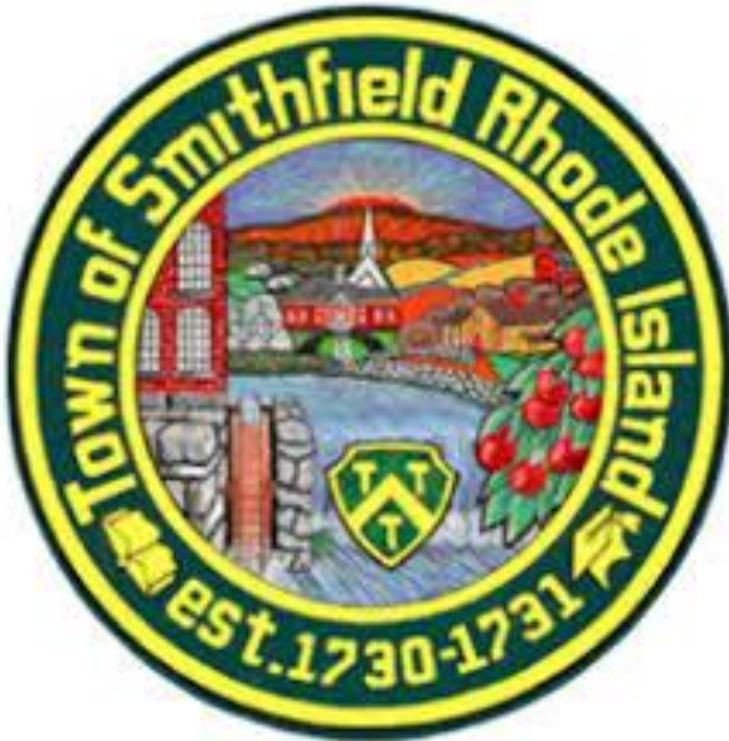


Smithfield Historic
Preservation Commission

Smithfield Historic Geographical Timeline



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SMITHFIELD HISTORIC GEOGRAPHIC TIMELINE

PREHISTORIC 6000 B.P to 1600

After the melting of the last glaciers, some of Rhode Island's earliest known human habitations were in our region.

Early hunters and inhabitants camped around wetlands and rivers such as the areas near Waterman Lake, Twin River and the Woonasquatucket River. Hilltops were ceremonial and spiritual centers. Major native pathways crisscrossed the area. The early people left us with many names for foods, places and towns. Some of our hills still have native names: Nipsachuck, Wayunkeke, Mohegan, Weecapasacheck, Pamechipsk. Local Native tribes include the Narragansett, the Wampanoag, the Massachusetts and the Nipmuc.

EARLY AREA HISTORY

COLONIAL 1600 to 1730

1634 William Blackstone moves from congested Boston to the Cumberland area.

1636 Roger Williams establishes Providence as a colony. The first boundaries of the colony went from the Seekonk River to Neutaconkanut Hill and from the Pawtuxet River to the Pawtucket waterfalls.

1638 The Providence Woods(Scituate) are purchased by Williams from native American sachems Canonicus and Miantonomi.

1660 The 7 Mile Line, the distance west from Fox Point in Providence, is established. Lands to the west are called the outlands. Lands to the east are called the inlands. The deed to this area was signed by sachem Wuttiashant on May 10, 1661. This line later became Smithfield's western border. Providence borrows 20LB. to pay for the clearing of certain Indian titles(Wampanoag and others). These titles seem to cover lands of the future Smithfield, Burrillville and Scituate.

1661 Alexander, King Philip's brother, deeds lands around Louisquisset to Providence. Lands north and west of here belong to William Minnian, a Massachusetts Indian.

1662 Providence forms a committee to lay out a new town on lands near Wayunkeke Hill freed up by the 7 Mile Line sale. Thomas Olney Sr., William Carpenter and John Brown were the planners. William Hawkins and John Steere were granted 50

acres each provided they built houses, cut hay and lived there for 3 years. Hawkins settles near Ripper's Brook. Roger Williams, Thomas Olney and son and Matthew Waller were other buyers of 50 acre lots. At this time the town was not founded, only laid out.

1666 John Mowry and Edward Inman buy 2000 acres north and east of Wayunkeke from William Minnian.

1669 Minnian sells 500 more acres. King Philip releases claims to all of Inman's lands.

1675-1676 King Philip's War breaks out in the area. 2 major battles are fought on nearby Nipsachuck Hill. There is a large loss of life on both sides. The area tribes never really recover from the devastation. An estimated 54 homes are burned in northern Providence lands.

1685 Joshua Winsor builds the area's first mill.

1689 Resolved Waterman settles in the future Greenville.

1699 William Hawkins and Daniel Williams build a fulling mill on Ripper's Brook in a new village called Fountain Spring. The mill was run by Robert Sanders 1699-1740.

1700 James Angell and Elisha Smith build the first houses in Georgiaville.

1703 Major William Smith is the first settler in the Enfield area.

1723 Sanders and Moses Bartlett build a second mill and create Factory Pond for water power.

TOWN OF SMITHFIELD

EARLY YEARS 1730-1871

1730 For the ease and benefit of its citizens, Providence decides to split 3 towns from the city-Smithfield, Glocester and Scituate. At the time of the division a census shows the Providence colony

population of 3,707 whites, 128 blacks and 81 Indians. Smithfield is incorporated at Newport February 26 and becomes the second largest town by population in the colony.. It is not known why the name was chosen. Central Falls was the center of early Smithfield and still holds the town's 1730-1870 records. Earlier records are held in Providence City Hall. The new town encompassed 73 square miles north to south from Massachusetts to Johnston and east to west from the Blackstone River to Glocester. At this time there was rapid migration into the region because of a wealth of ponds, rivers for water power, rich forests, game, fish, good soil and cheap land.

1733 Spragueville is first settled by Abraham Smith. Stillwater is settled by Daniel Smith. Resolved Waterman builds a hotel in the Greenville section. It houses the first post office. The Great Country Road is laid out to carry farm goods to Providence and the seacoast. It was to become Putnam Pike in the nineteenth century.

1738 Mandatory duty for adult males to do highway maintenance. Ridge Road was one of the earliest town roads. Also, Austin Avenue(originally called Killingly Road) was the early main east/west road in the area.

1748 Town census shows a population of 430.

1752 Thomas Owen founds Georgiaville.

1755 John Farnum and son build in Georgiaville.

1775 A semi-militia company with 100 arms is formed in Smithfield.

1776 In May, 3 militia companies are formed as the Revolutionary War begins.

1782 The town consists of 35,236 acres with a population of 2,217.

1783 A town meeting urges an end to the slave trade in R.I.

1797 The first library commission is established. Some time after the War for Independence the village of Greenville is named after the famous R.I. General Nathaniel Green.

1800 Nehemiah Hawkins converted a sawmill to a machine shop. Later on downstream he built a mill powered by the newly dammed Hawkins Pond.

1804 The Gloucester Turnpike Company is formed to improve transportation from Greenville to Chepachet.

1809 Construction begins on the Douglas Pike

1810 The Powdermill Turnpike opens between Providence and Greenville.

1813 The Georgia Cotton Manufacturing Co. opens.

1819 Farnum Pike is built.

1820 In Enfield, later named Esmond, the first house for a public school is built. Citizens build a new schoolhouse in 1849.

1822 The first Baptist Church opens. Woonasquatucket River mill owners incorporate in order to construct reservoirs for water

power for their mills in: Greenville 1822, Spragueville 1830, at Waterman Lake 1837 and at the Bernon Mill in Georgiaville 1853. Stump Pond was created in 1910. Today, these ponds are the backbone of Smithfield's natural wealth.

1823 The Smithfield Exchange Bank opens.

1851 The Episcopal Church opens.

1871 The town is divided again. North Smithfield and Lincoln are formed. The town's population drops from 12,317 to 2,338. The new boundaries remain today.

1873 The Providence and Springfield Railroad opens in Smithfield with stops in Esmond, Georgiaville and Stillwater.

1876 St. Michael's Church is built.

By the end of the century, Smithfield has many mill villages: Greenville, Georgiaville, Stillwater, Enfield (later called Esmond), Spragueville and Knightsville.

