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Continuing the Tradition ~ Preserving Our History

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

All Spring Events Cancelled at BVHS

All spring events at BVHS have been canceled due to the COVID-19 epidemic. The Cemetery Conservation Workshop on April 8, the talk by Charlotte Taylor, RIHPHC, on April 19 and the Christine Nowak lecture by Morgan Grefe, RIHS, have been cancelled. We hope to reschedule all at a later date. We will re-schedule the annual meeting later this year.

Everyone stay safe!

Remembering the Paramount Line Greeting Card Company

*By Francine Jackson.
Photographic research by
Jim Hendrickson*

A building that was an important part of my life, and the lives of many in the community for many years went up in flames Saturday, March 14, 2020. Paramount Line, the oldest, and for most of its existence, the second largest greeting card company in America (after Hallmark) was located at 400 Pine Street in Pawtucket for many years. First begun in 1918 by the Markoff family in Providence, the 1875 brick building on Pine Street became home to the company in the 1950s.

Of all the factories in the area, Paramount was



Paramount Greeting Card Publishers
Photo courtesy of the Pawtucket Public Library

the only one that had a department exclusively for students. The Conveyor Belt Assembly (CBA) was devoted to placing seasonal—especially Christmas—cards in their boxes. The first person on the belt set down the bottom of the box. The next two would

count cards in two groups of 12, one placing the set straight up in the box, the other upside down; then came the envelope pack, followed by the top card, making a box of 25 cards. The next person would close the box, followed by those at the end who

would collect the boxes, to be brought downstairs for packaging and sales.

A big change came in the late '60s, when a "shrink pack" machine was wheeled to the end of the conveyor, which made packs of six boxes, for ease of handling; it also created a new department, exclusively for the sale and shipping for the holiday season. This department was largely staffed by student workers. Also, if, during a school year there was a week off, or for the summer vacation, all students were welcomed back. There was always work for them. Paramount paid for many students' high school and college tuition. (continued on p. 2)

Remembering the Paramount Line Greeting Card Company



Abandoned Paramount Factory in 2016
Photographed by Jay Juliano, pictures from his photographic blog:
<http://www.journeysthroughlens.com/>

(Continued from p. 1)
One of the best parts of working there was, surprisingly, the administration. Led by President Jimmy Winston, who knew everyone in the building by name, and Julian Flamand, floor supervisor, anyone who was seen to be a good worker was welcome to stay as long they liked. After college, some of us who could not get jobs in our declared fields were encouraged to stay; perhaps

becoming part of the folding department, or order filling; several men worked their way up from floor walkers to management. And there was rarely a discouraging word heard from any workers; we all were part of a family, with one goal in mind: To make the best greeting cards.

Sometimes, if there was a bit of slow time, the management, especially Julian, would show off some of the features

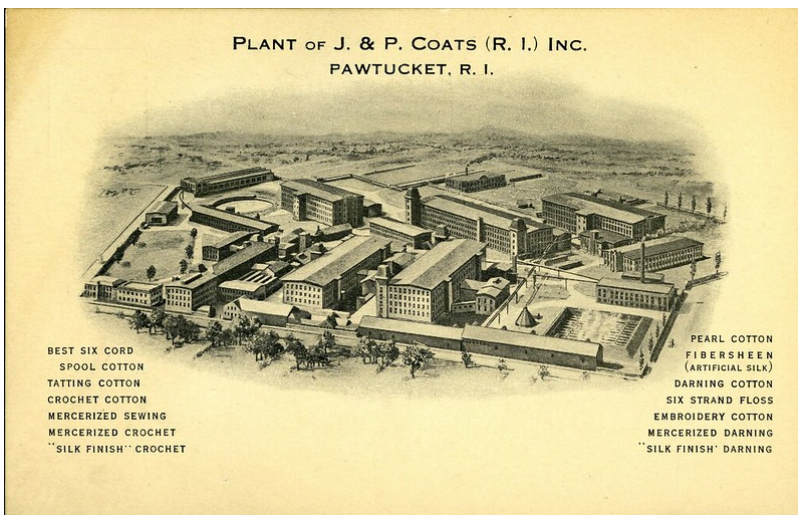
of the 19th century building, indicating the incredible workmanship in making a structure as perfect as it was: The location of the metal – not wood – pillars that handled the power wheel; the structures that allowed the weight of the cutting machines; the air mechanism for the flock – the miniscule pieces that would make a card “fluffy” – that could easily get into your skin without being blown off.

One of the saddest moments of my life – even though I wasn’t working there anymore – was hearing that Paramount, after affiliating with a Canadian company, was moving the entire plant to Canada, and leaving that beautiful old building empty. To learn that the company had declared bankruptcy a year later was heartbreaking. A company that was so

important for so many people, not only leaving, but gone within so short a time. It felt like a betrayal to the economy of the area.

Now even the building is gone. An alarm call in the middle of the night, followed by dozens of responding police and fire fighters, couldn’t save the historic structure. It is now just another of many old buildings that could have stood proudly for at least another century, brought down by negligence and inactivity instead of being reclaimed for other businesses or housing. Too many buildings have already gone the way of the Paramount building; there must be some way to keep the remaining 19th century structures alive.

Paramount went out of business in 2006. It was located in part of the former J. P. Coates/Conant Thread complex. The Pawtucket Library has photos at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/pawtucketlibrary/sets/72157670089563146/>.



The J & P Coates Complex, courtesy of the Pawtucket Public Library



Paramount on March 27, 2020, Photograph by Susan Clarke

Volunteers make discoveries at the Bernon/St. James Cemetery



The newly discovered fence

The exciting restoration work at the Bernon/St. James Cemetery on Logee Street in Woonsocket continues. Last January, Greg Duhamel made a wonderful discovery: a cemetery plot map of the cemetery as of March 26, 1842, which should be helpful this year.

This March the volunteer group has been able to uncover more stones, and do some clean up and repairs.

On March 14, Duhamel with Johnelle Bergeron, Bing Kubaska and Aidan did some chainsaw work and found two headstones, 1 footstone, 3 bases and a large piece of the lost wrought iron fence, located after receiving a tip from Steve Perrault. On March 25, they located the gravestone of Zoa Tripp under a fallen dead tree in the

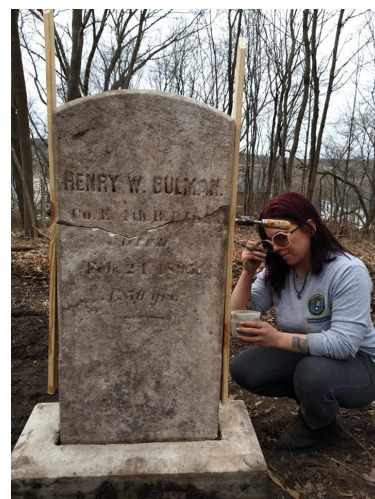
Lever and Tripp plot. A few days later, Connor G. Keen of KEEN Tree Service saw their plea for help for experienced chainsaw people, and came to help out. He took down a massive dead tree. Duhamel, Bergeron, Kubaska, and Zachary Cote, dug, cleaned and did repairs. The stone of Captain Ichabod Allen from the War of 1812 and several other stones were uncovered and photographed.

They were planning a big clean up on May 2. Hopefully this can take place; please check the Facebook posts if you are interested.

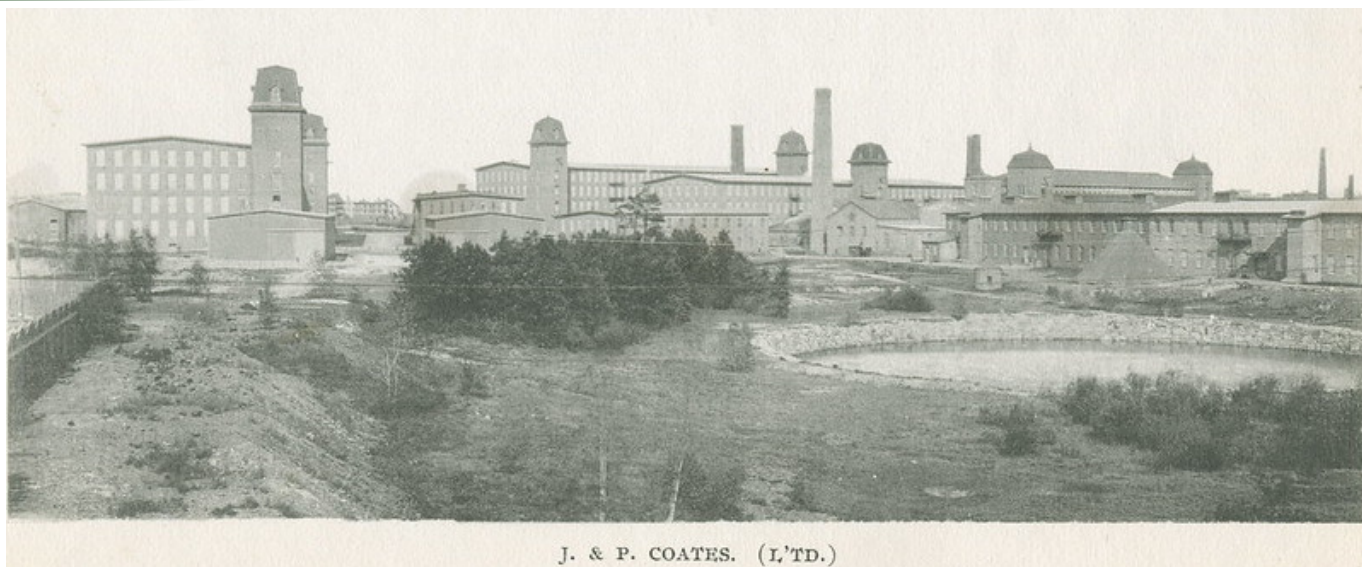
Please see the Facebook Group River Road and Blackstone River Valley Cemeteries for more about their discoveries. Photographs are courtesy of Greg Duhamel and are from the Facebook page.



Uncovering buried stone



Johnelle Bergeron repairs stone



J. & P. COATES. (I,TD.)

The factory complex in its heyday. J. P. Coates Ltd, Dart and Bigelow, 1897, courtesy of the Pawtucket Public Library
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/pawtucketlibrary/27876638195/in/album-72157670089563146/>

Renovation Work Continues at Northgate



New furnaces installed at the end of February



Front stairs



Upper landing floor stripped and refinished

Thanks to the Champlin grant that BVHS received last December, Dupuis Oil installed new furnaces for Northgate in February. The grant was for

replacing the furnaces and renovating the bathrooms. Thanks again to Gail Harris for all her work on the grant application. Thanks to both

Gail and to John Houghton for getting all of this work done.

This week, John has been getting the stairs refinished. This work

was not part of the grant.

We are looking forward to everyone seeing them finished when we can reopen. (Photographs by John Houghton)

In Memoriam: Gloria Turner



Gloria Turner

Gloria Turner, a member of BVHS from 1986 until her death, passed away on January 11,

2020. She was part of a group of dedicated women, including Ann Buckley, Hope Boott, Ida McDermott, and Jennie Hedberg, who were the backbone of BVHS during the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. She served as hospitality chair from 2006 to 2012.

Even after she was not able to come to gatherings, she continued to support BVHS, and she will be greatly missed.

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