

**EARLY RHODE ISLAND
HOUSES: AN
HISTORICAL AND
ARCHITECTURAL STUDY**

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Early Rhode Island houses: an historical and architectural study by Norman M. Isham & Albert F. Brown

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NORMAN M. ISHAM & ALBERT F. BROWN

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HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL STUDY

BY

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1895

TO

WILLIAM CARPENTER, JOHN SMITH THE MASON

AND THE REST OF THE

EARLY CRAFTSMEN OF RHODE ISLAND

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PREFACE

THE present book is the result of much observation and study of the early colonial work in Rhode Island. Yet it can hardly be said to have exhausted even so small a subject as this would seem to be. Newport and the Narragansett country each deserve a book by themselves, and each needs more complete exploration than we have been able so far to give them. As far as the book goes, however, we claim for it considerable accuracy, and whatever may be the reader's opinion of the theories put forth in the text, he may rest assured that the drawings are veritable historical data. Every plan, elevation and section is based upon measurements of the house it illustrates; and the perspectives are made—two from pencil sketches made on the spot, the rest of the number from photographs.

We have thus personally examined, sometimes from garret to cellar, every house described in the text, and our thanks are most heartily tendered to the courteous owners and occupants who allowed us to explore, measure and sketch at our leisure, and often shared our enthusiasm. Every house in the catalogue in Chapter IX has also been seen or examined either by ourselves or by Mr. Edward Field, Record Commissioner of the city of Providence, who has worked much with us and to whom our thanks are due, not only for his exploration but for the keenness with which he has

run to earth the documentary evidence for the dates of the Providence houses. These dates we have merely stated, leaving the authorities upon which they are based for him to publish.

In the cases of the Newport and Narragansett houses we have no documentary evidence to show for the dates. Both the Newport and North Kingstown records are in such a condition that little can be learned from them. We have given conjectural dates for all these houses based upon the Providence work and upon the date of the Smith house, which we believe to be 1678-80.

Perhaps a word may be necessary on the meaning of some geographical names which are now much narrower than they were two hundred years ago. Providence in the sense in which it is used in this book means the whole northern part of the State, practically the present Providence county west of the Seekonk and Blackstone rivers. Warwick included the present town of Coventry; it was really the strip of land between Warwick and Gaspee points, running twenty miles inland. The territory which now forms the towns of Cumberland—the old Attleborough Gore—East Providence, Warren, Bristol, Tiverton and Little Compton, was part of the Plymouth Colony.

We hope that this work will be a help to the future historians of New England and that it will promote the collection of scientific data about the oldest houses in the original New England colonies, so that the vague descriptions of too many of our town histories may be supplemented by accurate measured drawings.

¹ If we include the "Pawtuxet Purchase."

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