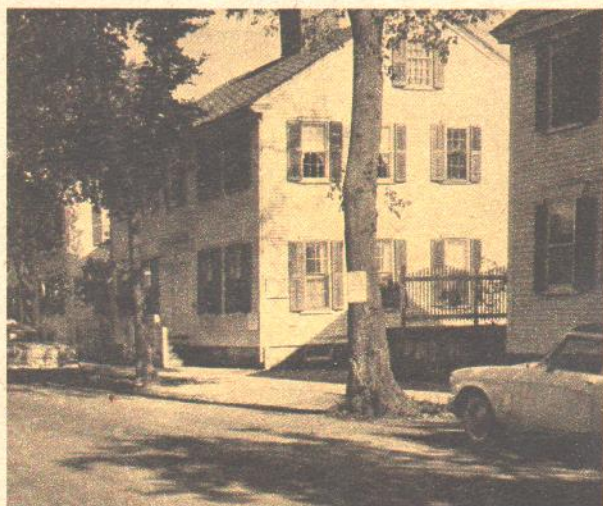


Prov. Journal
Dec. 2, 1962

A NEIGHBOR LOOKS AT R.I.

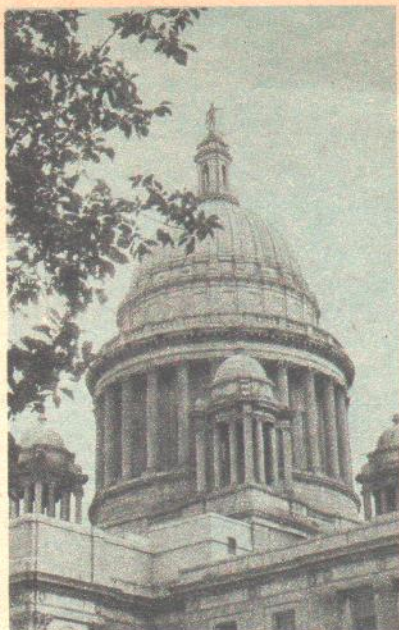
... a handsome city with its impressive sky line and its happy blending of old and new architecture.



Main Street in Wickford . . . the charm of unchanged simple dwellings.

General Nathanael Greene, whose birthplace is still occupied by descendants of the Greene family.





**First came a surprise, then a
a week of travel and a conclusion
that here are 'infinite riches
in little room'**

An experienced and enthusiastic observer of the New England scene, Mrs. Annin for several years has been visiting the northeast states and writing about them for The Berkshire Eagle in Pittsfield, Mass. This fall, she made Rhode Island the subject of a series of articles. Herewith is a summary of her observations on our state; some readers may rediscover Rhode Island through her eyes and words.

BY KATHARINE H. ANNIN

THE FIRST SURPRISE was to learn that the smallest state has officially the longest name — The State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. If it seems presumptuous for an outsider to try to cover a whole state in a week, my excuse is that any region may profit from knowing how it looks to the tourist.

My daughter and I decided to start at the southeast corner and swing counterclockwise around Narragansett Bay to Watch Hill, with detours of course, and a side trip to Newport. This route took us first into a region set apart from the busy, industrial sections of the state, and full of peaceful charm. Our first evening gave us an unexpected sense of remoteness when, after an excellent dinner at Sunderland's Restaurant south of Tiverton, we drove on to Sakonnet Point and looked across the dark water to the lights of Newport, and to Beaver Tail and Brenton Reef. To the east we could see the sweep of the Texas Tower known as Buzzard's Bay Beacon.

After a restful night at the unique Stone House Club, we explored side roads flanked by stone walls and saw the many summer homes set back in spacious grounds. Little Compton ranks with the best of New England villages for the charm of its old church, town hall, country inn, general store and white houses.

Here we began to pick up the threads of history which we came upon later all over the state. Here lived Col.

Continued on next page

'the most magnificent

Benjamin Church famed for his prowess in dealing with the Wampanoag Indians in King Philip's War. An active local historical society has headquarters in the Wilbor house, built in 1690.

At Adamsville, almost on the Massachusetts line, we met a handsome rooster, depicted in bas relief, honoring the breed of Rhode Island Red poultry. Experiments conducted near here developed this dual-purpose fowl and gave Rhode Island its state bird.

Crossing two bridges to the Bristol peninsula we experienced one of the sudden contrasts that are plentiful in Rhode Island. We were at once in the coastal industrial megalopolis with all that goes with it of urban sprawl and blight. Fresh from reading George Howe's lively chronicle of *Mount Hope*, I was surprised to find so few remaining signs of former days, when this was King Philip's headquarters, or when Bristol was one of the busiest seaports.

From here sailed trading ships to the Far East; slave ships to Africa and the West Indies; privateers in the War of 1812, and, still later, whaling vessels. Bristol also produced in the 1930s the famous line of America's Cup defenders that came out of the Herreshoff shipyards. But if not visible to the casual tourist all this past glory is set forth in the famous Haffenreffer Museum of the American Indian, and in the Bristol Historical Museum now housed in the old jail, where we found much of interest connected with the famous names of DeWolfe, Colt and Burnside.

And so we came to Providence, a handsome city with its impressive sky line and its happy blending of old and modern architecture. On the Mall we read the two bronze plaques on the southeast corner of the massive Hospital Trust building. They show the heights to which the water rose in the great storm in 1815 and in the 1938 hurricane. Between those dates, hurricanes were unheard of in New England.

To the north rises the State Capitol, one of the handsomest examples of traditional, domed architecture. Here one begins to feel that spunky independence which distinguished Rhode Island from the beginning. Settled by religious come-outers from Massachusetts under Roger Williams, it was the first of the colonies to declare independence from England, two months before the Declaration of Independence was signed. It was so distrustful of the federal principle that it sent no delegates to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia and refused to sign the new document until two years after all the other states. In the State House hangs the original parchment charter obtained by Roger Williams from Charles II in 1663. And it is altogether fitting that the dome is topped by a symbolic figure of the Independent Man.

Against the steep hillside east of Market Square stands the First Baptist Meeting House, its soaring spire, with its vane 185 feet above the ground, easily holding its own among modern structures. It was built in 1775 by the first Baptist parish in America, which had been organized in 1638 by Roger Williams, who joined the denomination briefly during his lifelong search for a congenial home for his restless spirit. Its meticulous restoration in 1957, through the generosity of John D. Rockefeller Jr., shows the beauty of the building, erected "For the public worship of God and also for holding Commencement in."

Happily for the weary sightseer the elevators to the fifth floor of the Court House help one to the upper levels of the hill, where there is much of interest in and around the campus of Brown University. Especially striking is the group of modern buildings of the Rhode Island School of Design. They seem to achieve admirably that union of beauty and usefulness which are described on a plaque at the foot of a flight of steps as being of eternal benefit to "the growing mind and waking spirit."

We were greatly impressed by Brown's priceless collection of Lincolnia — books, portraits, letters and documents, which are housed in the John Hay Library. Additions are being made all the time, including current articles on the 100th anniversary of the Civil War. All are catalogued for ready reference. We visited the John Brown House, now the headquarters of the Rhode Island His-

and elegant mansion'

torical Society. This was built in 1786 and was described by John Quincy Adams as "the most magnificent and elegant mansion I have seen on this continent." Designed by Joseph Brown, it was the home of his brother, John. These were two of the four Brown brothers who left their mark all over Rhode Island.

We were grateful for a small booklet called *Seeing Providence*, published by the Providence Journal Co. which gave us thumbnail sketches of more buildings in the heart of the city than we could possibly visit. To be sure, much time was wasted in trying to negotiate Providence traffic. We had chosen a very comfortable motel in the town of Johnston, but we were determined to dine on seafood at Johnson's Hummocks, and became involved in five hair-raising trips across the city. There were places where Route 1 and Route 6 seemed to be wrapped around each other, and no left turns were allowed anywhere. Fortunately for us, once in the center of the city we were able to squeeze into a parking space and proceed on foot.

Leaving Providence we stopped to tour the Gorham Corp. plant. Then, we headed down the west shore of the bay. At first, there were sad signs of the decline of the once flourishing textile industry, which started at the original Slater Mill in Pawtucket in 1793. But as we came into the rural regions everything again looked prosperous. Planes from the Quonset Naval Air Station soared and roared overhead.

This region was settled very early and we kept on following Rhode Island history. Roger Williams turned up again at Smith's Castle at Cocumscussoc, an old house dating from 1678 where he worked out the first dictionary of the Indian language and ran a trading post. Two famous Revolutionary generals grew up near each other: General James Mitchell Varnum, whose house in East Greenwich has magnificent woodwork, and General Nathanael Greene, whose birthplace on the Potowomut River is still occupied by descendants of the Greene family.

The same sense of continuous living pervades Main Street in Wickford where civic pride, without benefit of preservation societies, keeps alive the charm of unchanged simple dwellings, each doorway slightly different from its neighbor. We found the Cold Spring House a most pleasant old-fashioned inn, and here we were introduced to the culinary treat which is to Rhode Island what scrapple is to Philadelphia or maple syrup to Vermont-johnnycake.

Newport of course deserves a whole book to itself. At first glance it seems like a hodge-podge of four ways of life superimposed on each other—the Colonial community's carefully preserved old buildings, including the White Horse Tavern where we had an excellent dinner; the spectacular "summer cottages" along Bellevue Avenue; the U.S. Naval Base whose personnel swarm the streets, and in summer the still different element brought by the Jazz Festival. Since The Breakers is probably the sight no Rhode Islander has missed, I shall not describe it, but will, instead, hurry back over ferry and bridge and into South County, where the finest beaches and views of the ocean attract the summer crowds.

From Point Judith light to Watch Hill we hugged the shore as closely as possible. We returned north by roads further inland, which brought us to the tall monument in the Great Swamp Reservation where the last major battle of King Philip's War was fought, and though many villages where stone mills, some abandoned and some converted to modern industry, testified to the days when every stream capable of being dammed into a mill pond played its part in the economy of the state.

We were brought back sharply into the present and future by circling the campus of the University of Rhode Island at Kingston, with many new buildings under construction.

The last day of the tour proved too short to cover the remaining ground. But in contrast to our trips through the northern New England states, our total mileage was small. We had found Rhode Island to be like the miser's hoard that Christopher Marlowe described as "infinite riches in a little room."