

COLONIAL SCHOOLS AND SCHOOLDAYS

ts heard. In the large room
ood the type cases, the old
-press with the marble bed,
per, the pots of ink, the flat
the forms were assembled
locked; where the master
ourneymen printers and the
bored from daybreak to bed-
setting, picking up type,
ng, folding paper, smearing
ink with leather balls, peal-
et printed sheets, the whole
of that carbon-like odor
ll print shops.

r's establishment "At the
peare's Head," often rushed
fluent statesman, Stephen
ying in his pockets a message
import to be printed in the
distributed as a proclamation
guide public opinion in the
efiance to tyranny. There,
the Tories demanding edi-
nce to His Majesty. John
d the mechanics of publicity
unity from the late sixties
en he retired and died. In
ch accommodated a success-
publishing business for
century, one can no longer
vidence of the activity that
ne. The old sign has long
ared; the smell of ink has
n the books in the northwest
ore.

tations of neglect and misuse
f occupants, Shakespeare's
ongs to an association of
d citizens who came to the
usly and enthusiastically.
ch and expert craftsmanship
task of faithful restoration.
g the Providence-Cranston
ouncil, Junior League of
c., and Federation of Rhode
Clubs occupy the premises.
errily, shall I live now,"
atest of all the poets by
resent and future genera-
ne to know this place of
il beauty and of important
ciations.

It was long after the founding of Provi-
dence before any attention was given
to schools. Parents instructed their own
children in all necessary rudiments. How-
ever, we may conclude that this sort of
education only concerned itself with very
practical instruction, and, in short, might
well be compared to the sort of training a
craftsman in one of the mediaeval guilds
gave his apprentice.

In Providence, land was set aside for a
schoolhouse by 1663 but there the matter
rested for a long while. In 1684, William
Turpin, a professional schoolmaster, ar-
rived in town and, by 1687, succeeded in
bringing about the erection of a school
house on Stamper's Hill, the junction of
North Main and Stampers Streets. Pre-
vious to this he had been giving lessons to
private pupils who lodged with him or to
whom he paid regular visits. As an ex-
ample, he instructed one Peregrine Gard-
ner, giving him board and schooling for
one year for the sum of six pounds, one-
half paid in beef, pork, and corn and the
rest in silver. The instruction consisted of
training in reading and writing with per-
haps a little arithmetic thrown in.

By 1735, another schoolmaster had
come to Providence. He was George
Taylor who secured the permission of the
Colonial Assembly to keep school in one
of the chambers of the Colony House on
North Main Street. In return for the
privilege he was bound to keep the glass
in good repair and tend the sun dial out
in front.

It is amusing to look at the Cipher Book
of a scholar of that period. In the one
belonging to John Brown and dated 1749
we find things like the following:

"Addition Is an Arithmetical gather-
ing of Divers Sums together to Produce
one Total."

"How Many Sparrows at 10 a Penny
will buy a Yoke of Oxen at £10 Price?"

"Suppose it 45 miles to Boston, How
many Barley Corns will Reach there?"

These are a few of many problems, all
solved concisely with the added remark
written out — "John Brown the Cleverest
boy in Providence Town."

More important than accuracy in spell-
ing was penmanship. The scholars of the
day were children of ship merchants and
storekeepers, and the need for them to
learn how to keep legible records was para-
mount. Because, in most instances, they
were to follow their elders in business,
their school problems were based on the
needs of the coasting trade and the shops.
They learned "Rules in Trett and Tare,
etc." — *Tare* being the weight of a bag,
barrel, or chest, *Trett* referring to the
allowed amount of loss on such goods as
sugar and treacle. Since Providence at
that time was a bartering community,
they learned the rules of barter. And be-
cause the coasting trade was flourishing,
many of the problems they had to solve
dealt in such things as latitude and ships'
tonnage.

After the first Court and Colony House
had burned down in 1758, a wave of agita-
tion began for several new schoolhouses.
When their cost was revealed, the enthu-
siasm suffered a blight and only one was
built. This was known as the "Old Brick
Schoolhouse" and was located on Meeting
Street, near the second Colony House.
Part of its cost was met by the town, the
rest by private subscription. Here two
hours a day were spent "in perfecting the
scholars in reading and properly under-
standing the English tongue" while what
time remained was given over to "writing,
arithmetic, and languages." This was the
school attended by the children of the
East-Siders. The West-Siders had erected
a school of their own four years earlier at
the corner of Mathewson and Chapel
Streets.

The year 1768 saw the erection of Whip-
ple Hall, a private schoolhouse of con-
siderable local fame. It was located in the
North End of Providence, a one-story
building with a hipped roof and a belfry.
Two schools were kept here, the higher
being in charge of George Taylor. About
forty pupils attended, the tuition being
4 shillings sixpence apiece.

Meanwhile attention was turning to a
different type of school, one that James
Manning had begun at Warren. This

same gentleman, destined to be the first president of the college for which he was already agitating strongly, had opened a Latin School to prepare pupils for the college once the latter had been founded. Strangely enough in those very practical days, his school was a huge success, and he had to import textbooks from London for his many scholars. In 1770, after Brown University had been founded, Manning's Latin School moved into new quarters at the head of College Street and took the new title of the "University Grammar School."

James Manning's first efforts in Warren bore quick fruit indirectly in Providence, for in 1766 a certain Benjamin Stelle, influenced by the former, opened a school here for the "instruction of young ladies in the knowledge of writing and arithmetic." There were two sessions a day, the first from 6 A.M. to 7:30 A.M., the second from 4:30 P.M. to 6 P.M., hours that no girl of today would willingly keep. Yet, as in the case of James Manning, Benjamin Stelle's enterprise was received with favor and he prospered.

All during this century the schools had been private in nature, the pupils paying for their tuition. The idea of free schools had been in the minds of prominent men for many years but not until 1800 did they come into existence in Providence. But let us leave Providence for the while and turn to Narragansett, that very prosperous section of colonial Rhode Island.

Here, according to the reminiscences of Thomas Robinson Hazard, the first schoolmasters were three Irishmen of great culture and refinement, Masters Kelly, Ridge, and Slaughter. They traveled about visiting the farms and communities around Boston Neck Point, Point Judith, and Tower Hill, imparting instruction to the children but, particularly, exerting their good influence on the rough manners and characters of the country folk.

After they had passed away, a new type of schoolmaster arrived, one who made no pretense to the polite attainments of his predecessors, but believed in more rugged methods of teaching. He was Master Robert Noyes who kept school on the Tower Hill road. He believed in the rule and spared it not. After a few of his pupils

discovered that his wooden rod might be split if they crossed two hairs in their open palm, Master Noyes made a new one of leather with a wooden handle. He enjoyed such sport so much that he used one of the older pupils, by the name of Gust Tift, as a spy to procure him victims. This traitor in the ranks watched the boys constantly and if they so much as lifted an eye from their books dragged them forward to Master Noyes and his ruler. Punishment was always administered on the left hand in order to keep the right fit for writing lessons.

In conclusion, just as evidence that school boys then were no different than those of today, we might cite an incident or two from the school days of this particular Hazard who later became known as "Shepherd Tom" and who wrote the famous "Johnny-cake Papers." He had the small boy habit of stuffing pockets with every conceivable odd and end. Master Noyes caught him one afternoon and made him lay the contents of his jacket pockets on his desk. They were worthy of Tom Sawyer himself. The following items he remembers were in one side alone: "One bunch of hair pulled from Deacon Brown's old horse's tail, to make snares of for quails; two rusty board nails; one shingle nail; two small eels, which I caught in Indian Run; three live crabs, got in Narrow river; a piece of beefsteak, left from my dinner; one pin hook; one white-faced bumble bee; four tadpoles; and one bottom fish; besides several other items." From this episode he derived the nickname "tadpole," but it did not affect him half so much as the humiliating recollection of hearing Sally Brown, his school girl sweetheart, snicker aloud as he laid his treasures out before the teacher's astonished eyes.

On another occasion, when he arrived at the school wet from having waded in a stream he was ordered to hang his breeches on a line outside and was then placed between two girls in his embarrassing condition. It happened that he was on precarious terms with both young ladies and one of them improved her priceless opportunity by inserting a pin a half-inch into his bare thigh, making him yell and jump about three feet in the air. For this he

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was collared by Tift and hustled before
 Master Noyes. He was not whipped but
 had the worse punishment of having to
 stand before the whole school reading his
 primer, his nether parts exposed.

Such were school days in colonial times.
 The change has been great with the pas-
 sage of years, but the school boy of today
 still manages to find ample opportunities
 for his mischief.

BETTY BOWEN

THOSE who assume the delicate task
 of selecting the greatest American
 women in history rarely include the name
 of a Rhode Islander although this small
 but extremely important state, from the
 standpoint of historical significance, has
 not been completely lacking in fair sex
 contributions during its more than three
 centuries of existence. Perhaps the his-
 torians have been guilty of female belittl-
 ement in the telling of the Rhode Island
 story, or, it may be that the ladies of
 Rhode Island, who might have been
 logical candidates for the national Hall of
 Fame, have suffered by comparison with
 their more aggressive and better-adver-
 tised male contemporaries. At any rate,
 it remains for someone to do better by the
 illustrious women of Rhode Island than
 has yet been performed. All this may
 suggest that you are about to read a
 glorified review of the life of Ann Hutchin-
 son, Mary Dyer, the Indian Princess
 Weetamoe, Ida Lewis, or some other one
 of the great and the important "on the
 distaff side." Quite the contrary, for the
 reader is about to learn something of the
 life of a Rhode Island adventuress who
 brought fame to herself, and not through
 the usual channels of immortalization,
 such as sacrifice, leadership, wisdom,
 character or heroism.

Following rather closely Albert Payson
 Terhune's interpretations of what few
 facts are available to the historian, it is
 told that, sometime in the year 1769, a
 child was believed to have been born on a
 ship bound from the West Indies to Nar-
 ragansett Bay, and that the mother died
 a few hours after her baby girl first saw
 the light of day. There seems to be no
 record of the identity of either the child's
 mother or father, but it is believed that
 the tiny orphan started off in life in

Providence. It has been said that soon
 after the ship came into port, a trades-
 man's wife was so attracted by the beauty
 of the lonely little waif that she adopted
 the baby, and, after the customary reli-
 gious ceremony, gave the child the name
 of Eliza Bowen.

Those were rather strait-laced days
 when customs were not too far removed
 from the must-not-smile-in-church, speak-
 not-unless-spoken-to rules which pre-
 vailed hereabouts during the early genera-
 tions of local history. Young people had
 a hard time of it trying to comply with
 pre-Revolutionary Emily Post dictums,
 and, apparently, young Miss Bowen had
 her particular adolescent difficulties. At
 the age of fifteen she was not only con-
 sidered both the prettiest and the clever-
 est girl in the Colony — which combina-
 tion at that age is enough to give any
 parent or guardian something to worry
 about — but, she was also popularly re-
 garded as the worst. At least the super-
 pious folks said Betty was the worst,
 probably meaning the worst-behaved. No
 doubt it was comparatively easy to gain
 that reputation then, either by a bold
 show of independence, or by simply failing
 to conform to all of the ideas of the blue
 law devotees. It should not be recorded
 that she was bad, in the strict sense, but it
 might be better to describe her, at this dis-
 tant point of vantage, as a youngster with
 unusual beauty and an exceptional mind,
 one who had in full measure, even in girl-
 hood, the irresistible charm of a super-
 woman. Doubtless, she realized her
 advantages over other girls of her own
 age, and, if true, she probably made excel-
 lent use of such superiorities. That might
 account for her early reputation among
 the over-modest, conservative people of
 her time. It can be surmised that she was