant University and Senior Lecturer, Liberal Arts at the Rhode Island School of Design.



Her talk will trace the changes from the late 18th century through the first half of the 20th century using a series of landscape paintings as evidence of changes to the environment. These changes were incorporated into visual arts and the concept of the ideal began to change.



During the Great Migration, the availability of land in the New World and its seemingly untamed character had driven a majority of the population to acquire land, clear it of trees, and create various kinds of fields and farm. In this way, they had attempted to duplicate what was familiar and prized in their homeland.



By the 18th century, these transplanted European residents had continued to idealize the pastoral landscape and artists depicted the results in paint and print. By the end of the 18th century, a more diverse economy began to be developed including some manufacturing and mining. By the first half of the 19th century the introduction of built elements to the environment were also incorporated into visual art and the conceptualization of the ideal began to change.



The Blackstone Valley Historical Society Remembers the later, great Al Klyberg

I have been at an incredible loss for words when it comes to saying goodbye to our dearest friend, Al Klyberg. I will forever appreciate how encouraging he was to me through my journey as a board member of BVHS. Al was always there to help any of us with answers to questions we may have had. I will miss his lectures in the upstairs hall at North Gate.

I will miss receiving his annual Christmas card in the mail.

Al was just an outstanding, inspirational, smart, kind and, let us not forget, funny human being. He would always show us we need not forget our sense of humor especially when dealing with challenges.

BVHS expresses its sincerest condolences to Al's wife, Beverly, daughter, Kimberly and son, Kevin. To the most humble, kind, wise man that lived on a Canal in the Village of Quinnville, we bid you farewell.

- Jason Dionne, President

I first met Al Klyberg when I became involved at the BVHS. I always enjoyed hearing Al talk about our town and the states history.

Our local Blackstone Valley area is now a popular field trip destination for local students. Most recently, Al spear-headed an idea to build a space for the students waiting to enter the Wilbur-Kelly House Museum. This space would be a replication of a barn that once stood on the property of the property. We are excited to have been given a grant to make this vision of this barn a reality.

My father and others worked hard to protect and preserve the Blackstone Valley in the 1960's. Al's wish was to recognize and pay tribute to these gentlemen, and as a result a plaque will be hung in commemoration of their work.

I will miss Al and will always remember his very dry sense of humor. Especially the smirk he would give me when he cracked a joke.

-John Houghton, Vice President



Al was one of the cornerstones of the recovery of BVHS starting in 2006. When I took on the responsibilities of president in 2006 after BVHS hit a bad patch, Al agreed to be vice president and resident agent. I knew little about the history of the Blackstone Valley but with his help I began to be more knowledgeable. I guess you could say he was my "wingman".

He was instrumental in guiding the renovation of the Buckley Museum building into a state of the art archival storage area. From applying for the grant money and ensuring the bequest which came with the Virginia Doris Collection to acquisitions of the Lysander Flagg Museum material. He also oversaw the volunteer internship of Sharon Zagorsky, a Tufts University museum studies student, who completed the first comprehensive inventory of the archives. There were many other things he did, too numerous to mention.

He was our "go to historian". He helped us envision new goals for the future of BVHS. Without his guidance and gift of time, BVHS would not be where it is today.

But most of all he was a friend.

-Pat Armitage, Past President



There was no one who could talk about history like Al—when he talked, the topic immediately became exciting. Ideas and insights burst into your head as he spoke. He said it was because he often had to present ideas and catch people's interest quickly, so he honed his skill. But I think it was more than that. Listening to Al, history became fascinating. He knew everything you could think to ask about, and he never stopped learning. I hadn't been at BVHS very long when Francine Jackson was talking about the 1853 train wreck in Valley Falls. Al showed us a ledger in the BVHS archives with a list of the insurance payments to the survivors. We got inspired, walked the train tracks, did some research, and created an exhibit. And that was just the beginning.

Al left the board of BVHS in 2013 when Jason finished his first year as President. He wrote a history of the Civilian Conservation Corps in Rhode Island. He worked to get the Kelly House barn restored for school groups. He started the Heritage Harbor Foundation. But he was always involved, always there to help, and he told us he had confidence in us. We are fortunate to have known a truly great man. I will miss him very much.

As the author of *Louisquisset: the Quest for the "meeting place,"* and the presentation of the Nowak lecture In May 2015 about this topic, I can say that this would not have happened without Al. He was my mentor in this research, my guide and "professor" as I plunged into early RI history. His goal was to have this project and others combined in a book eventually. I hope that may come to pass as it would be a tribute to him.

In addition to having the pleasure of getting to know Al, my wife and I enjoyed a conversation we had with him one day when I returned a book that I had borrowed on the Nipmuc Indians. This encounter turned out to reveal a rare coincidence. Al asked for my wife's name which is Joan Chandler Harvey. He seemed to be interested in that and asked where she came from explaining that he grew up in Hackensack, NJ. My wife said that she knew it well as her father was a minister there. And then, a surprise amazed us all. When Al was in elementary school there, he informed us, his school had a fire and he and some of his classmates were provided space in Joan's father's church. Al said, "I remember Rev. Chandler. He gave us classrooms in his church!" Now, that was a long time ago; but, he remembered and warmed our hearts in the process.

-David Harvey, BVHS member

Al's son, Kevin, gave such a wonderful eulogy on his Dad. I had to smile and chuckle to myself when he described how Al would all of a sudden get that "twinkle" in his eyes and the grin would appear and he would give forth one of his great one-liners (and more) on almost any subject. When Al left the board, I so much missed his sense of humor and mostly his patience. After coming on board at BVHS, we had our first open house. Al arrived, plunked down a card table, put over it a table cloth and put on his straw hat. That day we had maybe 25 people and everyone who stopped at Al's table were warmly greeted and given a warm dose of history and thanks for coming. His enthusiasm was contagious. Whenever I needed advice or help with a project (think Champlin), he always quickly responded with a plethora of background information, suggestions, encouragement and support. Al -- my "Mr. History" a treasured friendship. I am one of the lucky ones!

-Gail Harris, BVHS Board Member



Flagging activities are coming this month and that promises a lot more drive-bys and visits to the yards that we have worked so hard to recover and transcribe in the last couple of years. In Pawtucket, I will be working with 4 schools and flagging 3 cemeteries with approximately 250 Jr and Sr High City students. We should be flagging over 1500 gravesites. I also have an essay contest with the same students asking why Veterans are important to them and the top essay from each school will be read at our Memorial Day event downtown. I strongly encourage any of the readers of this newsletter to get involved if they can in any flagging events near them.



Oak Grove Cemetery Project



Millville Cemetery Project



Oak Grove Cemetery Project

By the time this goes to print, the Millville, Mass group of youth and adult volunteers from New Hope Baptist will have completed their second workday at the “Old Cemetery” on Rt. 122. It is truly exciting to see ripples continue to spread from our original work in Pawtucket, 6 years ago.

Last Saturday the Pawtucket DPW finally brought in a backhoe to Oak Grove Cemetery and we were finally able to place back “upright” many massive and thick markers that were too weight prohibitive to tackle by hand. There is a promise of another work day there soon.

That same morning we had a dozen retired Police and Fire Vets come out for the second year and do an extensive grounds cleaning and some needed repair work on winter damaged markers at Mineral Spring Avenue Vet Cemetery, where many of our Civil War warriors are laid to rest. After Memorial Day and all the flagging is done, we will have a large swath of available yards to return to and I really hope to tackle the Ballou Cemetery (Ln 5) and Lincoln 6 and 7 which are encircled and cut off by Rt. 295.

As always I deeply appreciate the material and labor support of the work and our FaceBook sites by BVHS and you our Community...Please feel free to contact myself, John Houghton and Peter Sarazin with ideas and questions...Thank you all!



Mineral Spring Cemetery retired police and fire fighters who volunteered to clean-up.

**Ken was also recently nominated by the Attleboro Historical Commission to receive a Historic Preservation Award!
The Ceremony was May 8 at Attleboro City Hall.
Congratulations, Ken!**

*In November 2015 BVHS voted to aid Ken Postle in his efforts to uncover lost cemeteries.
Donations to help him in his mission can be submitted to BVHS.*

In our February Newsletter, we began a three part story by Dave W. Harvey, speculating on the origins of the name Harvey the Rabbit. We pre-gamed, with a scene from the movie which he references.
Reference your last issue and save this issue so you can look back our February and April editions.

What do we know for sure? Mary Chase, the author of *Harvey*, copyrighted her play in 1943 after two years of writing it under the title *The White Rabbit*. One year later in 1944 she copyrighted it again under the title *Harvey*. The play was first produced at the 48th Street Theater in New York on November 1, 1944. Frank Fay originated the role of Elwood P. Dowd. So, is it possible that Fay during the previous year of production and rehearsal had something to say about the naming of the white rabbit? We will never know. But, my father had a good story. He did not waiver from the belief that Fay had something to do with the naming and that his encounters with Fay in the early 1920's was the catalyst. Fantasy thinking on his part? Probably. But, why not? The whole play is a fantasy about an invisible rabbit that has provided millions of people with laughs and keen observations on life. One of my favorite lines in the play is Elwood's response to Dr. Sanderson who says to him, "We have to face reality, Dowd, sooner or later." Elwood says, "Dr. I wrestled with reality for 35 years, and I am happy to state that I finally won out over it." I enjoyed revisiting this little piece of family lore which over time has become our legend. Thanks to Sue for suggesting to me that I write it up. And to Joan who is always a good critic. But, most importantly, I want to thank Harvey who whispered in my ear along the way with encouraging words and pleasant comments. He said to me more than once that my father was a very nice man and he agrees with him that Fay had a say in selecting his name. Hey, I think I would go along with that. If you have not read the Play recently or at all, I recommend it highly. It is full.

Notes

1. The word Pooka comes from old Irish folklore. A pooka is a fairy spirit in animal form, always large and appears here and there and now and then to this one and that one. It is mischievous but not malevolent. It is benign and from Celtic mythology and especially fond of social outcasts. (Harvey Pooka.com)
2. Mary Chase received a Pulitzer Prize for *Harvey* in 1944-45. The play in its original engagement ran for 1175 performances the third longest running play at the time in Broadway history. James Stewart got the part of Elwood over Fay in the 1951 film. The reason for this has to do with Frank Fay.
3. Frank Fay. He was considered the first stand-up comedian and pioneered the art form. He did away with props and was emulated by Jack Benny, Milton Berle, Bob Hope and others. He was also a notorious racist. In June of 2014 Kliph Nesteroff published an article called the Fascist Stand-up Comic. In it he detailed Fay's life which seemed to be driven by his anti-Semitism. Fay was not liked or rather he was hated by his fellow comedians. One reason was the Madison Square Garden event in January 1946 when thousands of white supremacists gathered in support of Franco, Mussolini and Hitler, their fallen hero. According to Nesteroff the event was called "The Friends of Frank Fay."

Fay was very smart but his career was declining. He was a bigot.

Married to Barbara Stanwyck, when she became famous the marriage ended after 2 or 3 years. In 1944 he was given a chance to resurrect his career that had become stagnant; he was cast in the role of Elwood Dowd in *Harvey*. But after that January 1946 Garden event he was washed up in the "business" and the movie role in *Harvey* was given to Jimmy Stewart in 1951.

(Reference our previous issues for complete story.)

This concludes Dave W. Harvey's story, "A Family Legend".

We are currently renting North Gate!

Call John at (401) 651-6463
or visit bvhsri.org
for more information



Francine is on the radio..

*Tune in to WPMI at 9:35 A.M on the
4th Thursday of the Month*

**You can submit your
stuff!**

Do you have a story to include in the
Landmark newsletter?

Submit it to BVHS and we'll do our best
to print it.

bvhs58@gmail.com

Upcoming events

May 21
1:30—2:00 P.M.
North Gate

Notice of Annual Meeting and Election of
Officers

May 21
2:15 P.M.
North Gate

**Annual Chris Nowak Memorial Lecture
Gail Mohanty**

Adjunct Professor of History and Social
Sciences at Bryant University

Lecture: Technology and the Landscape

June 28
6:30 P.M.
Cogswell Tower

BVHS on the go!

Bob Ferri will lead a group tour of the Cogswell
Tower in Central Falls

If you know someone who
hasn't been receiving their
Landmark newsletter, please
let Pat know.

Call (401) 737 6229

E-mail bvhs58@gmail.com

BVHS EXECUTIVE BOARD

President: Jason Dionne

401-862-4202

Email: jhdio70@gmail.com

Vice President: John Houghton
Secretary: Francine Jackson
Treasurer: Lori Melucci

Members-at-Large

Gail Harris, Bob Ferri



Like us on Facebook

Visit us at www.bvhsri.com