

Eleazer Arnold

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NOTE: This paper was originally prepared for the opening of the restored Eleazer Arnold House and permission for reprinting from *Rhode Island History*, July, 1952, was granted prior to the untimely death of the author.

ELEAZER Arnold, builder of the noted seventeenth-century stone-end-chimney house, was a typical representative of the second generation of Rhode Island settlers. Born in 1651 in Watertown, Massachusetts, son of Thomas and his second wife, Phoebe Parkhurst, Eleazer came to Rhode Island with his parents in 1661. Thomas was a large landholder and occupied public office as did every citizen of note.

After King Philip's War the Providence settlement pushed into the "outlands" on every side but particularly toward the north. It was wild country as is shown in the diary of Madam Knight (1704) who wrote of the Old Devil's Tavern:

May all that dread the cruel feind of night
Keep on, and not at this curs't Mansion light.
'Tis Hell; 'tis Hell! and Devills here do dwell:
Here dwells the Devill—surely this's Hell.

The Reverend Jacob Bailey wrote (1754) of Wrentham, Massachusetts, "The people begin now to appear in a sylvan roughness; the women in these parts wear but little more clothing than what nature gave them." Of Pawtuxet, he wrote, "In riding through a great wood, we came, at length, to a house about the bigness of a hog-sty. The hut abounded in children, who came abroad to stare at us in great swarms, but were clothed only with a piece of cloth about the middle, blacker than the ground on which they trod."

Such were the conditions in Rhode Is-

land as pictured by travelers of a period only fifty years after Eleazer Arnold erected his mansion in 1687 on the Great Road to Mendon. The land he built on was fifty acres, left to him by his father at "World's End," near Scott's Pond. There it stands today.

In 1710 traffic on the road had so increased as to warrant Eleazer Arnold to apply for and obtain a license from the Town of Providence to "keep a public house for the entertainment of strangers" and sale of liquor.

He held many public offices: Justice of the Peace, 1705-1709; member of the Town Council, 1684-1686; and Deputy to the General Assembly of Rhode Island eight times from 1686 to 1715.

During the troublous times of the Andros administration, Eleazer Arnold was one of six inhabitants of Providence who declared their opposition to the surrender of the Rhode Island charter to any other person or government except King James himself.

The best evidence concerning the ordinary lives of early settlers is to be found in their wills. Administration of Eleazer Arnold's will was granted January 14, 1722/3. The original inventory totaled £399:07:04. A supplementary report brought the grand total to £441:17:00. With one exception, that of Captain Jonathan Crawford, mariner and merchant, Eleazer Arnold was possessed of as much property as anyone who died in Providence between 1716 and 1722.

The inventory reveals, among other items:

<i>Personal effects:</i>	£	s	d
Imprimis his wareing apparel	08	19	00
three bits of new Cloath	01	17	04
Raizors sisers and old specktles	00	03	00
a Blanket and 2 guns	01	17	06
a Brass mortar and pestell shears knife and hammer	00	17	00
A Chest and ten Chares	01	09	00
a spinning wheale and a warm- ing pan	01	04	00
a flock bed and bolster and a narrow hoe	01	18	06
27½ pound of wool	02	00	00
an old bed the Indians used to Lie on with sum tobaco	00	05	06
an Houre glass tin Tunnel and a box	00	02	00
a frying pan Brass skillet and a mug	00	09	00
two tubs a Rundlet and a Tray	00	11	00
a Ceeder tub and three sives	00	09	06
Eleven swine	05	02	00
two plow sheairs and Colters	01	05	00
five old sithes 3 axes	00	13	06
four Calves	02	12	00
Nineteene sheepe	07	00	00
Cart wheales and irons: yoake and Cleaves	07	02	06
a Yoake of oxen and five Cows	27	00	00
2 Yearlings and a Bull	07	02	00
a horse and two Colts and sum hay	35	00	00
Horse gears pitchfork ax and Cart Rope	00	16	00
a Plough and three Bells with Collars	01	02	08
Pailes and Grindstone	01	01	00
a Paier of Cyder mill Roles	00	12	00
Copper money	00	02	00
in Bills of Publick creadite	63	06	00
in Bills of Creadite	00	06	06
money due upon morgage Deede	31	00	00
money due upon a Note	10	00	00
money due upon four bonds	95	00	00
23 ounces & ¾ & : 28 : graines of silver money	14	05	04

Thus Eleazer Arnold, son of an early settler, built a splendid mansion in the wilderness, became a tavern keeper as well as a large farmer, and died with a substantial estate.

Mr. H. Minot Pitman, noted genealogist, has supplied the following information about the owners and occupants of the house:

Jeremiah Arnold, son of Eleazer, b. ca. 1680; m. Freelove; d. 1774/5. Freelove Arnold, daughter of Jeremiah, m. 13 August 1741, as his second wife, Job Arnold, who had bought the house in 1736. Job Arnold, b. 6 November 1707; m. (1) 18 January 1729/30 Kesiah Hawkins; m. (2) 13 August 1741 Freelove Arnold; d. 1776. He was the son of Thomas Arnold and his wife, Mary Angell, and the grandson of Richard Arnold, brother of Eleazer, the builder of the house.

Oliver Arnold, son of Job and Freelove (Arnold) Arnold, b. Smithfield, 10 June 1788; m. Cumberland, 26 February 1818, Betsey Bowen Whipple; d. 10 July 1828. He was Captain of the Cumberland and Smithfield Light Dragoons, 1820-22.

Preserved Arnold, son of Oliver and Betsey Bowen (Whipple) Arnold, b. 26 June 1828; m. 21 October 1851, Annie Lazell Harris; d. 10 February 1919. No surviving issue. He left the house to his great-nephews and nieces, Charles and Dr. Emery Porter, Margareth Arnold (Pitman) Chamberlain, Eleanor Louise (Pitman) Smith, Lawrence Minot Pitman, and Harold Minot Pitman, who gave it to The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.