

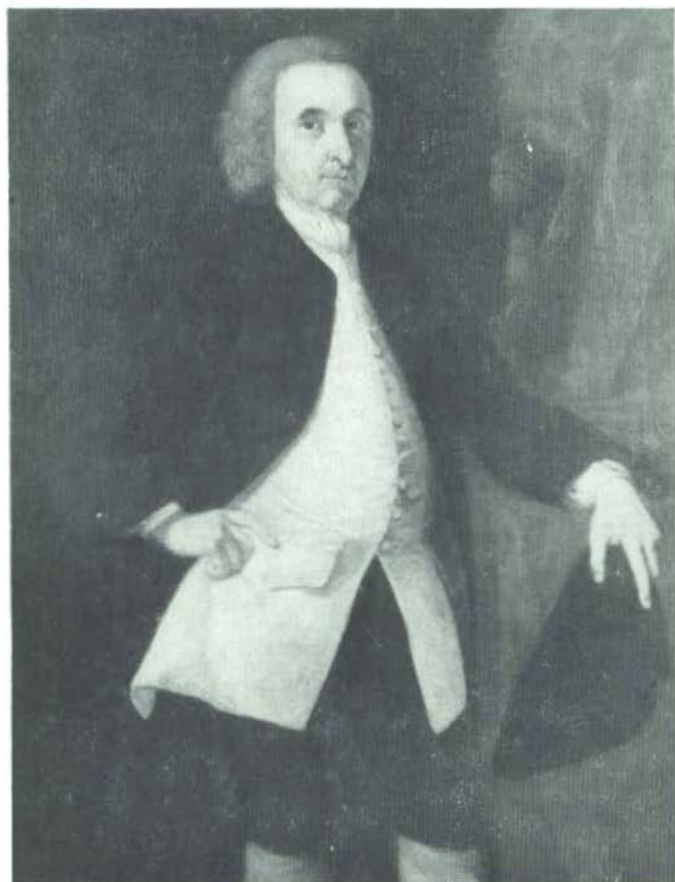
RHODE ISLAND HISTORY

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HON. THOMAS CRANSTON, 1710-1785

Portrait in oil by John Singleton Copley

Gift of Mrs. Walter Hidden

Rhode Island Historical Society

ISSUED QUARTERLY AT PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

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RHODE ISLAND HISTORY

VOL. VII OCTOBER, 1948 NO. 4

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Rhode Island and The Australian Trade, 1792-1812

by LLOYD G. CHURCHWARD*

It is a fact seldom remembered today that the first speculative cargo to reach Sydney, New South Wales, was an American one. This was in November, 1792, less than five years after the founding of the colony. Before that date and for some years afterwards, the only British trading ships to arrive at Sydney were the government supply ships. But in the twenty years following November, 1792, no less than sixty-four American ships visited New South Wales.¹ Of these, sixteen were from Rhode Island. Although other American ports—Boston, New York, Salem, and Philadelphia—sent ships to Sydney during the years 1792-1812, none was as active in this traffic as was Providence.

The trade with Australia developed directly out of the China trade. As early as 1787, several weeks before Port Jackson was settled, an American ship on the China run had opened up a new route by sailing eastward in the roaring forties, round the south cape of Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania) and northward past the east coast of New Holland (Australia).² The existence of a convict settle-

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¹ These figures are based on lists published in *Historical Records of Australia* and the *Sydney Gazette*, supplemented by reference to American newspapers and other American sources.

² Josiah Quincy, ed. *The Life and Journals of Samuel Shave*, 1847. The voyage of the Philadelphia ship *Alliance* is mentioned in a letter of December 31, 1787. The arrival of the ship on its return to Philadelphia is mentioned in a letter by Phineas Bond, October 2, 1788. J. Franklin Jameson, ed., "Letters of Phineas Bond," *Annual Report of the American Historical Association* (Washington, 1896) v. 1, p. 578.

ment close by this route was a natural attraction to American ships. The direct run from America to China by the way of New Holland was a long run, and ships were liable to run short of water. Furthermore, a convict settlement was bound to take some years to become self-supporting. American shippers might find a market for their foodstuffs, rum, and dry goods in Sydney as they had already found a sale for them in the European colonial settlements in India and the Indies. To acquire a salable outward cargo was always difficult in this early China trade; another market along the route would mean less ballast and more profit on the outward run. Again, goods sold in Sydney would be paid for in bullion or in notes on the British treasury, both acceptable to the Canton merchants. Finally, in time of war the passage between Java and Sumatra became a favorite hunting ground for cruisers. Some American ships were recommended to take the eastern route around New Holland in order to escape the attentions of hostile cruisers.³

Two Americans seem to have conceived the idea of trading with Sydney at about the same time. The first of these, Thomas Patrickson of Philadelphia, was lucky enough to get tipped off by Lieutenant-Governor King. King, who was the commandant of Norfolk Island, about 900 miles east of Sydney, had been sent by Governor Phillip to secure supplies from the Dutch at Batavia in 1790. In the following year he met Patrickson at the Cape of Good Hope and suggested to him the advantage of taking a speculative cargo to Sydney.⁴ Patrickson took the hint. He returned to Philadelphia; loaded his ship, the *Philadelphia*, with a cargo of American beef, wine, rum, gin, tobacco, pitch, tar, and other items; and left on April 1, 1792, for the published destination of the Indies,⁵ but actually for Australia. When he arrived in Sydney in November, 1792, supplies were short, and the Governor was only too happy to be able to increase the rations by buying from the Amer-

³ Instructions to Captain Dexter of the *John Jay*, May 13, 1800. William B. Weeden, "Early Oriental Commerce in Providence,"—*Proceedings of the Mass. Historical Society*, 1907-1908, Third Series, v. 1, pp. 249-253.

⁴ King to Governor Phillip, King's Letter Books, ms., Mitchell Library, Sydney. See also David Collins, *An Account of the English colony in New South Wales, from its first settlement in January, 1788, to August, 1801* (London, 1804) pp. 186-87.

⁵ Philadelphia *Dunlap's American Daily Advertiser*, April 2, 1792.

ican. The Governor, wrote David Collins, bought "such part of the *Philadelphia's* cargo as he thought was immediately wanting in the colony," 559 barrels of American cured beef and 27 barrels of pitch and tar. For these he gave Patrickson a note on the British Treasury to the extent of £2829/11/—.⁶ The rest of the cargo was purchased by the officers and others of the settlement. Patrickson then contracted with the Governor to carry provisions to Norfolk Island. He eventually sold his ship and became a contractor for the transportation of convicts to Sydney.

The second American to reach Sydney in 1792 was Captain Benjamin Page of Rhode Island.

"In December, the *Hope* an American ship, employed in collecting skins and carrying them to the China market, put into this port for the purpose of wood and water, of which she was represented to be in great need. Her master, Mr. Benjamin Page, having informed me that he had on board a quantity of spirits and provisions for sale, I directed the commissary to lay before me a state of the provisions in the store; and having reason to fear the crops would fail from the great drought which has lately prevailed and to guard against the delays which have been observed to take place in the arrival of ships with supplies from England, I judged it my duty to avail myself of this opportunity, and have the satisfaction of acquainting you that by this purchase I directed the commissary to make I have augmented the quantity of provisions in the colony to seven months at the established ration."⁷

The "quantity of provisions" purchased from Page consisted of 200 barrels of beef, 80 barrels of pork, 44 barrels of flour and 7,597 gallons of spirits, for which £2957/6/6 was paid. There is no evidence to suggest that Page or the *Hope's* owners, Brown and Francis, had heard of Patrickson's preparations for his Sydney voyage. The *Hope* actually left several weeks ahead of the *Philadelphia* and there was nothing in the preparation of the voyage to suggest that its cargo was selected expressly for the Sydney market. It is probable that Page gave the real reason when he claimed that he put into Sydney simply for wood and water. In later years this explanation was given so often that it became suspect.

The *Hope* cleared Sydney for Canton and reached its

⁶ Collins, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

⁷ Grose to Lord Dundas, January 9, 1793. *Historical Records of New South Wales*, v. 3, p. 2.

home port again on October 4, 1793.⁸ For a decade after this date Brown ships, ships owned by the firms Brown and Francis, or by Brown and Ives,⁹ often called at Sydney on their way out to China. These two Providence firms were the first American firms to have anything like a regular trade with New South Wales. In fact, no other American firm built up a definite interest in the Australian trade until the Salem firm of N. L. Rogers and Brothers in the decade after 1832. Some of the Brown ships came direct to Sydney, some came via the Falkland Islands or some other sealing ground. They almost all cleared for Canton. The last of them, the *Eliza*, E. H. Correy, captain, used Sydney as a base from which to work the Fijian sandalwood trade.¹⁰

Early in 1794 the *Hope*, this time under the command of Martin Page, left Providence on a speculative voyage for Sydney, via the Falkland Islands. Benjamin Page was at this time a part owner in the ship *Halcyon*. Being at enmity with his Uncle Martin, he left Providence in the *Halcyon*, shortly after the *Hope*, only he sailed direct. He arrived at Port Jackson on June 14, three weeks ahead of the *Hope*. This swift move did not bring immediate reward, since when the *Halcyon* arrived, there were no fewer than five British supply ships in port. However, before the end of June Benjamin Page had sold most of his cargo. He left Sydney on July 8 carrying the Governor's despatches, which were to be forwarded by British ship from Canton. When Martin Page arrived in the *Hope* on July 5, the market was absolutely saturated. He sailed for Canton some weeks later with his entire cargo intact.¹¹

⁸ Providence Gazette and Country Journal, October 5, 1793.

⁹ Brown and Francis was founded by John Brown and his to be son-in-law, John Francis in 1787. The firm lasted until the death of John Brown in 1803. Brown and Francis were pioneers in the China trade. Their ship the *General Washington*, which visited Canton in 1788 was the first Providence ship in the trade. Nicholas Brown, nephew of John, formed the firm of Brown and Ives in 1792 with his brother-in-law, Thomas Poyton Ives. They also entered into the China trade. In 1794 they built the ship *John Jay* especially for this trade. She visited Australia on her third run in 1800.

¹⁰ For an account of this venture see, William B. Weeden, *op. cit.*, pp. 262-65.

¹¹ The *Halcyon* was owned by John Innis Clark, Joseph Nightingale, William F. Megee, and Benjamin Page (*Ships' Registers of Providence*). She left Providence on February 21, 1794. Providence Gazette and Country Journal, February 22, 1794. For further information see Collins, *op. cit.*, pp. 265-66.

Benjamin Page came out yet a third time as captain of the *Ann and Hope* in 1798. There was no effort to trade on this voyage. The ship took in water at Botany Bay and did not even enter Port Jackson. In his log book¹² Page has left an interesting account of a skirmish between two native tribes that occurred on October 23 while the ship was at anchor in Botany Bay.

"I sat down by one of the natives by the name of benelong who had an Iron shield different from the others this man informed me he had been to Europe twice and the shield he had was presented him by the Governor whom he had often dined with, his story pleased me very much and we tried to dissuade him from fighting, which he shook his head at and smiled very Ironically."

In the battle that followed Benelong was severely wounded, but was carried in triumph from the field of battle. This same native was one of the first to take on a certain veneer of westernization. He was a favorite of Governor Phillip's and is frequently mentioned in the early writings about the colony. The Australian novelist, Eleanor Dark, has recently made him the central character in her novel about the first settlement, *The Timeless Land*.

Benjamin Page made his fourth trip to New South Wales in the *Hope* in 1801. Such a familiarity with the Australian run was not paralleled till the days of the Salem-Australian trade in the thirties, when the Rogers' captains, Millet, Driver, and Mugford, made several runs each. Some good runs were made in these early days. The *Semiramis*, which arrived at Sydney on October 1, 1798, made the trip from Providence to Sydney in three months and nine days,¹³ which would have been considered good time even for a clipper ship in later days.

The last Providence ship to make the Sydney run was the *Eliza*, owned by Brown and Ives, in 1807. A few traders from other American ports came after this date, but it is clear that there was a decrease in this trade even before the war of 1812 put an end to it. The reasons for this are not hard to discover. At first, owing to the uncertainty of the British supply ships and the impossibility of growing

¹² The log of the *Ann and Hope* is now in the John Carter Brown Library, Providence, Rhode Island.

¹³ Collins, *op. cit.*, p. 452.

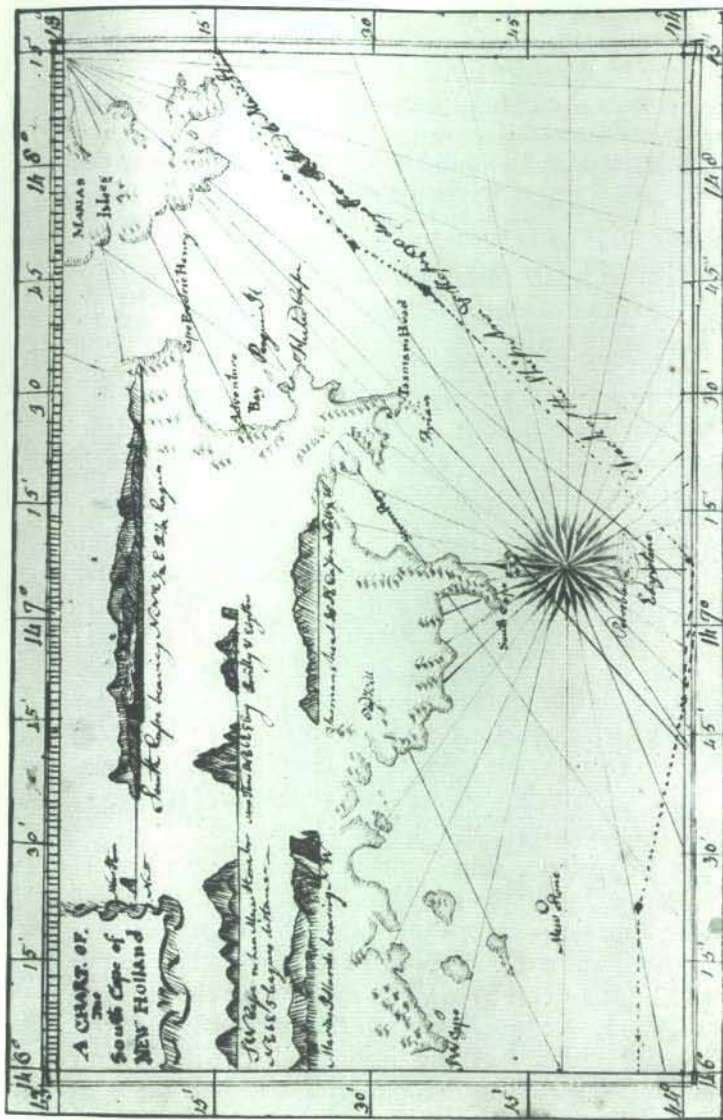


CHART FROM THE LOG BOOK OF THE *Ann and Hope*, CAPT. BENJAMIN PAGE, SHOWING HER ROUTE TO AUSTRALIA IN 1798. THE MAKER OF THE CHART EVIDENTLY BELIEVED TASMANIA TO BE A PART OF AUSTRALIA.

Courtesy of John Carter Brown Library.

enough food in the colony itself, American ships had been welcomed. But, apart from the three and a half years, 1792-1795, during which the colony was directly under the control of the New South Wales (the Rum) Corps they had not been encouraged. No Governor of a British colony could run the risk of openly encouraging foreign interlopers into the monopoly sphere of the British East India Company.

Furthermore, some Americans had shown scant respect for British law and colonial property rights. During 1804 there were several clashes over the sealing rights to Bass strait and some Americans had carried off convicts from Sydney. Others had entered into illegal trading arrangements with Sydney merchants, and as late as 1806 the Governor was still complaining of the activities of American rum-runners on the coast to the north of Sydney. Governor King issued a series of orders aimed at restricting the activity of American merchants in Australian waters. Americans were forbidden to build ships on the Australian coast. No rum could be landed without special permit from the Governor. American ships using Sydney had to provide a bond of £500 as a precaution against the removal of convicts. At the same time King sometimes bought from the Americans. Thus when the Brown and Ives ship, the *John Jay*, put in in October, 1800, King purchased supplies of tobacco, tea, tar, and even some rum. In 1807 the East India Company charter was modified to permit British traders to make direct runs to Australia. In the same year most of the American ships were kept in their home ports as a consequence of the Embargo. By the time the War of 1812 was through the British Government had ordered a rigid enforcement of the Navigation Acts in British Colonies. This policy of rigid exclusion of American ships, coming as it did at a time when the American incentive to trade with Australia was already weakening, brought the trade to a sudden standstill. Sydney was not re-opened to American shipping till 1831, and in the following year the Rogers' ship *Tybee*, formerly re-opened the trade.¹⁴ But that is another story, and in it Providence had no part.

¹⁴ Putnam, *Salem Vessels*, v. 1, pp. 54-55, and *Sydney Gazette*, August 21, 1832.

The Old Stone Mill, Newport

by HERBERT PELL*

The Old Stone Mill at Newport, Rhode Island, is one of the standing mysteries of the United States. Its history has inspired much intelligent thought and a great deal of wonder.

We can discard the idea that it was built by Indians as we do the thought that it was erected by fairies.

Two different hypotheses have been seriously maintained. The first, which is the most popular, especially in Newport, is that it was built by Governor Benedict Arnold, sometime in the seventeenth century as a windmill. This theory is based on the fact that the earliest written record of it is in the Will of Governor Arnold, dated the 24th of December, 1677, which refers to it as "my stone built windmill." The belief that Arnold built it was supported by the fact that at Chesterton, England, near Arnold's supposed birthplace, there is a somewhat similar structure which was at one time used as a windmill.

In 1677 the shores of Narragansett Bay had been known to Europeans for over one hundred years, and Newport had been permanently inhabited for nearly fifty when Governor Arnold's will was written. During these fifty years, there is no record or reference to the Mill. This seems to be taken as conclusive evidence by those who believe that Arnold built it, but we must also realize that no printed reference to it ever appeared until 1819, when it was mentioned in the *Gazette*, published in Hartford, Connecticut. So far as I know, the only reference now known to exist in the one hundred and forty years between Governor Arnold's will and the mention in the *Hartford Gazette* is found in the minutes of a Quarterly Meeting held in Newport on July 25th, 1756, nearly eighty years after Governor Arnold's will.

The fact that the early chroniclers of the first forty years of Newport made no mention of the Mill, does not seem so astonishing when we consider that those who fol-

*Formerly United States Minister to Portugal and Hungary. This article is an excerpt from a longer one that will appear as a separate publication.

Year of visit	Ship	Master	Owners	Information on Voyage
1792	<i>Hope</i> 208 tons	Benjamin Page	Brown & Francis	Speculative cargo. Clears for Canton.
1794	<i>Halcyon</i> 177 tons	Benjamin Page	Clark & Nightingale, Wm. F. Megee, Benj. Page	Speculative cargo. Clears for Canton.
1794	<i>Hope</i> 208 tons	Martin Page	Brown & Francis	Trader and sealer comes via Falkland Islands. Clears for Canton.
1794	<i>Mercury</i> 80 tons	William Barnet	Brown & Francis	Sealer from Falkland Islands. Puts in to refit. Clears for Canton.
1796	<i>Abigail</i>	Christopher Thornton		Speculative cargo. Clears for Canton.
1796	<i>Susan</i>			Speculative cargo. Clears for Canton.
1798	<i>Semiramis</i> 459 tons	Jacob Smith	Jacob Smith and Wm. Handy (Newport)	Refits. Clears for Canton.
1798	<i>Aun & Hope</i> 550 tons	Benjamin Page	Brown & Ives	Refits at Botany Bay. Clears for Canton.
1799	<i>Resource</i> 424 tons	Nathaniel Pearce	John Corlis, Wm. F. Megee, et al.	Refits. Clears for Canton.
1801	<i>John Jay</i> 464 tons	Benjamin Dexter	Brown & Ives	Speculative cargo. Clears for Canton.
1801	<i>Fallenbee</i> 269 tons	James Perry	Vernon & Co. (Newport)	
1801	<i>Hope</i> 208 tons	Benjamin Page	Brown & Francis	Refits. Clears for Canton.
1802	<i>Arthur</i> 265 tons	Scott Jenkes	Brown & Ives	Speculative cargo. Clears for Canton.
1803	<i>Patterson</i> 447 tons	Jonathan Aborn	Munro & Co.	Speculative cargo. Clears for Canton.
1807	<i>Eliar</i> 135 tons	E. H. Correy	Brown & Ives	Speculative cargo. Clears for Fiji.

lowed in the days of Newport's greatest eminence also omitted to refer to it.

The early settlers, and in fact, the highly cultivated and educated inhabitants of Newport in the eighteenth century, apparently took no interest in its origin or in any local antiquities. As a matter of fact, it was, even in Europe, nearly the end of the eighteenth century before there was any real interest in ancient structures.

It is certainly of European origin. The oldest picture of the Stone Mill is attributed to Gilbert Stuart about 1770-75, showing the structure, as it then was, considerably higher than today, on the top of a hill overlooking the harbor. It has been suggested that this painting was not by Gilbert Stuart, but by his daughter at a later date. The important thing, however, about this picture is that it shows the Mill considerably higher than it is now.

Philip A. Means, in his book, *Newport Tower*, (Henry Holt & Company, 1942), makes a masterly analysis of the theory that the Mill was built by English settlers, and annihilates it completely and forever. He shows that Arnold did not come from the neighborhood of Chester-ton and that the Chesterton structure was not built to be a mill. He points out that one mill was quite sufficient for a town the size of the Newport of those days; that the old mill built by Peter Easton was blown down in a hurricane at the time of King Philip's War. Most of the active men were needed for fighting and unquestionably those available would not devote themselves to any such work at such a time. The new mill built then was a wooden structure near Easton's Pond.

Although the situation at the top of the hill is good for a windmill, the construction is not. The arches are too small for wagons loaded with grain to pass through.

Arches are cheaper to build than solid walls. They economize material and can be built by almost any mason much more rapidly, and if properly made can bear any weight which can conceivably be put on them quite as well as can a solid wall. An arch, however, will not stand the twisting, sidewise push which would come from a windmill.

The walls of an ordinary stone or brick house will sup-

port much greater loads than will a wooden or even steel frame, but they will not stand up as well against the twisting force of an earthquake, the charge of a motor truck, the impact of a bomb or the torsion of a windmill. In Italy where earthquakes are frequent, and wood is expensive, the walls of stone or brick houses are always made very much thicker than in other countries. In Portugal where there are many stone windmills, they are always built as solid as if for the support of huge towers.

Ordinary common sense would suggest that a community which was satisfied with wooden dwelling houses and churches, would not go to the trouble of building stone windmills. If Governor Arnold, or anyone else, had had the time and money needed to build such a structure, he would at no greater cost have built himself a stone house, or if he were using public money, a stone church, town hall or fort.

It seems inconceivable that a poor and extremely practical society, such as that of Newport in the first forty years of settlement, would have selected a windmill, situated in the fields out of town, as its only experiment in stone building. They were not millionaires, spending the wealth of the country on their own pleasures. They were extremely practical men who needed for their immediate support, the result of every bit of effort they could expend.

Unquestionably there is no similar structure in America, and as far as I know in no part of the world has anyone ever built such a thing for use as a windmill.

Hjalmar Holand, in a book, *America 1355-1364* (Duell, Sloan and Pearce 1946), suggests that the builders of the tower were members of an expedition sent by the King of Norway to search for the survivors of a Norwegian Colony in Greenland which had been attacked and annihilated by the Eskimos. Holand believes that when this expedition arrived at Greenland, it found the colony utterly destroyed and sailed west and south searching for survivors. Having heard of Newport, they went thither, and when they found that the refugees had not come there, detached an expedition from the main force and sent it north along the coast to search for them. This expedition

ran up the coast as far as Hudson Bay which it entered and then went up the Nelson River to Minnesota where it tried to swing east and return overland to the main force at Newport. Holand certainly proves that a Norwegian expedition did go up the Nelson River and did finally disappear in Minnesota.

His inferences in most cases have been justified by discovery of remains and he makes no attempt to go beyond what can be reasonably proved. He has discovered all these relics demonstrating the hasty passage of a small group of men who had no means whatsoever of replacing anything which they lost, and therefore would have taken particular care to lose as little as possible. They obviously travelled as fast as they could for which reason we find no walls or traces of anything like a settlement, but still all these casual droppings have been found in a country which has not been one-tenth as much dug over as has the site of Newport, which he believes to have been the semi-permanent camp of the main expedition from which these explorers were detached. It seems obvious that this main body would have left, and would have left in a comparatively small area, a great deal more than a quick marching expedition would have scattered in Canada and in Minnesota.

There is not a place in Europe where well disciplined Roman soldiers encamped even for a single night that some relics have not been discovered, after having lain in the ground since a thousand years or more before these Norsemen are supposed to have been in Newport.

Holand suggests also that the tower was built incidentally for defense. Of course fortified churches were very frequent in those parts of Europe exposed to heathen attack. Naturally he runs into the very difficult problem of the arched ground floor which of course would have been utterly impossible in Europe as the support of a structure intended for defense. American savages, however, did not have battering rams or any siege equipment, but they were quite able to make fire and, getting under the arches, could have burnt out the defenders above with great ease. Holand gets over this difficulty by the hypo-

thesis of a very heavy cement and stone domed roof under the lowest floor. It is almost inconceivable that a practically monolithic block of that size could have disappeared totally without trace. There is no indication on the walls of the building that any large bits of material were torn out which would undoubtedly have happened had this dome collapsed, nor is there any record of any fragments discovered. As a matter of fact, masons able to build such a structure would have almost necessarily made it in such a way that it would have been quite as permanent as any part of the building.

It seems, however, obvious that if defense had been a serious object in planning the tower, there would have been no arches at all. It would have been better to have built it as a round wall, the lowest story of which could have been readily filled with earth or stones, making a solid and impregnable foundation for the other parts.

Thirteenth century Scandinavian architects or soldiers would be unlikely to take the chance that it would never occur to the Indians to pick up a fallen tree and use it as a battering ram against one of the supporting columns. A soldier of those days would certainly have insisted on an adequate number of small openings out of which arrows could be shot in all directions, and not have made these openings so large as to admit the missiles of besiegers.

Both Means and Holand believe that the tower was designed to be part of a church and make much of the fact that in northern Europe there were many round churches, which of course is true; but they do not mention that such churches are found all over Europe — one at least, almost exactly the same in design at Tomar, the most important headquarters of the Templars, and later of the Order of Christ, in Portugal. There are of course many in Italy and in every other European country. These round churches were often built by the Knights Templar and can be found wherever there were any large commanderies of that Order.

The Templars were suppressed in the rest of Europe, but in Portugal they were reorganized as the Order of Christ, almost the only change being that they were put

under the authority of the King of Portugal rather than that of the Pope. They were maintained as a fighting order to drive out the Moors and afterwards to protect the country from Moorish attacks.

Prince Henry the Navigator, whose studies and interest in navigation made possible the great era of Portuguese exploration, was Grand Master of this Order and used its funds to finance various expeditions. Most of the Portuguese ships on exploring expeditions bore the cross of the Order on their mainsails. It was quite certain that the leaders of the maritime interest in Portugal knew the church at Tomar, the headquarters of the Order of Christ, of which Miguel Cortereal was a member.

We can take it as absolutely certain that an expedition settling in Newport, and large enough to detach a party of thirty or more to go on an exploring expedition, would have left a considerable number of artifacts. It is of no particular importance that there are no records of early earth works, or even of walls. Such things would not attract the attention of the early settlers, but such an expedition would certainly have left a certain amount of broken earthenware, and probably at least as many metallic objects as did the expedition going up the Nelson River. Nothing whatsoever has been found.

I pass over completely the Means theory of a colony remaining in Rhode Island for a couple of centuries. Such a settlement would unquestionably have left plenty of remains which would have been discovered.

This total lack of any artifacts in Newport or its neighborhood is one of the most remarkable parts of the mystery which we are considering. Every camp site of any army, and the shortest and least successful attempts at permanent settlements all over the world have left their trace. Every abandoned barn, and every deserted farmhouse long after the last timber has rotted into the earth, is surrounded by little objects, which when dug up prove that it was once a place of human occupancy.

To account for the Old Stone Mill, we must accept the hypothesis that it was built by Europeans, and also that although they had the building skill to erect it, they had

few tools and almost no baggage. It must have been built by a group of men who were on the island long enough to build it, who had a reason for building it and who were practically without the equipment and articles of comfort and luxury which would normally be brought by a group or community sufficiently civilized to erect it. No expedition or people in that stage of culture could possibly land in a strange country without bringing with them earthenware dishes, possibly some glass, silver or pewter mugs, knives, forks, buckles, grindstones, etc. That none of these things have been found in a district as much dug over as Newport suggests very strongly that the people building the Old Stone Mill had none or very few of these things. Of course, every shard of earthenware would not be dug up, and every shard dug up would not necessarily be recognized, but that no relics whatsoever of the builders of the Old Stone Mill, beyond the Mill itself, should remain, indicates very strongly that they had very little impedimenta.

This inevitably forces us to the conclusion that the builders of the Old Stone Mill were a group of shipwrecked sailors. There seems to be no other tenable hypothesis. Such men would be able to build such a stone structure, would have a reason to do so, as I shall show later, and would have with them very few artifacts to lose. It remains to suggest who were these sailors.

The voyage of Columbus proved that there were islands in the western ocean. Other voyages proved that there was land west of these islands. The Portuguese navigator Cortereal seems to have been the first to suspect the existence of a great continent, but there was always the possibility that somewhere along the coast this supposed continent might have a strait running across it to the Pacific Ocean. As they explored the coast and ran up the great estuaries they could always hope that the next turn would bring them in sight of the waters of the great South Sea. Imagine the feelings of Verrazano sailing up the salt and tidal waters of the long inlet which we call the Hudson River with this hope at the end of every reach. Narragansett Bay, too, might be this sought-for passage.

In the year 1500, King Emanuel of Portugal gave a commission to Gaspar Cortereal, allowing him to explore at his own expense and risk the islands and continents which he might discover in the west, and guaranteeing him the possession of what he found. This is an important point which has not been sufficiently considered. Even though in many cases expeditions had been supported by merchants and speculators, and in almost every case the leaders and members of the expedition received a part of the property discovered, the case of Cortereal is the first and almost only expedition of that time, sent to unknown countries, which was entirely a matter of private enterprise.

In the course of the summer of 1500 Cortereal discovered a country at 50 degrees Latitude, of which he thought the climate cold and which he called Terra Verde [Greenland] because of the trees. This unlucky choice of a name made for confusion in the minds of a good many students and gave them the idea that he had actually reached Greenland, the southernmost point of which is 60 degrees and certainly was never wooded at any time in recorded history. The 50th degree goes through the northern part of Newfoundland and the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

When he came back from his voyage, Gaspar organized another expedition with the financial assistance of his brother, Miguel, who took a half interest in the enterprise.

It is unfortunate that all Portuguese records were kept in Lisbon and were almost all destroyed in the earthquake and fire of 1755, and it is for this reason that I am obliged to refer to the correspondence of the Venetian Ambassadors. It is difficult from the description sent by these diplomats to get an accurate idea of the route followed by Cortereal.

It is probable that he went directly west, and in the course of his two voyages he arrived about at the mouth of the Delaware and then went north. The next year, 1501, he went further north and sent back two of his caravels to Portugal, while he continued on the American coast for a little while by himself, intending to return later. He never returned.

Miguel Cortereal, in his desire to help his brother, got

an authorization from King Emanuel and conducted another expedition. He had three well equipped ships built at his own expense. When they arrived in America, they explored the mouths of various rivers in the hope of finding Gaspar. These three ships arranged a rendezvous on the 12th of August, and as the ship of Miguel Cortereal never arrived at the meeting place, the two other ships returned to Portugal. There was no more news of either Cortereal.

Assonnet Bay, in Massachusetts, is a small, very shallow inlet on the east bank of the Taunton River, opposite Dighton. It is about half way between Fall River and Taunton. Near high water mark there is a large boulder covered with various inscriptions which has been known since early colonial days.

During nearly three centuries there have been a great many references to this Rock and many theories on its origin have been advanced. There can be no question that the inscriptions were there at the time of the arrival of the English, and various drawings made of them at odd times in the last three hundred years, beginning with that of the Rev. John Danforth, show that they have remained substantially unchanged and without later additions of any importance.

The late Professor Edmund Burke Delabarre, of Brown University, made by far the most serious study of the Dighton Rock.* He observed the Rock itself with the utmost attention. He made a series of photographs, many by flashlight, so that he could carefully compare pictures taken with the light coming from various directions. The shadows falling in different directions in different photographs gave him the best possible way of studying these inscriptions.

Professor Delabarre studied his photographs with a microscope and says: "The first independent discovery that I made for myself, by aid of this new battery of photographs, was the date '1511.' Almost everyone else, neglecting the lower curve of the 5 and adding the circles

* See Edmund B. Delabarre, *Early Interest in Dighton Rock*. Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Vol. 18: Boston, 1917, and *Dighton Rock*, New York, 1928.

resembling sun-symbols just above and below the 51, had seen this as a small human figure. Once seen as a date, with Indian pictographs drawn over and around it, it is unmistakable."

Further study showed him the name of Miguel Cortereal and the letters V DEI hic DUX IND, and beneath the word DUX a rough outline of the arms of Portugal. There can be no doubt that this inscription has been on the rock from the beginning, although it was unrecognized and confused with superimposed lines.

I believe we may take this inscription as being certain in its intention. Its existence has been proved as far back as 1680. Its meaning is obvious. V DEI obviously means voluntate dei — by God's will — and DUX IND — the leader or chief of the Indians; IND being an abbreviation for "indorum."

The name of Cortereal was for centuries unknown, except to serious students, and almost certainly had never been heard of in New England at the time when we have the first definite proof of the existence of some of the markings which indicate his name. There is every reason to accept Professor Delabarre's conclusions that Cortereal inscribed his name on this rock and also that he was not equipped with European tools with which to make deeper markings on the stone.

Professor Delabarre believes that the first inscription on the rock was that of Cortereal and that the superimposed doodles were the work of idle Indians.

It seems to me that we have here the most tenable hypothesis about the Old Stone Mill. Cortereal, while anxious to make discoveries of unknown lands, realized only too well that unless the products of such lands were valuable and easily transported, his discoveries would be worth very little. Cortereal hoped, like every other explorer, to find a passage through to the Pacific. It is obvious that if he came to the mouth of Narragansett Bay, he would go up it, full of hope, and it is quite possible that caught in a swift tide, especially if he came down the East Passage, his ship was driven with great force against a rock and sank immediately. Ships of those days were heavy and would fill

rapidly. In such a case there would not be time to collect many tools or much equipment. The crew would scramble for the boat and get ashore as best they could.

Once ashore the question of escape would be the first consideration. Had they possessed adequate tools they could probably have built a ship with which to go north or south in the hopes of meeting some European vessel. Without tools, however, they would be obliged to stay where they were, hoping for rescue.

A stone structure such as the one under consideration would not require as many tools as would a wooden tower. It is particularly important to realize that a wooden structure would have required almost exactly the tools that would be needed for making a boat.

The stones that were used in the Newport tower show little indication of having been shaped or particularly worked over. The cement is made of lime from shells. There are no stones big enough to require even a block and falls to get them into position.

The fact that this tower is the only monument erected by its builders shows very clearly that they had no idea of setting up a permanent, or even semi-permanent establishment. A group of settlers able to construct such a building, adequately equipped with tools and expecting to be in Newport for a long time, would have built themselves comfortable houses and a fort long before they started a stone tower.

The only possible reason for a group of civilized people to begin and end their building operations with a thing like this is that they wanted as soon as possible to erect a structure which would attract the attention of possible rescuers sailing along the coast. The first thing that the traditional ship-wrecked sailor does is to put a shirt or a flag on the tallest tree he can reach.

An intelligent man in Cortereal's position would have selected the highest point he could find with a good view of the sea and, if possible, erect some sort of a beacon or look-out from whence passing vessels could be signaled.

The Portuguese have always been good masons. Even today their favorite way of construction is to use small

stones thickly embedded in cement, which is the method used in the Old Stone Mill.

Once we accept the idea of using arches as a support for a round structure, eight arches is the most obvious number. It takes no calculation to lay out the plan. A smaller number would not support a round building. The ship-wrecked sailors, or whoever it was who built the Old Stone Mill, arranged it with windows looking out to sea. Every possible approach by water has an opening in the Mill. There is one looking over Easton's Bay, one has a view of the open sea and the third commands the harbor. There are none on the north or landward side, although this is the direction from which savage enemies would be most likely to come.

These openings are all windows. There are no small apertures through which guns or arrows could be fired in some security and which would not admit missiles from the outside. Such openings have always been widely known and widely used in all structures built for defense. Where the walls are thick, the opening is broad on the inner side, narrowing to the smallest possible outlet that will allow adequate view. The broader opening in the rear makes it possible for the marksman to swing his weapon. Nevertheless the Newport builders made windows.

Arches can be built much more rapidly than walls, if there is a fairly good mason to superintend the work. In the case of the Newport tower, the stones had to be brought by hand, as did the shells carried up from the beach to be burnt for lime and the sand with which the cement was made. If the tower was to be completed in time for the hoped-for expedition of the year following, a course of arches at the bottom would be the obvious thought of any constructor in a hurry.

The lavish use of cement is characteristic of a great deal of Portuguese building to the present day. Anyone who has ever seen Italian or skilled north European masons building a wall with stones carefully fitted together and only the interstices filled with cement, will see the difference when he takes his first glance at the Old Stone Mill, which was built in the Portuguese way, although at the time

cement must have been appreciably harder to come by than stone.

The fact that the stones themselves are almost all undressed, suggests that the constructors were practically without tools.

The structure was almost certainly appreciably higher than it is now. This is shown in the picture by Stuart. It is generally believed that for some reason a top story was knocked off by the British at the time of the Revolution, although there is no record of this destruction. In any case there would have been a platform on the top where lookouts could be stationed and probably where a beacon fire could be maintained at night.

After the wreck, one of the problems which would present itself to the commander of such an expedition would have been the task of keeping his men occupied and hopeful. He would not want them wandering along the coast in small groups, grousing, complaining and possible cooking up a mutiny. The erection of a building like the Old Stone Mill would give him the perfect answer to this problem.

The building was originally faced with plaster as are most of the stone buildings of Portugal. Before the island was covered with trees, every ship cruising within sight of Newport would have seen this tower and would probably have entered to investigate.

Another question which must be considered is why this civilized group with some knowledge of masonry devoted itself entirely to building a tower rather than a fort or a dwelling. The fireplace in the tower suggests that at least one of the purposes of erection was to provide a place of habitation. Its size shows that they must have been very few. That they built a tower conspicuously visible from the sea rather than more comfortable and lower dwelling places, suggests strongly enough to be necessarily accepted that they were building a beacon to attract the attention of passing vessels.

Of course all this discussion is nothing but the weighing of probabilities. A conclusion reached by the elimination of all impossible hypotheses never stands as solidly as one

which is supported by tangible proof; but in this question, as in so many of the problems of life, we must rely on probability. We must use the methods of the archeologist rather than of the historian.

It would of course have been possible for Cortereal to have been wrecked in some other part of the country, perhaps further north and to have worked his way to the Providence River, and in his despair of rescue have become the leader of an Indian community.

If we accept this, we find ourselves back where we started, looking for another group of shipwrecked sailors able to build such a monument and having a reason to do so. The leader of the party must have been a man who firmly expected that an expedition would be sent to find him and who believed that the best thing he could do would be to set up a beacon which could be observed from the sea.

An explorer without a lively hope of rescuing friends, would have been much more likely to drive northward where he would run a chance of meeting fishermen, or even to attempt the very long and difficult journey south in the hope of finding Spanish explorers. The hypothetical expedition must also have been suddenly wrecked to account for the complete lack of discovered artifacts.

It seems to me that the hypothesis of a well-equipped expedition and even more of a long-continued settlement, leaving no other monuments, no shards of earthenware and no metal, is so improbable as to amount to impossibility, and therefore, we must assume ship-wrecked sailors.

We know that Cortereal was in the neighborhood. His inscription on the Dighton Rock is recognized by all who have given any study to that monument. He would have had every interest in building such a tower which was manifestly built for observation rather than defense.

While, of course, nothing can be definitely proved, it seems to me that by far the most tenable of all the hypotheses that have been offered is the assumption that the Old Stone Mill was built by the Portuguese under Cortereal.

My contention is briefly this: that Means has forever discredited the belief that the Mill was built by the English.

The Scandinavian theory in anything like the form in which it has been expressed by Means or Holand is also untenable. It is quite obvious that a permanent settlement such as Means suggests could not have existed on the site of Newport, which has been dug over to such an extent, without leaving relics which would have been discovered. Even the temporary expedition suggested by Holand would have left something. The total absence of pre-English, non-Indian relics discovered at Newport or in the neighborhood in all the various plowings and excavations that have taken place there, suggests to me that the builders of the Old Stone Mill must have been shipwrecked sailors landing with very little more than their clothes. They were obviously civilized men knowing how to build arches and make cement; they also must have had a motive for building: manifestly the Mill was not built for defense. No fortified tower in Europe or anywhere else has ever been built with an open ground floor. The usual method would be to build eight or ten feet of solid wall, entirely filled with earth and stone, an outside and possibly detachable staircase to the first floor which would be pierced with small openings out of which arrows could be shot, and which would be difficult to hit from the outside. The openings in the Mill are long and easy targets facing the sea and not the land side, from which enemies would be most likely to come. It is obvious that it was designed as a beacon or signal tower.

The ordinary individual explorer with one ship would scarcely have been so hopeful of rescue as to wait for it in Newport — he would have made an effort either to go north where he could hope for some European fishing vessel, or to risk the long march toward Cuba. Even if he were accompanied by a squadron, he would have waited only a couple of months to be sure that he was given up by his companions. Miguel Cortereal was in a different position: he had come out himself searching for his brother, and would have expected his other brother to look for him; therefore he thought it worth while to wait where he was.

Even if you discard the belief that the Mill was built by the Portuguese, you have to go back to the problem of finding another group of shipwrecked sailors.



GODDARD SECRETARY

Rhode Island Historical Society

A Blockfront Secretary

PRESUMABLY MADE FOR JOSEPH BROWN

by MABEL MUNSON SWAN*

No more appropriate setting can be imagined for the magnificent Goddard blockfront secretary shown in the illustration than John Brown House, one of the most richly decorated buildings of its time, now occupied by the Rhode Island Historical Society. This is the house which John Quincy Adams on his visit to Providence described as "the most magnificent and elegant private mansion" he had seen on this continent. It was designed in 1786 by Joseph Brown, one of the four brothers: "Nick and Jo, John and Mo," who under the firm's name of Nicholas Brown and Company, became merchant princes accumulating great wealth in trade. Although this house was one of many other elaborate ones in Providence, it deservedly won the local reputation of being the finest.

Here in the office, Joseph Brown's secretary dominates the room. It has been called the finest of all the blockfront secretary group, and reputedly was made by John Goddard for Joseph Brown at about the time of his marriage in 1759. It is listed in his inventory as "1 Mahogany Desk & Bookcase in the North Parlour" of his house on South Main Street and was valued at £12.

It is a most dignified piece with great beauty of line and proportion; and though it is a tall piece, in the John Brown House it gives no impression of excessive height. Of evenly matched and richly colored mahogany, it is typical of Goddard's best work, and is indeed, the most elaborate and highly developed of all the known blockfront secretaries.

Although the interior of the bookcase is very plain, the exterior fully compensates for any lack of ornament with nine carved shells topping the fully blocked front. Further decoration is effected by the extension of the lines between the blocking carried through the top panels on the doors, the only known instance of this treatment.

*Mrs. Swan has written many articles of historic interest, many of which have appeared in *Antiques* magazine.

Other interesting points to notice are: the unusual placing of carved shells on the desk lid; the flat blocking cut from the solid wood of the drawer fronts; the three doors of the bookcase all blocked with shells at the top; the high sweep of the broken arch top; the carved rosettes which terminate the moulded scrolls of the pediment; all unusual and most decorative features.

The small spiral that curves outward on the bracket foot, which is a characteristic of the Townsend-Goddard pieces, is a closed spiral on this secretary. This spiral, the delicate urn shaped finials, and the moulding around the broken arch are typical Goddard characteristics.

In 1759 when John Goddard is thought to have made this secretary, his cabinetmaker's shop was on the waterfront in the northwest part of Newport on what was then known as Easton's Point and which is now Washington Street. Here his three sons, Townsend, Thomas, and Stephen, his "boys" as he called them, worked with him learning their father's trade. Job Townsend, his father-in-law, under whom John Goddard served his apprenticeship, had his cabinetmaker's shop close by.

The Goddards and Townsends were Quakers, and Easton's Point was a Quaker community which had been left to the Society of Friends. During the Revolution these Quakers fell under deep suspicion because of their religious principles against carrying arms. John Goddard's name was placed on the list of suspects as early as July 10, 1776, and when rumors of his leaving Newport with the British became widespread, he and his friend Thomas Robinson were confined to their own yards until the enemy had sailed away carrying Daniel Goddard, John's brother, with them.

For many years authenticated Newport tradition steadily maintained that John Goddard was the maker of the several blockfront secretaries that had turned up in Rhode Island, all with the same characteristics: the flat blockfront, the large carved shells, the scroll on the ogee bracket foot, the moulding on the pediment, and the slender urn shaped finials.

Some letters in the Rhode Island Historical Society confirmed the tradition that Goddard had made furniture for

the Browns as well as for Jabez Bowen and Governor Stephen Hopkins:

Newport ye 30th of ye 6th mo 1763

Friend Brown

I send herewith the Tea Table & common Chairs which thou spoke for with the Bill the other Work is in good forwardness hope to compleat in a short time . I recd a few lines from Jabez Bowen whom I suppose this furniture is for Requesting me to make a pre. Case of Drawers, please to inform him I shall gladly serve him if he can wate till some time in the fall which will be as soon as I can finnish them as I have but little help if he inclines to wate for me I would know whether he means to have them different from what is common, as there is a sort which is called a Chest on Chest of Drawers & Swel'd front which are costly as well as ornimental . thou'll please to let me know friend Bowen's mind that I may conduct accordingly till then am thy friend

Jno Goddard

Moses Brown replied on October 10,

Mr. Godard Sr

I recd yours of ye 4th inst in Regard to what Mr Bowen wrote you I had no Knolidge of, but from my acquaintance with him I am induc'd to believe he would use no man with more Severity than they deserve but it is possible he may be mistaken as to ye particular Time they were to be Delivered, but this you was to do, that is, Finish ye Work I Wrote for ye first you did after my Brothers Wifes furniture were done, but Instead of this you have made work for Gov Hopkins family spoke for in May and delivered it before ours and we have ye greatest Reason to think you once sold part of that made on purpose for us as ye boatman Cudgo once told me the Work was Ready but as it was something Drisly you did not care to send it, and at ye same Time sent word for us to Relinquish a Table which you could have £20 more for, but we Rifus'd notwithstanding which it did not come in Some Time, I should be very sorry to think you have not acted agreeable to your Engagement to me if you Really had done it, but I must be free to Tell you I can not think you have when I was at your Shop with our Friends T. Robinson and W. Richardson abt ye 25th of April you told me you had got all your Work in good Forwardness ye Words as near as Can Remember Some of which you then showed me and I believe bothem Gent would be not a little Surprised were they told that ye Work then in Forwardness was not all delivered until abt 5 months after. The Cherry Table & Leather Chairs I sent ye money for as I Wrote and should Gladly have sent it for ye others were they Ready. . . .

To this John Goddard replied at once expressing his surprise that Moses Brown should even suspect him of not treating him fairly:

for my part I cannot Conceive how it Could Enter thy Heart to suppose such a thing. Unless thou have been MisInformed as I am ready to think thou hast been As to my sending to know if thou would Release the Table it was only to satisfy Collector Wanton's Daughter as she would not be put off without, I was so far from selling her or anybody else the Table that £20 or £50 would have been no temptation at all Unless thou had Conceded to it which I did not expect or desire—for I think I can Truly say I never did any such thing in my life—the only Reason thou had not the Table sooner was because Cudgo chose to wate for the Chairs and not because I had it to make or could have £20 more for it and the Buro Table was done five or six weeks before the other Chairs which thou might have had if called for. . . . Well according to the best of my Capasitye with regard to my work for Gov Hopkins Family is true, and thou must have expected I should Engag'd work to keep my Boys Employed if it should a little Retard thy work, for we must do so or we Should be out of Employment So hope thou will excuse and think better of

thy friend
John Goddard

These letters establish the fact that John Goddard was making furniture in 1763 for Moses Brown, for the wife of one of his brothers, for Jabez Bowen, and for Governor Hopkins. The "swel'd front" which he mentioned in his letter as being costly as well as ornamental was without doubt the block front, for what is now known as a swelled front was not known in this country at that time.

There are ten or more of these blockfront secretary book-cases known of this type. The one made for Nicholas Brown is now owned by his great great grandson, John Nicholas Brown; another made for John Brown is in the Garvan Collection at Yale University; several are in the Rhode Island School of Design. One purchased by Arthur B. Lisle from a grandson of Elisha R. Potter of Kingston, Rhode Island, bears the inscription on the back of one of the inside drawers, "Made by John Goddard in 1761 and repaired by Thomas Goddard in 1813." The color of the mahogany in this secretary is somewhat darker, and the shells on the top drawer and the boxes on the pediment are lacking. Another blockfront secretary in the Karolik Collection in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts resmbles the Lisle secretary.

John Goddard is credited with having made many types of furniture, but the piece of furniture by which he is known

the best is the block front secretary. Although its origin was doubtless European, no exact model of it exists as it was developed in Rhode Island and Connecticut. The blockfront does not exist in England although as Holloway says in his "Practical Book of American Furniture and Decoration" if the curves of the Dutch cabinet were straightened out we should have a close approximation of the American blockfront. However, one name stands out in connection with the development of the blockfront in this country, and that is John Goddard.

At the close of the Revolution, Newport was in a deplorable condition. Trade was completely destroyed; there was no work for the craftsmen, no orders from wealthy citizens, many of whom had left Newport. Those who had been obliged to stay there had difficulty in even supporting their own families. John Goddard died soon after the close of the War, leaving an estate insufficient to pay his debts.

The brief period of the making of these magnificent secretaries was over, but slowly with the passing years recognition and full appreciation has come of the work of the quiet, soft spoken Quaker, John Goddard, the master craftsman who made our finest pieces of American furniture.

CORRECTION

In my article "Newport Tower or Mill," printed in *Rhode Island History*, v. 7, no. 1 (January, 1948) the last line of the paragraph numbered 13 on page 6 should read *southwest of Narragansett Bay*. This places the settlement, the *easternmost Dutch settlement*, a few miles west of Narragansett Bay.

The argument for the Dutch is *in no case* a very strong one. Mr. Pohl's Icelandic foot, however, does not exclude the Dutch. The old foot of Leyden measured 313.46+ millimetres to 313 for the Icelandic foot used by Mr. Pohl. Forty-six one-hundredths of a millimetre per foot produces differences of about half an inch in twenty-seven feet. Hence, with an allowance of less than half an inch in the largest dimensions, all of Mr. Pohl's arguments for the Icelanders will support any users of the Dutch foot. I know from rueful experience in my work at Cluny that these old systems of mensuration give much trouble, and conclusions must be based with great caution on such results.

K. J. Conant.

The Design of the John Brown House

Headquarters of the Rhode Island Historical Society

by the late NORMAN MORRISON ISHAM, F.A.I.A.

edited by JOHN HUTCHINS CADY*

Tradition says that John Brown's house was designed by his brother Joseph and that English craftsmen worked upon it. While there can be little doubt that the design was made, or was at least strongly influenced by Joseph Brown, we have no records to prove that foreign craftsmen were employed in its construction.

Joseph Brown had been chairman of a committee appointed to "make a draught" of the First Baptist Meeting House and had designed his own dwelling (50 South Main Street) and the Market Building. He is known to have possessed a copy of Gibbs' *Book of Architecture*, from which the Baptist steeple was taken, and a copy of Abraham Swan's *Designs of Architecture* wherein are found illustrations which may have provided inspiration for John Brown's house.

On a stone in the inside cellar wall near the southwest corner is the inscription "Founded 1786 by John Brown." As Joseph Brown died December 3d, 1785, he had no part in its construction and probably made no detail drawings for the interior woodwork.

The Reverend Edwin M. Stone, in a biography of Zephaniah Andrews,¹ the mason, recorded that Mr. Andrews built University Hall and John Brown's house. The probability is that some master carpenter of Providence did the greater part of the work; it is only in parts of the detail that any suspicion of a foreign hand can arise and this is so minimized by a careful analysis that, in the end, the difference which strikes one at first comes to be largely a matter of scale with some outside influence in the very fine carving of the detail.

In his will made in 1802 John Brown described his house as "54 by 50 feet square, three stories high, with a deep cel-

* Mr. Cady recently has been engaged in arranging and indexing Mr. Isham's architectural drawings, papers and other documents. This description of the John Brown House is a digest of certain manuscripts and notes found in the collection.

¹Edwin M. Stone, *Providence Association of Mechanics and Manufacturers* (Providence, 1860), pp. 113-4.

lar under the whole." The ell at the rear was not built until later and the kitchen and bathing facilities were located in outhouses. The plan, while conforming in general to that of other large Providence houses, had certain unusual features for the period. The scheme of a central stairway hall extending through the house was the same as in the Russell house (118 North Main Street) and the Joseph Brown house, erected 1772 and 1774, respectively, except that the hall partitions of the John Brown house were built of masonry. At some time, possibly originally, a narrower hall extended through a part of the present northwest room to a side entrance, now closed, in the center of the west wall of the house. In contrast to most contemporary houses of the central-hall type, where the fireplaces were put in pairs in two chimneys which stood between the rooms, each fireplace of the John Brown house has a chimney of its own, an arrangement which set a precedent for many later Providence houses.

Originally the house stood in the middle of the lot, facing on the steep grade of "Power's Lane," with a garden on the east and a "green yard" on the west. The garden is now owned by the Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island and is a part of the estate on which the Bishop's House at 10 Brown Street is located.

A distinctive feature of the facade, which followed English precedent but was new to Providence, is the slight projection in the center, crowned by a pediment. An open entrance porch is set in the projection, with brownstone columns crowned by a wooden entablature and a balustrade with twisted balusters, and over the porch is a Palladian or Venetian window, reflecting a departure from English tradition previously adopted in the First Baptist Meeting House and on the stair landing of the Russell house. The walls have belt courses to mark the stories and are crowned by a very fine cornice, excellently proportioned to their height.

The effect of dignity and repose which the outside gives repeats itself within the house. The stairway hall, of course, has the New England proportion as against the southern, but it is very spacious for a northern house and must have been even more charming before the north window on the

stair landing was closed by the construction of the ell. The doors which open from the hall to the rooms are very finely treated with well detailed entablatures and broken-curved pediments and some of the best carving in the house is found in the friezes. The great staircase of mahogany with its twisted balusters and its beautiful scroll at the foot of the rail has a new device in the curved string at the landing instead of the usual square turn with two posts. Otherwise this stairway is a refined copy of the one in Joseph Brown's house, even to the fine vertical scroll, which seems to exist only in these two examples, with which the cap of the stair wainscot is finished.

The rooms give a splendid impression of space, especially the drawing room on the right of the hall. The mantel and over-mantel, including the French marble fireplace frame, though comparatively modern, may have been remodeled along the lines of the original; there was probably no precedent for the ceiling decoration added early in the present century. The room is wainscoted about to the window level, but the wainscot cap stops against the window architraves which go down to the seats with which each opening is provided. The seats were not, apparently, as popular in the old world as they were with us where we went out of our way to gain the space for them. An arched doorway with rich carving flanked by pedestals and busts opens from the drawing room into the former dining room at the north; this doorway is framed in the latter room by fluted Ionic pilasters and entablatures. The southwest room has a decorative arrangement of two arched windows with an elaborate architectural chimney breast which may have been rebuilt in the nineteenth century; certainly the French marble fireplace is not original.

In general the details are refinements of those in the Russell and Joseph Brown houses. It is not necessary to think of importations or even of English workmen though the tradition may be accurate.

In plan and in setting, in scale and proportion, and in interior treatment the John Brown house is among the very best products of the Early Republican period.

The Portrait of Thomas Cranston

The Society has been fortunate in the recent acquisition, through the generosity of Mrs. Walter Hidden, of a portrait of Hon. Thomas Cranston by John Singleton Copley, no other example of whose work is included in our collection. It is reproduced on the cover of this issue of *Rhode Island History*.

Thomas Cranston (1710-1785), son of Samuel and Elizabeth (Cornell) Cranston, followed in the footsteps of his famous grandfather and great-grandfather, Governors Samuel and John Cranston. From 1746 to 1774 he served almost continuously in the General Assembly as a deputy from Newport and was speaker of the House in 1754 when the town of Cranston was incorporated and named in honor of his family.

The portrait has an interesting history. Together with Copley's portraits of Thomas Cranston's wife, Mary (Coggeshall) Cranston, and his daughter Rhoda, it was deserted in a decaying house in South Kingstown, once the property of Edward Hazard, Cranston's son-in-law. After being neglected and mistreated by later occupants of the house, the portraits were rescued from oblivion by Wilkins Updike, the historian of the Narragansett Church.

Caroline E. Robinson in *The Hazard Family of Rhode Island* (Boston 1895) gives the following account of the manner in which the portraits came into Updike's possession. "Many years afterwards, as Doctor Johnson, of Kingston, was returning from an early visit, in passing the house his horse shied . . . he was startled almost as much as his horse had been, to see a stately dame gazing at him from a canvas. The family had set the portrait outside their door to be washed off by the rain, as there had been a slight summer shower. It was commonly used for a fire-board. Doctor Johnson, on his return home, went to see his old friend, Wilkins Updike, to recount the experience of the morning. Mr. Updike, who knew that such portraits were in existence, sent his daughter Mary to examine these, and prove their identity. . . ."

From Wilkins Updike the portrait of Thomas Cranston descended to his grandson, the late Mr. Walter Hidden of Providence.

Rhode Island Historical Society

LIBRARY HOURS

Mon. through Fri. . . . 9:00 to 5:00

Tuesday evening 7:00 to 9:00

Sunday afternoon 3:00 to 5:00

Lecture Program

Wednesday, October 20, 1948 . . . 8:15 p.m.

WHAT DO WE REALLY KNOW ABOUT THE
OLD STONE MILL?

Illustrated

JOHN HOWARD BENSON and WILLIAM S. GODFREY

Wednesday, November 3, 1948 . . . 2:30 p.m.

THE NEWPORT PLAN

Illustrated

ANTOINETTE FORRESTER DOWNING

Author of EARLY HOMES IN RHODE ISLAND

Wednesday, November 17, 1948 . . . 8:15 p.m.

ALUMNAE HALL, PEMBROKE COLLEGE, 123 CUSHING STREET

A TOUR OF MOUNT VERNON

Illustrated

CHARLES C. WALL

Superintendent of Mt. Vernon

Wednesday, December 8, 1948 . . . 8:15 p.m.

WHY RHODE ISLAND OPPOSED THE
FEDERAL CONSTITUTION

HILLMAN M. BISHOP

Asst. Professor of Government, C.C.N.Y.

Exhibition

OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER

RHODE ISLAND SILHOUETTES