



No. 28

March, 1956

Greetings to the 522 members of the Roger Williams Family Association. Since our last bulletin was sent out we have had the pleasure of meeting several of our members who had not previously attended any of our meetings. We hope that more members will be able to be with us on the first Thursday of each month at the John Brown House, 52 Power Street, Providence, R. I.

Did you know that a famous Rhode Island historical document hangs in seclusion on the 5th floor of Providence City Hall? It is the original deed transferring land from Canonicus, and allied Indian Sachems, to Roger Williams, founder of the city and state. For legal purposes, it is the basic document in tracing title of ownership to much of the land in the modern city. Historically, it is unique in that it carries the signature of Roger Williams and "ye marks" of two of the principal Indian chieftains.

Another rare historical document is an engraving found at the Providence City Hall, having a map, dated 1708, showing lots on the East Side of the city, with names of the original owners. A side note on the map says this was "Taken from papers of the ancient Harris Family, and I suppose this to be the original drawn by Andrew Harris, the surveyor."

Signed Moses Brown.

Our Association is planning to compile a booklet about Roger Williams and his memorials. Any pictures or material that we could use, and that members would be willing to loan, would be much appreciated.

HELEN S. BEDSON,

President

THE YOUNGER BROTHER

Robert Williams is one of the neglected early inhabitants of Providence. So far as is known he died childless, and, since most local history is written by genealogists and most genealogists aren't interested in persons who die sine prole, Robert Williams has been relegated to obscurity even more thoroughly than younger brothers of famous men usually are. In many ways he was a typical younger brother. When his widowed mother died in 1634 his older brothers Roger and Sydrach were abroad, Roger in New England and Sydrach in the near east, where he was a merchant. Robert was made executor of the will. He promptly fooled the money away, by dabbling in certain get rich quick schemes into which some London sharpies lured him.

Ten years later Roger Williams brought suit against the overseers of the will, trying to get his share of the estate. He never had any success, partially, he admitted, because his conscience wouldn't let him take an oath, which was a serious legal handicap.

Roger Williams had gone to London to get a patent for Providence Plantations; when he returned to Providence in 1644 he probably brought his younger brother with him. At any rate, Robert Williams appears in Providence about that time, and was assigned a house-lot at the southerly end of the town, about where Wickendon Street meets Fox Point Boulevard.

Robert Williams may have been a somewhat flighty youth, but he appears to have been an educated man, and Providence at that time was sorely in need of educated men. Robert Williams became almost immediately one of his brother's strongest political allies. Generally speaking, he was a man of capabilities in town politics. He could handle town meetings, as is shown by his frequent elections to the post of moderator, and he often wrote the official letters for the town to the neighboring colonies.

There is evidence, however, that he was something of a hothead, and he was sometimes in trouble when the factional fights broke out. Once, during the summer of 1648, he apparently went on a binge. The town records show that he was drunk when Benedict Arnold came into town and took possession of John Throckmorton's pinnace, and that the same evening he put the town to the charge of 12 shillings for "setting a needless watch". Apparently he was on something of a rampage.

Whatever his frailties, Robert Williams served the town well. When his brother Roger went to England to seek a charter in 1651, Robert was one of those upon whom the responsibility of running the town naturally fell, and he did a reasonably good job of holding the shaky government together.

One of the facts about Robert Williams which has always interested me is that he was the original owner of 20 acres of pasture in downtown Providence. He and his heirs would have been well heeled if he had stuck it out here.

But instead he sold the land and went off to Newport, where, in 1672 he was the schoolmaster. I'm not sure about it, but I think he was the first schoolmaster of record in the whole colony. If that's the case, perhaps he deserves to have a school named after him. After he got to Newport he was elected general solicitor—the equivalent of attorney general—of the colony for four years, in 1673, 1674, 1676, and 1680. After 1680 nothing is known of him.

DO YOU KNOW RHODE ISLAND?

On October 6th Miss Clara Pearl Dyer, our Vice President, gave us a talk on Rhode Island which included a quiz and some amazing statistics. She said that by reducing the number of square miles in Rhode Island to square feet, and dividing the result by the population of the United States, it will be found that each two five-member families can have a lot of land big enough for a two family house. As if this were not enough to impress you with Rhode Island's size, take the same number of square feet and divide it by the population of the world and find that each person can have land enough for a rocking chair. If you do not believe this, figure it out for yourself!

A RETURN TO ENGLAND

At our November 3rd evening meeting the Reverend Frank Crook gave an illustrated talk on his trip to Bristol, England to see his brother inaugurated as Mayor of that city. It was interesting to note the differences between English and American ceremonies, the English dress and rites being so much more colorful than ours.

CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON AND "CHRISTMAS GREENS"

At 12:30 P.M. on December 1st our Hostess, Mrs. Ernest Dyer, served a delicious luncheon to 46 members and guests at the John Brown House. The dining room and tables were beautifully decorated by our member, Miss Gladys Segar. Following the meeting, Miss Segar gave a talk on traditional holiday decorations. First used at pagan feasts and religious ceremonies, greens were a symbol of everlasting life, believed to possess mystical powers. Woven into the legends of many lands and people, some have acquired a sacred character with the passage of time.

MY EUROPEAN EXPERIENCES

On January 5th, 1956, Mr. Edward Bradford gave a resume of his travels in Germany, Holland and England. He had planned to tour these countries on a bicycle, but because of an accident and hospitalization in Germany, he had to continue his travels by bus and on foot. He was very much impressed by the courtesy of the European people and hopes to return again this year.

ROMANTIC BLUE WILLOW

At the February 2nd meeting, Mrs. Harold P. Williams traced the history and symbolism of the Blue Willow pattern and its variations from its origin in China as the "Rivers and Islands" pattern to its modern version. She related in prose and rhyme the story of the unhappy lovers, Chang and Koong-se and their final transformation into doves.

INDIAN AND PAISLEY SHAWLS, THE MINK COATS OF THE PAST

On March 1st, Miss Mary C. Whitlock of the College of Home Economics, University of Rhode Island, gave us a talk on shawls. She exhibited numerous colorful shawls and scarves, which were much admired. Her detailed account of the origin and manufacture of the different types was very interesting.

In Memoriam

MISS CELINDA E. BABCOCK	September 3, 1955
MR. GEORGE A. ELLIS	October 4, 1955
MRS. CHARLES E. HURDIS	October 9, 1955
MISS JESSIE H. HUNT	December 14, 1955
MR. EDWIN HARRIS	December 15, 1955
MRS. JESSIE W. PECK	December 25, 1955
DR. JOHNSON M. COX	January 27, 1956
MRS. ANNA UTLEY WILCOX	February 19, 1956
MR. OSCAR HARRIS	February 26, 1956
MISS MAY E. COUGHLIN	March 12, 1956

Oscar Harris, the oldest Rhode Island member of our Association who was a direct descendant of Roger Williams, had the title of Honorary Vice President conferred on him in 1951. At one time he was Treasurer of the Association and was very active in its affairs. He was born in Providence, R. I. on Feb. 10, 1868, the son of Henry W. and Fannie E. (Arnold) Harris. He had resided in Warwick for 80 years. On his mother's side he traced his line from Mercy (Williams) Waterman, fourth child of Roger Williams.

NEW MEMBERS SINCE SEPTEMBER 1955

MRS. OSCAR ALLEBAUGH (Susan Cranston), 140 Sinclair Ave., Providence, R. I.
 ALEXANDER J. BATTEY, 21 Keitch Ave., Skaneateles, N. Y.
 SYLVANUS HAILE BOWEN, III, 105 Trails End, Greenville, S. C.
 MRS. JOHN BRIER (Evelyn Chase), Brewster, Mass.
 MRS. ERNEST A. CHASE (Bertha D. Jordan), Brewster, Mass.
 FRANK G. CLEMENT, South Berwick, Maine
 ROGER WILLIAMS COOKE, 76 Woodbury St., Providence 6, R. I.
 MRS. ROGER WILLIAMS COOKE (Elsie Morriss), 76 Woodbury St., Providence 6, R. I.
 MRS. JESSE E. COTTRELL (Ida M. Colwell), 1732 Broad St., Edgewood 5, R. I.
 MISS GAIL HASLAM, 87 Columbia Ave., Edgewood 5, R. I.
 MRS. ALBERT E. HAYES (Fanny A. Colwell), 1732 Broad St., Edgewood 5, R. I.
 GUSTAVUS R. IDE, 2502 Pawtucket Ave., East Providence 14, R. I.
 MRS. GUSTAVUS R. IDE (Florence I. Thornton), 2502 Pawtucket Ave., E. Providence 14, R. I.
 MRS. WILLIAM JERRETT (Blanche L. Colwell), 1732 Broad St., Edgewood 5, R. I.
 MISS GERTRUDE W. JORDAN, 308 Benefit St., Providence 6, R. I.
 WILLIAM B. LEVET, 381 Mercer Road, Princeton, N. J.
 MRS. WILLIAM B. LEVET (Margaretta A. Smith), 381 Mercer Rd., Princeton, N. J.
 ROBERT W. MARKHAM, JR., 141 Shaw Ave., Cranston 5, R. I.
 MRS. ROBERT W. MARKHAM, JR., (Virginia C. Dyer), 141 Shaw Ave., Cranston 5, R. I.
 ROBERT WILSON MARKHAM, 3rd, 141 Shaw Ave., Cranston 5, R. I.
 MISS JUDITH ANN MARKHAM, 141 Shaw Ave., Cranston 5, R. I.
 KENNETH G. MILLER, 8617 Piney Branch Rd., Apt. 2, Silver Spring, Md.
 MRS. WILLIAM S. MULLINS (Elise Bowen), 315 Townes St. Ext., Greenville, S. C.
 MRS. ROBERT E. NELSON (Virginia M. Battey), 31 East Austin, Skaneateles, N. Y.
 MRS. JONES W. SEALE (Cynthia M. Williams), 1134 Jefferson St., N.W., Washington 11, D. C.
 MRS. CARROLL T. SHAW (Marjorie A. Horton), 6 Elam St., Wickford, R. I.
 MASTER GEORGE O. STEERE, JR., Box 133, Forestdale, R. I.
 CLIFFORD K. WILBUR, 107 Richard St., Cranston 10, R. I.
 MRS. CLIFFORD K. WILBUR (Ruth E. Williams), 107 Richard St., Cranston 10, R. I.
 REGINALD D. WHITE, South Berwick, Maine