

Some things have changed
in the past 27 years.



Some things have not.

Since 1988, physicians have trusted us to meet their professional and personal insurance needs. Working with multiple insurers allows us to offer choice, competitive rates, and the benefit of one-stop shopping. Call us.

800-559-6711



RIMS-IBC

Haines State Park: The Fresh-Air Legacy of Dr. George B. Haines

MARY KORR
RIMJ MANAGING EDITOR

The legacy of **DR. GEORGE B. HAINES** (1843–1910) continues to this day in a hundred-acre park that bears his name on the Barrington/Riverside border.

It was here he lived on a farm during the final year of his life, seeking respite from years of tending to the mill families and French Canadian immigrants who flooded the Valley Falls section of Cumberland, along the Blackstone River.



The wooden entrance sign on Washington Road in West Barrington greets visitors to Haines Memorial State Park, one of the first state parks in Rhode Island, which was donated by the estate of Dr. George B. Haines in 1911.

The *Providence Medical Journal* and *Transactions* of the Rhode Island Medical Society report that Dr. Haines began his medical training as a surgeon's assistant on the receiving ships and floating hospitals, the USS *Sabine* and USS *Vandalia*, docked at the Portsmouth (NH) Navy Yard in the Civil War era. He then attended Dartmouth College, graduating with a degree in medicine in 1871.

The following year he came to Rhode



Valley Falls, Cumberland, as seen on a postcard from 1906, and where Dr. George B. Haines lived and practiced medicine from 1872 until 1909.

Island. In 1876, Dr. Haines married, but was left a widower at age 34 after his wife died from complications of childbirth. Seven years later his daughter died. He never remarried, and immersed himself in his profession.

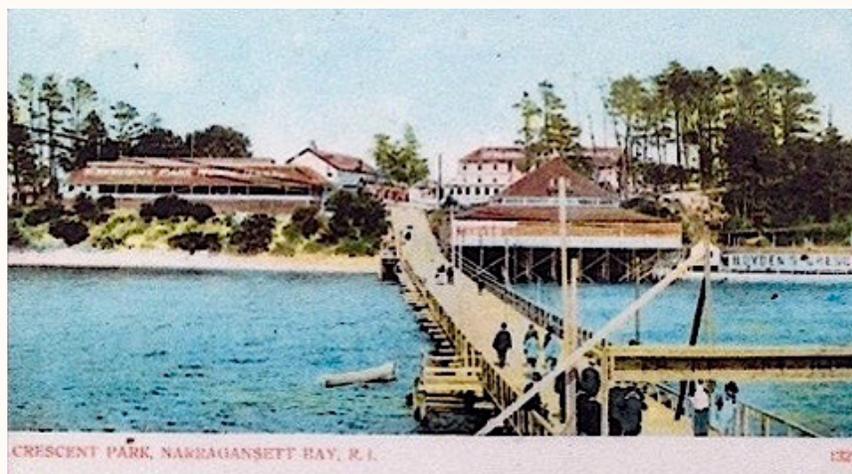
In addition to his practice, he served as a public health officer for Valley Falls, and worked closely with Dr. Lucius Garvin (later Governor of RI), of nearby Lonsdale. Perhaps as a result of his frequent bouts with severe asthma, Dr. Haines held a firm belief in the healing power of fresh air and open space, as did many general practitioners of the day.

It is no surprise, then, that at the age of 66, decades into his profession, and after extensive travel, he bought the Humphrey farm overlooking Bullcock's Cove in Barrington. It was a

wooded retreat of 83 acres. No doubt he enjoyed the view – it was directly opposite Crescent Park, billed as the “Coney Island of New England.” At one point, there was a footbridge, now a boat ramp, that connected the farm to the back of Crescent Park, and which was destroyed in the 1938 hurricane.

By train, trolley and steamship, throngs came to eat at Crescent Park's renowned shore dinners, stroll the Midway, and ride the rollercoaster or slide down the thrilling chutes into the Providence River.

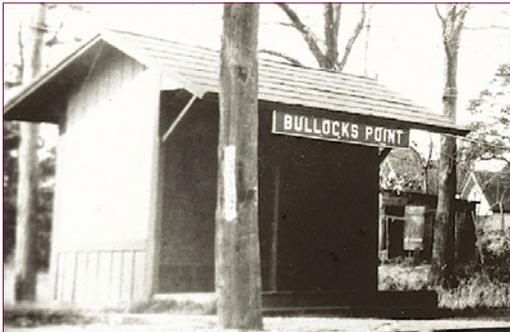
The most famous park attraction was the Charles I. D. Loeff Carousel, originally built at the head of the 400-foot pier facing Dr. Haines' property. Later on, a more elaborate one was built on the Midway; its horse, chariots and lone camel still spin their magic today.



A close-up from the informational placard on the East Bay Bike Bath shows a vintage postcard of Crescent Park as seen from West Barrington, where Dr. Haines purchased a farm in 1909 for fresh air and relaxation. The pier in the postcard was destroyed in the Hurricane of 1938.



A vintage photograph shows the view west from Bullock's Cove to Crescent Park, with the park's large wooden rollercoaster in the background.



The Bullock's Point railroad station where Dr. Haines collapsed and died in 1910.



Dr. Haines did not have long to enjoy the farmstead, which he had settled into permanently in 1909. On October 11, 1910, he collapsed and died unexpectedly at the Bullock's Point train station near his property. The medical journals attribute his passing to severe asthmatic "apoplexy."

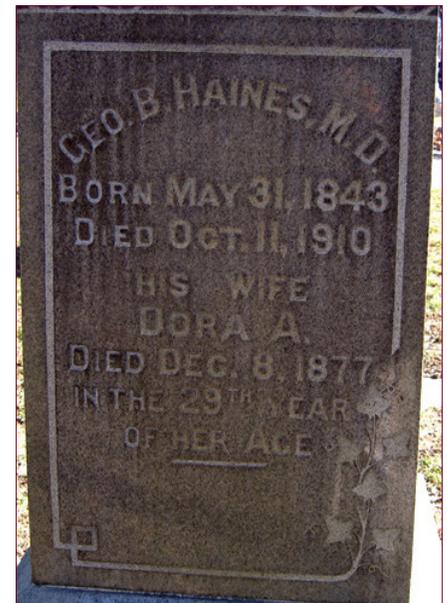
The following year, his sister, Ida M. Haines, sold the farm to the Metropolitan Park Commission in Rhode Island for \$1, fulfilling her brother's wish that his land be used for "parks, parkway, or boulevard uses only, or purposes in strict harmony therewith." The Park Commission expanded the memorial to more than one hundred acres in the ensuing years.

Today, the East Bay Bike Path, built over the old railroad tracks, whisks riders through Haines Park, where Dr. Haines spent the last year of his life and where he died on an autumn day as he waited for the train to pull into the station. ❖

During the Great Depression in the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps, which was at work in other parks across Rhode Island, built stone fireplaces in Haines Park. They could be rented for \$.15 cents a day and are still in use today.



The horses, chariots and lone camel on the Looff Carousel still spin their magic. Built in 1895, it is among thirteen Looffs remaining in operation in the USA, and one of two in Rhode Island.



Grave of Dr. Haines in Swan Point Cemetery, Providence.