

# GREAT ROAD, LINCOLN, RI

## Driving Tour



*Travel through three hundred years in three miles.*

John H. Chafee

**BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY**

National Heritage Corridor



## G R E A T R O A D

There are many fascinating historic sites throughout Lincoln, but the jewel of the town's heritage is the Great Road Historic District that shows the evolution of Lincoln from a handful of frontier homesteads, to the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution, to today. Great Road contains not only the two oldest houses in Lincoln, but also a quarry village, a sample of the town's agricultural origins, and a variety of industries along the Moshassuck River.

**A sulky race on Great Road at the turn of the century. The Arnold House is in the background.**




The Rhode Island Historical Society

Great Road is one of the earliest roads built in America. Construction began sometime in the 1660s and was completed in 1683, but the road's history goes back even further as many sections followed ancient Native American trails. Great Road began in Providence and ran north into Lincoln before continuing up into Mendon, Massachusetts, the first English settlement in south-central Massachusetts. By 1737, the road had been extended to connect with the new county seat at Worcester, Massachusetts. The Great Road allowed the settlers of the Blackstone Valley to

send their farm goods and other products, such as lumber and iron, to the port of Providence.

Great Road served as the major transportation link through the Blackstone Valley until the early 1800s, when the Louisquisset Pike (1806) and the Blackstone Canal (1828) absorbed much of the road's traffic. In the late 1600s, many of Lincoln's earliest residents settled along the road. In the 1700s, several taverns opened to serve the stagecoaches that traveled on Great Road. Lime haulers from the local quarries used it to get to Providence. Between 1800 and 1820, several small mills opened along Great Road, but the limited power of the Moshassuck River hindered the development of the larger mill villages that thrived on the Blackstone River. The only village to develop along Great Road in Lincoln was Lime Rock, centered around the limestone quarries that supplied the village its name.

Even into this century, Great Road served as a key route on the western side of the Blackstone River. In 1926, as cars and trucks replaced wagons and stagecoaches, Great Road was widened and paved with gravel and tar, but even this could not eliminate the charm of this well-worn trail. Modern highways have now replaced Great Road as the Blackstone Valley's main thoroughfare, but have in no way diminished its natural beauty and historical significance. 

Total distance of the tour is 3.25 miles.  
Driving Tour time is about one hour.



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**Eleazer Arnold House c. 1687.**

**1**  
**FRIENDS**  
**MEETINGHOUSE**  
**(1704/1745)**  
**374 GREAT ROAD**

The one-room meetinghouse built in 1704 became the center of the Quaker community for northern Rhode Island. The meetinghouse was expanded in the 1740s to its current size. As the Quaker community in the Blackstone Valley grew, a chain of meetinghouses were established along Great Road, several of which, including this one, are still active. The adjacent cemetery contains the graves of many of the meetinghouse's members over the past three centuries, including Stephen H. Smith, whose home you will soon see.

*Continue north to the traffic light and park in the dirt lot across the intersection.*

**2**  
**ELEAZER ARNOLD**  
**HOUSE (C.1693)**

The oldest home in town is also the finest example of a "stone-ender" in the state. Its most distinctive feature is the great stone-end chimney which makes up the western wall of the house. Eleazer and his wife, Eleanor, had ten children, many of whom also built homes in the Lincoln area. The Arnold family was so prominent that this part of Lincoln was sometimes called "Arnoldia." The house remained in the Arnold family until 1918.

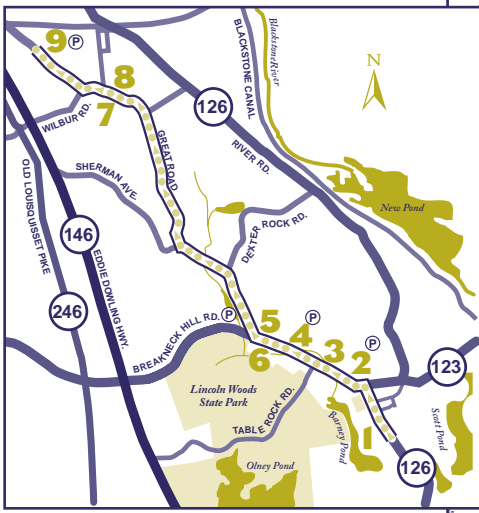
Behind the Arnold House is the Croade Tavern, built c. 1700. It is the last remaining structure from the original Jenks Settlement in Pawtucket, RI and was moved here in 1918.

*Proceed west 3/10 of a mile to the Moffett Mill.*



Town of Lincoln

**A typical day at the blacksmith shop in the early 1900s. Billy Hannaway is standing between the wagon shafts. Hannaway was an amiable man, and the smithy was a popular "hang-out" for children and local loafers.**



LINCOLN

# 3

**MOFFETT MILL**  
(C. 1812)

This small wooden mill, believed to have been built by George Olney, was used as one of the first machine shops in Rhode Island. It is a rare example of a wooden mill built during the first wave of industrialization in the Blackstone Valley (1790-1820). In 1850, Arnold Moffett purchased the mill and built the stone dam that still stands. Besides housing a machine shop, the mill also produced shoelaces, wagons, and wagon wheels.

*Continue along Great Road for about 2/10 of a mile. Parking for Chase Farm is available just past the farm house, near the blacksmith shop.*

# 4

**CHASE FARM /  
HANNAWAY  
BLACKSMITH SHOP**  
(1870-1895)

On January 26, 1867, Benjamin E. Chase and his wife Alzada purchased this 118 acre farm for \$10,000. The Chase family ran a dairy farm and milk delivery service until 1965, making this one of the last working farms in Lincoln. The farm remained in the Chase family until the widow of their grandson, also named Benjamin, sold it to the Town of Lincoln in May 1979. Currently the farm is being preserved as a reminder of Lincoln's agricultural heritage.

Adjacent to the Chase Farm is the Hannaway Blacksmith Shop. Originally



Town of Lincoln

**Modern blacksmith demonstrating the old techniques at Hannaway's Blacksmith Shop.**

located across from Hearthside, this shop was built as a carriage house between 1870 and 1895. In 1901, William Hannaway purchased the building and moved his business into it. Hannaway's smithy was successful until the proliferation of the automobile forced him to close his shop in the 1920s.

# 5

**HEARTHSTONE**  
(1810-1811)

One of the finest Federal-style houses in Rhode Island is Stephen H. Smith's Hearthstone. According to legend, Smith was engaged to a woman who wanted to live in the grandest home in the state. While Smith came from a prominent family, he did not have the funds to build



# 6 BUTTERFLY MILL (1811-1813)

One of Rhode Island's earliest stone textile mills, it was built by Stephen H. Smith between 1811-1813 and named after a pair of stones in the wall that



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such a mansion. Then, fortune smiled upon him and he won \$50,000 in the Louisiana lottery. He secretly used his winnings to construct this mansion for his beloved. Despite this grand gesture, however, his fiancé refused to marry him. Some say she did not like the house and did not want to live so far into the wilderness. Others say it was because he spent all of his money building the house. Whatever the reason, the heartbroken Smith never married and lived here with his brother and his family.

While unlucky at love, Smith was successful in other aspects of his life. He built and managed the Butterfly Mill across the street from his home. He was also a commissioner of the Blackstone Canal and played a key role in planning the canal's route and purchasing the land. The Town of Lincoln now owns Hearthsides and it is operated by the Friends of Hearthsides.

## The Butterfly Mill.

resembled a butterfly. In later years it served as a textile print works, a tannery and a machine shop. Besides the butterfly, the mill also gained fame from its bell, which was cast in Amsterdam during the 1500s. It served on board the *H.M.S. Guerriere* which was captured by the *U.S.S. Constitution* in the War of 1812. Smith purchased it for his mill shortly afterwards. In 1950, the roof collapsed and what had been a two story mill was renovated as a single story dwelling. The famous butterfly can now be seen in the chimney. It is currently a private residence.

*Follow Great Road to the right for about 2 miles. About 1/10 of a mile past Central Elementary School is the Mowry Tavern on the left, next to the horse farm.*



Hearthsides 1810-1811.

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**Activities in Lincoln are not limited to Great Road. Here are some canoeists enjoying a ride through the Blackstone Canal at the Blackstone River State Park. The Blackstone is a popular destination for canoeists and kayakers. For more information and suggested tours, please see the "Get on the River" page of our website.**

# 7

## MOWRY TAVERN (1800 / 1820)

The location of the Mowry Tavern along the Great Road made it a popular rest stop for travelers, especially after it became a horse-changing stop for stage coaches that ran between Providence, Woonsocket, and Worcester. The Mowry Tavern, and others along Great Road, continued to serve travelers until the Providence & Worcester Railroad opened in the 1840s eliminating the need for stage coach service. The tavern was then used as a farm house and is today a private residence.

The Mt. Moriah Lodge is the brick building across the street, at the intersection of Anna Sayles Road.

# 8

## MT. MORIAH LODGE #8 (C. 1800/1804) 1093 GREAT ROAD

The first structure on this site was a one-room schoolhouse, built c. 1800. In 1804, 23 local Masons received permission to establish a new Lodge. They expanded the building to its present size, meeting on the second story while the first floor continued to be used as a school until 1870. The Masons then took title to the entire building. The Lodge still holds its meetings here.

*Follow Great Road to the intersection with Wilbur Road, take the right fork and continue northwards for about 4/10 of a mile.*



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### Lime Kiln at Lime Rock

**In the mid-1660s, Gregory Dexter began quarrying limestone in the center of Lincoln. The lime had several uses, such as for the tanning and bleaching processes and for making mortar. Before the end of the century, Thomas Harris opened a second quarry nearby and the village of Lime Rock grew around the two mines. The two quarries merged in the late 1800s and continue in operation today under their corporate descendent, the Conklin Limestone Company, which is the oldest company in America in continuous operation. This lime kiln from the mid 1800s is located along the Louisquisset Turnpike just northwest of the active quarry.**

# 9

## VALENTINE WHITMAN JR. HOUSE (C. 1694)

The Valentine Whitman, Jr. House is another wonderful example of a stone-ender. The Whitman family was one of the first to settle in Lincoln, but Valentine Whitman, Sr.'s original homestead was burned by Native Americans during King Philip's War. It is believed that Whitman, Sr. built this house in about 1694 and gave it to his son as a wedding gift. The first town meeting of the new Town of Smithfield was held here in 1731. The Whitman family lived here until the mid 1700s when it transferred to the Wilbur family. Then, throughout the 1800s and 1900s, it served as the home for the Whalen family. The Town of Lincoln now owns the Whitman House, and it is open one Saturday per month.



## DIRECTIONS

From Route 146: Take Route 123/Breakneck Hill Road Exit. Proceed east, down the hill to Great Road. At first light, take a right. The Meetinghouse is about 1/10 of a mile on the right.

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## ALONG THE WAY

- ✓ Parking is available at the Arnold House, Chase Farm, and the Whitman House, as well as at the Butterfly Pond Conservation Area, which is across the street from the Butterfly Mill and just west of Hearthiside.
- ✓ Free Open House Tours on Great Road on Saturdays. Blacksmithing demonstrations at the Hannaway Blacksmith Shop offered every Saturday April through November from 9AM to Noon. Other properties open Saturdays on a rotating schedule from 1PM – 4PM. 1st Saturday of month – Valentine Whitman House. 2nd Saturday – Hearthiside. 3rd Saturday – Friends Meeting House. 4th Saturday – Eleazer Arnold House. For more on Great Road events please see <http://www.hearthisidehouse.org/> or call (401) 726-0597.
- ✓ Sites #2 through #5 are marked with purple Heritage Corridor signs.
- ✓ Facilities are available at Lincoln Woods State Park, which borders the southern side of Great Road. The entrance to Lincoln Woods is just west of the Arnold House on the left.
- ✓ Blackstone River State Park/Blackstone River Bikeway runs through Lincoln and Cumberland for about 8 miles. Eventually the Bikeway will run from Providence to Worcester. Along the Bikeway is the Captain Wilbur Kelly House Museum, which features exhibits on the evolution of transportation in the Blackstone River Valley. The Kelly House is open daily, April – October from 9AM to 4:30PM, free admission. The nearest entrance to the Bikeway is on Rt. 123 about 1/2 mile east of the Eleazer Arnold House.
- ✓ Blackstone Valley Visitor's Center—175 Main Street Pawtucket. Free maps and information, videos, exhibits and more. Restrooms. Free parking. Open seven days. 401-724-2200 or 800-454-2882. Directions: Follow Rt. 123 East to Rt. 114 South (Broad Street). Follow Rt. 114 South to RT. 15 East (Main Street). Center is about 1/4 mile on left.

**Congress established the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission in 1986, recognizing the national significance of the region between Providence, RI and Worcester, MA—the Birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution. The John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor is an affiliated area of the National Park Service.**



**This brochure was developed under the direction of The Rhode Island Historical Society in partnership with the Heritage Corridor Commission.**

[www.nps.gov/blac/home.htm](http://www.nps.gov/blac/home.htm)