

# RHODE ISLAND HISTORY

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GREGORIAN REFLECTOR OF 4-INCH APERTURE AND 24-INCH FOCAL LENGTH USED IN THE OBSERVATION OF THE TRANSIT OF VENUS, JUNE 3, 1769, NOW IN LADD OBSERVATORY, BROWN UNIVERSITY. *Photograph by C. H. Smiley.*

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ISSUED QUARTERLY AT PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

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# RHODE ISLAND HISTORY

VOL. IV

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CHARLES B. MACKINNEY, *President*      GEORGE L. MINER, *Treasurer*  
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*The Rhode Island Historical Society assumes no responsibility  
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## Industrial History: A New Service

There have been numerous mechanical inventions by Rhode Island people over the years which can be considered basic inventions and which have had strong influence on industry not only in Rhode Island but everywhere. The history of these matters has been given scant attention in the past and we find that while there is much material in the files of the Historical Society relating to the early days, we have but little information regarding 19th Century developments. The various types of steam engines, screws, safes, files, textile machinery, ship windlasses, automatic sprinklers, electrical cartridge fuses, and sewing machines—down to the recent Quonset hut—are a few of these that come to mind. We are now collecting data on this subject and hope to have the history and details of these inventions in our files for the use of historians and also for the use of industry and business.

I believe this Society can serve industry in a way that possibly has not been realized, and we are planning to ask our business and financial institutions to assist us in this undertaking, both by giving us any information or material that may be of interest and also by joining hands with us in some form of a corporate membership to assist in the added expense connected with it.

A number of corporations, with whom this matter has been discussed, have already indicated their willingness to cooperate with us in this undertaking.

CHARLES B. MACKINNEY, *President*



## Our Newspaper Collection

William R. Staples, writing an account of the Rhode Island Historical Society for the "American Quarterly Register" in 1839, said: "The Society regards as particularly valuable their files of newspapers. With great labor and at great expense, they have succeeded in procuring an almost perfect file of the *Providence Gazette*, the earliest paper printed in Providence. Their files of most of the other newspapers printed in the State are nearly perfect."

This was written only 17 years after the Society was founded. Since then there has been no cessation of the attempt to keep the Society's files of Rhode Island newspapers complete. For many years an appropriation by the State legislature for the purpose of gathering and binding all of the State's newspapers has notably solved the Society's problem in this respect.

The result is that today the Rhode Island Historical Society has, so far as I know, the most complete collection of its newspapers owned by any State in the country. The value of such a collection is apparent. I doubt whether any contemporary expression of printed opinion and fact, both for national and local history, measures up to the newspaper. No history of a town or city can be written without recourse to its newspapers. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries even the advertisements have unique value in social and economic study. In the wider fields of history, whether State or national, the whole trend of events is reported at regular intervals, in the printing of documents and letters, in the arguments of partisan communications, and in editorial opinion. The newspaper is omnivorous. Not only political history but religious, educational and social history find place in its pages. Literature, especially essays and poetry, was constantly supplied to its readers.

If all the printed sources of history for a certain century or decade had to be destroyed save one, that which could be chosen with the greatest value to posterity would be a file of an important newspaper.

C. S. B.

## Joseph Brown, Scientist and Architect

by J. WALTER WILSON\*

Joseph Brown was the second of the four brothers who played such an important part in the affairs of Providence both during and after Revolutionary times. A testimonial<sup>1</sup> drawn up at the time of his death describes him thus:

He was descended from an ancient and respectable line of ancestors; to which his character adds no inconsiderable lustre. He possessed a strong and manly genius calculated for business, as well as for the greatest improvements in the liberal and useful ARTS and SCIENCES. His skill and industry in the earlier part of life in the merchandize and manufactures, in which he was concerned, had rendered his circumstances easy if not affluent, and enabled him to indulge his natural taste for SCIENCE.

He became, in fact, a noteworthy amateur scientist and architect.

We are accustomed to think of the lives and thoughts of our colonial ancestors as dominated by religious controversy and political trials. But throughout the colonies and, indeed throughout European civilization, there was an intense interest in science. The important advance of science in the 17th century, which Professor Whitehead designated the Century of Genius, beginning with Galileo and culminating in Newton, made an enormous impression on popular thought. The development of scientific instruments, the telescope and the microscope, even the thermometer and the barometer, gave tools to the scientist and playthings to the less serious amateur, much as did radio a generation ago.

Unquestionably the most important men in New England were the ministers of the churches, referred to as "That influential body of men known as the New England or puritan clergy,—of great personal influence, they were a power in the land."<sup>2</sup> Many of the most conspicuous of these

\* J. Walter Wilson, Ph.B. (Brown) 1918; Ph.D. 1921; Frank L. Day Professor of Biology.

<sup>1</sup> *Testimonial to Joseph Brown, Esq., Providence, December 10, 1785. Ms. John Hay Library, Brown University; Broadside in R. I. H. S.*

<sup>2</sup> W. P. and J. P. Cutler, *Life, Journals, & Correspondence of the Reverend Manasseh Cutler, LL.D.* (Cincinnati, 1888), p. 119.



were amateur scientists: Ezra Stiles of Newport, later president of Yale; Manasseh Cutler and John Prince of Salem; and Perez Fobes of Raynham, for a time Professor of Natural Philosophy, and Vice President of Brown, then Rhode Island College. Ezra Stiles' *Diary* has innumerable references to his scientific activities and the Reverend Manasseh Cutler's *Journal* tells of his own activities as well as those of the people he visited. For example on April 10, 1766: "Spent the morning [with Mr. Thomas Adams at Medfield, Mass.] viewing objects in the microscope. We could see that a hair has a path in the middle, by which moisture is conveyed from the nutritive vessels to the extremity of the hair. Fur is full of joints, which occasions its softness."<sup>3</sup> In fact some young men apparently joined the clergy to get leisure for science. This was true, for example, of John Ewing, New Jersey College (Princeton) 1754, later Provost of the University of Pennsylvania and author of a *System of Natural Experimental Philosophy*. According to his biographer Robert Patterson, Ewing accepted an appointment as tutor following his graduation and "At this period he resolved to choose his profession; and feeling the study of theology congenial to his wishes, and calculated to permit him to mingle with it scientific researches, he adopted it with his usual promptitude and his usual zeal."<sup>4</sup>

Men in political life were also interested in science: Franklin, Jefferson, John Adams and Stephen Hopkins in Rhode Island. Far from being of minor importance, this interest in science was a significant factor in the life of the times. Charles W. Parsons quotes Professor Tyler, the well-known historian of American Literature, that "the bond of scientific communion . . . helped to prepare the way for political communion,"<sup>5</sup> and the Bridenbaughs say much the same thing: "Interest in science . . . proved a strong force for Americanization, bringing together persons of all ranks

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> John Ewing, *System of Natural Experimental Philosophy* (Philadelphia, 1809), p. xii.

<sup>5</sup> Charles W. Parsons, "Early Votaries of Natural Science in Rhode Island," *R. I. H. S. C.*, vol. VII, p. 247.

in close and increasingly democratic association for the accomplishment of a common purpose."<sup>6</sup>

Joseph Brown was neither a clergyman nor a political leader but acquired the leisure for his studies from success in business. My own interest in him was aroused through investigating the activities of my predecessors in science teaching at Brown. This was started in part by the discovery of the remarkable fact that though founded by the Baptist denomination with the development of the clergy in mind, all of its professors for the first quarter century down to 1790—with the exception of President Manning himself—were science professors: David Howell, Joseph Brown, Benjamin Waterhouse, Benjamin West and Perez Fobes.

Furthermore, as many or more of its early graduates went into medicine—then as now an important scientific career—as went into the clergy. For example, of the five in the class of 1773, the class of Solomon Drowne, three went into medicine and only one became a clergyman. Joseph Brown, as a benefactor, a trustee and a professor obviously had much to do with this trend in the young college.

Joseph Brown was born Dec. 3, 1733. His father, James, was the greatgrandson of Chad Brown, one of the first settlers, and first elder of the Baptist Church. James had become a merchant and laid the foundation for the prosperity of his family. He had married Hope Power, granddaughter of Pardon Tillinghast, another of the early pastors of the church. When Joseph was five years old his father died, leaving the bringing up of the family to the mother. Guild says "She was remarkably amiable in her temper, and brought up her boys well; a proof, says one, of strength of character and mind."<sup>7</sup> Joseph married Elizabeth, daughter of Nicholas Power and they had four children but the line died out according to Guild with Mrs. Eliza Rogers, his granddaughter.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Carl and Jessica Bridenbaugh, *Rebels and Gentlemen* (New York, 1942), p. 363.

<sup>7</sup> Reuben A. Guild, *Life, Times and Correspondence of James Manning and the Early History of Brown University* (Boston, 1864), p. 155.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.



Joseph played an important part in getting the college under way. He was a trustee, and from 1784 till his death Professor of Experimental Philosophy. He received the honorary degree of A.M. in 1770 at the second commencement. He was elected a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and was for several years a representative of Providence in the General Assembly. He had a stroke of apoplexy Nov. 24, 1784, and on March 4, 1785, President Manning in a letter said: "Mr. Joseph Brown's indisposition is indeed a very heavy stroke to us. The college and the church particularly feel it. There is little possibility of his ever being restored to his former usefulness, though he again goes a little abroad."<sup>9</sup> He died Dec. 3, 1785, at the age of 52.

Of his works, the best known and indeed the most noteworthy, were his participation in the observation of the transit of Venus in 1769, and the planning of five of the most important buildings architecturally in the Providence of Revolutionary times: the College Edifice, now University Hall, the First Baptist Meeting House, the Market Building, his own house on South Main Street, and the John Brown house, now the home of the Rhode Island Historical Society. Both these activities have been adequately treated, the astronomical by Mr. Lownes in a recent number of *Sky and Telescope*,<sup>10</sup> and the architectural by Mr. Isham,<sup>11</sup> Mrs. Downing<sup>12</sup> and Prof. Hitchcock.<sup>13</sup> I include them here to make my story complete.

In the 18th century there seems to have been no profession comparable to that of our modern architect. The rôle of such men as Munday, Harrison, and Joseph Brown seems to have been to select a plan, more or less complete, and leave it to the master workmen to carry it out. At least this was Joseph Brown's rôle in each of his projects.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 350.

<sup>10</sup> Albert E. Lownes, "The 1769 Transit of Venus," *Sky and Telescope*, II, No. 6, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Norman M. Isham, *The Meeting House of the First Baptist Church in Providence* (Providence, 1925).

<sup>12</sup> Antoinette F. Downing, *Early Homes of Rhode Island* (Richmond, 1937).

<sup>13</sup> Henry Russell Hitchcock, Jr., *Rhode Island Architecture* (Providence, 1939).

In connection with University Hall the first committee "to draught instructions and prepare a model of the house"<sup>14</sup> included Stephen Hopkins, Joseph Brown, and the Rev. John Davis. After a preliminary report this committee was changed to replace Davis by President Manning. They reported Feb. 9, 1770, and it was voted "That the College edifice be built according to the following plan, viz.: That the house be one hundred and fifty feet long and forty-six feet wide, with a projection of ten feet on each side, (ten by thirty,) and that it be four stories high."<sup>15</sup> The construction of the building was in the hands of another committee of which Joseph Brown was not a member, but his brother John was. I think there is no actual record of the part played by the various men in planning the building but one of the items of expense in the building is the sum of three pounds twelve shillings "for the passage of Joseph Brown, Jonathan Hamman, and Zeph. Andrews to Cambridge to view the colleges."<sup>16</sup> Hamman (Hammon or Hammond) was a carpenter and Zephaniah Andrews was a master mason. The model finally adopted by the building committee was Nassau Hall, Princeton, which according to Guild was regarded as one of the finest structures in the country. The fact that both Manning and Professor Howell were Princeton men may have had something to do with the selection.

In the planning of the First Baptist Meeting House Joseph Brown seems to have played a more important rôle. He with Hammond (the same carpenter), and Comfort Wheaton, a "housewright," were appointed members of a committee "to make a draught of a house 90 by 70 feet together with a tower and steeple and make an invoice of the timber and other material, and ascertain the price of the same". Brown and Hammond again went to Boston "to view the different churches and meeting-houses there, and to make a memorandum of their several dimensions and forms of architecture."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Reuben A. Guild, *History of Brown University with Illustrative Documents* (Providence, 1867), p. 230.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 231.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236.

<sup>17</sup> Isham, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-2.



The final design of the meeting house was adapted from plans in a book by James Gibbs which Joseph Brown owned and which is now in the possession of the Providence Athenæum. The main body of the church contains elements of two of Gibbs' churches. But Isham says that "the plan of the meeting house is pretty nearly a product of its own time and place." The steeple, however, follows closely one of the rejected plans for St. Martin's in the Fields in London. The story of the steeple illustrates the relation between the "architect" and the master workman. The plan in Gibbs selected by Brown is a drawing to the scale of one-twelfth of an inch to the foot. It was the work of the master workman—in this case James Sumner of Boston—to make from this plan working drawings from which the structure could be made and devise a method of constructing it. How this was accomplished is instructively told in Isham's history of the building.<sup>18</sup>

In 1773 Joseph collaborated with Stephen Hopkins in planning the Market House. This building Hitchcock characterizes as "Rather rudimentary and even archaic like the college edifice."

In 1774 Joseph built a house for himself on South Main Street which still stands between the Court House and the Old Stone Bank. Toward the end of his life he planned the house on Power Street for his brother John. At the time it was built it was one of the most magnificent dwelling houses in North America. How much of the detail he planned no one knows. The work was done by some of the same master workmen who had carried out his plans at University Hall and the Meeting House. At any rate he did not live to see the building commenced.

Brown's taste in architecture was, according to Hitchcock, even in his own day old-fashioned. The buildings, in contrast to those of the Newport architects, Munday and Harrison, though larger, and more expensive, were "neither so refined nor so up-to-date in style."<sup>19</sup> Since Gibbs's "Book

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>19</sup> Hitchcock, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

of Architecture" was published in 1728 and the plans in it were undoubtedly somewhat older, and since most of the buildings which Brown could have examined for models were of an older period, this may not be surprising. Whatever the academic criticism may be the fact remains that the buildings are, for most of us, the source of an aesthetic satisfaction which is timeless. They are substantial and beautiful and constitute his most important contribution and claim to memory.

The idea of making observations of the transit of Venus apparently originated with Joseph Brown, as a result of his reading Winthrop's account of the transit of 1761. He ordered a telescope like Winthrop's, but seeing a list of apparatus requested by the American Philosophical Society for a similar observation, realized that his own would be inadequate. He took the matter up with Benjamin West and additional instruments were ordered. "Mr. Brown's expense in this laudable undertaking was little less than 100 pounds sterling, besides near a month's time of himself and servants in making the necessary previous experiments and preparations." Among the apparatus was a micrometer which they did not know how to use. "Not having any author by us from which we could get the use of that curious instrument, we were obliged to have recourse to experiments" says West; further "in justice to him [Joseph Brown], I must acknowledge, our work could not have been done with equal accuracy had it not been for his skill and contrivance therein."<sup>20</sup> It must be admitted that in a letter to Stiles from the Rev. David Rowland, pastor of the First Congregationalist Church in Providence it is stated that these statements "which are designed to do so much honor to Mr. Brown were forced in by him, contrary to Mr. West's Inclination, and what was really just and right; and the advantage taken because Mr. West's circumstances were low and he was not able to support the press."<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Benjamin West, *An Account of the Observation of Venus Upon the Sun, the third day of June, 1769, at Providence, in New England* (Providence, 1769), pp. 10-12.

<sup>21</sup> Franklin Bowditch Dexter, *Itineraries and Correspondence of Ezra Stiles* (New Haven, 1916), p. 562.



However, it must be remembered that there was high feeling between the Congregationalists and the Baptists and that West was a Congregationalist and Brown a Baptist. I haven't a doubt but that without West's astronomical and mathematical knowledge the observations could not have been made. Nor that without Joseph Brown's inspiration, financial backing, and also skill and contrivance in manipulating the apparatus, they would not have been undertaken nor completed. Like every other coöperative enterprise of this sort it is very difficult even for the participants themselves to tell who deserves the greatest share of the credit. The observation turned out to be very important. Cook's voyage to Tahiti was planned to make similar observations of the same transit there. "The Providence account by West [says Lownes] was the first to be published, except for brief newspaper stories and the only one printed as a separate document."<sup>22</sup> Both Brown and West deserved plenty of credit for their work and were awarded it by their contemporaries. That Brown was capable of independent astronomical observation is indicated by a paper of his in the first volume of the *Memoirs* of the American Academy entitled "An Observation of a Solar Eclipse, October 27, 1780, at Providence," apparently his only published paper.

According to the *Testimonial* of December 10, 1785, "his favorite study was Mechanics: in this was the greatest strength of his genius discovered; honorary proofs of which are left behind him." I have two accounts of activities of this sort. In Solomon Drowne's diary there is the following account of a test of a fire engine made under his direction like one then in Providence.

April 15, 1772 Town meeting day. Vote and choose representatives at the court house. The engines were carried up behind the court in order to try them. The new one throws water further than either of the other two which, perhaps, is owing to its being better manned, the over-the-river people having chose out a sett of strong lusty fellows before they brought the engine over; whereas, they could scarce get enough to man our engine even such as they were, some boys. However, the new engine is an excellent one

<sup>22</sup> Lownes, p. 5.

considering it is the first ever made in this town. It was made by Jackson founder under the direction of Joseph Brown A.M. exactly of the same dimensions as the down town one. A dispute arose among the Learned in Phylosophy about the spraying of the water after it is emitted from the pipe, some attributing it to one thing and some to another, which I shall pass over in silence.<sup>23</sup>

The first fire engine of Providence was purchased some time between 1754 and 1759 when the inhabitants of the compact part of the town petitioned to purchase a "large water engine." It was a so-called "cheese wheel" engine imported from London. In December, 1760, Obadiah Brown and James Angell were authorized at a meeting of the compact part of the town to purchase another engine in Boston. In 1792 there were four engines here; No. 1 on North Main Street opposite the First Baptist Meeting House, No. 2 at the south end of Benefit Street. (I presume this was the one purchased in Boston and which was the "Downtown" one referred to by Drowne as the model for Joseph Brown.) No. 3 at the north end of Benefit Street and No. 4 near what is now the corner of Weybosset and Dorrance Streets which would be the one from "Over-the-river" that Brown made. According to White "these engines were nothing more or less than a box mounted on rollers and steered by a tail-like lever behind, and drawn by ropes hooked to the forward corners. They were supplied with water by buckets passed by men arranged in double rows, one for handling the full buckets and the other for returning them to be refilled. This was called 'forming a line' and was the primary duty of the fire wards."<sup>24</sup> Everyone was required by law to have two leather fire buckets with his name painted on them near his front door. The engine was pulled as near as possible to the fire and the water played from a nozzle mounted directly on the engine, for satisfactory fire hose was not invented till 1808. These four engines made up the fire apparatus of Providence until 1822 when a fine engine, the Hydraulion No. 1, with a thousand feet of hose was purchased from a firm in Philadelphia.

<sup>23</sup> *Solomon Drowne's Diary, 1770-1774*. Ms. John Hay Library, Brown University.

<sup>24</sup> Charles E. White, *The Providence Fireman* (Providence, 1886), p. 302.



In Manasseh Cutler's *Journal* there is the following account of the steam engine at the ore beds at Hope furnace:

Wednesday, June 27. This morning I received a polite invitation from Governor Bowen, in the name of a large company, to join them in a Turtle frolic, six miles out of town. Mr. Hitchcock and the other clergymen of the town were of the party, but, much against my inclination, I was obliged to excuse myself. Spending my time in Turtle frolics would very illy comport with the long journey and public business I had undertaken. As I went out of town, Mr. Hitchcock and I waited on Governor Bowen. I informed him that it was my wish to visit the famous steam engine at Cranston, of which he is one of the proprietors. He proposed excusing himself from going with the Turtle party, and riding out with me to the engine, eight miles from Providence; but it must have deprived him and the company of so much pleasure as they had then in prospect, I insisted on his not thinking of it, and went on myself to Cranston. To go to the furnace and engine was eight miles, nearly, out of my way, and a road I had never traveled; but my curiosity was so much excited by the description of so singular a machine, and the only one in America, that I could not deny myself the pleasure of viewing it.

I arrived at the ore-beds at 12 o'clock. The engine was at work, raising water from a well 80 feet deep. The iron flue is  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet wide and 6 feet long, with a square hearth at the mouth, secured from fire by large, thick, iron plates. On the back part of the flue is a winding funnel, which passes into a chimney on the back part of the building. A wooden boiler of 6 feet diameter is placed above the flue, which is constantly kept full of water when the engine is in motion. The boiler rises above the first story of the building, much in the form of the large cisterns in distilleries, where it receives at the top the condensing cylinder,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet in diameter, and made of plated iron. From this cylinder a large worm passes with many windings down the boiler. The valve that passes into this cylinder is more than 2 feet in diameter, and rises and descends by means of an iron rod made fast to one end of the large beam. Around the top of the boiler are numerous leaden pipes, some connected with the condenser and some not, furnished with stopcocks for admitting or excluding air or water, as necessary in working the machine; but they are too numerous and complicated to admit of any description from a mere view of the machine. A large reservoir of water is placed in the third loft of the house, constantly affording water to the works below, and as constantly supplied (with a pump for the purpose), by the working of the machine. The large beam is a massive piece of timber, near 4 feet in diameter and 20 feet long, being two very large oak timbers nicely forged together. It moves on a large iron bolt in the center, like the beams of scales, and has two arching timbers at each end, forming the segments of a circle, along which two chains of a prodigious size play as the beam moves. One of these leads to the piston or valve of the condenser, and the other, at the

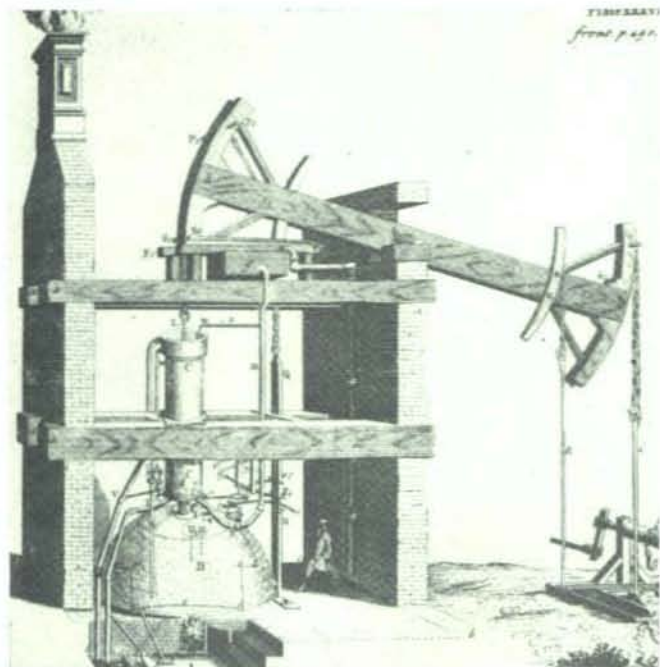
opposite end, to the pumps in the well. There are four cold water pipes, one feeding pipe, and one venting pipe. By the same motion of the beam which raises the water out of the well, all these pipes open or close, by the means of stop-cocks and valves, as the design of them requires. There are two large pumps in the well, which is 80 feet deep and 23 feet wide. The sides of wells are supported by large timbers, laid horizontal, so as to make the form of the wells quintangular, and the ends of the timbers let into one another. The engine raises 7 hogsheads of water in a minute, and the flue consumes 2 cords of wood in twenty-four hours. The immense weight of the beam, the cast-iron wheels, large chains, and other weighty parts of the works, occasion a most tremendous noise and trembling of the large building in which it is erected, when the machine is in motion. By the sides of the well from which the water is drawn are two other wells of the same form, 70 feet deep. These are sunk down in the bed of ore; and in these are the workmen, about ten or twelve in number, digging ore. The ore is raised in large buckets, which hold about one ton weight, let down and drawn up by large chains, carried from the well to a large capstan, which is constantly turned by an ox. As one bucket rises, another goes down. These wells are kept dry by the water continually drawing off into the well where the pumps are fixed, and the pumps keep the water below the height where the men work. This curious machine was made under the direction of Mr. Joseph Brown, of Providence, and is a standing proof of the abilities of that able philosopher. The invention was not new, but he has made many valuable improvements, in simplifying and making the working of it more convenient, above what has yet been done in Europe. It cost upward of one thousand pounds sterling. Baited my horse; 8d.<sup>25</sup>

The steam engine here described was obviously a complicated contrivance. The problem of draining mines was an old one and it was for this purpose that the first successful steam engine had been built by Newcomen in England about 1712.<sup>26</sup> It was the only purpose to which the steam engine had been put when the one at Hope furnace was built, for it was only in the 1780's that Watt developed the rotative steam engine to drive machinery. Many improvements had been made meanwhile on the Newcomen pumping engine, and Joseph Brown's was, according to Zachariah Allen, of this type. He says "One of the earliest steam engines constructed in the United States was erected upon Newcomen's plan at the Hope Furnace in Rhode Island,

<sup>25</sup> Cutler, vol. I, p. 205.

<sup>26</sup> A. Wolf, *A History of Science, Technology, and Philosophy in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1939), p. 611.





NEWCOMEN'S STEAM ENGINE

From J. T. Desaguliers, LL.D., F.R.S., *A Course of Experimental Philosophy*,  
(London), 1744.

where it was used for raising water from the shaft of a pit sunk for obtaining ore."<sup>27</sup> The fundamental principle was always the same; the huge beam supported in the middle had the pumps attached to one end and the piston to the other and as the cylinder filled with steam the piston was raised and the pump arm lowered. Then a jet of cold water caused the steam to condense, producing a vacuum, which pulled the piston down and raised the pump end with the water from the well. The complicated system of levers, trips, cords, piping, and valves was necessary to time the entrance of the steam and the jet of water, and to keep the boiler full. It would be exceedingly interesting to know just what Brown's improvements were. Whatever they were, the mere building of the engine implies a thorough-going understanding of mechanical principles and their application. It must have been his masterpiece in this line, but the reputation given him by Cutler and the casual nature of the account of the fire engine suggest that there must have been many more such works that we have not been told about.

<sup>27</sup> Zachariah Allen, *Science of Mechanics* (Providence, 1829), p. 326.

*To be concluded in the next issue.*

*Editor's Note:* Joseph Brown's activity in the fire engine field provides one view of fire-fighting in Providence in other days. This seems an appropriate time, therefore, to present two other articles on fires, fire-fighting, and fire-engines. These articles are the two next following.



## Moses Brown on Fire-Fighting

Communicated by ROBERT MORTON HAZELTON<sup>1</sup>

MOSES BROWN TO JOHN BROWN<sup>2</sup>

January, 1801

Dear Brother—

I have just returned, fatigued from attending the greatest and most calamitous fire<sup>3</sup> this town has ever experienced. The first of my knowing it, my son sent up a lad from Corlis' store telling me it was on fire and that the buckets were wanted. That was about ten minutes after eleven. Immediately I ordered up my horses, carriage, and cart to take down my engine and I went down myself in a chaise with the 8 leather buckets.

On my arrival I found the store was consumed and Welcome Arnold's nearly gone. Halsey's house was in flames and soon Lippets and then Clarke and Nightingales' brick warehouse. By the time I got there the wind had varied from the North to the West and thus saved Corlis' house. However it put the whole range along the North side of Power's Lane in danger and I feared for thy mansion<sup>4</sup> and had Jones station a man on the roof.

The Power's old house taking fire, we hawled down several old buildings on the north side of the lane and the blacksmiths shop on the south side. This was successful in staying its progress that way. The C. & N. brickhouse was blown up and those southward of it partly pulled down and partly burned. Clarke & Nightingale's great store and all on the wharf behind the brickhouse were consumed.

We made a stand in the back lane by young Cook's house, pulled down some old buildings on the west of it, and by great exertion with engines, fire hooks, etc. saved the double house. If it had burned, those in the back street and Nightingale's would have been in danger. On the main street our stand was to pull down the three small buildings north of Sam Godfrey's house and place three engines at the northwest corner of the North alley at Wm Thayer's brick house. We blew up one of the buildings north of that on the North Common, and here we were happy to see the devouring flames stayed.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Hazelton is currently engaged in making an index of the Moses Brown Papers in the collection of the Rhode Island Historical Society. The documents here presented are transcribed from the original handwriting of Moses Brown's notes for letters and reports contained in boxes of miscellaneous material in the Society's library.

<sup>2</sup> John Brown, at the date of this letter, was absent from Providence, serving in Congress.

<sup>3</sup> This fire broke out about 10 A.M., 21 January 1801, in the loft of John Corlis's large brick store on the west side of South Main Street, nearly opposite the foot of Planet Street. According to contemporary accounts the day was cold and windy and the fire soon spread along both sides of South Main Street, from No. 101 to No. 143.

<sup>4</sup> The house at 52 Power Street, now the home of the Rhode Island Historical Society.

## MOSES BROWN ON FIRE-FIGHTING

81

My hoarseness and fatigue were such together with the heat,—I was in the midst both on foot and on horseback directing with my trumpet, and the smoke—that I found it necessary to return home, as soon as the fire was secure. That was about  $\frac{1}{4}$  to 4 o'clock.<sup>5</sup>

All the stores on the wharves in the district are burned. I hope most of the goods were saved. The streets, lanes, gardens, and such were covered with them. My team and divers others were employed in removing them. Some people came from 9 miles in the country to our assistance. However for want of use, and as some people complained to me, for want of influential directors more damage was done than otherwise. One engine failed and the mud from the docks damaged the working of the others. The wind rather abated and once or twice shifted favourably for the saving of houses. It is remarkable that this is the same spot where the fever raged, this year. Of course no analogy can be traced. I cannot give thee the exact number<sup>6</sup> of dwelling houses or stores, thou'll know by my narrative where it extended as well as I. Although I passed several times along the streets on horseback, with the fire on both sides so that it seemed hardly safe, I cannot say how many are burned. I might list the houses, but then I don't know them all.

Better provision for water must be made. Some fountains from the hills above would be much better than to depend upon the shores or wells. The damage thou can judge perhaps from 160,000 to 200,000 dollars worth.<sup>7</sup> The hemp and many bulky articles will be lost.

This evening I had another alarm. All the bells were ringing. I sent down, being so fatigued as not fit to go unless really needed. My messenger returned soon saying that several buildings were aflame below the conflagration of last night. I made to set out, though unfit. On the hill, people just returning said that it was under control. So I have returned and now give thee this rough scrawl. I hear of few accidents and no lives lost.

MOSES BROWN TO SOLOMON THAYER<sup>8</sup>

Being appointed with Samuel Jackson to consult with thy neighbor Elder Weld about thy Impellent Pump<sup>9</sup> and to ascertain the use that it may be to the town and report at their next meeting, I took pump home to my house and fitted it with a brake or handle and secured it in a tub. On applying power sufficient to move the pistons, the plug through which the leather pipe conveys the water was forced out.

<sup>5</sup> Moses Brown's fatigue, after this day of exertion, is easily understood when one realizes that he was 63 years old at this time.

<sup>6</sup> According to contemporary accounts, the fire destroyed 37 buildings, of which 16 were dwellings, 10 were stores, and 11 were miscellaneous structures.

<sup>7</sup> Estimates of the damage ran as high as \$300,000.

<sup>8</sup> A short time after this disastrous fire, Solomon Thayer approached the town with an invention which he called a "showering system." The town appointed Moses Brown and Samuel Jackson to test the device and submit a report. This is an informal report Moses Brown made to the inventor.

<sup>9</sup> This pump was the vital part of the "showering system."



In the afternoon when we were to make the experiments of its raising water, we several times forced the plug out after wedging and tightening the same. As thy neighbor had delayed his returning home on purpose for this experiment we proceeded to substitute a temporary security. We nailed on a horse shoe over the plug and put a brace under the pin of the beam which governs the pistons.

We were then able to raise water through leather hose—40 feet perpendicular and impell it forward over the roof of my house 80 feet more. In doing this I found that on taking out the pump one of the lower plugs was also started out, as far as the length of the iron lugs.

Thou wilt perceive, therefore, that some improvement still is necessary in the perfection and durability of thy pump. I would suggest as a remedy that the plugs be made with screws [i.e., be threaded], which may be soon done. By having them project out about 2 inches they may be taken out and put in as occasion may require to facilitate the repair of valves. —The standard that supports the beam seems not quite so secure as required by the roughness of the hurrying times such as fires often are. Another standard may be fixed on the front side for a brace, and I could suggest further that the pump requires strong bracing to steady it. Possibly two of the legs should be in a direct line with the working arm and two others at right angles to those. . . . As a friend to useful improvements, to thee as so far having successfully produced a cheap, simple, and useful machine I submit these observations. If there is any value for thee in my hints thou art welcome to them.

#### MOSES BROWN TO TOWN OF PROVIDENCE<sup>10</sup>

Agreeable to appointment we have examined the Impellant Pump of Solomon Thayer. We tried the same with leather hose 66 feet long through which and the pipe at the end it carried water 120 feet and over the top of a house 40 feet high. The hose not being quite tight, the addition of tin or wooden pipes fitted to houses or other buildings or onto the tops of ships would better shew the force. We find the force of the pump to be quite considerable both in the experiment which we have made and in the simplicity of the application of the power to the ordinary forcing pump. With this, two men can exert their strength on a handle 8 feet long fitted with screws on a beam eleven inches only, which moves the forcers and impells the water through the pipe, until the weight of water added to the friction becomes equal to the force applied.

Though the experiment succeeded better than we expected and we think the inventor merits encouragement, yet we find the pump in its present stage insufficient to warrent the purchase. Some improvements to secure the permanency of some parts of the machine are absolutely necessary, which we have suggested in a letter to the patentee. They may be easily added and at small expense.

<sup>10</sup> Moses Brown's report to the town on the committee's test of Thayer's invention.

The pump is of wood, which of course makes it subject to getting out of order and wear. The additional expense of metal, for those citizens who chose to have them made, would render them more durable and useful.

We understand that the inventor places the chief dependance for his fee, on the idea and use of the pipes which are to be attached. If some house were to have the pipes erected and an experiment carried out in spreading the water for showering the house, we apprehend it might answer a valuable purpose. It would demonstrate how houses might be made secure from taking fire. We cannot admit that the idea of using such pipes is limited to himself.<sup>11</sup>

We suggest an idea which if on more mature reflection and examination is thought to answer may considerably add to the use and encouragement of the piping. They may be made to serve as conductors for lightening, as well as for showering, in which case they must be made of thick tin, not wood. They could have the elevated metal points and connection to earth added as in the usual lightening rods.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> At that time Almy & Brown were already using a system by which a watermill-driven force-pump carried water to the second story of the cotton mill at Pawtucket. This system had an added pipe to serve to spray the roof in case of fire. The pipes of the system were made of wood bored by water-driven machinery. Both Thayer's system and that used by Almy & Brown are interesting forerunners of the modern sprinkler system.

<sup>12</sup> Moses Brown's findings started a long line of improvements which culminated finally in a vote of the freemen that "Moses Brown, David Leonard, G. Arnold, be and are hereby appointed a committee to purchase two new fire engines for the town."



LAFAYETTE'S OVERSHOES

In the Society's collection.



## James Brown's Diary, 1801-2.\*

Transcribed by BRADFORD F. SWAN

Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> day January 1801—is a cold day, . The ground just covered with a late snow. The month of Dec<sup>r</sup> last was unusually mild—I came from Providence Via Bristol this day.

3<sup>d</sup> a very cold day. The river is not shut & has not been this winter—

4<sup>th</sup> some spitts of snow N

5<sup>th</sup> a snow of five Inches fell last night. The ice has made in my chamber the three last nights—N.W.

6<sup>th</sup> lodge at Coll Leonards with M<sup>rs</sup> Ward & C<sup>o</sup>—

7<sup>th</sup> drive from Norton to Taunton 9 miles, and leave the Mony for Sproats execution with Judge Paddleford taking his Recpt.—We dine at Leonards & come home in the Eve, in Rain

8<sup>th</sup> Sleighing spoiled, warm—10<sup>th</sup> SuM<sup>r</sup> is here

11<sup>th</sup> very warm. I go to Newport by Water N.W.

12<sup>th</sup> return with \$1000, the Dividend of the Insur Company on the 26<sup>th</sup> Dec<sup>r</sup> last on my Fathers one hundred shares in that Office—

14<sup>th</sup> rain. We hear that Russia has seized the British property, & that G. Britain has declared war against her & the northern Powers—G. Britains right to search Neutral ships is the Question. this is settled; new Treaty soon commences— [This last passage was apparently entered at a later date.]

15<sup>th</sup> very warm & Hazy

from 15<sup>th</sup> to ye 18<sup>th</sup> Jany 1801, moderate then a cold day—N.W.

19<sup>th</sup> warmer. S.W. write to J<sup>n</sup> B—

20<sup>th</sup> some rain last night, snow P.M.

21<sup>st</sup> no sleighing being drifted—Cold—about 10 Oclk in the morn<sup>g</sup> M<sup>r</sup> John Corlis's brick store is discovered to be in flames in the third Story. The store was filled with valuable goods Teas, China, Cottons, Hemp, English dry goods [erasure] (three hundred thousand Dollars in all)— [The estimate was apparently added later.] It was soon demolished—as was Mr Sam. Arnolds range of Stores—being very valuable also Mr. Halseys elegant house Range of Wood & Brick stores having valuable east India & other goods to great Amounts The brick house belonging to M<sup>rs</sup> Nightingale, occupied by Moses Lippit was also destroyed with the wooden stores to the westward also—C & Nightingale large store, next occupied by J. I. Clarke & Green & Barker.—being very rich and little saved out of it next the Old house of Gov<sup>r</sup> Cooks formerly with all its stores &c next again the Estate of the house of C & Nightingale all burnt to the ground—also the houses of Eddy & Daniel Bucklin and a house next south of Lippitts store nearly pulled down & injured—D Bucklins

\* This diary was given to the Society recently by Dr. Clarence S. Brigham, Director, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.

was the last house burnt on the west side of the street the distance between it & Joseph Arnolds wooden house being about twelve Feet

On th East of the street the flames began on Pecks large house & building which were destroyed—also the old house of Anne Power & another on that Lott with Cooper shop &c also Aunt Burroughs o<sup>r</sup> [blank] also [blank] Uncle Laws[?], o<sup>r</sup> buildings, very large & lately repaired—also the other valuable houses as far as M<sup>r</sup> W<sup>s</sup> Thayers brick house—

The Damage estimated in houses & stores to be about [erasure] 300000 Dollars

Inclusive of

Property personal

The principal Losses fall on Mr. J. Corlis

Sam<sup>l</sup> Arnold & family

about— \$40000

Thos L[loyd] Halsey —25000

G I. Clarke &

—30000

Mr. N.....

W. F. Magee [Megee]—4000

[†] D Wolfe of Bristol 10000

Joseph Peck [erasure] 4000

Corlis— 7000

The flames were stopped progressing about 4 Oclk P.M. having raged about five hours. The Beef Pork &c in M<sup>r</sup> Clarks large store afforded a great Flame forty hours after the building was first on fire—

The wind at first was N.W. & fresh

it afterwards veered to the North & perhaps N.E.—

14 or 15 houses were destroyed

11 or 12 Stores &c —

† The diarist wrote James and then covered it with what appears to be Chr.

To be continued



PEWTER BUTTON

Worn by R. I. Regiment in the Revolution

In the Society's collection.



GODDARD TALL-CASE CLOCK

*Bequeathed to the Society by G. Prescott Knight, Esq.*

## The Peck Manuscript Collection

The collection of manuscripts recently given to the Rhode Island Historical Society by the Hon. Frederick S. Peck is of interest to both historians and genealogists; now that they have been sorted, calendared, and indexed, the scholar will be able fully to appreciate their possibilities.

To the historian, the letters covering the period 1780-1810 will appear the richest. The activities of General Nathanael Greene and of Colonel James Abeel, his assistant in the Quartermaster General's Department of the Army, are dealt with in some detail; these letters throw light on the less picturesque but essential phases of warfare, as well as on the career of Rhode Island's famous Revolutionary War general.

In the same period Providence merchants were laying the bases for their fortunes; the letters of the four Brown brothers, of Thomas Poynton Ives, of Clark and Nightingale, and of Welcome Arnold—to mention only a few of those represented in the collection—show how widespread were the commercial interests of these merchant princes.

Public opinion of these times is reflected in the letters to Benjamin Bourne, then sitting in Congress at Philadelphia, as the merchants began to despair of the government's tariff policies and to urge simultaneously that Britain be put firmly in her place and that war be avoided.

Among other letters one of special interest is that written by the English poet Abraham Cowley while he was with the exiled Stuart court in 1650. The Dorr Rebellion, the political career of Tristram Burges, the activities of Prof. Romeo Elton, biographer of Roger Williams—all these are illuminated by the manuscripts.

To the genealogist, the collection of papers of three families—the Pecks of Barrington, the Howards of Foster, and the Thorntons of Johnston—will be of value. The social historian, too, will read with interest the letters written by members of the Howard family who migrated to central New York State.



An unusual feature of the collection is that it contains the autographs of Rhode Island governors from William Coddington to Theodore Francis Green. Roger Williams and several of his 17th Century Rhode Island colleagues are also represented.

In short, the student of Rhode Island history, as well as of the Revolutionary War and of the early economic development of the Federal period, will find these manuscripts a treasure trove.

The calendar and index has been prepared by Mrs. Ethyn M. W. Kirby, Ph.D., for the Frederick S. Peck Collection.

W. G. R.

#### Assistant Librarian Appointed

CLIFFORD P. MONAHON

A.B. (Bates) 1922; M.A. (Cornell) 1933;

B.S. in library science (Columbia) 1945.

#### News — Notes

William G. Roelker, the Society's director and librarian, has been appointed a lecturer in history at Brown University. During the Summer term he will offer a course entitled: "Social and Intellectual History from Colonial Days to 1865."

Donald Lines Jacobus has contributed an article entitled "Dickinson Problems" to *The American Genealogist* (April, 1945), in which he raises the question of the claim of descendants of Charles Dickinson, Sr., of Narragansett (?1660-1740) to Mayflower ancestry through Elizabeth, daughter of John Howland. Mr. Jacobus asks for light on the early history of the family, particularly any clues pointing to the origin of Charles Dickinson.

Harold Bowditch, M.D., of Brookline, Mass., one of America's foremost students of heraldry, will speak before the Society during the next lecture season on "Early New England Paintings of Coats-of-Arms." Members are requested to bring examples in their possession.

B. F. S.

## John Scott, Merchant

By RICHARD LeBARON BOWEN

In the archives of the *Massachusetts Historical Society* are three original letters of John<sup>5</sup> Scott, Jr.,\* written by him in 1765 at Charlestown, South Carolina, to Mr. Christopher Champlin,<sup>†</sup> merchant, at Newport, Rhode Island. Written when John<sup>5</sup> Scott was twenty-six years old, these letters are an important addition to the little previously known about him. Being in private hands they escaped the general destruction suffered by the Newport Records which were carried away by the British during the Revolutionary War.

To begin with, he calls himself John Scott, Jr., although his father's name was George. He had a cousin, John Bennett<sup>5</sup> Scott, who was apparently a year younger, and perhaps the junior was to distinguish the two, although in

\* Cf. *Rhode Island History*, vol. II (1943), No. 2, April, p. 49; also, "The Arms of Richard Scott," by Richard LeBaron Bowen, *N. E. Hist. Gen. Register*, vol. XCVI (1942), p. 16.

† This was CHRISTOPHER<sup>5</sup> CHAMPLIN (*Christopher<sup>4</sup>, Christopher<sup>3</sup>, Christopher<sup>2</sup>, Jeffery<sup>1</sup>*), born at Westerly 29 Nov. 1731, died at Newport 25 Apr. 1805. His grave in the North Burial Ground, Newport, is marked by a stone reading:

HERE  
ARE DEPOSITED THE REMAINS  
OF  
CHRISTOPHER CHAMPLIN, ESQUIRE  
PRESIDENT OF THE BANK OF RHODE ISLAND  
AND THE FIRST GRAND MASTER OF THE MASONIC FRATERNITY  
IN THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND;  
HE DIED ON THE 25TH DAY OF APRIL, 1805,  
IN THE 75TH YEAR OF HIS AGE.

His father, Christopher<sup>4</sup> Champlin, married at Westerly, 22 Apr. 1730, Rev. Mr. McSparran officiating, Hannah Hill, daughter of Capt. John Hill. In 1738 when the Town of Westerly was divided the north part became the present Town of Charlestown. The great estate of the Champlins, containing 2000 acres, fell within the limits of the new town. The homestead farm, containing seven or eight hundred acres, with a spacious mansion house, out buildings, etc., was in the possession of the family in 1847.

Christopher<sup>5</sup> Champlin, coming to Newport at an early age, became a wealthy merchant and banker. He was warden of the Trinity Church, Lieut.-Colonel of the Militia, a high ranking Mason, and a great man generally. He lived in a large old house on the south side of Mary Street, opposite Clarke Street, on the site now occupied by the Newport Y.M.C.A. building. Much is found about him in his grandson George Mason's books *re* Newport; *Annals of Redwood Library*; *Trinity Church*, etc., and in Updike's *History of the Narragansett Church*.

Christopher<sup>5</sup> Champlin's huge porcelain boiled-dinner platter is now doing service as a table centerpiece in Mr. George Andrews Moriarty's house at Ogunquit, Maine.



that case one would have expected to find him called senior. If he was really the senior of the two cousins, perhaps the explanation of his being called junior is to be found in the family "main line" pride.

In this Scott line there were already a grandfather John<sup>1</sup>, and a great-grandfather John<sup>2</sup>. We know that John<sup>3</sup> Scott inherited, in direct descent, the illuminated Scott Arms, quarterly-of-eight, and the Scott Pedigree-Roll that was made in England about 1608 for his great-great-great-grandfather Edward Scott. From these letters we know now for the first time that John<sup>3</sup> had and was using a Scott Armorial Seal, apparently a new one and not the one used fifty-three years before by his grandmother, the wife of John<sup>2</sup> Scott, when she signed the Scott deed in 1712. In 1765 Edward<sup>4</sup> Scott of Newport was the head of the Scott family and undoubtedly had his father's Seal.

These newly discovered letters also show for the first time that John<sup>3</sup> Scott, Jr., at the age of twenty-six, was an important merchant in the South, with a correspondent at Newport, Rhode Island, three years before his uncle Edward<sup>4</sup> Scott died, on 30 June 1768, making him his heir and leaving him an estate of £9000 sterling, or £300,000 Old Tenor, of whom Ezra Stiles in his *Diary* says: "Mr. Jn<sup>o</sup> Scott died 24 May 1773 . . . after a Bacchanalian Life . . . lived most profusely, having squandered about £80,000 Old Tenor since his Uncles Death."

These letters, here published for the first time, were folded in envelope form, as was the custom of the day, and secured on the back with black and red sealing wax on which is impressed the Scott Arms, *three catherine wheels, a bordure engrailed*, without indication of tinctures. These 1765 impressions are the last known use of the Scott Armorial Seal by the main line of Scotts. John<sup>3</sup> Scott's son, John Cookson<sup>6</sup> Scott, a merchant, with whose death, on 16 Nov. 1808, the male line became extinct, is not known to have used the Scott Armorial Seal.

"Cha<sup>s</sup> Town S<sup>o</sup> Carolina  
Feb<sup>y</sup> 27 1765

"Mr Christ<sup>o</sup> Champlin

Sir

Your favour of 22<sup>d</sup> ult<sup>o</sup>. p<sup>r</sup> Capt<sup>t</sup>. Winslow I have before me, I am Surprized our Leather Should Stick at hand when M<sup>r</sup> Bufsell Sent Some of the very Same Leather & he informs a M<sup>r</sup> Wilson that it was Sold to Some advantage, & he further Says that ours might, on allowing Short Creditt, w<sup>c</sup>. we are not against, So they are but Safe, as fore using at vendue it will not turn to any Acco<sup>t</sup>. —however on the whole do with it as it was your own M<sup>r</sup> Wilson don't know what was the quantity Sent, I am not Concern'd in the whole adventure, but in a 1000W<sup>t</sup>., w<sup>c</sup>. is to be made up to me. Send me the N<sup>t</sup>. Proceeds of all the Leather in good Sparmalite Candles. I hope you will be able to remitt it by the first Vefsell, as I am in want of a few Boxes of that article — As for M<sup>r</sup> Jos. Atkinson\* he is a man lately come from England to Set up the Tallow Chandling Businefs, but quite a Stranger to me I happened to be in his company one day, & he was Saying that he'd be glad to know where he could get any Sparmalite on w<sup>ch</sup>. I made Mention of your Name, but told him at Same time that he must Send Something to purchase it, that is all that pafsed between us. and as for his Circumstances know nothing about it —M<sup>r</sup> Wilson joins me with Compliments and am ever

Your most Humble Serv<sup>t</sup>.  
Jn<sup>o</sup> Scott Jun<sup>r</sup>."

[Original letter, *Massachusetts Historical Society*.]

"Cha<sup>s</sup> Town S<sup>o</sup> Carolina.  
22 Mar 1765

"Mr Christ<sup>o</sup> Champlin

Sir:

Had pleasure of visiting you under 27 . . . Capt Winslow . . . I shall be obliged to you if you'd inform me what price you could get me a well built Schooner Burthon abt 60 tons at Marblehead or at y<sup>r</sup> place.

Your most Humble Servant,  
Jn<sup>o</sup> Scott, Jun<sup>r</sup>."

[Abstract of original letter, *Massachusetts Historical Society*.]

\* This is new source genealogical data that should be valuable to the Atkinson Family.



"Cha<sup>s</sup> Town S<sup>o</sup> Carolina.  
Sept. 10, 1765

"Mr Christ<sup>o</sup> Champlin

Sir:

I have been some time without a line from you to let me know what you have done with our leather, if not sold to dispose of it at vendue, at whatever price it will fetch, as ordered formerly.

Your most Humble Servant,

Jn<sup>o</sup> Scott, Jun<sup>r</sup>."

[Abstract of original letter, *Massachusetts Historical Society*.]

## Book Reviews

*The following book review by William B. Hesseltine is reprinted from Wisconsin Magazine of History (March, 1945) because it not only describes the book but it also states so clearly the case for local history.*

### LOCAL HISTORY. HOW TO GATHER IT, WRITE IT, AND PUBLISH IT.

By Donald Dean Parker. Revised and edited by Bertha E. Josephson. (New York: 1944) Social Science Research Council, 230 Park Avenue. Pp. xiv, 186. \$1.

The history of the United States has not yet been written. None of the works bearing such names as "History of the United States," or "American History," or "Growth of America," have any warrant to so ambitious a title. At best, these volumes are histories of public affairs, histories of the national government, or histories of large, nationwide movements. They are not histories of the United States for the United States is something more than nationwide economics, national politics, and the national government. The United States is a congeries of regions, a conglomeration of communities, an endless assortment of individual—and often individualistic—localities. The real history of the United States is the composite story of these communities, and it cannot be written until the history of each locality has been composed.

The study of local history is, by all odds, the most fascinating and fruitful phase of historical scholarship. Here, the student gets down to bedrock, sees personalities without the glamour that distance and prestige give "national" figures, meets social forces in their elemental form, studies politics in the backrooms where policies are formed, and learns economic principles in watching men dicker over a horse-trade. The local historian is privileged to gaze into the very foundation stones of American society, and to grow in wisdom as he learns to perceive the infinite in the infinitesimal.

It was with real appreciation of both the needs and the joys of local history that the Social Science Research Council appointed a committee to study methods of encouraging more workers in the field. The first result of their efforts is a handbook, carefully compiled and edited, giving complete and detailed instructions for the gathering of local historical material, its writing, and its publication. The book is addressed to the amateur, to the novice in historical study, to the high school teacher and his students, to woman's clubs, librarians, or anyone else who wishes to venture into the promising avenues. But the expert historian can find helpful suggestions in its pages.

*Local History* begins with a description of historical sources and with instructions how to use them. There are sections on directories, travel accounts, diaries, letters, and sermons. There are chapters on newspapers, public records, business records, and church records. There are instructions on note-taking, on bibliographies, footnotes, and on literary composition. And finally, there are a number of suggestions on publishing local history.

This excellent volume should do more than instruct and guide the novice. It should inspire every high school teacher, every county and local historical society, and many an intelligent and literate citizen to start work on some locality or on some aspect of local history. There is work to be done in the vineyard, and with this book in his hands, none can plead that he knows not how to labor.



## GOOD-BYE, PROUD WORLD.

By Margaret Emerson Bailey.

(New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1945.)

If one were not a native of Providence, Miss Bailey's *Good-Bye, Proud World* would read like a novel. Perhaps, after all, that is the way it should be read.

But to anyone brought up in Providence, especially on the Hill, the book has a personal quality. Its reading is exciting, like a game. On every page or two, some one is named whom you remember. And you read eagerly, to see whose name will appear on the next page and the next. But there are obstacles. As if to offset avidity, there is mystery. There are names which, by virtue of the fact that you do not know them, convince you they must be fictitious. Then you become more alert to character study than before. Like a detective weighing every clue, you hurry mentally around old Cushing Street and its neighborhood, thinking of this person and that, until you have tracked down your quarry. Then you push on to the next page and the next.

Subconsciously, as you read, you align yourself with one of two groups of critics. If you favor the modern school of writing that believes in realism, the frankness of detail leaves nothing to be desired. Stark realism in reporting confronts you from start to finish. If, however, you belong to the older school, you become more and more concerned with the thought of the fitness-of-things and the speech-of-people. Like a guest in a house where tension is obvious, you feel embarrassed and ill at ease.

Professor William Whitman Bailey, the author's father, was a tradition here in Providence. We watched for him each year in the Commencement procession, with the sun shining full upon his gorgeous, coral-colored gown. We saw him as he rambled about, collecting specimens for his botany classes and for his studies with the microscope. Children knew he was much beloved. Even if one did not know him personally, it was pleasant to meet him with his box of specimens tucked under his arm. One knew that a kind and friendly soul had passed, and one revered his scholarship.

It was common knowledge, too, that his was an erratic household, in which the principals did not always see eye to eye. After all, poets are poets, and scientists are scientists. One should not expect their homelife to be of the common cut. But one did not know that trouble centered upon wealth, or rather upon the lack of it; that the stress laid upon its lack, by the women of his household, made the sensibilities of the family as tender as an open wound; that nice, honorable, old "Grandpa" Simmons wrapped himself in silence, his mantle of defense; that Professor Bailey retreated to his third-floor study; and little "Meg" brooded overmuch.

To whichever school of criticism one belongs, it seems obvious, however, that the story is told as its writer wished that it should be told. Its char-

acterizations are given with too deft and sure a skill to have been lacking in awareness or design. If they were not vibrant and their detail so telling, who is there who would be disturbed about them?

But when the book has been closed a while and its tinge of bitterness is half-forgotten, our minds revert to the point from which we started. 'His was an erratic household, in which the principals did not always see eye to eye.' Yes, of that we are convinced. 'Professor Bailey was a tradition here in Providence.' He is that no longer. His coral-colored, academic gown and his little, old, tin box have become the merest of accessories. He himself has become a personal friend—gracious, whimsical, and tolerant. We know him now as scientist and father, a man who could withdraw his attention from his microscope, and focus it upon his little daughter with the same discernment with which he would analyze a Gingko leaf, a man whose difficulties we can understand, whose character we can venerate. 'He was much beloved.' Yes, now we know the reason why.

Mrs. Bailey, as we meet her on the printed page, seems shallow and strangely callous. Perhaps, however, the memory that will really linger will be of her valiant effort to supplement her husband's income, and her extra-effort to provide her children with the 'silly things' which, in the world of snobbery—the only world she knew, alas—were essential to the very breath of life.

In *Good-Bye, Proud World*, the writer's touch is not a light one. Her tale is like an etching drawn in shadow. Aside from the question of its frankness, it has unusual features of its own. In how many autobiographies, I wonder, would one find the secondary characters—parents, grandparents, cousins, aunts, and beaux—vividly drawn, while beside them, as if apart from them, the primary figure stands watchful and brooding. It is not a usual point of view, this emphasis on the secondary characters. We get their picture clearly as we were meant to see them, some full-rounded by detail, some in low relief seen from a single angle.

But the author's personality is not so clear or vibrant. We await the moment when we sense her depth of soul. There was opportunity, perhaps, for this after the superb description of Isadora Duncan's dancing. For, it was that incident that was the turning point in young 'Meg's' life. Stiffening her back against a lamp-post as they went from Symphony Hall, in words deep with meaning, she broke with her convention-bound lover. Subconsciously, she broke also with the purse-proud world in which she had spent her youth. For a fleeting moment, we touch the depth.

Then the tale goes on. We know what 'Meg' said, what every one said, and Professor Bailey does not fail us. But we lack the sense of crisis; the feeling of consternation in the family circle; the exhilaration with which young 'Meg', breaking with her world, goes forth to conquer other worlds. We await the poetic touch of revelation, which Miss Bailey's facile pen could have written deftly, if she had wished it so.

MARGARET B. STILLWELL



## ROGER CONANT, A FOUNDER OF MASSACHUSETTS.

By Clifford K. Shipton.

(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1944.)

This volume deals primarily with life in Massachusetts in the 17th century; yet it is of primary interest to every New Englander.

Dr. Shipton has utilized all the information accumulated in the years of his editorship of *Sibley's Harvard Graduates* to present an accurate account of life on the coast of New England in the days of the first settlements. He demonstrates that the English settlers were sawyers, not axemen, and thereby provides further ammunition to explode the log cabin myth; he gives a vivid picture of the economic problems at Plymouth and Salem; and he makes an expert summary of the principles underlying the Puritan Commonwealth.

Readers can accept Dr. Shipton's story as equally applicable to Rhode Island with two exceptions: We in Rhode Island had no contact with "home," and no rescue ship arrived in the nick of time from England to relieve our distress; and we had a surfeit of friendly, albeit thieving, Indian neighbors, whereas a plague of some sort, perhaps measles, had wiped out most of those in Massachusetts Bay. Recommended reading.

W. G. R.

## ASK NO QUARTER.

By George Marsh.

(New York: William Morrow &amp; Co., 1945.)

Good historical romances come along all too seldom, hence Mr. Marsh's book is doubly welcome. It runs to 569 well-packed pages, the great majority of them full of action. The scene is Newport in the years after King Philip's War, and there the author puts his hero, Hugh Jocelyn, whose father was killed at the Great Swamp Fight, through adventures afloat and ashore.

Young Hugh Jocelyn takes up privateering after being educated by a charming but down-at-heels Englishman. He has his thrilling adventures and his equally thrilling love affairs.

All this takes place against a tapestry-like background of historical detail which is remarkable for its accuracy and the thoroughness of Mr. Marsh's research. Many historical figures of the times are re-created, and the reader, no matter what his previous notions, generally agrees with the pen pictures of these famous men.

The book constitutes a pleasant way to learn how life was lived around Narragansett Bay in the late 17th Century.

B. F. S.

## Some Recent Accessions

From Mr. and Mrs. William Grosvenor, five photographs of Providence scenes in 1891.

From Mrs. H. Anthony Dyer, bound volume containing issues of the *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, May 3, 1787 to May 3, 1788.

From Miss Harriet C. Edmonds, through Mr. Joseph G. Henshaw, two letters addressed to Capt. John Edmonds of the barque *Beaver*, dated 1842 and 1849.

From Mrs. H. F. Provan, an album of Providence scenic postal cards.

From Mr. William Allen Dyer, Jr., of Syracuse, N. Y., through Mr. Denison W. Greene, manuscript dated March 24, 1808 relating to subscriptions for building the Wickford Bridge, North Kingstown.

From Mr. John P. Brown, a scrapbook containing Civil War clippings.

From Mrs. Edith Daniels Fenner, photostat copies of the papers of the Shambell Family of Rhode Island; also copy of a log of the ship *Isis*, owned by Brown and Ives, for a voyage from Providence to Canton in 1803.

From Mrs. Maude S. Raymond of Stamford, Conn., in memory of John Swift Holbrook, a bound volume of Leyden documents relating to the Pilgrims, with index and plates.

From Mrs. Maude S. Raymond of Stamford, Conn., *Braintree Town Records, 1640-1793; American Marriage Records before 1699; Life in New Bedford A Hundred Years Ago; The Cradle of the Republic: Jamestown and James River; The Bradford History of Plimouth Plantation; The St. John Genealogy; Rochambeau and the French Troops in Providence.*

From Miss Margaret A. Gardner of East Providence, papers relating to graduating exercises at Miss Gardner's School for Young Ladies, 235 Benefit Street, Providence, 1884-1891.

From Mrs. Esther Tillinghast Dane of Larchmont, N. Y., Church Family papers in manuscript. This includes a number of letters.

From Mr. John Nicholas Brown, copy of the proclamation for the Centennial (1939) of St. Stephen's Church, Providence.

From Mr. Silas T. Nye, a group of miscellaneous 19th Century manuscripts. Also a lottery ticket (1790) for the Providence Great Bridge Lottery.

From the Misses Mary and Jane Anthony, a photograph negative of the College Hill cable car; miscellaneous manuscript items, including several concerning the Providence Tool Company and its contracts to make rifles for the Turkish Government in 1873. The contracts are included in the group, which also contains photographs of the company's two plants.

From Mrs. George H. Webb, *Charter and By-Laws of the First Universalist Society in North-Providence*, (Providence, 1828).

From the author, Harold S. Vanderbilt, *Ranger, Rainbow and Racing.*

## New Members of the Rhode Island Historical Society

Since April 1, 1945.

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| Miss Margaret E. Bailey<br>New Canaan, Conn.        | Mr. Eugene T. Lothgren                             |
| Prof. Mildred E. Bassett                            | Mr. John B. McCabe<br>Thiells, N. Y.               |
| Mr. Truman Beckwith, 3rd                            | Mr. Charles B. McGowan                             |
| Rev. Granville Gaylord Bennett<br>Barrington, R. I. | Mr. Norman D. MacLeod<br>East Providence, R. I.    |
| Mr. Hazard Brownell                                 | Mr. Felix A. Mirando                               |
| Mr. C. K. Campbell                                  | Mr. Clarence T. Murdock<br>Clayville, R. I.        |
| Miss Marilyn Foster Coombs<br>Westerly, R. I.       | Mrs. Clarence T. Murdock<br>Clayville, R. I.       |
| Mr. Angelo Del Sesto                                | Mr. Harry Pinkerson                                |
| Mrs. Robert S. Emerson<br>Pawtucket, R. I.          | Mr. Howard C. Sanford<br>Coventry, R. I.           |
| Charles L. Farrell, M.D.                            | Mr. John D. Sawyer, Jr.<br>North Providence, R. I. |
| Mrs. Charles L. Farrell<br>Pawtucket, R. I.         | Rev. Henry H. Schooley                             |
| Mr. Howard E. Gladding                              | Mrs. Edgar W. Shaw                                 |
| Mr. Robert M. Goodrich                              | Mr. Robert H. Smith                                |
| Mr. William C. Harrington                           | Mr. Vincent Sorrentino                             |
| Dr. William A. Itter<br>Kingston, R. I.             | Mr. W. Allen Traver<br>Barrington, R. I.           |
| Mrs. Chester H. Kirby                               | Mrs. W. A. Traver<br>Barrington, R. I.             |
| Mr. Edward M. McEntee                               |  |
| Mr. Vincent A. McKivergan                           |  |

*This brings the Society's membership to 1148.*