

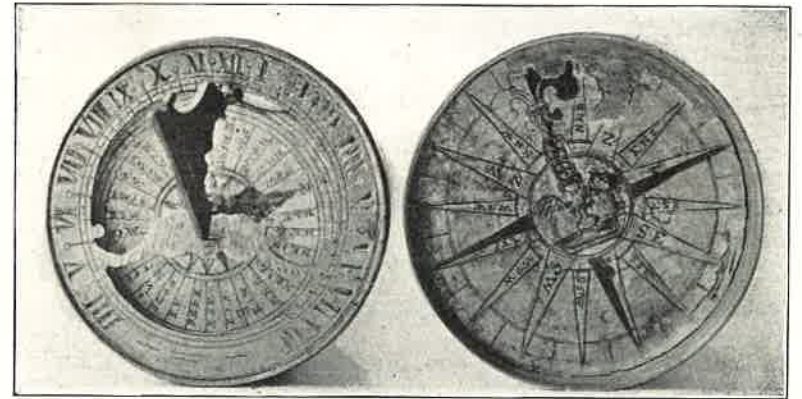
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RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTIONS

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No. 3



ROGER WILLIAMS' COMPASS

From the Society's Museum

Issued Quarterly

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HOWARD W. PRESTON, *President* EDWARD K. ALDRICH, Jr., *Treasurer*
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Early Rhode Island Pottery

BY CHARLES D. COOK *

The late Mrs. Alice Morse Earle, in an article published in 1892, tells us that "At the commencement of the Revolutionary War, a man named Upton came from Nantucket to East Greenwich, R. I., and there manufactured earthenware. The pottery when made was baked in a kiln which stood at the corner of King and Marlboro Streets. He made pans, bowls, plates, cups and saucers of common red clay, a little finer than that now used in the manufacture of flower pots. As little porcelain was imported from Europe during the war, people used willingly and even eagerly the coarse plates and drank their "Liberty tea" from the coarse cups and saucers. The clay came from Gould's Mount, now owned by Mr. Henry Waterman of Quid-

*The following note on Rhode Island potters is an extract from a paper on Early New England Pottery which was read by Mr. Cook before the Handicraft Club, April 7, 1925.

neset. After the war was ended, potter Upton went back to his safety assured home on Nantucket, and the Greenwich pottery was closed."

In an endeavor to check up and verify Mrs. Earle's account of potter Upton, I found that she had taken the story from Dr. D. H. Greene's *History of East Greenwich*. A search of the printed historical material relating to Nantucket failed to disclose any reference to a potter named Upton. The East Greenwich Town Records, to which I next turned my attention, proved more fruitful. Here I found that on December 9, 1771, Thomas Aldrich sold to Isaac Upton and Samuel Upton a lot of land in East Greenwich bounded southerly on King Street and westerly on Marlborough Street. Several years later, that is, in 1783, Isaac Upton, at this time a resident of Berkley, Mass., deeded to Samuel Upton of East Greenwich for 250 Spanish milled dollars all his share in the dwelling house and potter's shop in East Greenwich, the same land that had been deeded to them in 1771. Both Isaac and Samuel were called "potters" in this deed. The East Greenwich Council Records show that they were both living in East Greenwich in 1777.

Having thus determined the given names of these Upton potters, I turned to the Upton Genealogy, and found that they were brothers, Isaac having been born about 1745 and Samuel about 1747, at Bedford, Mass. Their father was Edward Upton, a glazier by trade, who came from Danvers, Mass., where the family had been settled for many years. This Danvers connection gives us an interesting clue. It was doubtless due to their friends and relatives at Danvers, that the Upton boys took up the trade of potters, which they undoubtedly learned from the famous Danvers potters. They both married Yarmouth girls and perhaps lived for a while on Cape Cod. Tradition may have confused Cape Cod and Nantucket. Samuel is said to have followed the sea when not engaged in pottery work. I have several pieces of pottery that came from East Greenwich and which seem to fit the description of the Uptons' work.

The Uptons were not the earliest Rhode Island potters, for Joseph Wilson was working at Providence as early as 1767.

The following advertisement appeared in the *Newport Mercury* for June 22, 1767:

"Joseph Wilson—potter

At the North End of Providence Informs the Public, that he can Supply them with Earthen Ware at a cheap Rate, made in the best Manner and glazed in the Same Way as Practised in Philadelphia—All persons in this Town may be regularly supplied by Means of the Boats which constantly pass between this Place and Providence."

Wilson, it would appear, learned his trade from the Swiss and German potters of Pennsylvania, while the Uptons carried on the traditions of the Danvers' industry. It is interesting that within the space of five years workmen from these two great centres of the American pottery industry should have set up their workshops in Rhode Island.

Report upon the objects excavated at the Jireh Bull house and now in the museum of the Rhode Island Historical Society

The excavations made at the site of the Jireh Bull house in South Kingstown, R. I., have been described by Mr. Norman M. Isham, who was one of those in charge of the work. Mr. Isham's account, together with his plans of the foundations as unearthed, and also a photograph of the excavations, were printed in the January, 1918, issue (vol. XI, No. 1) of the *Rhode Island Historical Society Collections*.

In this article, Mr. Isham made a brief reference to some of the objects of interest found during the excavations. Photographs of these objects are now reproduced together with a fuller account of them based upon Mr. Isham's notes.

The Jireh Bull garrison house was attacked by the Indians on December 15, 1675, during King Philip's War, and burned down with the loss of fifteen lives. A later house was built near the ruins, and this house subsequently fell to pieces or was torn