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FRONT COVER

The doorway pictured on the cover is the unused west entrance of John Brown House. When Marsden Perry was restoring the house at the turn of the century, a hall partition was torn down to enlarge the dining room. Then the outside door to the west was sealed, but the exterior was preserved.

During the painting operation this past summer the appearance was enhanced by painting the door an attractive tile red to blend with the bricks; polishing the brass, which had been painted black; and substituting the Auton House knocker for a reproduction.

Many feel that this is the most attractive entrance doorway of John Brown House.

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RHODE ISLAND REACTIONS TO JOHN BROWN'S RAID

by JOHN MICHAEL RAY

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ON THE COLD autumn night of October 16, 1859, eighteen men under the leadership of John Brown invaded a small town in Virginia called Harper's Ferry. The raiding party consisted of five Negroes and fourteen white men (three of whom were John Brown's sons). Brown's small band of raiders took the unsuspecting town by complete surprise and succeeded in capturing the Federal arsenal and armory. While in the armory, some citizens who were being held as hostages, overheard Brown stating the objectives of his assault. "I want to free all the Negroes in this state. I have possession now of the United States armory, and if the citizens interfere with me I must only burn the town and have blood."¹ After the initial surprise of the raid undue alarm and panic spread throughout the South.² Panic-stricken Southerners carefully watched Northern newspapers for indications of opinions and reactions to the Harper's Ferry raid.

A considerable majority of Northern newspapers condemned the desperate attack. However, in those areas where antislavery feeling was strong there existed admiration for Brown and agreement with the ultimate aims of his daring raid.³ It will be the purpose of this article to measure the reaction of one particular Northern state, Rhode Island, to Brown, his raid, trial, and execution. The writer

¹Allan Keller, *Thunder at Harper's Ferry* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1958), p. 39.

²James G. Randall, *The Civil War and Reconstruction* (Boston, 1953), p. 172.

³George S. Merriam, *The Negro and The Nation, A History of American Slavery and Emancipation* (New York, 1906), pp. 164-165.

will attempt to show that Rhode Island's attitudes and feelings were not essentially similar to those of the rest of the North. Rhode Islanders were generally more emphatic in their condemnation of John Brown and the raid, more enthusiastic in their sympathy for the South during this crisis, and ultraconservative in their reactions to Brown's execution.

On Tuesday morning, October 18, 1859, while John Brown and his men were desperately fighting against overwhelming odds in the form of a force of United States marines under Colonel Robert E. Lee, Rhode Islanders read in the Providence *Daily Journal* that the insurrectionists consisted of about 250 whites and were aided by a "gang" of Negroes. On the same day, the Providence *Daily Post* ignored any news they might have received concerning the raid, devoting their interest to the public meeting recently held by the Negroes of Newport in protest against the injustice which was being committed against them by those in control of the public schools. The newspapers throughout the state had yet to receive an accurate account of the Harper's Ferry raid.

On October 20, 1859, two days after the capture of Brown and his men, the Providence *Daily Journal* showed complete condemnation and disapproval when it described the raid as a "foolish, riotous, and bloody work. All lovers of good order and decency and peace will unite in uttering their abhorrence of this mad and criminal attempt."⁴ On the same day the editor of the Providence *Daily Post*, the Democratic organ of the state, was more concerned with those who instigated the raid and concluded that the responsibility fell upon the Republicans and Abolitionists of the North. With this editorial there began an intense dispute between the two most powerful newspapers in the state, the Democratic Providence *Daily Post* and the Republican Providence *Daily Journal*.

In the eastern section of Rhode Island, the newspapers exhibited feelings of vehement disapproval of the raid. The Newport *Mercury* stated that it was a mad attempt to create an insurrection and "that for humanity's sake it should not be countenanced. . . ." ⁵ The Newport *Advertiser* condemned the raid, describing it as a "murderous

⁴ Providence *Daily Journal*, 20 October 1859, p. 2.

⁵ Newport *Mercury*, 26 November 1859, p. 2.

outbreak."⁶ J. Wheaton Smith, editor of the Warren *Telegraph*, considered the raid beneficial since it demonstrated the utter futility of mad schemes for servile insurrection. In his editorial of October 22, 1859, he cautioned the North:

Firm and unyielding in our own rights, let us respect the rights of others. If slavery is an evil, let us not forget it was entailed upon the South not only by its own, but by our Northern ancestry. Charity is the strongest bond of National Union and the only guerdon of its perpetuity.⁷

The Rhode Island *Pendulum* and the Narragansett *Times*, newspapers published in the central and southern sections of the state, were equally emphatic in expressing their disapproval of the raid. The Narragansett *Times* declared "that the act was not only ill-advised and ill-timed, but rash, foolish, mad and wicked."⁸

The one notable exception to this general censure of the Harper's Ferry raid as expressed in the Rhode Island newspapers was the Woonsocket *Patriot*, published in the northwest section of the state. Samuel S. Foss, editor of the *Patriot*, expressed complete astonishment at the ability of John Brown and his followers in fighting against the Federal troops as they did. "In audacity," Foss wrote, "it beats the Shay's Rebellion in Massachusetts, the Whiskey Rebellion in Pennsylvania, and the Dorr War in Rhode Island."⁹

On October 27, 1859, the "audacious" John Brown and his followers were brought to trial and charged with murder, inciting slave rebellion, and treason against the state of Virginia. On the latter charge the citizens of Rhode Island had cause to exhibit concern, for it was not long ago, on April 26, 1844, that ex-Governor Thomas Wilson Dorr had been charged with treason against the state of Rhode Island. The charge of treason against a state is so unusual that the Dorr trial was only the second case in the history of the United States, and that of John Brown in Virginia was to be the third.¹⁰ There is a possibility that had Dorr's defense counsels more

⁶ Newport *Advertiser*, 30 November 1859, p. 2.

⁷ The Warren *Telegraph*, 22 October 1859, p. 2.

⁸ Narragansett *Times*, 5 November 1859, p. 2.

⁹ The Woonsocket *Patriot* and The Rhode Island State Register, 21 October 1859, p. 2. (Hereinafter referred to as *Patriot*)

¹⁰ Arthur May Mowry, *The Dorr War or The Constitutional Struggle in Rhode Island* (Providence, 1901), p. 251.

strongly contested the charge of treason against Rhode Island in 1844, John Brown might also have claimed a like liberation from the state of Virginia in 1859.

During the Dorr trial the Democratic press condemned the proceedings and heralded Dorr as a martyr to the principles of the Declaration of Independence.¹¹ During the Brown trial, however, the state's most powerful Democratic newspaper, the *Providence Daily Post*, stated that Brown was a murderer, a man of blood, and that he and his associates, with the assistance of Republicans and Abolitionists, had plotted not only the liberation of the slaves but also the overthrow of state and federal governments. The *Providence Daily Journal* answered the *Daily Post* by stating that the raid of John Brown was characteristic of Democratic acts of violence and that "He was acting in direct opposition to the Republican Party, who proclaim as one of their cardinal principles that they do not interfere with slavery in the states."¹² The two major newspapers in Providence continued, throughout the crisis, to accuse each other of misrepresenting the facts and attempting to falsify history.

While the *Daily Post* continued to accuse Republicans and the *Daily Journal* continued to accuse Democrats, the *Woonsocket Patriot* complained that the Virginia authorities showed indecent and cowardly haste to condemn Brown and his men. Editor Foss stated, "Of their guilt . . . there can be no doubt . . . but they are entitled to sufficient time to prepare for trial, and . . . a fair trial."¹³ The *Providence Daily Post* thought that there were probably good reasons for the haste in which the trial was being conducted and that the only thing gained by a delay would be calmer feelings. The *Providence Daily Journal* stated that although the guilt of Brown was evident, the South must guarantee him a fair trial to preserve domestic peace.

On October 31, 1859, John Brown was found guilty of treason against the state of Virginia, inciting slave rebellion, and murder. For these crimes he was sentenced to be hanged in public on Friday, December 2, 1859. Upon receiving the news, Northern writers, edi-

¹¹Edward Field, ed., *State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations at the End of the Century: A History*, Vol. I (Boston & Syracuse, 1902), p. 349.

¹²*Providence Daily Journal*, 21 October 1859, p. 2.

¹³*Patriot*, 28 October 1859, p. 2.

tors, and clergymen heaped accusations of murder on the Southern states, particularly Virginia.¹⁴

Although Rhode Islanders were preparing for the state elections, they watched John Brown's trial with extreme interest. On Wednesday morning, November 2, 1859, the *Providence Daily Journal* stated that although Brown justly deserved the extreme penalty, no man, however criminal, ought to suffer the penalty without a fairer trial. The editor's main criticism of the trial was the haste with which it was conducted. The readers of the *Providence Daily Post*, however, learned that it was generally conceded that "Old Brown" had a fair trial. Concerning the sentence the editor asked, "What else can Virginia do than to hang the men who have defied her laws, organized treason, and butchered her citizens."¹⁵

In the eastern section of the state the newspapers' reaction to Brown's trial and sentence were basically identical. J. Wheaton Smith, editor of the *Warren Telegraph* stated that "the ends of justice must be satisfied, a solitary example must be set, in order that all those misnamed philanthropists [*sic*], who, actuated by a blind zeal, dare to instigate riot, treason, and murder, may heed it and shape their future course accordingly."¹⁶ The editor of the *Newport Advertiser* could discover no evidence of extenuating circumstances in the Brown trial which would warrant making an exception to the infliction of capital punishment.

In direct contrast to the other Rhode Island editors, Samuel S. Foss of the *Woonsocket Patriot* outwardly condemned the trial as being completely unfair. Concerning the sentence, Foss wrote, "If it be possible . . . that mercy shall override vengeance . . . and that John Brown's sentence shall be commuted to imprisonment, it would be well—well for the country . . . and for Virginia."¹⁷

Despite the excitement being caused by the trial and sentence of John Brown, Rhode Islanders turned their attention to the state elections. The state had elected Republican candidates in the past two years. There was no doubt as to the control the Republican party exercised throughout the state. If it failed on occasion to elect its

¹⁴Keller, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

¹⁵*Providence Daily Post*, 26 November 1859, p. 2.

¹⁶*The Warren Telegraph*, 5 November 1859, p. 2.

¹⁷*Patriot*, 4 November, 1859, p. 2.

candidates for general state offices by majorities, the failure was due to a lingering remnant of the Know-Nothing party, which called itself the American Republican party.¹⁸ The American Republicans and the Republicans both nominated Lieutenant-Governor Turner for governor. Elisha R. Potter was the Democratic candidate. The results of the election of 1859 found Republican candidates not only winning the offices of governor and lieutenant-governor but also obtaining the two Congressional offices from the eastern and western sections of the state.

During the month of November hardly a day passed when there was not some mention of John Brown in the Rhode Island newspapers. On November 7, 1859, the Providence *Daily Journal* reprinted a letter sent to John Brown from "E. B.," a Quaker lady in Newport. In reference to Brown's raid she wrote, "though we are non-resistants and religiously believe it better to reform by moral and not by carnal weapons . . . we know thee was anemated [*sic*] by the most generous and philanthropic motives."¹⁹ "E. B." compared John Brown to Moses in that they were both acting to deliver millions from oppression. In contrast to "E. B.," most Rhode Islanders hardly thought of John Brown as being another Moses. Most attempts to develop any sympathy for Brown and his actions found an unresponsive audience in Rhode Island.

On Wednesday evening, November 23, 1859, in Warren, Rev. Mark Trafton of New Bedford, gave a "Mission of Sympathy" lecture in which he favorably viewed the Harper's Ferry insurrection. The Warren *Telegraph* stated that many of Rev. Trafton's remarks were inappropriate and savored strongly of radicalism and fanaticism.²⁰ In its account of the Trafton lecture, the Providence *Daily Post* said that the remarks of Rev. Trafton made the people indignant.²¹

No sympathy or admiration for Brown could be found in the Providence *Daily Post*, for the editor claimed that there were a score of men in the state prison who were a thousand times more deserving of sympathy. The Providence *Daily Journal*, however, stated that

¹⁸ Charles Carroll, *Rhode Island Three Centuries of Democracy*, Vol. I (New York, 1932), p. 591.

¹⁹ *Providence Daily Journal*, 7 November 1859, p. 1.

²⁰ *The Warren Telegraph*, 26 November 1859, p. 2.

²¹ *Providence Daily Post*, 28 November 1859, p. 2.

Brown's courage, bravery, and heroism "in a good cause would make a man a martyr; it gives something of dignity even to a bad one."²² The Woonsocket *Patriot* admitted that John Brown might deserve punishment or imprisonment "but he should no more be hung than Henry A. Wise or James Buchanan."²³ The Newport *Mercury* exhibited more concern over the possibility of the abolitionists making a martyr of Brown than it did over the development of sympathy for him.

In her letter to John Brown, "E. B.," the Quakeress from Newport, had suggested that the American people owed more honor to John Brown for seeking to free the slaves than they did to George Washington.²⁴ During the latter days of November to the day of Brown's execution, it seems that most Rhode Islanders did not concur in "E. B.'s" suggestion. On November 22, 1859, the Providence *Daily Journal* stated that although Brown's "pluck" and honest fanaticism must be admired, any honor paid to Brown would only induce other fanatics to imitate his actions. A week later the *Daily Journal* had discovered the initial plans of some Providence citizens to hold a meeting honoring John Brown on the day of his execution. The editor of the *Daily Journal* warned, ". . . that if such a demonstration be made, it will not find support or countenance from any of the men whose names are recognized as having a right to speak for Providence."²⁵ The Providence *Daily Post's* editor wrote that he could not believe that a meeting honoring Brown was to be held in Providence. He further called upon the people of Providence to rebuke the meeting and avoid disgrace.

On December 2, 1859, John Brown was hanged at Charles Town, Virginia. Extraordinary precautions were taken so that no stranger be allowed in the city and no citizen within the enclosure surrounding the scaffold.²⁶ In many Northern towns and cities meetings were held and church bells were tolled.²⁷ Such was not the case in Rhode Island. The only public demonstration in honor of John Brown was

²² *Providence Daily Post*, 28 November 1859, p. 2.

²³ *Patriot*, 2 December 1859, p. 2.

²⁴ *Providence Daily Journal*, 7 November 1859, p. 2.

²⁵ *Providence Daily Journal*, 29 November 1859, p. 2.

²⁶ Elijah Avery, *The Capture and Execution of John Brown* (Chicago, 1906), p. 37.

²⁷ Oswald Garrison Villard, *John Brown A Biography Fifty Years After* (Boston & New York, 1910), p. 72.

held at Pratt's Hall in Providence, on the day of his execution.

Despite the opposition of the city newspapers, the Pratt Hall meeting "brought together a very respectable audience, composed in part of those who had been distinguished for years for their radical views upon the subject of slavery, of many of our colored citizens, and of those who were attracted to the place by the novelty of such a gathering."²⁸ Seated on the platform were Amos C. Barstow, ex-mayor of Providence and a wealthy Republican stove manufacturer; Thomas Davis, an uncompromising Garrisonian; the Reverend Augustus Woodbury, a Unitarian minister; the Reverend George T. Day, a Free-Will Baptist; Daniel W. Vaughan, and William H. H. Clements. The latter two were appointed secretaries. The first speaker was Amos C. Barstow who had been unanimously chosen president of the meeting. He spoke of his desire to promote the abolition of slavery by peaceable means and he compared John Brown of Harper's Ferry to the John Brown of Rhode Island's colonial period. Barstow concluded that as Rhode Island's John Brown became a canonized hero, if not a saint, so would it be with John Brown of Harper's Ferry.

The next speaker was George T. Day. Although admitting Brown's guilt on legal grounds, Day said that, "Brown is no common criminal; his deed was not below, but above the law."²⁹ Following Day was Woodbury who spoke of his disapproval of Brown's attempt at servile insurrection, his admiration of Brown's character, and his opposition to slavery. Woodbury's remarks were applauded by a portion of the audience several times and once there was hissing.³⁰

The fourth and last speaker was Thomas Davis. By this time large numbers of the audience had left the hall.³¹ Davis commenced his remarks by an allusion to the general feeling of opposition which the meeting had encountered from many of the citizens and all the newspapers of the city. He said that the propriety or impropriety of such a gathering was a question that was to be settled by every man in accordance with the convictions of private judgments. In the re-

²⁸*Providence Daily Journal*, 3 December 1859, p. 1.

²⁹*Speeches of Hon. A. C. Barstow, Rev. Geo. T. Day, Rev. A. Woodbury, Hon. Thomas Davis and Resolutions Adopted at a Meeting of Citizens Held in Providence, R. I., December 2d, 1859, on The Occasion of The Execution of John Brown* (Providence, 1860), p. 11. (Hereinafter referred to as *Speeches*)

³⁰*Providence Daily Post*, 3 December 1859, p. 2.

³¹*Ibid.*

mainder of his speech Davis spoke of his admiration for Brown and warned those who took part in the meeting that they "are liable to the charge that they are supporting traitors and upholding men whom the laws have condemned."³² He recalled that in Rhode Island a party opposed to the state's condemnation of a man (Thomas W. Dorr) proclaimed the state's action as a violation of the law of the land and the principles of human liberty. At the close of Davis' speech the following preamble and resolutions were read by the president, and on the question of their adoption passed unanimously:

Whereas, John Brown has cheerfully risked his life in endeavoring to deliver those who are denied all rights . . . and is this day doomed to suffer death for his efforts in behalf of those who have no helper: Therefore,

Resolved, that, while we most decidedly disapprove the methods he adopted to accomplish his objects, yet . . . in his willingness to die in aid of the great cause of human freedom, we still recognize the qualities of a noble nature and the exercise of a spirit which true men have always admired and which history never fails to honor.

Resolved, that his wrongs and bereavements in Kansas, occasioned by the violence and brutality of those who were intent on the propagation of slavery in that territory, call for a charitable judgment upon his recent efforts in Virginia to undermine the despotism from which he had suffered, and commend his family to the special sympathy and aid of all who pity suffering and reverence justice.

Resolved, . . . that the anti-slavery sentiment is becoming ripe for resolute action.

Resolved, that we find in this fearful tragedy at Harper's Ferry a reason for more earnest effort to remove the evil of slavery from the whole land as speedily as possible. . . .³³

On the morning following the Pratt Hall meeting the editor of the *Providence Daily Journal* wrote that although the meeting was milder and less extreme than those held in other areas for similar purposes, it could have been avoided completely. He also commented that good order was observed throughout, although the proceedings at times were interspersed with hisses and applause. The *Providence Daily Post* stated that the meeting was "no indication of the senti-

³²*Speeches*, op. cit., p. 29.

³³*Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

ment of Rhode Island. A majority of all the men who attended . . . looked upon the affair with pity and disgust, and some . . . were evidently ashamed of their company."³⁴ The editor further claimed that nine tenths of the citizens of Rhode Island would repudiate the resolutions.

On December 2, 1859, the Woonsocket *Patriot* printed an article in epitaph form, bordered in black, in which John Brown was proclaimed a "martyr for a Principle" and a "victim of American Slavery." Foss, the editor, declared that Virginia had gone back to darker ages for her example and justification. He further stated that Brown's day of execution was observed in a solemn manner in many neighboring towns, but Rhode Island had only one meeting of this nature.³⁵

There was to be one other meeting in Rhode Island, but this was not in commemoration of Brown. It was a meeting of the citizens of South Kingstown, held at the Free Church in Wakefield on December 17, 1859. The meeting was held so that the citizens could express their condemnation of the Harper's Ferry raid and their devotion to supporting the laws of the Union. Despite the poor weather, there was a very good attendance by members of all political parties.³⁶ The following resolutions, except the second, to which there were a few dissenting voices, were passed unanimously:

Resolved, that in the opinion of this meeting the late attempt of John Brown to excite a rebellion in the State of Virginia, deserves the stroagest [*sic*] condemnation of all peaceable and law abiding citizens.

And, whereas, a clergyman has lately in public discourse compared the gallows of Brown to the cross of Jesus Christ and others, in discourse and in the public journals, have endeavored to excite sympathy for him as a martyr:

Resolved, that we entertain the most unqualified abhorrence of such irreverent and unchristain sentiments,

Resolved, that in our opinion the great majority of the people of this town and State are devoted to the Union and constitution. . . .

And while the supporters of Brown are constantly from the pulpit and other public places expressing their sympathy for this miscalled martyr,

³⁴*Providence Daily Post*, 3 December 1859, p. 2.

³⁵*Patriot*, 9 December 1859, p. 2.

³⁶*Newport Advertiser*, 28 December 1859, p. 1.

Resolved, that in our opinion it is not only proper but highly necessary that those who condemn such opinions, should publicly express that condemnation, in order that the opinions of our people should not be mistaken abroad.³⁷

Elisha R. Potter, a prominent Democrat in state politics, was present at the South Kingstown meeting. Some time late in January or February, 1860, he received a letter from James McCarter of South Carolina. McCarter wrote:

I see from several sources the newspaper containing an account of the public meeting at Wakefield and I noticed the able speech you made in defense of the South. These various meetings have done much more good than is apparent on the surface. For although our ultra-papers try to write these down, as not conveying the true sense of poeple [*sic*] yet I think the Southern mind is very disabused of the impression that the sympathy for John Brown was so universal, at [*sic*] at first we were led to believe. I know of no better way of preventing the spread of abolitionism than the very course you adopted.³⁸

At the time of Brown's raid, Rhode Island still had her own problems with racial discrimination. With the exception of the Woonsocket *Patriot*, every newspaper in the state strongly condemned the raid. Moreover, the editor of the Warren *Telegraph* expressly stated that the North contributed to the South's "peculiar institution" and that it should respect the rights of the South.

It would seem that if Rhode Island was to exhibit any manifestations of contempt for the South or leanings in favor of Brown, however slight, they would have been shown during Brown's trial. The Republican Providence *Daily Journal*, extremely cautious in avoiding any connection with Brown, feebly criticized the haste with which the trial was conducted. Foss of the Woonsocket *Patriot* was the only Rhode Island editor to approach the feelings of resentment and indignation shown by many Northern writers, editors and clergymen in response to the trial and sentence.

During the month of November, while Brown was awaiting his execution, most Northern states began to develop some forms of admiration, sympathy, or pity for him. Rhode Island exhibited some

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁸James McCarter, South Carolina, 20 Jan. 1860, letter to Elisha R. Potter, South Kingstown, R. I., Elisha R. Potter MSS, University of Rhode Island Library.

feelings of this nature in the form of the editorials of the *Providence Daily Journal* and the *Woonsocket Patriot* and the letter from "E. B." to John Brown. These actions, however, were offset by the poor reception given to the Reverend Trafton's lecture and the continued show of contempt toward Brown in the other Rhode Island newspapers.

On the day of Brown's execution most Northern states held meetings in his honor and church bells were tolled. Rhode Island held only one such meeting and this was opposed by all the newspapers, with one exception, and by a majority of the citizens. In reaction to this meeting and to show their allegiance to the Union, the citizens of South Kingstown held a meeting expressing their condemnation of Brown and his raid.

It seems apparent that Rhode Islanders had no desire to favor any form of radicalism during this critical period in the nation's history. There was no recorded mention of John Brown or the raid in any sessions of the General Assembly in 1859 and 1860. This does not seem surprising since the Republicans had a majority in the General Assembly and they were doing their utmost to discredit Democratic charges concerning their connection with John Brown.

In 1860 the radical or abolitionist wing of the Republican party was successful in placing its candidate, Seth Padelford, a wealthy Providence merchant and a warm advocate of antislavery reforms, on the Republican ticket as the gubernatorial nominee.³⁹ In a record voting election Padelford was defeated by the Democratic candidate, Colonel William Sprague. Rhode Island again refused to endorse a radical leader. Whether it be the candidacy of Seth Padelford, the lectures of the Reverend Mark Trafton, or the raid of John Brown, Rhode Islanders, for the most part, refused to approve of anything which might possibly lead to the disruption of the Union.

³⁹ John J. Turner, Jr., "The Rhode Island and National Elections of 1860" (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of R. I., 1955), p. 8.



JOHN SMITH, THE MILLER, OF PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

SOME OF HIS DESCENDANTS

by CHARLES WILLIAM FARNHAM

WHILE JOHN SMITH THE MILLER is a familiar figure to those versed in the founding of Providence Plantations, his descendants, save those outlined in Austin's *The Genealogical Dictionary of Rhode Island*,¹ have rarely been clearly identified.

The writer has attempted to trace these descendants through the period when the majority of Smiths were still resident in Rhode Island, prior to the migrations to other states. Unpublished notes on Smith families by the late Rev. James P. Root at The Rhode Island Historical Society and data on one John the Miller line by the late William W. Chapin, also at the Historical Society, have been a major help in defining Smith relationships.

Contemporary with John the Miller were John the Mason, of Providence; John of Prudence Island; John of Newport; John of Boston and Warwick, who was first president of the Colony in 1649-50; Richard of Kings Town; Christopher of Providence; Edward of Rehoboth and Newport; Ensign Henry of Rehoboth; John of Dartmouth; John the Trader, of Kings Town and New Amsterdam; and a John of Providence, called "Jameco John," who died before 1685 leaving a son John of Medfield, Massachusetts. Because some of the descendants settled in the same communities and often intermarried, the task of separating descendants of John the Miller from unrelated Smiths has been challenging.

Sources consulted include vital statistics, deeds, probate records, court records, burial records, genealogies involving allied families, and some family papers. Of particular value have been early cases in the Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Providence, in which relationships nowhere else to be found were expressed in legal actions.

Impetus for the study came from Kenneth F. Pemberton of San Francisco, a direct descendant of John the Miller, whose enthusiasm for Smith genealogy spurred the purchase of the family cemetery of his Revolutionary War ancestor, James Smith, in Spragueville, Rhode Island.

¹John O. Austin, *The Genealogical Dictionary of Rhode Island* . . . (Albany, 1887), p. 382-384.

FIRST GENERATION

1 JOHN¹ SMITH, born in 1595 (presumably in England) was of Dorchester, Massachusetts, when he joined Roger Williams and four others in the spring or summer of 1636 to make the first settlement in Providence.

Roger Williams stated on 17 November 1677: "I consented to John Smith, Miller, at Dorchester (banished also) to go with me."² The General Court of Massachusetts had ordered on 3 September 1635, "that John Smyth shalbe sent within theis 6 weekes out of this jurisdiction for dyvers dangerous opinions, wch hee holdeth, & hath dyvulged, if in the meane tyme he removes not himselfe out of this plantacion."³

John the Miller is recorded as town clerk in 1641. He had died before 1649, for in that year his widow, Alice, who died after 1650, and her son John, Jr., administrators of the estate of John the Miller, signed articles of agreement with the inhabitants of Providence. They gave the widow and John, Jr., exclusive rights to maintain a mill as long as they provided satisfactory service in grinding corn for the townsmen.

Henry C. Dorr states:

It was fortunate for Williams that one of his earliest companions was a millwright. So soon as they were able, the townsmen availed themselves of his services. In 1646, (1st of 1st mo.,) they made a grant of land to John Smith, in the valley where the falls of the Mooshassuc invited the erection of the Town Mill. The memory of his obsolete machinery, (for breaking up grain by an operation similar to that of a pile driver,) has been preserved in the name of "Stampers street." Long before jail or meeting-house, the Town mill was the earliest institution of the Plantations. It received much careful oversight from the Town meeting. The miller was to build and repair it at his own cost, and the town promised to erect or to permit no other. "Town meeting, 3d, 9mo., 1649, agreed that every second and fifth day of the week shall be for grinding of the corn of the town." The other days were the miller's own. "The sixteenth part of every bushel (with allowance for waste according to the custom of the country) is to be allowed for grinding." The mill fixed

²*Rhode Island Historical Tracts*, no. 14 (Providence, 1881), p. 53.

³*Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay . . .* (Boston, 1853), v. 1, p. 159.

the centre of the town at the North end, and long kept it there. . . . The population became densest in its neighbourhood. . . . Sixty years later, (October 27, 1705,) the water power which moved the Town Mill was not yet fully employed. The Proprietors then granted to John Smith, the son of the old miller, and to Richard Arnold, the land next south of the grist mill for a sawmill, which they were to build within three years. . . .

During one hundred and eighty years the Town Mill fulfilled its office, and was one of the last memorials of primitive times. It was destroyed at last, by the Blackstone canal, through which some over-sanguine citizens, fondly hoped that the old locality would regain something of its primitive importance. They gained nothing but experience. The Town, now that its once favorite mill was silenced and deserted, endeavoured to repossess itself of the acres which it had granted to the old miller. His descendants maintained their possession with a sturdy perseverance worthy of their ancestor. During ten years the contest claimed the attention of the courts. The Town gained nothing but a better knowledge of the vagueness and inaccuracy of its own early grants and records. The estate, once the most valuable in the Plantations, ended by becoming an inheritance equally unprofitable to those who held or who sought its possession.⁴

Time has obliterated the site of the old grist mill, but it was in the vicinity of Mill and Charles streets at the falls of the Moshassuck River, now a fading industrial area.

The town meeting of 24 May 1673 recorded the grant of land made in 1647 to John Smith, Sr. of "tenn acors mor or Lese At or about the place wheer the mill now standeth, sixe Acors mor or Lese of meddow Lieng at the upear End of that which is Caled the Great meddow on the southwestard sid of the River Called Moshucsucc six Acors of meddow at the plac comonly Caled wainscote meddow lieing and being part of it on the south side and part of it on the North side of the River. . . ."⁵

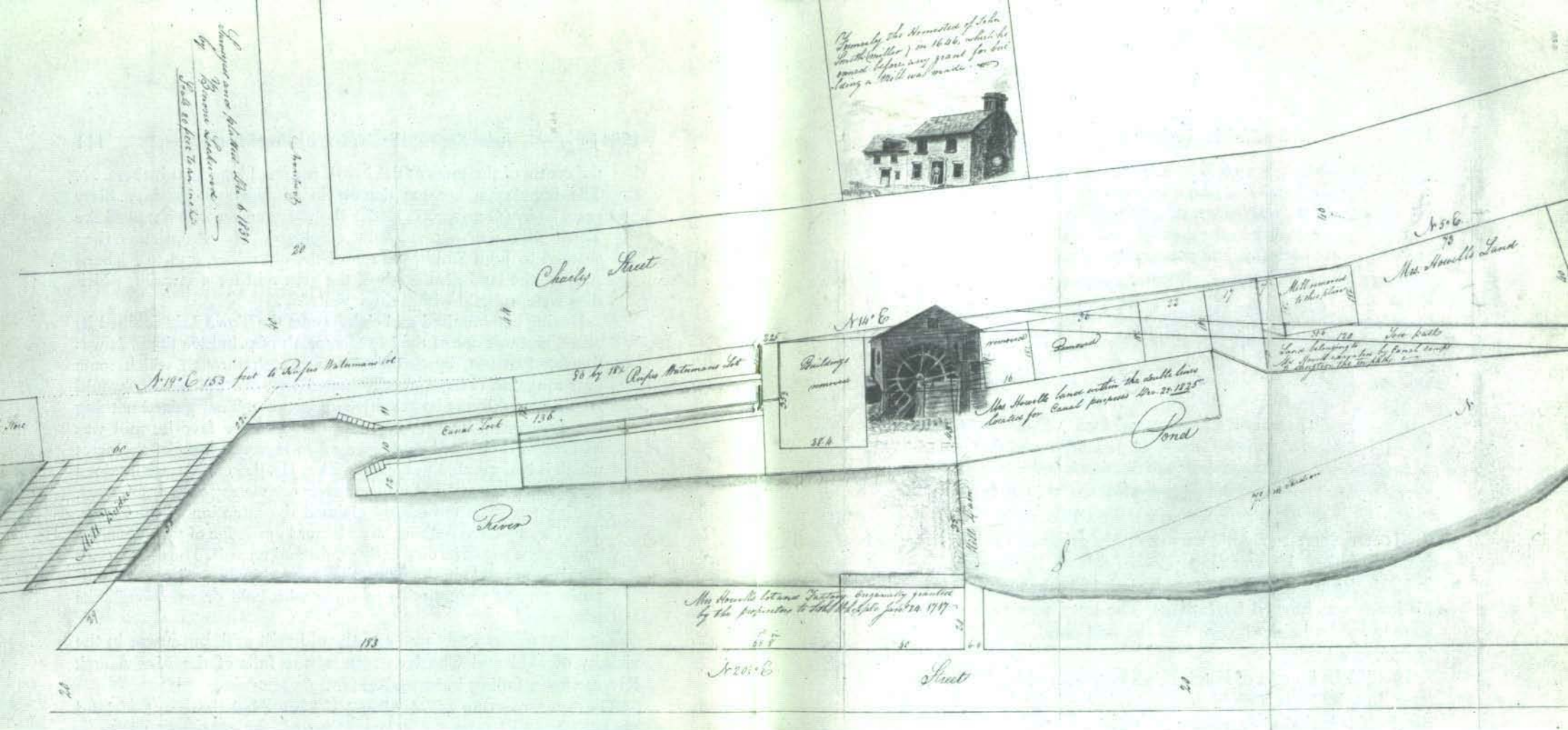
CHILDREN OF JOHN¹ AND ALICE SMITH:

2 I JOHN² SMITH

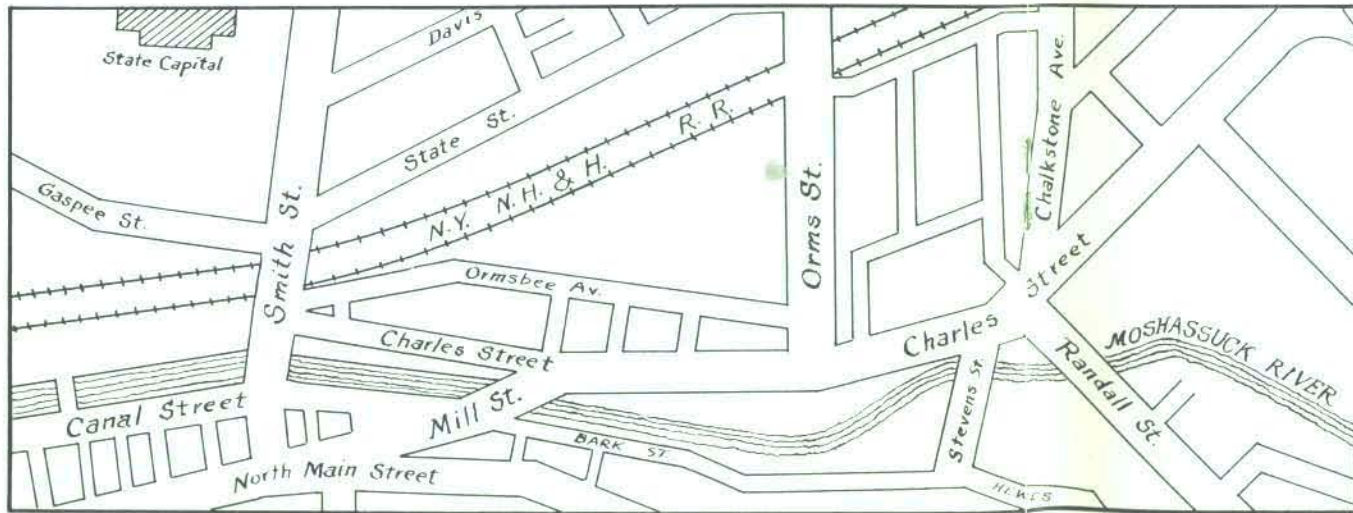
II ELIZABETH² SMITH married Shadrach Manton of Provi-

⁴Henry C. Dorr, "The Planting and Growth of Providence . . ." *Rhode Island Historical Tracts*, no. 15 (Providence, 1882), p. 48-53.

⁵*The Early Records of the Town of Providence . . .* (Providence, 1893), v. 3, p. 239.



From the Society's Collection



Plat of the area surrounding the original town mill in Providence, surveyed in 1831 by Benoni Lockwood, showing the mill and the home of John Smith, miller. The mill was off Charles Street above the Mill Bridge, which is the present Mill Street, a short link connecting North Main and Charles streets, about a quarter of a mile northeast of the State House. At the left is a section taken from a Providence city map which will assist in identifying this location.

dence, son of Edward. He was found dead on the road 27 Jan. 1714, and a jury returned the verdict that he died of natural causes. He was town clerk 1667-68-69-70, served as deputy in the same period, and held offices as surveyor of highways and overseer of poor. He was a cooper.

CHILDREN OF SHADRACH AND ELIZABETH (SMITH) MANTON:

- 1 EDWARD MANTON b. 11 Dec. 1658; d. 14 Aug. 1723; m. Elizabeth of John and Sarah Thornton, who d. after 1723.
- 2 ANN MANTON m. 18 Sept. 1682 John Keese, who d. 10 Dec. 1700. She d. in 1728.
- 3 ELIZABETH MANTON m. Henry Esten, of Thomas and Ann, who was b. 11 Jan. 1651 and d. 23 Mar. 1711. (Grandchildren of Shadrach and Elizabeth are named in Austin's *Genealogical Dictionary*.)¹

SECOND GENERATION

2 JOHN² SMITH (*John*¹) carried on the grist mill business inherited from his father. He was made Ensign 6 Nov. 1654, was a juryman in 1661, deputy 1666-72 and town clerk 1672 through 1676. In 1682 his home was burned by Indians. The town records in his custody were saved by being thrown into the mill pond, it is said, and were later rescued.

In 1655 he bought of Hugh Bewit two acres of land, and ten years later drew lot 21 in a division of lands in his father's right. Land laid out to him included six acres of the Neck, abutting Arthur Fenner, John Jones and Shadrach Manton, six acres at a place called New Bridge, and 150 acres abutting John Brown up the West river, being a part of a meadow or low land which was granted to John Smith Sr. and John Smith Jr. by the town.

He married SARAH WHIPPLE, of Capt. John and Sarah Whipple, who was b. 2 Feb. 1642 and died after 1687.

His will, made 22 Feb. 1681/2 and approved by the Town Council 2 June 1682, bequeathed to wife Sarah:

... halfe the mill with ye halfe of ye land neere, viz) ten acres upon ye hill, & ye valley whereon ye house standeth to say ye one halfe of it, And ye halfe of all ye land & meadow at ye west River, reaching as farr as the lower End of william Haukins is meadow, & halfe my meadow at ye Great meadow, & halfe my part of ye Saw mill, & ye

meadow at wenScott the halfe of it; & six acrs of land in ye neck ye halfe of it; with the halfe of ye house & goods & catle, The halfe of all which is abovementioned I bequeath to my wife durning her life, & ye other halfe to my son John Smith, So: that at my wifs decease ye med at wenscot to be resined up to be | divided | equally among his brothers & himsefe, to say into seven parts.

Also I make my wife Exsecutrix & my son John Exsecutor, to receive & pay Such debts as are found due. And after ye decease of my wife, then yt halfe which his mother possesst to fall to him my said son John.

And to my Daughter Sarrah I give fourty acrs of land; And my Daughter Alice forty Acrs which is to be laid out a this side ye seven mile line. And to my daughter mary tenn shillings. I give likewise to my son John sixty acrs of land at wanscot, with this provisor, yt he take it so as not to wrong ye rest of his brethren in spoyling the rest; And ye remainder of my land there to be Equally devided among his six brethren. Likewise a hundred & forty Acrs at wenscot meadow to be Equally devided among my seven sons, Likewise for two Rights & a halfe of Comon to be Equally desposed of among my seaven sons when it coms to be drawne for by lott or otherwise. Alwayes provided that Sarah & Alice have theirs first.

The bequests to son John were made with the condition that he fail not in being helpful to his mother in bringing up his brothers and sisters, "some of them being very young."⁶

The inventory taken by John Whipple, Jr., and William Hopkins, totaled £90 1s 9d. It is interesting to note that the grist mill house over it and equipment were valued at £40.⁷

On 21 May 1709 partition of the lands of John were made to sons John, Joseph, Benjamin, William, and Elisha; sons Israel and Daniel had died not long after their father.

CHILDREN OF JOHN² AND SARAH (WHIPPLE) SMITH:

- 3 I JOHN³ SMITH
- II SARAH³ SMITH, d. 14 Oct. 1725; m. Richard Clemence of Thomas and Elizabeth Clemence, who d. 11 Oct. 1723.

CHILDREN⁸ OF RICHARD AND SARAH (SMITH) CLEMENCE:

⁶*The Early Records of the Town of Providence*... (Providence, 1894), v. 6, p. 60.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁸Providence original vital records.

- 1 SARAH Clemence, b. 11 Nov. 1688. She is named in her father's will as Sarah Angell.⁹ In the Court of Common Pleas, Providence, for the June term, 1751, Elizabeth Clemence sued John Angell, Providence merchant, for dower rights in real estate held by Angell. Possibly this John Angell was the husband of Sarah Clemence, and the suit was brought by her grandmother, Elizabeth Clemence.¹⁰
 - 2 MARY Clemence, b. 24 May 1689.
 - 3 ANNE Clemence, b. 11 Dec. 1690. Her mother's will left to daughter, Anne Browne, £10, which sum was to be left in the executor's hands, with interest to be paid to Anne until her son, James Appleby, was of age. If he died, it was to go to his sister, Ann Appleby.¹¹ Providence vital records list the death of James Appleby 21 Dec. 1716, and a Providence deed 9 Dec. 1718 identifies Ann as his widow. The marriage of Ann Appleby and Isaac Brown, by Richard Waterman, Justice, 29 Mar. 1724, appears in Providence marriage records.
 - 4 THOMAS Clemence, b. 6 Aug. 1693.
 - 5 ABIGAIL Clemence, b. 4 Dec. 1695; m. 7 June 1716 John Thornton. Children recorded were RICHARD, STEPHEN, SOLOMON, DINAH, JOHN, and DANIEL.¹²
- III ALICE³ SMITH, b. 1665; d. 19 Feb. 1735/6; m. (1) Major John Dexter, son of Gregory and Abigail (Fullerton) Dexter, b. 6 Nov. 1652; d. 23 Apr. 1706; m. (2) 3 Feb. 1727 Governor Joseph Jenckes, b. 1656; d. 1740. She is buried in the North Burial Ground.

CHILDREN OF JOHN AND ALICE (SMITH) DEXTER:¹³

- 1 STEPHEN Dexter, b. 15 Apr. 1689; m. Susannah Whipple of Joseph and Alice (Smith) Whipple and had JOHN, JOSEPH, CHRISTOPHER, JEREMIAH, EDWARD, SUSAN, who m. William Brown; FREELove, who m. Peter

⁹*The Early Records of the Town of Providence . . .* (Providence, 1901), v. 16, p. 292.

¹⁰Original papers in the custody of the clerk of the Superior Court, Providence.

¹¹*The Early Records of the Town of Providence . . .*, v. 16, p. 418.

¹²Providence original vital records.

¹³*Ibid.*

- Randall; and WAITSTILL, who m. Charles Field.
- 2 JAMES Dexter, b. 22 Feb. 1691; d. 7 Nov. 1731. Austin's *Genealogical Dictionary* lists his wife as Hannah Wilkinson, daughter of Josias and Hannah (Tyler) Wilkinson. The Dexter family genealogy names Mary Whipple as his wife; possibly he was twice married. His children were: JOHN, ANNE, JAMES, DAVID, HOPESTILL, and MERCY Dexter.
 - 3 JOHN Dexter, b. 24 Oct. 1692; d. 29 June 1716. He was a sea captain and unmarried.
 - 4 MARY Dexter, b. 30 Apr. 1694; d. 22 Sept. 1760; m. 10 Dec. 1713 John Angell of James and Abigail (Dexter) Angell, who was b. 4 Oct. 1691 and d. 11 Feb. 1785. They had: JOHN, JAMES, and ABIGAIL Angell.
 - 5 ABIGAIL Dexter, b. 26 Apr. 1696; m. (1) Arthur Fenner of Arthur and Mary (Smith) Fenner, who d. before 1723; m. (2) Elisha Greene of James and Mary (Fones) Greene, who was b. 5 Aug. 1698. A daughter by the first marriage was SARAH Fenner; children by the second marriage: ELISHA and ABIGAIL Greene.
 - 6 SARAH Dexter, b. 27 June 1698; d. 5 July 1773; m. John Comstock of Samuel and Elizabeth (Arnold) Comstock, who was b. 26 Mar. 1693; d. Jan. 1750.
 - 7 PHEBE Dexter, b. 4 Aug. 1700; d. 1766; m. 13 Sept. 1716 Thomas Kilton of Robert and Bethia (Fenner) Kilton, who was b. 17 Jan. 1690; d. 11 May 1749. Children were FREELove, JOSEPH, WILLIAM, STEPHEN, JAMES and PHEBE Kilton.
 - 8 ANNE Dexter, b. 6 Nov. 1702; m. 18 Jan. 1725 John Brown, and had son JOHN BROWN, Jr.
 - 9 ALICE Dexter, b. 14 Oct. 1705; m. 10 Feb. 1725 William Olney of John and Rachel (Coggeshall) Olney.
- IV MARY³ SMITH, d. 13 Dec. 1737; m. Arthur Fenner of Arthur and Mehitable (Waterman) Fenner of Providence, who d. 24 Apr. 1725.

CHILDREN OF ARTHUR AND MARY (SMITH) FENNER:

- 1 ARTHUR Fenner, d. 1723; m. Abigail Dexter of John and Alice (Smith) Dexter, his first cousin; she m. (2) Elisha Greene.

- 2 MARY Fenner, d. 7 Oct. 1745 unmarried.
- 3 JOHN Fenner, d. 24 Nov. 1725; m. 1 Nov. 1724 Amey Colwell, b. 1703, dau. of Robert and Mary Colwell. They had one daughter, MARY, b. 20 Apr. 1725. Amey m. (2) Joseph Thornton.
- 4 MERCY or MARCY Fenner, m. in Providence 13 Oct. 1726 Solomon Rutenberg, of Olneyville. John Austin's *Genealogical Dictionary* records son THOMAS and two daughters. Providence vital records list the marriage of Solomon Bradford of Gersham, dec., and Priscilla of Bristol to Mary Owen, widow, daughter of Solomon and Mary Rutenberg, 9 Nov. 1769. Miscellaneous papers on the Owen family at The Rhode Island Historical Society name as third wife of Joseph Owen, son of Josiah and Polly (Esten) Owen, Mary Tripp, widow of Anthony and daughter of _____ Rutenberg of Olneyville. Joseph d. 1767. One daughter, Ruth, who married Thomas Abbott of Providence, is listed.
- 5 EDWARD Fenner, d. in 1767; m. (1) Phebe Barton; m. (2) 11 Apr. 1728 Amy Thornton, widow of Josiah, and daughter of Richard Borden. Children were EDWARD, JR., who m. (1) Dinah Potter, of Capt. Abel and m. (2) Wealthian Colegrove of Stephen; CAPT. ARTHUR of Fairfield, N. Y., who m. Rachel (Corp) Westcott, widow of Stephen Westcott and daughter of John Corp; JOHN, who m. (1) Lydian Carpenter of Hezekiah, and m. (2) Amey Downing of John, widow of Robert Colwell; STEPHEN, who m. Frances Corp of Edward; SARAH, who m. Col. John Waterman; ALICE, who m. (1) Simeon Strivens and m. (2) Col. John Waterman as his second wife; ESTHER, who m. William Corp of Edward; MARY, who m. William Harrington and removed to Williamstown, Mass.; and FREELove, who m. Andrew Edmonds.

- 4 V JOSEPH³ SMITH
- 5 VI BENJAMIN³ SMITH, b. about 1672
- VII ISRAEL³ SMITH, d. young
- VIII DANIEL³ SMITH, d. young
- 6 IX ELISHA³ SMITH, b. 14 Apr. 1680
- 7 X WILLIAM³ SMITH, b. 1682

[to be continued]

SHIPBUILDING IN COLONIAL RHODE ISLAND

by W. E. MINCHINTON

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ESTABLISHED as soon as settlement permitted, shipbuilding in the American colonies had become a major industry by the American Revolution. Abundant timber supplies made shipbuilding cheaper there than in Great Britain where wood was becoming scarce and expensive. By 1775 there were shipyards in all the colonies but the main centre of the industry was New England. The statistics of colonial shipbuilding are still unsatisfactory but a welcome beam of light has been shed on the New England scene by the study of Massachusetts shipping 1697-1714 recently carried out by Professor and Mrs. Bailyn.¹ In their analysis of the changing pattern of production in these years they show that while the main shipbuilding centre at this time was the Boston Bay area, there was a marked expansion of production in the Narragansett Bay area where shipyards were to be found at Taunton, Bristol, Freetown, Swansea, and Rehoboth. Taunton, which had built only two vessels of the Massachusetts fleet of 1698, contributed thirty-eight to the total registered by the end of 1714; the other four towns in the region accounted for another thirty-five. Since the vessels produced in these southern yards were considerably larger than average, their importance in the tonnage totals is greater than mere numbers of vessels would suggest. The average size of vessels of known tonnage produced in Taunton was 96.2 tons, that of vessels built in the five Narragansett Bay towns was 75.9 tons.² How many larger vessels were built there after 1714 we do not know but in the half-century before the Revolution, Rhode Island earned a reputation as a builder of shoal-draft sloops and schooners up from 20 to 80 tons for trading voyages to the southern plantations.³

Vessels were built not only for colonial shipowners but also for British merchants. By the time of the Revolution, it has been said, about a third of all the shipping of British registry had been built in the American colonies, chiefly in New England. There were two

¹Bernard and Lotte Bailyn, *Massachusetts Shipping, 1697-1714, a Statistical Study* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1959).

²*Ibid.*, p. 50-51.

³John G. B. Hutchins, *The American Maritime Industries and Public Policy, 1789-1914* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1941), p. 151.

main methods by which British merchants obtained colonial-built shipping. A common practice was, as Edmund Burke described it,⁴ for the merchants of New England to construct ships on their own account, load them with the produce of the colony — naval stores, fish, and fish-oil principally — and send them upon a trading voyage to Spain, Portugal, or the Mediterranean. Having disposed of their cargo, they made what advantage they could by freight, until such time as they could sell the vessel herself to advantage. British merchants could therefore buy colonial vessels offered for sale in Great Britain. But ships were also built on commission for British merchants in the American colonies. Two such, as the letters which follow describe, were built for a Bristol, England, merchant, Isaac Hobhouse.

During the seventeenth century the Hobhouse family had occupied themselves as mariners and shipwrights at Minehead in Somerset. There Isaac was born in 1685, the youngest of four children of John Hobhouse and Anne Maddox, and there he was brought up. Directly he reached manhood, however, he must have succumbed to the attractive power of Bristol, fast increasing in importance as "the metropolis of the west of England," for he was firmly established there by 1723. His commercial interests were almost entirely confined to the triangular trade between England, the west coast of Africa, and either the West Indies or the plantation colonies. His name is to be found amongst the signatories to a number of petitions sent by Bristol merchants to Whitehall between 1720 and 1755, for example, those relating to trade with Virginia in 1723, with South Carolina in 1734, and with Africa in 1739. When the new Africa Company was founded in 1750, he became a member. Like other Bristol merchants of his time, he had industrial as well as mercantile interests; he was a partner in the Joseph Percivall & Copper Company and in a sugar refinery at Redcliffe.

Though he was regarded as an eminent merchant, he did not, unlike many of his contemporaries, hold office in the government of the city of Bristol, of which he became a free burgess in 1724, or in the Society of Merchant Venturers, of which he became a member in the same year. Possibly owing to some physical infirmity, he seems to have shunned public life to an extent remarkable for so considerable and enterprising a man. Having acquired a very large fortune with

⁴*Account of the European Settlements in America* (London, 1757).

the highest reputation, he retired from business about 1757 and died unmarried at his house in Queen Square, Bristol, on February 20, 1763.

Like many eighteenth century merchants he owned or had shares in a number of ships. Such was the man for whom vessels were built at Warwick, Rhode Island, in the early 1720s. Only a fragment of the correspondence concerning the building of the vessels survives. Three letters dealing with the first transaction (together with a fourth relating to a later transaction) are preserved in Bristol, England, three in the Jefferies Collection in the Central Reference Library, and the fourth in the City Archives. The first three are written by John Michael Chenevard, who was possibly descended from a Huguenot family of Poitou. Chenevard himself married Jean Beauchamp of Hartford, Connecticut, and had two children. His son, John, was baptized in Hartford on August 5, 1733, and his daughter, Marianne, on March 23, 1734/5. Shortly afterwards, Chenevard died on April 7, 1735, aged 56.⁵ More than a decade earlier he had been in correspondence with Isaac Hobhouse of Bristol, England. His first letter runs as follows:⁶

Newport Rhode Island 14 March 1722/3

Messrs Hobhouse & Co.
Gentlemen

I sent you via St Christophers the 24 December last copy of the bargain made for your snow the Johanna and I had the honour to write you again the 7 February via Boston that I would send her to Messrs Crump & Hassell to Barbados and that I advised them that she should sail from hence the 26 March at farthest but to my sorrow she is not finished yet so I believe it will be a month longer before she sailes.

I cant now and I believe it will be impossible for me to perform that article in your general letter by which you order me to mention in the bill of sale the share of each owner but I hope the mentioning thereof in the account will be satisfactory to you all.

The ship will cost about 1500 of this country money which are about £600 sterling and I hope to procure her about £160 freight Barbados money except I take the freight as paid here to prevent any drawing on you. This will be sufficient for insurance if you make any, you may mention in the policy the snow Johanna Owen Arnold master from the colony of Rhode Island to Barbados for she is built at a place called

⁵Charles W. Baird, *History of the Huguenot Emigration to America* (New York, 1885), II, 335-6.

⁶Jefferies Mss. XIII, 33 (Bristol Central Reference Library, Eng.).

Warwick altho she is not thought dangerous by anybody bringing her here yet the insurance I suppose will cost no more

I conclude in great haste

Gentlemen

Your most humble servant

John Michael Chenevard

About two weeks later Chenevard wrote a second letter which repeats most of the information contained in the first.⁷

Newport Rhode Island 29 March 1723

Owners the Johanna
Gentlemen,

I had the honour to write to you via Boston the 14th instant to repeat you my former letters and to acquaint you that the ship and outsett will cost about £1500 which makes about £600 sterling and that I shall procure for her about £160 freight to Barbados. If you insure tis fit to mention on the show Johanna Capt Arnold from the colony of Rhode Island because she is not at Newport yet. Tis not thought by anybody there is any danger from Warwick here but I suppose the premium will not be the higher. I thought about January last that this vessel had sailed long before this time but some people here are like snailes especially the man from whom I bought her. Wee can't keep her less than a month here. I shall not be able to mention your respective shares in the bill of sale, the whole interest of everyone will not be over above sufficient for all your costs. I should be glad to hear from England the price of our goods. I did not receive one letter.

I am [in] sincerity your most humble servant

Gentlemen

John Michael Chenevard

I give my services to all friends

I wrote the 20 inst. to Messrs Lyde⁸ and serve'all others via Dublin per Capt Jervis

Then there is a gap in the correspondence but a letter written two months later brings better news and completes this episode.⁹

Newport 27 May 1723

Owners the Johanna
Sirs,

I had the honour to write to you about the 18th inst by the Johanna snow and the 24th via Boston that she sailed from hence the 22nd with

⁷*Ibid.*, 31.

⁸Another Bristol merchant firm. Lionel Lyde was "an eminent Virginian merchant and one of the Aldermen of the city of Bristol."

⁹BRO 8029 (16) b, Bristol Record Office, Council House, Bristol, Eng.

a fair wind that continued four days so this is only to accompany a duplicate of your account, that you may see what bills I have drawne, desiring you to give due honour to all them and to believe mee in sincerity
Gentlemen

Your most humble servant

John Michael Chenevard

But the *Johanna* was not the only vessel which Hobhouse obtained from Rhode Island. The final letter, which survives in the Hobhouse Manuscripts relating to this colony, concerns a similar transaction eight months later. This time the letter, which contains information about the process of shipbuilding itself, comes from Thomas Quircke.¹⁰

Newport February the 3d 1723/4

Mr. Isaac Hobhouse

Sir,

When I wrote to you last I was in hopes the vessel would have been launched before this time, but being winter time the day's so short and the weather so bad that wee are forced to ketch at a good day when we can gitt it [to] hand haveing but fue hands it go on very teadious so that if we have good weather may be launch'd in a monthes time but the weather being so uncerttain there is no man can be sure when.

Capt Powel is heare waighting to sett up a vesle and is likely to tarry a good deal longer for the timber is the greatest part of it growing in the woods yeat which I think must be very unfit for to put in a vesle so green espesially considering what trade she is desined for But it must be so or none as it is impossible to get stuff that is seasoned, building being so much in demand, and had not wee mett with this frame as we did, must have staid a considerable time longer and at last have taken up with green stuff, but my greatest comfort is that we have neither timber nor plank but what has been cutt down a twelve-month and some two years which must be much better for servis in all cases than that which is green

I writ you in mine of November the 29th that if the futtocks¹¹ would allow of it would make her half a foot deeper in the holde than the first dimentions pursuant to your orders but the futtocks would not allow of above an inch or two as she was not desined for so much when she was moulded but wee made a shift to make her four inches broader. Wee are now shott up to the gunilwhale and if the weather favors us cannot be long before she's off. She is as good a peese of work as ever was done in America and as likely a bottom for sailing. I hope she will answer your expectation in those respects which, that shee may, shall be sole study

¹⁰Jefferies Mss. XIII, 79.

¹¹The ship's middle timbers between floor and top timbers.

and care of him who in all casis wherein you shall think fitt to imploy him, remain your most faithfull humble servant at command.

Thomas Quircke¹²

Incomplete though this correspondence is, these four letters expose some of the problems connected with shipping and shipbuilding in the early eighteenth century. For example, bad weather or the shortage of timber could delay construction. Professor Albion records that the problem of green timber, about which Thomas Quircke was concerned, was a general one. "Ships built to order were often thrown together in a few months with any kind of green timber."¹³ The correspondence also contains reference to marine insurance. Clearly Chenevard was a cautious person determined to cover himself against possible mishap to the ship on her maiden voyage from Warwick in Narragansett Bay to Newport, Rhode Island. And then there is information about the first trading voyage. As on another occasion in 1723,¹⁴ the vessel carried freight on her first voyage not directly to England but first to Barbados where Crump and Hasell were Hobhouse's agents. From Barbados the *Johanna* probably brought a cargo of sugar and other West Indian commodities back to England. Unfortunately while there is mention of the cost of the *Johanna* there is no mention of her size. But it is possible to make an estimate as we know that, during the Colonial period, prices of vessels built in North America generally ranged between £3 and £4 per ton.¹⁵ So the *Johanna* was probably a vessel of between 150 and 200 tons burthen.

This correspondence leaves the larger general questions unanswered. How many ships were built in Rhode Island for British merchants before the Revolution? How important was Warwick as a shipbuilding center? Was there a boom in shipbuilding in Rhode Island in the early 1720s, as these letters suggest?

¹²Probably Capt. Thomas Quirke who was master of the Bristol ship *Jamaica* in 1730. See E. Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America* (Washington, D. C., Carnegie Institute, 1930-35), II, 428, and IV, 129, 190.

¹³R. G. Albion, *Forests and Seapower, The Timber Problem of the Royal Navy, 1652-1862* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1926), p. 246.

¹⁴See, for example, my *The Trade of Bristol in the 18th Century* (Bristol Record Society, XX, 1957), p. 93-101 where a further extract from the Hobhouse letters is printed. These letters concern the *Friendship*, which was built at Boston in 1722 and made her maiden voyage to Barbados in 1723.

¹⁵Hutchins, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

A NOTE ON GREGORY DEXTER

by BRADFORD F. SWAN

WHEN I wrote my biography of Gregory Dexter,¹ the progenitor of the Dexter family of Rhode Island, World War II was still in progress and to ask any Englishman to do research for me in that country at that time seemed an unwarranted imposition. Consequently, for my statements about the birth date and birthplace of Dexter I had to rely on data gleaned from the published researches of genealogists in this country. These revealed discrepancies which could not be reconciled and because none of the findings was documented in any way I was forced to choose rather arbitrarily among them — a sort of genealogy by majority vote. The result of my poll was that Dexter was probably born in Olney, in the county of Buckinghamshire, in 1610.²

Evidence has recently come to light that when Gregory Dexter was apprenticed to Elizabeth Alde in London in 1632 to learn the printer's trade, his village of origin was listed as Old, in the county of Northamptonshire, where his father, Gregory, was a yeoman. This evidence indicates that it might prove profitable to seek either a record of Gregory Dexter's birth or baptism in the parish records of Old.

Early last year D. F. McKenzie published an article entitled "A List of Printers' Apprentices, 1605-1640" in the 1960 volume of *Studies in Bibliography, Papers of the Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia*.³ Working with two hitherto unprinted manuscript volumes in the records of the Stationers Company of London, the Register of Apprentices, 1605-1666, and the Register of Freemen, 1605-1704, he compiled his list of apprentices, giving the essential facts of their apprenticeship agreements and certain other data. McKenzie makes Gregory Dexter No. 13 in his list, and records that he was apprenticed to Elizabeth Alde, widow of Edward, on March 12, 1632, for a term of eight years.

McKenzie also adds from the records the information that Gregory was the son of Gregory Dexter, yeoman, and that his town or village and county of origin was Old, Northamptonshire.

¹Bradford F. Swan, *Gregory Dexter of London and New England 1610-1700*, (Rochester, N.Y., 1949).

²*Ibid.*, p. 1 and 3-5.

³*Op. cit.*, (Charlottesville, Va., 1960) v. XIII, pp. 109-141.

Now this does not necessarily mean that Gregory Dexter was born in Old; to be precise, it merely means that this was his home village in 1632. But the supposition can be made, however, that his father, being a yeoman, might well have resided there for some time, perhaps all his life, as yeomen were not prone to move about. Furthermore, although Olney, by tradition Dexter's birthplace, was no great distance away across the county line in Buckinghamshire, the names Old and Olney are somewhat similar, and it is particularly interesting that several genealogists, when stating that Dexter was born in Olney, make the mistake of placing Olney in Northamptonshire.

There seems no good reason to believe that any mistake was made in entering Old as the village of origin in the apprenticeship records. For instance, Richard Oulton, who succeeded to Mrs. Alde's business and then entered a partnership with Dexter, had two apprentices whose village of origin was listed as Ould.⁴

This variant spelling calls for a bit of explanation. Old seems to have been spelled about as many different ways as it is possible for a three-letter place-name to be spelled. It is sometimes spelled Wold, and at one time the names Old and Wold were apparently used interchangeably. It is also spelled Ould and Would, Wowld and Wowlde. It is given as Old on the map in *Road Atlas of Great Britain/ 3 Miles to 1 Inch*, a current reference work, but in the *Survey Gazetteer of the British Isles* by John Bartholomew (the 9th edition, including a summary of the 1951 census) it is given as "Old, or Wold," a parish and village in Northamptonshire. This work states that the parish contains 2,076 acres, has a population of 300, and that the village is seven miles southwest of Kettering, the nearest town of any size. In Dexter's time, Wowlde was a parish in Orlingbury Hundred, and Orlingbury was the principal nearby town. The *Survey Gazetteer* reveals that Orlingbury has diminished in size and is now slightly less populous than Old.

It is quite interesting that Elizabeth Alde and Richard Oulton, her successor, should have trained three apprentices, all from Old.

Obviously a careful search should be made in the parish records of Old, not only to see if this was the birthplace of Gregory Dexter but also to see what connection, if any, existed between this obscure Northamptonshire village and a prominent London printing house.

⁴These are McKenzie's No. 423, William Isam, son of Edward, gentleman, and No. 424, Robert Jennison, son of Thomas, yeoman.

Mr. and Mrs. Monahon attended the twenty-first annual meeting of the American Association for State and Local History held in San Francisco from August 29 through September 1. This group, comprised mainly of directors and trustees of historical societies, concerns itself seriously with the solution of their problems. It is supported by royalties derived from the publication of *American Heritage* and gives grants-in-aid to students working in the field of local history. The program of the conference centered about the special feature of the folk image of the West and of the Civil War. There were also practical panel discussions concerning problems of organization, maintenance, and management of historical society libraries, the role of local county societies, and of the preservation of buildings and sites of historical interest. A most inspiring discussion came out of the description of work done in Junior Historical Societies by representatives from Texas, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Colorado, where Junior groups exist.

The Monahons also made several stops at western and Canadian museums, historical societies, restored buildings and historic sites.

* * *

With the assistance of a grant from the American Philosophical Society Dr. Jacques M. Downs has spent the summer working on the Carrington Papers, an outstanding collection relating to the American trade with the Far East during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Edward Carrington (1775-1843), a native of New Haven, Connecticut, came to Providence at an early age and embarked on a mercantile career in the employ of Samuel Butler and Company. In 1802 he went to Canton, China, where he laid the foundation of the great fortune which he later accumulated. While in Canton he served for several years as United States Consul.

Carrington returned to Providence in 1811 and after the War of 1812 became one of the most successful merchants in the country. At one time he was the owner of twenty-six vessels engaged in world-wide commerce. He was also active in textile manufacturing, was president of the Blackstone Canal Company, and served several terms in the Rhode Island General Assembly.

Dr. Downs has arranged and classified a large part of the collection and plans to continue the work next year.

* * *

Mr. John H. Wells, who has voluntarily undertaken the indexing of many books and manuscripts in the Society's library, including the 1850 and the 1860 federal censuses of Rhode Island, is now indexing the 1865 Rhode Island census. Several of the works which he has indexed have been reproduced on microcards and thus made available to other libraries.

* * *

Wendell D. Garrett, assistant editor of the Adams Papers at the Massachusetts Historical Society, has been engaged to prepare for publication in book form the "Catalog of the Rhode Island Historical Society Furniture Collection" by Ralph E. Carpenter, Jr., which appeared in *Rhode Island History* from October, 1955, to January 1960. Descriptions will be materially expanded and a number of pieces received since 1960 will be added. Publication of the volume is planned for next spring.

* * *

Alan H. Rosenus, a Brown University student employed by the Society during the summer, has listed and labeled all of the printings stored in bins on the fourth floor of John Brown House. The bins have been numbered and the task of finding and returning the printings has been greatly simplified.

* * *

Work done on John Brown House during the summer included painting all of the trim, repainting the side doors tile red instead of black, and removing the paint from the front gate in order to restore its natural mahogany color. By winter all of the windows in the main part of the house will have been covered with combination screens

and storm windows. The elms on the Society's grounds have been treated with Carolate as a protection against the Dutch elm disease.

* * *

Mrs. Lawrence E. Tilley has been engaged by the Society to assist in the library, taking the place of Mrs. Frank Holland, who resigned the first of the year because of illness.

Miss Benedicta Johnson came to the Society in June as part-time bookkeeper, spending two days each week in the office on the second floor.

Mrs. Edith Pye, secretary on the first floor, was taken ill in July but is expected to return in October.

THE RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEW MEMBERS

June 3, 1961 — September, 1961

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| Miss Dorothy M. Alker
Cranston, R. I. | Mrs. Richard Lewis, Sr. |
| Miss Alberta F. Brown | Mrs. Gladys Maxwell
Jackson Heights, New York |
| Mrs. Margaret I. Buffington
New York, N. Y. | Mrs. Robert F. Oldmixon
Barrington, R. I. |
| Mrs. Henry B. Congdon | Mrs. J. Wilbur Riker |
| Miss E. Rita Davidson
Cranston, R. I. | Mr. Henry L. Savage, Jr.
Princeton, New Jersey |
| Mrs. Elizabeth F. Emerson | Mrs. Elizabeth N. Selle |
| Mrs. Arnold Hirsch
Pawtucket, R. I. | Miss Louise Smith
Charlottesville, Virginia |
| Mr. Richard Hubbard Howland
Washington, D. C. | Mr. Arnold Smith
Charlottesville, Virginia |
| Mrs. James M. Kiberd | Mrs. Julius Stoll, Jr. |
| Mr. Richard Lewis, Sr. | Miss Hope Willis |

EXHIBITION

A selection of period dolls from

*The MRS. ARTHUR MILTON McCRILLIS
Collection*

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER