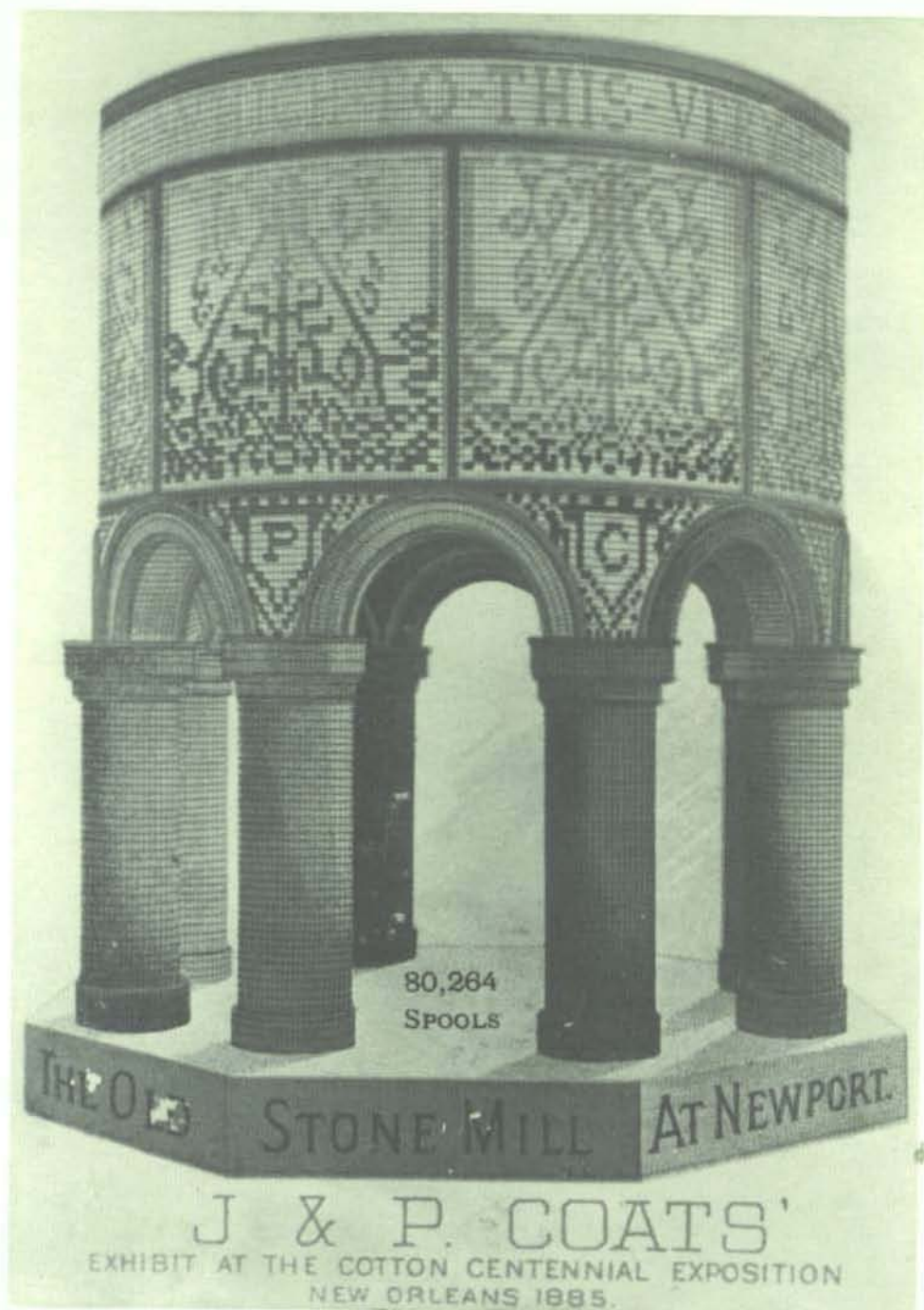


# RHODE ISLAND HISTORY



VOLUME 35:1 FEBRUARY 1976



*The enigmatic stone tower of Newport, a symbol of 19th-century interest in historic preservation, also appealed to the entrepreneurial spirit. The J & P Coats Company exhibit shown in this chromolithograph is a monument to both history and imagination.*

# R H O D E I S L A N D H I S T O R Y

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*Photograph by James Gibbs*

## Historic Preservation in Rhode Island

by Antoinette Forrester Downing\*

Preservation in Rhode Island has paralleled to some extent its history in the United States. Centering of the state's early preservation story around Newport is no accident. By the 1770s the city by the sea already had an impressive heritage from leaders in political, mercantile, and religious thought. In the arts the heritage includes furniture by Goddards and Townsends; some fine painting by John Smibert, Robert Feke and Gilbert Stuart; silver; pewter; and a number of extraordinary buildings — among them those of Richard Munday's period and the outstanding work of Peter Harrison. Newport's heritage received early recognition. Nationally, sporadic interest appeared late in the eighteenth century. In 1796 Benjamin Latrobe expressed regret over demolition of Green Spring, an ancient structure in James County, Virginia. Demolition of Boston's Old Brick Meeting House in 1808 caused a flurry of protest. Plans to salvage Independence Hall began in Philadelphia in 1813 and restoration efforts continued following its acquisition by the city in 1816. Of particular interest for Rhode Islanders and Newporters, because of association with the Pell Family, was the preservation of Fort Ticonderoga, New York. William Ferris Pell, caught up in its romantic history, leased it in 1820 and saved it from further vandalism. Later acquired by his family, the fort was finally restored by Stephen Pell early in the twentieth century.

Another early episode in the history of preservation occurred in Newport. In 1822 Abraham Touro, son of Issac Touro, former rabbi of the Newport synagogue, left \$10,000 to the city and state for the support of the synagogue.<sup>1</sup> Touro's intent was to

induce to Newport more Jews to reopen the synagogue, closed in the early 1790s after dispersal of the Jewish community during the Revolution, but this gift stipulating that municipal and state authorities find a suitable custodian and make needed repairs, resulted in restoration of the synagogue. Evidence that these repairs were comparatively skillful efforts at restoration emerged from studies in the 1950s with the discovery of a sketch of the ark made by Ezra Stiles at the dedication ceremony in 1763 which differs markedly from the present ark perhaps installed during the 1820s repairs. Since the design for this replacement came from Battey Langley's *Treasury of Designs* of 1750 and James Gibb's *Rules for Drawing* of 1738, copies of which Peter Harrison is known to have owned and used, the alteration, whenever made, was in a true sense an integral part of the style of the original building.<sup>2</sup> Judah Touro, Abraham's brother, another patron of the arts and early preservationist, gave \$10,000 in 1839 for the Bunker Hill monument and \$1,000 in 1843 to repair the portico of Redwood Library. He bequeathed another \$3,000 to Redwood in 1854 and matched his brother's gift to the synagogue by leaving \$10,000 for a reader or minister. He also left \$10,000 to Newport to encourage acquisition of the enigmatic old Stone Tower and a small plot of land known today as Touro Park — the remainder of the total \$16,000 required was raised in a local campaign.<sup>3</sup>

Developing interest in historical and antiquarian matters led to formation of a state historical society. After an unsuccessful attempt to establish a Newport society in 1821, The Rhode Island Historical Society successfully organized in 1822 with a northern

*Block Island North Light, one of many types of structures qualifying for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Detail view from northwest.*

\*Consultant to Providence Preservation Society from its beginnings in 1956 and chairman of both the Providence Historic District Commission and Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, Mrs. George E. Downing is also a trustee of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.



cabinet in Providence and a southern counterpart in Newport. First activities consisted chiefly in the collection of family papers, genealogical material, newspapers, records and documents, and members soon communicated with other learned societies. In 1829 Charles Christian Rafn, secretary of the Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries at Copenhagen, Denmark, announced preparation of his monumental work on early Norse voyages, *Antiquitates Americanae*. The Rhode Island society took part in local investigation of possible pre-Columbian remains of European origin in America, and its secretary, Thomas H. Webb, called Rafn's attention to "mysterious mounds which had been discovered in the newly opened West, to pottery and other artifacts that did not appear to be the work of known Indian tribes," and above all to "many rocks inscribed with unknown characters, apparently of ancient origin . . . discovered scattered through different parts of the country," among them Dighton Writing Rock, subject of speculation since its discovery in the seventeenth century. Rafn based the Norse theory of Dighton Rock on this information, a theory later amplified to include Newport Tower. Speculation about the tower's origin developed into a full-fledged controversy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

One of Rhode Island's first concerted preservation efforts was the attempt to save Governor William Coddington's house, among the oldest (1640) in Newport. When Clarke Burdick, its owner in 1834 decided to demolish the house, the Historical Society tried but failed to raise \$800 needed for its purchase, salvaging only one leadpaned casement window.

The Society's second attempt to save a historic building succeeded. It was rumored in the 1830s that Whitehall, given by Dean George Berkeley to Yale College when he left Middletown in 1732 and long since a tourist attraction, was to be razed. Describing it in his *Itinerary* (1744), Dr. Alexander Hamilton wrote "We called at a public house which goes by the name of Whitehall the dwelling here of the famous Dean Barclay, when in the Island; where we drank punch and tea and had the company of a



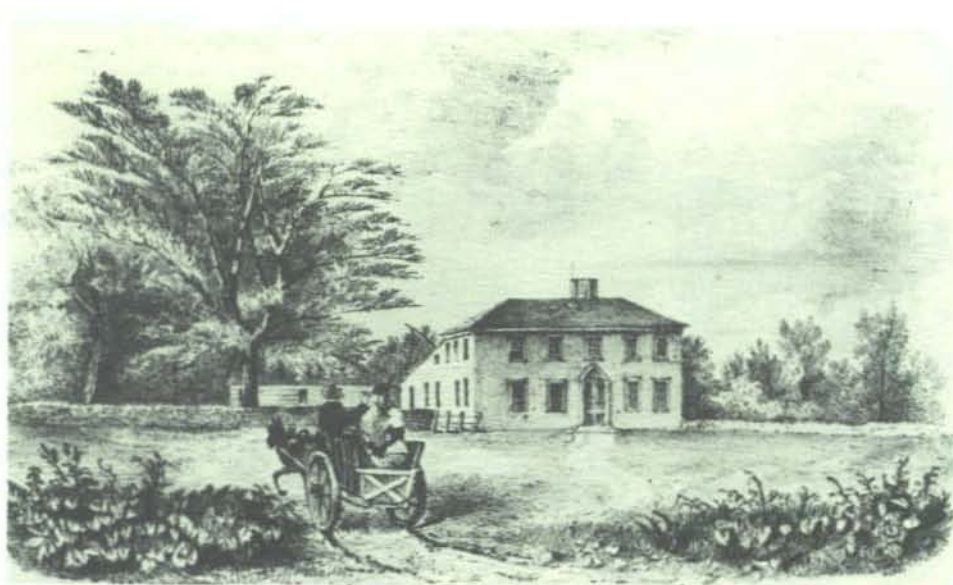
History of New England by John Gorham Palfrey

William Coddington House.

handsome girl, his daughter." Secretary Webb wrote President Jeremiah Day of Yale that "this memorial of by-gone times was by no means beyond repair, and that cost of restoration would be far less than would that of tearing it down and erecting a new structure." Day replied that there had been no suggestion of demolishing Whitehall, but that had it not been for the lively interest and timely communication of the Society, the college would "probably have been too negligent in seeing that the house was kept in repair and saved from ruin."<sup>4</sup> Once more fallen into disrepair in the 1870s, Whitehall's "picturesque ruins," appealing to nineteenth-century architects, helped inspire interest in colonial architecture that led to the colonial revival of the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>5</sup>

In 1842 the Society built a new home for its northern cabinet. A small Greek Revival building still standing on Waterman Street in Providence and now owned by Brown University, it was the first structure built exclusively by an American historical society for its own use. Here publication of Rhode Island historical texts and collection of documents and relics continued. In 1847 Henry Bull of Newport gave Robert Fekes's portrait of Reverend John Callender — one of the earliest paintings acquired by the Society and one of the artist's most successful likenesses.<sup>6</sup> In 1853





RHIS Library

*Whitehall, romantic and picturesque, appealing to artists as well as architects, inspired this 19th-century lithograph by A. A. Harwood.*

George Champlin Mason, who played an important role in the developing interest in antiquarianism and architectural history, led in the successful establishment of a separate Newport Historical Society. Mason, one of the growing number of young men who studied abroad, was in Rome, Florence, and Paris from 1846 to 1848 where he met William Morris Hunt among other American students. After his return he painted architectural and landscape views, made drawings and supervised construction of new "cottages" for the influx of summer residents. His invaluable semi-historical and antiquarian writings included *Annals of Trinity Church*, *Annals of Redwood Library*, *Newport and its Cottages*, and *Reminiscences of Newport*.<sup>7</sup>

It was also at midcentury that Thomas A. Tefft, a young man still in his teens and a protege of Henry Barnard, arrived in Providence from his home in Richmond, Rhode Island in 1845 to attend Brown University and study architecture. His career proved significant not only for mid-nineteenth-century architectural development here but also for the

state's preservation history. Soon a member of the firm of Tallman & Bucklin, he was largely responsible for the new Providence and Worcester Station built in 1848 — voted one of the ten most important buildings in America by the American Institute of Architects in the 1880s. Until Tefft went abroad in 1856, where he died in 1859, he made a solid impact on Rhode Island building, designing churches, public buildings, schools, railroad stations and many important houses, a number of which are still standing. His reserved taste, and his respect for buildings of the past, make him especially important for our story here. Commissioned in 1850 to enlarge the Old State House in Providence, dating from 1762, he did so by constructing an entry fore-tower to house the stairway. The renaissance detailing of this addition, sympathetically related to the Georgian design of the original structure, may well be the first example in the state where new work was consciously designed to conform in character to the old.

Tefft had a number of commissions in Newport, where he met George C. Mason, Sr. as well as



*Characters and Corners of Rhode Island* by George D. Laswell

*George D. Laswell's 1924 drawing of the Old State House prominently shows the tower designed by Thomas A. Tefft.*

summer visitors like Horatio Greenough and others whose influence on architecture and the arts in Boston and elsewhere was considerable. Beginning in 1851, he delivered several important lectures, in one of which, "Early Architecture of Newport" delivered in 1853 before the newly organized Newport Historical Society, he established his preservation interests stating that Newport's early structures required preservation both for their architectural values and historical associations. He saw these colonial homes as "incubators of the American spirit of freedom, integrity and enterprise that bid fair to revolutionize the world." He further noted that the "plain and cheap wood structures" of his ancestors, "although the decoration was confined to several conventional areas and the repeated features often became monotonous, always remained chaste and legitimate and there is scarcely a building of this period where you can find a clumsy or inappropriate ornament while in no case is the convenience of the internal arrangement

sacrificed to external appearance." His own ground plans were almost without exception close to eighteenth-century models.<sup>8</sup>

By midcentury scattered efforts were being made to record buildings and views of cities and towns for future reference. Edward L. Peckham, who had made a series of watercolor views of Providence in the 1830s, painted the same scenes again in the 1840s and early 50s to indicate changes that had occurred. The Rhode Island Historical Society also initiated the practice of recording buildings that could not be saved — John Russell Bartlett was commissioned to make a series of record drawings of Providence and a daguerreotype was taken of the old Coffee House before its demolition in the 1850s.

By midcentury a few archeological investigations were also underway. Zachariah Allen, later vice president of The Rhode Island Historical Society from 1870 and president from 1880 to 1882, who spearheaded research into location of the spring site, home site, and burial site of Roger Williams, presented his study in 1860. Some one hundred years earlier, about 1755, that indefatigable scholar, Ezra Stiles, minister of the Second Congregational Church in Newport and later fifth president of Yale College, had mapped the same sites for the same antiquarian reasons.<sup>9</sup>

In 1878 Horatio N. Angell discovered another archeological site — the Indian soapstone quarry in Johnston, a stratum of steatite with important Indian pottery remains. The find immediately aroused considerable interest and became the subject of a comparatively scientific investigation which was reported to a special meeting of the Historical Society. An account appeared in the press, but little subsequent effort has been made to protect the site, now almost obliterated by road construction and intrusive development.<sup>10</sup>

The Centennial held in Philadelphia in 1876, by focusing national attention on growth and development of the nation's architectural, commercial and industrial achievements during its first hundred years, helped to fan incipient interest in recording the past. An immediate result was a nationwide program for identifying and marking





RHS Library

*Market Square, watercolor by Edward Lewis Peckham, 1835, part of his series of Providence sketches. The old Coffee House is on the left beyond the bridge; next to it, the Granite Block replaced in 1939 by the RISD Auditorium. The Market House itself is on the right.*

historical sites.

In Rhode Island, the General Assembly passed a resolution in 1878 to purchase the Indian Burial Ground in Charlestown, enclose it within a substantial stone wall, and install an appropriate tablet. Appropriation of \$1,500 was made by the legislature in April, 1906, for the purpose of suitably marking sites of historic interest — the sum to be expended by the secretary of state acting with the executive committee of The Rhode Island Historical Society. The committee's final report listed eighteen markers placed between 1906-1909 including Indian and King Philip's War sites and the home of Gilbert Stuart as well as sites associated with colonial founders, governors and Revolutionary War heroes or events.<sup>11</sup>

An increasing awareness of need for lands for public use prompted organization in 1883 of the Public Park Association. In 1871 Betsy Williams had given land for Roger Williams Park which,

planned by Horace W.S. Cleveland, is still one of the state's finest parks. Wilcox Park, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, was given by Harriet Hoxie Wilcox to the city of Westerly in 1898. Although the primary purpose of the Public Park Association was establishment of a metropolitan park system in Providence, the association became the pioneering organization in the state to promote land use planning.<sup>12</sup>

As a result of the association's efforts the Metropolitan Park Commission, organized in 1904, was established by legislation in 1907. The commission engaged the Olmsted brothers to develop a planning and accounting system and by 1909 had announced acquisition of Lincoln Woods. When absorbed in 1935 into the newly formed Department of Agriculture and Conservation, now the Department of Natural Resources, the commission had secured by gift or purchase thirty-four preservation parks, sites and monuments

in thirteen cities and towns. It also administered Queen's Fort in Exeter and the great swamp fight site in South Kingstown — both owned by The Rhode Island Historical Society.<sup>13</sup>

Efforts to save important threatened buildings, usually by special groups organized for the purpose, increased late in the nineteenth century. Acquisition and restoration of Washington's home at Mount Vernon, initiated in 1822, had been the outstanding national example — efforts on its behalf were well under way when the Mount Vernon Ladies Association obtained their charter in 1856. In Boston an attempt to save the Thomas Hancock house failed, but measured drawings were made before demolition in 1863, worth noting since such drawings were seldom made at that time. Boston's successful campaign to save the Old South Meeting House in 1877 was followed by restoration of its Old State House (Town House). These campaigns led to other preservation efforts in New England.<sup>14</sup>

In Newport George C. Mason, Jr. protested a proposal in 1882 to demolish the 1760 Brick Market then serving inadequately as City Hall, writing that Peter Harrison, its designer, "stood high in the ranks of his contemporaries . . . , never surpassed and rarely equalled by the architects who settled in the Colonies," and that the building "remains externally as he left it; quiet, dignified and eloquent; a pure and graceful example of the free Classic of the early eighteenth century." Earlier Mason had persuaded the city to finance needed repairs, carried out under his direction, to the masonry of Old Stone Mill. His drawings of the mill with a scholarly analysis of its structure, were published in 1879.<sup>15</sup>

One of the first instances of acquisition of a historic building by a historical society for its own use occurred in Newport in 1884 when the Newport Historical Society purchased the Old Seventh Day Baptist Meeting House (1729) to serve as its headquarters, a practice which became an accepted method of saving old buildings. George C. Mason, Jr., instrumental in the acquisition, converted the building into the Society's headquarters. His set of measured drawings for this work was published in 1885.<sup>16</sup>

Newport's importance as a social summer resort played a part in influencing the evolving architectural style of the nineteenth century, especially the colonial revival. Newport's Victorian buildings, outstanding nationally, fully reflected the manifold architectural interest of the whole period. In turn the charms of colonial Newport captivated wealthy socialites, artists and writers as well as architects brought to the summer colony for their skills or lured by the reputation of the brilliant Newport season. Thomas Wentworth Higginson wrote nostalgically about "Oldport Days"; Henry James describing the little houses huddling down Newport's hills, called them "little old gray ladies"; and architects visiting Dean Berkeley's home in Middletown were intrigued by its appearance as a picturesque ruin. By the 1870s and 1880s architects were including many colonial elements in their designs. They also collected parts from abandoned houses and soon began to incorporate them into new houses or into colonial structures they were now remodelling. Charles F. McKim "colonialized" the kitchen of the eighteenth-century Robinson House in 1878 and, in the best tradition of colonial revival, converted the old kitchen of the Dennis House into a living hall by moving the front stairs and incorporating them into his new room. Working for Edwin Angell, George C. Mason, Jr. converted the eighteenth-century Southwick House on Washington Street into a Queen Anne cottage with colonial detailing.

The history of the Hunter House waterfront doorway reflects changing preservation interests. Removed in the 1870s to allow a wider rear entrance and porch, the doorway was salvaged by McKim from a rubbish heap and nailed on the rear of Dennis House across the street. Norman M. Isham transferred it to the front of the same house in the 1920s. It was returned to Hunter House as the front entrance in the 1950s, at which time a copy was made for Dennis House.<sup>17</sup>

As interest in early building increased in the 1880s and 1890s, so did publications on historic buildings and colonial architecture. Two of the earliest were Edwin Whitefield's *Homes of our Forefathers in Connecticut and Rhode Island* (1881) and *Homes*





Author's collection

Interest in colonial architecture led to restoration of the kitchen in the Thomas Robinson House and attendant influence of the colonial revival on new building.



Photograph by Robert Merserey

Architects' use of colonial elements carried into 20th-century design. The 1910 Maxim Karolik House, Newport, by Odgen Codman is an end result of colonial revival spirit.

*of our Forefathers in Massachusetts* (1882). George C. Mason, Jr.'s lectures on "Colonial Buildings in Newport," published in 1881, helped to focus national as well as local attention on Newport. The *American Architect and Building News* also published articles and measured drawings on other important colonial structures. Rhode Island was represented by drawings of the John Brown House in Providence, doorways from Bristol and in Newport — Trinity Church, Brenton House and the Colony House. These articles and drawings were later collected in William Rotch Ware's *Georgian Period*, already noted.<sup>18</sup>

*Early Rhode Island Houses*, written jointly in 1895 by Norman M. Isham and Albert F. Brown, was one of the first scholarly books on early building in the United States. It described some of the state's most important seventeenth-century houses, analyzed structural elements, included measured drawings, and supplied hypothetical reconstructions. Their *Early Connecticut Houses* (1900) followed the same format.

Interest in colonial buildings had clearly become established. Like the Newport Historical Society,

other societies were acquiring historic buildings for headquarters or to show as museum houses. Most of these buildings had strong historical and frequently Revolutionary War associations, but the end of the nineteenth century saw attempts to preserve buildings as demonstrations of the quality of American life in the past. In 1897 Massachusetts' Ipswich Historical Society acquired the seventeenth-century Whipple House, a sturdy old structure with no strong historical associations, in order to "increase appreciation of a way of life that had vanished." Rhode Island's Windmill Society of Jamestown was formed in 1904 to restore that town's 1787 windmill, a structure acquired in 1912 and maintained since by the Jamestown Historical Society.<sup>19</sup>

None the less, preservation efforts, if undertaken at all, were still usually limited to buildings associated with historical events or important persons. Although the American Institute of Architects, founded in 1856, was never preservation-oriented, it had by the end of the century joined in efforts to save buildings like Philadelphia's Congress Hall and Boston's Massachusetts State House. In



Washington the Institute acquired for its headquarters in 1901 the "Octagon" designed by William Thornton.<sup>20</sup>

Societies like the Daughters of the American Revolution and the National Society of Colonial Dames, both organized in the 1890s, almost immediately engaged in patriotic and historic preservation projects. In Rhode Island they have usually become custodians of property given to or acquired by municipality or state. When Pawtucket acquired the 1685 John Daggett House in 1905, Pawtucket Chapter DAR (organized in 1892) undertook its restoration and has since retained its custody.

One Providence chapter of the DAR was named in commemoration of the destruction of HMS *Gaspee* in 1772 — generally considered one of the early overt acts leading to revolution. The burning of the British schooner was planned in the old Sabin Tavern on South Main Street in a room known thereafter as the Gaspee Room. When the tavern was demolished in 1891 its owner, William Richmond Talbot, installed parts of the historic structure — front steps, staircase, other woodwork, and paneling from the Gaspee Room — in the Talbot residence at 209 Williams Street. In that setting in 1892 Mrs. William R. Talbot organized Gaspee Chapter DAR whose members purchased the Talbot house, known thereafter as Gaspee House, in 1929. Today the Gaspee Room, with its mixture of salvaged woodwork is best understood not as a restoration but as a shrine that memorializes a signal moment in Rhode Island's Revolutionary history. The Gaspee Chapter transferred ownership of the House to The Rhode Island Historical Society in 1975.<sup>21</sup>

When Providence's Esek Hopkins Chapter of the DAR organized in 1919, its members assumed custodianship of Esek Hopkins House, home of the American navy's first admiral. The house had been semi-restored and given in 1908 to the city with an endowment for maintenance by Mrs. Frederick L. Gould, great-great-granddaughter of Hopkins. The chapter has undertaken subsequent refurbishing.

Soon after its organization in the 1890s the National Society of Colonial Dames also became

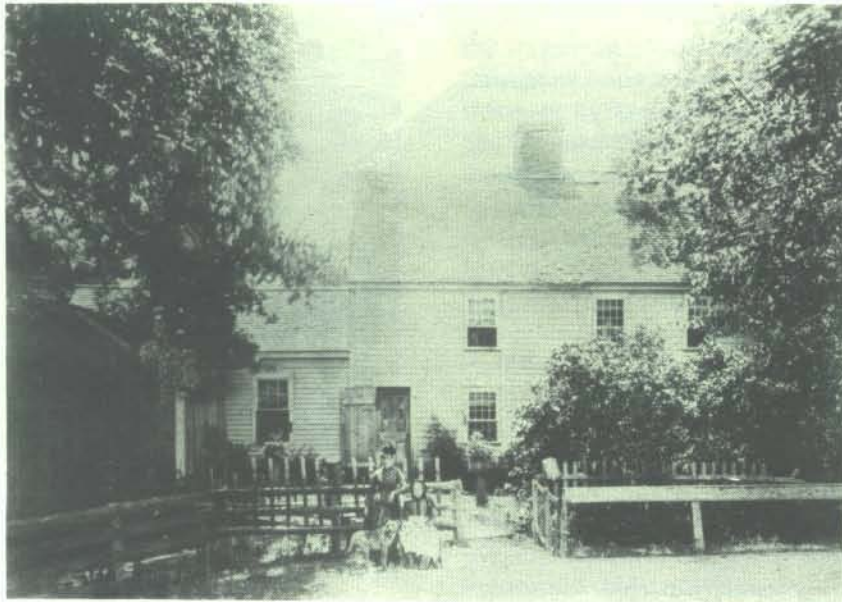
involved in preservation projects with patriotic and historical connotations. In 1896 the Society joined the American Institute of Architects in efforts to restore Philadelphia's Congress Hall. The Dames, who were responsible for restoration of the Senate chamber, engaged Newport's George C. Mason, Jr., at the time a Philadelphia resident and vice president of the Philadelphia Architectural Club.<sup>22</sup>

Another early Dames' project with Rhode Island associations was the restoration of the Van Cortland mansion in New York. The building, which had become city property in 1889, was leased in 1896 to the Colonial Dames in the state of New York who engaged Rhode Island's Norman Morrison Isham to restore it as a house museum. Its guide booklet published in 1897, giving a history of the mansion and its occupants and an analysis of its architectural fabric, was an illuminating interpretation which still serves as an example of creditable restoration information and museum practice.

Locally, the Colonial Dames in Rhode Island purchased in 1900 a portion of a 999-year lease on Dean George Berkeley's Middletown home, Whitehall, undertook much needed repairs and attempted a restoration. They have since made the care, study, furnishing and interpretation of Whitehall a main objective, engaging Norman M. Isham in 1936 to restore its two front parlors. Plans are currently being made for further restoration, but the house presents problems of analysis because of early changes and its 1900 "restoration."<sup>23</sup>

In 1927 the state acquired the home (1743) of Stephen Hopkins, governor for nine of the thirteen years between 1755-1768 and a signer of the Declaration of Independence, moving it from the site selected for a new Providence County Court House. Again the Dames assumed custodianship, and with the initial guidance of Norman Isham as restoration architect have been responsible for restoring, furnishing and operating the little building as a museum house. The garden was designed by Alden Hopkins, a descendant of Stephen Hopkins and a former landscape architect for Colonial Williamsburg.





RIHS Library

*The Daggett House in Pawtucket had not yet become of interest to preservationists when its inhabitants and faithful dog posed for the photographer out back. Pots of flowers, open windows, a pail on the fence make this a distinctive portrait of a historic house.*

Developing awareness of our nation's past led to increasing interest in American furniture and hence in authentic furniture settings. George Francis Dow, Secretary of Essex Institute, set up several alcoves as colonial rooms in Salem, Massachusetts about 1899 and in 1909 the seventeenth-century John Ward house was moved to the Institute's grounds to serve as a museum house — both because of its architecture and the period furniture displayed there. This concept soon led to widespread collection of houses or parts of houses and to installation of period rooms in museum complexes.

By 1900 in Providence Marsden Perry, then owner of the John Brown House, and Charles L. Pendleton were forming major collections of early American furniture. Pendleton gave his to The Rhode Island School of Design in 1904, and to create a suitable background for the collection, Stephen Metcalf gave a new building — Pendleton House, first

museum for furniture to be built in the United States. Stone, Carpenter and Willson, the architects, used Pendleton's own house, built in 1799 by Edward Dexter, and other representative federal houses as models.

In 1913 under the direction of Henry Kent, the Metropolitan Museum of Art began development of its American wing with installation of a series of period rooms. Norman M. Isham of Providence was in charge of the New England section. The American wing initiated a new era in museum history, focusing attention not only on furniture but also on architecture. Chosen for quality, authenticity, and range of style, the rooms became landmarks in promoting serious study of American furnishings.

Important as the wing proved in fostering appreciation of American decorative arts and architecture, installation of these rooms became a source of serious concern among preservationists who

watched the Metropolitan and other museums strip from important structures interiors that might otherwise have been preserved in original locations. New England preservation groups rose in protest when it was rumored in 1913 that the Metropolitan hoped to secure the interior of Touro Synagogue in Newport for the American wing. A number of preservation societies formed to prevent loss of local landmarks. Even so, several Rhode Island buildings, including Metcalf Bowler's summer house and Samuel C. Elam's "Vaucluse," both in Portsmouth, and the Allen house on Wickenden Street in Providence, lost exceptional interiors and fine doorways to the Metropolitan. In the 1920s the Joseph Russell House (1772), one of Providence's first great pre-Revolutionary mansions, was denuded of four splendid rooms and its stairway to embellish museums in Denver, Minneapolis and Brooklyn; as it stands today on North Main Street, its still splendid exterior is an empty shell.

Interest in the house as a setting for furnishings expanded into interest in the house as an element of a whole environment. In Ipswich, by the end of the nineteenth century, Reverend Thomas Franklin Waters had so effectively called attention to the village's many early structures that, although no important events were associated with them, from that time Ipswich has in effect been treated as a living museum town.<sup>24</sup>

In Rhode Island there was also an effort to preserve a real town almost as a museum. The attractive and pleasant layout of certain mill villages along Rhode Island's streams had been a matter of comment since the mid-nineteenth century. In 1915 Henry F. Kendall bought the mills and entire village of Slatersville, one of the most picturesque in the state, and set about transforming it into his somewhat utopian concept of a model New England village. Slatersville in North Smithfield still retains most of this character.<sup>25</sup>

Reproducing entire villages like Sweden's open-air model in Skranson (1890s) began in America early in the twentieth century. The lost village of New Salem, Illinois, was reconstructed in 1920. Salem and Plymouth in Massachusetts were soon building Pioneer Village and Plimouth Plantations



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*Pendleton House, Benefit St., Providence, first museum for furniture to be built in the United States, part of the Rhode Island School of Design.*

respectively. In Rhode Island an Indian village, no longer standing, was recreated in 1936 at Goddard Park in Warwick as part of the state's tercentenary. Such complexes as Henry Ford's Greenfield Village in Michigan (1926), Massachusetts' Old Sturbridge Village, begun as Wells Historic Museum (1937), and Storowtown (1930) have been developed to save threatened structures by moving them to create museum villages. Formation in 1910 of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, under the astute guidance and persevering leadership of William Sumner Appleton, gave direction to New England preservation efforts. The SPNEA soon began to acquire early structures — five in Rhode Island to date. Society headquarters in Boston's second Harrison Gray Otis House designed by Charles Bulfinch now houses a museum and an important preservation library. For years *Old-Time New England*, the SPNEA's quarterly journal, and its earlier *Bulletin* have served as an invaluable information resource, including measured drawings, careful studies of many hitherto unrecorded structures, and pioneering articles on specific topics such as hardware, construction methods and paneling types.

In Rhode Island Norman M. Isham became the



chief preservation architect during the first third of the century. A graduate of Brown University, he entered the firm of Stone, Carpenter and Willson in 1886, opening his own office in 1892. An able architect in his own right, Isham worked mostly in colonial revival style and many of his buildings still exist.

Involved in almost every restoration project undertaken here from publication of his first book in 1895 to his death in 1943, Isham was soon associated with Sumner Appleton and other prominent preservationists. His preservation philosophy may be followed in his work. His excavation of two important colonial sites were early Rhode Island examples of careful procedures. Following Zachariah Allen's 1860 example, in 1906 he investigated the traditional site in South Kingstown of Bull's garrison or block house burned by Indians in 1675.<sup>26</sup>

Isham's restoration of Newport's Brick Market in 1914 was documented in detail in a special bulletin of the SPNEA. His 1917 report on the Newport Colony House, which included measured drawings and an analysis of changes made over the years,

became the basis for restoration undertaken for the state 1926-1932. In this restoration Isham's philosophy was evident. On the first floor, he cleared the main hall of its accumulation of later partitions but retained formal casings applied in 1875 to the original solid tree columns and also kept the 1805 judge's bench. Upstairs he made no effort to restore the original three room plan choosing rather to keep the present Victorian courtroom and its 1840s or 1850s furniture. The old council chamber he left as he found it — one bay wider than originally designed.<sup>27</sup>

For its one hundred and fiftieth anniversary in 1925, Isham wrote a brief history of the First Baptist Meeting House in Providence. Also in 1925 he undertook extensive repairs and restoration of Newport's Trinity Church for its two hundredth anniversary. The original measured drawings are now in the Newport Historical Society and his superb account of the building was published in 1936.<sup>28</sup>

In most of his restorations Isham made a practice of keeping elements from more than one period if they seemed important or if the original material

*Doorways and other architectural elements from early American houses on display in Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, about 1920.*

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had been lost. When he restored the seventeenth-century Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House for the Newport Historical Society in 1927 he retained important paneling, mantels and other features from several eighteenth-century alterations. The resulting restoration is thoughtful and rewards close study.

His last project, the seventeenth-century Thomas Clemence house in Johnston, in collaboration with John Hutchins Cady, Isham undertook for Henry Dexter Sharpe in 1940-41. This restoration was intended to return the house to its earliest period and is notable for its careful documentation which included a detailed history of the house, its ownership and changes, a full photographic record of the restoration process, and a series of measured drawings made for the Historic American Buildings Survey.<sup>29</sup>

Other projects in the first half of the century emphasized saving structures with historical, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century or Revolutionary War associations. SPNEA acquired the seventeenth-century Eleazer Arnold house in Lincoln in 1918, and in 1919 the General Nathanael Greene Association was formed to acquire and restore the general's homestead (1779) in Coventry. Groups formed in the 1920s to save historic buildings included the Wickford Main Street Association, designed to protect this early waterfront village. In Pawtucket the Old Slater Mill Association, organized to restore America's first successful textile mill (1793), was one of the earliest in this country to save a building because of its importance in the history of American industrial development.

Private preservation activities continued to proliferate. The 1930s saw formation of Little Compton, Portsmouth, Warwick and Western Rhode Island historical societies. The Gilbert Stuart Memorial Association, organized in 1931, acquired the artist's birthplace (1754) in North Kingstown and under Isham's direction undertook restoration and exhibition of the house, snuff mill and adjacent little grist mill. SPNEA acquired Newport's John Mawdsley House (1680, 1750 and 1799) in 1937, and about the same time the Newport Historical



*Courtesy Providence Journal-Bulletin*

*Norman Morrison Isham (1864-1943), architect and historian, had major influence in developing a philosophy and direction for historic preservation in Rhode Island.*

Society raised money to save Vernon House, General Rochambeau's headquarters during the Revolution. Shakespeare's Head (1772) in Providence, printing office and home of John Carter, publisher of the *Providence Gazette*, was acquired for restoration through efforts of the Shakespeare's Head Association, formed in 1938 for that purpose. The Varnum Continentals, organized in 1907, purchased the home of General James Mitchell Varnum in East Greenwich in 1939.

Also in the 1930s the Colonial Dames began a statewide project to collect information about early Rhode Island buildings; some of their data has been published. The Rhode Island School of Design and Brown University, using part of a grant from Carnegie Corporation for a community art project, sponsored a book on Rhode Island archi-





*Photograph by Patricia A. Sheehan*

*Citizens of Wickford Main Street Association have been successful in preservation efforts. As viewed from the harbor, motorboats and all, Wickford still retains much of its unique historic character.*

ecture which covered the seventeenth century through Greek revival.<sup>30</sup>

Preservation projects of the 1940s included John Nicholas Brown's gift of John Brown House (1786) to The Rhode Island Historical Society in 1941 to serve as its headquarters. In 1945 Mr. Brown came to the rescue of the Providence Arcade, built in 1828 by Russell Warren and James C. Bucklin, threatened with demolition for downtown development. Through his auspices the Rhode Island Association for the Blind acquired the building for its headquarters. The Little Compton Historical Society acquired and began restoration in 1947 of its first property, the Quaker Meeting House on West Main Street. The Cocumscussoc Association was formed in 1949 to restore Smith's Castle, seventeenth-century home of John Smith located at his trading post established at Wickford in the 1640s and for many years home of the Updike family. Outstanding among preservation events

in this decade, the Preservation Society of Newport County was formed in 1946 to prevent New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art from removing parlor panelling in Deputy Governor Jonathan Nichols' waterfront mansion, generally known as Hunter House (1756).

Because of its impact on all restoration work in North America, the major program evolving during these years, in Williamsburg, Virginia, must be noted here. In 1926 John D. Rockefeller, Jr., inspired by Dr. W. A. R. Goodwin, began preservation and restoration of that city, capitol of Virginia from 1699 to 1780, and by the 1950s Reverend Mr. Goodwin's dream of Williamsburg taken back to its eighteenth-century heyday had become as much a reality as Rockefeller millions and American scholarship could achieve. The influence of this colossal undertaking on all other preservation efforts cannot be overestimated. The Williamsburg concept of restoration of an entire town to the most

significant period in its history altered preservation concepts in North America so completely that by the 1940s restoration generally had come to mean stripping away later accretions or — in other words — getting rid of subsequent history. By 1955, 82 buildings at Williamsburg had been restored, 375 totally reconstructed and 616 demolished. Preservation philosophy still reflects the Williamsburg concept.

Serious in its effect on many restoration projects has been dependence on Williamsburg precedents rather than on local building traditions. In 1940 the Brown University administration selected Perry, Shaw and Hepburn, architects of Colonial Williamsburg, to restore University Hall, designed in 1770 by Robert Smith of Philadelphia and modeled after his Nassau Hall at Princeton.<sup>31</sup> The original interior was drastically altered to conform with early eighteenth-century Williamsburg models.

The appeal to the general public of Williamsburg and Sturbridge concepts has led to proliferation of local village museum restoration projects, most of which, undertaken without requisite research or funding, can claim little authenticity.

Old Sturbridge Village, through a careful process of reevaluation, has developed from a heterogeneous collection of salvaged structures ostensibly representing a New England village green into a valuable laboratory for the study of American culture. Because of continuing reassessments, Williamsburg and Sturbridge are indeed serious and important illustrations, in three-dimensional form, of past ways of life. They help the student as well as the tourist and school child to understand the past in the fullest possible sense, but it must be remembered that such projects, no matter how brilliantly conceived and executed, must be understood as preservation concepts of their day. Enough time has now passed to place them in their own historical perspective; they are parts of the changing history of the preservation movement in North America.

Like most preservation projects thus far discussed, Williamsburg and Sturbridge were products of private initiative. Passage of the Antiquities Act in



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*Gilbert Stuart's birthplace, Saunterstown, a 19th-century view by landscape photographer W. B. Davidson.*

1906 marked tentative governmental recognition of responsibility for the nation's historical and archeological legacy. This early legislation, requiring permits for examination of ruins or gathering of antiquities, had little effect in Rhode Island. The next national preservation legislation, the Historic Sites Act passed in 1935, declared for the first time a national policy to preserve for public use historic sites, buildings and objects of national significance.<sup>32</sup>

From this act two important programs developed. Section 2(c) set up the mechanism for designating landmark buildings and sites from which the National Historic Landmarks program evolved with criteria for evaluation developed by the National Park Service. These criteria, emphasizing authenticity, uniqueness, historical importance, and educational values, are basically still in use today.

In Rhode Island no structure received landmark designation until 1946, and selectiveness of designations is indicated by the fact that when the National Historic Preservation Act passed in 1966 only eleven structures had been given landmark status, all but one built before 1800. Touro Synagogue (1763) is the only designated National Historic Site in the state; the ten landmarks designated prior to 1966 are Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House (1695, c. 1750 and



1765), Redwood Library (1748), Brick Market (1760), Old Colony House (1739) and Newport Poor Farm and Asylum (1819), all in Newport; First Baptist Meeting House (1775), University Hall (1770) and Market House (1773), in Providence; Old Slater Mill (1793) in Pawtucket; and Gilbert Stuart's birthplace (1754) in North Kingstown. National Historic Landmarks are still designated by authority of the Historic Sites Act and more Rhode Island buildings and districts have been designated since 1966. Although prestigious, landmark recognition carries with it no financial benefit or legal protection.

Section 2(a) of the Historic Sites act, which evolved into the Historic American Buildings Survey, HABS, and in 1970 the Historic American Engineering Record, HAER, set up the first nationally supported systematic program for recording, photographing, and measuring historic structures. Rhode Island's initial HABS program was directed by Philip D. Creer, chairman of the Department of Architecture, Rhode Island School of Design, with Norman M. Isham and John Hutchins Cady among its first committee members. More than 1,000 buildings and sites were inventoried of which some 115 were measured and/or photographed and included in the 1941 catalog. Most of the buildings so recorded had been built before 1800, and many, already threatened, have since been demolished. This program, with its full file of material in the Library of Congress, is an invaluable asset. Seven additional HABS programs have been carried out here since 1941, and the catalogue of all HABS work in Rhode Island is now ready for publication.<sup>33</sup>

Until recently, American preoccupation with the pre-Revolutionary period precluded any serious effort to understand and protect the cultural inheritance of later periods. Lewis Mumford's *Sticks and Stones* (1924) and the *Brown Decades* (1931) helped in the re-evaluation of nineteenth-century work. Even more important was Henry-Russell Hitchcock's leadership in reassessing post-eighteenth-century American art and architecture. Scholars of the next generation,

influenced by Hitchcock's earlier emphasis on the need for serious studies of later nineteenth-century developments, have increasingly turned to the study of Victorian and post-Victorian periods. These young scholars also contributed to a significant reassessment of the preservationist's role in the light of an altered definition of cultural and architectural values.

This change of interest was presaged to some extent in Rhode Island in the late 1940s. Prior to this date, college courses in American art and architecture were chiefly those given as part of the Rhode Island School of Design architectural program by Isham who emphasized pre-nineteenth-century work. Late in the 1930s Dr. Alexander Dörner, then director of RISD's museum, commissioned Henry-Russell Hitchcock to mount a comprehensive photographic show of Rhode Island architecture. This exhibition with its accompanying volume was the first work to deal with the architectural history of the state from the seventeenth century to the present.<sup>34</sup>

As interest in the complexities of nineteenth-century culture developed, earlier periods were increasingly neglected. After Isham's retirement in 1941, the Rhode Island School of Design offered little American architectural history. When Brown University began to offer courses in the history of American architecture in the 1950s, emphasis had shifted almost entirely to nineteenth- and twentieth-century developments.

Moreover, architects and teachers of the older generation had been schooled in classical and Beaux Arts traditions. Partly because of drastic changes in building technology in this century, and partly because of twentieth-century architectural concepts, many schools broke away from traditional architectural training, with the result that many architects now practicing have only a superficial understanding of eighteenth- or nineteenth-century structure or stylistic development. From past building traditions a real break has occurred.

At the same time American patterns of living have undergone drastic changes. Probably the



chief single cause has been mobility made possible by the private automobile, a mass mobility which has spawned sprawling suburban developments, bedroom towns, and shopping centers set in seas of asphalt parking lots. Limited access high-speed freeways have crisscrossed the nation, contributing to deterioration of once vital urban centers where important city buildings once stood. Federal renewal projects, intended to revitalize city centers, were predicated on wide-scale clearance of buildings deemed dilapidated and outdated. Such wholesale clearance has too often destroyed the nation's cultural and civic inheritance.

In the face of such changes, twentieth-century preservation goals are being reassessed. Preservationists now more aware of the virtues of nineteenth-century architecture and witnesses of massive demolition not only of whole neighborhoods but of landmarks that can never be replaced, have slowly come to recognize the importance of preservation on a much broadened scale. They have learned by experience that buildings, no matter how distinguished, suffer serious loss when they are stripped of their settings, when trees are cut down for parking lots and front yards eaten away by widened freeways or gas stations, and when high-rise apartments and condominiums become their neighbors.

The preservation story from the 1940s to 1970s must be told against this background of shifting interests, changing technology, and rapid change in living patterns. Urban renewal plans that would radically alter Newport and Providence and road-building programs that were to fragment many of the state's old villages were incubated in the 1940s. Yet no genuinely comprehensive survey of state resources had ever been made and little preservation information was available for planning use. Even societies that were to play leading roles in developing a broader philosophy were originally formed in response to threats against individual buildings. The initial interest of the nation's most important preservation organization, the National Trust for Historic Pre-



*Courtesy Providence Journal-Bulletin*

*John Hutchins Cady (1881-1967), architect, historian and planner, whose history of Providence, work with the AIA, Providence Preservation Society, and City Plan Commission greatly influenced the cause of historic preservation in Rhode Island.*

servation, chartered in 1948, was directed toward saving buildings of national significance. In Rhode Island impetus for formation in 1946 of the Preservation Society of Newport County, one of the most important forces in the state for the past twenty-five years, did not come from as yet unperceived threats to the whole fabric of the old town — urban renewal and road-building projects — but from threatened loss of the Hunter House. The new society soon recognized, however, the larger need to protect not only hundreds of pre-nineteenth-century buildings but also great mansions of nineteenth-century Newport.

Guided at first by John Perkins Brown, a member of the Georgian Society, Mrs. George Henry Warren, the new society's president, charted a course that not only included restoration of the Hunter House but also resulted in a survey of





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*South Water and Crawford Streets, Providence, view from the Grosvenor Building, about 1899.*



Photograph by Laurence E. Tilley

*Similar view in 1952 shows the ubiquitous presence of parking lots where historic structures once stood.*

Newport architecture from the seventeenth-century to the present which intended to lay the ground work for a preservation plan.

On advice from Kenneth Chorley, then director of Colonial Williamsburg, the society negotiated with Countess Laszlo Szechenyi for permission to display the Breakers, summer home of Cornelius Vanderbilt built by Richard Morris Hunt in 1895. First shown in 1948 and finally purchased by the society from the family in 1972, the Breakers has proven a permanent tourist attraction. Its success has led the society, under Mrs. Warren's brilliant direction, into an extraordinary house-museum program. The society now owns and displays three colonial houses and eight summer mansions which had more than 455,000 visitors in 1975.

The society not only shows the houses but promotes their use for concerts, balls, dinners, and special celebrations. Visitors therefore have a sense of the social glamour for which Newport has long been famous. Since the society's efforts have concentrated on the care and use of these great museum houses, however, it has become apparent that protection of three hundred or more

eighteenth-century houses and hundreds of small later houses that make up the historic town is still to be accomplished. Because of rising maintenance costs, trustees have considered disposal in some manner of the least profitable of the properties. If this happens, already threatened Bellevue Avenue could be opened up to further incompatible development.

Programs for restoration and rehabilitation of smaller houses have had to depend on efforts of other organizations — The Point Association (organized 1955), Operation Clapboard (1963), Oldport Association (1965), Historic Hill Association (1970) and most important, Newport Restoration Foundation, an ownership company John Perkins Brown persuaded Miss Doris Duke to form in 1968. For the past five years under the direction of Francis Adams Comstock, former associate director of the school of architecture at Princeton, the foundation has acquired, documented, renovated, and leased some forty early houses and plans similar treatment for at least thirty more. Most of these are small eighteenth-century buildings in the old part of the city. All



work is done by carpenters and craftsmen trained by the Foundation Shop in preservation techniques. Miss Duke has also developed a farm village of moved structures, including an eighteenth-century windmill, on land around the old Page farm in Portsmouth, better known as the site where British General Prescott was captured by an American party under Colonel William Barton in 1777.

In 1974 the foundation developed the Samuel Whitehorne House (1811) on Thames Street as a museum for display of Newport furnishings. Future foundation plans include development of a narrow park in front of Trinity Church following in a much modified version a proposal made for the Preservation Society in the late 1950s by Christopher Tunnard. A history of the foundation's accomplishments is now in preparation.

Restoration of the Friends Meeting House, undertaken by Mr. and Mrs. Sydney Wright in 1968, stemmed from a suggestion made by Mrs. George Henry Warren. Entrusted to Orin M. Bullock, Jr., former resident architect of Williamsburg, the restoration reflects the wishes of Mr. and Mrs. Wright for meticulously careful, thoughtful research and documentation. When the first part of this meeting house, a square hip-roofed turreted structure that could hold 500 or more, was built in 1699 Newport was already the scene of the New England Friends Yearly Meeting. Two additions, one in 1730 and a second in 1807, tripled the size of the original in order to accommodate yearly meeting crowds of as many as three to five thousand. Enlarged again in 1857 and once more in 1867, the building was converted into a community center when the Yearly Meeting was no longer held in Newport. As originally proposed, it was intended to return the structure to its 1730 appearance; but information revealed during restoration work on the 1807 addition led the Wrights and Bullock to keep the first three parts of the building and to explain earlier and later developments of the complex by models. A Rhode Island landmark in restoration techniques, the Meeting House has been given to the Newport Historical Society.

Despite such accomplishments, Newport has been increasingly threatened. Urban renewal projects and road plans formulated in the 1940s and 1950s now are coming to fruition. Drastic physical changes have been caused by clearance for new tourist-oriented hotels; by shopping-center construction on either side of the Brick Market and on Bellevue Avenue; by the Newport Bridge to Jamestown; by a wide cut through old Newport for Memorial Boulevard; and by demolition of most of the old waterfront. On the positive side, the recent urban renewal project for Historic Hill at last calls for preservation and incorporates practical and sensitive proposals for rehabilitation of this part of Newport.<sup>35</sup>

The Providence Preservation Society, organized in 1956, was also formed because of a threat but from the first its purpose was not to create or operate museum buildings to attract tourists, but to salvage remaining College Hill architecture for private residential use. Brown University's rapid postwar expansion and attendant need for dormitories resulted in the loss from 1948 to 1955 of four blocks of excellent buildings in the middle of the old East Side. This loss was the catalyst for formation of a society dedicated to making "the past an asset for the future," with John Nicholas Brown as chairman of its board, Mrs. William Slater Allen its president, and John Hutchins Cady, following Norman Isham as a preservation architect, one of its founding members. At this time the Preservation Society endorsed Cady's *The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence* (1957), an invaluable account of the city's growth.

From the outset, the Providence City Plan Commission, then in process of developing plans for an East Side renewal project, supported the College Hill program. The Commission asked the Providence Preservation Society to serve as the citizen organization required for a pilot study grant from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development "to explore ways to protect and renew the historic architecture of College Hill." With approval of this grant the College Hill study became the first municipi-



pally supported preservation effort in the state and immediately involved PPS in a federally funded city planning project.

The City Plan Commission, basing its prize winning report on a comprehensive survey and analysis of the physical architecture and social character of College Hill, recommended a restoration program that respected buildings of all periods, and encouraged contemporary design for new construction. The report further proposed development of a national park as a memorial to Roger Williams (approved by Congress in 1964); passage of protective historic district legislation; some spot urban renewal work; an education program; development of a historic trail along Benefit Street; municipal improvements; encouragement of privately financed restoration programs; and formation of a representative organization of citizens to oversee development of the plans.<sup>36</sup> The Providence Preservation Society, Benefit Street Association and Fox Point Neigh-

borhood Association have jointly filled the latter function.

Success has been chiefly due to private investment. Mrs. Malcolm G. Chace, Jr., alone acquired and restored for resale some forty houses, including an entire block around a terraced and gardened interior court. The Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island elected to use its restricted Edwards Fund to restore and convert a block of houses on Benefit Street between Church and Star streets into apartments for retired clergy. Altogether, more than two hundred houses have been privately restored.

To encourage investment in the area, PPS has organized festival tours to show small houses; formed a consultant bureau to advise prospective buyers on restoration and furnishings; set up a docent training program; arranged lectures on period design; and supplied owners with deed histories and other information. The preservation concept has spread beyond the study area into

*These buildings on the south side of George St. opposite St. Stephen's Church no longer exist. Expansion by Brown University resulted in razing of historic houses in this block in the early 1950s.*

*Courtesy Brown University Photo Lab*





other neighborhoods (one predominantly Portuguese), and is encouraged by PPS's program of awarding to houses rehabilitated according to their building period, markers giving original builder, date of construction, and the society's seal of approval. Local historic district zoning has been in effect since 1960 and Roger Williams National Memorial Park has now reached the planning stage.<sup>37</sup>

Many remaining problems are still tied in with Brown University expansion. Large new university buildings have altered residential scale and landlords have converted dwellings into off-campus student houses. Recently some limited cooperative planning with university officials has been possible. Other threats to the area are due to rising maintenance costs, and include stripping houses of detail to cover them with new siding materials. Historic district regulations help to prevent such alterations in protected sections.

In other parts of the state, the 1950s and 1960s saw formation of an increasing number of historical societies organized to protect local buildings and historic villages, some sparked by proclamation of Rhode Island Heritage Month in 1956, initiated by the old Council of Economic Development. Cranston, Hopkinton, Pettaquamscutt, and Blackstone Valley historical societies were all organized in the 1950s. The lapsed Massasoit Monument Association (chartered 1907) was reactivated in 1952 as the Massasoit Historical Society and has since initiated a strong preservation program, working with town and state officials to develop a master plan for Warren's observance of the Bicentennial. The Cranston Historical Society acquired the 1750 Joy Homestead in 1959 to save it from demolition and began a sensitive restoration of that little building. When Sprague Mansion, the mill owner's estate of the Cranston Print Works, faced demolition in 1964 and replacement by a federally financed high-rise housing project for the elderly, the Cranston society enlisted public support, secured the \$100,000 asking price, and has since restored the house and grounds. Now furnished

and the center of a vigorous historical and social program, Sprague Mansion has an extremely important place in the city's life.

Historical societies continued to organize in the 1960s, among them Barrington, Warwick, Foster East Providence, Richmond and Charlestown (formed in protest over demolition by the state, without notice or permit, of the eighteenth-century Indian schoolhouse reported to be the oldest Indian school building in the nation) along with the Huguenot Historical and Gloucester Heritage societies, and the New England Wireless and Steam Museum in East Greenwich. Warwick's society has undertaken restoration of the John Waterman Arnold House (1800); the Richmond and Charlestown associations have restored one-room schoolhouses; the Gloucester society made a survey of Chepachet Village and acquired the Job Armstrong store for headquarters. Organization of the League of Rhode Island Historical Societies in 1965 has filled a statewide need for coordination.

In the 1970s historical societies have formed in Burrillville, North Smithfield, Smithfield and Coventry. The Smithfield society has recently acquired the old Smith-Appleby house for restoration.

Little has been said of the many individuals who have guarded their own historic properties or have underwritten preservation projects. Among these, John Nicholas Brown has quietly rescued a number of distinguished Rhode Island buildings. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., from 1956 to 1958, made it possible to restore the First Baptist Meeting House in Providence then in need of major structural repairs. Members of the First Unitarian Church and other citizens of Providence rallied to restore John Holden Greene's fine 1816 Congregational Meeting House after its disastrous 1967 fire. Little Compton citizens recently raised \$150,000 to restore their badly deteriorated Congregational Meeting House.

Such projects have largely resulted from private support and enterprise. Before 1968 legislation established a state historical preservation commis-



sion, no formal overall program existed for the protection of one of the richest cultural inheritances in the country. Rhode Island has never had a state-financed historical agency or museum, or a state based archeological or landmarks program. Until recently state supported preservation and related activities consisted chiefly in designating and marking historical sites or publishing colonial records and related documents, although in the late 1920s and early 1930s the director of the now defunct State Bureau of Information, in the office of the secretary of state, published several scholarly tracts.<sup>38</sup>

For its tercentenary in 1936, however, the state assumed a leadership role. The Tercentenary Commission, created in 1935 with members appointed by Governor Theodore Francis Greene, installed markers along major streams and many historic roads; issued a pictorial and historical map; financed construction by Brown University students of scale models of six colonial buildings; and among its promotional literature published two good booklets for general distribution.<sup>39</sup>

The commission's published report included a bibliography of tercentenary-inspired publications and reprints with an excellent account of related activities, among them publication of a *Handbook of Historical Sites in Rhode Island* by the Providence Department of Public Schools and, of particular importance, marking of buildings and historic sites undertaken by various city and town committees. Forty markers were placed in Bristol, forty-five in East Greenwich, forty-eight in Middletown, and twenty-one in Tiverton. The DAR compiled a comprehensive catalog of the inscriptions.<sup>40</sup>

The Division of Public Buildings has been responsible for maintenance of state-owned historical structures, most of which, like the Bristol and, until recently, the Kent County court houses, are still in active use. Providence's colonial court house (1763) known as the Old State House served as one of several meeting places for the General Assembly until 1900. From then until 1974 the building housed the Sixth District Court. The present

State House, designed by McKim, Mead and White in 1891 and opened in 1900, has always been on public display, both for architectural quality and for exhibition of important state documents and artifacts. A capitol restoration project is now in progress. The only state-owned buildings now used as museums are the Old Colony House in Newport and the Stephen Hopkins House in Providence. Three old arsenals for chartered militia commands — Newport Artillery armory (1840), arsenal of Providence Marine Corps Artillery (1839), and the armory of the Kentish Guards in East Greenwich (1840) — are under the adjutant general's jurisdiction.

Some of the first specific preservation planning undertaken by the state occurred in the early 1950s, when Governor Dennis J. Roberts initiated a statewide development study. Under direction of the recreation bureau of the newly organized Development Council, now the Tourist Promotion Division, Department of Economic Development, a citizen's heritage committee was formed in 1951 to inventory and map the state's historic sites and buildings. This inventory was used by the Department of Public Works, then developing the state's federally assisted highway program. The governor also recommended formation of a state foundation to protect and capitalize on our historical and architectural heritage, for which the heritage committee prepared legislation modeled on that of the Massachusetts Trustees of Reservations. Passed in 1956, it established the Heritage Foundation of Rhode Island with power to acquire by gift or purchase historic buildings and objects and to support various other preservation activities. Although state-sponsored, the foundation is private, and while it has received several important properties, including the Lyon estate in Bristol, land on Prudence Island, and Hannah Robinson's rock in Narragansett, has been comparatively inactive.

Responsible for tourist promotion programs, the Department of Economic Development and its predecessor have always emphasized the state's historic legacy. In 1956 the agency initiated an annual Heritage Month program centered around



May 4th, Rhode Island's Independence Day, which has been not only increasingly successful but also has sparked formation of a number of local preservation organizations. Two films recently produced by the department, "The Rhode Island State Capitol" and "Historic Houses in Rhode Island," describe some of the state's outstanding buildings.

The first preservation legislation per se, the enabling act for historic area zoning enacted in 1959, was proposed in the College Hill report. Its passage permitted Rhode Island cities and towns to develop their own protective legislation. South Kingstown and North Kingstown immediately passed historic protection ordinances and delineated historic districts in their villages of Kingston and Wickford, respectively. Providence and Newport followed suit in 1960 and 1963. The enabling act designated the local building inspector as enforcing officer and specified that appeals from historic district commission decisions be taken before the zoning board of review and then to the state supreme court. The Providence ordinance included two building lists — a first-priority list limited to buildings of outstanding significance, and a second list which included the many structures important as part of the area's architectural fabric. Newport's ordinance called for an amendment to the enabling act that allowed protection for isolated buildings of historic merit. Providence and several other communities have since developed their own special legislation to allow protection for individual sites and buildings. Commissions in each of these four cities and towns have been carrying out their responsibilities since appointment.<sup>41</sup>

Two appeals to date have been taken to zoning boards one of which also moved to court. The decision of the South Kingstown commission rejecting the design of a new parish house for Kingston's Congregational Church (1820) was reversed by the zoning board; the court upheld the board and the structure was built as designed. In Providence, the zoning board upheld the commission's decision to deny the Rhode Island School of Design permission

to demolish the 1863 Marshall Woods house designed by Richard Upjohn. RISD did not carry the case to court and has since restored the structure for offices and a student center. In the past ten years, East Greenwich, Smithfield, Cranston, Warwick and Hopkinton have appointed historic district study commissions, and four more communities have enacted historic zoning ordinances — Cranston, North Smithfield, Smithfield and Warwick. North Smithfield has now established Union Village as a legal historic district.

Again on the state level, acquisition of lands for parks and recreation, some of which included buildings or sites of historic significance, was accelerated in 1964 by the Green Acres Act administered by the Department of Natural Resources. Several of the properties acquired are of special historic interest.<sup>42</sup>

The first green acres purchase, Colt State Park in Bristol acquired in 1965, includes various buildings owned or constructed by the Colt Family. One, the eighteenth-century Coggeshall farm, has been transferred by long-term lease to Coggeshall Farm Museum, Inc. for development as a working farm and museum.

Dame Farm in Johnston was part of the green acres acquisition of Snake Den Park in 1969. The Rhode Island Historical Farm, Inc., formed in 1971 to save as a museum this early nineteenth-century farm complex, has persuaded the Department of Natural Resources to include preservation of the farm in future plans for Snake Den Park.

Fort Adams in Newport, one of the outstanding coastal fortifications in America, transferred by the federal government to the state in 1964, is now being developed as a park and historic monument. Fort Wetherell in Jamestown and Fort Varnum in Narragansett were transferred to the state in 1970 and 1971, respectively. All these properties are administered by the Department of Natural Resources.

Nationally, 1966 will be remembered as a landmark year in the cause of historic preservation. Publication of *With Heritage So Rich*, a report of a special committee, Albert Rains, chairman, with





*Photograph by David W. Chase*

*A. S. Potter House, a residence of unusual octagonal design, is part of a historic district in Carolina Village recognized by the National Register of Historic Places.*

a foreword by Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson — prepared under the auspices of the United States Conference of Mayors with a grant from the Ford Foundation — set the stage for the National Historic Preservation Act and inaugurated a broad federally supported preservation program.<sup>43</sup>

This legislation established a department of history and archeology and an advisory council on historic preservation in the National Park Service. The secretary of the interior was authorized to maintain and expand the National Register of Historic Places initiated by the 1935 act; grant funds to the states for preparing comprehensive surveys and state preservation plans; and give matching grants-in aid for restoration of sites and structures listed on the National Register. Section 106 of the act set up review procedures for all federally funded programs affecting properties on the register.

Other federal legislation has also established effective mechanisms for protecting the nation's

cultural resources. Of these, the National Environmental Policy Act in 1969 provided for protection and enhancement of the environment, including historic properties.<sup>44</sup> The President's executive order of May 13, 1971 stated that the federal government "shall provide leadership in preserving, restoring and maintaining the historical and cultural environment of the nation." All federal agencies were thus specifically directed to screen their own programs for adverse effect on historically important properties, and "to administer such properties in the spirit of stewardship and trusteeship for future generations." Protection of the man-made environment was thereby made a national responsibility. Much of the credit for this epoch-making legislation was due to years of effort on the part of many dedicated individuals as well as the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

With passage in 1968 of legislation establishing Rhode Island's Historical Preservation Commission the state qualified to take part in the new federal program. Since much of the commission's mandated work is essentially preservation planning, it is fitting that the governor designated the director of the Department of Community Affairs, responsible for local planning and other activities, as historic preservation officer to serve in required liaison capacity between the state and National Park Service. The Statewide Planning Program was also directed to supply administrative assistance.<sup>45</sup>

Responsibilities of the new commission include making a survey of the state's cultural, archeological, historical, and architectural heritage; submitting nominations for the National Register and setting up a state register; marking historic sites and buildings; administering the National Park Service's grant-in-aid program; and developing the required state preservation plan, the first edition of which was approved by the Park Service in 1970. It is currently being updated according to federal requirements.<sup>46</sup>

The commission, now in its seventh year, is becoming an increasingly important preservation force. Starting with a minimal budget and no



staff, by 1975 the commission had a staff of fourteen. It is working closely with state agencies and departments, with all community and town officials, and with private organizations. One of its primary objectives has been to survey, assess, and record information needed for incorporation into local and state plans. The staff prepares individual city and town reports; submits them with maps and data sheets to local governing bodies; recommends local preservation programs; designates properties to be entered on the National Register and submits them as a component of the computerized environmental inventory maintained by the Statewide Planning Program. These community survey reports are already beginning to form a statewide network of local plans for historic preservation. The report for Warren has been the impetus for development of a master plan for that town as its Bicentennial project. The Woonsocket survey, the final report for which is now in draft form, has been made an integral part of a major urban renewal project in that city. The survey reports have been vital in changing perceptions of the value of preservation to community life and have been instrumental in helping secure funds for restoration efforts.

Four reports have been published to date, some sixteen are in preparation, and all should be completed in the 1970s. For the National Register of Historic Places, by 1975 the commission had prepared 158 individual and 37 district nominations, ranging in date from the seventeenth to twentieth centuries, among them an eighteenth-century town pound, an old cemetery, a lighthouse, a windmill, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century mills, post road and mill villages, seaport towns, parks, gilded-age mansions, and modern commercial buildings.

Since 1971 the commission has administered the federal fifty percent matching grant-in-aid program for restoration of buildings and sites on the National Register. During this five-year period seventy-one grants, totaling just over \$900,000, have been awarded for acquisition, for exterior and interior restoration, and for research and site archeology. Properties receiving grants have been

owned by the state, by municipalities, by religious and educational institutions, historical societies, non-profit organizations, and private individuals.

The commission has developed an innovative procedure through its administration of acquisition and development grants from the National Park Service. Working closely with the Park Service and the state's Budget Office and Statewide Planning Program, the commission has been able to help a private investor use the grant-in-aid program to acquire and restore an important historic house for his own residence. The early-to mid-eighteenth-century Israel Arnold house in Lincoln was in extremely dilapidated condition when it was purchased with help of a grant-in-aid for acquisition and restored under close surveillance with a partial grant for development.

In addition to its mandated program, the commission prepares federal preservation information for state agencies such as the Coastal Resources Management Council and the Departments of Transportation and Natural Resources, as well as for municipal planning and redevelopment agencies when road building, reservoir, park acquisition and urban renewal projects are initiated. Recently the commission completed a survey report of Navy surplus lands and, under contract with the New England Power Company, the historical-archeological-architectural report required as part of the environmental impact study for the proposed nuclear power plant in Charlestown.

Both the Department of Natural Resources and the commission initiated research necessary for restoration of Fort Adams. As a result of three HABS programs, with matching costs underwritten by the Department of Natural Resources, measured drawings of the fort have been completed. Through the grant-in-aid program archival and archeological work has begun and an expert on coastal fortifications has been engaged as technical consultant. Procedures for the fort's gradual restoration and its development as an asset of national importance have been outlined. In 1974 the commission secured a special



\$200,000 grant-in-aid to begin needed structural repairs.<sup>47</sup>

Legislation in 1974 enables the commission to plan a suitably comprehensive program. An amendment to the commission's 1968 act, implementing the State Register of Historic Places, provides protection against encroachment from state and municipally funded projects. A section also directs the commission to survey and inventory all buildings, sites, and artifacts in state custody which possess historic significance and to recommend and/or review proposed changes. The Antiquities Act of 1974 enables the state to develop a broad program of identification, preservation, protection, and disposition of archeological resources, both on land and under water.<sup>48</sup>

Early in 1975 the commission moved its headquarters to share with the state's Bicentennial Commission the Old State House in Providence providing a suitable use for that historic building. Restoration of the Old State House will be undertaken jointly by the two commissions as a bicentennial project.

Rhode Island has a long tradition of historic preservation and a long legacy of properties worth preserving. From the 1822 efforts to restore Touro Synagogue to the most recent activities of the Historical Preservation Commission, Rhode Island has been in the forefront of preservation activities. Impetus to preservation groups throughout the state by commission activity is reflected in many new organizations and programs since 1968; in the number of communities and organizations now appealing for help in restoring local landmarks; in establishing historic zoning and national register historic districts; and in the increasing amount of preservation planning included in state and municipal projects. With these new organizations working together with older historical societies and preservation groups, this state, as part of the national program, is now capable of developing and maintaining a comprehensive program for planning historic preservation.



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## The Rhode Island Historical Society

### *One Hundred Fifty-fourth Annual Meeting*

The one hundred fifty-fourth annual meeting — in the ballroom of Aldrich House, 110 Benevolent Street, Providence on January 25, 1976 — was called to order at 3:30 p.m. by president Duncan Hunter Mauran.

Minutes and reports of the 1975 annual meeting were approved as printed in *Rhode Island History* 34: 2 (May 1975).

Treasurer George H. Cicma reported that 1975 had been a year of both significant achievements and minor disappointments. Two factors, the reduced purchasing power of the dollar and a decline in pledges from the annual Friends Fund drive, resulted in a deficit of approximately \$5,000. On the positive side, donors increased from 529 to 607. On the negative side, pledges declined from \$28,500 to \$27,600. The high point of the year was the receipt of \$600,000 from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund for endowment of Aldrich House. The Society was awarded almost \$130,000 in grants from foundations and government agencies in 1975 — a new record. "It is my opinion," Mr. Cicma concluded "that a balanced budget for the current year is a distinct possibility."

Members stood in silence while the president read the names of members who had died during the preceding year.

The nominating committee's report was submitted by its chairman — H. Cushman Anthony — and its slate as presented was duly elected.

The president, librarian, and director gave their reports. Pamela Fox announced the award of certificates to volunteers who had worked twenty hours or more during 1975 —

*Library Projects:* Henry L. P. Beckwith Jr., Arlan R. Coolidge, Frank Crowther, Irene Eddy, Mrs. Leslie A. Jones, Joseph K. Ott, Marion Ricketson, Tracy G. Thurber.

*Guides John Brown House:* Maggie Berendes, Carol Blanck, Dorothy Budlong, Kathleen Hendry, Leslie Henshaw, Dorothy Hiller, Clara McQuaide, Elizabeth Morgan, Penny Robertson, Janet Woolman.

*Research (Guiding Manual):* Deborah Byers, Katherine Goddard, Jane Reeder.

*Restoration of Objects:* William Achtermeier, Ralph Heath.

*Events:* Jean Berrie, Barbara Bridgford, Rosemary Commette, Mrs. Arnold Hayes, Mrs. George Nelson, Mrs. Avery Seaman, Mrs. F. Brooks Wall.

*Photography:* Carl Becker, Warren Jagger.

The meeting was followed by a program of Rhode Island music performed on the piano by Thomas Casey Greene.

Respectfully submitted,  
BRADFORD F. SWAN  
*Secretary*



### *Annual Report of the President*

I wish to welcome you here to this annual meeting, our first to be held in Aldrich House. During the past year the Society has continued to grow. We now have more assets, both material and monetary, than we have ever had before. The gift of Aldrich House, gardens, and grounds, and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund generous endowment allowing us to keep it, is where much of this growth has been centered. There have also been some major improvements at John Brown House, and some notable accessions at the Library where we are running out of space.

All this does not come free. With each addition come greater obligations and responsibilities to our community. We need your support now more than ever because, unlike many governmental projects, we have no one to bail us out if we start to sink except our loyal and interested members and staff. A dedicated staff has been particularly productive and without them our accomplishments this year would have been impossible. They contributed much of their own time with little reward but satisfaction for a task well done.

DUNCAN HUNTER MAURAN

### *Annual Report of the Librarian*

Continuing our policy of previous years, the library staff has sought to increase the quantity and quality of our collections while providing better service to our patrons. At times these have seemed mutually exclusive aims. As the number of library patrons has increased, the curators have been able to devote proportionately less of their time to acquisitions and cataloging. A few statistics will illustrate the dimensions of the problem: there was a total of 6,700 daily visitors, an increase of over 1,000 from 1974; more than 1,130 people used the library for the first time in 1975 compared to 870 in 1974; telephone calls increased

astronomically from 1,300 in 1974 to 3,300 in 1975.

Despite increased demand for public service, the librarians did manage to devote time to their curatorial duties — assistant librarian Nancy F. Chudacoff, in charge of our reference department, and her assistant Lisa Krop not only answered many of the letters and most of the phone calls, but also supervised the reading room and completed several special projects. Mrs. Chudacoff prepared a ten page booklet informing library users about our various genealogical materials and their location. She also worked with representatives from Mayor Cianci's office on a new history of Providence, delivered papers at meetings of the New England Archivists, Connecticut Genealogical Society, and Rhode Island Genealogical Society; represented this Society on the women's committee of the Rhode Island Bicentennial Commission and on the Ethnic Heritage Studies Project advisory committee. She also assumed the editorship of *Rhode Island History*. Miss Krop, in addition to helping readers, shelving books, checking in periodicals and preparing books for binding, also surveyed all non-New England periodicals for Rhode Island material, prepared several bibliographies, and assembled an exhibit of early school texts.

Manuscripts curator Nathaniel N. Shipton accessioned twenty-five collections plus fifty-one individual items, and cataloged twenty collections and fifty single manuscript items. According to these statistics we are still falling behind, but we are falling behind more slowly. He also worked one day a week on the Nathanael Greene Papers, attended a two-week institute on archives given by the Ohio Historical Society in Columbus, and served on a subcommittee of the Rhode Island Bicentennial Commission.

With a total of sixty-six manuscript accessions, Mr. Shipton noted that it is encouraging that over eighty per cent were gifts. Personal and family papers headed the list. Miss Gertrude C. Bray willed to the Society her diary and correspondence relating to her years as a YMCA canteen worker with the 42nd (Rainbow) Division in World War I. Much admired by the "doughboys," she continued to receive invitations to their marriages and christenings for thirty years afterward. Another war journal received was that of Peter C. Smith, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery from 1861 to 1863. Sometimes humorous, Smith was plain spoken about himself and those around him.

Collections of business papers included well known



firms such as the Lippitt Woolen Company in Woonsocket during the years 1831-1943. Small businesses, like common men, rarely leave records; so we were pleased to get papers of C. H. George Company hardware in Providence (1878-still coming), Manville Provision Company (1920-1950), and George Dods' cooperage in Providence (1797-1875).

Sometimes a single letter speaks as well as an entire collection. Alfred Arnold's account of his capture and imprisonment by the French in 1799 explains much of Rhode Island's opposition to Jefferson's Francophile policies. On a happier note, General Isaac Peace Rodman's letter to Governor Sprague in 1861 proudly compared the 4th Rhode Island Regiment's perseverance, discipline and temperance with the sad performances of other states' units.

Among the Society's purchases was a group of Anthony family papers for the most part records of the family farm in Portsmouth, R. I., from 1706-1826; this particular collection complements Anthony papers already on our shelves. In a purchase from the Bullock estate, we added Hawes, Harris, Babbitt, and Simonds material on such diverse subjects as West Indian rum trading and the Nevada silver rush. The Bicentennial has pushed nearly everything pertaining to the Revolution beyond reach. But, with a little luck and a speedy telephone connection, it was possible to buy Samuel Phillips' memoir of his naval service from 1799 to 1783. This purchase was all the more important because Phillips' naval activities had long been overshadowed by his army career, which included going on Colonel Barton's raid to capture General Prescott in 1777.

Marsha Peters, graphics curator, reported acquisition of several photographic collections including those of the Lippitt family, the Camera Club of Providence, the *Providence Journal*, and of Frank Warren Marshall, art editor and photographer for the *Providence Journal*. Architectural drawings of the present Providence County Court House and glass plate negatives made by the City of Providence public works department were also acquired. Several collections were processed including Cady, Estey and Saylesville negative collections, the architectural drawings collection, and the broadside file.

Miss Peters also assumed responsibility as picture editor of *Rhode Island History*, producing both August and November issues. She also attended the Society of American Archivists meeting in Philadelphia where she

participated in a panel on photographs, their use and interpretation.

Nineteen seventy-five also saw an important change in the make-up of the graphics collection. The film archives came under the aegis of the graphics collection as of November and the graphics curator assumed the responsibility of film curator. Amy Zehnder as archival assistant was assigned to the film archives to begin work processing, logging, and cataloging film. Activity in the film archives took on several dimensions. Accessions were brought up to date, a subject index to cataloged film was started, and logging of WPRI news film for 1963-1970 was completed. New equipment was ordered, including a viewer-editor for super 8, 8mm, and single 8 film, so the film archives now has a capacity for viewing home movies in the collection.

Consolidation of the graphics and film departments has resulted in a more efficient organization of our staff and resources, enabling us to achieve better control of the film collection and provide better service.

The librarian continued to spend most of her time working with Library secretary Doris Sher, other staff members, the director and Library committee on matters of policy and planning. As she noted in last year's annual report, the Library has run out of space for new acquisitions. The effort to cope with this problem has taken several directions. After two years' work, a book collecting policy has been established and approved by the Library committee and the Board of Trustees. A clearly defined collecting policy is the foundation of quality collecting and efficient allocation of resources.

Printed materials not conforming to guidelines of the collecting policy were weeded from the collection and sent to auction. All serials were first checked for any articles pertaining to Rhode Island. The dozen that were found were photocopied and will be added to the book collection.

While carefully defined collecting policies insure the most efficient use of existing space, they do not create new space, and new space is still needed. Recognizing this fact, the Board of Trustees has appointed a long-range planning committee to study the Library's present and future needs and to develop a program for meeting these needs. I am sure that this committee will be making a report to you at next year's meeting.

In addition to her administrative tasks, the librarian also made several field visits to obtain new collections, interviewed more than thirty people for two staff vacancies, and cataloged approximately 500 books. While the number of volumes cataloged was considerably less than hoped for, next year's figure should be more encouraging, since the staff positions filled were that of a full time book cataloger and a clerk-typist to assist her. A full time book cataloger has been needed for many years, so we were delighted when Title X funds were made available through auspices of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission. Cataloger Tevis Kimball and her assistant Ursula McFarland have been hard at work since the beginning of December.

The librarian also participated in several professional activities. She chaired the State Document Project Committee and wrote its report, served as corresponding secretary of the Rhode Island Library Association, and chaired the Consortium of Rhode Island College and Academic Libraries. She also attended the fall meeting of the Rhode Island Library Association and a one-day conference on new cataloging rules, sponsored by the New England Association of Technical Service Librarians.

The work of the Library staff was greatly augmented by the assistance of several excellent volunteers. Tracy G. Thurber, who arranged and cataloged our currency collection last year, spent this year searching for new acquisitions. He also assisted Nancy Chudacoff in preparing an exhibit of Rhode Island bills. Frank Crowther prepared a shelf list of the postal cancellations collection, and prepared a stamp exhibit which will open in February. Mrs. Leslie A. Jones continued to arrange the post card collection, and in the course of this work discovered several important postal cancellations which were of interest to Mr. Crowther. Marion Ricketson and Arlan R. Coolidge, professor emeritus of music at Brown University, cataloged portions of our sheet music collection. Miss Peters was assisted by Anne Hayne, who sorted the broadside file, while Mr. Shipton was assisted for the fifth year in a row by Irene Eddy, who has been transferring manuscripts from scrapbooks to acid-free folders. Christina Simmons, a graduate student from Brown University, and Francis Rose, a student in the Neighborhood Youth Corps program, also assisted in the manuscript department.

Other Neighborhood Youth Corps students were Robin

and Wayne Carvalho, Ana Silva, Jose Dias and Carl Machado. These students, along with James Butterfield and Paul Cromwell from Brown, provided much needed clerical and janitorial assistance. This Society has benefited greatly from both college work-study programs and the Neighborhood Youth Corps Program (now CETA). We hope that both will continue.

Special appreciation must be conveyed to the members of the Library Committee, Franklin S. Coyle, Mrs. Sydney L. Wright, Mrs. Rufus C. Fuller Jr., Edwin C. Brown, Philip B. Simonds, N. David Scotti, and Joseph Fogarty. They were faced with many important issues of policy this past year. Their careful deliberation and informed counsel were greatly appreciated.

NANCY E. PEACE

### NECROLOGY 1975

Rt. Rev. Granville G. Bennett  
 John W. Browning, Jr.  
 Benjamin C. Clough  
 Mrs. Robert S. Emerson  
 Mrs. Chester C. Greene  
 Daniel Hale  
 Herman B. Harrington  
 Mrs. Herbert E. Harris  
 Alexander B. Hawes  
 James H. Higgins, Jr.  
 Mrs. Ernest W. Mann  
 Mrs. J. Harry Marshall  
 J. Benjamin Nevin  
 W. George Parks  
 David Patten  
 Miss Elizabeth A. Phillips  
 Hon. Robert E. Quinn  
 Wayland W. Rice  
 Mrs. Louis J. Van Orden, Jr.  
 Mrs. Andrew Wallace, Sr.



### *Annual Report of the Director*

In a letter to Samuel Ward Jr. in April 1772 Nathanael Greene wrote *I observe in your Letter the Strongest inclination for obtaining a large fund of useful Knowledge to be drawn from reading History. If we act only for ourselves, to neglect the Study of history is not prudent. If we are entrusted with the cares of others it is not just. Ignorance when it is voluntary is criminal, and he may be properly charged with evil who refuses to learn how he might prevent it.*

*There is no part of History so generally useful as that which relates to the progress of the human mind, the gradual improvement of Reason, the successive advances of science, the Vicissitudes of Learning and ignorance, which are the light and darkness of thinking Beings, the extinction and beginning of Arts and all the revolutions of the intellectual world. Accounts of Battles and invasions seems to be the peculiar Business of Military Men; and the useful and elegant Arts should be the Study of those who are to Govern the state and form the manners of Mankind.*

Nineteen seventy-five was a year of useful and elegant arts for the Rhode Island Historical Society — useful in developing rental properties for income, getting budgets and planning tools refined, gathering money from new sources and training new members of staff — elegant in a host of new activities for members and for our Rhode Island public. In the area of usefulness Clifford Cone and I spent considerable time planning and conferring with contractors in getting the Aldrich Gardens pavilion and Gaspee House ready for tenants. Pamela Fox and I wrote and submitted nearly four times our usual grant and foundation requests with the result, as reported by our treasurer, of receiving nearly \$130,000 for projects, including an institutional support grant from the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts. One of the chief projects in our sights was to raise money for an opening exhibit at Aldrich House — our bicentennial show. We have raised enough now to bring in a curator to do the exhibit and to buy most of the basic hardware for this occasion and others yet to come. We hope to make this museum curator's position a permanent one and thereby fill the last major slot in our staff structure. The great value of our permanent collection at John Brown House, the overseeing of

that house's interpretation, and the direction and creation of an ever changing program of displays and educational experiences requires professional leadership.

As you have heard, Nancy E. Peace has led our team at the Library to a very successful and productive year. Of great importance to Rhode Island for many years to come is her direct influence in getting the state to revise and improve its system of records and documents preservation. This was a major undertaking and clarifies our position and responsibilities greatly by getting the state to bear its proper duties. Also in the area of the very useful arts has been the presence of Frederic L. Chase, Jr. to look after business affairs of the Society, serving both as bookkeeper and membership secretary. We have gained better control over all our financial operations with his help.

As for the elegant arts, perhaps the best way to report to you is by the following slide presentation which graphically depicts the year as one of elegant achievement, of great public visibility, of contact with and service to our members. For organizing and conducting membership events like the fund drive open house, Preservation Week activities, summer concerts, Hats off to History Week, the Centennial Ball, and our current series of forums we are indebted to our assistant director for development, Pamela Fox.

*(Following is an abstract of the director's comments which accompanied a slide presentation reviewing highlights of the year's activities.)*

Spring 1975 included a dinner at Aldrich House for presidents and representatives of member organizations of the League of Rhode Island Historical Societies, an open house kick-off for our 3rd Annual Friends campaign and Preservation Week, celebrated by the opening of Aldrich Gardens. Over \$27,500 was raised in the Friends campaign. In the course of the year Aldrich House was used for concerts, lectures, films, workshops and receptions. Over 1700 persons attended these events of the Society; another 1300 toured the gardens, while still 2,000 more attended functions sponsored by community cultural organizations for a grand total of 5,000 people in nine months.

Summer was brightened by two concerts of early American music. A third took place as part of Hats off to History Week in September — a ten event insight to the many roles and functions of the Society including gallery

talks at John Brown House, a behind-the-scenes tour of the Library, a lecture by former director John T. Kirk, a concert, a puppet show, and a film night.

Part of the *Adams Chronicles* was filmed at John Brown House as was a bicentennial film for the National Park Service by Secondari Films of New York City.

Two major elegant arts developments occurred at John Brown House this year. One was the gift by the Birge Wallpaper Company of Buffalo, New York of reproduction wallpapers of three original patterns used by John Brown. French in origin, the papers were carefully reproduced under our specifications and hung expertly by the MacPherson wallpaper firm of East Providence. An anonymous gift paid for the installation. The transformation of our first floor rooms was truly spectacular. The other development was a beautiful and cleverly executed slide and tape show which tells the story of the Brown family at John Brown House. The show was created by our coordinator of education, Mary H. Reynolds, with enormous technical assistance from her husband Dr. Charles Reynolds. The results have been roundly applauded by all. Another anonymous gift by a local foundation has made it possible to purchase slide and tape equipment which can be used both at John Brown and Aldrich houses. Ancillary to the tape show is a new display of personal objects belonging to John and Sarah Brown. Puffing out Mr. Brown's considerable waistcoat is cotton stuffing donated by the Union Wadding Company of Pawtucket, whose president is Kenneth Washburn, a descendant of John Brown.

The Centennial Ball held with the Providence Preservation Society at the opening of the new Marriott Inn netted both our organizations \$3,200. Over 300 people attended our annual Christmas Party and were treated to martial tunes by the Pawtuxet Rangers and chamber music by faculty members of Rhode Island Junior College.

Visitors to John Brown House totaled more than 6,500, including 1,200 Providence school children; 2,500 in other group tours; and 3,000 individuals.

Staffing at John Brown House has included Frieda Place, receptionist; Thomas Brennan, museum registrar; William Pacheo, tour guide; Mrs. Reynolds; Mr. Chase; the director; Mrs. Fox; and Virginia C. Catton, secretary.

In buildings and grounds responsibilities, Mr. Cone had assistance from Jonathan O'Brien and William Corrigan. At Aldrich House, the General Nathanael Greene Papers project completed volume one and shipped it off to the University of North Carolina Press. The project is headed by Richard K. Showman, assisted by Margaret E. Cobb and Robert E. McCarthy. Joyce A.E. Boulind and Noel P. Conlon provide support for this effort as does Nathaniel N. Shipton. Mr. Conlon continued to copy edit our highly regarded publication, *Rhode Island History*. A special undertaking at Aldrich House this year is our Black Heritage Project. Under the leadership of Rowena Stewart of Portsmouth, a committee began gathering objects and records relating to the history of blacks in Rhode Island. The effort has been remarkably successful and received additional grants.

The director continued a number of ancillary responsibilities again this year, serving as vice chairman of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission and a member of the Rhode Island Bicentennial Commission. As an adjunct professor of history at the University of Rhode Island he offered two sessions of his ten-week course in historical agency administration. He also participated in a two-week seminar on museum exhibits sponsored by the American Association for State and Local History, delivered a paper at a meeting of documents editors at Iowa City and gave numerous talks on the Society and other subjects to groups around the state. He also appeared about a dozen times on the WPRI-TV show "Front and Center," as well as on news broadcasts and talk shows.

With the addition of a museum curator we shall have a staff of nearly twenty-five people — some on special projects which will terminate eventually and others working only part-time. It's a record size for our organization. It's what it takes if we are to carry out the purposes of our Society and maintain the spectacular and irreplaceable collections that have been given to us in trust. I feel very strongly that we have one of the finest staffs of any historical society in the country. I really believe that.

I must report to you that because of other enormous growth demands our salaries have neither kept pace with inflation nor with ranges in comparable institutions. Our top priority in the annual giving campaign this spring



and our membership drive activities to come must be to broaden the base of financial support to keep the degree of excellence our staff has achieved. Most of our senior staff are called upon to perform frequently in various capacities on weekends and evenings — a fifty or fifty-five hour week has been necessary to make many of these things happen.

What makes us excited and interested in putting forth such an effort is the realization that we are so very close to completing the basic combination of staff and resources necessary to field a full program of services for the cause of local history. An irreverent but not irrelevant question of "so what?" might be raised at this point. "What does it all matter, or what does it matter at all?" The point is we think it *does* matter. The people of Rhode Island are interested in knowing who they are and where their neighborhoods and towns came from. We feel they're entitled to their past. It's one of those things that adds to the quality of our life here. Both Mr. Mauran and Mr. Swan at different times have commented about the importance of both the living scale and the cultural institutions which contribute to making life here enjoyable and interesting. We are now at a point where we can contribute significantly.

Fortunately the work has not been a solo effort. Thousands of volunteer hours of our members, the leadership of our board of trustees, and the dedication of our dozen committees form the other side of the alliance. Active members in the form of officers, trustees, and committee workers are absolutely essential to carry our programs to the leadership of the Rhode Island community and carry back needs and desirable directions to our staff — neither can do it alone.

When Nathanael Greene went South to take command of the war in that quarter he succeeded where others had failed partly because he worked well with both professional soldiers and volunteer militia. He wrote on one occasion that he saw part of his job to be to "Spirit up the people." We who are his heirs have no less a job. We now have the capabilities to lift the spirits of this particular community. With your help and enthusiasm this organization can enter the third century of American independence with confidence that it is being faithful to its goals and ideals and with reasonable assurance that its hard work will be both effective and appreciated.

ALBERT T. KLYBERG



Photograph by Warren Jagers

*Dining room of the John Brown House showing recently installed wallpaper reproduced from the original French paper imported by John Brown. This paper and two other patterns, also in first floor rooms, were a bicentennial gift from the Birge Company, Inc. of Buffalo, N. Y., a division of Reed Decorative Products Group. Installation of the wallpaper culminated a decade of restoration work on the house.*

**Officers and Committee Members**  
elected at the 154th Annual Meeting to serve  
until the Annual Meeting in 1977

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Lawrence Lanpher, *vice president*  
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The Board of Trustees is composed of the officers; chairmen of the standing committees; members at large Thomas R. Adams, Norman T. Bolles, Alan P. Cusick, Mrs. Mary A. Homans, Hon. Robert J. McKenna, Joseph K. Ott, Mrs. Peter J. Westervelt; the director; and Elliott E. Andrews, state librarian, *ex officio*.

\*Bradford F. Swan resigned as secretary, and David W. Dumas was appointed in his place.





Courtesy Providence Journal-Bulletin

***Bradford Fuller Swan (1907-1976), theater/arts critic Providence Journal-Bulletin 1937-1976, president Rhode Island Historical Society 1968-1970 and secretary of its board of trustees 1972-1975, associate editor Rhode Island History 1945-1947.***