Historic and Architectural Resources of South Kingstown, Rhode Island: A Preliminary Report

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

This report is published by the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission as part of the program set forth in Rhode Island's "Historical Preservation Plan," first edition (1970). Commission activities are supported by state and local funds and by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, under the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended in 1980.

Printing of this report was financed in part by the South Kingstown Historical Society. In addition the participation and review of members of the South Kingstown Historical Society has been important to the preparation of this report.

This document is a copy of the original survey published in 1984.
It has not been corrected or updated.

Since the original publication:
>additional properties have been entered on the National Register;
>some financial incentives referred to in these pages are no longer available;
>some new financial incentives are available.

For up-to-date information, please contact:
RI Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission
150 Benefit St.
Providence, RI 02903
(401)222-2678 www.preservation.ri.gov info@preservation.ri.gov

The Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission is your state agency for historical preservation. The Commission identifies and protects historic buildings, districts, landscapes, structures, and archaeological sites throughout the State of Rhode Island.

Cover Illustration: Washington County Courthouse (1775, 1876; 1329 Kingstown Road; #3-T) and County Records office (1857/58; 1331 Kingstown Road; #3-U). From c. 1890 photo by W. B. Davidson, courtesy of Rhode Island Historical Society.

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

PRELIMINARY SURVEY REPORT

TOWN OF SOUTH KINGSTOWN

1984

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION COMMISSION

150 BENEFIT STREET, PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02903

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

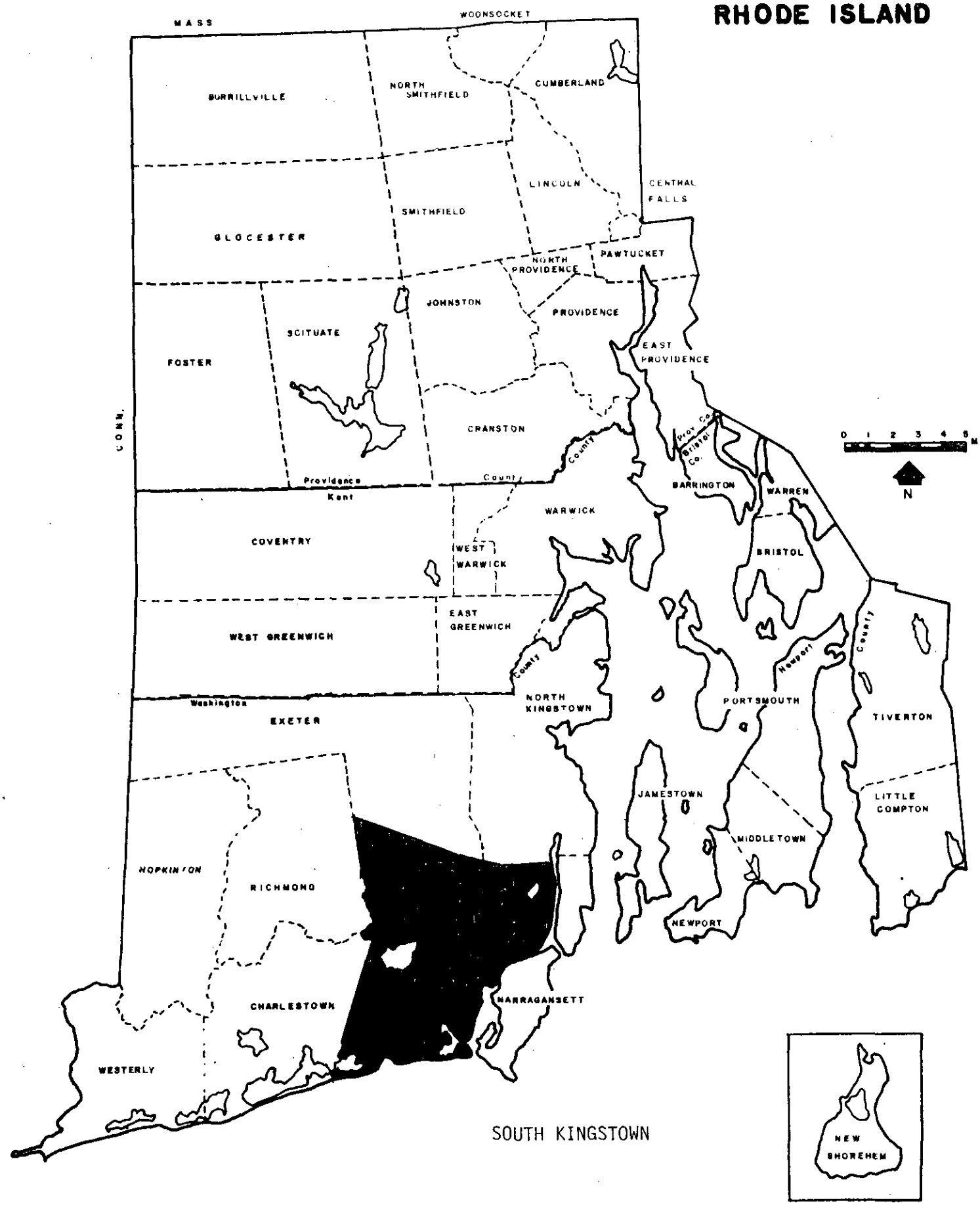
The Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, established by the General Assembly in 1968, is charged with the responsibility of safeguarding Rhode Island's cultural heritage. In order to provide an overview of the physical record of this heritage, the Commission has initiated a "broadbrush" or preliminary planning survey of the rural and suburban towns of the state The purpose of this initial inventory is to identify and record properties of historic and architectural significance in each town. Presently, archeological resources are treated through a separate survey effort being conducted by the Commission. The preliminary surveys, which are designed to provide a catalog of nonrenewable cultural resources, identify districts, structures, and sites eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (see Section II) and suggest priorities for historic preservation. This catalog of cultural resources, useful for a variety of planning purposes at the local, state, and national levels, is the basis for historic preservation planning.

Upon completion of the survey, finished maps are developed and a brief report written. The result is a preliminary document--useful until a full-scale, intensive, cultural-resource survey of the community can be completed. The Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission will conduct such intensive surveys if funds and staffing are available.

METHODOLOGY

The preliminary surveys are accomplished by driving all public rights-of-way in a given town and noting on an appropriate map each building or site of particular architectural, visual, cultural, or historic significance. Each property is photographed and recorded on a standard data sheet which includes a physical description and notations concerning history, use, condition, and architectural style or period. The significance of each property is evaluated in a preliminary fashion and properties are designated as being in one of three categories: properties already on, or determined by the federal government to be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places; properties recommended at the staff level for nomination to the Register; and other significant properties, some of which with further study and review, may be determined to be eligible for the Register. Known archeological sites are mentioned only incidentally in these studies to provide historical context. The major emphasis of the South Kingstown survey and report is on extant historic buildings, a list of which is provided in Appendix A.

Research was conducted at several libraries, principally the Rhode Island Historical Society Library and the Providence Public Library. Information on the National Register properties was obtained from the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission files. Several South Kingstown libraries and the archives of the Pettaquamscutt Historical Society also yielded information. Nineteenth century maps (as listed in the bibliography) were useful in associating individual properties with previous owners, and in providing insights about the growth and development of villages and communities. All known possible sources of information, including town and county histories, reports, gazetteers, and newspaper and travel accounts, were examined; they provided most of the information used in the report (see Bibliography). For South Kingstown, the most important source of information was Cole's 1889 History of Washington and Kent Counties. In addition, the Pettaquamscutt Historical Society and knowledgeable residents were consulted. Most helpful were Kenneth Mars, who reviewed the original survey and the preliminary draft, and Margaret Shunke and William Metz, who reviewed the preliminary draft and provided useful comments and data. Caleb Davis identified difficult to locate properties along Post Road and in the Matunuck Hills; Mason F. Cocroft also led several field visits to the Matunuck Hills and obtained data on those properties and for the Watson Tract; Barbara Hale Davis was knowledgeable about the Matunuck-Perryville area; Mary Du Moulin helped identify properties designed by her late architect husband, Rockwell King Du Moulin; Sally Wilson helped in unraveling some Hazard family "knots" in the Peace Dale area; and Kevin Munroe also contributed some items used in the report. Historical Preservation Commission staff who reviewed and contributed to this report include Antoinette F. Downing, Chairman of the Commission, William MacKenzie Woodward, and Edward F. Sanderson. Archeologist Paul Robinson wrote the section on Native Americans. The Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission is also indebted to Town Planner Anna Praeger and the Town of South Kingstown for their cooperation, particularly their assistance in preparing a large scale map of cultural resources; to the Pettaquamscutt Historical Society for their financial support which made publication of this report possible; and to the many other unnamed individuals who assisted by providing information on their houses and property.


RHODE ISLAND
MASS
WOONSOCKET
BURRILLVILLE
NORTH SMITHFIELD
CUMBERLAND
LINCOLN
CENTRAL FALLS
SMITHFIELD
GLOCESTER
NORTH PROVIDENCE
PAWTUCKET
JOHNSTON
PROVIDENCE
SCITUATE
FOSTER
EAST PROVIDENCE
CONN.
CRANSTON
Providence County
Kent County
Prov. Co.
Bristol Co.
BARRINGTON
WARREN
0 1 2 3 4 5 M
N
WARWICK
COVENTRY
WEST WARWICK
BRISTOL
EAST GREENWICH
WEST GREENWICH
Newport County
NORTH KINGSTOWN
PORTSMOUTH
TIVERTON
Washington
EXETER
JAMESTOWN
LITTLE COMPTON
HOPKINTON
RICHMOND
MIDDLETOWN
NEWPORT
CHARLESTOWN
NARRAGANSETT
WESTERLY
SOUTH KINGSTOWN
NEW SHOREHEM

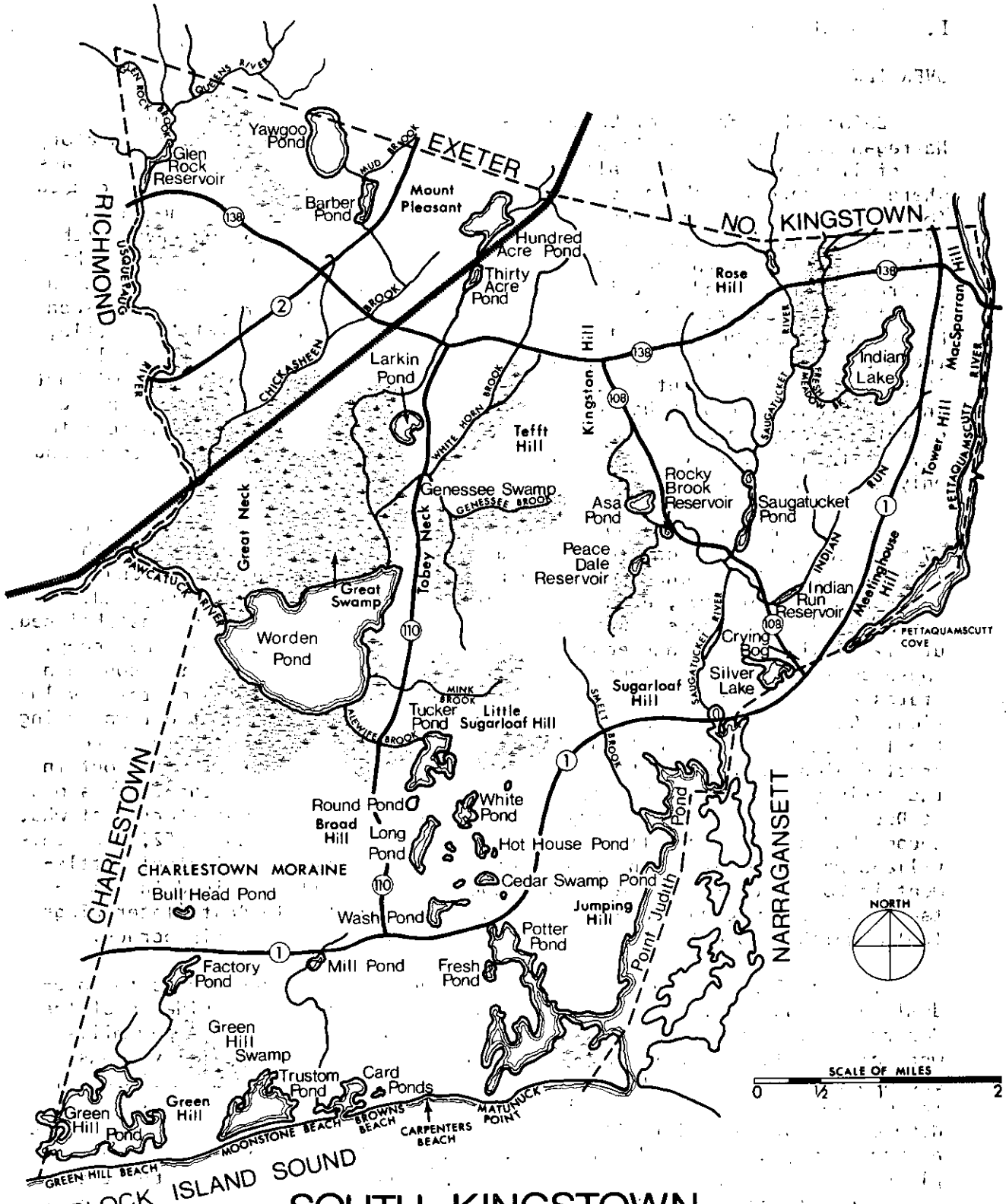
I. ANALYSIS

OVERVIEW

Before the arrival of European settlers, Native Americans--the Narragansett tribe--inhabited what is now South Kingstown. Their migratory way of life centered seasonally near the shores of the ponds and the oceans, where they caught fish and shellfish and planted crops, and in the secluded forests, which provided food from animals, nuts, and berries, and which afforded shelter in winter. The Narragansetts also carried on trade with other tribes and with Europeans. In 1657/58, a group of white men purchased a large tract of land that included today's South Kingstown, opening up the land for settlement. Two decades later, King Philip's War erupted between Native Americans and the colonists. After the war's most decisive battle, the Great Swamp Fight, which occurred in South Kingstown on December 19, 1675, and the subsequent death of King Philip, settlement proceeded without interruption. Although Native Americans had occupied the area for untold centuries, the impact of South Kingstown's first residents was limited; today, there are no readily visible traces of their activity in the town, and only a few Indian place names.

Some farms were laid out and some houses were built during the late 17th century, but the greatest period of land settlement occurred in the 18th century, when along the low-lying and water-oriented eastern and southern parts of town, an aristocratic society, unique to New England, known as the Narragansett Planters, evolved. Large estates were established, utilizing slave labor and economically based on horses, cattle, and sheep. These commercial plantations, which shipped their products to the southern states and to the West Indies, prospered until about the time of the Revolution. Other, smaller, farms were created throughout much of the town during the 18th century, and small mills, sawing wood and grinding grain, were erected along waterways at various localities. The Post Road, laid out in the early years of the 18th century, supported taverns and stagecoach stops at Dockray Corner and at Perryville. A small community was started at what became known as Tower Hill, and, especially between 1732 and 1752, when this village was the seat of the county courthouse it was the principal settlement in South County. After 1752, however, Tower Hill declined in importance when a new county courthouse was erected at Little Rest (later Kingston), which became the center of the town's intellectual aristocracy.

In the 19th century, agriculture was eclipsed by industry as the predominant economic activity in town. Peace Dale, under the guidance of the Hazard family, became the leading manufacturing center. Large new mills were also built in Wakefield, where commercial growth, especially banks and stores, transformed this village into a relatively large settlment by the mid 19th century. The mills at Rocky Brook were responsible for the development of a smaller village there. Smaller factories were constructed at Usquepaug, Mooresfield, Glen Rock, and Biscuit City, putting these places on the map as settled communities. Schools and churches built outside the villages served the dispersed rural population. A railroad, laid



SOUTH KINGSTOWN

PHYSICAL FEATURES

out through the northwest corner of town in 1837, by-passed all the villages, but eventually helped create the small community of West Kingston and provided transportation for students after the agricultural school and experiment station (later the University of Rhode Island) was established at Kingston in 1888. During the last half of the 19th century, several rural estates were created, mostly along Post Road. The beach areas, especially Matunuck began their development as summer resorts, and summer visitors began to frequent the town. The Narragansett Pier Railroad, built in 1876, served Peace Dale and Wakefield while shuttling passengers and freight between Kingston Station and fashionable Narragansett Pier (which was part of the town of South Kingstown until 1901).

In the 20th century, the automobile made the town increasingly more accessible from the state's major urban areas to the north. The college grew considerably; it was renamed the University of Rhode Island in 1951. Kingston remained a quiet, residential village, seemingly unmoved by the passage of time, while its importance was overshadowed by the development of Wakefield as the commercial center for this part of Rhode Island and by the removal of the county courthouse in the last decade of the 19th century. The beach areas underwent an "explosion" of summer houses and cottages, particularly at Matunuck and Green Hill. The nearby Matunuck Hills, sparsely populated since the 18th century, were newly discovered and became a fashionable summer retreat for Providence families. Farming continued as a minor occupation. Commercial fishing also continued as a relatively small scale enterprise, while recreational boating became popular during the 20th century, its activities abetted by the development of marinas along Point Judith Pond.

Material evidence of the Narragansett Planters, of the town's first settlement at Tower Hill and of all the early mills is almost nonexistent today, but the lives and activities of South Kingstown's former residents are remembered in Indian sites, villages, hamlets, farms, houses, mill sites, schools, churches and bridges. These, and other historical and cultural resources constitute important components of the town's heritage.

LOCATION AND POPULATION

South Kingstown, about 30 miles south of Providence and part of Washington County, is bordered on the south by Block Island Sound (the Atlantic Ocean). The town's boundaries with its neighboring towns are both natural and artificial. The Pettaquamscutt River and Point Judith Pond make up most of the boundary with the town of Narragansett to the east, while the Usquepaug River forms most of the boundary with Richmond to the west. Most of the western border with Charlestown and the northern boundaries with Exeter and North Kingstown are straight-line, man-made boundary lines.

South Kingstown is irregularly shaped. It is about 10 miles long from north to south, while its east-west dimension varies from about eight miles at the north to about six miles along the ocean. The town's 20,411 population (1980) is unevenly distributed. Most people live in the Wakefield-

Peace Dale-Rocky Brook area in the east central part of town, which contains about half of the entire town population. Kingston contains a sizeable number of permanent residents, largely in suburban tracts near the village proper, but much of its population is seasonal--students attending the University who live in dormitories and houses on or near the campus, which is just north of the village center. In contrast to the educational center at Kingston, the town's other seasonal residents are attracted by South Kingstown's recreational and climatic amenities--its lakes, ponds, and the ocean. Sizeable summer communities beginning with Snug Harbor along Point Judith and Potter ponds in the east, include the Matunuck Beach colony, Carpenter's Beach, and the relatively sedate and quiet Green Hill summer community. Smaller seasonal populations are scattered about inland--in the Matunuck Hills, along Indian Lake, and along the smaller ponds, and the town hosts summer camps for boy scouts, girl scouts, and the YMCA, among others. Outside the villages, most of the town's residents are dispersed throughout the town, especially along and near Route 1. The western part of South Kingstown, which includes the large and virtually uninhabited Great Swamp, and much hilly topography, is relatively sparsely populated.

TRANSPORTATION

Route 1, known by several names and approximately following the path of the old Post Road laid out in the early 18th century, crosses the eastern and southern parts of South Kingstown. A new section of highway--the Oliver Hazard Perry Highway--was built in the early and mid 20th century, bypassing Wakefield and Perryville. An easily-traversed highway, it carries large volumes of traffic in summer as part of the expressway link between the Providence metropolitan area and the Narragansett and South Kingstown shore areas. Route 138, a major east-west artery in southern Rhode Island, connects I-95 in Richmond to the west with Newport to the east. The section of Route 138 between Kingston and Route 1 at MacSparron Hill, known locally as Mooresfield Road, is heavily used by University of Rhode Island students. Route 108, connecting Kingston with Point Judith, crosses Wakefield at Dale Carlia Corner, southern Rhode Island's largest shopping center; it is well traveled by university and local residents. The South County Trail, Route 2, a 1930s highway laid out across country, passes through the sparsely-populated northwest part of town. It carries a relatively light volume of traffic. Route 110, Ministerial Road, is a small, lightly traveled road, scarcely more than a country road; it also is used largely by university students as a direct route between Kingston and the popular Moonstone and Matunuck beaches.

The main line of Amtrack between Boston and New York crosses the northwest part of town, with a station at West Kingston that serves a small number of commuters. A limited bus service is also available.

GEOLOGY AND LANDFORMS*

South Kingstown's landscape, a complex interface of land, vegetation, and water, is a product of millions of years of geological formation,

*Refer to the Map of Physical Features following page 1 for locations.

weathering, and erosion and of the more recent transformation of the land surface by glaciers. Topographically, the town has several distinct areas. Between Route 1 and the ocean and Point Judith Pond is a flat or gently rolling coastal plain punctuated by several large salt ponds and lined by sandy barrier beaches. North of the coastal plain in the southern part of town is a belt of knobby terrain known as the Matunuck Hills, heavily overgrown with laurel and rhododendron and containing about a dozen, deep, clear, spring-fed ponds. About half of the town's granite-floored interior, north of the Matunuck Hills and west of Tower Hill Road, is an area of swamps and hills, interspersed with a few flatter, more habitable areas. A steep escarpment about 100 feet high and known variously as MacSparran Hill, Tower Hill, and Meetinghouse Hill, separates the more erosion-resistant rocks of the interior from the weaker rocks of the Narragansett Basin. The Pettaquamscutt River and Point Judith Cove lie at the western end of the Basin.

The land rises from the southern coast to the relatively low and broad northern hills. Mount Pleasant, at 322 feet above sea level, near the Exeter line, is the town's highest elevation. Nearby Rose Hill and Tefft Hill and several unnamed hills attain maximum elevations of from 221 to to 270 feet. Summits in the Matunuck Hills are from 150 to 200 feet above sea level.

Most of South Kingstown's interior is underlain by younger granitic material than the rest of interior Rhode Island. A medium-grained, pink granite formation, the rock was more extensively quarried in Charlestown and Westerly than in South Kingstown. Here, it supplied material for almost all of the building foundations for more than two centuries, and was used to build entire buildings, most notably several at the college at Kingston. There are several abandoned quarries in the town today.

Continental glaciers--vast ice sheets overriding the land-- of the recent geologic past, are chiefly responsible for South Kingstown's present topographical variety. The southward-moving ice mass carried large quantities of soil and rock which were deposited indiscrimantly over the land when the ice sheet melted about 11,000 years ago. In several places where the ice sheet remained stationary for long periods of time while ice movement continued to carry forward boulders, soil, clay, and other materials, in conveyor-belt fashion, long ridges of earth, known as end moraines, were formed. The Charlestown Moraine, extending from Wakefield to Watch Hill, is an excellent example of this geological form. A sinuous ridge ranging in elevation from about 150 to 200 feet, it lies north of U.S. Route 1, which approximately follows its southern boundary. East of Route 1, the moraine has a more subdued topography, probably the result of post-glacial erosion. In places, large ice blocks were left standing after the glacier's reatreat. Subsequently covered up with material deposited by glacial meltwaters, depressions resulted when the ice chunks melted, creating a very irregular landform known to geologists as kame-and-kettle topography. Tucker Pond, Long Pond, White Pond, Cedar Swamp Pond, and Wash Pond are the largest of the many water-filled kettle holes in South Kingstown.

Before glaciation, rivers and brooks draining the interior followed relatively short and well-defined routes to the sea. Glacial deposits, particularly the creation of the Charlestown Moraine--essentially a massive earth dam--blocked the pre-existing waterways. Poor drainage north of the end moraine created numerous swamps and ponds, including Worden Pond and the Great Swamp. Because of glacial interference, the Pawcatuck River, only five miles from the sea where it leaves the Great Swamp, meanders almost twenty miles before reaching the sea in Westerly. All of the town's waterways are relatively short in length. Unsuitable for navigation, they were harnessed for power beginning in the early 18th century. The smallest brooks supported only grist and saw mills and small textile factories, while the larger and more even-flowing Saugatucket River served a number of 19th century mills that were the nucleus for several communites, ranging in size from Mooresfield to Peace Dale.

South of the Charlestown Moraine, vast quantities of glacial meltwater, heavily laden with rock and soil, created the coastal plain of generally sorted beds of gravel, sand, and clay. At that time, sea level was lower than at present. Over the thousands of years since the retreat of the continental glacier and the return to "normal" sea levels, the outwash deposits were worked and reworked repeatedly by storms, tides, and currents, to produce a long barrier beach, ponds, and marshes. South Kingstown's coastal ponds, or lagoons, include Green Hill Pond, Trustom Pond, and Potter Pond. Beaches along the gently curving oceanfront include Green Hill Beach, Moonstone Beach, Browning's Beach, Carpenter's Beach, and Matunuck Beach. For the first few centuries of settlement the beaches were used primarily as a source of seaweed and driftwood, but beginning in the late 19th century, their recreational potential was discovered and today a large summer population occupies the entire stretch of shoreline.

Originally forested, then cleared to a large degree for farming by Native Americans and early European settlers, much of South Kingstown has reverted to forest. Parts of the town--the swamps and the more rugged slopes and rocky areas--are still sparsely inhabited, including the large, state-owned Great Swamp, now a wildlife management area. The Great Swamp remains in a largely wild state, as do the Matunuck Hills. Settled by Europeans as early as the 18th century, and now an area of widely-dispersed summer houses, its rugged terrain, covered with Rhode Island's most extensive and luxuriant growth of laurel and rhododendron offers views of Block Island to the south and crystal-clear ponds below. The Matunuck Hills is an exceptionally fine and rare landscape.

A knowledge of South Kingstown's land forms provides insights into the town's settlement and land use history. At various periods of time, as perceived by the different groups of settlers, from the original inhabitants to the present residents, the town's varied natural resources have played a role in the town's history and are intimately bound with its cultural resources.

PREHISTORIC NATIVE OCCUPATION AND SETTLEMENT

Human presence in Rhode Island, and probably in South Kingstown, stretches back ten thousand years before Roger Williams was granted the land that became Rhode Island in 1636. Over this long period of prehistoric Native American occupation, substantial changes occurred in the physical environment and in human subsistence practices. The climate warmed, melting the last glaciers, causing sea level to rise as much as fifty feet, and transforming the landscape from spruce-dominated to deciduous forest. For most of this period, the Indians relied on wild plants and animals for their sustenance, using the coastal and interior areas at different times of year to take advantage of the seasonal availability of different foods and other necessities. During the late spring and summer, prehistoric people lived along the coast, harvesting herring and shellfish. As fall set in and winter approached, the same group would journey inland for dependable supplies of firewood and favored hunting grounds. By 1000 A.D. the Indians were beginning to supplement their diet with domestic crops. As agriculture was gradually adopted, corn, squash, beans, and pumpkin were cultivated.

The greatest environmental changes occurred during the Paleo-Indian Period, from 8000 to 6000 B.D. As the climate warmed and the glaciers melted, sea level rose, inundating the coastal plain rivers and forming Narragansett Bay. Spruce forests gave way to pine and later to oak. Mastodon, caribou, moose, and giant beaver inhabited these forests and were hunted by the Paleo-Indians. Sites from the Paleo-Indian period are rare because there were relatively few inhabitants at this time; there is only one such site recorded in Rhode Island, in Lincoln on the Wenscott Reservoir.

During most of the Archaic Period (6000 to 500 B.C.) the climate continued to warm, becoming even milder than it is today between 3000 and 1000 B.C. Sea levels continued to rise, reaching a level close to today's by about 3000 B.C. This stabilization of the environment allowed the formation of extensive tidal mud flats which supported the growth of abundant shellfish populations. Forests continued to change from the earlier conifers to a deciduous woodland which sheltered a greater variety of animals and plants, and thus could support a greater number of human beings. This increase can be read in the archeological record. There are more Archaic sites, located in a wider range of habitats and containing a far broader assortment of artifacts, than in the Paleo-Indian period. Among these artifacts are tools for hunting deer, birds, and small mammals, for preparing nuts and other wild plant foods, and for working wooden objects; a variety of projectile points, some probably the first true arrowheads, typically fashioned of quartz, quartzite, or green shale; and scrapers and drills, probably used to prepare hides or other materials for clothing or adornment. Ground stone gouges and axes and soapstone bowls appear for the first time.

Archaic sites are most commonly found on freshwater streams and saltwater inlets and coastal ponds. At these locations, spring runs of herring or salmon were harvested and shellfish of various kinds were gathered.

There are many Archaic sites in South Kingstown, around Potters and Trustom ponds and along fresh water rivers and streams. Most noteworthy is a winter encampment along the Chipuxet River, a 35-acre site protected from the harsh coastal winter storms and located to take advantage of both interior and coastal resources. At this site, artifacts representing household activities were recovered as well as ornamental objects and hunting equipment. The presence of these artifacts and the wide range of human activity they represent suggest a semi-permanent winter settlement, perhaps similar to the winter settlements observed by Roger Williams in the 1630s.

During the Woodland Period (500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.) the climate cooled slightly and the forest took on a hickory-chestnut composition. Sites dating from this period are larger than earlier sites because larger groups began living together, managing and harvesting the abundant nut crops or exploiting the coastal shellfish and spring runs of alewife and other anadromous fish. The oil from nuts probably was extracted and stored for the winter in clay pots, while fish were dried and packed, enabling some groups to live in the same area year-round. When the climate warmed again slightly later in the period, the growing season increased, allowing a predictable yearly harvest of corn and other domestic crops. These agricultural products helped ensure an adequate food supply and further encouraged year-round residence in one place, although inland hunting and gathering probably were continued.

Woodland period sites in South Kingstown are located in much the same places as sites from the earlier Archaic period. The presence of shell and grit-tempered ceramic vessels represent a technological change from the earlier soapstone bowls. This is accompanied by less diversity in the shapes of projectile points. Together, these two changes suggest a more specialized society, a specialization encouraged by the overall increase in population size.

Eventually the de-emphasis on seasonal movement to procure food and the growing emphasis on agriculture led to the establishment of permanent camps along the coastal plain and fertile flood plain terraces along the rivers. By the time of the first European contact, in the early 1500s, the Indians were settled around a number of semi-permanent villages led by chiefs called sachems. They were subjects of the Narragansetts whose domain included all of what is now Rhode Island west of Narragansett Bay.

The Narragansetts maintained other settlements in addition to a main village. These settlements were linked to the seasonal availability of different foods and other necessities. According to Roger Williams, each family maintained summer gardens on the coastal plain. Following harvest, inland hunting camps were established, and in the spring, families would move to locations along the rivers and inlets to harvest migrating fish. The major settlement, however, was an inland village from which all of these seasonal activities were coordinated and where the sachem probably resided year round. In addition to these activities, the Narragansetts were noted for their manufacture of shell and metal objects and their abilities as stone masons.

Prior to permanent European settlement in New England, Indian contact with explorers and traders resulted in the spread of diseases for which the native peoples had no resistance. Between 1616 and 1619 these diseases struck the coastal tribes of southeastern New England with great severity, depopulating whole villages and upsetting traditional tribal boundaries and alliances. The Narragansett Indians, who were not effected by the epidemic and were only lightly touched by the smallpox epidemic that followed in 1633-1634, became the dominant tribe in New England.

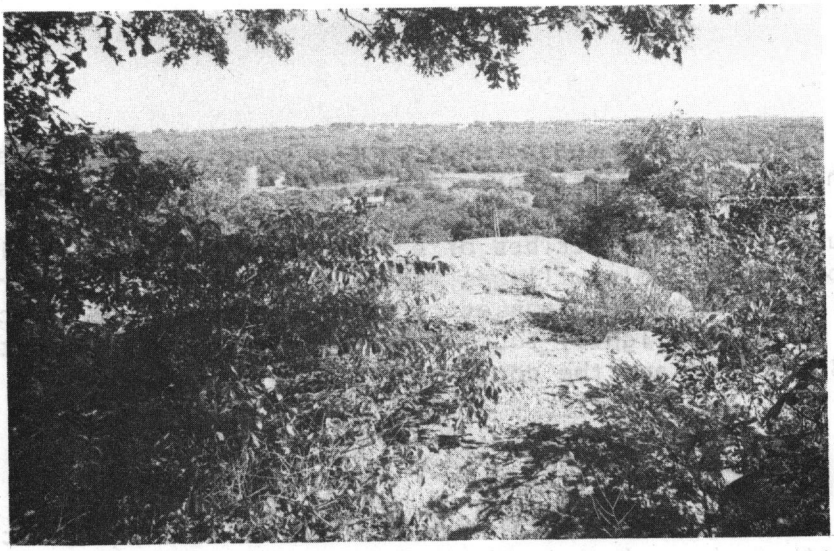
THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Although the initial contacts between Native Americans and Europeans were made through traders in the early 17th century, most of the interaction between the two groups was limited to several trading posts. European settlement of the South Kingstown area did not begin until after the Pettaquamscutt Purchase of 1657/58. Taking up the land proceeded slowly thereafter, interrupted by King Philip's War of 1675-76. Following the war, settlement proceeded unabated as the Pettaquamscutt proprietors built houses, established farms on large tracts of land, and laid out roads inland and along the shore.

Native Americans and Early Europeans: Contacts, Contracts, and Conflicts

Fort Ninigret, in Charlestown, used as a trading post by the Indians in prehistoric times, was occupied again in the early 17th century, soon after Dutch explorer Adrien Block explored the Rhode Island coast in 1614, and Dutch traders began exchanging cloth and arms for furs from the Indians. Because of the contact with Dutch traders, the Narragansetts became middlemen with inland tribes, who eventually became economic subjects of the Narragansetts. Narragansett dominance over adjacent tribes was confirmed after the Wampanoags to the east were decimated by a plague about 1620, and the Pequots to the west were defeated by combined Narragansett, Mohegan, and Colonial forces in about 1636. With a population of about 30-35,000, the Narragansetts became the largest and most powerful tribe in New England, and were reportedly the best farmers among the Atlantic seaboard aboriginies (C. Woodward, 1971). The land, cleared of woods for a distance of from eight to ten miles inland from the sea, was described as level and open country in a 1643 report to Governor Winthrop of Massachusetts. In 1637, Roger Williams set up a temporary trading post in what is today North Kingstown. Here in 1643, he established a permanent post, which, taken over by Richard Smith in 1651, became known as Smith's Castle, or Cocumscussoc. During the mid-17th century, a trading post was also established in a house built by Jireh Bull on the east slope of Tower Hill, near the Pettaquamscutt River.

In 1657/58, several Narragansett sachems--Quassaquanch, Kachanaquant, and Quassaquack--sold the land, loosely referred to as the Narragansett Country, that included South Kingstown, Narragansett, and parts of North Kingstown and Exeter. This, the Pettaquamscutt Purchase, and several later purchases, opened up the land for settlement. Each of the original Pettaquamscutt proprietors received choice tracts along the water, including Boston Neck and Point Judith in today's Narragansett, and at Matunuck Neck



Pettaquamscutt Rock: off Middle Bridge Road. (#46)

Quaker Burial Ground (Historical Cemetery No. 95 (1710): Tower Hill Road. (#131)

Dugway Bridge: Dugway Bridge Road. (#31)

and the Back Side (the area west of Potter Pond in South Kingstown and Charlestown). Other parcels, owned in common, were offered for sale, and one tract of 300 acres near Worden Pond was set aside for a minister's income. In 1665, the Narragansett Country became "ye King's Province". The present towns of South and North Kingstown, Exeter, and Narragansett were all part of Kingstown. The county, later known as Kings County, was renamed for George Washington following the war for independence.

The relationship between the Indians and European settlers had been strained from the days of initial European settlement. Continued friction between the two groups erupted into war when the Wampanoags, under King Philip, engaged in several skirmishes with white settlers, beginning in June, 1675, in what was then Plymouth Colony. Although they were the strongest Indian group in southern New England in 1675, the Narragansetts did not immediately enter King Philip's War, but attempted to maintain neutrality. The Narragansetts did, however, accept Wampanoag refugees which the sachem Canonchet refused to turn over to the United Colonies. The colonists, angered by this refusal, declared war on the Narragansetts in November, 1675. On December 15, 1675, Indians attacked and burned Jireh Bull's garrison house and 15 men, women, and children died. Several days later, on December 19th, the colonial forces reached the palisaded village of the Narragansetts, deep in South Kingstown's Cedar Swamp. In the battle of the Great Swamp. many warriors, women, and children died when the colonial army burned their palisaded settlement. King Philip was killed in August, 1676, terminating the war. The remaining Narragansett Indians followed several directions; some settled in Charlestown with the Niantics who had remained neutral during the war, while others moved west into New York state and Canada. In addition, others were sold into Carribean slavery, or worked locally for white families.

European Settlement

European settlement of South Kingstown had begun with the Pettaquamscutt Purchase of 1657/58. By 1675, a few houses had been built, some of which may have survived King Philip's War; others were built following the defeat of the Indians. By the end of the 17th century, inland farms were being established.

According to William Davis Miller (1933), houses were built at Tower Hill between 1658 and 1669. Originally established along the west bank of the Pettaquamscutt River, at the foot of Tower Hill, the settlement, gradually extending up to the hill's crest, became the community known as Tower Hill.

Large farms were established in other parts of the town. William Knowles was at Little Rest Hill in 1671; farms there averaged 500 acres. Robert Hazard built a house and was living near Little Rest before 1687. By the time he died, in 1718, he had increased his landholdings considerably and his family had become the largest amd most powerful of the Narragansett Planters. Robert's oldest son, Thomas, further increased the family landholdings. In 1698, he purchased more than 900 acres from Samuel Sewell, 300 acres on the west side of the Saugatucket River, near today's Peace Dale, and 600 acres on the "Back Side"--west of Matunuck Neck.

Roads were laid out from Tower Hill inland and north and south. Some of the early roads are today's Tower Hill Road, Saugatucket-Curtis Corner roads, originally Broad Road, leading to the ministerial lands; Rose Hill Road and the road leading to and through Little Rest; North Road; South Road; and Mooresfield Road. Along the roads and on the large farms, farmhouses were built. William D. Miller's, Early Houses of the King's Province (1941), includes drawings and brief accounts of about a dozen early houses, most with large stone chimneys at or near the end of the house. South Kingstown Quakers had a monthly meeting before 1699, and reportedly, a Congregational society was formed in the late 17th century also, but no meeting houses were erected during the century. Jireh Bull rebuilt his house soon after King Philip's War; but it later fell victim to neglect. Another old house, the Dale Carlia House, built in 1693, may have been the oldest house in the Pettaquamscutt Purchase when it was torn down in 1958 to make room for a bank building, but several early houses still stand in South Kingstown. The best preserved is the Samuel Perry House (#43)*, built some time between 1696 and 1716 in the Matunuck area. Two old Congdon family houses (#79 & 82-A), reportedly built during the last decade of the 17th century, both with massive stone chimneys, underwent extensive renovations in the early 20th century which transformed them in size, scale and spirit.

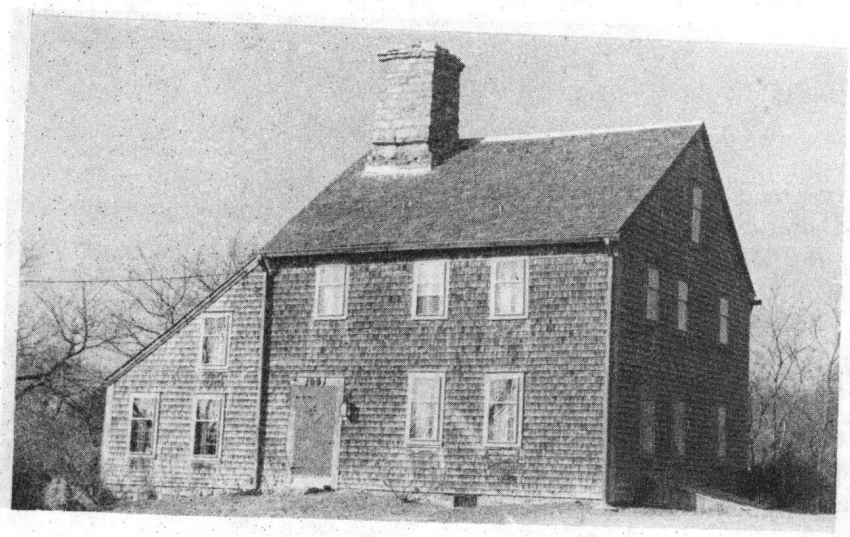
THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Agriculture was the dominant economic activity and way of life throughout the 18th century. Although many of South Kingstown's farms were largely non-commercial, family-run enterprises, a plantation system based on large tracts of land and slave labor prospered in the coastal parts of South Kingstown and adjacent towns for most of the century. Increased population and land settlement spawned several small communities, notably Tower Hill and Little Rest, each in turn having served as the county seat with its courthouse. Several places, including Usquepaug, Wakefield, Glen Rock, and Biscuit City had their beginnings around grist and/or saw mills, while several houses appeared in conjunction with stage coach taverns along the Post Road, which was laid out early in the century. Many houses erected in the town during the 18th century--good examples of Colonial and Federal era architecture--have survived to the present.

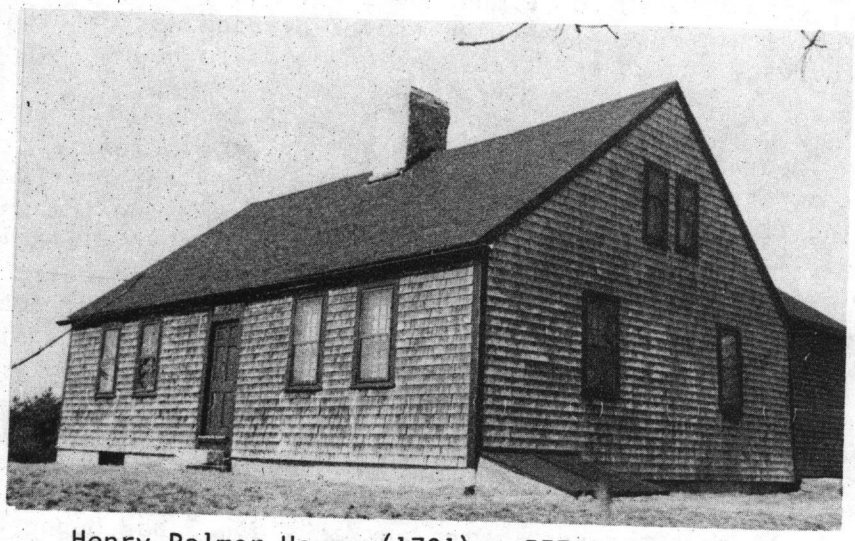
The Narragansett Planters

Through a unique combination of circumstances, particularly large landholdings, favorable climate, fertile soil, proximity to water, and slave labor, a landed aristocracy called the Narragansett Planters evolved in the southeast

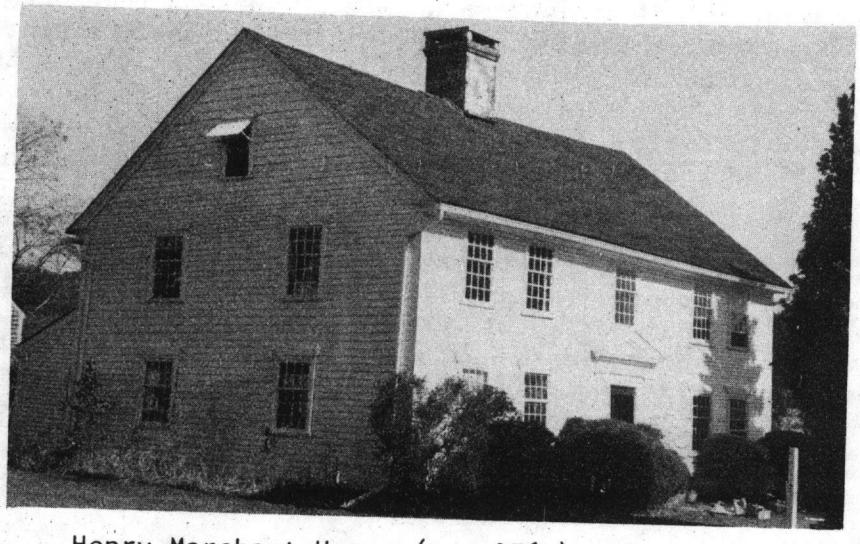
*Numbers in parentheses refer to the Inventory (Section III) and to the Map of Cultural Resources following page 126.



Samuel Perry House (1696-1716): 844 Matunuck Schoolhouse Road. (#43)



Henry Palmer House (1721): 557 Succotash Road. (#74)



Henry Marchant House (pre-1760): South County Trail. (#119)

corner of the King's Province (Washington County). Beginning in the 1660s and ending about a century later, with the peak period of prosperity between about 1740 and 1763, the Narragansett Planters were an aristocracy of stock farmers and dairy men who derived their wealth from the land; an anomoly in Rhode Island, this society had no parallel in the rest of New England.

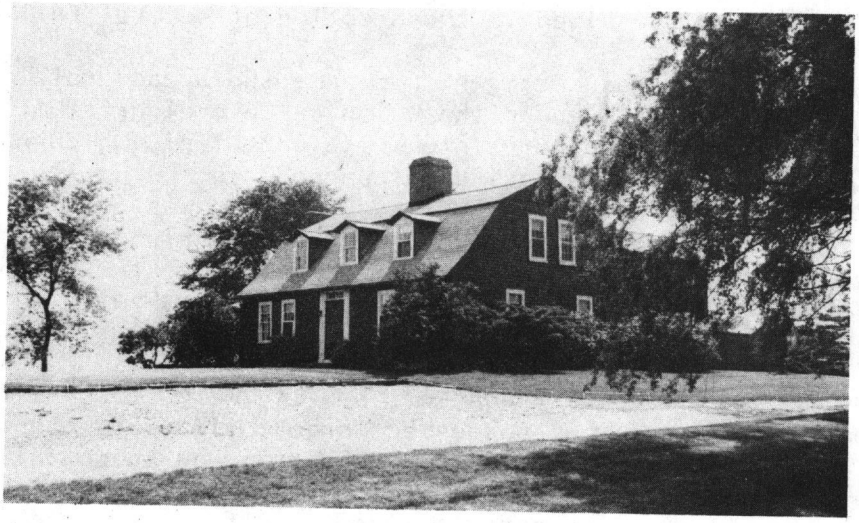
The southern coast of Rhode Island, surrounded and enveloped by water, enjoys the best climate for agriculture in New England. In addition to the tempering effect of the sea, which resulted in milder winters and less snowfall than in inland areas, the even distribution of rainfall assured good pasture lands. The productive lowland along tidal rivers and inland ponds, with rich soil and herbage, provided excellent pasturage for horses and grazing for cattle, while the upland areas, such as the Matunuck Hills, with numerous stone-covered slopes, was admirably suited to sheep. Proximity to water was also essential for relatively quick and cheap transport of agricultural products; the numerous coves were suited for docks which enabled direct shipment. At a time when travel by road was difficult, water also permitted easy access and transport of goods to Newport and elsewhere by ferry.

An important factor in the growth and development of the Plantion society was the ownership of large tracts of land along the fertile coastal plain, extending from MacSparran Hill and Boston Neck along the shore to the Champlain tract in Charlestown, a district about 20 miles long and two to four miles wide. By the mid 18th century, the Robinsons and Hazards had acquired large estates in the midst of the Pettaquamscutt country. Rowland Robinson owned a 3,000-acre tract centered on his estate at Silver Lake in today's South Kingstown.

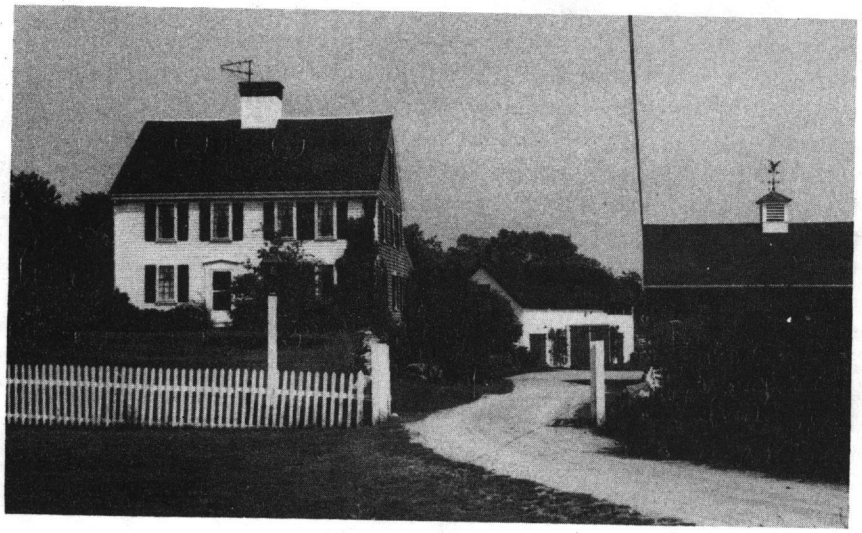
The princely estates, many thousands of acres in extent, required a large labor force, which was provided by tenants, hired hands, indentured servants, and some Indians held as slaves, but mostly by black Africans. It is likely that the use of Indians as slave labor began after King Philip's War; the transition to African slaves was easily accomplished because of the large number of Rhode Island vessels sailing the world's oceans, many actively involved in the slave trade. Slavery, both Negro and Indian, reached a development in colonial Narragansett unusual in the northern colonies. By the first half of the 18th century, South Kingstown, except for Newport, had the largest number of enslaved Negroes. According to the Census of 1730, three quarters of all the 1,648 colored slaves in the colony were in Newport and the Narragansett Country. In that year, South Kingstown contained 965 whites, 333 Negroes, and 223 Indians. By about 1748, South Kingstown had the highest number of slaves in the colony.

The mainstay of the Planter's economy was horses, and cattle and sheep and their by-products. John Hull, one of the original Pettaquamscutt Purchasers, took an early interest in horse breeding; by 1680, the Narragansett Pacer, which originated here and became the most popular horse in the colonies, was being exported. It became the favorite saddle horse because is had the least fatiguing gait over rough roads, and was extensively

William Congdon House/Brookfield (c. 1690, 1930): 159 Post Road. (#79)



Weeden Farm/Willow Dell (1753, 1871 et seq.): Post Road. (#100)



Rocky Meadows Farm (1754): 205 Post Road. (#87)

advertised in Charlestown, South Carolina, between 1734 and 1740. The Pacer was also in great demand in Cuba and in the French islands of the West Indies, where it was used to turn sugar mills, and in Dutch Guiana.

Next in importance to the Pacer were cattle and dairy products. Rhode Island dairy cows were exported to other colonies and to the West Indies, although most were retained for dairy uses. The cattle grazed in herds of 100 to 150 head on the largest estates. An excellent cheshire cheese, known as Narragansett cheese was made on each estate having a cheese house. It was produced in great quantities and widely exported to the colonies and the West Indies; much of it went to Boston. Butter was also exported, but in relatively small quantities, as were hides cured in several local tanneries.

Sheep, introduced into the stony upland pastures of the Narragansett country before 1675, made this the greatest sheep-raising area of New England. At one time, there were flocks of almost 1,000 sheep. The great production of wool resulted in the erection of several fulling mills in town.

The major crop was corn, which became the bread grain of the colony. Almost all the corn stayed in the colony. Several grist mills, one built as early as 1661, ground corn into white corn meal, which was used to make jonny cakes. Other crops included tobacco, rye, hemp, flax, used for weaving into linen, and oil from the seeds. Lumber was cut in the Cedar Swamp adjoining Worden Pond and floated to the northern shore of the pond, where, on a lot known for generations as the Landing, or Framing Lot, was hewn, cut, and framed. Most of the lumber was used for boats built in several shipyards along the Pettaquamscutt River.

The leaders of the Narragansett society were, for the most part, well-educated men, some of whom possessed large collections of books. For instance, the home of Reverend James MacSparran, an Episcopal clergyman, who settled here about 1733 at a home and farm known as The Glebe (#140), was the center of hospitality and intellectual life, where such visitors as Dean Berkeley were entertained. The Planters also went across the bay to Newport for recreation and social hospitality. Children were tutored, and libraries were collected. Horse racing on the beaches fox huntings, and dances were other forms of entertainment.

As a number of favorable conditions created the Narragansett Planters, a series of unfavorable circumstances brought an end to their opulent way of life. Some of the Planters were members of the Society of Friends, or Quakers, the first group to perceive the evils of Slavery and to work for an end to the system. Voluntarily at first, then through legislation, slavery was halted. The Negro population was increasing in greater proportion to the white population until 1756; after that, the situation was reversed, and an important labor source for the Planters slowly dwindled. Another problem was that the Narragansett Pacer had been exported in such great numbers that the breeding stock was depleted. By 1800, there was only one Narragansett Pacer left in Rhode Island (the breed only survived several years longer in Connecticut). Finally, the division of estates, curtailment of trade with

the West Indies, and fluctuating currency in the colony, also contributed to the decline of plantation output by 1763. The Plantation system was permanently laid to rest with the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. Although an important part of Rhode Island history and a unique way of life in New England for about a century, the Narragansett Planters left few material remains.

Early Settlements

Tower Hill and Little Rest, the major settlements of the 18th century, owed at least part of their growth to the successive establishment of the county court house in each community. Each place also supported a church. Several other small communities evolved during the century, but, unlike Tower Hill and Little Rest, they were sited along waterways whose water power was utilized in the operation of small grist, saw, and fulling mills.

At Tower Hill, at the junction of Post Road (now Tower Hill Road), Torrey Road, and Saugatucket Road, a Congregational society formed and met. Here the renowned minister, Samuel Niles, served from about 1702 to 1710. During the 18th century, the Narragansett Country experienced remarkable growth. In 1729, when King's County was incorporated, the Colony's judicial system was revised with each county to have a jail and its own court house where the General Assembly would meet on a rotating basis. Tower Hill was chosen as the site for the Kings County Court House, and the General Assembly met here for the first time in 1732. In the same year, a new Congregational church was erected. Dr. Joseph Torrey was ordained and began his service at Tower Hill in 1732; he remained here for 60 years as physician and pastor. The neglect of the court house at Tower Hill and agitation for a new court house led to the removal of the county seat from Tower Hill to Little Rest in 1752; henceforth there was little further activity at Tower Hill. A post office and a school house were built, but the Congregational church was sold in 1791.

At Little Rest, originally comprised of large farms, the first house lots and small holdings were laid out in the first decade of the 18th century. By 1752, when the court house and jail at Tower Hill had deteriorated to a bad state of repair, Little Rest was a thriving community. Several influential residents successfully petitioned the General Assembly to relocate the court house and county seat to Little Rest, citing the advantage of a more central location and promising that they would soon build "three good taverns" for the entertainment of those attending the courts. By the end of the 18th century, Little Rest was a well-established village, and for more than a century thereafter, Little Rest (later Kingston) prospered and its native sons, notably Elisha R. Potter, Sr., (1764-1835) were important and influential in town and state affairs.

Usquepaug, along the Queen's River, lies along the western border of the town with Richmond, and most of its buildings are in that town, but, by a quirk of geography, the river and mills built along it were included in the town of South Kingstown. A grist mill was erected about 1700; by 1706, a weave shop and a fulling mill had been added, but the community grew slowly,

if at all, throughout the 18th century. At first known as Cottrell's Mill, the place was renamed Robinson's Mills, then, in 1716, became Mumford's Mills, a name it retained for more than a century afterward.

Wakefield began in the early 18th century as a small mill village along the Saugatucket. A grist mill, a saw mill, and a carding mill were built at a site several hundred feet above the present dam and a handful of houses were erected along nearby Post Road. About 1765, a snuff mill was built. Dockray Corner, a small section of Wakefield west of the present village center, was relatively important in the 18th century. In 1745, a tavern and stagecoach stop were established at the Willard Hazard Tavern (#13-YY), and a store opened there in 1769.

At Glen Rock, a small community grew up around a grist mill and a saw mill which were probably erected in the early 18th century. Another small locality that came into existence in the 18th century was Biscuit City, where a small mill is mentioned in a 1795 deed. In 1716, a grist mill (#59) was built by Samuel Perry in the Matunuck area, north of Moonstone Beach. Unlike the other small 18th century mills, it never generated a settlement but today it is still in operation, grinding corn for jonny cake meal by water wheel.

Rural Settlers

While a few families were living in the grand manner along the fertile and hospitable coastal plain, most of the town's farmers were living at a subsistence level on smaller, often rocky and hilly farms dispersed throughout the town. These farmers grew crops, raised animals, and engaged in other activities mostly to provide for their own families. Some of the hard work they underwent is manifested today in the many miles of stone walls they built as they cleared their fields, and in many of the old cart paths and roads connecting the scattered and isolated farmsteads. These ways formed the pattern for the present road system in town.

Among South Kingstown's rural settlers were Indians, mostly descendants of the Narragansetts, and, in the latter part of the 18th century, Blacks. According to census data in 1730, there were 225 Native Americans in town. In 1782, 32 Indians were counted. (In 1790, they were counted with the Black population.) Blacks in South Kingstown numbered between 333 and 453 during the century. After attaining their freedom, many settled in the more remote interior sections of town, especially in the Matunuck Hills and along Ministerial Road. These freedmen included Ned Watson, a preacher; Guy Watson, hero of the Revolutionary War Black Regiment; Cuff Tory, a fisherman; and Sylvia Tory, the mysterious witch of Ministerial Road, who was the only former slave who could purchase her land.

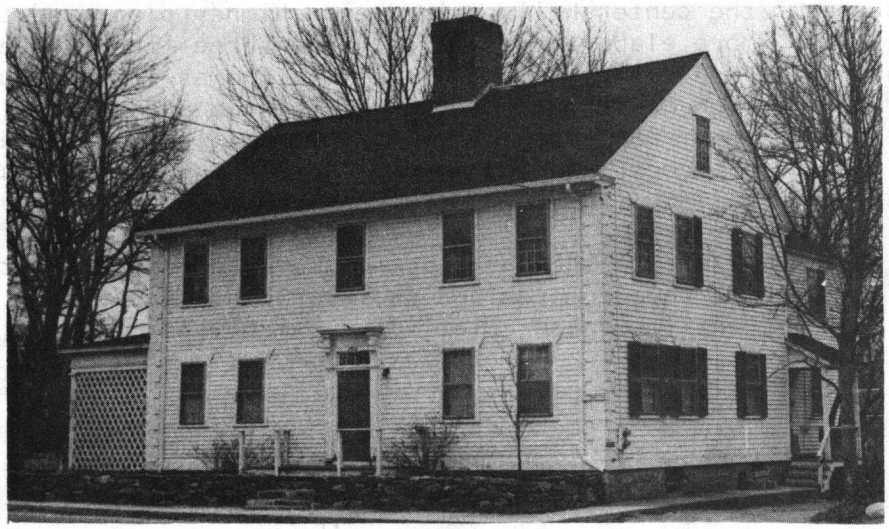
Colonial and Federal Era Houses*

The South Kingstown survey recorded 84 buildings dating from about 1700 to 1830. The mostly wooden, box-like houses built at that time were

*See Appendix A for a list of noteworthy architectural resources.

George Fayerweather House (1820); 8 Mooresfield Road, Kingston Historic District. (#3-Z)

Elisha Potter Reynolds House/The Homestead (1809): Kingston Historic District. (#3-E)



Wilkins Updike House (1819): 1276 Kingstown Road, Kingston Historic District. (#3-E)

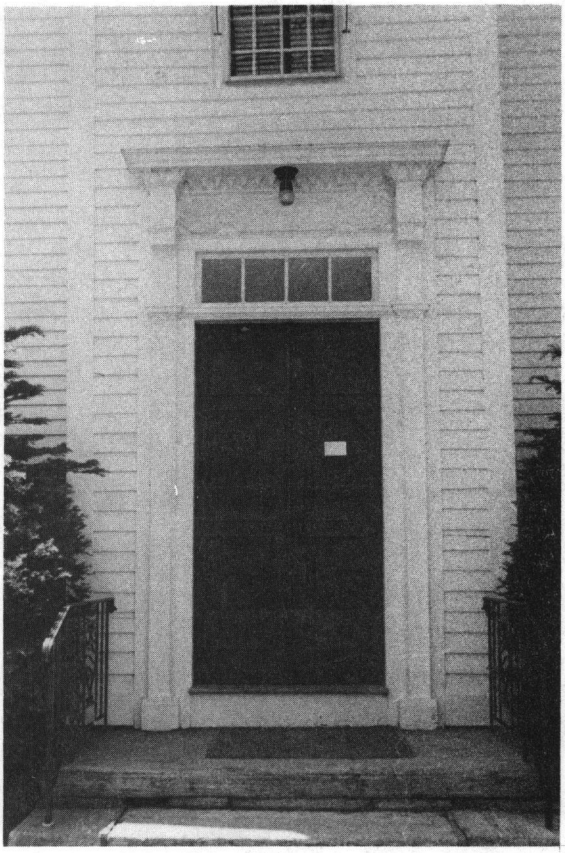
of massive post-and-beam construction, joined together by pegs. The most common types were the two-and-a-half story, gable-roofed structures built on an end-chimney 3-bay plan, or a more or less symmetrical five-bay scheme with a central entrance and a large center chimney. Kingston village has an important concentration of fine, large houses, most dating from the first decades of the 19th century. Good rural examples include the pre-1760 Henry Marchant House (#119) on South County Trail and the Palmer Gardner House (#67) on Mooresfield Road. The smaller one-and-a-half story version of this basic house type is also widespread throughout the town. These basic types formed the core of South Kingstown's domestic architecture. They remained an important part of the town's building tradition and comprised a significant part of its housing stock until well into the 19th century, largely defining the town's visual character. Depending on the age and scale of these early houses, they vary primarily in roof form, detail, and plan.

The gable roof remained a standard form throughout this early period, and in fact continues so in the present, but nine or more gambrel-roofed houses from the Colonial period have survived to the present time. The gambrel-roofed Perry House (#86), built in 1815, is a late example of this roof form, which was more popular before the Revolution.

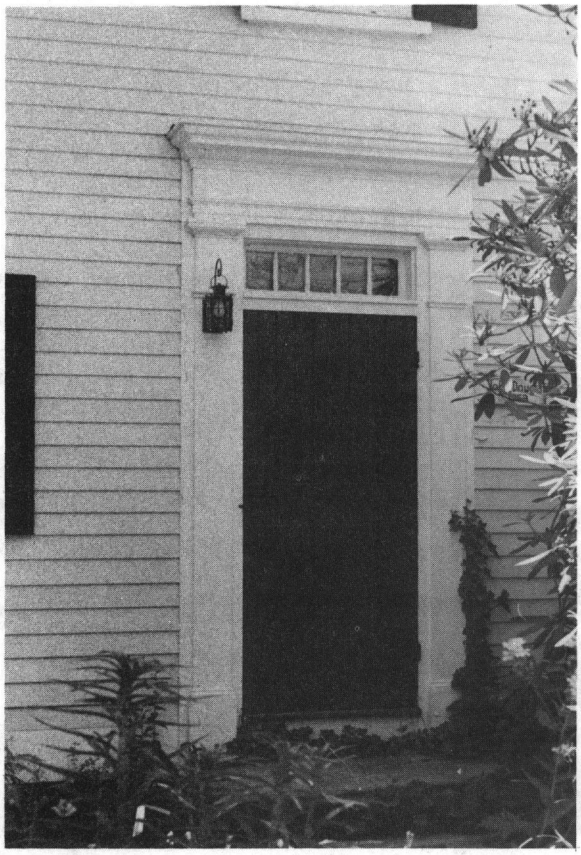
Detail on South Kingstown houses was minimal. The exterior focus, the entrance, usually has a plain surround, simply framed with flat pieces of wood. Others have only a row of transom lights, often five in number, above the door. Four houses in Kingston--the John Douglas House (#3-K), the Wilkins Updike House (#3-E), the Thomas P. Wells House (#3-S), and the Luke Aldrich House (#3-FF)--have rare, narrow and tall entryways, topped with a 5-light transom and a moulded cap. Very few of these Federal era houses have the fine entryways common to their urban counterparts. The most noteworthy are those at Shadblow Farm (#126), which has a pedimented entry with fluted pilasters and transom lights, and the Cottrell Homestead (#139), which has a fanlight in addition to its pediment and fluted pilasters.

As the center chimney remained standard for South Kingstown's early houses, so did the five-room plan. From a small entryway, or porch, large rooms were located to the left or right, with three rooms across the back of the house. Only a very few early houses recorded in South Kingstown made use of the center hall, paired-end-chimney plan, and they are among the larger, more elaborate examples. The three finest Federal houses in town are the Asa Potter House (#3-G), the Thomas Taylor House (#3-J), and the Like Aldrich House (#3-FF), all in Kingston and all built within two or three years of one another. Large, block-like structures, two have hip-roofed porticoes, and all have a roof balustrade composed of block panels alternating with decorated openings.

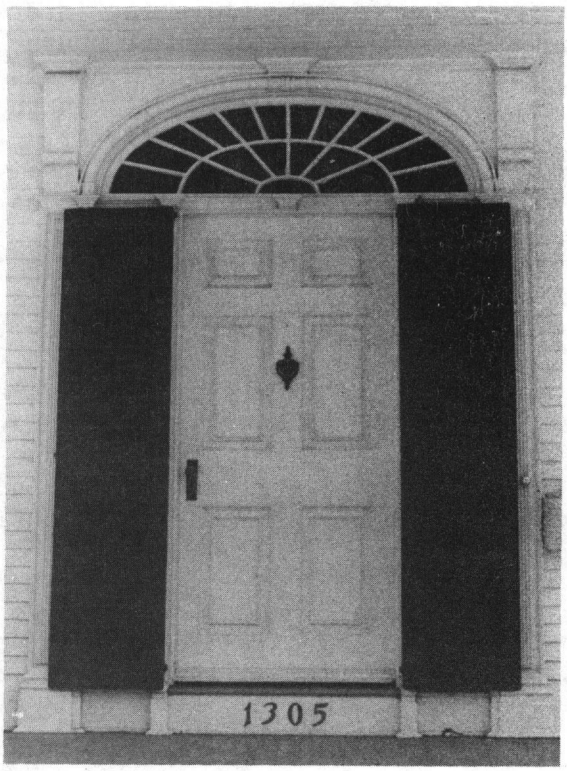
Although some of the early houses have undergone alterations and additions which have compromised their original appearance, many exist today in a largely unaltered and relatively well-preserved state.



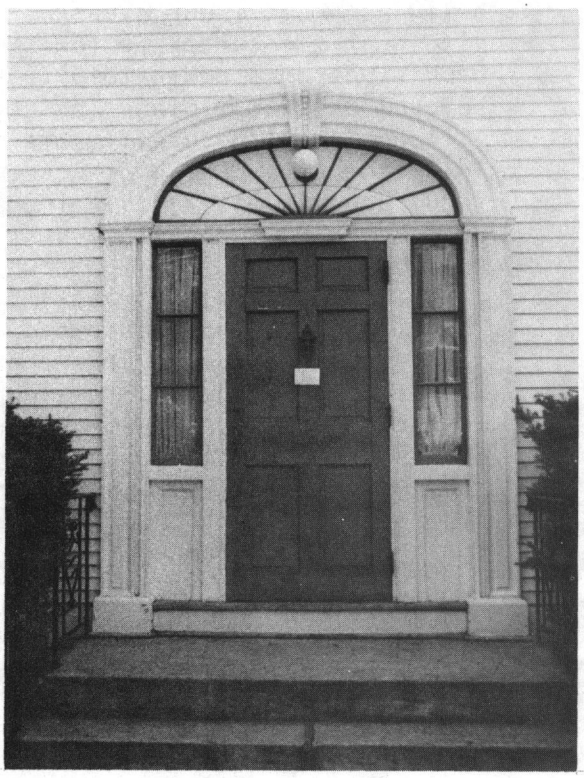
Kingston Congregational Church (1820); 1334 Kingstown Road, Kingston Historic District. (#3-V)



John Douglas House (1753); 1308 Kingstown Road, Kingston Historic District. (#3-K)



Thomas S. Taylor House (1827): 1305 Kingstown Road, Kingston Historic District. (#3-J)



Thomas P. Wells House (1832): 1328 Kingstown Road, Kingston Historic District. (#3-J)

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

1800-1840

By the early nineteenth century, Tower Hill had remained a small, community, whereas Kingston was entrenched as the town's most important village. By this date, the present network of roads had been developed. Some roads served as important highways, while many others were mere links between farms. Farming itself continued to be the mainstay of the economy, but small industries--saw mills, grist mills, and blacksmith shops--served the local population. Boatbuilding along the Pettaquamscutt River together with a little fishing, both relatively insignificant in the overall town economy, furnished some employment. The Industrial Revolution, however, which had started in Pawtucket with Samuel Slater's 1790 cotton mill, began to stir the town to a new awakening. While the small textile mills started at Green Hill, at Glen Rock, at Mooresfield, and in the Matunuck area, had little impact on settlement, manufacturing of cotton and wool on a larger scale at the textile mills of Usquepaug, Rocky Brook, Peace Dale, and Wakefield resulted in the development of small villages, or hamlets, in the early 19th century. These places later grew into sizeable communities. In 1837, the New York, Providence, and Boston Railroad, known locally as the Stonington line, was laid out across the northwest corner of South Kingstown, and a station was built west of Kingston, near Waites Corner Road. A stage line was established connecting the West Kingston station with Kingston, Peace Dale, Wakefield, and Narragansett Pier.

Little Rest (Kingston)

The Pease and Niles gazetteer, published in 1819, described "Little rest hill" as a small but pleasant village occupying a prospective and interesting site near the center of town, with about 25 dwellings, the court house, and a bank (incorporated in 1818). Between 1802 and 1832, 13 dwelling houses and several other buildings (as recorded in the inventory) were built in the village, architecturally some of the finest in town (see Appendix A). In 1819, the Pettaquamscutt Academy started; it became the Kingston Academy in 1826, and was enlarged in 1832. In 1820, the Congregational church was moved from Tower Hill to Little Rest, where a new meeting house was erected.

The Fayerweather blacksmith shop was begun in Kingston during this period. The blacksmith shop was owned and operated through the 19th century by two generations of the Fayerweather family, descendants of a freed Black slave, George Fayerweather, who was once the property of the Reverend Samuel Fayerweather of the Glebe. George's son, George II, was a blacksmith and carried on his trade in Kingston Village by 1809. In 1819, George II purchased land from from James Helme, Jr., and the blacksmith shop was moved to the north side of Mooresfield Road on the outskirts of the village, where it continued for the rest of the century.

Luke Aldrich, a cabinetmaker, was another craftsman who was active in Kingston early in the 19th century, and southern Rhode Island's first newspaper, the Rhode Island Advocate, was published in the village in the 1830s.

H. Eldred House (c. 1822): 150 North Road. (#71)

Shadblow Farm (1810): Tower Hill Road. (#126)

Thomas S. Taylor House (1827): 1305 Kingstown Road, Kingston Historic District. (#3-J)

Two important community leaders during this period were Elisha R. Potter and Wilkins Updike Potter, Kingston's most prominent and influential son, served as a member of Congress, as Rhode Island Commissioner of Education, and as a Rhode Island Supreme Court justice; he was an historian, author, and leader of an active intellectual and social community. Updike, who moved to Little Rest before 1819, was an author, historian, and lawyer who also served as a representative in the General Assembly.

Peace Dale

The first mill site at Peace Dale was along the Saugatucket River about 300 feet north of the present mills. Here, in the 18th century, farmers brought their flax to be manufactured into linseed oil (from the seed) and linen cloth (from the fiber). By the late 18th century, a water-powered fulling mill and a grist mill, owned by John W. Knowles and Joseph Congdon, were also operating at the site. In 1799, Rowland Hazard returned to South Kingstown from Charleston, South Carolina. He purchased the fulling mill in 1804 where he manufactured rolls of carded wool, and in 1811 he acquired the linseed oil mill. In 1814, Hazard purchased four looms, which were installed in the mill and were weaving woolen cloth by 1815. The consolidation of all the manufacturing processes, from carding to finishing, in a single mill, gave the woolen industry a fully developed factory system a year or two ahead of the cotton industry. In 1819, Isaac P. and Rowland G. Hazard succeeded their father in the business; by 1821, they had installed a power spinning jack and begun the manufacture of Kersey cloth and linsey-woolens. The latter were woven by hand until the installation of power looms in 1828. Peace Dale, named for Rowland Hazard's wife, Mary Peace, remained a small community during the early part of the 19th century. In 1823 it had only 5 houses, the mills, a store, and about 30 inhabitants.

Wakefield

In the 18th century, Dockray Corner, with its stagecoach stop and tavern, was the center of activity in the Wakefield area, but the development of the textile industry in the village created a new center of interest. About 1807, Joseph Congdon started a carding mill along the Saugatucket River. In about 1820, the mill property was acquired by James Robinson. The Robinsons retained the mill for several decades; they also built at least two stores, and erected several fine dwellings along Post Road west of the river. By 1822, Wakefield had 9 houses, a store, a grist mill, a saw mill, a blacksmith shop, carding mill, and about 60 inhabitants. In the next two decades, two religious societies erected church buildings--a Baptist church, built in 1830 near River Street, then the easternmost part of the village, and an Episcopal church, built in 1840 off the main street west of the river.

Other Villages and Manufacturing Activities

During the early 19th century, mill sites along the town's smaller waterways were developed or expanded, in some places creating small communities. Rocky Brook, under the Rodman family, was transformed into a propserous mill village. In 1821, Samuel R. Rodman purchased Rodman ancestral land here. By

the 1830s, at least two textile mills were in operation along Rocky Brook, and several dwellings had been erected for workers and others. A short distance downstream from the village of Rocky Brook, Joseph Hazard established a small axe factory in the 1830s, which he rented to Stephen C. Fisk and Stephen E. Wright in about 1835. At Usquepaug, a grist mill was erected in 1807, and a carding mill went up soon after, but the major impetus to growth in the village was the construction of the Independence Mill in 1836. It manufactured Kentucky jean cloth and employed several workers who lived in nearby houses. Upstream from Usquepaug, Barber's Mill, a small, remote locality, was the site of early grist and saw mills. Barber's Mill which later became known as Glen Rock, remained a tiny settlement in the early 19th century. Another small settlement developed at Biscuit City. Sold in 1808 to the South Kingstown Cotton Manufactory, the mill there manufactured cotton for 11 years before being converted into a carriage and wagon factory. In 1830, the mill was sold at auction and used as a grist mill thereafter. At Mooresfield, the site of an 18th-century grist mill and a later fulling mill, a 2-story mill was built in 1836.

Several other sites were developed for manufacturing textiles in the early 19th century. None of them ever grew large enough to warrant a place name; they consisted only of a mill and perhaps a house for the mill owner-operator. In the Green Hill area in the southwest corner of town, along two, small, sluggish brooks, two textile mills were erected in the early 19th century. A small cloth factory, identified as Browning's Factory on an 1831 map, burned in 1837. East of Moonstone Beach Road, another mill, perhaps built by a member of the Carpenter family, manufactured woolen cloth. In the northern part of town, Amos Wells built a carding mill around 1828, but it proved financially unsuccessful and eventually became a grist mill. Only one other structure, a house, was associated with this mill site.

Boatbuilding during these years occurred on a small scale along the shores of the Pettaquamscutt River. Only a handful of men engaged in this activity, and sites were few. The Dolphin, built in 1813, was the first of at least ten boats launched by Captain John Aldrich Saunders from the Tower Hill area. These boats were part of the larger Rhode Island coastal trade fleet that played a continuing and important support role in the state's economic life.

Agriculture and Fishing

Although South Kingstown had several villages, large and small, and several industrial sites, the dominant economic activity during the early 19th century continued to be farming. Pease and Niles' 1819 gazetteer noted eight grain mills and two clothiers works in South Kingstown, but deemed the town's manufacturing and mechanical employments inconsiderable. South Kingstown was a flourishing agricultural township whose prevailing gravelly loam soil, which was generally strong, fertile, and adapted both to grazing and grain cultivation, supported many excellent dairy farms and good crops of Indian corn, barley, oats, and rye. Dairying was the major agricultural interest. Fisheries, on the shore of Narragansett Bay (Narragansett was then part of South Kingstown) and in the salt ponds, were of some importance, yielding considerable quantities of

alewives, bass, perch, and smelt. Most of the fish were exported to Providence, Newport, and New York City.

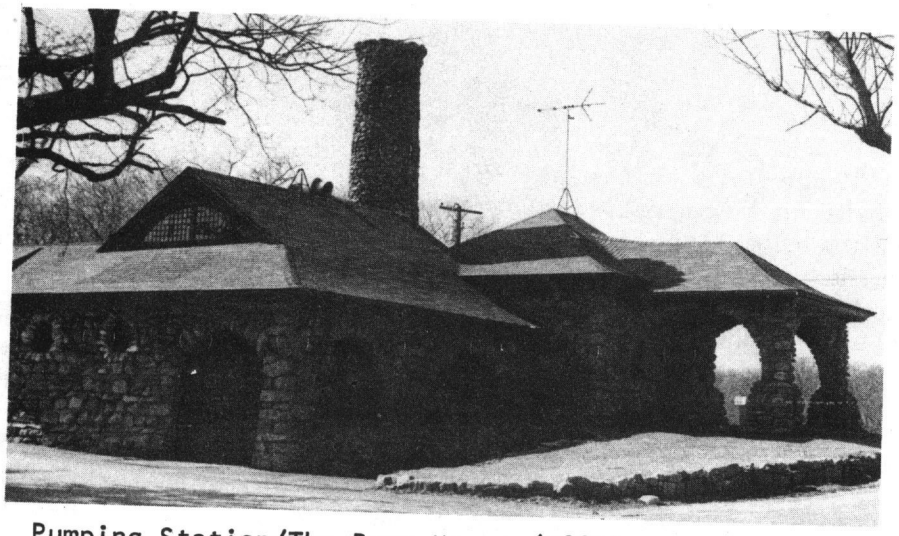
1841-1875

The full force of the Industrial Revolution finally arrived in South Kingstown in about the 1840s. New, large, efficient factories went up in Peace Dale, Wakefield, and Rocky Brook, transforming these hamlets into urban villages. Under the leadership of the Hazards, Peace Dale rapidly became the largest settlement. Wakefield, led by the Robinson family, increased its industrial capabilities and began to assume its role as the commercial center of South Kingstown, while Rocky Brook, under the Rodmans, also grew as new factories were built. Textile mills also were located at water power sites in remote localities such as Mooresfield, Glen Rock, Green Hill, and Matunuck. Farming lingered on as a widespread occupation of many town residents, but the value of the town's agricultural products was decidedly secondary to manufacturing.

Kingston

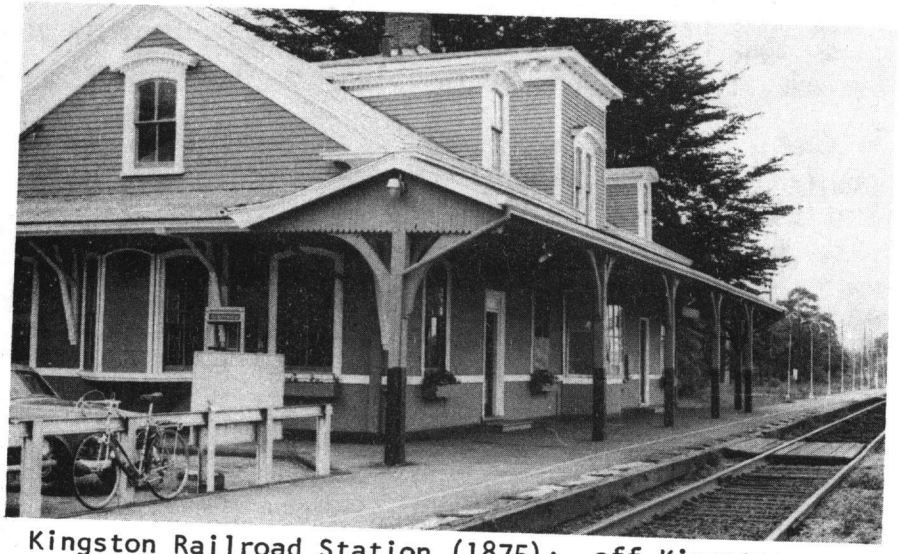
In Kingston, building activity had peaked by 1840; few buildings were added to the heart of the village (that part now included in the Kingston Historic District). But the village continued to prosper, and its estimated population rose from 191 in 1865 to 267 in 1875. Kingston remained the leading center of intellectual and social life in the town. The court met here, attracting lawyers and other professionals; the Caleb Westcott Tavern (#3-L), owned by Philip Taylor, then his son, John, was the stage coach stop on the run between the train station in West Kingston and Narragansett Pier; a saving bank was established in the 1850s; and the Kingston Seminary (#3-EE) opened in 1853 (it closed as a school in 1863).

The Fayerweather blacksmith shop continued in business, and apparently the demand of increased industrial or building activity offset the declining agricultural economy. A surviving account book shows that George Fayerweather II made tools, nails, hinges, and other architectural items in addition to shoeing draft animals and sharpening or repairing blades. The business was successful enough for George II to take his sons into partnership with him. George III, who had been plying the blacksmith trade in Connecticut since 1832, moved back to Kingston in 1855 with his wife, Sarah, and their children, and entered into some manner of partnership with his brother, Solomon. Sarah Harris Fayerwether, a graduate of the Prudence Crandall School in Connecticut was an abolitionist who was held in high esteem by William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass, who reportedly stopped at the Fayerweather house on visits to Rhode Island. Besides being the center of blacksmithing activities in Kingston, the shop was a favorite gathering place for villagers, and travelers often stopped there in order to get a drink of water from the nearby well. Upon the shop's huge doors were posted advertisements, notices, and news of public interest. By the 1880s, Solomon Fayerweather was the sole surviving village blacksmith. He retired in 1895 or 1896, and in the 1920s or 1930s the shop finally collapsed.



Pumping Station/The Pump House (1889): Kingstown Road, Rocky Brook Historic District. (#9-C)

Narragansett Pier Railroad Station (1876): Railroad Street, Peace Dale Historic District. (#7-R)



Kingston Railroad Station (1875): off Kingstown Road, West Kingston. (#14-A)