

Slave horse/War horse: The Narragansett Pacer in colonial and revolutionary Rhode Island

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Abstract: This paper examines how horses and the horse trade fit within the story of warfare in seventeenth and eighteenth-century America. This paper, which is part of a wider book project on horses throughout the Atlantic World, will focus specifically on the Narragansett Pacers. Horses started to appear in New England in 1629, when Francis Higginson shipped approximately 25 mares and stallions from Leicestershire, England to the Massachusetts Bay Colony. From this stock, the first horses made their way to Rhode Island less than a decade later. The Narragansett Pacer was a mixture of the Dutch, Irish, and English breeds. The Pacer was a fairly small horse, and its easy gate led to it being used both for long distance travel and racing. Furthermore, the Pacer was the first “truly” American breed of horse. The horses were raised on plantations in Rhode Island, and often cared for by slaves. In addition, the account books and letters of Brown family of Providence reveal that the Pacer was at the heart of the transatlantic slave trade. Pacers were exported to Cuba, Barbados and the West Indies. From such promising beginnings, the Pacer was extinct by the next century. The paper will examine the where the Pacer fits within the story of Colonial Wars between European Empires and the build up to the American Revolution. Rumours abound not only that George Washington rode Pacers, but also that Paul Revere did too on his famed midnight ride. Whilst considering these celebrated and revered roles, the paper will consider why and how the Pacers continued to be shipped primarily to Suriname as revolution and war brewed in America.

Paul Revere’s Midnight Ride

The American Revolutionary War involved a number of iconic moments, including Washington’s Crossing, the signing of the Declaration of Independence and Paul Revere’s midnight ride. In particular, Revere’s legendary ride has captured the public imagination in a range of ways, from annual historical reenactments to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s poem. Revere’s ride from Charlestown to Lexington on the evening of 18th April 1775 has also inspired generations of painters, who have used their artistic license to depict Revere of a range of horses. Whilst the horse was most likely chestnut or bay, painters adroitly depict Revere on a white horse for night scenes and a black horse for daytime.¹ Therefore, whilst Revere’s story is well known, the story of the actual horse he rode warrants further attention.

Paul Revere was a silversmith by trade, but during the war he carried messages for the Patriot cause as an express rider. On the evening of 18th April 1775, Revere was sent for by Dr. Joseph Warren and instructed to ride to Lexington, Massachusetts, to warn Samuel Adams and John Hancock that British troops were marching to arrest them. After being rowed across the Charles River to Charlestown, Revere then took off upon a horse. On the way to Lexington, Revere ‘alarmed’ the countryside, stopping at each house, and arrived in Lexington around midnight. Revere alerted people that ‘The regulars are coming out!’ After delivering his message, Revere was joined by a second rider, William Dawes, who was pursuing the same mission via a different track. Dawes and Revere decided to continue to Concord to locate supplies and weapons and a third rider, Dr. Samuel Prescott, joined them. Shortly after they were all arrested by a British

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patrol; however, Prescott got away very quickly, and Dawes escaped soon after. The British patrol held Revere for some time before he was eventually released, but without his horse. Left without a mount, Revere returned to Lexington in time to witness part of the battle on the Lexington Green. At this point, Revere's horse passes out of the historical record.

We know that Revere did not own the horse he rode on his legendary ride, and it belonged to the family of John Larkin, a deacon of the Congregational church. The mare was never returned. Scholars have suggested a range of names, but Brown Beauty seems most probable. In addition to the debate about the horse's name, there is a lack of consensus on its breed.² Some have suggested that the horse was a descendant of an East Anglian breed, distantly related to the Suffolk Punch. Other arguments range from a fine-boned thoroughbred, with a long gait and elegant Arabian head to a heavy plough horse. David Hackett Fischer argues in *Paul Revere's Ride* that 'She was neither a racer nor a pulling animal, but an excellent specimen of a New England saddlehorse – big, strong and very fast.'³ The saddle-horses were bred for alertness, surefootedness and agility on the challenging New England terrain. Many, including Esther Forbes in *Paul Revere and the World He Lived in*, argue that he was 'riding a plain, lively, surefooted little creature, who paced naturally... chestnut in colour' – essentially a Narragansett Pacer.⁴ However, there are some problems with proving Revere rode a Pacer. For example, Richard O'Donnell describes the animal as a 'little brown mare,' but Revere's account says it was a large horse.⁵ Moreover, after his capture, the sergeant of grenadiers took the horse to replace his own small mount. The Narragansett Pacer was a small horse, a pony by today's standards, normally no bigger than 14hhs. This starts to put some cracks in the story that he rode a Pacer.

Revere himself provided three accounts of his ride, and although he stated that he borrowed the horse from John Larkin, neither he nor anyone else took much notice of the mount, or referred to it by name. Revere simply called it 'a very good horse.' The Massachusetts Provisional Congress requested information from Revere about his actions on the evening of 18th April 1775, and he provided two accounts, a draft and a corrected copy of a deposition, both dated 1775. The Patriots hoped to prove that the British had fired the first shot, and accordingly depositions were taken from eyewitnesses of the clash on Lexington Green. Arguably, the most detailed account of Revere's ride was his letter to Jeremy Belknap, Corresponding Secretary of the Massachusetts Historical Society, composed 23 years after the event and dated 1798. In the letter Revere stated that 'I saw two men on Horse back... When I got near them, I discovered they were British... One tried to git a head of Me, & the other to take me. I turned □ my Horse very quick, & Galloped towards Charlestown neck.'⁶ There are a few things in this letter that are worth considering, including the fact that the horse galloped. This calls into question whether it was a Pacer, as other contemporary accounts noted that Pacers did not gallop well. For example, Robert Livingstone argued 'But what is most remarkable is that they amble with more speed than most horses trot, so that it is difficult to put some of them upon a gallop.'⁷ Whilst the Narragansett Pacer was notable for the movement of its backbone and its natural, not acquired gait, we also see the difficulties in training a trotting horse to gallop. *A Gentleman's Complete Jockey*, published in London in 1700, averred 'the Gallop... is very awkward to be brought to... because having been trained to set Pace... he scrambles with his Legs.'⁸ The combination of the height problem, lack of any recording of breed and the galloping issues, seriously call into question whether the horse was pure Narragansett Pacer.

Background, breeding and origins

After potentially ruling out the Pacer's magnum opus as Revere's equine partner at the pivotal moment in the Revolutionary War, we are forced to turn to what the breed actually did, where it came from and where it ended up. The Pacer took its name from 'Narragansett Country,' Rhode Island, an area approximately twenty miles in length from Wickford to Point Judith and westward to Charlestown. The area was known as Narragansett Country (after the local Native America tribe) until 1729, when it was renamed the Kings County. This name remained in place until 1781, when the area was renamed again as Washington County.⁹

The origin of the Narragansett Pacer has been widely debated. Its ancestors were probably among the English and Dutch horses that arrived in Massachusetts between 1629 and 1635. Some believe the Narragansett Pacer was produced from Irish Hobbies, the Suffolk Punch and the Scottish Galloway pony. Whilst others stress that the breed was developed from the Spanish Jennet or Andalusian.¹⁰ As a natural pacer, the breed moved in an unusual fashion. Isaac Hazard thus wrote: 'My father described the motion of this horse as differing from others in that its backbone moved through the air in a straight line without inclining the rider from side to side, as does a rocker or pacer of the present day.'¹¹ The Narragansett Pacer was typically chestnut in colour, with a white blaze, star or stripe on the face and white stockings or socks on their legs. (see Figure 1).¹²



Figure 1: Painting of a Narragansett Pacer

A number of contemporary accounts criticised the Pacer's looks and argued that it was 'no beauty' and one went as far as describing it as 'villainously ugly.'¹³ Others were more complimentary, and averred that it could travel one hundred miles a day, over

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rough roads, without the horse or rider tiring. Dr. McSparran, rector of the Narragansett church from 1721 to 1759, wrote in *America Dissected*: ‘The produce of this country is principally butter, cheese, fat cattle, wool and fine horses that are exported to all parts of English America. They are remarkable for fleetness and swift pacing and I have seen some of them pace a mile in a little more than two minutes and a good deal less than three minutes. I have often upon the larger pacing horses rode fifty, nay sixty miles a day even in New England where the roads are rough, stony and uneven.’¹⁴ In addition, a number of eventful tales surround the Pacer. In 1711 Rip Van Dam, of New York, and later Governor of the State, wrote to Jonathan Dickinson, an early mayor of Philadelphia, a very entertaining account of his ownership of a Narragansett Pacer. When the Pacer was shipped from Rhode Island it jumped overboard and swam back to shore to return home. Van Dam continued that ‘He always plays and acts and never will stand still, he will take a glass of wine, beer or cyder, and probably would drink a dram on a cold morning.’¹⁵

The Narragansett Pacer, whilst not praised for its beauty had many strong qualities. On the back page of the John Carter Brown Library’s copy of Philip Astley’s *The Modern Riding Master* published in 1776, is a list in an unknown hand stating the desirable qualities for a horse.¹⁶

a pricked Ear	}
a light Trot	
a bushy tail	
a high neck	}
a full Eye	
short front	
a lofty carriage	
easy to mount	}
pleasure to ride	
when mounted	

The Pacer undoubtedly embodied many of these qualities. They also did well in hot climates, which was one reason they were exported to the Caribbean and South America. However, due to their small size, they were not suitable for pulling wagons and carriages.

By the time of the of Revere’s midnight ride and the American Revolutionary War, Pacers had started to disappear in Rhode Island and the breed eventually became extinct in its pure form. By the end of 1763, efforts were made to revive interest in breeding Pacers. An advertisement was printed in the Newport Mercury on 28th March 1763, stating: ‘Whereas the best Horses of this Colony have been sent off from Time to Time to the West Indies and elsewhere by which the Breed is much dwindled, to the great Detriment of both Merchant and Farmer; therefore, a number of public-spirited Gentlemen of Newport, for the Good of the Colony, and to encourage the Farmers to breed better Horses for the future, have collected a Purse of ONE HUNDRED DOLLARDS to be Run on Thursday, the Fifth of May next, on Easton’s Beech, free for any Horse Mare or Gelding bred in the Colony.’ Sadly, there were only three starters, and

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the winner belonged to Samuel Gardiner of South Kingstown.¹⁷

One theory suggests that the extinction of the pure breed came about because of the exportation to the West Indies. However, there were a number of other factors that contributed to its demise. Along Narragansett Bay Robert Hazard is said to have raised some two hundred Pacers in a year, and shipped directly from South Ferry aboard ships known as 'Horse Jockeys' to the Indies and the Southern Colonies. During the Revolution, the Sugar Islands, were forced to work with their own resources, and mastered raising their own horses. Therefore, after the Revolutionary War, the demand was not so high for the Narragansett Pacer. Moreover, waterpower was substituted for horsepower, wherever possible. In addition, conditions in New England were changing that rendered the Pacers obsolete. For example, as roads were improved, carriages became common and travel by saddle became less frequent. Consequently, the American trotter evolved, which was a better carriage horse than the Pacer and therefore more useful. As the eighteenth century progressed, there was less pasturage available in New England. With the cultivation of new land, horse breeding in New England was substantially reduced.¹⁸ Therefore, the pure breed's extinction was likely due to all these factors.

The Narragansett Planters and trade

The story of the Narragansett Pacer is tightly entwined with the history of slavery and the slave trade. The horses were often raised by slaves on the plantations in Narragansett and were shipped to work on the sugar plantations alongside slaves. Furthermore, they represented a major component of the provisioning slave trade. The 1730 census reveals that South Kingstown, Rhode Island had a total of 1,523 residents, and 965 are listed as 'white,' 333 as 'negro' and 225 as 'Indian.'¹⁹ North Kingstown had an additional 165 'negros.' In addition to what the planters termed 'negro slaves,' there were also Native Americans; and some were listed as 'Spanish Indians,' indicating they were imported from the Caribbean or South America. Seven Native Americans are listed in South Kingstown probates. Moreover, there were indentured servants who were listed as 'Indian' and 'mustee.' Therefore, chattel slaves toiled alongside servants and wage labourers who were Native American and mixed race, and it is likely that the planters utilised the wage labourers to work alongside the slaves and also supervise them. By the time the census was taken in 1748-9, 1774 and 1783, South Kingstown, had more 'negroes' than any other town except Newport. By this point, the County, which contained one-third of the population of the Rhode Island, numbered more than a thousand slaves.²⁰

Newport was undoubtedly the pivotal slave market of New England, but there were a number of cases where the Narragansett Planters imported their own slaves to the landings they built directly out to the ocean on Boston Neck. The records suggest that both Col. Thomas Hazard and Rowland Robinson Jr. did this.²¹ William Douglass, a physician, who wrote a range of pamphlets during the course of the eighteenth century on politics, economics and medicine, noted in his *Summary* that 'it is true, their late Guinea trade exchanging negroes for horses, stock, and provisions shipt off for the West-India islands, has added considerably to the number of their negroes.'²² Most of the slaves in North and South Kingstown were Africans and African Americans, and prior to the 1740s most of New England's slaves came from the West Indies, along with sugar.

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After 1740 demand for slaves increased and New Englanders began importing directly from Africa.²³

The Narragansett planters were mostly Anglican, and many of their slaves converted to Christianity and were instructed with the Book of Common Prayer. The records of St. Paul's Church reveal a number of cases of slaves being baptised and the Reverend catechising them.²⁴ The Narragansett planters are not to be confused with the planters of the Southern Colonies. Douglass observed that 'Rhode Island Colony in General is a country for pasture, not for grain; by extending along the shore of the ocean and a great bay, the air is softened by a sea vapour which fertilizeth the soil; their winters are softer and shorter than up inland; it is noted for dairies, whence the best cheese made in any part of New England is called (abroad) Rhode Island cheese. The most considerable farms are in the Narragansett country.'²⁵ During the course of the eighteenth century at least 35 planters lived on a minimum of 25 different plantations and owned between 10 and 19 slaves. Most planters had an average of 4 slaves.²⁶ There were a number of pivotal planting families, including the Hazards, Rowlands, Robinsons and Gardners. Most of the planters lived in South Kingstown, and by the nature of the soils and the climate, the Narragansett planters were stock and dairy farmers rather than growing cash crops like sugar, tobacco, indigo, rice and cotton. The area was known for its export of butter, cheese, livestock and lumber.²⁷ The most lucrative commercial effort of planters was the breeding Narragansett Pacers. The importation of horses to New England began a decade after the initial settlement at Plymouth, but when they were first received in Rhode Island, especially Narragansett Country is unclear.²⁸

The first mention of any type of horses in the area was made in a letter written by Peleg Sanford to his uncle Samuel Hutchinson in 1666: 'in Respect of the Extremity of the winter I could not gett your horses from Narragansett, but intend if yor pleasure Soe be to send for them as Soon as the Ketch arrives which we dayly Expect.'²⁹ John Hull's letter of 1672 reveals that he was probably the first to consider the development and maintenance of a pure strain of Pacer. Hull stated: 'if we...procure a verry good breed of large & fair mares & stallions & that noe mungrell breed might come amonge them...wee might have a verry choice breed for coach horsessaddle...[and] draught others & in a few years might draw of Considerable numbers & shipp them for Barbados Nevis or such parts of the Indies.'³⁰ We also see how the horses were bred to work on the sugar plantations: 'for the French at Martinique and Guardalupa, and the Dutch at Sorronam begin to rival us in the sugar trade, and this is owing...to the great supplies of horses they frequently receive from New England...for as we grind the sugar canes with windmills, so they are necessitated to do it by an engine that's drawn by horses and cattle.'³¹ How Hull's plans progressed is unclear, as there is an acute absence of studbooks and listings in estate inventories. Therefore, it is difficult to pinpoint when the pure strain of the breed emerged. The only explicit mention of a Pacer is in Ichabod's Potter inventory from 1739, which lists 'one small white pacing horse £6.'³² Other inventories simply make mention of 'one trotting mare, one Bay horse.'³³ More common, are entries such as '10 Horse Kind.'³⁴

Up to the mid-eighteenth century, horses were of immediate necessity in the American colonies, as all travelling was done in the saddle and the heavy work was generally accomplished by the use of oxen. However, the draught horse was in great demand in the West Indies, and the Pacers were mainly exported for draught purposes to the non-English islands. The horses were in high demand in the non-English islands as

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horses, not windmills, turned the sugar mills. This profitable sale of horses, therefore, would seem to have been directed, not as Hull had expected, to Barbados and Nevis, but to the French islands of Martinique and Guadalupe and to the Dutch colony of Suriname.³⁵ Horses were traded for rum, sugar and other commodities needed in the colonies.

Shipping horses across the Atlantic was a dangerous business, as we can see from this account from Jamaica: 'Im sorry to acquaint you with the loss of Three horses in the Voyage, as Eight only landed, and those in bad order, poor and much brused.'³⁶ We can also see there was competition between Rhode Island and Connecticut to ship Pacers in 1769, 'The Horses per the *Charlotte* are all sold... on average Twenty-Eight Pounds per Horse. Cap'n Nicholls from Connecticutt arriveing about six days before your Vessell with Forty four Horses on Board, which was great Determent to the Sale of your Horses...Our Sugar Market is still very dull, and it is to be feared will not be better this Crop.'³⁷ During the British occupancy of Newport and after the Revolution, the port of New London, Connecticut became the centre of the horse trade.³⁸ Breeders in Connecticut tried to carry on the strain, for example, General Jeremiah Wadsworth of Hartford advertised Narragansett Pacers from his stable in Baltimore as late as 1802.³⁹

Browns⁴⁰

The Brown family of Providence, Rhode Island, were heavily involved in the trade of Pacers to Suriname.⁴¹ James Brown and his son Nicholas Brown were key players in the shipment of Pacers to the Dutch Colony, located on the northeastern Atlantic coast of South America. Previously an English colony, Suriname came under Dutch control in the seventeenth century and its tolerant religious policy attracted a range of religious denominations. The authorities encouraged plantation agriculture to build a 'second Brazil,' and eventually, Suriname blossomed into an important plantation colony producing sugar, coffee, coco, and cotton. Massive drainage and irrigation helped to increase the numbers of plantations from 100 to 400 during the course of the eighteenth century.⁴² Farming expert, Anthony Blom, spent twenty years in the colony and noted there were 50,000 slaves at work.⁴³ Most planters settled in the capital city to escape the lonely life of the interior and to be safe from attacks from runaway slaves, who often hid in the woods close to plantations. The authority of Suriname's Protestant church was weak, and it was forbidden to introduce slaves to Christianity, out of fear that the teaching would encourage rebellion. This contrasts markedly with encouragement to convert to Christianity that the slaves in Rhode Island experienced.⁴⁴

Suriname planters relied on horses to turn their sugar mills. The fact that the Browns intended to only ship them to Suriname is evident in the letters that survive, as the horses are never referred to as Narragansett Pacers; they are always called 'Surinam horses.' The letters repeatedly emphasise how keen they were to get horses to export. James Brown wrote to his agent, Mr Sall Cutler, on 28th February 1739 that 'I beg...you would get me teen or a dusin Surnam horses...I hope that you will not fail me for I shall depend on you.'⁴⁵

The Brown family had specific expectations of the horses they needed to ship. James requested in 1737 that 'I want some Horses that are in Case fitt for Shiping, that are worth between Seven & fourteen pounds, Mares will do if they are in good Case, they must be between three &...Eight years of Age.'⁴⁶ The letters from James and Nicholas

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repeatedly included requests to get ‘a score a small horsis’ that are ‘fit to Go to sea’ or ‘in good trim for shipping.’ Both father and son repeatedly specified how many hands high the horses could be: ‘PS. none of the horses to be more then fourteen hands high’ and ‘not exceeding thirteen & a half hands high, or fourteen hands at the most.’ There were endless requests for horses that are ‘in good care’ ‘free from lameness’ ‘have two good eyes’ and ‘have good teeth.’⁴⁷ The weight of the horses was important too; James told Mr Morris in 1738 that ‘I want some Good fatt horsis.’⁴⁸ Descriptions of the horses and slaves were often very similar, reinforcing how both were seen as chattel property. For example, an advertisement in the Newport Mercury from 27th February 1764 for a slave could easily have been for a horse: ‘to be sold...She is strong and healthy; and, among other qualifications, is a most notable breeder.’⁴⁹

The letters reveal a genuine sense of competition and urgency in the horse trade. For example, Nicholas wrote to Isaac Tripp that ‘In order to forward the horses as soon as possible...our vesel being ready much sooner than we expected & there being many other vesels who will get away before the 15th.’⁵⁰ In addition, an advertisement from the Providence Gazette in January 1764 announced that ‘Nicholas Brown and Company want to buy immediatly, a few likely Surinam horses’ (see Figure 2.)⁵¹

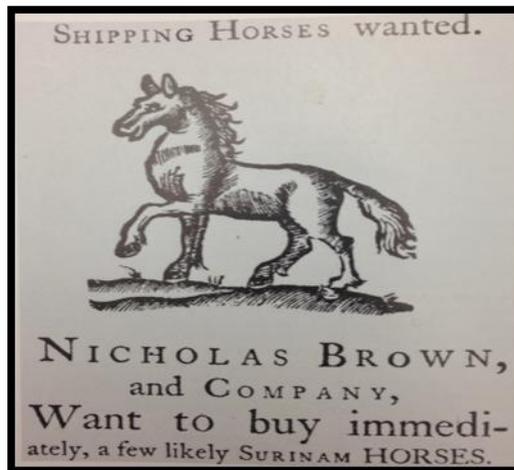


Figure 2: Advertisement from *Providence Gazette*, January 1764

The Brown family merchants repeatedly specified how much they were willing to pay. In 1765 Nicholas was willing to allow ‘twelve dollars a piece’ for ‘good Surinam horses.’⁵² Nicholas declared in 1766 ‘the price to be forty eight gallons New England rum for each horse.’⁵³ In March 1765 Nicholas contracted Isaac Tripp to purchase ‘Forty Horses ... fitt for the Suranam Markkett.’ With hard money in short supply, he proposed to pay for the purchase in goods, including rum, sugar and molasses. In addition to edible and drinkable goods, Nicholas also proposed to pay in human goods with ‘one Negrow Garl.’⁵⁴ The fact the horses were directly traded for human property reveals just how closely their plight was tied to that of chattel slavery. The Brown family sourced the horses from plantations in Rhode Island, where they were raised by slaves and then sold them to toil alongside slaves on plantations in Suriname. They also directly traded their equine property with their human property.

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The Browns clearly saw no value in keeping or selling the horses in Rhode Island; they were specifically acquired for the Suriname market. Nicholas Brown wrote to Frank and Evan Mallbone in November 1765 that ‘our Brigg George’ has already sailed and ‘we have...thirty Surinam horses...we have no particular use for them at present and you...proposd sending a sloop for Surinam about the last of this month.’ Nicholas then offered Frank and Evan the horses ‘at the price they cost us viz 12 dollars a head, we assure you they are very good horses for that market, and are lookd upon by indifferent persons to be worth near double the mony of the same sumber of horses just saild from this town for Surinam.’⁵⁵ The fact that the Browns felt there was no point keeping them in Rhode Island and also the use of the term ‘that market’ indicates how they had a specific targeted trade.

The Browns also faced a number of problems. James warily wrote in 1736, ‘I have been informed that you did not tell me the truth about that little horse and I depended upon your word about the Age of him, you told me he was but Six years old...but [if] that Horse and is above Eight years old I will not have him.’⁵⁶ From Philip Astley’s, *The Modern Riding Master*, published in 1776 we see that, ‘His Age is known by his Teeth...the Country Dealers, by pulling out two Teeth, and cutting the Gums, make them appear older [or younger] than they really are.’⁵⁷

Through the winter of 1765 Nicholas kept a number of his horses with Rowland Robinson, one Rhode Island’s most prominent breeders of Narragansett Pacers.⁵⁸ On 20th December Rowland Robinson wrote to Nicholas in Providence from South Kingston, Rhode Island, telling him his horses had died. Sadly part of this letter is torn and bits are missing, in particular the bit that tells us exactly how many died. Robinson continues that ‘they will all die’ and they are the oldest ‘I ever saw and the oldest I [be]leave in the Colony I dew think they a[r]e thirty five...I take all the pains I can to keep them alive but it is my opinion they will all die, except they are howsed and have grain...to house them...will make the cost rise two high for if they should be a live in the spring I would not give you a dollar a head...I shall expect to be paid for each horse till he dyths.’⁵⁹ Nicholas replied immediately that ‘[I] must request that you do your utmost in every respect...to preserve there lives if that what remains may... ship...We...are convinced that we where most shockingly deceav’d in them, and...there grinders all wornout, when these horses first came they where look upon by...to be a very good parcel of horse.’⁶⁰ Using other sources, we glean that there were various ways to dupe potential customers, and *The Smithfield Jockey* pamphlet describes many of them in detail, such as how to make a horse appear younger, gallop faster, lame and so on.⁶¹ Another advice pamphlet, the 1700 London version of the *Gentlemans Complete Jockey*, offers a detailed discussion of how to ‘fatten a lean horse in a short time’ The author, suggests, ‘give him three... a day, for a week, Mashs made of boiled Oats, Beans, and Bran...after this, for a week, make up Balls of Barly-meal, Honey, Enaula campane beten into-powder, the Juice of sweet Fennel, and Cummine-seeds; make these up into balls with new Ale, and give him three of them a day as big as Pullets eggs for a week, after each half a peck of Oats and two quarts of split Beans.’ However, the pamphlet concludes that if the horse is ‘very old’ it will not work.⁶² Sadly, we do not know happened to horses and if they survived.

Conclusion: The Narragansett Pacer’s legacy

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To conclude, whilst the Narragansett Pacer may be gone, it is not forgotten. The Pacer has influenced a range of modern breeds, including the Standardbred, Tennessee Walking Horse and the American Saddlebred. The Pacer's story now has a lasting legacy as part of FDR's New Deal. A mural by Ernest Hamlin Baker entitled 'The Economic Activities of the Narragansett Planters' was commissioned for the Wakefield, Rhode Island, post office by the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture. It hung in the post office from its completion in 1939 until 1999. The mural is now on display at the Pettaquamscutt Historical Society in Kingston, Rhode Island, where it was moved in 2003 after the Wakefield post office closed.

The Treasury Department envisioned that the artworks would reflect the community in which it would be placed. As the title suggests, the mural captures the area's slave-dependent economy in the eighteenth century. The controversial New Deal arts projects provided work for jobless artists and promoted American art and culture.⁶³ Baker's other work included posters for the U.S. government, *New Yorker* profiles and covers for *Fortune* magazine.⁶⁴ The Pettaquamscutt Historical Society was recently bequeathed some of the original sketches that Ernst Hamilton Baker made and photographs of him installing the original mural. A number of the draft sketches reveal that Baker originally planned to include Native Americans in the mural, although they did not make it into the final piece. The Treasury Department provided strict guidelines for the artists to follow when creating a work of art for a public building, which would be heavily used by members of the community. Baker made several visits to Wakefield and as was encouraged to focus on local subjects as a way of reaching the average citizen.



Figure 3: Ernest Hamlin Baker's *The Economic Activities of the Narragansett Planters*

In 1940 Baker commented in *American Artist* that 'I grimly determined to confine the main theme to the income-producing sources of the Planters' wealth and culture.'⁶⁵ The final mural depicts slaves performing a range of tasks, including breeding horses and livestock, growing corn, making cheese, shipping and smuggling. As Figure 3 shows, the Narragansett Pacer dominates the mural.⁶⁶ In the centre of the mural an elaborately dressed white planter is riding a Narragansett Pacer, whilst giving orders to the slaves. To

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the left of the planter, a slave is leading two additional Narragansett Pacers. The Pacers, the slaves and the planter are at the forefront of the mural, showing their centrality to the economy. The planter's implied cruelty is clear from his face and posture on horseback.⁶⁷ The slaves are depicted as strong and competent, but their faces seem to blend into the same face. In the background there is a ship to indicate the area's trading and mercantile connections. The mural provides a last reminder of the Narragansett Pacer's importance to Rhode Island and the wider Atlantic World.

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Images

Figure 1 – Image courtesy of Pettaquamscutt Historical Society, Kingston, Rhode Island. The painting was done from a description of the horse and was reproduced through the courtesy of Miss Ann Holst of Warwick, Rhode Island.

Figure 2 – The woodcut of a Narragansett Pacer appeared in the Providence Gazette in January 1764. Advertisement courtesy of Rhode Island Historical Society Rhi x3 1740.

Figure 3 – Image courtesy of Pettaquamscutt Historical Society, Kingston, Rhode Island.

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NOTES

¹ Esther Forbes, *Paul Revere and the World He Lived in* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1942), pp. 191-195.

² John R. Galvin calls the horse Thunderer in *The Minute Men: The First Fight – Myths and Realities of the American Revolution* (Dulles, VA: Potomac, 2006) pp. 123-124. Popular writers have inventively named her Meg, Scherazade, Dobbin and Sparky. A genealogy of the Larkin family, published in 1930, stated: ‘Samuel (Larkin) ... born Oct. 22, 1701; died Oct. 8, 1784, aged 83; he was a chairmaker, then a fisherman and had horses and a stable. He was the owner of “Brown Beauty,” the mare of Paul Revere’s Ride made famous by the Longfellow poem. The mare was loaned at the request of Samuel’s son, deacon John Larkin, and was never returned to the owner.’ Cited in Patrick M. Leehey, *What was the Name of Paul Revere’s Horse? Twenty Questions About Paul Revere – Asked and Answered* (Boston, MA: Paul Revere House Publications, ND).

³ David Hackett Fischer, *Paul Revere’s Ride*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 106 and endnotes.

⁴ Forbes, *Paul Revere and the World He Lived in*, pp. 191-195.

⁵ Many works of popular history cover the midnight ride. For example, see Richard W. O'Donnell, "'On the Eighteenth of April, in Seventy-five' Longefellow didn't know the half of it." *Smithsonian*, 4 (1973), pp. 72-77.

⁶ The manuscript letter includes some interlineations, apparently in the hand of Jeremy Belknap. In printing the account in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 1st series, vol. 5 (1798), Belknap assigned to it the date of 1 January 1798. At the end of the document, Revere signed his name but then, apparently choosing to remain anonymous, wrote above it 'A Son of Liberty of the year 1775' and beside it 'do not print my name.' Either he changed his mind or Belknap ignored his request, for the two phrases are crossed out in the original document, and the name is included in the printed version. See following article for discussion: "Paul Revere House" <http://www.paulreverehouse.org/bio/faq.html>. Accessed 14 January 2014.

⁷ Although Robert Livingston refers to a 'single footed trot,' arguably the pure bloods could not trot at all and they maintained their own characteristic pacing. Livingston made these claims in the first American edition of the *Edinburgh Encyclopedia*. Cited in Benjamin Ladd Cook, "The Narragansett Pacer," *RIY*, (1965-66), pp. 56-58.

⁸ A.S. Gent, *The Gentlemans Complete Jockey* (London, 1700), p. 53.

⁹ Washington County is the name that survives today, although the area is known locally as South County.

¹⁰ Esther Forbes, *Paul Revere and the World He Lived in*, pp. 191-195

¹¹ Alice Morse Earle, *Customs and Fashions in Old New England* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894), p. 189 accessed 13 April 2014.
[189http://www.gutenberg.org/files/24159/24159-h/24159-h.htm4](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/24159/24159-h/24159-h.htm4).

¹² Image courtesy of Pettaquamscutt Historical Society, Kingston, Rhode Island. The painting was done from a description of the horse and was reproduced through the courtesy of Miss Ann Holst of Warwick, Rhode Island.

¹³ Rip Van Dam commented that the horse was 'no beauty though so high priced, save in his legs.' Alice Morse Earle's book published in 1894 asserted: 'There died in Wickford, R. I., a few years ago, a Narragansett Pacer that was nearly full blooded. She was a villainously ugly animal.' Morse Earle, *Customs and Fashions in Old New England*, p. 189

¹⁴ James McSparren "America Dissected, being a Full and True Account of the American Colonies" (1752), published as an appendix in Wilkins Updike, *A History of the Episcopal Church in Narragansett Rhode Island, Including a History of other Episcopal Churches in the State* (Boston, MA: The Merrymount Press, 1907).

¹⁵ Cited in Morse Earle, *Customs and Fashions in Old New England*, pp. 187-188.

¹⁶ Philip Astley, *The Modern Riding Master: Or, A Key to the Knowledge of the Horse, and Horsemanship; with Several Necessary Rules for Young Horsemen* (Philadelphia: printed and sold by Robert Aitken, 1776), JCB D776 A855M, John Carter Brown Library, Providence, Rhode Island.

¹⁷ *The Newport Mercury*, 9 May 1763. <1759:3:20-1770:10:8> Collections held at Newport Historical Society, Newport Rhode Island.

¹⁸ Cook, "The Narragansett Pacer," pp. 56-58.

¹⁹ Elisha R. Potter, Jr. (ed.), *Collections of the Rhode-Island Historical Society*, Vol. III (Providence, RI: Marshall, Brown and Company, 1835), p. 114.

²⁰ Wilkins Updike, *A History of the Episcopal Church in Narragansett Rhode Island, Including a History of other Episcopal Churches in the State* (Boston, MA: The Merrymount Press, 1907) Vol. 1, pp. 207-208. See also William Douglass, *A Summary, Historical and Political, of the First Planting, Progressive Improvements, and Present State of the British Settlement in North-America* (Boston, MA and London, re-printed, 1755), p. 89 for census figures.

²¹ *Collections of the Rhode-Island Historical Society*, Vol. III, p. 69; Updike, *A History of the Episcopal Church in Narragansett Rhode Island*, p. 515.

²² Douglass, *A Summary, Historical and Political*, p. 90.

²³ In the late eighteenth century manumissions became more common, and free black communities increased in size. Indentured servants supplemented slaves before the American Revolution, and gradually became the bulk of the work force after 1784. Robert Fitts, *Inventing New England's slave paradise: master/slave relations in eighteenth-century Narragansett, Rhode Island* (Oxford: Taylor & Francis, 1998), p. 79, p. 82, p. 91.

²⁴ The entries in the Narragansett Parish Register appear as an appendix as part of 'The Records of St. Paul's Church Narragansett, 14 April 1718 – November 6, 1774' in Wilkins Updike, *A History of the Episcopal Church in Narragansett Rhode Island, Including a History of other Episcopal Churches in the State* (Boston, The Merrymount Press, 1907) Vol.2, Appendix.

²⁵ *A Summary, Historical and Political*, p. 100.

²⁶ Fitts, *Inventing New England's slave paradise*, p. 73, p. 85, p. 92. Whilst the majority of the planters lived in South Kingstown, Charlestown contained fewer, but larger plantations. North Kingstown was the most developed town in Narragansett, and contained fewer plantations.

²⁷ *Collections of the Rhode-Island Historical Society*, Vol. III, p. 67; Douglass, *A Summary, Historical and Political*, p. 99.

²⁸ John Winthrop noted in his journal that 60 horses were shipped to New England. John Winthrop, *History of New England 1630-1649*, James Kendall Hosmer, (ed.), (New York, NY: 1908), Vol. 1 p. 368.

²⁹ The letter is dated 29 May 1666. Sanford went on to be Governor of the Colony from 1680 to 1683. 'Letter Book of Peleg Sanford,' *Rhode Island Historical Society*, (Providence, RI: 1928) pp. 7-8.

³⁰ Letter dated September 8 1672 to Benedict Arnold, 'John Hull Letter Book,' vol. 1 transcribed by Florence Berlin for the *American Antiquarian Society* (1930) Further letters re: horses, pp. 132-133, pp. 337-338 of the transcript.

³¹ Calendar of State Papers, 1720/21, 197, Cited in William Davis Miller, "The Narragansett Planters," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, (April, 1933) Vol. 43, Part 1. (Worcester, MA: 1934) pp. 49-115.

³² South Kingstown Probate Records, Vol. III, p. 103.

³³ South Kingstown Probate Records, Vol. III, p. 70.

³⁴ When Rowland Robinson died in 1716 he had ‘64 horses, mares and colts.’ South Kingstown Probate Records, Vol. III, Jeremiah Wilson Estate, 1740 – South Kingstown Probate Records, Vol. I, p. 86.

³⁵ Calendar of State Papers, 1714/15, 654. Also Idem, 1720/21, 197. See *Collections of the Rhode-Island Historical Society*, Vol. III.

³⁶ Isaac Pereira Mendes to Aaron Lopez, Kingston, Jamaica, 15 February 1767 “Commerce of Rhode Island, 1726-1800,” Vol. 1, 1726-1774, *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 7th Series, Vo. IX (Boston, MA: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1864), p. 183.

³⁷ Benjamin Wright to Aaron Lopez, Savanna La Marr, 8th April, 1769. Ibid, p. 271.

³⁸ The role of Connecticut in exporting horses and other goods is explored by Joseph Avitable in a PhD dissertation. Joseph Avitable, “The Atlantic World Economy and Colonial Connecticut.” (PhD diss., University of Rochester, NY, 2009).

³⁹ According to Hazard there was only one Narragansett Pacer in Rhode Island in 1800, although the breed was carried on for a few years longer in Connecticut. Pacers bred by Wadsworth were advertised in the *Federal Gazette & Baltimore Daily Advertiser* in 1802. Deane Phillips, *Horse Raising in Colonial America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell, 1922), p. 917, p. 926, p. 927.

⁴⁰ James Brown passed away in 1739 and his brother Obadiah raised his four children, John, Nicholas, Joseph and Moses. John Brown is perhaps the most well-known of the Brown family, especially for his slave trading, followed by his abolitionist brother, Moses. The Brown family – Nicholas Sr., John, Joseph, and Moses, were instrumental in founding Brown University.

⁴¹ It is bordered by French Guiana to the east, Guyana to the west and Brazil to the south. Wim Klooster, *The Dutch in the Americas 1600-1800: A Narrative History with the Catalogue of an Exhibition of Rare Prints, Maps and Illustrated Books from the John Carter Brown Library* (Providence, RI: John Carter Brown Library, 1997), pp. 67-78; Anthony Bloom, *Verhandeling van den landbouw in de colonie Suriname – Treatise on agriculture in the colony of Suriname*, (Amsterdam, 1787); Philippe Fermin, *Nieuwe algemeene beschryving van de colonie van Suriname – New General description of the colony of Suriname*, (Harlingen, 1770).

⁴² Klooster, *The Dutch in the Americas 1600-1800*, p. 68.

⁴³ Bloom, *Treatise on agriculture in the colony of Suriname*.

⁴⁴ Although Africans maintained a large majority over whites (sixty-five to one in the rural areas), as did recently-arrived blacks over seasoned slaves, they were subjected to heavy labour and endured harsh treatment. Consequently, ever-swelling numbers of slaves escaped. The maroon communities were covered in detail by Philippe Fermin, who spent eight years in the colony. Fermin, *New General description of the colony of Suriname*; Klooster, *The Dutch in the Americas*, p. 68, p. 78.

⁴⁵ February the 28 AD 1738/9, *The Letter Book of James Brown of Providence, Merchant 1735-1738* (From the original manuscript in the Rhode Island Historical Society) (Providence, RI: Rhode Island Historical Society), p. 60. Hereafter referenced as *The Letter Book of James Brown*.

⁴⁶ Febry 3d. 1735/6, Ibid, p. 19.

⁴⁷ Nicholas writes that ‘none of wich to be under two years old & all to have good teath two eyes, to be free from lameness and to be in good shipping care.’ Providence 23 May 1765, John Carter Brown Library, Providence, RI. Manuscript – BFBR B. 357. ML 1764-1767; BFRB Miscellaneous Letters, 1765 B. 357. Folder 3 folio 11 Hereafter referenced as ‘Nicholas Brown Papers.’

⁴⁸ January the 21th Ad. 1737/8, *The Letter Book of James Brown*, p. 49.

⁴⁹ Cited in Fitts, *Inventing New England’s slave paradise*, p. 82

⁵⁰ November 1765, ‘Nicholas Brown Papers,’ Folder 4 folio 16.

⁵¹ The woodcut of a Narragansett Pacer appeared in the Providence Gazette in January 1764. Advertisement courtesy of Rhode Island Historical Society Rhi x3 1740.

⁵² Providence 1 June 1765, ‘Nicholas Brown Papers,’ Folder 3 folio 14.

⁵³ 11 April 1766, *Ibid*, Folder 7 Folio 2.

⁵⁴ Providence 11 March 1765, *Ibid*, Folder 3 Folio 1.

⁵⁵ 15 November 1765, *Ibid*, Folder 4 folio 19.

⁵⁶ Augt. 26th. AD 1736, *The Letter Book of James Brown of Providence*, p. 36.

⁵⁷ Astley, *The Modern Riding Master*, pp. 11-12.

⁵⁸ Nicholas writes to Matthew Manchester that he was willing to let the horses stay in Narragansett ‘to work on the... farms’ and then send the remainder down to Rowland Robinson to keep. Robinson kept his Nicholas’ horses for thirty shillings a week in 5 December 1765, ‘Nicholas Brown Papers,’ Folder 5 Folio 2 and 3.

⁵⁹ 20 December 1765, ‘Nicholas Brown Papers,’ Folder 5 folio 14.

⁶⁰ 20 December 1765, *Ibid*, Folder 5 Folio 15.

⁶¹ *The Smithfield jockey: or, the character and original of a horse-courser, with the tricks and rogueries of an ostler. Published for the benefit of gentlemen and others.* (London: W.D., 1675)

⁶² Gent, *The Gentlemans Complete Jockey*, p. 18.

⁶³ ‘The National Archives: A New Deal for Art,’ Accessed 13 April 2014.
http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/new_deal_for_the_arts/celebrating_the_people1.html

⁶⁴ Christopher P. Bickford, *Picturing History: Wakefield’s Post Office Mural of 1939* (Kingston, RI: Pettaquamscutt Historical Society, 2003), pp. 2-3, p. 5.

⁶⁵ Cited in *Ibid*, p. 8

⁶⁶ Image courtesy of Pettaquamscutt Historical Society, Kingston, Rhode Island.

⁶⁷ Bickford, *Picturing History*, p. 11.