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Synthesizing Rhode Island History: Problems, Approaches, and Opportunities

William G. McLoughlin

Mr. McLoughlin is a member of the Department of History, Brown University. This paper was read during a panel discussion on "Synthesizing Rhode Island History" at a meeting of the Rhode Island History Round Table, Nov. 16, 1982.

1. William G. McLoughlin, *Rhode Island: A Bicentennial History* (New York and Nashville, 1978).

2. Gordon S. Wood, "Star-Spangled History," *New York Review of Books*, Aug. 12, 1982.

3. Lincoln Steffens, "Rhode Island, A State for Sale," *McClure's Magazine*, XXIV (Feb. 1905), 330-353.

4. See, for instance, Elmer E. Cornwell, "Party Absorption of Ethnic Groups, the Case of Providence, R.I.," *Social Forces*, XXXVIII (1960), 205-210; Peter Bardoglio, "Italian Immigrants and the Catholic Church in Providence, 1890-1930," *Rhode Island History*, XXXIV (1975), 47-57.

Synthesizing Rhode Island history for a 220-page bicentennial history was in some ways easier and in some ways a lot harder than I thought it would be.¹ I found it easy because my task was simply to sum up what had already been written and turn it into a readable and highly personal interpretation for the general reader. I was asked to write what Gordon S. Wood has called "narrative" or "story-telling" history.² Because Rhode Island has a great deal of history for such a small place, and because I was limited to a very few pages, I had a lot to choose from. When in doubt, I always selected what was most colorful (such as Lincoln Steffens's marvelous study of how Boss Charles Brayton and Nelson W. Aldrich had corrupted the state after 1875).³

What I found more difficult than I expected was the effort to cover the extremely complex social, ethnic, and cultural history of Rhode Island since the turn of the century. I had to rely mostly upon unpublished honors, masters', and doctoral theses and a few scholarly articles by political scientists like Elmer Cornwell and by graduate students like Peter Bardoglio.⁴ I was just barely able to find enough material to write the last skimpy chapter of the book. The greatest task and opportunity for the study of Rhode Island, as I see it, remains the synthesizing of what has happened here in the twentieth century. If I had a million dollars to fund research in Rhode Island history, I would earmark it for ethnic, labor, and women's studies since 1900.

Synthesizing the history of this state poses two problems. First, because it has been so diverse, it is hard to find any one theme upon which to center attention, and second, because of the state's development in the modern era, it is hard to find any theme broad enough to encompass it all without rehearsing the history of the nation as a whole. For example, I selected such themes as religious liberty, the welcoming of diverse ethnic groups, the practice of pragmatic democratic politics, the willingness to try new experiments, the belief in equal opportunity, and the faith in the American dream. These are all consistent aspects of Rhode Island history but they are also the basic themes of American history. What seems unique about Rhode Island turns out in the end to make it a microcosm of the whole national experience. Sometimes Rhode Island was ahead of the rest of the country

and sometimes it was behind, but essentially the states have all been on the same track; they are all part of the same sub-culture of western civilization.

These problems and others will continue to complicate any effort to distill or synthesize Rhode Island history in the future. My general feeling about the course historians should follow is cautionary. It seems to me that the state of the historical profession today is such that we probably ought to postpone any attempts to synthesize the history of Rhode Island or, for that matter, the history of the United States until we have gotten our heads together. There are too many methodologies at work—each of which asks different questions, uses different kinds of data, and seeks different answers. Historians are generating new data every day, and they need to generate more before we can find a better way of summarizing the over-all shape and direction of Rhode Island history in any significantly new form.

I think there are patterns in our state's history, but they are put upon it by historians in terms of the questions they ask and in terms of the data they have available. The questions we ask as historians differ from one generation to another; so do the available data. The facts are not simply out there to be found and assembled. The very definition of what is a fact has to be redefined by every new generation of scholars. Is it a fact that this or that group (say, for instance, labor, or ethnic groups, or a particular industry or church) played a key role on this or that issue? We cannot know the answer until we study each group (the upper class, the middle class, the working class, the native-born, the foreign-born, the Protestants, the Catholics, the Jews, and so on) and until we know how that group's role may have changed over time. We cannot hope to begin to agree on whether history is made from the top down or the bottom up until we know better than we do now who constituted the top, middle, and bottom in any particular era.

So, as I have said, the first kind of historical research I would encourage scholars to undertake are studies of special groups, special economic interests, special institutions. Ethnic studies seem particularly important in Rhode Island, and so do labor unions and business or banking interests. To this I would add studies of specific institutions—prisons, school systems, hospitals, families, and courts.

Second, I would urge the study of group movements and interactions—the changing nature of Protestantism, the shift of hegemony from the Yankees to the Catholics, the dispersal of ethnic groups from the cities to the suburbs, and the relationship between business and politics.

Third, I would like to see more comparative history. I do not see how we can decide whether Rhode Island is in any way unique (or typical) unless we make some careful studies of what happened in other states to similar groups, institutions, industries, unions, or power elites. How, for example, can we hope to discuss the decline of the textile industry in Rhode Island unless we also discuss the rise of the textile industry in

5. Professor James of the University of Iowa has written a long draft of a history of institutions in colonial Rhode Island, which I read a couple of years ago. He is currently revising the draft for publication by Harvard University Press.

6. For a stimulating discussion of "thick description," a term usually associated with ethnographic analysis, see Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973).

North Carolina or Georgia? How can we hope to discuss the successes and failures of the labor union movement in Rhode Island unless we discuss these in the context of the union movement in other New England States? How can we discuss the decline of Yankee hegemony in Rhode Island without comparing its decline in Connecticut or Massachusetts? We all agree that Rhode Island is different, but just how different is it?

Most historians acknowledge that the greatest need for research and writing in Rhode Island history falls in the period since 1880. But we also know that it was precisely in the last one hundred years that Rhode Island ceased to be particularly unique. Rhode Island by 1880 was part of Southern New England, and part of the industrialized Northeastern quadrant of the United States. How else could Nelson Aldrich, from this tiny state, have become "the General Manager of the U.S.," as Lincoln Steffens called him? Any synthesis of Rhode Island history must therefore be synthesized with the general history of the United States, or at least of the industrial Northeast. And certainly a study of Rhode Island's industrial history requires more knowledge than we yet have of just how the men who ran Rhode Island were linked by marriage, investments, or politics to the men who ran the rest of the Northeast. We know that the railroad and steamship lines were of major importance to Rhode Island, but we also know that they were not on the whole run by Rhode Islanders. Do we know how closely Rhode Island businessmen were connected in other ways to interests outside the state?

There are, of course, gaps in our local records, but they are of primary concern to the microcosmic and quantitative historians. These gaps can be overcome by correlating Rhode Island history with the history of other states, communities, and institutions which were very much like ours here. Because of the failure of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century forefathers in Rhode Island to keep (or preserve) good written records in many areas (especially town and church records), we will never be able to do the kinds of intensive local studies associated with the "New Social History," but from what I have seen of Sydney V. James's monumental manuscript about Rhode Island's colonial records of incorporation, I believe there are ways to get a lot more details out of what we have than we formerly thought possible.⁵

I am heartily in agreement with those who practice interdisciplinary history and who use all kinds of sources—artifacts, buildings, monuments, photographs, advertising, folk art, and oral history to add more "thick description" to our study of the past.⁶ If the task of synthesizing Rhode Island history can be equated with the study of "cultural history"—the type of history that gives us a holistic picture of people, their values, their beliefs, their way of life—then that task certainly requires integrating all the kinds of historical material we have available.

There is certainly enough material here in our state and local archives to provide us with data for plenty of good studies of Rhode Is-

land's culture and sub-cultures. We can all list untapped sources that need to be put to use, particularly for business, ethnic, and labor history. Gordon Wood has noted recently that professional historians have become increasingly specialized and that they have abandoned "narrative" or "story-telling" history for "problem-solving" or monographic history. But I disagree with Wood's view that this specialization of history may make it impossible for us ever again to write "synthetic" history. I think more narrative history will be forthcoming when we have more problem-solving history written about Rhode Island. History is a story-telling art, not a scientific experiment. As long as we have men and women who undertake the study of history with sensitivity and insight, they will discern a pattern in the carpet of the past, and we will have good "synthetic" history. But this is more likely to occur in some periods than in others; right now I doubt that we have the material available to do this in a new way, though I think the most recent attempt by George Kellner and J. Stanley Lemons is a major contribution in summing up what we know about Rhode Island.⁷

I look forward, then, to a period of intensive monographic and problem-solving studies of various aspects of Rhode Island's history, written from a variety of methodologies and generating new kinds of data. From these, eventually, we will be able to offer future narrative historians the opportunity to write a new and better synthesis of our state's history than we have had before.

7. George H. Kellner and J. Stanley Lemons, *Rhode Island: The Independent State* (Woodland Hills, Calif., 1982).

John Henry Brown. Sixth plate, ca. 1855. Notice the bottom of the brace at his feet to keep his position stationary. The slightest movement would blur the image. Courtesy of Rhode Island Historical Society Library (RHi x3 4787). Gift of Olive Lawton Smith.



"Nature Caught at the Twinkling of an Eye": The Daguerreotype in Providence

Maureen Taylor

Despite the popularity of photography and the rapid innovations that have made it a part—in one form or another—of Americans' lives in the twentieth century, few people realize that photography dates from 1839 when Louis Jacque Mande Daguerre revealed his process for capturing images on metal plates at a public meeting of the French Academy of Sciences. Daguerre's process (which was the result of his collaboration with Joseph Nicephale Niepce, who died before Daguerre produced the first image) was greeted by many throughout the world with wonder and awe. In America, a public fascination with Daguerre's discovery enabled a number of enterprising photographers to open daguerreotype studios and to refine, over the years, the art and techniques of modern portrait photography.

Yet the history of these early photographers is hazy. In some cases, evidence of their work survives in the countless daguerreotypes that have found their way into library collections or that remain in private hands. Unfortunately, though, most examples of their work are "unsigned" and often cannot be attributed to specific photographers. Other sources that tell us something of their lives and their studios are elusive. The little that we know about these photographic pioneers comes from a handful of sources—city directories, newspaper accounts and advertisements, and an occasional biographical sketch or obituary.

Given the paucity of sources, it is not surprising that the history of daguerreotype photographers generally has been ignored or has been inaccurately understood. One popular misconception, for instance, is that the first daguerreotype studio in Rhode Island was established in Providence, at 25 Market Square, in 1847.¹ Other sources suggest, however, that Rhode Island's first studio was probably opened in Newport by Henry N. Manchester, who was working there in 1844. And, interestingly enough, that same year another Rhode Island photographer, Elisha Baker, opened the first daguerreotype studio in Providence, located at 9 Market Square. These local pioneering efforts, which occurred three years earlier than some Rhode Islanders have assumed, indicate the alacrity of popular interest in daguerreotype photography and the enthusiasm of local virtuosos, who quickly learned the necessary skills and techniques.

Ms. Taylor is picture editor of this journal and graphics curator of the Rhode Island Historical Society.

1. The misconception found its way into a proclamation issued by Governor Philip W. Noel declaring Dec. 28, 1976 as "Louis Jacques Daguerre Day" in Rhode Island. The proclamation also erred in its chosen date of commemoration. Daguerre's public announcement of his process actually occurred on Aug. 19, 1839. A copy of the proclamation is in the Doris Collection, John Hay Library, Brown University, Providence.

2. *Providence Daily Journal*, May 23, 1840.
3. *Ibid.*, May 19, 1840.
4. *Ibid.*, May 30, 1840.

News of Daguerre's process reached America in 1839 and was disseminated to a wide audience in 1840, when Francois Gouraud—Daguerre's emissary—traveled around the country on the lecture circuit, giving public demonstrations and exhibiting examples of the process. He also taught classes and sold equipment, thus spreading the word and the apparatus of daguerreotype photography at the same time. When Gouraud came to Providence in late May 1840, an advertisement appeared in the *Providence Daily Journal* announcing the "Daguerreotype or the art of drawing taught in one lesson."² Unimaginative minds, of course, could only conceive of a process that captured images in terms of a mechanically rendered "drawing." As a result, Daguerre's innovation was lauded in Rhode Island as "the wonderful drawing produced by the light of the sun."³

Actually the process was fairly complicated, although light was indeed the key element in obtaining the image. Daguerreotypes were created by plating a sheet of copper with silver, sensitizing it with iodine vapor, placing the plate in a camera, and exposing the plate to light. To bring out the latent image, the plate was then placed in a closed box and was developed using vapors of heated mercury. After being fixed with hypo and washed with distilled water, the image was dried and mounted under glass to protect the fragile surface. The resulting image was unique. Tiniest details, from street cobblestones to leaves on a tree, were captured by the light sensitive surface. Known as the mirror with a memory, the highly polished silver contained a reversed image that could only be discerned when viewed at an angle. Each picture had an exposure time of about fifteen to thirty minutes (excluding preparation), and each plate had to be freshly coated with chemicals.

Gouraud's last day in Providence was the highlight of his visit. To stimulate interest in his final lecture, he offered the public an opportunity to win a view of the city taken from Masonic Hall (where the lecture was to occur) in Market Square, all for the nominal price of twenty-five cents. Originally the lecture was to be given at Union Hall, but the demand for tickets far exceeded the seating capacity there. On May 30, the day of the big event, the *Providence Daily Journal* printed a favorable editorial comment: "We have seen a view of the city taken by this instrument from the window of the City Hotel. Nothing can equal the fidelity of the picture. It was taken with one of the instruments which Mons. Gouraud has for sale."⁴ Regrettably, the winner's name was not recorded and the whereabouts of the "view of the city" is not known.

Typically, though, the daguerreotype offered as a prize in the lottery held on Gouraud's final day in Providence was a cityscape and not a portrait of the winner. Indeed, the earliest daguerreotypes are of street scenes and landscapes; portrait daguerreotypes were an American innovation. Until Gouraud's students improved his techniques—changing the developing formulas, decreasing the exposure times, and modifying the equipment—portraits were impractical. Yet, even with these

changes, daguerreotype portraits were not easily done. Contrivances, such as chairs with neckbraces, were needed to hold sitters stationary for the required exposure time. It was several years before portraits were of an acceptable quality, though the advertising claims of daguerreotypists tried to convince the public that nearly perfect images were possible and that the latest equipment and techniques were being used to insure maximum results.

Although Gouraud lectured in Providence in 1840 and, presumably, taught some people to use his camera and sold them the necessary equipment, it was not until some four years later that a permanent studio opened its doors for business in that city. There were, however, itinerant daguerreotypists working throughout New England in the intervening years, and they effectively competed with traveling portrait painters or limners. Many of these painters, whose livelihoods had been threatened by the popularity of daguerreotypes, turned to doing



*Seth Draper and Stella Draper
(brother and sister). Half plate,
no date. Photographer unknown.
Courtesy of Rhode Island
Historical Society Library (RHi
x3 4785).*

Providence, Rhode Island. Half plate, ca. 1850. View of the Town House, College and Benefit streets, and the Central Station of the Providence Police Force. Photograph by Manchester & Brother. Courtesy of Rhode Island Historical Society Library (RHi x3 1557). Gift of Manchester Brothers.



5. *Providence Directory*, 1844.

6. *Ibid.*, 1838, 1847.

daguerreotype photography themselves because their patrons preferred the accuracy and the relatively low costs of photographic portraits. Families no longer had to pay a portraitist for his work over an extended period of time, which often meant supplying his room and board as well. The daguerreotypist could provide them with likenesses of the entire family in an afternoon and for a fraction of the cost. Very little is known about most of these itinerant photographers. They traveled from city to city, leaving behind only the shiny remembrances of their work, and most stayed in a city only as long as business was good. It seems likely, however, that several passed through Providence in the early 1840s.

The daguerreotype business attracted a diverse group of practitioners. Elisha Baker was forty-six years old when he started his studio in 1844 and was, by profession, a preceptor.⁵ Three years after Baker opened his studio in Providence, five other daguerreotypists were operating in the city. To supplement his income, Baker—like other daguerreotypists—sold equipment and gave lessons in the art of the process at his Daguerreotype Institute. But failures in the business were commonplace. Most studios lasted for only a year. It seems evident, in fact, that daguerreotype photography, as a business venture, attracted individuals looking for an easy way to earn money, though skill and talent were essential for success. Not everyone found a fortune in the burgeoning portrait business. The profusion of daguerreotypes that remain anonymous as to both the name of the sitter and the identity of the photographer suggests the fierce competition that existed among daguerreotypists and the relative ease with which the sitter could find a competent photographer.⁶

Yet competency was no guarantee that a studio would prosper or sur-

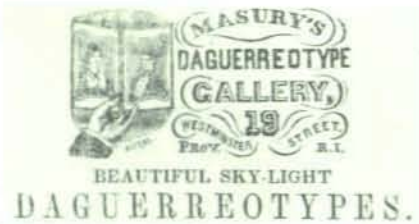
vive. Many operators, facing stiff competition or a dwindling clientele, lost interest and sold their businesses to other practitioners after a short while. The case of Samuel Masury, a Providence daguerreotypist during the mid-1840s, is a representative example of how one's business or interest could quickly turn sour. In January 1846, at the height of his career as a daguerreotypist, the *Providence Daily Journal* praised Samuel Masury's work:

MR. MASURY'S DAGUERREOTYPE.—We have had occasion lately to test the skill of Mr. Masury, whose daguerreotypes we have often heard commended for fidelity of likeness and for perfection of finish. We have not seen any specimens of the art which we prefer to those of Mr. Masury, and very few, if any, which equal them. Few are aware of the important improvements which have been made in the process of taking daguerreotype likenesses, and of the very great difference between those which are well taken, with the best plates and the most perfect apparatus, and those which are carelessly and bunglingly executed. Mr. Masury's are of the former character, as any one can see who will call at his room, and examine the numerous specimens which are upon his table, all of which are excellent and many of them very striking likenesses.⁷

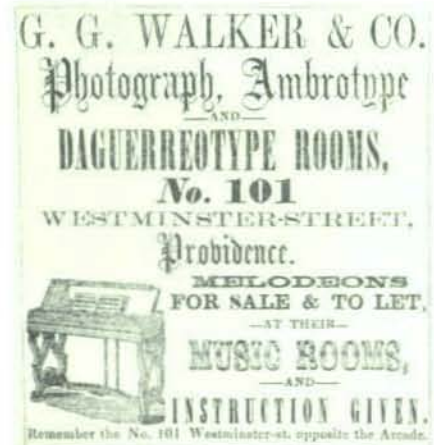
Yet, within a year, Masury sold out his share of his business to his partner, Samuel Hartshorn. Predictably, Hartshorn advertised that he would maintain Masury's standards. Masury, however, did not give up photography for very long; within a year, he had opened another studio at a different location. He stayed in Providence until 1850, when, at the age of twenty-two, he moved to Boston.⁸

Problems with taking portraits abounded and probably convinced many daguerreotypists, who lacked Masury's resilience, to abandon their work for good. A good light source was needed, and many operators tried to increase their business by stressing the availability of prime light sources, such as skylights or studio exposure to northern light, in their advertisements. But many patrons complained that the light sources were too bright and others feared that the shadows cast by the light would appear in the daguerreotype portrait. To overcome this misconception, daguerreotypists assured the public that the "unpleasant appearance about the eyes, under the nose and chin," caused by the light, would not be seen in the final portrait.⁹

Despite these problems and the sometimes discouraging prospects for success, many daguerreotype studios expanded their operations. Some firms consisted of several operators who would, in some cases, eventually leave to start businesses of their own. As the daguerreotype business grew, photography took on the characteristics of a profession and an art. Operators referred to themselves with a variety of titles: daguerreotypists, artists, or daguerrean artists. At the same time their portraits did become artistic compositions, confirming the talents of those operators who assumed the title of artist. Artistic considerations caught up with technological achievements.



Advertisement for Samuel Masury's second studio.
Providence City Directory,
1850-1853.



Advertisement. Providence City
Directory, 1856.

7. *Providence Daily Journal*, Jan. 13, 1846.

8. Floyd Rinhart and Marion Rinhart, *The American Daguerreotype* (Athens, Ga., 1981), 401.

9. *Providence Daily Journal*, July 9, 1847.

**DAGUERREOTYPE
SALOON.**

The Subscriber having learned that SALOON IS THEIR YELLEDGE for a short
time would take this opportunity to advise the subscribers of the 4 Signs and
reality that he is now prepared to take

ORIGINAL DAGUERREOTYPES,
Or to Copy Daguerreotypes or Platines.

CASES,
Every Description Furnished.

Having devoted some time to the business, and being prepared with a good
Apparatus, he feels confident in assuring the public that all Pictures taken by him
shall give entire satisfaction. All who wish to obtain a

GOOD LIKENESS,
WILL RESEMBLE TO LIFE AT HIS

SALOON

without delay, as his stay in the village will be limited.

J. A. FOSTER.

Printed & Published by J. A. Foster, No. 101 Market Street, Providence, R. I.

Many itinerant daguerreotypists worked in New England. J. A. Foster stopped in Rhode Island probably in 1856. Broadside courtesy of Rhode Island Historical Society Library (RHi x3 4099).

10. *Daguerreotype Almanac for 1856* (Providence, 1856), 4. A copy is in the Rider Collection, John Hay Library.

11. *Providence City Directory*, 1847, 1848.

12. Rinhart and Rinhart, *American Daguerreotype*, 380.

13. *Providence City Directory*, 1856.

Although less expensive than painted portraits, daguerreotypes were not always an inexpensive proposition. The final cost depended upon the size, the mounting, and the type of case desired. One Providence daguerreotypist, George Rider, published a daguerreotype almanac in 1856 to increase his business, and he listed prices that ranged from twenty-five cents for a sixteenth size portrait that measured $1\frac{3}{8}$ inches by $1\frac{1}{8}$ inches without a protective case to eighteen dollars for a whole plate portrait that measured $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches in an oval pearl case. Rider also promised that "all customers would be allowed to sit until they get a perfect picture without regard to time or expense to proprietor." His motto echoed this pledge: "Never give up; it is better to hope than once to despair."¹⁰

After initial improvements in the process, daguerreotypists offered various services and specialities to their customers. Hough & Anthony, a Providence firm located on Westminster Street, claimed that it paid particular attention "to taking pictures of children having an apparatus constructed for that purpose." The firm also specialized in "pictures of sick or deceased persons taken at the residence of their friends."¹¹ G. S. Hough and Charles J. Anthony, the principal partners in the firm, were in business for just a year in Providence before Anthony moved to Pittsburgh. Anthony later patented a vignette process called the "Magic Background" in 1851 and exhibited his work at the American Institute in New York City.¹²

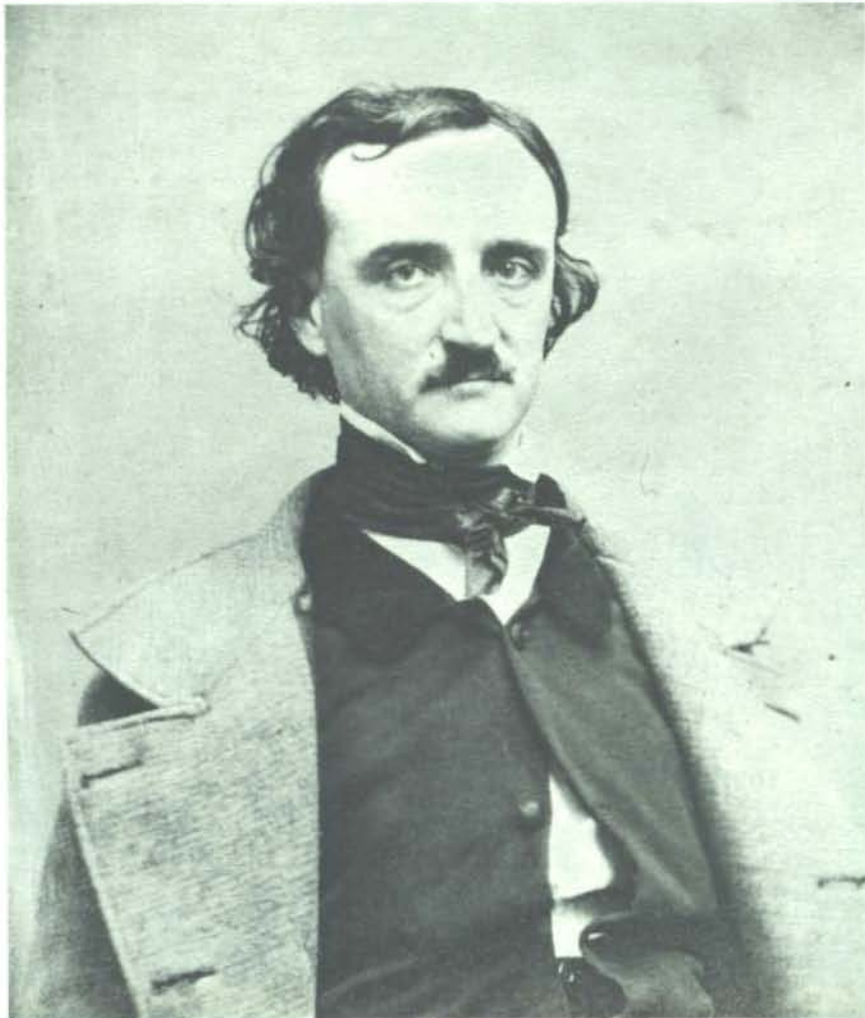
The studios of the daguerreotypists were themselves a spectacle. Studios in larger cities like New York were often compared to high-class bordellos. Most, however, sought to achieve an air of respectability, and many studios promoted comfortable waiting areas as a device to lure more customers. In Providence, almost all of the daguerreotype studios were located in the downtown business district within the vicinity of Market Square and lower Westminster and Weybosset streets. One enterprising photographer had an adjoining music room where melodeons could be bought or leased; for interested parties, lessons could be given. George Rider, not known for his modesty, declared that he had "eight competent assistants and facilities that excel any other daguerreotype concern in the world."¹³ Certainly Rider's studio must have been a sight to behold.

Many daguerreotypists learned, however, that supplying their studios required patience and the foresight to order in advance from supply houses in New York or Boston. Providence never attracted a permanent supply house for its numerous daguerreotype studios. One reason may have been Providence's proximity to other cities and sources of supply, but low demand may have also precluded the establishment of local manufacturers of daguerreotype materials. In the period 1844 to 1860, only one supplier could be found in Providence—the firm of Cook & Emerson, located at 56 Friendship Street (listed in the 1858 city directory as "daguerreotype material manufacturers and engravers"). Cook & Emerson only sold equipment and supplies for one year, perhaps be-

cause the popularity of daguerreotypy peaked in Providence during that year, with eleven individuals listed in the city directories as practicing daguerreotypists. The following year, 1859, only six individuals were listed. Despite this change, the number of daguerreotypists in Providence never fluctuated drastically. There was a gradual increase in the late 1840s and then the numbers remained fairly constant throughout the 1850s. By 1860, however, the number of daguerreotypists in the city began to drop sharply.¹⁴

The major reason for the decline in the popularity of daguerreotypy was the development of other photographic processes. Ambrotypes, paper prints, and tintypes were easier and cheaper to produce. These images did not equal the daguerreotype in quality, but they had the advantage of providing multiple copies of the original image. Daguerreotypists, who from the start of their careers had taken advantage of new opportunities whenever they presented themselves, diversified their services to include these new processes. Rider and others in Providence began to stress a variety of photographic methods in their adver-

14. *Ibid.*, 1844-1860.



*Edgar Allen Poe (1808-1849).
1848. Photograph by Samuel
Hartshorn. Courtesy of John Hay
Library, Brown University.*

tisements. But daguerreotypy was soon considered to be outmoded. Eventually it disappeared.

The flexibility and adaptability of daguerreotypists is clearly revealed in the careers of Henry Manchester, who may have established the first studio in Rhode Island, and Edwin Manchester, his brother. Both men readily adapted to changes in the field of photography. Henry Manchester studied photography with John Plumbe, Jr., of Boston (one of America's first daguerreotypists), before going to Newport. Henry later moved to Providence, where he worked with Samuel Masury. After spending a year in Pennsylvania, he returned to Rhode Island and opened a studio with his brother in Providence. Henry and Edwin Manchester were in the forefront of photography in Rhode Island. Working together for a number of years, but later adding different partners to the firm, the Manchester brothers established a prosperous business that continued long after the popularity of daguerreotypy had declined. Over the years, the firm changed its name: Manchester & Brother; Manchester & Chapin (with Joshua Chapin, a physician turned daguerreotypist); Manchester Bros. & Angell (with Daniel Angell); and Manchester Bros. (with Edwin's son, George). The Manchester dynasty lasted from 1843 to 1895, when Edwin retired at the age of seventy-five. Part of the secret behind the survival of the firm was the ability of the two brothers to adapt to the technological advances that came about during the years of their success. Unfortunately, only one Manchester daguerreotype has been identified—a view of Providence prob-

Ellen and Jennie Wallace.
Quarter plate, no date.
Photographer unknown.
Courtesy of Rhode Island
Historical Society Library (RHi
x3 4786).





First Baptist Church, North Main Street, Providence, Rhode Island. Whole plate, ca. 1848. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Rhode Island Historical Society Library (RHi x3 210).

ably taken around 1850 (the daguerreotype was presented to the Rhode Island Historical Society by the Manchester Brothers firm in 1871).¹⁵

In striking contrast to the experience of the Manchester brothers, Providence's only woman daguerreotypist remained in business for just two years. Although women were employed in many establishments to prepare the customers and to offer advice about how they could look their best, Lydia White owned and operated her own studio in 1854 at 9 Market Square. A year later her husband Joseph joined her firm of L. B. White & Company. Joseph White had given up engineering to learn photography and had spent a year in partnership with George Walker, another Providence daguerreotypist. After 1856, Joseph White worked alone, but he left the photography business five years later. Nothing else is known about Lydia White.¹⁶

15. *Biographical Cyclopaedia of Representative Men of Rhode Island* (Providence, 1881), 423; *Providence City Directory*, 1844–1895.

16. *Providence City Directory*, 1854–1861.

17. "Photography in the Long Ago," *Providence Journal*, Oct. 30, 1904; Virginia Louise Doris, "The 1st Daguerreotype Studio in Providence, R.I.," typescript, Doris Collection, John Hay Library.

18. *Providence City Directory*, 1844-1860.

The most famous daguerreotype portrait taken in Providence was that of Edgar Allen Poe. His image was captured in 1848 by Samuel Hartshorn, while Poe was visiting Sarah Helen Whitman. The Poe daguerreotype, though now famous because of the fame of its subject, is a typical example of the kind of portrait photography that became the mainstay of most local daguerreotypists. There is little, in fact, that distinguishes it from other local examples. In this sense, then, local daguerreotypists were neither unusual nor unique.¹⁷ What was unique was the process itself—a process that not only captured images on metal plates, but that also captured the public's imagination. Ultimately the wave of popularity that followed the introduction of daguerreotypy to America led to the establishment of numerous studios specializing in the art. In Providence alone, forty-two daguerreotypists worked either alone or for a studio in the years 1843 to 1860.¹⁸ Their real achievement, however, can be seen in the surviving examples of their work. For it is in the daguerreotypes themselves, in these reluctant images of the past, that we may perceive the innovative origins of modern portrait photography.

Providence Daguerreotypists

- Anthony, Charles J.: Portland, Me., 1846; Hough & Anthony, Providence, 1847; Pittsburgh, Pa., 1850-1851. PCD; FR.
- Baker, Elisha W.: 1844-1850? PCD; BN; FR.
- Bennett, William.: 1850-1854. PCD; FR.
- Bowes, ———: 1849. NEBD; FR.
- Boyden, Jeremiah: J. Boyden & Company, 1855; G. G. Walker & Company, 1856-1857. PCD.
- Brayton, ———: 1849. FR.
- Brown, George: 1850. PCD.
- Brown, George W.: 1850. PCD.
- Brown, Thomas M.: 1856. PCD.
- Carpenter, George: 1857. PCD.
- Chapin, Joshua B., M.D.: Manchester & Chapin, 1853-1859. PCD; FR.
- Cobb, Luther: Cobb & Company, 1849-1857. PCD; FR.
- Cobin, C. S.: 1849. NEBD; FR.
- Coggeshall, Francis B.: 1857-1858. PCD.
- Davis, Ezekiel H.: 1860. PCD.
- Ellis, ———: 1852. FR.
- Freeman, Henry: 1855. PCD.
- Greene, Stephen P.: 1856-1858. PCD.
- Griffith, Paul T.: Thatcher & Company, 1858. PCD.
- Griffin, Charles: 1854-1855. PCD.
- Hatshorn, Samuel W.: 1847-1859; partnership with Samuel Masury, 1848; partnership with William Johnson, 1850. PCD; FR.
- Hathaway, William: 1860. PCD.
- Hawkes, Edwin L.: 1860. 1860 Census.
- Hough, G. S.: Portland, Me., 1846; Hough & Anthony, 1847; Pittsburgh, Pa., 1851-1853 [with Charles Anthony], 1854-1855 [alone]. PCD; FR.

- Hurd, Gustine L.: 1858-1859. PCD.
- Johnson, William S.: partnership with Samuel Hartshorn, 1850. PCD; FR.
- Lovejoy, John F.: Lovejoy Brothers, 1858-1859. PCD.
- Lovejoy, Philip H.: Lovejoy Brothers, 1858-1859. PCD.
- Manchester, Edwin Hartwell: 1843-1895; Manchester & Brother, 1850, 1852-1853, 1860-1862; Manchester & Chapin, 1853-1859; Manchester Bros., 1863, 1864, 1869-1881; Manchester Bros. & Angell, 1865-1868. PCD.
- Manchester, Henry Niles: 1850-1881. See Edwin H. Manchester. PCD.
- Mason, George E.: 1857-1859. PCD.
- Mason, John X.: 1847. PCD.
- Masury, Samuel: 1847-1850; partnership with Samuel Hartshorn, 1848; sold out to Manchester Bros., 1850; moved to Boston, Mass., 1850. PCD; FR; BN.
- Pearce, Henry G.: 1858-1859. PCD.
- Randall, Charles H.: 1858. PCD.
- Rider, George W.: 1854-1857. PCD; FR.
- Thatcher, George L.: Thatcher & Company, 1858. PCD.
- Walker, George G.: 1850-1864; Walker & White, 1854; Walker & Company, 1856-1864. PCD.
- White, Joseph: 1854-1861; Walker & White, 1854; L. B. White & Company, 1855. PCD.
- White, Lydia B.: L. B. White & Company, 1854-1855. PCD.
- White, Stephen H.: 1860. 1860 Census.
- Whiteman, Henry W.: 1857 (with Manchester & Chapin). PCD.

Sources:

- BN—Beaumont Newhall, *The Daguerreotype in America* (New York, 1961).
- FR—Floyd Reinhart and Marion Reinhart, *The American Daguerreotype* (Athens, Ga., 1981).
- NEBD—*New England Business Directory*, 1849.
- PCD—*Providence City Directory*.

Book Reviews

Providence: A Pictorial History. By PATRICK T. CONLEY and PAUL R. CAMPBELL. (Norfolk, Va.: Donning Company, 1982. 232 pp. Illustrations, maps, chart, and bibliographical essay. \$19.95.)

In just three years, Providence will celebrate its three hundred and fiftieth birthday, a longevity surpassing that of most of the world's countries. Reproducing the city's extensive history would be a herculean task, but in *Providence, A Pictorial History*, Patrick T. Conley and Paul R. Campbell have attempted such a task by proving the old adage that a picture is worth a thousand words. By amassing over four hundred photographs, maps, and illustrations and including substantial commentaries on each, the authors have produced a book that is both refreshing and enigmatic.

Until recently, few historians had ever taken advantage of the rich graphic archives that some libraries and historical societies had collected, and those who did used the materials for illustrative purposes rather than as historical documents. Conley and Campbell, however, have ably mined the magnificent graphics collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society, plus a few smaller collections, and they have tried to use the illustrations to convey things that readers cannot get in other ways. Thus changes in the city's land uses, its scale and spatial relationships, and the texture of its neighborhoods become much more vivid and understandable. The reader can *see*, and thereby comprehend, how the city claimed land from the water, how its transportation systems developed, how the face of downtown and the skyline changed, and how city residents dressed and worked. Moreover, in their commentaries, the authors often add a nice touch by explaining what subsequently happened to a particular building or site.

The book is organized chronologically, with each chapter covering a period of from one to four decades. Such a scheme creates a kind of continuity, allowing contemporaneous illustrations to be grouped together. But it also precludes the possibility of thematic unity which in some instances might have been more enlightening. Thus, for example, the authors lose the opportunity to group those illustrations which depict how the city gradually expanded in its center by reclaiming land from the Providence River and the Great Salt Cove, or how architecture and transportation technology refashioned the area surrounding Market Square in downtown.

The book depicts people as well as buildings and locales, and the authors present a different set of heroes and villains than might be found

in more traditional local histories. That is, Conley and Campbell make special efforts to note the accomplishments of immigrants and their descendants—especially Irish Catholics—and the prejudices of native Yankees. For example, they include sympathetic information on such figures as Gilded Age reform politicians Edwin D. McGuinness and Charles E. Gorman, amateur baseball organizer Tim O'Neil, and other such men while also pointing to the bossism and nativism of Senator Nelson W. Aldrich and *Providence Journal* editor Henry Bowen Anthony. Such perspectives present Providence history in a new and refreshingly corrective light, but in several instances the authors portray ethnic and racial minorities in ways that exacerbate circumscribed and condescending stereotypes. Blacks, for example, are referred to in the commentaries mainly in the context of race riots (1824, 1831, the 1960s), and the only photograph prominently depicting black people (aside from the portrait of artist Edward Bannister) shows a group of menacing, gun-toting men guarding a South Providence store from vandals in 1970. The city's Hispanics and Southeast Asians are pictured in native costumes that are rarely worn and that accentuate their differences from fellow Providencians.

The authors also can be faulted for various references and statements that good sense or good editing should have excised. For example, they refer to Native American Indians as "red men" and to Mayor Vincent A. Cianci, Jr., as "rotund." They too often use extraneous and trite adjectives such as "hapless," "ill-fated," and "worthy." Their discussion of prohibition seems overly flip, and they take an unnecessary potshot at Brown University when they claim that its alumni magazine was "not given to superlatives when dealing with 'townies.'"

These drawbacks, though nagging, are relatively minor within the scope of the entire book. The volume's two major faults most likely can be attributed to the publisher rather than to the authors. First of all, the book has no index, an unpardonable sin in a project of this sort. Readers who seek depictions of or information on specific topics, people, or places must leaf through the pages without any convenient guide. Second, for inexplicable reasons the publisher chose to print the extended commentaries to the illustrations, which comprise important contributions by the authors, in hard-to-read italicized typeface. Thus most of the book's text is in italics, and reading the book for more than a few minutes tends to fatigue one's eyes.

In the end, however, the pluses outweigh the minuses. In addition to the myriad engaging pictures and useful commentaries, Conley and Campbell include a brief appendix on mayors and population figures and a very thorough annotated bibliography of works on Providence history. By devoting over half the book to Providence in the twentieth century, they give emphasis to a historical period that Rhode Island historians generally have ignored. To their credit, the authors made a commitment to history rather than to art; instead of letting aesthetics determine their choice of illustrations, they obviously based selections

on historical relevance. Though the format, with its episodic pictures and unconnected commentaries, precludes substantial interpretation, *Providence, A Pictorial History* portrays the long and twisted history of a fascinating city with flair and exuberance.

Brown University

Howard P. Chudacoff

Buildings on Paper: Rhode Island Architectural Drawings 1825-1945. By WILLIAM H. JORDY, CHRISTOPHER P. MONKHOUSE, and CONTRIBUTORS. (Providence: Brown University, Rhode Island Historical Society, Rhode Island School of Design, 1982. xiii + 243 pp. Illustrations and plans, map, and supplementary index. \$18.00.)

The recent recognition of architectural drawings as works of art worthy of exhibition in their own right and not merely as records of the buildings themselves, looms in the background of this handsomely illustrated catalogue of the exhibit mounted at all three of the institutions credited with its publication. Artistic qualities of the plans, elevations, perspective renderings, and other methods of presentation on paper appear to have been the prime consideration in selecting the 195 subjects shown in Providence in the spring of 1982 before traveling to New York and Washington. This art historical perspective is both the great strength of the catalogue and its essays, as well as its greatest failing.

The preface by the two primary authors and exhibit organizers, Christopher Monkhouse of the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, and Professor William Jordy, Brown University, sets forth the context of the show and the rationale for selection. This includes a healthy description of types of materials not discovered, including colonial drawings or "handsome reconstruction drawings" by restoration architects to act as surrogates for that period. Thus the exhibit begins in 1825 with a proposed addition to Newport's Redwood Library attributed to William Weeden. The text, on the other hand, begins with an essay by Monkhouse on the use of architectural drawing in the state from 1735 to 1876. One should not read the end date of this essay too firmly; the text follows the history of colonial buildings and their design sources well into the Colonial Revival. This provides an opportunity to show the work of Alfred Stone, using photographs of the Robert W. Taft house (1891) in Providence (Stone's drawings in this style seem not to have survived).

This essay leans heavily on documentary evidence of the introduction of architectural drafting and the way Boston and New York architects in the first quarter of the nineteenth century influenced a limited number of Rhode Island practitioners. By stressing stylistic advancements in architectural drawing and rendering, especially as the prac-

tice of architecture in America became a profession during the mid-century, we see a shift from the conservative drafting practices of Rhode Island builder-architects to the introduction of out-of-state designers commissioned to build the earliest Newport "cottages" and villas. The major exception in mid-century is Thomas Tefft, for whom a collection of over six hundred drawings survive in Providence, of which some forty were selected for exhibition. Apprenticed to the Providence firm of Warren, Tallman & Bucklin, Tefft deserves the extended treatment given him, both for the quality of his designs and the significant advances he introduced to the architecture of the state over his brief ten-year career.

With the introduction of Richard Morris Hunt's designs for Chateausur-Mer and other Newport houses, the drawings become products of formally trained architects. Not only those trained at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, like Hunt, but graduates of American architecture schools which followed M.I.T. (1868) or drafting classes available at the Rhode Island School of Design, adopted new graphic abilities that doomed the day of "a front elevation and a couple of floor plans." Part II, Professor Jordy's essay on the Rhode Island drawings of 1876 to 1945, explores the relation of stylistic changes in graphic presentation to the evolution of architectural design itself. By concentrating on the changing architectural styles of this period, his text explicates the significance of adopting specific methods of drawing and rendering by individuals and firms. This unifies a great deal of material and helps the reader understand the ways Boston architects like H. H. Richardson or Peabody and Stearns relate to contemporaneous work of Rhode Island architects. The "heroes of the piece," however, are McKim, Mead & White, whose Rhode Island work is well analyzed, together with Hunt's contributions to the American Renaissance in Newport. What is just as interesting, more so for their being less well known, are the early twentieth-century big houses (if not mansions) of which an elevation and garden plan for Villasera (in Warwick) by Charles Platt is illustrated in the exhibit catalogue.

Twin themes between World Wars I and II are the shift from pen and ink drawing to the use of pencil and the shift from historically premised building designs of all sorts to the rejection of history with the introduction of the modernism. The former was readily adopted by Rhode Island architects as well as by many outside architects working in the state. The latter was far less spectacularly felt. Something of the conservatism of the state's clients made the impact of modern architecture before World War II something less than envisioned by its advocates in the 1930s. Jordy traces the efforts of Henry Russell Hitchcock, whose exhibit and book *Rhode Island Architecture* (1939) dealt with the sweep of the state's architectural history through photographs, to find acceptable examples of modernism in his day. In my view it would have been better to illustrate the plan and views of Richard Neutra's house for John Nicholas Brown with the essay rather than including

his Fishers Island, New York, masterpiece of West Coast modernism in the exhibit itself. The predominance of high-style logic over geography (despite a Rhode Island client) detracts from the internal consistency of this catalogue.

The catalogue contains numbered entries of one or more plans and drawings for each building organized, in general, alphabetically. While this is logical and useful in the section entitled "Biographies of Architects" (pp. 205–240), contributed summaries by several scholars of some 100 architects and their partners whose work is represented in the catalogue, such a layout is useful only if the catalogue is viewed as a reference book. As museum catalogues can reinforce their authors' essays by the way the contents are organized (facilitating finding the work if the author forgets to cite the entry number in the text), it is unfortunate that such an attempt was not made in this case. Rather, drawings of all periods are shown in no temporal, stylistic, or geographical order. Had the work been divided in units around the style of the drawing, the architectural style of the building depicted, chronologically, or even by building type, the text and the catalogue could have been better integrated.

Not that such clustering was not attempted. Alternative designs by different hands, such as for changes to the Redwood Library, are combined (with Russell Warren following William Weeden for example). In such cases the explanatory text does a good job of tracing the factual relationships of the subject. On the other hand, Richard Morris Hunt's proposal in the 1860s for the same institution is found under a proposal of Dudley Newton with which it is treated. Clearly, anyone wishing to mine this publication for its gems of architectural history *must* get the typescript index that accompanied my review copy. I hope it accompanies all copies, but, if so, it is to be deeply regretted it was not published with the catalogue itself.

One other example illustrates other quibbles with this work. Two sketch designs by Zachariah Allen for the Georgiaville (Smithfield, Rhode Island) Mill he erected in 1853–1854 is combined with Thomas Tefft's beautiful perspective rendering of a mill he designed for Rhode Island investors in Cannelton, Indiana. Like the Brown house in New York, the desire to illustrate this subject led to its inclusion over the logic of geography. It is not, as Hitchcock had shown in his seminal 1939 exhibit (and as every Rhode Islander knows), that the state has no textile mills; it has no architectural *drawings* of these monuments. Mention is made of the depth of research into the state's industrial architecture in recent years, but the catalogue text by contributor Richard Greenwood makes several errors that suggest the problems of treating such utilitarian structures in the context of high-style architecture.

Most textile mills through much of the nineteenth century were designed by engineers working with contractors or builders (a fact bemoaned by professional architects who thought they should get the work). Allen himself was not an architect, even in the sense of those builder-architects whose work is included in this catalogue. Rather he

was an engineer, one who often combined elements of the most recent improvements in European and American industrial engineering. He was not "one of the first mill builders" to recognize that removing the stair to an external tower was an improvement of plan as well as fire preventive. As early as the second decade of the nineteenth century other Rhode Island mill builders had erected such stair towers, as did the Waltham-Lowell system before 1820. To credit Allen (and John Holden Greene) with this feature at the Allendale Mill, a factory erected in 1822 *without* a stair tower to which one was added in 1839 as part of a large addition, is to misread the physical evidence. Allen's main contribution to the Georgiaville Mill goes unmentioned. The design is a unique example of the 1850s practices of the Lowell-system mill builders, who had begun to join their earlier factories with projecting, gabled pavilions between the older "wings." The Georgiaville Mill represents Allen's borrowing of these taller, brick mill designs of Lowell and their transformation into the vernacular masonry tradition of Rhode Island.

While Rhode Island architects were involved in building the state's many nineteenth-century mill villages, Tallman & Bucklin were said to have done hundreds, their role was less involved with paper design than as general contractors. It is probably in this sense that John Holden Greene was involved in the building of Allen's early mills. In this context, Tefft's great mill drawing may have been done for promotional value and based as much on his background in the office of Warren, Tallman & Bucklin as on the experienced hand of the mill's engineer, Charles T. James. It might have been better if mill architecture had not been included in this exhibit.

This work will be of value to anyone with an interest in Rhode Island architecture. The authors, including thirty-nine contributors, have detailed a vast amount of specific information on those architects whose drawings have survived. This alone is of permanent value to scholarship. Not only does Rhode Island have a great legacy of architecture, there is now a great deal more available about those who practiced this art, the historical circumstance of design and construction, as well as a number of unrealized dreams. In this, *Buildings on Paper* should be an incentive to many other states.

Kittery, Maine

RICHARD CANDEE

Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643. By NEAL SALISBURY. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982. xiv + 316 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, and index. \$19.95.)

Neal Salisbury has written a true ethnohistory of New England's founding years, in which the goals, policies, and frustrations of all participants are taken into account. The story he tells and the analysis he

gives are much more complex than in most histories of early New England and the book makes a very significant contribution. He begins with Indian pre-history and a long discussion of Indian culture, social and political organization, and religion and use of ritual. He has digested all the recent work in the field and this section of the book makes a valuable introduction to the subject.

When Salisbury turns to the founding of New England, he begins much earlier than most histories, long before the Puritan colonies of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay were begun, and he discusses the Dutch and French experience in addition to the English. Skillful use of the earliest sources enables him to gauge how much change had occurred among New England Indians before the earliest English tracts were written. Rather than seeing the Pequots as invaders from the west, and the Mohegans as a defecting remnant of that tribe, he argues for Connecticut-area origins for both, and quite separate histories. He also believes later English sources gave a false picture of the Indians around Narragansett Bay and their relationships.

Salisbury rejects the idea that there was a tragic necessity in the domination of European culture over Indian. Again, he paints a much more complex picture, which draws on the goals of all the Europeans as well as the situations of the various Indians they confronted. The French and Dutch were both interested in the fur trade, which meant relatively small groups of Europeans and a non-intrusive relationship. As long as fur-trading was the goal there would be no competition for prime agricultural land; Salisbury argues the two cultures could have continued as trading partners indefinitely, particularly as the fur trade took Europeans, especially the French, into the less populous parts of the region. He acknowledges, however, that even this relationship had a massive impact on the natives as the traders brought the first of the European diseases to which Indians had no immunity and which wrought such a terrible toll among them. Also, in order to participate in the trade, Indians forsook old skills and developed new, more specialized ones related to the trade. Trade goods also transformed Indian culture, though Salisbury argues Indians were able to assimilate the new relationships, roles, and tools within their own belief and ritual system.

The situation changed drastically when the English came, not because they were Puritans, but because their goals were different. They came fleeing social and religious upheaval at home, and their hope was to create a new version of English society in America. This meant they were aiming at agricultural land, and therefore insinuating themselves into the most populous areas of New England. It also meant they would be in direct competition with the natives; there was no possibility of the cooperative relationship which the fur trade allowed. At this point, the cultural differences between them became important as they had not been when the fur trade was the point of contact. Indian culture was based on reciprocity and communal ownership. Their prac-

tices aimed to maintain equilibrium between people. English culture was the opposite: individualistic and competitive. English colonies, from Sagadahoc in 1607 on, were marked by insensitivity to Indian needs and an assumption that the relationship must be one of domination/submission. Salisbury very effectively shows how each side tried to interpret the other within its own system and how each fell into misinterpretation.

The final section of *Manitou and Providence* is the most provocative, as Salisbury presents a new interpretation of the developing contact between Indians and all Europeans culminating in the Pequot War, the brief alliance of Massachusetts Bay with the Narragansetts, and the murder of Miantonomi. His use of all sources and points of view once again makes the picture much more complex and realistic than previous interpretations. The Pequots no longer appear as the dominant tribe in the process of over-reaching itself; Salisbury argues they were declining by the mid-1630s. The role of the Narragansetts and their Pokanoket associates is also presented very differently, as is that of Roger Williams. Rhode Island readers should find the book particularly interesting for its insights into that colony's early history.

University of Connecticut

KAREN ORDAHL KUPPERMAN

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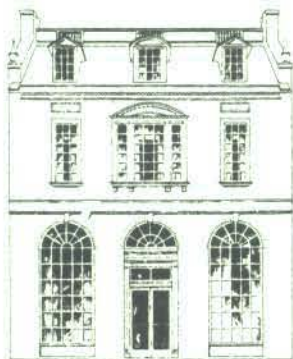
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