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Photograph by Rowena Brownell

THE ARCADE

Detail of the interior of the Westminister Street end

[see inside front cover]

ISSUED QUARTERLY AT PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

PUBLISHED BY RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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 Photograph by Rowena Brownell

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THE ARCADE

[reproduced on front cover]

On April 23, 1951, the Camera Club of the Providence Engineering Society presented to the Rhode Island Historical Society 382 photographs, taken by club members. These were largely contemporary views of Rhode Island; some few were of workers in jewelry plants. A detail of Mrs. Brownell's picture of the Arcade is used on the cover in appreciation of the gift from the Camera Club.

The Arcade is an outstanding historic landmark of Providence. Designed by Russell Warren and James C. Bucklin, the building was ready for occupancy early in 1829. One of the architectural details of the buildings are the monolithic columns of Rhode Island granite from the Bear Ledge Quarry in Johnston. The Roman Ionic capital surmounting the column, the Greek key, and the dentil cornice, all excellent examples of Warren's use of Greek details, are shown with great distinction in Mrs. Brownell's photograph. Many of the other photographs presented to the Society are equally distinguished and will become an invaluable part of the Society's collections.

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THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF THE
SHAWOMET PURCHASE

by CHARLES M. PERRY*

WHY should this mere dot on the map be of any especial significance, except that it is the point where Coventry, West Greenwich, and Connecticut join? The object of this essay is to tell you a little about how it made history.

The spot came into being, at least theoretically, early in 1643, when Samuel Gorton and associates bought from Narragansett chieftain Miantonomi the tract of land that was then called Shawomet. In the deed the tract was described as "one parsell of lands . . . lyeing upon the west syde of that part of the sea called Sowhomes Bay from Copassenetuxett over against a little Iland in the sayd Bay, being the north bounds and the outermost point of that neck of land called Shawhomett; being the south bound ffrom the sea shoare of each boundary upon a straight lyne westward twentie miles."¹

Gorton and his friends started at once to settle near what is now called Old Mill Creek, but Massachusetts claimed the district, invaded it late in 1643 with arms, took most of the settlers prisoners, and carried them to Boston. They were freed the next year.

In 1644, soon after the Shawomet men had been freed by Massachusetts, Samuel Gorton, with his usual sagacity and foresightedness, persuaded Canonicus together with Mixan and Pessicus, successor to Miantonomi, to put themselves, their lands, and their people under the jurisdiction of the King. Samuel Gorton, John Wickes, Randall

*Mr. Perry has made an extensive study of Warwick land records.

¹The original deed is in the John Carter Brown Library.

Holden, and John Warner were named agents to represent them at the English Court.²

This submission to the Crown played a part (perhaps a large part) in getting the title to the Shawomet Purchase validated and confirmed by the Royal Commissioners. The Earl of Warwick helped so much to bring about the decision in 1646 that the Shawomet men changed the name to Warwick in his honor. In documents of a later date it is often called the Warwick Grand Purchase. The Neck came to be called Warwick Neck as it is today.

In 1647 Warwick became a part of the Colony of Rhode Island and sent men to the General Assembly along with those from Newport, Portsmouth, and Providence. Massachusetts bothered the settlers of Warwick no more.

Settlement was resumed in 1647, but on account of growing hostility of the Indians, progress was confined mostly to the coastal region. After the end of the Indian War in 1676, more attention was given to developing the hinterland and more thought was devoted to dividing the land among its owners, the purchasers. Thus the bounds of the purchase began to receive attention.

Connecticut obtained its charter from the Crown in 1662. Under it she claimed all of the land south of Warwick eastward to Narragansett Bay. In 1663 Rhode Island obtained its charter in which its west bound was the Pawcatuck River. Both colonies appealed to London and a board of arbitrators there decided in 1664 that the Pawcatuck was meant to be the bound between the two colonies.³ Connecticut would not comply with this decision; and trouble, even violence with personal injuries, occurred between opposing factions in the neighborhood of Westerly.⁴

Repeated attempts were made by the Rhode Island General Assembly to get Connecticut to appoint commissioners to meet Rhode Island men and settle the dispute. Nothing was accomplished until 1703. In that year commissioners from both colonies met and agreed that the line between them should be the Pawcatuck River from the sea to the mouth of the Ashaway River, thence a straight

²*R. I. History*, v. 2, no. 1, p. 1, January, 1942.

³John R. Bartlett, *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island . . .* (Providence, 1856-65), v. 2, p. [3]-21, 59. Hereafter cited as *R.I.C.R.*

⁴*Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 439.

line to the southwest corner of the Warwick Grand Purchase, "which extends 20 miles due west from a certain rock lying at the outmost point of Warwick Neck," thence a north line to Massachusetts Bay Colony.⁵ The assemblies of both colonies promptly accepted the decision of the commissioners. Rhode Island appointed Capt. James Carder and John Mumford surveyors to join the Connecticut surveyors to run the line.⁶ The first thing to do was to locate the southwest corner of the Warwick Grand Purchase. Connecticut would not cooperate. While no report of surveyors Carder and Mumford has come to light, there is good evidence that they ran the south line of Warwick to the southwest corner.⁷

Year after year the Rhode Island Assembly appointed committees and commissions to try to get Connecticut to act with them to run and fix the line by bounds on the ground. Nothing happened. It took a jolt from the mother country in 1719 to start action again. In that year the Lords Commissioners of Trade ordered the Colony of Rhode Island to send them a map or chart of the colony.⁸ That order had to be obeyed. At last the western boundary would have to be determined and marked on the ground. Both colonies appointed committees to cooperate in the work, and John Mumford was again chosen surveyor for Rhode Island. The committees met in Warwick, April 12, 1720. The Connecticut men prepared to measure the Warwick south line to determine the position of the southwest corner. For some reason that is not clear, the Rhode Island men refused to join the Connecticut crew in measuring the south line unless the Connecticut men would agree to a joint running of the Rhode Island-Connecticut line. Finally it was agreed that the two groups would join in the triangulation to determine the distance across the water from the tip of Warwick Neck to the Post Road, and that the Connecticut men would follow the Rhode Island crew as they measured the south line as observers only. The Connecticut men reported that the Rhode Island chainmen made the line too long, reading "almost 1/2 mile westward, beyond the bounds they

⁵*Ibid.*, v. 3, p. 474.

⁶*Ibid.*, v. 3, p. 476.

⁷John Warner's Field Book, dated Feb. 24, 1723/4, p. 33. Typescript in R. I. Historical Society.

⁸*R.I.C.R.* v. 4, p. 263; Samuel Greene Arnold, *History of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations* (Providence, 1859), v. 2, p. 64.

had formerly made."⁹ Presumably this refers to the survey Carder and Mumford made in 1703. The line between the colonies was not run at this time.

The map Mumford made for the Commissioners of Trade in London had two lines, a red one and a green one, for the western boundary. The green line ran due north from the mouth of the Ashaway River to the Massachusetts south line. The Lords of the Committee Council, at the Court of St. James, in February, 1726, ordered that the "green line drawn from the mouth of Ashaway river where it falls into the Pawcatuck river, and thence extending north to the south line of the Massachusetts Bay, be the . . . boundary between the . . . colonies of Connecticut and Rhode Island . . ." The order was confirmed by the King.¹⁰ Thus the award of 1664 was made more definite and given official approval. The Connecticut agent in London at the time also gave his approval. A line due north from the mouth of the Ashaway River would run about 180 rods (more than 1/2 mile) west of the southwest corner as it is today. For two years nothing was done about surveying and marking the line.

In February, 1728, the Rhode Island General Assembly, noting that Connecticut took "no care for the settlement of the same," appointed a committee to run the line with Connecticut commissioners, or without them if none were appointed by that colony.¹¹ Since Connecticut did not act, in May, 1728, the Rhode Island General Assembly again appointed a committee with the same surveyors to run the line anyway. Vain attempts were made to get Connecticut to cooperate, and nothing was done until September, 1728. According to Warner Papers, 464, (Rhode Island Historical Society) William Greene started September 18, 1728, to run the Warwick Purchase south line 20 miles from the tip of Warwick Neck. He set down course and distances for the line and stated that at the end of 20 miles he was "70 rods above ye old corner maid by John Mumford." Thus the corner was pushed still farther west. No mention is made of any Connecticut men participating in the running of the line, but when the monument of stones was made at the end of

[continued on page 80]

⁹*R.I.C.R.*, v. 4, p. 273.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, v. 4, p. 373; John Carter Brown Library Mss. v. 8, no. 559.

¹¹*R.I.C.R.*, v. 4, p. 399-400.

THE VOYAGE OF THE *MERCURY*

by EARL C. TANNER

[concluded from April, 1951, v. 10, no. 2, p. 44]

While repairs were in progress, Captain Mathewson was busy with the ship's commercial business. By letter from Providence he learned that the owners would have preferred him to send their specie direct from Lima to S. Russell & Co. in Canton on board the *America* which was in Peru at the same time as the *Mercury*. As this had not been done, Captain Mathewson was to put the specie on board the ship *Washington* bound from Gibraltar to Canton. Unfortunately, the *Washington* had just sailed when the *Mercury* arrived at Gibraltar. Captain Mathewson was therefore obliged to deposit the money with Messrs. Hill & Blodget (the Carrington Correspondents in Gibraltar) for shipment to Canton at the first opportunity.

Not all of the specie, however, was sent to Canton. Some, in accordance with instructions, was retained for the purchase of an assorted cargo worth \$39,622.25 for the West Coast of South America. This cargo consisted of dry goods, wine, flour, brandy, raisins, oil, etc. For reasons that have not come to light, the projected purchase of arms in Europe was abandoned. In addition, a quantity of freight was shipped for Rio and small ventures were taken on by the officers. Sufficient specie was retained for the purchase of Brazilian products to be added at Rio to the Gibraltar cargo.

At this time a number of important changes were made in the ship's personnel. By a previous agreement, Captain Mathewson entered into a one-tenth ownership of the *Mercury*. Mr. James, who had brought the ship from Providence to the Texel and had since been first mate, chose this juncture to announce that he would stay on only if he were made captain again. As Mr. Wheaton, the second mate, was also threatening to leave and as there was not a man in Gibraltar "fit for an officer to any vessel," Captain Mathewson was constrained to allow Mr. James the salary and nominal position of captain, while retaining for himself the duties of supercargo and the ultimate responsibility for the ship's affairs. To the owners in Providence, Mr. Mathewson, as we shall now call him, explained, "I did not wish to have him [Capt. James] remain by

the ship on account of his being a very active man, as he is quite the reverse, but I knew him to be steady, and free from drinking, and in case of accident to me was capable of bringing the ship home." The entire crew was discharged and a new crew engaged consisting of one American, one Swede, two Englishmen, and the rest Italians and Greeks.

Finally, on December 28, 1822, Mr. Mathewson having come aboard with two passengers, the Captain "hoisted in the Pinnacle and filled away—all hands securing the anchor, &c for Sea." The haul to Rio was uneventful except for the discovery that the cook shipped in Gibraltar was "unable to perform the cooking." The crew had to take turns. One day they ran into a school of bonita and caught several. Another day they picked over the potatoes between decks and found about a barrel damaged. Every day they worked on the rigging. And, after six weeks, they arrived at Rio.

Here the usual port routine recommenced. Freight was unladen; new freight taken on for Valparaiso; and the owners' cargo was supplemented with \$5,000 worth of coffee, white wax, white sugar, brown sugar, segars, and several hundred Dutch cheeses. On February 21, 1823, between ten and twelve o'clock at night, "Charles McCalpin, Andrew Jackson, and Robert Shepherd deserted from the ship." After a little more than two weeks in port the *Mercury* was again ready for sea.

The voyage to Valparaiso was enlivened by the sighting of whales and bonita.⁸ One day the Captain "Killed a Hog, for all hands, being the last of the Chile breed—she had been on board eighteen months—" Some uneasiness must have been occasioned by the following observations recorded in the log.

- Mar. 1 Boy Nichlas sick
- Mar. 2 the boy mentioned yesterday is more unwell — he has a high fever. —
- Mar. 3 a hog Died — Nicolas no better.
- Mar. 4 Nicolas the same — Georg sick
- Mar. 5 we think that Nicolas has the Small Pox. his skin is now covered with Pimples. George no better.
- Mar. 8 George some better but Nicolas very bad with Small Pox
- Mar. 9 Georg recovering. Nicolas still worse —

⁸The difficulty of storing perishables in these latitudes is illustrated by the fact that 177 out of 200 quintals of fish from the Gibraltar-Rio cargo had to be thrown overboard.

At length both George and Nicolas recovered and the *Mercury* came up with Valparaiso. Mr. Mathewson was able to write the owners in Providence on April 11, 1823, advising them of "our safe arrival at this place last evening, after a pleasant passage of 51 days from Rio Janeiro."

Freight was discharged and, market conditions proving favorable, some \$30,000 worth of the Gibraltar-Rio cargo was sold. The profit on these sales was slightly impaired when Mr. Mathewson had \$672.75 "cash stole from me at Lynch, Hill & Co.'s house, by their steward." There were also the usual petty losses such as four barrels of brandy "leaked out"; four pairs of silk hose "stole by a priest of Valparaiso"; and one pound of silk "stole by Lynch's brother." Still, the venture was successful.

On board ship the crew was causing considerable difficulty. It all began on April 29, 1823, when the captain had to "give James Sullivan some medicine for the venereal complaint." A serious epidemic followed, but the *Mercury* rode out this storm as she had so many others.

Mr. Mathewson having weighed the advantages of a voyage to Callao against the advantages of a voyage to "Arrekeeper" [Arequipa], decided on the former. By letter from Lynch in Lima, he had learned that 2,500 of Bolívar's troops had arrived at Callao and 3,000 more were daily expected with Bolívar himself to lead them. "If the latter arrives," wrote Mr. Mathewson, "there is no fear of the Spainards entering Lima, although there is not the least doubt but what they have 12,000 men, well clothed and armed." In any case, some hard fighting was anticipated and the possibilities for a lucrative arms contract seemed good.

Mr. Mathewson procured at Valparaiso "certain merchandise and three horses on Freight, and six passengers" including a Colombian ambassador. The uncollected balance due on sales in Valparaiso, he left in the hands of William Wetmore, a Carrington supercargo then on the coast. The *Mercury* left Valparaiso on June 21, 1823, and, after an uneventful voyage, arrived at Callao on July 3. Once again, everything at that city was found to be in confusion. Bolívar had not arrived and the royalist general Canterac had, on the 18th of June, retaken the capital.

He entered Lima without a single gun being fired, the patriots having no idea of his advancing until he was within a few miles of the city, when they left in great confusion, most of the public property falling into the enemy's hands. The merchants having so little warning of the approach of the Spaniards, they had no time to remove their property, and most of the foreign merchants remained in the city, all of which had to pay Cantuack forty pr. ct. on the amount of all goods they had in store. Cantuack demanded three hundred thousand dollars of the inhabitants immediately on his entering the city, giving them eight hours to pay it in, and if not paid at that time he would race the city to the ground. This was paid and he has since demanded two hundred thousand more.

Such was the report sent by Mr. Mathewson to Providence. The patriots had only 5,000 poorly armed troops at Callao and Canterac's army was camped within sight on the Lima road. "At present it is impossible to say what I shall do," concluded Mr. Mathewson; "you may, however, rest assured that no exertion shall be wanting on my part."

Then began a period of waiting. On July 11, 1823, Mr. Mathewson reported no change; on July 21, he reported that the Spanish army had evacuated Lima, but had threatened to return and condemn all foreign property in the city. Under these circumstances, the merchant houses were slow to make purchases. They preferred to wait for news from a patriot expedition which had been dispatched to upper Peru, the success of which would determine the course of events for some time. Still, Mr. Mathewson managed to dispose of some \$10,000 worth of his cargo. At this point it occurred to him that if he were to proceed to the coast of Upper Peru, he might arrive just in time to sell his cargo to the victorious patriot expedition and to take on board the royalist refugees. He accordingly procured freight and passengers for "Arcker" [Arica] and departed from Callao on September 13. He arrived at Arica after "a tedious passage of thirty-six days," the winds having been extremely contrary. Here, as at Callao, everything was found to be "in a state of confusion." A patriot force of about 4,000 had just been routed on a battlefield nearby and the Spaniards were expected momentarily at Arica. Mr. Mathewson hastily sold off \$2,400 worth of goods, took on freight and returned to Callao, full of indignation against the Upper Peru expeditionary force. "Had it not have been for the shameful flight of Santa Cruz's army," he wrote, "I should

have sold everything I had very high at Arcker, and should have had as many passengers as I could have taken for Gibraltar, at \$700 each."

At Lima, conditions were still upset and prospects uncertain. Mr. Mathewson managed, however, to sell another \$16,000 worth of the Gibraltar-Rio cargo, leaving only a remnant on board. As in 1822, so also in 1823, Mr. Mathewson found means of furthering his own private interests at Lima. Failing to locate the J. S. Martínez for whom he had purchased military clothing in Gibraltar, he sold the consignment and credited himself with the profits. In November, he was the winner of a pawn lottery in which the prize amounted to \$900.

On board, the routine duties of minor repairs, maintenance, and restocking went on interruptedly except by the mutiny of two crew members which occurred on November 10. After a hand-to-hand battle, the officers succeeded in getting the mutineers into a prison on shore.

In view of the relative stagnation of commerce, Mr. Mathewson decided on a voyage to Canton and back. He hoped that conditions might have been stabilized by the time of his return and pointed out that "There is now not any China goods on the coast of Peru . . ." He determined on a west bound cargo of copper, silver, cotton, and any freight that might be in the market. In the course of collecting this cargo, the *Mercury* sailed from Callao on December 31, 1823, and visited in order, Samanco, Truxillo, and Payta. At Callao, he had obtained a quantity of old copper worth \$101.90. At Samanco, 1,000 bales of cotton were to be picked up on freight, but a letter from the governor of Santa advised that he "had not been able to procure sacks for the cotton, and that it was impossible to get mules to carry it to port." At Truxillo, there was no cotton to be had, but Mr. Mathewson was able to purchase \$25,962.75 worth of silver. At Payta, he obtained fifty bales of cotton worth \$300.00

⁹Mr. Mathewson further anticipated that a cocoa crop would be ready by the time of his return and that he would be able to take a cargo of that commodity to Spain. The Spanish government, he had learned, had decreed that old Spaniards desiring to leave the revolted colonies might bring their property into Spain without paying duties. Mr. Mathewson had some plan for getting his own cocoa into Spain duty-free under that decree. He wrote Providence to have information waiting for him in Peru on his return from China as to whether The French Navy would make it difficult for him to get into Cadiz.

and \$1,744 worth of silver. Further supplies of cotton were unavailable because all the mules in Piura had been impressed by the government. With this cargo and a small freight of cotton shipped by Lynch, Hill & Co., the *Mercury* set out for Canton on January 17, 1824.

The westward voyage lasted eighty-two days and passed without event. At the island of Lintin, freight for Canton was picked up and also a sum of money from the *George* (a Carrington ship), to be delivered to S. Russell & Co. In Canton, Mr. Mathewson assembled, with the aid of S. Russell & Co., a cargo of China goods worth about \$45,000. The usual articles were included: clothing, satins, crapes, nankeens, chinaware, gilt and lacquered furniture, fans, fire-crackers, paper lanterns, etc. Nothing of note occurred while the *Mercury* was in port except for some trouble with the crew. They were not obliged by contract to return to Chile and Mr. Mathewson had to advance them considerable money "to keep them quiet and remain by the ship." At this time, too, Mr. Wheaton, the second mate, demanded his discharge and had to be replaced. By June, 1824, the cargo and \$30,000 worth of freight were on board. Charges on the freight were, in this case, to be one-third of the net profit. On the 27th, the *Mercury* sailed, as it was thought, for Chile. But on July 11, she ran into a hurricane. Mr. Mathewson recorded some of the highlights in a letter to Providence.

At 11:45 A. M., the wind shifted of a sudden from N. N. E. to N. N. W., and blew to such a degree that it was with difficulty a man could hold himself on deck, and the sea, which for several hours previous could not rise, now rose like pyramids in the air, breaking over the ship from stem to stern. July 12, at 3 P. M. the ship lay nearly on her beam ends, so that the water poured down the companion way. I now requested the foremast to be cut away; as soon as the lanyards of three of the weather shrouds were cut, the masts went over the side, clear from the ship, and she partially righted. At 2:30 P. M. the mizen topmast went over the side, and the ship righted; at this time everything was afloat in the cabin, our stern ripped to pieces, our deck lights stove in, long boat knocked out of the chocks, roundhouse and binnacle stove to pieces, our starboard bulwarks all gone, with most of the breast-ail, all hands imploring in clearing the wreck; but the sea was breaking over the ship in such a manner that we could not clear the spars from her until 6 P. M., at which time we got the lee lanyards of fore and main rigging cut, so that the spars drifted clear of us; at midnight the gale rather abated.

With the *Mercury* so badly crippled and part of her cargo damaged, Mr. Mathewson would have wished to return to China if winds had permitted. Because of the southwest monsoon, however, it seemed best to proceed eastward to the nearest port in that direction. With jury masts and emergency sails, the *Mercury* struggled across the Pacific arriving at Monterey, California, on October 25, 1824. Extensive repairs were imperative, but there were "neither carpenters, cordage, nor iron to be had." Mr. Mathewson was able to get only a supply of spars and a new foremast, but he reported with satisfaction, "I have sold about two thousand dollars worth of goods at this place, without being obliged to pay port charges, at from 50 to 100 per cent advance." On January 1, 1825, the *Mercury* started down the coast in search of a port where repairs might be effected. On January 21, she put in at Mazatlán.

Here a survey on the damaged goods was taken by four captains who happened to be in port. The loss was found to be slight and all agreed that the cargo had been well stowed. Meanwhile, extensive repairs were underway and sales were made on ship and on shore. Trouble with the crew broke out when a boat from an English vessel (presumably on a social call to the fore-castle) was ordered off. Next day, January 27, the entire crew went on strike, forcing the captain to borrow four men from another ship for minimum maintenance. In retaliation, the captain ordered the cook not to serve breakfast and warned the men that they "should not have any thing to eat until, they would work." On the 29th, "One of the men came aft and told the Captain They all wanted to go to there Duty again." The captain called them all aft and asked if it was true that they wanted to go to their duty. They replied that it was so and "the Cook begin to Cook as usual."

No further incidents occurred until March 19 when three men went AWOL. One of them was picked up by the Captain of the Port and returned to the *Mercury*, where he was "Emediately put in Irons On account of Being making false complaint Against the Ship."

When the *Mercury* sailed again on March 27, 1825, \$32,163 worth of her cargo had been sold at Mazatlán. As she proceeded down the coast, it became apparent that she was leaking badly. On March 25, the log records, "Pomp going Every 2 Hours." On

the 27th and for some time thereafter, the pump was "Going Every Half Hour." By May 16th, it was "Every fifteen minutes." On June 1, 1825, the *Mercury* put into Guayaquil for survey. Two captains and a carpenter came aboard and "after Examining her thoroughly they reported her Not to be Sea-worthy—" nor worth repairing.

Mr. Mathewson had the entire cargo unladen and made arrangements for disposing of the vessel. On June 27, 1825, at 10:00 A. M. "the Auction commenced on shore abreast of the Ship. At 5 PM finished the sale of the rigging, & Ship & Spars & C.—" The log records a West wind blowing and then "So Ends the Journal of the Ship Mercury."

* * *

The ship ceased to exist, but her affairs were far from settled. The crew was dismissed; Captain James left, presumably for Providence, with the log; and Mr. Mathewson stayed at Guayaquil to dispose of the cargo. In that city he sold goods worth about \$20,000. Most of the proceeds and most of the remaining cargo he dispatched to Alsop, Wetmore & Co., the Carrington correspondents in Lima. Finally, on September 12, 1826, Mr. Mathewson, himself, boarded the steamboat *Tillica*, bound for Lima, taking with him his financial records, about \$11,000 in doubloons and gold dust (which he smuggled on board to avoid the export duty), some shawls, tortoise shell combs, handkerchiefs, and shirts, mostly the property of the owners of the *Mercury*. A few days later, the steamboat *Tillica*, having put into the port of Guama, was demolished by an explosion. About fifteen persons were killed. Mr. Mathewson, who happened to be on shore at the time, later recorded the incident, "The decks of the steamboat were blown off, most of the property on board destroyed—blown overboard and lost—among which was all the specie and all the goods . . . [I] had on board, except one shawl, which was much damaged . . ." After a few days in Guama, Mr. Mathewson and the other survivors of the *Tillica* procured mules and proceeded overland to Lima.

It might have been supposed that, once the affairs of the *Mercury* were settled with Alsop, Wetmore & Co., Mr. Mathewson would have claimed the right to visit his wife and young children, whom he had left in Providence five years before. Instead, he elected to

invest the *Mercury* funds in chartering a ship for another China voyage.¹⁰ Nor was that all. He wrote the owners in Providence that he calculated on making the round trip to China in about nine months and on being back in South America about November, 1826, "at which time, if you will have a good ship and fast sailer here for me, I will return back to Canton again one or more times and will be sure to make money . . ." Edward Carrington & Co.'s surprise was undoubtedly increased when it learned that the funds of the *Mercury* had been used to charter three-quarters of the ship *Superior* for the first of Mr. Mathewson's projected series of voyages to China. As the *Superior* herself was a Carrington ship, the company found itself in the unusual position of chartering its own vessel.

On July 25, 1826, the Providence owners addressed a confidential letter to Alsop, Wetmore & Co. in Lima expressing fears that all was not well with Mr. Mathewson. They confessed their regret at seeing him "willing to be absent so long from his family," and pointed out that he had "children at the age that requires a father's care . . ." It seemed strange that he had no wish to settle up his accounts, especially as he had no vessel of his own to operate with. "We are aware," they wrote, "that your country is calculated to favor any volatile feelings a man may give way to, and we fear he has already departed from a strict course of morality . . ." Under the circumstances, they concluded, "we should consider ourselves very reprehensible, if we neglected to guard against losses by our agents . . ." Accordingly, they provided Alsop, Wetmore & Co. with a power of attorney to take possession of Mr. Mathewson's cargo when he should return from Canton in the *Superior*. If the fears and suspicions which had been confided seemed unfounded and Mr. Mathewson proved willing and desirous of returning home, Alsop, Wetmore & Co. might "manage accordingly."

Meanwhile, Mr. Mathewson had run into unexpected difficulties in China. He had stopped at Manila to pick up a small cargo of rice and paddy and had proceeded to Canton. There he had decided to do the ship's business himself and save on commissions to Messrs. S. Russell & Co. He accordingly made contact with a hong merchant,

¹⁰Fortunately, most of the *Mercury* funds had been forwarded to Lima or were still in Guayaquil. The amount lost on board the *Tillica* was only a small part of the proceeds of the Canton voyage.

sold his cargo,¹¹ and contracted for silks, which were to be woven to order and ready by May 12, 1826. But in March, labor troubles developed. In April, Mr. Mathewson wrote to Providence, "The silk weavers stopped working on the 8th ult., and are still loitering about the streets, drinking samfeu, not being willing to work unless their wages are raised, which the silk merchants refuse doing" In May, the strike was settled, and in June, the *Superior* sailed for South America, arriving at Valparaiso on October 3, 1826, and at Lima, October 24, 1826.

At this latter port, Mr. Mathewson learned by letter, and, perhaps, through Alsop, Wetmore & Co., that his proceedings were causing dissatisfaction in Providence. He accordingly determined to settle his affairs and return home. A portion of the proceeds of his late voyage he was able to put on board the *Superior* when she sailed for Providence in December, 1826. This remittance was in the form of specie. The rest, except for a remnant left in the hands of Alsop, Wetmore & Co., he shipped in silver and copper on board the *Portia* bound for New York in January, 1827. His affairs being sufficiently in order, he himself took passage on the same ship, arriving at New York in May, 1827. Next month he was home.

Leaving the owners to untangle the accounts of the *Mercury*, a task which they completed in 1848 with the assistance of the Supreme Court of the United States,¹² let us close our narrative with a view in retrospect. First, let us admit that the owners of the *Mercury* displayed, from time to time, an excessive preoccupation with their own interests. To offset this shortcoming, Edward Carrington and his associates have left us a brilliant example of entrepreneurial skill and daring. Their world-wide multi-million dollar operations

¹¹The gold and silver which Mr. Mathewson had brought were found to include "a large quantity of copper nails, old iron, dirt, and two four pound copper shot"

¹²The litigation lasted for 18 years, and finally resulted in a judgment of several thousand dollars against Henry Mathewson. The Supreme Court decided that under the terms of the contract which went into effect after the *Mercury* reached Gibraltar, Henry Mathewson was not justified in trading on his own account, even though paying freight to the partnership (in which he assumed one-tenth interest at Gibraltar). It was furthermore determined that the same rules extended to the voyage of the *Superior*. The profits of a number of speculations into which Henry Mathewson entered on the West Coast and in China after 1822 were forfeited. By 1848, the interest on the sum due exceeded the principal. Benjamin C. Howard, *Reports of Cases Argued and Adjudged in the Supreme Court of the United States* (Boston, 1848), VI, 122-146.

in a period when radio and cable were unknown excite our wonder. Turning to Henry Mathewson, we get similar contrasting impressions. There is little doubt that he engaged in systematic petty embezzlement. His devotion to his family seems to have lacked warmth. Yet his seamanship and his knowledge of world markets command our admiration. Furthermore, a man who has no thought of returning home after five years at sea and even after losing his vessel must be admitted to possess stamina and perseverance to an uncommon degree. The crew deserves our sympathy. Though turbulent in port and not above occasional pilferage, these men served faithfully and to good purpose. Finally, the *Mercury* herself leaves us with mixed feelings. She was scarcely seaworthy when she sailed from Providence. Yet she stayed afloat six years, visited four continents, carried arms to San Martín, refugees to Spain, European goods to South America, South American goods to China, and China goods to South America. Like the men who owned her and the men who sailed her, she was imperfect, but she accomplished much.

RECENT GIFTS

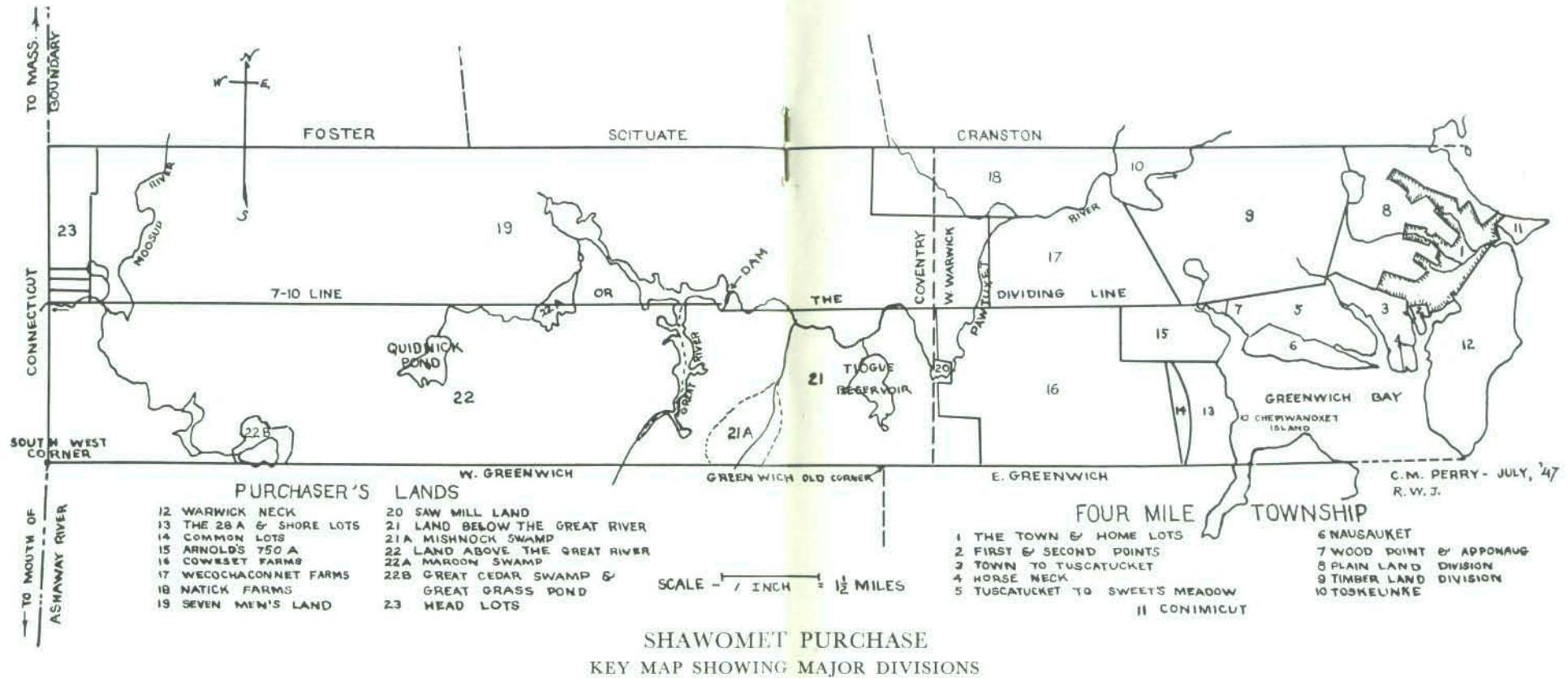
Mr. Franklin R. Cushman and his sister, Miss Julia D. Cushman, have given to the Society a chest on chest, which was once the property of Moses Brown, descending to the Cushmans through his step-granddaughter, Avis L. Harris. This recent gift, together with previous gifts from the Cushmans, makes a substantial nucleus of Moses Brown furniture in the house built and occupied by his brother John. They have also given the Society a twelve-sided, cherry, tip-top table from the Elijah and Jason Williams family.

* * *

Mrs. Frank Mauran, Jr. has presented a Duncan Phyfe type sofa, which has been placed in the lower hall of John Brown House. The sofa formerly belonged to Gen. William Ames.

* * *

Mr. George William Curtis of Ashfield, Mass., has given the Society oil portraits of his great grandfather and great grandmother, George Curtis (1796-1856) and Elizabeth (Burrill) Curtis (1798-1826) both of Providence.



[continued from page 68]

the line, Connecticut men were present and apparently approved the work of the Rhode Island surveyors, for the Rhode Island Assembly at its session on the last Wednesday of October, 1728, ordered "that the commission of the Connecticut commissioners, and the settling and establishing the line by the said commissioners between the two colonies, be recorded in the public records of the colony."¹²

Thus the controversy between the two colonies, that had been hot for sixty-five years, was settled. At least, the people most interested and concerned thought it was settled.

¹²*Ibid.*, v. 4, p. 413.

It is interesting to note that every time the south line of Warwick was measured, the 20 mile point from Warwick Neck was placed farther and farther west, until it finally landed where it is now, 21 miles 70 rods from the Neck. The line had been stretched 390 rods or about 6%. It seems a little queer that the Connecticut Commissioners should agree to this after protesting so vigorously earlier. The reason may be that they realized the award of 1726, "the green line," would rob them of still more land and that they might as well adhere to the agreement the two colonies made in 1703, even though they knew the southwest corner was much too far west.

One result of fixing the Rhode Island-Connecticut line was the addition of a strip of land to the western edge of Rhode Island from the south line of Warwick to the Massachusetts line. Older surveys had placed the colony line farther east some three-quarters of a mile or more. Therefore in 1728, when the line was finally agreed upon and marked, the owners of both Warwick and Providence had more land to divide. This extra property they proceeded to slice into small lots. These are the headlots that arouse curiosity when seen on the old plats. A few families had a queer feeling one day when they suddenly found themselves living in Rhode Island, whereas the day before they were in Connecticut.

These facts indicate how important the southwest corner became, the controversies that occurred over the location of it, and some of the results of finally getting its position agreed upon and marked. But this is not quite the end of the story. In February, 1729, the General Assembly ordered "that the boundary line between this colony and Connecticut, be renewed once in three or four years, with such commissioners as they shall appoint; and if they appoint none, to renew the bounds without them."¹³

In October, 1736, a committee consisting of William Greene, Col. Daniel Abbott, and John Jenkins was appointed to renew the bounds between the two colonies. They were to notify Connecticut and with their committee to do the work as soon as might be. It was not until January, 1740, that the Rhode Island Committee reported to the General Assembly. It seems that the Connecticut committee, though appointed promptly, was not willing to cooperate. They objected to meeting the Rhode Island committee in Killingly, Connecticut, and postponed it until 1739. Again they did not show up; so the Rhode Island men started alone. They began at the mouth of the Ashaway River and renewed the bounds (heaps of stones) from place to place until they came to Warwick southwest corner, "which was a large heap of stones when made in the year A.D. 1728, with sundry trees marked . . . near said heap of stones, which two of us well remember, being then present, and helped to make said heap of stones, and mark said trees; which heap of stones was made in the edge of a swamp, on the east side thereof, where some cedar grows in some part of said swamp; we found

¹³*Ibid.*, v. 4, p. 418.

said heap of stones to be removed and all gone from said place; but the trees standing with the old marks on them, viz.: W.W: B.E.D.A: J.W:, and sundry other letters of them; and we men marked said trees, leaving all the old marks standing on them.

And we also made up a large heap of stones in the same place, and from the southwest corner of Warwick, November 17, [1739] we proceeded northward and renewed the former bounds from place to place in the dividing line as run in the year 1728 . . ."

Daniel Abbott }
John Jenkins } committee.¹⁴
Wm. Greene }

There may have been rumors that the bound in the southwest corner had been tampered with, for in June, 1741, the General Assembly appointed the same committee with the addition of Ezekiel Warner and Ishmael Spink to examine whether the boundary marks between Rhode Island and Connecticut at or near the southwest corner of the Warwick Purchase had been removed.¹⁵ The Committee reported in October, 1741, that they made their inspection in July, 1741, of the Warwick southwest corner where the bound was made in 1728 and revised in 1739. They stated, "the two first mile monuments northward and southward of said corner, to be both standing in their proper places where they were first made" but that the heap of stones had been moved "about two rods and a half, or something more, to the eastward . . . near in the course of Warwick line, and upon the uplands, upon a sort of knoll . . ."¹⁶ They did not move the heap of stones back to the original place. Other plans were in the making. Shortly after the above report was made, the General Assembly appointed a committee to meet with a Connecticut committee "to erect a large monument or heap of stones, at Warwick south-west corner, in the place where the corner formerly was made at the time of settling the line betwixt the two governments . . . Whereupon, the next day, the 25th [November, 1741] we met at said corner, the Hon'ble Roger Wolcott, Esq., James Wadsworth and Timothy Pearce, Esqs., a committee appointed by the government of Connecticut . . . and after a conference

¹⁴*Ibid.*, v. 4, p. 564.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, v. 5, p. 34.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, v. 5, p. 34.



Courtesy of the Connecticut Boundary Commission

BOUNDARY STONE BETWEEN RHODE ISLAND
AND CONNECTICUT

[southwest corner of Shawomet purchase]

and some argument used, they unanimously agreed to join with us, to revise the aforesaid corner; whereupon, we, with such assistance as was present, belonging to each government, raised a stone in said corner, that was provided and brought in place, of ten feet and a half long, and two feet and three inches wide, and considerable thickness, [10 inches] having the letter C on the west side and R

on the east, and the date of the year, and several other letters; being now a corner of West Greenwich and Coventry; and round the same, we made a considerable heap of stones." Report signed by Daniel Abbott, John Fry, and Ishmael Spink. Abbott was paid £8 10s, Fry £7 10s 9d., Spink £6 "for their service in said affair."¹⁷

So, at last, a bound too big for vandals to tackle, marked the Southwest Corner, the key point in the Rhode Island-Connecticut Line.

Standing in a swamp, it was upheaved by the frosts of nearly a century so that it had to be reset upright in 1839. In 1923 it was embedded in a foundation of concrete. It stands upright now, a mute but effective guardian of the bounds between two sovereign states.

¹⁷Ibid., v. 5, p. 59; Arnold *op. cit.*, v. 2, p. 140.

PICTURES OF PROVIDENCE IN THE PAST,
1790-1820

THE REMINISCENCES OF WALTER R. DANFORTH

edited by CLARKSON A. COLLINS, 3rd.

[continued from April, 1951, v. 10, no. 2, p. 60]

The demolition of a very old building with its rough and massive stone chimney at one end and with every mark of antiquity to prove its coexistence with the early settlement of the town made room for the large brick block¹ now occupied by Mr. Read and sons of the late George W. Gladding. Its second story was first occupied by the Roger Williams Bank when it commenced its financial operations,

¹This building stood on the north corner of North Main and Amos Streets. George F. Gladding & Co., now Gladdings Inc., was located at 35 North Main in 1850. Partners in the firm at that time were George F. and Benjamin F. Gladding. James H. Read had a wholesale dry goods store at 29 and 31 North Main. Prior to the renumbering in 1870 the odd numbers were on the west side of the street.

Seth Wheaton being president and Nathan Waterman, Jr. cashier;² and also by the Hope Insurance Company, John S. Dexter being president.³ He had been a Colonel in the Revolutionary Army, having left the bar to serve his country. He was afterwards Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas. On one occasion Judge Howell, a stockholder in the company, father-in-law of Ebenezer Knight Dexter,⁴ generally called Knight Dexter, had suffered his dividends to lie over through neglect, and was told by the president that he was ready to pay him a considerable sum of money. The judge, as much pleased as surprised, took and pocketed the money, exclaiming in his joy, "Why, Dexter, you deserve to be knighted." "God forbid," replied President Dexter, "one knight of the name is enough in all conscience." "You are right there," said Howell breaking into one of his most hearty laughs, "one Knight Dexter is all sufficient," nothing giving him more unfeigned delight than a severe hit at his son-in-law.

Anterior to the spring elections of 1811, when much vituperation was poured out from the partisan press opposed to the Federal candidate for governor, William Jones,⁵ and severe personalities were

²The Roger Williams Bank was incorporated in 1803. Seth Wheaton (1760-1827) was a native of Providence. During the Revolution he served as ensign and lieutenant in the First Regiment of Militia of Providence County. Thereafter he was active as a mariner and merchant and was first president of the United States Branch Bank in Providence.

Nathan Waterman, Jr., (1779-1846) was a son of Richard and Elizabeth (Vaughan) Waterman of Coventry, R. I. He had previously been clerk of the Exchange Bank for a short period, and later held the position of cashier of the United States Branch Bank. He was called "Jr." or "2d." in order to distinguish him from his uncle Nathan, son of Amaziah.

³The Hope Insurance Company received its charter in 1804. John Singer Dexter (1754-1844) studied law in the office of James M. Varnum and accompanied him into the army as a member of the Kentish Guards. After the war he practiced law in Providence where he wielded considerable political influence among the Federalists. He was Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas of Providence County from 1811 to 1817. Walter R. Danforth was clerk of the Court during the same period.

⁴Ebenezer Knight Dexter (1773-1824) was a leading Providence merchant. His name is preserved by Dexter Asylum which stands upon his forty-acre farm, a legacy, together with other property, to the town of Providence. He married Waitstill Howell, daughter of David.

⁵William Jones (1753-1822), a native of Newport, had the unusual distinction of holding commissions in both the army and the navy during the Revolution. After the conclusion of hostilities he entered the hardware business in Providence and engaged extensively in politics, serving as Speaker of the Rhode Island House, 1809-11, and Governor, 1811-17.

exchanged on both sides, Judge Howell, who was felicitous in wielding the two edged sword of his caustic wit, in a conversation concluded some remarks on the qualifications of candidates by saying laughingly and in good nature and to kill two birds with one shot, "Why don't they put up my son-in-law, Knight Dexter? He's *nearly as tall as Jones, and quite as slim.*"

David Howell came to this place from New Jersey before or at the infancy of Rhode Island College, was a tutor in 1766 and received the degree of Master at the first award of its academic honors in 1769. He was soon after appointed Professor of Natural Philosophy, which place he held for nearly ten years, and afterwards from 1790 to 1825 held the professorship of law in that institution, having had conferred on him in the meantime the degree LL.D. In the early part of our Union he represented this state in Congress and was surpassed in ability by few other members. He practiced law in this state for a long course of years with great success, finding few amongst his contemporaries who could meet him at the bar with an equal amount of legal knowledge or powerful argument.

Holding a professorship in the college at the death of President Manning, he temporarily presided over the institution and at the commencement of 1791 made an address to the graduates, distinguished for its elegance and appropriateness, which was published here⁶ and republished in Europe; and at the commencement of 1792, before the inauguration of President Maxcy, delivered another address which was also much admired.

He held the office of United States District Attorney for several years, and at the death of the Hon. Judge Barnes received the appointment of United States Judge for the Rhode Island District. In both of these offices he discharged his duties with acknowledged ability, continuing in the latter to the time of his death.

He was a caustic writer and when engaged in political controversy showed no mercy to his opponent. His speeches at the bar were seasoned with classic allusions and pungent satire, often sliding into severe sarcasm. His severe personal reflections at the bar against his client's adversary sometimes called forth indignant rebukes, threats

⁶Howell's address was published in the (Philadelphia) *Gazette of the United States* of September 28, 1791, and republished in the *Providence Gazette* of October 22, 1791.

of revenge, and actual assaults. But yet in his intercourse with friends he was social, companionable, and pleasant, always ready with a "quiver full of arrows" barbed with wit. In a keen encounter of wit, however, he often came off second best with our venerable fellow townsman, John Howland,⁷ at the barber's shop. Howell was a Republican of the warmest temperament; and he was once asked by a friend why he continued to shave at the shop of that violent Federalist. "Why," said he in reply, "I can get as much again shaving for my money at Howland's as at any other place."

Judge Howell was a man of strong passions, which he could not always subject to the control of judgment, but we have no instances to give in proof of this remark. He was of large stature and in his advanced years was unwieldy in his personal movements. Of course a frame like his must be sustained, and he was remarkable for his gastronomic performances.

But to return to the old building which was demolished. It was tenanted by Mrs. Heath, who, speaking in language of those days, was a widow woman and of very respectable character, and also by an honest old Ethiopian named Cato, whose windows and counters presented a rare assortment of pies, cakes, gingerbread, cookies, nuts and fruits of all sorts, which were constantly exchanged at all times of day and in the evening for English half penny pieces or coppers and spurious copper coins manufactured in Bungtown, the Federal currency of dimes and cents not having at that time gone into practical operation. It was a mart of great resort for youth, and indeed many of the patrons were "children of a larger growth." The venerable figure of that old building has been shrouded by the mantle of oblivion, and few there are who call to mind the features of its worthy tenants, long since incorporated in their primitive clay.

On the opposite [east] side of North Main Street from President Street⁸ down to the old Arthur Fenner House, corner of Market

⁷The aged John Howland (1757-1854) was still alive when Danforth spoke. Apparently his only private vocation was that of hairdresser. He spent many years, however, in the service of the town as auditor and treasurer. Howland's lifelong interest in Rhode Island's past led to the preservation of much valuable manuscript material which might otherwise have been consigned to the trash heap or the paper mill. He was the second president of the Rhode Island Historical Society, holding office from 1833 until his death in 1854.

⁸President Street was the lower part of the present Waterman Street between Benefit and North Main.

Square, was a long range of old and small buildings, three of them only exceeding one story in height. The building of the store occupied by Owen Mason⁹ was the first improvement made there, and recently an elegant brick structure erected by Benjamin Aborn and the heirs of Samuel Arnold has made a further improvement. But its change in occupants within the period of these reminiscences speaks forcibly of the mutability of terrestrial things, the evanescence of human life. At the corner now occupied by Mr. Bradford¹⁰ as a seed store and a depot of horticultural and farming apparatus, was the tailor's shop of the deceased Charles Holden,¹¹ where he and a numerous corps of his own boys might be seen "from rosy dawn to dewy eve," most industriously threading their way to a state of independence. Mr. Holden was a regular attendant at the Friends Meeting and was esteemed by the members and all others as a man of probity and a useful citizen.

Next in order was the shop of a haberdasher of wooden wares, sieves, hoe handles, rakes et cetera, whose name was Barker, and who, from his grave and venerable appearance was generally indicated by mischievous school boys as "Old Daddy Barker."¹² He was a frugal, honest, and respectable man, attending closely to his own business and allowing others to manage theirs as best they might, was generally clad in drab, and went to the Quaker meeting. From such a stock good fruit might have been expected, but it was far otherwise in fact. He became father-in-law to Jacob Otis,¹³ formerly known here as a horse doctor of considerable eminence, who was not a thriving man, but bore a fair character, and who in his turn became father of Jacob Otis, Jr., and Sewall, his brother, who were vicious and disreputable in their lives. Young Jake, as many probably recollect, under the inspirations of alcohol would often seat himself

⁹The shoe store of O. Mason & Co. was located at 10 North Main Street in 1850.

¹⁰In 1850 William B. Bradford & Son sold seed and wooden ware at 38 North Main St.

¹¹Son of John and Dorothy (Rice) Holden of Warwick. He died March 21, 1812, in his 69th year.

¹²William Barker. His death in his 68th year is mentioned in the *Providence Gazette* of February 10, 1798.

¹³A somewhat different account of Jacob Otis may be found on page 146 of *A Genealogical and Historical Memoir of the Otis Family . . .* (Chicago, 1924) by William A. Otis, where it is stated that he was a physician, a man of means, a soldier in the Revolution, and an eminent Quaker. Jacob Otis married Sarah Smith Barker, daughter of William Barker. Sometime after her death, November 1, 1821, Otis moved to Orange County, New York.

in a waggon and drive round in Market Square in so contracted a circle that the slimmest man in the whole town, a very Calvin Edson, would be loth to trust himself in the centre. Sometimes during these gyrations the centrifugal force would throw him from his orbit and prostrate him on the pave to the amusement of spectators, but though bruised, he would like Antaeus, rise from his mother earth renovated with strength to pursue his pastime.

Near "Daddy Barker" or as his successor, Jonathan Congdon opened a hardware store¹⁴ and with his other productive business prosecuted extensively the manufacture of cotton and woolen cards for carding in the lap, by hand, an article then in universal use. No young married woman thought herself prepared for housekeeping till she was furnished with a pair of either kind and knew how to use them, together with a woolen and a linen spinning wheel and clock reel. The manufacturers perforated their leathers and formed the teeth with the aid of a very simple labor saving machine operated by hand (for neither horses nor steam had then been pressed into service ancillary to the useful arts) and put them out to be set by children, girls and boys, at about four or five coppers a pair; and many were the youths of either sex, who abridged their hours of play and "balmy sleep" to devote themselves to this employment and take the first lessons in industry to conduct themselves to competence.

Next south was the tinman's shop of James Burrill, Sen., one of the most regular and industrious mechanics in the place;¹⁵ and rarely during the hours of work was the sound of his hammer suspended except a short time before noon, when his landlord, Nathan Waterman,¹⁶ a contemporary shop joiner on the West Side, and two

¹⁴Jonathan Congdon (1763-1862) succeeded his father Joseph Congdon in a business established at least as early as 1790. Under the management of his descendants it has grown into the Congdon & Carpenter Co. of the present day. The first *Providence Directory*, published in 1824, lists J. Congdon & Son at 36 North Main and 13 North Water (Canal) Streets.

¹⁵James Burrill, Sr., father of Senator James Burrill, was a native of Lynn, Massachusetts. After serving an apprenticeship in Newport, he opened a tinsmith's shop in Providence, where he was long known for the excellence of his work. He was an original member of the Providence Association of Mechanics and Manufacturers and later became its president. He died in 1825 in his 82nd year.

¹⁶Nathan Waterman, son of Amaziah. He owned much of the original home lot of his ancestor Richard Waterman, including the site of Hope College, which he sold to Brown University, and the land on which the old Cabinet of the Rhode Island Historical Society stands. This property was given to the Society, of which he was a member, under the provisions of his will. He died February 9, 1830, in his 89th year.

or three others would "just drop in," when the coffee pots and milk pans and colanders, and candle moulds and sauce pans and soldering irons would be put aside for a general fumigation of the Indian weed, not with cigars, but long clay pipes. Relaxation from work would be employed in a political discussion or a talk on local affairs, on revolutionary France, on the news from the Hague, and on matters and things in general, which would engage their eager attention till the Baptist bell in emphatic tones would herald the dinner hour and declare "the banquet waits." Col. Edward Dexter¹⁷ was desirous of hiring the lot on which this shop was as the site for a large store of several stories and offered Mr. Waterman inducements strong, so far as increased rent was an object. He received no definite answer after several conferences and was at length told that he had better speak to Burrill on the subject. To him therefore, while at work, he expressed his wishes, and told his whole story, informing him that he had been referred to him by his landlord. Mr. Burrill kept about his work for some time, and then lighting his pipe and looking Dexter full in the face calmly remarked, "You wish to move this old shop away, do you?" "Yes," responded Dexter. "Well, then, where will Nathan smoke his pipe?" "That I never once thought of," said Dexter, but he saw the decision was against him, and he submitted to judgment *for once without an appeal*.¹⁸

¹⁷Colonel Edward Dexter (1770-1860), a man marked for his eccentricities in a day when Rhode Islanders were still noted for their individuality of character. He received his commercial training in the counting house of Welcome Arnold and later became one of the most successful among the merchants and shipowners of Providence. "But," states his obituary in the *Providence Daily Journal* of August 24, 1860, "what gave Colonel Dexter such prominence in the community was the possession of a will and a temper which we have never seen equalled in any other man, and which continued in undiminished vigor down to the day of his death. That anger, passion and profanity which degrade and debase most men, in him always rose to a dignity not often seen, and in their fullest manifestations of defiant audacity almost to sublimity . . . What were Col. Dexter's theological views we never heard. He must have believed in God, or he would not have so frequently and so awfully invoked his vengeance upon those he deemed his foes. He must have believed in a hell, or he would not have so constantly and so fearfully imprecated its most horrible torments upon the objects of his unrelenting and unforgiving hate. But he has passed the boundaries of human judgment, and we may charitably hope that his unquiet spirit . . . has found that repose which was ever denied it during its lengthened pilgrimage here on earth."

¹⁸To quote again from Dexter's obituary: "He labored under the singular delusion that the world had, without cause, made war upon him. He was therefore nearly all his life a suitor in courts, and after having been frequently defeated in our State tribunals, made Massachusetts his residence for the purpose of bringing his cases within the federal jurisdiction.

Next southerly came the red painted house of John Nichols, in the basement story of which he kept his brush making shop. It projected beyond the next building, and the entrance was at the corner on the south side of the building, and the customer landed on the floor by the descent of two steps. Mr. Nichols was esteemed as an honest man and a fair trader. He was a Highlander and had been a soldier, having fought by the side of the gallant Wolfe at the Plains of Abraham, and having come to this country about the time of the Revolution, adopted it as the place of his permanent residence. He was of the Sandemanian denomination and one of the very few who professed that faith in this town. A daughter of Mr. Nichols was unhappily married to James Atwood, a man of no enviable notoriety. He was at times a trader and a speculator with occasionally considerable capital, but having run out his money, his credit, and character, lived long enough to regret that he had not profited by the old maxim, "Honesty is the best policy."

The aged and venerable Richard Jackson, Senior,¹⁹ owned and occupied till death the estate next south, the old square built house which was afterwards bought and repaired by Amasa Breck. There Mr. Jackson kept a store for the sale of West India goods. The early part of his life had been employed in buffeting the waves of old ocean, and he was for many years a nautical commander. He was a quiet, upright, substantial, intelligent citizen, and a kind neighbor, against whom a breath of censure was never uttered.

In the next two buildings, one of which was where the large Aborn brick block now stands, groceries were kept by Elisha Brown²⁰ and Rufus Peck. The signboard of Brown was formed by an angle in front, as many others were in that day, and at the point where the angle was formed was placed a large gilt spread eagle. Mr. Brown was amiable in his character, a fair dealer and an esteemed citizen. Of a family of several members, I believe, only one survives, Alonzo Brown, well known as a skillful boatman in our river and bay. Rufus

¹⁹Richard Jackson, Sr., (1731-1818) married Susan, daughter of Nathan and Phebe (Smith) Waterman. His house and the row of shops north of it, now replaced by the School of Design Textile Building and the U.E.R. tunnel, stood on the original Waterman lot.

²⁰Elisha Brown (1749-1818), son of Deputy Governor Elisha. His son Alonzo was born in 1787 and died in 1866.

Peck was a different sort of man from his nearest neighbor.²¹ His grocery was on a small scale and was little better than a low grog shop. In his dealings and general character the public had little confidence, and he was a dark spot on the bright disk of that industrious, thriving and well ordered neighborhood. The emblem over his shop door was a carved crow with two links of sausage in its bill. An honest and quick-witted seaman passing there one day, looked up and exclaimed, "That's an unholy alliance — a crow with sausages — a crow never eats sausages unless he steals them." The by-standers saw that the sailor shot his arrow in the dark, but they unanimously agreed that he had hit the mark, the target being neither more nor less than a peck measure.

These shopkeepers, landholders, and mechanics, who were so busy in our streets, and so busy assisting in our municipal affairs are, with one exception, Jonathan Congdon, all gone. They have made their exit from the stage of this bustling world; the places which knew them will know them no more, and strangers are occupying their business stations.

We come to Market Square. The first considerable improvement within my recollection (and I profess to recollect distinctly local events transpiring as far back as fifty-seven years) which was made in this place was the erection of the Coffee House, which is now recognised in the old building adjoining westward to the splendid Granite Block on the North side of Market Square.²² But it does not comprise the whole block, the building at the corner of the square and Canal Street, in the lower part of which are Stillwell's book and stationery store and Webster's hat store, having been previously erected by Carter and Wilkinson. The Coffee House in its day was considered a progressive effort in the architectural department of municipal improvement. It was planned and built by David McLane

²¹Rufus Peck, son of Jonathan and Ruth (Wheeler) Peck, was born in Rehoboth, November 11, 1761. *A Genealogical History of the Descendants of Joseph Peck . . .* (Boston, 1868) by Ira B. Peck states (p. 159) that he was a merchant. His advertisement in the *Providence Gazette* of December 23, 1797, reads in part: "I continue my Business as usual, at the Sign of the Crow and Sausage, a few Doors Northward of the Market; where are for Sale, a general Assortment of WEST-INDIA GOODS and Country Produce . . . Any Payment is considered by me as preferable to Credit. Doors open from Bell-ringing till Nine o'Clock."

²²Designed by John Holden Greene (1777-1850). It was demolished in 1939 to make way for the School of Design Auditorium.



Engraving in R. I. H. S.

THE OLD COFFEE HOUSE
Market Square, Providence

and Paul Draper,²³ and was said to be the first wooden building in the town where the joists (rafters or supporters) of the roof were laid upon the plates or frame, instead of being let into them by mortices and tenons as had previously been the practice. McLane had been an operative housewright and this method, though an innovation, was soon acknowledged by the craft generally to be an improvement, inasmuch as labor was saved and strength was added to the building by preserving this timber whole; and since that time, this mode has been generally adopted by architects.

This establishment, which was got under way by the proprietors of the building, was for some years what it purported to be: an Exchange Coffee House. Its lower floor was laid out into one or more well furnished bars, and a room comprising all its front except an entrance and stairway to the upper stories was the Exchange for merchants, politicians, newsmongers, male-gossips, and scandal-

²³Probably the Paul Draper who graduated from Brown in 1789 and later became a purser in the navy. He was lost at sea in 1800.

brokers of all descriptions, in stormy weather, when it was inconvenient for them to assemble at their old established rendezvous on the Great Bridge. On the east and west sides of this large hall were a number of recesses each furnished with a table and seats to accommodate four persons, who at pleasure could be supplied with newspapers and magazines or with coffee, sling, punch, flip, or other refreshments then in vogue. Whiskey punch, mint juleps, champagne and other "thin potations" of the present day had not then become fashionable drinks amongst gentlemen. In the second story were large parlors and a spacious room for the practice of the culinary art and the manufacture of gastronomic delicacies. The third story and the elevated attic had rooms for lodging, for a billard table, and for the accomodation of card parties, which were generally composed of amateurs instead of professed artists, there being at that time no organized board of Professors in the art of Gaming. To use a boy's phrase, they didn't play for keep, but for fun.

This establishment was kept up a few years, but it was found to be in advance of the population, the refinement, and the business of the place, and not in accordance with the opinions of its staid, prudent, and domestic inhabitants; and after having had a succession of keepers or landlords, none of whom ever secured a competency in the business, was discontinued.

McLane was succeeded there by Uriel Rea,²⁴ 50 years ago, a man highly respected for his amiable and upright character, his mild temper, and courteous deportment. His successor was George Bradford, a proof of whose integrity is found in the fact that he was for forty-five successive years appointed a constable of the town and performed his official duties during that period with singular fidelity.

To aid the builders in their enterprise, which was hailed as a great public improvement, and through the address and perseverance of McLane, a lottery had been granted him by the State Legislature, several classes of which were drawn by the old fashioned slow process, before the idea had been struck from mathematician's pericraniums that combinations of numbers might be found which would lead to the same result, by an almost instantaneous operation — a prodigious

²⁴Uriel Rea came to Providence from Nantucket, where he married Tabitha Coffin May 5, 1776. He died March 30, 1806, in his 57th year.

labor-saving invention without which it is not easy to conceive in what manner, at the present day when lotteries are so numerous, this useful branch of business could be accomplished. The wheel of fortune revolved; the lottery of McLane was drawn; but few purchasers of prize tickets ever received their pay. Those who held fortunate numbers had a golden vision in prospect, but it soon vanished into thin air; and the treasures which had seemed almost within grasp were gone in a moment as though touched by the magic wand of genii such as we have had described in oriental tales.

McLane after experiencing several turns of fortune took his last turn in the year 1805 or 7, at Quebec or Montreal, where he had been tried for a treasonable conspiracy against the British Government, was found guilty, and sentenced, and expiated his crime on the gallows — sad termination of his ambitious career, of his long cherished hopes of wealth and distinction! He was a man of great decision of character, and possessed a restless spirit of enterprise and adventure. His stature was above the middling size, and his personal appearance was prepossessing. When a resident here²⁵ he had been heard to declare, while under the pressure of pecuniary embarrassment, that he was resolved to possess wealth at any hazard and at any sacrifice and that rather than encounter chill penury, if no reputable way offered, he would bid defiance to the laws of society and armed as he was with physical strength and indomitable courage take the highway for his field of action, where he would levy and collect such duties from travellers as his wants might require. He was a native of Attleborough, Mass., and his family name was Lane, to which he prefixed Mc, believing that the reputation of Scottish origin or Scottish birth, amongst a people who value things the more for being "far fetch'd and dear bought" would give him a decided advantage, as he subsequently affirmed it actually did in the Southern States where he emigrated annually for several autumns on trading excursions.

²⁵On January 21, 1797, Paul Draper advertised in the *Gazette* requesting that all demands against "the late Firm of M'Lane and Draper" be presented at once "in Consequence of Mr. M'Lane's leaving this place."

[to be continued]

A SAILOR'S ENIGMA

Even on a record breaking voyage such as that of the famous Brown and Ives ship *Ann & Hope* in 1815 there were periods of monotony which one sailor might seek to relieve with scrimshaw work and another with the composition of Greek verse. Uriel Rea, Jr., evidently had a taste for puzzles, the following example of which was found between the pages of his "Journal of a Voyage from Providence, Rhode Island, to Canton in China on board Ship *Ann & Hope* Wilber Kelly master Commenced June 18th. 1815."

ENIGMA

First take a Word that does Silence proclaim,
Which backwards and forwards does still Spell the same;
Then, add to the first a feminine name,
Which backwards and forwards does still spell the same;
An instrument too, which Lawyers oft frame,
And backwards and forwards does still spell the same;
A very rich fruit whose Botanical name,
Both backward and forward does still spell the same;
And a musical Note which all will proclaim,
Both backwards & forwards doth still spell the Same;
The initials of these, when joined form a name,
Which any young Lady that's married will claim,
And backwards and forwards does still spell the Same;

ANSWER

When I to my mouth am placing my thumb,
I signify plainly my wish to be mum.
Find the name of a female, can be spelled in that manner,
Each reader will say it can spell none but Anna.
I fear that a Lawyer if he is pretty well feed,
So his conscience is silenced may draw a Bad Deed.
And I'll honestly say I was puzzled in grammer,
My Botany ransacked, to find the Anana,*
And my musical pate Box I op'ed and found in him,
Demi quavers and crotchets and at last the long minim,
And the whole was sumed up and I found that I had em;
My acrostic explains — that a Wife is a Madam.

* *Pine Apple*

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEW MEMBERS

March 1, 1951 — June 30, 1951

Mrs. Norman D. Baker	Mr. Robert Leeson
Mr. Richard H. Blanding	Mrs. Harold L. Madison
Mr. and Mrs. John F. Brown	Mrs. Kent F. Matteson
Mr. Allen H. Chatterton Pawtucket, R. I.	Mr. James A. McManus Pawtucket, R. I.
Mr. John R. Crawford (dec'd 5-5-51)	Mrs. W. Sayles Nicholson
Mr. William B. Farnsworth	Mr. Fred Piggott Greystone, R. I.
Mrs. Harold J. Field	Mr. Walter H. Reynolds
Miss Susan B. Franklin Newport, R. I.	Mrs. Bernard Scott Warwick, R. I.
Mr. Clarence E. Greene North Attleboro, Mass.	Mrs. John P. Sherman Attleboro, Mass.
Mr. Verrano C. Hart	Mrs. M. Lawrence Small East Greenwich, R. I.
Mr. Howard Huntoon	Mr. Thomas E. Steere, Jr. East Providence, R. I.
Mrs. Harold C. Johnson Cranston, R. I.	Mrs. Lawrence F. Vories Harmony, R. I.
Dr. Walter S. Jones	

EXHIBITION

June-September

BUTTONS FROM COLLECTIONS OF MEMBERS
OF THE RHODE ISLAND BUTTON CLUB

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Except holidays

Monday through Friday	9:00 to 5:00
Sunday afternoon	3:00 to 5:00

Library only

Tuesday evening	7:00 to 9:00
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*Closed Sundays and Tuesday evenings,
June, July, and August*