



# THE LANDMARK

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*Continuing the Tradition ~ Preserving Our History*

[bvhsri.org](http://bvhsri.org) ♦ 1873 Old Louisquisset Pike (Rte 246) ♦ PO Box 125, Lincoln RI, 02865

## See Providence as it looked in 1810 Early 19th-century theatrical artifact brings history to life



Restorers working on the Drop-scene in 2018. The image is courtesy of RIHS.

Richard Ring, the Deputy Executive Director for Collections & Interpretation at the Rhode Island Historical Society, is coming on February 19 to talk about the RIHS's Drop Scene Project. The RIHS's Theater Drop-Scene is the earliest known surviving American theater backdrop.

The backdrop features a panoramic view of Providence from the base of Federal Hill looking east, painted by John Worrall in about 1809-1810. John Worrall (ca. 1783–September 14, 1825), was a scenery painter who had worked in Boston. It was made for the first theater in Providence, which was located at the

corner of Westminster and Mathewson, a spot currently occupied by Grace Church. In the [RIHS news article](#) about the project, they wrote, "In the early 1790s, Boston was resistant to the establishment of theaters, but the people of Rhode Island were more receptive, and it was agreed to allow a permanent theater to be built in Providence." John Brown gave the lot for the theater, and subscribed for seven shares of the company. The theater opened in 1795. The Historical Society acquired the drop-scene in 1833, soon after the theater was demolished and the land

sold to the Grace Church Corporation. It is the largest graphic image of Providence in their collection.

The RIHS has been engaged in a massive project to restore and make available this image of Providence, and it has taken four years, from 2018 to 2022. The drop scene was first cleaned and then conservation work was done by Curtains Without Borders. Then Artopia Giclée of Stoneham, Mass. took 76 digital photographs of the scene and put them together. The image was then digitally retouched using existing visual information, and printed onto large pieces of heavy

**2:00 p.m. Sunday,  
February 19**  
**Talk by Richard Ring,  
RIHS**

art paper at 1/4 scale for the artist to work on. The artist physically painted areas of the image that were difficult to repair digitally. The photographer then shot the painted prints and put them together to make a restored digital image for display and interactive use. We can see again what Providence looked like in 1810. [Read the full article about the Drop-Scene Project](#), and come on Sunday, February 19 to learn all about it.

**Most events are free.  
Everyone is welcome.  
Donations are gratefully accepted.**

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**2:00 pm Sunday, February 19: Richard Ring**, RIHS, will give a talk on the Drop-Scene Project.

**2:00 pm Sunday, March 19: Bob Kynch** will speak about the Narragansett Park Race Track. Mr. Kynch was unable to make his presentation in October, and in his place, Francine Jackson showed a short film by Jim Dooley about the race track.

**2:00 pm Sunday, April 16: Jim Bailey** will speak about his research and his upcoming book about Captain Henry Every, the pirate.

**1:30 pm Sunday, May 21: Annual Meeting and talk by Kevin Klyberg**, Blackstone River Valley National Historic Park Ranger.

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## Bob Ferri Rides the Rails



The new Pawtucket-Central Falls Transit Station opened for service on January 23. Photograph by John Houghton

By Francine Jackson

Board member Bob Ferri, as a representative of Central Falls, was invited to join in one of the first scheduled stops at the new Pawtucket-Central Falls Transit Hub on January 23. Although a train did stop at 4:21 am, it was the 9:18 that carried many of our elected officials, city, state and federal, who had made the 6-minute ride from Providence to cut the ribbon on the new facility at 300 Pine St. in Pawtucket.

Twenty years in the making, the new transit hub was a result of a collaboration between RIDOT,

RIPTA, the cities of Central Falls and Pawtucket, and the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA). Although Amtrak will not stop at the station, it did play a role, allowing construction to continue along its corridor.

At present, the MBTA is planning on having 40 stops at the new station during the week, and 18 on weekends. The large parking area can accommodate over 100 cars. RIPTA will allow those with monthly MBTA train passes to ride RIPTA buses at no cost.

The celebrated new

transit hub signals a return to a mode of transport through the Blackstone Valley that had finally shut down in 1981, although the station closed in 1959. (Passengers accessed the tracks by staircase.)

Of course, the new station does not bode well for the original Beaux Arts train station that has been allowed to stand unused since 1959. There have been [videos](#) made on its tragic history, as it just falls to ruin.

With new interest in commuter rail traffic in the area, perhaps

we should look to returning to it and doing our best to attempt to bring the building back, not, of course, as a train stop, but as a remembrance of days gone by. Many of us remember going there to ride the "Zoo Train," nonstop to the Bronx Zoo. In decades past, this was the only easy way to travel to sites such as this. Perhaps there should be a concerted effort to at least keep the building from any more decay.

See an article on the original Pawtucket-Central Falls station at [ArtInRuins](#).

### BVHS Executive Board

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