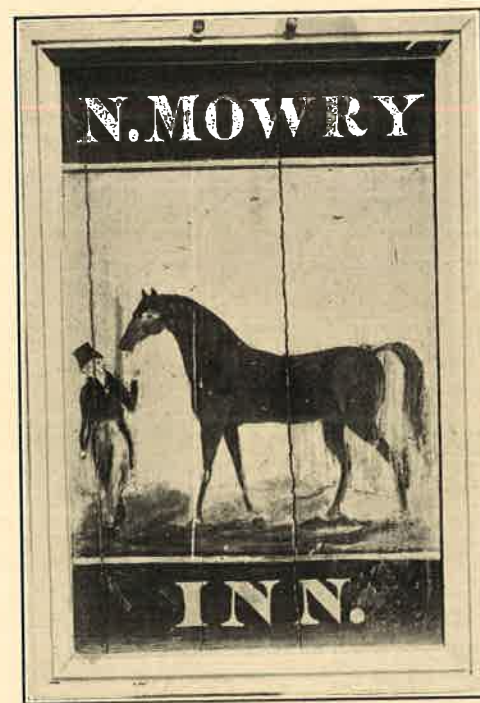


EARLY AMERICAN  
SIGNBOARDS

HOWARD M. CHAPIN



Mowry Tavern, Lime Rock, R. I.  
*Loaned by Col. Samuel M. Nicholson.*

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
PROVIDENCE

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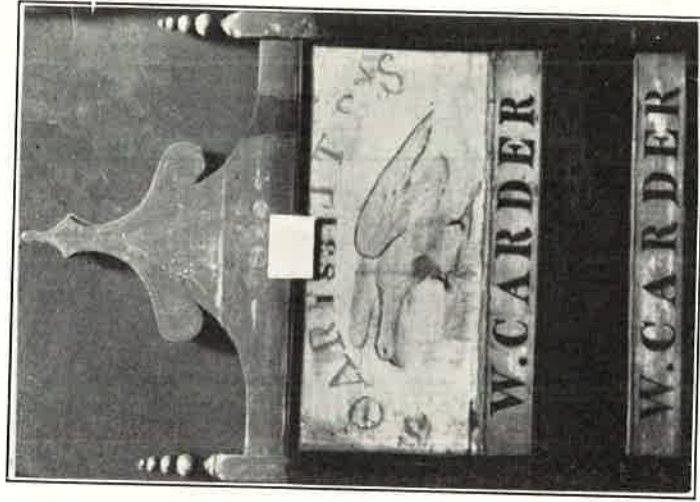
## Old Signboards

BY HOWARD M. CHAPIN.

In 1922 the Society held a loan exhibition of old signboards which created a great deal of interest. Photographs were taken of all of the signboards in the exhibition and illustrations of the Rhode Island signs are included in this issue of the *Collections*.

The signboard had reached a high state of development in the Old World as a necessary and time-honored institution, when it was transported in toto, design, form, and use, to the growing colonies of the New World. Social customs are most retentive, and America absorbed the signboard as a natural phase of its daily life without making any marked modification in its appearance or use. As the original purpose of the signboard was to inform the unlettered, its use in seventeenth-century New England was practically as important as in England, and the use of the signboard gradually died out as education increased. The wooden Indian of the tobacco shop, one of the few distinctively American signs, held its own almost to the end, while the striped barber's pole and the three balls of the pawn shop came through with flying colors. The signboard, as everyone knows, reached its lowest ebb at the beginning of the twentieth century, and has now taken a new lease of life for three quite different causes; first as the symbol of nationwide institutions as the bell for the telephone system, then secondly on account of the "historical revival," as the modern interest in antiques might be called, and lastly as a means of quickly communicating information to those rushing along in automobiles.

Signboards fall into three general classes: trade signs, the purpose of which is to call attention to the particular trade that its owner follows; tavern and shop signs that are, like trade-marks, distinctive of the particular house regardless of what its business may be; and toll signs which give the rates and charges. The earliest signs in New England were in general tavern signs, these being followed by trade signs as the towns



This sign, formerly hung at the tavern at the corner of the Greenwich Mail Road and the Rocky Point Road.  
Given to the Society by Mrs. Israel R. Sheldon.



Gardiner Tavern, Exeter, R. I.  
Loaned by Mr. Russell Grinnell.

grew larger and their business centers became more complex and confusing. Finally, with the construction of roads and bridges, toll signs followed as a natural corollary.

The earliest sign displayed at the recent loan exhibition at the Rhode Island Historical Society was the trade sign of a Providence shoe-shop, the sign bearing the date 1718. Various types of "Butes and Shous" are shown in black and red upon a white background. The reverse of the sign is similar in design, the whole being about twenty inches square. This sign is particularly interesting because it does not seem to have been retouched in modern times, the J form of the ones and of the seven, and the scroll work being characteristic of the period. It belongs to the first type of signs, the sort that we have described as trade signs.

The earliest class of signs used in New England was the tavern sign. Each tavern was known by its distinctive sign, and its reputation for service and for cheer was easily associated in the traveller's mind with the emblem or device of the particular hostelry. One of the earliest, if not indeed perhaps the earliest, of Boston signboards was that which displayed the *King's Arms* and hung before the inn or ordinary that was kept by Hugh Gunnison as early as 1642. It is said that the name of this tavern was changed to the *State's Arms* during the Protectorate as a matter of political and economic expediency.

A sign bearing the popular English device of a *Rose and Crown* and the date 1725 is preserved by the Attleboro Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution. This sign formerly hung at the Daggett Tavern, an historic building which is still standing in Slater Park, Pawtucket, R. I. The sign has interesting ornamental iron-work, but one side of the sign has been retouched, which is a great pity, for both the details of the design and the coloring have suffered grievously.

Larwood and Hotten, the great authorities on English signboards, have developed a classification which perhaps cannot be greatly improved. It will be interesting to list our American signboard devices in similar groups, which the reader can then compare in diversity and number with those of England. Many interesting colonial signs still remain unrecorded, and it will be the work of years before the American list can pretend to rival that of the mother country.



Asaph Bowen Tavern, Hartford Stage Line, Coventry, R. I.  
Loaned by Mr. Ulysses G. Bowen.



Asaph Bowen Tavern, Hartford Stage Line, Coventry, R. I.  
Loaned by Mr. Ulysses G. Bowen.

The historical or commemorative group of signboard designs gave in later years a chance for America to develop some distinctively American designs. Some one once said, perhaps slightly, that the Greeks honored their great men by erecting statues to them, that the Romans rewarded them with triumphal entries and ovations, and that the English hung their portraits in the streets to serve as signs for public houses. Many of the early Boston taverns followed this popular national trend with such names and signs (for the sign was almost an integral part of the tavern) as the *King's Head*, 1691, the *Queen's Head*, 1732, *George* or *St. George*, 1721, *Cromwell's Head*, 1760, Admiral *Vernon's Head*, 1743, *Shakespeare* and *General Wolfe*, 1768. As time went on the word "head" gradually came to be omitted, and by the late eighteenth century the word "head" is rarely found as part of a tavern's name. It is related that the sign of *Cromwell's Head* was hung so low that all who passed under it had to make a necessary reverence, and that *Vernon's Head* was particularly popular because of his nickname of "Old Grog." Almost everyone of the old signboards unlocks a flood of tradition and fact, which would make interesting reading, but would lead us far afield from the subject of our study.

The *King's Head* was of course a popular sign, and was found throughout the colonies. At Newport we find not only a *King's Head*, 1767, but a *Queen's Head*, 1765, and also the sign of the *Queen*, 1750 to 1770. A *General Wolfe* sign was hanging at Brooklyn, Conn., in 1773 before the Tavern owned by Israel Putnam, and also at a Newburyport Tavern. This latter sign braved even the anti-English feeling of the Revolutionary days. At Providence the sign of *General Montgomery* ornamented an inn at the North End of the town in 1784, and the sign of *General Amherst* marked a stable at Newport in 1765. The head of the popular *Pitt* adorned many tavern signs in the New World. It hung at Newport in 1759, at York, Maine, at Lancaster, Penna., with the date 1808, and at Portsmouth, N. H., it replaced the head of the hated *Earl of Halifax* during the stirring days of 1775. The *Marquis of Rockingham* was another Portsmouth sign, and in 1769 the *Marquis of Granby's* head invited guests to an inn at Newport, R. I. There was also a sign of *John*



*Wilkes* at Newport in 1771, and the *King of Prussia*, in remembrance of his service as an ally in the French Wars, was still on a tavern there in 1766. *Shakespeare* was also popular, and advertised a coffee house at Boston, while at Providence *Shakespeare's Head* was for years the well known sign of the town's leading printing house. With the coming of the Revolution, American heroes replaced the former English notables, and signboards bearing portraits of *Washington*, *Franklin* and *Lafayette* were scattered galore throughout the colonies. These portraits varied greatly in motive, coloring and technique. There were *Washington Taverns*, *Washington Coffee Houses* and later *Washington Hotels*. A statue of *Franklin* still stands at the Franklin Building, Providence, a bust of *Hamilton* stood on the Hamilton Building, and of *Wayland* on the Wayland Building. Boston honored *John Hancock* by placing his portrait on a signboard, and the portrait of *William Warren*, the actor, as Falstaff, hung for many years at the New Theatre Hotel in Philadelphia, 1882. The Anawan House, Rehoboth, Mass., 1836, commemorated the famous Indian chieftain *Anawan*, of King Philip's War fame, with a signboard picture representing Anawan on horseback in an altogether too modern style. Tobacco was sold at the sign of *Tecumseh* at Providence in 1821. Was this a forerunner of the wooden Indian of the tobacco shop? The Vernon Stiles Inn at Thompson, Conn., on an unusually large signboard, shows *Lafayette*, seated behind a span of horses in the act of raising his hat in salutation. On the reverse the faces were not finished, but were left blank, without very much detriment to the general effect of the sign. The commemoration of the Marquis' visit, as well as the signs of *Hancock*, *Anawan*, *Franklin* and *Washington* have the flavor of American history and should certainly be classed as new world modifications of signboard devices. Few classical celebrities were honored with signs in New England, although the *Head of Hippocrates* hung in colonial Salem, and *Neptune*, in his chariot surrounded by Triton, appeared on a Philadelphia signboard. The reverse contained a marine view, and the complexity of the designs marks the sign as of the decadent period, for signboards as well as heraldry turned from simplicity to "picturesque bits" in their flamboyant decline.

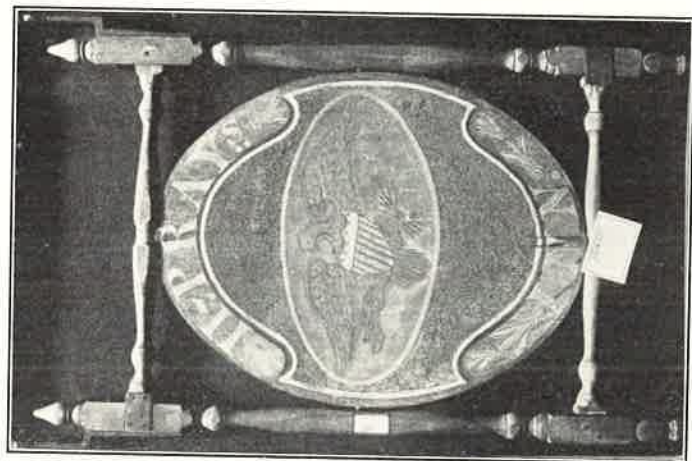
The second group of signs consists of those bearing an heraldic or emblematic device. The *crozen* is one of the earliest of these signs and is found in London as early as 1467. Although unmentioned, it always appears on the *King's Head* and on the *Queen's Head* in signs bearing such representations. It is also often found standing by itself as a sign of the *Crozen* tavern, Boston, 1745, or the *Crozen* coffee house, Boston, 1718, Newport, 1777, and elsewhere, scattered throughout the colonies during the pre-Revolutionary period. The crown is also very popular in combinations such as the *Rose and Crozen* of 1725 already mentioned. There was another *Rose and Crozen* at Boston in 1728, and other colonial combinations were the *Hat and Crozen*, Newport, 1764, the *Crozen and Beehive* and the *Crozen and Razor*, the two latter swinging at Boston. The sign of the *Three Crozens* hung at Lancaster, Pa., in 1771.

The royal arms, usually under the name of the *King's Arms*, as at Boston in 1651 and later at Salem, fall into this group. The *King's Arms* hung before a coffee house at Newport in 1767, and in 1766 a sign at Saybrook bore the *King's Arms* on one side and a ship on the other. Of the trade-guild arms we find that both Boston and Newport boasted a *Freemason's Arms* and a *Baker's Arms*, and that the *Painter's Arms* hung before a Providence paint shop in 1769. There was a *De Lancey Arms* Tavern in New York in 1763.

Samuel Adams Drake, Boston's great historian, aptly wrote: "The Revolution wrought swift and significant change in many of the old, favorite signboards." He notes that "down came the King's arms and up went the people's arms" and that "the crowns and sceptres, the lions and unicorns furnished fuel for patriotic bonfires, or were painted out forever." He continues "The crown was knocked into a cocked hat, the sceptre fell at the unsheathing of the sword. The heads of Washington and Hancock, Putnam and Lee, Jones and Hopkins, now fired the martial heart instead of Vernon, Hawk and Wolfe." The Newport Mercury of August 19, 1776, contains the following comment: "Within a few days past, the sign of the *British Union Jack*, which had been a tavern sign at a house in this town, near half a century, was taken down and on Friday last the sign of the *Flag of the*



Center Hotel, Centredale, R. I.  
 Loaned by Mr. George C. Dempsey.

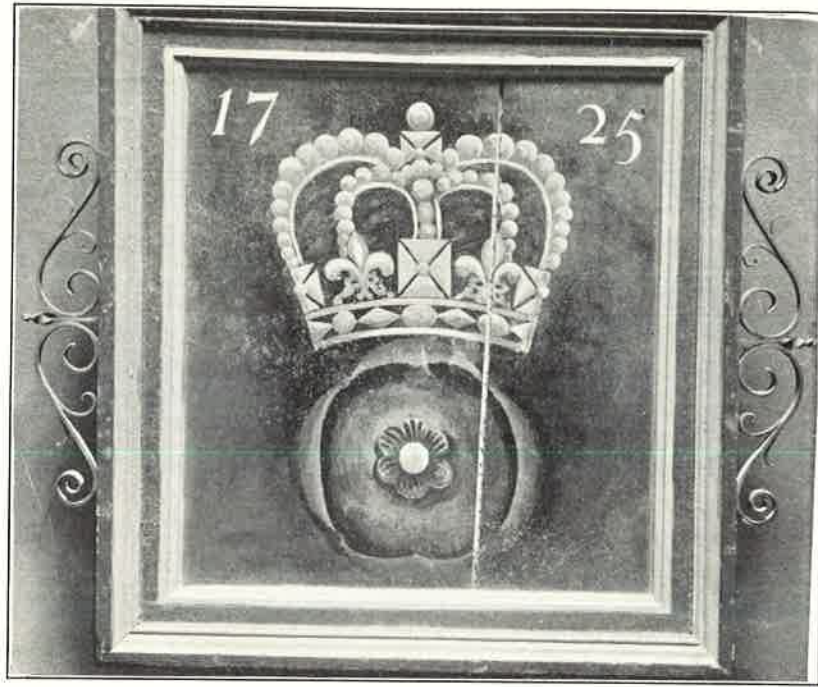


Pray's Tavern, North Providence, R. I.  
 Loaned by Pawtucket Chapter, D. A. R.

*Thirteen United States of America* was put up in the place thereof, by the patriotic owner of the house, who certainly deserves every reasonable encouragement of his countrymen." The *Arms of the United States*, the spread eagle with national shield, of course became immensely popular in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The national arms appear on the signboard of H. Pray's Inn, of Angell's Center Hotel, at Centredale, R. I.; of Witter's Inn in Connecticut in 1829, of the Tavern of Northfield Farms and of many other inns. At the Spicer Tavern at Hopkinton City, R. I., the *Eagle and Arms* are surrounded by twelve stars, instead of thirteen, and a great variation is of course noticeable in the arrangement and coloring on the different signboards. In many cases the *Eagle and Arms* appear on only one side of the board and the other side is decorated with a different design, as at Newton, N. H., where the reverse originally bore a *Punch bowl*, and at Coventry where it bore a *Yoke of oxen*. The Bissell Tavern at East Windsor, Ct., had an *American eagle* on one side and *Thirteen interlacing rings* on the other, each ring encircling a tree or plant peculiar to the state it designated. Within the large circle was a portrait of Washington. This motive with much variation in detail was very popular during and immediately after the Revolution. Later this design was replaced by the *Head of the Goddess of Liberty*. The *American eagle* holding the *Arms of Connecticut* appears on the tavern sign of Daniel Loomis.

Heraldic charges such as the cross, the lion, the unicorn, etc., served as signboard devices in America as they did in England. Boston had its *Cross Tavern*, 1732, its *Red Cross*, 1746, and its *Great Cross*. The *Red Lion*, Boston, 1654, the *Red Lion*, Philadelphia, and the *Golden Lion*, Newport, 1773, were heraldic lions, although natural lions also are found on signboards. The *Golden Lion* at Philadelphia, an heraldic charge symbolic of Great Britain, was changed into a *yellow cat* on account of the unpopularity of the lion in America during the Revolution. Other heraldic devices in use were the *Three Horseshoes*, Boston, 1774, the "*Flower de Luce*," Boston, 1675, the *Unicorn*, Newport, 1773, and the *Green Dragon*, Boston, which tavern Daniel Webster styled "the Headquarters of the Revolution."





Daggett Tavern, Slater Park, Pawtucket, R. I. This sign has been restored.

*Loaned by the Attleboro Chapter, D. A. R.*



Bull Dog Tavern, Providence

*From photograph in the Society's Library.*

It is of course very difficult to draw the line between the heraldic animals of the second group and the real animals and mythological monsters of the third group. The *Lion* at Boston in 1789 may have been an heraldic charge, but as the lion has always been a popular beast the one appearing so soon after the Revolution would seem more likely to have symbolized the King of Beasts rather than the British lion. It is easy enough to distinguish between the two lions, if the sign is extant, for the heraldic lion is a peculiar symbolic creation quite unlike a real lion, and the British lion is of course crowned. The *Lion* on the signboard at Amherst was certainly not heraldic. The sign of the *Lion* hung before a tobacco store in Providence in 1763, a *Lion and Mortar* at Salem years earlier, and there was a *Bunch of Grapes and Lion* at Providence in 1766 over Edward Thurber's store. After the dissolution of the firm of Thurber and Cahoone, Edward Thurber carried on his business at the sign of the *Brazen Lion* in 1768. Various heraldic lions have already been mentioned, as has Philadelphia's famous *Yellow Cat*.

The dog family was represented by the sign of the *Dog and Pot* at Boston in 1722, doubtless a copy of the famous old London sign, by the *Greyhound Tavern* at Roxbury and by the sign of the *Greyhound* at Providence in 1772. The appearance of the Providence *Greyhound* sign is preserved by a woodcut in a contemporary newspaper and reminds one of the huge wooden cat that until recently stood in lower New York. There was a *Fox* at Jaffrey, N. H., in 1802 and a *Golden Fox* at Providence in 1768.

A great many signs bore the horse both by itself and also in combinations. We find the *Black Horse* at Boston in 1698, at Newport in 1766, and at New York, and there was a very curious *Black Horse* sign dated 1762 in the exhibition of 1922. Jonathan Nichols kept the *White Horse* at Newport in 1759, and later a *White Horse* hung before a tavern and a general store, and the *White Horse* sign is found at Providence in 1803, at Boston and at many other places. The *Horse* by itself appeared on the sign of the Pembroke Tavern and the Dewey Tavern, 1776. The signboard of the Grosvenor Inn at Pomfret bears a horse and the date 1765 on one side and on the other a soldier

on horseback carrying the Continental or Grand Union flag of 1776. This sign was retouched some years ago by Mr. Hoppin of Providence. In combination the *Horse and Eagle*, Newport, 1774, is unusual, not being mentioned in the English list. The *Man and Horse*, Providence, 1798, is doubtless a variant description of the *Horse and Groom*, a common English device appropriate for taverns, which appears on the signboard of Mowry's Inn, Smithfield, R. I., a signboard that is still extant, and on the signs that formerly hung at Brattleboro, Vt., and at Prescott, Mass. This latter sign had on the reverse a *Horse and Rider*. The *Coach and Horses* sign was used at Philadelphia, at Centrebrook, Ct., and elsewhere, and a *Stable and Horses* at Providence in 1784. The unusual sign of a *Horse, Rider and Hounds* hung at Hopkinton, N. H., in 1786.

The *Unicorn* was considered as especially appropriate for chemists and goldsmiths, and diverse romantic tales and legends are related in connection with this mythological beast. It is believed by many that the unicorn is merely the outgrowth of the distorted account of the rhinoceros, as described by returning sailors. In later years sailors often exhibited the tusk or horn of the narwhal as evidence that they had seen and killed a unicorn. The *Unicorn and Mortar* appropriately hung before an apothecary's shop at Providence, and there was a *Unicorn* at Newport in 1773. This latter unicorn may however have been heraldic.

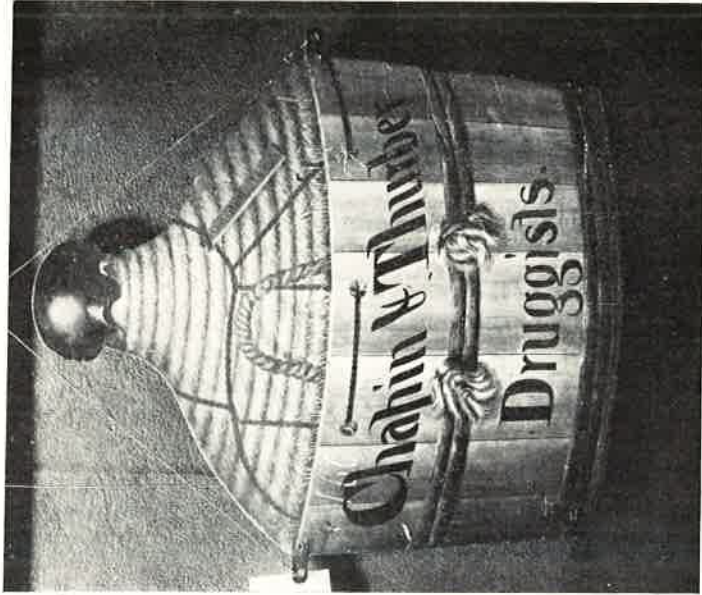
Of the bovine animals we note the *Bull* at Boston in 1833, a *Bull's Head* at Lancaster, Pa., and a *Yoke of Oxen* at Coventry, R. I., in 1811. The lamb had long been a popular sign in England, so it is not surprising to find the sign of the *Lamb* at Boston as early as 1746, and later a *White Lamb* at Providence. Perchance the reason the *Lamb* is not found earlier in New England is because it might be thought to savor of idolatry. Both a *Buck*, 1772, and a *Roe-buck*, 1768, and also a *Buck and Breeches*, 1774, swung on signs at Newport, and a *Reindeer couchant* and an *Elephant*, 1760, were in use at Providence. Groceries were sold at the sign of the *Gilded Rhinoceros* at Providence, an animal that seems to have escaped English signboards. There was a *White Bear* at Newport in 1749, a *Great White Bear* at

Providence in the nineteenth century, a *Rabbit and Two Pine Trees* at Northfield and a *Hat and Beaver* at Boston.

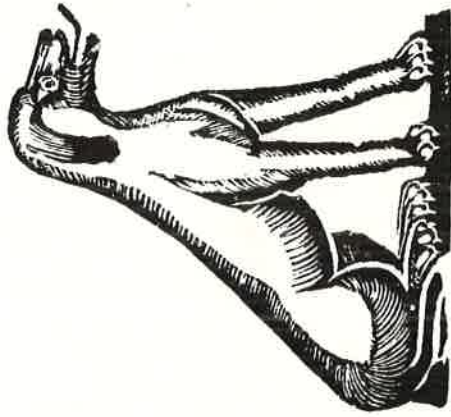
Human figures occasionally appeared on sign-boards as the *Boy and Book*, 1762, the *Black Boy*, 1764, and the *Giant and Midget*, all at Providence and of necessity human figures appear in composition pictures. A *man seated at table with wine glass* was on the reverse of the sign at Centrebrook, Ct., and there was a *Golden Head* at Newport in 1771 and a *Brazen Head* at Cornhill, Boston, in 1760.

The bird group, though extensive in number, is rather limited in subject. Chief of the signboard birds is of course the eagle, some heraldic American eagles having already been mentioned in connection with the second group of devices. The *eagle* on the Pawtuxet, R. I., tavern sign is not an heraldic specimen, but rather a bird emblem. This signboard originally bore the inn-keeper's name, S. Carpenter, and the date, 1825. It was later repainted to read Wm. Hancock 1834, and later a board with the name W. Carder was placed over Hancock's name, thus recording changes in ownership. The famous *Golden Eagles* of Newport, like the Horses of St. Marks, have had an eventful history. Originally they are said to have been companion pieces and to have graced the gate-posts of Metcalf Bowler's elaborate country estate in Portsmouth, R. I. The panelling from one room in his house is now in the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum in New York. After the sale of the Bowler property, these eagles were carried to Newport. One of them is considered by some to have been the *Golden Eagle* that served as the well known sign of John Bours' shop. It is sometimes called the *Golden Eagle*, 1763, and sometimes is merely referred to as the *Eagle*. One of the eagles was later placed over George Eng's store on Thames Street, and the other on top of Townsend's Coffee house, where it appears in an old engraving of about 1840. This eagle was twice blown down from its perch. Today the two eagles, full relief carvings, not pictures, stand facing each other, one on each side of Thames Street. One of the eagles has suffered considerable restoration, the head and feather-carving clearing dating from a late period.





Druggists' sign which hung at 73 Westminster Street, Providence, from 1843 to 1850 and later at 31 Westminster Street.  
Loaned by Howard M. Chapin.



The sign of the Greyhound, Nathaniel Wheaton's shop on William Street (now North Main Street), Providence, in 1772.  
From *The Providence Gazette* of November 7, 1772.

The *Golden Eagle*, Providence, 1809, perhaps the same as the *Spread Eagle*, 1799, the *Horse and Eagle*, Newport, 1777, all Tavern signs, the *American Eagle*, a Providence printer's sign, 1816, the *Eagle*, Boston, and the *Rising Eagle*, Malden, 1766, give proof of the regard in which this bird was held. In Pennsylvania, a curious signboard bore a *Hen with Chickens* above which hovered an *Eagle with a Crown* in its beak, and the inscription read, "May the Wings of Liberty cover the Chickens of Freedom and pluck the Crown from the Enemy's Head." The spirit of the Revolution is evident in this sign.

A few other birds appear on signboards as the *Swan* at Boston, 1708, the *Dove* at Boston, the *Purblind Owl*, and the *Crow and Sausage* both at Providence. The *Three Cranes* at Charlestown, and the bird on a Philadelphia sign will be mentioned later in connection with humorous signboards.

Fishes and insects make but scant showing as signboard emblems. The *Dolphin* at Philadelphia falls into this category for the English list classes sea mammals as fish, and in 1768 the sign of the *Fish and Frying Pan* hung at Providence before a dry-goods shop. The *Turtle*, a Providence sign of 1821, is a very unusual signboard device. The *Beehive*, symbolic of busyness, made an appropriate sign, and we note the *Beehive*, Charlestown, N. H., 1760, the *Golden Beehive*, 1792, also called the *Arm and Beehive*, and the *Silver Beehive*, 1805, both at Providence, two *Beehive Taverns* at Philadelphia, and the *Crown and Beehive*.

The botanical group, flowers, trees and herbs, brings us to the puzzling *Locust Stump* which is mentioned so often in the columns of the *Newport Mercury*. It was certainly a well-known landmark, but whether it was painted on a signboard, carved in relief, or an actual stump, perhaps gilded to serve as a sign, is a problem still awaiting solution. The *Orange Tree*, 1708, and the *Logwood Tree*, 1732, were both Boston tavern signs. The latter sign doubtless owes its origin to the profitable logwood trade that New England sea captains plied. It is worth noting that the *Locust Stump* and the *Logwood Tree* are American devices and are not listed among European signs.

The *Bush* was for many years in England the trade sign of an inn where one could be cheerfully refreshed and it may have

been so used in America. The *Green Bush* tavern at Barrington, R. I., is perhaps an outgrowth of this old custom. Mrs. Earle mentions a *Pine Tree* tavern at East Poultney, Vt., and the sign of the *Rabbit and Pine Trees* at Northfield, Mass. *The Great Trees* and the *Wheat Sheaf* were Boston signs.

A popular fruit sign was the *Bunch of Grapes*, which, used in 1712 at Boston as a tavern sign, may have carried with it a subtle suggestion of what was to be served, but as used at Newport in 1773 over a candle-maker's shop, and at Providence, 1766, over a dry-goods shop, its significance is doubtful, and it became clearly a house sign and not a trade sign. The Providence *Bunch of Grapes* is still in existence, as is also the business house, which still continues to use the symbol, although the original is in the Historical Society Museum. The Providence bunch was for a while associated with a lion as the sign of the *Bunch of Grapes and Lion*. The *Bunch of Grapes* served as a coffee house sign at Newport in 1764.

Naturally biblical and religious emblems were not popular designs for the signboards of the austere Puritans who settled New England, to whom such representations would seem to be sacrilegious and too strongly reminiscent of the Roman church. People, who went so far as to cut the cross out of their national flag, would scarcely be expected to tolerate the portraits or attributes of saints upon their signboards. The few crosses, used on the early colonial signs, were doubtless heraldic rather than religious in significance, and have been so considered. The likenesses of saints and martyrs, as might be expected, were conspicuously absent, although there was a *St. George* Tavern at Boston in the early days. This tavern was also called the *George* and seems to have been named in honor of George as England's national hero, rather than as a canonized saint. *Noah's Ark* was a Boston sign of 1656, which was doubtless considered historical rather than biblical by the literalists of those days. The *Gilt Bible* appropriately advertised a seventeenth century Salem bookshop, and the same idea is again repeated a century or more later in Rhode Island, where the sign of the *Bible and Anchor* hung over bookshops at Providence in 1798 and 1806, and at Newport in 1799. A nineteenth century



Old shop-sign, dated 1718, said to have hung above Waterman's Shoeshop on North Main Street, Providence.





**RATES OF TOLL.**

For a Waggon, Cart or ox Sled 7 Cts	not exceeding 4 Cattle 10
A Team of more than 4 Cattle 15	A Sley with more than 4 Horse 12 1/2
A Sley with 4 Horse 6	A Coach Chariot or Phaeton 40
A Chaise Chair or Sulkey 20	A Horse and Waggon 6
A Person and Horse 5	Horses and Mules in droves per head 2
Neat Cattle, in droves per head 1	Swing in droves for every fifteen 10
Ferry mules by their Meters each 1	Sheep and Swine shants 7

Toll-sign, Harmony, R. I., 1818-1880.  
From the Society's Museum.



Fac-simile of Turks Head sign, Providence, R. I.  
From the Society's Museum.

Providence apothecary used the sign of the *Good Samaritan*, and like most apothecaries, probably lived up to this sign.

The dignities, trades and professions have contributed much to the variety of the signboard. The *King's Head* signs are sometimes included in this group which is very comprehensive. The sign of the *Traveller*, Providence, 1767, the *Mariner*, Providence, 1794, the *Sailor*, also Providence, the *Ale-bearers*, the *Sailor and woman*, the *Three Jolly sailors*, the *Wounded Tar*, the *Boatswain and Call*, five Philadelphia signs, and the *Woodman and Axe* at Germantown are characteristic of this type of signboard pictures. The *Soldier and Sailor*, often known as the *Patriotic Brothers*, appear in various surroundings, and are a phase of the spirit of '76.

The ship and its accessories were favorite devices. Boston had the *Ship Tavern*, 1666, also called *Noah's Ark*, and later the *Ship in Distress*. There was a *Ship* at Providence, another at Philadelphia, and the one in bas-relief at Saybrook, 1766, is now at the Connecticut Historical Society. The *Steamboat Hotel*, otherwise *Hatches Tavern* in North Attleboro, had an elaborate ship design.

The *Brigantine* hung at Providence in 1766, the *New York Packet* and the *Ship and Plough* in 1795 and a *Passage boat* at Newport in 1771, while Philadelphia had the *Brig and Snow*, and the *Two Sloops*. Parts of ships also were utilized as for instance the *Cross Trees* and the *Top-Gallant* at Philadelphia, and the *Trysail* at Newport. The *Anchor* or *Blue Anchor*, 1652, the *Lighthouse and Anchor*, 1763, both at Boston, and the various *Bible and Anchor* signs give proof of the appeal of this device.

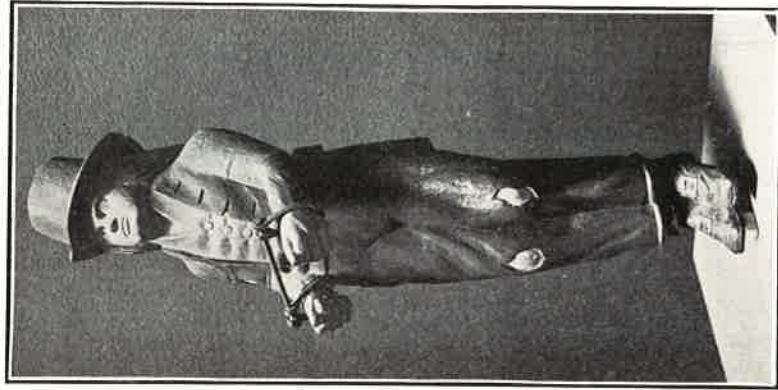
Other signs featuring the objects connected with trades and professions were the *Smith's Anvil*, 1801, the *Saddle*, 1794, the *Golden Reel*, 1794, which was next door to the *Spinning Wheel*, the *Gold Watch*, the *Mortar*, the *Pestle and Mortar* and the various combinations of the mortar and other objects. A very unusual sign was that of the *Mathematical Instruments* at Newport in 1766. No English counterpart of this device is noted. The *four in hand stage* shown on the sign of *Cady's Hotel* at Gloucester, R. I., in 1810, as some of the other horse combina-





Sign of the Bunch of Grapes, which hung in Providence, in 1766.

From the Society's Museum.



Sign that hung before the Kent County Jail, East Greenwich, R. I. From the Society's Museum.

tion signs, may well belong to this group. The sign of the *Clock in Motion*, 1814, is another unusual one.

The house and table produced another group of devices, more prolific in England than in America. Still we find here the *Castle*, 1675, the *Punch Bowl*, 1789, and the *Golden Keys*, all at Boston, the *Gold Cup* at Salem and the *Pewter Platter* at Providence in 1784. The *Punch Bowl* on the Newton, N. H., sign was later, in 1798, emasculated into a *Tea-pot*, and years before prohibition days, too.

Objects of dress and adornment add a few new designs. Beginning at the top with the sign of the *Hat* at Lancaster, Pa., Providence and Newport, R. I., the *Iron Hat*, 1798, the *Gold-laced Hat*, 1796, the *Hat and Crown*, 1764, the *Hat and Helmet*, and the *Bonnet*, for there was a wooden bonnet painted white, which until recently was preserved at Newport; we then come to the *Dresden Fan* at Newport in 1767, later called merely the *Fan*, followed by the *Blue Glove* and the sign of the *Stays*, both at Boston. In addition to the *Buck and Breeches* already noted, Newport had also the sign of the *Leather Breeches*, 1773, but this sign was rather a trade-sign than a distinctive sign, for it signified that its owner, Martha Lenby, made, mended, and washed leather breeches.

Of footwear we find the sign of the *Stocking*, 1796, the *Boot*, the *Mammoth Boot*, the *Little Boot*, the *Shoe and Boot*, and then finally the *Boot, Shoe and Slipper*. The boot, like the barber's pole and the three balls, continued in use even at the lowest ebb in signboard history as the trade sign of an occasional shoe-maker or shoe shop.

While a person clothed in the signs just enumerated might not be entirely satisfied with the appearance, yet he or she would find the costume fully as harmonious as those in the general run of musical comedies and far more extensive.

Geographical and topographical signs form a group by themselves, and were used extensively in England, but rather sparingly in America. The *Indian* was used at Greenfield, Mass., in 1774, at Concord, N. H., in 1794, and at Haverhill, N. H., while the *Indian Queen* was at Boston and Bladensburg, Md. The *Grand Turk* sign at Boston and the *Turk's Head* at Provi-

dence come under this grouping. The *Turk's Head* sign is said to have been originally the figure-head of Jacob Whitman's ship, the *Grand Turk*, and this theory is strengthened by the fact that the sign was carved in full relief in figure-head style. Whitman set this sign up over his shop as early as 1791, and the sign soon gave its name to the building and to the locality, just as the *Elephant and Castle* gave its name to a locality in London, and as the *Seven Stars* gave its name to a Boston Street. The *Turk's Head* was blown down in the Great Gale of 1815, and drifted off in the flood, but was recovered and later carried to Montgomery, Ala., where it was again set up as a shop-sign. Thence it went to New Orleans, where according to one account it was destroyed in a fire. Another more picturesque story is that it was rescued from the fire and sent to the Cherokee Indians, who thereafter venerated it as the image of a god. A facsimile reproduction of this interesting and impressive sign is preserved at the Rhode Island Historical Society. There was also an earlier *Turk's Head* sign at Providence, dating back to 1763. This is also said to have once graced a ship's prow as the figure-head of the ship *Sultan*, and later to have been set up on shore over the owner's shop.

Larwood and Hotten devote considerable space to humorous and comic signs and to those that contain puns and rebuses. America is, generally speaking, very weak on this sort of signs. Mrs. Alice Morse Earle, in her entertaining book on "Stage Coach and Tavern Days," from which we have already drawn, mentions a few humorous signs, but these seem to be merely copies of similar well-known ones of England. Five of these may be worth describing briefly. The sign-board bearing the picture of a headless woman and the title, the *Quiet Woman*, which is sometimes varied as the *Silent Woman* or the *Good Woman*, had a strong appeal, as did the *Struggling Man*, also called the *Man making his way through the World*. This shows the globe with a man's head, arms and legs protruding from it, as he struggles onward. The signboard bearing the pictures of a tree, a bird, a ship and a mug of beer and the following verse:

"This is the tree that never grew,  
This is the bird that never flew,  
This is the ship that never sailed,  
This is the mug that never failed,"

doubtless had good drawing power for it was used at Boston and Philadelphia as well as in England. Perhaps the most famous humorous sign is that of a man carrying on his shoulder a drunken woman, a monkey and a magpie, and having around his neck a chain and padlock marked "Wedlock." This sign, imported from England to the New World, is called *A Man Full of Trouble*, a paraphrase of the English title *A Man loaded with Mischief and Matrimony*. The sign of the *Four Alls* depicts a king, a general, a minister and a laborer with the legends "I govern all," "I fight for all," "I pray for all," and "I pay for all." This sign, which hung at Philadelphia, was a slightly changed version of the old English sign in which the *Devil* was usually represented with the legend "I will have all," or words to that effect. The *Three Cranes* at Charlestown, 1734, is said to have been a play on words, the three birds (cranes) symbolizing the three cranes which in the vintry used to lift the barrels of wine.

The last group of signs is called the miscellaneous group, and is a sort of catch-all for what remains unclassified. Here we find the bell popular both in Old and in New England, there being a *Blue Bell Tavern* at Boston as early as 1663. The *Golden Ball Inn* at Providence was a very famous hostelry, where Madame Jumel, Lafayette, Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison and James Russell Lowell stayed at various times. There was a *Golden Ball* at Boston, another at Newport, at Bristol and many other places. D. Hall's *Golden Ball* from some old tavern was shown in the recent exhibition, suspended from its ornamental ironwork. At Roxbury was a *Ball and Pen*, at Newport the *White Stone*, 1790, at Dedham the *Law Book* and at Andover the *Horseshoe*, 1692. Astronomical objects fall into this group as the *Star*, 1764, at Boston and 1773 at Newport, the *Seven Stars*, perhaps intended for Charles' Wain, at Boston, 1771, and the *Sun*, of which name Boston boasts of four taverns between 1724 and 1785. There was a

*Sun* at Salem, at Providence and at Newport. The *Carboy*, 1855, at Providence, is of this group, and, though late, is interesting in that it is painted upon tin instead of wood, and the name of the painter is known.

This opens up a very fascinating study that still seeks research workers—the subject of signboard painters. Gilbert Stuart heads the list with several boards ascribed to him. Then follows Benjamin West, Bernard Wilton, both the Peales, Matthew Pratt, Louise Chapin, Halpin, Rice, Hicks, Woodside and Brown.

Nathaniel Ames, the celebrated almanac maker, ran the tavern at Dedham, and on account of unfortunate litigation, caused a sign to be painted in 1749 representing the judges of the court. The court sent a sheriff to remove the insult, and by good luck and hard riding Ames got home first and removed the sign. The "Federal Convention of 1787 Inn" at Philadelphia, had a pictorial sign showing the *Convention*, and the Union Hotel had a reproduction of the engraving of the *Declaration of Independence*. Picture signs, showing *Washington crossing the Delaware*, hung at Philadelphia and at Taylorsville, Pa. Pictorial signs and signs with verses mark the decline of the signboard and show a lack of taste, being entirely out of keeping with the purity of the earlier productions. The charm and simplicity of the early signboards carries their crudeness of workmanship, and conversely the better workmanship of the later complicated pictorial boards serves to accentuate their inappropriateness.

Toll signs are really a special study by themselves, for while not as a rule artistic or ornamental, they carry a vast amount of interesting information, economic, social and historical, in the few lines of descriptive text and prices that they bear. Often, as is the case with other signs, the paint of the background has been worn away, leaving the letters standing in low relief.

A very remarkable sign is the *Handcuffed Man*, that formerly hung over the door of the Kent County Jail at East Greenwich, R. I. Exactly why a jail needed a trade sign is not quite clear, as there was evidently no necessity for the jail to attempt to popularize its services. Of course, some warden may have hoped that this sign might serve as a timely warning to some soul wandering from the straight and narrow path.