

RHODE ISLAND HISTORY



VOLUME 34:4 NOVEMBER 1975

THE REPEAL
OR THE FUNERAL OF MISS AME-STAMP



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British political cartoon, 1766, satirizing Stamp Act repeal necessitated by strong resistance of American colonists to the tax. In this engraving George Grenville, Chief Minister and First Lord of the Treasury, carries the coffin of "Miss Ame-Stamp" (1765 died 1766). On the quay are bales labeled "Stamps from America," and "Black Cloth from America" presumably for the funeral. The other figures as well as other graphic references concern personalities and politics in England.

R H O D E I S L A N D H I S T O R Y

Published by

THE RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
52 POWER STREET, PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND
02906 and printed by a grant of the
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Issued Quarterly at Providence, Rhode Island, February, May, August, and November. Second class postage paid at Providence, Rhode Island.

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Rhode Island History (1942-) and its predecessors *Rhode Island Historical Society Collections* (1918-1941) and *Publications Rhode Island Historical Society* (1893-1901) are available in microform from Xerox University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. (313) 761-4700. Please write for complete information.



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Newport in 1730 in a lithograph by J. P. Newell, 1884. The city's harbor and strategic location on the Bay contributed to Rhode Island's development as a center of commerce in the 18th century.

Molasses to Muskets – Rhode Island 1763-1775

by Joel A. Cohen*

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Britain's policies toward its American colonies were based on the concept of mercantilism. This political and economic philosophy presumed that the colonies existed in subordinate status solely for England's betterment. Fortunately for America, these mercantilistic doctrines were implemented only imperfectly. There was a wide gap between London's mercantilist legislation and the practical ways colonists used to evade it. So with the end of the great war for empire in 1763, many English leaders believed the time was right to put theory into practice and reorganize the ineffectual colonial system. Legislation of 1760s and 1770s was often designed "not simply as a solution to problems of imperial defense or finance but also as a means to achieve the final and effective subordination of the commercial interests of the Americans to the requirements of the Mother Country." Reaction in Rhode Island to this rejuvenated mercantilism would lead to spirited protest and ultimately to revolution.¹

Rhode Island's economy and traditionally independent nature would be seriously challenged by attempts to enforce British legislation. Traits of particularism, individualism and independent action which began in the 1630s were reinforced by the charter of 1663. This document incorporated the colony and gave Rhode Islanders the right "to hold forth a livelie experiment" in civil government "with a full libertie in religious concernements"; thus they were allowed and – in certain respects – encouraged

towards self-government. Governor and company were granted all powers of government which "bee not contrary and repugnant unto, butt, as neare as may bee, agreeable to the lawes of this our realme of England, considering the nature and constitutione of the place and people there"; and the inhabitants of the colony were to have the same privileges, liberties and rights "as if they, and every of them, were borne within the realme of England." In essence this charter seemed to insure a future of independent activity on the part of Rhode Islanders.²

The economy of eighteenth-century Rhode Island was oriented toward the sea. Excellent harbor facilities at Newport and Providence provided bases for increased commerce. Unfortunately, lack of a developed hinterland – from which raw materials could be drawn and in which manufactured products could be sold – caused Rhode Islanders to be ever more dependent upon a "carrying" maritime trade. From 1700 on, commerce increased, especially from Newport, where trading was done with most mainland colonies and with Madeira, Surinam, and West Indies. By 1731 the colony had even established direct trade with Holland, the Mediterranean, and England. In 1740 vessels from Newport and Providence for foreign ports had grown to one hundred and twenty, and by 1763 over five hundred and thirty-four ships from Newport alone were involved in overseas and coastal trade.³

Rhode Island then in 1763 was an important trading

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1 Thomas C. Barrow, "Background to Grenville Program, 1757-1763," *William and Mary Quarterly* 22: 1 (January 1965) 104; "Project for Imperial Reform: Hints Respecting Settlement for our American Provinces, 1763," *William and Mary Quarterly* 24: 1 (January 1967) 108-126.

2 John Russell Bartlett, ed., *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England*, 10v. (Providence, 1856-1865) 2: 3-21.

3 James B. Hedges, *Browns of Providence Plantations: Colonial Years* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952) xiv-xv. Frank Greene Bates, *Rhode Island and Formation of the Union* (New York: Macmillan, 1898) 31-32.

and shipping center. Seed, oil, flax, horses, cheese, and lumber from Rhode Island were limited in quantity; but the addition of fish, flour, and beef from other colonies served merchants well in their dealings with ever-growing West Indian trade. Molasses was the single most important product taken aboard in the islands and after proper distillation in the colony became rum. Rhode Islanders used molasses and rum to help pay off their debts in England, to purchase African slaves, and to buy products of other colonies for consumption and export. When the Grenville ministry in 1763 indicated its desire to resuscitate and enforce the Navigation Acts, which colonists had so successfully ignored — particularly the Molasses Act of 1733 — it could be sure of strong protest from the Narragansett Bay colony.⁴

In 1764 the British government did adopt a revised version of the Molasses Act which threatened to ruin the colony's economy. Rhode Islanders desperately needed molasses imported from the foreign-controlled West Indies because British islands could not supply enough, and the new three pence per gallon duty on foreign molasses, if enforced, would not allow merchants a profit. Predictably, the General Assembly sent its complaints about this bill to the king, to no avail.⁵

Although this "Sugar Act" posed a severe problem to Rhode Island commerce, colonists soon devised methods to get around it. Freemen controlled government and courts and thereby helped to thwart enforcement of the act. Smuggling, tax evasion and tying up court cases for years led to effective control over officers of the king and successful defiance of Parliament's authority. Rhode Islanders were determined to continue their independent ways.⁶

Grenville's program for exacting revenue from

American colonies reached its height on March 22, 1765, when royal approval was given to the Stamp Act. By the terms of this act, stamps were to be placed on all decisions of civil courts, licenses of various kinds, bonds, deeds, pamphlets, almanacs and newspapers as well as many other articles and documents. In addition to these taxes, which in several cases were very high, Parliament also provided for possible transgressions. Heavy fines and penalties were to be meted out by colonial vice-admiralty courts to anyone who violated the act.⁷

Rhode Island looked on this tax as an infringement of its traditional rights and liberties. On August 7, 1765, a special town meeting was called in Providence for the purpose of expressing the town's dissatisfaction with the act. At this meeting a committee made up of Stephen Hopkins, John Brown and others was appointed for the purpose of drafting instructions to the town's delegates in the General Assembly. Six days later the instructions and resolutions which the committee reported were unanimously accepted. For the most part, these resolutions would soon be espoused with slight modification and addition by the General Assembly.⁸

In Providence, reaction against the Stamp Act was fairly calm and orderly but the attitude of the people of Newport was quite the opposite. Late in August riotous behavior and mob violence were directed against several persons and their property. Among them were stamp distributor Augustus Johnston, both Dr. Thomas Moffat and Martin Howard who were deeply resented because of publicly expressed affection for the crown and alleged writings in support of the Stamp Act. For two days the town was in turmoil. Johnston, Howard, Moffat and a few others noted for their loyalty to the king's government retreated to the

4 "Remonstrance of the Colony of Rhode Island to the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations," Bartlett 6: 378-383.

5 General Assembly petition complaining about this "Sugar Act" and the forthcoming stamp tax, Bartlett 6: 414-416.

6 David S. Lovejoy, *Rhode Island Politics and the American Revolution, 1760-1776* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1958) ch. 2.

7 Bernhard Knollenberg, *Origin of the American Revolution, 1759-1766* (New York: Macmillan, 1960) 226. Arthur Meier Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution, 1763-1776* (New York: Columbia University, 1918) 65.

8 William R. Staples, *Annals of the Town of Providence*, (Providence: 1843) 210-214.



Courtesy Proprietors of the Social Law Library, Boston

Martin Howard in his robes as Chief Justice of North Carolina, a position to which he was appointed in 1767, two years after fleeing Newport because of his opinions in favor of the Stamp Act. Portrait by John Singleton Copley.

harbor and safety of British man-of-war *Cygnets*. The turbulence finally quieted down. Augustus Johnston returned to town and resigned his post, but Moffat and Howard elected to leave and set sail for England.⁹

Rhode Islanders expressed dissatisfaction with the Stamp Act in ways other than mob activity. In September 1765 the General Assembly met in East Greenwich and added its voice to protests against the act. First of all the Assembly voted to send Metcalf Bowler and Henry Ward to the upcoming conference in New York — the Stamp Act Congress. These two men were

given detailed instructions and the power to cast the colony's support for any measures which would bring about relief from the accursed act.

Next the Assembly adopted a series of resolutions similar to those Patrick Henry had proposed to the Virginia House of Burgesses in May. These Rhode Island resolves were six in number. The first two declared that the people of the colony had the same rights and privileges as the natural born citizens of Great Britain. Number three stated that they had always been "governed by their own Assembly, in the article of taxes and internal police." In the fourth resolve they stated that only the General Assembly could levy imposts and taxes on the colony, and for any other power to do so would be unconstitutional and have "a manifest tendency to destroy the liberties of the people of this colony." The fifth resolution, one which had not been accepted in Virginia, declared that Rhode Islanders were "not bound to yield obedience to any law or ordinance designed to impose any internal taxation whatsoever upon them," unless the act were levied by their own Assembly. Finally, all colony officials were directed to continue as though the new act had never been passed, and the Assembly would guarantee indemnity and support. In other words, the Stamp Act would not be binding on Rhode Islanders despite what the crown had ordered.¹⁰

When time came for the Stamp Act to go into effect, inhabitants of Rhode Island ignored it. The actions of Governor Ward were indicative of general feeling throughout the colony. In December he received from the lords of the treasury a letter of instructions with regard to the new act. The letter requested him to give his aid and assistance to the distributor of the stamps and to see that the stamp master "appoint under Distributors in every proper Town and place" in the col-

⁹ *Newport Mercury* September 2, 1765, p. 3. Edmund S. Morgan and Helen M. Morgan, *Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953) 144-148.

¹⁰ Bartlett 6: 449-452.



Library of Congress

Embossed stamp of the type affixed to newspapers, pamphlets, and all legal and business documents as a tax on the colonies by order of the British government.

ony. Finally, he was asked to “be very attentive to the Detection of any Frauds which may arise.”¹¹

Governor Ward answered the letter as soon as he was assured that the stamp master had relinquished his office. With that, he informed the lords commissioners of the treasury that stamp distributor Augustus Johnston had resigned and then explained that people were so against the act “that no Person I imagine will undertake to execute that Office.” Also, he declared that continued operation of the act “would be attended with swift & inevitable Ruin to the Government” of Rhode Island. This letter is indicative of the attitude of Rhode Islanders as well as of the character of Samuel Ward — a colonial governor who refused to take the required oath for executing the Stamp Act.¹²

Rhode Island — “the licentious republic” — had acted accordingly during the Stamp Act controversy. The “outcast of New England” had in some instances led the way in gaining repeal of that hated act in 1766. Many of the arguments and methods used against British governmental authority which were first

Port or Place in GREAT-BRITAIN, or in the Colonies, make a just and true Report of all the (their true and proper Denominations, agreed Fourth Year of the Reign of His present Majesty to be void, otherwise to remain in full Force.

Scaled and delivered
at Rhode-Island in New-England,
(where no stamped Paper is to be had)
in the Presence of us,

Rich Beale

Courtesy Newport Historical Society

Rhode Islanders refused to use the stamps. The printed statement at the bottom of a shipping contract in 1765 attests to their firm resistance.

attempted in the 1760s would come to the aid of the colony in later disputes with the crown. Rhode Island would continue to be a thorn in the side of the home government.

It was not long before Parliament was again attempting to raise money from the colonists. The so called Townshend duties on paper, glass, paint, lead, and tea went into effect in 1767 and the General Assembly accordingly sent its protest to the king. As usual, the petition emphasized the rights of the colony granted by the 1663 charter. The Assembly denied Parliament’s authority to tax and said it was “an infringement of those rights and privileges derived to us from nature, and from the British constitution, and confirmed by our charter, and the uninterrupted enjoyment of them for more than a century past.”¹³

It would take more than petitions based on constitutional principles before the Townshend duties were repealed. Colonists realized from previous experience that economic pressures worked best in winning Parliament to their way of thinking. Non-importation agreements were needed before the

11 Charles Lowndes to Stephen Hopkins, Whitehall, September 14, 1765, Letters to the Governor of Rhode Island, v. 7, p. 32, R. I. Archives. It is interesting to note that Lowndes did not know that Samuel Ward had been governor since May 1765.

12 Samuel Ward, Newport, December 26, 1765, Letters from the Governor of Rhode Island, v. 1, p. 159, R. I. Archives. Samuel Greene Arnold, *History of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations*, v. 2 (New York, 1860) 263.

13 Bartlett 6: 560.

duties were abrogated. From 1768 to 1770 non-importation agreements were established throughout the colonies and many of the merchants around Narragansett Bay reluctantly obeyed. In 1770 when all the levies, except on tea, were removed, effective non-importation broke down. Business had been hurt enough, and merchants of Rhode Island were quick to join in resumption of trade with the mother country.¹⁴

After 1770 there was a period of relative calm in the colonies. Business adapted itself to Parliament's regulations and most colonists attempted to establish a satisfactory relationship with the British government, but in Rhode Island things were different. Rhode Islanders had their own methods for dealing with the crown and its officers.

In March 1772 the commissioners of customs dispatched the armed schooner *Gaspee* to Narragansett Bay. Its purpose was to prevent violations of revenue laws and to put a halt to the illicit trade so successfully carried on in the colony of Rhode Island. The overzealous activity of the *Gaspee's* commander, Lieutenant William Dudingston — in stopping everything afloat under the pretense of enforcing the acts of trade — quickly angered many people.¹⁵

On June 9, 1772, it was learned that the *Gaspee* had run aground while chasing the sloop *Hannah* up the Providence River. That night John Brown and others from Providence attacked the schooner, wounded its commander and then destroyed the ship by fire.

As a result of this deed, the king established a committee of inquiry to look into the *Gaspee* affair. The powers of this commission were very broad. It could summon anyone before it and even send persons involved in the incident to England for trial. Committee members were authorized to apply to General Gage and Admiral Montagu at Boston for military support and protection if they thought that necessary.

Here was a direct threat to Rhode Island's traditional independence. The accomplishments of the committee, however, were negligible. Allegedly, no one in the colony recognized or knew of any of the

members of the raiding party, and the events of the night on which the *Gaspee* was destroyed drew a complete blank from the colonials. Rhode Islanders would give no aid to any outside force which threatened their liberties. The king's commission was significant in that it gave rise to the establishment of legislative committees of correspondence, and to the adoption by many colonial assemblies of resolutions which were to move the colonies one step nearer to revolution. Once again Rhode Island was in the forefront of independent action.¹⁶

From 1773 on, Parliament continued with its string of unbroken blunders. Tea Act, so-called "Coercive Acts" designed to punish Massachusetts Bay, and Quebec Act establishing new controls over western lands — all appeared as threats to the American colonies. It is not surprising then that Rhode Island would be willing to send its two most distinguished citizens — Samuel Ward and Stephen Hopkins — to the first meeting of the Continental Congress. The Revolution was merely waiting for Lexington and Concord.¹⁷

Throughout 1760s and 1770s Rhode Islanders reacted strongly against attempts of the British government to intensify control over the colonies. New mercantilist legislation appeared to curtail Rhode Island's liberal and independent "charter privileges." Even local politics were threatened. Internal political factionalism had been going on since 1757 when Rhode Island was divided between Newport based followers of Henry Ward and the Providence clique led by Stephen Hopkins. As a result of this struggle, a politically mature population of freemen conducted its own affairs undisturbed by authority of Parliament. True, the Ward-Hopkins controversy had ended with a Hopkins victory by 1770, but the populace feared that any encroachment by England was potentially dangerous. Legislation and taxation by any outside power had to be stopped. Therefore, when Rhode Island revolted it did so to preserve its liberal "charter privileges," its local economy and politics, and its traditionally independent nature.¹⁸

14 Lovejoy 142-147.

15 Bartlett 7: 57-192. Cohen, "When They Burned the *Gaspee*," *Providence Sunday Journal* June 4, 1972 ("Rhode Islander," 19-22).

16 Merrill Jensen, *Founding of a Nation: A History of the American Revolution, 1763-1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968) 424-433.

17 Bartlett 7: 246-247.

18 Lovejoy, 14, 18, 90, 127, 194. For further evidence concerning importance of charter rights as a cause for revolution see Portsmouth Town Meeting, October 4, 1784, Town Meetings, v. 1, p. 384, Town Clerk's office.

The swift-sailing Sloop H O P E.



On Thursday next will sail (com-
 pletely fitted for a short Cruize of
 Fifty Days) the swift-sailing Pri-
 vateer Sloop HOPE, mounting
 10 Carriage Guns, CHRIS-
 TOPHER SMITH, Com-
 mander. All Gentlemen Sea-
 men, and able-bodied Landsmen, who wish to try
 their Fortunes, may have an Opportunity, by apply-
 ing at the Rendezvous, at Mr. Joshua Hacker's, or
 to the Commander on board, at Clark and Nigatin-
 gale's Wharff.

Grant Us Commission to Make Reprisals upon Any Enemies Shipping

by Peter E. Jones*

Providence merchant and shipmaster Samuel Chace Jr. lost all he had in the world during foggy, early morning hours on 27 August 1777. His command, 160-ton privateer ship *Oliver Cromwell* — fine new vessel of 20 guns and well fitted — was run on shore with great force and all sails standing and set afire by HMS *Kings-fisher*. So ended Chace's audacious and pathetic attempt to run the blockade of Seakonnet passage with only twenty-three men aboard, barely sufficient to sail the ship.¹

Kings-fisher, Captain Graeme, or another Royal Navy vessel had been patrolling this station — part of the general blockade of Narragansett Bay — since the British first occupied Newport and Rhode Island (Aquidneck) in December 1776. The British would maintain this blockade, albeit with varying strength and determination — for three years — in an attempt to prevent privateersmen like Chace, the new continental frigates *Warren* and *Providence*, or any other vessels belonging to the continental "fleet" of converted merchantmen from breaking out into the Atlantic where they could prey upon unescorted British merchant shipping and West-India convoys.

On occasion the blockade could be pierced. *Blaze Castle*, James Munro, a frigate built British merchant ship, prize to the 10-gun sloop *Sally*, and now a Rhode Island privateer of 20 guns, went down the middle

channel between Aquidneck and Conanicut and "passed near the *Amazon*, who immediately on perceiving her, made the proper signals, to the ships below her, but nothing being done by them, and the privateer having the advantage of a fair wind and a dark night, she got out to Sea" on 30 November 1777.²

In a related incident on 25 December 1777, the night being very dark, with a moderate breeze, *Kings-fisher* then at anchor in Seakonnet passage "saw the flashes and hear'd the report of several guns from Fogland ferry (and) supposed it to be a Rebel vessel Comeing down the river. (At) 1/2 after 1 AM: slipt our small bower and got underway immediately and stood towards the Rebel shore. At 2 saw a Ship comeing down which proved to be her fired at from our Battery, sett studding sails, the Chase being just ahead, we fired a Bow gun at her and she returned us three shot. (At) 1/2 after 2 fresh breases and D°.W, the Chase leaving us fast, at 3 the Chase most out of sight." *Marlborough*, George Waite Babcock, did reach Bedford safely, but the brig in company with her was run ashore on the north point of Fogland in Tiverton and, after "a great number of Shot were fired at her from the battery, which has damaged her so much, that she cannot be got off, she was set on fire by a party of the Troops, under cover of the Galley."³

During the months prior to the blockade in 1776,

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1 Joseph Russell to Amy Russell, 28 August 1777, Shepley Papers 9: 57, RIHS Library. *Providence Gazette* 30 August 1777. Log HM Sloop *Kings-fisher*, Public Record Office ADM 51/507. *Diary of Frederick MacKenzie* . . . Narrative of Military Service as an Officer of Royal Welch Fusiliers 1775-1781 in Massachusetts Rhode Island and New York (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930) 2v.

2 *Providence Gazette* 28 September, 5 October, 23 November 1776. Bonds, Masters of Vessels, Maritime Papers 3: 20 November 1776, R. I. State Archives.

3 Log, *Kings-fisher*, *Providence Gazette* 3 January 1778. MacKenzie, 25-30 December 1777.

there had been an "excessive rage" for privateering throughout Rhode Island. Governor Nicholas Cooke had exhausted his initial supply of forty-seven printed continental commissions or letters of marque and reprisal in six months, and he then resorted to the expedient of signing handwritten state commissions for an additional twelve private ships of war in November and December.⁴ This rage was simply engendered by successful cruising.

Montgomery, a modest 60-ton sloop armed with ten carriage guns four pounders & two pounders and ten swivels, took three valuable prizes, also two others in company with a privateer belonging to Salem on her first effort in May. When sold as lawful prize at public vendue, the 180-ton snow *Harlequin*, the 280-ton ship *Eagle*, and *Rover* — burthen about 100 tons — their appurtenances and cargo, "319 Hogsheads 177 Tierces & 24 Barrels Sugar, 303 Hogsheads & 30 Tierces Rum, 127 Bags 15 Barrels Ginger, 22 Bags Cotton, 1 pipe Madeira, 39 barrels oil, 6000 staves and 2 boxes Shellwork" brought £24,517.4.8, to "be delivered and paid to the Owners of and the Officers and men belonging to the said Sloop of War . . . to be for their Sole Use and Benefit, to be shared among them according to such Rules and Proportions as they by their Articles have agreed on."⁵

Allowing certain deductions for Joseph White, *Revenge*, his share of *Harlequin*, and half the remainder which was due *Montgomery's* owners, and realizing that surviving records are incomplete and do not permit more accurate accounting, *Montgomery's* ordinary seamen and marines appear to have received more than £200 each and her captain Daniel Bucklin over £1450.⁶ Or as it was so neatly phrased in an untitled ballad composed for *Montgomery's* second cruise in August —

*Come all you young fellows of Courage So Bold
Come Enter on Bord and we will Cloth you with gold.*⁷

Privateering — an honourable avocation by eighteenth-century standards — had been specifically

authorized in 1776 to compensate for inadequacies of the continental fleet. It was hoped that privateersmen might intercept supplies destined for British military and naval forces and likewise retaliate against Great Britain — whose fleets and armies were "wasting, spoiling, and destroying the country, burning houses and defenceless towns" — by attacking and eventually crippling British commercial shipping.⁸ In time, the war now wholly fought on American soil and against American property would be brought home to England in the form of increased insurance and shipping rates, higher prices, then bankruptcies, food shortages, and clamor in the streets and in Parliament for cessation of hostilities. While it was true that *Montgomery* and her counterparts did profit thereby, this was considered legitimate compensation for private ships of war — vessels owned, outfitted and manned by private citizens at their own risk.

Though issued the same commissions, private ships of war were of two distinct types — privateers and letters of marque. Heavy-armed vessels, devoid of cargo aside from military stores and some supplies, manned by large complements, privateers cruised the high seas to attack British merchant and military supply ships. Letters of marque were merchant vessels, manned by small crews and carrying cargos bound for delivery at specific ports. Rather more light-armed, letters of marque were encouraged to attack British shipping, but this activity was subordinate to their main responsibility — to transport cargo "with all Dispatch in the Most Safest Manner."⁹

To some, the nod to privateers was merely the opening of Pandora's box. Benjamin Rush felt that "the four Eastern States will find great difficulty in raising their quota of men, owing to that excessive rage for privateering which now prevails among them. Many of the Continental troops now in our service pant for the expiration of their enlistments, in order that they may partake of the spoils of the West-Indies. At a moderate computation, there are now not less

4 Letters of Marque 1776-1780, Maritime Papers and Cooke, Letters 2: 66 RISA.

5 *Providence Gazette* 27 July; 3, 24, 31 August 1776. Admiralty Papers 9: 42, 64 — Admiralty Court Minute Books 2: 27 — Registers of R. I. Vessels 1776-1778, 18 November 1777, p. 139, RISA. RIHS MSS. 6: 61.

6 R. I. Colonial Records 10: 234, RISA. *Journals Continental Congress*, 34v. (Washington: GPO, 1904-1937) 8: 602, 12: 1022. *Boston Gazette* 30 September 1776. Charles W. Farnham, "Crew List of Privateer *Independence*," *Rhode Island History* 26: 4 (October 1967).

7 RIHS MSS. 13: 5.

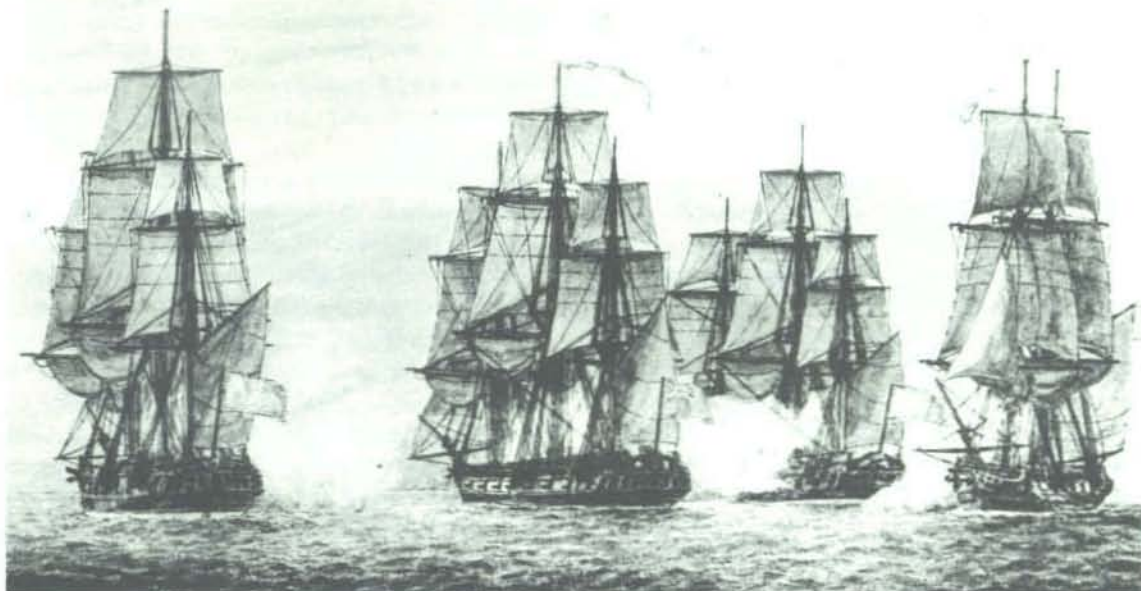
8 JCC 4: 229-32, 247-48, 251-54.

9 Brown Papers, V 76-775A, 21 August 1776, John Carter Brown Library.

10 Peter Force, *American Archives* 5th ser., 3: 1513.

11 *Letter Book of Esek Hopkins, 1775-1777*, ed. Alverda S. Beck (Providence: RIHS, 1932) 90.

12 Hopkins, 48, 24-25.



The engagement between American vessels Alfred, Cabot, and Columbus and British frigate Glasgow, 6 April 1776, as recreated in an early 20th-century watercolor. The outcome was indecisive, each side sustained injuries and damages.

than ten thousand men belonging to New England on board privateers.¹⁰ Esek Hopkins — commander-in-chief of the continental fleet then operating out of Providence — continually bemoaned the siphoning of potential recruits by privateers. Hopkins had assured the marine committee on 24 October 1776 that he would put the fleet out to sea as soon as possible, “but expect to meet with great difficulty in getting Men — the Privateers being so plenty, and having great Success that the Men look on their Shears better than what they have in the Navy.”¹¹

Hopkins’ situation was somewhat unique. His continental fleet — a new venture as yet without heroes or tradition — had already received a bloody nose on 6 April 1776 when *Alfred*, *Cabot*, and *Columbus* were challenged and then roughly handled by HMS *Glasgow*, a frigate then in company with her tender. Though there may have been extenuating circumstances, the resultant courts-martial criticizing Abraham Whipple (*Columbus*) for lack of judgment and ordering John Hazard (*Providence*) to surrender his commission for failure to properly execute his duty

did little for morale or the fleet’s public image.¹²

Continental fleet and privateers were direct competitors for available seamen simply because both engaged in the same business — seizing British merchant and supply ships — privateers by design and the small continental fleet of converted merchantmen by default. Privateers did pay better and more promptly. The Continental Congress, largely through persistent lobbying by Hopkins, would resolve this disparity retroactive to 1 November 1776, but even then there were still long delays before final payments ever reached the pockets of continental seamen. John Hancock, for the marine committee, Governor Cooke and the Rhode Island General Assembly all felt obligated to address Hopkins on this issue —

... and whereas it is represented to this Assembly, that great uneasiness hath arisen among the Men belonging to the Navy, on account of the Wages not having been paid nor the Prize money distributed, which has not only produced a great Disaffection to the Service and now prevents many from entering therein . . . you will please to see that the Wages are duly paid to the Seamen, and that the Prize money due to them, be

paid to them by the Agent as punctually as Circumstances will admit, to prevent Murmurs among the Seamen. We have heard some Complaints for Want of Attention to the Seamen, which induces us to mention it to you.¹³

Finally, privateersmen possessed élan and their seamen served under experienced captains, local men known and chosen for ability, where the continental fleet was burdened with several self-interested political appointees, as Hopkins admitted in a moment of candor. "The attention to business of most of the Officers, and an expectation of getting higher Stations in the new Ships has I think been some hindrance to getting the Fleet ready to Sail so soon as otherwise it might. I am very Sensible that every Officer has his Friends, and that has had so much Weight with me as not to Order a Court Martial although ever so necessary but where the Complaint came in writing and that from the principal Officers in the Fleet."¹⁴

Rhode Island possessed probably the finest harbour in North America. New England was considered the seat of the rebellion. The court for the trial of maritime and prize causes in Providence had condemned £300,000 of the £1,800,000 estimated by West-India planters and merchants to have been lost to privateers and letters of marque in 1776.¹⁵ As a result of those factors, Admiral Sir Peter Parker's Squadron — and several frigates, over fifty transport and supply ships with one troop of 17th Dragoons, 3rd Battalion of Light Infantry, 3rd Grenadiers, 3rd & 5th brigades of British (eight regiments), Losberg's and Schmidt's brigades of Hessians, and two companies of Artillery aboard — anchored in the middle channel between Dyer's Island and Weaver's Cove — half a mile from the shore and immediately off Mr. Stoddard's house — on 7 December 1776. The naval blockade of western

and middle channels and Seakonnet passage to which Capt. Chace fell victim was inaugurated six days later.¹⁶

Only fourteen commissions were issued to privateersmen in 1777.¹⁷ Although *Oliver Cromwell*, *Blaze Castle* and *Marlborough* were three of the largest and most heavy-armed privateers outfitted in Rhode Island throughout the war, seamen and marines were apparently still reluctant to sign aboard and prepare to exchange broadsides with any of the blockading frigates. To go privateering one first had to break out of Narragansett Bay. *Oliver Cromwell* had but twenty-three men out of her full complement of one hundred and thirty.¹⁸ *Blaze Castle* fared no better. The Rhode Island council of war had granted Captain Munro permission to enlist volunteers from troops within the state to engage *Kings-fisher* in March 1777, but by the time *Blaze Castle* ran the blockade eight months later, she still had insufficient men and was obligated to recruit additional hands at New London for her intended cruise.¹⁹ *Marlborough* did fire several cannon during her encounter with *Kings-fisher*, though this hardly seems to justify the account in the *Providence Gazette* (3 January 1778) that "had Captain Babcock been fully manned, he would undoubtedly have taken the Enemy's Ship, and carried her into Port." At any rate, *Marlborough* made for Bedford, compelled to sign additional men for what would eventually be a most successful cruise.

Never had it been the intention of the Continental Congress that privateersmen should actively seek out and attack British warships. Their contribution would be very real and an integral part of coordinated strategy, but their targets were strictly merchantmen and supply vessels. Privateersmen were definitely not

13 R. I. Colonial Records 9: 500. *Correspondence of Esek Hopkins*, ed. Alverda S. Beck (Providence: RIHS, 1933) 74, 87.

14 Hopkins, *Letter Book*, 65.

15 Force, 5th ser., 3: 1029; 1: 589. James B. Hedges, *Browns of Providence Plantations*, 2 v. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952; Providence: Brown University Press, 1968) 1: 284.

16 MacKenzie, 21 November-13 December 1776.

17 Letters of Marque 1777. Bonds, Masters of Vessels, 3: 1777.

18 Letters of Marque 20 November 1776. Bonds, Masters of Vessels, 3: 4 August 1777, note 1.

19 Council of War Notebooks 1: 105-6, 3 March 1777, RISA. MacKenzie, 30 Nov. 1777. *Connecticut Gazette* 26 December 1777.

20 *Providence Gazette* 23 November 1776, cited only by date in 3 references following.

21 12 October 1776.

22 5 April, 10 May, 24 May 1777.

23 9 August, 22 November 1777.

24 R. I. Colonial Records 9: 700, 704-17, 769.

25 "Sloop *Diamond* in acct. with Owners" July 1776. Brown Papers V-D5.

26 "Ship *Blaze-Castle* in acct. with Owners" March 1778. Brown Papers V-B6.

spoiling for a fight and would stand to trade broadsides with an opponent only if the prize looked worth the risk. Captain John Tillinghast, privateer sloop *Independence*, mounting eight carriage guns, probably 4-pounders or 3-pounders, engaged the 300-ton British supply ship *Friendship*, sixteen guns, 4-pounders and 3-pounders, for twenty minutes; then exchanged shots with a fourteen-gun ship and a small brig in company with *Friendship*, when they then thought proper to sheer off. When it was over, *Independence* had two dead and four wounded, including Captain Tillinghast.²⁰ Captain Thomas Child, privateer brigantine *Industry*, twelve 6-pounders, fell in with a ten-gun Jamaica ship, but making much water and only able to bring two guns to bear, Captain Child was finally obliged to quit her after suffering two dead and six wounded.²¹

As a further indication of lack of enthusiasm in 1777, *Montgomery* — successful and unscathed after three cruises — was being sold out together with her

guns and appurtenances as she came in from sea in May, as were the privateers *Independence* and *General Sterling*.²² The schooner *Eagle* and the sloop *Greenwich* — though commissioned in Rhode Island — avoided the blockade entirely, outfitting and sailing from Bedford in August and November.²³ West-India staples — rum, sugar and molasses — most plentiful at British expense in 1776, were dear in May and placed under an embargo prohibiting their exportation from the state in June.²⁴

This lack of enthusiasm afforded some men a unique opportunity. The British were in Rhode Island's home waters, encamped on an island and almost totally dependent upon external sources of supply for wood, coal, blankets, tents, shoes, munitions, provisions. Privateering need no longer be exclusively limited to the shipmaster who had requisite financial backing to outfit a modest 60-ton sloop (ca. £1065),²⁵ or even a large ship (ca. £4890),²⁶ to cruise on the West-India station, ready to pounce upon the

Rhode Islanders had a tradition of privateering. In this portion of a letter of marque, 1744, the period of King George's War, Governor William Greene instructs privateers to prey on French and Spanish shipping.

RIHS Library

Colony of Rhode Island &c

W^m Greene Gov^r 16th 1748.

June 6, 1744

By the Hon^{ble} William Greene Esq^r Governour
and Commandor in Chief in and over his Majesty's
Colony of Rhode Island & Providence Plantations
in New England.

Instructions to be observed by Cap^t James Allen Com-
mandor of the Sloop *Provence* of Newport in Pursuance
of the Commission or Letter of Marque here with given him.

First That it shall be carefull for you to set upon by force of arms
and to subvert and take the Men of War, Ships and other Vessels —
whatsoever as also the Goods, Monies, and Merchandizes belonging to
the Kings of Spain or France, or either of them, He or Their Vassals and
Subjects and Others inhabiting within either of their Countries, Territories
(and Dominions) and such other Ships, Vessels and Goods as are or shall
be liable to Confiscation Pursuant to the Treaties betwixt his Present
Majesty and other Princes, States, and Potentates But so that no
Hostility be committed nor Prize attacked, seized or taken within the
Harbours of Princes or States in amity with his Majesty or in their
Rivers or Roads within Shot of their Cannon.

merchantmen left to shift for themselves outside the 150 leagues within which HM frigates would escort convoys which regularly formed up and sailed from St. Christopher in the Leeward Islands.²⁷

Privateering need no longer be merely an indirect mode of warfare. Now any victualer, wood vessel, supply ship or West-Indiaman bound to Newport and intercepted meant a direct, proportionate increase in hardships facing British and Hessian garrisons on Rhode Island. A small armed boat, able to row well and sail fast, able to slip into the protection of shoal water, a boat which could be beached — and in some cases even carried off by her crew — this type of boat would not only make an ideal cruiser for operations in and about Narragansett Bay and the sounds, but was already the common lot of saltwater fishermen, small coastal haulers and other working men.

William Bentley and his fellow Newporters Henry Oman, John Harwood and others, were among the first to outfit an armed boat and receive letters of marque and reprisal in 1778. As revised and extended by a resolve of the Continental Congress, 24 July 1776, this commission legally empowered Bentley, captain of the privateer boat *Black Snake*, “by Force of Arms, to attack, seize, and take on the High Seas, or between high-water and low-water Marks, all ships and other vessels, their tackle, apparel and furniture, and all goods, wares and merchandises, belonging to any subject or subjects of the King of Great Britain, except the inhabitants of the Bermudas, and Providence or Bahama islands; or to any other person or persons who adhere to him or in any wise aid or abet him in his unjust war against these states.” On the same day, 19 May 1778, Captain Bentley also signed and received several copies of the eleven-point “Instructions to the

Commanders of Private Ships or Vessels of War,” which reiterated in some detail both his powers and his responsibilities as a privateersman.²⁸

Owners of privateers or letters of marque usually applied directly to the governor for their commissions, but Bentley, Oman, Harwood and company may have circumvented this customary procedure — as well as the small fee of £3 — when they petitioned the General Assembly on May 9th, representing themselves as poor men and very great sufferers by the enemy who have lost our all and been drove off from our habitations and who “have now fix’d up a Boat in order to Catch fish down at point Judah & Therefore pray your Honors to grant us a Commission to make reprisals upon any Enemies Shiping that may Fall in our way as we propose to Equip ourselves with Arms in order for our defence and as there will be Vessels passing and repassing up the Sound doubt not but we shall have an opportunity of Distinguishing ourselves.” Very receptive to this proposal, the Assembly resolved to grant Bentley a commission and also to furnish *Black Snake* with small arms, directing Colonel Daniel Tillinghast, continental agent in Rhode Island, to provide six good muskets.²⁹

Bentley and company did distinguish themselves after an initial scrape with HM galley *Spitfire*, Lieutenant Sauma, off Newport Harbour, wherein *Black Snake* — in company with another armed boat, probably *Revenge*, Elijah Champlin — mistook *Spitfire* for an unarmed vessel, came off to attack her, but when within gunshot they met with such an unexpected reception, that they with difficulty got off; and it was supposed with some loss.³⁰ *Black Snake* then took three fish boats belonging to Newport and a boat belonging to a transport-ship of the enemy, the first prizes cap-

27 Samuel Chace, Public Notary for town and county of Providence, “Publick protests of British shipmasters, Copy Book of Depositions,” RIHS Library.

28 Letters of Marque 19 May 1778. JCC 4: 247, 253-4; 5: 605-6. Bonds, Masters of Vessels 3: 19 May 1778.

29 Petitions to R. I. General Assembly 17: 15 (1778-80) RISA. R. I. Colonial Records 10: 84.

30 MacKenzie, 25 May 1778. Letters of Marque 18 May 1778. Bonds, Masters of Vessels 3: 125.

tured by an armed boat outfitted and commissioned in Rhode Island.

Bentley's attorney should have appeared before the court for the trial of maritime and prize causes to have twelve good and lawful men vote to condemn the four boats as lawful prize, but instead Bentley, Oman, Harwood, Newton, Thomas and Willson decided to approach the council of war, then sitting at Providence, to appraise them of a rather unusual situation — "the Expense of trying the Captures before the maritime Court will be so great that it will eat up the Profits: And thereupon (the subscribers) pray as there is not the least Doubt of their being legal Prizes that they may be empowered to sell the said Boats with their Tackling either at publick or private Sale and share the Money according to their Articles."³¹

At least in some circles the maritime court had already acquired a somewhat notorious reputation for summary condemnation of British property. Realizing this and perhaps eager to offset the losses incurred by Bentley and his men at British hands, the council of war abrogated the entire judicial process on June 22nd and resolved to let Bentley simply sell his prizes.³²

The necessity for being in Providence to negotiate *Black Snake's* prize money was a boon for Henry Oman. He either informed Charles Bowles Baker, a local merchant, or was informed by Baker about the possibility of commanding *General Sullivan*, a fast sailing armed boat named in honour of Major General John Sullivan of New Hampshire, recently arrived in Providence to supervise the expedition assembled to dislodge the British from Newport. Unlike the *Black Snake* cruise — a haphazard enterprise dependent upon the largess of the General Assembly and the continental agent — *General Sullivan* was well outfitted, well armed with

two swivel guns and carried six men.³³

In appearance, iron swivel guns very much resembled miniature cannon and like the heavier pieces were also rated by the weight of solid shot they fired. Virtually every armed boat would mount a single swivel in the bow and *General Sullivan* probably carried one of the popular 1/2-pounders — although of small caliber, favored because of their light recoil — and perhaps a single flintlock blunderbuss-swivel, accepted substitute for another 1/2-pounder on board more heavy-armed boats.³⁴ This blunderbuss-swivel — just as the additional 1/2-pounder it may have replaced — could be set on a special stock amidships, adapted to sternpost or posted to double *General Sullivan's* fire-power in the bow; so long as the second swivel was handy and able to bear during an engagement, it really didn't matter. Privateersmen could purchase 1/2-pounders, as well as heavier ordnance, from Brown's Hope Furnace or at public vendue from many of the British vessels condemned as lawful prize. Their cost was a very modest £20 a piece in January 1778, even though this figure represented an increase of 600% over the prewar price of £3 and obviously reflected the intention of most sellers to charge what the market would bear. Even a pound of black powder — enough to discharge a 1/2-pounder four times — was now twelve shillings.³⁵

It was not in the nature of things that *General Sullivan* or any other armed boat was meant to stand abeam and attempt to hull her British adversaries with repeated broadsides of 1/2-pound shot. That threat would hardly overawe an unarmed, much less coax a light-armed merchantman or supply ship into surrendering. *General Sullivan* relied instead on the "whiff of grapeshot" delivered at exceedingly close range.³⁶ Dis-

31 *Providence Gazette* 27 June 1778. Maritime Papers 1776-1781, 187.

32 Copy Book of Depositions, 3 December 1776. *Providence Gazette* 23 November 1776.

33 Letters of Marque 25 June 1778. Bonds, Masters of Vessels 3: 133.

34 William Mountaine, *Practical Sea-Gunner's Companion* (London, 1747). M. V. Brewington, "American Naval Guns, 1775-1785," *American Neptune* 3: 1 & 2 (January & April 1943). Howard I. Chapelle, *History of American Sailing Navy* (New York: Norton, 1949), 91 ff.

35 Ship *Blaze-Castle* to Clark & Nightingale 15 December 1777. To Thomas Durfee of Freetown 25 March 1776. Ship *Blaise Cassell* to John Brown 8 December 1777. Brown Papers, V-B6, L 74-76M. Hedges, 1: 269 ff.

36 Or loose musket balls, langrage, whatever was available.

charging her swivels and small arms to clear a path to the rails, it was often a case of over the sides with hand Grenadoes and graplins and then hand-to-hand with pistols, pikes and cutlasses.³⁷ In crucial seconds prior to actual boarding, powder pots, small crocks of "Potter's Clay, with Ears to tye Matches, lighted at both Ends, & filled with dry fine Powder or an offensive Composition of fine Powder mixt with some Brimstone beaten small, some Assa Foetida, some Pieces of Verdegrease, & some Camphire," were occasionally employed to spread alarm and confusion on a British deck.³⁸

To compensate for their lack of firepower, as well as to enhance the possibility of their never having to use it, armed boats often traveled in company. This precaution was dictated as much by the number and caliber of swivels as by the difficulty in reloading them in confined spaces of an open boat under fire. Assuming that a gunner could keep his powder dry, he had still to cope with the following procedure —

To load your piece, first observe the wind and be sure to lay your powder to windward of your piece, and place your match staff or linstock to leeward; clear the touch-hole, and sponge her well, and strike the sponge on the muzzle to shake off the foulness two or three blows. Stand on the right side of the gun, and let your assistant hold the barrel aslope, so that you may thrust in the ladle, being full of powder, give it a shog, then strike off the heaped powder, he being on the right side likewise, with your body clear of the muzzle, put your ladle home to the chamber, steadily holding your thumb upon the upper part of the ladle staff until your thumbs be under it, and give a shake or two, to clear the powder out of the ladle. As you draw it out keep it up, that you may bring no powder out with the ladle; then with the rammer put the powder home quietly, and then put home a good wad to the powder, and give it two or three strokes, to gather the loose powder together, and it will fire the better; be sure your assistant have his thumb on the touch-hole all the while; then put the shot home with the rammer, and after it another wad and then give it two or three strokes more to settle it home, that there may be no vacuity between the first

*wad, bullet, and last wad. Standing to windward, and your piece, by the Dispart (a sight to allow for the difference between the muzzle and breech thickness) directed to the mark, prime her, and let the powder come from the touch-hole to the base ring, your leg, standing forward, and with your match-staff, fire the powder on the base ring, and draw back your hand — and you have fired like a Gunner, but if you had given fire upon the touch-hole the powder there would have endangered to have blown the coal and match-staff out of your hand. Therefore you must have a care of a touch-hole.*³⁹

But General Sullivan returned empty-handed, her mettle untried. The cruise had been a disconcerting setback for Henry Oman and he expected to be cashiered when General Sullivan was sold to William Wall, a Providence merchant who had speculated in privateering since Montgomery's first venture in May 1776. But Wall retained both Oman and his six-man crew when he applied for General Sullivan's new commission in 1779.⁴⁰ Perhaps Oman had convinced Wall that his luck would change if he cruised in company with another, more experienced armed boat and perhaps Wall had then suggested *Seven Brothers*, Gideon Hoxsie, a successful privateer owned by his friend and former business associate David Lawrence.⁴¹ Whatever the genesis of the arrangement, Oman and Hoxsie did act in consort for the next four months.

General Sullivan, *Seven Brothers* and a third armed boat, *Bradford*, Sion Martindale, soon sighted a sloop running for Newport on May 12th. When finally overhauled outside Newport harbour, she proved to be the 70-ton Bermuda built *Nancy*, Edmund Partridge, originally bound from New Providence to New York with rum, molasses and fruit. Already taken by a Salem privateer and then recaptured by a British tender, she was nevertheless a remarkable prize because Bermuda sloops had established a near legendary reputation on their ability to sail fast.⁴² The fame of Rhode Island's armed boats was not so widespread, although it will be apparent that some of them could sail very well. *Seven Brothers* — which had just participated in the cap-

37 *Boston Gazette* 13 April 1778. *Connecticut Journal* 13 May 1778.

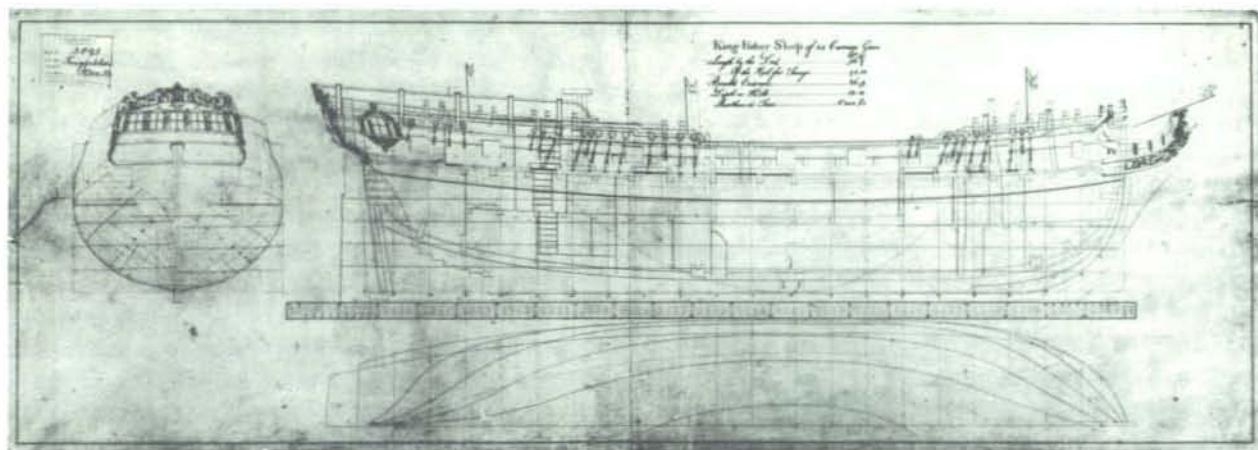
38 Mountaine.

39 Louis F. Middlebrook, *History of Maritime Connecticut during the American Revolution 1775-1783* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1925) 2: 44.

40 Bonds, Masters of Vessels 4: 81.

41 Letters of Marque, 57 (n.d.) 23 June 1778. Bonds, Masters of Vessels 3: 23 June 1778.

42 *Providence Gazette* 15 May 1779. Chapelle, *Search for Speed under Sail: 1700-1855* (New York: Norton, 1967) 65 ff.



National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England

King Fisher sloop of 14 carriage guns. Applied to the ship-rigged Kingsfisher, the term 'sloop' designated a British warship mounting less than 20 carriage guns.

ture of *Nancy* — had while in company with the armed boat *Hornet*, Charles Jenckes, previously intercepted the 45-ton sloop *Fancy*, a well found and an exceeding fast sailer, in July 1778.⁴³ And yet of *Seven Brothers* herself or of the reasons for her sailing prowess, very little is known. About the only source is an undated letter from David Lawrence to the governor requesting that a commission be granted to Captain Gideon Hoxsie. In the letter, *Seven Brothers* — then outfitted for her intended cruise — is described as burthened about two Tons carries two Swivel Guns, manned with Ten Men and fitted with a suitable Quantity of Muskets Pistols Cutlasses, Powder Ball and other military Stores. She hath on board half a barrel Pork and half a barrel of Bread &c.⁴⁴

Rhode Island issued about thirty commissions to some twenty armed boats between May 1778 and October 1779, but of the boats themselves, again, very little is known.⁴⁵ Intermittent accounts of armed-boat activity appear in the *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, *Connecticut Journal* (New Haven), *Connecticut*

Gazette and Universal Intelligencer (New London) and *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, and these also contain a handful of public notices describing various types of boats lost or stolen and an occasional advertisement for a boat to be sold. Some eighteenth-century prints and aquatints by William Burgis, J. F. W. Des Barres, and Thomas Johnston depict boats belonging to Massachusetts and New York. Several useful draughts of general eighteenth-century boat types are in Falconer's *Universal Marine Dictionary* and in the Admiralty draught collection, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England. The bonds and instructions to commanders of private ships or vessels of war in the Rhode Island State Archives are not only incomplete, which we would expect, but lack the meticulousness common to documents recorded by eighteenth-century clerks.

Dimensions aside, on the rare occasion that a boat built in Rhode Island or owned and used by Rhode Islanders is mentioned in records kept by the colony or in other public notices, reference was most often

43 *Providence Gazette* 25 July, 19 September 1778. Admiralty Court Minute Books 2: 104-115. Admiralty Papers 10: 39-56. Letters of Marque 1 July 1778. Bonds, Masters of Vessels 3: 1 July 1778.

44 Letters of Marque, 57 (n.d.).

45 Letters of Marque 1778-1779. Bonds, Masters of Vessels 3, 3(2), 4.

made to one and only one salient feature. Eighteenth-century boats were classified according to their hull design, if it conformed to traditional lines of a locally or generally recognized type such as the whaleboat or Block Island boat and — when on the English model — longboat, cutter, barge or pinnace. Or boats were classified by their rig, the distinctive cut and arrangement of sail(s) and spar(s) and the number of masts. The two-mast boat with two short gaffs, two spritsails or two triangular Bermudas sails, and the single-masted boat carrying a spritsail or short gaff, and then sometimes called a sloop boat, were the more common types. For a variety of reasons, not least of which was the owner's desire to make his boat a fast sailer, the same boat might carry several different rigs during her lifetime. Or a boat could be identified by the business in which her owner was engaged. If he happened to be a fisherman, then his boat became a fish boat, regardless whether the boat was single or two-masted, whaleboat or Block Island boat.

John Brown might contract with Joseph Nicholas of Nantucket Island, to build his whaleboats,⁴⁶ and the committee who built the ships *Providence* and *Warren* for the United States AD 1776 might retain boatwrights and carpenters to build suitable boats for the two frigates,⁴⁷ but many working boats — painstaking reproductions of locally popular and proven designs — were still built with a few simple tools by the same men who would man them. Such was the case for *Black Snake*. And yet, when these boatmen or others who had not built and did not own their boats applied for commissions to outfit as privateers in 1778 and 1779, their boats — just as *Black Snake*, *Seven Brothers*, and *General Sullivan* — were almost invariably described in letters of application, bonds and instructions as armed boats, privateer boats or private armed boats, all of which affords not the slightest glimpse of the rigs they carried or the hulls beneath them. Fortui-

tously, eight captains decided not to be so tightlipped and bonds and instructions do refer to the armed whale boat called the *Fly*, armed long boat *Cesar*, armed schooner boat *Wasp* (William Cornell), and armed two mast boats *Larke*, *Wasp* (Samuel Briggs), *Hornet* (Samuel Jeffers), *General Gates* and *Betsy*.⁴⁸ We also know that privateer boat *Black Snake* was an armed whaleboat, as were privateer boat *Revenge*, armed boat *Jolly-Robbin* and armed two mast boat *General Gates*; that armed whale boat *Fly* was a two mast boat.⁴⁹ The armed barge called the *Galley's* barge, Benjamin Cozens — in company with *General Sullivan* during the capture of three fishing boats on 4 August 1779 — belonged to the *Pigot Galley* then in state service.⁵⁰ Although it would be unwarranted to presume, in the absence of further details, that every armed boat was either whaleboat or two-masted boat, these two types do seem to predominate.

Vice Admiral Samuel Graves, R.N., at Boston in July 1775 and under constant harassment from raiders in whaleboats — who set fire to Boston Lighthouse which is at present rendered useless and who were robbing the Islands and burning the Houses and Hay thereon (which) most certainly distresses the Garrison — made a very succinct case for utilizing whaleboats: “from their Lightness and drawing little Water, they can not only outrow our Boats, but by getting into Shoal Water, and in Calms, they must constantly escape.”⁵¹ He might have added that with a proper rig they could also sail very well.

Whaleboats were made of oaken keels with lapstrake cedar clapboards about one half-inch thick and, while extremely sturdy, were so very light that two men can conveniently carry them, though it would have taken several stout hands when the boats were loaded and the wood had made up.⁵² They were generally meant to be conveyed aboard whaling sloops and brigs and were probably about the size of Thomas

46 Hedges, 1: 87.

47 Journal of the Committee, 9 January, 24 July, RIHS Library.

48 Letters of Marque 1778-1779. Bonds, Masters of Vessels 3 & 5.

49 *Providence Gazette* 27 June 1778. *Connecticut Journal* 3 March 1779. *Connecticut Gazette* 6 November 1778. Middlebrook, 2: 238. Outward-Inward Entries 1776-1787, 4 November 1778, RISA.

50 Admiralty Papers. Maritime Papers: Revolutionary War 1776-1781.

51 Graves to Philip Stephens, 24 July 1775, William Bell Clark, ed., *Naval Documents of the American Revolution* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1964-) 1: 961.

52 Alexander Laing, *American Ships* (New York: American Heritage Press, 1971) 55.

Wickham's 21 Feet 8 inches Keel, which Rhode Island had taken into state service in October 1777.⁵³ Double-enders, unequaled in fine lines and powerful form, were preferred by most whaleboatmen because they would back off smartly when a whale was harpooned, rather a necessity if the boat was not to be upset, were easier to build and were acknowledged by many to be more seaworthy than square-sterned boats since the gunwale amidships rises with an accelerated curve at each end, and this rise of bow and stern gives it a duck-like capacity to top the oncoming waves, so that it will dryly ride when ordinary boats would fill. These whaleboats could be rowed with four, five or six oars and will make ten miles an hour in dead chase by the oars alone.⁵⁴

John Brown wanted 3 Whale boats for a Brigg that's going Wailing to the Western Islands — 2 of them to be 6 ored & 1 of 5 ores.⁵⁵ The *Boston Newsletter* (12 February 1730) spoke of a whaleboat's crew as Stersman, an Harpineer, and Four Oar Men. The five-oared whaleboat, with oars of varying lengths, was somewhat unique to North America, and it is nicely represented in Thomas Johnston's *Plan of Hudsons Rivr. from Albany to Fort Edward* published in 1756 to commemorate New England's participation in the Crown Point expedition.⁵⁶ *Black Snake*, *Fly* and *Revenge* could most certainly have been armed five-oared whaleboats, though the evidence seems to indicate that military people and privateersmen favored the six-oared boat with about nine or ten men aboard.⁵⁷

Long whaleboats, with twelve to sixteen oars, were also very much in vogue both as raiders and express boats. Fitted with sails and with swivels, and on occasion with a small carriage gun, perhaps a 3-pounder, the British used them to shuttle dispatches between Yorktown and New York during the military crisis in September and October 1781.⁵⁸ *General Gates*, Obadiah Wright, a two-masted Connecticut whale-

boat commissioned in Rhode Island on 13 September 1780, and subsequently found guilty of illicit trading by the New London maritime court in 1782, may have been of this type. She was heavier than the light whaleboats, schooner-rigged and carried fourteen men and a single swivel.⁵⁹

Whaleboats had been exceedingly popular in pre-Revolutionary times both as fishing boats and small coastal haulers.⁶⁰ Since whaleboats *Fly* and *General Gates* were two mast boats, it is entirely conceivable that armed two mast boats *Larke*, *Wasp* and *Betsey*, as well as *General Sullivan*, *Seven Brothers* and many other armed boats about whom so little is known, might also have been whaleboats, but lacking any real information, it is just as reasonable to suppose that they were not.

The term two mast boat is broad and elusive and could have been indicative of at least several known combinations of rig and hull other than the two-masted whaleboat. Chappelle felt that the "lap Streak Two Mast Boat, painted Black and Yellow, a lower Streak Chocolate color, the Masts Yellow, the top of the Fore-mast Black, the top of the Main-Mast not Black, a Graplin on board instead of an Anchor, Taken away from the End of Tilestone's Wharf" on 3 September 1777, may have been a cutter, a ship's boat modeled and rigged to row and sail very fast.⁶¹

British and American naval cutters of this period appear to have been about twenty-seven feet long, beamy, rowed with ten or twelve oars, clinker-built, probably heavy-built apropos the English mania for oak planking, and variously rigged, with the Royal Navy partial to lugsails.⁶² Though with a proper rig, the cutter would have made a rather able privateer, it cannot be stated with any more certainty that any of the armed boats were cutters. They could have been similar to the gaff-rigged "Two Mast Boat, 23 feet keel, a long cuddy with a fireplace and cabbins in it,

53 R. I. Colonial Records 10: 162-3, 195-7.

54 Laing, 167 ff. William A. Baker, *Sloops and Shallops* (Barre: Barre Publishing Co., 1966) 76 ff.

55 Hedges, 1: 87.

56 *Boston Prints and Printmakers 1670-1775*, Publications Colonial Society of Massachusetts 46 (1973) 99. *Connecticut Gazette* 31 July 1778.

57 MacKenzie, 3 August 1777, 21 August 1778. *Naval Documents* 3: 1117. *Bonds, Masters of Vessels* 3: 19 May, 18 June, 30 July 1778.

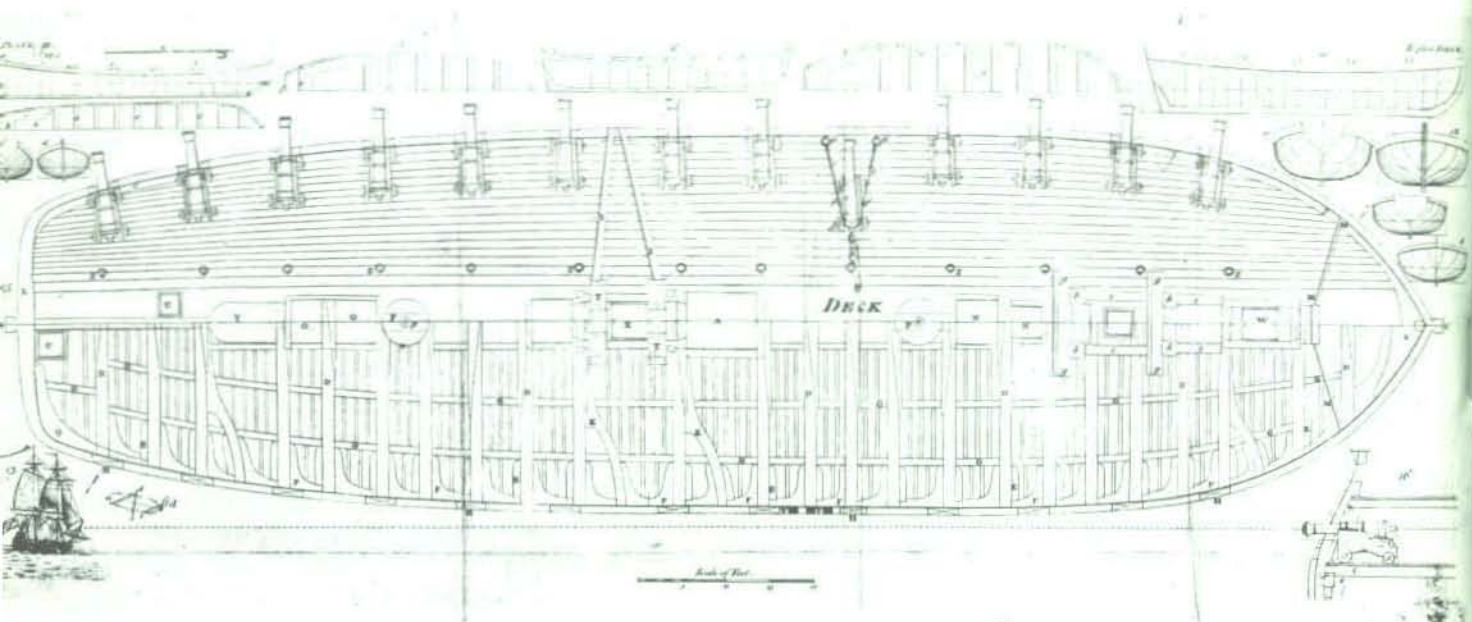
58 MacKenzie, 20 May, 6 September, 3 and 9 October 1781. Bre-wington discusses a 3-pounder which had done duty as a swivel.

59 Middlebrook, 2: 238. *Bonds, Masters of Vessels* 5: 53-54.

60 Chappelle, *American Small Sailing Craft* (New York: Norton, 1951) 22-3. See note 53.

61 *Boston Gazette* 8 September 1777. *American Small Sailing Craft*, 25, 21.

62 William Falconer, *Universal Dictionary of the Marine* (London, 1776) plate 3, figs. 5-8, article "Boats." "Capt. Thomas Thompson's Inventory public property Continental frigate Raleigh January 1778." *American Neptune* 26 (1966).



Courtesy John Carter Brown Library, Brown University

Plate III from William Falconer, *Universal Dictionary of the Marine*, 1776, showing a barge, figs. 1, 2, 3; a cutter, figs. 6, 7, 8; and a longboat, figs. 10, 11, 12. The center drawing is the lower deck of a 74-gun ship.

one cable and anchor, a new fore-sail, her mainsail old, a new boom not tarr'd, and her sides painted yellow, stolen and carried off from Rainsford Island by a number of British prisoners" on 16 January 1782.⁶³ They could have resembled either the open two-masted boat, rowed with six oars and sprit-rigged, judging by the furl of her sails — pictured in Des Barres' *Boston, seen between Castle Williams and Governors Island, distant 4 Miles*⁶⁴ — or the small "double-bottom Cedar Boat Republican, 19 Feet Keel, Green Bottom, black Wale, and white Hanks, an Iron Clamp with a Brass Sheave at her Stem (?) for heaving up her anchor; at her foremost Head, a blue Vane; two Staples in each Quarter

for shifting her Sheets; her Sails Russia Duck" stolen from Ephraim Weeden of Newport.⁶⁵ One or two of the larger armed boats might have even approached the large and very clever sail boat built at Tiverton in April 1779 and probably intended for state service. "She is 30 feet strait rabbit full length 32 feet 9 (feet) 4 Inches beam, and three feet sev'n Inches in the Hold (and) should be Rigged in the same manner as a Man-of-Wars pinnace with sliding gunter Masts."⁶⁶

From the examples above it is obvious that, without more information, the appearance of armed two-masted boats *Larke*, *Wasp*, *Hornet* and *Betsey* must remain conjectural. This is more especially the case for *General*

63 *Boston Gazette* 21 January 1782. Baker, 78.

64 J.F.W. Des Barres, *Charts of the Coast and Harbors of New England* 1781, from his *Atlantic Neptune* (John Carter Brown Library).

65 *Newport Mercury* 2 June 1795, *American Neptune* 14:1 (January 1954) 61.

66 Ezek Cornell to Col. Ephraim Bowen, 17 April 1779, *Cooke Papers* 2: 51, RIHS Library. *Collections RIHS* 6: 231. MacKenzie, 27 September 1781.

Sullivan, *Seven Brothers* and other privateers for whom surviving records have merely bequeathed a name. It is speculation, but some of these were undoubtedly single-masted. It is therefore significant that gaff-rigged and sprit-rigged single-masted boats were prevalent in William Burgis' *North East View of the Great Town of Boston* (1723) and *South Prospect of ye Flourishing City of New York* (ca. 1721),⁶⁷ among others, and that the New England history of the sprit-rigged single-masted boat with one headsail stretches from John Hunt's *Draught of St Georges fort* (1607) to whaleboats of the later nineteenth century.⁶⁸

Regarding the armed long boat *Cesar*, Christopher Smith, it is reasonable to surmise she was built on the English model. William Falconer defined the longboat in *Universal Marine Dictionary* as the largest boat that usually accompanies a ship, generally furnished with a mast and sails: those which are fitted for men of war, may be occasionally decked, armed, and equipped, for cruising short distances against merchant ships of the enemy, or smugglers, or for impressing seamen &c. Included among draughts and illustrations at the end of Falconer's text are plans for an eight-oared longboat approximately 35' long x 11' broad x 5' deep. Chapelle used a draught from the Admiralty collection in the National Maritime Museum and envisioned the typical longboat belonging to the Royal Navy, ca. 1740, as sloop-rigged⁶⁹ — an observation which Randle's contemporary watercolour, *View of His Majesty's Armed Vessels on Lake Champlain, October 11, 1776*, tends to confirm by portraying a longboat — then in service as an armed tender and mounting a carriage gun — rigged as a topsail sloop.⁷⁰ According to her bond, 8 August 1778, *Cesar* carried two swivels and twelve men and was owned by Samuel Aborn, a Warwick merchant who had helped to outfit the 60-ton schooner *Eagle* and the 80-ton sloop *Batchelor* as privateers in 1776.⁷¹

Seven Brothers — whose sailing prowess provided the occasion for this excursion into eighteenth-century boat types — continued to cruise in company with *General Sullivan* and *Bradford* throughout the summer of 1779, taking a small Newport fishing schooner with two swivels in June and then successfully tackling an 8-ton armed boat in late August. But the rhythm of this cruise had been broken — for some inexplicable reason, *General Sullivan* had joined the *Galley's* barge, Benjamin Cozzens, for a brief foray against some unarmed fishing boats during the first week in August.⁷²

Cozzens was then a second lieutenant aboard the schooner-rigged *Pigot Galley*, mounting eight 12-pounders and two 18-pounders besides swivels — a British ship surprised and boarded in Seakonnet passage 29 October 1778 by Major Silas Talbot and about eighty brave volunteers in a small sloop, and subsequently taken into state service. Perhaps because the *Galley* was manned by state troops, whose times are expired, by which reason she now lays at the wharf unman'd, Cozzens was able to enjoy this short cruise in the *Galley's* barge.⁷³

At the trial finally held on 20 September 1779 after several adjournments, Oman and Cozzens charged that the three fishing boats — owned by Benjamin Trip, Jonathan Lawton and Elijah Knap — were the property of and belonged to some of the subjects of the British king, and were then employed in fishing for the purpose of supplying his subjects and army on Rhode Island. But upon examination of the evidence, the jury found that only two men had signed British association acts at Newport, and the libellants were directed by the court to relinquish the fishing boat belonging to Knap.⁷⁴

This situation was not at all extraordinary. Ship's papers were the usual and very often only method for clearly identifying a vessel, her appurtenances and

67 *Boston Prints and Printmakers*, 34, 60-61.

68 Laing, *American Sail* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1961) 32-3, 332-5. E. P. Morris, *Fore-and-Aft Rig in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927). G. F. Dow and John Robinson, *Sailing Ships of New England 1607-1907* (Salem: Marine Research Society, 1922) 1st series.

69 *American Small Sailing Craft*, 18-19.

70 *Naval Documents* 6: 1379, 1344.

71 *Bonds, Masters of Vessels* 3: 140, 89, 32.

72 *Providence Gazette* 5 June, 21 August 1779.

73 *Maritime Papers: Revolutionary War*, 149. MacKenzie, 18 May, 5 August, 29 October 1778. *Connecticut Gazette* 6, 13, 20 November 1778. *Providence Gazette* 7 November 1778. "Return of Strength & Posts 27 March 1779," *Letters and papers of Maj. Gen. John Sullivan* (Concord: *Collections New Hampshire Historical Society* 14).

74 *Admiralty Papers* 10: 77.

cargo, as British owned. When presented, together with certain affidavits and other testimony, before the court, these papers would prove a privateersman's claim that the captured vessel was indeed British property and therefore lawful prize. Ship's papers were indispensable to the privateer's suit. British captains like John Hunter realized this and, being reluctant as part owner of *Rover* to incur financial loss and the inconvenience of possible internment, he sought to conceal the brigantine's true identity. "Before the Sloops (*Montgomery*) Boate came on board, I (seaman James Watson) saw the Mate come out of the Cabin, with a Bundle of Papers and went forward and hove them overboard." *Rover* — formerly the American brig *Betsy* — had been captured by HM frigate *Argo* and condemned in vice-admiralty court at Antigua, 3 April 1776. Though now British owned and outbound from Antigua to Ireland, the absence of ship's papers and Hunter's protestations that he was born in America and owned property there might have been sufficient to perplex a maritime court jury and thereby gain a verdict for acquittal and damages.⁷⁵

To further confuse the issue, some vessels carried fraudulent papers or neutral registers. The secret committee of the Continental Congress — in a letter addressed to Governor Nicholas Cooke on 15 November 1776 and signed by Richard Henry Lee, Philip Livingston, Robert Morris and Francis Lewis — indignantly accused Captain Timothy Pierce, privateer sloop *Gamecock*, of willfully seizing *Hancock & Adams*, which he knew to be an American vessel under charter to the secret committee to obtain arms and munitions in Europe. Captain Sam Smith Jr. carried a fraudulent Irish register to escape detection by British cruisers, but "any man of Common Sense and Common honesty" could have plainly discerned that Smith's second (American) register was genuine. However, "love of plunder prevailed" and the secret

committee therefore demanded that Governor Cooke give strictest scrutiny to Pierce's conduct and, if it was not satisfactory, prosecute him for the penalty of his bond and sue for damages. Captain Pierce alleged that *Hancock & Adams'* papers were not in order. Captain Smith's genuine register did not bear a seal and there were different inks and handwriting; and though to the secret committee all this will not avail, it was nevertheless a reasonable argument. Confronted with two sets of papers, one of which Captain Smith asserted was fraudulent, the other of which did not appear to be genuine, Captain Pierce decided to settle the matter when his prize had arrived in a safe port where papers could be properly examined and authenticated, lest his gullibility permit a British vessel to escape.⁷⁶

Seven Brothers and *Hornet*, Charles Jenckes, had captured the sloop *Fancy* with her cargo of rum, sugar and coffee, on 22 July 1778. Sent into Providence, her papers in order, trial scheduled for August 12th and subsequently postponed until September 7th because most able-bodied males were on militia duty for the impending expedition against the British on Aquidneck Island, the matter seemed but another routine condemnation until Robert Treat Paine introduced the deposition of Joseph Dimon. Dimon alleged that he had sailed from Salem in March 1778 aboard the armed sloop *Trenton*, Joseph Leach. Subsequently taken and carried into Antigua, Dimon drifted about until he heard that a Salem sloop, Capt. Miller Johnston, had clearance for Halifax, but actually intended to return to Salem or Newburyport. When Johnston confirmed this rumour, Dimon signed aboard. According to Dimon, *Fancy* was then standing for Dartmouth or Bedford when intercepted by *Seven Brothers* and *Hornet*. Paine could produce another seaman, Joseph Smith, also of Salem, whose testimony would corroborate Dimon's. The jury remained unimpressed. *Fancy's* papers included too many bills

75 Admiralty Papers 9: 41, 43.

76 Letters of Marque, 35 (n.d. September 1776). Letters to Governor Cooke 8: 99, RISA. JCC 6: 943, 950.

77 See note 43.

78 *Providence Gazette* 23 January 1779. Admiralty Papers 10: 62 ff. Admiralty Court Minute Books 2: 140.

79 *Providence Gazette* 11 April 1778, 11 September 1779. *Connecticut Gazette* 17 July, 7 August, 6 November 1778; 8 April, 5 May, 10 June 1779. *Connecticut Journal* 3 March 1779. Middlebrook, 2: 132.

80 MacKenzie, 26 May 1778.

81 MacKenzie, 18 October, 17 November, 31 December 1778.

82 MacKenzie, 6 July 1777; 9 June, 14 September 1778.

of lading drawn on Antigua merchants for the cargo to be anything but British. The vote was for condemnation, in spite of the somewhat irregular appearance of Gideon Hoxsie and Charles Jenckes as prosecution witnesses. Paine objected that their verbal statements — rather than their sworn depositions which was the customary procedure — by no law could be so taken. But his only recourse when the verdict was officially read by final decree of the court was to petition for an appeal to the Continental Congress.

Hoxsie, Jenckes and the other shareholders in *Seven Brothers* and *Hornet* retained their £9340 — the libellants' share from the sale of *Fancy* after all legal fees and various commissions had been paid — for about ninety days. On 12 January 1779, Jonathan Paysons produced the decree of the Continental Congress reversing the maritime court. Miller Johnston had been vindicated.⁷⁷ All this but two days before Jenckes would be ordered to restore one-half the proceeds from the sale of cargo on board the sloop *Molly's Adventure* to her owners, Mathew Erwin & Company, Philadelphia merchants. *Hornet* had seized *Molly's Adventure* off Point Judith while she was making for Newport under Donald Cameron, a prizemaster from Goodrich's privateer brigantine *Dunmore*.⁷⁸

Black Snake, *General Sullivan*, *Seven Brothers*, *Hornet* and *Revenge* overhauled twenty-two prizes between May 1778 and September 1779, of which nineteen were loaded with fuel and/or provisions for British forces on Rhode Island.⁷⁹ In the process the privateer boats — partly through *Revenge's* and *Black Snake's* attacks upon *Spitfire Galley* and HMS armed sloop

*Haerlem*⁸⁰ — had acquired a reputation for near reckless tenacity, a reputation literally worth its weight in wood since it forced the British to leave their wood fleet at anchor in Newport harbour whenever a proper escort was unavailable. This detention lasted for thirty days from 18 October to 17 November 1778 — an unusual act of deference when scarcity of provisions and firing has induced many inhabitants to leave this island who would otherwise have remained.⁸¹

The immediate rationale for these armed privateer boats would disappear when the British quit Rhode Island in October 1779. Not a few people wondered why they had bothered to stay. *The Soldiers have nothing to do but to mount Guard once in three or four days. We attempt nothing against the Enemy by which their minds might be engaged (which) naturally leads some to gloomy reflections, and induces others to commit actions disgraceful to themselves, hurtful to the discipline of the Army, and destructive to the Cause of their Country. If we were to undertake little enterprises against the Enemy, in which we could run no risque, it would employ the minds of the Soldiery, give them something to do and to talk of, and would at the same time teach the young Soldiers and give them confidence. Such enterprises would also prevent the Enemy from undertaking anything against us, and would harrass them greatly. A Contrary conduct invites them to make attempts, makes them insolent on finding they may be effected with impunity, and tends much to dispirit our own men.* In spite of those sound and oft-repeated admonitions, the British idled away three years conducting but a handful of raids, and then only in response to some exigency created by American initiative.⁸²



HIPPED by the Grace of GOD,

For the Preservation of the Liberties of America.

The Honorable

NICHOLAS COOKE, Esq; *Governor.*

The Honorable

William Bradford, Esq; *Dep. Gov.*

1. Samuel Dyre, Esq; *Assistant.*
 2. Simeon Potter, Esq; *Assistant.*
 3. Ambrose Page, Esq; *Assistant.*
 4. John Sayles jun. Esq; *Assistant.*
 5. John Jepson, Esq; *Assistant.*
 6. James Arnold jun. Esq; *Assistant.*
 7. Jonathan Randall, Esq; *Assistant.*
 8. Peter Phillips, Esq; *Assistant.*
 9. Joseph Hazard, Esq; *Assistant.*
 10. Thomas Church, Esq; *Assistant.*
- Henry Ward, Esq; *Secretary.*
- Henry Marchant, Esq; *Attorney General.*
- Joseph Clarke, Esq; *General-Treasurer.*

Revolution's Impact on Rhode Island

by Patrick T. Conley*

In the fateful months following Lexington and Concord, Rhode Island and her twelve sister colonies moved toward the brink of separation from the Empire. Finally, in belief that their natural rights, their rights of local self-government, their property rights, and their rights as Englishmen¹ had been denied or unjustly abridged, revolutionaries in each of the colonies took the decisive step — they declared their independence from England and proclaimed creation of the United States of America.

Rhode Island's radicals were in the vanguard of the revolutionary movement.² They had the greatest degree of local self-government, the most to fear and the most to lose from what many colonials erroneously considered the deliberate tyranny of the mother country. On April 25, 1775, a week after Lexington and Concord, the outgoing General Assembly authorized raising a 1500-man "army of observation," despite objections of Governor Joseph Wanton and Deputy Governor Darius Sessions.³ On the first Wednesday in May the incoming Assembly met. Tabulation of votes cast for general office in town meetings of April 19 revealed that Wanton and Sessions had secured re-election. Notwithstanding, the

Assembly chose Nathanael Greene commander of their observation army. Wanton — in an attempt to obstruct military mobilization — feigned illness and absented himself from the May session. In Wanton's absence army commissions could not be conferred. Sessions, anticipating trouble with the Assembly, declined to serve.

At this juncture the legislature, in a move of dubious legality, selected the militant Nicholas Cooke to fill the office of lieutenant-governor and heir apparent. Then, when Wanton finally made his appearance in June, the legislature declared that no one was "to administer the oath of office" to him. With Wanton effectively displaced, the Assembly directed Secretary Henry Ward to sign all military commissions, and Cooke immediately assumed the functions and eventually the title of chief executive.⁴

In April 1776 Cooke was elected governor in his own right, and the Assembly, with little opposition, passed an act repudiating Rhode Island's allegiance to George III. This renunciation act of May 4 was a bold and defiant maneuver, but it did not constitute a declaration of independence from the Empire itself, despite the overwhelming popular and scholarly

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1 The charter of Charles II guaranteed Rhode Islanders all "liberties and immunities of free and natural subjects" of England. During 1765, aggrieved colonials in Rhode Island elsewhere alleged that this provision was violated by the Stamp Act and its taxation without representation. In October 1769, England was again indicted by Rhode Island for failing to accord colonists the rights of Englishmen when the General Assembly adopted a Virginia resolution censuring use of juryless and remote admiralty courts for trying those accused of violating the navigation acts. John Russell Bartlett, ed., *Records of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England*, 10v. (Providence, 1856-1865), 6: 451-52, 602-04, hereafter cited as *RICR*. David S. Lovejoy, "Equal Rights Imply Equality: Case Against Admiralty Jurisdiction in America, 1764-1776," *William and Mary Quarterly* 16: 4 (October 1959) 459-84.

2 On May 17, 1774, less than two weeks after news of the Boston Port Bill arrived in Massachusetts, a Providence town meeting became the first group to advance proposals for a general congress of all the colonies to bring about united action in emergency. On June 15, the General Assembly made the colony the first to appoint delegates to the anticipated continental congress. Edmund Burnett, *Continental Congress* (New York, 1941) 19-20. *RICR* 7: 246-47, 280-81.

3 *RICR* 7: 310-11.

4 Correspondence between Wanton and the Assembly is printed in *RICR* 7: 311, 332-37. Joel A. Cohen, "Lexington and Concord: Rhode Island Reacts," *Rhode Island History* 26: 4 (October 1967) 100-02.

belief of succeeding generations that it severed imperial ties.⁵ For the next two-and-one-half months Rhode Islanders continued to describe their province as the "English Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations." Oaths, writs, and commissions during this period clearly indicate continued colonial status, and Governor Cooke, in a letter to General Washington, accompanied by a copy of the controversial declaration, asserted that Assembly action upon the question of independence had been postponed pending a decision by the second Continental Congress.⁶

When Congress did act, Rhode Island quickly responded. On July 18, 1776, its Assembly – without conducting a popular referendum – approved the Declaration of Independence and pledged on behalf of its constituents to "support the said General Congress, with our lives and fortunes." The state of Rhode Island on that day was proclaimed, but a difficult and costly struggle intervened between proclamation and England's reluctant ratification of Rhode Island's newly assumed status.⁷

That struggle – the American Revolution – wrought many political, economic, cultural, social, and ideological changes in those American states which rejected English rule. The nature and extent of these changes have long been the center of considerable historical debate. It can be stated with assurance that internal political and constitutional alterations produced by the Revolution in Rhode Island were minimal.

Many of the officers who presided over the colony's affairs in 1775 (Governor Wanton, of course, excluded) continued to hold important positions in 1783, the year the Treaty of Paris was declared definitive. Joseph Clarke was still general treasurer and Henry Ward remained as secretary of state. Henry



Courtesy Redwood Library

Governor Joseph Wanton. Portrait by unknown artist.

Marchant, attorney general in 1775, had become one of Rhode Island's delegates to the confederation Congress. Assistant (i.e. Senator) Peter Phillips had become associate justice of the Superior Court, several assistants and deputies had been appointed justices of their county court of common pleas. Deputy (i.e., state representative) Thomas Holden of Warwick had advanced to brigadier general of militia in the County of Kent and Deputy William Bradford of Bristol had become speaker of the House. Several others who were deputies in the years immediately preceding the Revolution either served in the post-Revolutionary Assemblies or were replaced by relatives.⁸ Rhode Island in 1783, as in 1775, was a white man's democracy in which people deferred to an upper-strata, traditional governing class. The war for independence

5 For example, May 4 is called R. I. Independence Day and has been designated a legal holiday. The *R. I. Manual* (published biennially by the secretary of state) prints the renunciation measure under the title "An Act of Independence." Historians have also accepted this popular but erroneous belief. One contends that the colony's radicals "declared Rhode Island's independence of Britain two months before the radical party was able to achieve that end in the Continental Congress." Merrill Jensen, *Articles of Confederation* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1963) 40. The act is found in *RICR* 7: 522-26. It passed the lower house by ten-to-one, with only six deputies in opposition. Nicholas Cooke to George Washington, May 6, 1776, *RICR* 7: 545.

6 *RICR* 7: 522-23. On May 7 Cooke explained the issue of independence to congressional delegate Stephen Hopkins, in William R. Staples, comp., *Rhode Island in the Continental Congress* (Providence, 1870) 68.

7 *RICR* 7: 581-82.

8 Jackson Turner Main, *Upper House in Revolutionary America, 1763-1788* (Madison, Wis., 1967) 182-83, notes "the striking similarity between the upper house [in Rhode Island] before and after the Revolution." Cohen, "Democracy in Revolutionary Rhode Island: A Statistical Analysis," *Rhode Island History* 29: 1 & 2 (Feb.-May, 1970) 3-16, also denies political upheaval.



Courtesy Brown University

Governor Nicholas Cooke. Portrait by unknown artist.

clearly did not produce upheaval in political personnel of the state, nor did it markedly affect the structure of government.⁹

While other rebellious provinces, Connecticut excepted,¹⁰ scrapped their royally granted basic laws, Rhode Island tenaciously clung to the charter of Charles II.¹¹ An important motive underlying the revolutionary spirit of many Rhode Islanders was the desire to preserve intact the liberal charter which sustained their remarkable autonomy. As the leading student of pre-Revolutionary Rhode Island has contended, "Rhode Islanders went to war in April, 1775, to force Great Britain to recognize their self-governing colony." Then, in mid-1776 they first renounced royal allegiance and then proclaimed independence "as a final step in defense of their political

self-sufficiency."¹²

Reverence for the charter and attachment to the system it produced was so widespread that even Tory Governor Joseph Wanton, in opposing the "army of observation," had based his argument in part upon it. "Your charter privileges are of too much importance to be forfeited," exhorted Wanton, as he admonished the Assembly regarding "the fatal consequences of levying war against the king."¹³

Despite the sacrosanct position of the charter, the exigencies of war did evoke repeated criticism in some quarters for one of its provisions — the apportionment clause. This criticism came from the country towns, particularly those on the remote western border and in King's County (appropriately changed to Washington County in 1781).

As war progressed, these relatively populous rural communities were forced to bear an unprecedented tax burden. Obligations of country towns were accentuated between 1778 and 1780 because valuations upon which taxes were levied excluded those municipalities "in the possession of the enemy." Once-prosperous Newport, plus Middletown, Portsmouth, Jamestown and New Shoreham were exempted. Even after liberation these war-ravaged and depopulated Bay areas experienced slow recovery and therefore were subjected to valuation estimates proportionately lower than those of pre-war years. Country towns took up the slack, but only grudgingly and with difficulty.¹⁴

In the period 1777-1784 rural communities protested against this new fiscal arrangement. Many of these protests included a demand for "more equitable representation." The towns complained that their taxes had risen and that the war's financial burden weighed heavily upon them. Despite these circumstances, the number of deputies from the farming

9 RICR 7: 239, 312-13; 9: 688-94. Lovejoy, *Rhode Island Politics and the American Revolution, 1760-1776* (Providence, 1958) 182. Cohen, "Rhode Island and the American Revolution: A Selective Socio-Political Analysis" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1967) 177-78.

10 Connecticut, like Rhode Island, was a self-governing colony with a very liberal and quite satisfactory charter, retained until 1818. Richard J. Purcell, *Connecticut in Transition, 1775-1818* (Middletown, Conn., 1963).

11 RICR 7: 581-82.

12 Lovejoy, *Rhode Island Politics*, 193-94.

13 RICR7: 332-33.

14 Committee Reports to General Assembly 3: 107; 4: 8-19 (Rhode Island State Archives) hereafter cited Reports RIGA. RICR 9: 169, 273.

Table – Rhode Island in 1782
Population, Ratio of Representation,
and Value of Rateable Property

Towns and Counties	Deputies in Gen. Assembly	Population	Ratio of Deputies to Population	Value of Rateable Property (in £)
Barrington	2	534	267	30,720
Bristol	2	1,032	516	65,240
Warren	2	905	453	39,000
Bristol County	6	2,471	412	134,960
Coventry	2	2,107	1,054	100,000
East Greenwich	2	1,609	805	79,600
West Greenwich	2	1,698	849	73,300
Warwick	4	2,112	528	175,100
Kent County	10	7,526	753	428,000
Jamestown	2	345	173	20,000
Little Compton	2	1,341	671	89,300
Middletown	2	674	337	34,000
Newport	6	5,530	922	153,000
New Shoreham ^o	2	478	239	NV
Portsmouth	4	1,350	338	55,000
Tiverton	2	1,959	980	110,500
Newport County	20	11,677	584	461,800

towns remained stationary – fixed by the charter at two per town. This “inequity” caused them to develop resentment towards the Bay settlements, especially those enjoying greater representation. Portsmouth in particular was the object of their criticism. In 1782 it ranked 20th in population and 24th in value of rateable property, but its four deputies gave this town twice the representation in the lower house of the mainland country communities. The implication that this unequal representation had contributed to what the farmers considered an unjust levying of taxes by the Assembly made rural areas even more dissatisfied.¹⁵

15 See table – Rhode Island in 1782.

Cranston	2	1,589	795	123,340
Cumberland	2	1,548	774	90,832
Foster ^b	2	1,763	882	76,000
Glocester	2	2,791	1,396	158,000
Johnston	2	996	498	64,200
N. Providence	2	698	349	45,874
Providence	4	4,310	1,078	217,000
Scituate ^b	2	1,628	814	107,000
Smithfield	2	2,217	1,109	200,000
Prov. County	20	17,540	877	1,082,246
Charlestown	2	1,523	762	81,300
Exeter	2	2,058	1,029	102,870
Hopkinton	2	1,735	868	91,000
N. Kingstown	2	2,328	1,164	148,650
S. Kingstown	2	2,675	1,338	292,300
Richmond	2	1,094	547	70,360
Westerly	2	1,720	860	97,000
Wash. County	14	13,133	938	883,480
Rhode Island	70	52,347	748	2,990,486

a) A valuation was not taken on New Shoreham (Block Island) because of British occupation.

b) In 1781, Scituate was divided and Foster created out of its western sector.

Source: “Rhode Island Census of 1782,” Theodore Foster Papers, RIHS, vol. 14; RICR 9: 520 (valuation).

Taxation and the “equal representation” movement of the Revolutionary years were closely related. Rhode Island’s first wartime estimate of the value of rateable property for the purpose of levying a tax was made in February 1777. This estimate and the consequent £16,000 tax of March 1777 brought criticism not only from the country towns but also from Providence and Bristol.¹⁶ This imposition, coupled with other alleged irregularities by the Assembly, prompted freemen of Scituate to make the first request for charter revision, April 28, 1777, embodied in the town meeting’s instructions to Scituate’s deputies in the General Assembly.

16 Reports RIGA 3: 107. RICR 8: 149-51.

These instructions complained of a recent pay increase which the state's legislators voted to themselves and protested against the "great disproportion" between wages of officers and men in the militia. More important was the contention that the colonial charter had become "void" when Rhode Island declared her independence from England. Scituate freemen asked that the charter's apportionment system be discarded in favor of one based upon population and taxable wealth. They "earnestly recommended" that the Scituate delegates use their "utmost influence to cause an act to be drawn settling the form of government, having particular regard that each town in this state be equally represented having regard to the numbers of inhabitants, and value of estates in each town."¹⁷ Scituate had good reason to be aggrieved. Not only was it placed eighth in the estimate of 1777, it also ranked third in population, and an unenviable first in the number of inhabitants per deputy.¹⁸

Apparently little came of the Scituate request. Five months later, in the September 1777 session of the Assembly, a resolution was passed creating a five-man committee "to form a plan of government for this state." This committee may have been created in response to Scituate's plea, but it never reported and the issue was temporarily postponed.¹⁹

Scituate's disadvantageous position was slightly relieved in 1781 when its western sector was set off and incorporated as the town of Foster. The principal effect of this political cell division was to halve Scituate's number of inhabitants per deputy, so that it approximated the state average.²⁰

Next to espouse equal representation was Gloucester, another community whose population, ratio of deputies to inhabitants, and taxes were all high. On December 5, 1778, Gloucester's freemen ordered her representatives to work for a system of apportionment which would give each town one deputy in the Gen-

eral Assembly. This request was also disregarded by the legislature.²¹

By early 1779 the Assembly showed signs of yielding to the agitation for a more equal allocation of deputies. In February, the House approved a proposal allowing each town two deputies. The upper chamber suggested a representation of one or two men depending upon a town's wealth and population. The difference between the two houses could not be reconciled and again the movement was frustrated.²²

This attempted alteration by the legislature prompted several newspaper articles in the *Providence Gazette* by a writer who referred to himself as "the American Whig," opposing any change in the form of government because of the turmoil it could cause at this critical time. The Assembly evidently agreed, for it did not renew proposals to modify the charter at its next session.²³

In July 1780, as war costs mounted, the Assembly approved another estimate and prepared to impose another tax levy. This move produced immediate opposition and the estimate was revised in November. Yet several country towns complained or refused to cooperate, so a further revision was authorized at the May 1781 session. The grumbling continued, especially in Washington County; so the Assembly, in its valuation table of February 1782, made minor concessions to that area prior to imposing a state tax of £12,000 and a Continental levy of £6,000.²⁴

The estimate and assessment of 1782 greatly aroused freemen of Washington County. Particularly hard hit was South Kingstown whose valuation was set at a state high of £292,300, while Providence was a distant second with £217,000, and Portsmouth, with four Assembly votes, a remote twenty-fourth.²⁵

Protest was in order and on April 4, 1782, a convention of delegates from Westerly, Charlestown, Hopkinton, Exeter, Richmond and South Kingstown met at Little Rest (Kingston) and drafted resolutions

17 R. I. Historical Society Manuscripts 3: 11 (# 500), hereafter cited RIHS MSS. Scituate Town meeting Records, Town Clerk's Office, are practically barren for 1772-78. All subsequently cited town meeting records are in the municipal clerk's office of the respective town unless otherwise indicated.

18 *Census of the Inhabitants the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations . . . 1774*, arranged by John R. Bartlett (Providence, 1858) 239. Reports RIGA 3: 107.

19 RICR 8: 304.

20 RICR 9: 460. See table.

21 Gloucester Town Meeting Records 1: 140.

22 Journal House of Deputies 1778-79 (February 27, 1779). Journal of the Senate, 1777-1780 (February 28, 1779), RISA. RIHS MSS. 3: 56.

23 Cohen ("Rhode Island and the Revolution," 123-24) uncovered the articles of "the American Whig" in defense of the status quo.

24 Reports RIGA 4: 15-37. RICR 10: 169-70, 229-30, 260, 273-74, 279-80, 323, 397-98, 520-21.

25 See table.

requesting the General Assembly to devise a more equal mode of representation and taxation. The towns were especially aggrieved because communities which contributed less tax revenue than they, had "thrice & twice the number of voices in assessing the same."

Washington County communities unanimously recommended calling a constitutional convention composed of two delegates from each town.²⁶ South Kingstown enthusiastically approved these resolves in town meeting and instructed her deputies to work for their passage, but the influence of the Bay towns in the Assembly effectively prevented any positive response to the request of the Little Rest convention.²⁷

Although the legislature was not responsive to the extreme demands of the towns aggrieved by the 1782 estimate, it was cognizant of their difficulties. In October 1782 it attempted to alleviate distress by allowing the towns more time to collect the taxes which had been assessed.²⁸ This concession, while well-meaning, did not solve the problem. In Gloucester a few farmers attempted to divest the tax collector of some cattle he had confiscated from those who had refused to pay their rates. When these disgruntled rustics were arrested and placed on trial for their obstructionism, a mob which included some Massachusetts men rescued them. Before the situation got out of hand, Deputy Governor Jabez Bowen had the ringleaders captured and brought to trial. Most of the principal insurrectionists were heavily fined and ordered to jail until their fines were paid.²⁹ This quick action averted a minor Shay's Rebellion, but it left a residue of hard feelings in the country towns.

In February 1783 the Assembly made another attempt to lighten the tax load on Rhode Island's towns by placing an excise on certain enumerated for-

eign imports. In June this expedient was repealed and replaced with a general *ad valorem* impost of two per cent, but revenue from this measure was insufficient to alleviate the financial plight of the state's municipalities. The legislature made an additional effort to aid agrarian communities in October 1783 by revising upward the valuations for the island towns of Newport County but despite this adjustment, farming towns on the mainland continued to shoulder the major tax burden.³⁰

Reports of general treasurer Joseph Clarke for 1782-86 reveal how burdened these towns were. South Kingstown, by far the most distressed, was continually deficient in its collections. In February 1786 on the eve of the paper money emission, the town was listed as delinquent for every levy since imposition of the 1782 estimate. Hopkinton, Richmond, and Coventry were also far in arrears, but lesser amounts than South Kingstown, which owed £2,668 in back taxes.³¹

In early 1784 distress became acute. Two communities, Westerly and Hopkinton, feeling that scarcity of currency was at the root of the problem, vainly urged the mercantile-controlled Assembly for an emission of paper currency.³² Other hard-hit Washington County communities decided to call a second convention. This body met on April 1, 1784 in South Kingstown. As in 1782, it again demanded reapportionment. Further, it alleged that the present tax system was inequitable. To relieve financial pressure upon the country towns it was urged that the impost be raised to five per cent.³³ Although several rural communities in other parts of the state officially expressed views similar to those advanced by the Washington County convention,³⁴ the Assembly remained cool to these protests. Their only concession was a raising of the impost by one-half of one per

26 Charlestown Town Meetings, March 14, April 17, 1782. Town Council and Probate Record No. 3, 1767-1787.

27 South Kingstown Town Meetings, April 1, 29, 1782. Town Meeting Records 1776-1836, pp. 146-48.

28 RICR 9: 606-07.

29 Cohen, "Rhode Island and the Revolution," 144-46.

30 RICR 9: 699, 718, 729-30. Elisha Dyer, comp., *Valuation of Cities and Towns in the State of Rhode Island* . . . (Prov., 1871) 36-39.

31 Reports RIGA 4: 74, 90, 94, 97, 101. For condition of taxes 1786-89, in which South Kingstown continued deficient despite the issuance of paper money, see Miscellaneous Manuscripts R-346 RIHS Library, hereafter cited Misc. MSS. RIHS. In early 1783 the General Assembly considered dividing South Kingstown as

it had bisected Scituate in 1781. This proposal was designed to solve the town's apportionment ills, but South Kingstown strongly rejected this solution. Town Meeting Records 1776-1836, pp. 161, 165-66.

32 Cohen, "Rhode Island and the Revolution," 146.

33 Resolves of the convention are in Misc. MSS., RIHS, So 87, C 884 (Charlestown), and N874c. North Kingstown, South Kingstown, Exeter, Westerly, Hopkinton, Richmond, and Charlestown participated in the convention.

34 Cohen, ("Rhode Island and the Revolution") after examining town meeting records, finds that Coventry, Foster, Johnston, Scituate, Smithfield, Warwick and West Greenwich took positions similar to the South Kingstown convention. See p. 147, footnote 69. I have found statements of support in Misc. MSS., RIHS, F-811 (Foster) and Johnston (J-641).



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Efforts of towns to obtain relief from their tax burden through more available money were rewarded in 1786 with a new emission of paper currency, the last issue by the state. Later issues were made by individual banks.

cent.³⁵

After the 1784 convention the equal representation movement temporarily abated only to revive in 1787 after country towns gained ascendancy in the General Assembly. From beginning to end, however, this movement was not primarily one for constitutional reform *per se* but rather protest against oppressive taxation.

Although the war for independence left the structure of Rhode Island government unchanged, despite the representation controversy, and though it failed to

effect drastic overturn in governmental personnel, it did prompt some legal and political changes. For instance, the Revolution and sentiments it generated influenced legislation affecting Catholics and Negro slaves.

Whatever anti-Catholicism existed in Rhode Island was mollified by assistance rendered to the struggling colonials by Catholic France and by the presence of large numbers of French troops in Newport under General Rochambeau, some of whom remained when the struggle was over. Thus, the General Assembly in February 1783 removed the arbitrarily-imposed disability against Roman Catholics by giving members of that religion "all the rights and privileges of the Protestant citizens of this state."³⁶

Most significant of several statutes relating to Negroes was the emancipation act of 1784. With a preface invoking sentiments of Locke, that "all men are entitled to life, liberty and property," the manumission measure gave freedom to all children born to slave mothers after March 1, 1784. Though an encouraging gesture it was not a complete abolition of slavery, for it failed to require the emancipation of those who were slaves at the time of its passage.³⁷ One such individual, James Howland, remained technically and legally a slave until his death in 1859 on the eve of John Brown's raid.³⁸

The emancipation act was followed by a concerted effort of Rhode Island reformers — particularly the influential Quaker community — to ban the slave trade. This agitation had a salutary result when the General Assembly enacted a measure in October 1787 which prohibited any Rhode Island citizen from engaging in this nefarious traffic. The legislature termed the trade inconsistent with "that more enlightened and civilized state of freedom which has of late

35 RICR 10: 48-49.

36 RICR 9: 674-75. The General Assembly was unaware that the Catholic disqualification had been inserted, without individual passage, in the *Digest of 1719*, for the 1783 measure purported to repeal the "Act of March, 1663." On the origins of the 1719 statute, which denied to Catholics the status of freeman, see Conley, "Rhode Island Constitutional Development, 1636-1775," *Rhode Island History* 27: 3 (June 1968) 78-80.

37 RICR 10: 7. Other statutes were a law of October 1779 which forbade sale of Rhode Island slaves outside the state without their consent, RICR 8: 618; and a February 1778 measure which granted freedom to those slaves who enlisted in Rhode Island's "colored regiment," upon completion of their term of duty, RICR 8: 358-60. Quaker influence on Rhode Island's anti-slave movement is discussed in Mack Thompson, *Moses Brown: Reluctant Reformer* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1962) 92-96, 175-202.

38 Edwin W. Snow, *Report upon Census of Rhode Island: 1865* (Providence, 1867) xlvi.

prevailed."³⁹

A side effect of the Revolution to have important consequences for Rhode Island's political and constitutional development was the decline of Newport. Its exposed location, the incidence of Toryism among its townspeople, and its temporary occupation by the British, combined to produce both a voluntary and at times a forced exodus of its inhabitants. In 1774 its population was 9209; by 1782 that figure had dwindled to 5532. The population of Providence — more sheltered at the head of the Bay and a center of Revolutionary activity — remained stationary during these turbulent times.⁴⁰

The Revolution was a blow from which Newport never fully recovered. British occupation adversely affected both its population and its prosperity. From this period onward, numerical and economic ascendancy inexorably moved northward to Providence and the surrounding mainland communities.⁴¹ The failure of political power to make as rapid a journey up the Bay, because of the charter's inflexible apportionment clause, became the source of increasing discontent and eventually prompted a number of calls for constitutional change. In the late eighteenth century those calls were sporadic and lacking in urgency. Only the equal representation movement posed a threat to any portion of the charter. Most Rhode Islanders apparently shared the opinion of David Howell, who made the following complacent observation while serving as one of the state's delegates to the confederation Congress: "As you go Southward Government verges towards Aristocracy. In New England alone have we pure and unmixed Democracy and in Rhode Island & P.P. it is in its Perfection."⁴² With

Howell's view evidently reflecting the sentiments of a majority of his fellow citizens, it is not surprising that during the 1780s major constitutional disputes were not internal, but instead revolved around Rhode Island's relation to the central government, and especially to that system envisioned by the convention of 1787.

Rhode Island did not experience internal upheaval during the war for independence. The aphorism coined by Carl Becker and defended by socio-economic historians that the Revolution was in large measure a contest over "who should rule at home" has little applicability to the Rhode Island experience.⁴³ Whatever conflict existed was sectional and produced no change in structure of government. A majority of Rhode Islanders felt that no such alterations were needed, for they believed with David Howell that Rhode Island possessed "pure and unmixed Democracy . . . in its Perfection." Revolutionary Rhode Island was a democracy tempered by a degree of deference and by intermittent political indifference, but it was a democracy nonetheless.⁴⁴

Ironically, the sacrosanct charter — which Rhode Island's revolutionaries left intact and untouched — contained no provisions for its own amendment. So, during the early nineteenth century, when the state experienced accelerating metamorphosis from agrarian to industrial society, democracy declined as a landless and voterless working class grew in size and grew in its resentment toward the system of government which denied it basic rights and privileges.⁴⁵ This situation did indeed produce internal convulsion, but that erupted three generations after the Revolution in a crisis known as the Dorr Rebellion of 1842.

39 RICR 10: 262 Elizabeth Donnan, "Agitation Against Slave Trade in Rhode Island, 1784-1790," in *Persecution and Liberty: Essays in Honor of George Lincoln Burr* (New York, 1931) 473-482.

40 Population changes have been noted by comparing figures in *Census of 1774 with "Rhode Island Census of 1782,"* Theodore Foster Papers, v. 14, RIHS Library.

41 Lovejoy, *Rhode Island Politics*, 193-94. Franklin Coyle, "Survival of Providence Business Enterprise in the American Revolutionary Era, 1770-1785" (unpublished master's thesis, Brown University, 1960). Peter J. Coleman, *Transformation of Rhode Island, 1790-1860* (Providence, 1963) 20-22, 67-68.

42 David Howell to Welcome Arnold, August 3, 1782, quoted in Hillman Bishop, *Why Rhode Island Opposed the Federal Constitution* (Providence, 1950) 11, a pamphlet reprint of four articles serially in *Rhode Island History* 8 (1949).

43 Carl Becker, *History of Political Parties in Province of New York, 1760-1776* (Madison, Wis., 1909) 22. A more acceptable approach is to examine social changes which were a result of the liberalizing tendencies of the Revolution. Richard B. Morris, *The American Revolution Reconsidered* (New York, 1967) 43-85. Frederick B. Tolles, "The American Revolution Considered as a Social Movement" *American Historical Review* 60: 1 (Oct. 1954) 1-12.

44 Cohen, "Rhode Island and the Revolution," 170-78. Lovejoy, *Rhode Island Politics*, 13-18. Conley, 92-94.

45 This development is a major theme of my forthcoming book "Democracy in Decline — Rhode Island's Constitutional Development, 1775-1841" to be published by the Rhode Island Historical Society.



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Westminster and Eddy Streets in Providence on a rainy day, about 1900. Notice the man on the bicycle framed by the umbrellas and other details of the scene captured by photographer Frank W. Marshall.