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Historical Register

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THE ANTIQUITIES, GENEALOGY AND HISTORICAL
MATTER ILLUSTRATING THE HISTORY
OF THE

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

A HISTORICAL MAGAZINE FOR THE PEOPLE

*A record of treasures and of men,
For twelve full score years and ten.*

JAMES N. ARNOLD, EDITOR

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- 1822 Henry Pearson, Providence, R. I.
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 " Lyman Low, Warwick, R. I.
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 " Harris Foster,
 " John P. Eaton,
 1824 Jeremiah B. Allen, Providence, R. I.
 " Freeloove Harris, Cranston, R. I.
 " Thomas Snow,
 " Charles Hicks,

From The Mercury, December 21, 1889.

Mr. James N. Arnold, Editor of the Narragansett Historical Register, read an interesting paper on "The Huguenot at Narragansett", before the Newport Historical Society, Tuesday evening.

From The Cranston Leader, October 24, 1889.

James N. Arnold, Editor of the Narragansett Historical Register, called on us this last week. M. Arnold is a native of Cranston and probably has more of the history of this, as well as other Rhode Island Towns at his command than any person in the State. Mr. Arnold is at work at present on a publication of inestimable value to the public, but one which will bring him little or no compensation. The work is the "Vital Records Rhode Island, from 1636 to 1850," and as soon as he obtains sufficient subscriptions will commence its publication.

THE STATE FAIRS.

THE following communication was prepared to be read at the annual meeting, 1886, of the Washington County Agricultural Society, but accidentally not reaching the address in time was not read as intended.

No. 154 Power Street, Providence, R. I.

To the Hon. R. Hazard, President of the Washington County Agricultural Society, Oct. 31, 1886.

My Dear Sir: Offering my sincere congratulations to all interested in the organization of the Washington County Agricultural Society, over which you so ably preside in its pre-eminent success and practical operations, if you will waive any charge or supposition of a personal egotism I will refer to my own identity with its origin.

By a reference to the charter of the R. I. S. E. D. I. (granted at the October Session of the Legislature of this State in 1820) you will observe it requires that the Annual Meeting be held at the village of Pawtuxet, then comparatively one of the most isolated localities of the State with little, (if any) thrift, and a very small population. At first the novelty of the occasion and its surroundings overcame the inconvenience of attending the meetings and realizing the great disadvantages of the location; but as this subsided all interest in the public at large ceased and it was confined to a very few members of the Society, of whom memory recalls the late Hon. J. P. Francis, the Messrs J. G. and A. B.

Chadsey, William G. R. Mowry, J. De Wolf Perry, E. D. Pearse, E. A. Lawton, B. H. Lawton, W. Viall, H. W. Lothrop, O. Johnson, J. Holden, H. Staples, and others equally entitled to mention, but whose names have passed from me. The organization with all its adjuncts became thoroughly demoralized and its limited funds were fast diminishing. (which were created by lottery grants and Acts of the Legislature.)

At this crisis the late Messrs, Moses B. Ives, Stephen H. Smith, Owen Mason and myself, then Secretary, resolved upon a vigorous effect for the resuscitation of the whole matter. The first thing to be done was to have the Charter so amended as to allow the meetings to be held wherever and whenever election should direct. After much effort this was accomplished.

The strong jealousy existing at this time in the rural districts prevented any suggestion or proposal of making Providence the future home of the Society, of which there would be an antagonism which we could not venture to encounter. I proposed as a preliminary step to have the next fair at Kingston in the early part of October, 1856, to which the gentlemen replied, " Very well, do what you can as Secretary and we will sustain you." I lost no time in visiting Kingston, and stating my purpose to the late Hon. W. Updike, E. R. Potter, Judge Clark and others, from all of whom I received the most encouraging assurances of an earnest cooperation and probable success.

The fair was held under the most auspicious circumstances in every respect, and its success was far beyond our highest anticipations. The hostelry of the late Philip Taylor, Esq., was tested to the extent of its abilities, but proved to be amply and ably responsive to every requisition. Nature gave us one of her loveliest autumnal days, and every conceivable ad-

junct existed under the most liberal and favoring circumstances, at Kingston and that at Providence, as well, were among the first few red letter days of a long life.

At their close thanks and congratulations were as freely and sincerely offered as they were gratefully received. I should have stated, that through the courtesy of the late Hon. John R. Bartlett, (then Secretary of State,) the free use of the Court House was obtained for the industrial exhibition and the gratuitous use of the requisite grounds for the cattle was generously offered by the liberal proprietors, whose names, I regret were not known.

Particular mention should be made of the untiring zeal and effort of the late Mrs. Samuel Rodman, who contributed from her own easel portraits of the Rev. Dr. and Mrs. McSparran, which now adorn the walls of the Rhode Island Historical Society. Equally honorable mention should be made of Messrs N. C. Peckham, J. H. Taylor, J. G. Clarke, William French and others in their different capacities.

I am impelled to think that the great success of the fair was the origin of the present Washington County Agricultural Society. Stimulated by what had been accomplished, we felt emboldened to propose our final purpose and action, and to hold the next fair in Providence.

The proposition was so favorably received, and so generously sustained by the public at large, that for three days and evenings, the extensive Railroad Halls were crowded to excess with visitors and exhibits, so much so that additional supports were required to the floors, etc.

The most generous acknowledgements, were due to the arduous and efficient labors of the Secretary, (the late Hon. William R. Staples,) by which no confusion existed at the fair, or in its closing.

One of the most attractive features of the exhibition was the horticultural exhibit, for which we are indebted to the courteous, generous and disinterested cooperation of the R.

I. Horticultural Society, the result of which has been the success of the Society subsequent to their valued assistance, as compared with its previous condition. And from this time the R. I. S. E. D. I. have been constantly prospering and increasing their reputation and most practical results, they have received a valuable stimulant in the membership and most active cooperation of Messrs, O. and J. F. Brown, W. H. Hopkins, William E. Barrett, and their present efficient executive officers and others of the most active members.

Allow me, in conclusion, Dear Sir, to offer, through yourself, to my innumerable friends of "auld lang syne," in the South County, my kind regards and pleasant memories, and receive for yourself my highest esteem and respect.

Very truly your friend.

ELISHA DYER.

P. S. The R. I. S. E. D. I. of today is a just memorial of the efforts of those who have "passed away," and a source of honest pride to those who, as members, are witnesses of its position and progress.

It cannot be a presumptive or obtrusive inquiry to know how far the existence and success of this older (if not the parent) organization has been suggestive of, and conducive to, the formation of similar societies in this and the adjacent States. One thing is certain, to none is their progress and prosperity more a source of sincere pleasure and congratulation than to all its members.

It is no assumption of license to state that whenever its experiences and resources can be in any degree beneficial to others, they would undoubtedly be most fully and cheerfully made available.

It would have been highly interesting and gratifying to have supplemented this paper with accounts of the first and last fairs at Pawtuxet, Kingston and Narragansett Park, but all of their records are not existing.

It should have been stated that the cattle exhibit of the fair at the Railroad Halls was upon the Calendar lot, (so called) near the junction of Aborn and Sabin streets. The plowing and other matches were on the nearest available ground, west of the city in Johnston. E. D

The above "Black Hill," and the "State Fair," are republished by special request. The former article from the Rhode Island Schoolmaster for November 1861, and the latter from the Providence Journal. Editor.

MORTUARY.

DIED, On Thursday evening, August 26, 1813, Benjamin West, Esquire; LL. D., Postmaster, of this town, in the 83d. year of his age.

WE have already discharged the painful duty of recording the demise of *Dr. Benjamin West*. This venerable philosopher and christian was born in Rehoboth, Mass., and while yet a boy, the family removed to Bristol, R. I., where his rising genius was discovered and fostered by the Rev. Mr. Burt, who loaned him a few books, from which he drew the first rudiments of science. He married in Bristol, and soon after settled in this town. The gifts which bountiful nature had lavished on him, and his astonishing acquisitions, rivited the attention and admiration of co-