

# RHODE ISLAND HISTORY

VOL. 14, NO. 4  
OCTOBER, 1985

THE RHODE ISLAND  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



J. M. ANTHONY  
CIGARS

PUBLISHED BY THE RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
52 POWER STREET, PROVIDENCE 6, RHODE ISLAND

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### THE WOODEN INDIAN

by CLIFFORD P. MONAHAN

ONE OF the Society's most important recent accessions is a wooden cigar store Indian presented by the Rudolf F. Haffenreffer Foundation. This figure, known as Pocahontas or the Indian Princess, guarded the door of James M. Anthony & Company's tobacco store in Providence, originally located on Weybosset and later on Westminster Street, between 1883 and 1936. She may, however, have been a familiar sight to residents of Providence for a far longer period, since James M. Anthony & Company was the successor to other firms which can be traced back at least as far as the year 1867.

The origin of the cigar-store Indian is bound up in the history of trade symbolism. Wooden figures were used in eighteenth and nineteenth century America to advertise all sorts of shops and businesses. Among the commonest were the little carved mariners, who hung outside ship chandlers' and instrument makers' shops. A unique

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# RHODE ISLAND HISTORY

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## CARIBBEAN PORTS

IN THE FOREIGN COMMERCE OF PROVIDENCE

1790 — 1830

by EARL C. TANNER\*

THE Caribbean commerce of the port of Providence dates from the seventeenth century when Rhode Island merchants, seeking sources of sugar and molasses, dispatched their vessels to the ports of the West Indies. The trade which they initiated proved so successful that for two hundred fifty years Providence sloops, schooners, brigs, and ships continued to ply the sea lanes linking Narragansett Bay with the West Indies and the Spanish Main.

The most colorful events of this long history occurred in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These were the years when economic and political patterns in the Caribbean area passed through a series of almost kaleidoscopic changes as the nations of Europe and the European colonies in America suffered the successive shocks of the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, and the Wars for Latin-American Independence.

For the maritime history of Providence it is fortunate that these crucial decades in the development of the Caribbean coincided with a period of maximum activity in the foreign trade of the Rhode Island merchant houses. Indeed from the close of the American Revolution until 1830 the foreign trade of the port of Providence was similar in nature, if not in scale, to the foreign trade of New York, Boston, and the other major ports of the northeastern United States.

The fortunes of Providence commerce with the Caribbean, then, take on more than local significance. The geographical distribution

\*Most of the material of this article is taken, with minor alterations, from the author's *Trade between the Port of Providence and Latin America 1800 to 1830* (typed Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1951), 95-122.

of Providence trade, shifting under the impact of commercial restrictions, international wars, and colonial revolutions, reflects, for this period, certain important, but little known aspects of the broader patterns of United States trade with the Caribbean. If, for example, it can be shown why the ports of Hispaniola and Surinam, favorite rendezvous of Providence shipping in the 1790's were rarely visited thereafter; or how the ports of Cuba, almost unknown to Providence shipping in 1790, came to dominate later Providence commerce with the Caribbean — then useful light will have been cast on a relatively obscure chapter in United States maritime history.

This purpose may be accomplished by an analysis of arrivals at the port of Providence from the several major political jurisdictions of the Caribbean.

#### THE BRITISH WEST INDIES

The British West Indies were divided administratively into sub-areas. For commercial purposes, however, only three divisions need to be distinguished. First in importance were the sugar producing colonies: Jamaica, the Leeward Islands, the Windward Islands, and, after it had been seized from the Dutch, Demerara. These colonies were closed to American shipping in 1783 and remained so until the outbreak of the Napoleonic Wars.<sup>1</sup> From the table of arrivals at the port of Providence it will be seen that a change took place in 1793 and 1794.<sup>2</sup>

At that time the British Navy was engaged in war duties, and the British merchant marine was unable to carry on normal trade with the colonies. While opposed to sharing the lucrative trade between the West Indies and Europe, Britain was willing that the Islands should temporarily enter into direct trade with the United States

<sup>1</sup>The best general history of the British West Indies for this period is Lowell Joseph Ragatz, *The Fall of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean, 1763-1833* (New York, 1928). Trade between the British West Indies and the United States is the subject of a brief account in Timothy Pitkin, *A Statistical View of the Commerce of the United States of America* (New York, 1835), 180-213. A more extensive review of trade between the British West Indies and the United States to 1812 may be found in A. T. Mahan, *Sea Power in Its Relation to the War of 1812* (Boston, 1918), I, 1-283.

<sup>2</sup>The several tables of arrivals presented are based on the impost books in the Providence Customhouse papers. The first entry is for June 24, 1790. Figures for the Bahamas, 1808-1811, are further based on information from the book of entries and clearances and the incoming manifests, also in the Providence Customhouse papers—all of which, for the period, are at The Rhode Island Historical Society.

#### ENTRIES AT THE PORT OF PROVIDENCE

##### From the British Sugar Colonies

1790	0	1800	9	1810	8	1820	0
1791	0	1801	12	1811	6	1821	0
1792	0	1802	5	1812	0	1822	0
1793	3	1803	8	1813	0	1823	1
1794	13	1804	15	1814	0	1824	3
1795	14	1805	5	1815	0	1825	5
1796	11	1806	9	1816	0	1826	4
1797	4	1807	4	1817	0	1827	1
1798	11	1808	8	1818	0	1828	0
1799	15	1809	3	1819	0	1829	0

in order to avoid their complete economic ruin. Therefore a number of ports were opened to American vessels not larger than seventy tons.<sup>3</sup> A fleet of sloops and schooners immediately set out for Jamaica, Barbados, Tortola, St. Vincent, Anguilla, Nevis, Montserrat, Tobago, St. Kitts, and Antigua. In the course of the next nineteen years one hundred sixty-three vessels entered Providence from the British sugar colonies.

Unfortunately for American shipping the opening of the West Indian ports was only one half of a policy initiated by the British in 1793-94. The other half consisted in a drive to eliminate all neutral trade with the French West Indies and to capture as many of the French colonies as possible. Thus, while some vessels went voluntarily to the British West Indies, others, attempting to trade with the French West Indies, were seized and carried into British West Indian ports as prizes. The Spaniards, who were allied with the English from 1793 to 1795, joined in, and about one hundred fifty American vessels in all were taken.<sup>4</sup> The British justified their seizures by reference to a rule which had been promulgated by themselves in 1756. According to the rule of 1756 a nation might not in time of war extend to neutrals commercial privileges which were denied in time of peace. As Jay pointed out in 1794, the rule, aside from its doubtful validity, was not applicable in the present case: France had, for some years, permitted direct trade between the French West Indies and the United States, though with certain restrictions.<sup>5</sup> Jay succeeded in having the seizures stopped and in getting a joint British-American commission appointed to adjudge British and American claims. (The British, too, were making claims

<sup>3</sup>Pitkin, *op. cit.*, 193.

<sup>4</sup>Robert Greenhalgh Albion and Jennie Barnes Pope, *Sea Lanes in Wartime* (New York, 1942), 73-74.

<sup>5</sup>Mahan, *op. cit.*, 90-93.

based on damage done by French privateers illegally fitted out in American ports.) This commission sat from time to time for ten years, and eventually awarded American claimants several million dollars; British claimants received about \$150,000.<sup>6</sup> The opening of the British West Indian ports, provision for which was included in the original text of Jay's Treaty, was surrounded with so many conditions that the American Senate refused to ratify that part. However, the British continued to extend the privilege of entry to small American vessels by executive order.<sup>7</sup>

Jay's Treaty greatly diminished trouble with the British from 1795 to 1805. There were occasional seizures throughout this period and, more serious, a ruthless policy of impressment beginning in 1803. High profits, however, reconciled ship owners, if not sailors, to these inconveniences. In the early nineteenth century British practice seemed to go so far as to permit American vessels to sail from the French West Indies to the United States and thence to France with their cargoes of sugar. In 1808, however, the right was categorically denied by a ruling in the case of the *Essex*.<sup>8</sup> The *Essex* case, together with the Orders in Council, started a sequence of events which ended in the War of 1812 and a complete cessation of trade between the United States and the British sugar colonies.

When peace was restored, the Islands remained closed.<sup>9</sup> It was the intention of the British that they themselves should monopolize the carrying trade not only between the Islands and Europe, but also between the Islands and the United States. It was hoped that Canada would be able to supply a large part of the needs of the British West Indies.

This policy was, of course, extremely unpopular in the United States. That it was likewise unpopular in the Islands is suggested by the following notice which appeared in the *Providence Phenix*:

The Colonial Legislature of Antigua has addressed a memorial to the British government in which they deprecate in strong terms the policy now pursued toward American vessels in their not being admitted to an entry in any of the British West Indies. They report the impossibility of their colonies in America furnishing the West

<sup>6</sup>Albion and Pope, *op. cit.*, 75. <sup>7</sup>Mahan, *op. cit.*, 96-97. <sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 101-102

<sup>9</sup>A useful history of trade between the British West Indies and the United States from 1815 to 1830 is F. Lee Bennis, *The American Struggle for the British West India Carrying Trade* (Indiana University Studies, Study 26, X, Bloomington, Ind., 1923). See also, Ragatz, *op. cit.*, 331-383.

Indies with adequate supplies and assert that the supplies which reach them through the depot of St. Bartholomew come charged at treble the amount at which they could be landed there direct from America — while on the other hand that Island is so glutted with the articles allowed to be exported from the British Islands as to produce a serious depreciation in their value, &c.<sup>10</sup>

The United States government soon took countermeasures, placing in 1817 a duty of \$2 a ton on British vessels arriving from the British West Indies.<sup>11</sup> Next year British vessels from areas not open to United States vessels were wholly excluded.<sup>12</sup> The economic distress occasioned in the British West Indies was acute, but the United States was relentless. In 1820 American authorities cut off an indirect trade which had sprung up with the British West Indies by way of Canada.<sup>13</sup> In 1822 the British King and the American President were each authorized to negotiate a treaty of reciprocity. Anticipating success and anxious to halt the ruinous decline of the British West Indies, the King opened a number of ports by executive order. Congress concurred in 1823,<sup>14</sup> and immediately vessels began to enter the port of Providence from the British sugar colonies. In 1823 there was one; in 1824, three; in 1825, five; in 1826, four; in 1827, one. In 1822 the President had, in accordance with his authorization, revoked the law of 1818, but not the discriminating duty of 1817. In 1823 the British, dissatisfied, countered with a discriminating duty of their own. Negotiations dragged on until in 1826 the British again closed their West Indian ports.<sup>15</sup> From 1826 until after 1830 no vessels arrived at Providence from the British sugar colonies.

Quite unlike the British sugar colonies were the southern Bahamas.<sup>16</sup> Their export was salt, a commodity also produced in England. For this reason trade with the southern Bahamas was not so much cherished by England as was trade with the sugar colonies. Trade between the southern Bahamas and the United States was not seriously interfered with at any time and therefore showed a very different pattern from trade with the sugar colonies:

<sup>10</sup>*Providence Phenix*, Feb. 24, 1816. <sup>11</sup>Pitkin, *op. cit.*, 196. <sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 196.  
<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 197. <sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 197-198. <sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 198-199.

<sup>16</sup>Turks Island and its neighbors were settled from Bermuda in 1678. They were under the administration of the Bahamas from 1804 to 1848. After the latter date, they were transferred to Jamaica. Most Providence arrivals from the Bahamas were from Turks Island. A few were from Ragged Island, Rum Key, Long Island, East Caicos, Exuma, Nassau.

## ENTRIES AT THE PORT OF PROVIDENCE

## From the Bahamas

1790.....	4	1800.....	12	1810.....	9	1820.....	3
1791.....	5	1801.....	15	1811.....	2	1821.....	2
1792.....	9	1802.....	18	1812.....	0	1822.....	2
1793.....	15	1803.....	9	1813.....	0	1823.....	0
1794.....	25	1804.....	10	1814.....	0	1824.....	1
1795.....	26	1805.....	7	1815.....	3	1825.....	0
1796.....	22	1806.....	11	1816.....	2	1826.....	1
1797.....	12	1807.....	7	1817.....	4	1827.....	0
1798.....	17	1808.....	13	1818.....	4	1828.....	3
1799.....	6	1809.....	12	1819.....	4	1829.....	2
						1830.....	2

As may be seen, this trade held up steadily until it was cut off by the War of 1812. During this war the United States became accustomed to obtaining its salt either domestically or from other foreign producers, such as the Cape Verde Islands. The Bahamas trade was resumed immediately after hostilities ceased, but did not recover its former volume.

The third division of the British West Indies was Belize, British Honduras. Like the Bahamas, this area appears to have been left relatively free from commercial restrictions. No Providence firm, however, undertook to trade with Belize in the nineteenth century until Carpenter and Hodges entered the area in 1818. The trade lasted only until 1826 and seems to reflect rather the fortunes of two or three business houses than any commercial regulations.

## ENTRIES AT THE PORT OF PROVIDENCE

## From British Honduras

1818.....	1	1821.....	4	1824.....	2
1819.....	3	1822.....	8	1825.....	6
1820.....	6	1823.....	9	1826.....	5

The early decades of the nineteenth century were, on the whole, a period of decline in trade relations between Providence and the British West Indies. Trade with the sugar colonies, strong at the beginning of the century, was wholly cut off by 1830 (though it was later to revive slightly). Trade with the Bahamas declined sharply, though it was not wholly to die out for some time. Trade with British Honduras, having flourished briefly, was permanently extinct.

## FRENCH WEST INDIES EXCLUSIVE OF HISPANIOLA

On the eve of the French Revolution relations between the United States and the French West Indies differed greatly from relations between the United States and the British West Indies. By the

Franco-American alliance the United States had guaranteed French possessions in Latin America, and by a Franco-American commercial agreement American vessels were permitted to trade with specified French West Indian ports, though they were not, until war broke out, permitted to trade directly between France and the Islands.<sup>17</sup> In 1793 the British embarked upon a campaign to eliminate trade between the United States and the French West Indies. While attacks were launched on Martinique and Guadeloupe, American vessels attempting to trade with those areas were seized and taken into the British West Indies as prizes. Guadeloupe was occupied for a few months; Martinique, from 1793 to 1801. When Martinique was seized, forty American vessels in port were condemned.<sup>18</sup> Then came Jay's Treaty and the partial adjustment of British-American differences.

Jay's Treaty, though it removed one obstacle to trade with the French West Indies, created another and equally serious difficulty. The British-American reconciliation so irritated the French that they began a program of attrition against American shipping, using every pretext for seizures. The XYZ affair, the establishment of the United States Navy Department, and the Quasi-War of 1798-1801 followed. In 1798 American vessels were authorized letters of marque for use against French privateers or the French Navy, while the American Navy was assigned to protect sea lanes in the Caribbean; by such measures, the French offensive was blunted.<sup>19</sup> The events of these years were reflected in the number of arrivals at Providence from the French West Indies:

## ENTRIES AT THE PORT OF PROVIDENCE

## From the French West Indies

## Exclusive of Hispaniola

	Cayenne	Guadeloupe	Martinique	St. Martin	Total
1791.....	0	1	0	1	2
1792.....	0	2	1	3	6
1793.....	1	1	1	6	9
1794.....	2	0	0	1	3
1795.....	1	1	0	0	2
1796.....	2	0	0	0	2
1797.....	3	0	0	0	3
1798.....	1	1	4	1	7
1799.....	0	0	1	0	1
1800.....	0	0	1	0	1

continued on next page

<sup>17</sup>Albion and Pope, *op. cit.*, 67, 73.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 80-81.

ENTRIES AT THE PORT OF PROVIDENCE, *continued*

## From the French West Indies

Exclusive of Hispaniola

	Cayenne	Guadeloupe	Martinique	St. Martin	Total
1801.....	0	1	7	0	8
1802.....	0	3	7	1	11
1803.....	1	2	3	1	7
1804.....	2	3	3	0	8
1805.....	0	1	5	1	7
1806.....	0	2	7	2	11
1807.....	2	3	2	0	7
1808.....	1	0	0	0	1
1809.....	0	0	0	0	0
1810.....	1	1	2	0	4
1811.....	1	0	0	0	1
1812.....	0	0	0	0	0
1813.....	1	0	0	0	1
1814.....	0	0	0	0	0
1815.....	0	0	2	0	2
1816.....	1	1	2	0	4
1817.....	1	0	0	0	1
1818.....	0	0	2	0	2
1819.....	0	1	0	0	1
1820.....	0	0	3	0	3
1821.....	0	0	0	0	0
1822.....	0	0	2	0	2
1823.....	0	1	2	0	3
1824.....	0	0	1	0	1
1825.....	0	0	1	2	3
1826.....	0	0	3	2	5
1827.....	0	0	0	0	0
1828.....	0	0	1	0	1
1829.....	0	0	1	0	1
1830.....	0	0	1	0	1

The fairly active trade with the French Windward Islands in 1792 and 1793 practically ceased after the latter date. From 1794 to 1800, inclusive, only two vessels returned from Guadeloupe, while six returned from Martinique, which was in British hands.<sup>20</sup> Until the Quasi-War broke out, about two vessels a year returned from Cayenne; then none until 1803. The case of St. Martin is somewhat equivocal, as part of the island was Dutch, and ships frequently failed to specify which part had been visited. In the absence of any indication to the contrary, the arrivals from St. Martin have been classified as from French St. Martin.

In 1801 the Quasi-War was concluded with the cancellation of the United States guarantee of French possessions and the assump-

<sup>20</sup>Another reason for light trade during the 1790's was a slave revolt which reduced production for several years beginning in 1794. Slavery was firmly re-established in 1802.

tion by the United States government of American spoliation claims against France.<sup>21</sup> As may be seen from the table of arrivals, a period of relatively active trade followed. Between 1801 and the Embargo thirty-four vessels entered from Martinique; fifteen from Guadeloupe; six from Cayenne; and five from St. Martin. The Embargo was the first of a series of blows which practically put an end to Providence trade with the French West Indies. No sooner was the Embargo lifted than England again seized the French colonies. The British retained possession of Guadeloupe from 1810 to 1816; Martinique, from 1809 to 1814; and Cayenne, in the seizure and occupation of which the Portuguese cooperated, from 1809 to 1817. Meanwhile the War of 1812 intervened. When these several obstacles to commerce had finally been disposed of, Providence had established other connections. The table of arrivals indicates that trade between Providence and the French West Indies from 1808 to 1830 was desultory at best.

## HISPANIOLA

The western half of the Island of Hispaniola was occupied by French and British buccaneers early in the seventeenth century. By 1665 the French were effectively in possession,<sup>22</sup> though Spain did not cede the area until 1697. In the eighteenth century French Hispaniola was brought to a very high level of prosperity and could boast thousands of flourishing plantations. Underlying this prosperity, however, was an unstable and, as it proved, explosive social structure. The white population in 1789 numbered 35,000 to 40,000; the free colored, 25,000 to 30,000; and the slaves, 400,000 to 450,000.<sup>23</sup>

Trouble began when the French Revolution proclaimed its motto of liberty, equality, and fraternity. First the freed men and then the slaves adopted the principles of the Revolution and proceeded to put them into effect by means of armed uprisings. While the National Assembly in Paris wavered between supporting the blacks and the whites, the former systematically proceeded to seize control of the

<sup>21</sup>An account of these events as they affected Rhode Island may be found in Amasa M. Eaton, "The French Spoliation Claims and Rhode Island Claimants," *The Narragansett Historical Register*, IV (1885-1886), 202-234.

<sup>22</sup>C. H. Haring, *The Buccaneers in the West Indies in the XVII Century* (London, 1910), 123, 124.

<sup>23</sup>T. Lothrop Stoddard, *The French Revolution in San Domingo* (Boston, 1914), 9.

western half of Hispaniola. When, in 1795, France acquired the eastern half of the island as part of a peace settlement with Spain, the black armies extended operations into that area. By 1801 the entire island was under the control of the black general, Toussaint L'Ouverture.<sup>24</sup>

The table of arrivals at the port of Providence indicates the effects of these events upon trade:

## ENTRIES AT THE PORT OF PROVIDENCE

*From Hispaniola*

1790	16	1800	5	1810	0	1820	1
1791	25	1801	4	1811	0	1821	0
1792	17	1802	6	1812	0	1822	1
1793	13	1803	1	1813	1	1823	1
1794	12	1804	0	1814	0	1824	4
1795	22	1805	0	1815	0	1825	1
1796	13	1806	2	1816	1	1826	0
1797	11	1807	0	1817	0	1827	2
1798	4	1808	0	1818	1	1828	3
1799	4	1809	1	1819	0	1829	3

Trade through 1795 maintained a high level, reflecting the economic prosperity of the island under the plantation system. Then, as the slave revolt progressed, productivity fell off, and commerce was disrupted. It will be noted, however, that trade did not cease during the Quasi-War of 1798-1801; instead, there was an average of over four arrivals a year.

These arrivals are to be explained by the fact that Providence was trading with Toussaint L'Ouverture, a practice encouraged by the United States government and protected by the United States Navy.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, a Rhode Island naval officer, Commodore Silas Talbot, was assigned to the Santo Domingo station and carried on a friendly correspondence with Toussaint L'Ouverture.<sup>26</sup> The turbulent conditions prevailing on the island, however, did not favor extensive trade. Wholesale atrocities were practiced on both sides; life and property were in constant peril. Under a Santo Domingo headline the *Providence Gazette* reported in 1801, "The most horrid scenes of the reign of Robespierre are about to be realized in this unfortunate colony." The *Gazette* went on to describe mass executions. "Ship-

<sup>24</sup>The British contributed to the chaos of the 1790's by seizing Jeremie as a part of their program to harass the French West Indies. They remained from 1793 to 1798. When they left, Jeremie came under the control of Toussaint.

<sup>25</sup>An account of naval operations in the West Indies at this period may be found in Charles W. Goldsborough, *The United States Naval Chronicle* (Washington, 1824), *passim*.

<sup>26</sup>Talbot papers at The Rhode Island Historical Society.

loads of whites and mulattoes are frequently sent from the Island under the pretense of transporting them to some other; but from the speedy return of the vessels, it is too evident how their cargoes have been disposed of."<sup>27</sup>

In January, 1802, a new French army, under Leclerc, arrived to undertake the reconquest of Santo Domingo. By June Toussaint had been defeated and captured. Then disaster struck the French forces in the dual form of yellow fever and a counteroffensive under the new black leader, Jean Jacques Dessalines. The rout was complete, and in 1803 the remnants of the French army were withdrawn. Next year the Republic of Haiti declared its independence.<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile the Quasi-War between France and the United States had been terminated. American naval protection was withdrawn from the Caribbean, and American vessels trading with the Haitians became easy prey to French cruisers. Under these circumstances very few Providence vessels ventured into Haitian waters from 1803 to 1806. Beginning in 1806 the American government undertook to suppress the trade altogether. From 1806 until the Embargo every vessel clearing for the Caribbean was required to carry a "Santo Domingo bond" by which the captain acknowledged his obligation to stay out of Haitian ports.<sup>29</sup>

From 1806 to 1824 there was almost no trade between Providence and Hispaniola. The Santo Domingo bonds, the Embargo, the War of 1812, and a series of uprisings on the Island made trade difficult or impossible. For a time the Spaniards regained control of the eastern half, while the west was divided between a mulatto president, Pétion, and a negro king, Henri Christophe (successor to Dessalines). Trade was possible, but did not attract many vessels from Providence. In 1822, however, the entire island was reunited under the dictatorship of Jean Pierre Boyer, mulatto successor to Pétion. The relative stability achieved under Boyer was reflected by a slight increase in the number of arrivals at Providence.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup>*Providence Gazette*, Jan. 24, 1801.

<sup>28</sup>Stoddard, *op. cit.*, 349.

<sup>29</sup>Walter Lowrie and Matthew St. Clair Clarke, eds., *Commerce and Navigation* (American State Papers, Washington, 1832), I, 717.

<sup>30</sup>For the history of the United States relations with Haiti in the 19th century, see Rayford W. Logan, *The Diplomatic Relations of the United States with Haiti 1776-1891* (Chapel Hill, 1941).

Destruction of the plantation system not only reduced the volume of trade but also brought about a change in the type of exports from Haiti. In the 1790's sugar had been the major export. In the 1820's sugar had practically disappeared, and coffee was left in first place. This change can readily be understood in view of the fact that sugar cane grows only when planted and tended with regular care. The years of turmoil and the freeing of the slaves ruined the sugar plantations. Coffee, however, continues to grow and produce, though not abundantly, with little or no care.<sup>31</sup> The Revolution in Haiti put an end to that prosperity which had been enjoyed by a small white minority, but it gave to the people an opportunity to build a society relatively free from oppression.

<sup>31</sup>Robert Greenhalgh Albion, *The Rise of New York Port* (New York, 1939), 186.

[to be continued]

#### THE WOODEN INDIAN

[continued from inside front cover]

early nineteenth century is the society's manacled felon, which hung from the Kent County Jail in East Greenwich for many years as a warning to evildoers and certainly not as an advertisement of the trade of the thief! Another earlier trade figure is the Society's copy of the original Turk's Head, whose history is lost in legend, but may have begun as a tobacco sign, set up in front of Smith and Sabin's shop at the corner of Town Street and Market Square. Possibly the wooden Indian is one of a few types of shop signs that survived to the 20th century. Other types of signs included picturesque foreigners, representatives of America's everyday life, figures of literature and history and even prominent personages of the day.

Mr. J. L. Morrison, who wrote an article on wooden Indians in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1928, thinks that the first carved figures to advertise tobacco shops were called "black boys" because of their resemblance to the little Negro slaves, who were brought from Jamaica to entertain *grandes dames* and it was quite natural to connect the Negro who worked on the tobacco plantation with the finished product. Tradition has it that the first tobacco Indian was a figure of Pocahontas at the door of a Boston, Massachusetts, tobacco vendor's shop in colonial times. But it was not until the 1840's that there was evidence of many such effigies. From that time on to 1900

every small town boasted at least one resplendent trade figure, whether of Indian or other genus.

The earliest mention of ready-made wooden Indians as an article of merchandise appears in an advertisement placed in a New York paper of 1856 by Edward Hen, a tobacconist, who offered such figures for sale at his store at 23 Liberty Street.

The carving of wooden Indians in the early days seems to have fallen into the hands of the makers of ships' figureheads. Itinerant craftsmen, whose specialty was painting the wooden Indian, traveled widely. They followed the westward movement and when they reached Illinois and Michigan inspired large numbers of German and Swiss woodcarvers, already working in that area. Sizes ranged from some thirty inches to larger-than-life forms, while the bases might be crude blocks of wood or well-shaped plinths usually carrying a fitting advertisement.

The significance of the Society's acquisition of this wooden Indian is important. The flamboyant era of the 1840's to 1880's in Rhode Island history can best be set forth by such pieces of folk art, which include in addition to such trade signs: ships' figureheads, toys, circus ornaments, weathervanes, garden and house ornaments, decoys, primitive portraits and scenes, theorem and other decorative painting. Folk art is now drawing a great deal of late but well-deserved attention from collectors and museums, both in exhibitions and permanent installations. Holger Cahill, formerly the Director of the Index of American Design, sums up the case for folk art thus: "These sculptures were made by anonymous craftsmen and amateurs, carvers, carpenters, cabinet makers, shipwrights, blacksmiths, stone cutters, metal workers, sailors, farmers, and laborers. The work of these men is an expression of the common people and not an expression of a small cultured class. . . . It comes out of craft traditions, plus that personal something of the rare craftsman, who is an artist by nature if not by training. . . . There is a remarkable variety of personal styles in these carvings and castings and a great deal of vigor and inventiveness even when the technique is crude and primitive. . . . Surface realism meant nothing to them for they tried to set down not so much what they saw as what they knew and felt. . . . Their art mirrors the sense and the sentiment of a community and is an authentic expression of American experience."



LABOR PROBLEMS IN  
THE RHODE ISLAND COTTON MILLS — 1790-1940

by EDITHA HADCOCK

[concluded from July, 1955, v. 14, no. 3, p. 93]

A large number of employers continued to oppose government intervention, particularly hour legislation. They justified the long hours of work on the basis that the work was not arduous and did not endanger health. They feared that shorter hours would increase costs and decrease productivity, since workers might develop habits of laziness and drunkenness during the extra leisure time. They warned that state regulations would handicap the mills in competition with the producers in unregulated low cost areas and bring about further curtailment of mill operation and employment.

Gradually the opposition to government regulation lessened. Leading employers recognized that shorter work periods and the employment of adults contributed to plant efficiency, while high working standards deserved protection. The technical innovations which had rendered child labor unprofitable proved more potent in reversing the opposition to child labor laws than the agitation for the children's educational needs.

Although school and hour laws and factory inspection regulations were enacted, they were not provided with adequate means of enforcement or supported by sustained public interest. Effective legislation was opposed. However, the concern about substandard conditions led to constructive action in the next century.

\* \* \*

In the twentieth century the Rhode Island fine goods markets were crowded by the products of Southern firms driven from the coarse goods field by competitors in the South, the West, and Japan. Southern employers paid lower wages for heavier work loads and longer hours as long as other jobs were in the more arduous and less remunerative agricultural pursuits. Later on Southern workers secured more favorable terms of employment when the South became industrialized and subject to unionization and national minimum standard legislation. By that time, productivity had increased; humidifiers, long draft spindles, and automatic looms had been adopted; and the workers had become experienced. Technical conditions in some of

the Southern mills equaled and even surpassed those of the Rhode Island plants.

A few large holding companies were organized in the 1920's in order to secure financial resources and stronger market positions. Unfortunately the financial advantages of the holding companies were over-rated; too many obsolete plants were bought, and not enough investment was made in modernization. Firms with more than 60,000 spindles proved to be less efficient.

When the demand for cotton goods decreased sharply in the 1920's, several Rhode Island manufacturers curtailed operation and transferred part or all of their investments to Southern areas. In the depression of the 1930's many mills became bankrupt and abandoned cotton manufacture permanently. Buildings were torn down, and machinery was scrapped. By 1935 Rhode Island had lost from 24 to 30 per cent of her cotton machinery. While the scrapped machines were obsolete, the workers were employable, left in deserted mill villages without hope of further jobs.

In many of the active plants working conditions deteriorated and employment was uncertain. Technological changes threatened jobs, upset working habits, downgraded job status, and blocked promotions. Mechanical innovations simplified machine tending so as to require less skill and physical strength and shorter periods of training. Fewer skilled workers were needed even in the production of finer materials. When workers struck or threatened to strike, many mills closed; they reopened only when employees accepted heavier work loads and wage cuts.

The unemployment and wage reductions seemed more serious to the workers of the twentieth century than to the employees in the early mills. In the previous century not so many were unemployed at a time, and the jobless could turn to domestic or farm labor. In the 1930's thousands were unemployed with no other means of support.

Troubled by the tremendous relief expenditures and taxes, local business organizations and the State Rehabilitation Committee endeavored to attract new enterprises. They promoted the industrial advantages of the state and encouraged economic diversification rather than the extreme specialization of the past.

Cooperative agreements were sponsored by the Cotton Textile Institute and the National Cotton Manufacturers' Association to

eliminate substandard conditions and to stabilize employment. Small mills refused to cooperate. A cotton textile code for minimum standards was set up under the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, but the code was not effectively enforced. Its administration was blocked by confusion and delays; it pleased neither executives, workers, nor the small mills. Finally, in May 1935, the act was declared unconstitutional.

Thereafter the Cotton Textile Institute and the National Cotton Manufacturers Association confined their efforts to public relations and cooperative research programs. Both sought to attain public favor and helpful government regulations and to prevent adverse government restrictions. Both also promoted new products and advised more efficient production and merchandizing methods, functions of major importance for firms too small to afford independent research.

The permanent elimination of obsolete machinery and plants in the 1930's improved the industry's competitive position and reduced the number of substandard mills. Mechanization required larger capital investments and made difficult the establishment of new enterprises.

Throughout the difficult years of the 1920's and the 1930's managerial, marketing, and technical readjustments continued to be made by leading firms. When pessimists warned that other fabrics had supplemented cotton, these firms devised new products and found new markets. Scientific management methods and employer-employee programs were adopted to increase productivity. Although not always successful, management recognized the significance of employee attitudes. Efficient arrangements of machinery, proper lighting, and controlled ventilation and humidity were found valuable. Modern electric lighting fixtures, larger windows, and saw-toothed roofs provided better lighting and reduced imperfections. Vacuum strippers and humidifiers checked breakage, helped to produce superior yarn and cloth, and brought cleaner air and improved temperature to the workers.

The average hourly and weekly earnings of the cotton mill workers remained far below the average earnings of employees in other industries. Although productivity had increased and efficiency-winning methods of wage payment had been adopted in the leading mills, the

resulting savings led to price cuts rather than to increased wages and it was the consumer who benefited. In the 1920's and 1930's wage reductions of from 10 to 30 per cent and even of 50 per cent were imposed. As unions gained more bargaining power, the earnings of the relatively scarce skilled workers increased somewhat, but the wages of the semi-skilled and the unskilled remained relatively low.

By the late 1930's wage rates rose as a result of the combined influence of minimum standard legislation, industrial unionization, and the development of highly-paid jobs in the new war plants. Backed by impressive cost of living statistics, the Textile Workers of the CIO demanded wage adjustments to cover increased costs of living. Employers declared that the workers' productivity and the plants' financial resources would not allow wage advances, but the wages were increased. The Rhode Island Department of Labor estimated that within one year, from June 1941 to June 1942, average weekly earnings in fifty Rhode Island cotton mills increased from about \$21 to almost \$26, or about 24 per cent. By April 1943 average weekly earnings were over \$32. Still the cotton mill workers' earnings were among the lowest paid in the state.

By the late 1930's liberal manufacturers had realized that regular and adequate income secured and held efficient workers, while low wages and irregular employment hurt workers' morale, impaired efficiency and often stirred up labor trouble that cost more than was saved through paying low wages. By that time, only a few manufacturers justified the low wages as family income which afforded adequate sustenance when the members of a family combined their earnings.

Work schedules were reduced voluntarily in a number of mills after 1900 and in all mills when the Rhode Island legislature restricted the hours of women and minors to fifty-eight in 1902, fifty-six in 1909, fifty-four in 1913, and finally to forty-eight in 1936. Though men were not affected until the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, too few were employed to allow the mills to operate on schedules longer than the legal maximum. The enactment of the national 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act helped to remove the competitive disadvantage of the state maximum hour law by requiring time and a half for overtime over forty hours.

In some mills the night shift was eliminated either because night

workers were deemed less efficient and more likely to be absent, or because the National Cotton Manufacturers Association recommended that excess capacity might be reduced thereby. Social workers had long warned that night work endangered the health and welfare of the workers, especially of the women who had duties at home during the day. During the war emergency of the 1940's night shifts were utilized again, and women and minors were occasionally allowed to work longer than the legal maximum.

Work schedules were also adjusted to allow for rest periods and longer lunch periods. A state law of 1943 directed manufacturers to provide at least a twenty minute lunch period after six hours of work. Many firms allowed thirty minutes for lunch; a few offered an hour. Rest periods of ten or fifteen minutes in the forenoon and afternoon were provided in some plants; in one firm where work assignments were heavy a ten minute rest period was required after every fifty minutes.

In other industries extensive personnel programs initiated effective hiring, training, and supervision practices. Workers were encouraged to express their ideas, air their grievances, share responsibilities, and promote team work. It was observed that workers desired recognition and security, fair working assignments and suitable living conditions, as well as higher wages and shorter hours. Attempts were made to explain changes that disturbed work habits, to give adequate notice of dismissal, and in some cases, dismissal wages if workers were no longer needed.

Because of the proved advantages of personnel work in other industries, a few cotton mill executives adopted personnel programs. Unfortunately their personnel departments were often inadequately staffed and financed and they were restricted to clerical duties. Hiring, firing, and training continued to be carried on by foremen, while general personnel policies were formulated by overseers and superintendents. In the late 1930's personnel departments were enlarged and more efficient employment, training, and follow-up techniques were adopted. Efforts were made to build up continuous contacts between management and labor, to exchange ideas about plant problems, and to settle grievances promptly.

A few employer-employee programs were installed in the 1920's often as a way to exclude outside unions. Their achievements were

limited by the competition from plants with lower employment standards. Too often the workers believed that such programs were used to reduce wages, to increase work loads, and to curb unionization. In the late 1930's the programs were modified to meet the requirements of the Wagner Labor Relations Act or were taken over by outside unions.

Recreational and welfare services were introduced during the first World War, in some cases to escape payment of war taxes or to avoid unionization. Few were continued after the War. Mill village facilities were not repaired, and most of the company housing and community buildings were sold in the 1920's and 1930's. As late as the 1940's many mills were without suitable rest rooms or cafeterias, and few offered insurance or pension programs. Well-equipped clinics and safety programs were instituted, however, as a result of the enforcement of comprehensive workmen's compensation legislation.

In the twentieth century some of the national officials of the newly organized United Textile Workers realized the need for industrial organization and protective legislation. Their craft locals clung to craft policies and pointed to the failure of the Knights of Labor as an example of the weakness of all-inclusive "uplift" methods. The labor demands of the First World War helped to perpetuate craft policies, while the unfavorable Supreme Court decisions of the 1920's discouraged the fight for protective legislation. The resulting delay in structural reorganization and neglect of political action weakened the United Textile Workers.

Dissension and secession dissipated union strength and finance. Dissatisfaction increased when the national failed to attain collective bargaining gains, strike victories, or protective legislation after the First World War. Finally, after several secessions, strike losses, and the suffering resulting from unemployment, wage cuts, and anti-union drives, both industrial unionization and political action became a permanent union program.

The strike failures during the depression years of 1922 and 1935 taught lessons in mass organization and public relations. Union leaders were toughened by their difficult experiences. They had seen their locals destroyed and the union-management programs fail. They realized that women and unskilled workers must be organized. The 1934 strike demonstrated the effectiveness of mass meetings, sound

trucks, motor cavalcades, newspaper publicity, and radio broadcasts.

The dramatic conflict over industrial unionism in the American Federation of Labor during the mid-1930's involved the cotton mill workers, for their national, the United Textile Workers, was a member of the Committee of Industrial Organization that withdrew from the American Federation of Labor. With the help of the financial resources and leadership of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the textile union leaders began an aggressive organization drive in the North and South. Because of local jealousies and disappointments, a few of the locals and their leaders returned to the American Federation of Labor and secured the old United Textile Workers' charter. The majority of the textile locals stayed with the Congress of Industrial Organizations and reorganized as the Textile Workers of America. Although the revived United Textile Workers was primarily concerned with the unionization of the woolen and worsted workers in Rhode Island, its rivalry further retarded effective organization of the cotton workers.

Meanwhile an all-inclusive Independent Trades Union successfully organized workers in a variety of industries in and near Woonsocket. The Independent's social, economic, and political programs, and its standard union management contracts not only unified heterogeneous groups of workers into a forceful union, but also won textile workers away from the older unions.

In spite of membership losses and contract terminations during the recession of 1937 the Textile Workers' union gained valuable experience. Their contracts were written agreements drawn up in accordance with basic union standards. Workers with no previous union experience were organized. Local leaders were given training in job evaluation and time studies as preparation for union management negotiations. Economic and social programs were devised to unify the workers and encourage their active support of union activities. Women workers were given a more important part in the locals, and immigrant workers were helped to become naturalized citizens, registered voters, and participants in the union programs.

Political action became a permanent union function, not just a depression technique. Steps to form a labor party in Rhode Island in 1935 and 1936 failed; too many minority groups existed, and there were not enough leaders, stirring issues, or sufficient community of

interests. A vigilant labor lobby was maintained, and strong political backing was gained. The Republican and Democratic parties did not long overlook the value of a favorable labor constituency. When a constitutional revision altered the Senate's geographical basis of representation, the workers in the densely populated cities won even more influence. By the early 1940's both state and national legislatures had enacted maximum hour and minimum wage laws, outlawed child labor, checked the arbitrary use of injunctions in labor disputes, legalized collective bargaining, and provided social security.

In the 1930's laws and court decisions declared employers' anti-union tactics illegal; in the mid-1940's they restricted labor union abuses. The Norris-La Guardia Act of 1932 and the state anti-injunction law prevented the arbitrary use of injunctions. Clause 7A in the National Recovery Act of 1933 recognized collective bargaining. The Wagner Labor Relations Act legalized collective bargaining and outlawed anti-union practices. Meanwhile the unions' mass organization tactics, jurisdictional disputes, and wartime labor disputes antagonized the public. In 1947 the Taft-Hartley Act amended the Wagner Act, outlawed union abuses, and restricted union activities.

By the 1940's leading plants had been organized. Unions had gained recognition, better working conditions, seniority rights, and pensions. Standard contracts were formulated by research staffs to stabilize working conditions and check unfair competition.

Management and unions gradually developed techniques of cooperation. Both had mutual interests in efficient business methods that would increase payrolls and profits. Both also had sharp differences of opinion. Managements resisted union infringement of executive functions and union requests for benefits that increased economic costs. Union leaders and workers resented management delays in granting long desired improvements and management's seeming disinterest in social costs. It was as important for unions to give up jurisdictional disputes, unauthorized strikes, and restrictive work practices as it was for management to understand the workers' needs, the value of collective bargaining, and the prompt settlement of grievances.

The settlement of disputes was promoted by the mediation and conciliation services offered by the state and national governments.

Efforts were made to narrow areas of disagreement and to encourage the prompt consideration of labor grievances before they culminated into major labor issues.

In the 1930's and 1940's the fight for minimum standard legislation had won the support of organizations such as the Rhode Island League of Women Voters, the Interdenominational Commission of Social Action, and both the state and national Consumers' Leagues. Consumer education and commissions of investigation attempted to counteract the common habit of shopping according to styles and prices with little thought of the standards under which purchases were produced. It was pointed out that price reductions might be the result of production under substandard and unhygienic labor conditions rather than the efficient use of resources. Social consciousness grew under the impact of unemployment, relief needs, and labor strife that upset community peace and convenience.

Although state laws had improved the standards of work for women and children, leading manufacturers concluded that state regulation offered inadequate protection. Interstate compacts were made to support minimum standards, but they proved ineffectual. States with lower standards would not join and there was no authority to enforce conformity. Employers in the Southeastern states supported proposals for national regulation when they experienced severe competition from mills in unregulated areas further South and Southwest. In 1938 the Fair Labor Standards Act required that interstate business grant minimum wages, time and a half for work over forty hours, and the abolishment of child labor. A textile committee was appointed to carry on further investigation, advance wages above the minimum, and narrow the North-South wage differential.

In the depression of the 1930's Rhode Island could not cope with the burden of relief work. The need for national emergency relief demonstrated the advisability of social security, long advocated by liberal leaders. Problems of unemployment, old age, and the care of the dependent and handicapped were tackled through the national Social Security Act of 1935 and subsequent state legislation. By the mid-1940's Rhode Island had pioneered in reforming the state's administration of social security, public welfare, and workmen's compensation. Public assistance was reorganized under a uniform

and centralized administration and unnecessary record keeping was eliminated. Aid was given on the basis of need, without residence or citizenship qualifications. Workmen's compensation evolved from an inadequate program of financial relief for injured workers to a well-rounded program of financial aid and rehabilitation for workers hurt by accident or occupational disease. In 1942 Rhode Island set up a state disability insurance program.

Social Security legislation helped to keep substandard employees out of the labor market. The taxes for Social Security benefits were far more constructive than taxes for public relief or the cost of private aid to families of underpaid workers, especially when such relief indirectly subsidized substandard mills. Social Security aid for dependent children and widowed mothers kept the children at school and the mothers at home. Because of unemployment compensation benefits, unemployed workers were less willing to accept substandard conditions imposed during depressions, while they were encouraged by public employment offices to move out of areas of labor surplus.

There has been some question as to whether national minimum standards and Social Security legislation might impose handicaps upon manufacturers in competition with low cost areas in other parts of the world, such as the Orient or South America. International agreements might maintain minimum standards of work; economic diversification of the low standard countries might help to push up their low standards. But it is dubious whether such adjustments could be attained over a wide enough area or in short enough time to be of any assistance to manufacturers in the United States.

Thus the Rhode Island mills' enduring success will continue to depend upon their sound adaptation in managerial, marketing, and production techniques, and labor relationships. The manufacturers who survived difficult periods of business depression and competition in the past proved that up-to-date and efficient use of material and human resources could effectively meet market demands and that higher standards of work were possible and profitable.



THERE is rarely a visitor to John Brown House who does not exclaim over the fine collection of furniture, mostly of Rhode Island origin, that has come to The Rhode Island Historical Society during the past few years. Realizing that these pieces are of not only local but also of nation-wide interest, the Society feels that its members as well as authorities on American cabinet making would appreciate having a detailed description of them. We propose to publish a number of photographs with comments in *Rhode Island History*. Eventually they will be collected and published as a catalog.

Mr. Ralph E. Carpenter, Jr., the compiler of the catalog, is acknowledged as an authority on early American furniture and the author of *The Arts and Crafts of Newport Rhode Island 1640-1820*, and *The Fifty Best Historic American Houses*. He has been largely responsible for the outstanding exhibitions of Rhode Island furniture in the Nichols-Wanton-Hunter House in Newport since 1953.

C.P.M.

CATALOG *of*  
THE RHODE ISLAND  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
FURNITURE COLLECTION  
*by* RALPH E. CARPENTER, JR.

THE RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
FIFTY-TWO POWER STREET, PROVIDENCE



## 1. EASY CHAIR

*Mahogany*

Newport 1750-1760

Townsend-Goddard

During the period 1750-1760, when it can be assumed this chair was made, there were at least two Goddards and six Townsends actively working in Newport. Two years ago when *The Arts and Crafts of Newport Rhode Island* was written there seemed to be sufficient evidence to attribute it "probably" to John Goddard. Today the author hesitates to even make such a guess. What can be said is that the design of both the claw feet and the turned stretchers are practically identical to those of the Sheffield side chairs (*Antiques*, July 1955 p. 44), which have a history back to John Townsend. Similar feet are found on a bed (Collection of Cornelius C. Moore) having the same history of ownership. The Sheffield side chair has on its crest rail an area of crosshatching with punch marks, a feature found on labeled pieces by John Townsend. Because of the close family relationship by marriage, or by birth, between all of eight Goddards and Townsends working 1750-1760, assumptions can be freely made as to why one might have produced work with identical design characteristics to one of the others. To mention only a few:

1. John Goddard and Job Townsend because John married Job's daughter.
2. Christopher Townsend and Job Townsend because they were brothers and only a few years apart in age.
3. John Goddard and John Townsend because they were almost the same age, and John Goddard married John Townsend's cousin.
4. John Goddard and Job Townsend Jr. because they were only a few years apart in age, and John married Job's sister.

We are sure, however, that this fine, bold easy chair bears unmistakable characteristics of Townsend-Goddard craftsmanship and it is the only such chair known to the author.

Ex-collection Henry A. Hoffman



## 2. SIDE CHAIR

*Mahogany*

Newport 1730-1750

This fine side chair is an unusual example of a usual type. Seldom is one seen that so completely displays definite and identifiable Townsend-Goddard characteristics. The shaping of the leg, the claw feet, and the turned stretchers are in the same classification as the easy chair (No. 1), as are three other side chairs:

1. The Karolik Collection in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts includes a side chair (No. 80 on page 143 of the catalogue) which differs only in that it has a pierced splat.
2. The Metropolitan Museum has on loan a chair that differs in that the knees are carved, the seat is square, the splat is pierced, and the shell on the crest rail is more highly developed.
3. The Hunter House in Newport has on loan a chair (Fig. 1, page 44, *Antiques*, July 1955) that differs in that the back is in the "Chippendale" style.

It is interesting to note that in spite of the great many chairs that can be placed in the same general category, these are the only ones with the same claw feet, turned stretchers, and except for the Hunter House chair, the same shaping of the back.

In these chairs the claw foot is webless and the leg seems a little "bent" where it joins the talons. The stretchers are turned with greater "finesse" than usual, with a fillet provided at the point where the diameter changes abruptly. The only fault one might find would be that the shape of the crest rail is accentuated just a little too much. The knees might be thought by some to be just a little bulky but to others the bulk in the knees would be looked upon as giving a sturdiness, so characteristic of Newport furniture.

Ex-collection Henry A. Hoffman





### 3. SIDE CHAIR

*Mahogany*

Massachusetts 1750-1760

At first glance one might attribute this chair to Newport, at least until the claw feet were observed. While there is always the possibility that a cabinetmaker might have copied the style of some other locality, the decided backward slant to the outer talons place the origin of this chair in Massachusetts. Confirmation of this attribution is found in the design of the pierced splat and the carving that appears thereon. Otherwise, the shells on the knees, the shape of the back and the shell on the crest rail are all very very similar to what we would expect to find in a Newport chair made by the Townsends and Goddards. The block at each end of the center stretcher is not usually found in Newport chairs but there are a few instances where they do appear on chairs which have all the other Newport attributes.

A chair with identical piercing of the splat, but with a "Chippendale" back is shown in Vol. II of Wallace Nutting's *Furniture Treasury* No. 2179. In fact Lockwood in his Vol. II shows on page 82 this design of splat as a typical "Chippendale" style. These other chairs are mentioned by way of pointing out that the introduction of a "Chippendale" style splat in a chair which otherwise has "Queen Anne" features would date this chair at the end of one style and the beginning of another. Some call this a transitional style. Actually design and style appear to have changed constantly by various degrees. When the indication of a change is abrupt or pronounced it is apt to be termed transitional.

Ex-collection Henry A. Hoffman



#### 4. SIDE CHAIR

*Mahogany*

Rhode Island 1765-1780

During the time that the Townsends and Goddards were turning out the fine block and shell pieces for the "carriage trade" a great volume of plainer furniture was also produced for the less opulent citizens and for export. This chair is plain, sturdy, and relatively inexpensive in design. The best mahogany was often used even though the design was simple. The center of the crest rail is unadorned, the legs are plain, and the pierced splat is not embellished in any way. In Newport the stretchers seem always to have been a little thicker than they were elsewhere, as in this case. Then too, for some reason, the height of the back of the Newport chairs is not quite so great as those of other localities. Often chairs of this grade were sent as venture cargo to the ports of the southern colonies and the West Indies to bring "the best price obtainable."

With slight modifications these chairs could become more expensive models for domestic consumption. The center of the crest rail would be crosshatched or shell-carved, the legs moulded or stop-fluted, and the splat embellished with scrolls or a bit of carving. The crest rail instead of being straight would be shaped to fit the back. Since all these features would of course increase the price, fewer were made, and as a result they are less common today.

A chair of the same design has been attributed to Joseph Rawson, Sr., of Providence. Similar chairs can be attributed to various Newport cabinetmakers: the Townsends, Robert Lawton, and others.

The history of this chair: Benjamin Weeden 1778, Mary Fowler Weeden, 1818, Susan Reynolds Weeden 1858, acquired in 1910 from descendants by Elliot Flint. The early owners lived in Wickford, Rhode Island.

Ex-collection Elliot Flint

# THE RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## NEW MEMBERS

June 14, 1955 — August 31, 1955

Mr. Arthur W. Cate	Mr. and Mrs.
Mr. Arthur D. Champlin, Jr. Rumford, R. I.	Duncan Hunter Mauran
Mr. Allen F. Day	Mr. Frank Mauran, III
Mr. Charles H. Doebler, IV North Scituate, R. I.	Mr. Nicholas Picchione
Mr. Clarke Freeman, Jr.	Mr. Ralph S. Richmond Little Compton, R. I.
Mr. M. Antoine Gazda Wakefield, R. I.	Mrs. Ciro O. Scotti
Mr. John A. Graham Pawtucket, R. I.	Nino U. D. Scotti
Mr. D. Bruce Hutchinson	Mr. Robinson C. Trowbridge
	Mr. Thomas F. Vance, Jr. East Providence 14, R. I.
	Mrs. James F. Walsh

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## LECTURES

September 28, 1955, Wednesday	8:30 p.m.
(following the Annual Meeting for members) Usher Parsons: Perry's Surgeon at the Battle of Lake Erie PETER PINEO CHASE, M.D.	
October 20, 1955, Thursday	8:15 p.m.
Gilbert Stuart JAMES T. FLEXNER, Author of <i>Gilbert Stuart, a great life in brief</i> (1955)	
November 13, 1955, Sunday	3:00 p.m.
Influence of General Rochambeau in Rhode Island CLAIBORNE DEB. PELL, Member, Gen. Rochambeau Commission, State of Rhode Island	