

# ANNALS OF CENTERDALE

ITS PAST AND PRESENT

1636-1909

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FRANK C. ANGELL.



ANNALS  
OF CENTERDALE

In the town of

North Providence, Rhode Island

Its Past and Present

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1636 - 1909

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BY

FRANK C. ANGELL

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*“He that wishes to be counted among the benefactors of posterity must add by his own toil to the acquisitions of his ancestors.”—Rambler,*

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IN LOVING MEMORY  
OF MY  
FATHER AND MOTHER  
I AFFECTIONATELY  
DEDICATE THIS BOOK.







VILLAGE OF CENTERDALE (SMITH STREET).

## PREFACE.

Truth needs not many words, but a false tale a large preamble.

In presenting this volume to the public I do so with the full appreciation that it will be, to a large extent, of local interest.

In answer to the question why I undertook the task of writing the history of the little New England village, I would say that I was prompted to do so from a feeling of regard and admiration for the old-time residents of the village, when each and every one had the welfare of his neighbor at heart—smiling upon his successes and sympathizing with him in his adversities.

Again I would answer, that most people have within their hearts an indescribable feeling of love or regard for the place of their birth or the home of their adoption,—“be it ever so humble,”—the place where they have beheld the rising and the setting of the sun for more than half a century, and have watched with pride the planting and growth of the various industries and institutions around their homes.

In undertaking the task I did so fully realizing that the task of the historian is a difficult one, even when it is, as in the present instance, the recording of events relatively small and unimportant in themselves to the general public, but interesting subjects of thought and conver-

sation to those who have known the village in late times, and whose lives are or have been connected with the history of Centerdale by birth or residence or by family ties more or less distant.

I believe I am right when I say that I am not alone in liking to hear the story of the first settlement and growth of Centerdale, to know who were the first to make their homes here, who built the first house, and, as time went on, to know when and how came to be established the first industry, the first schoolhouse, church, hotel, and other public and private houses and buildings which go to make up a typical New England village.

Neither is it too much to hope that those who come after us may wish to glance back along the lines of the early days of Centerdale, and learn something of its early history.

In my endeavor to carry out the plan of presenting as faithful and true an account as possible, it has been necessary to depend entirely upon original research. In doing so I have made use of not only all the public and private records, old deeds, diaries, and account books obtainable by me, but also of family and village tradition in so far as the latter might be made to square with indubitable historical facts. And from these sources, with much hard work of searching records and the even harder task of unaccustomed authorship to contend with, I present this volume to the public, asking indulgence for its imperfections.

F. C. A.



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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTION.

**B**EFORE we tell the early history of the village of Centerdale, let us for a moment turn our thoughts back to a time long before the country was known to the white man; to a time when only the native Indian roamed the primeval forests, whose solitude was broken only by the rustling of the leaves of the forest trees, the howling of the wild beasts, or the fierce war-cry of the red man.

Let us picture in our minds the country as formed and fashioned by nature's hand; behold it, in all its picturesque beauty, before the pioneer's axe had hewn the stately trees that grew upon the hillside; see it before the plow-share had torn from the fields their soft green mantle.

Let us in our reverie stand for a moment upon the moss-covered banks of the beautiful Woonasquatucket, whose waters flowed with peaceful current beside the hill and through the vale, and trace its winding course along the path nature seemed to have carved for it; around the foot of the verdant hills, and down through the valley and the green meadows.

Let us pause for a moment and listen to the rippling of the little brooklets as they come prancing down the hillside, looking, in the glow of the setting sun, like silver ribbons dropped from the sky, hurrying along to join their larger companion, who was silently moving on to mingle with the headwaters of Narragansett bay; while here and there along the banks of the stream we see the

wigwam of the Indian, while not far away we discern the dusky form of the red man, whose watchful eye and attentive ear are ever alert to the dangers that constantly beset his home, and unconscious of the fact that soon the intruding pioneer will cause him to retire farther and farther into the wilderness, and that their cherished hunting grounds ere long will be transformed into busy communities; the intense silence which had reigned for centuries will soon be broken by the clanking of the loom or the rumble and roar of the swiftly moving train.

But how soon was this change to come about? As the sturdy pioneers pushed their way back into the country, the surrounding scene seemed to change like the shifting scenes of a play-house.

The native Indian, unused to the white man's ways, withdrew to more quiet sections of the country; the beautiful Woonasquatucket, whose waters for centuries had flowed untrammelled to the sea, was soon curbed in its course and made to lend its strength to turn the heavy millstone, and to force the saw through the oaken log to provide material for the settler's home.

The forests ere long were changed into fertile fields; roads constructed where only the narrow Indian trails were found; and the settler's cottage had taken the place of the wigwam of the Indian.

But let us see if we can tell the interesting story of WHO were the first settlers of this vicinity, WHOSE axe felled the first tree, WHOSE plowshare turned the first sod, *who* built the first house, WHOSE hand first harnessed the waters of the Woonasquatucket, WHO and *when* was started the first business enterprise, WHO *first* labored in Christ's vineyard, and caused to be erected the first church.

To be able to answer all or any of the questions would be both pleasing and interesting.

But time in her rapid flight has drawn the curtain behind several generations, and among those who have passed away were many who helped to make the history we are about to tell, leaving behind them bright illustrations of a Christian life, and examples of their energy, thrift, and patriotism.

After the lapse of more than two hundred and sixty years one is obliged to rely more or less upon tradition and reminiscences for information pertaining to many unrecorded events and personages of those early days; but these should be accepted only when they are in harmony with recorded facts.

Traditions and family legends are often, however, of historical value; even though they may not be strictly correct in all of their details, they furnish the key to unlock the door to the information we are seeking, and with their aid the old colonial records can be read with a clearer understanding; for many of the records of the early days of the colony are very obscure and indefinite, though undoubtedly clearly understood at the time. Especially is this the case with the land transfers, and in such cases family tradition and reminiscences lend valuable help to a clear understanding of that which is obscure in the colonial records.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE ORIGINAL AND SUBSEQUENT LAND OWNERS OF CENTERDALE, 1636-1909.

**A**FTER Roger Williams and his little band of followers, consisting of Thomas Angell, Joshua Verin, John Smith (the miller), William Harris, and Francis Wickes, had landed upon the shores of Providence Plantations, they settled upon land previously secured, or *purchased*, by Roger Williams, from the Indians.

In *purchasing* the land from the Indians, Roger Williams was only carrying out one of the principles he always advocated while at Plymouth and Salem, as well at the Providence Plantations: that the Indians were the true and rightful owners of the land they occupied, and were the only ones who could convey a title to them; that the patent or grant from the king of England could convey no title to them to any one, nor could any foreign potentate lawfully give away their territory.

There does not appear to be any written document conveying the land from the Indians to Roger Williams until March 24th, 1638, when the following deed, or memorandum, as it was called, was given and signed by the two great chieftains Canonicus and Miantonomo, chiefs of the Narragansett Indians:

“At Nanhiggansick the 24th of the first month commonly called March in the second year of our plantation or planting at Mooshausick or Providence. Memorandum: that we Caunaunicus and Meauntunomi, the



two chief sachems of Nanhiggansick, having two years since sold unto Roger Williams, the lands and meadows upon the two fresh rivers called Mooshausick and Woonasquatucket, do now by these presents establish, and confirm the bounds of those lands, from the river and fields at Pawtucket, the great hill of Neotaconkonitt, on the North-west, and the town of Mashapauge on the west. As also in consideration of the many kindnesses and services he hath continually done for us, both with our friends of Massachusetts, as also at Quinickicutt and Apaum or Plymouth, we do freely give unto him all that land from those rivers reaching to Pawtuxet River, as also the grass and meadows upon said Pawtuxet river,


“In Witness where of we have hereunto set our hands

“The mark of  Caunaunicus

“The mark of  Meauntonomi

“In the presence of

“The mark of  Seatash

“The mark of  Assotemenit

“1639 Memorandum 3<sup>d</sup> mo 9<sup>th</sup> day. This was all again confirmed by Miantonomi, he acknowledged this his act and hand up the streams of Pawtucket and Pawtuxet without limits, we might have for our use of cattle

“Witness hereof

“ROGER WILLIAMS

“BENEDICT ARNOLD”

This deed, or memorandum, is the first or earliest land conveyance found recorded in the early records of Providence, and without doubt the earlier sale spoken of in this deed was a verbal agreement.

During the summer of the same year that Roger Williams arrived he was joined by six others, who arrived in time to receive their allotment in the first division of land.

After the first division of land into home sites, and six-acre lot of meadow land, the balance of the land lying upon the Mooshausick and Woonasquatucket rivers to the limit of the grant was called the common, and included all land not sold or allotted to any of the settlers, and extended north up the Woonasquatucket river seven miles from Fox Point to a bound called the seven-mile line, which is about where the Smithfield line is now located.

As the colony increased in number, and personal safety became more secure, the pioneers naturally pushed their way back into the country a few miles from the Providence settlement, and took up land from the commons; and as this practice grew, it became evident that a more business-like method of conveying land titles must be had in order that confusion might not result, and a committee was appointed with full power to sign deeds of land in behalf of the colony, this committee consisting, in 1669, of John Throckmorton, Arthur Fenner, and Henry Brown. The writer has in his possession one of the deeds executed by this committee in 1669. The deed is written upon parchment, and is yet in a fair state of preservation for a document so old, but very few of these deeds being now in existence.

Among those to thus push out into the common land and take up holdings therein were Thomas Angell, John Smith, Epenetus Olney, and Richard Pray, and these men appear to have been the pioneers in the settlement of that

portion of the Woonasquatucket valley which afterward became known as Centerdale.

Of these, Thomas Angell came from England in 1631 when he was a lad of some 12 or 13 years, and apparently in charge of Roger Williams, whose protege he seems to have been, not only accompanying the founder of Providence from England to Boston, but later making one of the party of five who came with Roger Williams from the Massachusetts colony in 1636.

When the first division of land was made among Providence settlers Thomas Angell received, in common with the others, a six-acre lot of land, although he was clearly too young to sign the civil agreement entered into by the other members of the pact, but which he signed afterwards. His lot, however, was number two on the division list, and included the land on which the First Baptist Church of Providence now stands, and a part of the section traversed by Angell street.

Thomas Angell married and had two sons, John and James; and five daughters, Amphillis, Mary, Deborah, Alice, and Margaret. He died in 1695; but during his life he had taken up several tracts of land, and one of these claims he gave to his grandson, James Angell, son of John Angell, who soon afterwards sold it to his brother, John Angell, Junior. This farm was located on the west side of the Woonasquatucket river, and included the land near the present railroad crossing, at Centerdale, extending along the west side of the river nearly to the Smithfield line as now laid out. This farm contained about 200 acres, and covered the present site of the village of Graniteville as well as a portion of Centerdale.

By deed dated July 26th, 1728, John Angell, Jr., con-

veyed a part of this farm to his son Stephen, who became, by the death of his father in 1744, the owner of the whole farm, where he lived and raised a large family, nine boys and two girls. One of these boys, John Angell, was among the first to enlist in the Revolutionary War, having promptly joined General Warren, at Bunker Hill, where he assisted in throwing up the embankments at that place and took part in the battle which followed. He served in the Continental Army throughout the war, and received the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

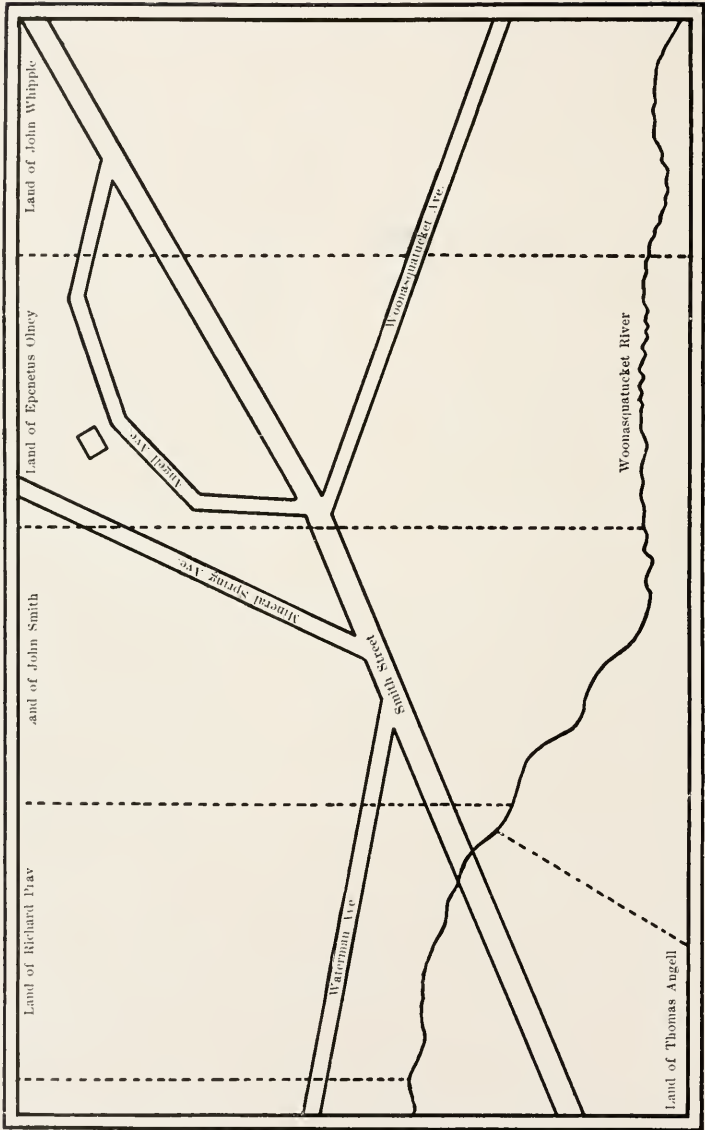
Stephen Angell died in 1772 and willed the place to his son William, who afterwards disposed of it to his brother Daniel. After Daniel came into possession of the farm he, in 1774, erected the house, now standing in Graniteville, and generally known to local people as the Olney W. Angell place.

When Daniel Angell died, May 9th, 1810, he gave the farm to his son Olney; and upon the death of Olney Angell, in 1856, he dying intestate, his son Olney W. Angell purchased it; the farm, in the meantime, having been divided into a number of small farms and home sites, leaving less than one-half of the original farm to be disposed of in this manner.

Upon the death of Olney W. Angell, February 5th, 1879, he, too, dying intestate, it passed to his children, who still, 1909, hold it in common with each other. And thus we have a complete line of ownership of a large tract, from the original grant from the Indians to Roger Williams, down to the present day.

One of the objects in tracing this tract of land, which is largely in the village of Graniteville, is that the southerly or lower end of the farm is a portion of the territory of





MAP OF THE ORIGINAL CLAIMS OR FARMS

Centerdale, and upon this part was erected the Colonial Powder-Mill, an account of which will be given in another chapter; and upon this farm was also erected the second house built in the village of Centerdale.

The original proprietors of the land on the east side of the river where the village of Centerdale is located were John Smith, Epenetus Olney, and Richard Pray. To establish the exact boundary of the several allotments would be impossible, but by patient research a map of the original farms has been prepared for this work; and reference thereto will serve to give a general idea of their location. No claim is made, for this map, of absolute accuracy in regard to scale; but the street lines are correct, and the boundary lines of the farm are as near correct as they can be made, after the lapse of about 250 years, with the very indefinite land records of the first 100 years as a guide. And to one unacquainted with old landmarks and local history, the reproduction of a map of the claims of the original owners would be a difficult, if not impossible, task.

In taking up a farm from the original rights, or the commonings as they were called in the early days of the colony, the idea is suggested that the settlers were familiar with the old saying, "git a plenty while ye are gitting," for the farms in those days contained 100, 200, and sometimes 300, acres, and usually every man owned several farms in different parts of the colony.

The land where the business center of the village of Centerdale is located was taken up from the commonings by John Smith, about 1680; but which of the many John Smiths it was who secured this land is not easy to determine, because John was a favorite name with the Smith

family in those early days, as at the present time, the name occurring so often that some designation, or title, was often used to denote the John Smith referred to as John Smith, Senior; John Smith, Junior; John Smith, "Mason;" John Smith, "Miller;" John Smith, "Carpenter;" and, sometimes, plain John Smith.

However, it is certain that John Smith (probably the miller) took up this land, and also that he had a son John Smith; and when John Smith, Senior, died, a portion of his estate lying upon the east side of the Woonasquatucket river was given to his son John Smith, Junior. This farm contained 160 acres, and was bounded as follows: Starting at a point on the Woonasquatucket river a few rods beyond the present junction of Waterman avenue and Smith street, and running in an easterly direction 320 rods, or nearly one mile; thence running in a southerly direction 80 rods, or one-quarter of a mile; thence running in a westerly direction 320 rods to the river; thence following the river in a northerly direction to the first-mentioned bound. (See map.)

John Smith, while he was still living, gave the farm to two of his sons, Philip and William, who owned it jointly.

After the death of Philip, his wife, Sarah Smith, was appointed administratrix upon his estate, and as Philip Smith owed his father a considerable sum of money, she turned over his half, or share, of the farm to his father to secure him from loss of the money loaned. This share was that part lying upon the Woonasquatucket river, and is where the village of Centerdale is situated.

March 15, 1736, John Smith sold the farm to John Whipple, who probably bought it on speculation, for he soon afterwards, on January 6th, 1737, sold the same to



Nathaniel Day, who came from Attleboro, Massachusetts, and who made it his homestead place until his death. The house is still standing, and is a little distance north of the line of Mineral Spring avenue, nearly opposite the junction of Brown street, and is now the property of Charles A. Brown.

James Angell, son of Stephen, who was great grandson of the original Thomas Angell, mentioned in this chapter, and brother of Col. John Angell of Revolutionary fame, won the hand of Amey, daughter of Nathaniel Day, and they were married February 1, 1760. The enterprising and industrious habits of this young man so greatly pleased his wife's parents that, in 1770, Nathaniel Day deeded one-half of his farm to his son-in-law, and in 1772 he gave him the other half of the farm, together with other lands, including one-eighth of the saw-mill property, standing on Richard Coman's land, stating in the deed of gift that he did so from the great love and confidence he had in James Angell.

Upon the death of Nathaniel Day, James Angell and his wife continued to live upon the homestead, and there eleven children were born to them; the two youngest, James and Nathaniel, being, however, the only ones who remained permanently in this locality and were directly and prominently identified in the future progress of the village.

Upon the death of James Angell, Senior, he gave the homestead farm to his youngest son, Nathaniel, who continued to live upon it until his death, August 14, 1872; or, to be exact, upon such part of it as he had not disposed of during his lifetime. After his death the remainder of the farm was platted and sold for home sites; the plat being known as the Nathaniel Angell plat.

Nathaniel's brother, James, not receiving any part of his father's property, like many other enterprising young men, started out to make his own fortune, and learned the carpenter's trade, serving his apprenticeship with his brother Emor, and was considered an expert carpenter. In 1824 he purchased from his brother Nathaniel a portion of the homestead place, this purchase being the part which now constitutes the business portion of the village of Centerdale. He continued to own and improve this part of it until his death, in 1870, when he gave it to his youngest son, James Halsey Angell; and at the latter's death, in 1890, it passed to his two sons, George F. and Frank C. Angell, the last-named having still in his possession a large part of the estate. Thus we have a complete line of ownership of the central part of the village, from the Indians in 1636 to the present time (1909).

The land adjoining the Smith claim on the north (see map) was taken up from the original rights by Richard Pray; but it is impossible to determine the exact date, as he was an extensive land owner and took up land from the commonings in different parts of the colony, the descriptions of which, as given in the deeds, are so confusing and indefinite that many of the claims are impossible to locate.

But it is certain that Richard Pray was in the colony and bought land as early as 1652, and his name does not appear upon the record as living in this section later than 1714. It appears that he sold his claim here to Richard Coman, in 1700. This Richard Coman died in 1716; but the name of Richard seems to have been a favorite one with the Coman family, for it was handed down through several generations, and the last member of the family to

own this land was named Richard; the name of Coman, however, finally disappearing from the records of this section about the year 1825.

In the year 1810, when cotton-spinning by water-power was still in its infancy, William Bellows and Jonathan Congdon foresaw the advantages offered by the Woonasquatucket river, and bought a portion of the land owned by Richard Coman, including the saw-mill and grist-mill privileges, together with the adjoining land owned by Nathaniel Angell, James Angell, and others, with the right to raise the dam. They, however, for want of capital, and knowledge of the business, abandoned the idea of erecting a mill, and March 8, 1812, sold the land to Israel Arnold.

Arnold immediately set to work to build the mill, an account of which will be given in another chapter; but in 1823 he sold the premises to Richard Anthony, who in 1838 sold the same to Joseph Cunliff, who, with others to whom he had mortgaged it, sold it in 1859 to Amos N. Beckwith, the property remaining with the Beckwith family until January 1891, when it was sold to Messrs. Green and Baldwin, who afterwards sold it to the present owners, James Lister, William Mackie, and William Dracup, who still own it under the corporate name of the Centerdale Worsted Company.

The original proprietor of the land south of the Smith claim was Epenetus Olney, who was the second son of Thomas Olney, one of the original twelve settlers who received a home share and meadow land from Roger Williams's first purchase from Canonicus and Miantonomo. He was not, however, one of the little party who came with Roger Williams, but he joined them soon

after, and in time to receive his share when the first division of land was made. Thomas Olney was prominent in the public affairs of the colony, and was elected its first treasurer. He came from London in the ship "Planter," with his wife (who was Mary Small), in 1635. They had, at the time of their arrival in Boston, two sons: Thomas, 3 years old, and Epenetus, one year old. Other children were born to them; but as Epenetus is the only one who settled in the immediate vicinity of Centerdale, no effort will be made to follow the descendants of the other children of Thomas Olney.

Few family names occur more frequently in land conveyances of this section than that of Olney, and their frequent purchases and exchanges, with the very indefinite boundaries, render it difficult, and in many cases impossible, to determine the exact location of all the holdings of Thomas Olney and his descendants. But it is certain that the land south of the Smith claim (see map) was taken up from the original rights by Epenetus Olney, about one-half of the farm in May, 1675, the rest in June, 1686. He died in 1698, and his son Epenetus, Jr., received as his share of his father's estate a tract of land containing about 120 acres, joining on the south the land of John Smith, and extending westerly to the Woonasquatucket river (see map). Here he erected a house and made it his homestead place, residing there until his death, September 17, 1740. This house was the first house erected in Centerdale, and is situated on Angell avenue, and is now the residence of Thomas H. Angell. (An account of this house will be given in another chapter.)

After the death of Epenetus Olney, Jr., the farm passed to his eldest son, James, who lived there until his death,

February 10th, 1770, when he gave it to his son Samuel. In 1813, Samuel dying intestate, James Burr was appointed administrator upon his estate, and sold the place to Isaac Bullard, who, shortly afterwards, in 1816, conveyed the place to James Burr, and in 1835, after the death of James Burr, about 50 acres of the farm, or that part lying between Smith street and the Woonasquatucket river, was sold by the heirs of James Burr to James Angell, who had previously, in 1824, bought the adjoining land upon the north from his brother Nathaniel.

It is upon these two sections owned by James Angell that the greater part of the village of Centerdale is now situated.

After the death of James Angell, November 22, 1870, that part of his estate passed to his son, James Halsey Angell, who held it until his death, July 1st, 1890, when it passed to his two sons George F. and Frank C. Angell.

George F. Angell received as his share that part of what is now know as River View plat, lying south of Steere street and between Woonasquatucket avenue and the river.

The rest of the land is still in the possession of Frank C. Angell, who platted that part lying between Smith street and Woonasquatucket river avenue into home sites, the plat being known as Highland Park plat.

The rest of the Epenetus Olney farm, after the death of James Burr, remained in the Burr family until 1855, with the exception of a few acres which were sold to Randall H. and Sarah Tallman, in 1854.

The remainder, including the house, was sold by the heirs of Burr to Martha A. Farnum, in 1855; and December 22d, 1856, she sold the same to Mary A. Yeomans, who

in 1865 sold the property to Thomas Holden Angell, who still, in 1909, owns and occupies the homestead house and land surrounding it. In 1898 he sold a portion of it to Frank C. Angell, who platted it into home sites, the plat being known as Highland Park annex.

No attempt has been made to note the various subdivisions of the three original claims, as the object of this chapter was to follow the direct line of ownership of the land received from the Indians to the present time. By referring to the maps in this work, the principal subdivision can be readily followed out.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE COLONIAL SAW-MILL.

His echoing axe the settler swung  
Amid the sea-like solitude,  
And rushing, thundering, down were flung  
The Titans of the wood.

—A. B. STREET.

**A**FTER the axe of the pioneer had made a clearing in the forest, and by persistent industry and perseverance had changed the clearing into fertile fields, their attention was next directed towards providing more comfortable homes for their families, who had already braved many cold New England winters in their rude log-cabins.

Among the first obstacles that confronted the early settlers was the entire absence of proper material with which to construct comfortable homes. Saw-mills, brick and lime kilns, were unknown to the new country; the slow and laborious process of the saw-pit afforded no relief, except for such limited supply of boards that were needed for farm-wagons, doors, etc.

As late as 1680 there were but four saw-mills in the colony, and they were widely distributed over a large tract of territory extending from Woonsocket to Pawtuxet; so the settler was compelled to erect such shelter as he could from the means at hand.

To copy the wigwam of the Indian would furnish but a poor substitute for the comfortable homes many of them

had left behind them in the old country, and but little protection against the attacks of the Indians, who were soon jealous of the encroachment of the white man upon their hunting-grounds.

So the log-cabin was their only resort, and for a time they must be content with their rude quarters, with the scanty light from the open door or perhaps a lone window, which must be securely closed with a strong plank shutter at night as a protection against an attack from the Indians or from wild beasts which roamed the forest; and to keep out the cold in the winter, in the daytime oiled paper was used as a substitute for glass, as but little glass was brought to this country in the early colonial days.

About the year 1680 Captain Richard Arnold turned his attention to the building of saw-mills, in different parts of the colony wherever sufficient water-power and supply of logs could be secured to make it profitable. He had already one in operation at Woonsocket in 1680, and had in 1700 secured the right to dam the Woonasquatucket river at Centerdale and Georgiaville and Stillwater in 1702; also the right to dam the West river and to erect a mill near Wanskuuk in 1706.

According to the early records of the town of Providence, about the year 1700 he built a saw-mill upon the Woonasquatucket river, a little over five miles from the salt water harbor, and it is designated therein as Captain Richard Arnold's new saw-mill. The mill was located near the southerly end of the dam of the Centerdale Worsted Co., about 125 feet from the highway. The location of the dam was practically the same as the present one. Arnold did not buy the land, but obtained permission to connect the dam to the banks of the stream



from the abutting owners, and erected the mill upon the east side of the river on land belonging to Richard Pray.

Just how long he operated the mill is not known; but as there is no mention made of the mill in his will, he must have disposed of it before his death, April 22d, 1710, to Richard Coman, who, a short time before, bought the land from Richard Pray.

About 1750, the mill being much out of repair, the farmers banded together, forming a sort of company, and repaired the old mill and set it in operation again.

The following are the names of the shareholders in 1765, as far as can be obtained: Richard Coman, Stephen Angell, Nathaniel Day, Charles Olney, Nemiah Smith, and William Goddard; each owning one-eighth or one-sixteenth part, according to the number of shares taken.

The mill changed hands many times, as the proprietors died, and in 1800 the owners were reduced to three: James Angell, Richard Corman, and William Goddard.

As logs were becoming scarce, and the mill, from old age, had fallen into decay, it was finally abandoned about the year 1840; thus bringing to a close the first business enterprise established in the village of Centerdale, after an existence of about 140 years.

In 1787 Isaac Olney built a grist-mill upon the west side of the river, opposite the saw-mill, upon the site of the powder-mill, which was destroyed in 1779 (an account of which is given in another chapter), using the same water-wheel that was used for grinding the powder. The mill continued at this place until 1797, when he sold it to William Goddard, who removed the mill across the river and continued to run the grist-mill in connection with the

saw-mill of which he was part owner. The grist-mill continued in operation long after the saw-mill was given up, but was finally abandoned about 1852.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE FIRST HOUSE.

**T**HE first house in Centerdale was built by Epenetus Olney, son of Epenetus, who was the second son of Thomas Olney, one of the twelve pioneers who was with Roger Williams when the first division of land was made in the Providence Plantations in 1636.

After the death of Epenetus Olney, Senior, his son Epenetus received, as a part of his share of his father's estate, about 120 acres of land bordering upon the east bank of the Woonasquatucket river and extending in an easterly direction along the southerly line of the land of John Smith. (See map.)

The colonial road traversed the farm, and for a short distance formed the boundary line between this and the land of John Smith; this road is now known as Angell avenue, and it was upon the east side of this road that Epenetus Olney, Jr., over 200 years ago, built his home, the first house erected in the village of Centerdale.

After a lapse of more than 200 years, and obscured by the very indefinite records of the early days of the colony, it is impossible at this time to place the exact date when the house was built; but from the following account an approximate time can be fixed with reasonable accuracy.

March 9th, 1666, Epenetus Olney, Sr., married Mary, a daughter of John Whipple, and eight children were born to them, viz.: Mary, JAMES, Sarah, Epenetus, John, Mercy, Thomas, and Lydia. He died June 3d,

1698, leaving no will, in which case under the old English law the property would pass to the oldest son (James).



THE FIRST HOUSE. Epenetus Olney Homestead, 1700-2.

But James, knowing that his father had often expressed a wish that his estate might be divided among his children, proceeded to divide the property in accordance with his father's desires, and, according to the records of the town of Providence, in deed book No. 2, page 34, James Olney conveyed to his brother Epenetus a tract of land containing about 120 acres, stating in the deed, . . . "And it being so that my brother Epenetus Olney is now desirous to settle, and be accommodated with some of his father's lands to himself, and hath *already begun a settlement upon some part thereof by building, fencing, and planting thereon.*" . . .

This deed is dated August 29, 1702, and establishes a time when the house was already built, by declaring that

he had already begun a settlement upon some part thereof by *building*, fencing, and planting thereon.

There still might be a question of location (as the boundaries of those old farms were very obscure and indefinite, they often being bounded by a tree, a clump of bushes, some one's garden, fence, or a cornfield), but from a deed recorded in the same book, No. 2, page 34, from other parties, stating that said land was at "*his farm where he now dwelleth*" . . . and it further states that it was bounded by a highway lying between *it* and John Smith land, . . . to those familiar with old landmarks this tract can be easily located. This deed is dated May 30, 1702. This furnishes further evidence that the house *was built previous* to May 30, 1702, and was upon land joining the land of John Smith; which establishes the fact that it was upon what is now known as Angell avenue, Centerdale, and now is the residence of Thomas H. Angell. Without doubt he built the house sometime after the death of his father, in 1698, and before 1702; so it might be safe to say it was built about the year 1700.

Although there are no important historic associations connected with the homestead of Epenetus Olney aside from the fact that it was built by one of the very early settlers of this section, and was the first house built in the village of Centerdale, but from the fact that there has been a mistake made in locating the homestead of Epenetus Olney, it seems but right and proper at this time to correct the error.

In a work entitled "State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations at the end of the Century," edited by Edward Field, A. B., in Vol. III, page 627, the Epenetus

Olney house is illustrated and located on the west side of Woonasquatucket avenue, nearly opposite Emanuel street.

The house and farm described was known by local people as the Obadiah Olney farm. Obadiah was the son of Charles Olney and grandson of Epenetus, Jr., was born August 15, 1773, married Ruth Barton in 1793, and died in 1858. Without doubt this house was built by him soon after his marriage; consequently was only about 100 years old when torn down in 1898; while the real Epenetus Olney house antedates this house nearly or quite 100 years, and is still in a good state of preservation for a house more than 200 years old.

The following account taken from the early records of the town of Providence, Vol. IX, page 66, will furnish conclusive evidence and proof of the place in question:

"At a meeting of the Town Council held September 3, 1733, a committee was appointed to lay out a high way through the stated commons and to pass near the dwelling house of Epenetus Olney."

September 26 and 27th, 1733, the committee proceeded and laid out the same, and October 22d, 1733, presented their report, as follows:

"Persuant to an order of the Towne Council of Providence held the 3<sup>d</sup> day of September anno Domini 1733 for the Laying out of a highway, from the highway that was Already Layed out through that which was Commonly Called the stated Common, and from thence to Extend northwestwardly neare the Dwelling house of Epenetus Olney: and so to the north bounds of the Towne of Providence.

"Where upon wee the subscribers being a Committee appoynted by the afore said Town Council for the Compleating s<sup>d</sup> work went according to said order: and took

our departure from a Pine tree standing in or Neare the north line Line of the Town of Providence, and from thence: S: 35: degrees East: 32: pole: to the East End of Stephen Angels Barne: thence S: 25<sup>d</sup>— &  $\frac{1}{2}$  E: 25 pole to a walnut bush: thence S: 10<sup>d</sup> W: 18: pole to a stake: thence: S: 20<sup>d</sup> W 34: P: to a stake thence: S: 46<sup>d</sup> E: 17: P—to a Rock: thence S: 35<sup>d</sup> &  $\frac{1}{2}$  E 24: P: to a Pine bush: thence: S: 24<sup>d</sup>—E: 20 P to a Pine bush thence S: 45<sup>d</sup> — E: 20 P to a pine bush: thence S: 40<sup>d</sup> &  $\frac{1}{2}$  E: 14 P to a pine bush: thence S: 8<sup>d</sup> E: 8. P to a pine bush thence S: 54<sup>d</sup>: E—14: P to a pine bush: thence: N: 54<sup>d</sup>—E: 20 P to a stake standing on the west side of the Wonasquottuckett River thence E: 6: P: a Cross said River to a heape of stones it being a Bounder of M<sup>r</sup> John Smiths Land: the three Last Courses are Laid: 3: Poles wide: thence S: 48<sup>d</sup>—E: 20: P: to a white oake tree thence: S: 31<sup>d</sup>—E: 30 p to a black oake tree: thence S: 65<sup>d</sup> E: 14 P to a black oake tree: thence N: 80<sup>d</sup>—E: 10: P to a Rock thence N: 72<sup>d</sup>—E: 32: P: to a black oake thence N: 82<sup>d</sup>: E: 7: P to a black oake tree: thence: S: 20<sup>d</sup>—E: 4: to a white oake tree: thence: S: 46<sup>d</sup> — E: 19: P—to a black oake tree thence: S: 29<sup>d</sup>—E: 9: P to a Popple tree thence: S: 12<sup>d</sup> W: 9 P to a Rock thence: S: 28<sup>d</sup> — E: 14 P: to a stone in Epenetus Olneys Orchard: thence S: 72<sup>d</sup> — E: 10 P to an Apple tree." . . . (See map of old road.)

As will be observed, the courses and distances are given with great minuteness, and bounds designated with great care (like a pine bush, a stake, a white oak, black oak, or an apple tree) to the Woonasquattucket river. After crossing the river (the landmark being well known at the present day) the courses and distances in poles are carefully given to a stone in Epenetus Olney's orchard, making the distance from the river to said bound stone 168 poles, which is less than a dozen poles from the house of Epenetus Olney, now the residence of Thomas H. Angell, and about

the distance the orchard would naturally be from the house. (See early records of the town of Providence, Vol. IX, pages 65, 66, 67, 68, or in the *original* Book of Records, No. 3, page 200.) While the Obadiah Olney place, which has been mistaken for the Epenetus Olney farm, is fully one mile further down the river, and no public highway was laid out by this place until 1844 (over one hundred years afterwards), when Woonasquackett avenue was built (see chapter VI), the only way to reach it before that time was by a private driveway connecting with Fruit Hill avenue.

As a further evidence may be cited the deed of Nathaniel Day to James Angell, in 1770, in which the farm conveyed was bounded on the south by the land of Samuel Olney, who was the son of James and grandson of Epenetus Olney, and up to the year 1770 there had been but three Samuels in the Olney family. (See Olney Memorial, a genealogy of the descendants of Thomas Olney, by James H. Olney.)

One was the son of Joseph Olney the noted inn-keeper, who kept the old tavern, in 1776, on the corner of Olney and North Main streets, Providence, in whose yard stood the old Liberty Tree. His son Samuel was drowned in the Mississippi river in 1774.

Another was Samuel, son of Ezra Olney, who was born 1765, and consequently would be but five years old in 1770, and too young to have a farm in his own name. While *Samuel*, son of James Olney, and grandson of Epenetus, was born in 1745, and lived upon the place referred to until his death in 1813.

Upon the death of Samuel Olney, who died intestate, James Burr (a grand-nephew) was appointed admin-



istrator upon his estate, and sold the farm to Isaac Bullard, who afterwards, in 1816, conveyed it back to James Burr. After the death of Burr the estate passed out of the descendants of Epenetus Olney's family, as described in chapter II.

At the time the house was built it was about one-half its present size: the east end, or about one-half its length, was the part built by Epenetus Olney, or as far back as the big old-fashioned chimney, which in those days was often built at the end of the house, and many times extending outside of the main body of the house. The west end was built sometime later; the exact time is not known, but probably after the death of Epenetus, in 1740.

The house is still in a good state of preservation for a house more than 200 years old, and is the property and homestead place of Thomas H. Angell, who was town clerk of North Providence twenty-five years, or until poor health compelled him to decline a re-election in November 1906.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE REVOLUTIONARY POWDER-MILL.

THE people of every locality are justly proud of the part they or their ancestors have taken in any important event whether of local or of national importance; and visiting friends and strangers are sure to have pointed out to them the noted house, or the exact spot, where the honored and memorable event occurred.

It is true that during the stirring times incident to the American Revolution, no battles were fought in the immediate neighborhood of Centerdale; and there is no evidence that a British officer or even a red-coated private was sheltered under the roof of the lone house which then marked the site of the now flourishing little village.

But Centerdale is not without memories of the Revolution. Should you ask a resident of the village what important part was taken by the people of this locality in the struggle for independence, you would have pointed out to you the place where was situated the Revolutionary powder-mill, the first and only one erected by the colony of Rhode Island, and provided one of the most important and powerful agents that gained for us our liberty and independence.

The years 1775 and '76 were times of stirring interest to the people of the thirteen colonies.

Rhode Island and her sister colonies were actively preparing for the great struggle that was clearly inevitable. The people of Boston had already held their tea party, the

lantern had been lighted in the belfry of Old South Church, the "Gaspee" destroyed, and the sands of Bunker Hill had been stained with the blood of brave patriots.

Everywhere in village and town men congregated in little groups, earnestly discussing the events that had already transpired, and pledging support to each other, and allegiance to the cause they had espoused.

The Rhode Island legislature was convened, and action taken to secure the safety of the State from an invading foe.

Military companies were organized in all of the little hamlets as well as in the larger towns. Committees of safety were formed and were gathering together all of the muskets and swords that had long lain idle in the homes of the colonists.

Without doubt but few realized the magnitude of the great struggle that was before them, nor were they conscious that they were preparing the way for the birth of a great nation, and that ere long would behold the sun rise in all its morning splendor, and reflect its golden rays upon the grandest nation upon the earth; dedicated and consecrated to the cause of liberty and freedom.

But how few of them were conscious of the fact that the exigencies of war would draw so heavily upon their resources or call upon many homes to sacrifice upon the altar of freedom a loved one; a son, perhaps, or a husband and father, forever saddening the happy fireside.

Well and truly does Judge Staples say in the "Annals of Providence:" "The price they paid for liberty and independence perhaps cannot be estimated by any of the present inhabitants. We can count up the millions of dollars expended and number the lives that were lost in

that contest. But who can form an estimate of the sufferings of the inhabitants at large, and of the privations they bore in raising that sum; or of the affliction and sorrow and pain that preceded and followed the deaths of the martyrs of freedom?

“Want and misery were not confined to the ranks of the soldiery; they pervaded all parts of the country, and all classes of society. Pain and sickness and sorrow did not revel merely in the camp. They spread their devastating influence to the home of the soldier. If he returned himself, he bore with him the seeds of sickness, and spread them in his family, to blast his hopes of future comfort and joy. If he fell in battle, the mother, the wife, the child, drank of the cup of sorrow and suffering.

“The idea that can now be formed of the scenes of the revolution must be very faint and imperfect. It may well be doubted whether the most vivid imagination can paint the picture with all its horrors. How grateful must have been the news of peace, under such circumstances, to the war-worn veteran and his care-worn family—peace with liberty—liberty with independence, all that he wished, nay, more than he dreamed of at the outset, wrung from the grasp of the mother country.” . . .

It was evident to all that most of the munitions of war must be manufactured at home. Bounties were offered to those who would undertake the manufacture of supplies for the needs of the army that was about to enter the field. Cannon must be cast, muskets and swords manufactured, powder and balls provided.

Until the summer of 1776 all gunpowder used in the colony of Rhode Island was secured from outside the colony, most of it coming from Groton and New London,

Connecticut; being transported to the State magazine in Providence by boat, or overland by horses or oxen.

On account of the difficulty of obtaining powder from these places after the opening of hostilities, it was decided to encourage the manufacture of it within the colony, and the following resolution was passed by the General Assembly at the January session, 1776.

“And where as it is necessary that *one* powder Mill be immediately erected in the colony for the manufacturing of gun powder

“Be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid that a bounty or premium of Thirty Pounds, shall be paid out of the Colony Treasury, to the person or persons who shall erect a powder-mill in this Colony and shall make and manufacture therein Five hundred pound weight of good and merchantable gun-powder.

“And where as, it is expedient that such Powder Mill should be situated as to accommodate the public in the best manner.”

The bounty of thirty pounds did not offer sufficient inducement for anyone in the colony to undertake the risk of manufacturing a product that they had so little knowledge of, and, realizing the pressing need of it, the colonial government decided to undertake its manufacture on their own account; and at the May session of the General Assembly, 1776, John Jenckes and John Waterman were appointed a committee to procure a suitable site, and erect a powder-mill thereon at the charge of the colony as soon as possible, and they were authorized to draw out of the general treasury “One hundred and Fifty Pounds Lawfull money for the purpose.”

The committee immediately set at work to secure a

suitable site; one that would be convenient to the colony magazine, and at a place where water-power could be had to reduce the powder to its proper fineness.

The committee in their search selected a site on the Woonasquatucket river in Centerdale.

The exact location was between the railroad station and the dam of the Centerdale Worsted Co., as now located. At that time there was a saw-mill upon the opposite bank of the river, and the State or colony obtained the right to use the water from the saw-mill pond to operate the powder-mill.

About the middle of June, of the same year, the mill was completed; but on account of it being a new industry, the committee found some difficulty in procuring a man sufficiently informed in the process of the manufacture of gunpowder to take charge of the mill.

They reported the fact to the Assembly who, alive to the necessity of taking active steps to set the mill in operation as quickly as possible, instructed and authorized John Waterman to procure a man at SOME PRICE, or upon the best terms he could make, to operate the mill.

He finally succeeded in obtaining the services of a man, well versed in the manufacture of gunpowder, by the name of Jacob Goff.

In order that Goff might be with his family, the Assembly appropriated two hundred pounds to purchase a piece of land and erect a dwelling-house for them, and appointed Jacob Goff and Caleb Harris a committee to superintend the building of the house.

The house built by the State for Goff was the second dwelling-house built within the limits of what is now the village of Centerdale, and stood upon that part of the old

colonial road which was abandoned as a public highway after the completion of the Powder-Mill Turnpike, in 1815. The house stood about 125 feet west of the iron bridge that crosses the Woonasquatucket river (see map), and was destroyed by fire April 14, 1902.



DWELLING HOUSE BUILT BY STATE FOR JACOB GOFF, 1777.

Soon after Goff took charge of the mill he secured the services of a man by the name of Laban Beverly. In August, 1779, the State had a quantity of powder which by dampness had become unfit for use, and transported it to the powder-mill to be remanufactured, as it was called. The process of remanufacturing was a hazardous operation, but had proceeded without mishap until the afternoon of August 28th, 1779, when it was supposed that some foreign substance had in some way got into the mixing or stamping mortar, when suddenly the place was illumined by a lurid glare, followed quickly by a terrific explosion, not unlike the deafening crash of a hundred thunderbolts, the concussion being felt for many miles

around, causing fear and alarm in many homes, who fully realized that some terrible disaster had occurred. The country around was strewn with the debris from the wreck of that which was but a moment before the colonial powder-mill. One of the beams from the building was blown for nearly three-quarters of a mile from the mill.

After the dense smoke had cleared away it was seen that the powder-mill was completely demolished, and that Jacob Goff and Laban Beverly had been blown some distance and were terribly burned and mangled, but were still living: death relieved them of their suffering the following evening.

At the time of the explosion there were about two tons of finished powder upon the premises, besides a large quantity that was being made over.

The family of Jacob Goff, consisting of his wife Olive Goff and five children, were left destitute, and with no relatives who were able to provide for their comfort. The facts being made known to the General Assembly, with the knowledge that Goff lost his life in the service of his country, they immediately granted an allowance of six hundred dollars for the relief of the destitute family.

The State decided not to rebuild the powder-mill, and the site lay idle until 1785, when the General Assembly appointed a committee, consisting of John J. Jenckes and Jabez Bowen, to sell the property.

In August, 1786, they sold the land and dwelling-house to Isaac Olney, also (as the deed describes it) the large water-wheel, with all the privileges of the water which the State bought of the owners of the saw-mill called the "Mudd Mill."

After Isaac Olney bought the property he erected thereon



a grist-mill, which was the first grist-mill erected here. He continued to run the mill until October 27, 1797, when he sold it to William Goddard, who removed it across the river and ran it in connection with the saw-mill of which he was part owner.

In a work entitled "Revolutionary Defences in Rhode Island," by Edward Field, on page 40, the colonial powder-mill is erroneously located on the Waterman road near the little hamlet known as Cæsarville, which is about one mile south from its true location. There is no evidence that more than one powder-mill was built by the Rhode Island colony, during the Revolutionary War, and it is well known by old residents of Centerdale that the mill was located on the western bank of the Woonasquatucket river near the dam of the Centerdale Worsted Mills; and as further proof is the positive evidence of the deed of the powder-mill site given by Joseph Clark, general treasurer of Rhode Island, to Isaac Olney, dated August 24, 1786, and recorded in book number two, page 180, of the records of the town of Johnston.

After defining the boundaries of the lot, the following additional description is given: . . . "there being about one acre and an half of said land with the dwelling house, and the large water wheel with all of the privileges of the water which the State bought of the owners of the saw mill called the Mudd Mill." . . .

It is common knowledge among elderly people for many miles around Centerdale that the saw-mill once located here was known by the name of Mudd Mill. After Israel Arnold built the spinning-mill here, in 1812, he named the place *Center*, and it was known by that name until in after years it received the affix of "Mill" and

“Ville,” and finally, after the post-office was established here, in 1849, it was changed to Centerdale.

Further evidence can be given that the powder-mill was located here from the fact that the old colonial road leading from Providence (after the erection of the powder mill) was called the Powder Mill road, and in 1810, when the turnpike company was incorporated, it took for its corporate name, “The Powder-Mill Turnpike Corporation,” undoubtedly on account of its following the line of the old highway leading to the powder-mill and in many places using the old roadbed.

The highway was always called the Powder-Mill Turnpike until it was purchased by the State in 1873, when that part lying in North Providence was named Smith street, it being a continuation of Smith street, Providence.

## CHAPTER VI.

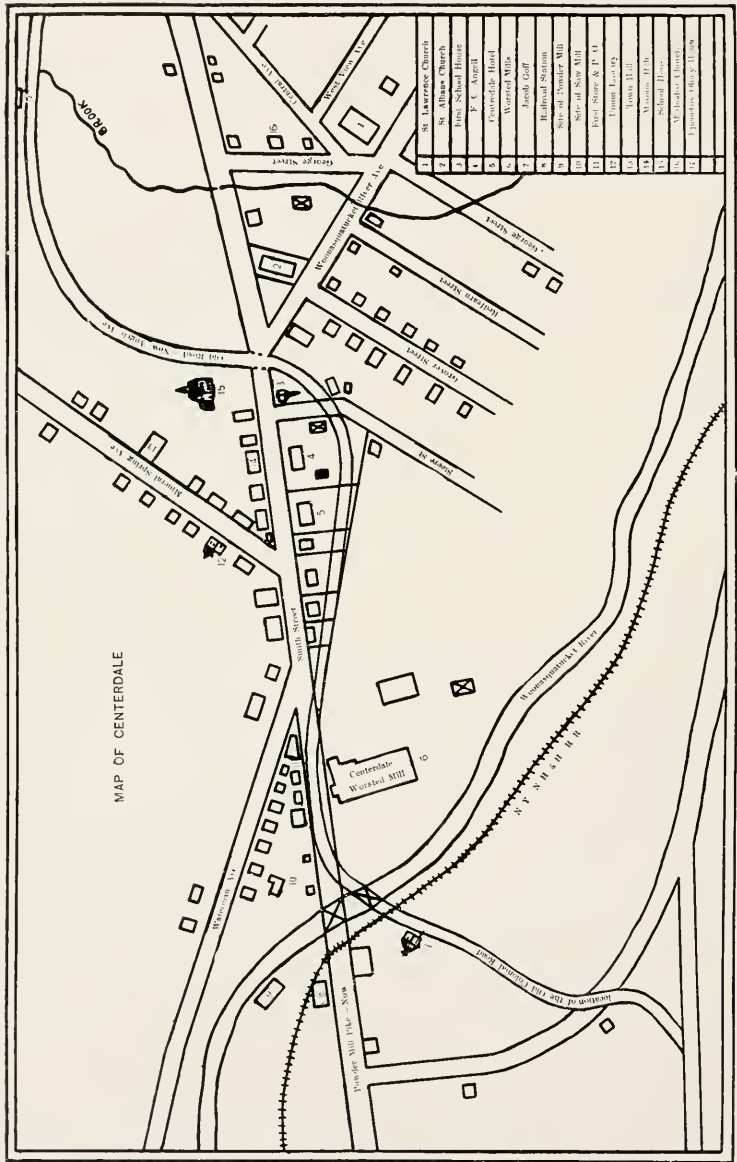
### HIGHWAYS.

**P**REVIOUS to the year 1810 the only public highway leading from Providence via Centerdale to the towns in the northern part of the State and the adjoining towns in the States of Connecticut and Massachusetts was the old colonial road; and from its winding course, undoubtedly it was originally a continuation of driveways from the farm of one settler to that of another, as the pioneers pushed their way back into the new country, and in many cases following old Indian trails.

As the country became more thickly settled, and the farmer and trader had more frequent occasion to journey to Providence to sell or exchange their produce, the necessity for better highways became apparent. To meet the requirements it was proposed to construct a direct turnpike road from Providence to connect with the Gloucester turnpike, which was already completed from the northern part of the State as far south as Greenville.

The prospect of a paying investment and the encouragement of the starting of a stage line from Putnam, Conn., to Providence, caused the organizing of a stock company with sufficient capital to undertake the construction of the much needed highway, the connecting link between the towns near the Connecticut line and Providence via the Gloucester turnpike road.

At the February session of the General Assembly, 1810, an act was passed incorporating the Powder-Mill Turn-



pike Corporation, consisting of Henry Smith, Philip Allen, Richard Olney, Robert Newell, and others, giving them the power to construct and maintain a turnpike road three rods wide, to begin at Sprague's tavern (a point near the junction of the Snake Hill road, in Greenville) at the easterly end of the Gloucester turnpike road; from thence running easterly until it reaches the westerly line of the town of Providence, on the plain (as it was called) near Fenner Angell's, or at such point or place as the committee to be appointed shall fix and establish.

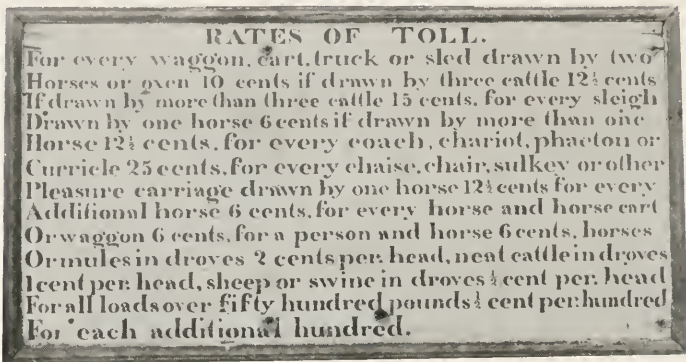
This proposed turnpike road now constitutes the main thoroughfare through the village of Centerdale, upon which is located the principal business places of the town, and is now called Smith street.

Soon after the act of incorporation was granted by the legislature, arrangements were made for the construction of the road, and in 1815 it was opened to public travel. Like all turnpike roads, the charter provided for the repairs and maintenance of the road by a system of taxation from all who traveled over it, the tax, or toll, as it was called, being collected at certain designated places called toll-gates. There were two gates established; one being located at the northeast corner of what is now called Smith street and Fruit Hill avenue. At that time the old Fruit Hill tavern stood there, and was kept by James Angell, who afterwards built the Centerdale hotel. Mr. Angell was one of the first to collect toll upon the new road.

The other gate was located at the corner of the turnpike road and the road that leads to Spragueville, at what was afterwards known as the George Mowry tavern, about midway between Centerdale and Greenville.

The corporation was obliged by law to post a sign-board, or rate-board, as it was called, near the gate, giving the rates of toll to be paid before passing through.

One of the old rate-board is still preserved, and a copy of the rates of toll charged is here given:



OLD SIGN OF RATES OF TOLL.

The Powder-Mill turnpike was no exception to nearly all other turnpike roads in the State, and eventually proved a failure as a dividend-paying enterprise. After a time the roadbed required extensive repairs, and the annoying system of toll-taking became unpopular with the public, which induced the towns through which it ran to petition to the legislature to purchase the highway, the towns agreeing to accept such parts as lay within their boundaries as town roads, and to keep the same in repair. Accordingly, at the January session of the General Assembly in 1873, one thousand dollars was appropriated to purchase the road, and it was then thrown open to the public, and declared a free public highway; and August 3, 1874, that part lying in North Providence was named

Smith street, it being a continuation of Smith street, Providence.

#### THE FARNUM TURNPIKE, NOW WATERMAN AVENUE.

At the February session of the General Assembly, 1808, Joseph Farnum, Caleb Farnum, Stephen Steere, Elisha Steere, and others, were granted a charter incorporating the Farnum Turnpike Company, whose object was to construct a turnpike road from Centerdale, running north-erly through Georgiaville to the Appleby road, so-called. It was thought that the building of this highway would prove a great convenience to the people living in Georgiaville and the surrounding country in Smithfield, by afford-  
ing them a more direct route to Providence. For some reason unknown the road was only partially constructed, and the charter was allowed to lapse; but at the meeting of the General Assembly, in 1819, the charter was revived. After continuing along inactive it again lapsed, when finally, at the January session, 1828, the charter was again revived, and a meeting of the incorporators was ordered to be held at the hotel of Winsor Farnum, in Georgiaville, on the first Monday in March, 1828. The company was then reorganized, and the turnpike was eventually com-  
pleted. The highway, as anticipated, was a source of convenience to the public, and remained a turnpike road until the January session of the General Assembly, 1873, when an appropriation of \$500.00 was made to purchase the turnpike and make it a free public highway, provided the towns through which it passed would accept it as a town road and forever keep it in repair. This the towns of North Providence and Smithfield voted to do at their next town meeting, and in 1873 the Farnum turnpike

was declared a free town road. After the town of North Providence accepted the portion lying in that town it was, in 1875, named Waterman avenue, in honor of Caleb V. Waterman, an old and respected resident of Centerdale.

#### MINERAL SPRING TURNPIKE.

At the June session of the General Assembly, 1825, a charter was granted incorporating the Smithfield and Gloucester Turnpike Corporation, with power to construct a turnpike road, starting from Pawtucket, running thence westerly until it intersected the Powder-Mill turnpike road, at Centerdale; thence running in a westerly course through Johnston, Scituate, and Gloucester to the Connecticut line; from whence it was to continue on to Pomfret, Conn.

The construction of that part west of Centerdale was abandoned before any work was commenced, and at the October session of the General Assembly the name of the corporation was changed to the Mineral Spring Turnpike Corporation, the company taking its name from a spring near the line dividing the town of North Providence from the city of Pawtucket, not far from Orchard avenue. This spring is said to be strongly impregnated with some mineral, probably iron.

The following year, 1827, the work of construction was begun, opening up a part of the country lying between Pawtucket and Centerdale which previously was not well provided with a convenient highway running east and west, and as Pawtucket was at that time a part of North Providence and the seat of government of the town, the new highway proved to be a great convenience to the people living in and around Centerdale.



Unfortunately the course of the road lay over long hills, requiring frequent and expensive repairs, and the comparatively limited travel over the road resulted disastrously to the stockholders. The unpopularity of the toll-gate system was demonstrated in this case as in others, and the enterprise followed the way of similar projects in this State. The road was purchased by the town in 1867, and declared a public highway and named Mineral Spring avenue.

#### WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER ROAD.

After the completion of Mineral Spring turnpike Centerdale was well provided with outlets in either direction, excepting the country bordering on the Woonasquatucket river, from Centerdale to Manton.

After the successful spinning and weaving of cotton by water-power, the country bordering along the river began to be rapidly improved. Daniel Lyman had already built a cotton mill at Lymansville, and in 1822 Zachariah Allen completed the mill at Allendale. This increasing business soon demanded better highway service, the only way of reaching those places being by private driveways constructed by the owner of the mills, and not at all adequate to public need. It was evident that a highway was needed from Centerdale through the villages of Allendale and Lymansville to Manton, connecting with the old road now called Manton avenue, from whence one could reach Olneyville and Providence with much greater convenience.

The distance from Centerdale to Manton was only about two miles, and was too short to encourage the construction of a turnpike road; so if a highway was to be built, it must be done by the aid of popular subscription.

This being so, and the need of such a road clearly apparent, a meeting of the citizens interested was called about the first of October, 1843, to consider the matter and take such action as might seem expedient. At this meeting it was voted to build the road by subscription, and after its completion to have the town accept it as a town road.

A subscription paper was drawn up, dated October 2d, 1843, a copy of which is here given:

“We the undersigned, for and in consideration of the use and benefits derivable from the opening of a level public road between Center Mill & Triptown [now Centerdale and Manton], along the Easterly bank of Woonasquatucket river in North Providence, do hereby agree to pay the several sums affixed to our respective names for the purpose of constructing said road, to the committee of the subscribers who may be hereafter appointed to complete the same.

“North Providence Oct 2<sup>d</sup> 1843”

The paper contains 112 names, with amounts varying from \$1.00 to \$225.00. The total amount subscribed was \$900.00 in cash, besides all the land needed for the road and fencing the same.

The largest donators were Zachariah Allen, James Angell, Obediah Olney, Charles Olney, and the Center Mill Company.

As soon as success was assured, a meeting of the subscribers was called, February 10, 1844, to make the necessary arrangements for carrying on the work. Elisha O. Angell was elected chairman and Zachariah Allen,\* secretary, and as the record of the meeting is still extant

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\* One of Rhode Island's noted cotton manufacturers.

and in Mr. Allen's own handwriting, it is given here in full:

“At a Meeting of the subscribers and others interested in making a new Road from Center Mill to Triptown holden at Center Hotel in North Providence on Saturday Feb 10<sup>th</sup> 1844 pursuant to notice in the public papers

“Mr Elisha O Angell was elected Chairman & Z Allen Secretary

“It was voted that the following named Gentlemen be appointed a committee to collect the Subscriptions for building said road, and to make the necessary contracts through Mr James Angell, Joseph Cunliff, Elisha O Angell, Olney Angell, Z Allen and Asa Steere.

“Voted that James Angell be appointed Treasurer to receive the sums collected by the aforesaid Committee and to disburse the same on their joint order

“Z Allen Secretary”

The committee immediately advertised for bids for the construction of the road, and April, 1844, the contract was let to Col. George Smith, who agreed to build the road for \$900.00

It is curious to note the form of contract used then in comparison with the voluminous form, covering thirty or forty printed pages, now in use for work of that kind. That one being written upon a scrap of paper scarcely half the size of this page, the words occupying about a dozen lines.

It is a curiously worded document, and is here given, the spelling and capital letters used in the original being retained:

“ April <sup>th</sup> 1844

“ I James Angell Joseph Cunliff & Elisha O Angell Let the Road Leading from Center Village To Triptown to

Col George Smith for Nine Hundred Dollars Said Smith Makes the Road 18 feet on the travil Wide Except the Cuts & filling Cuts to be 16 feete at Botton filling 16 ft at top. He to Build the travil from Powder Mill Road on the West Sid & Gradually Strike the Center of Road accross the Brook. then & there Strikes the East Sid at the Rock in the Swamp. We are to advance the money as We can Collect & as the Road Advances & Said Smith is to Comince Building Road Tuesday April <sup>th</sup> & is to finish Road Soon as Covenant Can Be Built."

With this (ironclad) contract Col. George Smith set to work some time in April, 1844, to carry out its provisions, and in the early part of October of the same year the road was completed and ready for public travel.

The road was afterwards accepted by the town as a public highway, and named Woonasquatucket avenue.

This comprises all the main or principal highways that lead to or pass through Centerdale.

## CHAPTER VII.

### TRANSPORTATION.

TO give the history of transportation through the valley of the Woonasquatucket to and from Centredale, it will be necessary to begin the story at the time when the farmer's oxen furnished the motive power for moving the products of the forest and farm to market; and in the early days of the colony it is not supposed that the freight traffic exceeded the transportation facilities.

The passenger traffic was expected to take care of itself. People must get to town and back again the best way they could: that way, generally, was on foot, with their gun for a traveling companion; but the more fortunate would go on horseback.

The colonial roads over which they were obliged to travel were little better than cartpaths now seen on country farms or in the woods, and originally were pass-ways from one farm to another and were laid out to convenience the parties interested, which accounts for the winding course which many of them took.

The introduction of the cotton and woolen industry into the country greatly increased both the freight and passenger traffic, which ultimately called for better high-ways for moving the products of the mill.

The poor condition of the roads encouraged the organizing of turnpike corporations, whose object was the construction of turnpike roads as an investment and source of revenue from toll-gates which were placed at certain distances along the road.

Turnpike roads were generally surveyed and laid out in a more direct course than were the colonial roads, often shortening the distance to be traveled between points one or more miles; but they were far from being model highways, such as we now have, but were still a great improvement over the old colonial road. An event of importance to early Rhode Island people was the completion of the Powder-Mill turnpike, in 1815, from Providence to Greenville, where it connected with the Gloucester turnpike, which had already been completed to Chepachet. The Gloucester pike was here met by the Putnam pike, which continued on to Putnam, Conn., thus forming a complete turnpike road from Putnam, Conn., to Providence, R. I., a distance of about 30 miles. The building of these turnpike roads made a promising opening for a through stage line from Providence to Putnam.

This was long before the advent of the steam railroad, and for those days the stage-coach furnished satisfactory and ample means of communication between Providence and Putnam, via Centerdale, Greenville, and Chepachet. Although it took two days to make the round trip, the traveling public appeared satisfied. This was the first public conveyance the people of Centerdale had enjoyed.

Who the parties were who originated the line is unknown at this time; but a man by the name of John Richards was at one time a part owner, and was a noted stage driver on that line for many years, or until the steam railroad was built which connected Putnam with other important places, which rendered the stage line unprofitable, and it finally was withdrawn about 1860.

About the year 1845 two brothers, Daniel and Weston Whipple, established a line of stage-coaches from Pascoag

to Providence, via Chepachet, Greenville, and Centerdale, passing over the same road traveled by the Putnam line.

The venture did not prove a profitable one, and two years later they sold out, and bought a line just started by Sterry Frye from Georgiaville (then called Nightingale's) to Providence, via Centerdale.

This eventually proved to be the popular line for the people of Centerdale, as the distance from Georgiaville to Providence was only about seven miles, and more trips could be made daily and in quicker time.

In the early days of the line two round trips were made each day, while a few years later four round trips were made; and the public no doubt considered that they were as well provided for as the people to-day are with the electric cars running every few minutes.

In June, 1867, Thomas Wilson Mathewson purchased the line from Daniel Whipple (his brother Weston having long since withdrawn from the company).

After selling the route to Mathewson, Daniel Whipple decided to continue in the business, which resulted in a spirited rivalry for the passenger traffic between the two lines, with the result that the patrons of both lines were more benefited by the opposition running than were the proprietors; for the fares were soon reduced from twenty-five cents to ten cents from Centerdale to Providence, and for a time the Whipple, or opposition, line was credited with carrying their passengers free and standing treat at the end of the route. But it is doubtful if every passenger received his treat, whatever may have been true as regards the fare.

The Whipple line continued to run until 1871, when it was withdrawn, leaving the Mathewson line in possession

of the road, and this continued to run until August 11th, 1873, when the building of the steam railroad put an end to the stage line, which was purchased by the railroad company, and the stage-coaches withdrawn.

Several attempts were made, after the railroad was built, to establish a line of omnibuses between Centerdale and Providence, by Frank Cooper, James Barnes, and James H. Angell, but none met with any degree of success.

It will now be necessary to go back a few years in our story, to about the year 1856.

The rapid development of the cotton and woolen industries throughout the northern part of the State caused those connected with the manufacturing industries to seek for better transportation facilities than the slow and tedious method afforded by horses and oxen.

The project of constructing a railroad from Providence through the Woonasquatucket valley to Pascoag attracted the attention of some of the prominent business men, and in 1856 a preliminary survey was made by L. M. E. Stone, a civil engineer, and it was found that the natural features of the country were such that the road could be easily and economically constructed, and would prove a great benefit to the many industries of the northern part of the State.

At the January session of the General Assembly in 1857 a charter was granted under the corporate name of The Woonasquatucket Railroad. For a time matters looked very encouraging for the immediate construction of the road; but before sufficient funds could be secured to begin the work the financial depression which overspread the country in 1857 and 1858 caused a delay in building the road, this being followed by the breaking out of the



Civil War in 1861, and the dull times that followed the close of the war still further delayed the construction until 1872.

In December, 1871, a new company was formed and elected William Tinkham, president; J. C. Knight, secretary; Lemuel M. E. Stone, treasurer, superintendent, and chief engineer. The old charter was revived and the name changed to The Providence and Springfield Railroad, a new survey was made, and vigorous efforts were put forth by President Tinkham to complete the road at as early a date as possible. Messrs. Clyde & Dillon, of New York, received the contract for its construction and equipment. The roadbed to be built was about twenty-three miles in length, and to expedite its completion was sublet in sections of varying lengths. The section passing through Centerdale was sublet to Messrs. Finnegan & Sullivan, who broke ground about one thousand feet south from the Centerdale station, May 7th, 1872.

Work was pushed rapidly along, and the following year the road was opened for public travel. The first passenger train to pass through Centerdale was upon the morning of August 11th, 1873, at 8 o'clock.

The first time-table called for only two round trips each day, the first train leaving Centerdale for Providence at 8 o'clock in the morning, and on its return arriving here a few minutes before 10. The second trip was made in the afternoon, leaving Centerdale about 1:20, and arriving here upon the return trip from Providence about 4:30 o'clock.

After a short time another train was added, leaving Centerdale at 6:15 A. M., and arriving at Centerdale on its return trip at 6:40 P. M. The running time was about

twenty-six minutes. The fare was twenty cents to Providence. One freight train was also run, making one round trip daily.

As the population increased the need of better facilities for travel began to be called for.

The stage-coach and omnibus had long been relegated. The steam cars, which for a time appeared to furnish ample accommodation, now seemed to satisfy only those who lived within easy walking distance of the station.

A line of horse cars by way of Smith street now appeared to be the only resource, and a project to establish a line was proposed by Hon. Ira Olney, of Fruit Hill, who at that time was serving as senator from North Providence to the General Assembly.

At first the project was ridiculed by many as far in advance of the requirements of the limited travel to be accommodated along Smith street, which was not deemed sufficient to warrant a financial success.

The proposition finally attracted a few adherents, and in the early fall of 1890 notices were posted inviting all interested to meet at the town hall in Centerdale to consider the question.

The result of the meeting was that Hon. Ira Olney was instructed to obtain a charter incorporating a company to build and operate a line of horse cars from Centerdale to Providence, via Smith street. The act was passed by the senate, but the legislature adjourned before action was taken upon it in the house of representatives.

In the meantime the introduction of electricity as a motive power for propelling cars was making rapid progress, and some of the lines around Providence were being equipped with the new motive power, and it was

apparent to many that horse cars would soon go the way of the stage-coach and omnibus. The presence of this transition period caused some delay in further action until October 12th, 1891, when a meeting was held to take into further consideration the question of transportation facilities. At this meeting a committee of five was appointed, consisting of Frank C. Angell, Walter W. Whipple, James C. Collins, Stephen A. Kelly, and Thomas W. Angell, to confer with the Union Railroad Company and ascertain upon what terms they would build and operate the much desired line.

The result of the committee's efforts was that the Union Railroad Company agreed to construct and operate the line as soon as the town would put the street in suitable condition to lay rails upon it, and they also agreed to construct and operate a line upon Woonasquatucket avenue and Douglas avenue within a certain time named in the agreement, provided the town of North Providence would grant to the company the exclusive franchise of the streets for twenty years.

This the town readily agreed to do, and the company commenced the work of construction upon Smith street during the spring of 1893.

The work was pushed rapidly along during the summer, and about 6 o'clock upon the evening of November 11th, 1893, the first electric car arrived in Centerdale. This was considered a trial trip, and brought the officers of the road and a few invited friends.

After completing many details, the line was opened for public travel, upon a forty-minute schedule, Sunday morning, November 19th, 1893.

After about two years a thirty-minute schedule was run

which continued until 1902, when cars were run every twenty minutes until a fifteen-minute schedule was run in 1906.

During the summer of 1895 the Union Railroad Company (now known as the Rhode Island Company) commenced laying rails upon Woonasquatucket river avenue from the junction of Smith street at Centerdale, and connecting with the rails of the Manton avenue line at Manton, where the rails continued on to Providence; and June 1st, 1896, the first regular car was run over the street upon a forty-minute schedule, continuing until December, 1904, when cars were run every thirty minutes.

The opening of the line of electrics upon Smith street to Centerdale in 1893 led many of the people of Providence, who had never journeyed up the beautiful Woonasquatucket valley, to do so, and thousands availed themselves of the opportunity, to ride over the new line and view the beautiful scenery.

In reviewing the progress made in transportation throughout this section it is interesting to note the remarkable progress made in the moving of freight as well as the rapid and comfortable means of traveling from one distant place to another.

A little more than four score years ago, there were only the old colonial roads, hardly suitable for the passage of vehicles other than farm wagons.

The turnpike roads which supplanted the colonial roads have come and gone. The roads constructed and maintained by the towns are fast giving way to the perfected State roads.

The stage-coach has come and gone, the horse cars have been supplanted by the swift-moving electrics, and the

ponderous locomotive, moving heavily loaded freight trains, has lightened the burdens of the faithful horse.

Remarkable as has been this transition, it has all taken place within the recollection of men now living.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE COTTON MILL.

THE successful spinning of cotton by water-power in America by Samuel Slater, in 1791, encouraged men of means to secure many of the available sites where sufficient water-power could be obtained and erect mills for the spinning of cotton. Up to this time cotton was picked, spun, and woven by hand in America, although spinning by water-power was introduced in England several years previous to its introduction in America; for England was very jealous of the industry, and forbade any person, under pain of forfeiture, to carry or send from the United Kingdom models, patterns, or machinery used in the process of manufacturing cotton yarn. But at the close of the War of the Revolution the colonist took a different view of the question, and bounties were offered to persons who would come to this country and construct machinery for the manufacture of cotton yarn.

It was to secure this bounty that young Samuel Slater came to this country.

It was several years after this before the power loom was introduced, or about the year 1814, but it was not in successful operation until 1816.

William Gilmore explained the Scotch loom to Judge Lyman, of North Providence, who caused one to be made under the direction of Mr. Gilmore. After a few difficulties were overcome the loom was in successful operation in the mills at Lymanville, North Providence.

The Woonasquatucket river offered many available sites for water-power, and the country around Centerdale was a convenient distance from Providence, where the supply of cotton could be had and also a ready market secured for the product of the mill. The Powder-Mill turnpike was already being constructed, and would provide ample highway facilities, and these conditions offered sufficient inducements for Jonathan Congdon to purchase, in 1810, the saw and grist-mill privilege, together with the dam and pond, and also the land where the Centerdale Worsted Mills now stand.

Congdon, either for the want of capital or lack of knowledge of cotton spinning, failed to improve the property, and sold the same to Israel Arnold, March 8, 1812.

Soon after Arnold purchased the property he proceeded to improve it, and erected a cotton-spinning mill. The mill was built of wood and was of small dimensions, 18 x 57 feet, two stories high. A few years later, after the success of the power loom was assured, a small addition was built of stone, 25 x 45 feet, and the original mill was used to accommodate about a dozen looms.

To provide homes for the employees necessitated the building of four two-tenement cottages which were arranged in a row near the line of the street leading from the mill in a southerly direction. These houses were, in 1892, moved to Waterman avenue.

The little mill with the four or five houses now gave the place the appearance of a busy little village, and was destined soon to be christened with a name.

After the mill was set in operation Arnold gave the name of *Centre* to the place. The name seemed a very appropriate designation for the little village, it being about

four miles from Greenville on the north, four miles from Pawtucket on the east, four miles from Providence on the south, and seven miles from Scituate on the west. The business was conducted under the name of The Centre Cotton Manufacturing Company.

The country around Centre soon began to feel the impetus given to it by the new industry, which invited other industries to locate here. Soon a store was started, followed by a blacksmith and wheelwright shop, and other enterprises which will be spoken of later.

The village continued to be known by the name of Centre until about 1830, when MILL was appended to the name, and for many years it was called Centremill, and by some, *Centreville*, until the United States Government established a post-office here in 1849, when the name was changed to Center Dale, that the mails might not confuse the mails going to an office previously established at Centerville, in the town of Warwick, R. I. The name continued to be spelled with the capital D to the last syllable until about 1870, when the post-office department ordered that the name of the office be spelled as one word, Centerdale, and since that time it has remained unchanged.

Just what degree of success Israel Arnold had in the manufacture of cotton cloth is not known; but it is but fair to presume that he was rewarded with reasonable success considering the early stages of the industry in this country at that time.

But whatever his success may have been, great credit should be given him for his courage and energy in establishing a new industry in a new country.



He continued to operate the mill until 1823, when he sold one-half of his interest to Richard Anthony, who was already operating a mill at Greystone.

In 1826, Israel Arnold, *et al*, sold his remaining interest to James Anthony, a son of Richard, the mill being run under the firm name of Richard Anthony & Son.

After the Anthonys bought the mill they made many improvements. An addition, 40 x 80 feet, was built. The wooden weave room was moved across the street and made into a four-tenement house, where it is still in use, and is the building numbered 10, 11, 12, 13.

The capacity of the mill now was about fifty looms, and their product always found a ready market in New York and Philadelphia.

The Anthonys were very progressive men, and took active part in advancing the local interest of the community.

They built and established the first store, and were prominently connected with the building of the first church, and other village improvements, accounts of which will be given in another chapter.

Their business was very prosperous until the death of James Anthony, the junior member of the company, who possessed a good business capacity and was much relied upon in the administration of the affairs by his father in his advancing years.

The death of James Anthony and the declining health of Richard Anthony, who died in 1840, prompted the latter to retire from business, and in 1838 he sold the mill to Joseph Cunliff, who continued to operate the mill with the average success of small mills of that day.

On the night of March 17, 1850, fire was discovered in one part of the mill, and soon the whole structure was in flames. There being no engine or fire apparatus at hand, the whole village was in great danger from the fire, and an alarm was carried to Providence by a man on horseback, and after considerable delay a hand engine with firemen to man it was dispatched to Centerdale, but it arrived too late to save the mill from total destruction; but the firemen lent valuable assistance in saving the village from being destroyed.

The destruction of the mill was a severe blow to the community, and many feared that the mill would not soon be rebuilt, and that the little village would consequently be allowed to fall into decay.

But the water privilege was not destined to remain long idle.



CENTERDALE MILL IN 1875

In 1853 Mr. Cunliff rebuilt the mill, and October 29, 1853, leased it to Zebulon Whipple; but before it was set

in operation Whipple subleased it to John D. Burgess, September 12, 1854, for the manufacture of cotton cloth.

Mr. Burgess continued to operate the mill until the property was sold in 1859 by Joseph Cunliff *et al*, to Amos N. Beckwith, who at that time was running a mill at Dyerville. At the May session of the General Assembly, 1860, the business of the Beckwiths was incorporated under the name of The Dyerville Manufacturing Company, with Amos N. Beckwith and Truman Beckwith as incorporators.

Under the management of the Beckwith's many improvements were made to the property. A new dam was constructed, an addition built to the mill, and a Corliss steam engine was installed to assist the old wooden-breast water-wheel, which was quite ready at that time to give way to the modern turbine wheel which was set in 1876, under the direct supervision of Thomas Wilmarth, who was at that time superintendent and general manager of the Dyerville Co.; and while under his management the production of the mill was increased to a considerable extent.

In 1888 the looms were removed and machinery installed for making warps and filling for the mill at Dyerville, where all of the weaving was to be done.

About noontime, August 7th, 1889, fire again broke out in the upper story of the mill; but by the aid of a detachment of the Providence fire department, which responded to a call for aid, the mill was saved from destruction, but was damaged to a considerable extent.

Business prospects not being very encouraging, the company decided to make a few temporary repairs to the

mill, and wait for a more favorable time before again setting the machinery in operation.

In January, 1891, the property was sold to Henry H. Green, and at the May session of the General Assembly, 1891, an act was passed incorporating the Centerdale Worsted Mill, with Henry H. Green, John C. Baldwin, and William Dracup, as the incorporators.

New and improved machinery was installed for the manufacture of worsted yarn.

Thus closed, after nearly eighty years of existence, the first epoch of the cotton industry in this place.



CENTERDALE MILL IN 1909.

The Centerdale worsted mills under the management of Messrs. Green, Baldwin, and Dracup did not continue the business long; Messrs. Green and Baldwin withdrawing from the company in September, 1891, selling their shares to James Lister, Jr., and William Mackie, who reorganized the company, electing William Mackie,

president; James Lister, Jr., treasurer; and William Dracup, secretary.

Under the new organization the village quickly assumed a new appearance, extensive repairs were made to all of the houses, a large addition was added to the mill, and the little cotton factory of a few years before was transformed into a large and well-equipped worsted mill.

New machinery was brought from England suitable for spinning the finest grades of worsted yarns used principally in the manufacture of cloth for men's wear and dress goods.

The mill has been increased to about three times its former size since it came into the possession of the present owners, and gives employment to about 300 in its different departments.



RIVER SCENE NEAR CENTERDALE MILL.

## CHAPTER IX.

### SCHOOLS.

IT is much regretted that no record can be found to establish the time when interest was first awakened in the cause of education in this vicinity; but from that which can be gathered from sources at all reliable, the time may be fixed as having been between the years 1802 and 1805.

Previous to that time there was no pressing need of school facilities here, as the population hardly exceeded half a dozen families within a radius of one mile, and there was already a school at Fruit Hill, about one mile away; and a school not more than two miles away was not considered distant in those days.

But during the time intervening between the year 1800 and 1810 the spinning of cotton by water-power was attracting considerable attention, and parties were negotiating for the old saw-mill privilege, together with the land adjoining, for the purpose of erecting a spinning mill, which necessarily would cause many new families to locate here; and it was also evident that with the increase of population which the new industry would call together, better school facilities would be needed.

There were no public schools established by law in Rhode Island at that time, as Rhode Island was considerably behind some of her sister States in establishing free schools. Although attempts were made in the colony as early as 1663 to establish free schools for "*poor children*," and in after years by several towns, none seem to have met with success.

In 1789 The Providence Association of Mechanics and Manufacturers was formed, and during the transaction of the business of the association the members soon discovered their deficiencies in education.

Important papers were to be drawn up and various kinds of technical documents prepared such as but few were competent to execute; and it did not take the members long to decide that *their* children should have better advantages for obtaining an education than they themselves had. The association began to agitate the question of better school facilities, and kept up the agitation until 1799, when they decided to petition to the General Assembly, which was then in session, to establish free schools throughout the State.

John Howland was a member of the Mechanics Association and was foremost in advocating the measure, most of the labor of pushing along the movement falling upon him. And to his untiring energy and persistent efforts the final triumph of free education throughout the State is due, and he may be justly called the founder of free public schools in Rhode Island.

A memorial or petition was prepared by Mr. Howland, and under the name of The Providence Mechanics Association he presented the same to the General Assembly at the February session, 1799, praying them to enact such laws as would establish a system of free schools throughout the State.

The memorial was strongly opposed by some of the members, and, strange as it may appear, the strongest opponents to the law were the delegates from the poorer towns, which really were to receive the most benefit.

The subject was finally referred by the General Assembly to a committee, which reported, in June, 1799, a bill that was ordered to be printed and to be distributed to the several towns for inspection.

At the October session the bill was taken up, and after much discussion was passed by the house of representatives. It was then sent to the senate, which postponed acting upon it until the session held in February, 1800, when it passed without much opposition and became a law. Thus was achieved the first great triumph in the cause of education in Rhode Island.

As already stated, the law was strongly opposed by many of the country towns that were most to be benefited, in consequence of which little effort was made by these towns to enforce it. Because of this non-enforcement the law soon became unpopular, and was repealed in 1803.

Efforts were made several times, after the repeal of the law, to revive the movement, and each time the interest of John Howland could be seen endeavoring to firmly establish the cherished object of his life, the system of free public schools throughout the entire State.

The winter session of the General Assembly, 1828, proved a triumph for the friends of education. After a long and severe struggle, "An act to establish public schools throughout the State" was passed. Up to this time this part of the town enjoyed only such school facilities as could be obtained through the generosity of those who interested themselves in the cause.

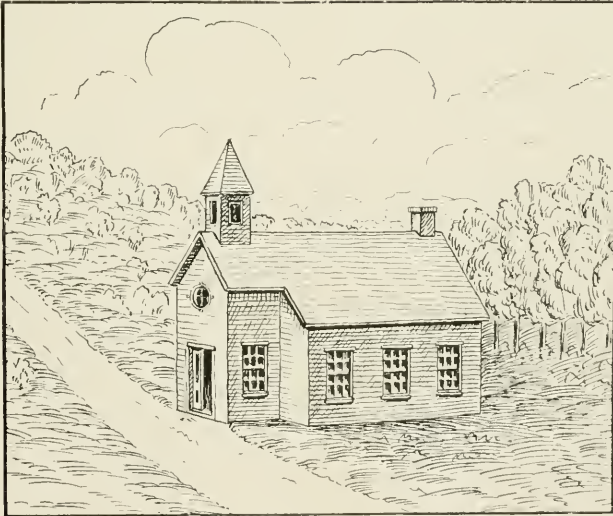
It was a common custom for the people of a community interested in education, and having sufficient means, to build a schoolhouse at their own expense for the accommodation of the neighborhood, and charge a nominal rent



to some teacher for the use of it. In some cases a teacher would be employed at a salary which was deemed sufficient at the time.

A small tuition fee was collected from each pupil attending, to pay the salary of the teacher, which was in most cases from one dollar and a half to two dollars and a half per week. Not many of the old-time teachers, however, were paid as high as two dollars and a half per week. This high figure seldom or never was reached without a struggle.

Of course his board would be included, the teacher boarding around the neighborhood a week or two with each family; and without doubt the experiences of some teachers boarding around the country would furnish amusing and interesting reading.



THE FIRST SCHOOL HOUSE—1802-5.

Some time between 1802 and 1805 Nathaniel Angell, Olney Angell, Benjamin Whipple, and Roger Olney, by mutual agreement, formed themselves into a kind of a company with the object of promoting the general welfare of the community, and to provide better facilities for attending school. They caused to be built at their own expense the first schoolhouse ever built in Centerdale. This was about the year 1802, possibly a year or two later.

This schoolhouse was built upon land belonging to Nathaniel Angell, near the southerly corner of Smith and Steere streets, but stood facing the old road, as Smith street at that time had not been constructed. (See map of old road.)

Like most country schoolhouses of those days it was a small one-story building, 20 x 25 feet, with an ell, upon the end facing the road, 8 x 10 feet, for the entry; the boys and girls using the same door and entry. The end of the building was surmounted with a belfry and bell, which in those days was no common luxury for a country schoolhouse.

The interior was arranged with a broad aisle through the center of the room, the floor being built on an incline, slanting from the sides of the room towards the center aisle, the desks being arranged lengthwise of the room upon the incline floor facing the center aisle, and the teacher's desk was upon a high platform at the rear end of the room.

It would be interesting to know the name of the first or any of the early teachers, but unfortunately no record of them has been preserved, nor is there any one now living who can supply any of their names earlier than 1824.

The only names I have been able to learn of those who taught in the old schoolhouse are Miss Ruth Richardson, who taught in 1824; Stephen Angell, in 1833, 1834, and 1835.

A Miss Briggs taught from August 1, 1836, to November 1, when she was succeeded by John Colwell, November 21 of the same year, Mr. Colwell receiving twenty-three dollars per month salary. Mr. Colwell was succeeded, June 26, 1837, by Rebecca Steere, at a salary of three dollars per week; these figures being found in a memorandum made in an old account book of James Angell, who was trustee of the school at that time. After Miss Steere came Jenks Mowry, Frank Anthony, and William W. Wright, in the order named; Mr. Wright being the last to teach in the old schoolhouse before the building was abandoned for school purposes, in 1848.

In 1823 the land where the schoolhouse stood was sold to James Angell who, in 1828, sold it to Asa Steere, who desired to build a dwelling-house thereon, and the schoolhouse was moved across Smith street, nearly opposite its first location.

Here it remained until it became inadequate to meet the requirements of the increasing population, and in 1848 it was abandoned for school purposes, a new schoolhouse having been built.

In the summer of 1846 a meeting of the taxpayers of the school district was called, and it was voted to assess a tax upon the ratable property of the district sufficient to purchase a suitable lot and erect thereon a new schoolhouse.

A piece of land was purchased at the corner of Smith street and Angell avenue (the site of the present school-

house), and a committee was appointed to proceed and build a house after designs furnished by Thomas Telft, an architect, whose skill as an architect of school buildings stood very high at the time.



THE SECOND SCHOOL HOUSE, ERECTED 1848.

In due time a beautiful two-room house was erected, which at the time was considered one of the model school-houses of the State.

In November, 1848, schools were opened in the new house, Mr. Henry A. Cook having charge of the grammar department and Almeda Hartwell of the primary school.

Under their careful direction, and that of their successors, the standard of the Centerdale schools stood very high throughout the northern part of the State.

Soon after the State adopted the free school system, in 1828, the town was divided into school districts, each district having full control of its school affairs, with the right to assess a tax upon all ratable property of the district to provide funds to erect school homes, and repair

the same, and to defray the expenses incidental to the conduct of the schools.

The district around Centerdale was known as school district number five, and included the villages of Graystone, Centerdale, and Allendale as far as Emanuel street, and extended in the direction of Fruit Hill to Sunset avenue, and extended in an easterly direction to the Smithfield road.

The business pertaining to school affairs was placed in charge of one or more trustees, who were elected annually by the legal voters of the district.

It was sometimes the case in some districts that incompetent men were elected as trustees, whose only object seemed to be to install some friend or relative as teacher in the school, regardless of the person's qualification or the wishes of the people.

Occasionally some little neighborhood broil outside of the school, either in politics, or trade would enter into the election, and the result would be that the office would be filled by a person wholly unfit for the position, and the schools would suffer in consequence.

But this was not always the case, for some communities were fortunate to secure trustees who had the interest of the schools at heart, and in such cases trustees, teachers, and scholars would work in harmony together, and good results would be obtained; and it might be truthfully said that district number five was generally fortunate in securing competent men for trustees to manage the school affairs.

But whatever the deficiencies of the district system may have been, it served its purpose in the early days of free

schools; but as the system of free schools developed with the increasing population, and the greater demands made by the ever-changing condition of affairs, it became evident that the district system, which had answered well its purpose in the early days, had now become inadequate, and some change in the management of the schools was necessary to attain the best results.

At the January session of the General Assembly, 1884, an act was passed authorizing the towns in town meeting to abolish the school district system and transfer all of the school property into the hands of the town and place the entire management and care of all public school interests in a town school committee. The law was not made compulsory, but left it optional with the towns to adopt the town system or not; but in 1903 the law was amended, to go into effect January 1, 1904, abolishing the district system and requiring every town throughout the State to proceed and organize under the new law; as nearly every town had already adopted it, it was thought best to make the system uniform throughout the State.

North Providence was the first town in the State to adopt the new law, at a town meeting held June 1st, 1885, and an immediate improvement in the school buildings and the general management of the school affairs was noticeable.

The first superintendent of schools under the town management was William W. Wright, who labored diligently and faithfully to effect the change from the obsolete district system to the town management.

Mr. Wright served as superintendent until 1887, when he was succeeded by George W. Gould, who served one year, when he was succeeded by James C. Collins, who

served from 1888 until 1897, when he was succeeded by the following: Henry R. Hill, from 1897 to 1901; George M. Hall, from 1901 to 1905; Arthur Cushing, from 1905 to 1907, when Thomas P. Bassett was chosen superintendent.

Soon after the town assumed the management of the schools, it became evident that the school attendance had again outgrown the capacity of the house which was once the pride of the village, and that a new and more commodious house must soon be provided.

At a town meeting held June 27, 1885, an appropriation of \$4,000.00 was made to provide better school facilities for the Centerdale district.

Messrs. James C. Collins, Preston L. Belden, Henry R. Hill, Herbert L. Eddy, Martin W. Thurber, and Benjamin Sweet were appointed a building committee.



THIRD, OR PRESENT SCHOOL HOUSE.

The result of the committee's labors was that a new three-room schoolhouse of modern design was erected from plans furnished by William R. Walker, architect.

The work of construction was under the direction of Benjamin Sweet, contractor, who commenced work during the summer of 1885, and the building was completed during the following winter, and was formally dedicated, February 22d, 1886, with appropriate exercises.

A large gathering of the people of the town, with the friends of education from adjoining towns, was present.

The dedicatory exercises were conducted by the chairman of the building committee, Hon. James C. Collins, and addresses were made by Hon. Thomas B. Stockwell, Commissioner of Public Schools of Rhode Island, Rev. V. E. Tomlinson of Valley Falls, and Thomas J. Morgan, principal of the State Normal School.

Many congratulations were extended to the residents of the village for the beautiful building which they that day had dedicated to the cause of education. The building contained three rooms, for grammar, intermediate, and primary departments.

Other rooms have been added from time to time as needed, until now the house contains six rooms with modern furnishings, including a steam heating plant.

The schoolhouse occupies an elevated and commanding site, and is surrounded by trees of many years' growth, making the surroundings attractive to a person entering the village.



## CHAPTER X.

### CHURCHES.

And he said unto them, Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. ST. MARK xvi, 15.

**I**N 1830 the village of Centerdale had grown to be a busy little community. The mill had been enlarged to more than double its former size, several houses had been built, an old-time variety store established, a wheelwright and blacksmith shop started, and also a tavern had been established; for in those days a country village would hardly be complete without its village tavern.

Previous to 1832 the village contained no building consecrated to God for holding divine services; but religious services were occasionally held in the school-house, and an occasional prayer-meeting at the home of some of the residents.

There was as early as 1816 a Baptist church at Fruit Hill, about one mile away, where those who were inclined could attend.

About 1830 the people desired a more convenient place for holding divine service than the schoolhouse afforded, and with the influence and help of the Anthonys, who had purchased the cotton mill, and the co-operation of the resident people, a substantial sum was secured as a fund to build a Free Will Baptist meeting-house.

The results of their efforts were that a stone edifice 37 x 56 feet was erected upon land secured from James Angell, upon the west side of Smith street, opposite the junction of Mineral Spring avenue.

The meeting-house, as it was called, was a substantial stone building, surmounted by a square belfry on the end fronting the street.



THE BAPTIST MEETING HOUSE. (ARMORY HALL.)

In 1835 a subscription paper was circulated to obtain a sufficient amount to purchase a bell. The original paper is still preserved, and a copy is here given with the names and amounts subscribed:

“We the subscribers being desirous to procure a bell for the Center Village Meeting House agree to pay the sum affixed to our respective names to be applied to that purpose.

“North Providence July 17 1835

Halsey Sweetland . . .	2 50	Adam Lawrence . . .	1 00
Samuel Sweet . . .	1 00	Martin Wheeler . . .	1 00
Waterman Sweet . . .	1 00	Brown W. Sweet . . .	3 00
Timothy Colwell . . .	1 00	Jenks Smith . . .	1 00
James Corey . . .	1 00	Elias Hutchins . . .	2 50
John W. Colwell . . .	1 00	John Hutchinson . . .	1 50
William Mathewson . . .	1 00	A. Sawyer . . .	1 00
William A. Colwell . . .	1 00	Ephraim Whipple . . .	1 00
Royal Waterman . . .	1 00	John F. Smith . . .	1 00
Fenner Brown . . .	2 00	James Anthony . . .	15 00
E. M. Sears . . .	1 00	James Angell . . .	10 00
L. Ross . . .	50	Asa Steere . . .	5 00
Ebben Scott . . .	1 00	Luther Carpenter . . .	5 00
George Cummings . . .	1 00	Ephraim Hawkins . . .	5 00
Dexter Edwards . . .	50	William Woodworth . . .	7 00
George Waterman . . .	1 00	Richard Briggs . . .	6 00
John G. Needham . . .	2 00	Edwin Capron . . .	6 00
Stephen Angell . . .	1 00	Obadiah Olney . . .	1 00
Nathaniel Angell . . .	2 00	Welcome Farnum . . .	1 00
Ambross Eddy . . .	1 00	Daniel Farnum . . .	50
			<hr/>
			98 00

Ninety-eight dollars was obtained to buy the bell, and a fine, deep-toned, Spanish bell was secured.

A short time previous there was some religious trouble in Spain, and many of the bells upon the churches and convents were removed and transported out of the country to prevent their being confiscated or from falling into the hands of the opposing party.

Some of the bells were shipped to New York and Boston, and eventually one of them poised in the belfry of the Centerdale meeting-house.

This bell was made of Spanish bell metal and weighed about 600 pounds, and was inscribed as was the custom

in those days; unfortunately no record was made of the words of the inscription before it was destroyed by fire in 1892, which also destroyed the building and its contents, including all of the church records, an account of which will be given later.

At the time of the fire spoken of, all the records of the early history of the church were destroyed; so it is impossible to tell the date when this, the first church, was dedicated, except that it was in the autumn of 1832.

Rev. Elias Hutchins, Rev. Gilbert Whitemore, and Rev. Maxcy Burlingame were among the early preachers in the new meeting-house: but which of the three was the first to officiate is unknown: but certain indications point to Rev. Elias Hutchins as being the first.

How interesting it would be if a full and complete report of the first service held here, the name of the first officiating clergyman, the address that was made, the psalms and hymns that were sung and the attending incidents of that most interesting occasion; what a satisfaction it would be if a picture of that first gathering, such as the modern triumph of the art of photography could give of a like scene to-day, could be produced.

The interior of the house was not unlike other meeting-houses built in those days, and consisted of one large audience room, 17 feet in height, lighted by six large windows, 5 x 9 feet in size; across the end was the gallery, always to be found in those old-time meeting-houses, to accommodate the village choir.

The pulpit, which stood at one end, was of enormous size; the top of the reading-desk being fully nine feet above the floor. The pews were like stalls, or boxes, with doors to close and button the sides being so high

that only the heads of the congregation could be seen; while a boy a dozen years old could scarcely see over the tops of them.

The Baptist society continued to hold services in their "new meeting-house" until about 1845, when religious services under the direction of the Free Will Baptist denomination were discontinued.

At the annual convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church of Rhode Island, held in 1839, a canon was adopted, establishing a board of missions for the purpose of propagating and establishing missions in such parts of the State that had never been blessed with the privileges of worshiping God in the true church, as understood by the adherents of the Episcopal Church.

Committees were appointed to explore the northern and western portions of the State with special reference to this subject. They found some towns entirely destitute of a regular place for divine worship of any kind within their limits. Here was good missionary ground to work in, and the church was not slow to grasp the opportunity.

Missions were established in Burrillville, Johnston, Smithfield, Cumberland, North Providence, and other towns throughout the State.

Where meeting-houses of other denominations could not be had for holding services, halls were secured; and in the absence of both, services were held in the open air.

During the years 1844 and 1845 occasional services were held in Centerdale in the Baptist meeting-house, which was loaned for the occasion to Rev. James C. Richmond, missionary; the services were but occasional, their object being to sow the seed and patiently wait and watch for it to take root in the virgin soil and bring forth fruit;

and if the harvest was sufficient, to establish a mission station, in the hope that, with God's blessing, it might develop into a church to the glory of God.

As before stated, these meetings were but occasional. Until 1847 Rev. James H. Eames, who was at that time rector of St. Stephen's Church, Providence, interested himself in the missionary work in this direction, and, foreseeing the abundant harvest that might be secured, entered the field and held regular services in Centerdale once each Sunday.

He immediately entered into negotiation for the purchase of the Baptist meeting-house, and in 1848 he obtained a loan of \$50.00 from the Convocation Missionary Fund to secure the stone church at Center Mill (as it was called), he receiving assurance that a sufficient amount could be raised, from those interested, to pay the balance due on the church.

Interest now increased rapidly in the work, under the guiding hand of that very devout and gifted servant of God, Rev. James H. Eames, who labored earnestly to establish the church to which he had given his life labors.

The interior of the building was altered to accommodate the services of the Episcopal Church. The high pulpit used by the Baptists was removed, a chancel and sacristy erected, and other improvements made, and ere long the mission was in a flourishing condition.

On account of the arduous duties at St. Stephen's Church, Mr. Eames was compelled to relinquish temporarily his work in this place, Rev. Josiah Phelps officiating as missionary for several months, when he returned to his home in Indiana.

In March, 1849, Rev. James H. Carpenter was appointed missionary to this station. The following extract taken from his annual report to the convention held in Providence, June 12 and 13, 1849, will give an idea of the condition of affairs at that time.

. . . "At Center Mill are the regular morning and evening services on Sunday, and a congregation not large, but increasing, and evincing some encouraging signs of interest. The Sunday-school, which a few weeks ago consisted of scarcely 20 members, now numbers 50, including 9 teachers. The choir have reorganized and resumed their appropriate services in public worship. A substantial and commodious stone edifice for the worship of God, capable of seating 300 or 400 persons, is already erected. A majority of the shares in this building were purchased by the church a year or two since, of its former owners and occupants, who were of the Baptist society. It is furnished with a *good bell*, and the proper church fixtures have been added. It now needs for the more complete worship of God in decency and in order a small organ, a communion service, a carpet, and a surplice. These things I hope the more able friends of missions and the church in our neighboring cities will not suffer it long to want." . . .

Mr. Carpenter continued to officiate until March, 1850; from that time until November, of the same year, the place was filled by Mr. Gray, a lay reader.

About this time great interest was awakened in the home missionary work, and Rev. James Eames resigned his position as rector of St. Stephen's Church, Providence, to enter again the missionary field.

He was assigned to three missions, one at Greenville, one at Valley Falls, and at Centerdale. He entered upon his work at Centerdale the second time in November, 1850.

On account of the distance between the three stations, Mr. Eames was required to walk or drive 100 miles every week in the discharge of his duties at the three stations.

The work proved too much for him, and he was compelled to give up the Centerdale mission in November, 1851. Regular services on Sunday were discontinued for a short time, but the Sunday-school was continued and was well attended and did excellent work. Occasional services, however, were held the following year by Revs. Mr. Lumsden, Mr. Fairbairn, and Mr. Mills, together with the general missionary, Mr. Eames.

In 1853 Mr. Eames was granted a leave of absence by the convention and was away fourteen months, traveling through the countries of the east, principally Egypt and the Holy Land.

During his absence Rev. Benjamin B. Babbitt, of Massachusetts, was appointed missionary to fill his place at Centerdale, and regular services were again held. It was during the time of Mr. Babbitt's labors here that he conceived the idea of a mission at Olneyville, and with the consent of the board of missions entered upon his labors, the outcome of which was the establishing of the Church of the Messiah at Olneyville.

Upon the return of Mr. Eames from his travels, in 1855, he resumed the care of the mission.

The church found many obstacles to overcome. The population was small, and largely inclined towards the Baptist faith; there being Baptist churches already established at Allendale, Graniteville, and Fruit Hill, all within a radius of one mile. And in consequence of the limited population and the existing circumstances, the board of missions decided to discontinue further efforts



to establish a church in this place at that time. The last services held here by Mr. Eames was Christmas night, 1855.

The discontinuance of the mission was much regretted by the faithful few who had labored to establish the church, but they bowed in humble submission to the inevitable, hoping and trusting that the seed sown by His faithful servants had fallen upon good ground, and when watered with the dew of His blessing would spring up and bring forth an abundant harvest in the near future.

The meeting-house, as it never ceased to be called, remained closed for holding divine services until April 29, 1863, when it was sold to James Halsey Angell, who removed the pews and other church fixtures and transformed it into an armory, or drill-hall, for the use of Company A, First Regiment Rhode Island Militia, which was organized during the Civil war in accordance with a law passed by the General Assembly ordering the organizing of the State militia. The hall was named Armory Hall, and was ever afterwards known by that name until it was destroyed by fire, February 6, 1892. An account of the fire, published in one of the Providence newspapers, is here given, which also gives a brief account of the last few years of its existence:

“About 2 o'clock Saturday morning, February 6, 1892, fire was discovered issuing from the windows and roof of Armory Hall. The alarm was soon given, but before many minutes the whole building was enveloped in flames. Evidently the fire had been raging for some time before it was discovered, in order to have gained such headway. In the absence of all fire apparatus nothing could be done to save the building and the attention of the people was turned

toward saving adjoining buildings, especially the Centerdale Hotel, which was literally covered with sparks and cinders, but was saved from destruction partially by the presence of about two inches of snow which covered the roof. The fire from the hall communicated with a small wooden structure used as a barber shop and occupied by H. E. Turner. By 4 o'clock both buildings were totally consumed. The origin of the fire is unknown. The hall was insured in the Pawtucket Mutual Insurance Co. for \$2,000; the barber shop was uninsured and is a total loss. Both buildings belonged to the estate of the late J. H. Angell. The burning of Armory Hall removes an old and familiar landmark from the town, and will be regretted by many of the townsmen who were accustomed to assemble there upon different occasions. The hall was a stone structure 37 x 56 feet and was erected in the year 1832 by the Free Will Baptist Society, who held services there about 13 years when services were discontinued, and in 1847 the house was sold to the Episcopal Society, who held services there until 1855, when services were again discontinued, which ended the building's career as a regular place of worship. In the year 1863 the property was sold to Mr. J. Halsey Angell, who transformed it into Armory Hall for the use of a military company which was organized here during the Civil war. At the close of the war the hall was remodeled into a public hall for general purposes. The order of Good Templars and the Temple of Honor occupied it from 1871 to 1874. In 1886 it was again remodeled and a stage erected and a set of scenery added. In 1890 the Centerdale Athletic Club occupied it for a gymnasium, and continued to do so until it was destroyed by fire Saturday morning. The club lost all of their paraphernalia, upon which there was no insurance. The basement of the hall was occupied by the Young American Band as a band room; they losing about \$150, in instruments and uniforms, etc. The loss of the old bell, which was allowed to occupy its accustomed place in the belfry, is much regretted by the public generally, as is manifested by the frequent calls for a small piece as a token in remembrance of the many times it chimed forth its sweet and melodious notes, sometimes calling the people together to worship, and at other times calling forth in more stirring peals for men to assemble in defence of their country, or to battle with the fiery fiend which at

this time had encircled its home and forced it to give up its life (as we might say), for its voice will be heard no more. But the faithful old servant gave a farewell stroke as it descended into the fiery cauldron below, which was distinctly heard by those present. The bell was cast in Spain upwards of one hundred years ago, and was considered of unusual fine and mellow tone." . . .

The destruction of Armory Hall removed the only place where public gatherings or religious services could be held in the village; for the doors of Armory Hall were always opened free of any charge by Mr. Angell to any denomination who desired to hold divine service there. But as a rule the services were but occasional.

Spring came, followed by summer, autumn, and winter, for more than two-score years before the beautiful services of the Episcopal Church were again exemplified in Centerdale. The seed sown by those early missionaries had long slumbered, but had now taken root, and in February, 1897, the harvest time was at hand; and God in His infinite wisdom directed the footsteps of His faithful servant, Rev. James W. Colwell, thither to gather the golden harvest. It would have been difficult to have found a man more especially qualified to undertake the arduous work than Mr. Colwell. He was a man of large experience in the work in Christ's vineyard, of pleasing address and tireless energy, and he entered upon his work here with renewed ambition, feeling that he was to complete the work begun by his esteemed friend, Dr. Eames, so many years before.

The people of the community during the long time the church had remained dormant had affiliated themselves with other denominations in adjoining villages, there being less than half a dozen Episcopalians within the

limits of the village; thus it will be seen that he had no easy task before him. He must first interest and educate the people in the faith and forms of the church. In this work he was especially gifted, and was ably assisted by his daughter, Miss Mary E. Colwell (now Mrs. B. M. Latham), who labored tirelessly for four years with her father, traveling through summer's sun and winter's snow upward of ten miles every Sunday to labor in the church she so much loved and to help establish St. Alban's mission.



REV. JAMES W. COLWELL.

There being no hall in the village in which to hold services, a small room in a building on Waterman avenue was donated to the use of the mission by the Centerdale Worsted Co., and a generous friend of the church contributed suitable furnishings; and February 21, 1897, services were

held there for the first time, Rev. James W. Colwell officiating, assisted by Arch-deacon Tucker.

The attendance was very encouraging. The object of the meeting was explained by both the officiating clergymen, who earnestly implored the blessings of God to descend upon the community and to encourage in the hearts of the people a desire to labor for the establishment of the church to the glory of God. They also told of the earnest efforts of Dr. Eames, who labored so faithfully in the endeavor to establish the church in Centerdale so many years ago.

After the service Frank C. Angell announced that he had in his possession the communion service, bible, and prayer book used by Dr. Eames in his labors here forty years ago, and desired to present the same to the new mission.

The bible, prayer book, and communion service had been carefully cared for by Mr. Angell and his ancestors, as treasures too sacred to be put to common use; and now, after nearly half a century had passed, he rejoiced that he had the pleasure of returning the treasures to the use to which they had been dedicated.

The attendance increased at each service, and soon the room was far too small to hold all who came; but many were content to stand outside of the building and listen to the inspiring words of the earnest and faithful missionary.

The name of St. Alban's Mission was suggested by Mr. Colwell as a suitable name for the mission to be known by, and the congregation readily adopted the same; and the society has ever since been known by that name, in memory of the first Christian martyr in England.

To afford an opportunity for the ladies to labor for the advancement of the work of the mission, The St. Elizabeth Guild was organized; and to the persevering efforts of this little band of willing workers is largely due the credit of erecting the beautiful St. Alban's church, which now adorns the village.

Interest in the work continued to increase, and April 22, 1897, a meeting was called that a general interchange of opinions might be had as to the advisability of erecting a church. At a subsequent meeting committees were appointed to solicit funds for that purpose. The generous donation of the Centerdale Worsted Company of one thousand dollars, and the gift of a beautiful building site, centrally located (where the St. Alban's church now stands), by Frank C. Angell, encouraged the giving of many liberal amounts, and the widow's mite received the same blessing of God as the larger amounts received.

At a meeting held April 12th, 1899, the following resolution was passed:

*“Voted,* That a committee of three be elected, to be known and called the building committee, with power and authority to proceed and erect or cause to be erected a suitable building or church edifice suitable for holding religious services according to the established custom and forms of the Episcopal Church.”

Frank C. Angell, William Dracup, and James W. Colwell were elected as the committee.

Designs furnished by D. H. Thornton, architect, were accepted, and April 17, 1899, ground was broken for the foundation, which was placed by William A. Sweet. The contract for the building of the church above the

foundation was awarded to John A. Chase, contractor and builder. The work progressed rapidly, and June 22, 1899, the corner-stone was laid in accordance with the usual forms of the Episcopal Church by Bishop Coadjutor William N. McVickar, assisted by a delegation of the clergy.



ST. ALBAN'S CHURCH.

After the corner-stone was laid the building began to assume its beautiful proportions; the spire gradually ascending heavenward, surmounted and holding aloft the golden cross, the emblem of Christ, proclaiming to all the world that "all who believe and are baptized shall inherit eternal life."

In due time the church was completed, and December 19th, 1899, was delivered into the hands of the committee by the contractor.

The work of placing the pews and furnishing the interior was rapidly pushed forward, and February 21st, 1900, the third anniversary of the founding of the mission, the church was formally opened and dedicated to the worship of God by Right Rev. Bishop William N. McVickar, assisted by a delegation of the clergy.

The mission was now firmly established in its new home, with an encouraging future before it. A small debt which was upon the church at the time it was dedicated was paid January 1, 1906, and June 16, of the same year, it was formally consecrated by Bishop McVickar. The sermon was by Rev. George McC. Fiske, D. D., rector of St. Stephen's Church, Providence.

The day was one long looked forward to with much interest by the members of the little parish, and would have been a day of unalloyed pleasure to all had not the vacant seat within the chancel rail told the sad story that the beloved rector (James W. Colwell), who had labored so long and faithfully to establish St. Alban's Mission, had been called away to receive the reward of the faithful and hear the joyful tidings, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

In November, 1905, Mr. Colwell was stricken with paralysis at his home in Greenville. The news came as a heavy blow to his many friends, especially so to the members of the mission, who fully realized that this was but the beginning of the end. He never recovered sufficiently to resume his labors at St. Alban's. While visiting his



daughter, at Mansfield, Mass., he was again stricken, immediately after asking divine blessing at the evening meal, and soon expired. His death occurred April 26th, 1906.

During the time that Mr. Colwell was unable to officiate at St. Alban's Mission the place was filled temporarily by Richard James and Henry Harman, lay readers, until March 25, 1906, when Rev. Alva E. Carpenter, rector of St. Peter's Church, Manton, assumed charge until October 7, when he was succeeded by Rev. Edmond C. Bennett.



METHODIST CHURCH.

### THE CENTERDALE METHODIST CHURCH.

During the summer of 1896 William H. Tilley, a local preacher of Mount Pleasant M. E. Church, assisted by

Mr. C. A. Lockwood, and others, held religious services in the open air in the village; the first one occurring July 12, 1896. These open-air meetings were held regularly each pleasant Sunday until October 23, when the weather became too cold for out-of-door services; and as no hall was to be had, William H. Tilley, to further the work he had inaugurated, purchased a lot of land on George street near Smith street, and at once proceeded to erect a small church, doing much of the work himself. January 3, 1897, saw the church completed, and the first services were held within its walls at that time.

The formal dedication of the little church occurred June 17, 1897; the presiding elder of the Providence district, Rev. Mr. E. C. Boss, officiating; and great interest was manifested by the members, who worked earnestly and devotedly for its advancement.

At a session of the Methodist Episcopal Conference, held a few months later, it was deemed unwise to organize a M. E. Church at Centerdale at this time. Whereupon the members of the new church voted unanimously to organize as an Independent Methodist Church. Mr. W. H. Tilley, who had acted as assistant pastor, was elected pastor, and June 27, 1901, was formally ordained to the gospel ministry; and under his direction and his untiring energy and generosity the church still continues on with its good work.

#### ST. LAWRENCE CHURCH.

*(Roman Catholic.)*

Until the summer of 1907 Centerdale was included in the parish of St. Thomas church, at Manton, about two

miles distant, necessitating quite a long walk for those who desired to attend service, and many were unable to do so from some disability or the infirmities of old age.



ST. LAWRENCE CHURCH.

As the population increased the adherents of the Catholic Church increased accordingly, and eventually numbered about 400 communicants in and around Centerdale. On account of the distance of St. Thomas church from Centerdale, and the size of the parish, a plea for a division of the parish was made to Rt. Rev. Bishop Harkins, who, after carefully considering the question in all its bearings, decided that the best interest of the church could be served by a division of the parish and establishing a new church near Centerdale; believing that the people would be more conveniently accommodated and have a more home interest in the work than they would have in a place of worship more distantly removed.

In compliance to his wishes and orders the parish was divided, the new one receiving the name of St. Lawrence parish, and Rev. Joseph Hardy was assigned to take charge of the same. Father Hardy was a young priest, and especially qualified to undertake the arduous task, and entered into the work with much energy and enthusiasm, and soon awoke among his parishoners a lively interest in the church work. A room was secured in Allendale, where services were held temporarily, or until other arrangements could be made.

The members of the new parish soon saw the urgent need of a larger and better place for holding divine services than the present room afforded and in a building suitably arranged and consecrated to His holy name.

A suitable site for a new church was secured near Centerdale, on Woonasquatucket avenue, corner of George street, and June 17th, 1907, ground was broken for the foundation of the new edifice. The work of construction was now pushed rapidly forward by J. C. Walch & Co., contractors, from plans drawn by Messrs. Fountaine & Kennicutt, architects. The size of the church is 45 x 100 feet, with a spire 107 feet above the street.

October 20, 1907, the corner-stone was laid with the impressive ceremony of the Catholic Church by Rt. Rev. Bishop Matthew Harkins, D. D., assisted by a large delegation of the clergy. The sermon was by Rev. Thomas C. O'Brien. The first service was held in the unfinished structure October 13, 1907, Rev. Joseph Hardy, rector.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE VILLAGE TAVERN.

**I**N ye olden times a country village without a tavern would be as devoid of life as a schoolhouse in vacation time, and would offer little inducement for people to remain long within its limits.

The taverns in those days were the center of the community and a very important feature in the life of the town, socially and otherwise; they were the farmer's club-room, the village bureau of information, the main center for obtaining the news from abroad, as well as the village gossip. Newspapers were only occasionally seen, and a farmer who could afford a weekly or monthly paper was always a welcome guest at the gatherings around the open fire-place of the tavern room. There would be discussed the price of hay, corn, potatoes, wood, and other products of the farm; there was planned in the long winter evenings the work for the coming season, advice was sought and given in reference to everything of interest to the community; occasionally politics were reviewed and party campaigns planned.

Aside from the home, there probably is no place to which the minds of our grandfathers would revert with more pleasing recollections than the evenings passed in the public room of the old-time tavern.

Pleasant indeed must be the recollections of those early days; the swinging signs, the rattling stage-coaches, the stories and adventures related around the cheerful blaze

of the open fire-place, and the merry dances held at these taverns attended by the people from all the country around.

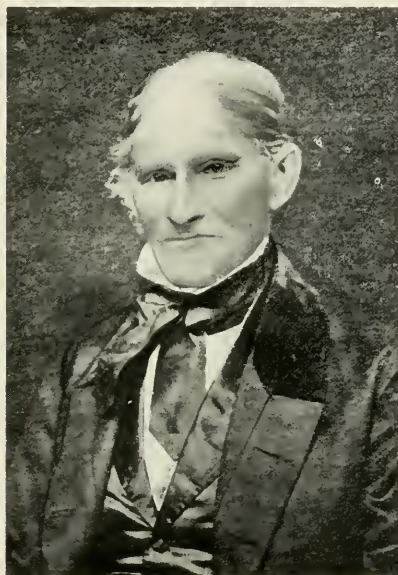
The hotel of to-day has little in common with the tavern of one hundred, or even fifty years, ago. That close neighborly companionship formed around the hearth-stone of the tavern room has long since disappeared.

It is not difficult to understand some of the causes that has brought about this change. The introduction of new industries, employing many transient people who do not remain long enough in any place to have anything in common with the old residents, or to take any interest in the welfare of the community; the rapid and convenient ways of traveling to and from the neighboring cities for business and other purposes; the diffusion of the news from all parts of the world through the daily newspapers delivered at the doors of almost every home, together with the changes incident to the mode of living in modern times, are some of the chief causes of the decline of the old-time village tavern.

To give a history of the old tavern, now called the Centerdale Hotel, without calling attention to its founder, James Angell, would be like trying to tell the history of Rhode Island without alluding in any way to Roger Williams. So it is but fitting that a review of the life of one so intimately connected with the early history of the village of Centerdale, and whose life-long interest was so identified with its progress, should be given at this time.

James Angell was born December 5th, 1781, and came from sturdy old Puritan stock. He was the son of James Angell and Amey Day, nee daughter of Nathaniel Day (mentioned in chapter II of this work), and was a direct

lineal descendant of the fifth generation from Thomas Angell, who came with Roger Williams from England in 1631, he being one of the five persons who constituted Roger Williams's little party when he came and founded the city of Providence in 1636.\*



JAMES ANGELL.

The early life of James Angell was not unlike that of other boys brought up on a farm. He inherited a strong and robust constitution, and his boyhood days upon the farm were well calculated to firmly knit his young frame together. He was possessed of wonderful vitality, and seemed never to tire from work or appear fatigued; nor was he ever sick a day in his life until the illness that caused his death at the age of 89 years. His habits were

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\*See Chapter II.



correct in every way. He was a very temperate man in the use of ardent spirits, although not an total abstainer.

As evidence of his wonderful vitality, it may be mentioned that at the age of eighty-five years he would go into the field and do what would be considered a good day's work for a man of forty years; and in the haying season would take his scythe and mow with the rest of the men; and in the parlance of the hay-field, "no man could mow his heels."

He was of a genial and pleasant disposition, cordial and courteous to all, and seemed to possess a certain amount of unassumed dignity which commanded a respectful recognition from all. He took an active interest in all that pertained to the moral and intellectual welfare of the community, and was foremost in all philanthropic enterprises. He was honored many times by his townsmen, who elected him to various public offices of the town, including that of representative to the General Assembly for the years 1843-44-45.

He was twice married: the first time to Lydia Olney, the second time to Selinda Ray. Six children were born by the first wife: Elisha O., Amanda, Amey, Nathaniel, Hannah P., and Henry J., and two were born by the second wife: James Halsey and Adeline F.

It is interesting to note the extreme longevity of the family. The combined ages of James Angell and four of his brothers at the time of their death was 424 years, an average of nearly 85 years each; while the combined ages of four of his children was 329 years, an average of over 82 years each; and one of the sons died at the age of 94 years.

While yet a young man James Angell decided to emi-



grate to the State of New York, or, as it was then called, to the far west. He accordingly gathered his household goods together, and, placing them, with his little family, consisting of his young wife and two small children, upon an ox-cart, started on the long and tedious journey. This was in 1808, many years before the advent of the steam railroad.

After arriving at his destination he purchased a farm near Saratoga, N. Y., where he remained three years, or until 1811, when he returned to Rhode Island, making the return trip in the same manner as he had gone; the time occupied in the journey being about three weeks each way, which is quite in contrast with the modern method of traveling in a vestibuled train of drawing-room cars and making the journey in a few hours.

Shortly after he returned he leased the farm and tavern known then as the "Thayer Stand," on Fruit Hill, and renamed the stand "Fruit Hill Tavern," and ever after the locality has been known as Fruit Hill. It received its name on account of the delicious fruit which grew there in abundance, especially cherries.

In 1822 Mr. Angell's lease expired, and he removed from Fruit Hill and decided to establish a tavern at Centerville (or Center, as it was then called). Early in the spring of 1824 ground was broken for the erection of the structure, which was soon to be noted as the most popular and hospitable tavern in the northern part of the State; the house was completed during the summer, and late in the fall of the same year was opened to the public.

James Angell was well calculated to be a successful landlord. His old-time courteous and dignified manner, combined with his genial and generous disposition, especially fitted him for the host of the village tavern.



CENTERDALE HOTEL IN 1873.

The house is 30 x 55 feet, two stories in height, and at the time it was built was not adorned with the piazza which now runs the entire length of the front of the building; but there was a porch, or stoop, as it was then called, that ran across the south end. This, however, long since disappeared by being enclosed in the body of the house.

Ten fire-places constituted the heating apparatus, while two brick ovens served to bake the bread and pastry and roast the turkeys for the dances held in the winter-time in the hall that occupied a portion of the second story.

This cozy hall, 18 x 30 feet, was built with an arched ceiling 16 feet in height, and at each end was a fire-place, with brass andirons cleaned and polished to such brightness as to reflect around the room the soft light of the glowing fire, which added much to the cheerfulness of the room and helped the feeble light of the twenty-five or thirty candles, supported by circular chandeliers of tin, suspended from the arched ceiling. These, with perhaps a half-dozen candles upon the mantel-shelves at the ends of the hall, were expected to furnish ample light to properly display the costumes of the fair damsels as they tripped the light fantastic toe to the music of the orchestra stationed in the little boxlike balcony, or alcove, in the side of the room, fully nine feet above the floor.

These festive occasions were always supplemented by a turkey supper, prepared under the direct supervision of the landlady; and it was at these times that she was afforded an opportunity to display her skill in the culinary art.

Turkey suppers in those times were not served in courses, but in the good old-fashioned way; all of the

good things being tastefully arranged upon the table before the guests were seated.

The uncarved turkeys were placed upon the table, flanked by all of the fixings incidental to such suppers, together with many kinds of pies and cake (all home-made, of course). Fruit, consisting of apples and raisins (and sometimes oranges), were arranged in tall glass dishes; and if the occasion was of especial note, nuts were included; but almonds and pecans were only provided for very special events.

As already stated, the suppers were served in one course, everything being placed upon the table and everybody helping themselves to as much as they desired. It was always served at 12 o'clock, after which dancing would be resumed and continued until daylight.

Square dances, or cotillions, as they were then called, were the popular dances of those days, and the "Schottische" and "Polka" were generally tried once during the evening; but "Money Musk" and the "Virginia Reel" were always included in the programme.

These grand balls, as they were called, occurred about four times during the winter, and were held on the evening of Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years, and Washington's birthday. Those held at other times were called cotillion parties. They were highly popular throughout this section of the State between the years 1835 and 1857, particularly so between 1847 and 1857, while the tavern was under the management of James Halsey Angell (son of the original landlord). But during the financial depression throughout the country in 1857 the people had less money to spend for recreation and amusement, and this, being followed by the breaking out of the Civil War

in 1861, caused the old-time balls to live only in the pleasant memories of those who in their younger days had taken part in them.

The tavern room, or bar-room as it was generally called, undoubtedly was the most attractive room in the house to most visitors to the village tavern. It was in this room in the early days of the tavern that the farmer and his neighbors would congregate in the long winter evenings, and seat themselves upon benches and heavy oaken chairs around the open fire-place, with the wood piled high upon the iron andirons, and listen to the yarns spun, perhaps by some returned sailor from a long whaling voyage, or perhaps to some one who had a hunting or fishing story to tell or re-tell that number of times that there was some danger that he would convince himself that the story was true. The teamster was always welcomed to these gatherings, for he was sure to bring the latest news from the northern part of the State as well as from the city.

This was long before the advent of the steam railroad, when all of the supplies as well as the products of the large mills and other industries of the northern part of the State were hauled by horses and oxen. And as it required two days to make the round trip, the Centerdale tavern was the stopping-place for the night, and sixty or eighty horses would often be accommodated at the tavern stables, together with half a dozen yoke of oxen.

It was in this room that many of the old-time sailors would drink the good-bye to their friends before leaving for New Bedford, Mass., to embark on a five-years' whaling voyage. Jack Walmsley, Henry Burlingame, Jerry Daily, Stephen Briggs, and Captain John Lawton are names well worthy of being mentioned as brave and

hardy whalemens who took their departure from here. It was here that the adventurous gold hunters of '49 assembled to plan and arrange for a trip around Cape Horn to California, in the good ship "Perseverance."

The bar, which was the most important fixture of this room, was placed at one end of the room, and was a curious little affair in comparison with the modern idea of bar fixtures of artistic wood carvings and massive mirrors. This little bar was about six feet in length by fourteen inches in width, the top being fully four feet above the floor; and if a man was a little under size, his head would come but little above the top of the bar.

Suspended over the bar, securely fastened to the ceiling by strong hinges, was a sort of gate which was let down at night when the bar was closed, and gave to the room somewhat of the appearance of a bank, only the grating was made of wood instead of grill-work of polished brass. In the morning the gate would be raised up and secured to the ceiling by a strong iron hook. In 1853 the gate was removed; but the little bar remained until 1870, when that gave way to one of more pretentious appearance.

Back of the bar were four or five shelves built against the wall, like the shelves in a store, along which were arranged tall glass jars filled with long sticks of striped candy; tobacco, cigars, and nuts of all kinds were also kept for sale. But the liquor was kept under the bar, out of sight, and consisted of brandy, West India rum, New England rum, Holland gin, and Jenckes gin,\* wine, and cider, and in the early days a kind of drink called "Bitters." Whiskey was but little used here before 1860, but was kept in small quantities. Ale, or strong beer as

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\*An American product.

it was called, was moderately drunk; but no lager was sold until after 1870. The first lager beer brewed in the United States was in 1843, and was made then only in very small quantity in New York, and it was several years after before it was sold regularly in a saloon in that city; and it took several years more for it to become popular; the difficulty of keeping it without ice being a bar to its general use until the use of ice became more common.



GLASSES USED IN OLD TIMES AND TO-DAY.

It is curious to note the prices charged in those times and compare them with the prices charged to-day. Brandy and rum were but four cents a glass; gin was three cents,

unless a little molasses were added, then the price was four cents. The price of whiskey was the same as gin; but, as said before, whiskey was but little used.

The glasses used were the common water or table tumblers, like those now in general use about the household, instead of the diminutive little glasses in use to-day.

Cigars were one cent each, or six for five cents; and in after years two and three cent cigars were introduced, but not many of that extravagant price were sold. After the breaking out of the Civil War in 1861, prices advanced rapidly, and, strange as it may seem, have kept on advancing.

A reference to the following bills, copied from an old account book of James Angell, while landlord of the Centerdale tavern, will prove interesting. Those having dates earlier than 1824 were taken from books while he was at the Fruit Hill tavern.

## NORTH PROVIDENCE March 1826

AMASA SMITH		To JAMES ANGELL	DR
Mar	4	To 3½ gills Gin.....	.22
"	28	" 2 glasses Rum.....	08
"	"	" 1 Glass Gin and Molasses.....	4
Dec	26	" 1 glass Gin & 1 pint New Rum.....	10
Jan	2	" 5 glasses gin.....	16
"	"	" 2 glass gin.....	6
			<hr/>
			.66

## NORTH PROVIDENCE 1827

JAMES LATHAM		To JAMES ANGELL	DR
Feb	27	To 1 Drink of Rum and 1 Drink Beer.....	.06
Mar	16	" 2 " " .....	8



THE VILLAGE TAVERN.

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Dec 13	To Lodging and Wine.....	20
“ 27	“ 4 drinks.....	16
“ 29	“ 2 “ .....	8
		<hr/>
		58

NORTH PROVIDENCE 1827

CHRISTOPHER BROWN

To JAMES ANGELL

DR

Feb 15	To 1 quart Gin.....	14
“ 20	1 dinner and Bitters.....	22
	1 Cigar.....	01
	Ginger bread for boy.....	06
		<hr/>
		-43

NORTH PROVIDENCE 1827

THOMAS MANCHESTER

To JAMES ANGELL

DR

Feb 17	To 1 glass Rum & 12 cigars.....	.12
“ “	“ 1 Pie and cheese.....	08
Mar 18	18 cigars.....	16
“ “	“ Wine and Egg.....	07
“ 23	“ 4 Cigars & 1 Orange.....	08
“ 27	“ 9 cigars 3 glasses gin 1 glass wine.....	22
		<hr/>
		-73

NORTH PROVIDENCE 1830

MR AMSDELL

To JAMES ANGELL

DR

Oct 11	To 2 meals victuals Lodging & Bitters.....	-44
“ 12	To 1 “ “ and Bitters.....	22
Nov 30	To 1 “ “ & 1 drink .....	22
		<hr/>

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HALSEY SWEETLAND

Oct 9	1817 To boarding your man Henry Macquire 9 weeks & 6 days at \$2.00 per week.....	\$10.71
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## CHRISTOPHER BROWN

May	16th	1817	To 2 quarts N. E. Rum.....	.25
"	"	"	" 1 Lodging.....	08
"	"	"	" 1 Gill Bitters.....	10
"	18	"	" Cider Cigars and Tobacco.....	08

Aug	9	1834	JOHN ANGELL Blacksmith	
"	"	"	To 1 dinner and Wine.....	20
"	12	"	" Supper Breakfast & Lodging.....	44
"	15	"	" 1 Lodging.....	08

It would seem from the above account that a man with but little money could manage to live quite like a gentleman of leisure. With board only two dollars per week and brandy four cents a glass, or wine and eggs for seven cents, and then enjoy a cigar for one cent, there certainly would be no occasion for him to complain of being overcharged.

But regardless of the exceeding low prices charged in those days, the tavern-keepers seemed to prosper and get rich just the same as they do now, with board at two or more dollars per day, brandy at thirty-five cents a glass, and cigars fifteen cents each; but just how they accomplished it is hard to understand.

At the time the tavern was built it was still the custom to hang out a sign-board, or swinging sign, in some conspicuous place, and a tavern would be thought hardly complete without its swinging sign. Some of the tavern-keepers took especial pride in their swinging signs, and occasionally one would be seen which displayed no little artistic taste; but as a rule they did not possess much merit.

The tavern-keeper would select such a design as met his fancy. If he was a lover of horses, he might select a horse for his emblem. And if the painter should happen

to have more black paint than white, and painted the horse black, the tavern might afterwards be known to the country around as the Black-Horse Tavern, or the White-

Horse Tavern, according to the color the painter painted the horse. The deer, bull, or lion's head were all popular designs. The picture of an Indian was sometimes used. But during and after the Revolution the picture of Washington, or an American eagle, was the favorite emblem painted upon the swinging signs. The emblem selected by James Angell for his sign-board was the eagle. At the time the sign was painted an attempt no doubt was made to add a little dignity to the house by naming it the "Center *Hotell*"



SWINGING SIGN ON THE VILLAGE TAVERN.

(with two l's) instead of tavern, but the public did not seem to relish the high-toned name, for it was always called the "Center Tavern," and later the "Centerdale Tavern," until recent years when the term hotel was adopted.

The sign is still kept as a relic of old times and is in a good state of preservation, considering the number of years it was exposed to the weather. The old sign was removed from the house in 1852.

It will be interesting to note the successors of James Angell as landlord of the hotel. James Angell presided as landlord from 1824 to 1841. It was during his seventeen years' administration as landlord that the place established the reputation of being a model hostelry. In 1841 he was succeeded by his son Nathaniel, who remained until November 1, 1848, when he was succeeded by his brother James Halsey Angell, who conducted the house until April 1, 1858. It was during these years that the balls spoken of in this chapter were so popular, particularly so during the administration of James Halsey Angell (or Halsey, as he was always called). J. Halsey Angell retired from the hotel business April 1, 1858, and was succeeded by Henry C. Peckham, of Danielson, Conn., who remained until April 1, 1859, when Albert Haynes assumed charge; and April 1, 1861, was succeeded by Albert Mowry, who remained only one year, or until April 8, 1862, when Nathaniel Angell again became landlord, for the second time, and successfully conducted the house until November 3, 1873. Thus it will be observed that of the first half-century of the existence of the Centerdale hotel, forty-five years of it were under the direction of James Angell and his two sons. And the policy adopted by the father was always adhered to by the sons, no one being permitted to drink to excess at the bar, and no card-playing or gambling devices were ever allowed upon the premises.

Nathaniel Angell finally retired from the management

of the hotel, November 3, 1873, when James Barnes assumed charge and continued until July 7, 1886, when he was succeeded by James Higgins. Mr. Higgins did not remain long, and October 6, 1887, James Barnes returned and remained until April 1, 1889, when he was succeeded by Albertus Searle until April 10, 1890, when James Barnes for the third time assumed charge of the place and remained until his death, which occurred July 17th, 1891. Cassius S. Mathewson, son-in-law of James Barnes, then assumed charge of the house and continued to be the genial landlord of the Centerdale hotel until his death, which occurred January 28, 1909.

The following is the chronological order of the succession of the landlords of the hotel from its beginning to the present time: James Angell, from 1824 to 1841; Nathaniel Angell, from 1841 to November 1, 1848; James Halsey Angell, from November 1, 1848, to April 1, 1858; Henry C. Peckham, from April 1, 1858, to April 1, 1859; Albert Haynes from April 1, 1859, to April 1, 1861; Albert Mowry, from April 1, 1861, to April 8, 1862; Nathaniel Angell, from April 10, 1862, to November 3, 1873; James Barnes, from November 3, 1873, to July 7, 1886; James Higgins, from August 16, 1886, to September 19, 1887; James Barnes, from October 6, 1887, to April 1, 1889; Albertus Searles, from April 1, 1889, to April 10, 1890; James Barnes, from April 17, 1890, to July 17, 1891; Cassius S. Mathewson, from July 17, 1891, to January 28, 1909.

It will now be necessary to go back a few years in our story of the old tavern. James Angell, the original landlord of the hotel, died November 20, 1870. The hotel estate was then conveyed to his son James Halsey Angell,

who held it until his death, July 1, 1890; when it passed to his oldest son, George F. Angell; when, upon his death, August 18, 1894, it passed to his widow, Sarah L. Angell, who continued to own the property until August 25th, 1897, when it was sold to Cassius S. Mathewson. Thus the old familiar hostelry passed out of the Angell family after continuous ownership of the land for over 160 years.

Shortly after Mr. Mathewson purchased the estate he proceeded to renovate the old hostelry and introduce many modern conveniences. An addition was built on, a steam-heating plant installed, electric lights introduced, the bar-room enlarged to more than double its former size, and the house throughout the inside was thoroughly remodeled. And if we were to visit to-day the Centerdale hotel, we would recognize but little in common with the old tavern stand of eighty years ago. The swinging sign has disappeared, the cheerful fire places have been removed, supplanted by the modern steam heater; the bright and glaring electric light has taken the place of candle and the lamp, the little bar with its portcullis gate has been removed to make way for the modern bar fixtures of carved oak, and massive mirrors; all of which give to the ancient hostelry the appearance of a modern hotel instead of the old-time tavern stand.

The only room that still retains its old-time appearance is the little dance hall with its high-arched ceiling, which still remains intact with the exception that one of the fire-places has been removed; and as we gaze around the room our eyes rest upon the lone fire-place with the empty andirons which once held the bright and glowing embers, but now are cold and cheerless. A feeling almost of sadness comes o'er us as our minds revert back to the

time when the cheerful fire shown brightly across the open hearth, adding much to the joyous scenes of by-gone days, and seemed to burn more brightly as the merry dance went on; and not unlike the warm heart of a cherished friend, that beat the faster when the cup of joy and happiness is full.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE COUNTRY COBBLER.—THE HARNESS MAKER.

#### THE COUNTRY COBBLER.

IN the early days of the colony it was the custom for the shoemakers, or cobblers, as they were called, to pack their kit, together with a few lasts, in a strong bag, and with a roll of leather travel from house to house and repair up the shoes, or make new ones, for the whole family.

These visits were made once or twice each year, and without doubt the fall visit was a welcome one to the farmer boys, who, in most cases, were obliged to go bare-footed until the cobbler came, no matter how late in the season his annual visits were made.

Just who the first cobbler was whose annual visits made glad the hearts of the pioneer's home is not positively known. Indications point strongly to Epenetus Olney.

There is no question but that Epenetus was a shoemaker. His name is mentioned in the "Early Records of Providence" as Epenetus Olney the "SHOOMAKER," besides, the inventory of his estate after his death in 1698 includes all sorts of shoemaker's tools, etc.

But whether he ran a perambulating shop or not is hard to determine, but undoubtedly he did, for the people were too thinly scattered about the country for a cobbler permanently located to get much work; besides, it was the custom in those days for the cobbler to make house



to house visits. Diligent research and inquiry fail to reveal who his successor was. There is no positive evidence that a shoemaker was permanently located in Centerdale until about 1820, or shortly after the introduction of the cotton industry by Israel Arnold, when Samuel Sweet did all of the cobbling that the neighborhood had need. He was at that time the miller at the grist mill, and when grinding was dull he would turn his hand to cobbling. After he gave up business there was no resident shoemaker here for many years, the people carrying their work to Graniteville (an adjoining village), where Paris Whitman attended to their wants. Paris Whitman was succeeded by Horace Convas, who carried on the business until his death. In 1850, Arnold Hawkins, who had previously occupied a shop on Fruit Hill, moved to this place and established a shop which was really the first shoemaker shop permanently established in Centerdale. Arnold Hawkins was an expert workman at his trade, and was capable of producing work quite equal to any.

At the time he came to this place but few ready-made boots or shoes were worn, except of the very common or cheap kind, most people preferring to have their boots and shoes made by the village cobbler. The term *Boots* is used here to designate the long-legged boot worn in those days, which extended as far up as the knee—in some cases above the knee. Comparatively few shoes were worn by men or boys, and a man would not be considered fashionably dressed with shoes, except in the ball-room, when pumps (a low-cut slipper) were worn. It was a common custom when a father's boots were past repairing to take the long legs of the boot to the shoemaker and have a pair made from them for one of his boys. If the leather ran a little

short of the proper length the shoemaker would add on a piece of fancy colored leather (usually red) at the top, and the boy who was fortunate enough to have a pair of red-topped boots usually wore his trousers tucked inside of his boot-legs, to attract the attention of his comrades to his coveted prize.

Arnold Hawkins continued in the business until his death, which occurred in 1894, after forty-four years of active business life in this place.

#### HARNESS MAKING.

The first harness shop in Centerdale was established by James E. Bailey in the year 1857, in a building then standing at the junction of Smith street and Waterman avenue; the building where the first store was started and where the first post-office was located. He remained at this place about a year, when he removed to a room in a building that had been recently erected on Mineral Spring avenue, by George H. Page, for the manufacture of carriages. James E. Bailey was a practical harness maker, having served a full apprenticeship, and was proficient in making all parts of a harness. He was a man of a genial disposition, possessing a kind and pleasing voice, and exceedingly courteous in his manner, even carrying his polite and courteous manner to an extreme limit. He was much interested in military affairs and connected himself with a prominent military company in the city of Providence, and in due time was promoted to the office of 2d Lieutenant; and at the breaking out of the Civil war, in 1861, went to the front with the First Regiment, Rhode Island Volunteers, and afterwards re-enlisted in the Third Regiment, Rhode Island Heavy Artillery, and served

throughout the war, returning with an honorable record, having been promoted to the office of Major. His military record will be given in another place.

Shortly after Bailey went to the defence of his country a shop was opened by Louis Bell, in a small building number 1999 Smith street, where he conducted the business for about two years, when he was succeeded by Thomas Anderson until the summer of 1864, when the shop was closed for a short time.

At the close of the war Major Bailey returned to Centerdale, and, finding his old place of business closed, and desiring to again enter into business, re-opened the shop in August, 1864, and continued in business until the spring of 1866, when from business adversities he was compelled to make an assignment and close up the shop.

The place did not remain long closed, for in April, 1866, Alexander W. Harrington re-opened the shop, and for many years did a thriving business. He was a very energetic and public-spirited young man, and did much for the improvement and social welfare of the community.

In 1876 he entered into the manufacture of paper, and with others leased two paper mills at West Medway, Mass. He has since that time continued in the paper business, in some of its branches, and for many years had an office in New York City. He was succeeded in the harness business, in May, 1877, by Frank C. Angell. The business under his management soon began to increase, and soon called for larger and more commodious rooms, and in 1881 he erected the building known as the Masonic Hall building, and numbered 2001 to 2007 Smith street, and removed to that place, occupying nearly the entire lower floor of the building. With the increased

room there was ample opportunity to extend the business and add many accessory lines of goods. After doing a thriving business for fifteen years he decided to retire from the business that he might give his full attention to the real estate business, in which he was at that time much interested.

The advent of the steam and electric cars eventually caused the business to decline, in consequence of which there has been no harness and saddlery store here since, except in a small way when some one would open a shop for repairs, but, meeting with indifferent success, would remain but a short time.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH AND WHEELWRIGHT AND THE FIRST LIVERY STABLE.

Under a spreading chestnut tree  
The village smithy stands;  
The smith, a mighty man is he,  
With large and sinewy hands;  
And the muscles of his brawny arms  
Are strong as iron bands. . . .

—LONGFELLOW.

**T**O speak of the village blacksmith shop would cause the mind of the old-time resident of Centerdale to revert to an old smoke-blackened building standing a little way back from the highway; near it a large tree with long spreading branches covered in the summer with green foliage and reaching far out over the blackened ground in front of the shop; and in the mind-picture may be seen, just a little to one side of the door, a pile of half-burned embers, the remnant of the circular fire used for heating tires for the heavy cart-wheels.

The building, which long since had lost its upright position, is dotted here and there with patches of dingy red paint, the remains of what was once a coat of red, but which had long since failed to withstand the storms of time. And leaning against the old weather-worn shop a number of cast-off wagon tires have found a resting-place, and, lying near, is a pile of old wheels and broken parts of old wagons. Inside of the shop, upon the smoke-begrimed sides and beams, are hanging long rows of horse-

shoes, of many shapes and sizes, waiting to be nailed to the feet of the faithful horse. At one end is the forge with the open fire, which now and then sends forth spiteful sparks as the strong arm of the smith forces down the lever of the massive bellows. Near the forge, upon a solid oaken block, rests the anvil, behind which stands the village blacksmith with face all tanned and begrimed with smoke to nearly the color of his long leather apron; his sleeves rolled far above the elbows, showing the muscles and sinews of brawny arms.

Soon we see him take from off the forge a half-completed horseshoe and raining down rapid blows with a heavy hammer, which seems like a toy in his vice-like grasp, throwing out myriads of glittering sparks on all sides like a miniature display of fireworks, now and then tapping the anvil a measured blow which seems to chime with the heavier one like music.

This was the appearance of the old blacksmith shop as it was more than three-score years ago, when John R. Cozzens, the village blacksmith, stood behind the anvil in Centerdale.

To give the early history of the first shop it will be necessary to go back to the year 1820, when Halsey Sweetland leased a piece of land from Nathaniel Angell on the west side of Smith street, nearly opposite the junction of Waterman avenue; here he erected the first blacksmith shop in the village, which at that time contained scarcely half a dozen houses. He was quite successful in his business, and October 16, 1826, purchased the land the shop stood upon, and continued to work at his trade until March 18, 1829, when he sold the place to Brown Sweet.

Mr. Sweet continued the business about three years, and October 29, 1831, sold the shop to Edwin Capron.

Shortly after Edwin Capron purchased the property he started a livery stable in connection with the shop. Mr. Capron was not a blacksmith by trade, and did not meet the success that a skilled workman might have done; and March 14, 1836, he sold the shop to David Cutting. Mr. Capron, however, retained the livery business, and continued the same with success until his death, in 1889, an account of which will be given in another place.

For some reasons unknown at this time Cutting did not remain long in the place, and October 2 of the following year, 1837, he sold it to Samuel S. Arnold, who remained here until April 17, 1843, when he sold the place to John R. Cozzens. In 1854 Mr. Cozzens demolished the old shop and erected a new one at the same place. Mr. Cozzens came to this place from Boston, Mass., where he learned his trade. He was a typical blacksmith in appearance; fully six feet in height, with broad shoulders, and of quick and agile movement.

He always took great interest in athletic sports where strength and agility were required, and often in his young days he would enter wrestling contests, which were popular in those days, to show his strength and agility. He was of a kind and social disposition and popular with his townsmen, generous to a fault with his hard-earned money. His purse string was always found untied at the call of the poor and needy and at the demand of the public welfare. He took active part in the political affairs of the town, but never aspired to any prominent position in the offices of the town, although many times urged to do so.

He was a mechanic of more than ordinary ability, and his remarkable vitality and industrious habits persuaded him to stand behind the anvil many years after old age had silently whispered to him to lay down the hammer and let the fire upon the forge be extinguished. Mr. Cozzens died, after a short illness, April 6th, 1897, in the 76th year of his age, and was buried in Mineral Spring cemetery, Pawtucket, with Masonic honors, by Roger Williams Lodge, No. 32, of A. F. & A. M., of Centerdale, of which he was a charter member.

After the death of Mr. Cozzens the shop was sold to William A. Sweet, who in 1900 demolished the old building and erected the present one and leased the same to his brother Herbert Sweet, who still occupies it. Other blacksmith shops have been started here from time to time but in all cases were of but temporary existence.

#### THE VILLAGE WHEELWRIGHT.

The first wheelwright shop in the village was built by William Sweet, in 1830, on land leased from James Angell, on the west side of Smith street, nearly opposite the junction of Mineral Spring avenue. It was a small one-story building, 18 x 25 feet, and stood with the gable towards the street. Work-benches were arranged upon either side, where two or three men could work, but generally one man was sufficient to do the work of repairs, with an occasional new cart or farm wagon to be built.

Mr. Sweet continued to run the shop until 1845, when he sold the building and the business to Caleb V. Waterman. Caleb V. Waterman was born in Coventry, R. I., and in early life was apprenticed for seven years to Samuel Brayton, of Cranston, to learn the wheelwright trade.





CALEB V. WATERMAN.

To learn the trade of wheelwright in those days meant something more than it means to-day, when machinery enters so largely into the manufacture of almost every part of a wagon, for in those days each and every part of a wagon must be sawed or hewn from the log to its required form, and much labor and not a little skill was required to do it. To order a cart or wagon from Caleb Waterman meant many hard days' work with the saw and axe before the parts could be assembled together. Each spoke for the wheels must be split with an axe from well-seasoned cleft oak or walnut wood of straight and perfect grain, then hewn to the required form with a broad-axe, after which they were taken to the work-bench, and under his skillful hand were smoothed and tenoned, to enter

the hub which had already been encircled with mortised holes true and square. The felloes, or rims, were all sawed by hand from heavy plank in two-spoke sections, and thus every part of the wagon was made in the same slow and laborious manner; and it might be truthfully said that a wagon made after that manner would be like "The deacon's wonderful one-horse shay."

Caleb Waterman was a man who might be justly called a universal mechanic, since there was no part of a wagon that he could not make and make well. He could forge all of the ironwork, and was equally as good a worker in iron as wood. If necessary he could give assistance to the village butcher, being an expert at that business, as well as his own trade; and if a neighbor needed assistance in the hay-field Caleb Waterman's strong arms and willing hands were ever ready. For many years, or until his death, he served as undertaker, for, strange though it may seem to us, in those days the village wheelwright was generally the village undertaker.

If a neighbor died the wheelwright was expected to make the coffin, provided he had not one already made of the proper size. If one had to be put together after a person died, not much time could be given to the making of an elaborate affair, even though it lay in the skill of the wheelwright to do so. A plain pine box with a coat of stain and, if the time permitted, a single coat of varnish was all that could be given, as well as all that was expected.

In 1861 Mr. Waterman moved the shop to a lot on Waterman avenue and discontinued the wheelwright business and gave his attention to undertaking, and continued the

same until his death, March 29th, 1865. The discontinuance of the wheelwright business by Mr. Waterman in 1861 closed the first epoch of the business in this place. Caleb V. Waterman was always held in high esteem by his townsmen, and his sterling worth as a citizen was many times recognized by his appointment to places of honor and trust in the government of the town and State. He was elected senator from North Providence to the General Assembly, April 2, 1851, and served until 1853. After his death, as a public recognition of his worth, the town council named one of the principal thoroughfares of the town Waterman avenue.

In the year 1859 George H. Page and his brother Simon S. Page purchased a tract of land on the south side of Mineral Spring avenue, about seventy feet from the junction of Smith street, and erected thereon a two-story building, 30 x 50 feet, for the manufacturing of wagons and carriages of all kinds.

Many wood-working machines were introduced, and carriages and wagons, both light and heavy, were manufactured complete, from the turning of the hubs to the trimming of the tops of light buggies. The woodwork was done upon the first floor, the painting and trimming upon the second floor, while the forging of the ironwork was done in the basement, which also held the contrivance which furnished the motive power for running the machinery, which consisted of a combination of gears propelled by horse-power. The enterprise proved a failure, and in 1861 the Messrs. Page made an assignment and the shop was leased to Israel B. Phillips, who continued the business until 1863, when the shop was closed for about a year.

In 1864 George Thompson re-opened the shop, and the following year took into partnership James E. Bailey; the firm name being known as Bailey & Thompson. Business adversities overtook the firm, and in the spring of 1866 the business was sold out to Marvin Smith, who continued in it until 1868, when he was succeeded by Ethan Thornton. Mr. Thornton conducted the business for about one year, when he was succeeded by Thomas Harris, who remained until 1881, when the shop doors were closed for many years.

Soon after the shop was closed, John R. Cozzens & Son (Charles) opened a small shop near their blacksmith shop, and ran it in a small way in connection with their blacksmith business until the death of John R. Cozzens, in 1897, when this shop was discontinued.

January 10, 1894, George W. Harris purchased the land and buildings formally occupied by his brother Thomas and re-opened the old stand that had been closed since 1881. A blacksmith's forge was installed in connection with the wheelwright shop for the purpose of forging the ironwork for the wagons and for shooing of horses. George Harris continued the business until 1906, when he sold out to George P. Willis. October 3, 1908, the land and building was sold and made into tenements.

#### THE FIRST LIVERY STABLE.

The first livery stable in Centerdale was established by Edwin Capron in the year 1831, and as he was one of the old-time residents of the village, having passed more than 70 years of his life in Centerdale, a brief sketch of his life seems appropriate.

Edwin Capron was the son of Asa and Sally Capron, and was born in Cumberland, R. I., October 16th, 1800. He was a lineal descendant of the sixth generation of Banfield Capron, who came from England about the year 1660. He was twice married, the first time in 1822, to Deborah Angell, daughter of Olney Angell, who was also of good old Puritan stock, being a descendant of the sixth generation of Thomas Angell, mentioned in Chapter II of this work. She died January 24, 1831. In 1836 he



THE FIRST LIVERY STABLE.

married for his second wife Emeline Wright, who survived him and died December 31, 1891. He was a man much respected among his neighbors; was upright and honorable in all transactions; always a temperate man in the use of ardent spirits. He was of a social and genial nature, always having a pleasant word for everyone. He was a man fully six feet in height, and exceedingly lithe and agile in

his movements. To show his agility in his old age, it will be interesting to say that at times when he would meet a few of his young acquaintances engaged in playful sports he would say, "Let me see if any one of you can jump from the ground and strike your heels together three times before alighting again." After many vain attempts they would give it up, when he would step forward and do the feat with so much ease and grace as to make the younger ones feel ashamed; at the same time he would exclaim, with a cheerful laugh, "How is that for a man seventy-five years old?"

He brought up a large family of children, three girls and six boys, all of whom inherited to a greater or less degree the lithesome agility of the father, but none his equal. He died July 22, 1889, in the eighty-ninth year of his age.

His early life was spent in the cotton mills at Centerdale, and elsewhere, where he learned the art of cotton manufacturing, which will be spoken of later. Desiring a change of vocation, he in 1831 purchased the blacksmithing business, in Centerdale, of Brown Sweet. Not being a practical blacksmith, he started the livery business near by, anticipating that he could attend to that and at the same time have an oversight over the blacksmith shop. In March, 1836, he disposed of the business to David Cutting and moved to Thompson, Conn., and entered into the cotton manufacturing business. He, however, was not successful in this venture, and in 1840 sold out and returned to Centerdale and repurchased the livery stable. He continued the business at the same place until his death, which occurred July 22, 1889. He at that time had nearly completed his eighty-ninth year.

Two or three attempts have been made to re-establish the livery business here, but the invasion of the steam and electric cars has made the livery stable unprofitable, except when carried on in connection with some other business.

Thus the death of Edwin Capron marked the decline of the independent livery stable in Centerdale.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE VILLAGE BUTCHER.

PREVIOUS to 1824 there was no resident butcher or marketman in Centerdale; for, in the early days of the country the farmer depended almost entirely upon the products of the farm to supply his daily wants. Not only the products of the garden, but his fuel and clothing, also his supply of meat, came from the farm.

Occasionally a farmer would have an ox or a cow not needed, and with the assistance of his neighbors the cow would be slaughtered and the quarters hung up in the cellar to be kept cool; ice not being in general use in those days. If there was danger of the meat spoiling before it could be consumed by his own household, he would *lend* a portion of it to his neighbors, and when they had an opportunity the loan would be returned from their overstock of fresh meat.

One of the seasons always looked forward to with much interest on a farm in those days was the annual hog-killing day. This generally occurred late in the fall after the corn had been harvested and fed to the pigs to get them in a proper condition for the killing. Upon an appointed day the neighboring farmers would drive their hogs to a convenient place, usually to the farm most centrally located, where arrangements had previously been made; the platform erected and scalding-vat placed.

The place selected was generally in the orchard or under a large tree with low spreading branches to suspend the dressed hogs upon. The day was looked forward to as a



kind of holiday by the young people, although there was plenty of hard work to be done.

The farmer's wife, assisted by her good neighbors, was expected to prepare a feast for the men at noon-time, which always consisted of hog's pluck smothered in onions. Potatoes, turnips, squash, and other garden vegetables were served, together with the old-fashioned corn-meal pudding sweetened with molasses. Cider was generally the drink furnished, and it is doubtful if the elaborate feasts furnished in the city banquet halls of the present day are partaken with a better relish.

For several days now the farmer's household saw busy times. The different parts of the hog must be prepared for future use. The hams must be cured and hung in a barrel or in the fire-place over a smoke from a slow corn-cob fire; the pork cut in long strips and placed with a plenty of salt in a barrel kept for the purpose, and it was no unusual boast to tell how many generations the same pork-barrel had done service in the family. The year's supply of lard must be carefully rendered, and the pole again hung to hold the long row of links of savory sausages.

Truly these were busy times for the farmer's wife as well as the whole household, for each had their particular part to attend to. Thus were most of the wants of the farmer supplied from the products of his own farm and he was not wholly dependent upon the weekly visits of the butcher's cart.

After the introduction of the cotton mill and other industries, bringing together many people engaged in other walks of life, it presented an opportunity for some one to establish a meat market in the place.

Asa Steere, then a young man, was quick to see the opportunity, and in 1824 established the first slaughter-

house and meat business in Centerdale. At the time he started in business here he had but a few hard-earned dollars he had saved from his meagre wages as a farmer boy or at such other work as he could find to do. He had but little or no education, but he possessed a clear mind and robust health and a determination to get along in the world. Ready and quick to take advantage of every opportunity to better himself, and a faculty to meet an emergency with a quick perception of just what to do to attain success.

In those days all cattle, sheep, and hogs were purchased on the hoof and slaughtered by the local butcher; as no dressed meat was brought from the west as is now done. The cattle were driven or shipped east, alive, to Brighton, Mass., that for many years being the principal cattle market for the east. It was the custom for the butcher to make periodical visits to Brighton, and, after securing a sufficient number, to drive them overland to their destination. A no small undertaking to drive a herd of strange cattle over strange roads for fifty, and in some cases one hundred, miles or more without mishap.

Sometimes a drover or cattle dealer would make a tour of the country towns over the public highways, driving a large herd of cattle, sheep, or hogs before him, when the butchers could make their selection without journeying to Brighton. But the modern method of transporting dressed meat from the west, on quickly-moving trains, almost to the door of the marketman has long since done away with the familiar sights of those days.

Asa Steere continued in the meat business until 1861, always doing a thriving business. His market and slaughter-house were located on the west side of Steere street,

about 150 feet from Smith street. In 1828 he built and occupied the house now standing on the east corner of Smith and Steere streets for his homestead place; the house standing nearly on the same spot where the first schoolhouse was built. In 1861, after nearly forty years of active business life, and having accumulated a small fortune, he retired from the business, selling the same to Frederick M. Aldrich.



ASA STEERE.

Asa Steere, or Major Steere, as he was generally called, being the pioneer butcher and marketman of Centerdale, a brief account of the man, who can justly be called one of the prominent and leading men of the town, seems appropriate and interesting.

He was born in Gloucester, R. I., April 19th, 1800, of poor parents, and, like many boys of his time, enjoyed little or no advantages to get an education. Early in life, while yet a small boy, he was thrown upon his own resources to get a living as best he could; he worked as a farmer boy in his younger days, and his work in the open air caused him to mature into a strong and robust man. Nature favored him with a very commanding presence, being fully six feet in height and of large frame and portly build, weighing upwards of 260 or 270 pounds; and his general bearing was that of a man of dignity and refinement. He was open-hearted, very cordial and genial in his manner, exceedingly popular with the general public, and was many times honored with public office by his townsmen; and without doubt but few men in Providence county were better known than Major Steere.

When a young man he became interested in military affairs and joined the Greene Artillery Company, at that time forming a part of the Twelfth Regiment of Rhode Island Militia. In 1826 he was appointed ensign, and in 1827 was promoted to first lieutenant, holding the position until the following year, when he received a commission of captain. In 1829 he was promoted to major of the Twelfth Regiment, holding that office until 1831, when he resigned from active military duties. He always retained the title of Major, and was universally known and addressed as Major Steere. He took great interest in sporting events and was a familiar figure upon the race track when racing events were popular at the old Washington Trotting Park, and was often called upon to officiate in the judges' stand. He married Susan Burlingame, daughter of Owen and Elizabeth Burlingame, of Gloucester,

in whom he found a willing helpmate. Three daughters were born to them. After retiring from business in 1861 he lived as a man of leisure until May 6, 1882, when he died, at the age of eighty-two years, honored and respected by all who knew him.

Frederick M. Aldrich, the successor to Asa Steere in the meat business, continued the same at the old stand until 1872, when he removed to what was then known as Railroad Hall building, which he erected for the purpose. In 1877 he sold one-half interest in the business to George G. Cozzens, who remained with him for about two years, when they dissolved partnership, each retaining one-half of the business. In 1881 Mr. Aldrich desired to emigrate to Colorado, and disposed of his interest to William A. Sweet who in 1893 sold out to his son Fred A. Sweet, who continued in the business until 1906, when he retired from active business.

After the death of Asa Steere the homestead estate was sold to Stephen A. Kelley in 1884, who immediately set to work to renovate the old market and to re-establish the meat business at the old stand. Mr. Kelley being a young man, conducted the business upon modern methods, and soon commanded a large trade, and ere long he had acquired a comfortable competence. In 1895 he retired from business and disposed of the several routes to different parties from other sections of the town. The old market and slaughter-house have since been sold to Frank C. Angell, who removed the building, and it is now used for other purposes.

Several parties have from time to time entered into the business field, but remained so short a time that it would not be of sufficient interest to attempt to follow out their career.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE FIRST STORE.—THE POST-OFFICE.

**T**HE first store in Centerdale was established by James and Richard Anthony (proprietors of the cotton mill), at the junction of Smith street and Waterman avenue, in a small one-story building which was torn down in 1892.

It was the custom in the early days of the cotton industry for the company, or proprietors of the mill, to conduct what was then called a factory store, where the employees could purchase such things as their everyday wants required. To obtain them from Providence was then quite an undertaking, for although the town was but five miles away, the conveniences for traveling were very limited, and a visit to the city twice a year was about all the average person would expect or could afford; besides, those who worked in the mill had but little leisure time to waste going to and from the city, which would consume the greater part of the day; for their time was fully occupied in the mill, where they were expected to be at work as early as half-past four o'clock in the morning and remain until eight o'clock in the evening, with thirty minutes for each of the three daily meals.

Pay-day came but seldom, although once in four weeks was supposed to be the settling time; but many of the operatives could get a settlement but once a year, and then their store account was often sufficient to dispose of the year's earnings.

Not very long after the Anthonys started the store a young man entered their employ as clerk, or salesman, by the name of Luther Carpenter.



LUTHER CARPENTER.

With the coming of Luther Carpenter to Centerdale began the career of one of the most successful men, from a business standpoint, that Centerdale has had.

He owed his success to his correct habits, strict attention to business, his perseverance and tireless energy. Possessing a fair education, he was endowed with sound ideas of business methods, besides having the tact and shrewdness in driving a bargain of a New England Yankee. He was of an amiable disposition, very slow to anger, and markedly fond of children, so much so that older and apparently more important customers were often obliged

to wait until the wants of the children were attended to. After serving as clerk for a time for the Anthonys he married Mary Anthony, daughter of James, one of the proprietors of the store, who soon after turned the store over to Carpenter. The business under his management increased to such an extent that more room was needed than the little one-story building afforded.

In 1842 Mr. Carpenter purchased a lot at the corner of Smith street and Mineral Spring avenue, and in 1847 erected a building, into which he moved, which at the time was considered a model store of its kind. The arrangement of the store fully exemplified the advance ideas he had as to the manner of conducting a country store or variety store, this being the title painted upon the sign over the door. And variety store it certainly was, for there were few articles required in the everyday life of man or beast that could not be found in the store of Luther Carpenter.

He continued in business until his death, which came suddenly, from heart failure, October 7th, 1886. He was in the eighty-sixth year of his age and always had enjoyed most excellent health, seldom if ever being confined to the house from sickness, and but few gray hairs could be found in the luxurious growth of dark brown hair. Notwithstanding his advanced age, he retained his mental faculties to the hour of his death. His judgment in business transactions was as clear and sound as that of the average young man of thirty or thirty-five years.

Soon after the death of Luther Carpenter the store was sold to George T. Batchelder, who had long been in Carpenter's employ. In 1855, George T. Batchelder, then a lad of nineteen years, entered the employ of Mr.



Carpenter, as clerk or salesman, and remained with him until 1862, when he enlisted in Company C, Seventh Regiment of Rhode Island Volunteers during the Civil War. After he returned from the war, in 1865, he again entered the employ of Carpenter and remained with him until the death of Mr. Carpenter, in 1886, when he became his successor in business.

It will now be necessary to go back a few years in the history of the stores in Centerdale. In 1848 a man by the name of Richard Briggs re-opened the store at the place vacated by Luther Carpenter when he moved into his new store on Mineral Spring avenue, undoubtedly supposing that the old stand would hold a large part of the trade; but Carpenter proved to be a too formidable competitor, and the Briggs store was compelled to close in 1854.

The following year it was re-opened by Benjamin Sherman, who continued the business about a year, when the doors was again closed. The store remained closed about a year, when the doors were again opened by a Mr. Whitaker; but Carpenter's shrewdness and business tact compelled him to abandon the field before the year had expired. This was the last effort made to maintain a store at the old stand. Three or four other attempts were made, at different times and places, to establish a grocery store in opposition to Luther Carpenter, but all met with indifferent success.

Eventually the increasing population and the business interests of the village demanded a competing store and January 12th, 1886, Albert H. Clark established a grocery store in a building known as Masonic Hall building, No. 2001-2003 Smith street. On account of failing health

he retired from business, March 1, 1891, selling out to Charles J. Hawkins & Co., who was succeeded, April 18, 1892, by Charles H. Keilty and Patrick H. McAleer, under the firm name of C. H. Keilty & Co. Upon the death of Mr. Keilty, March 18th, 1894, his interest was purchased by P. H. McAleer.

From time to time, as the needs of the village seemed to require, other stores have been opened. Some have been successful, while others have not; but without doubt some of these will become firmly established.

#### POST-OFFICE.

Early in the year 1840 the United States government established a post-office at the village of Fruit Hill, and February 25, 1840, appointed Stanton Belden, postmaster. The office was kept at the residence of Mr. Belden, at the northerly corner of Fruit Hill avenue and Smith street, he at that time being proprietor and principal of The Fruit Hill Classical Institute, a school in its day standing high in the esteem of the people, and receiving the patronage of many of the wealthy and influential people not only of this State but elsewhere.

The post-office remained at Fruit Hill until July 18, 1849, when it was removed to Centerdale, and Richard Briggs was appointed postmaster to succeed Stanton Belden.

Mr. Briggs at that time was proprietor of a country store at the junction of Waterman avenue and Smith street, the place formerly occupied by Luther Carpenter. And it was at this place where the Centerdale post-office was first located. The building was torn down in 1892.

The office remained at this place until 1854, when James Halsey Angell succeeded Richard Briggs as postmaster and moved the office a few hundred yards down Smith street to the Centerdale Hotel, in rooms especially fitted up to receive it.

In 1858, when Mr. Angell moved from the hotel, the office was transferred to the store of Luther Carpenter, on Mineral Spring avenue, and Luther Carpenter was appointed clerk, or assistant postmaster. Mr. Carpenter continued to act in that capacity until 1883, when George T. Batchelder, who had long been in the employ of Luther Carpenter as clerk, was appointed postmaster.

The office remained at Carpenter's store until November, 1893, when Charles H. Keilty succeeded George T. Batchelder as postmaster, and the office was moved to his store in the Masonic Hall building, No. 2001 Smith street.

Postmaster Keilty died March 18, 1894, and the following year his brother, M. M. Keilty, was appointed his successor. The office remained at the same place, but was under the care of Mr. Keilty's sister, Miss Jennie E. Keilty, who, July 3d, 1905, was appointed his successor.

The office at Centerdale is rated by the government as a fourth-class office. For many years it received but one mail each day and sent out but one; the outgoing one leaving about eight o'clock in the morning, the incoming mail arriving about five o'clock in the afternoon. The number of mails gradually increased, until now there are two incoming and four outgoing mails each day.

In July, 1893, the office was made a money-order office, which proved a great convenience to the people who desired to send moderate sums through the mails. In July,

1903, the government established the Centerdale post-office a separating office, requiring all mail matter sent to and from Providence to Centerdale, Greenville, and Harmony to be sent to the Centerdale office and there assorted and forwarded to its proper destination.

It will be interesting to note that in the early days of the post-office in Centerdale, and as late as 1856, but few letters were enclosed in envelopes, for they at that time had not come into general use. Most of the letters were folded together and the back edges sealed with a red wafer or a bit of sealing-wax.

Postage need not be prepaid by the sender unless he choose to do so; and failing of prepayment, the postage would be collected from the receiver, who would be charged double rates.

In the early days of the post-office in this country the rates varied according to the distance the letter was carried, and were excessively high in comparison with the rates charged to-day, as will be seen by the following: An ordinary letter carried thirty miles or less, the charge was  $6\frac{1}{4}$  cents; from thirty to eighty miles, 10 cents; letters carried one hundred and fifty miles,  $12\frac{1}{2}$  cents; from one hundred and fifty up to four hundred miles,  $18\frac{3}{4}$  cents; and for all over four hundred miles, 25 cents was charged. But comparatively few domestic letters were carried more than four hundred miles, for the middle or far west had been but little settled at that time.

Postage stamps were not required to be affixed to letters in those days, as the United States government did not issue postage stamps until 1847, and even then left it optional with the sender to use them; their object then being to enable the public to mail letters at hours when the

post-office was closed, and it was some ten years later before the government required all letters to be prepaid and stamps affixed before the letter could be started on its journey.

The time required in carrying the mails from place to place in the early days of post-offices is in strong contrast with the lightning-like speed now demanded in the mail service. Then the mails were carried on horseback or by stage-coaches, and required several days to carry the mails from Boston to New York city. They at that time were carried by way of Worcester and Springfield, and most of the time only two mails a week could be depended upon.

In 1786 a man by the name of Levi Pease advertised to undertake to make the trip from Boston to New York with stage-coaches in four days by way of Worcester and Springfield, and to deliver two mails a week in the winter and three in the summer time, as can be seen by an advertisement in the *Worcester Gazette* of January 5, 1786. In order to make this, what in those days was called quick time, the passengers carried were limited to four, and the line was known as the limited U. S. mail line; and an extra charge was made for the privilege of riding on the limited line much the same as now is the case with the limited fast trains of to-day; the coaches which followed the mail-coach would carry as many as could be comfortably or uncomfortably crowded on.

The advent of the steam cars brought about a radical change in the time of transporting the mails to distant points. Instead of two mails a week the number has doubled many times that each day; while a couple of sacks or bags were once sufficient to hold the Boston and

New York mails twice a week it now requires cars sufficient to transport many tons of mail matter several times each day.

Wonderful, and almost beyond the comprehension of the layman, has been the advancement of mail service of the country. It has, nevertheless, all been accomplished within the memory of man.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE WAR RECORD.

THE firing upon Fort Sumter by the confederates, April 12, 1861, was the signal for the stars and stripes to be flung to the breeze from every housetop throughout the loyal States. The assault upon the American flag caused the most intense excitement to prevail, and the patriotic enthusiasm which burst forth on all sides completely annihilated all party lines and political differences.

In response to President Lincoln's call for 75,000 volunteers to defend Washington, which seemed to be in emergent danger, William Sprague, then Governor of Rhode Island, offered the services of the State militia, and immediately set to work making hasty preparations for the departure of a regiment of infantry and a battery of light artillery to the nation's capital.

The office of the merchant was closed, the mechanics laid down their tools, and the farmers left their plows in the field, all striving to be the first to offer their services and, if need be, their lives for the defence of their country.

The first to be called upon was the Rhode Island Detached Militia, who immediately responded, and Saturday, April 20, the first detachment of the regiment, under the command of Governor Sprague, left Providence amidst the greatest enthusiasm of the immense throng that crowded the streets of the city to witness their departure. The church bells were rung, the cannon belched

forth its thunder, and the cheers of men rent the air, while the prayers and the tears of women who bid them god-speed and a safe return consecrated the hour that the steamer on which the command had embarked left its moorings.

Among those who were first to respond to the call for volunteers from Centerdale was James E. Bailey. At the time of the opening of hostilities James E. Bailey was the village harnessmaker, and was a member of one of the independent military companies in Providence, which composed a part of the First Regiment of Volunteers, holding the position of second lieutenant in Company B. After reaching Washington he was promoted to first lieutenant of the same company, June 4, 1861. He took part in the first battle of Bull Run, July 21, and served with honor during his three months' service, and returned with the regiment, July 28, and was mustered out August 2d, 1861.

He immediately re-enlisted in the Third Regiment, Rhode Island Heavy Artillery, which was then being organized. He was given command of Company E, receiving his commission as captain, August 27, and was promoted to major, January 1, 1863. He accompanied the regiment on their southern campaign, taking active part in the capture of Fort Pulaski, a fort which he afterwards commanded. He also was actively engaged in the siege of Charlestown, S. C.

Major Bailey was given command of the left in the terrible siege and capture of Fort Wagner. To give a complete military record of Major Bailey it would be necessary to give a review of the entire campaign of the Third Regiment of Rhode Island Heavy Artillery with which he was actively connected. He was a brave and



efficient soldier, and popular with his command. He served with honor throughout the war and received an honorable discharge upon his arrival home after the close of the war.

#### WILLIAM F. ALLISON.

William F. Allison enlisted as a private, June 6th, 1861, in Company B, Second Regiment, Rhode Island Volunteers, and July 16 was promoted to corporal. He took part in all of the battles in which his regiment was engaged until March 20, 1862, when he was transferred to Company B, Second Regiment of United States Cavalry. He followed the fortunes of the regiment until his term of enlistment expired, June 6, 1864, when he returned home and received an honorable discharge.

He was twice taken prisoner while on picket duty, but in both cases was recaptured by the Union forces. He took part in nearly all of the great battles in which the Army of the Potomac was engaged, including the battle of Bull Run, Gettysburg, Cold Harbor, Cedar Mountain, Malvern Hill, and the seven days' fight at the battle of the Wilderness, and many others. He has an honorable record as a soldier, and was always held in high esteem as a citizen.

After his return from the war he resumed work at his trade as a carpenter and contractor. In 1871 he joined Prescott Post, G. A. R., Providence, and in 1905 was elected Junior Vice Commander, and in 1906 elected Senior Vice Commander.

He took active part in organizing The Centerdale Veteran Association, and held the office of commander for four years. He was one of the charter members of Roger

Williams Lodge, No. 32, A. F. & A. M., and is Past Master of the lodge.

ZALMON AUGUSTUS OLNEY.

Augustus Olney, as he was generally called, enlisted in Company H, Seventh Regiment, Rhode Island Infantry, August 16, 1862, and was mustered in September 4, and left Providence with the regiment, September 10. He followed the fortunes of the regiment throughout the fall campaign, and was killed in the battle of Fredericksburg, December 13, 1862, while crossing the Rappahannock river with the regiment upon pontoon bridges. Although his services occupied but a few months, his conduct in the camp and upon the battlefield was exemplary.

GEORGE T. BATCHELDER.

George T. Batchelder enlisted in Company C, Seventh Regiment, Rhode Island Infantry, August 6, 1862, and soon after was appointed sergeant. He participated in many of the big battles of the war, and was twice wounded, once at the battle of Fredericksburg, December 13, 1862, and at the battle of Spottsylvania, May 18th, 1864. He remained with the regiment until its return at the end of the war, and was mustered out June 9th, 1865. After he returned from the war he re-entered the employ of Luther Carpenter as clerk, a position he had filled for seven years before going into the army. After the death of Luther Carpenter, in 1886, he became his successor in business.

GEORGE COLWELL.

George Colwell enlisted August 8, 1862, as a private in Company K, Seventh Regiment, Rhode Island Infantry.

He served with honor throughout the war. After being mustered out he again entered the employ of Nathaniel Angell. He afterwards removed to Watchemoket, East Providence, and served upon the police force for many years.

RANDALL H. TALLMAN.

Randall H. Tallman enlisted as a private, First Rhode Island Regiment, Rhode Island Volunteers, in 1861. He fought with the regiment at the battle of Bull Run, and returned with the regiment at the expiration of the three months' service for which they were enlisted. He shortly after re-entered the army as a private or special scout to General Burnside and remained with him throughout the war, and served with honor and credit to himself and his country. He was a brave and fearless man, and his rugged constitution well fitted him physically to withstand the exposure and hardships he was often called upon to endure in the discharge of his duties as a scout and spy. At the close of the war he returned to his home in Centerdale and was appointed upon the police force of the town, and was promoted to town sergeant, a position he held for several years. He died, September 2, 1883, in the sixty-ninth year of his age.

ROBERT F. SIMMONS.

Robert Fitz Simmons enlisted as a private in Company E, Third Regiment, Rhode Island Heavy Artillery, August 21st, 1861. He was promoted to sergeant, and was with the regiment on their Port Royal campaign and took part in the siege and capture of Fort Pulaski, Ga. November 7th, 1863, he was discharged by reason of promotion to

second lieutenant in the Fourteenth Regiment of Rhode Island Heavy Artillery. He, however, resigned his commission as second lieutenant before he entered upon active duty, as he preferred returning to his old regiment, the Third Rhode Island Heavy Artillery. After he returned from the war he went to Attleboro, Mass., and engaged in the manufacture of jewelry, and met with a good degree of success, and was held in high esteem by his townsmen.

#### ALMANZO S. STONE.

He enlisted as a private in Battery A, First Regiment Rhode Island Light Artillery, March 7th, 1864, and was transferred to Battery B of the same regiment, August 12, 1864. He served with credit to himself and his country until the close of the war, and was mustered out June 12, 1865.

#### WASHINGTON IRVING TALLMAN.

Irving Tallman, as he was generally known, enlisted, March 7, 1864, as a private in Battery B, First Regiment, Rhode Island Light Artillery. While engaged in the battle of Reams Station, August 25, 1864, he was taken prisoner by the Rebels; he was afterward paroled by them, September 25, 1864. He remained with his battery until the end of the war, and was mustered out June 12, 1865.

#### WALTER ROURKE.

Walter Rourke enlisted as a musician (fifer) in Company A, Fourth Regiment, Rhode Island Volunteers, October 30, 1861. After serving three years, the term of

his enlistment, he re-enlisted in the same regiment, as a veteran volunteer, in August, 1864. After his re-enlistment he served as a nurse in the hospital to October, 1864, when he was put on detached service at City Point, Va., in the General Hospital, and remained there until February, 1865, when he was transferred to Company G, Seventh Regiment, Rhode Island Volunteers, and was mustered out July 13, 1865.

#### GEORGE H. REMINGTON.

George H. Remington enlisted as a private in Company I, Eleventh Regiment, Rhode Island Volunteers, September 23d, 1862, serving nine months, the term for which the regiment was enlisted, and was mustered out July 13, 1863.

#### COMPANY A, FIFTH REGIMENT, R. I. M.

As a precautionary measure against an invasion of the northern States by the Confederate army, the enrollment and organizing of the State militia was ordered; and in pursuance of that order a company of infantry was organized in Centerdale in May, 1863. There being no suitable place in the village for an armory or drill hall, Mr. James Halsey Angell purchased the old church building, which had for many years been closed for public worship, and remodeled the interior to meet the requirements of the company for an armory. The company numbered eighty members, and was designated as Company A, Fifth Regiment of Infantry, in the Fourth Brigade of Rhode Island Militia. They held weekly meetings for drill and practice in the manual of arms. At the general muster of the regiment, held at Pawtucket, December 1, 1863, the

company had the right of the line and received many compliments for their soldierly appearance and proficiency in manœuvres. The following is a roster and list of the members of the company:

ROLL OF THE COMPANY.

Captain . . . . .	Charles E. Hall.
First Lieutenant . . . . .	Benjamin Sweet.
Second Lieutenant . . . . .	James A. Mathewson.

*Sergeants.*

George F. Angell . . . . .	1st Sergeant.
William Brayman . . . . .	2d Sergeant.
Jarvis Smith . . . . .	3d Sergeant.
Edwin W. White . . . . .	4th Sergeant.
Samuel N. Budlong . . . . .	5th Sergeant.

*Corporals.*

Philip Salisbury . . . . .	1st Corporal.
Joel Corbin . . . . .	2d Corporal.
George H. Higgins . . . . .	3d Corporal.
George F. Stollard . . . . .	4th Corporal.
William Phetteplace . . . . .	5th Corporal.
Frederick M. Aldrich . . . . .	6th Corporal.
Willard Pearce . . . . .	7th Corporal.
Henry Pearce . . . . .	8th Corporal.

*Wagoner.*

Cornelius M. Capron.

*Privates.*

Angell, Sayles H.	Adams, John Q.
Angell, William,	Billington, James R.
Angell, Andrew J.	Bicknell, William A.
Angell, Amasa W.	Brown, Henry F.

Barnes, Jonathan,	Lapham, J. H. P.
Britton, Sylvester O.	Mathewson, Henry N.
Brown, Henry M.	Mathewson, Jerome,
Barnes, John W.	Mathewson, Daniel W.
Capron, Edwin A.	Mathewson, Martin,
Capron, George W.	McCavert, James,
Cozzens, John R.	Olney, Barton J.
Collins, James C.	Potter, Albert H.
Collins, Henry,	Robertson, Argraves,
Collins, Daniel S.	Sweet, Ephraim A.
Dawley, James V., Jr.	Sweet, William M.
Dawley, Benjamin G.	Sweet, Seriel A.
Davis, Jonathan,	Stone, Almanzo S.
Eldridge, Thaddeus S.	Sweet, Albert F.
Gazlay, William,	Sweet, Andrew B.
Gardner, Joseph O.	Sweet, Joseph W.
Greene, Charles E.	Sweet, Emor W.
Gould, Sullivan W.	Stone, George W.
Gould, Lewis,	Searle, Edwin P.
Harrington, Alexander W.	Sweet, Welcome,
Higgins, Joseph,	Sweet, Edwin A.
Hall, Henry J.	Tallman, Irving W.
Hunt, Horace,	Turner, Harrison J.
Jencks, George N.	Waldren, Lewis,
James, Peleg A.	Walker, Charles P.
King, Stephen,	Whipple, Benonia,
Kinnecom, William,	Wilbur, Charles.
Kinnecom, Edward,	

## THE WAR WITH SPAIN.

The destruction of the U. S. Battleship "Maine," February 15, 1898, in Havana harbor, was followed by events which ultimately caused President McKinley to issue his proclamation declaring that war did really exist between the United States and Spain, and calling for 125,000 volunteers to defend the honor of the country and the cause of justice and humanity in Cuba.

The call for volunteers met with a hearty response from all sections of the country. Among those who responded from Centerdale were:

JOHN P. GEELIN,

Who enlisted as a private in Company I, Twelfth Regiment, United States Volunteers, and accompanied the regiment on their campaign in Cuba. He was slightly wounded in the battle of Santiago. After the end of hostilities in Cuba he returned with the regiment and re-enlisted in Company L, Twenty-sixth Regiment, United States Volunteers, and proceeded with the regiment to the Philippine Islands. At the expiration of his term of enlistment he returned to his home in Centerdale. He was a brave and fearless soldier; and while serving in the Philippines it frequently became necessary to call for volunteers to go upon some especially dangerous reconnaissance, and upon these occasions John P. Geelin was always among the first to volunteer to go, regardless of how dangerous the expedition might be.

LEWIS E. FOSTER.

In response to a call for volunteers, Lewis E. Foster enlisted as a private in Company A, Forty-sixth Regiment, United States Volunteers, in 1899. He accompanied the regiment to the Philippine Islands, and saw considerable active service while there. Here he remained until the expiration of his term of enlistment, and returned home and was mustered out in 1901. After remaining home for about three months he again enlisted in Company C, Fifty-sixth Regiment of United States Infantry, and went



with his regiment to the Island of Puerto Rico, and elsewhere, and after serving three years with the Fifty-sixth he returned home and was mustered out in the summer of 1904.

After a three months' visit to his home he again enlisted in Company D, Twenty-first United States Infantry, and was stationed at Fort Snelling, St. Paul, Minn. Here he was transferred to Company C, First United States Infantry, September 20, 1906, he preferring to go to Manila, P. I., where the First Regiment had been ordered, than to remain with the Twenty-first, who were ordered to Colorado; this being his second trip to the Philippine Islands. He remained until his third term of enlistment expired, in October, 1907. That he is a brave and honorable soldier is fully attested by his nine years of continued service in the United States army.

#### JOHN W. WALLACE.

John W. Wallace enlisted as a landsman in the United States Navy, February 2, 1900, and was assigned to the U. S. Cruiser "Newark." He remained on the "Newark" about eight months, when he was transferred to the first-class cruiser "Brooklyn," and was ordered to the Philippine Islands. After cruising around the islands eight months, the "Brooklyn" was ordered to China during the "Boxer" uprising. Here he remained about two years, calling at many of the ports of China. While he was at Shanghai he was transferred to the gunboat "Wilmington," January 11th, 1902. He remained upon the "Wilmington" until the term of his enlistment expired, and returned home by way of San Francisco, and was honorably discharged March 22d, 1904. Although

he was in no naval engagement during his time of service, he holds an honorable record as a marksman with small arms, ranking very good to excellent; conduct and sobriety receiving a mark of five, or excellent, the highest point obtainable.

FREDERICK M. BARNES, JOHN LARKIN, GEORGE H. SWEET.

Frederick M. Barnes and John Larkin enlisted as privates in Battery A, and George H. Hill in Battery B, First Regiment, Light Artillery, Rhode Island Volunteers, June 6th, 1898, and soon after entered camp duty at Quonset Point, R. I.

The destruction of the Spanish fleet off Santiago by Admiral Schley and the subsequent victories by the United States troops on land soon brought an end to hostilities in Cuba, and caused the United States Government to discontinue forwarding additional troops to the island; in consequence of which the First Light Artillery Regiment was ordered disbanded, and October 26, 1898, was mustered out, much to the disappointment of the officers and men, many of whom had, from patriotic motives, sacrificed good positions in civil life to enter into the service of their country.

GEORGE H. SWEET.

George H. Sweet enlisted in the United States Navy, June 24, 1898, and was assigned to the United States receiving ship "Constellation," stationed at Newport, R. I., the old "Man-of-War" being at that time used as a training ship for the United States Navy. He remained there until the end of the war or until August 27, 1898, when he was honorably discharged.

# UNION LIBRARY.

## CHAPTER XVII.



A. W. HARRINGTON, F. C. ANGELL, M. M. JOSLIN.

**I**N the summer of 1868 Frank C. Angell, Marcus M. Joslin, and Alexander W. Harrington initiated the movement to establish a free public library in Centerdale.

At that time Centerdale was a small country village of less than 200 inhabitants, and somewhat isolated from Providence and other large towns where the advantages of the public library were enjoyed. There were no means of communication with Providence excepting by the slow and cumbersome stage-coach, which made but two or three trips each day; for the locomotive engine had not then penetrated the Woonasquatucket valley, nor were the swift and mysteriously moving electric cars known at that time. Under these conditions but few could spare the time or afford the expense of a journey to Providence for the much coveted book.

At first the project of establishing a public library, even upon a small scale, in Centerdale seemed like too great an undertaking for them to carry through successfully, they being at that time young mechanics working in one of the workshops of the village for daily pay, and realizing that there were no men of wealth in the community to come forward and aid them in their undertaking; so whatever was done must be accomplished by their own efforts. It did not take long to interest the young people in the movement. An informal meeting was called to consider the matter and devise some way of providing the money for the undertaking.

By general assent the three promoters were considered a committee to inaugurate the movement, and decided to appeal to the public, through a series of local entertainments, to raise the first installment of one hundred dollars toward the two hundred which they hoped to be able to secure with which to purchase the books for a nucleus or foundation for the library. The question of a building, or room, to contain them had not then been considered.

The drama selected for the initial performance was entitled "All is not Gold that Glitters." A fac-simile of the programme is here given with the cast of characters.

The first entertainment was given in Armory hall, October 31st, 1868, and passed off very successfully. The attendance was not large, but the workers were not discouraged, and gave a second representation of the drama, November 28th. This was followed by other entertainments of like character, until, February, 1869, after working for four months, they succeeded in raising their first installment of one hundred dollars.

# Grand Exhibition

— AT —

Armory Hall, Centredale,

— ON —

Saturday Eve'g, Oct. 31.

The public are respectfully invited to attend an Exhibition as above, where will be performed the comic Drama, entitled

## All is not Gold That Glitters!

Jasper Plum,.....Mr. J. Marsh  
Stephen Plum,.....A. W. Harrington  
Frederic Plum,.....F. C. Angell  
Toby Twinkle,.....M. M. Joslin  
Sir Arthur Lovelle,.....H. J. Turner  
Harris,.....Mr. J. Nichols  
Lady Valeria,.....Miss A. F. Westcott  
Lady Leatherbridge,.....Miss. S. Lapham  
Martha Gibbs,.....Miss I. M. Burlingame

**SONGS, by . . C. E. TUTLOW.**

To be followed by the side splitting farce, entitled

## Betsey Baker!

Mr. Marmaduke Mouser,.....Mr. J. Marsh  
Mr. Crumby,.....M. M. Joslin  
Mrs. Crumby,.....Miss I. M. Burlingame  
Betsey Baker,.....Miss A. F. Westcott

The whole to conclude, with Celebrated

**CLOG DANCE**  
By C. E. Tutlow.

**Tickets, - - - - 25 Cents.**  
**Children, - - - - 15 "**

Doors open at a quarter to 7 o'clock.

Performance to commence at 7.30 o'clock

An Orchestra will enliven the occasion under the leadership of Mr. James Olney.

The proceeds to be devoted to the raising of a Public Library for the village of Centredale.

A. Crawford Greene, Printer, Railroad Hall, Providence, R. I.

A subscription paper, dated February 9, 1869, was now prepared, and the hard-earned hundred dollars was placed at the head of the paper. Various sums, ranging from one dollar upwards, were subscribed, and in due time four hundred dollars were secured, which was double the amount they at first anticipated.

The magic key seemed to have been touched, for the public, generally, now were alive with interest for the success of the library.

April 21st, 1869, a meeting was called inviting all people interested in the movement to assemble at the schoolhouse; the object being to form a society, or organization, to carry on the work in a business-like and systematic manner. The work thus far had been done informally by the young people connected with the dramatic club, but now that the establishment of the library was assured it seemed a proper time to perfect a permanent organization. At eight o'clock the meeting was called to order, and John Marsh was elected chairman and Frank C. Angell, secretary; the chairman stated the object of the meeting, giving a brief account of the work accomplished thus far, and spoke encouragingly of the future of the library. Various committees were appointed to attend to and prepare the preliminaries attendant to the permanent organization. This was but one of the many meetings held by the society before the permanent organization was perfected. May 13th, 1869, the constitution and by-laws were adopted, and at this meeting it was voted that hereafter the society should be called by the name of "The Union Library Association."

After the adoption of the by-laws, the following were elected as the first officers of the association: President,

John C. Budlong; Vice-Presidents, Alexander W. Harrington, John Marsh, James C. Collins, and Harrison J. Turner; Treasurer, George W. Remington; Secretary, Frank C. Angell; Corresponding Secretary, Alexander W. Harrington; Librarian, Frank C. Angell; Directors, John C. Budlong, George T. Batchelder, Benjamin Sweet, Marcus M. Joslin, Israel B. Phillips, John Marsh, George W. Remington.

The library association being now duly organized, and with a balance of four hundred dollars in the treasury, the pioneers in the work might well feel proud of what had been accomplished. The older and more influential citizens had now become interested in the movement to establish the library, and with their encouragement it was determined to continue the work until a sum sufficient had been secured to provide a suitable building to contain the books.

The fourth of July, the anniversary of American independence, was approaching, and it was decided to improve the opportunity and observe the day in a manner befitting the glorious occasion, and by combining patriotism with the laudable desire to promote intelligence and the public good, they would make this the occasion for increasing the library fund; and certainly no two objects could more appropriately be combined.

Under the direction of various committees, the preparations for the celebration progressed rapidly, and soon the village began to assume a gala day appearance. A mammoth awning was erected upon the village common, a platform built for the band and orators of the day, the old liberty pole, which had failed to do duty for several years on account of being disabled, was put in condition

to hold aloft the glorious emblem of American independence.

In due time all of the details of the arrangements were completed, and all anxiously waited the dawn of the coming day. Suddenly the booming of the artillery and the ringing of bells resounded through the valley, proclaiming to the people that the anniversary of the nation's birthday had dawned, and calling upon them to assemble and celebrate the day as only true patriotic Americans can do. It seemed as though God was pleased to smile upon their efforts, for a more beautiful day could not be desired. It would be a difficult task to describe the enthusiasm that was awakened or the pleasure enjoyed by all who participated in the celebration that day.

During the evening a display of fireworks enlivened the scene and closed the festivities of the day. Everything passed off in the happiest possible manner, making the event a complete success.

The success of the celebration increased the library fund sufficiently to warrant some steps being taken towards erecting a library building. A desirable site on Mineral Spring avenue was obtained on a ninety-nine years lease, and plans were drawn for a building, of wood, 20 x 26 feet, and one story in height. The contract for erecting the building was awarded to Messrs. Brown & Sweet, contractors, for eight hundred dollars, and in March, 1870, ground was broken for the foundation. Although the building was small, it provided ample accommodations for the books at that time.

The laws of Rhode Island at that time provided that all companies or societies desiring to hold real or mixed property in the name of the company or society, and



receive the protection of the laws of the State, should petition and receive from the General Assembly a charter, or act of incorporation.

At the January session of the legislature, in 1870, the Hon. James C. Collins, a representative to the Assembly from North Providence, presented a petition requesting that an act of incorporation be granted to the Union Library Association of Centerdale. The petition was duly granted at the same session, and the Union Library Association was now a legally constituted organization, and under its charter was empowered to have and use a common seal, and to have, hold, and convey real and personal property to an amount not exceeding ten thousand dollars.

The members of the library society might well feel congratulated upon the results of their labors; they had succeeded in erecting the library building, had about four hundred dollars in money with which to purchase books, and had become a chartered corporation under the laws of the State.

It must not be supposed that the ladies had been idle all this time. In July, 1869, in response to invitations extended, the ladies assembled at the residence of Mrs. Nathaniel Angell and organized the Ladies' Union Sewing Society. Weekly sessions were held, and their skillful hands soon fashioned many useful and fancy articles. A sale, or fair, as it was called, was held in Armory hall, under their auspices, December 24 and 25, 1869. The fair was a success and netted a handsome sum.

After the completion of the library building, the ladies of the sewing society requested that they be allowed the pleasure of furnishing the library room. Of course this

was readily granted, and under their direction the room began to take on a neat and attractive appearance. The walls were tastefully decorated, the floor was neatly carpeted, comfortable chairs and tables were provided; also ample provisions were made for heating and lighting.

It was now decided to formally open and dedicate the library upon the fourth of July, which was near at hand, at which time it was proposed to hold another celebration like the one held the year before. It is sufficient to say that the second celebration was as successful as its predecessor.



UNION LIBRARY.

At 12 o'clock noon, July 4th, 1870, the door of the library was thrown open to the public. The librarian, Frank C. Angell, received the visitors informally during the afternoon and evening. Upon the shelves were 350 volumes, all neatly covered and numbered; the appear-

ance of the room received many pleasant commendations from the visitors.

The library now being formally dedicated, it was decided to open the room for delivering the books every Tuesday and Saturday evenings from seven until nine o'clock.

At the time of the opening of the library it was thought not advisable to make it a free library, in the strict sense of the word, until some means were provided for its maintenance, but free to all members of the Union Library Association and the Ladies' Union Sewing Society; this virtually including nearly all of the people of the village. But the association desired to extend its privileges to others who might reside here at a future time and all others who lived within a radius of three miles; to all such people a charge of six cents per week was made; but the desires and hopes of the association were that at no distant day it might be made free to all, and in this they were not disappointed.

April 15th, 1875, a free library act was passed by the General Assembly, giving authority to the cities and towns of the State to appropriate money, under certain restrictions, to establish free public libraries. The State Board of Education at the same time was authorized to pay for such books as might be approved by them for such libraries. The amount apportioned to each library varied according to the number of volumes they contained. Fifty dollars was allowed the first 500 volumes in the library, and twenty-five dollars for every additional 500 volumes; but the limit of any library was five hundred dollars a year. Any town establishing or accepting a free public library was required to appropriate for its use at least as much

as the amount received from the State. Without doubt this legislation encouraged the establishment of many public libraries throughout the State.

The Union Library Association now saw an opportunity to carry out the original and long-cherished plan of making it a free library, and at a meeting of the association held February 17th, 1877, it was voted to make and declare Union Library a free public library; and an application was made to the State Board of Education for the privileges allowed by the act. The library since that time has gradually increased in the number of volumes, until now it contains about 5,000 volumes.

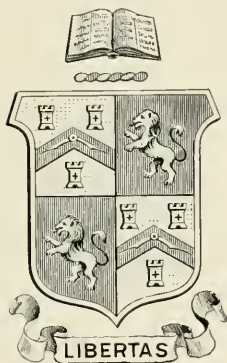
It has always been under the care of Frank C. Angell, who has served as librarian from its opening day, in 1870, until the present time (1909), excepting two years, 1871 and 1872, a total of thirty-seven years. The library at the present time is in a flourishing condition, and well deserves the support it receives from the State and the town.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### FRATERNAL ORDERS AND MUSICAL ORGANIZATIONS.

ROGER WILLIAMS LODGE, NO. 32, A. F. AND A. M.

THE origin of Roger Williams Lodge, No. 32, of Ancient, Free, and Accepted Masons was largely due to a desire of the members of the fraternity living in and around Centerdale for better accommodations in the matter of Masonic privileges, whereby they might more fully enjoy the benefits of fraternal brotherhood and promote a more mutual acquaintance and social intercourse with the brethren.



At the time of the formation of Roger Williams Lodge there were about thirty members of the order residing in or within a convenient distance of Centerdale, belonging to different lodges throughout the State who were obliged to travel many miles over country roads to attend a meeting of their home lodge.

By mutual agreement those interested assembled at the Union Library rooms on the evening of September 15th, 1875, to consider the advisability of forming a new lodge to be located in Centerdale. The meeting was well attended, and James H. Angell, a member of Temple Lodge, No. 18, was asked to preside; and Frank C. Angell, also

of Temple Lodge, was chosen secretary. The object of the meeting was briefly stated by the chairman, and after considering the expediency of forming a new lodge a committee was appointed to obtain information in regard to methods of procedure in such cases. Other meetings were held at the same place during the succeeding months, to hear the report of the committee and to perfect the work of organization.

At a meeting held December 27, 1875, the subject of a name for the proposed lodge was considered. Various names were suggested: among them was the name of Roger Williams, proposed by James H. Angell, and after some discussion it was decided to name the new lodge Roger Williams Lodge.

A petition signed by twenty-six Master Masons, and recommended by Temple Lodge, No. 18, of Greenville, was presented to Most Worshipful Nicholas Van Slyck, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Rhode Island, asking permission to open a Lodge, under dispensation, in Centerdale. The dispensation was granted under date of January 27, 1876, the Grand Master appointing Thomas Wilmarth, Worshipful Master; Alexander W. Harrington, Senior Warden; and Charles P. Walker, Junior Warden, to serve until the lodge was duly constituted.

The first meeting of the Roger Williams Lodge, under dispensation, was held in Railroad Hall building, March 4, 1876. At this meeting James Halsey Angell was appointed Treasurer; Frank C. Angell, Secretary; Rufus W. Harris, Senior Deacon; A. Jarvis Smith, Junior Deacon; George F. Angell, Senior Steward; William F. Allison, Junior Steward; George E. Olney, Chaplain; James V. Dawley, Marshal; George W. Capron, Musical

Director; and Asel S. Angell, Tyler; these being the first officers of the new organization.

At the annual communication of the Grand Lodge held May 15th, 1876, a petition for a charter was presented, and after due consideration was granted; and upon the twenty-seventh day of May, 1876, The Most Worshipful Grand Master Nicholas Van Slyck, assisted by the officers of the Grand Lodge, duly constituted Roger Williams Lodge, No. 32, in ample form, with all the rights and privileges of a subordinate lodge of the jurisdiction of Rhode Island. An address appropriate to the occasion was delivered by Judge George M. Carpenter, of the Supreme Court of Rhode Island, who was also a member of the Grand Lodge.

After the impressive ceremonies of constitution the following were elected as the first officers of Roger Williams Lodge, No. 32, A. F. & A. M: Thomas Wilmarth, Worshipful Master; Alexander W. Harrington, Senior Warden, Charles P. Walker, Junior Warden; James Halsey Angell, Treasurer; Frank C. Angell, Secretary; George E. Olney, Chaplain; Rufus W. Harris, Senior Deacon; A. Jarvis Smith, Junior Deacon; George F. Angell, Senior Steward; William F. Allison, Junior Steward; James V. Dawley, Marshal; Daniel O. Angell, Sentinel; Asel S. Angell, Tyler.

It is worthy of note at this time to observe that Frank C. Angell, who was chosen secretary at the first preliminary meeting of the organization, was appointed secretary while the lodge was under dispensation, and under the charter has held the office continuously to the present time, 1909, making a continuous service as secretary for over thirty-three years.

The lodge held their meetings in a small hall in Railroad Hall building until October, 1885, when they moved to rooms especially arranged for them in Angell block, No. 2005 Smith street, where they are now located. The lodge at the present time numbers 112 members and is in a flourishing condition.

WOONASQUATUCKET LODGE, NO. 53, I. O. OF G. T.

In 1870 the wave of temperance reform agitated the country throughout its length and breadth, stirring the cities and country towns to a furore of temperance excitement to an extent never known before in the country's history. Meetings and rallies were held in all of the village halls, encouraging the organizing of temperance societies and lodges to carry on the temperance work. Centerdale, like the neighboring villages, was caught in the swirl of the reform wave, and soon public sentiment was enlisted in the popular reform movement.

In April, 1871, the Woonasquatucket Lodge, No. 53, of the Independent Order of Good Templars was organized, and soon upwards of 200 members were enrolled. Armory Hall was secured and transformed into a commodious lodge room, and great enthusiasm was manifested on all sides, and Woonasquatucket Lodge, No. 53, received the high honor of being the banner lodge of the State in the good work it accomplished and its perfection in the ritual work.

The lodge continued to prosper and succeed in the work of temperance reform they had undertaken; and without doubt succeeded in alleviating temporarily, if not in all cases permanently, the evils of intemperance. But



like most reformatory movements that depend somewhat upon constant agitation and exciting of the public mind, the interest began to subside, and, not unlike the returning tide, the wave of temperance reform began to ebb, and gradually the members began to withdraw from active work, and ere long the lodge was obliged to resort to the inevitable; and in the summer of 1877 the Woonasquatucket Lodge, I. O. of G. T., once the banner lodge of the State, surrendered its charter to the Grand Lodge and rested from its good work.

#### THE TEMPLE OF HONOR.

Soon after the formation of Woonasquatucket Lodge of Good Templars a lodge of the order of the Temple of Honor was organized. This, too, was also a temperance order, but, unlike the Good Templars, only admitted male members over eighteen years of age.

The Temple was instituted August 3d, 1871, under the name of Enterprise Temple, No. 26, with thirty-five charter members; the following being the first officers: Charles P. Walker, Worthy Chief Templar; Arnold Hawkins, Worthy Vice Templar; Frank C. Angell, Worthy Recorder; Moses Clafin, Worthy Assistant Recorder; George F. Angell, Worthy Financial Recorder; George G. Cozzens, Worthy Treasurer; George W. Gould, Worthy Chaplain; Marcus M. Joslin, Worthy Usher; Charles J. Hawkins, Worthy Deputy Usher; William Smith, Worthy Guardian; Asel S. Angell, Worthy Sentinel.

They, like the Good Templars, held their meetings in Armory hall and enjoyed several years of prosperity, and

numbered about 150 members. The meetings were always well attended and considerable fraternal interest manifested. They were often the recipient of many fraternal visits from neighboring Temples from Providence and other places, who would always come in a body, and the return visits were always hailed as occasions of much interest, for Enterprise Temple was particularly strong in literary and musical talent, making visits especially enjoyable.

But as the interest in the temperance reform movement subsided the interest in the Temple began to wane, and, like the Good Templars, it was obliged to submit to the inevitable, and in June, 1879, surrendered its charter to the Grand Temple.

But in justice to the two reformatory orders it must be admitted that they did not labor in vain, that their efforts *did* carry joy and sunshine into many desolate homes and left a permanent impression of good upon the community.

#### MUSICAL ORGANIZATIONS.

The first musical organization in Centerdale was the Centerdale Cornet Band, which was organized May 6th, 1861. Unless the village choir is taken into consideration, in the early days of the church in this place, the church organ was but little known in country churches. *Here* the music was furnished by two violins, a bass-viol, flute, and clarionet, and a little later a small melodeon was added. This was many years after the time when the church people denounced and declared the violin an instrument of the devil, and to play upon one, or on any musical instrument, during church service would be positively sacri-

legious; the singing always being done without musical accompaniment.

Soon after the breaking out of the Civil War, in 1861, martial music was heard throughout the land. Nearly all of the country towns and villages, to show their patriotism, proceeded to organize a military company or a brass band. Accordingly, on the evening of May 6th, 1861, those interested in music assembled in the hall of the Centerdale hotel and organized the Centerdale Cornet Band, consisting of fifteen members, as follows: Edward Reynolds, John Widup, Thomas Whitworth, George G. Cozzens, George F. Angell, Albert Mowry, Bela Edwards, Henry Hunt, Edwin A. Capron, Albert F. Gleason, James Barnes, Daniel H. Capron, Charles Hudson, Cornelius M. Capron, and Charles Thornton. Edward Reynolds was elected leader, and John Widup, assistant leader. Gideon Goodspeed, a noted bandmaster, was secured as instructor; and in due time the band was able to render music in a very creditable manner. The band continued its organization until 1864 when, from various reasons, principally that so many of the members had moved to distant localities, it was decided to disband the organization.

#### THE YOUNG AMERICAN BAND.

The Young American Band was organized in August, 1884, through the efforts of Frank C. Angell and George A. Cozzens. Less than a dozen members were counted in its membership at the time of organization, but before many weeks it was augmented to twenty-five members, and Frank C. Angell was elected leader. The band differed from most bands in that it used but few brass

instruments, and was generally known as a flute and drum band; the instrumentation being as follows: 12 flutes (or fifes), 3 clarionets, 1 saxophone, 3 cornets, 4 snare drums, bass drum, and cymbals. At the time of its organization this style of band was very popular with the public, especially for street music, always attracting much attention and favorable comment. They continued under the leadership of Mr. Angell until September 16th, 1886, when George A. Cozzens was elected leader, Mr. Angell declining a unanimous re-election, but he still remained an active member of the band.

Under the leadership of Mr. Cozzens the band continued to prosper, and enjoyed the public favor to a greater extent than any similar organization for many miles around. They gave many complimentary evening concerts and street parades in the town; the line of march being always illuminated in their honor. Their band room was located in the basement of Armory Hall building, and was comfortably furnished and well suited to their use. At the height of their prosperity they sustained a serious loss by the destruction of Armory Hall by fire on the night of February 6, 1892; they losing many of their instruments, uniforms, and band equipments. There being no insurance upon them, the loss was a serious one for the organization. Somewhat disheartened, they engaged another band room, and endeavored to revive the interest in the disheartened ones. The organization was kept along with some effort, but finally disbanded in the summer of 1894.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### VARIOUS INDUSTRIES.

THE VILLAGE PHARMACY.—SPECTACLE MAKER.—PLANE MANUFACTORY.—THE UNDERTAKER.

#### THE VILLAGE PHARMACY.

**I**N olden times the drug store (or apothecary shop, as it was then called) was found only in cities or large towns. People living remote from large communities were obliged, when sick, to depend upon home remedies for relief, made from the herbs, roots, and barks that grew in the woods and fields around their homes.

Should you have climbed to the attic of one of those old country homes, you would have found suspended from the beams and rafters large bunches of herbs, and bags containing dried flowers, roots, and barks of many kinds, all gathered in their proper season, and carefully dried and stored away for future use in time of need.

To be able to name them all would require a better botanical education than the average person of to-day is likely to possess; but to the country people of those days their names were as familiar as the names of the trees about their door-yard.

The services of a doctor were seldom called for unless the illness assumed a serious stage, and then, perhaps, he would prescribe the use of some of the contents of the attic. But the changed condition of the country incident to the rapid increase of the population, and the advance-

ment made by science in the treatment of diseases and the compounding of the remedies, called for more convenient and skillful methods than the home dispensary afforded.

These conditions eventually opened a wider field for the druggist, and ere long, in many of the small country towns, could be found the store of the registered pharmacist. The first to establish a drug store in Centerdale was Nicholas F. Reiner, in a building near the junction of Woonasquatucket avenue and Smith street, on the thirtieth day of May, 1896. Mr. Reiner was a graduate of the New York College of Pharmacy and had several years of practical experience in some of the leading drug stores of Providence. The store was well appointed, and its convenience to the community was soon apparent, and the new business became firmly established. In a few years he required more commodious apartments, and July 4, 1901, he moved into a new building he had erected at No. 2030-2032 Smith street. In September, 1906, he sold the business to John E. McKenna, he having previously purchased a drug store at No. 1 Westminster street, Providence.

#### THE SPECTACLE MAKER.

In 1843 George U. Wright and William Gedney entered into a copartnership for the manufacture of gold and silver-bowed spectacles. They leased a building which then stood on what is now Steere street. They made solid gold and silver goods only, and in those days the greater part of the work was done by hand. The gold or silver came in bars, but often coin was melted down in crucibles placed in a furnace built for the purpose, and

molded into the different forms or drawn into wire for use, as the special work might require.

It called for no little skill on the part of the workman to produce the finished job, when every part, from the little hinges in the bow to the frames for the lenses, had to be fashioned from the crude metal. The lenses also had to be cut and ground to fit the frames.

In 1847 Messrs. Wright and Gedney sold out to William W. Wright, a brother of the senior member of the firm, who secured the services of William N. Allison, of New York, an expert workman in gold and silver, especially in the manufacture of spectacles. William W. Wright continued the business until 1855, when the business was discontinued.

#### THE PLANE MANUFACTORY.

In 1853 Ezekiel Smith leased a building from Joseph Cunliff, near the site of the old saw-mill, with the privilege of using the water from the pond of the Centerdale mill, for the manufacturer of carpenters' planes of all kinds. The power for running the saw and other machinery was generated by a small turbine water-wheel which was placed under the mill. This wheel was rather a crude affair when compared with the powerful turbines in use to-day. It may not be generally known that this was the first turbine water-wheel operated on the Woonasquatucket river, and attracted considerable attention.

The planes made by Ezekiel Smith, which included nearly all of the different varieties, were considered the standard plane, and much sought for by woodworkers in all departments.

In 1854 the business was removed to some other locality, where and for what reason is impossible to determine at this time, but it is the opinion of the writer that it was removed to Pawtucket or Central Falls, R. I.

#### THE UNDERTAKER.

In the early days of the village, when the population was small and the farmers made up the majority of the resident people, deaths were comparatively infrequent and the services of an undertaker not often required; consequently a professional undertaker was seldom found in the rural districts.

If a person died, a neighboring carpenter, or the wheelwright, was called upon to make the box, or coffin; and as no supply was kept on hand, they must be made after the person died; thus the time was necessarily limited, and little time could be given to the making of an elaborate casket like what is now used, although it might be within the skill of the workman to do so.

A plain pine box, or coffin, with a coat of red stain, and, if the time was sufficient, a coat of varnish, was all that could be given or was expected. The clergyman would sometimes act as undertaker at the funeral, but more often some prominent neighbor or personal friend would officiate.

Just who the carpenter was that furnished the coffins when needed previous to the year 1830 is at the present time unknown. In 1830, when William Sweet established the first wheelwright shop in Centerdale, he was occasionally called upon to furnish the coffin and officiate as undertaker when a person died in the neighborhood. He



continued in the business until 1845, when he disposed of the wheelwright shop to Caleb V. Waterman (an account of which is given in another chapter entitled "The Village Wheelwright").

Caleb V. Waterman, being a man of good business capacity and judgment, saw the necessity of having better accommodations at a time when the service of an undertaker was required. He purchased a hearse and proceeded to make up a sufficient number of coffins of various sizes at a season when sufficient time could be used to give to them a more finished appearance than was possible to do in the limited time previously given.

In those days the burial cases were made in the conventional style, totally unlike the burial caskets of to-day. Black walnut was the wood almost universally used, although cypress, neatly stained in imitation of black walnut or cherry, was sometimes used for cheaper grades; however well they may have answered their purpose, they would form a strong contrast with the beautiful and artistic burial caskets in use to-day.

In 1861 Mr. Waterman gave up the wheelwright business and devoted his entire attention to undertaking, which he continued until his death, March 29, 1865.

After the death of Caleb V. Waterman, the business was continued, under his name, for about one year, by his son-in-law, William W. Wright, when he disposed of it to Israel B. Phillips. Mr. Phillips, too, was a carriage maker by trade, but gave up the business to take up his new calling. He was especially qualified to conduct the business of undertaker. His quiet and sombre manner and the sympathetic expression of his face well qualified him for the melancholy duties of undertaker. In 1871 he

sold out to Arnold Staples and removed to Woonsocket, R. I., to engage in the same business. Arnold Staples continued the business on Waterman avenue until 1880, when he removed to Esmond, R. I.

After Arnold Staples removed to Enfield, Centerdale was without a resident undertaker until 1892, when Herbert A. Fenner, a graduate of the United States College of Embalming, of Boston, Mass., re-established the business at No. 2007 Smith street, where he remained until June, 1907, when he removed into a new building he had erected upon Steere street.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE TOWN HALL, OR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SEAT OF TOWN GOVERNMENT IN CENTERDALE.

THE town of North Providence, within whose limits is located the village of Centerdale, was at one time, or until 1765, a part of the territory of the town of Providence, which originally embraced nearly all of Providence county; but as the country became more thickly settled, desire for separate townships were manifest on all sides; the farming districts believing they could more economically manage their local affairs if they were separated from the business section of the town of Providence.

In 1731 the towns of Gloucester, Smithfield, and Scituate were set off and incorporated as separate towns. In 1754 Cranston was incorporated, and in 1759 the town of Johnston was established. It was not long before further discontent was manifest. Town meetings were frequently called to appropriate money or transact business benefiting only the business section of the town, much to the inconvenience of the farmers. This and other reasons soon engendered considerable political animosity, which resulted in another petition being presented to the General Assembly, at the February session, 1765, praying that a portion of the town of Providence be set off and incorporated as a separate town to be known as Wenscutt (or Wanskuck). Definite action was not taken upon the petition at that session but was deferred until the next

session when, June 13, 1765, the petition was granted with the exception of the proposed name, which was changed to North Providence. The town at that time not only included its present area, but included a large part of the territory of the city of Pawtucket, also the tenth ward of the city of Providence.

In due course of time the seat of the town government was established at Pawtucket, and there most of the town meetings were held. From natural causes the eastern part of the town developed more rapidly than the western section or the farming district. This again, after many years, caused the same trouble and dissatisfaction as in former years. The thickly populated sections of the town were frequently calling for large appropriations for various purposes that had little interest to the farmers, and in no way directly benefited them, naturally causing the rural taxpayers to believe they were being unnecessarily taxed to maintain the alleged extravagances of the richer and more populous sections. These reasons and many political grievances resulted in the presentation of a petition to the General Assembly, in 1874, asking for a division of the town; and without much delay the petition was granted, March 27, 1874, the act to go into effect May first of the same year, annexing a portion (or in other words the village of Pawtucket) to the *town* of Pawtucket, then located on the east side of the river (this section was afterwards incorporated as the city of Pawtucket in 1885) and returning to the city of Providence the territory now designated as the tenth ward. How wise or advantageous this act has proven, with the experience of later years, to the rural towns, is a question of diverse opinions.

After the town was divided, in 1874, no permanent headquarters for the town government was established until 1880. The town meetings were generally held in Armory Hall, Centerdale. The town clerk's office was at the residence of George Eddy, on Olney avenue, Fruit Hill. Mr. Eddy was elected the first town clerk of the new town in 1874, and held the office until June 7, 1880, when Thomas Holden Angell was elected his successor, and held the office continuously for over twenty-six years, or until November, 1906, when from failing health he declined a further re-election and was succeeded as town clerk by Louis A. Sweet.



TOWN HALL.

At a town meeting held June 2d, 1879, after an exciting political, or, rather, it might be called, sectional contest, it was decided to build a town hall in the village of Cen-

terdale, thus making Centerdale the seat of town government for the town. This was considered a grand triumph by the people of Centerdale, for the contest was strongly fought, by the different sections of the town, to have the town hall located in their vicinity.

An appropriation of \$2,000 was made to build a town hall and town clerk's office, and John R. Cozzens, Martin W. Thurber, and Charles E. Hall were appointed as a committee to proceed with the work of purchasing a suitable site and the erection of a building to accommodate the needs of the town. A lot on Mineral Spring avenue was secured, upon which they at once proceeded to erect a building, 28 x 36 feet, two stories in height, from plans drawn by L. M. E. Stone. The contract for building the same was let to Benjamin Sweet, a local carpenter and contractor. In the basement is located the police station, with four cells for the detention of prisoners. The town clerk's office and council chamber are located on the first floor, as also the town sergeant's offices. On the second floor is the hall for holding the town meetings, etc. The exterior of the building is very plain in appearance, as well as the interior, although very conveniently arranged for the transaction of the town's business.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES.

IT is proper and appropriate at this time to give some recognition of a few of the residents of the little New England village who have not already been mentioned in connection with some of the business interests of the town, but who have been life-long residents of Centerdale and prominent in all philanthropic enterprises tending to the moral and social interest of the community.

It may not be easy for the present generation to comprehend the social condition of a little New England village as it existed in the early days of Centerdale, before the population became as cosmopolitan as it is at the present time. At that time the resident people were composed of native-born, or American, people in the general acceptance of the word. In those days the people making up a little town were bound together by some family tie, more or less distant, when each and every one had a friendly interest in the welfare of his neighbor, rejoicing in his success and sympathizing with him in his adversities; and it is to like people born and reared under those conditions that we to-day are indebted for the many blessings we receive and enjoy from the glorious government under which we live, conceived by those who knew and had home interest at heart, making them far better qualified to establish the principles of self-government than a people of a more cosmopolite character, with a disregard of national or local conditions and peculiarities.



JAMES HALSEY ANGELL.

## JAMES HALSEY ANGELL.

James Halsey Angell was the son of James Angell and Selinda (Ray) Angell, and was born May 10th, 1822, and was a resident of Centerdale all of his life, or nearly seventy years. In 1842 he married Sarah Angell Capron, daughter of Edwin and Deborah (Angell) Capron, born June 23, 1824. Two sons were born to them, George F. and Frank C. Angell. Mr. Angell received a good common school education, and early in life entered the employ of Zachariah Allen as accountant in the Allendale mill and clerk in the village store. He subsequently bought out the store and continued in business until 1846, when he sold out, and November, 1847, succeeded his brother



Nathaniel as landlord of the Centerdale Hotel. At that time the place was conducted as an old-time tavern stand, and it was during his administration that the balls or dances spoken of in Chapter XI were so popular around about the country towns. He conducted the hotel successfully until April 1, 1858; moved to a farm belonging to his father, which afterwards became his own. This farm is now included in the village of Centerdale.

In 1854 he was appointed postmaster at Centerdale, an office which he held for many years. He took active part in town affairs, and held many offices of trust and responsibility. He was often called upon to serve as administrator in the settlement of estates, and his sound and unbiased judgment was often sought by his neighbors upon many questions which arise around a country town.

For thirty-three years, or until a few months before his death, he kept a daily diary of the everyday occurrences about the farm and village, without missing a day. This diary furnishes interesting reading, and was often consulted by his neighbors to settle some question in doubt or dispute; his diary always being accepted as authority in deciding such questions. It also lent valuable aid to the writer in preparing the "Annals of Centerdale."

He was made a Mason in Temple Lodge, No. 18, of Greenville, September 5, 1868, and in 1876 became a charter member of Roger Williams Lodge, No. 32, A. F. & A. M., of Centerdale, and took active part in organizing the same. He was elected treasurer at its first meeting, and held the office for fourteen years, or until his death in 1890.

He was public spirited and interested in all work that pertained to the moral and general welfare of the com-

munity. He took active part in establishing Union Free Library, and served as treasurer for fifteen years, or until his death.

In 1889 he was stricken with paralysis, from which he never fully recovered, and died, July 1st, 1890, in the sixty-ninth year of his age. As a mark of respect, all places of business in the village were closed during the time of the funeral. He was buried with Masonic honors, in the North Burying Ground in Providence.

#### BENJAMIN SWEET.

Benjamin Sweet was the son of Emor Sweet and Waity (Manton) Sweet, and was born in the town of Johnston, R. I., July 25, 1833. In 1857 he married Olive W. Gardiner, daughter of Nelson and Jane F. (Taylor) Gardiner, and five sons and seven daughters were born to them. When a boy he attended the schools of his native town until he was sixteen years old, when he entered the employ of his father as an apprentice to learn the carpenter's trade; and having a natural aptitude for that branch of industry, he made rapid progress, and in 1855 started in business for himself as contractor and builder, and met with considerable success, completing many large contracts, including the Stillwater woolen mill and other large mills and public buildings. He retired from active business in 1898.

In May, 1863, during the Civil War, he joined Company A, Fifth Regiment, Rhode Island Militia and was appointed first lieutenant, but the regiment was not called upon to do active duty in the field. He took up his residence in Centerdale in April, 1864, where he has since

resided. His party affiliations were always with the Republican party, and he was honored many times with public office. He represented the town of North Providence in the General Assembly in the years 1874 and 1875, and was a member of the town council for twenty-two years, serving in that office longer than any other man in the town. He was also elected upon the school committee and board of tax assessors for several years, and for many years has served upon the board of directors of the Union Free Library of Centerdale. He was always interested in public improvements and the good and general welfare of the home of his adoption, the village of Centerdale, where he still resides.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### LYDIA WILCOX.

And with the morn those angel faces smile  
Which I have loved long since and lost awhile.

- -SELECTED.

THE history of Centerdale would be incomplete without the story of that remarkable and mysterious person, Miss Lydia Wilcox. Who she was, whence she came, or how she came to be here, will probably never be known, for by her tragic end the key to her life's history was forever lost.

Here Lydia Wilcox lived for nearly fifty years practically alone in the little country village, daily moving among the people, without revealing to any person the secret of her going forth from the home of her girlhood or the equally baffling secret of why she held no communication with her family or former friends.

In the summer or fall of 1828, Mr. James Anthony, then proprietor of the cotton mill in Centerdale, had occasion to make a business trip to Boston; and as was the custom in those days, he drove there with his horse and carriage. This was several years before the advent of the steam railroad in this country, and to journey to Boston you would be obliged to either walk, go by stage-coach, or by horse and carriage. Upon his return trip he overtook upon the road a comely young woman of erect carriage, good features, and dark complexion. In accordance with the custom of the time, Mr. Anthony offered the young woman

a seat in his carriage, or, to use the old-time country phrase, gave her a "lift" as far as Centerdale.

Lydia Wilcox's after life gives reason for the supposition that the conversation between the mill owner and his fair passenger had the result of conveying to Mr. Anthony the information that the young woman was a mill worker, and of securing for her a position in the Centerdale cotton mill. Here she worked for many years, at first boarding with an elderly maiden woman by the name of Rebecca Smith; but afterwards she hired from the same person three small rooms in the basement of a small building now standing and numbered 1999 Smith street, and is the building now used as a fire station by the Centerdale Volunteer Fire Company. June 17, 1843, she purchased the house from her savings, and ever afterwards made her lonely home there until her death, November 1, 1877.

The moral character of Miss Lyddy (as she was always called by the village people, man, woman, and child) always escaped even a hint of lapse of strict rectitude during her half-century of life in a country village, which certainly is high praise indeed. Quite good looking enough to attract sweethearts, and industrious to a degree, such was the personality of Lydia Wilcox that the young men stood aloof from her; and it is agreed by those who knew her that the courage that would enable a man to take undue liberties with "Miss Lyddy" would qualify him for more popular deed of daring.

No better proof can be given of Lydia Wilcox's unapproachableness than the fact that in a rural community, where the one real aim of existence is usually to know as much of everybody's affairs as may be included within the realm of possibility, no person ever succeeded in breaking

down the barrier of her reserve so far as to gain her confidence; for this remarkable woman always maintained a state of hostile silence when someone more curious or more foolish than his fellows attempted to invade the secrecy that the Centerdale oddity preserved inviolate for so many more years than cynics allow womankind for the keeping of a secret. As she grew older, Lydia Wilcox's personality became more and more marked. She took up smoking, and it was no uncommon sight to see her with a common clay pipe of the "T. D." variety, which she always used, puffing away as though she thoroughly enjoyed it.

Miss Lyddy's peculiarities of dress were equally well marked, and her calico gowns lasted for a length of time calculated to plunge dressmakers into despair if the custom became common. A hood in the winter and a sun-bonnet in the summer made up this eccentric woman's headgear, and she was seldom seen with uncovered head; carrying this whim so far as sometimes to work all day at house-work, for which she had been hired, with her bonnet or hood upon her head. A shawl tied tightly about the body made up the essentials of "Miss Lyddy's" costume, upon which neither time nor the mutabilities of fashion had the slightest effect, beyond causing a renewal, from time to time, of the materials. When she could, "Miss Lyddy" kept a cow, some pigs and hens, from which she derived some income and a great amount of enjoyment; one of her prominent characteristics being a strong love for dumb animals of all sorts, in which she took an unflinching interest, whether the beasts were her own or her friends; and she would go into ecstasies of praise over a new-born calf or puppy that belonged to anybody she liked, exclaim-

ing, over and over again, "There's for ye, now! Just look at this mark! Just look at that mark! The likeliest one I ever saw! *There's* for ye now, *there's* for ye!" Although her unchecked aversion to those whom she did not like would hardly admit of her praising the live stock of her enemy, however good it might be. At such time she would give vent to her feeling by exclaiming, accompanied with a stamp of her foot, "*blast him*, he never owned a good horse or cow in his life, *blast him!*"

"Miss Lyddy" was a good hater, and once her dislike was aroused, nothing served to allay it; and this vindictive spirit, together with her personal appearance, which exposure to weather and time affected in the darkening of her complexion to swarthyness, led many to conjecture that she was either a Gypsy or a Canadian; the latter being represented at that time by strolling families of people with a considerable admixture of Indian blood; while others believed her ancestors were of English descent, which, without doubt, was nearest correct.

Lydia Wilcox's end was in keeping with her life, and only a probable cause was ever assumed as causing the tragedy which closed her earthly career.

About seven o'clock on the evening of November 1st, 1877, her home was discovered to be on fire. An alarm was given, and soon the village people gathered and forced open the outside door. Upon entering her room it was seen that the straw bed upon which her unconscious form was lying was on fire. This was quickly removed to the open air, and the flames which enveloped both the bed and the occupant were quickly extinguished. The aged woman, whose life-time custom had been to greet her visitors at her threshold, beyond which none for many years had

ever passed, was not quite dead when brought out, but the signs of life were confined to low moans which she gave forth at intervals. She died a few minutes later, without showing other indications of consciousness of her terrible fate. An involuntary movement in sleep overturning a lighted candle upon the straw bed was supposed to have caused the fire. The body was removed to Armory Hall, where the charred remains were prepared for burial, which occurred November 3d, 1877, Rev. Mr. Donovan, officiating, choosing for his text, "*I am a stranger and a sojourner with you, give me a possession of a burying place with you.*" (Gen. xxiii, 4th v.)

As no heirs to her estate were known to the town authorities, her small estate was taken in charge by the town treasurer of North Providence, who is required by statute law to hold the same in trust for a term of thirty years, when, if no legal heirs appear and establish a claim to the estate, the town treasurer has authority to sell the same for the benefit of the town. The time limit expired November 1, 1907, but the town, however, still holds possession of the estate, it being now used as the fire station of the Centerdale Volunteer Fire Company.

" All is finished, and at length  
Has come the bridal day  
Of beauty and of strength.  
To-day the vessel shall be launched!  
With fleecy clouds the sky is blanched,  
And o'er the bay,  
Slowly, in all his splendors dight,  
The great sun rises to behold the sight."

—LONGFELLOW.

THE END.





JUN 21 1909



