

# The East Smithfield Neighborhood Center

7 Esmond Street, Smithfield

SMITHFIELD HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

The East Smithfield Neighborhood Center located in the Esmond Village of Smithfield. A Greek Revival structure surviving from the early mill history of Esmond.



# Town of Smithfield

64 FARNUM PIKE

**SMITHFIELD HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

Telephone (401) 233-1017

Fax (401) 233-1091

September 7, 2017

The following report contains research, photos and recent discoveries on the East Smithfield Neighborhood Center, aka Esmond Hall located at 7 Esmond St., compiled by members of the Smithfield Historic Preservation Commission for the purposes of uncovering the original uses of the building as well as showcasing the history of the social and recreational importance to the residents of Esmond Village and the Town of Smithfield since 1851.

We are very excited about the prospect of having this building again usable and brought back to its former historic appearance ready for another century of use by the Community.

Sincerely Yours,

Robert Leach, RA, NCARB, Chair  
Katie Law, Vice Chair  
Smithfield Historic Preservation Commission

# **Preliminary Research and Findings of Fact**

**Research Compiled by Robert Leach, RA. and Katie Law, Smithfield Historic Preservation Commission 2017**

## **DESCRIPTION**

The East Smithfield Neighborhood Center, the Center, (aka, Esmond Hall) is a one-story end gable to the street, wood frame building located at 7 Esmond Street in Esmond, Rhode Island. The earlier main hall structure, having been adapted and enlarged to expand its many uses over time, has been joined by additional spaces configured as a complex but still represents the significant recreational, educational, commercial and religious needs of this former mill community spanning the 19th, 20th and early 21st centuries.

The structure's interior and architectural features having never been investigated until now and its role in this early mill community only having been researched in a broader context, its historic significance was overlooked. With the discovery of these intact historic construction details, documentation of numerous earlier uses, the site and potentially the earlier structure having a relationship to RI Governor Philip Allen's ownership, it is now recognized as a rare and important building type in Smithfield. The Center and site are now Listed on The Smithfield Register of Historic Places.

The Center, while not currently listed on the National Register, is a significant historic community resource that based on recent research performed by our Historic Preservation Commission, sheds new light on the significance of the structure and its past uses. The structure, (c.1851 & 1906) in its earliest uses, was provided by the mill owners for the mill community, ( quote ... RIHPHC Note--- it provides a surviving example of the recreational life of 19th, 20th and early 21st century mill village. Over numerous incarnations and town names: Allenville, Enfield, Esmond, Smithfield, this modest Greek Revival structure has been used for/as a school, chapel, bowling alley, town wide school graduation exercises, local theater (silent and sound movies), pool hall, Town Library, square dancing, Halloween parties and currently town wide events of all kinds including church services, youth dance classes and a Boy Scout Troop.

## **SITE**

The property is situated on a skewed axis, the Esmond Street facade oriented to the Southeast. The property is bounded on the South and West by a diagonal line, this remnant of the Railroad track "right of way" still exists as an undeveloped utilities right of way by National Grid. The original railway, ( NY & NH & H RR, 1873) proceeded from Providence to Worcester, MA with a siding at the existing Esmond Mill buildings passing the Center and continuing along the Woonasquatucket River into the Georgiaville National Register Historic District (Fig 42 p.31). To the North, the site abuts the remains of the original dam structure, exposed portions of the stone embankment are still intact. This corner of the mill pond illustrated on 19th and 20th century maps, (1905 W.F. Keene, C.E.) as outflow to the "trench", i.e. headrace, continued next to our property and crossed under Esmond Street to power the mill. The original

mill pond configuration can still be seen but the waterfall spillway is much reduced, the dam breach is topped by a pedestrian bridge as part of Esmond Park. (Fig.86 photo of Esmond park) In very close proximity toward the North and East, the Center shares a property line with the 1813 Allenville Mill Storehouse, (Fig.90) (from Smithfield Recon Report Blackstone page 10). This stone -rubble structure constructed by Philip Allen was part of the original factory as laid out with the supervision of Architect John Holden Greene (1), it was placed on the National Register in 1972, (Footnote 1 Greenwood, RI History Vol. 46 Nov. 1988; Zachariah Allen, Diary, 1821-24, 2 Mar. 1822, ZAMC)

The recreational center is located near the Woonasquatucket River within the **John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Park** and still overlooks the red brick Esmond Mill structures to the East.

## **EXTERIOR**

The building as originally conceived, was set back from the roadway on a slightly sloping lot, this grade change necessitated a set of stairs and a landing at the front entrance, as well as a raised granite faced foundation. The first period of construction provided a gable end to street placement, with a somewhat lower roof pitch (7 in 12), typical for Greek Revival structures. This earliest configuration was constructed as a 32.5' by 40.5' building with an additional projecting wing to the Northwest of 20.3' by 15.3', an exact match of the Union Church foundation plan (1905 Pope/Keen Fig.37). This evidence still exists in the crawl space below where the original granite foundation was reused on three sides when the main hall was expanded, but the foundation of this wing projection was abandoned in place. Floor reconstruction photos from the 1950's show this condition, (Figs.51-52). Subsequent gable roof expansions of the main hall and ells to either side stretched the hall to 62 ft in length with additions of 22' by 104' to the East and 30' by 40' to the West.

The original clapboarded exterior walls are currently obscured by T-1-11 siding.

## **INTERIOR**

Recent discoveries have included the uncovering of the earlier heavy timber structure, exposing of the intact frame of the 18-foot-tall by 61-foot-long elliptical vaulted ceilings, arched windows and the once concealed original balcony and movie projector room. The 4 (four) hardwood flooring bowling lanes are still intact.

A steel bank vault door exists at the end of the main hall it is conjectured that this may have been used as a mill payroll vault.

Numerous construction techniques were observed in comparing early structure (1851) with 1906 framing. (See figs.5,21,22,23,24,25,26,27)



## The East Smithfield Neighborhood Center in Current Conditions



Figure 1 East Smithfield Neighborhood Center showing main hall and left wing (SHPC 2017)



Figure 2 Base moulding corner plstr.



Figure 3 Capitals at corner bds.



Figure 4 Clapboard



*Figure 5 1906 frame roof (SHPC 2017)*



*Figure 6 Interior vaulted roof structure above drop ceiling, main hall*



*Figure 7 Roof peak, iron sag rod in foreground, projector vent pipe visible, flag pole remnants at rear center*





*Figure 8 Mouldings under arch ceiling soffit at ends*



*Figure 9 Roof flag pole remnants, street side interior*



*Figure 10 Fan light above school room south, boarded up on exterior*



*Figure 11 Taken on balcony, metal projector room door visible, street side fan window visible at top right also boarded up on exterior (SHPC 2017)*





*Figure 12 Councilwoman Cavanagh inspects balcony through trap door above street side restroom, original lathe/plaster, moulding intact*



*Figure 13 Projector room windows*



*Figure 14 Intact projector room, concrete floor visible*



*Figure 15 Main hall facing street, balcony and projector room above ceiling at far end*





*Figure 16 Right wing, former bowling alley, lanes visible on flooring*



*Figure 17 Right wing, former school room etc.*



*Figure 18 Interior of vault door at rear of main hall*



*Figure 19 Laser level, front of main hall*



*Figure 20 View from main hall into club area, office beyond*



*Figure 21 9 over 6 sash c.1906 (this photo is not current condition, photo taken 1954)*





*Figure 22 2017 peg mortise and tenon joint at boxed eave*



*Figure 23 Early timber truss*



*Figure 23 Heavy timber of early Greek Revival structure with iron bolt*



*Figure 24 (above) Reused joists*



*Figure 25 Reused Beam*

❖ Note: Mortise pockets for early, Butt \*& Cog Joint for floor joists





*Figure 26 Foundation of early wing*



*Figure 27 Mortised wall stud to eave girt*

❖ Note: Note Scribe Rule markings and hand saw tenon cuts

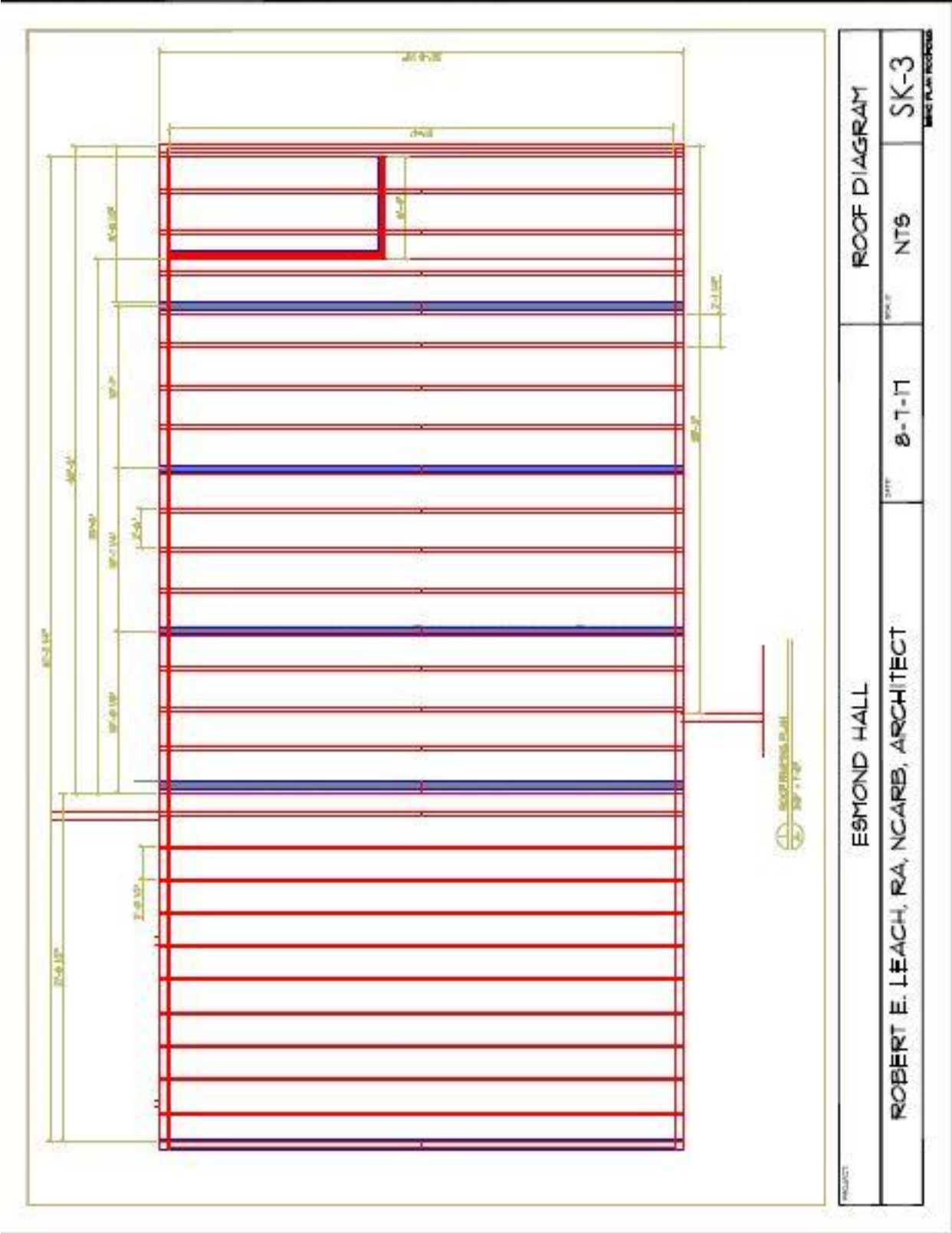


Figure 28 Robert Leach, Architect Roof Framing Diagram





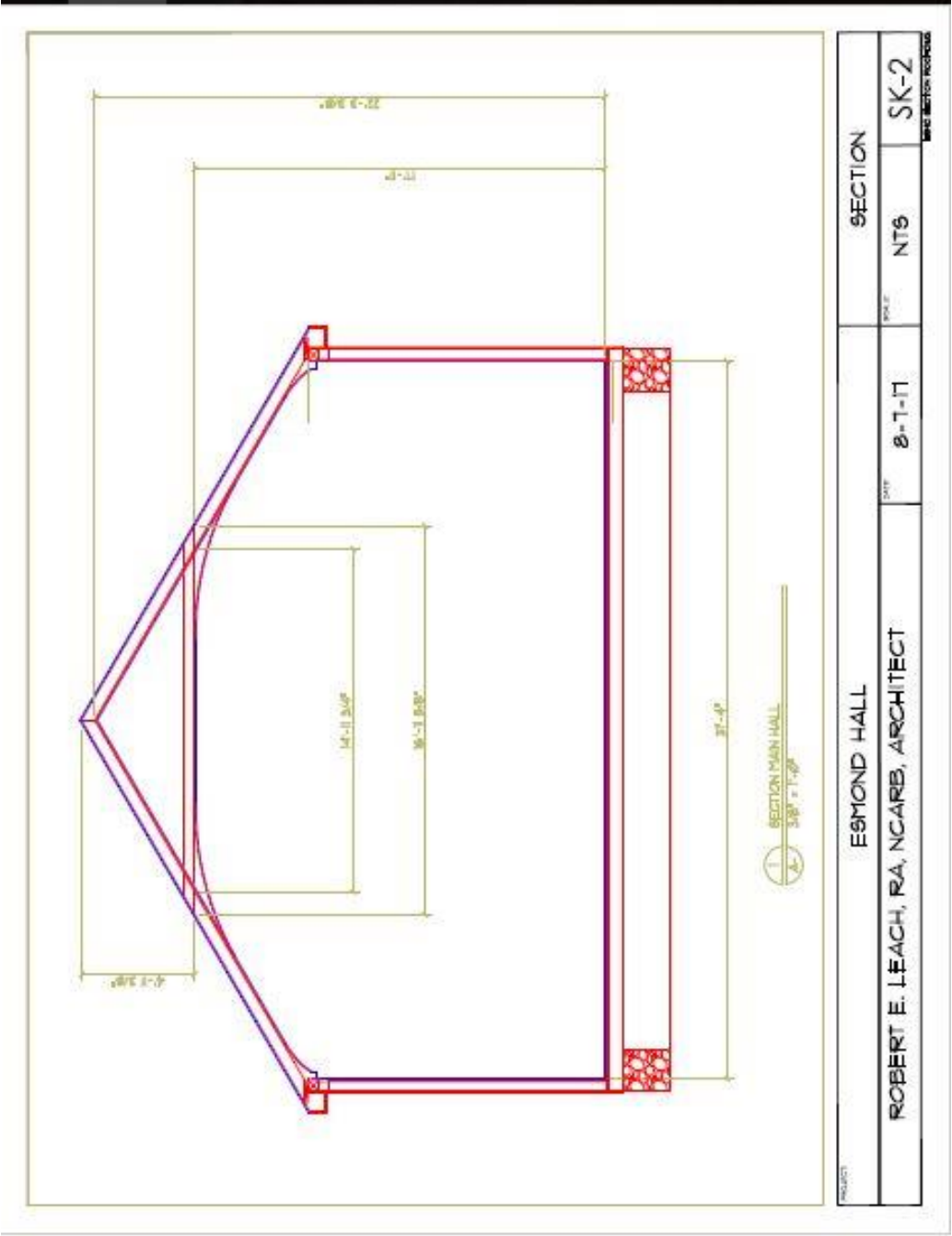


Figure 30 Robert Leach, Architect

***A History of the Mill Village of Esmond from its Inception as Allenville c.1812***

*History of the State of Rhode Island with Illustrations*

Albert J. Wright, Printer

No. 79 Mille Street, corner of Federal, Boston

Hong, Wade & Co., Philadelphia 1878, p. 306-311

“**Allenville** This place takes its name from its founder, Mr. Philip Allen. It is nearly, if not quite, dependent upon the factory; and the growth of one is substantially the growth of the other. This Mr. Allen purchased a tract of land from Mr. Eseck Smith, and erected a mill, it is said, about the year 1812. This mill antedates the one at Georgiaville, and if the date of its erection be indeed correct, it can claim the honor of being the first mill of its kind built in the town. In 1825, the mill was enlarged and improved by the addition of a building 40x80 feet. In 1858, the property was purchased by Mr. Earl P. Mason, who subsequently sold it to its present owners, the Smithfield Manufacturing Company. This was July 10, 1860. The Property has been materially improved by the addition of new machinery, besides remodeling of the buildings.”

*Picturesque Rhode Island: Pen and Pencil Sketches*

1881, Wilfred H. Monroe

“The Churches in town are as follows: a Baptist Church at Greenville, a Freewill Baptist Church at Georgiaville, at Allendale (sic Allenville) a free Church which has no settled Minister, but in which any Protestant clergyman is allowed to hold services...”

*Historical and Architectural Resources of Smithfield*

RI Historical Preservation Commission

1992

p.10

“The Woonasquatucket River was first harnessed to run two new textile factories in the southeast corner of Smithfield in 1813. Philip Allen, brother of Zachariah who later became a leading textile manufacturer and who erected a mill in nearby Georgiaville, erected a cotton mill and several subsidiary buildings, including a rubblestone storehouse which still stands at Esmond Avenue. Philip Allen created a small mill village by erecting houses for his workers along Esmond Street and Maple Avenue. In 1849, a schoolhouse was built, **and in 1851, Men built a church in the village.** Through midcentury, the village was known as Allenville.”

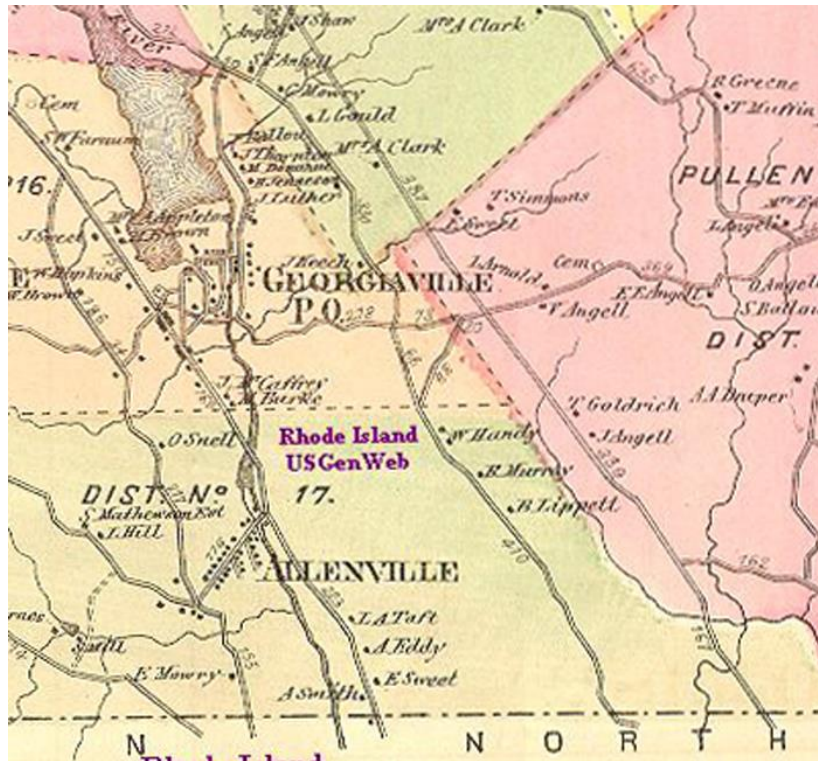


Figure 31 1870 Beers Atlas

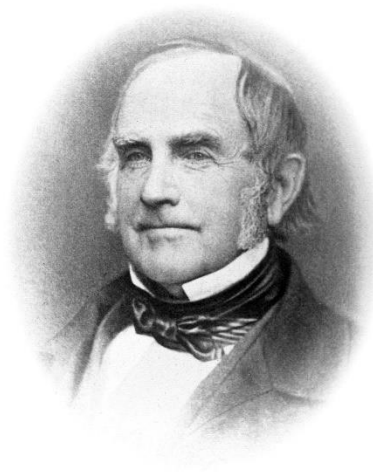


Figure 32 Governor Philip Allen

---

### **Earl P. Mason**

-Deed information from the assigns of Philip Allen-

Record of Deeds book 32, p.460

Central Falls City Hall

Recorded June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1858

Amos D Smith, Zachariah Allen, and George Nightingale, Grantors

Earl P. Mason, Grantee

-Deed information, land acquired and added to “Cotton Mill Estate”

Record of Deeds Book 33, p. 211

Central Falls City Hall

Recorded August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1859

Joseph Farnum, Grantor

Earl P. Mason, Grantee

*History of Providence County, Rhode Island*

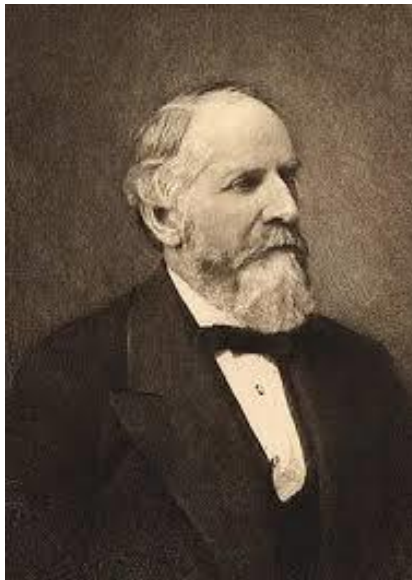
New York: WW Preston & Co., 1891

Vol. II

p.219

“In 1857 the mill property passed from Governor Allen to Earl P. Mason, Henry Lippitt and others...”

\*Henry Lippitt, pictured on following page, 33<sup>rd</sup> Governor of Rhode Island 1875-1877



*Figure 33 Henry Lippitt, photo courtesy of Preserve Rhode Island*

---

## **Smithfield Manufacturing Company**

Record of Deeds Book 35, p.209

Recorded July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1860

Central Falls City Hall

Earl P. Mason, Grantor

Record of Deeds Book 2, p. 348

Recorded April 23, 1879

Trust Mortgagee's Deed, Rhode Island Hospital Trust, (Grantor)

Recorded in the Town of Smithfield

-In this record, Smithfield Manufacturing Company has defaulted its mortgage for a period of over 90 days, and as such is subject to part and parcel auction.

"Whereas, heretofore the Smithfield Manufacturing Company, a Corporation created by the General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island, by its deed bearing date September 1<sup>st</sup> 1876 and recorded in the Town Clerks office in the Town of Smithfield in said state Real Estate Mortgage Book No. 2 at page 211, conveyed the estate hereafter described (together with other property) in fee and in mortgage to the Rhode Island Hospital Trust Company, a corporation created by said General Assembly, in trust, to secure certain bonds executed by said Manufacturing Company, and with a provision and power that in case of

default in the payment of said bonds, or the interest due thereon or any part thereof, when payable and continuance of such default for the term of ninety days that said Trust Company should stand and be seized of said granted estates and premises." P.348

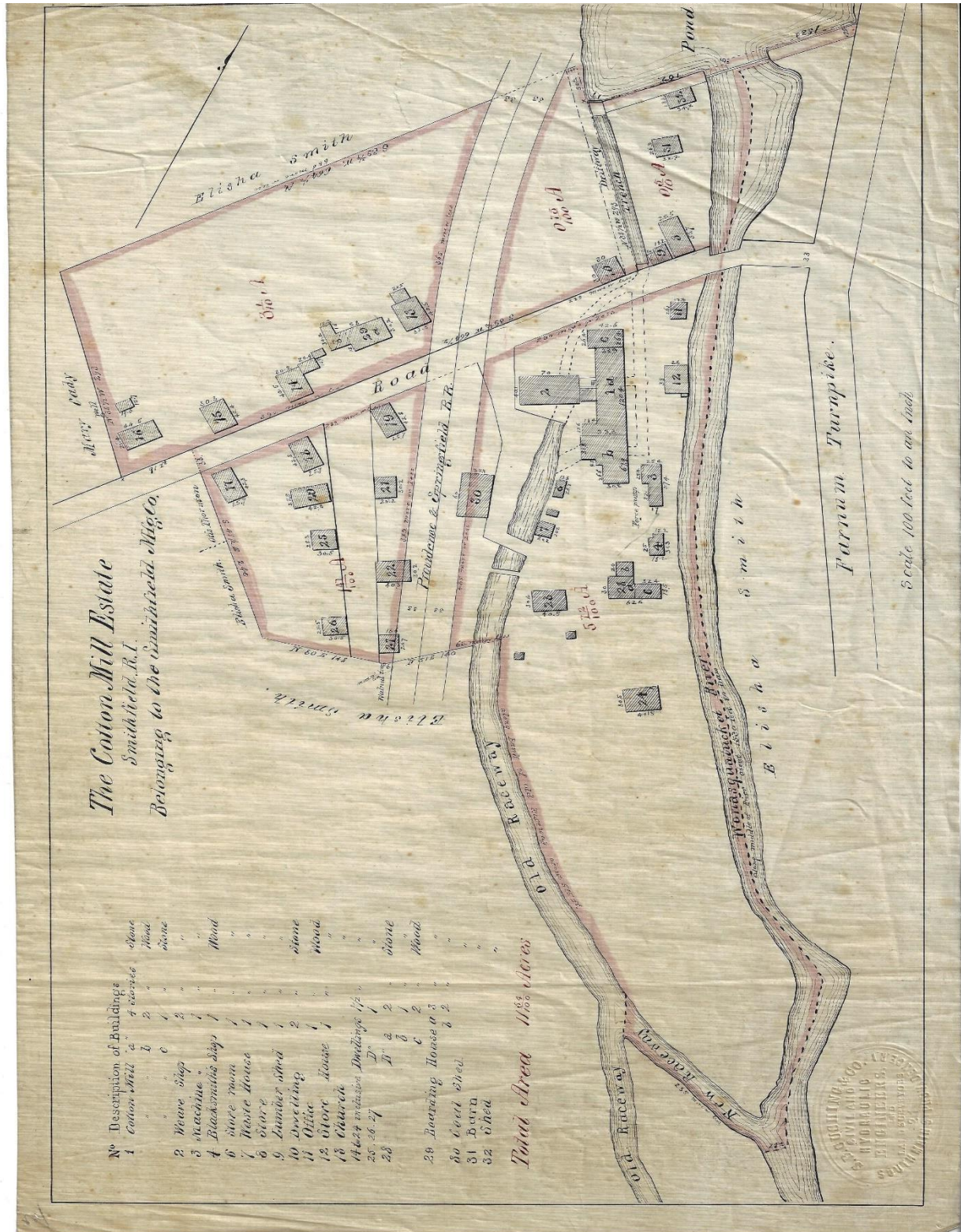
-As such, the premises and machinery went for auction. An excerpt from above mentioned mortgagee deed reads as follows;

"Mortgagees sale of valuable manufacturing property will be sold at public auction on Wednesday April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1879 at 12 o'clock on the premises."

"All that mill estate situated at Allenville, so called in the Town of Smithfield, in said State of Rhode Island, 8 miles from the city of Providence, on the Providence and Springfield Railroad, which has its station in the heart of the property. The estate comprises about 11 ½ acres of land, one stone mill building of 4 stories, two buildings of 2 stories one of stone and one of wood, and one stone building of 1 story, with a machine shop, blacksmiths shop, and various other out buildings, several dwelling houses, boarding houses of stone or wood, together with dams, water rights, and all other rights of every description on or connected with said estate, and together with all machinery fixed and movable, and tools and apparatus of every kind now in said mills or upon said estate. The machinery includes 220 looms and about 10,000 spindles, with all the necessary preparation."

"The plat annexed to said Trust Mortgage deed titled, 'The Cotton Mill Estate, Smithfield, RI, belonging to the Smithfield Manufacturing Company.' Reference is hereby made, as a part of this deed for a full description of said estate hereby conveyed..."







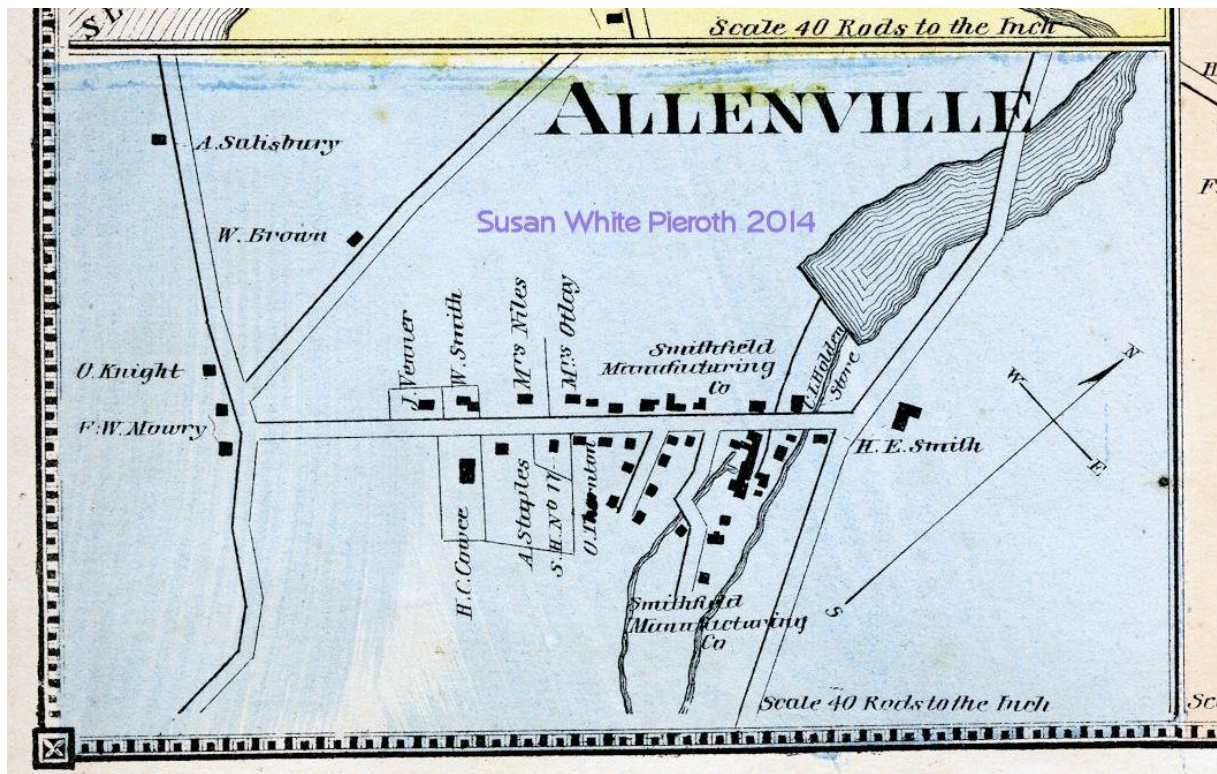


Figure 35 1870 Beers Atlas, Allenville insert showing Smithfield Manufacturing Company

### William H. Pope/ Enfield period

Record of Deeds book 2, p. 348  
Recorded April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1879  
Smithfield Town Hall

Mortgage Deed  
No. 2 Mort. p.461  
Thomas Donahue, Grantor  
Recorded October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1905  
Smithfield Town Hall

### *Representative Men and Old Families of Rhode Island*

Volume 1  
J.H. Beers and Co. Chicago

“In 1871 Mr. Pope engaged in the cotton success that attends good business ability and honest principles, and he continued in this line until 1878. In that year, he purchased of the Smithfield Manufacturing Company the mill and village called Allenville, in the town of Smithfield. The first mill on this site was erected in 1813 by Gov. Philip Allen. Mr. Pope renamed the village Enfield, after his birthplace in

Massachusetts. He was successful in this venture from the start, and from time to time as business warranted, he added to the equipment of the mill, and Enfield became one of the most prosperous mill villages in Rhode Island. He so managed his affairs that in times when all the other mills were idle his continued to run. He was a shrewd, far seeing business man, and was strictly just and honest in all his dealings. With his employees he was very popular, each one looking on him as a friend, and there was never a strike in his establishment.”

“He continued his manufacturing business at Enfield until 1902, when he closed down the mill and retired to devote his entire time and attention to his other interests...”

“A few months before his death he disposed of the mill and other property at Enfield.”



*Figure 36 William H Pope photo from Representative Men and Old Families Of Rhode Island Vol. 1*

*History of Providence County, Rhode Island*

New York: WW Preston & Co., 1891

Vol. II

p.218

“Enfield is a hamlet on the Providence and Springfield railroad, and consists of a few houses, a store, and a post office, and is the seat of the Enfield Mills. Major William Smith was the first settler in this locality. In 1813 the late Governor Philip Allen purchased land of Eseck Smith, a descendant of Major William Smith, and erected a small cotton mill, and the place was called Allenville. It retained this name until 1881, when a post office was established and the name was changed to Enfield.”

“There is one church building open to all denominations, and in which Reverend G.B. Cutler, of the Baptist Church of Georgiaville, frequently holds services.”

p.219

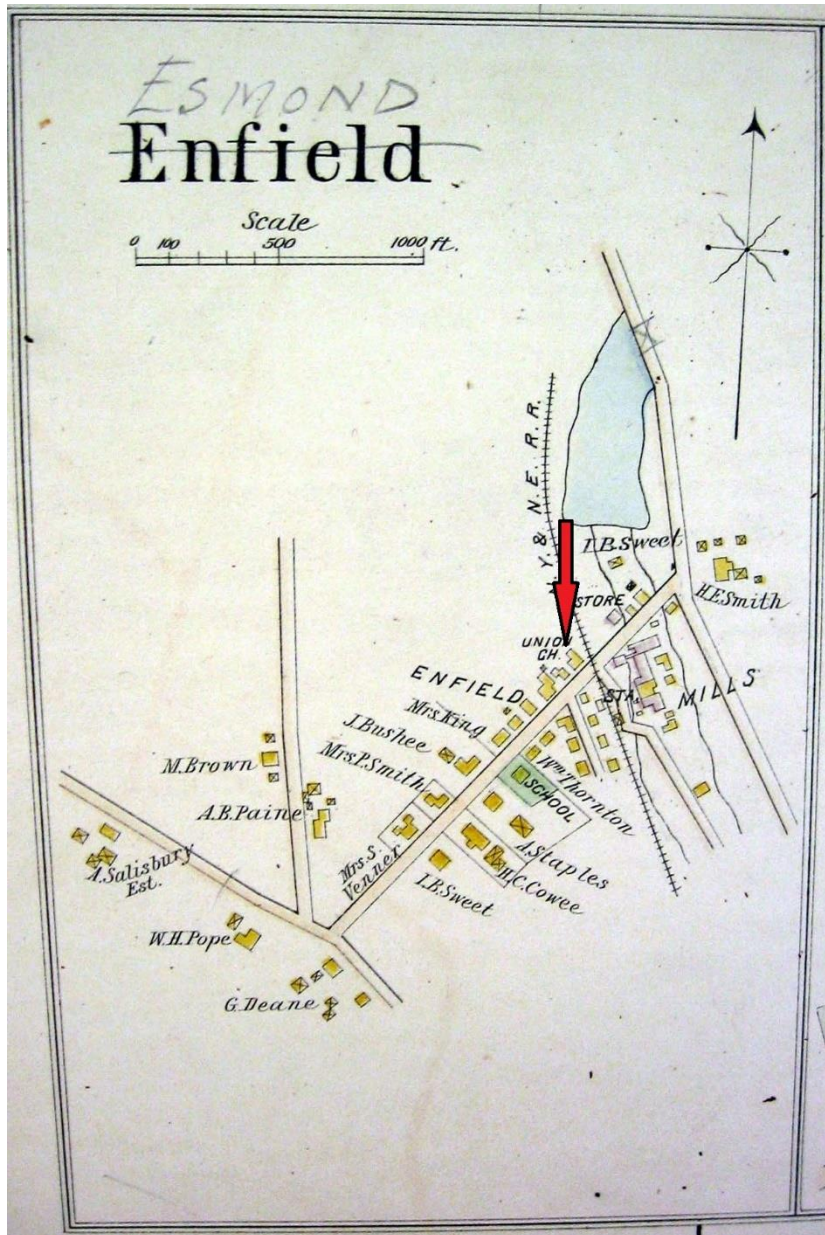
“In 1849 the citizens erected a school house, and in 1851 Governor Allen built a house for public worship and gave it to the citizens of the village. There is a Sabbath school maintained in the place.”

“In 1857 the mill property passed from Governor Allen to Earl P. Mason, Henry Lippitt and others; in 1867 into the ownership of the Smithfield Manufacturing Company, and in 1879 to William H. Pope, who runs

the business under the style of the Enfield Mills. This company manufacture (sic) print goods and employ (sic) constantly about 150 hands. Arnold Knight is superintendent of the works.”

## 1895 Map

Enfield inset:



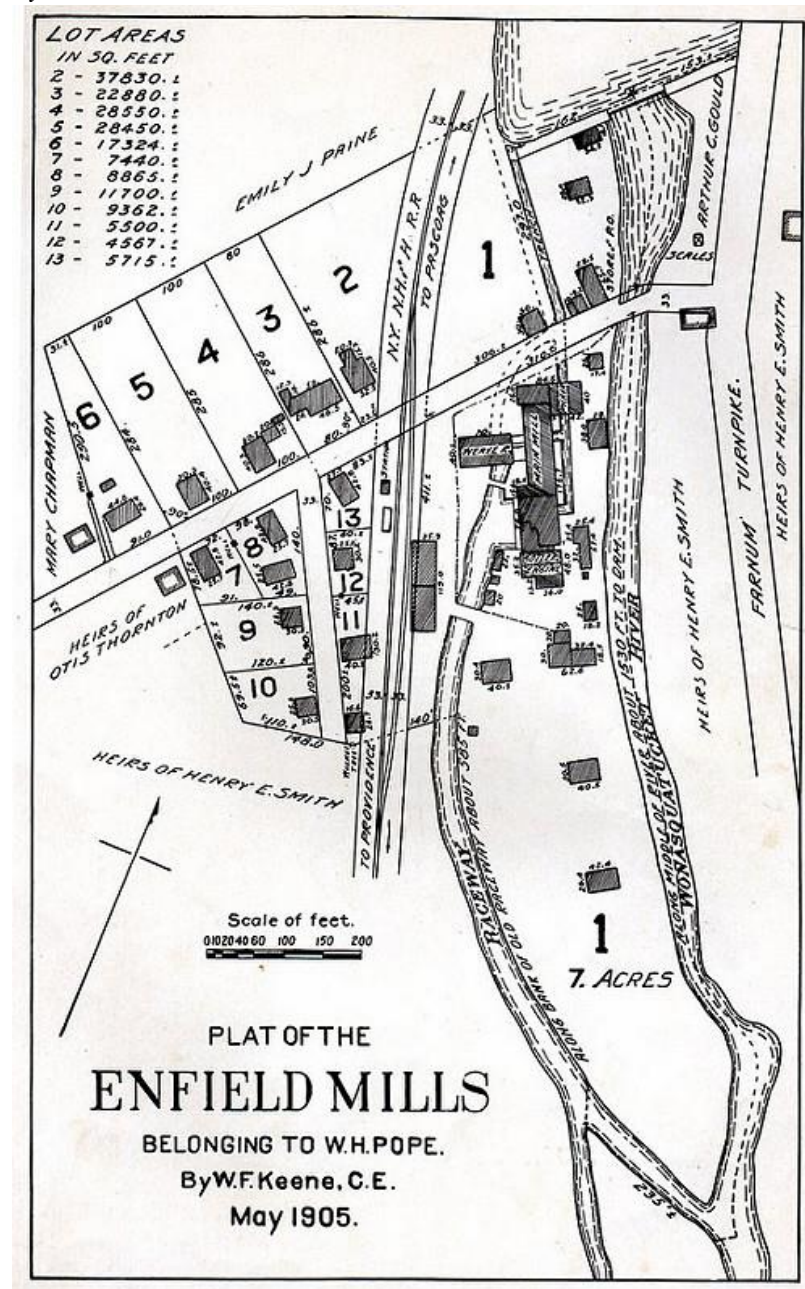
- ❖ Note: Union Church location
- ❖ Note: Store location to right of tracks, what is currently known as the East Smithfield Neighborhood Center is now located between the tracks and the store. In this map that area of the lot is vacant.

Figure 37 1895 Providence County Everetts & Richards map of Smithfield, Enfield inset



## 1905 Map

*Plat of the Enfield Mills Belonging to William H. Pope*  
By W.F. Keene, C.E.



- ❖ Note: Union Church in lot 2 with complete dimensions.
- ❖ Note: Lot 1 featuring only Allenville Stone Store.

Figure 38; Book 48 Plat Map Doc# 1439 Recorded May 5, 1905  
Smithfield Town Hall

## The sale of the Enfield Mills

A Pawtucket Times

August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1905

*Enfield Mills to Go At Auction*

Article lists the dwellings to be auctioned off with the mill as, “also 12 parcels of village property, including cottages, double houses, four-family houses, and a public hall.”

---

## The Esmond Mills/ Harold A. Whitman

Record of Deeds Book 10, p. 287

Recorded December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1906

Town of Smithfield

Harold A. Whitman, Grantor

“That certain Mill Estate situated in or near the village of Enfield in the town of Smithfield in the State of Rhode Island and known as the Enfield Mills...”

“...as the same are shown and delineated on that plat entitled, ‘Plat of the Enfield Mills belonging to William H. Pope by W.F. Keene, C.E. May 1905’ on record in the office of the town clerk in Smithfield, and comprising also all the property conveyed to Thomas O’Donahue by deed from William H. Pope dated October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1905...”

Providence Sunday Journal

October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1906

*Big New Mill Will Transform Enfield*

“The village of Enfield is not beautiful in any sense of the word. It consists of about a score of very ordinary mill tenements and a few private residences clustered in a haphazard way along the highway on the eastern side of the railroad. There is a little one-story school building near the centre of the village, and with the exception of a small church, which is owned by the proprietors of the village, it is the only public building in the settlement.”

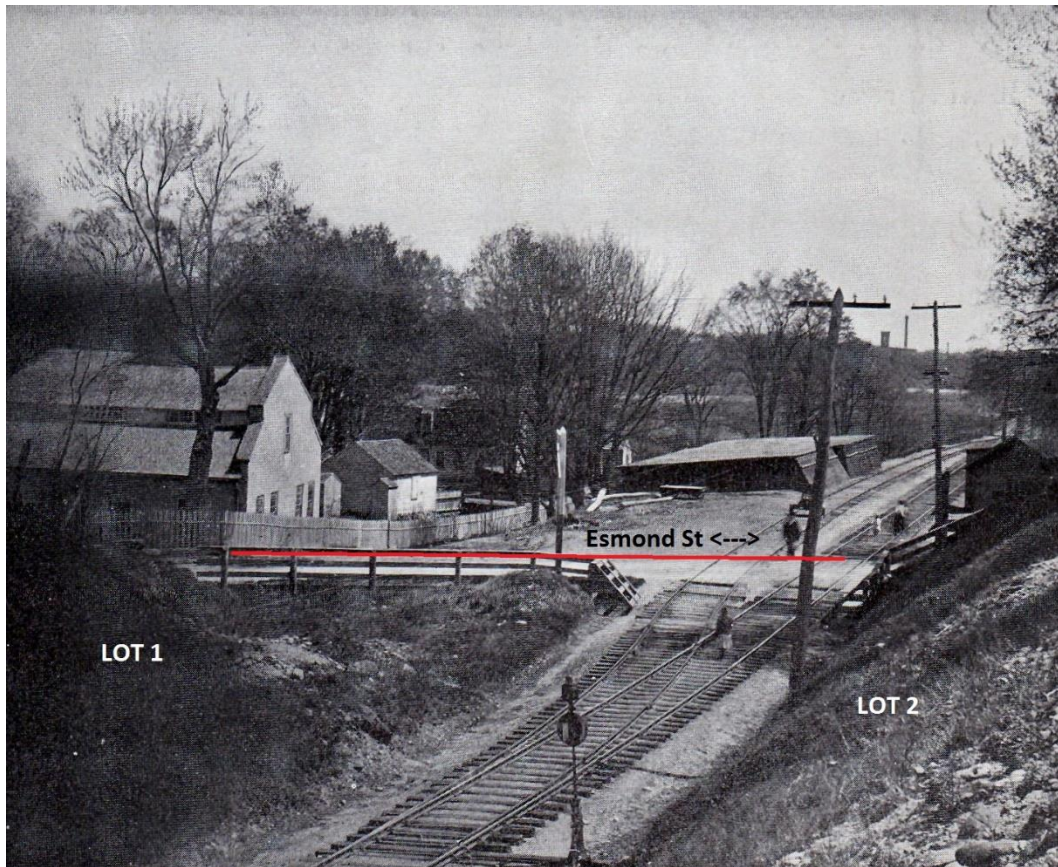
“A short time after the village was sold under the auctioneer’s hammer, Clarence Whitman and his son, Harold Whitman of New York came to the place and made a close inspection of the tenements and water privilege and spent considerable time among the natives in making inquiries concerning the class of help that had been employed in the village and the wages that had been paid.”

“After the property was transferred in spite of the fact that the men to whom it had been deeded refused to make known their names, there came a rumor that the new concern did not intend to start up the old mill, but were planning to erect a large plant that would greatly increase the importance of the village. This rumor was confirmed by the appearance of a small army of Italian laborers in the town one morning



which began to tear down the old mill, pull dilapidated houses apart and make excavations on the banks east of the railroad tracks for the foundation of large building.”

**“The large sand banks which flanked the railroad on each side of the tracks north of the station were removed and several buildings were moved to make way for the improvements.”**



*Figure 39 Photo Courtesy of Historical Society of Smithfield*

- ❖ Note: This view is taken from the hill on Lot 2 on the 1905 William Pope/Keene Map, looking south with original Philip Allen Mill weavers shed in left frame.
- ❖ Note: The above-mentioned article and quote reference removing these sand banks flanking the railroad on lots one and two, as well as moving several buildings.
- ❖ Note: At this time Lot 2 is occupied by the Union Church, while Lot 1 is occupied by the Allenville Stone Store with the entirety of the left of the store being a vacant lot.
- ❖ Note: To left of railroad track labeled Lot 1 is remains of hill excavated for railroad tracks 1873
- ❖ Note: It is conjectured due to recent findings that the Union Church was moved to lot 1, adjacent to the Allenville Stone Store and is now known as the East Smithfield Neighborhood Center.
- ❖ Note: The Allenville Stone Store and the East Smithfield Neighborhood Center are the only remaining non-residential structures from the early mill history of this village.





## *En route to Confirmation passing the Old Esmond Post Office - turn of Century*

*Figure 40 Courtesy of Historical Society of Smithfield*

- ❖ Note: The East Smithfield Neighborhood Center is visible just beyond the Allenville Stone Store at right.
- ❖ Belfry still attached, temporary wood front steps come down and bear towards stone store.
- ❖ Conjectured that this photo is soon after the Esmond Mills moves this building from Lot 2 of the 1905 Pope/Keene map to Lot 1
- ❖ Note: Lot 2 of Pope/Keene map now vacant





*Figure 41 Postcard, Esmond Mills*



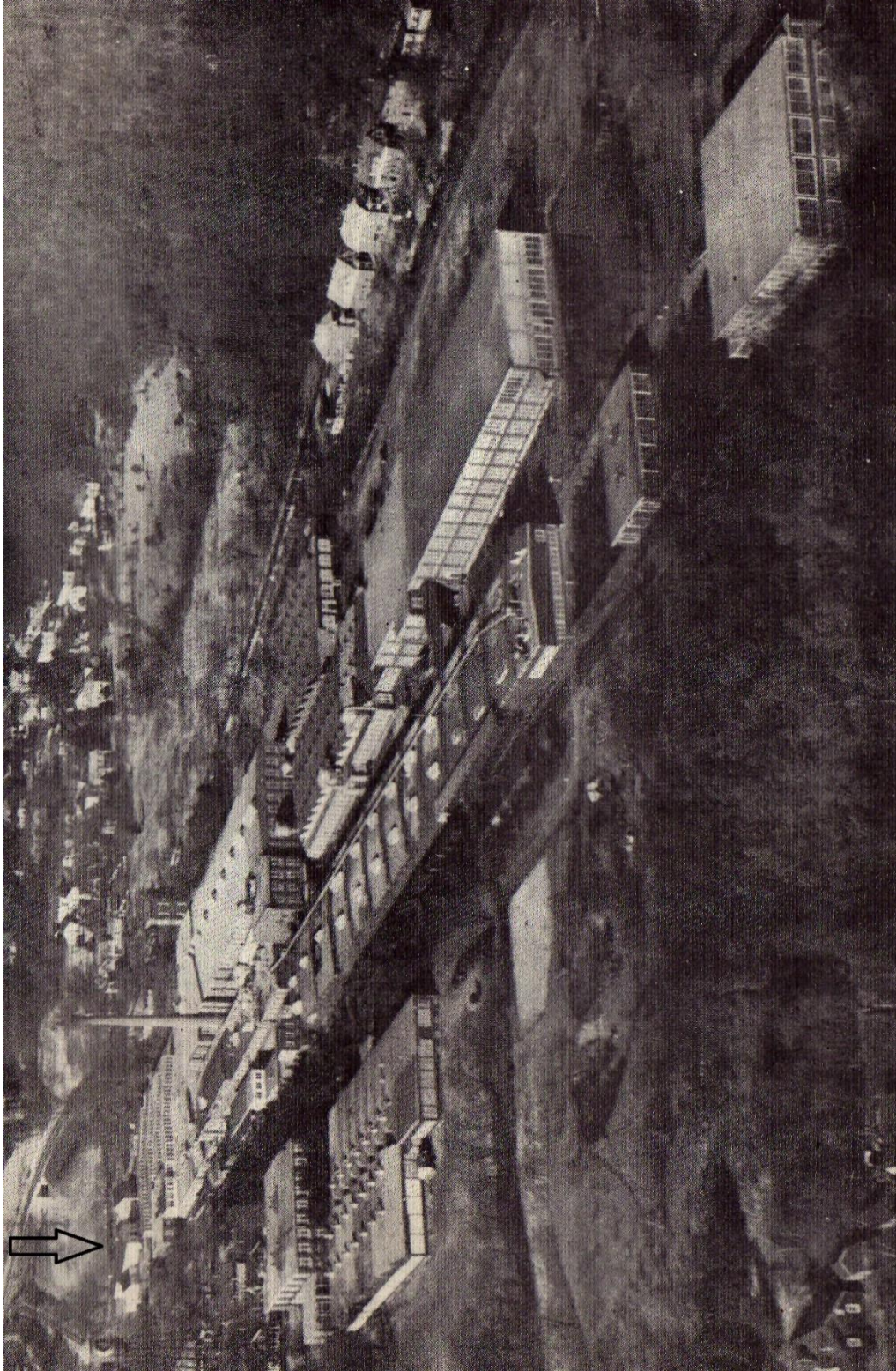


Figure 42 Courtesy of Historical Society of Smithfield, Neighborhood Center top left





Figure 43 Photo courtesy of Smithfield Historic Archives

❖ Plan by Waterman Engineering 1940, revised 1947



## The Esmond Hall

During the period of ownership under the Esmond Mills, the East Smithfield Neighborhood Center was known by many names, served various functions, and met the needs of many community groups. In its earliest stages, it was used as a recreation center for the upper echelons of the Esmond Mill. In a 1979 audio interview with William Demaine (a long-time mill employee from 1909-1948), Mr. Demaine states that the hall was only for the use of the Bosses, -that the youth could watch them play pool etc. but were not allowed to play. In 1916, he states that they formed the “Esmond Welfare Club” and kicked the bosses out. The first thing he did was go down the street to purchase new pool tables for the youth and “boy were the boys happy about that”. Thus, the center went back to being of use for the entire community again. With additions added left and right at later dates, several entities would occupy the building at the same time, it serving different purposes for each.



Figure 44 Providence Sunday Journal November 11th 1923 "Georgiaville Elated Over Defeat of Ancient Rival"

- ❖ Note: Belfry has now been removed
- ❖ Note: Flag pole now appears on center front of roof
- ❖ Note: Colonial light fixture above door
- ❖ Note: Venting for Projector booth visible on roof
- ❖ Note: Building now features left wing (visible in photo from same period on next page)

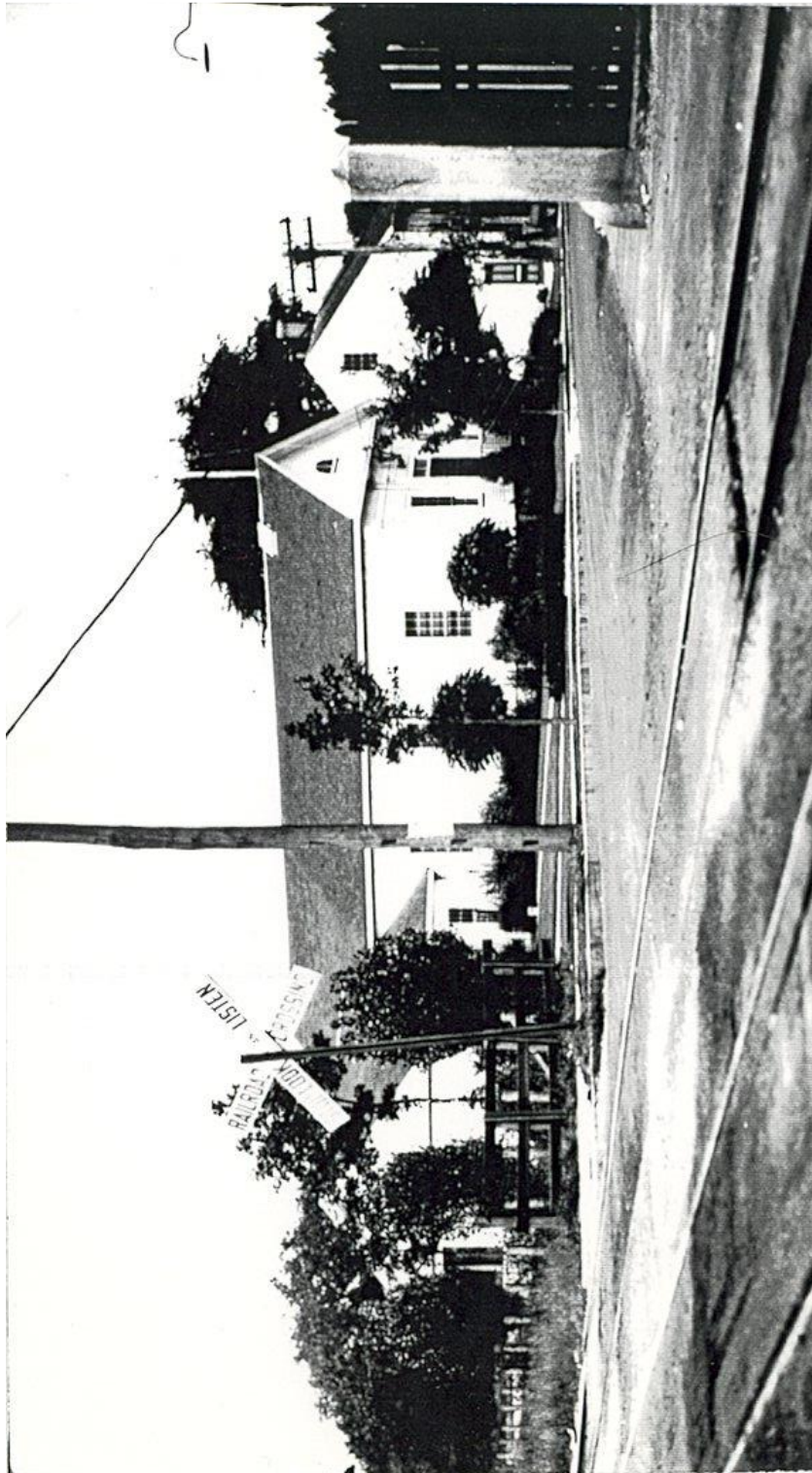


Figure 45 Photo courtesy of Historical Society of Smithfield c.1920's





*Figure 46 Photo courtesy of the Historical Society of Smithfield*

- ❖ Photograph depicts steam train crossing at Esmond Street, 1940's. Chief Lacroix pictured left.

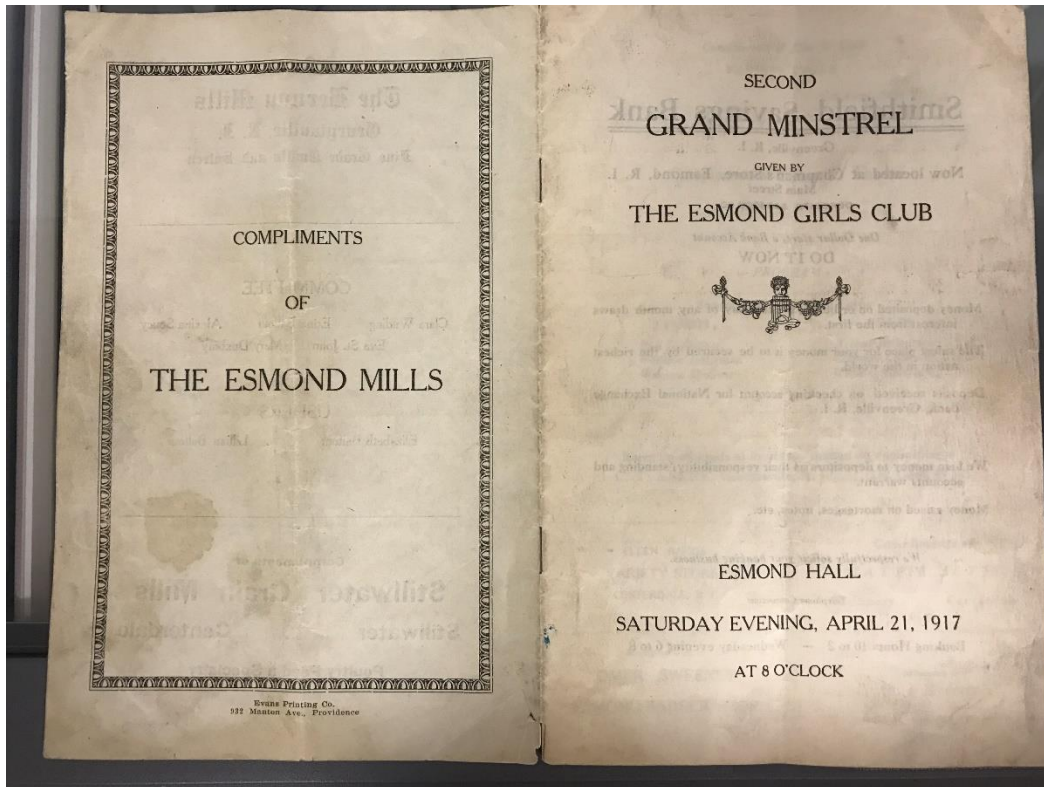


Figure 47 Document courtesy of the East Smithfield Library

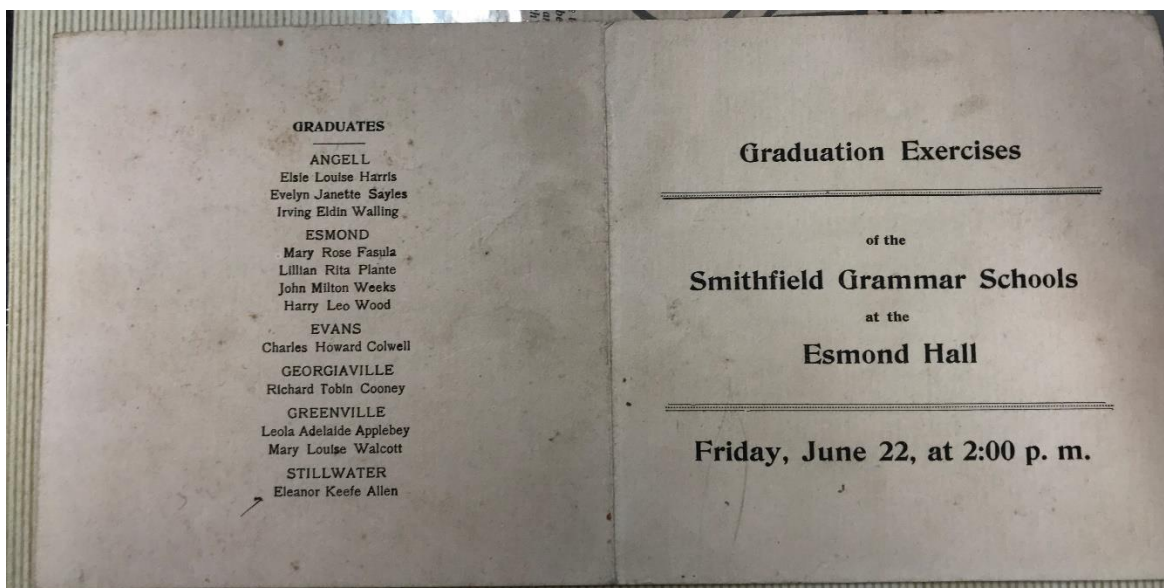


Figure 48 Courtesy of the East Smithfield Public Library, date unknown

- ❖ The Esmond Hall being utilized for the graduation exercises of all the local one room school houses, listed at left of photo



Figure 49; Page 39 Plan of Land Doc# 1413 Recorded Dec 31, 1920  
Smithfield Town Hall

- ❖ Note: Building appears in what is now called Parcel No 13
- ❖ Note: As of 1920, only the left wing has been added

*Fiber and Fabric (periodical)*

January 8<sup>th</sup>, 1921  
Vol. 69 No. 1875

“Esmond, R.I. -The management of the Esmond Mills gave a Christmas tree and entertainment to the children of the village in Esmond Hall on Thursday evening, December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1920.”



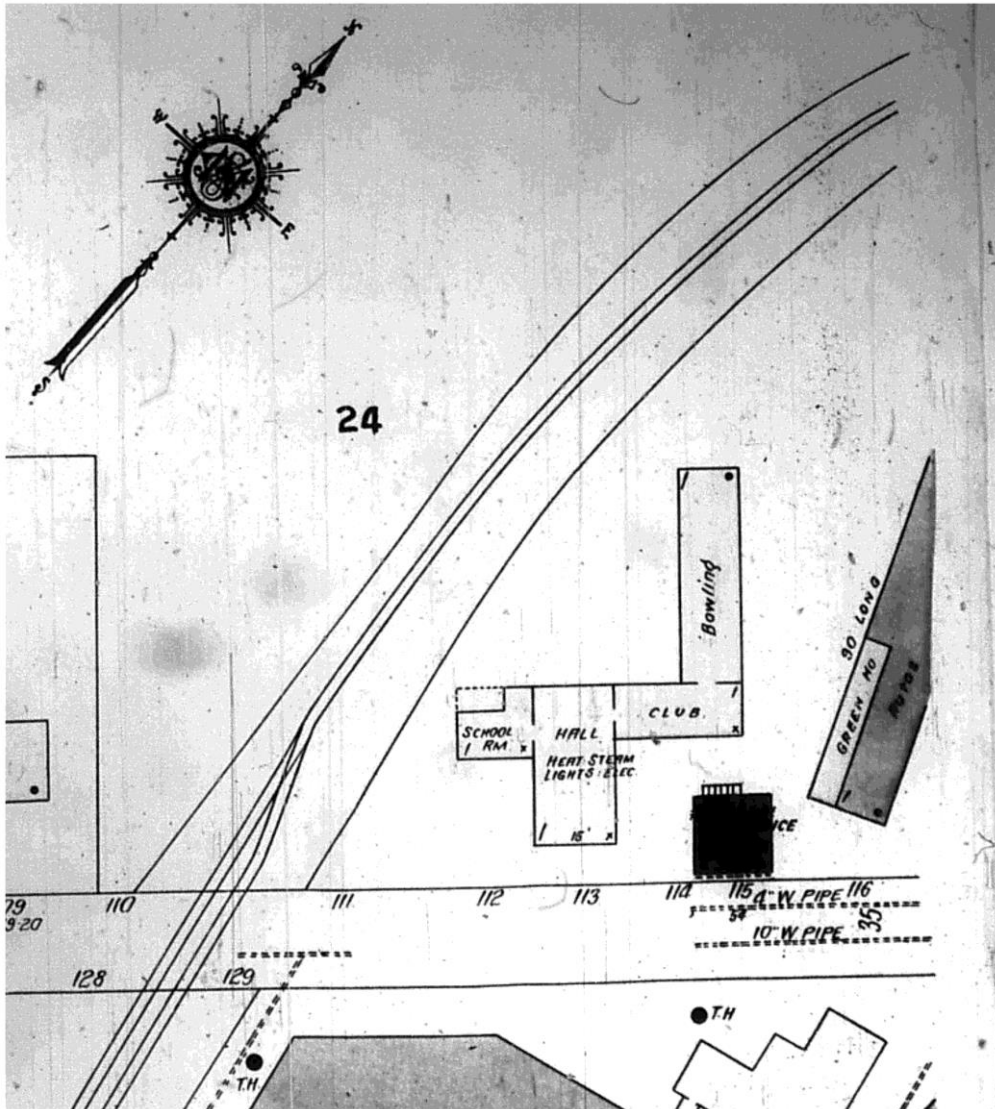


Figure 50 1924 Sanborn Map of Esmond

- ❖ Note Building now features new right wing “club” and rear right bowling alley addition

## The Esmond Theatre at Esmond Hall

During the 1920's, Esmond Hall featured the "Esmond Theatre", showing silent films for the community from a projector booth at the front of the main hall facing Esmond Street.

**6th Annual Paramount WEEK**

All these Paramount artists invite you to participate.

With Paramount Week the greatest motion picture season the world ever saw gets well under way. You have the opportunity for a grand review of 1923's achievements and a pre-view of the great Paramount Pictures coming.

Celebrate Paramount Week at your own theatre as millions have during five previous annual Paramount Weeks.

"It's Paramount Week at your theatre now!"

**PROVIDENCE JOINS IN THE NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION OF THE BETTER MOTION PICTURE AT ALL THESE THEATRES, ALL THIS WEEK—PARAMOUNT PICTURES WILL BE SHOWN AT ALL THESE THEATRES:**

**ESMOND THEATRE, ESMOND**  
Sept. 7 "THE OLD HOMESTEAD," With Theodore Roberts as Uncle Josh  
From the stage play by Denman Thompson

**PALACE THEATRE, JAMESTOWN**  
Sept. 4 BETTY COMPSO in "THE BONDED WOMAN"  
Sept. 6 GLORIA SWANSON in "HER GILDED CAGE"

**ESMOND THEATRE, ESMOND**  
Sept. 7 "THE OLD HOMESTEAD," With Theodore Roberts as Uncle Josh  
From the stage play by Denman Thompson

**PROVIDENCE EVENING TRIBUNE, Sept 1st 1923**

Figure 51 Esmond Theatre participates in "Paramount Week" showing a silent film. Advertisement from The Providence Evening Tribune, Sept 1st 1923

Esmond Hall can be found listed for several years in the Film Daily Yearbook of Motion Pictures, a yearbook listing local theatres. Below are links to the 1927 and 1929 yearbook listings. It no longer appears in 1930.

<https://archive.org/stream/filmyearbook19271927newy#page/622/mode/2up>

<https://archive.org/stream/filmdailyyearboo00film#page/706/mode/2up>



Photographs were taken by the Smithfield Recreation Association in 1954 as they repaired the floor of the main hall. This photo shows the projector booth with balcony, still intact in 1954 above the hall. Recently, the intact projector booth was found boarded up above the ceiling of the bathrooms. The balcony railings have long been removed and walled off. The projector booth still retains its concrete floor, projector windows, original metal sheathed table and door, and ventilation. Balcony still retains most lathe and plaster, along with trim. Fan window is boarded up from the exterior and until recently had been sheet rocked in on the interior side. Frame is intact. See above section with current conditions of building.



*Figure 52 Main hall featuring projector booth and balcony. Photo courtesy of the East Smithfield Library from the SRA scrapbook*





*Figure 53 Courtesy of the East Smithfield Public Library, SRA scrapbook*

- ❖ Note: Main hall facing rear, showing exposed stone earliest foundation wing
- ❖ Note: Foundation wing measurements with original front of hall match exact measurements featured on the Pope/Keene map (fig. 32) of the Union Church

## The East Smithfield Public Library

According to an August 3rd, 2016 Valley Breeze Observer article, *East Smithfield Library Celebrates 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*, the East Smithfield Public Library was formed by combining the two local libraries, Esmond Free Public Library, and the Bernon Public Library. The article goes on to state that, "The history of the Esmond Free Public Library dates back to 1916 when a district nurse, Sara Mellor, helped establish the library. Space and some funding were provided by the owners of the Esmond Mill.

During World War II and the years immediately following the war, the library was open one night a week for a couple of hours, Walsh said.

When the mill closed in 1946, heat to the building was turned off, causing some pipes to burst and destroying some of the books, according to a 1985 dedication booklet for the library's current building.

George M. Smith, director of the Smithfield Recreation Association, convinced the new mill owners, Textron Inc., to deed the building housing the library to the town. Between 1950 and 1954, books were moved into a large hall while its east wing was repaired."

-As mentioned previously, the East Smithfield Neighborhood Center has a main hall and several additions. The Esmond Free Public Library (later the East Smithfield Public Library) has occupied several areas of this building throughout time. In the photos below, you will see the library celebrating its 1972 move from the left wing to the right wing of the building which was formerly the bowling alley and recreation room.

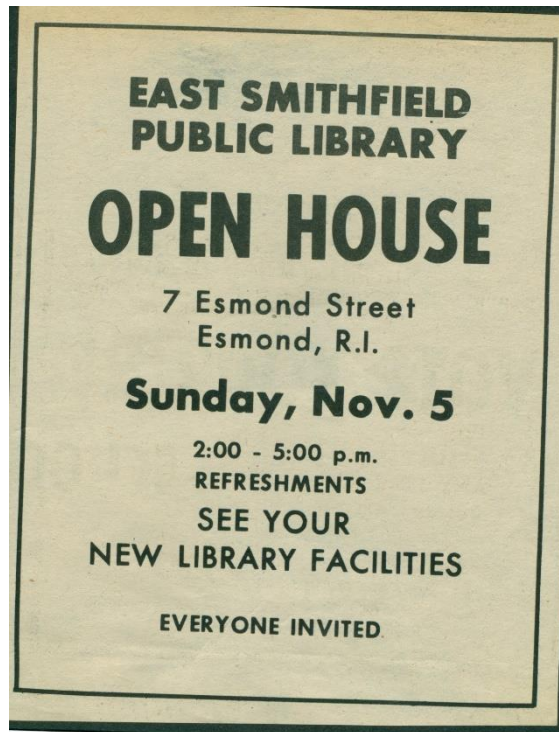
The photos below show the Library moving from the left wing to the right wing of the building in 1972.



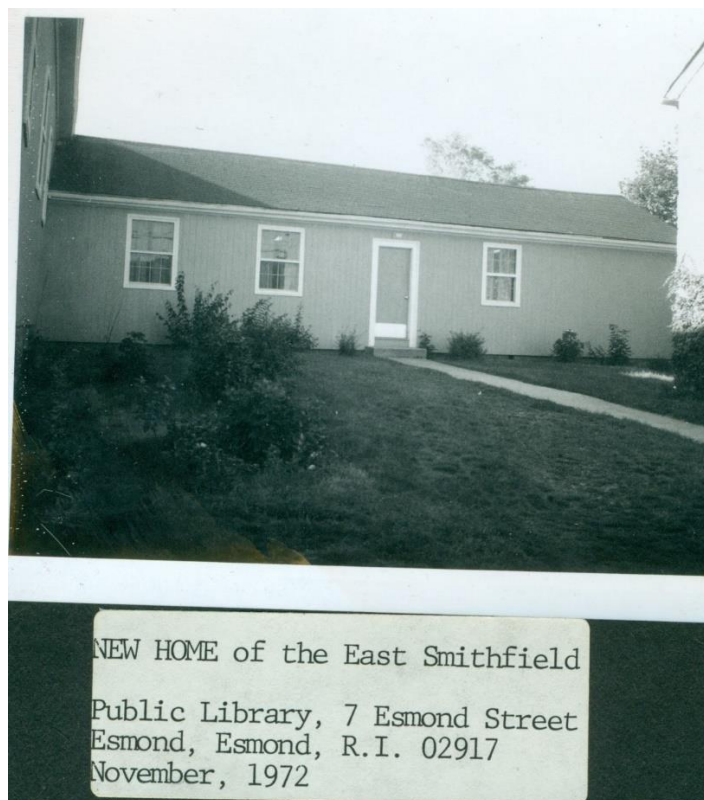
Figure 54 Courtesy of the East Smithfield Public Library



Figure 55 Courtesy of the East Smithfield Public Library



*Figure 56 Courtesy of the East Smithfield Public Library*



*Figure 57 Courtesy of the East Smithfield Public Library*





OPEN HOUSE - November 5, 1972  
VIEW of the childrens corner

OPEN HOUSE - November 5, 1972  
View of adult fiction and the  
Periodicals



Figure 58 Courtesy of the East Smithfield Public Library



OPEN HOUSE - November 5, 1972

View of Adult section of the library.



OPEN HOUSE - November 5, 1972

L to R, Shirley Steere , Wanda Moskwa, Carolyn Simmons, Coordinator for Smithfield

OPEN HOUSE- November 5, 1972

L to R, Louise Walsh, Wanda Moskwa, Emma Baron.



Figure 59 Courtesy of the East Smithfield Public Library

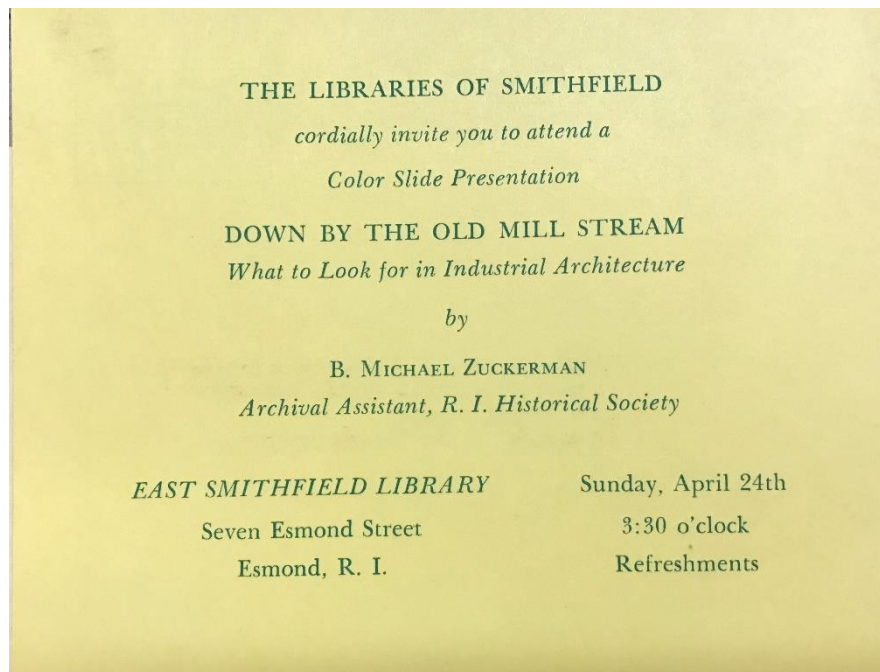


Figure 60 Photos Courtesy of the East Smithfield Public Library



Figure 61 Photo courtesy of the East Smithfield Public Library



## **The Smithfield Recreation Association**

As the use of the building by the Esmond Mills declined, the Smithfield Recreation Association took up office in the facilities in 1949 and began offering programs and activities for both the adults and youth of the community. By 1952 the bowling alleys had been reopened (closed since 1947) and the center was hosting a full calendar.

Examples of programs, activities, and events held by the Smithfield Recreation Association are as follows:

- Basket weaving classes
- Sewing classes
- Woodworking classes
- Craft classes
- Halloween parties in partnership with local police and fire departments to keep youth off the town streets and out of trouble on Halloween night
- Easter bonnet making
- Easter egg races
- Dance classes, (ballet, tap, acrobatic, and toe)
- May Dances
- Esmond Bunnyteens Canteen
- Competitive table tennis league
- Annual mystery rides, with chartered bus
- Thursday night adult recreational activities, (games, contests, bowling)
- Bowling
- Needlepoint classes
- Beadwork/Gympwork classes
- Indoor Easter egg hunts
- Decorated bike shows and contests
- Christmas dances
- Esmond Day Camp
- St. Patrick's Day dances
- Exhibitions and competitions of craft creations
- Little League bowling teams
- Couples square and modern dance program
- Fashion shows by the sewing classes
- Pre-teen record hop
- Annual Thanksgiving Dance
- Smithfield Golden Ager's Club
- Nock Hockey

Director George M. Smith (1949-1989) coordinated a calendar of events each season, packed with programs and activities designed to curb delinquency in the town and keep the youth both busy and further educated in life skills, including sewing, and woodworking. Mr. Smith's efforts also branched out into the local beaches of the town, coordinating Red Cross swimming classes and competitions.



*Figure 62 George Minchen Smith, photo hanging on wall of East Smithfield Neighborhood Center in dedication*

### In 1991 the House of Representatives passed a Resolution

“THE DEDICATION OF THE EAST SMITHFIELD NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER IN HONOR OF GEORGE MINCHEN SMITH”

“Whereas, after serving with this group for several years, George Minchen Smith was appointed Director of Recreation for Smithfield in 1949. Mr. Smith, an engineer working on the Manhattan Project at Brown University, firmly believed that recreation for all was important enough to warrant spending most of his spare time developing such a program for Smithfield; and

Whereas, As director, he began to add to the existing program and obtained the use of the Esmond Mills Community Hall as a base of operation in the area, also establishing a youth center there. In December 1951, primarily through George Minchen Smith's sterling efforts, Esmond Industries deeded the Esmond Community Hall to the Town with stipulation that it be used for recreation. They, likewise, donated the nearby Esmond Park and Memorial. A grateful Town Council happily voted to place the custodianship of the Community Hall property with the Smithfield Recreation Association; and

Whereas, Along with the youth center, Mr. Smith established sewing, tap dancing, ballet and baton twirling classes, along with gym program and Red Cross swimming classes; and

Whereas, He also founded such special events as the annual Halloween Party, the Easter Egg Rolling and Hunt, and the Block Dance; .....

“Whereas, When informed of federal grants for the Neighborhood Centers in 1971, the Association changed its name to the present East Smithfield Neighborhood Center. With the new name came even greater innovation. Although some of the original programs changed or simply ceased to be, George M. Smith always successfully maintained the vision that inaugurated this superb organization in June of 1943; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That we here gathered pay honor and tribute to a singular man whose dedication and love for the people of Smithfield enriched the lives of many. For over 40 years, George Minchen Smith put his very heart and soul into the Neighborhood Center, accomplishing far more than anyone could have ever expected. The dedication of the East Smithfield Neighborhood Center in his honor is an appropriate and living monument to this genuinely extraordinary man.

GIVEN THIS 18<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF JUNE, 1991

PROPOSED BY: Representative Joseph DeAngelis, Speaker of the House, District 57

The May 1947 issue of Ladies' Home Journal featured a six-page article on the success of the center and the Recreation Association. The article designed to shed light on the importance of funding for recreation and the difference such programs can make in the youth moral of the community and success in efforts to curb delinquency.



Figure 63 Cover, May 1947 Ladies' Home Journal





Figure 64 Ladies' Home Journal May, 1947 p.23



Figure 65 Ladies' Home Journal, May 1947 p.102

"The events leading up to the crime were, in police vernacular, routine. The boy left school on his sixteenth birthday and went to Philadelphia and found a job. He lost it after two months and couldn't find another. He went home, where he was just one more mouth to feed and where there was little for a boy to do. He quarreled with his family and got into trouble in the neighborhood. Then one night he killed the man next door after roundly beating him. 'I knew that the boy was a bad one,' a state trooper said after his confession. 'Two months ago I picked him up on suspicion and took him home., I told his father if he didn't want to punish him and hold him in check he'd have real trouble on his hands.'

In its unpleasant way, this story is typical of many juvenile-crime stories. The warning signs of restlessness; the lack of understanding on the part of the parents; the failure of the youth; the stern but vague voice of discipline saying, 'You better be good or you'll be punished.' Then the revenge, the brutal crime, confessed without emotion, without motive, without reason or driving desire. It happened that this story's locale was Garden City, New Jersey. With variations, the same sort of thing has taken place in thousands of other American towns and cities.

***But it has never happened in Smithfield; Rhode Island, and it never will.***

These are strong words. But they could be said not only about Smithfield, but about many other cities and towns. 'No news is good news.' Runs the old adage, and 'Good news is no news.' Could well be said to be its modern counterpart. The homes where there are good will and understanding, the towns where there are serenity and high responsibility are infrequently heard from. **Smithfield** is one of the quiet places."

"The threat that hung over Smithfield never materialized. It never will. Today the people of Smithfield have a sense of responsibility and of belonging in their community as a whole; their fellowship in play has helped give them roots in the four villages that make up this 'town'. You'll find the kids running the town's football teams, taking in the dues at the local teen-age club, helping the little ones act out Jack and Jill, sledding down the hills- and if you catch one in the principal's office, he's likely to be there talking about how the playground will operate this summer. And you'll find the adults working and playing together in their community's name. That is the story of how Smithfield licked its threat of trouble."

"It begins on June 21<sup>st</sup> 1943, when Cornelius J. Mahon called together representatives of the Smithfield's five churches, four schools, several businesses (most of them worsted mills) labor unions and the civic-minded so that he should get a good turnout. Mr. Mahon came right to the point. He told them that it was his feeling that Smithfield had a real trouble maker in their midst: the lack of something to do."

"Looking back now, the men and women who pioneered what was later to become the Smithfield Recreation Association recall how, from their own varying viewpoints, they agreed with Mr. Mahon. The town judge, Joseph Wholey (now clerk of the state's Juvenile Court), saw the need of planned recreation as vital to the prevention of juvenile delinquency and crime. Robert Tobin, personnel manager of Smithfield's largest mill, felt the same way, only he phrased it differently: 'I felt that if you don't do something to entertain the kids, you've got no kick coming if they get into trouble.' "

**The Smithfield Recreation Association had the foresight to make a scrapbook of its endeavors, enclosed below, please find a selection of photos from the SRA scrapbook, and articles from the local Observer Publication.**



*Figure 66 Photo courtesy of The East Smithfield Public Library, SRA scrapbook*





*Figure 67 Photos courtesy of East Smithfield Public Library, SRA scrapbook*





*Figure 68 Photos courtesy of East Smithfield Public Library, SRA scrapbook*





Figure 69 Photo courtesy of East Smithfield Public Library, SRA scrapbook

Observer

1950

*Smithfield Team Wins*

“The Smithfield Bunnyteens table tennis team defeated the Children’s Canteen team of the R.I. State Home and School in a contest last night at the Esmond Community Hall, Esmond, by a 10-5 score...”

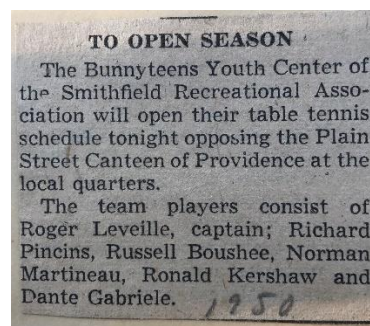


Figure 70 Photo of article courtesy the SRA Scrapbook 1 1950





Figure 71 Photo courtesy of the SRA Scrapbook 1

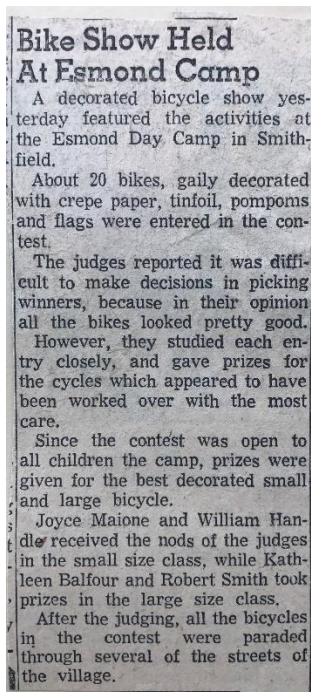


Figure 72 Photo courtesy of SRA Scrapbook 1



Figure 73 Photo courtesy of East Smithfield Public Library, SRA scrapbook



Figure 74 Photo courtesy of the SRA scrapbook 1 1957





*Figure 75 Photo courtesy of the East Smithfield Public Library, SRA scrapbook*



*Figure 76 Photo courtesy of the Smithfield Public Library, SRA Scrapbook*



# Vandalism Takes a Holiday In Smithfield This Halloween

**Police Spend Peaceful Evening as Youngsters  
Flock to Community Center's Largest Party**

Smithfield hobgoblins in droves checked their brooms at the door at the Smithfield Community Center last night and spent a well-supervised and orderly Halloween.

The youngsters of all age groups apparently forsook their mischievous rounds and remained until

the end of the program, leaving the Smithfield police force with little to do up to midnight.

The largest gathering to attend the town recreation program affair watched with rapt gazes as a professional magician performed wonders befitting the eve.

One or twice, George M. Smith, recreation director, dressed as a clown, was forced to step out of Halloween character to reprimand a few of the older boys for noise during the show.

Otherwise the night passed without incident throughout the lineup and award of prizes for best costumes. Even a few parents fell under the scrutiny of the judges. For the first time this year, they had been asked to dress with the youngsters to keep the spirit uniform.

Smithfield police reported no incidents and attributed the quietest such night on record to the proceedings at the center. Even the older set, which swelled the gathering to about 400 persons, showed up at the hall.

But they generally settled for regular clothes, and concentrated on ping-pong and bowling in another wing of the hall.

In another part of town, Greenville youngsters flocked to the fire station to partake of cider and donuts and view movies shown at the Greenville Fire Station.

Figure 77 SRA Scrapbook 1





## Basketweaving Course Looks Good to Mom, Too

Smithfield Office,  
2032 Smith Street,  
Centredale

Telephone  
CE 1-4610  
EL 3-2942

What was originally designed by the Smithfield Recreation Association to attract girls who felt they had outgrown regular functions of the summer programs has apparently caught the fancy of many Smithfield adults.

The daily basketweaving course at Smithfield Community Hall, set up for the first time this year to busy the hands of the "lost age group" ranging from early to middle teens, may be carried over into the fall program with a class for adults only.

Though nothing has been said officially, Mrs. Earl Shepherd, who supervises the morning sessions, said that George M. Smith, recreation director, has discussed with her the possibility of bringing the parents in on the project.

Weaving with the graceful, slender reeds, which Mrs. Shepherd said are a special Nile River variety, caught on quickly with the youngsters, who might have otherwise dropped out of the summer program because they have outgrown many of the activities they enjoyed in previous years.

When parents would drop by,

**ANCIENT ART** is revived in basket weavers' class of Smithfield Recreation Association. Mrs. Earl Shepherd, supervisor, gives long

reed from banks of River Nile to Rita Gagnon as Marilyn Campbell (left) makes progress on a basket.

—State Staff Photo

they wanted to start weaving themselves, Mrs. Shepherd said, and expressed interest in taking part in such classes.

Yesterday about 10 girls were busy putting the finishing touches on the first item, an attractive holder for floral decorations.

Reeds of different thicknesses are woven around a wooden base and then shellacked. Other household articles to be made include serving trays, hot dish underliners, and glassware conveyors.

Plans now include a sale of the handmade articles at the end of the season. Classes are held Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to noon.

Figure 78 SRA Scrabook 1



## Home-Made Holiday Bonnets

Community Hall. Left to right are Joyce Taylor, 6, Carol Ann Meehan, 6, and Geraldine Morgan, 8.

—State Staff Photo

by these little girls who took part in the Easter Parade Saturday at the Esmond



## It's A Break For Mom---And Fun For The Kids

1959



AT SMITHFIELD SUMMER RECREATION PROGRAM last week in the Game Room these young folk were hard at work building a block city when Photographer Malone stopped by to snap their picture. Left to right (foreground) Robin Anderson, Jean Marie Hamel, David Castellucci, Patricia Ellis, Linda Lacerenza,

and Joan Legreco. Donna Wagner and Faith Hanson are standing in the rear. "They're a little noisy at times," commented Mrs. George Smith, supervisor of the group and wife of the Smithfield Recreation Director, "but I have just as much fun as they do!"

—photo by Norman Malone

Figure 79 Photo courtesy of SRA Scrapbook 1



*March 3, 1954*

## Child Delinquency In Smithfield Drops

The Smithfield Recreational Association has been informed in a report from the Research Bureau, Council of Community Services, that the rate of juvenile delinquency in Smithfield had decreased 77 per cent last year compared to the previous year, Recreation Director George M. Smith of the local unit announces.

Smithfield, according to the report for 1952, was rated third highest in the state. Smith said he believed the good record was achieved because of the fine cooperation of the local churches, PTA groups, police and many other organizations that showed a keen interest in the planning of worthwhile leisure-time activities for the youngsters.

Smith said also there is no reason why juvenile delinquency cannot be eliminated completely in Smithfield with the co-operation of all units in the town to provide the necessary attractions and activities. He said the recreation association programs have been increased as much as possible to gain the interest of youngsters in the town-wide youth movement.

He added that in any case the youth of the town should be congratulated for establishing such a fine record for they have shown they are reliable, public spirited and worthy of all the credit that is due them.

Figure 80 SRA Scrapbook 1

Dec.  
1951

## Esmond Industries, Inc., Presents to Town Community Hall and Memorial Park Site

The Esmond Industries, Inc., owner of the major portion of the Esmond Mills property in Esmond, has given to the town the Esmond Community Hall property and the Esmond park property, site of the Esmond World War Memorial.

The gifts were disclosed last night at the Smithfield Town Council meeting with the title to the two properties being contained in two deeds which were presented yesterday afternoon to Town Solicitor Joseph S. Wholey and George M. Smith, director of the Smithfield Recreational Association. The deeds were signed by Clifford A. McBride, president of the concern.

The deeds contain restrictions that the Esmond Community Hall property be used exclusively for recreation purposes and the second piece of property for park and memorial purposes. The property upon which the Community Hall is located contains 18,010 square feet of land and the park property a total of 14,480 square feet.

The council accepted both deeds and passed a vote directing Town Clerk Margaret A. Crepeau to prepare a resolution to be sent to McBride and his brother, Frank McBride and other members of the corporation for their public spirited and generous gifts.

Town Solicitor Wholey said the firm having no use for the building and realizing its value to the town for recreation purposes and the other piece of property for park and memorial purposes decided to deed the both pieces of property to the town without cost.

He termed the action of the officials and members of the corporation "a wholesome tribute to the concern's officials for their interest in the welfare of the townspeople and expresses the co-operation between the concern and the town in which they do business."

Smith, who was present at the meeting last night, said, "The Esmond Industries, Inc., have performed a wonderful deed in donating to the town these two valuable pieces of property which should be appreciated and cherished by all residents of the town. It means the youth of the town will have a permanent home which use has been donated to the Smithfield Recreational Association and been operated by the recreation unit for the last two years."

The community house building contains a large hall, four bowling alleys in a separate section, two games rooms, a room for housing the Esmond Public Library and a room for a heating unit. The building faces on Esmond Street and formerly was used for a community building when owned by the Esmond Mills.

### Places Custodianship

The Esmond park area which contains the Esmond World War Memorial, is located at the intersection of Esmond Street, and much of the property is on Waterman Avenue and extends to the Esmond-Georgiaville highway bridge.

The council voted to place the custodianship of the Community Hall property with the Smithfield Recreational Association which has

used the structure for the last two years as a youth center.

Councilman Eugene E. Thibodeau was empowered to confer with the Balfour-Cole Post, No. 64, American Legion, regarding the maintenance and supervision of the park property.

Walter Whittingslow presided at the session, at which it was voted to hold the next regular meeting on Jan. 2 owing to New Year's Day falling on the regular meeting date. The council will sit as a board of canvassers Monday to prepare the voting lists to be used at the special town financial meeting Dec. 15.

### Council Commended

A letter was received from the Rev. Douglas W. Passage, pastor of the Georgiaville Baptist Church, commending the council for not reversing its former order of a 10-day suspension of the liquor, dance and victualling licenses of Gabriele's Cafe as the result of a fracas last month.

The council abated the sum of \$151.83 in interest charges on taxes amounting to \$2562 paid by Conway Modes, Inc., which formerly operated in the old Bernon Mill property. The plant has been closed for three years.

The use of the town hall auditorium was granted the Smithfield Commercial High School to conduct a food sale Dec. 14 and the Smithfield Recreational Association for a Christmas party and dance Dec. 22.

The council endorsed the R.I. Santa Claus Fund with each member contributing \$1 each. Others contributing were Building Inspector Jose Pacheco, Recreation Director George M. Smith, Town Clerk Margaret A. Crepeau, and Tax Collector Cora E. Viera, \$1 each.

A complaint entered by residents of Cedar Swamp Road regarding the dumping of old automobiles was referred to Chief of Police Arthur B. Gould for investigation.

The council voted to request Highway Commissioner Clarence H. Thurber to make repairs to a portion of Homestead Avenue and Higgins Street in the Georgiaville area.

Figure 81 SRA Scrapbook 1



## Town of Smithfield

Book of Deeds 20 p.339

Recorded September 27<sup>th</sup>, 1951

Esmond Industries Corporation, Grantor

\*This deed gives the land situated at 7 Esmond Street, containing the East Smithfield Neighborhood Center to the Town of Smithfield. Subject to one of the following restrictions-

“ 1. The premises shall hereafter be used exclusively for recreational purposes for the use and enjoyment of the residents of the Town of Smithfield, Rhode Island, under the direction of such committee, body or department if the Town of Smithfield as may from time to time be designated by said Town for such purpose..”

Since that time, the Smithfield Recreation Association continued to use this building and improve upon the premises whenever funding would allow.

In recent years, the Center has been used by local Girl Scout and Boy Scout troops, Square Dancing teams, Marie K. Jennison school of Dance, a local Church, and was a rental space for community members to hold dances and events.



*Figure 82 Photo courtesy of Phil Jordan*

In the above photograph, the local Boy Scouts hold their Pinewood Derby inside the right wing of the East Smithfield Neighborhood Center, formerly the bowling alley.





*Figure 83 Photo courtesy of Scoutmaster Peter Wood*

Pictured above, the local Boy Scout troop holds a meeting in the former bowling alley.



*Figure 84 Photos courtesy of Marie K. Jennison School of Dance*

Pictured above, the Marie K. Jennison School of Dance holds their dance class in the main hall.

**For the past several years, the typical calendar of the East Smithfield Neighborhood Center went as follows:**

**Sunday:** Rain of Freedom Church 9:30 AM- 12:00 PM; Rm 1 (All are welcome)

**Monday:** Aerobics Class 8:30 AM-10:30 AM Rm. 1  
Girl Scouts 4:00 PM-6:00 PM Rm. 2  
Swinging Squares Dance Class 7:00 PM-8:30 PM Rm. 5  
Aerobics Class 7:00 PM-8:00 PM Rm.1

**Tuesday:** Girl Scouts 4:00 PM-6:00 PM Rm. 2  
Teen Dance Class 6:30 PM-8:30 PM Rm.1

**Wednesday:** Aerobics Class 8:30 AM-10:30 PM Rm.1  
Yoga Class 5:00 PM-6:00 PM Rm.5  
Country Line Dance 7:00 PM-8:00 PM Rm.1

**Thursday:** Cub Scouts 6:00 PM-8:00 PM Rm.4  
Boy Scouts 6:30 PM-8:30 PM Rm. 5  
Aerobics Class 7:00 PM-8:00 PM Rm. 1

**Friday:** Smithfield Scrap Book Club 7:00 PM-8:30 PM Rm. 5  
(First Friday every month)  
Smithfield Youth Game Night 7:00 PM-9:00 PM  
(Second Friday Rm. 5)

**Saturday:** Aerobics Class 8:00 AM-10:30 AM Rm. 1



*Figure 85 Photo courtesy of Reign of Freedom Church*

***The Providence Journal***

August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2003

Section C p.1

*At the Center, anything Goes*

“The blue building with neat white trim and a sun-bleached American flag flapping to one side sits on a quiet Esmond Street in the Placid village of Esmond, but inside activity hums seven days a week. It’s the East Smithfield Neighborhood Center, a low-key but popular spot for people to take classes, figure out how to tie the knots that are so crucial to scouting, or learn how to dance.”

“The Center’s agenda begins on Sundays, when four couples practice for national ballroom dancing contests. Sunday afternoons are open for birthdays, first communions, and graduation parties. A smorgasbord of other functions takes up the rest of the week.... Friday nights are reserved for school-related purposes”



Figure 86 Photo courtesy of Google Maps 2017





*Figure 87 Esmond Park old dam embankments, Woonasquatucket River*

\*The following pages contain a selection of photographs of the mill workers from the Esmond Mills. At the turn of the century, most residents of the Esmond Village found employment in the mill (famous for its Esmond Bunny Blankets) and as such these are the community members the Esmond Hall served faithfully.

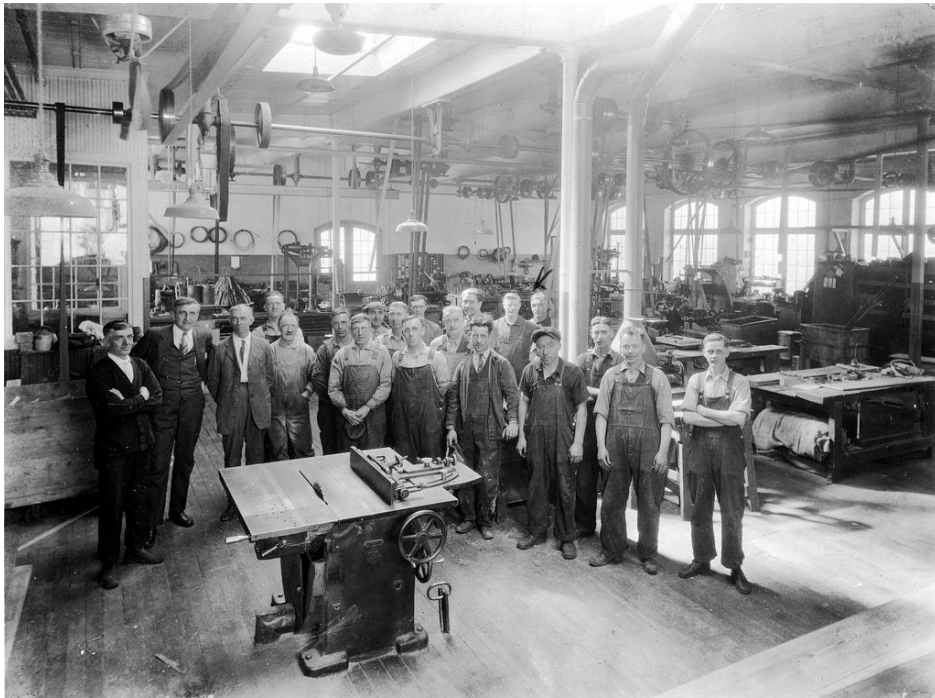


Figure 88 Photo courtesy of the Historical Society of Smithfield



Figure 89 Photo courtesy of the Historical Society of Smithfield





Figure 90 Photo courtesy of the Historical Society of Smithfield

Esmond Hall, now East Smithfield Neighborhood Center is the culmination and the completion of the mill village plan first conceived by Philip Allen (Zachariah Allen) in 1813. The designed mill community as eloquently described by Richard Greenwood, PHD, in his Rhode Island History Volume 46 no. 4 November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1988, in his description of *Zachariah Allen and the Architecture of Industrial Paternalism* sets out the first influences of the planned mill village where it states, “Allendale was apparently modeled on Allenville, Philip Allen’s factory village, which was located a short distance up the Woonasquatucket. Allenville was a mill village of comparable size that had been built in 1813 under the direct supervision of the Providence architect and builder, John Holden Greene. At Allenville and at virtually all water powered factories, beginning with the 18<sup>th</sup> century English textile mills, the village plan began with a waterfall as the focus then grew out of the engineer’s solution of the basic questions of where best to build the dam, dig raceways, erect the factory. With these locations fixed the housing was built in a convenient location, usually in a simple orderly arrangement.

Zachariah Allen followed this procedure at Allendale, surveying and laying out the site with Philip Allen and a surveyor.”

This model including the necessary public buildings formed the basis of that paternalistic architecture and planning. This model followed as well in nearby Georgiaville. The recreation center and its historic and present uses continues that tradition of serving the community.



---

The long three-story mill building on Waterman Avenue close to the Woonasquatucket River has a five-story stair tower on the road side and an old smoke stack on the river side. On the corner of Esmond Street and Dean Avenue is the Smithfield Public Library in a former three-story Colonial Revival school. Modest dwellings, including many duplexes, line many of the narrow streets in the village. The stone Allenville Co. Storehouse, dating from the first mill period (ca. 1813), is located at the edge of the Woonasquatucket River facing Esmond Street (listed in NR 1972).

There is a strong sense of place in the village which has some of the earliest mill housing in the region. Issues confronting the village are development pressures from the Route 44 corridor and concern of continued use of large mill buildings like the early 20<sup>th</sup> century structures in Esmond.



*Stone Store at Esmond*

Solutions include:

- Complete a National Register nomination for Esmond Village Historic District to provide recognition of its historical and architectural value.
- Using historical photographs and survey information develop a handbook about the history of Esmond and include residential rehabilitation design guidelines to encourage preservation and enhancement of village housing stock.
- Consider Neighborhood Conservation District protection which will help to preserve the overall sense of scale and massing of the historic structures. See Community Wide Preservation and Zoning Strategies in **General Preservation Planning Recommendations Section** for additional information.

*Figure 91 Page 10 of the Smithfield Reconnaissance Report*

\*This page has been included as a reference to the suggestions made by RIHPHC for the preservation village of Esmond.