

A Story of  
Rhode Island  
Told In  
100 Buildings

HOW THE  
OCEAN STATE  
HAPPENED



CRUDEN BAY BOOKS

# INTRODUCTION

Imagine a group of settlers arriving in an undeveloped location. First come shelters in which to live and then structures in which to work and shop. There are buildings for worship and education. As the community grows government buildings are required. With prosperity comes places in which to spend leisure time. And each step along the way builds a story only Rhode Island can call its own.

That story is all around you in the work of those who came before you. In these pages you'll learn the explanations behind the quirks, the traditions and the secrets that make Rhode Island uniquely Rhode Island. The building invented in Rhode Island that transformed the military? Solved. Where to find hockey-style side-by-side dugouts on a baseball field? Mystery solved. The oldest merry-go-round in America with horses suspended from chains? Identified. The clubhouse where players in golf's first U.S. Open changed their shoes? Revealed.

Clam cakes...Quonset huts...diners...summer stock theater...the CCC...Roger Williams...frozen lemonade...roadside architecture...the U.S. Open tennis Tournament...American chateaus...Triangle Trade...the Paw Sox...shore dinners...King Philip's War...This book will have you telling stories like a native in no time.

Almost all of the selections within are open to the public, or at least visible from public spaces. So, if you haven't seen these landmarks in person, fire up your GPS and get out and see the story of the Ocean State standing in plain sight on Rhode Island streets!

**A STORY OF RHODE ISLAND IN 100 BUILDINGS...  
HOW THE OCEAN STATE HAPPENED**

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# Tomaquag Rock Shelters

Hopkinton  
prehistoric



Geologists know these outcroppings in the Tomaquag Valley as pockets in the Potter Granite Gneiss. For those who called this home as many as 28 centuries ago these ledges were a place that could be fashioned into a temporary refuge. This is the best preserved and documented rock shelter in the Ocean State. More than two dozen shelters have been identified in the area, five of which could easily have been used for human habitation. Some feature evidence of crude fireplaces. No other signs of occupation in the vicinity outside of the caves have been uncovered to indicate an organized community.

# Newport Tower

Newport  
???



At some point the early 1800s there was no one left living who could say for sure what the old stone tower in town used to be or how it came to exist in the first place. By the 1830s it became popular to speculate that Viking origins were involved. Over the years others pinned the construction of the 28-foot high cylindrical tower on seafaring Chinese or Portuguese adventurers. The secretive Knights Templar have been raised as suspects in the origin story since there are no definitive records. In recent times visitors from outer space have gotten credit for the fieldstone creation that looks nothing like any other structure from English colonial days. Science has gotten involved and radiocarbon dating pegged the origins to Rhode Island's first period of European settlement from the 1630s to 1680s. Historians have chimed in that it is likely the "stone built Wind Mill" mentioned in the 1677 will of the first colonial governor of Rhode Island, Benedict Arnold - not the vilified traitor but an ancestor. So far the open-arched tower that may have seen the entirety of Rhode Island European-based history unfold around it has still not given up its secrets.

# White Horse Tavern

Newport  
1652



There were still Pilgrims alive when English import Francis Brinley first built a home on this site. William Mayes expanded the two-story residence into a roomy tavern in 1673 and no other building in America stands that has been serving meals as long. The Rhode Island General Assembly regularly met here and Newport city council members ran a tab on the public dime. The Nichols family became innkeepers for the better part of 200 years at the turn of the 18th century and began calling their establishment the White Horse Inn in 1730. In the 1950s the Preservation Society of Newport County stepped in to restore the building, including the Dutch-flavored gambrel roof installed after British occupation in the Revolutionary War. Instead of a future life as a museum, however, the 300-year old building revved back to life as a privately owned restaurant, making the White Horse Tavern the oldest eatery in the nation by almost 90 years.

# Smith's Castle

Warwick  
1678



This is where Roger Williams set up his first trading post after getting land from the Narragansetts. He sold the business and property to Robert Smith to raise money to sail to England and formalize the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. Smith built a well-fortified house on the spot which became a center of conflict during King Philip's War between the British militia and the Pequots on one side and the Narragansetts and Wampanoags on the other. After more than a dozen years of fighting the forces of Wampanoag chief Philip were nearly completely destroyed and the Rhode Island economy in tatters. Smith's house was burned in the last years of fighting in 1676 and some 40 soldiers buried on the grounds. The present house was constructed in the immediate aftermath of the war that saw much of the colony rebuilding from scratch. Smith's Castle carries on as a house museum with echoes of some of the fiercest colonial fighting on the North American continent.

# Eleazer Arnold House

Providence

1693

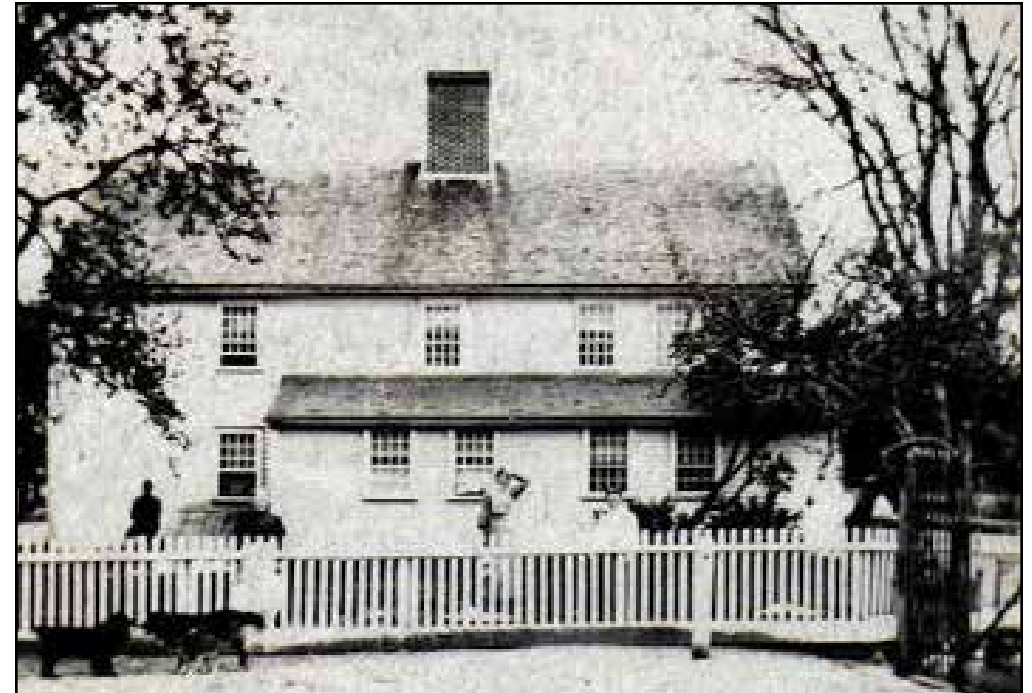


Although there has been considerable tinkering in its more than 325 years its defining characteristic - a massive, gable-filling chimney wall remains intact. The stone-ender was a rural English import that was popular in Rhode Island but so few remain that Eleazer Arnold's handiwork has been given National Historic Landmark status. Eleazer needed to build big - he had ten children and used his structure as a public house. The building has been in the hands of Historic New England for more than a century and has been restored to its 17th century appearance.

# Smith Appleby House

Smithfield

1696



This souvenir from the 17th century is one of the rare buildings with a direct lineage to one of Rhode Island's six original settlers, led by Roger Williams. Williams was said to be fortunate that his tiny band included John Smith, an experienced millwright. Meetinghouses could wait; the first public building erected in the Plantations colony was Smith's mill. He agreed to build it with his own money and that "every second and fifth day of the week shall be for grinding of the corn of the town" in exchange for the promise that no other competing mill would be allowed. The mill would continue in service for 180 years until it was destroyed during the construction of the Blackstone Canal. John's grandson Elisha raised the original core of this residence, a modest stone-ender. Many additions and alterations followed. Since 1976 the house and grounds, which include Smithfield's only surviving railroad station, have been owned and opened to the public by the Historical Society of Smithfield.

# Wanton–Lyman–Hazard House

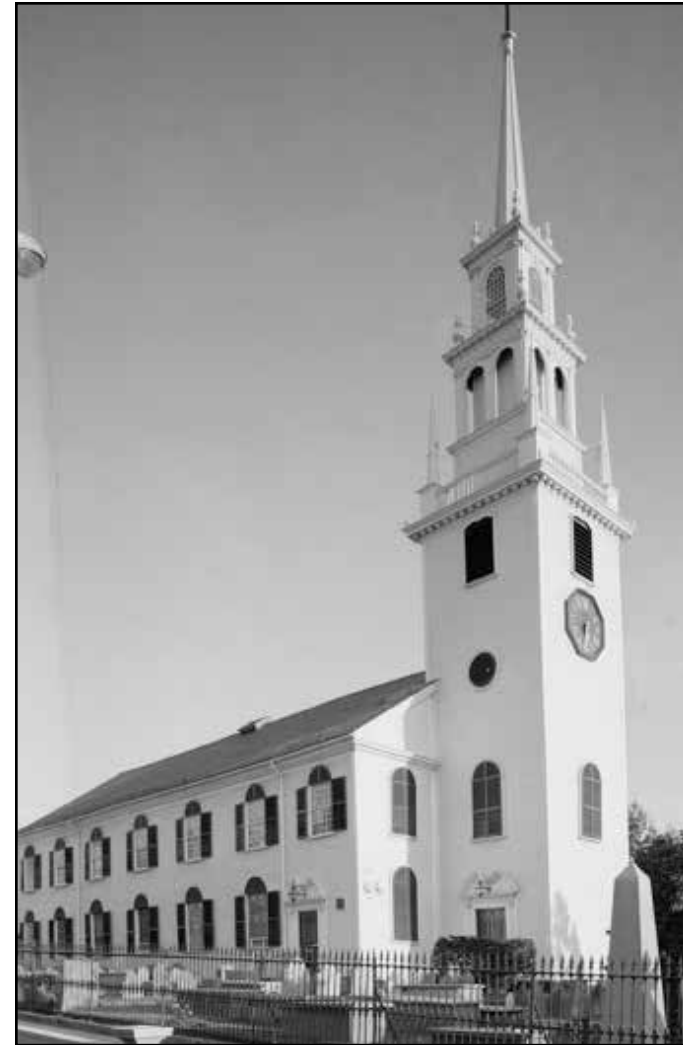
Newport  
1697



In a city of old houses, this is the oldest. Stephen Mumford, a local merchant, built a vernacular two-story home with a single room arranged around a central fireplace. Subsequent owners came and went, additions appearing commensurate with the circumstances of the residents. By the early 1900s the 200-year old house was abandoned. In 1927 the value of the deteriorating landmark was recognized by the Newport Historical Society. A sensitive restoration focused on interpreting the many styles that had come and gone in Newport since its construction in the 1690s, a date confirmed by a dendrochronology study of the timbers.

# Trinity Church

Newport  
1726



Trinity Church is the oldest Episcopal parish in Rhode Island, founded around 1698; its first meetinghouse followed in 1700. The current church building was conceived by local builder Richard Munday, who took his baroque styling cues from drawings of England's Christopher Wren when he rebuilt London after the city's Great Fire of 1666. The church is a dead ringer for the Old North Church in Boston, constructed just a couple years earlier. Trinity, however, was built entirely of wood. The church has been tapped by Hollywood in recent

years by Steven Spielberg for the slave ship drama *Amistad* and by Wes Anderson for the scout runaway romp, *Moonrise Kingdom*.

# Old Colony House

Newport  
1741



The Colony House served as one of five rotating state houses for the Rhode Island General Assembly until 1901 and today is the fourth oldest surviving state house in the United States. From this brick civic structure, constructed to replace a 50-year old wooden courthouse, came the news of the most important changes of the 18th century. The official death of George II and the ascendancy of George III was read here, and so was the Declaration of Independence on July 20, 1776. Rhode Island became the final state to accept the new republic's Constitution in the Old Colony House in 1790. In March of 1781 General Washington greeted French lieutenant general Count de Rochambeau in the hall. After statehood, with the capital now in Providence, the state legislature continued to convene here every other year until 1900 when the current state house - the Ocean State's seventh - came online. The Old Colony House reverted to its prior duty as courtrooms until a complete renovation by Norman Isham was executed in 1932.

# Stephen Hopkins House

Providence  
1742



Stephen Hopkins compiled quite the resume while living in this house - four terms as colonial governor, three stints as Chief Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court, first chancellor of Brown University, signer of the Declaration of Independence... The house was moved in 1809 and again in 1928 to its present location - moving houses was a common practice before the age of electrical wiring and indoor plumbing. The only building associated with a Rhode Island founding father was meticulously restored by Brown professor and architect Norman Isham, a pioneer in the chronicling and preservation of early American architecture. Some two dozen pre-Revolution Ocean State treasures owe their existence to Isham's vision beginning in the 1890s.

# Hunter House

Newport  
1748



This was the house that spawned the creation of the Preservation Society of Newport County, the stewards of the greatest collection of Gilded Age mansions in America. Job one was as a residence for Colonial Deputy Governor Jonathan Nichols Jr., who died in office. Another deputy governor, Joseph Wanton Jr., moved in after that. Wanton picked the wrong side in the American Revolution and his property was confiscated in 1780. He is presumed to have died shortly afterwards in the Loyalist stronghold of New York City. Before departing Wanton transformed the house with strong Georgian exterior features and finely crafted interiors. William Hunter, a United States Senator, was the most prominent of subsequent owners until the 1940s when demolition seemed imminent. The Preservation Society mobilized to save the house and open it to the public.

# Glocester Town Pound

Glocester  
1748



Nothing says colonial New England quite like a stone wall. Some estimates say there are more than 100,000 miles of abandoned walls snaking through woods and old pastures, built with debris scattered from the last Ice Age. There was a time when the region was virtually deforested and every time a farmer cleared land there were stones to be removed. Often they were stacked willy nilly around the edges of the field but other times they were dry-stacked into purposeful enclosures with "two-handers" - stones light enough for one person to lift into place but too big to do it with one hand. The Glocester Town Pound was one such structure, built in 1749 and considered the oldest in the country. The walls are more like chest-high instead of thigh-high normally seen on pasture walls and an iron gate has been crafted into the 50-foot square enclosure. Cattle and horses that strayed off the farm were herded in here and kept for a short period of time until claimed by their owners for a nominal fee. If no one showed up the animals were auctioned off to a new farm. The golden age of stone wall building ended in the middle of the 1800s with a migration of labor into factories and the consolidation of small family farms into larger spreads.



# Redwood Library

Newport  
1750



In 1747 Abraham Redwood and 45 like-minded Newporters came together with a plan to make books available to the community. In America, only Benjamin Franklin in Philadelphia had beaten them to the idea. Redwood spent €500 sterling to import 751 titles from London to seed the collection. The library was opened on a subscription basis with lending to members only. Peter Harrison, brandishing formal training in Palladian architecture from England, contributed the library building, the first Neoclassical public building erected in the British colonies. Ezra Stiles, a pastor for the Second Congregational Church, signed on as Redwood librarian in the days before he drafted the original charter for Brown University. The Company of the Redwood Library and Athenaeum, as it has been known since 1833, continues to this day, still a members-only library but now with 200,000 volumes. The Redwood is the oldest community library in the country still lending books from its original building.

# Gilbert Stuart House

Saunderstown  
1751



Gilbert Stuart was America's finest portrait painter back in a time when that was such a big deal his birthplace is celebrated as a national shrine. There was nothing particularly formative about Gilbert's life here - his family moved to Newport when he was just six years old. Almost as important as Stuart's artistic skills was his winning way with subjects who had to sit for portraits for hours upon hours. Stuart completed more than 1,000 portraits, including each of the first six Presidents, before his death in 1828 at the age of 72. His father constructed the building to house not only the Stuart family but a water-powered snuff mill. In 1930, after nearly two centuries as a private residence and tavern, the house was brought back to its colonial appearance and the mill restored. The property - with reproductions of some of Stuart's greatest hits on prominent display - has been a museum ever since.

# Brick Market

Newport  
1762



Peter Harrison drew up the plans for many of Newport's best 18th century buildings. For the town market place in 1762 Harrison reproduced the Old Somerset House in London using brick instead of stone. The exterior of the front of the building, three stories high, displays pilasters, decorative capitals and arcade columns topped with fine dentil work. Peaked and arched pediments alternate above each window. The Brick Market had many uses besides an open air farm produce selling place. In the 1790s the building was used for a hardware/novelty store and on the second floor was a theater and a printing office. By 1842 the town hall was located here. In 1928 the exterior was completely restored and two years later, the interior. Today it houses the Museum of Newport History.

# Old State House

Providence  
1762



The English Baroque building of red brick with rusticated brownstone and painted wood trim, completed in 1762, replaced the town's first County House, a two-story wooden structure that burned in a Christmas Eve fire in 1758. It was here on May 4, 1776 that the Rhode Island General Assembly renounced allegiance to King George III and so Rhode Island Independence Day is celebrated two months earlier than America's. The Rhode Island government operated here throughout the 1800s until the current State House on Smith Hill was completed to usher in the 20th century. The Old State House shuffled from the executive branch to the judicial branch with the Sixth District Courthouse hearing cases until 1975. Today the Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission makes the difficult calls in this beautifully proportioned building.

# Touro Synagogue

Newport

1763



Peter Harrison first emigrated from England in his twenties as a ship's captain but his dreams lay in building on the land. He returned to Europe and studied to be a master draftsman. When Harrison returned to Rhode Island a second time in his thirties he became recognized as America's first professionally trained architect. The Touro Synagogue built for Newport's Jeshuat Israel congregation stands at the pinnacle of his surviving designs in the Palladian style. The exterior is restrained but the classically inspired interior is ringed with Ionic columns that represent the twelve tribes of ancient Israel. This is the only Colonial synagogue still extant in the United States.

# University Hall

Brown University

1770



The no-nonsense name "College Edifice" sort of says it all for Brown University's first building. In the founders' original plan, the vision was that "it be a plain building, the walls of best bricks and lime, the door and window frames of red cedar." The choice of architect or builder was so inconsequential that there is no definitive record in the matter. There were some adornments added as the project moved towards completion and some have even suggested the College Edifice came to resemble Princeton's much-lauded Nassau Hall. American troops occupied the building during the Revolution and used it as a hospital. Afterwards it was concluded "that great injury hath been done to every part of it since taken out of the hands of the Corporation." The first of several major renovations was undertaken that have kept University Hall - the name was changed to reflect school expansion in the 1820s - as a centerpiece of the Providence campus.

# Spell Hall

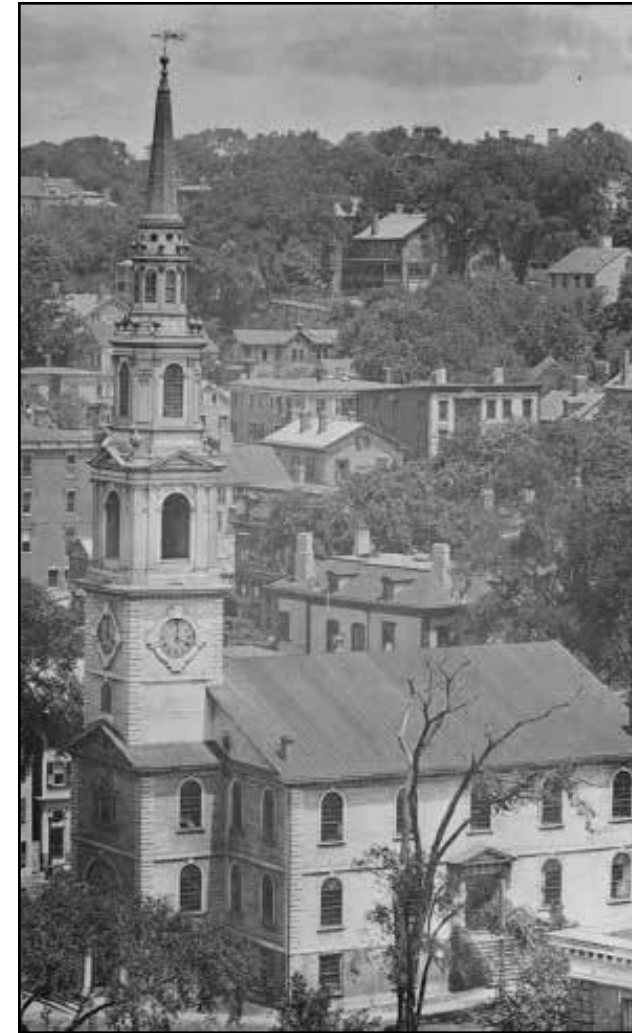
Coventry  
1774



The Greene family were among those driving the first stakes into the ground in Warwick. Nathanael Greene built this house when he moved to town to take charge of a family foundry. Despite a military background limited to helping organize a local militia, Greene was appointed by the Rhode Island legislature to command the colony's armed forces after the Battles of Lexington and Concord ignited the Revolutionary War. Greene rose to become George Washington's most trusted general and was sent to command the Southern Department of the Continental Army in 1780. Greene matched wits with General Lord Cornwallis until driving the British from Georgia and the Carolinas. He returned to Rhode Island after resigning his commission in 1783 but was heavily in debt. He headed back south where grateful legislatures had granted him land but died three years later at the age of 43. His homestead remained in the Greene family through the 19th century and is now restored to a museum.

# First Baptist Congregation

Providence  
1775



After arriving in Rhode Island Roger Williams held religious services in his home before converting his congregation into America's first Baptist church in 1638. Baptists in Rhode Island through most of the 17th century declined to erect meetinghouses because they felt that buildings reflected vanity. Eventually, however, they came to see the utility of some gathering place and erected severely plain-style meetinghouses. So the current Meeting House represented a dramatic departure from the traditional Baptist mores. It was the first Baptist meetinghouse, for instance, to have a steeple and bell. Designer Joseph Brown, a "gentleman architect," copied the five-stage steeple configuration from a plate in James Gibbs's *Book of Architecture* from 1728 to create one of the outstanding churches in New England.

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# John Brown House

Providence

1788



John Quincy Adams once gushed that this residence was, “the most magnificent and elegant private mansion that I have ever seen on this continent.” The man who built it in 1788 was 52 years of age and had forged a career as one of America’s great merchants; a slave trader, patriot and politician. John Brown, along with his brothers Nicholas, Joseph and Moses built a financial empire from a candleworks that extended into nearly every aspect of Rhode Island life. John played a leading role in the Gaspee Affair that helped trigger the Revolutionary War in 1775 and he was named a delegate to the Continental Congress, although he did not attend. Later he was elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1798, five years before his death. In 1976, the Brown family donated the house to the Rhode Island Historical Society for preservation.

# Slater Mill

Pawtucket

1793



In 1789, 21-year old Samuel Slater arrived on American shores with the plans for a mechanized cotton mill stored in his head, gleaned from years as an apprentice in British mills. In a few years he would have the first successful water-powered cotton-spinning factory in America up and running on the banks of the Blackstone River. On this side of the Atlantic Ocean Samuel Slater was the “Father of the Industrial Revolution.” On the English side it was more like the “Father of Industrial Espionage.” Slater’s first workers were young children, whose lives in the mill were strictly regimented while living in the factory village, a labor practice that came to be known as the “Rhode Island System.” When the United States Congress passed the Historic Preservation Act in 1966 creating the National Register of Historic Places Slater’s Mill is the first place they went to begin the register. By that time the mill had long been restored to its appearance at the time of Slater’s death in 1836 and had been a museum for more than a decade. In 1978 the Wilkinson Mill, constructed in 1810, was rebuilt with an eight-ton water wheel, the only one of its kind in America, and incorporated into the Slater Mill Historic Site.

# Watson House

Kingston

1796



As the Civil War was going badly for the Union, Abraham Lincoln signed into law one of the nation's most important public education bills. The Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862 provided funds from the sale of public lands to establish colleges "specializing in agriculture and the mechanic arts." The proceeds from the sale of 120,000 acres of the Kansas Territory went into Rhode Island coffers. But rather than start

a new school the money was channeled to Brown University to teach the classes mandated by the Morrill Act. It would be another quarter century before the state university sputtered to life with \$5,000 of federal money given each state to conduct agricultural research. The money was used to buy Oliver Watson's 140 acres and farmhouse for the Rhode Island College of Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts that was chartered in 1888. Momentum picked up with the passage of a second Morrill Act in 1890 and an agreement was engineered with Brown University to make the fledgling school - with its first class of 17 - Rhode Island's all-important Land Grant college. The two-story Watson place first saw employment as the residence for the school farm manager but was later adapted into a women's dormitory with space for 14 students. Its last official role was as a nursery school in the 1950s. The Watson House carries on as a museum in the center of the bustling University of Rhode Island campus; there's barely enough room to turn a tractor around at the old Watson place these days.

# Fort Adams

Newport

1799



Boasting one of the world's finest natural harbors, Newport was a bustling seaport as early as 1646, rivaling New York and Boston prior to the American Revolution. The first earthen defenses were constructed around 1700. After winning independence from Great Britain the site was identified as a key location in the first system of U.S. fortifications. In 1824 the Navy recognized Narragansett Bay as the best spot to "shelter ships during violent storms" and began developing the site as a naval rendezvous base. The fort was named for sitting President John Quincy Adams and when they finished working 33 years later Fort Adams was the largest coastal fortification in the country, designed to mount 468 cannon. The base continued in active duty through World War II. Now a state park, the strategic value of Fort Adams has receded behind its panoramic harbor views. The fort is now known for such non-military functions as hosting America's Cup yacht races and the Newport Jazz Festival.

# Brown & Hopkins Country Store

## Chepachet

### 1799



Few buildings loom larger in the American imagination than the country store, the place where farmers - and Americans were mostly farmers for much of its history - would gather to muster for militia practice, vote for local offices, and pick up mail. At a time when city stores specialized in one particular item country stores would carry just about anything needed for the home or farm. Ira Evans oped the first general store here in 1809 and it is considered by some to be the oldest country store in the United States. Certainly the creaky wood plank floors and potbelly stove help make the case. James L. Brown and William W. Hopkins were storekeepers in the 1900s, just two of a parade of owners who have rung up pennies at the cash register for old-fashioned candy in the Blackstone Valley store through the years.

# Washington Lodge No. 3

## Warren

### 1799



Freemasonry is the world's oldest and largest fraternal organization with roots reaching back to the medieval craft guilds of the 14th century. Washington Lodge #3 is the second oldest Masonic Temple in continuous use in the United States. George Washington was still in office as the nation's first President when dispensation was granted for the lodge on June 24, 1796. The Lodge Room continues in its original location on the second floor of the one-time Warren Town Hall.

# North Gate Toll House

Lincoln

1807



Colonial turnpikes were a community affair. Town governments usually constructed roads by dint of a labor tax - able-bodied males were required to put in time on road-building or be assessed a monetary penalty. Maintenance was spotty, left to the whims of the crop schedule since the labor pool was virtually all farmers. In 1682 this is how the Louisquisset Pike was laid out as the main road from Providence to Limerock. The first private turnpike was chartered in the United States in 1792 and toll-collecting companies became all the rage. Between 1800 and 1830 there would be more than 900 turnpike companies started in the Northeast, 34 in Rhode Island. Almost one-third of all companies incorporated in America during that time were turnpike businesses. The turnpike was a symbol of civic pride and it showed in the toll houses built at the time, such as the North Gate on the Old Louisquisset Pike. The building would later do duty as a hotel and a community center for the Grange, the country's oldest agricultural advocacy group. Today it is the headquarters of the Blackstone Valley Historical Society.

# Linden Place

Bristol

1810



Much of Bristol's history has traveled up and down the four-story spiral staircase of this landmark mansion since it was built in 1810 by the town's leading architect Russell Warren. The bustle in Bristol's gloriously deep harbor was in the notorious "Triangle Trade" that began with importing of slave labor from West Africa around 1700. Rhode Island soon took the lead in the unsavory business in the Americas and Bristol led the way in the colony. Rhode Island sloops would carry horses, livestock and finished goods such as rum to Africa where they would be used to purchase human beings who were shipped to the Caribbean and exchanged for sugar and molasses and coffee destined for Bristol. Linden Place's builder George DeWolf was at the heart of the Triangle Trade business. The stately proportions and powerful Corinthian portico of Warren's work represent some of the finest expression of Palladian architecture in New England.



# Corliss–Carrington House

Providence  
1812



John Corliss made his money in the China Trade and as a partner in a local gin distillery. He began this brownstone home in 1810 with high hopes but his businesses were crippled by a British embargo of East Coast shipping during the War of 1812. Reluctantly Corliss sold the house to 37-year old Edward Carrington who had just returned from a decade-long stint as the United States consul to China. Carrington added a third story and eye-catching double front porch while Corliss moved to a farm in Kentucky and struggled the final two decades of his life as a tobacco merchant. Carrington, meanwhile, enjoyed phenomenal wealth in building up Providence's largest shipping fleet after the war - 26 packets under sail. Carrington lived long enough to see the Old China Trade come to an end with the Treaty of Nanking at the end of the First Opium War in 1842.

# Bristol State House

Bristol  
1817



Bristol was in the original rota of five meeting places for the Rhode Island General Assembly. After the original state house on State Street became dilapidated the General Assembly ordered it sold and Warren jumped into the void in an attempt to wrest the county seat from Bristol. The town held on with the guarantee of a spanking new building on the Common. That State House was ready by 1817. Its architect is unknown but often attributed to the Bristol's go-to architect of the era, Russell Warren. Two decades later a major redesign and expansion took place that covered the Federal-style bricks with stucco scored to resemble large stone blocks in the fashionable Greek Revival style of the day. The General Assembly finally retreated to only Newport and Providence in 1854 and the building continued in use as a courthouse. Trials continued here until the 1980s. In disuse and decaying, the building was purchased for a single dollar from the State by the Bristol Statehouse Foundation which got everything back in order in time for a 200th birthday celebration.

# Aldrich House

Providence

1822



John Holden Greene was born in Warwick and came to Providence at the age of 17 in 1794 to apprentice as a housewright. After a dozen years he was the city's busiest architect. By 1830 he had designed more than 50 major buildings, including this house for Robert S. Burroughs. Greene's Federal-style homes often featured a trademark L-shaped plan and this three-story house eventually had three wings jutting into the backyard. Of the several residents of this handsome house the most prominent was Nelson Aldrich, who used this as his mailing address through most of his five stays in the United States Senate as an influential shaper of monetary policy. As for John Holden Greene, the final 20 years before his death in 1850 were unproductive, perhaps precipitated by financial reversals of his own.

# Slatersville Mill

Slatersville

1826



Slatersville is acknowledged as the first planned industrial village in the United States. Ten years after helping to establish the first successful spinning mill in America in 1793, Samuel Slater was eager to set out on his own. His brother John scoured the countryside for a location for the new enterprise and settled on Branch River where a few water-powered mills were then in operation. What the new site did not have, however, was people. Workers would have to be imported to the remote location and so the Slaters constructed not only the largest and most modern industrial building in America in 1807 but homes nearby for their workers, stores where they could buy supplies and eventually a meetinghouse where they could worship. That mill burned in 1826 and was quickly replaced by the current four-story stone structure. A wooden office building is the only structure that remains from the original complex.

# Blackstone Canal

Lincoln  
1828



It surely did not require many trips on rough early New England roads to convince folks that moving goods and people by water was a far superior option. The canal building age of the early 1800s was as hectic as the dot.com boom of the early 2000s. Monied investors in Providence set their sights on the markets of central Massachusetts and construction began on a canal in 1825. Benjamin Wright, fresh off shepherding the game-changing Erie Canal to completion,

brought the tricks of the trade to the Blackstone Valley. The route roughly followed the Blackstone River - once called "the hardest working river in America" - but only spent a handful of miles in the river itself. The 45-mile route climbed 451 feet and required passing through 49 locks; the trip from one end to the other required two full days. The canal opened for business just about the same time steam-powered locomotives began taking to iron rails. Boston merchants began energetically building railroads into the heart of the Bay Street to win back business from the Providence men. By 1848 the faster and cheaper trains had won and the canal closed. Most of the Blackstone Canal has become overgrown and some masonry sold away but much still exists. One of the best places to see the canal is in Blackstone River Park where the old towpath is now a trail and passes re-purposed mills, sluices, and canal milestone markers.

# Arcade

Providence  
1828



America's oldest surviving enclosed shopping center - closed since 2009 and redeveloped as micro-loft apartments - was built in 1828. The Arcade was designed by architects Russell Warren and James Bucklin to mimic similar malls that sprang up in Europe in the 19th century. The Arcade actually served as an indoor thoroughfare connecting Weybosset and Westminster streets. Boasting six massive granite Ionic columns at either end and elaborate iron railings lining walkways that ring its upper floors, the Arcade was an early example of Greek Revival architecture. The moneyman was Cyrus Butler who met initial ridicule for its remoteness from Market Square on the east side of the river but it was the beginning of today's downtown Providence.

# Providence Athenaeum

Providence  
1836



The Providence Library Company was founded in 1753 as an independent member-supported library. By the 1830s its burgeoning book collection demanded a new space and William Strickland of Philadelphia, the country's leading cheerleader of Greek Revival architecture, created its new home. Strickland drew up plans for this Grecian temple, the only building he ever designed in New England, which was completed in 1838. The Athenaeum served as the stage for much of the brief courtship between Edgar Allan Poe and Sarah Helen Whitman, considered one of the "best female poets of America." Greatly admiring the writings of one another long before they had corresponded or met, Poe, on a visit to Providence, saw Whitman for the first time in her rose garden behind her house on Benefit Street and immediately fell in love. The two were shortly engaged but the relationship ended in the library on December 23, 1848 when someone handed Whitman a note that said Poe had broken his promise and had been drinking again. Whitman immediately called off the wedding, rushing home and leaving Poe in the library. The two would never see each other again and Poe was dead within a year.

# Kingscote

Newport  
1839



This is the house that started it all. George Noble Jones' ancestors had built some of the first plantations in the Georgia colony in the 1730s. A century later he inherited plantations in northern Florida and a cash-producing wharf and mercantile property in Savannah. As he assessed his situation Jones concluded his best path forward would be as an absentee planter - spend winters in Savannah and summers in Newport. Jones hired America's best Gothic Revival style architect, Richard Upjohn, to design that summer "cottage" out on a remote farm path called Bellevue Avenue. In the coming years he would begin picking up seasonal neighbors as Newport's cachet as a summer retreat broadened. The Civil War scuttled Jones' dream set-up and the family left Newport forever. China trader William Henry King purchased Kingscote and it remained in the family for 90 years before being turned over to the Preservation Society of Newport County in 1972.

# Armory of the Kentish Guards

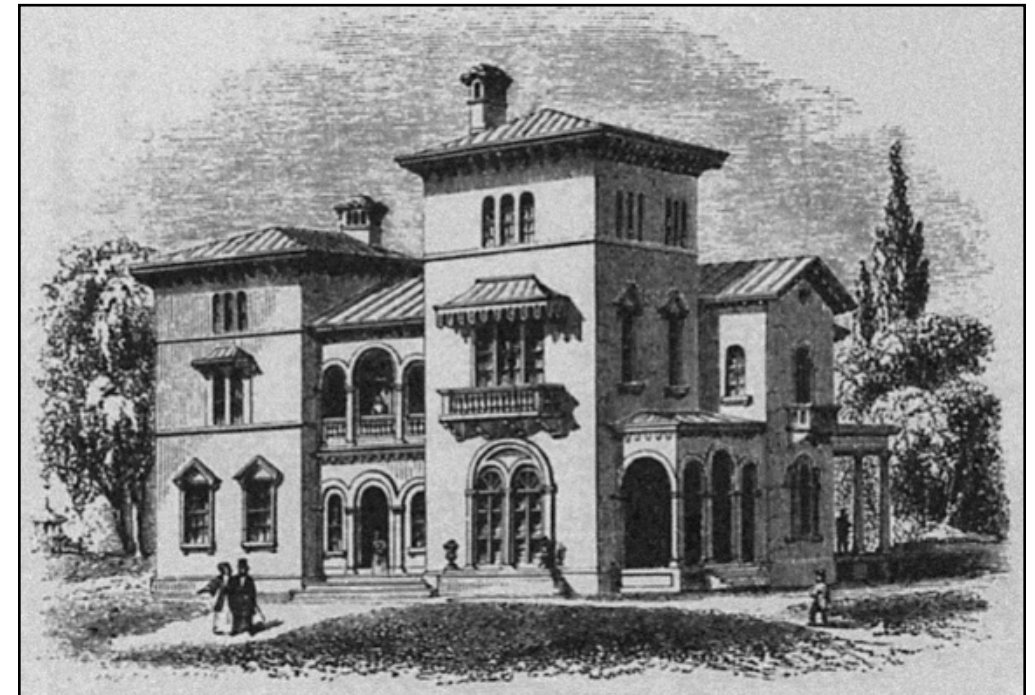
East Greenwich  
1842



In 1774, the year it was chartered, the commanders of the Independent Company of Kentish Guards voted to reject an aspiring officer, citing a stiff knee. The young man swallowed his pride and signed on as a private. The next year Rhode Island commissioned him a brigadier general and gave Nathanael Greene the command of its three regiments. The gimp knee did not prevent Greene rising to second-in-command to George Washington. The Greek Revival armory was built after the armed insurrection led by Thomas Wilson Dorr to change the Rhode Island electoral system in 1842. The Kentish Guard, the nation's fifth oldest chartered command, used it for meeting and drill sessions.

# Edward King House

Newport  
1847



Curious Newporters spent three years watching Edward King's new house go up. It was the largest house ever built in town, yes, but it was also one of America's first looks at the Italian Villa style, interpreted by celebrated architect Richard Upjohn. King poured the money he accumulated in the China Trade into Newport real estate and owned more land than anyone else. He is given the most credit for transforming the farmlands of the southern shores of Newport into the world-famous Ocean Drive by converting farmhouses into villas and renting them out to summer visitors. King replaced a privately owned farm road into Newport and gave the new drive to the city in 1857. Other landholders soon followed suit. The King family had wrung enough living out of the villa by 1912 but its working days were far from over. Given to the City of Newport, it began a run as the public library and most recently has housed a senior center.