

# The Great Road

BY CHARLES H. LEACH AND EDITH H. NOBREGA

*Ye who love a nation's legends,  
Love the ballads of the people,  
That like voices from afar off,  
Waving like a hand that beckons  
Call to us to pause and listen. . . .*

*Longfellow*

**A** HERITAGE that is ours is unveiled along the path of the Great Road. In the beginning it was an Indian trail with its point of origin at the Wading Place in Providence as part of the Shawomet Trail to Boston. It branched in several places, skirted the Great Moshassuck Swamp through Pawtucket and Central Falls and went through what is now Saylesville. It followed the course of the Moshassuck River northward, winding and wandering and branching to avoid pond and hill and swamp, always in a course of least resistance.

Recently as we rested in Prospect Park, just behind its statue of Roger Williams, we absorbed with nostalgia the magnificent panoramic view of our own megalopolis with the dome of the Capitol as the focal point of the horizon.

Surmounting the dome is the Independent Man with the spear of courage in his right hand, the anchor of hope in his left. It represents the forefathers of this state who chose hardship in the wilderness instead of the bigoted tyranny of the Puritans of Boston.

These men offered refuge to all who suffered from the persecution of despots — the Quakers at Portsmouth, the Jews at Newport, the Baptists in Providence and even the Sam Gortons who seem to have the attitude, "Whatever it is, I'm agin it." The God of all answered the prayers of each.

And we remembered that in our part of the state, northern Rhode Island, the Great Road was a lifeline for those men who came here under hardships and settled along its length. They built their homes and meeting houses, dams and mills, and many are still in use. We resolved to trace this Great Road.

To reach the cove and the Wading Place and thus start our trek over the Great Road, we traveled down Thomas Street, and passing the Fleur de Lys Building we remembered that it was on about this same site that Roger Williams' young protege, Thomas Angell, had his home.

The Moshassuck River from Saylesville emptied into the cove, and the Woonasquatucket River from Cen-

tredele joined it there. These two rivers formed a sand bar which was used for crossing at low tide.

The Wampanoag Trail from Bristol ended here; the Pequot Trail to Connecticut began on the other side. The Shawomet Trail to Pawtucket and Boston began here. The Great Trail to Worcester branched off the Shawomet Trail and skirted the edge of the Great Moshassuck Swamp in what is now Pawtucket, Central Falls and Saylesville.

This was forest, hill and swamp with the trail edging the cove and then becoming Towne Street (now North Main Street). It veered up Constitution Hill because there was a dense swamp that extended to Randall Square and beyond.

It followed the high ground toward Pawtucket, on North Main Street; it became Main Street through Woodlawn in Pawtucket to Richard Scott's meadow where the New York Lace Store is now. From there it followed what is now Lonsdale Avenue through Pawtucket and Central Falls and turned into Saylesville at Israel Sayles' Tavern at Richard Scott's Pond.

In Providence branches broke off from the Great Trail and the one at the North Burial Ground is appropriately named Branch Avenue. The paths became bridle trails and eventually the use of wheeled vehicles necessitated the building of roads.

A path off Branch Avenue, west of the Burial Ground, went up through the valley and met another path that left North Main Street opposite the Armory of Mounted Commands. It is now called Cemetery Street. Together, they cross the railroad yard on what the children call the Six Bridges, because of the six cantilever spans, crossing what was part of the Moshassuck Swamp.

Across the bridge, we picked up the trail again in Fairlawn, Pawtucket, near the Banigan Memorial Chapel, at St. Francis Cemetery. This is Smithfield Avenue in Pawtucket, which was once a turnpike, and now runs a comparatively straight line into the village of Saylesville where it begins to wind again at the pond and crosses the Moshassuck River at the Barney's Pond Bridge.



*Original building of Friend's Meeting House*

This road is all on the west side of the great Moshassuck Swamp; the Great Road was on the east and they joined just beyond this point.

To the left of the road from here we saw the Barney's Pond Dam with its mill stone. However, there is no record of a mill ever having been on this site. The dam, as it is today, was built in 1915 to replace an older one that formed a reservoir for the Sayles Finishing Plants. In the abutment, the masons combined mechanics with art to preserve a picturesque reminder of antiquity. This mill stone was moved from a mill farther up the river that ground thousands of bushels of grain. The many shades of stone in this work are typical of variegated hues found only in New England.

An area of approximately nine miles northward from Barney's Pond Dam was called the Loquasquaset Purchase, now called Louisquisset. Four men from Providence purchased this area from Massasoit who didn't even own it but just claimed it. They were Roger Williams, Robert Williams, Gregory Dexter and Thomas Olney.

They paid for all this, 10 fathoms of white wampum, four coats of English Cloth, eight knives, one hoe and a promise to deliver next day five more hoes and four knives or hatchets. But next day, Massasoit demanded two more coats. This they agreed to. However, he again demanded four additional coats and some shot.

As powder and shot were forbidden the Indians, the white men's answer is recorded to have been, "No, we are not willing to pay such a price for this barbarous wilderness." The names of two of the men are still with us in this area — Dexter Rock and Olney's Pond.

After we passed Barney's Pond Dam we entered an area which the men of Providence called "World's End." Its rocks and hills, ledges and forest brought us to

Lincoln Woods Farm, the original site of the home of Thomas Arnold who bought this wilderness in 1661. Thomas, half-brother of the William Arnold who came to Providence with Roger Williams, had holdings which extended to Slatersville, a distance of nine miles.

Just a short distance north of the Barney's Pond Dam is the oldest meeting house in Rhode Island still in its original form and in continuous use.

It is sometimes called the Quaker Meeting House. Quakers was a name given to members of the Friends by a contemptuous magistrate in England when the Friends were being persecuted.

The building's architecture symbolizes the lives of its builders — simple but not drab, plain but not ugly, austere but not forbidding. It is representative of the sober garb and quiet manners of the Quakers — severe but not unkind, self-assured but not bigoted.

The small ell in the rear of the building was the original place of meeting. This was built in 1703 on land given to the Friends by Eleazer Arnold, son of Thomas Arnold. At a quarterly meeting at Newport in March, 1702, "Gideon Freeborn and Abraham Chase were appointed to see what encouragement Providence Friends and friendly people would give to a house being built in Smithfield . . ."

Stephen Hopkins, Rhode Island's signer of the Declaration of Independence and a delegate to the first Continental Congress, was married to Anne Smith of Smithfield at this Meeting House. Among the witnesses were members of old Rhode Island families — the Dillinghams, Arnolds, Lovatts, Aldriches, Browns and Wilkinsons. This was in January, 1755. In May of the same year, Hopkins was elected governor and served several terms until 1768.

After using the small building for forty years, it was decided to build a larger meeting house. This house of worship was called the Lower Smithfield Meeting because another Quaker meeting house had been built in Smithfield at Union Village near Woonsocket.

Friends from Woonsocket and Providence came here to help raise this building. East Greenwich Friends sent word that they "were few and behind hand with their own meeting house and so not in capacity to help others yet."

Presumably, this building was erected by a "raising bee" when all the men of the neighborhood came to build the house. The women cooked their meals, the children carried wood for the fires and water for cooking, the boys performed that hateful, back-wearying task, turning the grind stones to sharpen the tools.

A friend of ours has written this about the meeting house: "My father was a builder and had a sincere admiration for the old-time craftsmen. He recalled,

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*Barney's Pond Dam  
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'Among them were the broad-axe men and adzmen who had built houses, barns and ships. There were men with augers and chisels for framing and joining. There were farmers with oxen for hauling, and some with no skills but with brawn and endurance. They united to build the meeting house.

"They had cut the tall, straight oaks on the lot, and the burly axemen squared the logs with unmatched skill. The frame was pinned together with long, round pegs of locust wood, the most enduring wood of all.'

"And," she said, "if you look at the corner posts inside the church, you will see the marks of the axes on the logs."

On the other hand, the corner posts on the old shed to the rear of the meeting house, show evidence that the axemen who framed that were less skillful than those who worked on the main building. The timbers are less smooth, the faces of the wood are crude.

A few years ago, the meeting house was threatened with ruin for lack of repairs. The church that had sur-

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*The oldest Meeting House in Rhode Island,  
still in continuous use.*



*Color photos by Tilley*

*Black and white photos by Osowski*



*Mounting Stone used by women to mount pillion behind rider*

A man could easily mount the horse by the stirrup, but a girl had to be elevated to the unnatural position of the pillion. Naturally, an acrobatically graceful girl in those days, even with her trailing skirts and multiple petticoats, could mount by placing a foot in the stirrup and, with a helping hand from the mounted boyfriend, swing herself into the pillion.

But this wasn't done, at least not in the presence of elders. It was indelicate, unfeminine and brazen. And so a mounting stone was provided for the lady to walk up, turn her posterior to the pillion and mount in a lady-like fashion.

In the shade dappled graveyard behind the meeting house lie the stern forefathers of the meeting in graves without high-raised monuments; just low, sober slabs perpetuating the simplicity of the Friends. Some of them are Arnolds.

As Thomas Gray said in his "Elegy:"

*For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,  
Or busy housewife ply her evening care;  
No children run to lisp their sire's return,  
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share . . ."*

Their's was never the boast of heraldry or the pomp of power; "Their lot forbade them to wade through slaughter to a throne, and shut the gates of mercy on mankind."

Nearby is another graveyard where some of the Arnolds are interred. They were buried outside the Quaker graveyard because, it is said, their survivors selected more ornate, more "prideful," monuments for their graves. But the austere fathers of the Meeting forbade such ostentation.

And so the simple plainness of the gravestones emblemizes the harsh discipline of their lives. Ostentation was abomination: simplicity was salvation. As John Greenleaf Whittier wrote about Rhode Island Quakers:

*No honors of war to our worthies belong;  
Their plain stem of life never bloomed into song.  
But the fountains they opened still gush by the way,  
And the world for their healing is better today.*

A short distance from the Meeting House is an ancient building given the euphemistic name of "Eleazer Arnold's Splendid Mansion."

This was the home of Eleazer Arnold, son of Thomas Arnold. Eleazer gave the land on which the meeting house was built. If he was not a Quaker, at least he was generous to them. There is doubt because in his old age, after 1700, he was licensed to "provide lodgings for travelers and to sell spirits." However, total abstinence was not mandatory among Quakers at that time.

The north end of the house, with its great stone chimney was built in 1687, ten years after the Indian Wars. It is a splendid example of what man can do with stones. There were, at one time, seven of these stone-end houses in this area, all owned by Arnolds. There were three or



*"Eleazer Arnold's Splendid Mansion"*

four along Shoddy Lane, the present entrance into Lincoln Woods. The clustered column style of chimney topping was on each of them and probably was the trade mark of John Smith, the mason, whose family gave us the name for the Town of Smithfield.

The Arnold land extended to Union Village near Woonsocket. On each end of this extensive farm a Quaker meeting house was built on land given by the Arnolds. The first mill on the river at Woonsocket was built by the Arnolds and the village of Arnold's Mills was founded by Arnolds.

The Eleazer Arnold house has been a mansion, an inn, a farmhouse, an antique shop and a decaying ruin. But the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities has restored it to its proper and justly honored dignity. It is open to the public during the summer months and in it one finds the old household utensils — churns, buckets, pitchers of wood, some of which were made in the cooperage shops of Lime Rock when it was a bustling village.

Also, there are hand-wrought andirons, cranes, hearth lamps, candle molds and many other things to warm the heart of the antique lover.

In the old common room, where once the weary traveler dozed before the great fire, nodding over his mug of hot grog, and where the neighboring farmers listened to the salacious stories of the itinerant peddler, the scene has changed.

The great fireplace is still there, the fire, flaming and flickering, still paints a glow upon the faces of the occupants of the room. But now the beverage is tea and the stories are the "tea table" talk of the neighboring womenfolks.

From the Splendid Mansion northward, the Great Road winds through the valley of the Moshassuck under an arched ceiling of elm and ash and oak and walnut.

As we traveled further northward from Shoddy Lane we spotted a jockey hitch-post which identifies the home of Mrs. Ernest Lapre (Hope Creelman) with its surrounding fields of verdant grass and luxuriant flowers and foliage. This beautiful garden was once the mill pond of the Shoddy Mill. The river now winds against the far embankment and the bridge and dam are a short distance from Great Road on the Shoddy Lane. The present owners have made of this old mill pond a landscape lover's dream. The only mill still on the river is right at the roadside and was built presumably before 1812. It was one of the first machine shops in Rhode Island.

As we peered down into the mill race where the water-wheel had turned the shafts of lathes to shape metal, to turn out wooden products such as clothesline posts, wheel spokes, and hoe and rake handles, our thoughts

wandered to the "Barefoot Boy" and  
*Mine the sand-rimmed pickerel pond.*  
*Mine the walnut slopes beyond,*  
*Mine on bending orchard trees,*  
*Apples of Hesperides. . . .*

In later years the mill operated braiding machines and the final product made there was laces for milady's corsets.

High above the placid mill pond and at the end of an S-shaped driveway, the home of the owner snuggles against the hillside — the homestead of the Moffett family.

Around the curve and across the road another dam was built and two mills derived power from this industrious little river which, in some places, might be called a creek. On the right of the dam was the Olney Mill sometimes referred to as the Moshassuck Grist Mill. The stones from this mill were set in the abutments of the Barney's Pond Dam and it was the home of the Peace family for many years.

On the other side of the dam was the Arnold Mill, a forging shop where Jeremiah Arnold, in 1835, made the dies to punch out, by waterpower, the first nuts for bolts from cold iron in America. His invention accelerated the growth of the nut and bolt industry.

On the knoll above the dam was the home of its owner, Israel Arnold, one of the many antiquities of our little valley. The ell of this house which was built about 1720 was like many others of that day with the fireplace end forming one wall of the building.

As we approached the Butterfly District, the first familiar landmark was "Hearthside," one of the most beautiful buildings in New England. "Hearthside," sitting in a broad expanse of field, a massive but not forbidding pile of stones arranged in a style that combines the practical and the fine arts, is a masterpiece of the builders' skill. It was built in 1810 by Stephen Hopkins Smith.

*Old Grist Mill Dam, 200 years old*



Unique in design, it hints at several styles. Its square austerity suggests the Georgian, but it is topped with a graceful ogee curve. It differs from the New England colonial because it has no "lightning splitter" gables, no gingerbread filigrees, no widow's walk, no cupola or monitor. Its tall-columned veranda hints of the Virginia colonial. The severity of stone work is softened by the varied shades in its patchwork pattern. Its mahogany mantels around white marble fireplaces, limestone from the nearby hills, granite of gray and blue and brown from a quarry across the river, all combine to make this a showplace, inside and out. Some time ago "Hearthside" was selected as the finest example of Rhode Island colonial architecture and a replica of it was built as the Rhode Island Building at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904.

There is an interesting legend told about this house which is meaningful to those who believe that money won in gambling has a curse on it. Stephen Smith was courting the belle of a nearby village and she agreed to marry him only if he would build for her the finest house in the country. This meant that he must try to surpass the beauty of the John Brown House, the Pendleton House, the Truman Beckwith House and any one of a dozen or so on College Hill. Smith was not a wealthy man and in his great anxiety to raise the necessary funds with which to build and thus win the hand of the fair lady, he was destined to become Fortune's Fool. He won, so 'tis said, \$42,000 in the Louisiana Lottery and then he began to build. It took much longer than he had anticipated and it was necessary that Stephen labor right along with his workmen. Of course, this meant that he was inattentive to his sweetheart all that time. But when the house was finished its beauty far surpassed others. It alone cost \$32,000 and by the time Smith had furnished it, his funds were exhausted.

Meanwhile the fickle lady had found another love and refused to marry Stephen.

He became a women-hater, lived alone in a smaller house nearby and, according to records, never married. The wealth he won was fool's gold; but he left a beautiful building for us to admire; a symphony in stone.

Across the road from "Hearthside" was the Butterfly Farm, Pond and Dam, so named because of the butterfly design in the stone work of a mill built in 1811 by Stephen Smith. It was a cotton mill built of the same many-hued stones found in "Hearthside." Originally it was a water-powered mill and the chimney was built later for steam power.

The peculiar stones were known to masons as Smithfield face stone and were used in building St. John's Cathedral in Providence and some were also used in St. Paul's Church in Pawtucket. Smithfield face stones can also be found in a bridge across the Hudson River at Poughkeepsie, New York. They were fine grained, easily split, and had smooth, natural faces of many shades. One of these stones, darker than the rest, was split in two, and, as the two halves lay on the ground, the stone cutter noticed that they resembled a butterfly's wings. Stephen Smith instructed the masons to set them in the wall of Butterfly Mill just between the windows in the upper story.

A large, very old and historic bell hung in the tower of the mill. It was cast in Holland in 1563 by Peter Seest with date and legend imprinted thereon. It was used many years in a monastery in southern England. With a change in government and the spoliation of convents and monasteries, the bell, with other church properties, was confiscated and turned over to the British Navy. It was fitted aboard His Majesty's frigate *Guerriere*.

During the War of 1812, Captain Isaac Hull, master of the *USS Constitution*, better known as *Old Ironsides*,



*"Hearthside", a fine example of Rhode Island colonial architecture.*

*Home built with the stones  
and on the site of  
the Old Butterfly Factory.*



and now in the Boston Navy Yard, engaged the *Guerriere* in combat. He blasted her into surrender; her fittings and stores were taken as prizes and Stephen Smith bought the bell in New Orleans. Today it is still in Rhode Island and commands a place of special attention in the Providence home of Mr. and Mrs. Paul C. Nicholson, Jr.

Time and neglect eventually took its toll. The roof of the old mill collapsed under the weight of snow and it lay in ruin for some time. Mr. and Mrs. George I. Parker purchased the site of the old mill and used many of the original stones in building their home there. We were happy to find that they, too, cherished the butterfly and it can be seen today in the chimney on the south gable.

From this point the Great Road turns northward to skirt the pond and winds through the valley toward Lime Rock. Just before it begins to climb Molasses Hill we found the old house of Captain Ebenezer (some history books called him John) Jenckes of the Continental Army.

After the burning of the *Gaspee* there were rumors of war. The British were in Newport and threatened to invade Providence. A meeting was held in the Valentine Whitman house and it was agreed that all the residents would gather their muskets, powder and shot and store them in three places on the Great Road. One place would be the Peleg Arnold Tavern in Union Village, another, the Eleazer Whipple House in Lime Rock and the third would be at the Jenckes House. (We wondered if this Capt. Ebenezer is the one we used to sing about — "Capt. Jenckes of the Horse Marines/He feeds his horse on corn and beans.")

Eleazer Whipple was a housewright who built the house now called by his name. At one time it was known as the Mowry Whipple Tavern. The house was

built before the Arnold House; was burned by the Narragansett Indians and then rebuilt in 1684. The house, now gone, was at the turn of the Great Road where the new Lime Rock Elementary School stands now. The first skirmish with the Indians occurred near here and, strange as it may seem, it was not with Rhode Island Indians, but with a party from Fall River. King Philip of the Wampanoags escaped from a trap at Fall River and led his braves, pursued by the whites, into a swamp called Nipsatchet or Nipsatchuck in Lime Rock. They were trying to reach the Nipmucks beyond Woonsocket and camped in a clearing to the left of here down in the meadow behind the Jordan Farm. The white men, who had followed them across the river at Martin's Wade near Berkeley, stayed in Whipple's house. Early the following morning, they surprised the Indians who were gathering wood and food in the planting fields.

In the ensuing skirmish Eleazer Whipple was wounded in the leg by an arrow. This was in the summer before the Great Swamp Fight at Kingston. The Narragansetts took to the warpath after the Great Swamp battle and all the residents hereabout went to the garrisons at Providence, Rehoboth or Portsmouth. Eleazer, with wounded leg, went to Portsmouth. After the death of King Philip, Eleazer petitioned the General Assembly for funds to repay those who had cared for him. He was granted ten pounds and thereby became the first Rhode Islander to receive government compensation for wounds received in battle.

We approached the village of Lime Rock which had been a boom town during the working of the lime industry. Here could be found hardrock men, teamsters, woodcutters, coopers, wheelwrights, blacksmiths and hostlers. The village had a post office, two banks, two hotels and a lodge of Masons.

Mount Moriah Lodge was instituted in 1805 and the

Masons erected their building, the only brick one in the village, to be used as a schoolhouse and temple. The school was on the first floor and the lodge rooms upstairs.

From the Stephen Wright graveyard we followed the winding, climbing road and came upon the Valentine Whitman house, now the home of Mr. and Mrs. John C. Whalen. In this house the first town meetings were held and officers were appointed — the viewers of fences, the corders of wood, the warders of hay, the town constables, and so on. Valentine Whitman was an Indian interpreter and Arnold's history tells us that he joined with several volunteers from Providence and took part in the Great Swamp Fight at Kingston. It was here also that the fathers of the town agreed that the arms of the settlers should be stored in the three places mentioned when they anticipated a British attack on Providence in 1775.

We continued north on the Great Road beyond the Valentine Whitman House and crossed the Washington Highway where the road loses its identity in the woods beyond.

The Great Road followed the Louisquisset Trail, but where the Indians and the settlers blazed the trail with axe marks on the trees, a different kind of signs marks the path for our swift cars through this wilderness.

We followed the Rte. 146 toward Woonsocket — it became the Great Road to Worcester — and a left turn just before entering this city brought us back onto the Great Road again where we soon saw the Smithfield Friends Meeting House in Union Village.

The land for this meeting house was given by the Arnolds and the building today is the third to be erected on the site; the two previous ones were burned. It was here that a famous person attended divine service but later was "put out of unity" with the Friends because of his zeal as an Abolitionist. He was Arnold Buffum.

The Quaker records state that in 1736, "Saylesville Friends helped to complete ye little meeting house at

Woonsocket" and began a subscription for that purpose.

Another old and honored place is the Peleg Arnold Tavern at Great Road and Woonsocket Hill Road. Peleg Arnold was a recruiter for soldiers in the French-Indian War and the Revolution. He was a member of the Continental Congress and was a Chief Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court.

It was at this house that Moses Brown and a companion stopped on their way home to Providence after delivering food, fuel and clothing to the citizens of Boston, gifts from Rhode Island Quakers during General Washington's Siege of Boston, before the evacuation of the British under General Howe.

It has been recorded of Peleg Arnold: "Toward the close of his life, he was not only an extensive dealer in, but also an ardent lover of, New England rum."

The first bank in Woonsocket, the Union National Bank, stood on Great Road near Arnold's Tavern. The savings of people hereabout helped to finance some of our early cotton and woolen mills. It was built in 1779 and later became a national bank.

The late Edwin Harris of the Pawtucket Manufacturing Company, whose ancestors were early Smithfield settlers, had records of money from this bank loaned to the founders of the first mills of the Metcalf family who developed the famous Wanskuck Mills, makers of fine uniform serges.

William Buffum, a director of this bank, was the son of Joseph Buffum who came from Salem and bought land at what is now Slatersville. Each of his sons was given a farm nearby. William's house, in this area, was similar to the Moses Aldrich House, built in 1774, where the Great Road turns off the highway on the hill above Branch Village. William Buffum married Lydia Arnold and it was inevitable that somewhere among their descendants there would be an Arnold Buffum. And there was. He was born in this area, two miles beyond the Friends Meeting House on Great Road.



*Old Limestone Quarry in  
Lime Rock, Rhode Island*



Arnold Buffum was a founder, and first president of, the New England Anti-Slavery Society founded at Boston in 1831. According to Elizabeth Buffum Chace's description of Arnold, he was a tall, aristocratic looking man and dedicated to the freeing of slaves. History has passed him by because, perhaps, he embraced an unpopular cause. In the *Dictionary of American Biographies* he is described by a fellow passenger on a European trip in 1843 as, "An Old Hickory Abolitionist; a tall, gray-haired, gold-spectacled patriarch; a very sharp old fellow who has all his facts ready, accuses his country as being pro-slavery, but still a genuine, democratic American."

Arnold Buffum's hatred for the cruelties of human slavery was reflected by all Abolitionists. Many of them were Quakers and they were hated with greater intensity by southern cotton growers and some northern cotton manufacturers who believed that the southern planters should be placated.

William Lloyd Garrison, the first secretary of the New England Anti-Slavery Society, was editor of the *LIBERATOR*. He married Helen Eliza Benson, daughter of George Benson, a member of the prosperous Providence firm of Brown, Benson and Ives.

Oliver Johnson in an editorial about William Lloyd Garrison wrote, ". . . was the first to unfurl the banner of Immediate and Unconditional Emancipation, and to organize on that principle a movement which, under God, was mighty enough to accomplish its object. It was through the instrumentality and influence of the Abolitionists that American Slavery was overthrown and four million dehumanized men, women and children at last became members of the human race."

Robert Green Ingersoll said of these Abolitionists in a Decoration Day speech: "Earth has no grander men, no nobler women. They were the philanthropists, the true patriots. When the will defies fear, when the heart applauds the brain, when duty throws down the gauntlet to fate, when honor scorns to compromise with death — this is heroism. The Abolitionists were heroes."

Arnold Buffum, because of his beliefs, was read out of the Society of Friends at the Meeting House — "put out of unity," they called it. He continued his fight for the slaves along with William Lloyd Garrison, John Greenleaf Whittier, Wendell Phillips and Frederick Douglass. They abhorred the sanction some churches gave to the slave trade. Ships leaving port on a slaving voyage were blessed by priests; upon arrival home, even though two-thirds of the captives had died, there were prayers of thanksgiving for a "successful voyage."

This, in one of Whittier's impassioned verses, was reviled, thus: "The slave ships speed from coast to coast, / Fanned by the wings of the holy ghost."



*Brayton House, built in 1774*

And so it followed that Arnold Buffum's daughters were ardent Abolitionists. Rebecca married Marcus Spring, a wealthy cotton broker from New York. During the trial of John Brown at Harper's Ferry, Rebecca visited him, braving the throngs of insolent soldiers and ignoring the scorn and mockery of the prejudiced populace, to bring solace and comfort to John Brown in his cell. Those seething, troublesome times brought about the crisis of our Civil War and we are still being troubled by the hatreds of those days.

When Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act, in 1850, enjoining everyone, under pain of punishment, to neither comfort nor harbor an escaped slave, and to assist in his return, Sarah Buffum, who had married Nathaniel Borden of the Fall River Mills, defied the law and made her home a stopping place for fugitives on their way to Canada.

Elizabeth Buffum married Samuel B. Chace, who with his brother Harvey Chace, built the mills at Valley Falls and Albion. Mrs. Chace likewise flouted this law and her home on Broad Street, Central Falls, was also a station on the underground railroad. Much of her childhood was spent along the Great Road; she attended the Friends Meeting in Union Village and went to school at the Academy on the Great Road. She was one of Rhode Island's noblest women. She was appointed to commissions and tormented legislators to bring about reforms in prisons, women's reformatories and mental institutions.

The Reverend Frederick A. Hinckley of Providence wrote in praise of her work in temperance, women suffrage, prison reform and orphanage improvement: "She was as inexorable as Destiny yet she cherished Portia's vision of the Quality of Mercy."

Elizabeth Chace numbered among her friends Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Greenleaf Whittier, William Lloyd Garrison, Susan B. Anthony, Julia Ward Howe and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

And John Greenleaf Whittier probably had all the Buffum sisters in mind when he wrote: "The poor slave's house of refuge when the hounds were on his track;/And saint and sinner, church and state joined hands to send him back."

Justification for the Fugitive Slave Act was emblazoned in newspaper headlines and apologies for it were preached from the pulpits. Ingersoll in condemning it said: "The vile and abominable institution of slavery had so corrupted us that we did not know right from wrong. It crept into the pulpit and the sermon became the echo of the bloodhounds' bark."

On the Great Road in Union Village, as we viewed the old Brayton House, poignant thoughts of that great humanitarian movement begun right here in Rhode Island by the Quakers toward a universal freedom for slaves, stirred our memory. It was Moses Brown of Providence, a convert and most zealous Friend, who first freed his own slaves and gave them freedom money. He recommended that all Quakers do likewise and the Quakers in Rhode Island were among the first in America to do so.

The Brayton House was erected by a freed slave named James Brayton in 1775. Up until a few years ago it was lived in by two of his proud descendants. The story of this house had its beginning in Middletown, Rhode Island, where a landowner kept a slave woman who gave birth to a son named James. The owner promised the slave she and her son would be freed upon his death, but he died without leaving a will and his execu-

tor sold the woman to another master and James was sold to Preserved Brayton of Rehoboth, Massachusetts. Preserved's wife was a Quaker preacher and, after a visit to England, where she learned that English Quakers were freeing their slaves, she persuaded her husband to set James free.

James Brayton, who had taken his new master's name, came to Union Village, and with his freedom money, he purchased a tract of land and traded day labor with the village carpenter who, in turn, framed and helped to build the Brayton House.

Through the years changes have been made on every side of the house; the Great Road was re-graded to a level higher than the house itself; elegant homes have been built nearby. But the Brayton House remains about the same; the antiquated windows and the handwrought hardware are still there. Only the roof repairs and the new paint are evidence of modernity.

Several years ago a memento of the man from Union Village who did so much to help free the slaves was found in the woodshed of the Brayton House. It was a cover, apparently, of a box for shipping and on it was printed in free-hand lettering, "Arnold Buffum, 212 Broadway, N. Y." To be treasured by the descendants of James Brayton was this small item once belonging to a man whose honor was "the honor that scorns to compromise with death;" — Arnold Buffum, Friend, Abolitionist, Humanitarian, one of the many who "opened the fountains" that "still gush by the way,/And the world for their healing is better today."

And so the Great Road endeth.

