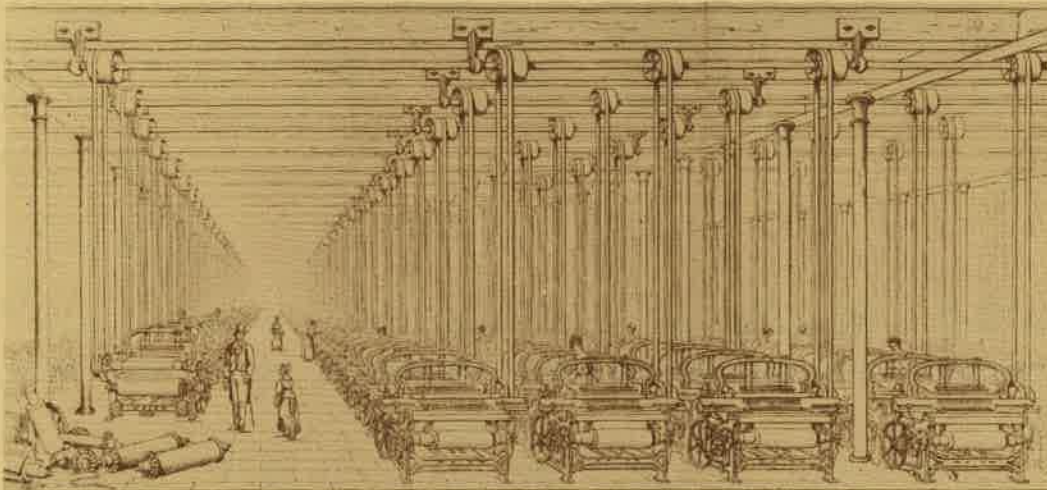


“ ‘For the Sake of Commerce’ :
Rhode Island, Slavery, and
the Textile Industry ’ ”



*An essay by Myron O. Stachiw
to accompany the exhibit*

“ The Loom & The Lash : Northern Industry and Southern Slavery. ”



An exhibit at the Museum of Rhode Island History at Aldrich House
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" 'For the Sake of Commerce': Rhode Island, Slavery and the Textile Industry'"

by Myron O. Stachiw

As to the clothing of the slaves on the plantations, they are said to be usually furnished by their owners or masters, every year, each with a coat and trousers, of a coarse woollen or woollen and cotton stuff (mostly made, especially for this purpose, in Providence, R.I.) for the winter, trousers of cotton osnaburghs for summer, sometimes with a jacket also of the same... The women have two dresses of striped cotton, three shifts, two pairs of shoes...¹

Frederick Law Olmsted made this observation in Virginia in 1853, while travelling as a reporter and chronicler of the customs and habits of the slaveholding states for a New York newspaper. Though not totally accurate regarding the dominance of Providence in the trade, he was correct in identifying Rhode Island as the center for the manufacture of coarse cloth for the clothing of Southern slaves. In the half century before the Civil War, Rhode Island led the nation in the number of mills producing "negro cloth," a generic name for a coarse, mixed cotton and woolen cloth produced exclusively for slaves. At least eighty-four warp and cloth mills were involved in the trade between 1814 and 1875, nearly one-third of the total number of textile mill sites developed in Rhode Island during this period.²

This extensive involvement with and dependence on the southern states for economic well-being was the source of much conflict in the political and moral thought of Rhode Island's commercial community. As anti-slavery and abolition activity intensified, many northern manufacturers chose profit over conscience and joined pro-slavery Southerners in opposition to the actions and demands of the "radical" abolitionists. Charles Sumner, a Massachusetts senator and abolitionist, condemned this "conspiracy" between the "cotton-planters and flesh-mongers of Louisiana and Mississippi" and the "cotton spinners and traffickers of New England" as a union of "the Lords of the Lash and the Lords of the Loom."³

Why did Rhode Island of all the Northern "free" states gain the particular distinction as the leader of this trade? By the early nineteenth century, a long and intimate relationship between Rhode Island and the South permitted Rhode Islanders to continue to profit from slavery long after its abolition in the state. Though many Northern industries from Colt firearms to Seth Luther clocks found important markets in the slaveholding states, few profited from the institution of slavery as directly as Rhode Island's textile industry.

During the Colonial period, Rhode Island merchants established extensive commercial relations with the Southern colonies, carrying produce, lumber and livestock to the south in exchange for sugar and

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1. Frederick Law Olmsted, *The Cotton Kingdom*, ed. Arthur M. Schlesinger (New York, 1953), 92.

2. Theodore A. Sande has identified 286 sites developed for textile mills between 1790 and 1860. Sande, "The Architecture of the Rhode Island Textile Industry, 1790-1860" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1972), 173.

3. Thomas H. O'Connor, *Lords of the Loom: The Cotton Whigs and the Coming of the Civil War* (New York, 1968), 81.

4. Jay Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade, 1700-1807* (Philadelphia, 1981), 26-28.

5. These figures were computed from John R. Bartlett, *Census of the Inhabitants of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, 1774* (Providence, 1858).

6. O'Connor, *Lords of the Loom*, 49.

molasses, rice, and tobacco from the staple-producing colonies. These items were then reshipped to England or Europe. The molasses was distilled into rum, which held a prominent position in another profitable trade undertaken by Rhode Island merchants—the slave trade. The journey to Africa to trade rum for slaves formed the second leg of the infamous triangular trade, completed by the carrying of captured Africans into slavery in the Southern colonies. Between 1709 and 1807, Rhode Island merchants financed nearly one thousand voyages to Africa, and transported more than 106,000 Africans to slavery in the Americas, nearly two-thirds of the American total.⁴

Rhode Island's involvement with slavery went beyond leadership in the slave trade. During the eighteenth century the proportion of free blacks and slaves to whites in Rhode Island was greater than in any Northern colony. Large farms in South County and on the bay islands were worked by slaves, who raised the livestock and produce sent to the South. Many gentlemen as well as those aspiring to that social distinction owned from one to several slaves as personal or household servants. Slaveholding was concentrated in the southern towns—Newport, North and South Kingstown, Charlestown, Warwick, Bristol, Portsmouth, and Jamestown—where nearly seventy-six percent of the colony's black population resided. In 1774 one out of eleven persons in this area was black, while in the northern towns the proportion dropped to one in thirty-three.⁵ (It was no coincidence that in the nineteenth century mills producing negro cloth were concentrated in South County. See Figure 1.)

These extensive commercial relations with the South were strengthened by deep social and familial ties to the region. Many of Rhode Island's merchants were born in or spent time in the South during their business careers; many found wives among the prominent Southern slaveholding families. Similarly many Southern families summered in Newport throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries where "the reciprocities of civilities" and "a better acquaintance with each other" gradually led to the loss of "their sectional and colonial prejudices."⁶

Rhode Island's entry into the production of negro cloth probably began innocently enough. The calls for economic independence following political independence were met with the successful establishment of the textile industry in Rhode Island. Stimulated by the Jeffersonian Embargo and the War of 1812, the domestic manufacture of all types of goods, particularly textiles, expanded rapidly. The years following the war saw the development of an economic policy called the American System—"buy nothing from abroad which we can make at home, with due encouragement and protection from our government." Armed with protective tariffs on imported manufactured goods, Northern manufacturers attempted to meet the needs of the nation's consumers. The combination of republican zeal, the availability of textile technology, and Rhode Islanders' familiarity with slavery and its needs probably led to the establishment of the early negro cloth mills in the state. Considering the difficulty of economic survival during the early decades of the textile industry, it is not surprising that many manufacturers chose a product protected by tariffs and with a market they had access to through familiar and established commercial networks. These policies proved so successful that following the 1824 Tariff, one economic observer commented "the consumption of British manufactured negro cloths ... had

materially decreased and importers had not been able to sell any quantity of them at prices to cover cost."⁷

The earliest organized opposition to Rhode Island's profits from slavery came from the Quakers in the eighteenth century. Criticizing Rhode Island's deep involvement in the slave trade, Samuel Hopkins wrote:

The inhabitants of Rhode Island, especially those of Newport, have had by far the greatest share in this traffic of all these United States. This trade in human species has been the first wheel of commerce in Newport, on which every other movement in business has been chiefly depended.⁸

Largely through the efforts of Hopkins and Moses Brown, a prominent Providence Friend, the Quakers were successful in influencing the Rhode Island General Assembly to pass the Gradual Emancipation Act in 1784 and the Act of 1787, prohibiting the slave trade in Rhode Island. Brown and Hopkins also established the Providence Abolition Society in 1790. Though they successfully prosecuted a number of Rhode Island slave traders in the next decade, including Moses Brown's brother John Brown, they were totally ineffective against the politically powerful DeWolf family, who continued to traffic in slaves out of Bristol into the 1820s, and eventually the Society dwindled to a handful of activists.

It was not until the organization of the American Anti-Slavery Society and state societies in the early 1830s that the public conscience was again awakened to slavery. Stimulated by the British debate over the immediate abolition of slavery in the British Colonies and its realization of that objective in 1833, the American Anti-Slavery Society was organized the same year. Agents were authorized to lecture and organize state societies advocating the immediate emancipation of slaves. The Rhode Island Anti-Slavery Society was created in February 1836 at the Rhode Island Anti-Slavery Convention. Theodore Weld, a leading abolitionist lecturer, organizer, and theorist, rejoiced at the establishment of the Rhode Island Society and wrote:

[Rhode Island] is steeped in the guilt and infamy of the African Slave Trade ... the most profitable customer of the South in her great staple of cotton ... the summer resort of thousands who hold slaves in the South ... What more befitting than that Rhode Island should organize a State Anti-Slavery Society in whose full laver she may cleanse her stains...⁹

Though the abolitionists did not specifically target the manufacturers or merchants of Rhode Island, their lecturers came under violent and sustained attack from this anti-abolitionist group. Henry B. Stanton, the American Anti-Slavery Society's agent in Rhode Island, was mobbed and stoned in Newport in 1835 and again in Providence the following year.¹⁰ In 1835 Providence, Woonsocket, Pawtucket, Newport, and Lime Rock (Smithfield) held anti-abolition town meetings.¹¹

The organizers of these anti-abolition meetings were almost all "gentlemen of property and standing"—men born into families who gave them wealth, business connections, higher education, and prominence. Many were also textile manufacturers. Leading the Providence group was Nicholas Brown, sixty-six years of age and a senior partner in the firm of Brown & Ives. By the 1830s the firm had turned to

7. Arthur Harrison Cole, *The American Wool Manufacture* (Cambridge, 1926), 1, 201.

8. Samuel Hopkins, "Essay on the African Slave Trade," signed "Crito," *Providence Gazette*, October 6 and 12, 1787.

9. *Proceedings of the Rhode Island Anti-Slavery Convention* (Providence, 1836) 86.

10. Arline Ruth Kiven, "The Nature and Course of the Anti-Slavery Movement in Rhode Island, 1637-1861" (M.A. thesis, Brown University, 1965), 68-72.

11. Jon Shanklin Gilkerson, Jr., "A City of Joiners: Voluntary Associations and the Formation of the Middle Class in Providence, 1830-1920" (Ph.D. dissertation, Brown University, 1981), 27.

12. Leonard L. Richards, "Gentlemen of Property and Standing": *Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York, 1970), 28-29.

13. Gilkerson, *A City of Joiners*, 29-32.

14. Gilkerson, *A City of Joiners*, 36.

15. E. Steadman, *The Southern Manufacturer* (Gallatin, Tenn., 1858), 18.

16. George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All! or Slaves Without Masters* (1856).

extensive involvement in cotton manufacture. Also in the group were Moses Brown Ives, Nicholas' forty-one year old nephew and a junior partner in the firm since 1832; William C. Goddard, Moses' brother-in-law, a professor at Brown University, who with his sons later joined the firm of Brown & Ives in cotton manufacturing; and Smith Bosworth, a self-made man who had become a "gentleman" by 1835 and later an agent for a cotton mill.¹²

In contrast to the elite status of the anti-abolitionists, most abolitionists belonged to the state's emerging middle class. Many were tradesmen or shopkeepers of middling prosperity or with expectations of upward mobility. The wealthiest of the Providence abolitionists, a forty-seven year old house carpenter, owned only \$15,000 in real estate; in contrast, seven anti-abolitionists were worth over \$100,000 each. Thirty of the thirty-six anti-abolitionists were in the top ten percent of the property owners among the white adult male population of Providence.¹³

The Rhode Island business community, particularly textile manufacturers, were motivated in their anti-abolition activities by Southern threats of a boycott of Northern goods and an end to the supply of cotton made available to Northern manufacturers. In their anti-abolition meetings, they wanted to demonstrate to the South that the "large Majority" of Northern communities, including their most prominent citizens, discountenanced abolitionist activities.¹⁴

As the abolition movement gained converts and became increasingly aggressive, Southerners began to advocate the establishment of textile mills in the South.

At present the larger portion of the purchased clothing for those slaves is manufactured in the free states, by abolitionists, and in many instances the goods are made into clothes by those inter-meddling fanatics ... The time has arrived when every sense of duty, of self-denial and patriotism demands of us to supply ourselves with the necessaries of life ... Why will we longer wait to be supplied by these Northern fanatics? This support should be withheld, because it enables them the better to prosecute their evil designs against our rights and interests...¹⁵

They also launched an aggressive pro-slavery campaign and a critique of the conditions of the poor laboring classes of the Northern manufacturing districts, often echoing the complaints of Northern laborers about wage slavery.

The vulgar parvenu millionaire of the North possesses a power that no master ever possessed; because this parvenu, this boss, this employer, can say to his workingman, 'I am not your master, I am not bound to support your family, 'tis nothing to me that you are sick or infirm, that you have many children or few ... and if your family starve, 'tis no business of mine ... the market is overcrowded with free laborers ... each ship from Europe brings a new supply...¹⁶

The abolitionists gained little support from the laboring classes of the Northern manufacturing districts. Though opposed to slavery and often identifying with the Southern slave, the artisan and urban working class based their opposition to slavery on a fear of the spread of "aristocracy" on the land. They saw the expansion of the slave labor system as the expansion of monopoly over the soil. This view

ENCOURAGE HOME ENTERPRISE.
COTTON AND WOOLEN GOODS.

THE subscribers have just added to their Factory a complete set of Woollen Machinery, and are now turning off various styles of superior.

KERSEYS & NEGRO GOODS

We also continue to supply our Celebrated Cotton, Onaburgs and Yarn at uncommonly low prices; and, in a few weeks, will be prepared to furnish a superior article of Striped Onaburgs.

Planters raising Sheep will please send us Wool—for which we will pay a fair price in Cash, or we will manufacture the Wool into Cloth for 12½ cents per yard, furnishing the warp for the same. Parties sending Wool will please send it early, so as to have it made up in time. It had best be washed before sent; but it may be sent just as taken from the Sheep.

MERCHANTS AND PLANTERS

Will find it their interest to purchase their Goods of us in preference to the trashy Northern Goods that annually flood our markets. We warrant all the Goods we send off to be of superior make, and all we ask is, for everybody to try them.

May, 1859. Address
JAMES G. GIBBS & CO.,
Columbia, S. C.

Advertisement for Southern manufacturing. *Southern Cultivator*, Vol. XVIII, No. 8, August 1860. American Antiquarian Society.

prompted large numbers of artisans and laborers to support the Free Soil Party in 1848 and later the Republicans.¹⁷

Artisans and laborers often opposed the abolitionists because of their lack of concern for the condition of Northern labor. The abolitionists criticized the factory owners not for the treatment of their employees, but only for their pro-slavery political stance. They considered the labor issue as artificial or secondary; whatever problems Northern labor might face they believed were all rooted in the institution of slavery. "American slavery is an evil of such gigantic magnitude," read an abolitionist resolution, "that it must be uprooted and overthrown before the elevation sought by the laboring classes can be effected."¹⁸ C. Gray, a worker in the manufacturing district of Worcester for nearly thirty years, summed up the views of labor toward the abolitionists in his pamphlet *Oppression at the North As Well As the South* (1862):

And pray tell me what is the necessity of these white-washed hypocrites, who for a pretence make long prayers and prate so loudly about Southern slavery, loading men who already have as much as they know how to stagger under, with additional bur-

17. Alan Dawley, *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn* (Cambridge, 1976), 65.

18. Eric Foner, "Abolitionism and the Labor Movement in Antebellum America," in Christine Bolt, Seymour Drescher, eds., *Anti-Slavery, Religion and Reform* (Hamden, Conn., 1980), 261-263.

19. C. Gray, *Oppression At The North As Well As The South* (Worcester, 1862), 5.

20. William Gammell and E.G. Robinson, *The Life and Services of the Hon. Rowland Gibson Hazard, LL.D.* (Providence, 1898), 8-9.

21. Richards, *Gentlemen of Property and Standing*, 82-100; Gilkerson, *A City of Joiners*, 37-40; Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeepers Millenium: Society and Revivals in Rochester New York, 1815-1837* (New York, 1978), chapters 5 and 6.

22. The conception of private property and community benefit and the public regulation of offensive uses of private property were undergoing fundamental changes in the early nineteenth century. At the center of this transformation were mill owners and manufacturers, who through the Mill Acts dethroned landed property from the supreme position it had held in the eighteenth century world view, ultimately transforming real estate into just another cash-valued commodity. Morton J. Horwitz, *The Transformation of American Law, 1780-1860* (Cambridge, 1977), 31-32, 45-53.

23. O'Connor, *Lords of the Loom*, 99.

24. O'Connor, *Lords of the Loom*, 96-101; Rowland G. Hazard, "Speech in the House of Representatives on the Fugitive Slave Law," February 21, 1850, in Caroline Hazard, ed., *Economics and Politics: A Series of Papers Upon Public Questions Written on Various Occasions From 1840-1855* (Boston, 1889), 26-31. The Fugitive Slave Act was an integral part of the Compromise of 1850, reluctantly accepted by the Whigs as the only alternative to nullification and secession. The act required federal agents to recover fugitive slaves from their sanctuaries in the North, and challenged the North's integrity and self-image as an asylum of freedom.

thens still more grievous to be borne, while they themselves touch not one of them with their fingers.¹⁹

One of the greatest ironies of the struggle between the manufacturing interests and the abolitionists was the extent of anti-slavery sentiments among the manufacturers. Rowland G. Hazard, one of the largest negro cloth manufacturers in Rhode Island, prided himself on having worked to free several improperly seized free blacks in New Orleans. He also authored several anti-slavery tracts, yet he gave no support to the abolitionists.²⁰ Members of the Rodman family also claimed strong anti-slavery sentiments, yet they owned a number of negro cloth mills and opposed the abolitionists as well. These sentiments were echoed by many of Rhode Island's merchants and manufacturers. How does one explain these seemingly clear contradictions?

One explanation is that the anti-abolitionists, usually the older, established elite, saw in the younger, fiercely-committed abolitionists a threat to the traditional order of authority, of which they had long been the keepers. Not only were the abolitionists threatening the manufacturers economically, but they claimed a higher authority, God Himself, to whom they answered for their stand on slavery, civil obedience, and morality.²¹

A second and equally important factor was the attitude of the anti-abolitionists that they were upholding the principal of private property against the attacks of lawless radicals and fanatics and from the tyranny of an unjust majority. Since the Constitution itself sanctioned slavery with the three-fifths representation rule for slaves, and then left it to the individual states to decide the fate of slavery, no defender of the Union and the Constitution or property-holding businessman could surrender the right of law to the demands of a radical group claiming a "moral" right. If they yielded to the abolitionists, they might be forced to yield again to the "moral" rights of striking employees or labor groups demanding a fair distribution of property. Thus the manufacturers could not advocate immediate emancipation, that being the forceful seizure of "personal" property.²²

Finally, a very basic yet important reason for the manufacturers' opposition to the attacks of the abolitionists was founded in economics. Many probably could not afford to change production from negro cloth to finer goods, a move that required capital and perhaps improved or new sets of machinery. The more successful manufacturers were able to make this transition after landing profitable war-time contracts for army uniforms and blankets.

A number of mill owners, however, did eventually change their attitudes toward the Southern states and the Slave Power. With the South's aggressive attempts at expansion into the western territories and political tampering with the new state constitutions of the former territories, many Northern businessmen could yield no more to the South. Amos A. Lawrence, one of the wealthiest members of the Boston Associates, a group of very wealthy investors and textile manufacturers, wrote in 1854, "We went to bed one night, old-fashioned, conservative, compromise, Union Whigs, and waked up stark mad Abolitionists."²³ Encouraged by the strong abolitionist sentiments around them and outraged by the Fugitive Slave Act forced upon them, many manufacturers followed Lawrence's lead and joined the "conscience whigs" and the newly formed Republican Party.²⁴ Founded on a platform opposed to the Slave Power, the party's presi-

dential candidate in 1856 was John C. Fremont. Leading the support for Fremont in Rhode Island was Rowland G. Hazard, by now a vocal opponent of slavery despite a threatened Southern boycott of his goods. The Republican Party and Fremont won the state of Rhode Island in the 1856 election, though Fremont was defeated nationally by James Buchanan, a pro-slavery Democrat.

Support for the abolitionists and anti-slavery forces was far from unanimous in Rhode Island even on the eve of the Civil War. William Sprague, a member of one of the wealthiest Rhode Island textile manufacturing families, was elected as a Democrat and Conservative Party governor in 1860 after warning of the adverse effects of allowing the "fanatic" abolitionists to win the election. A broadside for his campaign cautioned:

If Rhode Island is the first state in this struggle to take her stand upon the broad platform of the Union, the products of her machinery and her labor will take a preference in the markets of the United States, and the laboring man, the farmer, the mechanic, the tradesman, the merchant, the manufacturer, will all share in the general prosperity... If we are defeated and our state sold to Radicalism ... our candidate for governor will alone reap the fruits of this campaign. What are the great principles and paramount duty for which you are asked to sacrifice these interests? to close our factories, depopulate our villages and spread poverty and misery through our land?²⁵

However, when war broke out in 1861, Governor Sprague and many other manufacturers and laborers rose to the call to defend the Union and oppose the Slave Power. Sprague personally outfitted the First Rhode Island Regiment, and as a general, led them to war.

Rhode Island's production of coarse cloth was reduced considerably during and after the war (Table I). In 1850 negro goods consisting of kerseys, jeans, and linseys comprised seventy-nine percent of the total quantity of cloth and fifty-five percent of the total value of all woolen goods produced in Rhode Island mills. By 1870 their value dropped to 13.8%, though they still comprised 40.8% of the total quantity of woolen cloth produced. This was largely the result of the increased production of high-priced cloth such as fancy cassimere.

A surprising discovery is the continued production of the coarse cloth in as many as seventeen mills in 1870. Though only one mill (Hillsdale) continued to refer to its product as negro cloth, the other mills neither changed the type of cloth (kersey, linsey, jeans) nor their prices significantly. How does one explain this continued production despite the emancipation of nearly four million slaves?

One answer is that the working conditions of many former slaves changed little during the post-war period of Reconstruction. The system of gang labor under which the slaves worked before the war was not replaced by sharecropping or individual contracts for a number of years after the war in many Southern states. Instead, the freedmen who continued to work on the plantations were compensated with food and clothing as wages rather than as the responsibility of the former owner-turned-employer. Even under the system of sharecropping, where the tenant gave a portion of his crop to the land owner annually as rent, the landlord stocked his store with the cheap, coarse woolen cloth which he advanced to the tenant with other necessities

25. Broadside, "To the Conservative Voters of the State of Rhode Island" (Providence, 1859), Rhode Island Historical Society.

26. Jonathan Wiener, *The Social Origins of the New South: Alabama, 1860-1886* (Baton Rouge, 1978), 36-42, 77-108.

27. Cole, *The American Woolen Manufacturer*, I, 322.

28. Henry Ward Beecher, "A Sermon on the Times," *The Independent*, October 2, 1862.

in exchange for a portion of his next crop.²⁶

Another reason for the continued production of this cloth was the development and growth of a market in the West. The strong, coarse woolen cloth was well suited to the harsh demands of pioneer life in the western territories, "being used there for the clothing of laborers and backwoodsmen."²⁷ By 1875 however, nearly all the remaining negro cloth mills had burned, closed, or changed to the production of finer cloth, bringing to an end this era in Rhode Island's economic and social history.

In "A Sermon on the Times," the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher attempted to explain the evil that had brought the nation to a civil war. Though writing about his home state of Connecticut, his comments apply as well to Rhode Island:

We too, are suffering, in the North, and in the same way that we ought to ... Every man that should have voted right and did not, is having, or is yet to have, a part in the sufferings caused by this struggle. Every state that, for the sake of its manufactories has refused to do the right thing, has suffered, and shall suffer ... Why is it that the state of Connecticut ... has been so radically democratic, in the sense of that democracy which means pandering to slavery—why is it, but that she has established petty manufactories along the shore, and that her great market has been South? Why has the policy of freedom been so often betrayed and paralyzed by the merchants of New York, and Philadelphia, and Boston, and Pittsburg? Commerce has bribed them. And what is the result? You have been making money out of slavery ... For I call you more specifically to take notice, that the North has suffered to the extent that she has winked at slavery for the sake of commerce.²⁸



Five generations of a black family born on the plantation of J.J. Smith, Beaufort, South Carolina. Photograph by L.H. O'Sullivan. 1862. Library of Congress.

GLOSSARY

Cassimere—a soft-textured fabric usually made from wool of a medium weight; woven either coarse or fine; found in checks, plaids, and stripes.

Jeans—a durable twilled fabric of lightweight cotton sheeting yarns or mixed cotton and wool.

Kersey—a coarse-ribbed woolen or woolen and cotton cloth with a lustrous, fine nap, heavily fulled; used especially for work clothes and uniforms.

Linsey—a strong, coarse, durable fabric made of linen or cotton warp and wool weft.

Osnaburg—a heavy, rough, strong, cotton fabric woven with low-grade, coarse, uneven yarns; made in light, medium and heavy weights, in stripes, checks, or novelty effects.

Plains—a heavily-sized, solid-colored, cotton fabric; made with plain weave and ordinary yarns.

Warp—series of yarns extended lengthwise in a loom and crossed by the weft yarns; forms the foundation for the cloth.

Weft—yarn woven horizontally across the warp.

Table I. Negro Cloth and the Woolen Industry in Rhode Island, 1850-1870

	1850 ^a					1870 ^b				
	negro cloth mills		other mills		total	negro cloth mills		other mills		total
mills	33	70%	14	30%	47	17	30.9% (26.9)	38	69.1% (46 73.1)	55 (63)
employees	979	56%	771	44%	1750	632	14.4% (10.6)	3768	85.6% (5296 89.4)	4400 (5931)
value of product	\$1,204,030	55%	983,096	45%	\$2,187,126	\$1,241,163	13.8% (10.5)	\$7,753,048	86.2% (10,551,048 89.5)	\$8,994,211 (11,792,211)
quantity of cloth (yards)	7,275,000	79%	1,920,717	21%	9,195,717	6,197,346	40.8% (37.1)	8,989,645	59.2% (10,490,645 62.9)	15,186,991 (16,687,991)

a. Seventh United States Census, 1850, Schedule V, Manufactures. Manuscript, Rhode Island Historical Society. Statistics for Pawtucket and Woonsocket were not available.

b. Eighth United States Census, 1870, Schedule V, Manufactures. Manuscript, Rhode Island State Archives. Figures given exclude Pawtucket and Woonsocket for purposes of comparison to 1850 data. Figures in parentheses () include the Pawtucket and Woonsocket data.

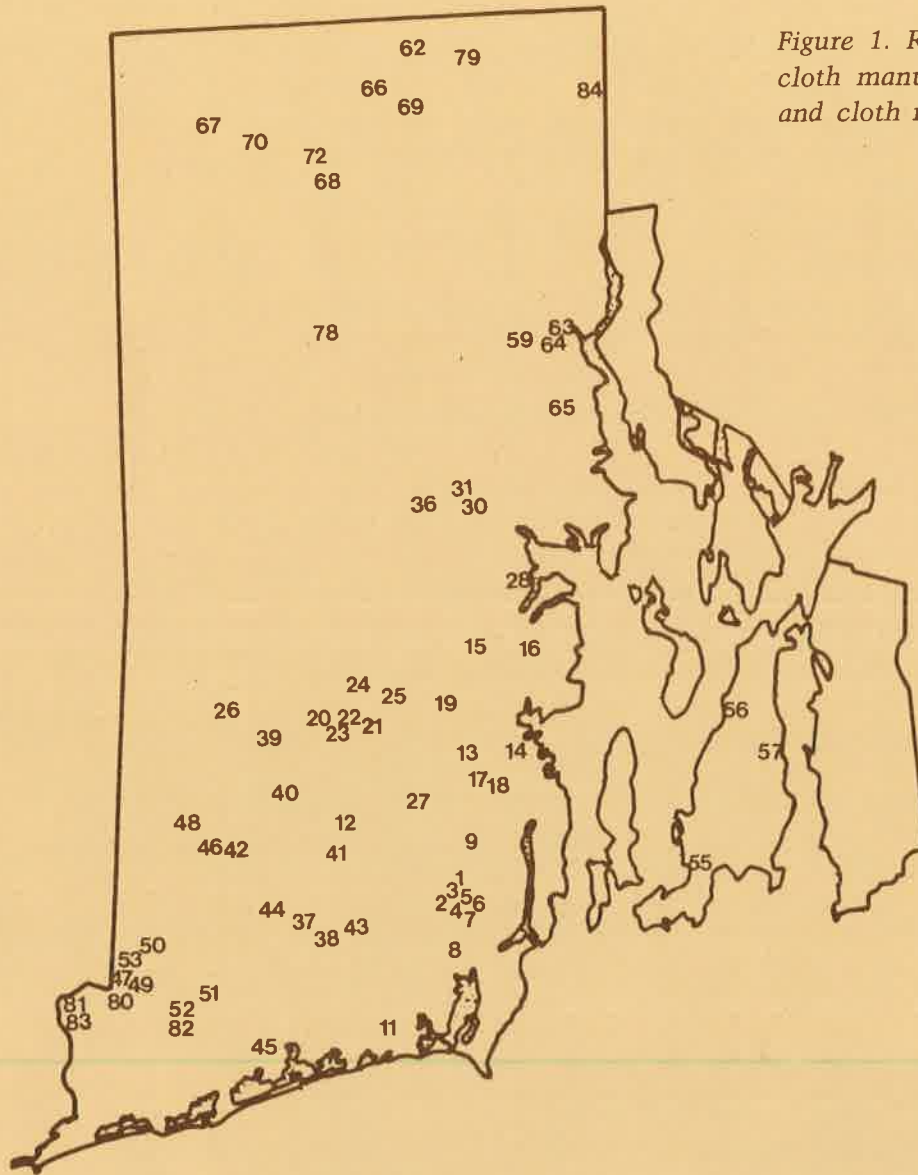


Figure 1. Rhode Island negro cloth manufactories: warp and cloth mills, 1814-1875.

Table II. Rhode Island Negro Cloth and Warp Mills, 1814-1817.^a

mill/occupant	location	dates of production	product
1. Thomas R. Hazard	Rocky Brook, South Kingstown	1815-ca. 1840	linseys
2. Rodman Mill, Samuel Rodman	Rocky Brook, South Kingstown	ca. 1840-1870	kerseys, plains
3. Thomas R. Williams	Rocky Brook, South Kingstown	1814-ca. 1858	negro cloth, kersey, jeans, plains
4. Rocky Brook Mill, Samuel Rodman	Rocky Brook, South Kingstown	ca. 1843-ca. 1877	coarse woolens
5. Durfee Mill, N.B. Durfee	Rocky Brook, South Kingstown	ca. 1858-ca. 1870	coarse woolens
6. Satinet Mill, Joseph Peace Hazard	Rocky Brook, South Kingstown	ca. 1840-ca. 1873	kerseys, plains
7. Peace Dale Mill, J.P. and R.G. Hazard	Peace Dale, South Kingstown	1819-ca. 1858	kerseys
8. Wakefield Mill, W.A. Robinson	Wakefield, South Kingstown	ca. 1821-ca. 1870	kerseys, jeans
9. Daniel Rodman	Moorefield, South Kingstown	1836-1876	linseys, kerseys
10. Carmichael & Schofield Co. Mill	Burnside, South Kingstown	1870	linseys, checks
11. W.G. Holburton	near Perryville, South Kingstown	1835-1860	kerseys

12. Glen Rock Mill, Daniel B. Rodman	Glen Rock, South Kingstown	1867-ca. 1880	kerseys
13. Narragansett Mill, Wm. E. Pierce & Co.	Belleville, North Kingstown	1852-1870	kerseys
14. Annaquatucket Mill, Ezbon Sanford	North Kingstown	ca. 1845-1875	linseys, kerseys, jeans
15. Davis Mill, Davis Reynolds & Co.	Davisville, North Kingstown	ca. 1849-1873	jeans
16. Reynolds Mill, G.W. Reynolds & Co.	Sandy Hill, North Kingstown	ca. 1860-1870	jeans
17. Silver Spring Mill, Wilcox & Pierce	North Kingstown	ca. 1823-1870	kerseys, jeans
18. Shady Lea Mill, Charles Allen	North Kingstown	ca. 1832-ca. 1870	jeans, warp, linseys
19. Lafayette Mill, Robert Rodman	Lafayette, North Kingstown	ca. 1845-1870	linseys, kerseys, jeans
20. Sodom Mill, Charles Allen	Hallville, Exeter	1814-1871	jeans, warp
21. Fisherville Mill, Schuyler Fisher	Fisherville, Exeter	1833-1873	warp, linseys, plaids, jeans
22. Hallville Mill, Dutee J. Hall	Hallville, Exeter	ca. 1814-1872	warp, coarse woolens
23. Dawley Mill, Dutee J. Hall	Hallville, Exeter	1854-1874	jeans, warp
24. Lawton Mill, Thomas A. Lawton	Lawtonville, Exeter	ca. 1830-ca. 1860	kerseys, jeans, warp
25. Greene Mill, Christopher C. Greene	Exeter Hollow, Exeter	ca. 1846-1873	warp
26. James S. Harris	Millville, Exeter	ca. 1832-1837	negro cloth
27. E. & H. Babcock	Yawgoo, Exeter	1846-1876	jeans, checks
28. Ezra Pollard	East Greenwich	ca. 1836	jeans
29. Hill, Baker & Benson	Melville, Kent County	1845	kerseys
30. Green Mill, Brown & Aldrich	Centerville, Warwick	1835	negro cloth
31. Wakefield Mill, R. Wakefield	Arctic, Warwick	1834-1852	linseys, jeans
32. Christopher Allen	Warwick	1845	jeans
33. Festus L. Thompson	Warwick	1845	plain and checked linseys
34. C. & S. Harris	Warwick	1845	jeans
35. J. Rhodes & Son	Warwick	1832	cotton cloth
36. Arnold Mill	Anthony, Coventry	1845	linseys
37. Shannock Mills, John T. Knowles	Shannock, Richmond	1828-ca. 1870	checked, plain, and plaid linseys
38. Clark's Mills, J.T. and J. Knowles	Clark's Mills, Richmond	1845-1848	linseys
39. Tug Hollow Mill, Sheldon & Hoxsie	Tug Hollow, Richmond	ca. 1836-1870	warp
40. Hillsdale Mill, Kenyon & Lillibridge	Hillsdale, Richmond	1833-1870	negro cloth
41. Independence Mill, J.B.M. Potter	Usquepaug, Richmond	1836-1866	jeans, warp, kerseys
42. David L. Aldrich	Hope Valley, Richmond	1853-1861	negro cloth
43. Kenyon Mills, A. & S.E. Kenyon	Kenyon, Richmond	ca. 1820-1870	jeans, linseys
44. Carolina Mill, Rowland G. Hazard	Carolina, Richmond	ca. 1841	cotton, osnaburg
45. King's Mill, Daniel King	Charlestown	1831-1841	negro cloth
46. Hazard Mill, J.P. & Jonathan Hazard	Locustville, Hopkinton	1821-ca. 1865	negro cloth
47. Smith & Campbell Mill, S. & D. Smith and Cambell & Co.	Ashaway, Hopkinton	ca. 1845-1870	linseys; jeans, checks
48. Moscow Mill, T.R. Wells & Co.	Moscow, Hopkinton	ca. 1847-1870	linseys, checks
49. Laurel Dale Mill, L.C. Carr & Co.	Ashaway, Hopkinton	1866-1870	plaid linseys
50. Bethel Mill, A. Babcock & W. Stillman	Ashaway, Hopkinton	ca. 1848-ca. 1868	plaid linseys

51. O. Langworthy	Burdickville, Hopkinton	ca. 1870	jeans
52. John E. Weeden	Bradford, Hopkinton	ca. 1848-1859	kerseys
53. Oakland Co. Mill	Ashaway, Hopkinton	1850	linseys
54. Briggs & Wilcox	Hopkinton	1850	plaid linseys
55. Sea Isle Manufactory, Thomas R. Hazard	Newport	ca. 1830-1860	negro cloth
56. Enterprise Factory, Edward W. Lawton	Melville, Portsmouth	ca. 1832-1850	kerseys
57. Clarke's Mill, Andrew W. Gilmore	Glen-anna, Portsmouth	ca. 1850-1858	negro cloth
58. Daniel Paine Mill, Hathaway, Paine & Co.	Cumberland	1845	linseys
59. Merino Mill, H.P. Franklin	Merino Village, Johnston	1832	negro shirtings, osnaburg
60. Appleby Smith Mill	Smithfield	1845-1850	kerseys, jeans
61. Pooke Mill, Pooke & Steere	Smithfield	1854	negro cloth
62. Slater Co. No. 3 Mill, S. & J. Slater	Slatersville, North Smithfield	1843	cotton cloth
63. Elm Street Manufacturing Co.	Providence	ca. 1844-1850	kerseys
64. Elisha A. Durfee	Providence	1860	kerseys
65. Bowen & Bailey Mill	Cranston	1860	kerseys
66. Leonard Nason Factory	Nasonville, Burrillville	1838-1845	kerseys, linseys
67. George W. Marsh	Bridgeton, Burrillville	1844-1845	jeans
68. Whipple Mill, Daniel S. Whipple	Gazzaville, Burrillville	1845	kerseys, jeans
69. Tar Kiln Mill, Joseph D. Nichols	Oak Valley, Burrillville	1844-1855	kerseys
70. Sayles Mill, Union Mfg. Co.	Pascoag, Burrillville	1838-1845	kerseys, jeans
71. Moses Albridge	Burrillville	1845	linseys, kerseys
72. Steere & Tinkham	Mapleville, Burrillville	1853-ca. 1857	plaid linseys, jeans
73. Peter Place	Burrillville	1845	kerseys
74. John T. Phillips	Burrillville	1845	kerseys, jeans
75. Sales & Shumway	Burrillville	1845	kerseys, jeans
76. John L. Barbour	Burrillville	1850	linseys
77. John Waterman	Burrillville	1845	jeans
78. B.I. Lawton	North Scituate	1845	kerseys, jeans
79. Gideon Bradford	Woonsocket	1845	kerseys
80. E. & H. Babcock	Potter Hill, Westerly	ca. 1840-1850	linseys
81. White Manufacturing Co., Babcock & Moss	White Rock, Westerly	ca. 1845-1870	checked linseys
82. W.P. Arnold	Niantic, Westerly	1845	linseys
83. O.M. Stillman	Stillmanville, Westerly	ca. 1830-1870	linseys
84. Happy Hollow Mill, Allen Haskill	Cumberland	ca. 1850	negro cloth

a. The mills are listed by their historical names when known, as identified in primary and secondary sources. As the mills were owned or operated by more than one person over the period covered, the principal owner during the period of negro cloth manufacture has been identified.

b. The dates of production and type of product are based on information from the following sources:

- William Graham, *Statistics of Woolen Manufactories in the United States, by the Proprietor of the Condensing Cards*, (New York, 1845).
- *Seventh United States Census, 1850, Schedule V, Manufactures.*
- *Eighth United States Census, 1860, Schedule V, Manufactures.*
- *Ninth United States Census, 1870, Schedule V, Manufactures.*
- Hoag, Wade & Co., *History of the State of Rhode Island*, (Boston, 1878).
- J.R. Cole, *History of Washington and Kent Counties, R.I.*, (New York, 1889).
- Theodore Sande, "The Architecture of the Rhode Island Textile Industry, 1790-1860," University of Pennsylvania, Ph.D., 1972.
- David Chase, "An Historical Survey of Rhode Island Textile Mills," Brown University, 1969.