

# RHODE ISLAND HISTORY

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GOVERNOR JAMES FENNER, 1771-1846

*Governor of Rhode Island, 1807-1811, 1824-1831.*

*First president Rhode Island Historical Society, 1822-1833.*

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## The Origin of the Newport Tower

by HJALMAR R. HOLAND\*

It is almost a pleasure to have one's opinions attacked by Professor Kenneth Conant because he is so courteous about it. The old and still somewhat common way of crushing an opponent by sneer and diatribe is not for him. Instead he sweetens the pills of criticism with many compliments which mollifies the opponent and gains for himself an admiring gallery of readers. Far be it from me, however, to insinuate that he bribes the jury with pretty phrases. It is merely a natural expression of his kind heart, and I gratefully acknowledge his gracious remarks about me in the *Rhode Island History* of January, 1948.

But a sweet disposition is not always a perfect substitute for good logic, and I do not find that any of his thirteen arguments militate against my conclusions about the age of the Newport Tower. I shall discuss these points below, and in order to avoid any appearance of evasion, I shall repeat his arguments in his own words.

1. The early English colonial masonry in Newport is similar, and, like the wooden structures of the time, strongly reminiscent of mediæval work.

The Newport colonists naturally obtained the stone, sand and lime used in this masonry from available local deposits. A pre-colonial party would do the same. I do not see that this objection proves or disproves anything.

\* Mr. Holand is the author of *America, 1355-1364*, published by Duell, Sloane, and Pearce in 1946.



2. The closest actual parallel for the general form of the tower is the so-called Treasury of the Cathedral of Canterbury. The putative annular aisle at Newport is purely a theory, suggested by the offsets above the piers—but these offsets are functional in the *staves* of the tower as actually built.

This objection supports a mediaeval rather than a colonial time of erection because the Canterbury Treasury is of undisputed mediaeval origin. A much closer parallel of the tower is found in several of the fortified round churches of southern Sweden, built in the 12th and 13th centuries. As to the "putative annular aisle," I have always maintained that it never was built although it may have been planned.

3. The open lower story would improve the circulation of wind if the structure were built as a windmill.

If this is true, why are not open lower stories found in other windmills? There are thousands of rotating windmills, but none of them have open lower stories. Evidently it is not desirable because when the observatory at Chesterton, England, was transformed into a windmill, the open lower story was closed up with heavy planking.

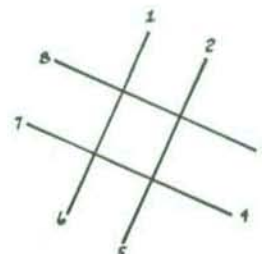
4. The middle stage was probably reached by a retractable ladder, but this stage, with its wooden floor, cannot seriously have been thought of as capable of resisting a determined attack. The floor was supported on timbers arranged like a number sign (#) and evidently mortised at the intersections. The cutting would so weaken the timbers that a support (of wood?) would probably be required under each intersection. This is in fact the timbering system of the Chesterton observation tower . . .

These timbers which rested in the eight trapezoidal beam holes immediately above the top of the columns present an interesting problem. Conant thinks that they were mortised at the intersections so as to make a level support for the floor planks *at this elevation*. This, however, is contrary to the conclusions of Hatfield, Mason, Enlart, Shelton, Allen, Rowe, and Means, who all agree in placing the first floor at the same elevation as the bottom of the fireplace. Here the stairway to the second floor begins, and a well defined line running around the inside of the tower shows that the floor was at this elevation. The bottom of the beam holes are an average of

46 inches lower than this recognized floor level. Assuming that the beams with the floor construction took up 13 inches, this leaves Conant's floor 33 inches below the true floor. To step up on the stairway to the second floor would require a step of 41 inches. The altar table would be more than six feet above Conant's floor.

Possibly Professor Conant thinks of the floor as being 46 inches thick (from the bottom of the beam holes to the foot of the stairway)! But that dilemma is equally bad because it is unthinkable that the builders of a commercial windmill would use up almost four vertical feet of their limited space in a single floor construction.

Mr. Conant has missed the significance of these timbers. They had nothing to do with a permanent floor construction. Their purpose was to provide a scaffold for the building operations at the lowest possible point. This was immediately at the top of the columns, because it would weaken the building to leave a large cavity in the shaft of each column. As this scaffold demanded great strength, it would not do to mortise the timbers at the intersections. This could be avoided by using some crooked timbers, and there is evidence to show that at least two of them were crooked. This is shown by the sketch below which gives the different elevations of the beam holes. These elevations were obtained by measuring their altitude above a datum line established by help of a transit operated by Mr. John H. Benson.



It will be noted that the beam holes 1 - 6 and 2 - 5 are practically on the same level, and the two timbers connect-



ing them may therefore have been straight. But holes number 3 and 4 are seven to eight inches lower and the timbers 3 - 8 and 4 - 7 must therefore have been the lower pair. However, hole number 8 is the highest of all, which indicates that the timber from 3 to 8 had a decided crook in it. A similar but less marked crook is indicated in timber 4 - 7. These timbers were not packed with mortar, which suggests that they were later to be removed. In one of the round churches in West Gothland, Sweden, we find provision for such removal. As in the Newport tower the beam holes are trapezoidal in shape, and beneath each timber was a short piece of plank. When this block was removed, the timber dropped down a couple of inches and thus became loose enough for removal.<sup>1</sup>

These eight gaping beam holes which disfigure the inside of the tower are highly significant because they bear witness to the relative age of the structure. It is so artistically designed and so well constructed that whoever built it must have been proud of it and eager to remove anything that impaired its beauty. Assuming that it was built in colonial times, we may be sure that the scaffold would have been removed as soon as it had served its purpose and the ugly beam holes would have been filled with stone and mortar. People have little patience with scaffolds after their house is built. But the beam holes were not closed up, which shows an absence of the pride of ownership and indicates that the Newport pioneers had nothing to do with the erection of the tower.

Let us now assume that it was built by the royal expedition of 1355-1364.<sup>2</sup> With them the conditions were different. Being only a small group, thousands of miles from other white men, the question of safety was a most serious problem. The weak point in the tower was the lower floor which would have to be made fireproof. In the Swedish fortified churches this problem was solved by making the first floor of concrete. There is no reason to

<sup>1</sup> Emil Ekhoff, "Om Kyrkornas forna egenskap av försvarsverk," *Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed*, Copenhagen, 1899, XIV, 38-39.

<sup>2</sup> H. R. Holand, *America, 1355-1364*, New York, 1946.

doubt that the members of the royal expedition would follow their prototype in this as in other things. They would postpone the removal of their strong oak timbers until a time when law and order could be maintained. On top of this scaffold they would mix the rubble from their stone work with lime and lay a thick slab of concrete which would make the whole building fire-proof.

And thus it would stand in safety and dignity until the English settlers came. It would not be long before the settlers would chisel a hole in the concrete so that a stairway could be put up. This rough pounding would crack the concrete, and when the roof collapsed, rain would filter in and rot the timbers until the floor fell down. The earliest pictures of the inside of the tower date from 1837, and these show that all the inside structure had disappeared.

This well built tower with its columns and arches, its concrete floor and shining coat of white stucco carries with it a vision of future immigration and a permanent colony.

Now back to Conant's 13 points.

5. Mills actually do have fireplaces in them in some cases . . .

Yes, if the fireplace is in another room, well away from the mill stones, there would be no great danger from combustion. But Mr. Conant will look in vain for any windmill anywhere which has a fireplace in the *grinding room*. The presence of the fireplace in the Newport tower eliminates the possibility that the tower was planned as a windmill.

6. The window frames of the middle stage were of almost the same dimensions as those which were currently used in the seventeenth century construction at Plymouth.

The primitive window frames in the Plymouth colony were the results of primitive conditions. The same applies to the earlier Norse encampment.

7. The present mortar surface seems too fresh and flat for 580 years of exposure. One of these recesses is proposed as the aumbry for a supposed slab altar formerly set in and against the curving wall. Any possible slab would have a most unconvincing shape as an altar.



As I know of no figures on the relative rate of deterioration of mortar, I cannot answer this objection. While an altar table supported in part by a groove in the wall may seem "most unconvincing," such altars are not unknown. I have seen one in the Cathedral of Hamar in Norway from the thirteenth century and have heard of many others.

8. Stairs led from near the fireplace to the upper stage. At that level the floor was supported by two parallel timbers near the middle of the circle. *No proper provision was made for supporting the ends of the transverse joists or planking.* This raises the question as to whether there was a full floor . . .

This appears to be Mr. Conant's most important objection because he has italicized it. But, unfortunately, this objection merely reveals a lapse of memory. At the level of the two parallel timbers there is a 6" x 6" groove in the wall which supports the transverse joists in the most approved fashion. It runs clear around the inside of the building except for a short space where the stairway well cuts through the joists. Mr. Conant must have seen it many times because it is in plain view from the ground. I have several photographs which show it plainly, and it can also be seen in Mason's drawing.<sup>3</sup>

9. The substance of this objection has been answered above except for the assertion that "the Newport structure actually served as a mill."

It is very doubtful if this is true because the claim rests on very unsatisfactory evidence. We have only one sworn statement about the early use of the tower. This is a statement by an octogenarian named Joseph Mumford to the effect that he had heard his father say that the tower about 1760 was used as a powder magazine. Mumford says nothing about the tower's being used as a windmill.

There is, however, a report that a wooden windmill was erected *on top* of the tower some time in the second half of the eighteenth century. A writer named Sarah S. Cahoon about 1840 published a small book entitled *Visit to Grand-Papa*, in which she devotes ten pages to the New-

<sup>3</sup> See Mason's drawing in illustration No. 22 in P. A. Means, *Newport Tower*.

port tower. In this she quotes "an aged and respectable gentleman" as saying that "he recollected perfectly, when a wooden mill erected on the top of this tower was employed in grinding corn."<sup>4</sup>

Finally we have an unverified report of an old man named John Langley, who in 1851 claimed that he had heard his father say that in *his* boyhood he used to carry corn to the mill to be ground. If this is true, he probably referred to the mill which was built on top of the tower.

I am happy to be able to publish an old document which throws considerable light on the tower as it was two hundred years ago. This document is the original minutes of the quarterly meeting held in Newport, July 25, 1756. It was called to my attention by Mr. Herbert O. Brigham, Librarian of the Newport Historical Society, and it has not previously been published. These minutes read in part as follows:

Quarterly Meeting Newport July 25th, 1756 (Book 2, p. 142)

—Whereas the Town Meeting of ye 22nd instant voted that a Ward House . . . Built upon ye Land of Jahleel Brenton Esq where ye Ward h . . . . . formerly built with ye aprobation of Jahleel Brenton Esq and . . . . . informed ye Meeting He was willing they allowing . . . three peppercorns a year for its standing on his Land.

It being Proposed in the Meeting . . build a look out upon Mr. John Banisters Stone Mill, instead of . . ye Ward house in ye neck it was Voted that Jahleel Brenton Esq and Col. Godfrey Mallbone be a Committee to apply to Mr. Banister to know if he will give Liberty for ye Town to build a look out house on his Mill and the Meeting be adjourned till three clock in ye afternoon to receive their report upon what con . . . . Mr. Banister will let ye town have it, provided he is willing to let them have it.

P.M. Three of ye clock Sundry of ye inhabitants having met according to ye adjournment Jahleel Brenton, Col. Godfrey Mallbone made a . . . . . that they had waited on Mr. Banister . . . . . for ye town to build a Look out on his Stone Mill and that Mr. Banister was willing their should a Look out built there and that he wo . . . . . a Ten foot way to it . . . Town fencing it in properly from his oth . . . . . paying him ten peppercorns a year and to have it as long as . . . to and at ye expirati . . thereof to leave it in ye same order it is in at present.

Whereupon the Meeting voted that ye Clerk should give forth a War . . . Call ye town together by Beat of Drum tomorrow at eleven of the . . . . . to consider on said affairs and also to consider whether

<sup>4</sup> Sarah M. Cahoon, *Visit to Grand-Papa*, New York, 1840, pp. 87-97.



it may be . . . necessary to build a Watch house at Castle Hill or else where to watch of nights.

The question before this town meeting was whether to rebuild the former ward house "on ye neck" or to build a look-out house upon John Banister's stone mill or tower. The two terms "ward house" and "look out house" therefore seem to be synonymous. The mill or tower site presumably was desirable because it was on top of the high ridge behind the town and commanded a wide view over the surrounding region.

But why was it necessary to build a house on *top* of the Tower? A lookout was nothing elaborate — just a small space enclosed by walls with a floor below and a roof above. Evidently the tower in 1756 had no roof because it is not likely that the owner would have permitted the wrecking of it for such a nominal compensation as ten peppercorns. Nor could it have had a floor because if it had, it would not have been necessary to build a whole house — a roof would have sufficed.

We may therefore reasonably conclude that the tower in 1756 was just about as it is now — a hollow rotunda without roof or floors. Moreover, it had been serving no public function because there was no public access to it until Mr. Banister at this meeting offered to give a ten-foot right of way to it.

The fact that the tower in 1756 was a ruin is highly significant. This was only 80 years after the time when Benedict Arnold is said to have built it, and as the tower bears evidence of having been very well constructed, such quick decay seems inexplicable. This fact is emphasized by the known frugality of the early English settlers, who took care to maintain their buildings in good condition. The only explanation for the decayed state of the tower is that it was built several hundred years before the colonists came.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> At a later meeting (in 1756) it was decided not to accept Mr. Banister's generous offer, probably because it would be difficult to anchor the look-out house securely upon the top of the tower. This discussion about putting a look-out house on top of the tower was probably the spark which caused someone to put up a gristmill on top of the tower as mentioned above. But the labor of carrying the grain up to this mill was so great that this mill did not do business very long.

10. Even if the tower were built as a mill, the upper chamber might be a look-out chamber.

This proves nothing.

11. The mason who repaired the top of the tower in 1946 reported a brick in the thickness of the wall, just below his work.

Perhaps he did. But he was not the first to repair the top. About fifty years ago a mason named Alexander Fludder made extensive repairs to the upper part of the tower, and the brick may be his.

12. . . . The tower was probably a W.P.A. project — of King Philip's War . . .

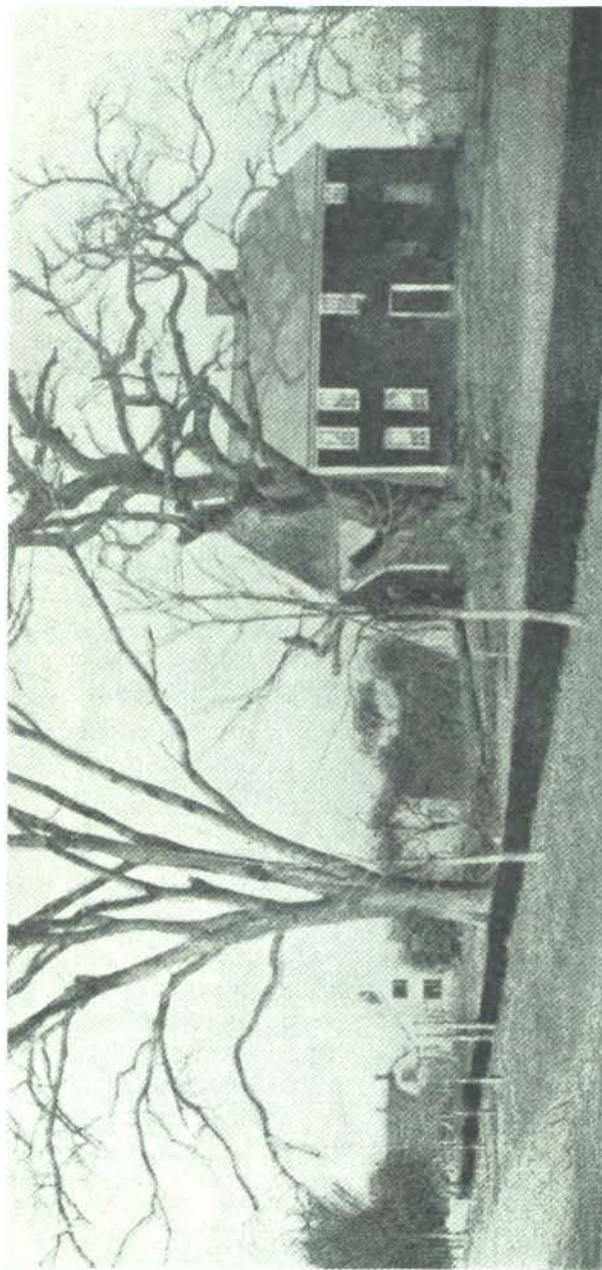
For two summers farming had been interrupted by King Philip's war. There were few men left on the farms and still fewer who would risk being shot by going out in open fields. When finally the war came to an end in August, 1676, people had more important things to do than to gather stones to build a stone windmill on columns.

13. If indeed as is suggested by William Wood's map of 1634 and Sir Edmund Plowden's petition for a grant of New Albion, there was an 'Old Plymouth' with 'a rownd stone towre' at Newport, we might suppose that the windmill-building Netherlands constructed and abandoned it. They early built windmills on Manhattan, and they had a settlement not far from Newport, just to the south-east of Narragansett Bay.

There is something mystic about this alleged Dutch settlement "just to the southeast of Narragansett Bay," because no one seems to have heard about it except Conant. But even if this Dutch settlement were a fact, it is difficult to visualize its people as building a windmill in Newport. While the Netherlands have built many thousand windmills, they have never, as far as is known, put them up on stone columns and provided them with a fireplace and an altar in the grinding room. And why should they spend months of heavy toil in building a windmill in a region where there were neither farmers nor grainfields? It was 150 miles from their base and the land belonged to another power. If they really planned to defy the English, they would have put up a fort instead of a windmill. On the whole the supposition seems fantastic.

This ancient tower in Newport deserves an objective and thorough study unhampered by uncritical preconceptions.





From *Early Rehoboth*, vol. 1 by Richard LeBaron Bowen

Poet Deacon Philip Walker's house, corner of Massasoit Avenue and North Broadway, East Providence, Rhode Island, as it appeared about 1890. Still standing, it is the oldest poet's house in the United States. The righthand half is the original house built by Deacon Walker in 1679; the lefthand half was added about one hundred years later. Unfinished at his death in August 1679, the Plymouth Colony Court, on 1 Nov. 1679, gave his widow Jane permission to finish the house at the expense of the estate.

Due to boundary line changes, this house has stood in three different towns and in three different colonies or states. It was originally in Rehoboth, Plymouth Colony; then in Seekonk, Massachusetts Bay Colony; and now in East Providence, Rhode Island.

## A Key to the Problem of the Newport Tower

by FREDERICK J. POHL

The courtesy with which Professor Kenneth J. Conant<sup>1</sup> of Harvard begs to differ with Professor Philip Ainsworth Means<sup>2</sup> and Mr. Hjalmar R. Holand<sup>3</sup> as to the origin of the stone tower in Newport is a lesson in good manners to a score of opponents Mr. Holand has met in the last thirty-five years. Perhaps someone may answer Professor Conant point by point, but mere argument is not the method which will arrive at a certainty of proof as to the origin of the tower. Whether built as a fourteenth century fortified Norse church or a seventeenth century windmill is still hotly debated, and just as Professor Conant thinks certain evidence conclusive and believes in the windmill theory, so anyone else may hold the evidence for the Norse church theory to be conclusive.

Mr. Holand's thesis that the tower was built as the beginning of a church by the religiously-motivated Paul Knutson Expedition is, as Professor Conant says, a plausible theory but has not been proved. On the other hand, Professor Conant writes: "If the tower were built as a mill which could serve as a lookout and provisional shelter in wartime, it would naturally have a fireplace." In these words Professor Conant admits two of the three purposes for which Mr. Holand says the tower was built: as fort, observation tower, and beginning of a church.

The impartial student of the problem will observe that the burden of proof is not exclusively on either side. The burden of proof is on Mr. Holand and those who would establish the Norse church theory as fact. The burden of proof is equally on Professor Conant and those who would establish the seventeenth century lookout,

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth J. Conant, "Newport Tower or Mill," *Rhode Island History*, (January, 1948), p. 2-7.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Ainsworth Means, *Newport Tower* (New York, 1942).

<sup>3</sup> Hjalmar R. Holand, *America: 1355-1364* (New York, 1946).



wartime shelter, and windmill theory as fact. The latter theory is as much an open question as the former.

In order to answer the evidence of William Wood's map of 1634 to which I called Mr. Holand's attention,<sup>4</sup> and the Plowden reference to a "rownd stone towre" which I brought forward after my friends Mr. Robert King of Merrick, L. I., and Mrs. Geraldine Huston of Teaneck, N. J., had called it to my attention,<sup>5</sup> Professor Conant has resorted to a theory of construction of the Newport tower previous to the establishment of the Rhode Island Colony, and has suggested that it may have been built by the New Netherlanders. Professor Conant some years ago made what seemed to me an incredible statement at the time he and Mr. Holand and I were up and down a stepladder studying the interior of the tower, when he declared that there were undeniable mediaevalisms in the tower's architecture; yet it was of the seventeenth century. It seemed contrary to reasonable assumption that the early English (or Dutch) Colonials would have built a windmill with mediaeval architectural details, but now Professor Conant asserts that "the mediaevalisms of early Colonial constructions are often very strong." I quote Professor Conant not merely to have this opportunity to say that good and sufficient evidence will be necessary to show the applicability of his assertion to the carefully-constructed Newport tower. I quote him because his assertion suggests a line of study which I here propose as one that should lead to conclusive results.

Exact measurements of those dimensions of the Newport tower which were a matter of choice with its designers will show whether English or Dutch or Norse units of linear measure were used in its construction, and will bring to light the nationality of its builders. Professor Means and Mr. Holand, like all who have hitherto published measurements of the tower, have given its dimensions in terms of English feet and inches. In attempting to apply

<sup>4</sup> Holand, *America*. Note, p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> Frederick J. Pohl, "Was the Newport Tower Standing in 1632?" *The New England Quarterly*, v. 18, no. 4, (December, 1945).

English linear measure to a building which they believe to be of Norse origin, Professor Means and Mr. Holand have given their readers an impression inimical to their theory. Surely Professor Conant will agree that the dimensions of a carefully constructed building reveal the system of linear measure which its planners used.<sup>6</sup>

The dimensions which were a matter of original choice by the builders of the tower in Newport were 1) the internal diameter measured between opposite columns, 2) the external diameter, outside to outside of opposite columns, 3) the height of the columns, 4) the width and height of the doorway (called the "Southwest window"), the large South window, the fireplace, the niches of the middle stage, and the windows of the upper stage, and 5) the internal height from floors to ceilings of the upper stages. The diameter of the columns was probably not a directly planned dimension, but was fixed by the difference between 1) and 2). There are no dressed stones in the tower, and with rubblework the actual diameters of the columns vary by as much as 40 mm. The distances between adjacent columns were not a matter of choice but resulted from the first two of the previously chosen factors. So also, the height of the round arches above the ground was not chosen but was the height of the columns plus the radius of a semicircle which spanned the distance between two columns. The heights above ground of the niches for the cross timbers that temporarily supported the floor of the middle stage were predetermined by the original choices of other dimensions above mentioned. The thickness of the wall was at various levels predetermined by other factors, such as the necessary insets inside the tower to support the circular floors, and the necessary inset from the external diameter to allow for the projection of each

<sup>6</sup> Dimensions reveal the system of linear measure used by the builders of Premonstratensian Abbeys: Watkin, Hugh R. "The Use of a Norse Standard of Measurement by the Normans in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Buildings, as Exemplified in the Structure of Torre Abbey and the Churches of Kingskerswell and Cockington," *Devonshire Association for the Advancement of Science, Literature, and Art. Report and Transactions*, v. 46 (1914) p. 236-345.



column beyond the wall for whatever purpose the designers had when they left that projection.

The measurements of the tower in approximate English feet and inches as given by Professor Means and Mr. Holand and previous students of the problem all seem to indicate that no important dimensions were laid off by an English foot ruler. The builders seem almost consistently not to have used any simple multiple of the English foot, or a simple multiple of it plus a simple fraction of it, and almost invariably there are extra inches and fractions of inches. This is in striking contrast with the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Cambridge, England, the dimensions of which as given by Dr. F. J. Allen<sup>7</sup> are obviously of English origin: external diameter 26' 6", internal diameter 19' 6", diameter of columns 3' 6", height of columns including capitals 8' 5", height of arches 11' 0", and entire height of building 30' 0". There is similar absolute contrast with the Chesterton mill in England, a building often invalidly compared with the Newport tower, for of the thirty-five dimensions of the Chesterton mill published by Mr. F. H. Shelton,<sup>8</sup> all thirty-five point unquestionably to the use of the English foot, and to no other unit of linear measure. On the other hand, of the mean dimensions in our first three categories given for the Newport tower by Mr. C. S. Peirce,<sup>9</sup> all point to the use of a unit decidedly larger than the English foot. No dimension of the tower was laid off by Dutch linear measure. The old Netherlandic "el" was 27.08 English inches (.6878 m.) in length, and the Netherlandic "voet" was 11.14 English inches (.283 m.). No dimension of the tower thus far presented by any writer is equivalent to any simple multiple of one of these Dutch measures, or to a simple multiple

<sup>7</sup> Dr. F. J. Allen, "The Ruined Mill, or Round Church of the Norsemen, at Newport, Rhode Island, U. S. A., Compared with the Round Church at Cambridge and Others in Europe," *Cambridge Antiquarian Society's Communications* (Cambridge, England) v. 22 (1921), p. 90-107.

<sup>8</sup> F. H. Shelton, "More Light on the Old Mill," *Bulletin of the Newport Historical Society*, (January, 1917), p. 7-12.

<sup>9</sup> C. S. Peirce, "The 'Old Stone Mill' at Newport," *Science*, v. 4 (Dec. 5, 1884), p. 512-514.

of one of them plus a simple fraction of a unit. The dimensions of the Newport tower point even farther away from Dutch linear measure than from English measure. Professor Conant's suggestion that the tower might have been built by Netherlanders seems untenable.

The dimensions most likely to reveal the nationality of the builders are those of the first four of the above-numbered architectural features. It is doubtful whether the heights from floors to ceilings of the upper stages can ever be satisfactorily determined. Excavation at the base of the tower may not uncover any metal or other remains that will prove either the Norse church or Colonial wind-mill theory, but it is to be welcomed if for no other reason than that it will make possible exact Metric System measurements of the internal diameter between the foundations of the eight columns. Meanwhile, since the English linear measure seems not to fit, curiosity spurs us to consider in terms of Norse linear measure those dimensions of the tower which have been variously presented in English feet and inches. Here is the table of Norse linear measure compared with the English and the Metric Systems:

ICELANDIC	ENGLISH	METRIC
1 thumlungur = 1/12 fet (tómme — Danish)	1.03 inches	.0313 m.
1/2 alen = 1 fet (fod — Dan.)	1.03 feet or 12.36 inches	.313 m.
1 fathmur = 3 alen (favn — Dan.)	6.18 feet	1.88 m.

Where there is rubblework the theoretically equal dimensions of masonry vary. This is particularly noticeable in measurements of the heights of columns which were affected by the varying thicknesses and lengths of the rocks which came to the hands of the masons. For this reason, mean dimensions and not individual variants should be used in our study. The factor of rubblework does not enter into the dimensions of the window open-



ings and niches in the wall of the tower in so far as the remaining mortar shows their size as established by measured wooden frames held in place until the masonry had been built up around them. The irregularities of rubblework are such that diameters of columns or thickness of wall will vary, and so also will internal and external diameters any considerable distance above the ground level. The mean dimensions at ground level are pertinent and available for present study.

Mr. Peirce gives the mean internal diameter at ground level as 18' 5" (English). I present for comparison the mean internal diameter as measured by Mr. Holand and Mr. John Howard Benson in my presence, 18' 5½" (Eng.), and by Mr. Holand and me, 18' 5 1/16" (Eng.).<sup>10</sup> Here we have measurements remarkably close to each other, considering that four different persons used their separate judgment as to where to hold the end of the tape in relation to the rough rubblework.

It is not so easy to ascertain the external diameter from outside of a column to outside of an opposite column. Obviously one cannot measure through the columns. Hitherto, the method used (by Messrs. Peirce, Holand, Benson, and others) was to measure the shortest distance between two opposite columns and then add to this the diameters of those columns computed from their circumferences. The practical objection to this method is that the mortar which once covered the rubblework and formed the original surface of the columns has largely weathered away, so that it is impossible to measure the original circumference of a column by passing a tape around it, since the tape naturally draws into the interstices between the horizontal stones. The tape cannot be made to stand out from the column at the line of the original circumference and the procedure is sheer guesswork.<sup>11</sup> One must also

<sup>10</sup> Since this article was written, I unexpectedly found myself early in April, 1948, with extra time in which to accompany Mr. Holand again to Newport. In Newport we were unable to procure a steel tape of the Metric System and were compelled to use a steel tape of English feet and inches.

<sup>11</sup> Mr. Peirce found the mean circumference of the columns to be 9' 11.6" (English), giving a mean diameter of 3' 1.03".

guess where the mortared surface was at the base of each column when one measures the distance between two columns. The whole process entails four guesses, two of which may involve a double error, since the thickness of the mortar on each column must be counted twice in the sought-for overall dimension.

The method I employed was to fix two stakes "A" and "A'" in the ground flanking the outside edge of a column, and two other stakes "B'" and "B" similarly flanking the outside edge of the opposite column. I placed these so that the two stakes and the vertical line of the outside of the column were in exact alignment. Since bits of mortar protrude here and there at various levels on the columns, the vertical line of the outside of a column is far more accurately indicated than is the circumference at any one level. I measured the distance from stake "A" to stake "B", and from "A'" to "B'". If there was a difference between these two measurements, I adjusted the positions of the stakes flanking one of the columns to eliminate the difference, but of course keeping them in alignment with the vertical edge of the column. When the difference had been eliminated, or in other words when the lines established by the two pairs of stakes were parallel, I had an exact measurement of the overall dimension from outside of a column to outside of the opposite column. I tabulate my findings:

Columns North to South	24' 8 7/8"
N.E. to S.W.	24' 7 3/8"
East to West	24' 8 7/8"
S.E. to N.W.	24' 7 7/8"
Mean of the above measurements:	24' 8 1/4"

Mr. Peirce, with some apparent inconsistency with his other measurements, gives the mean external diameter at ground level as 24' 8" (Eng.). This dimension is extremely close to twenty-four Icelandic feet, which are exactly 24' 8.64" (Eng.). A difference of .64 English inches (Peirce) in a dimension of twenty-four units means



a difference in the unit itself of only .026 or 1/40th of an English inch from the Icelandic foot. A difference of .39 English inches (Pohl) in a dimension of twenty-four units means a difference in the unit itself of only .016 or about 1/60th of an English inch from the Icelandic foot. From analysis of his own measurements of both internal and external diameters, Mr. Peirce concludes that the unit of linear measure used by the planers of the tower was 12.31 English inches. I observe that this suggested unit is only .05 or 1/20th of an English inch from the Icelandic foot. This is little enough to allow for mechanical error in laying down a foot ruler twenty-four times. But it is more likely that for such sizeable dimensions Norsemen would have used a fathmur stick (six Icelandic feet) laid down three times for the internal diameter and four times for the external diameter.

I did not do any measuring of the heights of columns, for the varying levels of the bases of the columns present factors of uncertainty. Because of the varying thicknesses of the undressed stones which the builders used, heights throughout the tower are more irregular than horizontal dimensions. The mean height on the outside of the columns, according to Mr. Peirce, is 7' 5/16" (Eng.). This is very close to 7 1/4 Icelandic feet, which are exactly 7' 5.61" (Eng.). Mr. Peirce gives the mean of sixteen measurements of the height on the inside of the columns as 7' 8 7/8" (Eng.), and Dr. Thomas H. Webb<sup>12</sup> gives the heights of the "shafts," minus base and capital, as 7' 9". Seven and a half Icelandic feet are 7' 8.7" (Eng.). This approximation seems to argue that the Icelandic foot ruler had been used in planning the height of the columns. Mr. Peirce gives the mean of the diameters of the bases of four columns which he calls "most regular" as 3' 9 3/4" (Eng.), and 3' 9.32" (Eng.) equal three- and two-thirds Icelandic feet. His measurement of 3' 5" as the breadth of the fireplace at the near edge is remarkably close to the

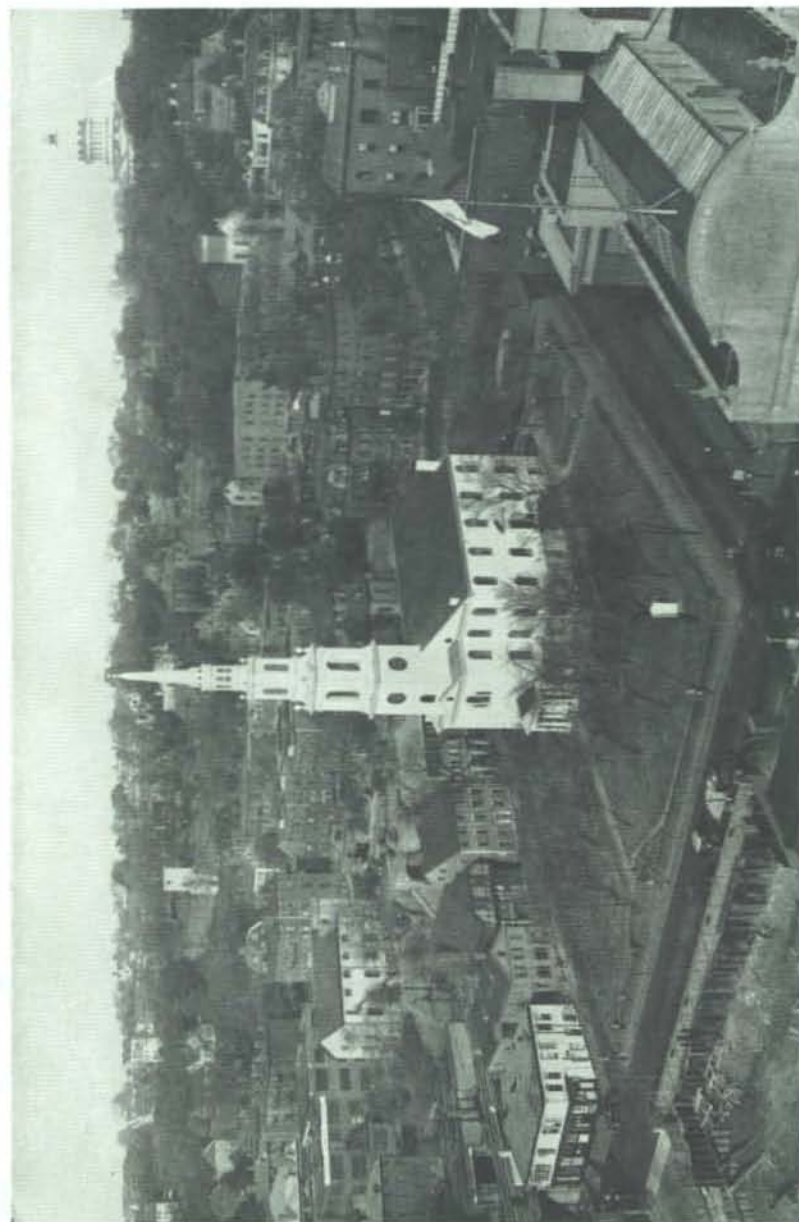
3' 5 1/5" (Eng.) which are the equivalent of three and a third Icelandic feet. His "breadth at base" of the fireplace given as 2' 7" (Eng.) is only a tenth of an inch from the 2' 6.9" (Eng.) which is the length of two and a half Icelandic feet. His 2' 3 1/2" (Eng.) breadth of the niche at the right of the fireplace comes close to 2' 3.81" (Eng.) which is two and a quarter Icelandic feet. Mr. Peirce measured the width of the South window on the outside as 2' 2". I found it to be 2' 1/2" + at its narrowest inside. Two Icelandic feet are 2' .72" (Eng.). The door at the southwest at its narrowest seems to have the same width as the window.

Apparently from the above figures we have a significant agreement between given measurements and various multiples of the Norse unit of linear measure. The use of the Icelandic unit of measure by the builders of the Newport tower is strongly indicated. Mr. Peirce's measurements, however, are not to be accepted as final, for he tells us that he used a "tape-line" and estimated a half-inch correction in the results he obtained, and could not later find the tape-line to check the accuracy of this correction.

The method of determining the nationality of builders by a study of linear measure offers great possibilities. The "small" dimensions of the doorway, large window, fireplace, small windows, and the various niches have not been measured with sufficient accuracy free of predilections for English inches to furnish a basis for conclusive study. Professor Conant says of the openings in the upper stage: "The window frames were of almost the same dimensions as those which were currently used in seventeenth century construction at Plymouth." They are "almost the same," but not quite. The differences, slight though they may be in the case of such short dimensions, are of the highest significance, and may be the key to the problem of the round stone tower in Newport.

<sup>12</sup> Dr. Thomas H. Webb, "Account of an Ancient Structure in Newport, R. I., . . .," a letter dated May 22, 1839 in *Det Kongelige Nordiske Oldskrift-Selskab*, p. 361-368.





From Angell's Lane, by George L. Miner.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH  
Taken in 1947 from the roof of the Hospital Trust Company Building

## Abigail Williams

wife of Miles or Michael de Courcy of Newport, R. I.

by G. ANDREWS MORIARTY, F.S.A.

Miles or Michael de Courcy (Coursey) was a mariner or sea captain of Newport, Rhode Island, who occurs from 1706 until his death in or about 1724. He married Abigail Williams<sup>1</sup> of Newport and had a son John<sup>2</sup>, who in 1760 proved his claim to be the heir of the Irish barony of Kinsale. This John was born at Newport about 1717 and served as a sailor until 1748, after which he resided at Portsmouth, Hants. Among his witnesses, when he proved his claim in 1760, was one Palsgrave Williams, a peruke maker. He was born at Newport and was then fifty-six years old; he was evidently a close maternal relative of the claimant.<sup>3</sup>

The only two Williams families in Newport at the end of the seventeenth century were those of Robert Williams (brother of the Reverend Roger Williams) and of John Williams. Robert and John Williams were in no way related.

Robert Williams was born in London about 1605-1610, the son of James Williams, a citizen and merchant tailor of London. He followed his brother Roger to New England and lived long in Providence. In later life he removed to Newport, where he was a school master in 1672.<sup>2</sup> He last appears in 1680 when he was Solicitor General of Rhode Island.<sup>3</sup> He was married, but there is no trace of any children or descendants in Rhode Island records, and the only conclusion to be drawn is that he died *sine prole*.

John<sup>2</sup> Williams, the head of the other Williams family in seventeenth century Newport, was the son of Nathaniel<sup>1</sup> Williams, a prominent Boston merchant who had been a selectman of that town. John<sup>2</sup> Williams was baptized at

<sup>1</sup> Gibbs, ed., *The New Complete Peerage*, v. 7, p. 290-291.

<sup>2</sup> Roger Williams, *George Fox Digg'd Out of his Burrowes*.

<sup>3</sup> John R. Bartlett, ed., *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island*, v. 3, p. 85. Hereafter cited as R. I. Colonial Records.



Boston 18 August 1644 "aged about 3 days."<sup>4</sup> He died at Newport, R. I., between 18 April 1687 and 25 October 1687. He married in 1670<sup>5</sup> Anna, daughter of Dr. John Alcock (A.B., Harvard, 1646) a physician of Roxbury, Massachusetts, and of Sarah his wife, daughter of Dr. Richard Palsgrave (Palgrave) of Charlestown, Massachusetts, who came to New England in the Winthrop fleet in the summer of 1630. Mrs. Williams inherited a large landed property from her father at New Shoreham (Block Island) R. I., and John<sup>2</sup> Williams, who was a wealthy merchant, resided there and in Boston until 1679, when he settled in Newport. In 1679 he was Deputy from New Shoreham in the Rhode Island General Assembly,<sup>6</sup> and on 25 July 1683 he was made a Freeman of Newport. In 1686 he was Attorney General of Rhode Island.<sup>7</sup> His will, dated 18 April 1687, was proved 25 October 1687. He named his wife and children Nathaniel<sup>2</sup>, Palsgrave<sup>2</sup>, Mary<sup>2</sup>, Ann<sup>2</sup>, Elizabeth<sup>2</sup>, Arabella<sup>2</sup>, and an unborn child. To his eldest son, Nathaniel<sup>2</sup>, he devised his mansion house in Boston and his "ffort Island" at New Shoreham. He also named his brother-in-law, Zachariah Whitman. His executors were his wife and his friend Robert Guttridge of New Shoreham, who was also guardian for his son Nathaniel<sup>2</sup> until he came of age. His brother Nathaniel<sup>2</sup> Williams of Boston was an overseer.<sup>8</sup> John's widow married Robert Guttridge<sup>9</sup> of New Shoreham by whom she had one child, a daughter, Catherine. She died at New Shoreham in 1723. Her will, dated 12 December 1718, was proved 27 June 1723. The executors were her son John Sands (*i.e.*, husband of her daughter Catherine Guttridge) and Robert Westcott (second husband of her daughter Mary<sup>2</sup> Williams). She named her daughter Arabella (Williams)

<sup>4</sup> *A Report of the Record Commissioners containing Boston Births, Baptisms, Marriages, and Deaths, 1630-1699*, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Marriage contract dated 25 January 1669/70 and recorded in Suffolk County, Massachusetts, Deeds, Liber 6, Fol. 241.

<sup>6</sup> R. I. Colonial Records, v. 3, p. 29.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>8</sup> Suffolk County, Massachusetts, Probate Liber 10, Fol. 336.

<sup>9</sup> See also "Genealogical Contributions," by G. Andrews Moriarty, *Rhode Island History*, v. 3, no. 4, Oct., 1944, p. 141-142.

Pelham of Newport; daughter Elizabeth (Williams, McCarthy) Paine; son [son-in-law] Thomas Paine; and daughter Mary (Williams, Sands) Westcott; also grandsons Thomas McCarthy, a minor; Palsgrave and John Williams; Joseph McCarthy; and Robert Sands, son of John and Catherine (Guttridge) Sands.<sup>10</sup>

Of the two sons of John<sup>2</sup> and Anna (Alcock) Williams, Nathaniel<sup>2</sup>, as presently appears, died *sine prole*. Palsgrave<sup>2</sup>, the second son, was admitted a Freeman of Newport 31 January 1703/4.<sup>11</sup> His wife, as presently appears, was named Elizabeth.

At this period Newport was an active seaport with a large trade with the Sugar Islands, London, Bristol, and ports even farther away; the connection with the Spanish Main was close. It was also, like other colonial ports at this time, resorted to by pirates and privateers from the Caribbean, Madigascar, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean.

Palsgrave<sup>2</sup> disappears from Newport records, but in 1717 as "Paul" Williams he reappears as Quartermaster of the notorious Bristol pirate, Capt. Bellamy, at Saba, a small Dutch island east of St. Croix, between St. Martin and St. Eustatius.<sup>12</sup> Williams was in command of one of Bellamy's sloops and the two rogues then sailed for the New England coast. Bellamy's vessel, the *Widah Galley*, was wrecked at Wellfleet on the south side of Cape Cod, and such of the crew as survived were rounded up by the local officers, sent to Boston, tried, and executed for their evil deeds.<sup>13</sup> "Paul" Williams put in at his family's old home at Block Island, where he kidnapped three men: George Mitchell, William Tosh, and Dr. James Sweet, as appears by a deposition in the New Shoreham Town Records, dated 18 April 1717.<sup>14</sup> There is also a letter regarding this incident addressed by Governor Samuel Cranston of Rhode Island to Governor Shute of Massachusetts in the Massa-

<sup>10</sup> New Shoreham Town Records; John O. Austin, *The Genealogical Dictionary of Rhode Island*, p. 89-90.

<sup>11</sup> Newport Town Records.

<sup>12</sup> Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy in the Colonial Period*. N. Y., Macmillan, 1923, p. 294-295.

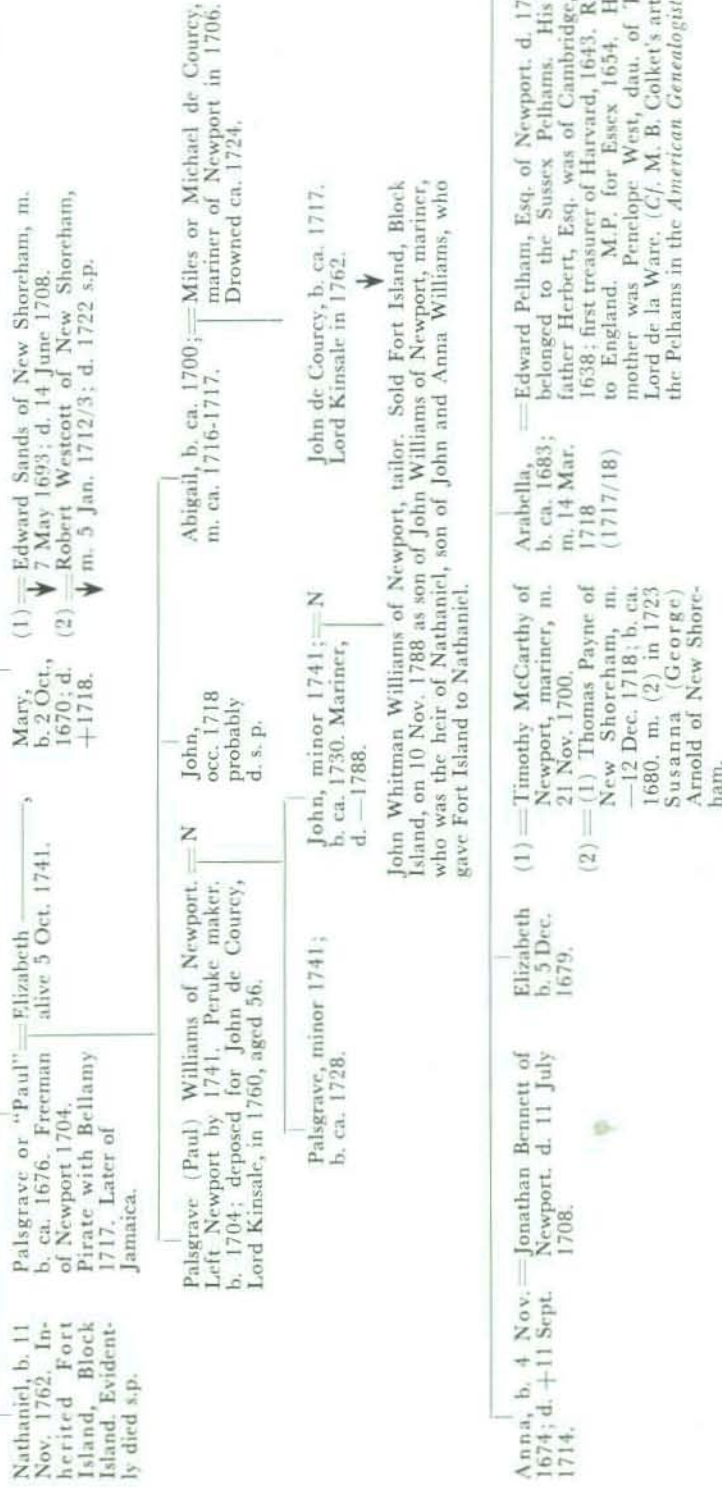
<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> S. T. Livermore, *History of Block Island* . . . Hartford, Case, 1877, p. 85-86.



# John Williams of Boston, Block Island, and Newport

John Williams of Boston, Block Island, = Anna, dau. of Dr. John Alcock of Roxbury, Mass., and Sarah Palsgrave, his wife (dau. of Dr. Richard Palsgrave of Charlestown, Mass.) She m. (2) Robert Guttridge of Block Island and had Catharine, who m. John Sands of Block Island on 9 Sept. 1709.



chusetts State Archives. Palsgrave<sup>3</sup> Williams last appears in 1718 when he accepted the King's pardon at Jamaica.<sup>15</sup>

On 5 October 1741 "Elizabeth<sup>3</sup> Williams, mother of Paul<sup>4</sup> Williams, who is gone and left his children namely Palsgrave<sup>5</sup> and John<sup>5</sup> Williams," petitioned the Newport Town Council to appoint Stephen Hookey of Newport guardian of the said children.<sup>16</sup> On 10 November 1788 "John Whitman<sup>6</sup> Williams of Newport, tailor, son of John<sup>5</sup> Williams late of Newport mariner," sold his right in the Fort Island at Block Island, "which John<sup>3</sup> Williams of Boston and his wife Anna left to their son Nathaniel<sup>3</sup> Williams and to whom the said John<sup>5</sup> Williams, father of John Whitman<sup>6</sup> Williams was heir."<sup>17</sup>

From the above facts the following conclusions may be drawn. Palsgrave<sup>4</sup> Williams, the peruke maker, who testified in 1760, aged fifty-six, on behalf of John de Courcy was a near relative of the latter.<sup>18</sup> Nathaniel<sup>3</sup> Williams, the eldest son of John<sup>2</sup> and Anna (Alcocks) Williams, who was given Fort Island at New Shoreham in 1687, died apparently without issue, from the wording of the deed of John Whitman<sup>6</sup> Williams, made in 1788.<sup>19</sup> The only other son of John<sup>2</sup> and Anna (Alcock) Williams was Palsgrave<sup>3</sup> also styled "Paul" Williams, who was made a Freeman of Newport in 1704, and who in 1717 was Quartermaster of the pirate Bellamy. This Palsgrave<sup>3</sup> clearly had a wife Elizabeth and a son Palsgrave<sup>4</sup> (Paul) Williams, who as a son of Elizabeth had in 1741 gone from Newport leaving behind two young sons, Palsgrave<sup>5</sup> and John<sup>5</sup> Williams. I conclude that at this time their mother was dead, as it was their grandmother Elizabeth, who petitioned respecting their guardianship. The Palsgrave<sup>4</sup> (Paul) Williams who had "gone away" in 1741 is undoubtedly the Palsgrave<sup>4</sup> Williams, peruke maker, of Jamaica (born 1704) who tes-

<sup>15</sup> *The Pirates Who's Who*, London.

<sup>16</sup> Newport Town Council Records.

<sup>17</sup> New Shoreham Town Records.

<sup>18</sup> See also "Genealogical Contributions," by G. Andrews Moriarty, *R. I. History*, v, 5, no. 1, Jan., 1946, p. 29-30.

<sup>19</sup> Examination of Suffolk Deeds and Probate at Boston reveals no trace of Nathaniel Williams, eldest son of John and Anna (Alcock) Williams. He evidently died without issue.



tified in 1760, aged fifty-six, on behalf of John de Courcy when he was claiming the Barony of Kinsale. He had two sons, John<sup>5</sup> and Palsgrave<sup>5</sup>, and the son John<sup>5</sup> is clearly identical with John Williams, mariner of Newport, whose son John Whitman<sup>6</sup> Williams, tailor, sold Fort Island at Block Island in 1788 as son and heir of John the mariner, who in turn was the heir of Nathaniel<sup>7</sup> Williams, who had been devised Fort Island by his father, John<sup>2</sup> Williams, the Attorney General in 1687.

Now, as Palsgrave<sup>4</sup> Williams, the peruke maker, was a close relative of John de Courcy, the only way this can be explained is that Abigail<sup>4</sup> Williams, wife of Miles or Michael de Courcy was Palsgrave's<sup>4</sup> sister, and the daughter of Palsgrave<sup>3</sup> or "Paul" Williams, freeman of Newport in 1704 and Quartermaster of Bellamy, the pirate, in 1717. I think there can be little doubt but that this proves the identity of the mother of John de Courcy, Lord Kinsale. It would seem that this connection of the Premier Barons of Ireland with the ancient Rhode Island seaport cannot but be of some interest in England, Ireland, and Rhode Island.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Research on this family is rendered difficult by the fact that the records of Newport, R. I., including the deeds, wills, births, marriages, and deaths were sunk off New York in 1779, which accident destroyed many manuscripts and rendered difficult the reading of those that survived. The Newport County Court Records are intact.

## The Patrol of Narragansett Bay (1774-76)

by H. M. S. Rose, Captain James Wallace

*Extracted and transcribed by W. G. ROELKER\**

*Written and annotated by CLARKSON A. COLLINS, 3rd*

(continued from v. 7, no. 1, January, 1948, p. 19)

While busily engaged in the detection of smugglers, Captain Wallace also found time to devote to the gathering of intelligence. In this he had the aid not only of known loyalists, but also of unsuspected agents, sometimes men in positions of high trust at the heart of the Patriot cause. As early as December 12, 1774, Wallace had forwarded to Graves an account of the proceedings of the Rhode Island General Assembly headed "Minutes for

Captain Wallace," an indication, of which we shall later find definite proof, that one of the members of the governing body was willing to act as a spy for the British.

No *secret* agent, however, was the man, a copy of whose warning letter Wallace sent Graves, along with his own comments, on February 9, 1775. Thomas B. Chandler, DD., graduate of Yale and Episcopal minister at Elizabethtown, New Jersey, was from the beginning unswerving in his devotion to the British cause.<sup>5</sup>

Rose, Rhode Island  
Feb. 9th, 1775

[Wallace to Graves]

Inclosed is a Copy of a Letter received Yesterday: The Gentleman who writes it I understand is a Man of Character, and by his Intelligence You may further judge of the Disposition of the People in this Country—however I hope in God to make them pay dear for their frolick, should they attempt it.

JAMES WALLACE

[Letter inclosed]

Sir

I think it my Duty to inform You of a piece of Intelligence I received last evening from a Person of the strictest Integrity and Veracity, who resides in the Eastern part of Connecticut, and who, Although a firm Friend to Government has been persuaded and indeed obliged to act such a part in Training a Number of Men in the Indian way, as to gain the Confidence of the *Sons of Liberty*. He tells me that a Plot is certainly formed for destroying his Majesty's Ship of which You have the Command; and that the Leaders of the Expedition are appointed, but he knows not who they are. The Method for executing is to be this, the Passage Boats to Providence often come close to your Ship, it seems, as they pass the Harbour, A proper Opportunity is to be Watched, when 100 Men properly Armed are to be concealed in the Hold, the Packett is to come alongside the Man of War, and they are to rise at Once and take Possession of the ship. How far this is practicable I am unable to judge, but of this I am persuaded, that no project is too hazardous or too wicked for some of the Rebellious Fanaticks of New England to attempt. You will be kind enough not to make use of my name at present in this Affair. You are undoubtedly a Stranger to my Character But Although I am not personally acquainted in Rhode Island on Enquiry You will find many Persons who can give some Account of me.

Thos. B. Chandler Elizb Town New Jersey

This attack on the *Rose* never eventuated, and Wallace continued unhindered his efforts to put an end to illicit

<sup>5</sup> Sabine, *op. cit.*, v. 1, p. 302.



commerce in the Narragansett Bay area. That these efforts met with no great degree of success is shown by Vice Admiral Graves's reports to the Admiralty in London. On March 4, 1775, he wrote: "The Rose and Swan in the different Passages at Rhode Island have lately seized several Smuglers, but we have not yet been so fortunate as to take any Arms or Ammunition." Again, March 19, he reported: "Directions have already been sent to the Commanders of H. M. Ships and Vessels under my Command . . . for . . . Vessels carrying on Contraband or illicit Trade; I am extremely mortified that notwithstanding the King's Ships and Vessels have been very active all this Winter, no seizures of any Consequence have been made. The variety of places well adapted for smuglers along this great extent of Coast, renders our Chance of intercepting them, with the few Vessels we have at present, very uncertain."

Graves's line of communications was also "uncertain," he revealed in his despatch of April 11, 1775: "The Posts are become somewhat insecure; two of my Letters have been opened at Philadelphia and a letter to me from Captain Wallace at Rhode Island has been absolutely taken away from a Special Messenger, other Departments of the Crown have experienced the same treatment."

News of the bloody clash at Lexington and Concord threw Newport into a panic. Merchants were advised to get their vessels to sea at once in order to avoid seizure, and available shipping was crowded with refugees fleeing to Philadelphia. Both factions realized that the critical moment had come, and the Tories were at first elated at the prospect of what they believed would be an easy victory for British arms.<sup>6</sup>

With his guns trained on the town, which he threatened to destroy if it took the part of the rebels, Wallace set about organizing the Tories and holding the port for the King.

On May 13 Graves, forwarding a large amount of intelligence gathered by Wallace, informed the Admiralty:

<sup>6</sup> Franklin B. Dexter ed. *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles* (New York, 1901) v. 1, p. 536-540. Hereafter cited as *Stiles*.

"In a Letter of the 20th of April Captain Wallace informs me that some friends to Government have been very industrious to bring the Town of Newport over to the King and were they sure of Constant Support they flatter themselves with succeeding; but what reliance! At present they are in terror of the King's Ships. However I submit to their Lordships Consideration the importance of such a post. Possession of this place would cut off any supplies that could be sent from the Southern to the Northern Colonies and it appears to me, from its situation, of such great consequence that I most heartily wish it was established as a King's Port and fortified accordingly. In the mean time I will add a Sloop of War or a Schooner to the Service Captain Wallace is employed on. . . ."

The leading Tories of Newport expressed their sentiments in support of orderly and lawful government in the following communication to Wallace:

A Copy of An Address from Some of the principal  
Inhabitants of Newport

to Capt. Wallace No. 15.

Newport Rhode Island 1st May 1775

Sir

We the Subscribers Inhabitants of the Town of Newport in the Colony of Rhode Island deeply impressed with a grateful Sense of the Support You have on all occasions given to His Majesty's faithful Subjects residing in this Town, and fully convinced that our Peace and Security has for some time past been owing in a great measure to your Attention to His Majesty's Service and spirited Conduct in the Execution of it; return You our unfeign'd Thanks.

It is with the utmost concern We acquaint You that the General Assembly of this Colony, at a late Sessions held at Providence, Resolved to raise and embody Fifteen hundred Men for the express purpose (as declared in the Act) of Joining and Co-operating with the Forces of the Neighbouring Colonies, and though the Representatives of this Town entered a timely protest against it, Yet we cannot rest here; We must as faithful Subjects to the King, and in Justice to Ourselves approve the Conduct of our Representatives, by shewing our disapprobation of an Act pregnant with so much Evil, by every means that becomes Obedient Subjects and good Citizens.

The difficulties and dangers which may attend us by shewing this disapprobation are obvious; but while We have the Support of the King's Authority and Power, which is in your Hands, and which we



earnestly Pray may be continued to Us; We shall cheerfully go on in our Endeavours to deserve that Peace and Security; We have hitherto enjoyed under the Mild and equal Laws of Great Britain, and which the Civil Power of this Colony appears to us unable to give.

These are Sentiments Sir, not hastily adopted, they have been uniformly the Rule of all our Actions.

We are Sir  
Very Respectfully  
Your most Obedient and  
most Humble Servants,

[signed]

Chas Dudley<sup>7</sup>  
George Rome<sup>8</sup>  
Wm Hunter<sup>9</sup>

John Bell<sup>10</sup>  
Jnd Halliburton<sup>11</sup>  
Robt Ferguson<sup>12</sup>

James Keith<sup>13</sup>  
Jah Brenton<sup>14</sup>  
[illegible]

Wallace probably knew only too well that the dread of his cannon was the sole protection left to the loyal citizens of the town. His reply is laconic, promising nothing specific. Captain Wallace's Answer to the Address No 16

Rose, Rhode Island May  
the 9th 1775

Gentlemen,

I have received your Letter containing your Sentiments upon the present Alarming Crisis, and will transmit them to the Admiral by the first Opportunity — it is my Duty and Inclination to give every Assistance and Protection in my Power to His Majesty's Loyal Subjects. I am,

Gentlemen. . .  
James Wallace.

To Messrs Dudley, Rome, Hunter &ca &ca &ca

<sup>7</sup> Charles Dudley (1737-1790) an Englishman, was the last Royal Collector and Surveyor of the Customs at Newport, being appointed in 1768. In November, 1775, he fled to the *Rose* and subsequently returned to England. Sabine, *op. cit.*, v. 1, p. 394.

<sup>8</sup> See Note 3.

<sup>9</sup> Dr. William Hunter was a Scotch physician who settled in Newport in 1752. He soon attained a prominent position in the town and in 1755 was appointed surgeon of the Rhode Island Regiment raised to go against Crown Point. In 1761 he married Deborah Malbone, daughter of Godfrey Malbone, one of Newport's wealthiest merchants. Dr. Hunter remained staunchly loyal to the Crown from the beginning of the controversy to his death at Newport in 1778. George C. Mason, *Annals of Trinity Church* (Newport, 1890) p. 120.

<sup>10</sup> John Bell was a major in the British army who had married Mary (Grant) Heatly daughter of the merchant Sueton Grant. During the war he and his family went to England where he died in 1779. Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

<sup>11</sup> John Halliburton, a Newport physician, was married to Susanna Brenton, daughter of Jahleel Brenton (1691-1767) and sister of Jahleel Brenton, later a British rear-admiral, who also signed the address to Wallace. Halliburton became a surgeon in the British navy during the Revolution, and after the Peace held high public offices in Nova Scotia. He died at Halifax, N. S., in 1808. Sabine, *op. cit.*, v. 1, p. 505.

<sup>12</sup> I have been unable to find any reference to Robert Ferguson. There was, however, an Adam Ferguson in Newport at the time. He was a snuff maker whose property was confiscated because of his tory sympathies.

<sup>13</sup> James Keith was a Scot, who had resided in America for nearly forty years. He died in 1780 and is buried in Trinity church-yard. Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

<sup>14</sup> Jahleel Brenton (1729-1802) son of Jahleel and Frances (Cranston) Brenton was a naval officer during the war, later rising to the rank of rear-admiral. He was the father of Sir Jahleel Brenton, also a British admiral, born at Newport in 1770. The large Brenton estates were confiscated by the Rhode Island government during the war. Updike, *op. cit.*, v. 1, p. 557.

(to be continued)

## Book Reviews

*Early Rehoboth. Documented Historical Studies of Families and Events in this Plymouth Colony Township.* By Richard LeBaron Bowen. Volume III. Privately printed, Rehoboth, Massachusetts, 1948. x, 186p. 14 illustrations. \$5.00.

For the benefit of those who do not know the earlier volumes in this remarkable series, it should be said that this is not an ordinary town history written to popularize its subject with those who know little about it. Each volume is, rather, a collection of monographs which either present and study some document or bring new documents and interpretations to bear on single subjects. The style has the crisp, factual quality of a legal brief, the type is small but clear, and the binding and index have the solid efficiency so dear to the heart of the librarian and researcher.

With justice Mr. Bowen derides the popular and professional historians who base their broad generalizations on American History upon vague and superficial misinformation about the events with which he deals with such thoroughness. His own passion for the record is reminiscent of John Smith, the miller and town clerk of Providence, who when his house was being burned by King Philip's Indians, had the presence of mind to cast the town records into a pond, whence they were later fished to transmit their information to posterity.

King Philip's war began just over the Rehoboth line and ended in the town itself, so this volume assumes a much wider importance than the ordinary town history. Mr. Bowen has not been content to describe the importance of the war to the town, but has made the most important study of the war and its historians that this generation has produced. He gives the best critical evaluation of the three contemporary historians, and marshals hitherto unpublished documents to cast new light on the war. The Rhode Island and Plymouth Colony campaigns are reexamined in detail and illustrated with unusual effectiveness by sections of the United States topographical survey maps.



Among the hitherto unused sources on which Mr. Bowen draws for material on King Philip's War are the long narrative poems of a contemporary, Deacon Philip Walker of Rehoboth. Besides the subject matter, the hand, the spelling, and the genealogy of the author are thoroughly gone into. To illustrate his point that verse was more popular in the colonial period than has been supposed, he cites a petition for a land grant presented in that form. He gives two chapters to thorough biographical and genealogical studies of Richard Wright, the organizer of the Seekonk, later Rehoboth, settlement, and to Captain George Wright, the military man whose success with the ladies led him down the primrose trail from Massachusetts to Plymouth to Rhode Island to the New Netherlands, with pauses in jail. By proving that three supposedly individual George Wrights were in fact this one blithe spirit in different bowers, Mr. Bowen has added a piquancy to the genealogy of thousands of Americans.

CLIFFORD K. SHIPTON

American Antiquarian Society.

*Angell's Lane. The History of a Little Street in Providence.* By George Leland Miner. Providence, Akerman-Standard Press, 1948. 198, xxxvi p. \$5.00.

Written spontaneously in unstudied style, Mr. Miner's account of the early days of Angell's Lane is informative and pleasant reading. It is as if a lecturer were at intervals to lay aside his documented notes to tell you how things appear to him, how things must or may have been, producing meanwhile a clever little sketch or two to prove that this was so. Fancy thus gives aid to fact, and one views reality with vision.

With Thomas Angell's homeshare lot as its focal point, the book tells of Providence in the days when young Tom Angell, among the first of its early settlers, built a home on Town Street and planted his apple trees on the hill above the Cove. Hardly had his sons reached manhood, when in the war of 1676 the town was razed and Thomas Angell and his neighbours had perforce to build again. A century passed; the townsfolk gathered to watch the building of the First Baptist Church on the southern portion of the homeshare lot, where the Angell's house had stood; on the northern side Angell's Lane ran its span up the hill as a 'Publick highway.' Then the Lane was paved and houses were built on its farther side. And, when another century had gone by, the Art Club established itself on Thomas Street, so named in 1804 — the portion of Thomas Angell's Lane cut off from the present Angell Street, when Benefit Street some fifty years before had crossed the map. Thus the book reaches its second objective, the story of the Art Club on Old Angell's Lane in Providence.

By the use of numerous charts and maps, property changes in the intervening years and later in the holdings of the Club are made excep-

tionally clear. One cannot but admire the charming and effective coloring of the endpapers depicting Thomas Street as it is today, and the typographical skill and presswork by means of which half-tones, silhouettes, charts, maps, and pen- and pencil-sketches are made to mingle with the text.

The history of the Club is rich in factual detail. One reads of its founding and its growing pains and of its arrival at man's estate with the possession of Brick House, Dodge House, and Sydney Burleigh's beloved studio, the Fleur-de-Lis. The interior of Brick House is rebuilt in its own pragmatic way, with a Rathskeller à la Burleigh-Nickerson-and-Hastings. The high second-floor gallery lends itself to varied pastimes — exhibitions, teas, costume balls, plays, musicales, members' nights, artists' nights, and the frolics of the Friday Knights.

The section is full of names and essential explanation. The record of the origin of the varied and exotic decorations in the Governors' Room, the Dutch Kitchen, and the Cabaret is quite invaluable. Their why and wherefore are a part of the rich traditions of the Club, all too likely to have become confused or lost if not set down while memory lives. The names of early members appearing on these pages bring definite personalities to the minds of those who long have known the Club. We who are so blessed know how these people looked, what they wore and said and did. We have memory-pictures deeply etched within our minds. But for posterity's sake one could wish that Mr. Miner had written down his memory-pictures of the artists whom he must have known so well. We wish he had continued to include running comments on this and that; or had given verbal pictures of the gaiety and beauty of the costume balls, or of the gambols of the Friday Knights. There is room aplenty for another book about the Club, its artists and their works. In the present volume, however, Mr. Miner has done what its title calls for. He has written the history of a little street and given the basic facts about the Club that has dominated it these sixty years.

It is easy to see that this is *his* street, that he has lived with it for many years, in his mind, in his activities, and in his heart. Now he has given us for all time the fruits of his labour, thus putting us deeply into his debt. It is to be hoped that others will join in the Providence street-writing fad. A street is good fun to have for a pet! There are many in Providence still in need of adoption, lest a knowledge of their colorful past slip from our grasp. Hopkins Street, Power, South Main, North Main, College Hill, North Court, Meeting Street to Benefit, Smith Hill, Westminster Street, Market Square — each has a tale to tell, and each is bound to be quite as rewarding a pet, as Angell's Lane has proved to be.

MARGARET B. STILLWELL

Annamary Brown Memorial



# Rhode Island Historical Society

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*John Brozen House will be closed Tuesday evenings and Sunday afternoons until after Labor Day.*

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This brings the total membership to 1317.

## Fall Exhibitions of Silhouettes

In the photograph collection of the Rhode Island Historical Society are several silhouettes, apparently made by the same artist. One of these is used as an illustration on the cover of this issue; another is of John R. Bartlett. In long hand at the bottom of the Bartlett silhouette is written: "Taken while I was Cashier of the Globe Bank in 1835. The artist had rooms near the Post Office then in South Main Street a few doors below College St. A large number of similar cuttings were made of prominent citizens."

A search of the Providence *Directory* published in 1836 reveals no cutter of silhouettes, and since Mr. Bartlett did not mention his name, it may be correct to think of him as an itinerant worker, whose visit in Providence was of short duration.

It is the desire of the Society to have a loan exhibition of silhouettes of Rhode Islanders during the months of October and November of this year. If you have silhouettes that you are willing to lend us for this occasion, will you let the librarian know of them?

C. P. M.