

**A**UGUSTUS JOHNSTON WAS ATTORNEY GENERAL of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in 1759 and a celebrated citizen. However, he enraged his friends and neighbors by his loyalist sympathies and by accepting the Crown position of Stamp Collector. Feelings about him ran so high that his house in Newport was sacked and his books and furniture scattered. This undistinguished record would have been lost in the limbo of things better forgotten had it not been for the Town of Johnston perpetuating his name, it having been adopted in 1759 while he was still persona grata with the patriots of Newport.

## AUG. JOHNSTON AND WM. SMITH

William Smith built his house in what was then Providence in 1703. His name was given to the Town of Smithfield when it was set off from Providence in 1730, and his name twice perpetuated when in 1871 a portion of the town was annexed to Woonsocket and the rest divided into Smithfield, North Smithfield and Lincoln. It was Major Smith's descendant Stephen Hopkins Smith who built the Butterfly Mill in Lincoln.

Johnston and the Smithfields run northward from the West Warwick line to the Massachusetts border, a distance of some twenty miles. Here along the perimeter of Rhode Island's metropolitan areas is open country, much of it rapidly becoming suburban as the exodus from city to country continues.

Johnston's 17,160 residents live scattered throughout the town, in many residential areas. There is no center of substantial population, but villages like Simmonsville, Graniteville, Hughesdale, Merino, Grant Station and Morgan Mill. Among interesting places to visit is the old Indian Soapstone Quarry on the Ochee Spring farm just beyond Olneyville on Route 6. The settlers made use of this soapstone in the making of household utensils, as the Indians did, but they found the granite in ledges of greater use. Here they quarried stone for many a building still standing and from Bear Ledge came the monolith granite columns for the Arcade Building in Providence, the second largest of their kind. Snake Den Ledge, a glacial formation, is of special interest to geologists. The Clemence-Irons House on George Waterman Road was built in 1654 by Thomas Clemence, a close friend of Roger Williams.

Neutaconkanut Hill is a recreation area with facili-



Johnston's "Little Red School House."  
There's nothing like it in America.

ties for sports, including baseball, softball, etc., and skiing. High above the hill rises the web-like framework of a radio transmitting tower. In Johnston is the new and distinctive Alpine Country Club, and on Killingly Road, those of English and Scottish ancestry enjoy Bowling-on-the-Green, a sport also played at the nearby Gloucester Country Club on Waterman's Lake.

One of the most interesting buildings in Johnston is the "Little Red Schoolhouse" on Greenville Avenue. Mrs. Lora E. O. Clemence continued teaching young children in her home, following her retirement after seventy years as a public school teacher. Her sons and daughters recently built on to her house a perfect reproduction of an old-time school house. Here Mrs. Clemence, at 87, continues to teach pre-primary children in preparation for public school, and the "Little Red Schoolhouse" is famous all over Rhode Island.

Farming and textiles have long been the chief industries of Smithfield, and they still occupy the efforts of many of its people. But textiles are being replaced by other industries and hundreds of acres of farm land are growing into residential developments, for Smithfield, like Lincoln and Cumberland, is part of Rhode Island's new Suburbia.

In the early days, many men of Smithfield were prominent in the Colony and in the Nation. Peleg Arnold and Daniel Mowry were members of the Continental Congress and Jonathan Arnold wrote the Rhode Island Declaration of Independence.

The Greenville Tavern on the Putnam Pike, once known as the Powder Mill Turnpike, was built in 1730. A famous meeting place for the townspeople, it is a well-known landmark. Among interesting old homes are Captain Joseph Mowry's House built in 1701, the Noah Farnum Homestead built in 1760 and the home of William Smith, built in 1703. Then there

is the Toll Gate House in Georgiaville, the Daniel Angell Tavern on the Douglas Pike and the Half Way House on Route 5.

In the center of the town are the Woonasquatucket and Stillwater Reservoirs and Georgiaville Pond, between Stillwater and Georgiaville.

The famous Esmond Mill that once made nationally known blankets is no more. The mill building is now a complex of diversified industries, turning out many products mainly in sheet metal fabrication, and here also are manufactured mine safety and general safety appliances of every sort. Georgiaville, once almost exclusively devoted to textiles, is now largely producing machine parts and tools. In Greenville is the textile finishing industry, long important in the community.

But Greenville has a new importance. It is one of the most rapidly growing communities in the area. On every side, there are new housing developments. Smithfield's increase in population, tripled since 1930 to 9447, with a 3,000 increase in the last ten years, is largely due to the growth of Greenville. Smithfield has had to greatly expand its school system and is now planning its first High School, to take care of the growing educational needs of the area.

In the northwest corner of the Town is the State's North Central Airport, a field built for commercial planes as well as for private flying. The Airport will soon be developed further, a new runway is currently under construction and it is scheduled for further expansion.

North Smithfield is so closely allied to Woonsocket that it is often thought of as being a part of that northern Rhode Island city. Hundreds of Woonsocket people have built their homes, and many are imposing ones, across the line all the way from Union Village to Forestdale and Slatersville and beyond.

But North Smithfield is far the older of the two communities, going back to William Smith and the dawn of the 18th century. Several fine old Colonial homes are still standing in Union Village to remind us of the storied past, among them the Peleg Arnold Tavern dating back to 1690. Elsewhere you will find the Captain Dana Arnold House built in 1714, the Old Schoolhouse dated 1810, and the Red Brick Tavern of 1805.

The taverns of the Smithfields were there because it was the way of the Great Road which wound its way from Providence, through Lincoln and the land beyond, until at last it reached Worcester. It was the main route of travel and the taverns were there to give horses and men the rest they needed en route.

There is also the house of Ananias Mowry, a man who was known far and wide as one who always told the truth, the Seth Allen Tavern, the first scythe factory in America, and one of the oldest Friends' Meeting Houses in this part of our state where the Quakers settled in the early 1700's.

In 1871, when North Smithfield was separated from Smithfield to become a separate town, its name was changed to Slater, but sixteen days later the General Assembly restored its present name.

And it is well they did, for in a state where so many towns bear the names of Dukes and Earls, yes, and Kings and noble families of old England, it is refreshing and reassuring to have these towns, bearing the commonplace names like those of Augustus Johnston and William Smith, of no noble ancestry but of noble purpose. For they were the men who blazed the trails through the wilderness, battled the Indians, built the Colony and fought for its freedom, so many, many years ago.

Rhode Island's North Central Airport now being developed to better serve the Blackstone Valley area.

