

Top: Michele Felix Corné, self-portrait, courtesy of the Redwood Library and Athenaeum, Newport. Bequest of Mary H. Bottomore, 11 September 1873.

Bottom: Photo of Corné house at 2 Corne Street, Newport, courtesy of Hannah Cassarino, July 2017.

MICHELE FELICE CORNÉ AND HIS NEWPORT HEIRS

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A large plaque, emblazoned with the State of Rhode Island seal, attached to the northwest corner of the house on the corner of Corné and Mill Streets, Newport, reads: "CORNÉ HOUSE/Home of the artist/MICHEL FELICE CORNÉ/who introduced the/tomato into this country." Incorrect spelling of the artist's first name, *Michele*, notwithstanding, the first claim is true—it was his home. The second part calls for separating truth from legend.¹ Beginning about forty years after Corné's death, newspaper articles and food journals have touted the claim *introduced the tomato into this country* as irrefutable truth. As one example, from Louisville, Kentucky's *The Courier Journal* ran a story under the header TOMATOES AND CORNÉ: "How did the thought transformation come about that changed a demon into a queen? We owe all our thanks to a man by the name of Michele Felice Corné."² With continued retelling and embellishing, Corné took on the qualities of a fearless folk hero, a Johnny Appleseed of tomatoes, who brazenly ate a fruit many considered poisonous. Corné's culinary fame extended to Omaha, Milwaukee, San Francisco, and Portland, Oregon, even as far as Australia where *The Sydney Morning Herald* proclaimed:

For ages, the tomato, once called the Love Apple, was considered poisonous. One day, in the last century, a man [Corné] dared to eat a tomato in public, survived, and gave to the world one of its most prized vegetables.³

Such a claim chooses to ignore how the tomato made its way from the New World in the first place, and how by the nineteenth century, the *pomo d'oro* had long been a staple in the diets of southern Italians like Corné. For all its hyperbole, there are seedlings of truth in these allegations, as Corné did introduce the tomato to his immediate neighbors in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Such a fixation diminishes a more fascinating story of the real Corné, a Neapolitan immigrant, who arrived in Massachusetts as a man in his late forties, earned his living as a painter and muralist, and then retired to Newport where he spent his last two decades in the tidy house on the street that later carried his name. Corné, a bachelor, bequeathed the house and generous bank accounts to his "body servant" and primary heir, Billy Bottomore. Billy survived his master by only nine years, but the Corné house went to Billy's widow and her heirs who continued to reside there until the early twentieth century. This article seeks to re-examine, mostly

1. This article standardizes the spelling of the artist's name as Michele Corné, every syllable pronounced. While he often used a grave accent è of his last name, we adopt the é.
2. *The Courier-Journal*, 5 Sept. 1948, p. 56.
3. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 Nov. 1986, p. 43.

without the tomato, Corné's life and work, and how a trail of his money enabled two Newport families to live in his house long after the artist's death. His gardens later took on a fame of their own with "Oriental Baths," one of the era's most exotic health fads. Like layers of discolored varnish that need to be removed from an artist's work, the connected lives of Corné and Bottomore deserve a fresh appraisal. First, we begin with an overview and assessment of Corné's surviving work.

The Artist

Most of the scholarly articles on Corné have focused, with good reason, on his life as an artist. Nina Fletcher Little wrote the most recent extensive article on Corné which appeared in the Peabody Museum's Summer Exhibition Catalog in 1972.⁴ This exhibition, the largest ever assembled of Corné's works, featured over eighty works from enormous paintings to small sketches, demonstrating the range of the artist from ship portraiture, naval actions, and portraits to historical landscapes. Several items



Sketch, now identified by the author as after Hogarth, courtesy of the Redwood Library, Newport.

were loaned from Newport's Redwood Library where Corné's self-portrait, among other notables, presently looks down from within the grand entrance hall. Few examples of his house murals, like that of the Sullivan-Dorr House in Providence, have survived. Corné himself made no pretensions about his talent as an artist, usually citing his occupation in American records as a limner.⁵ While clearly not in the same league with his American contemporaries, Gilbert Stuart and John Trumbull, the aggregate of Corné's output establishes him in a respectable category a notch or two above some of his peers called limners. The scope of the Peabody's Exhibition might have mollified some of Corné's nineteenth-century critics who denigrated most of his work. Seeing Corné's works in color rather than through black-and-white illustrations also changed my perception of the artist.

Fletcher notes that if, where, and when, Corné received training as a painter before he came to America has not been discovered. Many painters and illustrators learned from copying

4. Nina Fletcher Little, "Introduction, Michele Felice Corné" [hereafter Little, "Corné"] (Salem, Mass.: Peabody Museum of Salem, 1972), ix–xiv.
5. A term, originating in the eighteenth century, used to describe a decorative painter, usually with little or no academic training.

the work of other artists. We have at least one piece of evidence to support this premise. A pen-and-ink wash drawing, from the Redwood Library, has hitherto not been linked to its antecedent. It is a copy of Plate 4 from William Hogarth's satirical series *A Harlot's Progress*. First published in 1732 and widely copied in pirated versions, this work depicts, in six scenes, the spiraling journey of the hapless Moll Hackabout, a once-innocent country girl seduced into a life of prostitution. Corné's sketch depicts Moll, now in Bridewell Prison, looking ill-suited to pummeling hemp for a hangman's noose. Corné's sketch edits out about half of the Hogarth original. One wonders if Corné did this for his own practice or amusement. It is not likely what his New England clients would have wanted this vignette on their walls. Little's assessment of Corné's "competent professional style" was not academic, yet she concurs: "He was a talented ornamental painter, with admitted variations in quality from time to time." She acknowledges that Corné's "remarkable versatility, picturesque personality, and crisp, colorful technique combined to bring a refreshingly different dimension to nineteenth-century New England art."⁶

People who knew Corné concur that he was a born story-teller and may have embellished now-lost details of his early years. As for clarifying some ambiguities about Corné's true age or the circumstances under which he came to the United States, Little and other scholars did not consult one of the most important primary sources, Corné's naturalization record. On 1 June 1809, Michael Felix Corné, limner, of Boston, deposed "that he was born at Naples in Italy in September in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and fifty seven."⁷ This date is also consistent with Corné's age, as being in his 73rd year when he purchased a life annuity in 1830. Little cites Corné's gravestone as proof of his age and birthplace; she repeats the assertion that he was born on the Isle of Elba in 1752, making him 93 years old at the time of this death.⁸

In 1940, another Corné scholar, Robert E. Peabody, presented a talk, later published, titled "A War Refugee of 1800" to the Colonial Society of Massachusetts.⁹ He makes an elaborate case that Captain Elias Hasket Derby rescued Corné from Naples aboard the ship *Mount Vernon*, which arrived in Salem in April 1800.¹⁰ Peabody avers Corné was likely one of the three gentlemen listed as passengers on this voyage. This assertion, however, contradicts Corné's naturalization record which

6. Little, "Corné" [note 4], xiv.
7. United States Circuit Court, Boston, Docket A123, image familysearch.org.
8. No primary source directly connected to Corné himself states he was born on Elba. The island was governed by the King of Naples at the time of Corné's birth and would be under his control until the Napoleonic invasion. Oddly, the claim that he was 93 conflicts with records generated at the time of his death that he was 88.
9. Robert E. Peabody, "A War Refugee of 1800," [hereafter Peabody, "A War Refugee"], *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, Volume 34, Transactions 1937–1942 (Boston: Published by the Society), 1943, 405–412.
10. Peabody conjectures that Corné created many images of the *Mount Vernon* because that was the ship that brought him to Salem (ibid., 406).

states he arrived in Salem in July 1797.¹¹ Establishing the correct date is made more problematic by how Corné signed several marine watercolors, "M.C.P. Naples 1800."¹² Since abundant secondary evidence points to Corné living for a time with Derby family, it is likely he came to Salem under Derby's auspices during the tumult of Napoleonic Wars. Various legends about Corné, that he was the son of a count, among other claims, said to have been passed down through the Derby family have not been substantiated.¹³ Corné later recounted buffoonish tales of his military exploits as recorded by Newporter, George Champlin Mason.¹⁴

Corné's Years in Salem and Boston

Claims that Corné supplemented his income by working as a confectioner while he lived in Massachusetts are without foundation. He earned his livelihood with a paintbrush, gained more prestigious commissions, and yes, it is true, promoted the tomato! George B. Felt's *The Annals of Salem*, quotes William Bentley's diary entry 1802: "Mr. Corne is endeavouring to introduce the Tomatos. He finds it difficult to persuade us even to taste them, after all his praises."¹⁵ Seeking a wider circle of paying customers, Corné left Salem by 1808 for Boston where Suffolk County deeds place him in the thriving commercial center of the city. On 1 June 1809, Peter Paulhes sold for \$2,000 to Michael Felix Corné, limner, a dwelling house on Middle Street.¹⁶ Boston's 1810 census finds "Michael Cornee," with a household of two, the second person a young man between 16 and 25.¹⁷ On 31 October 1810, Thomas Barnes of Boston for \$300 in current bills sold to Michele Corné, artist, a dwelling house on Middle Street.¹⁸ The artist continued to expand his Boston holdings, for another decade, a measure of his financial acumen. Between 1818 and 1820, there were two other real estate transactions between Corné and confectioner Anthony Chapouil concerning a building at 4 Hanover Street, Boston.¹⁹

During the War of 1812, Corné attained his greatest commercial success by creating highly publicized scenes of naval battles. A Boston newspaper reported

We understand that the three elegant paintings of the battle between the Constitution and the Java executed by that favourite artists Mr.

11. Naturalization record [note 7].
12. Little [note 4]. The initials stand for "Michele Corné Pinxit [painted]." Other paintings of the *Mount Vernon* have date of 1799. Perhaps Corné was using his country of origin rather than where he completed the painting.
13. The extensive Derby family papers were not consulted for this article.
14. See pages 12 and 13.
15. George B. Felt, *Annals of Salem* [hereafter Felt, *Annals of Salem*], two vols. (Salem: W. & S.B. Ives, 1849), 2:631.
16. Suffolk Co., Mass., Deeds 229:56.
17. 1810 U.S. Census, Boston, Ward 3, Suffolk Co., Mass., p. 327.
18. Suffolk Co., Mass., Deeds 234:175.
19. Suffolk Co., Mass., Deeds 260:108, 266:135.

Corne, under the direction of Commodore Bainbridge, will be exhibited in few days at the Marine Hall of the Columbian Museum.²⁰

The following year, in a similar vein, another Boston newspaper stated "We are told the Panorama of the action on Lake Erie, now exhibited at the exchange Coffee House, painted by Mr. Corné is a very faithful representation." In high praise the reporter went on: "It is said to have met with the approbation of Comm. Perry, who visited it while in town."²¹ Apparently, Corné possessed sufficient skills to have other artists train with him. When deaf-mute artist George Ropes died on 26 January 1819, age 30, diarist William Bentley noted that he studied with Mr. Corné.²² Boston's 1818 Directory has Michael Corné, limner, living on 61 Middle Street.²³ In 1820, he was missing from the directory but shown in the census as heading a household with a young man between 16 and 25, a man and a woman over 45.²⁴

Billy Bottomore's Spurious Origins

The young man was William Bottomore. For at least the last 25 years of Corné's life, his servant Billy Bottomore, a good four decades younger than the artist, lived with him. Various described as his man Friday, a clever Italian, a Bolognese, and a Frenchman, Billy was none of these.²⁵ Robert Peabody wrote that Corné hired Bottomore as the artist's assistant:

When doing one of these large decorating commissions he had for an assistant another Italian refugee, Botomore by name, a native of Bologna. Botomore was originally a confectioner, but Corné took him up, and under his instruction the assistant could wash in some of the simpler parts of a decorative scheme, mix the colors, and make himself generally useful.²⁶

A later newspaper article claimed Bottomore was born in Barcelona, of an English sea captain, and that he had a sister named Lillibridge who lived in Newport—another piece of garbled information.²⁷ Two other seemingly solid sources claim

20. *Repertory* (Boston, Mass.), 11 March 1813, p. 2.
21. *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 19 May 1814, p. 2.
22. Felt, *Annals of Salem*, [note 15] 2:81.
23. *1818 Boston Directory* (Boston: John West, 1818), 69.
24. Michael Corne, 1820 U.S. Census, Boston, Ward 3, Suffolk Co., Mass., p. 72. Engaged in manufactures. The other people in the house were William Bottomore and Esther Headley, the housekeeper, noted below.
25. Marie Gale, "Some Newport Houses," *Bulletin of Newport Historical Society*, 21 Feb. 1921.
26. Peabody, "A War Refugee" [note 11], 408.
27. *Newport Journal*, 25 Feb. 1911, clipping, Newport Historical Society.

Spain as Bottomore's birthplace: Newport's 1850 census and his death record.²⁸ Nina Little wrote that Bottomore contributed to Corné's support in his later years—she has it backwards.

Despite such exotic claims, Bottomore was not born in Spain, nor was he a refugee, except perhaps from poverty. Death records in America for Billy and his younger brother Alfred show that their parents were Thomas and Mary (Tacy) Bottomore.²⁹ Neither the Bottomores' marriage nor Billy's baptism has been found in English records, yet evidence of Thomas and Mary's subsequent children is found among the baptisms in three different English counties. If Billy's age at death is correct, he was the first of the couple's known children. There may have been others who stayed in England. Certainly the Bottomore family persisted in Nottingham for decades after Billy's people left for America. Thomas and Mary's family is constructed below:

Richard Bottomore was baptized at Chatham, Kent, England, probably at St. Mary's church, 2 December 1798 and buried in Leicestershire, England 25 December 1802.³⁰

Dorothy Bottomore was baptized at Chatham, Kent, England 27 July 1800.³¹ She died before December 1802 when a second daughter was given this name.

Dorothy Bottomore was baptized in Shepshed, Leicestershire, England on 26 December 1802, the day after her brother Richard died, and she died in Maine on 18 November 1852.³² She was married, first, in Boston, by Baptist minister Rev. Thomas Baldwin, 11 July 1819, to

28. William Bottomore, 1850 U.S. Census, Newport, Newport Co., R.I., p. 379A. Newport Deaths, Newport City Hall, 4:5.
29. Billy's death record says his father was Thomas Bottomore (R.I. Vital Records, Deaths, 53:838). The death record of Billy's brother Alfred Bottomore identifies their mother as Mary Tacy (Massachusetts Vital Records, 1841–1910, Deaths, 473:638). Alfred named a daughter born in 1849 Mary Tacy Bottomore. The baby was daughter of "Alfred, shoemaker, b. Nottingham, Eng." (*Vital Records of East Bridgewater, Massachusetts to the Year 1850* [hereafter *VRs of East Bridgewater*] [Boston: NEHGS, 1917], 32). It may be a coincidence, but a William Tacy, 52, died 8 Jan. 1803 in Shepshed, Leicestershire where Thomas and Mary were living at the time (Leicestershire Burials, image, findmypast.com).
30. Baptism, England Births & Baptisms 1538–1975, database. St. Mary's, a church built on a site of worship since pagan times, has been closed, its bells silent, since 1974, and its future was unclear in 2013 (<http://www.kentononline.co.uk/medway/news/bells-silenced-after-dickens-church-4759/>). Leicestershire Burials, image, findmypast.com.
31. Baptism, England Births & Baptisms 1538–1975, database, image, findmypast.com.
32. Baptism, England Births & Baptisms 1538–1975, database, findmypast.com. Wife of Stephen Winslow, she died in her 50th year and is buried in Sand Hill Cemetery, Somerville, Me. Photo at Find A Grave Memorial# 69931462.

John Herrenden, who died or disappeared before 1828. She married secondly, after 1829 Stephen Winslow.³³ Billy Bottomore named Dorothy Winslow in his will, but she predeceased him.

Sarah Bottomore was baptized 15 July 1804 at St. Mary the Virgin, the enormous medieval church also known as "St Mary's in the Lace Market" in Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, England.³⁴ She died at home in East Bridgewater, Massachusetts on 19 December 1884, age eighty years, six months, and four days.³⁵ She was married, first, in Boston, by Methodist minister Rev. Solomon Sias, 22 May 1824 to Joel Lilley, a confectioner, who died in Boston in Sept. 1834, age 33, and was buried 26 Sept. 1834 in Christ Church Cemetery.³⁶ On 5 February 1837 Sarah married another confectioner William Waterson Marjoram, who was born in Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, England 16 April 1806, son of William and Sarah (Jasper) Marjoram, and died of typhoid fever in Boston, 11 November 1857, age 51.³⁷ The couple were evidently separated by the time William made his will in 1856, as he left her an allowance but no dower rights.³⁸ His marriage to Sarah Bottomore appears to have been bigamous, and after William's death, she resumed the surname Lilley.³⁹ She was named in William Bottomore's will as Sarah Marjoram.

33. She appears in the 1828 and 1829 Boston directories as Sarah Herrenden, a confectioner offering food and drink at 23 Union St., next door to the address where her mother was shown in the 1820 directory (*The Boston Directory for 1828* [Boston: Charles Stimpson, Jr., 1828], 142).
34. Baptism, England Births & Baptisms 1538–1975, database, findmypast.com.
35. Baptism, England Births & Baptisms 1538–1975, database, findmypast.com. Death from Massachusetts Vital Records, 1841–1910, 356:302.
36. Ancestry.com. *Norfolk, England, Church of England Baptism, Marriages, and Burials, 1535-1812* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2016. Original data: Church of England Parish Registers. Norfolk Record Office, Norwich, Norfolk, England. Massachusetts Marriages, 1800–1849, 2:39. Sarah's surname was recorded as "Baltimore." Ancestry.com. *Massachusetts, Town and Vital Records, 1620–1988* [database on-line]: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.
37. Marriage from "Marriages in Boston by Rev. William Jenks, D.D.," *NEHG Register*, Vol. 90 (1936), p. 105). Massachusetts Vital Records, 1911–1915. New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, Massachusetts.
38. William W. Marjoram, Wills and Probate Records, Probate Records, Vol 155–156, 1857–1858, Case 41356.
39. Maria Marjoram of Norbiton, Surrey, England claimed to be William's widow in a petition to the Suffolk Probate Court (*Boston Traveler* [Boston], 13 Aug. 1858, p. 3).. Maria appears to have been successful in her quest for Marjoram's estate. The 1859 directory of Boston shows Maria Marjoram, widow, living at 238 Hanover St., with John W.W. Marjoram, a wealthy young confectioner (*The Boston Directory* [Boston: Sampson and Murdock, 1859] 262). Maria (Mason) Marjoram d. at 249 Hanover St., Boston 24

Thomas Bottomore was baptized in Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, England 15 September 1805 and died in Boston, Massachusetts in December 1834, age 24.⁴⁰ He married in Boston, 7 October 1824, Rebecca Cocks.⁴¹ Thomas "Bottomur," confectioner, was listed in Boston's 1826 directory.⁴²

Alfred Bottomore was baptized in Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, England 13 February 1814 and died in East Bridgewater, Massachusetts 23 May 1897, age 83 years, four months, and three days.⁴³ He married at East Bridgewater, Massachusetts, 5 May 1845, Eliza Chamberlain. His elaborate granite obelisk in Elmwood Cemetery, East Bridgewater commemorates William, his wife Eliza Ann Chamberlain, and their son William. Alfred was named in the wills of his brother William Bottomore and Sarah (Bottomore) Lilly.

Billy Bottomore's claim that his father was a sea captain appears to have been a romantic fiction. While it is possible that Thomas Bottomore went to sea at some point in his life, he was, by 1814, a bankrupt confectioner in Nottingham. The necessity of auctioning his property in 1815 provides a picture of a once comfortable life. The auctioneers sold Thomas Bottomore's newly built house on Clumber St., Nottingham, with its dining room, kitchen cellar, five "lodging rooms," a yard, scullery, pump, and cistern, describing the property as "very eligible" for a baker or confectioner.⁴⁴ "T. Bottomore," of Nottingham,

Sept. 1863, age 55 (Massachusetts VRs, 167:132). Ancestry.com. *Massachusetts, Town and Vital Records, 1620-1988* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011. John William Walter Marjoram, son of William and Maria, was christened at St. Luke, Chelsea, London on 6 April 1834 ("England Births and Christenings, 1538-1975," *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:JMJB-4MN>)). John said in the 1900 census that he arrived in America in 1846, when he was 12 (1900 U.S. Census, Providence, Ward 8, Providence Co., R.I., roll 1508, p. 11B, E.D. 73).

40. Nottinghamshire Baptisms Index, 1538-1917, database, findmypast.com. Death from *Saturday Morning Transcript* (Boston), 20 Dec. 1834, p. 63.

41. Massachusetts Town and Vital Records, 1620-1988, image, ancestry.com.

42. 1826 Boston Directory, p. 52, image fold3.

43. Nottinghamshire Baptisms Index, 1538-1917, database, findmypast.com. Find A Grave Memorial#s 117475859, 117475922, 157684403. Although the obelisk gives only years of birth and death, a contributor to Find A Grave gives his birth 20 Jan. 1814 in Nottinghamshire, England. Death from Massachusetts Vital Records, 1841-1910, 473:638. His occupation was listed on the death record as farmer.

44. Thomas Bottomore had been declared bankrupt in 1814 and was summoned to the Punch Bowl in Nottingham at 11 A.M. 31 May 1816 to divide his assets (*The London Gazette*, notice of auction, 3 Mar. 1815, 462; summons, 7 May 1816, 865). The amenities, especially the pump and cistern, were advanced luxuries for the day. Michele Corne's house in Boston in 1822 has only privileges to use a pump, not one of its own. A "yard" was not grass surrounded by flowerbeds, but rather a working space where a wagon and other equipment could be kept.

confectioner, received a dividend 31 May 1816.⁴⁵ While no further record has been found of the father, Thomas Bottomore, Mary Bottomore and her children had moved to Boston by 1820, perhaps earlier. Boston's 1820 directory, prepared for publication in 1819, has Mary Bottomore, retailer, living at 24 Union Street.⁴⁶ She is likely the Mary "Bottomur" who married in Boston, 22 October 1819 Tibbets Hinkley, an American veteran of the War of 1812.⁴⁷ In 1880 his surviving siblings, Sarah Lilly and Alfred Bottomore, both enumerated in the East Bridgewater, Massachusetts census, claimed England as their birthplace and as that of their parents.⁴⁸ With so much evidence establishing this family in England, why then would Billy later concoct a Spanish grandfather? Perhaps to cultivate a sense of the exotic as his master did and to portray himself as someone different than a member of a poor English family. Alone among his siblings not to marry in youth, Billy remained a bachelor throughout Corné's lifetime. The foreign-born Bottomore never became a naturalized American citizen.

Corné's Newport Years

After selling two of his Boston parcels in April 1822,⁴⁹ Corné purchased property in Newport on 9 September 1822, from the estate of Samuel Gardner for \$715, described as

a certain lot of land with a stable thereon, standing, butted, and bounded as follows, to wit, southerly seventy-five feet on Pelham Street, Westerly, one hundred and ninety three feet on Bannister Street, Northerly, seventy five feet on Mill Street, and Easterly, one hundred and eighty nine feet on land of Benjamin U. Carr and Samuel Carr...⁵⁰

Several reasons point to Corné's choice of Newport. While Boston's population in 1820 was 43,289, Newport, in the same census, had only 7,319 residents. It was a much smaller and less congested community. In a period of economic decline

45. *The New Monthly Magazine and Universal Register*, January to June 1816 (London: Henry Coburn, 1816), 5:477. What this dividend was is mysterious.

46. *The Boston Directory* (Boston: John H.A. Frost and Charles Stimson, Jr., 1820), 47.

47. Massachusetts Town and Vital Records, 1620-1988, image, ancestry.com. The groom was probably the man of this name born at Woolwich, Sagadahoc, Maine 18 Oct. 1788, son of Aaron and Hannah (Edward Johnson, *Vital Records of Hallowell, Maine to the Year 1892*, six vols. [Auburn, Me.: Maine Historical Society, 1924], 1:145). Tibbets Hinkley had served as a seaman on the U.S. sloop *Hornet* under Capt. Lawrence in the War of 1812. His application for bounty land was rejected (Fold3.com, Warrant Number 55-178665).

48. 1880 U.S. Census, East Bridgewater, Plymouth Co., Mass., E.D. 538, p. 473A, 474D.

49. Michael Felix Corné of Boston, limner, sold Joseph Emerson Smith Esq., a certain piece of land and house situated on Middle St. Boston, with privileges to the pump for \$2,000 (Suffolk Co. Mass Deeds, 276:138).

50. Newport Land Evidence, Newport City Hall, 16:171.



Redwood Library owns this pen-and-ink wash drawing of a young lady who looks as though she could have stepped from the pages of a Jane Austen novel. This drawing, like another in the library's collection, has been "pricked," indicating how the artist transferred them to another surface such as decorated wallpaper. Corné fixed the drawings to the walls in his Newport house and made pencil marks through the pin holes, using a connect-the-dots technique to create the outline. We can speculate that the figures were once part of a larger bucolic scene. The drawing is on wallpaper saved from the Corné house. Courtesy of Redwood Library, Newport.

after the War of 1812, Newport gave Corné an opportunity for a more substantial plot than in Boston for less money. Perhaps it was Corné's time, at 65, to contemplate a comfortable retirement, and in the absence of any further demand for his artwork, to spend more time in his garden, growing tomatoes. He would make no further property purchases. His household in 1830, consisted of man between 20 and 29, another between 70 and 79, and a woman between 50 and 59.⁵¹ A decade later, the 1840 census records a man from 40 to 49, another from 80 to 89, and a woman between 70 and 79.⁵²

51. Michael Corné, 1830 U.S. Census, Newport, Newport Co., R.I., p. 13.
52. Michael Corné, 1840 U.S. Census, Newport, Newport Co., R.I., p. 182.

Corné made such an impression on his new neighbors that he would be remembered in several later accounts. He was included in Julia Ward Howe's daughters' biography of their mother, referring to him as "Father Corné:"

He chose Newport as his final home, because, as he told Mr. Ward, he found the climate was favorable to the growth of the tomato, "that most wholesome of vegetables." The Ward boys delighted in visiting Father Corné and hearing him sing his old songs, French and Italian, some of which are sung to-day by our grandchildren. Father Corné lived to a great age. When past his ninetieth year, a friend asked him if he would not revisit Naples. "Ah, sir," replied the old man, "my father is dead."⁵³

Corné merited an entire chapter in George Champlin Mason's *Reminiscences of Newport*. Mason described Corné as "fond of company, a great talker, and a good story-teller."⁵⁴ Among the vignettes worth recounting, Mason elaborates on Corné's financial acumen, at 72, when he bought an annuity for \$1,570 from the Massachusetts Hospital Life Insurance Company. It would pay him \$100 every six months. Over the next fifteen years, Corné collected \$3,000:

This the old man enjoyed excessively, for he was keenly alive to the disappointment and surprise of the company as year by year they were called upon to make a further payment, and when he received his check he used to say, with his wheezy voice, and a laugh that almost choked him: "De prezedent, he say he very glad I so well, but I know he lie all de time; he no know how much macaroni, how much oil, how much tomato I eat. My grandfather die when he one hundred, my father when he one hundred and two, and I—I live forever!" He was the first person in Newport to eat tomatoes. Before his advent here those vegetables were looked upon as poisonous. "There," he says, "is that potato; he grows in the dark, or in the damp cellar with his pale, lank roots; he has no flavor; he lives underground. But the tomato, he grows in the sunshine; he has a fine rosy color, an exquisite flavor; he is wholesome; and when he is put in the soup, you relish him and leave nothing in the plate."⁵⁵

In 1835, Corné, in a gesture that seems superfluous in light of his will, sold "one undivided fourth part" of his lot of land, house, and outbuildings to William Bottomore

53. Laura E. Richards, Maud Howe Elliot, *Julia Ward Howe, 1819–1910* [hereafter Richards, *Julia Ward Howe*, two vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1915), 1:53–54.
54. George Champlin Mason, *Reminiscences of Newport* (Newport: Charles E. Hammett, Jr., 1884), 330, hereafter cited as Mason, *Reminiscences of Newport*.
55. Mason, *Reminiscences of Newport* [note 54], 338–339.

for \$500.⁵⁶ George Mason writes rather condescendingly of Billy selling lollipops and other confections from the front room of the house. Given that Bottomore's family in Nottingham and Boston all practiced the trade, it is hardly any surprise that he would have followed this trade in Newport.

Corné wrote his will on 17 January 1838, with these specific requests:

Be it remembered that I Michele Corné, late of Naples in the Kingdom of Naples, now a Citizen of the United States residing at Newport...make a testamentary disposition of such of the goods of this world as I have been permitted by a beneficent Providence to accumulate and enjoy, do make and declare this last will and testament. First, I give and bequeath to my brother Joseph Corné of Naples aforesaid, a Captain in the Guards of the King of Naples, the sum of one thousand dollars to be paid to him as soon after my decease as may be convenient. Secondly, I give and bequeath to Samuel Gyles, son of my friend Charles Gyles herein afternamed two shares of the Capital Stock of the Bank of Rhode Island. Thirdly, I give and bequeath to Esther Aaby now residing with me an annuity of fifty dollars per year for and during the time of her natural life....Fourthly, I give, devise, and bequeath to William Bottermore who has lived with me many years for his assistance and fidelity to me during that time the house and lot of land in Newport where I now reside...Fifthly, I give devise and bequeath to said William Bottomore all the rest, residue, and remainder of my estate both real and personal....⁵⁷

Six years later, on 26 November 1844, Corné added a codicil to his will. For reasons unknown, he revoked the bequest to his brother and bequeathed \$1,000 to Bottomore. Esther's annuity had been rendered void because of her death. According to her gravestone in the Common Burying Ground, Newport Historical Cemetery 3, Esther Headley, "of Reading Mass.," died 20 October 1840, age 75.⁵⁸ Corné died 10 July 1845 and was buried with Esther. A six-foot obelisk with somewhat odd all caps carving, marks their graves.⁵⁹ Corné's death was noted with a substantial obituary in the *Newport Mercury*:

56. Michele Corné deed to William Bottomore, 14 Apr. 1835, Newport Historical Society, Vault A, Box 126, Folder 1.

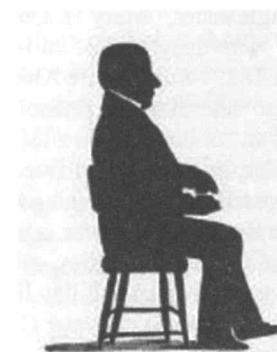
57. Newport Probate, 14: 213, witnessed by George W. Cole, Joseph Weaver, and Edwin Wilbur.

58. John Eylers Sterling, Barbara J. Austin, Letty R. Champion, *Newport, Rhode Island Colonial Burial Grounds* [hereafter Sterling et al., *Newport Colonial Burial Grounds*], ed. Cherry Fletcher Bamberg, FASG (Hope, R.I.: Rhode Island Genealogical Society, 2009), 326. The spelling of Esther's last name, *Aaby* undoubtedly reflects the way Corné pronounced her surname, dropping the initial h, not a sound made in Italian.

59. *Ibid.*, 325. The name is on the narrowest part of the stone, is only "M^l Corne" The transcription in the book comes from a nineteenth-century transcript by William Turner.

In this town on Thursday last, Mr. Michael Corné, a native of Italy, but for the last 23 years a resident of this place. Mr. Corné was of French descent, he entered the Neapolitan army at an early age, and at the time of the French invasion of that Kingdom, had attained the rank of a captain. Having been driven from his native country, he sought an asylum in the United States, and in 1799, arrived in Salem, Mass. Having had a taste for painting in his youth, he adopted the profession of a Painter in water colors. About the commencement of the last war, he removed to Boston, where he established himself as a historical painter. The representations of the different American Naval Victories were from his pencil; they were exhibited in the principal Cities and Towns, and produced the artist not only fame but a rich pecuniary award. About 1822 he came to Newport where he has ever since resided, attaining the advanced age of 88 years, with almost uninterrupted health and enjoying the esteem and good will of all who knew him.⁶⁰

Charles Gyles, who had been named co-executor with Bottomore, refused to accept the responsibility, leaving the latter as sole executor. Because of Corné's assets in Massachusetts, his will was also probated in Suffolk County.⁶¹



Silhouette of Michele Felix Corné from Mason's Reminiscences of Newport (1884).

60. *Newport Mercury*, 12 July 1845, p. 3.

61. William Bottomore's petition, *Boston Daily Atlas*, 24 Sept. 1845, p. 1. Suffolk Mass. Co. Probate, 143 (1845), Will #34468.

Billy Bottomore and the Chappell Sisters

The former maker of lollipops and sweets now became a gentleman of means. As recorded in the biography Julia Ward Howe's daughters wrote:

Billy Bottomore, a quaint old Newport sportsman, who took boys shooting, and showed them where to find plover, woodcock and snipe. Billy Bottomore passed for an adopted son of old Father Corné, another Newport "character" of those days... The name of Billy Bottomore always brought a twinkle to her eye, and we never tired of hearing how he told her, "There is a single sister in Newport, a seamstress, to whom I have offered matrimony, but she says, "No." The single sister finally yielded (perhaps when Billy inherited old Corné's money) and he became a proud and happy husband. "She keeps my house as neat as a nunnery!" he said. "When Miss E., the housekeeper, died, she nursed her and laid her out, and when Father Corné died, she nursed him and laid him out—" "Yes, Billy," broke in our Aunt Annie, "and she'll lay out you too!"—which in due time she did. He congratulated Julia on having girl-children only. "Give me daughters!" he cried. "As my good old Spanish grandfather used to say, give me daughters!" "Of this Spanish ancestor," our mother says, no one ever heard before."⁶²

Billy married the 48-year-old "single sister," Mary H. Chappell, in Newport, 6 April 1847.⁶³ She and her sister Abbey were daughters of an impoverished Revolutionary War pensioner James Chappell (d. 1829) and his wife Abigail (d. 1835).⁶⁴ Complying with the Pension Office's request to determine his financial need, Chappell disclosed on 26 June 1820 that he possessed an "old house" on a lot sixty-five feet square "with one desk, twenty chairs, three tables, one chest, and five other articles of furniture." He further stated his family consisted of himself, his wife, age 62, a daughter 22 [Mary], a daughter 19 [Abbey], and a granddaughter, age 11.⁶⁵ This granddaughter, another Abbey Chappell, married Charles N. Tilley in Newport on 3 November 1830.⁶⁶ In 1840, the Chappell sisters and Charles Tilley lived only a few doors away from Corné.⁶⁷ Their importance to this story is that later Charles Tilley gained control

62. Richards, *Julia Ward Howe* [note 53].

63. *Newport Mercury*, 11 April 1847. Married by Rev. Mr. Jacobs.

64. They are buried together with a simple marble gravestone in Newport Common Burial Ground near Mary and Billy and their spinster daughter Abby Chappell (Sterling et al., *Newport Colonial Burial Grounds* [note 58], 27. The similarity of gravestone to that of their daughter Abby, who died in 1884, suggests that the parents' stone was erected long after their deaths.

65. James Chappell, Revolutionary War Pension S 19, 935.

66. Arnold, *Vital Record of Rhode Island*, 4:2:17.

67. 1840 U.S. Census, Newport, Newport Co., R.I., p. 182.

of Mary Bottomore's estate, became her guardian, and passed on ownership of the Corné house to his son John Henry Tilley.

Billy Bottomore also acquired a reputation as a gardener. He wrote the following letter to the *Newport Mercury* only weeks before his death:

Messrs. Editors:

Gentlemen, having cultivated for the past 32 years the noble Cauliflower, I have tried all manner of experiments to avoid male white maggot which gnaws the bark of the stem beneath the earth and root...[and after describing the effects of a tablespoon of chimney soot]...I have raised them with as much ease as the Savoy Cabbage, which I serve in the same way; nor will the Cut Worm scarcely ever touch them. If you think this worthy of a place in your valuable paper, accept it from a friend to my fellow-citizen Gardiners. —William Bottomore.⁶⁸

For at least a decade, Bottomore had a potato variety named after him. John C. Barker of Middletown described the substantial yield of the "Bottomore potato."⁶⁹

Billy's comfortable life was cut short by his death in a cholera epidemic on 30 July 1854, age 56.⁷⁰ Unlike the death of his master, Bottomore's demise garnered only a brief death notice. His will, written in 1850, left bequests to his siblings, with the rest of his estate going to Mary: "I give and bequeath unto my brother Alfred Bottomore, and my sisters, Dorothy Winslow, and Sarah Marjoram, one thousand dollars each, but should either or both die before him, he shall be their heir or successor."⁷¹ In the time intervening between the will and the probate of the estate, Dorothy Winslow died on 18 November 1852.⁷² As a consequence, her brother Alfred's bequest increased to \$2,000.⁷³

Billy's sister Sarah survived both Billy and Dorothy. Sarah and her first husband Joel R. Lilley had adopted two children, Sarah Eleanor _____, who died in Boston in 1830, at the age of one month and Converse Reed _____, who was born ca. 1831.⁷⁴ Joel R. Lilley mentioned Converse as an adopted son in his will. After her second husband's death, Sarah moved from Boston to Newport where she lived, as Sarah Lilly, in household of her bachelor son, Converse R. Lilly.⁷⁵

68. "Agriculture," Letter to the Editor, *Newport Mercury*, 24 June 1854, p. 1.

69. "Good Farming and Large Potatoes," *Newport Mercury*, 1 Oct. 1864, p. 2.

70. "Died," *Newport Mercury*, 5 Aug. 1854, p. 3.

71. Newport Probate, 17: 390.

72. Wife of Stephen Winslow, she died in her 50th year and is buried in Sand Hill Cemetery, Somerville, Me. Photo at Find A Grave Memorial# 69931462.

73. Newport Probate, 17:513.

74. Death of Sarah Eleanor, *Columbia Centinel*, 22 Dec. 1830. The birth of Converse in *VRs of East Bridgewater* [note 29], 86, is taken from his gravestone and not hard proof of his place of birth.

75. Sarah Lilley, 1860 U.S. Census, Newport, Newport Co., R.I., roll 1204, p. 254.

Unfortunately, Converse Reed Lilly of Boston, “adopted son of Mrs. Sarah Lilly, known for many years by the name of Marjoram,” died of dropsy in Newport 1 March 1861.⁷⁶ Sarah then moved to East Bridgewater, Massachusetts where her brother Alfred Bottomore and his family lived. She died there in 1884, leaving a bequest of \$1,000 to Alfred Bottomore, with the bulk of her estate going to the New Jerusalem Church.⁷⁷ Alfred Bottomore, the last of Billy’s siblings, died in East Bridgewater in 1897, age 83.

A peculiar clause from Billy Bottomore’s will reads like a page from Edgar Allan Poe: “I desire that my body be placed in some secure vault until it be unfit for dissection and my coffin to be placed in a box before burial.” He was, like many Americans of his day, worried about the common practice of bodysnatching or grave robbing to provide specimens for dissection in medical schools. Curiously, the inventory of his personal estate shows no trace of Bottomore’s trade as a confectioner nor anything specific that can be identified with Corné, including the portrait. Billy’s monetary assets totaled \$7,630, and the furniture among eight rooms was assessed at \$489. In the final accounting of Billy’s estate, after deducting legacies and expenses, Mary Bottomore was left with \$5,600.⁷⁸

The remaining years of Mary Bottomore’s life on Corné Street were more eventful than one might expect from her church work as a member of the Dorcas Society of Newport’s First Baptist Church and as an agent for the *Baptist Missionary Magazine*.⁷⁹ Her household in 1860 consisted of two other people, Mary Faisneau, 15, at school, and Mary Pearce, 30, clerk.⁸⁰ Mary Amelia Faisneau was born in Newport 29 Aug. 1844, the daughter of hairdresser/barber George Faisneau and his second wife Amelia.⁸¹ Mary’s mother appears to have died between 1850 and 1860, leaving her much older husband with three young girls. By 1860 the family had largely dispersed, Mary Faisneau to Mary H. Bottomore, her sister Theresa to the family of Benjamin and Mary Mumford, and their father boarding with Henrietta in the family of his daughter from his first marriage Julia (Faisneau) Downing and her husband Benjamin F. Downing.⁸² George Faisneau

died 30 August, 1865.⁸³ The connection between Mary Bottomore and this family remains unclear. A “Baltimorean” writing reminiscences of Newport in 1874 included in his group of “peculiar characters” of Long Wharf familiar names: “Faisneau, ‘the hairdresser on Thames Street, who came out with ‘Count’ Vernon, and there was Mr. Corné, the Neapolitan, and Billy Bottomore, the fisherman...”⁸⁴ The connection may have been the camaraderie among European immigrants.

Mary Bottomore’s dramatic encounter with a burglar made compelling copy in the *Newport Mercury*:

John O’Donnell, a young Irishman, made a bold push on Saturday night last, by entering the dwelling of Mrs. Mary Bottomore, corner of Mill and Corne streets. About 11 o’clock Mrs. Bottomore heard a noise at the back door and immediately rose from her bed and went to the window which she opened a few inches and inquired what he wished. He told her he was sent by a sick person to borrow a syringe. She requested him to stop where he was while she could get it, and immediately left for another part of the house, but while she was gone he pushed up the window and entered the room, and on her return, he made an attack on her, but she being on the alert, grappled with him and threw him on the floor, and called to the only person in the house, a little girl 13 years of age, to run for help. A tussle then ensued, when he succeeded in throwing her, but by the active use of her finger nails, he was glad to desist and rapidly made his escape by jumping through a window-sash. Information was immediately given to Mr. B.B. Cornell, of the City Watch, who subsequently arrested him while setting on the steps of the “Sea Girt House.”⁸⁵

The “little girl 13 years of age” who ran for help was Mary Faisneau. Other newspapers picked up the story, with this additional detail about the culprit: “He had a quantity of matches with him, and perhaps intended to fire the house.”⁸⁶

In 1865, Mary Bottomore’s household appeared more complex and alarming. Mary Faisneau, now 21, still lived with her, but there was also a twenty-day-old child, a second Mary Faisneau. Mary Fish, 68, a nurse, also appeared to live with them. In the next consecutive household, perhaps renting from Mary, was Charles

76 “Deaths,” *Boston Evening Transcript*, 4 Mar. 1861, p. 3. He was not buried in Newport but in East Bridgewater in the Elmwood Cemetery on West St. [note 72].

77. Sarah Lilley, Plymouth County Probate, 1884, Docket 1739.

78. Newport Probate, Newport City Hall, 17: 499.

79. *The Missionary Magazine* (Boston: Boston Missionary Rooms, 1859), 438.

80. Mary Bottomore had then real and personal estate worth \$300 each (1860 U.S. Census, Newport, Newport Co., R.I., roll 1204, p. 260).

81. Arnold, RIVR [note 5], 4:2:95. In 1850, as a 4-year-old, Mary was living with her parents, George, 51, a barber, born in Massachusetts, and Amelia, 31, and two of the four younger siblings born by then (1850 U.S. census, Newport, Newport Co., R.I., roll 842, p. 689/346). In 1856 George Faisneau had a shop at 192 Thames St., and house at 2 Covell St. (*The Newport Directory, 1856-'57* (New York: William H. Boyd, 1856), 24.

82. 1860 U.S. Census, Newport, Newport Co., R.I., roll 1204, p. 67/227; p. 90.

83. *Newport Mercury*, 2 Sept. 1865, p. 3. After their father was near death in the summer of 1865, and Mary and her younger sister Henrietta Doty Faisneau and Theresa Easton petitioned the probate court to appoint Richard Cornell, his former business partner as their guardian (*Newport Mercury*, 8 July 1865, p. 3; 15 July 1865, p. 4). Cornell did become guardian of the younger girls, but not Mary who had reached the age of majority.

84. “Reminiscences of Newport,” 23 May 1874, *Newport Mercury*, p. 1. That hairdresser was Mary’s grandfather Etienne Pascal Faisneau. Mary’s father was shown in directories at 192 Thames St.

85. *Newport Mercury*, 24 Nov. 1860, p. 2.

86. “Miscellaneous Items,” *New England Farmer* (Boston, Mass.), 24 Nov. 1860, p. 3.

B. Peckham, who called himself a physician.⁸⁷ The combination of an out-of-wedlock baby and a dubious medical practitioner would not only have put Mary at odds with the Dorcas Society, it made her family downright uncomfortable. Mary Faisneau quickly disappeared into marriage: on Christmas Day 1866 in Newport she married Henry C. Mason of Minnesota “formerly of this city.”⁸⁸ Charles B. Peckham, however, was to be a persistent presence on Corné St., even after Mary Bottomore’s death.

Oriental Vapors on Corné Street

In the last year of Corné’s life, his garden shared something even more foreign than the tomato, alternately called “Oriental Baths” or “Oriental Vapors.” Their proprietor, C. B. Peckham expressed his effusive thanks to Corné and Bottomore “for granting me a resting place in their garden, perhaps the Eden of America.”⁸⁹ Charles B. Peckham, a fascinating and energetic character, had many business ventures in Newport from the 1830s through the 1870s, mostly on the outer fringes of conventional thought. Peckham started as a passionate foe of Christianity. In the summer of 1831 he advertised “Vice Unmasked” and *Moral Physiology*, treatises on morality by other authors, in the *Rhode Island Republican*.⁹⁰ By August 1833 he was co-publisher with James C. Swan of the *Rhode-Island Republican*, a newspaper described as a fearless foe of the “abuses of priestcraft.”⁹¹ By 1835 he had become the Newport agent for various newspapers and publishers, including the *Boston Investigator*, *New-York Free Enquirer*, *New-York Comet*, and others.⁹² These ads for “liberal works” continued for months.

87. 1865 Rhode Island Census, Newport, Ward 1, Newport County, R.I. State Archives, 1:249.

88. “Married,” *Newport Mercury*, 29 Dec. 1866, p. 3.

89. An article in *Newport Mercury*, 3 Jan. 1975, p. 4, describes Gladys Bolhouse’s discovery of C.B. Peckham’s broadside in the vaults of the Newport Historical Society. The document quoted in 1975 has not been found.

90. Henry C. Mason was then 22. He had been born on the Isle of Cuba, son of William and Lydia H. (_____) Mason (R.I. Vital Records, Marriages, 66:456). *Rhode Island Republican* (Newport), 21 June 1831, p. 1; 2 Aug. 1831, p. 3). Henry Clay Mason registered for the Civil War draft in Providence, giving his address as Broad St., Newport (NARA, Consolidated Lists of Civil War Draft Registration Records (Provost Marshal General’s Bureau; Consolidated Enrollment Lists, 1863–1865); Record Group 110, Records of the Provost Marshal General’s Bureau [Civil War Consolidated Enrollment Lists, 1863–1865 (Civil War Union Draft Records); *NAI*: 4213514; Archive Vol. #2 of 3). What became of the couple and Mary’s daughter remains a mystery. Mary’s younger sisters Henrietta and Theresa both married as well (ibid, 69:492 and 71:636).

91. *The Republican [Rhode-Island Republican]* (Newport), 7 Aug. 1833, under the masthead, p. 2. Characterization of the newspaper from *Christian Pilot* (Portland, Me.), reprint of a story in the *Hartford Times*, 29 Aug. 1833, p. 2.

92. *Rhode-Island Republican* (Newport), 4 Mar. 1835, p. 3.



Detail of “Broadside box 1” in the collection of the Newport Historical Society.

Peckham turned to various aspects of medicine, occasionally but inconsistently using the title “Doctor.” The only specific degree he ever used after his name was “SD,” the initials standing for Doctor of the Supernatural.⁹³ His *Rhode-Island Republican* announced in 1838 that “Doct. C.B. Peckham” would be editing a new medical journal, *The Lobelian*, and a year later that he had been invited by the head of an unnamed “newly chartered medical school” in Columbus, Ohio to edit their journal, *The Botanico Medical Recorder*.⁹⁴ By 1841 he was offering “Botanic Medicines” for sale on Mill St., one door above William Wilbor. The notice further informed the public that “VAPOR BATHS can also be had at the same place.”⁹⁵ Continuing newspaper reports show that he dabbled in politics and abolitionism. He owned property on Corné Street by 1851.⁹⁶ A guide to Newport in 1852 documents the “admirably arranged” Oriental Baths on Corné Street, styling Dr. Peckham “the Preissnitz of Vapour” an allusion to the founder of modern hydrotherapy Victor Preissnitz.⁹⁷ A surviving broadsheet with the banner headline (above) ORIENTAL BATHS FOR LADIES AND GENTLEMEN extols Peckham’s vapor treatment:

...a rarer medium than water, it more readily penetrates and softens the skin, and while its numberless pores freely open and discharge from the system its matters which are washed away in the vaporous

93. See note 99.

94. *Rhode-Island Republican* (Newport), 15 May 1838, p. 2; 8 May 1839, p. 2. The college was the Botanico-Medical College of Ohio, a facility that changed its name several times. A Cincinnati directory for 1844 has a woodcut of a large, exotic-looking building with a list of fees for lectures in different subjects and a note of an additional graduation fee of \$20 (*Cincinnati Business Directory for the Year 1844* [Cincinnati: R.P. Brooks, 1844], 142). The next page carries a half-page advertisement for the *Botanico-Medical Recorder*, said to be “an uncompromising enemy to all medical quackery.”

95. *Newport Mercury* (Newport), 6 Feb. 1841, p. 3.

96. Peckham was mentioned as an abutter in a petition to the Court of Probate over land on Corné St. 5 May 1851 (*Newport Mercury*, 10 May 1851, p. 3).

97. J.R.D. [John Dix, afterwards Ross], *A Hand-Book of Newport and Rhode Island* (Newport: C.E. Hammett, Jr., 1852), 158. Hot and cold water baths were also available on Long Wharf.

flood without the use of alkali. Nor does it fail to act upon all internal organs by absorption and nervous influence as efficiently as on skin.⁹⁸

Peckham was still running the Oriental Baths in 1875, his household consisting then only of himself and two English servants, Thomas and Annie Brown.⁹⁹ In 1880 he lived alone on Corné St., calling himself a physician.¹⁰⁰

Charles B. Peckham had long entertained a belief in spiritualism. In the mid-1830s he published a multi-part article "An Historical Sketch of the 'Manifestation of the Spirit' alias the Holy Ghost from the time of our Savior to ____." in the *Boston Investigator*.¹⁰¹ The fascination continued all his life, even to his death in Newport on 28 November 1882.¹⁰² Peckham's death notice states that: "A leading spiritualist of Newport, a prominent character in the spiritual circles of New England, dropped dead in a store Wednesday while examining spiritualist publications." The remarkable aspect of this death was that Peckham had "told a friend that Gabriel had sounded his trumpet and had given him warning that he was wanted in spiritland."¹⁰³ Charles Baring Peckham was buried in Island Cemetery, Newport Historic Cemetery 1.¹⁰⁴ At \$45 his gravestone was one of the most expensive charges against his modest estate. His effects were sold at private auction, and after the debts were paid, his four nieces divided \$417.74.¹⁰⁵

Guardianship of the Tilleys

A few years before her death, Mary Bottomore's nephews intervened in what became a family tug-of-war. In 1870, Mary boarded with a nephew, James Chappell, 43, a harness maker, living in Newport's Ward 4.¹⁰⁶ In the meantime, her sister and legal next-of-kin, Abbey Chappell, pressed for a different guardian.

98. "Broadside box 1," collection of the Newport Historical Society.

99. 1875 Rhode Island Census, Newport, Ward 1, Newport County, 4:62.

100. 1880 U.S. Census, Newport, Newport Co., R.I., roll 1210, p. 204D, E.D. 94.

101. *Boston Investigator*, 5 June, 3 July, 7 Aug., and 11 Sept. 1835, pp. 219, 221–223, 225–228, 230–233. The articles reveal a virulent anti-Christian bias. The byline is "Charles B. Peckham, farmer and SD," that is, Doctor of the Supernatural. The *Investigator* was one of the papers for which he was the Newport agent.

102. R.I. Vital Records, Deaths, 82:766. He was born in Middletown, R.I., the son of Daniel and Elizabeth (____) Peckham.

103. His death notice appeared in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 1 Dec. 1882, p. 1.

104. Middle name from added information (Find A Grave Memorial# 124281004, no photo). This burial ground discourages photography.

105. Charles B. Peckham, Probate Records from R.I. State Archives. The probate was protracted; the final account of the executor, Peckham's nephew Francis Peckham was not presented until 1886.

106. 1870 U.S. Census, Newport, Ward 4, Newport Co., R.I., p. 484A. James was the son of Mary's brother, Robert Chappell (1789–1829). A biographical sketch of this saddler and chiropodist appeared in the "Grist Mill" column of the *Newport Daily News*, 16 Dec. 1963, p. 10.

Abbey, who "wore one of the last leghorns trimmed with puce—Marie Antoinette's pet color—when she walked abroad,"¹⁰⁷ had lived with her niece Abbey (Chappell) Tilley since Mary's marriage to Billy Bottomore. A notice appeared in the *Newport Mercury*, 17 June 1871:

Upon the petition in writing to this Court, of Abbey Chappell, of the City of Newport, representing that Mary H. Bottomore, a person of full age, widow, now resides in, and has a legal settlement in said Newport, and has estate and property which requires the care and management of some suitable person, as said Mary H. Bottomore is a person for want of discretion in managing her estate, is likely to bring herself to want, and thereby render herself chargeable, that the petitioner is the sister of said Mary and her next of kin, and praying that Charles N. Tilley, of Newport, or some other person may be appointed guardian of the person and estate of Mary H. Bottomore.¹⁰⁸

Given the stature of Charles Nicoll Tilley as a Deputy Collector of Customs, the court acceded to Abbey's wish, and appointed him Mary's guardian on 26 June 1871.¹⁰⁹ A detailed inventory of Mary Bottomore's personal estate included blankets, sheets, pillow cases, books, and items of furniture that one would expect to find, but no self-portrait of Michele Corné, said to have been her bequest to the Redwood Library.¹¹⁰ A year later in another court case, James H. Chappell's claim for board and care of his aunt was granted to the plaintiff for \$954.77.¹¹¹ Mary Bottomore died on 14 July 1873 and was buried next to Billy in Newport Common Burial Ground.¹¹² Mary died intestate, and once again, her sister, Abbey, petitioned the court for Charles Tilley to continue his administration of the Bottomore estate. Charles retained control of Mary's house and assets. For the next twenty years, the property on 2 Corné Street would be rented while Charles Tilley, Abby, their son John Henry Tilley, his wife Louise, and Abbey Chappell all continued to live together in a house at 70 Mill Street, now bearing a plaque that identifies it incorrectly as the "Billy Bottomore house."¹¹³ Abbey Chappell

107. Mary Edith Powell, *Bulletin of the Newport Historical Society*, 20 Aug. 1917, p. 14. A leghorn was an elaborately decorated hat.

108. *Newport Mercury*, 17 June 1871, p. 4. The original guardianship papers have been transferred from Newport to the Rhode Island State Archives. They are presently in offsite storage, accessible for a fee.

109. Newport Probate, 27:138.

110. Newport Probate, 27:211.

111. *Newport Mercury*, 5 Oct. 1872, p. 2.

112. Newport Deaths, 4:186. Cause of death: "advance age."

113. 1880 U.S. Census, Newport, Newport, R.I., E.D. 193, p. 168D. The house had belonged to James Chappell. Billy Bottomore always lived at 2 Corné St.

died 6 December 1884,¹¹⁴ followed by her niece Abbey Tilley on 31 May 1886, age 77.¹¹⁵ Surprisingly, for a man of means and property, Charles Nicoll Tilley died intestate on 9 September 1894.¹¹⁶ His only child, John Henry Tilley was granted administration of his father's estate. Among the estate's assets was the yearly rent of \$ 55.00 from 2 Corné Street.¹¹⁷

John H. Tilley and his wife Louise moved to the Corné house shortly after his father's death, and they would be counted there in the Newport census. Apparently, they had no children. A servant, Martha King, born in Scotland, lived with them.¹¹⁸ John H. Tilley died 21 September 1907, with his funeral held from the house.¹¹⁹ His widow lived in the house until her death 10 January 1917.¹²⁰ By the terms of John H. Tilley's will, a bequest of \$5,000 was then released to the Newport Historical Society as well as to other organizations and individuals. Louise Hammett (Marsh) Tilley's death ended almost a century of familial ownership of the house on Corné with a sequence of occupants initially set in motion by the legacy of Michele Felice Corné who did much more than bring the tomato to Newport.



John Henry Tilley, photo from Representative Men and Old Families of Rhode Island (1908).

Michael F. Dwyer, Assistant Editor of this journal, first encountered Corné while researching images of the Pilgrims in art. He offers sincere thanks to Patrick F. Murphy, Newport City Historian; Caitlin Springer, Newport City Hall; Michelle Farias of Redwood Library; Kenneth S. Carlson, R.I. State Archives, Bert Lippincott, Sarah Long, and Molly Bruce Patterson, of the Newport Historical Society, and Cherry Fletcher Bamberg for their help with this article. Michael welcomes comments through email at michaelftdwyer@comcast.net.

114. Newport Deaths, 5:92.

115. Newport Deaths, 5:108.

116. Newport Deaths, 5:209.

117. Newport Probate, 48:271.

118. Charles Tilley, 1900 U.S. Census, Newport, Ward 3, Newport Co., R.I., E.D. 219, p. 12B.

119. Newport Deaths, 6:88.

120. Newport Deaths, 7: 3. An extended essay on John Henry Tilley and his family appears in *Representative Men and Old Families of Rhode Island* (3 vols., Chicago, Ill.: Beers & Co., 1908), 2:716–718.

GOLDDIGGERS OF 1868: The Bowen Claimants to the Jumel Estate (Part Three)

William B. Saxbe Jr., CG, FASG

Continued from *Rhode Island Roots*, June and September 2017

Editor's note: This article concludes the exploration of the descendants of James⁵ Bowen (*Joseph⁴, Joseph³, Obadiah², Richard¹*), some of whom claimed (unsuccessfully) to be heirs of the estate of Madame Jumel AKA Betsey (Bowen) (Jumel) Burr. Names marked with bold dots, such as “● Joseph Pearce ●,” are those of claimants. The reconstruction of James Bowen's poorly documented family depends for many clues on the depositions of relatives. Please see the previous article for full documentation. Below is a list of James Bowen's children to refresh the memory of readers. This article deals with 6. MARTIN BOWEN, and 7. PATIENCE BOWEN.—CFB

Children of James Bowen, born presumably at Rehoboth, Bristol Co., Mass:

with first wife Hannah (Chase) Bowen

2. i. EPHRAIM⁶ BOWEN.
3. ii. JAMES BOWEN.
4. iii. ELIZABETH BOWEN.
5. iv. HANNAH BOWEN.

with second wife Abigail (Williston) (Thurber) Bowen, birth order unknown:

6. v. MARTIN BOWEN.
7. vi. PATIENCE BOWEN.

6. **MARTIN⁶ BOWEN** (*James⁵, Joseph⁴, Joseph³, Obadiah², Richard¹*) was born, probably at Rehoboth, Mass. at an unknown time after his parents' marriage 10 Sept. 1761.¹ He died at Providence, R.I., 8 October 1822, his death notice calling him “an honest and industrious citizen, formerly of Rehoboth.”² He married at Rehoboth 17 May 1789 **MARY HORTON**.³ She was born in Rehoboth ca. 1770,

1. James N. Arnold, *Vital Record of Rehoboth, 1642–1896* [hereafter *Rehoboth VRs*] (Providence, R.I.: Narragansett Historical Publishing Co., 1897), 44.

2. “Deaths,” *Rhode-Island Religious Intelligencer* (Providence), 11 October 1822, p. 3.

3. *Rehoboth VRs* [note 1], 47. Intentions 22 March 1789. Martin registered intentions with Lydia Pearse at Rehoboth 20 April 1788, but there was no record of marriage (*ibid.*, 427).