

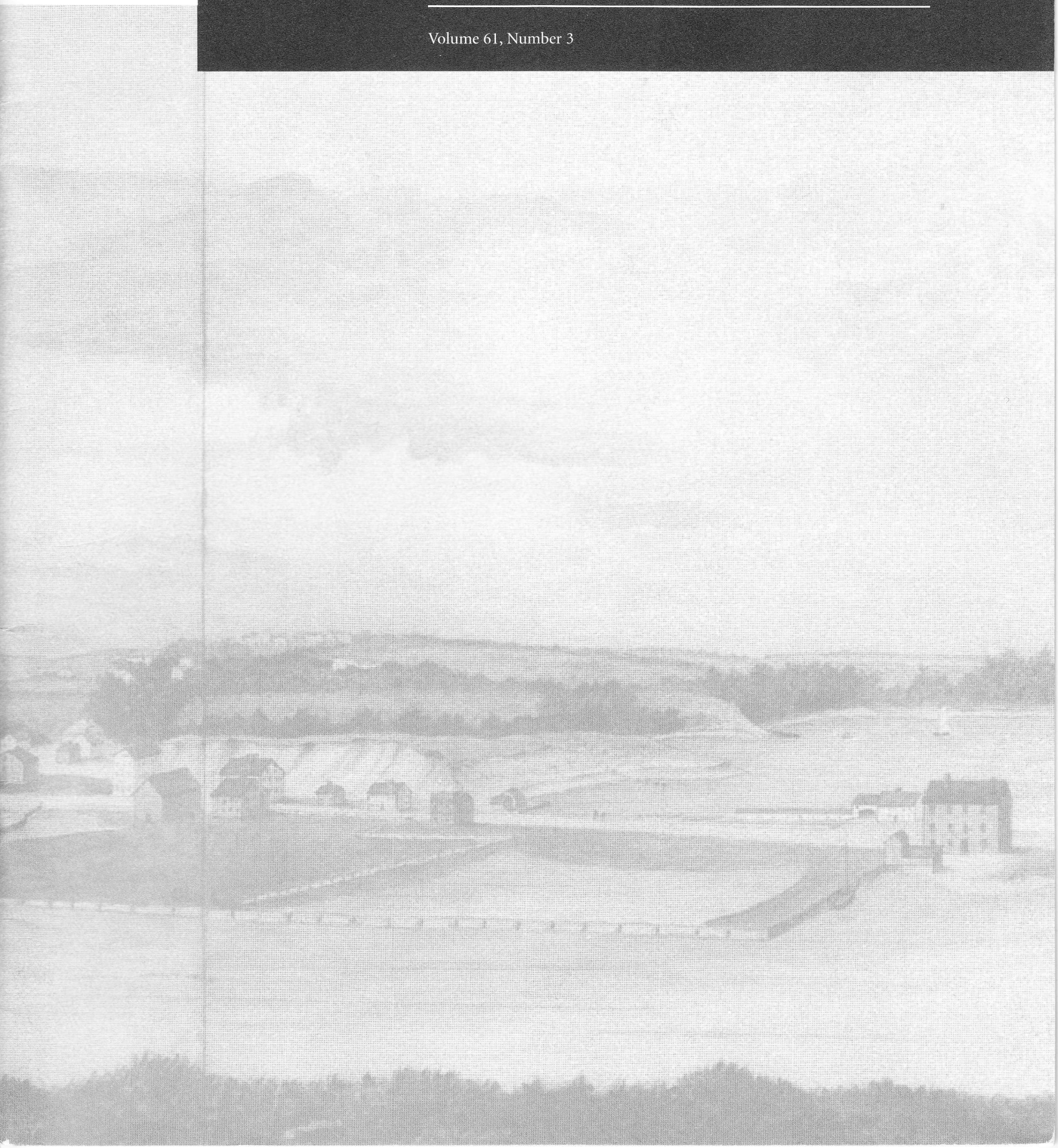
FALL 2003



Rhode Island History

A RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY PUBLICATION

Volume 61, Number 3



FALL 2003

Rhode Island History



Volume 61, Number 3

Published by
The Rhode Island Historical Society
110 Benevolent Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02906-3152
and printed by a grant from the State of
Rhode Island and Providence Plantations,
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Matthew A. Brown, Secretary of State

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Slate
Rock

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Land
two Rope works
owned by
John Pittman
and
William H. Hays
to 1810 ft.

or Fenner
&
heirs of
Gov. Brown
Rope
Works
Lot
open
Rope
mill

John Tapp
Land's Share

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William
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Incidence in 1708
from shore to George St
200 ft to an inch

John Brown's

INDIA BRIDGE

John Brown's India Point

CAROLINE FRANK

Lying beneath Interstate 195 in Providence, just before it crosses the Seekonk River on the Washington Bridge, is a grassy half-mile strip of waterfront property. Other than an occasional jogger circling its neatly looped sidewalks, until recently few people visited this spot. Its abandoned gravel-and-mud ball fields and its rapidly silting-over shoreline seemed to announce just one more inner-city waterfront obituary. The space clung weakly to some idea of a park; yet it looked like the end of the line, literally and figuratively. Arriving from the north via Gano Street or from the west via India Street, directed by highway or street signs to pass under I-195, expectant visitors reached India Point and found nowhere to go and no reason to stay. The shadow of the highway above and rotting, submerged pilings below were all that remotely linked this forgotten spot to glorious moments in its past as a major coastal transportation center. The property was virtually featureless.

Roger Williams first paddled his boat around the rocky bluff of India Point in 1636. The initial intention among his small group of disaffected Puritans was to establish a settlement near this spot, across the Seekonk River from Plymouth Colony, but they found a more desirable location on the river to the west, around Foxes Hill (on Fox Point). As the town of Providence grew up and flourished on the east bank of the Providence River, Tockwotton—as India Point was originally called—remained a side attraction to generations of local real estate speculators, several of whom envisioned making it into a thriving residential and commercial center.¹ After the upper harbor close to downtown Providence ceased to be a working port following the hurricane of 1938, city government drafted a number of development proposals for India Point, one resulting in the interstate highway.² Other proposals more friendly to the landscape, such as those for the ball fields and sidewalks, were also implemented; yet this waterfront property remained resistant to permanency. With the area especially vulnerable to hurricanes and other storms, its uses, residents, and structures, and even its shoreline, have continually changed.³

In defiance of India Point's dead-end character, however, local residents, organized as Friends of India Point Park, have launched efforts to rehabilitate this strip of land, and the City of Providence is once again eyeing development there, envisioning, in particular, a setting for recreation and tourism. Consistent with the current popularity of replica tall ships and Williamsburg-like historical theme parks, former Providence mayor Vincent A. Cianci Jr. envisioned white sails once again framing the shoreline of India Point. An India Point Steering Committee has considered proposals that include expanding the present dock facilities, welcoming cruise ships, establishing an on-site marina and restaurant, and creating a walkway linking India Point to Providence's Riverwalk and Waterplace Park.⁴

Such proposals reflect a desire to re-create India Point's landscape as it existed during a more glamorous age. Indeed, India Point experienced one of its most illustrious periods when John Brown brought the China trade to Providence in the late eighteenth century. Drawing principally on his estate records, his correspondence, and a map of India Point

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"Owners of Lots in Providence in 1798 From Shore to George St." Map drawn by Henry R. Chace, circa 1914. RIHS Collection (RHi X3 7624).

drawn by Henry R. Chace ninety years ago, this paper will examine Brown's efforts during that time not only to develop India Point as a center of industry and commerce but also to make it a choice address for Providence residents.

John Brown (1736-1803) was a highly successful merchant of an established Providence family, and he and his brothers were major figures in the commercial and political life of Providence during the second half of the eighteenth century. Following the Revolutionary War, Brown undertook an ambitious real estate development project at Tockwotton, where his family already owned land, a wharf, and two commercial enterprises. This development coincided with, and was named for, his—and Rhode Island's—first venture into the oriental trade in 1787, and for about forty years India Point flourished as a commercial seaport. As his correspondence shows, however, Brown envisioned development for the location that went far beyond that of a commercial seaport. He laid paved roads and gangways and tried to attract wealthy homebuilders; he constructed a state-of-the-art fireproof "store" (a warehouse where goods might also be purchased); he built a number of small manufactories and relocated artisans within them. Besides expanding the deepwater wharf area, he added docks for personal and passenger use and built the India Bridge over the Seekonk River in 1793.

Although Brown's ultimate plan for India Point never materialized, an examination of the buildings and landscape improvements he undertook, as well as his vision as the location's developer, provides vivid insights into the social personality and economic character of Providence at that period. Lying, as it did, outside the more densely built and peopled quarter of South Main Street, India Point encompassed an easily identifiable set of place-related social and economic features, features that can now help illuminate our understanding not only of late-eighteenth-century commercial seaports but of how the history of one place can be deeply intertwined with that of one man and his times.⁵



With the scant physical resources of Rhode Island favoring a colonial economy built on mercantile trade, Providence thrived as a seaport, its population climbing from under a thousand to close to ten thousand over the course of the eighteenth century.⁶ Seafaring, and all its ancillary activities, became the region's principal industry. Many of those who did not go to sea remained on shore processing both imported and local materials for use in maritime commerce. Shipwrights built ships from lumber; cordwainers and women wove hemp, flax, and cotton into sails and ropes;⁷ smiths forged iron into anchors and munitions; distillers turned molasses into spirits; chandlers worked whale oil into candles; coopers crafted casks of all sizes from wood and metal. Storehouses were built and manned to maintain ships' supplies and precious cargoes. Sailors caroused in taverns, squandering their meager earnings, while colonial housewives paid regular visits to the "stores," which eventually added countinghouses upstairs to keep track of mounting profits.⁸ All of these processing, warehousing, and retailing activities were conveniently located within Providence's port area, which, combined with its resident wage-earning population and tavern life, created a dynamic public space.

By the end of the 1700s Providence's bustling harbor extended from the cove above the Great (or Weybosset) Bridge, south along Water Street, around Fox Point, and east to India Point and the Seekonk River.⁹ Left relatively unscathed by eight years of war and economic depression, in 1781 Providence was home to 129 vessels and fifty-eight wharves.¹⁰ According to a 1784 plat map drawn by surveyor Caleb Jenkes, there were thirty-six "water lots," each with gangways and piers, around the tip of Fox Point alone.¹¹ Most colonial traders shipping from these cramped quarters engaged in barter. For many,

To be Sold by
J O H N B R O W N,
 At his Store, by the Cask or smaller
 Quantity,
T H E best of Rock Salt, good West-
 India and New-England Rum,
 good Teneriffe Wine, brown Sugars,
 Tea, Coffee, Cotton Wool, Pepper and
 Alspice.

*Advertisement in the Providence Gazette and
 Country Journal, 10 July 1779. RIHS Collection
 (RHi X3 7622).*

London.¹³ Surpluses from these trading activities were advertised in the *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, often with only the name of the trader as an address; apparently everyone in town knew where to go to purchase the wares of any of its merchants.

Skilled and aggressive traders such as John Brown were able to obtain various currencies, coins, and bills of exchange, as well as exotic goods for their cargoes, allowing them to accrue a great deal of wealth. These wealthy traders became leaders in colonial governments. During the course of the eighteenth century, wealth in New England became concentrated in fewer and fewer hands.¹⁴ Such wealth in Providence was for the most part reinvested in the built environment, including buildings and enterprises of the waterfront. In addition to improving port facilities and workshops, rich merchants also invested in bigger ships, luxurious homes, banks, roads and canals, and, ultimately, the textile mills and railroads that would put India Point out of business as a seaport a century later. Even the Revolutionary War itself can be viewed in part as an investment project of wealthy mercantile traders jockeying for more favorable global economic status. Brown University as well was funded by these elite traders, investing in the future of their scions. Sea trade remained the economic backbone of growing metropolitan Providence throughout all these projects, and it would continue to play an essential economic role until the end of the nineteenth century.

Since Rhode Island did not have easy access to the ample fishing grounds off the coast of Massachusetts, nor as much rich farmland as Connecticut, its economy came to depend more heavily on reexport and processing activities than on natural resources. To compete in global trade, Rhode Islanders turned to sugar refining, candle making, rum distilling, and shipbuilding, all activities situated in the busy seaport. An analysis of the economy of colonial New England shows that prosperity depended on overseas trade, and that those industries that did develop in the northern colonies in the eighteenth century were closely tied to exports. Although domestic industry became important in the nineteenth century, the wealth and capital of the colonial period rested wholly on exports, shipbuilding, and the related marine trades.¹⁵

Beyond their economic character, seaports manifest a particular cultural character. As a border zone absorbing the norms of two diverse worlds—that of high-risk, male-dominated seafaring and that of a more settled and orderly land-based community life—the waterfront can have a charged atmosphere. Seafaring has always attracted hardy as well as transient types, and ports, perhaps consequently, have housed a fair amount of marginal activities, as can be seen in innumerable anecdotal accounts throughout the ages. Some

this brought only meager returns; but for some, who were able to establish elaborate paper-credit networks, such barter could result in substantial profits.¹² The correspondence of Nicholas Brown & Company (in which John was a partner) in the decades prior to the Revolutionary War contains references to rum and candles traded for flour, rice, and even marine insurance in Newport; rum and candles traded for agricultural produce in Fishkill, New York; food stuffs traded for “head matter” (oil and other material derived from the head of the sperm whale) on Nantucket; and pig iron from the family’s Hope Furnace traded for European dry goods in

of this energy certainly fueled revolutionary sympathies in the 1760s and 1770s. Many of the initial rebellious acts of the Revolution, such as the Boston Tea Party, took place in harbors. In June 1772 John Brown prepared for the assault on the royal revenue ship *Gaspee* by bringing eight longboats to Fenner's Wharf in Providence, from where the attack was launched.¹⁶

In colonial New England the waterfront was also main street, the heartbeat of the town, and it brought all classes, races, ages, and genders into contact with one another. "Mother Hope" Brown, who outlived three of her five sons, kept a running account at the stores of each of her boys (as evidenced from her own account books as well as from "spike slips" among the papers of the various companies run by her sons).¹⁷ While at the harbor she might encounter a runaway slave shipping out as quickly as possible, an indentured servant carting goods to a warehouse, a carpenter earning a decent wage framing a new building, a neighbor stopping to purchase English tea and sugar; and of course she might also see one of her well-dressed sons supervising business. An eighteenth-century New England seaport was not only an inclusive social space; it was also a place where the raw edge of seafaring bumped up against the private, orderly lives of colonial homes and cottage industries. With a close examination of the historical record, an attempt can be made to reconstruct the character of India Point.



Throughout the colonial period India Point represented the outer limit of the Providence seaport. To the north, along the Seekonk River, lay a farm, identified as "Gov Fenner 57 acre Farm" on a map of 1798 Providence drawn about 1914 by Henry R. Chace.¹⁸ South of the farm was an air furnace (marked today by the one-block-long Furnace Street), which by the 1770s was owned and operated by the Brown brothers. John Brown referred to the property as "the East Town Furnace and Estate being a Farm" in a June 1802 schedule of his estate.¹⁹

Two roads led from the more densely settled parts of town to the little ferry service that carried passengers across the Seekonk to Massachusetts. One of these roads ran along the shore from Fox Point; the other ran north-south along what is today Hope Street. Both were little more than bumpy dirt paths. In the first half of the eighteenth century, Benjamin Tillinghast and Daniel Abbott, enterprising Providence merchants with an eye for real estate, bought property along the shore road (later named Shore Street, forming the western end of today's India Street) to sell as waterfront lots. "Daniel Abbott . . . laid out Tockwotton with the object of making that point the commercial center of the town fifty years before John Brown was king of India Point," wrote Henry Chace.²⁰ Given the density of development along Towne Street (today's North and South Main Streets) by the mid-eighteenth century, expanding the port into this adjacent waterfront area seems to have been a perfectly plausible plan. Tockwotton's waterfront lots, hidden behind Foxes Hill, found few takers, however.²¹

In the 1750s another ambitious Providence merchant, the young Brown brothers' uncle Obadiah Brown, also speculated on waterfront lots at Tockwotton.²² He purchased a larger property as well, just east of Abbott's last water lot, along the "road to the ferry" that ran east of the Shore Road, and there he constructed a spermaceti candle works and eventually a residence. John Brown acquired his first real estate at Tockwotton when he and his brother Nicholas purchased a half-share of the candle works from their uncle in 1758.²³ John was only twenty-two years old at the time, but he had already been involved in active trading along the Atlantic coast and in seaport affairs for ten years. His shrewdness in trade would earn him the fortune that twenty-five years later would allow him

to bring India Point to life, realizing on this location what others before and after only dreamed of.

Ironically, however, it was that same shrewdness that contributed to India Point's demise. As a man who lived by the religion of profit, Brown died in 1803 leaving no one—sons, relatives, or partners—who had been able to tolerate his icy business practices and thus carry his projects forward. In an 1850 lecture, Walter R. Danforth (later mayor of Providence) emphasized Brown's admirable traits and accomplishments, describing Brown as someone who

eminently possessed the rare talent of combining his own and the public good in his enterprises. . . . He gave an impulse to commercial business and to public improvements, such as had not been known before his time, and his various branches of enterprise created a demand for labor and afforded it a reward. He was extensively engaged in foreign commerce, and by his foresight and general intelligence was successful in most of his commercial transactions. His political influence was great. . . .

John Brown was the first president of the Providence Bank, which was the bank first established in this state and the second in New England, its charter having been granted in 1791. . . .

In stature, John Brown was of medium height, but when I knew him was fleshy and rather unwieldy in movement and might then be observed riding daily in all the business portions of the town in a one horse sulky, driving bargains and personally superintending all the branches of his affairs at the counting house, at his stores, at the shipyard, on the wharves, at the bank, and wherever his business operations called.²⁴

Other descriptions and accounts of John Brown have been less flattering. Brown has been criticized for profiting handsomely on his sale of military supplies to the American army during the Revolutionary War;²⁵ some suspect that he owed his brother Nicholas great sums of money that went unpaid;²⁶ and he defended slave trading in Congress as late as 1800—arguing, among other things, that it was beneficial to New England distilleries—thirteen years after Rhode Island forbade its ships to carry slaves, and three years after he himself was brought to court by his own brother Moses and found guilty of trafficking in slaves.²⁷

At mid-century Brown's great projects were still incubating. When Uncle Obadiah died in 1762, the four brothers took over his mercantile firm—with its real estate, wharves, stores, two distilleries, and candle works—and formed Nicholas Brown & Company, named after the eldest brother.



The spermaceti candle works was located on eleven acres at Tockwotton fronting on the north side of the "road to the ferry." The four brothers agreed that Joseph, the second oldest and the least inclined to commercial wheeling and dealing, should live at the works and manage its day-to-day operations. Joseph was a skilled architect (he later designed John's mansion, now known as the John Brown House), and it is likely that he made improvements to both the ten-year-old works building and the adjacent house that he and his wife, Elizabeth, occupied. An avid gardener, he had an elaborate kitchen garden behind the house.²⁸ Joseph provided the mechanical expertise needed to manufacture the candles and maintain the works.²⁹

In addition to the manufactory and all its tools, the property included loft dwelling houses, a cooper's shop, two stores, and a private wharf at which casks of whale oil for the candle works were unloaded from incoming vessels. There was also fencing, small outhouses, and gangways marking the lot. The main buildings were evidently erected in the colonial style of this period; although there appear to be no drawings or paintings specifically of the spermaceti candle works building, an 1840s painting of India Point—*Tockwotton*

from Fort Hill, by Kinsley C. Gladding—shows many small colonial-style structures in its background detail, providing an idea of the probable appearance of the property.

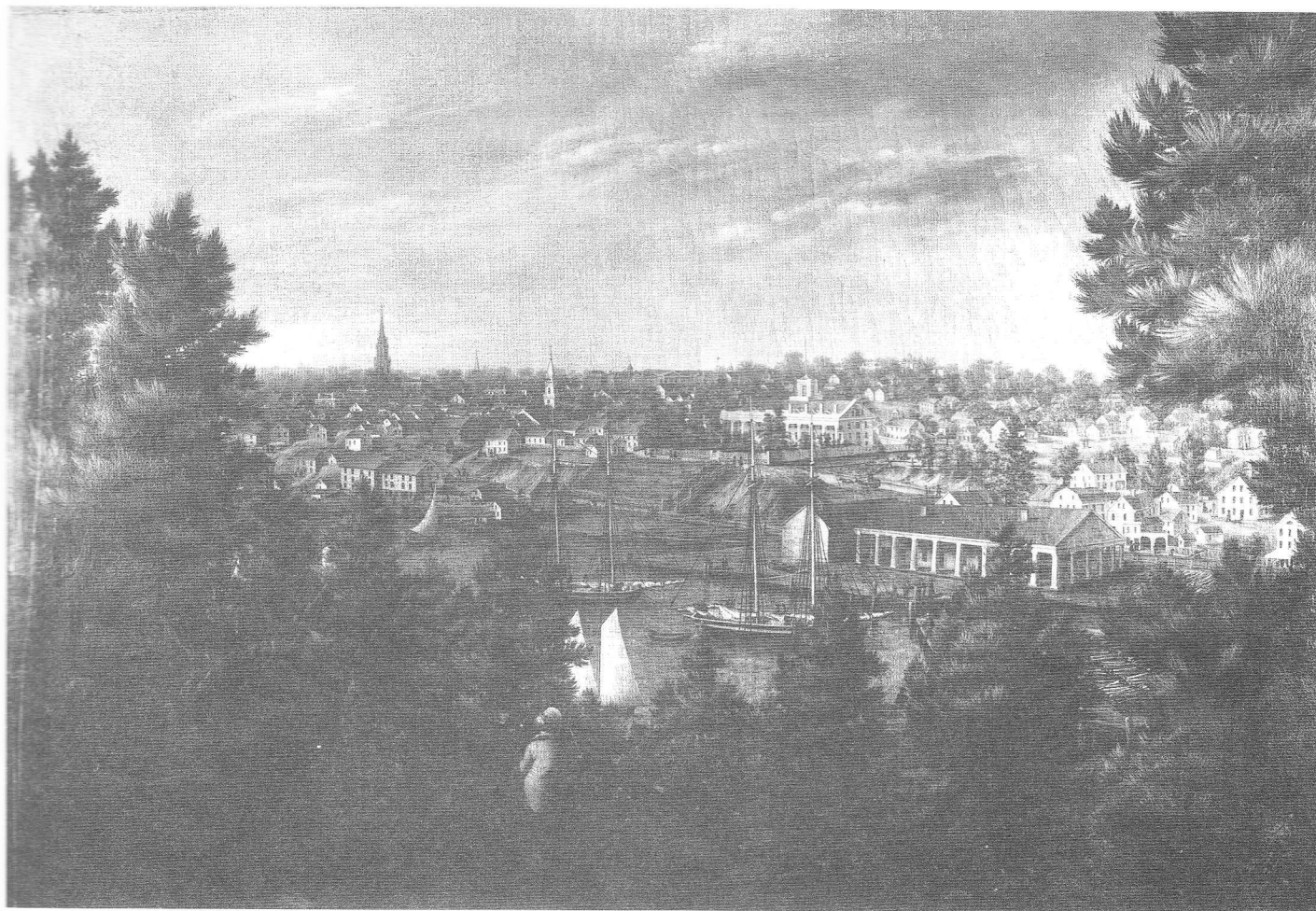
From the beginning, each brother kept separate account books for his own part of the candle works business, since each participated in some trading voyages separately. These account books provide a glimpse not only of the commercial success of the enterprise but also of its character as a workplace. Apparently Obadiah had developed his own particular method of manufacturing candles, derived, perhaps, from his earlier innovations for grinding “chocklit” with a water-powered mill.³⁰ A special manufacturing process may have accounted for the excellent reputation of the Nicholas Brown & Company’s candles, indicated in laudatory letters to the company from retailers and agents. Small quantities of the best-quality candles were made for special individual customers. There were a dozen spermaceti chandlers in America by 1763, but none sold as many candles as the Brown brothers. With the Browns profiting handsomely as well on their sale of oil to England, their candle business thrived until the war. John and Moses sailed regularly to Nantucket to negotiate terms for acquiring head matter—the highest quality whale oil—in exchange for their sugar, rum, molasses, foodstuffs, and refined oil.

In addition to his house, his firewood, and his garden, Joseph received £1,400 old tenor annually.³¹ He also received £9.68 a week in hard currency for boarding candle factory workers, for whose lodging, clothing, and meals he was responsible. A large packet of receipts, dating from the 1760s, for money paid to Mary and Ann Power for tailoring shirts and trousers specifically for the spermaceti candle works suggests that the men who worked there were not easy on their clothes.³² After shipbuilding, wages for the candle works and the Hope Furnace represented the greatest expense for Nicholas Brown & Company. Cheap labor was scarce in colonial times,³³ and indentured servants and slaves did not usually have the skills required for manufacturing candles. The brothers employed a full-time cooper to “trim” the oil and tend to any leaks in the vats. Once the men had strained the spermaceti from the head matter, they stored the oil by-products in casks in a dirt cellar vault (high enough to hold four stacked casks) to be sold later. The Browns also employed women to make the cotton candle wicks.

Until 1776 both blacks and whites worked as laborers at the candle works. At that time an agreement was drawn up by the brothers stating, among other things, that “as Moses hath not freedom to Imploy Slaves and pay them Nothing It is agreed that No Negroes that are such be hired Unless of Necessity to git the Stock out & then not to be Included in the Accounts but Moses will find his part in Freeman.”³⁴ Moses had freed his few slaves in 1773, and he was on the road to becoming a fervent abolitionist.

The war dealt the candle business a blow, and there is no evidence that the Brown brothers continued operating their candle works after 1777. A 1778 tax assessment for the “Rateable Estate” of John Brown reads: “1/4 part of a Six acre Lott at Tockquotten with the Remains of the Building & Materiels of the Spermiciti works the whole Now Let out for 25 Dollers to my Quarter.”³⁵ By the time Joseph died in 1785, the “Red House” he had lived in was entirely let out as a boardinghouse. The June 1802 schedule of John Brown’s estate indicates that the house was then rented out for \$150 a year, and that the property included a “prep house” which was being used as a barn, a shop “formerly applied to making Candle Boxes,” a cooper’s shop, a shed, a well, and a pump. In addition, by 1802 the land around the works had been divided into several house lots, one of which fronted on the “paved road.”

The Browns’ iron business also declined after the war. John had separated himself from the shipping side of Nicholas Brown & Company in 1771 to try his hand at his own maritime ventures, including cod fishing and slaving. He found neither enterprise suf-



Tockwotton from Fort Hill. Oil painting, circa 1840-1850, by Kinsley C. Gladding. RIHS Collection (RH X3 3090).

ficiently successful (though he would remain directly invested in the slave trade as late as 1798),³⁶ and he returned to refining sugar, distilling, and trading along the Atlantic seaboard separately from Nicholas's company.

In 1770 Nicholas described John's activities to a London agent familiar with the family: "Our Brother has the desire to Enlarge his business more than we apprehend the smallness of the Place and the Number of Traders at this Juncture will admit."³⁷ The comment suggests not only that there was tension between Nicholas and John but also that there was an increasing need at this time for new wharf space. Nicholas Brown & Company was dissolved in 1774. Following the war John's and Nicholas's business ventures remained independent of each other in management as well as philosophy for the rest of their lives.



In 1784 the *Empress of China* departed New York on a six-month trading voyage to Canton. This pioneering venture, inaugurating America's China trade, yielded its backers an impressive profit. Ever watchful for financially advantageous enterprises, John Brown was not long in following this lead. As the first Rhode Island trader with enough capital and nerve to risk an oriental venture, in 1787 Brown launched his refitted 385-ton ship, the *General Washington*, from India Point, perhaps from the "private wharf" cited as once part of the candle works in Brown's will.

Built in 1779 as a fast-sailing, 20-gun privateer,³⁸ the *General Washington*, now "fitted for India," had two complete sets of sails (one entirely new), four anchors, three boats and

oars, two spare top masts, one ton of additional rigging, and several tons of cannon and shot, some of which was to be traded. As a neophyte in the China trade, Brown, like other American merchants contemplating the Oriental trade, had as yet little information on the most appropriate cargo to carry to these unknown markets. The *General Washington* carried what seemed to be a good assortment of likely products, including New England ginseng, rum, and iron. In a 15 November 1787 letter, written while the vessel was being prepared for departure, John urged Nicholas to load additional stock, itemized as five tons of bar iron, four tons of pig iron, one thousand gallons of molasses, four hogsheads of West Indian rum, cocoa, and local rum. Foodstuffs such as smoked hams and barrels of codfish were also put aboard as trade goods. Additional cargo, principally Madeira wine, would be picked up en route. For the crew, there was beef, pork, "ship bread," cheese, beans, wine, and coffee, along with clothes, lamp oil, and tools.³⁹

The *General Washington's* voyage lasted two years, during which time John Brown received correspondence carried by incoming travelers indicating that it would be a financial success. It netted, in fact, over £30,000.⁴⁰ Brown's eager anticipation of the arrival of a ship richly laden with sumptuous goods from the Orient—including tea, silks, cotton goods, and lacquerware—is apparent in all his letters of this time. Brown was in debt; but on this voyage of the *General Washington*, as on its five subsequent voyages to the Orient, he counted on hefty profits, and he was afforded the luxury of time in planning how he would invest them.

A good portion of the profits Brown earned in the China trade went to building three new ships. The first, the 950-ton *President Washington*, was the largest and finest ship of its time. Launched in 1791 from India Point, she was sold, with her cargo, in Calcutta a year later for about \$60,000.⁴¹ Perhaps Brown needed the money, or perhaps it became apparent that the value of the ship would yield more than that of the voyage. The other two ships, the *George Washington* and the *Warren*, continued in the China trade, along with the *General Washington*, until Brown's death in 1803.

Nicholas Brown's firm, Brown & Benson, bought a share in John's first two China trips, but after that—and much to John's chagrin—Brown, Benson & Ives (a partnership of Nicholas Brown Jr., George Benson, and Thomas Poynton Ives, formed after Nicholas Sr.'s death in 1791) was determined to compete in the China trade with its own ships. It sent the *Rising Sun* to the East Indies in 1792 and continued in the trade for three more decades. There was great cost and risk involved in such ventures, but there were ample profits to be made when the ventures were successful. The firm's *John Jay*, for example, set out in December 1794 loaded with iron, cordage, rum, gin, meats, tobacco, and ship's tackle, a cargo valued at \$10,365; eighteen months later it returned with a cargo of teas valued at over \$250,000.⁴²

Postwar business correspondence from both John and Nicholas indicates that Nicholas's firms, as well as others, based their China ventures at India Point, where John had dredged a deep harbor. It is not clear, however, whether Brown & Ives (Benson was dropped from the company in 1796) owned its own wharf there or leased space from John. The Brown family papers contain a great deal of correspondence related to improvements that John made at India Point, and an equally voluminous correspondence related to the leasing of his space there, especially after he was elected to the United States Congress in 1799. Whether the India Point wharves were owned solely by John, by John and others, or even by a public corporation, as might have been the case with the "stage wharf" described below, it is clear that these wharves were part of a thriving international harbor. In the 14 September 1793 issue of the *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, there appeared an advertisement for the public sale of seven of Daniel Abbott's original water lots, "near that flourishing Part of the Town called India Point." On 19

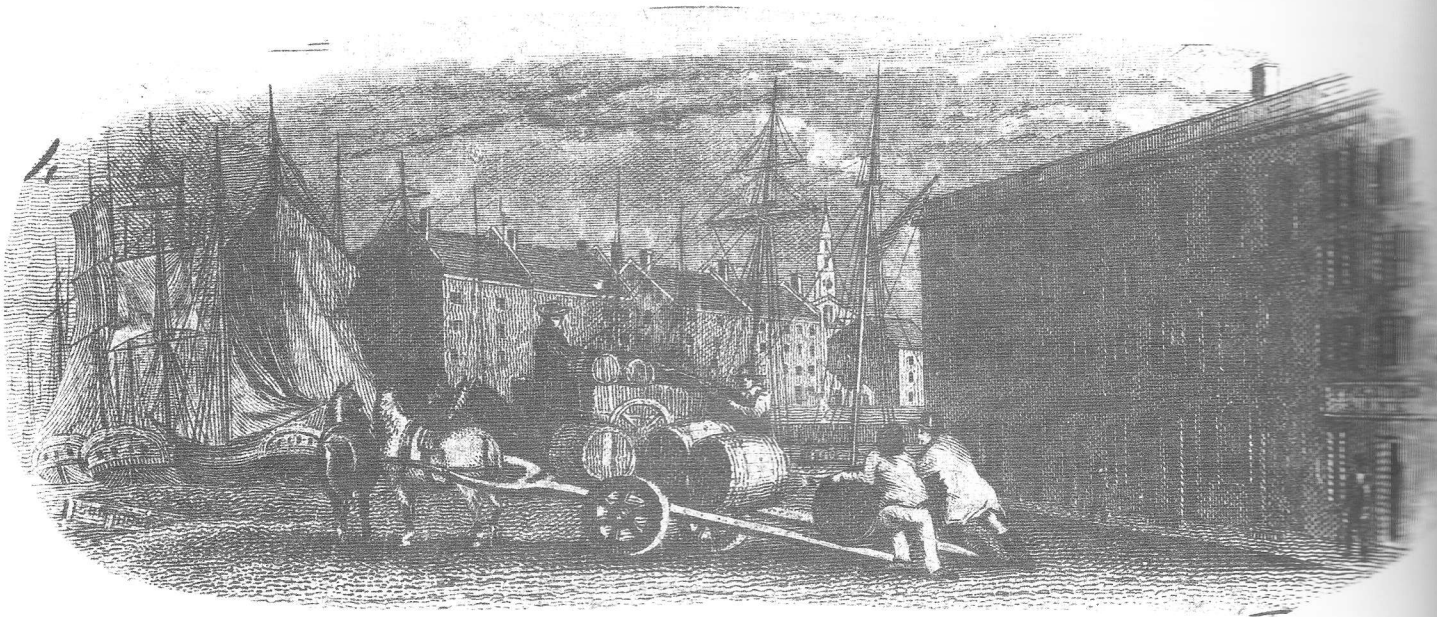
March 1803 the *Gazette* announced that a “fine staunch new” ship bound for Liverpool with “elegant Accommodations” had been christened the *India Point*. Only the most notable Providence neighborhoods would have been likely to attract the attention of those naming such a vessel.

Information about the wharves and storehouses at India Point, as well as about the gin distillery there, appears in several sources, including letters in which John Brown described his daily activities to relatives and acquaintances. John's last will and testament, dated September 1802, and the schedule of his estate, dated three months earlier, include itemized descriptions of all his properties, and Brown's pride in India Point radiates from these pages. The correspondence between his firm and Brown & Ives over the leasing of port space (correspondence that became quite bitter as time went on) also contains many details of India Point's built environment.⁴³ Papers relating to the sale of “India Point Estates” to the Boston & Providence Railroad Company in 1835 include not only descriptions of property lines and buildings but deeds and maps as well.⁴⁴

Brown mentioned six India Point wharf properties in his will, all of which can be found in the supporting documents:

- (1) “The Lot and Wharf with the Stone Head, adjoining the dock with stone steps at the Head near Mr. Seaman's Brick House,” were left to his wife, Sarah Brown. This waterfront property, which can be clearly seen on Henry Chace's map, was John Brown's principal dock. Running 114 feet along “the road to India Bridge,” the lot was 100 feet deep on its west side and 45 feet deep at the head of the dock by the steps.
- (2) Another lot and wharf “east of the large dock at India Point,” fronting 50 feet on the road and including a “good House painted a light stone colour, a good large wooden Store, and a large Blacksmith's shop,” were left to his second daughter, Sarah Herreshoff.
- (3) The gin distillery and its wharf immediately to the west of the stone head wharf, also clearly marked on Chace's map, were left to his third daughter, Alice.
- (4) A lot and wharf at the southeastern corner of India Point, fronting 163 feet along India Street, were left to his grandson John Brown Francis. This lot had a stable, a wooden store, a new wood house, and the new India Fire Proof Store.
- (5) The “old Ferry House with a gambrel roof” (also on Chace's map) and its wharf on the Seekonk River were left to Brown's wife. There is no indication that anyone lived in this building, but Brown did describe an additional “small tenement” on the north side of the lot.
- (6) A “stage wharf” along the western side of the India Store property, referred to frequently in the schedule of Brown's estate, was mentioned in the will only as a reference point. This wharf was most likely the largest point of land jutting into the water on Chace's map. Although Chace identified it as “John Brown wharf,” Brown may not in fact have owned all of it, since he did not clearly deed it to any of his descendants. The stage wharf (also called the “plank stage wharf”) may have been a loading dock for cargo vessels. It is probable that this is the same site that later became the terminus for the Boston & Providence Railroad, seen on maps and paintings after 1835. Indeed, the indestructible brick Fire Proof Store may have provided the foundation or structure for the railroad's terminal.

As seen in his will, Brown had a number of stores for stocking cargo and selling his valuable oriental goods, but he described one in particular in glowing detail, the “new India Fire Proof Store” near the stage wharf. This was a three-story brick structure, 100 feet



Engraving on a note issued by Providence's Traders Bank in 1836. RIHS Collection (RHI X3 434).

long and 35 feet wide—smaller, therefore, than the 200-foot structure noted on Chace's "Distill House Lot."⁴⁵ The floor of the ground level was laid with solid brick, the roof was tile, and all the windows and doors were lined with sheet iron and painted with fireproof paint, so that "Should all the Buildings near it Burn down the Store may not take Fire." In 1801, a year before Brown described this building in his will, a great fire had in fact destroyed many buildings on South Main Street.

The disputes between Brown & Ives and John Brown over the leasing of space add much color to our picture of India Point. In a 24 June 1800 letter to Thomas Poynton Ives, Brown stated that Brown & Ives was to pay him \$400 a year, free of wharfage charge, for rent at the brick store. Brown noted that this was the same amount the firm had paid since 1796, and that merchants in Boston were paying three to four times as much for such a wharf and store. Moreover, added Brown, one could ship at both high and low tide at his wharf. Ives did not share Brown's assessment of the value of the rented property. "Yr high opinion of the condition and value of yr wharves & Stores," he declared in an icy letter to Brown on 1 August 1801, "with the Prices you have generally fixt for Rent . . . has bin the cause of that part of the loss being [experienced] by others as well as our House."⁴⁶ But India Point was established as Providence's center for the China trade, and John Brown had cornered the wharf market there. However high Brown's rents might have been, the trade was still too lucrative for others to give up.



Like many New England entrepreneurial families, the Browns were rum distillers, having operated a distillery by the middle of the eighteenth century under Capt. James Brown, John's father. In 1770 the consumption of rum in the colonies averaged 8.5 million gallons a year, 60 percent of which was produced within the colonies. In that year there were twenty-two distilleries in Newport and three in Providence, one of the latter owned by the Brown brothers.⁴⁷ In 1788 Nicholas Brown and Welcome Arnold spent \$25,000 to build a rum distillery in Fox Point, making theirs one of the most expensive distilleries ever built in America.⁴⁸ Details of Nicholas's enterprise are important, since historians believe that when John built his gin distillery on India Point five years later, he used his brother's building as a model.⁴⁹ Although uncommon, American-made gin had been

produced since 1784, and when the price of molasses shot up at the end of the decade, John opted to give up processing rum and use local grains to distill gin instead. His gin distillery (clearly identified on Chace's map) was operating at maximum capacity by January 1791. By 1793 demand for the product was so great that John had to lease half of a rum still across town among the Providence River wharves to meet his orders.

Deeding his distill-house property at India Point to his daughter Alice in his 1802 will, John described the lot as running 180 feet along India Street, 304 feet south to the head of the wharf on the west, and adjoining a 100-foot dock on the east (which was to be used only by his heirs and other neighboring property owners). Improvements included a gin distillery with "all its machinery for horse pumping," a 200-foot pump house with stalls and stable, and a new wood house. There was also a new hog house paved with brick, a still, worms (condensing tubes), tubs, cisterns, hog pens, and malt kilns. He valued the total property at \$13,000.

If the cost and operation of John Brown's gin distillery was comparable to that of his brother Nicholas's rum distillery, for which there is a more complete record, it would have cost John about \$25,000 to complete his distillery in 1790; that figure may have included the initial cost of grains and a foreman's wages as well. In 1788 Nicholas's still house employed thirteen carters and sixteen laborers, including three carpenters, in addition to the manager, who lived on the site.⁵⁰ It may be assumed that John's distillery was equally labor-intensive. In 1790 Nicholas lowered the monthly salary of his manager from nine pounds to seven pounds, probably because of the high cost of molasses at that time. A still house manager was usually paid in rum, and he was also provided with firewood for his own use.⁵¹

Some of the raw materials used in John's gin-distilling operation, as well as the quality of the product, are revealed in advertisements placed by Brown & Francis in the *Providence Gazette* (John's Brown's son-in-law, John Francis, was his partner from 1786 to 1796). In a 6 February 1796 advertisement, the partners sought a quantity of good rye, barley, buckwheat, and juniper berries, as well as forty to fifty young shoats to be fattened on the residue of the fermented grains. Another advertisement, on 23 January 1796, announced (among other things) that "They have to sell the best GENEVA, warranted as good as any made in Holland, or any Part of Europe." In this and other advertisements Brown & Francis sought to buy or sell oxen, which they used on a treadmill as backup power when the main sources of power—a water mill and a windmill—were inadequate. (In a 7 August 1793 letter to Nicholas Brown Jr., Welcome Arnold complained that two horses and a mule could not turn the shaft in his rum distillery; apparently oxen were better suited to such work.)⁵² Coal, used in malting, was also sought in Brown & Francis's advertisements.

Brown & Ives was John Brown's best customer for gin (its ship *John Jay* carried fifty cases of it on its first voyage). But despite the demand for that product, John's distillery had difficulties to face. "We find it Every Day more & more difficult to Git Grain & more Expence in manufacturing Gin than we Expected," John lamented in a December 1794 letter to Ives. The preceding month John had informed Ives that he could fill Brown & Ives's order for four hundred full cases of gin only if the company supplied him with one hundred empty cases and bottles; he had just ordered a hundred new cases, he said, but it would take a month to make them. The following week he had suggested an alternative to the scarce cases and bottles: "We have White ash Caskes," he told Ives, "... [which] is very good for Gin as it will retain its Cleer White Culler in this Wood and in no other."⁵³

In a number of letters written between 1793 and 1795, Brown mentioned importing bottles from Europe. Then, in the 23 January 1796 *Providence Gazette* advertisement quoted above, Brown & Francis sought "A GOOD FOREMAN and Set of HANDS for their

GLASS WORKS at India Point, to go to Work in the Spring.” The exact location of the glass manufactory, the scale of its business, and the length of time it operated are all uncertain. It evidently made bottles for the distillery, but as neither the plant nor any of its utensils were mentioned in Brown’s will six years later, it may have been a small-scale operation and was disbanded after Brown left town in 1799 for his political duties in Congress.⁵⁴

An important belief underpinning Brown’s business philosophy, seen throughout all his correspondence, was that only good, skilled, and trustworthy men were to be hired for the key managerial positions in his enterprises, whether as ships’ captains or foremen. It is interesting to note his description of his still-house foreman in the 23 January 1796 advertisement, which offered for sale “a few of the best fat OXEN in the World, their Overseer or Manager being a Native of Holland, where he was bred to the Business of a Gin Distiller from a small Boy, when just able to carry a Pail, and used to raising Cattle over there.” A certain Hezekiah Sabin was the manager of the distillery while Brown was away, and Brown stayed in constant contact with him, managing the day-to-day operations of his successful enterprise from afar. In this correspondence Brown indicated that grains were plentiful, output of gin high, hogs fat, and business generally booming.

John Brown’s improvements at India Point included paved roads, gangways, stone walls, a new ferry house, small wood houses on some of the house lots enumerated in his will, wells and pumps, and, of course, the India Bridge and its tollhouse. Brown constructed the bridge (which he described as “handsome and expensive” in his estate records) in 1793, at the same time and under the same government legislation that his brother Moses built the Central Bridge further up the Seekonk River. John also did a considerable amount of dredging in the waters around India Point so that his port could accommodate the ever-larger ships of the China trade.



Perhaps aware that he had no associates interested in his projects at India Point, John Brown tried hard to attract other merchants to invest there. In a letter dated 16 March 1796, he tried to dissuade the ambitious Providence resident Edward Dexter from building his home on George Street, which Brown described as muddy ground. He urged Dexter to come to India Point instead:

Go thier, fix on any ground you wish and enter Immediatly in to the Importation of European Goods by taking the Ship Mary now their if you please, that I bo’t of Curtis and with or without Dickens as You Choose send her to Charlestown this Spring and let her take a load of rice to England and return to India Point next Fall with a Full load of Fall Goods and open a wholesale store their. Don’t you think every shop keeper will find the way to India Point to buy them. Your friends in Town can Ride to you their with more ease than through the mud of your proposed Habitation on the Hill. You must I know judge for yourself but I think it will be for your futer interest to fix at or near India Point if you do I expect Henry Smith & Benja will both follow and in fact that in a few years their will be houses all the way from India Bridge to the turn of the main street south of your Uncle Welcomes Distillery. What young fellow has done better than Edw’d Dickens for the time he has beene at India Point.⁵⁵

Brown continued actively developing India Point until his death. “I should have Liked to have Gone to the Boat to Meet You Could I have Left the Various workmen,” he wrote in a 26 September 1801 letter to his son-in-law Charles Herreshoff. “I am Every Day overseeing and Directing to the number of about 40 Men in the Various Branches viz the Distillery, the Repairs of the Ship Hope, the Removing the Hill at the Point to fill up the Pond Hoole at India Point . . . all the Attentions together with a new Wharf at India Point has kep me in my Sulky from the Brake of Day . . . I might Indeed have added the making of the New Rhode from India Bridge.”⁵⁶

"Would it be pleasing to Live in this Town or at India Point," Brown asked Herreshoff further along in this letter, "... ware I have it in Contemplation of building an Elegant Seat Should the Ship Genl. Washington Return Safe." Apparently Brown's next project at India Point was to attract prosperous families to relocate there, making the neighborhood as elegant an address as any in Providence. And being the powerful individual that he was, Brown might have succeeded, had he had fifteen years more.

But John Brown himself chose not to live at India Point, nor to remain on the waterfront of South Main Street, where he had lived until 1787. At about the same time that he began to build manufactories and wharves at India Point, he also built a mansion for himself (today's John Brown House) on Powers Lane, on the hill away from the seaport. By the early nineteenth century, as Robert Emlen has pointed out, Providence was "outgrowing its past as a riverfront town and growing into its new role as a mercantile port city." It was during this time that South Main Street, having suffered a major fire in 1801, acquired the label "Rotten Row."⁵⁷ Despite his improvements to the waterfront at India Point, John Brown, and merchants like him who established fashionable dwellings away from the waterfront, were ultimately responsible for its social decline.

As the infant textile industry and overland transportation matured and Providence became more populous, taking on the character of an urban center, people who could afford to do so moved away from the workplace. Some of Providence's finest homes were built during the last years of the eighteenth century.⁵⁸ Although Brown may have been at India Point from "the Brake of Day" every day overseeing his various manufactories and real estate improvements, he did not choose to reside there. But what of the people who did—the Dutch distill-house manager, for instance, or the tenants in Joseph Brown's "Red House," or those living on the numerous small house lots mentioned in Brown's will? What sort of place was India Point for them?

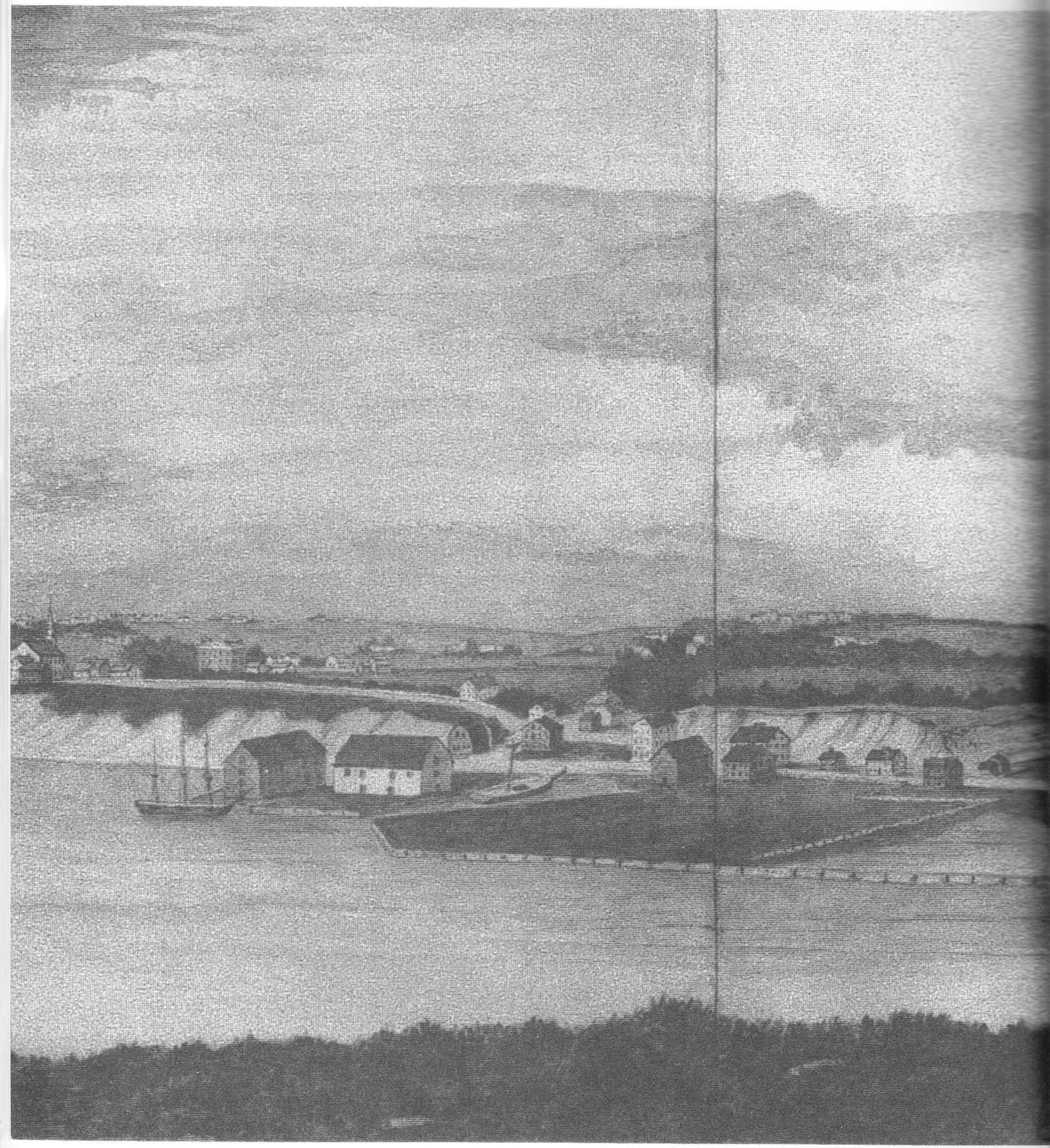
Although the available evidence indicates it was not a "rotten row," the operations of Brown's distillery, the quantity of raw materials needed for all Brown's waterfront manufactories, and the vast cargoes of the many incoming and outgoing ships suggest that this was not a tranquil place. It is likely that the handful of residents who had been living in this once-quiet neighborhood remained throughout its transition to a thriving commercial seaport, and the interactions between residents and the many waged workers, indentured laborers, and sailors that John Brown brought to India Point may well have been stressful.⁵⁹

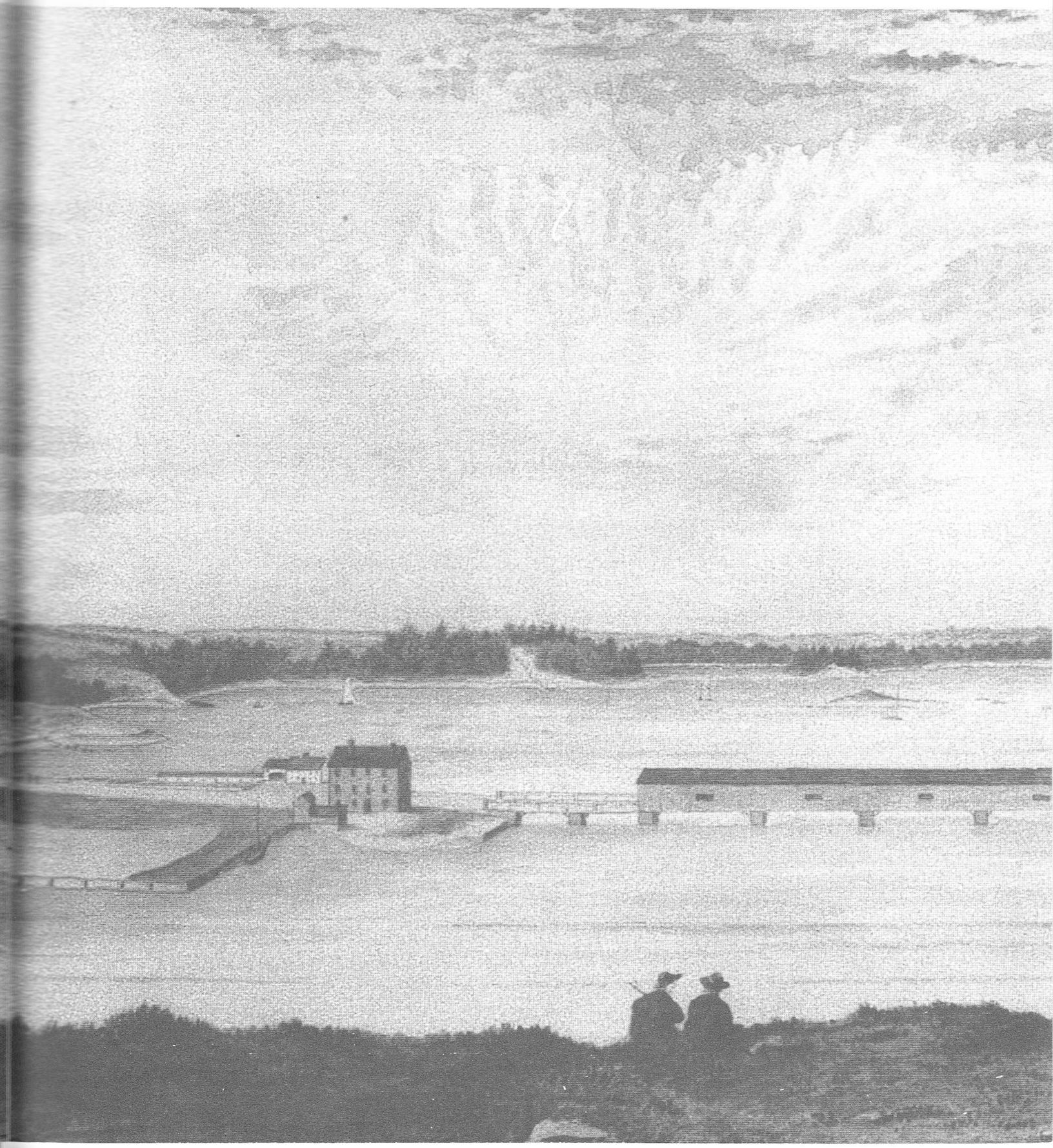


Further development at India Point seems to have ceased after John Brown died in 1803. Brown's various enterprises there eventually ran down without his personal oversight, and the space was used mainly to store ships' cargoes. There were, however, other factors besides Brown's death that contributed to this demise. Many Providence waterfront buildings were damaged in an 1807 storm, and were then entirely destroyed in the Great Gale of 1815.⁶⁰ Although Brown & Ives continued its China voyages from India Point for three decades after John Brown's death, and in fact achieved its peak earnings from its sailing ventures in 1819, the firm's principal source of revenue after 1820 derived not from sea trade but from local cotton spinning.⁶¹ For Rhode Island entrepreneurs, the first two decades of the nineteenth century were a time of transition from maritime trade to domestic industry, particularly in textile manufacturing. Thus there was little incentive to rebuild the lost or damaged wharves and port buildings.

Then, while international shipping continued to decline, the railroad came to Providence in the 1830s. In 1831 the Boston & Providence Railroad Company was

*Detail from Edward Lewis Peckham's India Point
and Seekonk River. Watercolor on paper, 1830.
RIHS Collection (RHi X3 7623).*





formed by an elite group of Massachusetts and Providence businessmen, including the partners of Brown & Ives. While laying its rails between the two cities, the company negotiated for the purchase of the "India Point Estates," which were then owned by both Brown & Ives and the widowed Sarah Herreshoff, John Brown's daughter, who had inherited her mother's holdings to add to her own.⁶² With the sale completed, the little rail cars made their first run over the entire route in 1835. The line terminated at India Point after crossing the Seekonk River on a newly erected bridge just below the India Bridge, which had been rebuilt in 1816 following the previous year's hurricane.⁶³ Kinsley Gladding's 1840s painting *Tockwotton from Fort Hill* shows the rail terminus on the former site of John Brown's wharf. It is possible that one of Brown's buildings—the well-built India Fire Proof Store, perhaps—had survived the hurricane and was adapted, with the addition of a Greek portico facade, as part of the Boston & Providence terminal. That structure was situated at about the location of the store as Brown described it in his will.

Having arrived at India Point, travelers from Boston could take a steamboat down Narragansett Bay and into Long Island Sound to New York. A more desirable route was created in 1837, however, when the New York, Providence & Boston Railroad completed its line between Providence and Stonington, Connecticut, from where a steamer ran to New York—a route that spared travelers an often unpleasantly rough passage around Point Judith. For the next decade India Point was busy with travelers carried by ferry between the Boston & Providence terminal and the terminal of the New York, Providence & Boston Railroad on the west bank of the Providence River. But in 1848 both lines redirected their tracks to the newly opened Union Passenger Depot in downtown Providence, and passenger traffic at India Point, along with its ferry service, came to an end.⁶⁴ India Point thereafter remained a cargo steamship terminal until the hurricane of 1938, with vessels traveling along the North American coastline rather than to distant ports across the Atlantic.⁶⁵ A gritty commercial port rather than one at least partially residential, as it had been in John Brown's day, India Point was eventually abandoned to decay and Route I-195.

But a brighter future may yet be in store for India Point. With the current renewed allure of waterfront living and the attendant interest in waterfront development in Providence, public attention and city resources are now being brought to bear on what has long been a sad urban park, but what was once, some two hundred years ago, a place where some of the finest ships afloat set sail before a diverse throng of onlookers who lived and worked there.

Notes

1. John Hutchins Cady, *The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence* (Providence: The Book Shop, 1957), 61.
2. For twentieth-century background on India Point and development proposals up to 1985, see William D. Warner, *The Providence Waterfront, 1636-2000* (Providence: Providence Waterfront Study, prepared for the Providence Foundation, 1985), II-17 to III-27, especially II-22, which deals with C. E. Maguire's 1947 plan for an expressway system that would, in his opinion, "greatly beautify the City."
3. Among the numerous fierce storms that struck India Point and destroyed structures there, the hurricanes of 1815 and 1938 were the worst. See Cady, *Civic and Architectural Development*, 83, 104; Warner, *Providence Waterfront*, 7; and David M. Ludlum, *Early American Hurricanes, 1492-1870* (Boston: American Meteorological Society, 1963), 19-40, 77-111.
4. See Dolores Hayden, "In Search of the American Cultural Landscape," in *Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America*, ed. Arnold R. Alanen and Robert J. Melnick (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), ix. For an illuminating discussion of historical theme parks, see Richard Francaviglia's "Selling Heritage Landscapes," in the same volume. Present development plans for India Point Park are discussed in two articles in the local Providence newspaper *East Side Monthly*: Steven Friedman, "India Point Park: A Storied Past . . . but What a Future!" August 2002, p. 3, and Judy Blackadar and Mae Warner, "New Playground Tile Project, Tree Mulching," December 2002, p. 6. The opening of a "state-of-the-art" playground at the park in May 2003 is recorded in "Playing at the Point," *Providence Journal*, metro edition, 3 June 2003, C1, and David Riley, "Celebrating a Unique Playground," *East Side Monthly*, July 2003, pp. 15-16.
5. An approach that looks at past social life as it was reflected in the built environment is that of the cultural landscape historian. This relatively new breed of scholar, as the Yale University professor of architecture Dolores Hayden explains, "situates the construction of places in complex historical contexts involving economic development, land-use planning, building design, construction, occupancy, and demolition" and also uses the material record to illustrate the comfortable as well as the uncomfortable sides of historic settings. See Hayden, "American Cultural Landscape," vii; see also Alanen and Melnick, introduction to *Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America*, 6.
6. Peter J. Coleman, *The Transformation of Rhode Island: 1790-1860* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1963), 21, 220.
7. Cordwainers (or shoemakers, as they are called today) were often unemployed fishermen, and hence an integral part of the working population of a seaport. See Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783-1860* (1921; reprint, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), 303.
8. Cady, *Civic and Architectural Development*, 61; Coleman, *Transformation of Rhode Island*, 27-31.
9. See John Fitch's 1790 map of Providence in Warner, *Providence Waterfront*, fig. 3.
10. Cady, *Civic and Architectural Development*, 57. John Brown and his brothers were not greatly harmed by the Revolution. As James Hedges notes, "The basic business structure of the Browns was intact at the close of the war. More fully perhaps than any other business family in the country, the Brown family enjoyed equal success and prominence in both the colonial and national periods of our history." James B. Hedges, *The Browns of Providence Plantations*, vol. 2, *The Nineteenth Century* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1968), xviii.
11. Brown Family Papers (hereafter cited as BFP), box 365, folder 11, John Carter Brown Library, Providence. This sketched plat map is in an extremely deteriorated condition.
12. Given the paucity of local natural products available for trading, some Rhode Islanders became adept at reexporting and at arranging credit to their advantage. This pattern of trading was initially established by Newport merchants in the first half of the eighteenth century, but by midcentury a few upstarts in Providence—which enjoyed the advantage of a larger hinterland than Newport's—were beginning to compete successfully in such trade. Providence became the state's predominant commercial port following the Revolutionary War, which left Newport largely devastated. See Jacob M. Price, "Economic Function and the Growth of American Port Towns in the Eighteenth Century," *Perspectives in American History* 8 (1974): 149-51; Elaine Forman Crane, *A Dependent People: Newport, Rhode Island, in the Revolutionary Era* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1985), 9-33; and Paul G. Bourcier, "Prosperity at the Wharves: Providence Shipping, 1780-1850," *Rhode Island History* 48 (1990): 35-36.
13. BFP, boxes 25, 122, 123, and 294. Of great benefit to researchers, archivists at the John Nicholas Brown Center in Providence have prepared finding aids, with summaries, for the Brown family's voluminous correspondence.
14. In Providence a handful of wealthy merchant families, including the Browns, controlled 75 percent of the town's wealth in 1775, up from 20 percent in 1705. See Lynn Withey, *Urban Growth in Colonial Rhode Island* (Albany: State

Notes continued

- University of New York Press, 1984), 52, and John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 105.
15. McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*, 97. See also Price, "Economic Function," 149-51.
 16. James B. Hedges, *The Browns of Providence Plantations*, vol. 1, *The Colonial Years* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1968), 209. Ample attention has been paid to the cultural marginality of seaports in the works of Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh; see Rediker's *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) and Linebaugh and Rediker's *The Many-Headed Hydra: Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000).
 17. For Mother Hope's "spike slips," see BFP, boxes 752-754; for her account books, see BFP, box 52.
 18. The map is reproduced, with minor changes, in Chace's *Owners and Occupants of the Lots, Houses, and Shops in the Town of Providence, Rhode Island, in 1798* (Providence, 1914). Chace based his map primarily on 1798 direct tax schedules, now at the Rhode Island Historical Society.
 19. "Schedule of John Brown's Estate, June 8, 1802," John Brown Papers (hereafter cited as JBP), box 3, folder 5, item 31, Rhode Island Historical Society.
 20. Quoted in Cady, *Civic and Architectural Development*, 61.
 21. During the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century, Providence was concentrated between the Providence River and Towne Street, today's North and South Main Streets. Development gradually spread east to Back Street, which later became Benefit Street. Further east lay the "road to the ferry," which became Hope Street along its north-south axis and India Street along its southern east-west axis. See Wm. McKenzie Woodward, "The Architectural Heritage of Providence," in *The Early Architecture and Landscapes of the Narragansett Basin*, vol. 2 (Newport: Annual Meeting of the Vernacular Architecture Forum, 2001), 60-64.
 22. See John Brown, Last Will and Testament, 13 Sept. 1802, JBP, box 3, folder 6, item 11.
 23. For accounts of the candle works from 1754 to just after the Revolution, see BFP, box 25, folders 1-12.
 24. "Pictures of Providence in the Past, 1790-1820: The Reminiscences of Walter R. Danforth," ed. Clarkson A. Collins 3rd, *Rhode Island History* 10 (1951): 10-11.
 25. Hedges notes that Brown took advantage of a shortage of gunpowder, charging George Washington's army what the muster-master general called "a most exorbitant price" of six shillings a pound. Hedges, *Browns of Providence Plantations*, 1:219. Arms were forged at the family's Hope Furnace north of Providence, and perhaps also at the air furnace at India Point.
 26. There is extensive correspondence between the brothers over settling the disputed balances between John's firm and Nicholas's firm, both before and after Nicholas's death in 1791. It seems that the youngest brother, Moses—well respected for his integrity—sided with Nicholas. See Moses's 24 July 1792 letter in which he urged John to settle his debts for the sake of "family harmony" (BFP, box 52, folder 6).
 27. Jay Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade, 1700-1807* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 214-15; Coleman, *Transformation of Rhode Island*, 51-52. See also Alexander Boyd Hawes, *Off Soundings: Aspects of the Maritime History of Rhode Island* (Chevy Chase, Md.: Posterity Press, 1999), 194-95.
 28. See John Brown, Last Will and Testament.
 29. This and all subsequent information on the spermaceti candle works comes from Hedges, *Browns of Providence Plantations*, 1:89-121; BFP, boxes 25, 47, and 338; and JBP, box 1, folders 8 and 26.
 30. Hedges, *Browns of Providence Plantations*, 1:9.
 31. BFP, box 338, agreement dated 18 Nov. 1768. "Old tenor" referred to paper bills of credit issued prior to 1740 by the colonial governments or land banks based on British pounds and shillings. The real value of such bills fluctuated greatly, especially in Rhode Island, where large quantities of unsecured paper currency were issued. By 1768 old-tenor bills were worth about one-quarter the value of "new" bank bills. See Philip L. Mossman, *Money of the American Colonies and Confederation: A Numismatic, Economic, and Historical Correlation* (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1993), 93-103, and Hedges, *Browns of Providence Plantations*, 1:75.
 32. JBP, box 1, folder 8.
 33. McCusker, *Economy of British America*, 103, 237.
 34. BFP, box 338, folder 11.
 35. JBP, box 1, folder 2.
 36. After Nicholas Brown & Company lost over \$9,000 on its 1764 investment in a slaving voyage, John's brothers were never again involved in the slave trade. For perspectives on the slave trade and John Brown's continued involvement in it, see, e.g., J. Stanley Lemons, "Rhode Island and the Slave Trade," *Rhode Island History* 60 (2002): 95-104, and Rhode Island Black Heritage Society et al., *Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade: John Brown and the Colonial Economy of Slavery*, a pamphlet published by the Rhode Island Historical Society in 2003.
 37. Nicholas Brown to Hayley & Hopkins, 24 Nov. 1770, BFP, box 34, folder 11. Hayley & Hopkins served as London agent for the Browns from 1768 to 1775, arranging maritime insurance and handling the overseas sale of their oil. The letter requests that separate invoices henceforth be sent to John and Nicholas.
 38. Hedges, *Browns of Providence Plantations*, 1:284-85, 2:16.
 39. Information on the *General Washington* comes from BFP, box 546, folder 7; Hedges, *Browns of Providence Plantations*, 2:16-36; and Robert Grieve, *The Sea Trade and Its Development in Rhode Island and Providence Plantations* (Providence, 1902), 462-70.
 40. BFP, box 546, folder 7; Grieve, *Sea Trade*, 464.
 41. With ships in the range of 100 to 300 tons considered large in Providence at this time, the *President Washington* was a very unusual ship for this colonial seaport. Grieve, *Sea Trade*, 465.
 42. The *John Jay* continued sailing to seaports around the world, including ports in Russia and the Pacific, for thirteen more years, often returning with cargoes valued at more than \$100,000. *Ibid.*, 465-68.
 43. BFP, box 53, folders 1-9; JBP, box 1.
 44. BFP, box 47, folders 9, 17-20.
 45. See "Schedule of John Brown's Estate," item 38.
 46. BFP, box 53, folder 9.
 47. Lester J. Cappon, ed., *Atlas of Early American History: The Revolutionary Era, 1760-1790* (Princeton, N.J.: published for the Newberry Library and the Institute of Early American History and Culture by Princeton University Press, 1976), 26-27, 103-4, and Hedges, *Browns of Providence Plantations*, 1:41-43.
 48. Hedges, *Browns of Providence Plantations*, 2:282.
 49. Unless otherwise stated, all information on Nicholas's and John's distilleries comes from Hedges, *Browns of Providence Plantations*, 2:8-15; BFP, box 101, folders 4, 6, 9, 10; and John Brown, Last Will and Testament.
 50. BFP, box 101, folder 4.
 51. For the terms of employment for distillery superintendents, see John Brown to John Sheldon, 11 Aug. 1790, BFP, box 101.

52. BFP, box 101, folder 10.
53. John Brown to Thomas Poynton Ives, 22 Dec., 6 Nov., 13 Nov. 1794, BFP, box 53, folder 4.
54. Americans remained almost entirely dependent on European glass manufactories for bottles until the nineteenth century. According to a leading authority on early American artifacts, very little is known about colonial bottle making in America; using historical records and archaeological finds, he notes the lack of evidence for American glass manufactories and surmises that the majority of bottles found on colonial sites were imported from Europe, primarily England. Ivor Noël Hume, *A Guide to Artifacts of Colonial America* (1969; reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 60.
55. 1935 copy of letter, JBP, box 1, folder 18. Edward Dexter (1770-1860) began his career as a merchant in the countinghouse of his uncle Welcome Arnold. For reasons we may never know, he was not persuaded by Brown's letter and built a substantial Georgian-style house on muddy George Street. Dexter did, however, accept Brown's invitation to participate in mercantile voyages, and he went on to become one of Providence's most prosperous merchants. "Pictures of Providence in the Past," 91 n. 17.
56. JBP, box 1, folder 25.
57. Robert Emlen, "A View of Providence: The Explication of a Landscape Painting," *Rhode Island History* 43 (1984): 40, 42.
58. Cady, *Civic and Architectural Development*, 63.
59. Providence's population rose from 4,361 in 1775 to 6,380 in 1790 and then to 7,614 by 1800. See Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in Revolt: Urban Life in America, 1743-1776* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), 216-17; Price, "Economic Function," 177; and the 1774 Rhode Island census. Welcome Arnold Greene states that during the last decade of the century, "the southern and eastern part of [Providence] was growing faster than the western, having about two-thirds of the population." Greene attributes the growth of this more populous area of the town, "with distilleries, rope-walks, a glass house, and auxiliary trades there located," directly to the East India and China trades. Welcome Arnold Greene, *The Providence Plantations for Two Hundred and Fifty Years* (Providence: J. A. & R. A. Reid, 1886), 69.
60. Cady, *Civic and Architectural Development*, 83; Warner, *Providence Waterfront*, 7.
61. Summaries in finding aids to Brown Family Papers, "Records of Brown & Ives," 4.
62. BFP, box 47, folders 9, 17, 18, 20.
63. Cady, *Civic and Architectural Development*, 104, 83.
64. "In 1847 the New York, Providence and Boston Railroad was authorized to enter the city from the westward. . . . No sooner was [its connection with the Union Depot] completed, in 1848, than the through route from Boston to New York via India Point and the steam ferry was given up, and busy, bustling India Point became a comparatively neglected locality." Greene, *Providence Plantations*, 86. See also Stewart P. Schneider, "Railroad Development in Rhode Island during the Nineteenth Century," *Rhode Island History* 61 (2003): 39-41.
65. Cady, *Civic and Architectural Development*, 104-6, 157; Warner, *Providence Waterfront*, 6-10.

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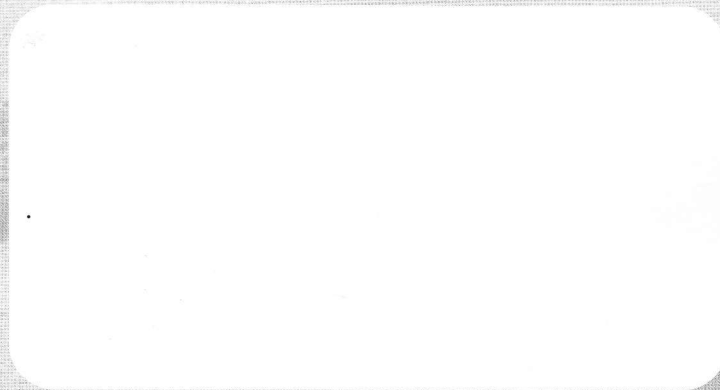
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