

④ Weybosset Bridge & the Cove



Weybosset Bridge today

Weybosset in the Narragansett Indian language meant, “crossing place,” a narrow, shallow place on the river that Indians used to walk from one side of

Narragansett Bay to the other, presumably during low to mid-tides. Weybosset is just south of the convergence of two rivers, the Woonasquatucket and Moshassuck, flowing south into the Providence River, at the upper end of Narragansett Bay. Today, it lies at the bottom of College Street.

Weybosset was also where three important Aboriginal Indian trails met, one coming down from the north, the second up from the southeast Mount Hope region called the Wampanoag Trail, and the third up from Connecticut in the southwest called the Pequot Trail.



Providence in 1700

Later the Weybosset name was given to a wooden colonial toll bridge built by the early

settlers across the Providence River at the entrance to the Cove prior to 1660. Roger Williams (1603-1683), founder of Providence and the Rhode Island Colony, served for a time as the toll taker at Weybosset in his elderly years. Gradually the Cove was filled in and became much of the land in Downtown Providence.

The first bridge was poorly constructed and fell into disrepair by the late 1670s, so the townspeople and their livestock waded across the ford until a second bridge was constructed in 1711. During the early years, farmers from the meadows to the west crossed over the bridge and sold their produce in what is still known today as Market Square.

The first drawbridge, constructed in 1764, allowed square rigged ships to unload their West Indies cargoes at the Bowen Street Wharf north of Steeple Street.

⑤ Roger Williams National Memorial



North Main Street park entrance

The Roger Williams National Memorial was established by Congress in 1965 to commemorate Williams’ “out-

standing contributions to the development of the principles of freedom in this country.”

The memorial, a 4.5 acre urban greenspace at 282 North Main Street near the State House and downtown Providence, includes a freshwater spring which was the center of the settlement of Providence Plantations founded by Williams in 1636.

It is on this site that Williams, through word and action, fought for the ideal that religion must not be subject to regulation by the state but, instead, that it should be a matter of individual conscience.

It was a remarkable journey that brought Williams to what is now the capital of Rhode Island and to where he put his beliefs into practice, giving “shelter for persons distressed of conscience.”

The Antram-Gray House an early 18th century structure with a late 18th century addition, serves as the visitor center for



Depiction of Providence in 1650

Roger Williams National Memorial.

The 17th century gardens at Roger Williams National Memorial include two interpretive gardens: an aboriginal garden and a colonial kitchen garden.

Regular Hours: Monday - Sunday:

Open 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Winter Hours: January through March

Mondays - Tuesdays: Closed

Wednesday - Sunday:

Open 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Holidays: Closed on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Day

⑥ Neutaconkanut Hill



A fabulous view of Providence can be seen from the top of Neutaconkanut Hill in a park on the western border of the City of Providence.

Its hiking trails lead to rocks that mark the location where aboriginal people once gathered for meetings, including the Narragansett, Nipmuc, Massachusetts and Pokanoket Tribes.

The Neutaconkanut Hill Park is open year around from dawn to dusk near the intersection of Killingly and Sunset Avenue in the Silver Lake District of Providence (Take Interstate Route 195 to Rte 6 West to the RI-128/Killingly Street exit and follow Killingly Street south to Sunset Avenue).

⑦ Rhode Island Charter at the State House

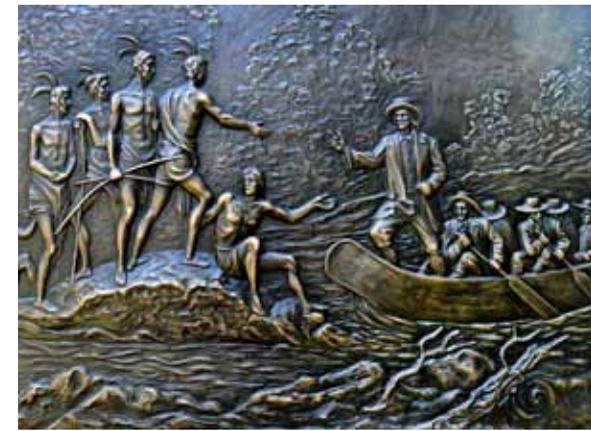


A portion of the original charter

The Royal Charter of 1663 was a document granted by King Charles II of England to settlers in Rhode Island which allowed them to govern their own colony and guaranteed their individual freedom of religion.

The Charter holds a unique place in the evolution of human rights in the modern world. When King Charles II granted the Charter, it marked the first time in history that a monarch allowed the right of individuals within a society to practice the religion of their choice without any interference from the government. This freedom was extremely radical in an age marked by wars of religion and persecution of people for religious beliefs.

The original charter along with other historic documents of the period may be seen at the Charter Museum in the Rhode Island State House in Providence between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. on non-holiday weekdays.



Take a Tour of 17th Century Providence

Visit seven unique places that give evidence of Providence in the 17th century.

Learn about dozens of other places from the 17th century in the East Bay and nearby Massachusetts



Many people think that the 17th century is gone in Providence. No buildings from that time survive, and much that was here has been transformed or covered over with new buildings.

If you know where to look, however, you'll find evidence of that important time when the City was just starting. Each location tells part of the story that can be put together to show what initially took place here 400 years ago.

Locate these seven places on the map in this brochure, and then travel to each one on foot, by bicycle or by car to learn more about how Providence started and who was here at the time.

Visit the www.SowamsHeritageArea.org website and find over fifty locations on-line that are part of the story of what happened in East Bay RI and nearby Massachusetts in the 17th century.

① North Burial Ground & Rev. Chad Brown



Prior to 1700, colonists buried their dead in family graveyards that haphazardly peppered the Providence landscape. As Providence's townspeople sought more efficient use of the land, the tradition of family graveyards declined and a burial ground was set aside.

Though the first burial didn't take place until 1711, the North Burial Ground is the location where early Providence settler Chad Brown was reburied sometime following his death in 1650.

In 1639, Rev. Chad Brown assumed the leadership of the First Baptist Church in America which had been briefly pastored by Roger Williams. The church members worshipped in a grove or orchard and in the houses of its members, and Brown remained pastor until his death sometime before 1650.

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② Slate Rock Park



Slate Rock Park at Gano and Williams Streets on the East Side is named after the ledge where Roger Williams and a handful of his

followers are said to have first stepped ashore after crossing from their original settlement on Omega Pond, across the Seekonk River, in the spring of 1636.

When they arrived, they had the good fortune to be met on a large slate rock by a number of friendly Narragansett Indians, one of whom greeted them with the phrase "What cheer, Netop?" a mixture of English and Narragansett. (See the photo on the cover of this brochure)

The Indians directed the group to continue down the river, around the point to the west, and up a small river to a cove where they established a settlement that would become Providence.

③ India Point Park



In 1680, Providence's first wharf was erected near today's Transit Street. Originally called Tockwotton by the Aboriginal

Americans, the point along the Seekonk River became known as India Point after John Brown began shipping tea and spices from the East and West Indies. India Point Park replaced the wharf after Route 195 was constructed.

During the 18th century, Providence was transformed from a rural hamlet into a seaport, trading with other colonies, the West Indies, Africa, and England. India Point remained an important trade center until the end of the Great Depression. Old timbers from previous docks can be seen India Park at the mouth of the Seekonk River.