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GEN. NATHANAEL GREENE MEMORIAL AT GREENSBORO, N. C.
Unveiled on Guilford Court House Battlefield, July 3, 1915, 134 years after the decisive battle on that spot.

HISTORY OF PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS. Part III. Early Commerce of
Rhode Island. Some Heroes of the Past. Picturesque Scrap of History. Early
Political Maneuverings. Providence as a Shopping Centre. Are you a Culprit? Opportunity
locks at Our Harbor Gates; also at the Doors of the City Hall.

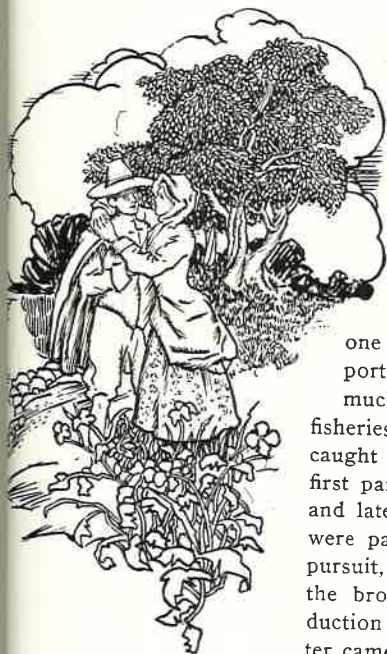


GEN. NATHANAEL GREENE MEMORIAL.

Erected on Guilford Court House Battlefield, Greensboro, N. C., unveiled July 3, 1915, 134 years after the battle fought on that spot, in which Gen. Greene successfully engaged the British forces under Lord Cornwallis and forced the latter to withdraw and enter the trap set for him by Gen. Washington at Yorktown.

THE EARLY COMMERCE OF RHODE ISLAND.

Once it Was Catching Whales in Narragansett Bay.—Here Also it Fostered the First Oil Trust Organized in This Country.—It Brought Slaves to be Sold at Auction in Providence, and Netted Owners and Volunteer Crews Big Dividends in Privateering.



AN agricultural hamlet in drowsy rest for nearly three-quarters of a century, Providence held the head of Narragansett bay, one of the finest inland waters in the world, while Rhode Island, the modern Newport (on the island of Aquidneck), was forging ahead and creating one of the foremost colonial ports. Something, though not much, was being done in the fisheries, although whales were caught in Narragansett bay in the first part of the eighteenth century; and later the citizens of Providence were participating in this important pursuit, so distinctly American, on the broad ocean. With the introduction of spermaceti or head-matter came the manufacture of candles, the most profitable adjunct of whal-

ing and the oil trades. James Brown appears as "distiller" in his purchase of the future Commodore Esek Hopkins' share of the "Charming Molly" in 1746. In 1758 Obadiah Brown sold to his nephews, Nicholas and John, one-half of the spermaceti works, with the moiety of the same staunch sloop. The British Minister, Grenville, perhaps unwittingly helped the whale-fishery in America when he abolished the bounties paid to British fishermen and relieved their American competitors almost entirely of discriminating duty.

Obadiah Brown in 1753 built a factory at India Point, in Providence, for the manufacture of sperm candles, and succeeded so well that he worked up three hundred barrels of "head-matter" the first year. Early traffic struck out in coastwise commerce to Philadelphia and New York, to Albany and Virginia. Long Island sound and the mighty Hudson were essential factors in the fiscal and social interchange of those days. While interior land travel was in semi-barbaric condition and the ocean threatened small craft, an estuary flow of great waters powerfully assisted the feeble communities in their outward progress.

"Father of Providence Commerce."

Closely associated with domestic trade was foreign commerce to the West Indies, the great mart for surplus production of the New England colonies. "English" goods were at first supplied from Newport, the largest port on Narragansett Bay, and lumber, a "principal money," brought down the Blackstone, Moshassuck, and Woonasquatucket rivers, was the chief remittance there. A little later Provi-



BIRTHPLACE OF GEN. NATHANAEL GREENE.
At Potowomut, about two miles south of East Greenwich.
(Courtesy of East Greenwich Academy.)

dence began to take advantage of its opportunities to develop her commerce.

Pardon Tillinghast may be considered the father of the local commerce, for he built the first wharf and warehouse in 1679. Nathanael Brown opened the first yard for shipbuilding on the "West Side" in 1711, and vessels built by him were among the first to sail from Providence to the West Indies. Property along the waterfront, called "warehouse-lots," with its shore privileges, was not completely divided and assigned until about 1749.

In the beginning, "home-lots" had been given settlers. These ribbon strips fronted on a "Town Street" (now North and South Main streets), controlling the shore. A "stated common," outside and chiefly across the Providence river, on the west side, was shared among the proprietors. Weybosset bridge, with a draw spanning this river, was rebuilt by a lottery in 1719. The main current of travel between Boston and New York crossed here, and the village maintained a mill with three taverns.

Enter Stephen Hopkins, Optimist.

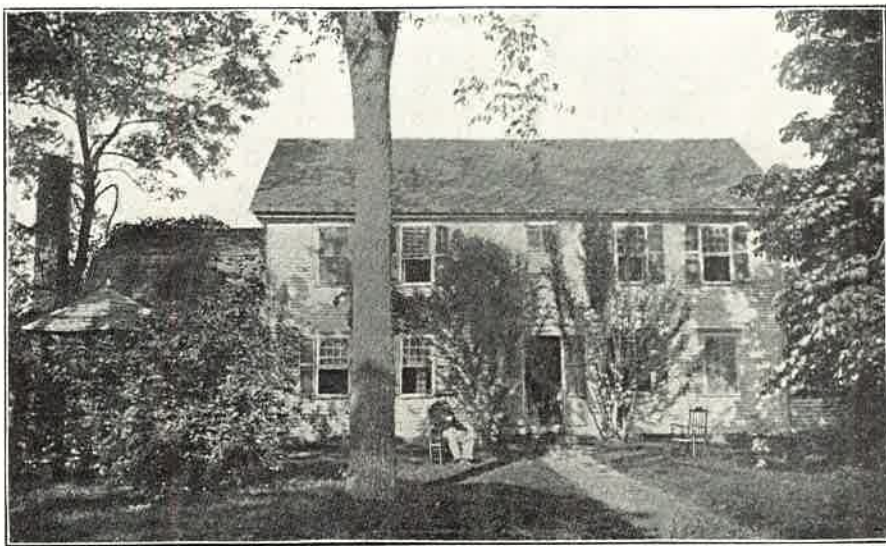
In 1742, Stephen Hopkins, at the age of thirty-five, came into town from his home in the country. A Newporter has said that "Hopkins taught Providence her capabilities, and calculated, rather than prophesied, her future growth and prosperity." His brother, Esek, seafaring to the West Indies, became the first commodore in the United States Navy. Several members of the family were ship-

masters, and by their skill and enterprise assisted the Browns in their various voyages.

James Brown and his brother Obadiah, descended from Chad Brown, a companion of Roger Williams and an early pastor of the First Baptist Church, were among the first merchants to obtain a record. Their operations are reported as early as 1733. According to Moses Brown, our best early authority, they had four sloops trading to the West Indies in 1736, Obadiah being the captain of one. At the death of James, who had likewise been a captain, the uncle took his sons, the famous "four brothers," Nicholas, Joseph, John, and Moses, as apprentices and partners.

How Cargoes Were Traded.

To show the complicated trade of these early voyages, we may glance at the lading of the sloop "Recruit," which sailed from Rhode Island in 1744. She carried bread, flour, Indian corn, sugar, molasses, salt, rum, tar, and pipe-staves. This cargo, although apparently strangely heterogeneous at first glance, was nicely assorted for the purposes of the voyage. The rum was made at home, the sugar and molasses came from the West Indies, flour from New York, corn and pipe-staves from Narragansett, and tar from North Carolina. The "Recruit" went first to Newfoundland, where she exchanged her provisions, tar, etc., for "refuse" fish from the fishing fleet. The slaves in the islands ate the inferior grades, while the better ones were reserved for the Catholics in Southern Europe. The first



HOMESTEAD OF NATHANAEL GREENE AT POTOWOMUT.

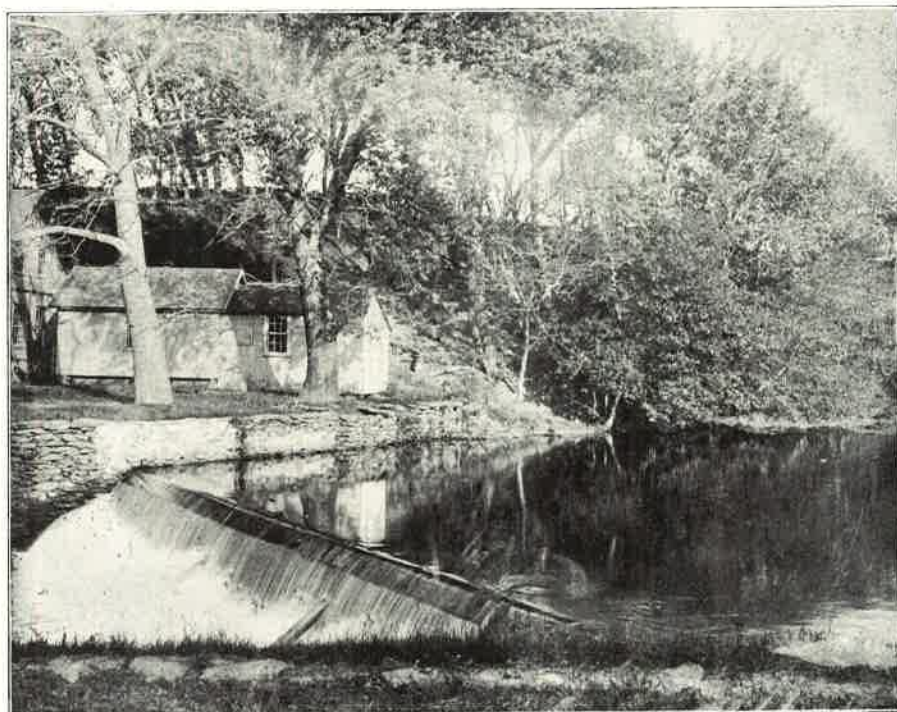
southern port was Barbadoes at Surinam, Nevis, St. Jamaica, and Savannah-la-trou. The molasses and other products of the voyage returned.

Molasses

Meanwhile a generation terprise, illegal where it sh always tending toward large on the part of the colonists. ter of all the signers of th to the commerce or the co trade. Sugar, molasses, and necessity in that period of used as tea and coffee in mental staple of the slave-t porting blacks, but the neig engaged in the trade. Mola Boston, and more especial Africa. Newport had twen molasses in the West Indies demand for rum to be sent t rum in the fisheries and lum

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SITE OF GEN. GREENE'S FORGE, POTOWOMUT.

The waters still pour over the dam at "The Forge" where this "Rhode Island Blacksmith" made his anchors.
(Courtesy of East Greenwich Academy.)

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southern port was Barbadoes, then stops were made in succession at Surinam, Nevis, St. Christopher's, St. Eustatius, Kingston, Jamaica, and Savannah-la-mer, thence home to Rhode Island, with the molasses and other products which the cargo and profits of the voyage returned.

Molasses, Rum and Slaves.

Meanwhile a generation was engaged in gallant forecasting enterprise, illegal where it should have had legitimate welcome, and always tending toward larger independence instead of loyal obedience on the part of the colonists. David A. Wells has said that one-quarter of all the signers of the Declaration of Independence were bred to the commerce or the command of vessels engaged in contraband trade. Sugar, molasses, and rum must be obtained, the last almost a necessity in that period of New England, for it was as commonly used as tea and coffee in our day, and in addition was the fundamental staple of the slave-trade. Providence did little directly in importing blacks, but the neighboring port of Rhode Island was largely engaged in the trade. Molasses and poor sugar, distilled into rum in Boston, and more especially in Newport, made the staple export to Africa. Newport had twenty-two still-houses. The average price of molasses in the West Indies was 13d. or 14d. per gallon. Although the demand for rum to be sent to Africa was immense, the consumption of rum in the fisheries and lumbering and shipbuilding districts was large.

Beginning of Lumber Trade.

Development of the town was quickened and much extended in 1751, when a vessel loaded with timber floated down the Seekonk river. Colonel Edward Kinnicutt took this first cargo to London and brought back enough goods to furnish three shops, kept by himself, Brown, and Jenks. Prior to this time the "English" goods necessary in a retailing shop had been supplied from the island port. In the same year, Captain Esek Hopkins brought in a valuable prize, the snow "Desire." This began the privateering which was carried on during the French and Spanish wars. In one cruise Abraham Whipple of Rhode Island in 1759-60 captured twenty-three prizes, valued at \$1,000,000 in paper money. In a land where money was scarce and the people brave and venturesome such sudden acquisition of riches, though the prizes might be few in number, drew the bold and resolute spirits to the flag of the privateers. Notwithstanding the

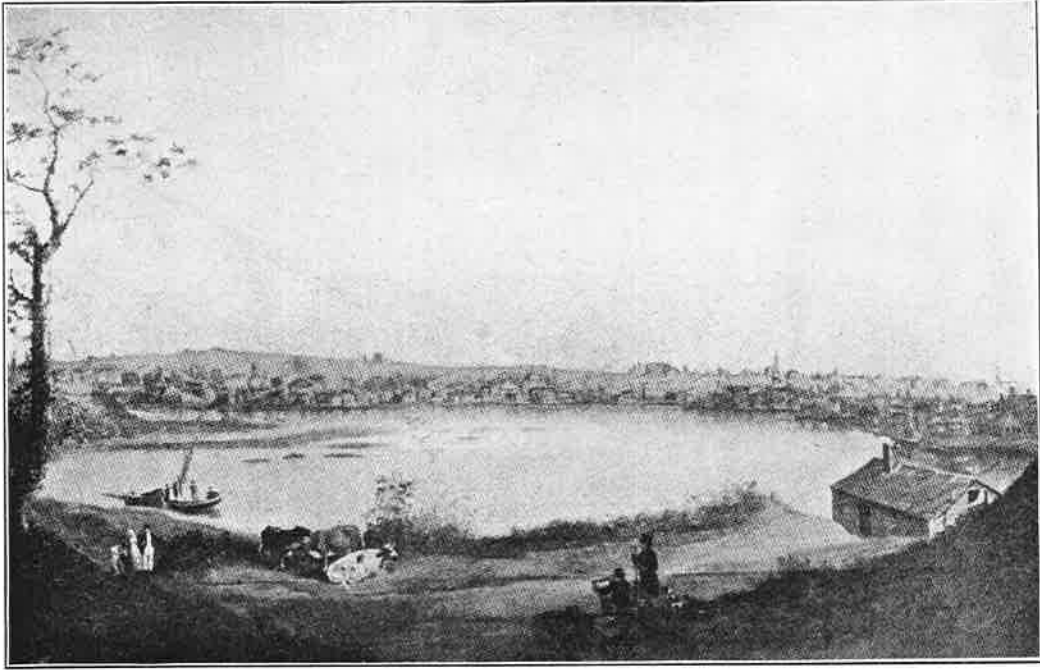
profits of plunder, Newport lost more commercially than she gained by the "old French war," and, according to Moses Brown, privateering in Providence made "many rich and some poor." The occupation of Newport by the British in the Revolution destroyed its commerce and ruined its commercial prestige. Providence then became the chief port of the state, and the privateering of the Revolution centred there. The canny Quaker, Moses Brown, correctly estimated the business, which was both speculative and risky; but it stimulated commercial enterprise, while training bold and hardy seamen.

Profit-Sharing Navigators.

The coöperative methods of early commerce are interesting. It will be remembered that whaling was prosecuted on proportionate shares, a long or short "lay." A similar principle was enforced in the West Indies trade, not in the form of partnership, but in separate individual interests or privileges. An old portage bill, October 1-November 28, 1763, shows that the brigantine "Sally," Nicholas Brown & Co., owners, signed articles with officers and crew on the following terms: The master had 35 pounds wages and a "privilege" of twelve hogsheads. The mate, in blank, must have had a private contract. The cooper, with an office and responsibility approaching that of the captain, had 70 pounds, with three hogsheads and five barrels. Common sailors had 35 pounds to 50 pounds, with a privilege of three barrels to some. The "share" in this transaction only pertained to freight, giving the sailors an opportunity to trade with their own capital. Three years later, Esek Hopkins took the brig "Sally" to the Windward Islands, laden with hoops, staves, sperm candles, beeswax, oil, beef and pork, ship bread, tar, turpentine, flour, and rice. Of the hoops, 25 per cent., and of the oil, 10 per cent., belonged to Captain Hopkins, while the remainder of the cargo was owned by Nicholas Brown & Co.

Oil Trust in Colony Times.

Do not imagine that the simple eighteenth century, destitute though it might be of steam rails, electric machinery, stock-tickers, and curb-brokers, did not comprehend or apply any of the possibilities of modern civilization. Rockefeller and Carnegie were unborn, but sharp calculators with long heads existed even in those days. What says the reader to a full-fledged trust in oil? In 1763 a solid



THE OLD COVE BASIN, PROVIDENCE—1818.

Once a beautiful sheet of water, prolific with fish and productive of delicious crustaceans. Pleasure boats sailed across it to Sand Point, a favorite recreation spot, and ships brought cargoes to the docks fronting where Exchange place now is.

agreement made all "head-matter brought into North America one common Stock or Dividend." It was divided among ten manufacturers, Nicholas Brown & Co. getting twenty barrels in each one hundred, Robinson of Nantucket thirteen, Palmer fourteen, "the Philadelphians" seven, etc. The Jews of Newport were among the contractors. If any forfeited their share "by such dishonorable conduct," minutely specified, it was to be divided pro rata. They agreed to pay only ten pounds sterling per ton for head-matter above the price of "body brown sperm oil," to be fixed by merchants of Boston according to the London market. They frowned on more spermaceti works "because present are more than sufficient." The arrangement was renewed from year to year until 1769.

Rise and Fall of Foreign Trade.

Commerce with the East was thenceforth to influence the whole growth of the town. Although the wealth derived therefrom became a great factor in future industrial development, even more important was the personal element involved. The captains and officers who were sent out to conduct these undertakings, though they might have been contending with modern weapons, were liberal successors of the earlier sea-kings. These mariners might lack the intense individual power of the privateersmen like Esek Hopkins or Abraham Whipple, but they were cast in a larger mold and exerted greater social force. As the crafts were some eight times larger than the West Indian cruiser, so the office was greater. A man who could control a crew for two years or more, husband a vessel, and barter cargo after cargo, according to locality, was a master of whom any community might well be proud. This citizen of the world became a citizen at home in his mature years, and contributed his share to social and industrial progress.

During the eighteenth century, as we have seen, Providence, the centre of the little colony, did not grow as rapidly commercially as its neighbor, Newport, with better facilities for the oversea trade with the East Indies, China, and the western coast of Africa. Eventually, however, Providence emerged as an important seaport town and for many years thereafter derived its wealth mainly from foreign commerce.

An enterprise well conceived, but too long deferred and wrongly undertaken, was crowned with success when the boat "Lady Carrington" passed through the Blackstone canal, connecting Providence with Worcester, in 1828.

Navigation continued until about 1840, carrying twelve freight boats and one for passengers, but disputes with those controlling the water-power in petty privileges for mills impeded the slack-water navigation and ultimately stopped it. If the canal had opened three decades earlier, it would have controlled the virgin water-power and made it quite as available for mills without hindering navigation. Development of interior New England would have been anticipated by nearly half a century, with very great industrial possibilities for Providence.

[From an article written by the late William B. Weedon, in chapter entitled "Industry," one of a series of authoritative articles contained in that very valuable work, "A Modern City."]



Founders Suffice Streets.—Campaign The Capture of Ge

(Note.—This Magazine, complete or connected history already been well done by no found no dearth of interesting a part second to no other state modern civilization. We are a few fragments that some of together by a fuller reading

EARLY POLITICS

Modern Campaign Ethics Col.

From Providence in Colonial

During the long Ward- conducted with far greater means employed. The free elevated to a position of correspondingly good bargain poll. When the traders of voices heard in the political equally determined resistance planters of South County w