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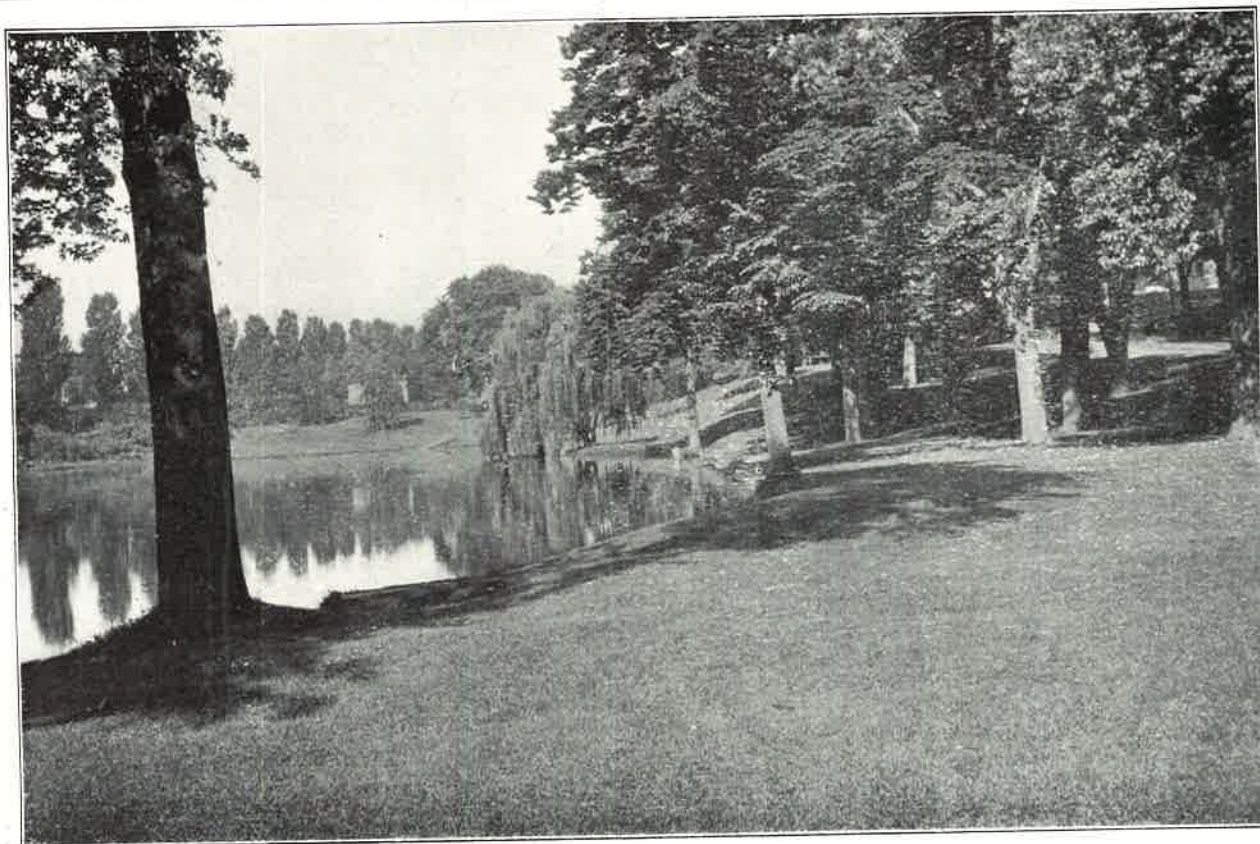
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OLD "KIT HEALEY HOUSE" AT CROSS'S MILLS
See Story of "Old South County."—Page 19

HISTORY OF PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS. Part IV. Rhode Island, always Busy with Leadership. "Lively Experiments" in Government followed by Commercial Supremacy, and this in turn by Industrial Pre-eminence. Pawtucket's Proud Distinction. Old South County and the Ninigret Dynasty. Chamber of Commerce Building Throbs with Multifarious Activities.



RHODE ISLAND HOSPITAL.
View in the grounds on Eddy street.

EPIDEMICS AND MEDICAL INSTITUTIONS.

By CHARLES V. CHAPIN, Superintendent of Health.

Sickness and death must always follow closely in the footsteps of the pioneer, and the gentle offices of the physician are soon needed wherever a home is founded. At many points along the New England coast some person, having at least more medical learning and experience than his fellows, came with, or soon after, the earliest settlers. Such was the case in the Providence Plantations and on Aquidneck, and Roger Williams had scarcely secured a permanent foothold here before men bearing the title "Doctor" followed. But there was a comparatively long period during which many of the settlers must have found it difficult or impossible to procure medical attendance. In such cases sickness was treated by the administration of a few simple remedies brought in by the immigrants, and with decoctions, ointments, and oils of various kinds, made by the unlearned hands of neighborhood nurses and housewives, whose duty it was to regularly hoard a store of medicinal roots and herbs as faithfully as they did their fruits and vegetables.

Most of the early settlers were strong and healthy men and women, and they found here a region which bore every indication of salubrity. Their occupations were in the main conducive to good health, and the simple and efficacious remedies kept in every household were promptly and boldly administered. These, with careful nursing, were sufficient in very many cases to ward off or cure disease.

Whatever trials and sorrows were endured by the pioneers of the Providence Plantations, through sickness and the lack of prompt medical attendance during the very early years

of settlement, will never be known to us; but it need not necessarily be assumed that they were much greater than would be suffered by an equal number of persons at the present day, dwelling where physicians are not within immediate call.

First Licensed Physician in the Colony.

The regulation of the practice of medicine, by the licensing of physicians, was strenuously resisted here in Rhode Island as a dangerous innovation and an unjustifiable interference with individual liberty. But it was no new thing, as the following extract from records of the proceedings of the General Assembly in 1664 will show:

"Whereas, the Court have taken notice of the great blessing of God on the good endevers of Captayne John Cranston of Newport, both in phissicke and chirurgery, to the great comfort of such as have had occation to improve his skill and practice, &c. The Court doe therefore unanimously enacte and declare that the said Captain John Cranston is lycenced and commistioned to administer phissicke, and practice chirurgery throughout this whole Collony, and is by this Court styled and recorded Doctor of phissick and chirurgery by the othority of this the Generall Assembly of this Collony."

Capt. John Cranston was born in Scotland in 1625 or 1626, and died in Newport March 11, 1680. He had a varied career; was a drummer in 1644; at one period was attorney general, and in 1676-8 was deputy governor, and governor in 1678-80.

The date of the issuance of this license was March 1, 1664, new style. While this is the earliest record of a license to an accredited physician to practice in this colony, he was not the first medical practitioner.

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John Clarke, First Medical Practitioner.

One of the immigrants arriving in Boston in 1631 was Dr. John Clarke, who remained there until 1638, when he removed to Portsmouth, and in the following year to Newport. Of his medical experience there during the next ten years little is known, but in 1651 he went to England, where he aided Roger Williams in procuring the revocation of Governor Codrington's commission as governor of the islands in Narragansett Bay. Dr. Clarke remained in England twelve years, and was instrumental in procuring the charter of Rhode Island. Returning to Newport, he officiated in the pulpit of the Baptist Church, at the same time continuing practice, until his death, April 20, 1676, at the age of sixty-six.

First Physician in Providence Plantations.

The records mention "John Green, surgeon," who was probably the first physician in Providence Plantations, and was contemporary with Roger Williams; but he soon (1641) removed to Warwick. Robert Jeffries, also, was given governmental authority in 1641 "to exercise the functions of surgery."

In the north part of the state no names of physicians are found among those of settlers prior to 1700. Roger Williams wrote to his friend Winthrop, in 1648, thanking him for advice and medicine. In that region dependence must have been placed mainly upon simple home remedies, or the occasional calling of a physician from a long distance. It should be remembered that at that date there were in Providence county only about one hundred persons capable of bearing arms, so that the number of cases of sickness at any one time could not have been large for some years. Newport was within a few hours by water, and doubtless some of those above named occasionally journeyed northward to attend the suffering. When the inhabitants returned to their former homes, after having been driven away by the Indians in 1676, their medical necessities were supplied by Dr. Richard Bowen, who settled at Seekonk, about two miles from Providence, and was there as early as 1680.

Epidemics of Early Days.

Those early physicians often found themselves surrounded by conditions that called for professional heroism and their best skill, when the country was swept by epidemics that were appalling in their virulence and merciless in fatality. Small-pox was an early visitor to the settlers of this state previous to the time when the discoveries of the immortal Jenner had mitigated its terrors, causing death and mourning in many families. Another disease, which was then called by such names as "malignant fever," "black vomit," and yellow fever (and which probably was the latter), fell upon the inhabitants, particularly those in Newport and Providence, and many died. Through the broader knowledge gained in the passing years and under the light of modern medical science, the old-time terrors of such epidemics long ago passed away.

The first severe visitation of small-pox to this colony took place in 1690, and the disease raged with great violence. Public affairs were neglected; the Assembly, then sitting at New-

port, did little business, and private trade operations were neglected through the winter of 1690-91. In 1712 the first efforts were made to combat the disease by legislation, a quarantine act being then passed. Newport ordered a hospital built on Coaster's Harbor Island. In 1732, Bristol authorities were constrained to procure a house for small-pox patients. In 1751, Providence had its first building for the purpose.

Inoculation Becomes Popular at the Seashore.

Inoculation was introduced into the colony in 1772, and in that year the General Assembly attempted to legalize the practice, which had developed intense opposition; the proposed legislative measure was defeated, but the operation was continued by intelligent physicians. In 1776 the matter was again brought before the Assembly, which voted to establish a hospital in each county, where persons could go to be inoculated. In addition to these, many private hospitals were opened, and the practice, which had been bitterly opposed, became a popular movement. The first one that was patronized by Rhode Islanders was on Ram Island, near New London, Conn. Later many were opened on the shores of the lower bay, some of which advertised fishing and hunting facilities and other attractions to mitigate the unpleasantness of a patient's stay. The disease continued to afflict this locality during a number of years and demanded a good deal of attention from the authorities.

Newport the Pioneer in Vaccination.

The introduction of vaccination into this country by a Newport physician, Dr. Benjamin Waterhouse, was met with nearly as much opposition as the preceding practice of inoculation, and this opposition exists to some extent to the present day. Providence, in 1810, employed Sylvanus Fansher to vaccinate the public, the town paying the expense; he vacci-



CRAWFORD ALLEN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL—PAVILION.

On its broad veranda convalescents enjoy the sunshine and fresh-air treatment, and from here tuberculous children, stretched on their frames, are wheeled into the salt water.