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NO. 2



Lady's Slipper

Diandria

From the Edward Lewis Peckham Collection
in the library of the Rhode Island Historical Society
(see inside front cover)

ISSUED QUARTERLY AT PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LADY'S SLIPPER	Cover
<i>Watercolor from Edward Lewis Peckham Collection</i>	
WHY RHODE ISLAND OPPOSED THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION	33
<i>THE PAPER MONEY ERA by Hillman Metcalf Bishop</i>	
RECENT ACCESSIONS	44
THE PATROL OF NARRAGANSETT BAY (1774-76)	45
<i>by William G. Roelker</i>	
DESTRUCTION OF THE SCHOONER GASPÉ	49
<i>Engraving by J. Rogers</i>	
NEWS-NOTES	64
NEW MEMBERS	Back Cover

LADY'S SLIPPER

[Reproduced on front cover]

Reproduced on the cover in colors is one of the water color paintings from the Edward Lewis Peckham collection in the Society's library. There are five volumes of these flower paintings, depicting more than five hundred examples of the flora of Rhode Island. Many of them bear a notation of the date and place where the painting was made. Lady's Slipper is marked, "Grotto, May 28/43 [date of the drawing] May 16/58 [date of the water color]. Ladies Slipper Diandria."

Mr. Peckham was born in Providence, June 4, 1812, and died October 30, 1889. He was the son of Thomas and Sarah (Wardwell) Peckham.

From 1830 to 1835 he studied botany, covering the state of Rhode Island either alone or in the company of other botanists. So accurate were his drawings that Dr. Asa Gray, eminent botanist and creator of the department of botany at Harvard, declared them to be the most perfect representation of New England plants that he had ever seen.

His detailed drawings of Providence and vicinity are better known than his paintings of flowers, since they are probably the most complete pictorial record of any locality before the advent of the camera. It is therefore a pleasure to reproduce for our readers this example of Peckham's very important but lesser known artistic work.

C. P. M.

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WHY RHODE ISLAND OPPOSED THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION

by HILLMAN METCALF BISHOP

THE PAPER MONEY ERA

[Continued from January, 1949, v. 8, no. 1, p. 10.]

DURING THE WAR for Independence, Rhode Island politics displayed a much greater degree of harmony than was typical of the thirteen states. In most of the northern and middle colonies the larger part of the upper class opposed independence. This was not the case in Rhode Island. Although Newport had its Tory element, the proportion of Tories as a whole was much smaller than in most of the other states. Perhaps many of the merchants preferred compromise with Great Britain, but the aristocracy of wealth and ability in this state went with the revolutionary tide, and as a result the leadership remained in the same experienced hands which had led the state for many years. The struggle with Great Britain ended the long drawn out Ward-Hopkins feud. Many of the issues which created bitter internal conflict in other states had been settled in Rhode Island long before the Revolution. The Charter of 1663 had established government on a broad democratic basis, and until the changes produced in the nineteenth century by industrialism there seems to have been no significant effort on the part of any section of the population to change the fundamental law of the state. In the annual state elections from 1775 to 1786 offices were frequently filled without contest, and such rivalries as occurred were a result of personal desire for office rather than deep-seated economic or political differences. Like England in a later period, Rhode Island until 1786 was a democracy with upper class leadership.

The eighteenth century in Rhode Island was an era of rising power and influence of the mercantile class. In a broad sense the mercantile interests consisted not only of the merchants and traders,

but also of the private creditors, the manufacturers, and the lawyers—few in number but influential in politics. The Revolution created a large public debt and hence added to the mercantile class a new group of public security holders. The more important merchants of the state were engaged at the same time in several of the above activities. The Revolution also shifted the center of mercantile influence from Newport to Providence.

The one issue which continued to divide the politicians of the state during the early war years was the question of paper money. Paper money was an old story in Rhode Island, and the struggle between creditor and debtor had been a persistent source of conflict in the colonial period. On the question of inflation the remnants of the landed aristocracy, many of whom were heavily in debt, were likely to join forces with the yeomanry. "The genius of our popular Government has always favoured debtors," wrote David Howell, "they being the most numerous Class of Freemen & voters."²⁰ On the other hand the mercantile class had the advantages of wealth and education, superior political skill, and greater experience in office. Although the leadership of the state was largely in the hands of the commercial class until 1786, it should not be assumed that they always had their way. Thus merchants were forced to compromise with country sections of the state on the question of state duties on imports in 1783, and at the outbreak of hostilities with Great Britain the agrarian majority were victorious on the question of paper money to finance the new army.

In spite of the dislocation of trade, the war years were years of prosperity. The foreign loans and the expenditures of Great Britain and France to finance their armies and navies in this continent resulted in an influx of hard money. Prices, even in terms of gold and silver, were high. The high prices made it possible for the mercantile and creditor interests in 1780 to repeal the legal tender laws of the Revolution without much opposition. As soon as peace was concluded, there was a tremendous influx of goods into this country from England.²¹ The exodus of specie to pay for the surplus

²⁰David Howell to Brown and Benson, March 26, 1792. Nicholas Brown Papers.

²¹During the first two years after the war it is estimated that the imports from England to the United States amounted to thirty million dollars, while the exports from this country to England were only between eight and nine million dollars. Timothy Pitkin, *Statistical View of the Commerce of the United States*, (New Haven, 1835) pp. 30, 31.

of imports brought deflation and a severe fall in prices. It is claimed that in the spring of 1786 Rhode Island farms and stock were being sold at public auction for $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ of their value.²² A paper money advocate maintained that in Washington County there were "upwards of 100 actions" at the February, 1786, court term, "more than ever was brought to a court for 20 years past, the bills of cost on which amount to more money than there is in circulation in the County."²³

The new problem of the public debt created by the war intensified the old creditor-debtor conflict. One month before the Convention met in Philadelphia to draft the Federal Constitution, a well-informed writer in the Providence press states:

The people of the United States are now divided, and have naturally thrown themselves into two great classes, or parties, and which are often distinguished by the names Mercantile and Landed Interests. On one side, are all the holders of the Public Securities, and those interested in the payment of the national debt, at its liquidated nominal value in specie.—On the other side, are the substantial yeomanry of the country, and those who are not possessed of any, or of but a small part of these Securities, and those whose interest it is to have the public debt discharged in the easiest manner. Into one or other of these classes most of the inhabitants of the United States will fall.²⁴

Rhode Island's share of the Continental debt was estimated at \$900,000 in 1786.²⁵ The recognized state debt is harder to calculate, and the estimates made by the Legislature ranged from around \$450,000 to over \$600,000.²⁶ In addition, the state had large unsettled claims against Congress for military expenditures in the

²²Newport Mercury, February 20, August 7, and 21, 1786. (Providence) U. S. Chronicle, July 27, 1786.

²³"A Planter," Newport Mercury, February 20, 1786.

²⁴"On the Two Great Parties, or Interests, which now divide the People of this and the United States, and the Necessity of their Union for the public good." (Providence) U. S. Chronicle, April 19, 1787.

²⁵"Brutus," Newport Mercury, August 21, 1786. By 1790 this amount had increased to over \$1,000,000. Hamilton in his famous "First Report on Public Credit" in January, 1790, estimated the foreign debt at \$11,710,378 62/90ths and the domestic debt at \$42,414,085 94/90ths or a total of \$54,124,464 56/90ths. By the rule of apportionment used under the Articles of Confederation Rhode Island's quota of the Continental debt would have been approximately \$1,163,676 or 1/9th of the total taxable property in Rhode Island according to the 1783 estimate.

²⁶"Brutus," *ibid.*; Rhode Island Acts and Resolves, March Session, 1787, pp. 15-17. See also "State of the Treasury of R. I.," February 24, 1789, Nicholas Brown Papers.

war. In 1788 it was estimated that the claims against Congress and that part of the recognized state debt which had been spent in the common cause totalled over \$2,000,000.²⁷ Later estimates were as high as \$5,000,000. When in 1793 the accounts between the states and the Federal Government were adjusted under Hamilton's plan for the assumption of the Revolutionary state debts, Rhode Island's share of the total state debt assumed by Congress was \$1,505,755.²⁸ A substantial part of the Rhode Island state debt was not accepted by the Federal Government, and some of it was never paid. Considering only the debt which was actually paid, we find that Rhode Island's quota of the old Continental debt was about $\frac{1}{10}$ of the total taxable property of the state; and the state's share of the new assumed debt was an additional $\frac{1}{10}$ of the assessed valuation of the state. Rhode Island, unlike most of the other states, had no public land which might be sold to help pay her obligations.

Prior to the Revolution taxation in Rhode Island had been very light. From 1714 to 1744 no taxes of any kind were levied, and the entire income of the Colony in this thirty year period was derived from paper money and the interest on the loan of such money.²⁹ Up to 1783 no duties on imports or exports were levied aside from small duties on tonnage used to support the lighthouse and fort. After 1783 small duties of 2% *ad valorem* and later 2½% were placed on imports.³⁰ The common mode of taxation was through direct taxes on real estate, polls and personal property. Approximately

²⁷"Report of the Committee Appointed by the General Assembly for Adjusting the State's Accounts with the United States." *R. I. Acts and Resolves*, October Session, 1788, pp. 7, 8. The Federal Government assumed that part of the state debt judged to have been authorized by Congress or incurred in the common military effort. Rhode Island exhibited claims against the Federal Government totalling \$5,215,845.87. *Ibid.*, May Session, 1792, p. 25. Expenditures of \$3,782,974 were accepted and the state was charged with payments made by Congress to the state of \$1,777,608 leaving a balance of \$2,005,366 owed to this state. This sum is a good indication of the exertions of this state during the Revolution. The latter amount was assumed by the Federal Government. J. W. Richmond, *Rhode Island Repudiation: or the History of the Revolutionary Debt* (Providence, 1855) Introduction, V.

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹H. K. Stokes, *Finances and Administration of Providence*, (Baltimore, 1903) p. 122.

³⁰*R. I. Acts and Resolves*, June, 1783, pp. 26-31; June, 1784, p. 17. Additional specific duties were placed on a few manufactured articles in 1785. *Ibid.*, June, 1785, p. 18. In December 1786 the duties were raised to 5% *ad valorem*, but since all duties and taxes were now payable in paper money, the impost duties were nominal.

$\frac{1}{4}$ of the state taxes were raised from poll taxes imposed on all adult males, including real estate and property tax payers. About $\frac{1}{8}$ of the taxes were collected from personal property and the remainder, or about $\frac{5}{8}$, on real estate.³¹ An authority on the finances of this state has said that a characteristic of the Rhode Island tax law in the eighteenth century was "its lenience towards most working capital."³²

In other words, the Rhode Island freeholders saw themselves in 1786 confronted with a public debt which if paid at full face value would, they believed, take from them in the form of direct taxes over a period of years more than twenty per cent of their property. In this situation it is not surprising that they lent a willing ear to the advocates of paper money, who suggested that the public debt be discharged through the emission of paper bills of credit.

Most of the states made very little real effort to levy or collect taxes to meet the Congressional requisitions. Although the security holders were only a small minority of the population, the amount of money loaned to Congress in the form of loan office certificates had been great. More money had been subscribed in the Rhode Island loan office during the Revolution, in proportion to the state's population, than had been subscribed in any other state except Pennsylvania.³³ The large security holders in Rhode Island were mostly merchants, and so long as the mercantile interests controlled the state government, vigorous efforts were made to collect the taxes to meet the interest on the Continental debt. Until the advent of the Paper Money Party to power, Rhode Island's record of compliance with Congressional requisitions was one of the best in the Union. The Journals of Congress show that in 1784 Rhode Island had paid a larger proportion of the Congressional requisition than any other state except South Carolina, which had been allowed to

³¹"Report to Congress of Secretary of Treasury on Systems of Taxation in the several states." *American State Papers, Class 3, Finance*, (Washington, 1833-1861) v.1, 1789-1802, pp. 422-423. This report estimates the poll taxes at 30% of the total tax. This estimate seems too high to the writer. In the 1778 evaluation, which was used until 1795, one-sixth part of the remainder or only 11⅓% of the total tax was estimated to be on personal property.

³²Stokes, *op. cit.* p. 127.

³³James Madison, *Writings*, (New York, 1900-1910) v. 1, p. 392. The above calculations include only the amounts carried on the books in the respective loan offices. Many of the Rhode Island subscribers were also on the books of the other states.

pay her obligations in specific supplies, while Rhode Island and the rest of the states had paid their requisitions in money.³⁴

In Rhode Island the taxes were actually assessed and collected by the towns, and when a town was delinquent the State Treasurer would bring suit against the Town Treasurer and send him to jail. To be a town treasurer in Rhode Island in the period following the Revolution was a hazardous occupation. Before anyone would accept the position of town treasurer, it was customary for a town to agree on a fee which the town treasurer would receive for each day he might have to spend in jail. In looking through the Town Meeting Records of the various Rhode Island towns for the period we are studying, this writer found eleven towns in which the Town Treasurer was committed to jail usually for substantial periods—chiefly in the years 1782 and 1783.³⁵

A condition which made the taxes even more odious was the fact that to a large extent the securities, both Continental and state, had passed from the hands of the original subscribers into the hands of the merchant and moneyed class, who purchased them for as little as $\frac{1}{5}$ to $\frac{1}{9}$ of their face value.³⁶ Most officers of the Continental Army were able to keep possession of their securities; but the common soldiers, who had fewer resources, were invariably forced to sell their "final settlements" for a small fraction of their face value. The soldier who was forced to sell his certificates at say 2 shillings 8 pence on the pound, or $\frac{1}{8}$ of their value, felt that he had been cheated of $\frac{7}{8}$ of his army pay. When he was compelled to pay his

³⁴In 1781 Congress requisitioned the states for \$8,000,000 to pay the interest on the Continental debt. By the end of 1783 three states had paid nothing. At the same time South Carolina had paid her quota in full in specific supplies. Rhode Island had paid 30% of the requisition in money. Pennsylvania had paid nearly the same proportion as Rhode Island, while the rest of the states at that time had paid very little. *Journals of the Continental Congress* (April 27, 1784) (Washington, 1928) XXVI, p. 309.

³⁵At that time the state had 30 towns. As the Town Meeting Records are not complete, there probably were other instances of the Town Treasurers' being committed to jail. See also: John R. Bartlett, ed., *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island* . . . (Providence, 1856-65) v.9, p. 441.

³⁶Securities were quoted at the number of shillings required to buy a certificate with a face value of a pound. In May, 1782, Continental securities were sold for 10/ or one half face value. In December, 1782, they sold for 6/8. By the spring of 1784 the cash price was 3/6 and by December of the same year 3/. By 1786 Continental securities reached their lowest price of around 2/2 and 2/3. The last figure would be one-ninth of their face value. The above quotations are taken from the Nicholas Brown Papers, other manuscript sources, and a few prices listed in the press.

portion of the taxes to pay the interest and principal, not only on the $\frac{1}{8}$ part which he received but also on the $\frac{7}{8}$ which he had lost, he felt that he was being doubly cheated.

This writer would agree with Hamilton that in order to establish the credit of the infant nation on a secure basis it was necessary to pay the public debt in full; and since some states had carried a larger share of the financial burden of the war than others, some adjustment of the state debt seemed fair. As for the individual security holders, perhaps greater justice would have been achieved if some distinction had been made between the original holders and the possessors at the time of the financing arrangement. In this way some compensation might have been allowed to those original subscribers or soldiers who, because of the impotence of government under the Articles of Confederation, were forced to suffer considerable loss.

Hamilton wisely realized that the most likely method of paying off the public debt was through imposts and other forms of indirect taxation. In this way the contribution of each taxpayer was disguised and indirect. Through the system of direct taxation on lands and polls used under the Articles of Confederation, it was possible for each taxpayer to see very clearly how much he was being forced to pay to discharge the public debt. The security holders were few, and the taxpayers were many. Under the system of almost pure democracy existing in Rhode Island the landholder, groaning under an unprecedented tax burden, could not be expected to have the same concern for "justice" and the public credit shown by the security holders. This is one reason why the Federalists became contemptuous of democracy and looked with favor on a "supreme controlling power" to curb the licentiousness of the people and the excesses of democracy.

It is easy to criticize the Rhode Island freeholders, who used depreciated paper money to discharge the state debt and who even offered the same medium to Congress in payment of the Congressional requisitions; but we should remember that in 1780 Congress had itself repudiated 39/40 of the Continental bills of credit, which bore on their face a promise to repay in gold and silver. Ultimately the Continental paper money was paid off at only one cent on the dollar. It was hard for the common man to make a distinction

between these two types of the public debt, which, after all, differed only in form. Both kinds of public promises had been issued to finance the war, and for some time they passed at equal value. The mercantile section of the community, more familiar with the ways of finance than the common people, had tended to put their money into loan office certificates rather than bills of credit. The great majority of the freemen in Rhode Island, and probably in the other states as well, did not see any difference between the solemn promises made by Congress to redeem both bills of credit and loan office certificates; hence they thought that both should be treated alike. Morally, at least, the two obligations were on the same basis.

Thus we see that in 1786 the Revolutionary debt and the post war deflation divided the state into two factions with fundamentally opposed interests. One faction, the Country Party or the Majority as they called themselves, was made up of the landowners large and small; the other, the Minority or "the respectable and virtuous Minority," to use one of their own favorite phrases, consisted of the mercantile or commercial interests of the state. When the lower house of the Rhode Island General Assembly in March, 1786, rejected a motion to issue paper money by a vote of 43 to 18 the result was a peaceful, political revolution in the state.³⁷ Almost over night a new party was formed, and with the slogan "to relieve the distress" this new Country Party came to power in the election of April, 1786, with what one of their supporters claimed was "the greatest majority ever before obtained in this State."³⁸

The Rhode Island Legislature in May, 1786, issued £100,000 in paper bills of credit, which were loaned out through mortgages on real estate. In spite of severe legal penalties on those who refused to accept the paper money at par with gold and silver, the money began to decline in value. According to the official scale adopted by the Legislature several years later, 3 paper bills were worth 2 in specie by July, 1786.³⁹ By September of the same year, the paper bills were quoted at 2 for 1; and by October, at 3 for 1. From then on the money continued its downward course until in July, 1789, it was rated at 15 to 1 in specie. Like the official table of depreciation used during the Revolution, the scale established by the state law

³⁷(Providence) *U. S. Chronicle*, March 9, 1786.

³⁸"Brutus," see note 25.

³⁹*Records of the Colony of Rhode Island*, v. 10, p. 448.

underestimated the actual decline in the value of the money. According to one of the hard money partisans, the paper on which the state had printed the bills had to be purchased at the rate of four of the new bills for one in silver. When the legal tender features of the act were suspended in September, 1789, it is asserted that the money was actually worth around 20 pounds for 1 in silver or gold.

From its emission in May, 1786, until September, 1789, the paper currency was legal tender for all past and future contracts at par with gold and silver. In case the creditor refused to accept the depreciated paper at full face value in discharge of an obligation, the debtor could lodge the money with a judge, who would then serve a legal notice on the creditor to call for the money. If the creditor did not call for the money, legal notices for three weeks were placed in the newspapers of the state; at the end of three months, should the creditor still refuse the tender, the judge would order a full discharge of the debt and the forfeiture of the money to the state. The legal notices printed in the papers make it possible to calculate the extent to which the people, and particularly the opponents of the Federal Constitution, took advantage of the law to discharge their debts at a fraction of their real value.

Most historians who have written on the Rhode Island paper money system have strongly condemned the paper emission act, assuming that the motive of the paper money partisans was to defraud and cheat the honest creditors, to say nothing of the suffering "widows and orphans" so frequently mentioned in the Federalist press. That the law created an opportunity for fraud and dishonesty on a large scale cannot be denied. However, the proportion of the population who actually took advantage of the situation to discharge their debts in paper currency has been greatly exaggerated. Eliminating duplications, one finds a few over 200 legal notices appearing in the press. It is unlikely that a creditor would have accepted the paper money unless compelled by a court decision. The fact that only a few over 200 of the total population of about 68,000 paid off even one debt in paper money is significant. In the last year of the legal tender act there were comparatively few notices in the press of debtors tendering paper currency. Even the paper money supporters reprobated the action of those who lodged paper currency with the judges. Many who approved the use of paper money to liquidate

the state debt did not approve the tendering of paper for debts originally incurred in silver or gold. In effect the law operated pretty much like the stay laws or moratoriums passed by a number of the states in the same period. Until the repeal of the legal tender provisions of the emission act in September, 1789, creditors were afraid to bring a suit to force the payment of a debt lest they be tendered depreciated paper.

The fact that the law resulted in the cancellation of a debt when a tender was refused was especially condemned even by the more moderate paper money men.⁴⁰ At common law, the refusal of a tender of gold and silver resulted only in the extinguishment of interest after the tender is made and the exemption of the debtor from the payment of costs in case of a suit.

The issues in the Rhode Island paper money struggle have generally been greatly over simplified. The rapid decline in the value of the money was neither desired nor intended by the paper money advocates, although it was caused in part by the large amount of money issued and the conditions of its emission. At least to some extent the depreciation of the money was the result of a desire of the merchants to kill the paper money as quickly as possible by refusing to give it currency.⁴¹ This at least was the belief held by a large section of the population, and there is strong evidence to support this conclusion. In spite of the injustices and difficulties created by paper money the Country Party responsible for the paper emission was returned to power the following year by a vote of nearly 3 to 1.⁴² So overwhelming was this victory that in the two following years the Country Party was elected without opposition. After the election of 1787 the Minority, who later took the name of Federalists, despaired of regaining the control of the state government and of a change in the public opinion of the state and put their hopes in the Constitution and the new Federal Government for relief from the baneful effects of paper money.

Articulate public opinion in the other states was pretty severe in condemnation of Rhode Island's conduct in the paper money era.

⁴⁰See note 24.

⁴¹Nicholas Brown to George Benson, Providence, June 17, 1786, and reply by George Benson, Newport, June 19, 1786. Nicholas Brown Papers.

⁴²The vote for Governor Collins at the head of the Country Party ticket in the election of April, 1787, was 2969 and that for his opponent William Bradford was 1141. (Providence) *U. S. Chronicle*, May 10, 1787.

"Rogues Island" was the familiar appellation applied to the state. Even the Anti-Federalists in the other states wished to have no contact or communication with the Rhode Island Anti-Federalists. The people of Rhode Island were no more dishonest or honest than the people of the other states, and it is unlikely that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the voters of that state were as devoid of all honor and principle as the Federalists maintained. That opportunities for great injustices existed in Rhode Island during the post war paper money era is not to be denied. Similar injustices were perpetrated in nearly all of the states during the Revolution. A leading contemporary historian, speaking of the general situation during the Revolution, wrote: "No agrarian law ever had a more extensive operation, than continental money. That for which the Gracchi lost their lives in Rome was peaceably effected in the United States, by the legal tender of these depreciating bills."⁴³ Rhode Island legislators in the post war years made paper money legal tender at face value not because they wished to wipe out all debts, as the extreme Federalists maintained, but because they believed that this was necessary in order to maintain the value of the currency. After the money started to depreciate, they believed that doing away with its legal tender quality would destroy the value of the money completely. Similar motives had led to the same action by Congress and the states during the Revolution. In the South many of the larger creditors were British merchants. This led many of the Southern states in the post war period to pass laws which in effect made it impossible for the British creditors to collect their debts. Such laws were no more honest or ethical than the legal tender laws of Rhode Island, but the victims of this action did not have the same opportunity to influence American opinion that the Rhode Island creditors had. Those states which had a minimum of popular disturbances during the post war period were generally those which had incurred a smaller debt during the Revolution or made little effort through taxes to pay the state debt and the Continental requisitions. The same fundamental conditions which produced the paper money era in Rhode Island were responsible in the neighboring state of Massachusetts for Shay's Rebellion.

An extended discussion of Rhode Island in the paper money

⁴³David Ramsay, *History of American Revolution*, v. 2, p. 134 *et seq.*, quoted in Albert S. Bolles, *The Financial History of the United States from 1774 to 1789*, p. 177.

era is not possible in this brief article. Since Rhode Island in the nineteenth century was the closest approach this continent has seen to pure unmixed democracy, an impartial account of what occurred when this democracy was subjected to unprecedented stresses is important for our understanding of both the strengths and weaknesses of democracy. Distrustful of democracy, the Founding Fathers regarded Rhode Island as a horrible example of what to avoid. Without condoning the excesses of the paper money emission, it is possible to say that the majority of the voters in this state were not as depraved as many of the Founding Fathers assumed on the basis of partisan and exaggerated accounts which they received from their Federalist friends in this state. If what the framers of the Constitution called the "leveling spirit" made greater headway in Rhode Island than in any other state, it was caused in part by the greater burden of taxes, in part by the more democratic form of government, and perhaps also by the greater economic difficulties faced by the people of Rhode Island in the post war period.

[to be continued]

RECENT ACCESSIONS

From the Plainfield Street Baptist Church, nine record books (including two membership lists) 1829-1941.

From the Pilgrim Press, *Weybosset Bridge*, by Rev. Arthur E. Wilson.

From W. D. Raymond, publications of the Somerville, Mass., Historical Society and other material pertinent to Somerville.

From William Davis Miller, Correspondence of John Brown Francis, mostly to Elisha Potter.

Gift, *History and bibliography of American Newspapers, 1690-1820*, by Clarence Saunders Brigham, 2 v.

By purchase, *The Butler family of Lebanon, Connecticut* . . . compiled by Bryant Ormond Butler, 1934.

Gift of the author, *A history of the Declaration of Independence*, by Charles O. F. Thompson.

Gift of the author, *Daniel Berkeley Updike and the Merrymount Press of Boston* . . . by George Parker Winship.

Miscellaneous material from the Estate of Nellie Brownell Potter.

Miscellaneous material from the Estate of Mrs. Robert W. Taft.

From John Wells James, 2 Prov. Directories, 2 City Tax Books and 2 Broad-sides.

From Mrs. Jacob A. Evans, *Evans and allied families*, compiled by The American Historical Co., Inc.

THE PATROL OF NARRAGANSETT BAY (1774-76)

by WILLIAM GREENE ROELKER

SEIZURE OF JOHN BROWN

[Continued from July, 1948, v. 7, no. 3, p. 95]

PURSUANT TO ORDERS from Admiral Graves, Captain Wallace was vigorously patrolling the entrance to Narragansett Bay. His two ships, the *Rose* and the *Swan*, were unable to cover adequately the three passages, and many vessels slipped through. News of the battles of Lexington and Concord further nettled Wallace's choleric disposition and fired his zeal. So when he received a tip from his Tory informer in the General Assembly that Rhode Island had created (April 25) and was about to equip and supply an army of observation of 1500 men,¹ Wallace was primed to act effectively to prevent it. Unfortunately for himself and for the Patriot cause John Brown arrived at Newport, April 26, with two vessels loaded with flour.

According to the Newport *Mercury*:

Last Wednesday [April 26], as Mr. John Brown, of Providence, merchant, was going from this town to Providence, in one of the Packets, the Packet was stopped, by order of Capt. Wallace, of the ship *Rose*, and Mr. Brown taken on board the ship *Swan*; soon after which another packet was stopped as she was going up. These Packets had on board a quantity of flour, which Mr. Brown had purchased for a number of vessels he was fitting out. Part, or all, of the flour was taken on board the ships; and the next day Mr. Brown was sent off in one of the Packets, to be carried to Admiral Graves, at Boston, without having a single reason given for his being thus violently seized and carried out of this colony, contrary to all law, equity and justice.²

A week later the *Mercury* carried this item:

Mr. John Brown, merchant, whom we mentioned in our last to have been illegally seized and sent to Admiral Graves, at Boston, by order of Capt. Wallace, of the ship *Rose*, on this station for the *protection* of trade, was there honorably discharged, and his Flour, which was unrighteously taken from him, ordered to be paid for, with damages, &c. for the detention of the two packets.

Several thousands, sterling, have been recovered in England, for a less violence than that committed on the person and liberty of Mr. Brown.³

This is the only public record of an event which created a real crisis in Rhode Island. In it there is nothing to reveal the nature of

the crime which Captain Wallace accused John Brown of committing. Dr. Ezra Stiles wrote that John Brown was seized "in Revenge as is supposed for his being concerned in Burning the Gaspee Schooner a year or two ago."⁴ Another suggestion was that the flour was intended for the Army of Observation, as it doubtless was. It mattered little which crime was laid at Brown's feet; under the law he could be transported to England for trial before a hostile jury, which, in all probability would find him guilty. With this dire threat hanging over him John Brown's many friends immediately began steps to procure his release.

The first of these was a rather boyish attempt to intercept the vessel carrying him to Boston. Elkanah Watson of Plymouth, then eighteen years old was apprenticed to John Brown. Over forty years later he wrote the following account of this attempt.

... Mr. Brown, having contracted to supply the army of Washington with flour, sailed for Providence with a cargo from Newport. The British not having seized any American vessels, he apprehended no danger, although Commodore Wallis, with two twenty-gun ships, lay in the harbor. His vessel was, however, seized, and himself sent a prisoner to Boston in irons, charged with heading a party in 1772, disguised as Indians, which burnt his Majesty's schooner Gaspee in Providence river. The charge was true, although the British government could never obtain any evidence of the fact...

Mr. Brown had occupied a father's place to me; I felt grateful, and in common with the whole community, indignant and exasperated at his seizure. A consultation was immediately held, and it was decided to send an express to Plymouth, in order to fit out two armed schooners to intercept, if possible, the captured flour-vessel, in her circuitous passage around Cape Cod, and release Mr. Brown. In the service of Mr. Brown, and a native of Plymouth, I was entrusted with the important mission. With my musket at my back, I mounted a fleet horse, and arrived in Plymouth by two o'clock in the morning, alarmed the town by the cry of fire, and roused up the Committee of Safety. At sunrise I was awakened by the beat of the drum to muster volunteers for the enterprise, and without hesitation fell into the ranks. By two o'clock the same afternoon, we embarked on board of two delapidated fishing schooners, equipped with two old cannon each, with powder loose in barrels, and between thirty and forty men to a vessel, black and white, all officers and all men. Thus equipped, we plunged into the ocean, reckless of every consequence, determined to rescue Mr. Brown. We had no commission, and had we been captured, would, in all probability, [have] been hung as pirates, with little formality. We cruised ten days east of Cape Cod,

without success, and being pursued by a twenty-gun ship, escaped into the harbor of Plymouth...

Mr. Brown was carried into Boston, and soon after released by the interposition of his brother Moses Brown, a conspicuous and influential quaker, and truly a great man.⁵

Writing in *Publications of Rhode Island Historical Society*, New Series, v. 5, p. 124, Hon. William Paine Sheffield says that Watson's account is "somewhat discredited" because he places the seizure of John Brown on July 3, whereas it occurred April 22, but Sheffield himself is in error as the date was April 26. Furthermore Sheffield says that Watson refers to "Washington's army, when in fact that army was not organized until long after the seizure." Mr. Sheffield was, of course, in ignorance of a recently discovered letter from Joseph Brown, written at Dedham, May 1, 1775, to his brother Nicholas at Providence. Joseph writes: "But just at about 6 o'clock this afternoon Seth Read told me at Roxbury that he had scene a man that could be depended upon who came rite from Plimmouth & that a Vessel had fitted out there after Brother John this is the first I have heard of it if they mis him & an act [account] of the attempt arrives in the town of boston before brother John is liberated I fear the consequences & if they should thake him we shall be puseled [puzzled] about brother moses however I hope & trust that God will with the use of the proper means Restore us all to each other again."⁶

The first reasoned attempt to bring about John's liberation was an address from a group of prominent and moderate citizens of Providence to "our Distressed brethren at Newport." This communication stated that the seizure of John Brown and the arrival of a proposal from Lord Dartmouth⁷ suggesting an "Accomodation of the unhappy Difference Subsisting between the Two Countries" had induced the writers "to recommend a speedy, but Cool & Dispassionate Meeting of the Town of Newport, to take into Consideration the Contents of the Letter [Dartmouth's], and Meditate Some Pacifick & Consiliating Measures for the Liberation of the Colony's Agent [John Brown] Now on bord the Man of War."⁸

Moses Brown delivered the letter to the proper persons at Newport and then with his brother Joseph hurried to Boston to persuade their friends to use influence to procure John's release. It seems probable

that he also had an interview with Governor Joseph Wanton, who wrote the following previously unpublished letter to General Gage:

Newport, April 27th, 1775

Sir,

Yesterday, Capt. Wallis of His Majesty's Ship *Rose*, Stationed in this Harbor, stopped a small Sloop, bound to Providence with a Quantity of Flour, consigned to M^r John Brown, Merchant in that Town, who was a Passenger onboard said Sloop, with a regular Sufferance from the Custom-House for the Flour; notwithstanding which, Capt. Wallis detained M^r. Brown onboard His Majesty's Ship *Swan*, and contrary to my Request for his dismissal has sent him round to Boston, to the very great Distress of his Family and numerous Connexions — The Pretext Capt. Wallis may have for so extraordinary a Proceeding, I am not acquainted with, as he has not answered the Letter I wrote him in behalf of M^r. Brown; nor given me the least Information in that Matter, which renders it necessary I shou'd address your Excellency in behalf of this unfortunate injured Gentleman, and to assure you, that he is a Person of considerable Fortune, One of the largest Traders in the Colony, and universally esteemed; his detention, Sir, will also be attended with the most ruinous Consequences to his Business, he being Owner of a large Number of Vessels, many of which are hourly expected, from different Voyages; Considering these Circumstances, and the peculiarly hard Fate of M^r. Brown, in being forced out of his Business, and sent such a Distance from Home, I hope your Excellency will excuse me, when I intreat you to exert your Influence in this Affair, that M^r. Brown may, without too great loss of Time, be restored to his Family and Business — I have the Honor to be, with great Respect,

Your Excellency's,
Most obedient
Humble Servant
[signed] JWanton *

His Excellency General Gage.⁹

Moses Brown was in too much of a hurry to wait while the Governor located his clerk and had the letter written. It was sent to Providence whence, with some others to members of the Council, it was forwarded by Nicholas Brown to Joseph and Moses in Boston, April 29, by the hand of Stephen Salisbury of Worcester. When Nicholas learned the next day that the gate at Boston had been closed again he wrote Joseph and Moses that if the letters did not arrive by Salisbury a messenger should be sent to Worcester for them as they were "of Grat Consequence."¹⁰



Destruction of the schooner *Gaspé* in the waters of Rhode Island 1772
From an old halftone of J. Rogers's original engraving, both in the library of the R. I. H. S.

Meanwhile other important persons had exerted their influence to obtain John's release. Stephen Hopkins, former Governor and present Delegate to the Continental Congress, on April 26 had notified the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts of the seizure of John Brown in a letter now missing. The Congress replied April 28, ordering the removal of certain British officers who were prisoners of war to the custody of Hopkins at Providence "... to be made such use of as they shall think proper for obtaining the liberty of said M^r. Brown."¹¹

When Joseph and Moses hurried off to Boston, April 28, to enlist the aid of influential friends, they carried with them the following letter from Stephen Hopkins to the Provincial Congress:

Providence, April 28, 1775.

Gentlemen:—

Mr. Joseph Brown and Mr. Moses Brown, of this place, principal merchants, and gentlemen of distinction and probity, will wait upon you with his letter. Their brother, Mr. John Brown, of this town, merchant, was, two days ago, forcibly taken at Newport in a packet, as he was coming from thence with a quantity of flour, which he purchased there. He was carried on board a ship of war and confined. We have since heard that he is sent round to Boston with the flour. I request you to give the bearers any aid and assistance in your power, for procuring the relief and discharge of their brother.¹²

He concluded with the statement that he did not favor holding British prisoners of war as hostages. The Provincial Congress appointed a committee to confer with Joseph Brown and to recommend suitable action.

On Monday, May 1, General Gage replied to Governor Wanton:

Boston 1st. May 1775

Sir

I have received your Letter of the 27th. April; in regard to M^r. Brown of Providence; the Vessel he is in, is not yet come round, but I have already spoke to the Admiral; and expect on M^r. Browns Arrival, he will be dismissed; as I don't as [sic] present, see any reason for his detention.

I am with great Regard &

[Thomas Gage]

The Hon^{ble}. Gov^r. Wanton¹³

John Brown did not reach Boston until May 2. From a letter written by Nicholas Brown at Providence on April 30, 1775, to Joseph

and Moses Brown at Boston, we learn that this was because his vessel went around by Nantucket Shoals instead of through Vineyard Sound, the more usual route.¹⁴ Perhaps an easterly wind made the longer course more desirable; perhaps it was taken to avoid interception.

In a previously unpublished letter to Nicholas, Moses Brown announced that John had been released.

Boston 3th of 5th mo 1775

Dear Brother

I have the Satisfaction to Inform Our Friends that Brother John is releas'd after much Intercession of Many & very kind friends and much Sollisitation to the General and Admiral with Whoom my personal Access was made (I may Say 'thro Divine as well as human favour) almost familiar a Circumstance very unexpected from the Charectors of Both when I came from home, I have Seldom Seen a patient humble Mind more Needed nor more Useful and as in proportion as I found this to be my State way was made for Success of those Endeavors that Seem'd from time to time Used

May this Dispensation be rightly Improved by us all — and please to tell Sister Brown I have often tho't of what she sead to me when I came away, let her ascribe the Release of her Husban[d] to the Same Cause and not to any Human Endeavours otherwise than as poor Instruments among the foremost in Zealous Care & Exertions thy Self ought largely to share, Brother Joseph is yet at Roxbury I suppose and Brother John I believe expects to go to Cambridge, for grattitude to his friends Without & Within [Boston] will move him ...¹⁵

As usual Dr. Stiles was promptly and fully informed. He wrote in his Diary for May 4, 1775:

... A little before Sunset M^r. Russell of Providence came to Town & informs that M^r. Jn^o Brown was dismissed & came home to Providence last night about XI^b at night. That he was first put on board Adm. Graves, then brot before Gen. Gage Cap^t Wallace's pretence for apprehendg him was that he was concerned in burning the Gaspee Schooner. Applic^a was made to Judge Oliver of the Commissioners that sat on that Affair at Newport & he testified that no Accusation was exhibited against M^r Brown, upon which Gen. Gage dismissed him, paid him for his flour, order the Packets to be returned to Providence & to be paid Demorage, and has sent off a Reprimand to Cap^t Wallace of the Rose Man o'War here. A humbling stroke to the Tories! The General & Admiral treated M^r Brown politely & dismissed him with Honor. An Army of 30 Thousd speaks Terror. Divine Providence can easily dis-appoint the Malice of Men in a bad Cause.¹⁶

Writing to Tristram Burgess many years later Moses Brown gave an account of the part he played in securing John's release.¹⁷

On May 8, 1775, Stiles made this entry in his Diary referring to the session of the General Assembly the day before. "By M^r Brown, Gen. Gage recommended That Rd. Isld. Assembly shd send Delegates to him to negotiate on the present Crisis. This passed in the Lower House but negatived in the upper—who refused to have any Negotiations with him [Gage] of this Nature."¹⁸

No record of this motion made by John Brown was found in Rhode Island Archives. By chance the following abstract of this important document was discovered in the transcripts of British Admiralty Records in the Library of Congress.

Endorsed Minutes of the Assembly No 8, [May 7, 1775].

John Brown presented an Address to the House upon the Subject of American Grievances from which is the following extractd.

—The Secretary of States Letter of the 3d of March, I think is evidently held out as a Test of their Inclinations towards a Compromise of our unhappy Disputes, therefore I give it as my Opinion, that it is now in the power of this Colony and Continent to make such propositions to his Excellency General Gage, as will effectually put a stop to any Hostilities till the Continental Congress and each Colony can consider of, and Answer the Secretary of States Letter, and till we have an Account of the Reception our Answers meet with, which might be as followeth or something similar, Viz. — Tell the General of our Determination of Defence, but that we really wish there would be no occasion of our Forces going into the Field, but that those of the Massachusetts &ca already Assembled round Boston, should withdraw and return to their respective Homes, and that all Prisoners on both sides should be immediately delivered up, and that a free Passage into and out of Boston should be immediately established, by which the Troops and all others may be supplied with fresh Provisions, in consequence of all which, the General with all his Principal Officers to engage and be obliged in some satisfactory manner that there shall be no further Hostilities Committed on any Person whatever, nor their Estates; till answer be received from his Majesty, to what the Colonists may send to him in answer to the Secretaries Letter abovesaid. — I think this cannot be by any means considered as too forward in these two Colonies [R. I. & Conn. or Mass.?), or if new Hampshire can be united in the same request, it would doubtless have the more weight, but as they cannot from many Circumstances be so soon introduced into the measure, it may with propriety be offered to the General Assembly for his Concurrence, And then immediately transmitted to the Continental Congress &ca &ca which I have not the least doubt of having a good effect.

P. S. As ther may not be time to Consult the General Assembly of Connecticut on this Subject in Time, to make the Proposition to his Excellency General Gage, during the Sessions of our present Assembly, why might not the proposition be made by us alone, not to be binding unless agreed to by them and new Hampshire.—

Upon the Motion whether two Persons should be Authorized to waite on General Gage, a warm Debate ensued, the principal Speakers for the Motion were Gov^r Hopkins, Doctor Bradford, Col^o Potter, and Dan^l Mowey [Mawney or may be Mowry] — Against it Doctor Babcock, John Denter [Dexter, Town Clerk of Cumberland] — Gover^{nr} Ward upon a Division of the House, the Speaker [Metcalf Bowler] turned it in favour of the Motion.—¹⁹

With his usual perspicacity Stiles saw the link between John Brown's action in General Assembly and his release by the authorities at Boston. Rabid Whig that he was he scented some sort of skulduggery. But the Browns, like many men of property at that time, were moderate middle-of-the-road men as is shown by the letter of April 27 to Newport.²⁰ While they resented the tyrannical acts of the British, particularly the interference with trade and the closing of the port of Boston, yet they were uncertain of the consequences of a complete break with England. Perhaps merchants like themselves stood to lose by independence; therefore for the time being they were in favor of exploring every means of accommodation. It was only natural that General Gage and Admiral Graves should take advantage of John Brown's situation to urge him to take conciliatory action. There is, in fact, evidence that an agreement in writing was entered into before witnesses which was binding both upon the Browns and the British officials.

John Brown, always bold and headstrong, began a course of action which would have violated this agreement and exposed him to further difficulties with the authorities. Also it would have alienated his family and friends, who had stood by him. On June 6 he began suit against Captain Wallace for £10,000 damages, because of his seizure and detention. On the following day he informed Moses of the action he had taken.²¹

Moses Brown was greatly disturbed by John's action and replied to his brief note of June 7 with a long letter of remonstrance. He called John's attention to the fact that besides breaking his engagement with the Admiral his behavior was ruining Moses's reputation for sincerity and honesty:

Providence the 16th of 6th m^o. 1775

Brother John

I rec^d thy Letter of the 7th, at portsmouth the 8th Ins^t with much Concern on thy Acc^t Apprehend^g the Measure of Sueing at this time would increase instead of Lessening thy Difficulties for the same Disposition that could Suspect thy purchasing flour on purpose to carry to Boston could evade the force of Such a Suit and even turn it against thee and thy friends at Newport that so kindly assisted in thy relief would take it Unkind at this time when they lay so expos'd & Under Wallises Resentment which he doubtless would manifest to them the Custom House officers heither to friendly to this Town would be influanc'd not only against thee but the Merchants in Providence, and thereby instead of Satisfying them, when they felt the Consequences would throw the Whole upon thee, thy Vessels wherever found will be particularly Mark'd, & detain'd to thy great Loss, on going to Newport and hearing a Vessel thou wast Concern'd in was Stopt I sent for Nicholas Power & gave him my Sentiments and Advised that if he tho't with me that he Spoke with The Sherriff & Stopt the Writt till further orders from thee but that I had no Authority & therefore of my Self would not Undertake it, what was done I know not, but if it is not Stopt its very Clearly My Opinion it had better be for it can not be of the Least Service that I can See but must Bring Distress if not Ruin on thee as thy own friends may be so far inducd to be thy Enemies at Newport as by Unguarded Expressions at Least Subject thee to the Strictest scrutiny which even Innocence itself can at this Confusd state of things just carry itself through the Torrents of Censure So prevalent against Considerate moderate men — that dont Run with the Tides, this I know by my Self who am much Confused with thee in the Country but were I go to work to Reconcile & please these people I must do things worse than any thing Charged on me or thee to the Loss of a Quiet & peaceful mind which I am thankful at times I am favourd with Some Conciousness of haveing as great a regard for my Countrys Rights Liberty & Happiness as the most Sanguine Wigg — and that I am Clear of haveing Enterd into any Engagements but Such as if pursued by all would be Like to Effect the Happyness of both Countries and of this Sentiment thou wast fully with me When I consider thy Engagements at parting with the Admiral thy Letter to Wallace & the Interests in a Settlement of y^e Difference with him I am inducd to believe thou art Lead aSide from that Standard of Resignation to thy alotment which I was pleas'd to find thee in a degree Possesd of at Boston, a State of mind muchsafer than that which is Drove & Hurried with the Spirit of the Unhappy Times When I came home from Newport and heard of a Vessel or Two being Armd & fitted & gone Out to Cruise for Vessels &c I feard weither thou might not be Still led further aSide from thy Duty by the Same Delusive Spirit and have Since heard that thou hast been so far Concern'd therein

as greatly to affect me as well as thy Self which is the more Imediate Ocation of thy Letter

As I have not claimd any merrits to mySelf 'thro my Journey to Boston, I will yet avoid it as far as Possible and only lay The Case before thee for Determination Weither or know my Character as a person professing Religion will not suffer and instid of that Sincerity & Honnesty thou knows I was tho't to have in Boston I shal not be thot to be a Deciver & a Hippocrite if thy Conduct Turns Out so Contrary to What thou Engaged and I was a Voucher & Surety for. this Effect to me as a Man only I could bear, but my religious profession & faithful Brethren which are nearer to me than any thing in Life are by me in this View Reproachd alldo and which at this time when we as a people [the Friends] can not Expect to Stand between the Violence of Two parties but by Our Sicerity and faithfulness to the Leadings of that Divine Principal of Truth which we profess to follow is truly a distressing Consideration to me who am desirous with the apostle to "Do Nothing against the Truth but for the Truth. The Writt hath already so far Shut up the way of my Saving the Injured & Innocent that I could Not do any thing for our Numerous friends at Nantuckett in the Case of Watermans Detention tho Several times Applyd to, for I considered the officers must suppose me at Least Consenting if not Aiding in y^e Writt Ad to these Considerations the Scituation my Estate as well as Person & Character Stands in, Equally Exposd with thine at a Time when I am Retird from Business and made Content with what I have, must it not bring an additional Trial & an Increasd mortification to have that Subject to the Pleasure & Will of another by my own Agreement signd by own hand before witnesses for the Redemption of him whose Conduct afterwards Subjects me to Such Tryals & Loss, however afflicting this Dispensation is I desire to be presarved in Resignation & to Act a Consistant part as far as in me lies and be as patient as I can under the Events, it is in vain for any to think Such Negotiations & Agreements are Void in Law & therefore the parties may do as they please, If all confidence is once Lost by Solemn Engagements being Violated how will future Innocences Suffer if there can be no Ransom Complyd with.

Where an Error by any Inducement Takes place there is no way I know of to Remedy it but to leave off[f] Continuing in the Spirit or Disposition that lead to it, I have therefore now only to ask of thee from the foregoing Consideration and from every grateful motive that thou Mannifest in all thy future Conduct a Conformity to thy Solemn Agreements which will Stand thee in Stead before all men if thou Conducts carefully & peacably, I have for Some time back tho't it would be more agreeable to me to go before the Committee of Correspondence of y^e Town & lay before them every Transaction Respecting thee geting thy Liberty from the Admirals Ship and unless matters are Restored as far as may be that Violates or is Sead to Violate our Engagements I must in Justice to my Self family & friends make known the part I acted for

thy Relief, which on thy Acc^t I at first feared would be to thy Disadvantage and I am not yet clear weather it may not become my duty to lay before the Admiral my intire disapprobation of Such Conduct for the Clearing my Self but I hope there may be no necessity for this—

A fear having taken hold on my mind at Seeing thee a Writing the address to the Assembly that thou would be led through a desire of popular approbation (a snare I am not unacquainted with) to ad Something that would lay us under Difficulties to guard & prevent which I gave thee a Copy of what we both Signd Mentioning at the same time we were bound in Honnor to the Observance of it and from thy Conduct after & till I went from home I had no concern on that account I have taken this method of writing in preference of an Interview Knowing it is seldom Sollid oppertunity can be had from the Hurry in Business &c & that thou might set down & Cooley Way the Steps that has been Pursued and make a stop for I believe it as Necessary for thee at this time of Tryal and difficulty as it was for the Children of Israel when they came to the read Sea which it seems to me Lays before thee, they were ordered to stand still & See the Salvation of God, they obeyd and the Floods were Divided before them, & then they past Safely 'tho no doubt fearfully on, may this be our Case Dear Brother and thou with me arive at the Banks of Deliverance from not Only Outward but Inward Troubles which the Sinscer in heart knows their [the Israelites] Travels remarkably Tipifyes 'Tis the Desire of thy friend & Brother²²

John replied in a typically oblique letter.²³ He told his brother Moses that he had advised him "more than once" that he would sue Captain Wallace, and the amount of the bail the Captain would have to put up, might bring him to heel. Wallace, he said, was a coward and ready to run at the least provocation. He concluded with a stormy statement that he was "so clear in opinion that the Measures now taking to Force America are Rong that its out of my power to Restrain my Self from wishing Success to the Countery in which I was Born."

Why was John Brown seized? Both his participation in the *Gaspee* affair and his purchase of 300 barrels of flour, presumably for the army of observation, have been advanced as the crime for which he was seized by Captain Wallace. Moses Brown and Dr. Stiles both quote Judge Oliver as stating that there was no evidence on which John could be held for his participation in the burning of the *Gaspee*.

The authorization for "supplying the troops with arms, provisions, &c., five hundred barrels of flour" did not pass the General Assembly until May 3,²⁴ and did not provide in any way for the appointment

of an agent. Yet the letter of April 27 from the citizens of Providence to Newport spoke of "the Colony's Agent Now on bord the Man of War," a person who could be no other than John Brown. Moses Brown in his letter of January 12, 1835, uses the same expression. Moreover James Angell writing from Providence for Deputy Governor Darius Sessions to the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts reported that "the situation of matters is such, occasioned . . . partly by the seizure made by the man of war, at Newport, of 300 barrels of flour, bought by this colony for supplying our army, that it will be impossible for our forces immediately to proceed to join your army, unless they go destitute of provision, which we imagine here would rather be a burden than a help to our friends."²⁵

From the quoted evidence it is apparent that some Patriots were assuming that John Brown was the agent of the colony and that the flour and other provisions were intended for the army. It suited Captain Wallace's plans to believe the same thing, and he based one of his accusations on this premise.

Moses' letter of May 11 to James Warren, president of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, explained that the news of the proposed purchase of flour by the Colony and the appointment of John as agent to make the purchase had reached the fleet prematurely, and Captain Wallace had assumed it to be an accomplished fact and had acted accordingly. But John Brown claimed that he had made the purchase for his own account, not that of the Colony. "This Circumstance rendered his Dismission much Easier," wrote Moses.²⁶

In the opinion of the writer Captain Wallace seized John Brown because he recognized in him a patriot of force and determination. Like every other revenue officer he included in his indictment every allegation which he thought would hold water.

²¹John R. Bartlett, ed., *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island . . .* (Providence, 1856-1865) v. 7, p. 310.

²²Newport Mercury, May 1, 1775; also, Providence Gazette and Country Journal, April 29, 1775.

²³Newport Mercury, May 8, 1775; also, Providence Gazette, May 6, 1775.

²⁴Frank B. Dexter, ed., *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles . . .* (N. Y., 1901) v. 1, p. 540. Hereafter cited as Stiles.

²⁵Winslow C. Watson, ed., *Men and Times of the Revolution, or Memoirs of Elkanah Watson . . .* (N. Y., 1856) pp. 20-23.

²⁶Letter in the Brown Papers in John Carter Brown Library; photostat in R. I. H. S.

²⁷"A letter is received from Ld Dartm^o with an insidious proposal for accommodation." Stiles, v. 1, p. 540.

Providence April 27th. 1775

"The Intelligence of Our Friend John Brown's being taken on board the Man of War and the Provisions he purchased being Stopt, together with A Letter rec^d. yesterday from the Earl of Dartmouth Inclosing by the Kings direction the Proposals of the Prime Minister of State for an Accommodation of the unhappy Differences Subsisting between the Two Countries, Induces us to Recommend a Speedy, but Cool & Despicionate Meeting of the Town of Newport, to Take into Consideration the Contents of the Letter, and Meditate Some Pacifick & Consiliating Measures for the Liberation of the Colony's Agent [John Brown] Now on bord the Man of War and Such A Suspension of all Hostile Attempts on both Sides as may secure the Lives & Properties of the Inhabitants of the Colony & the Kings Officers Seamen & Soldiers Within the same, Untill the General Assembly may Sit, and Further Deliberate on the Important Crisis of Publick Affairs— We Desire to act In Perfect Harmony with you our Distressed brethren in Newport, and If any thing to the Contrary hath Appeared We hope A due regard to our Inseperable Interest, The Love of peace & Concord, will so Effect our Councils as to admit of no Jars among our selves, as a People Equally Interested In the deliberation & Determination of the General Assembly who we wish may find the way open for Entering into A Mediation between the Inhabitants of the Massachusetts & General Gage, and under the Direction of the Divine Wisdom bring about a Suspension of Hostilities in that Colony, for at Least such A time as Oppertunity may be given for the General American Congress to take under

Consideration the Letters from the Ministry, and the late Acts of Parliament. The bearer Moses Brown is Conserved for the Welfare of his Country, and being desirous If possible a Restoration of all those benevolent & kind Offices that hath for more than a Centry subsisted between this & our Mother Country, brot in & Read to our Town Meeting yesterday The said Letters and as a Friend to both Countries Recommended a Waity Consideration of our Publick Affairs, with Candor & Moderation, A Spirit much wanting, in these times of Hurry & Commotion. The Town Meeting was Caled to Consider of Erecting a Battery, which was put off, Untill after the siting of the General Assembly, and after some Conference on the Letter &c. They were left for the Assembly's determination, And as we the Subscribers Approve of his good Intentions Recommend him & his Pascifick message to your notice and Regard & are your Friends—

Nich^o. Brown
Joseph Brown
William Smith
Job Smith
Elisha Brown
Eph. Bowen
Dan^l Tillinghast

Moses Brown Papers (R. I. H. S.) Misc. v. 1, p. 26.

Note: In addition to John Brown's brothers Nicholas and Joseph the other signers were Job (1736-1818) and William (1727 —) Smith, John Brown's brothers-in-law, older brothers of his wife Sarah. Elisha Brown (1717-1802) was John Brown's uncle. He was a prominent politician and served as Deputy Governor 1766-67. Ephraim Bowen (1753-1841) was for many years an honored figure in the military affairs of Rhode Island. He took part in the attack on the *Gaspee* and was the last participant in the affair to survive. Daniel Tillinghast (1732-1806) served as Colonel of the United Train of Artillery of Providence from 1774-95. In 1775-76 he was a member of the Committee of Safety.

⁹Gage Papers. This and one other letter are published by the approval and courtesy of the Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Sunday Apl 30th 1775

¹⁰Gen^l

Yesterday Evening we Sent by Mr Stephen Sallsbury of Worcester a Number

of Letters wch we rec^d by Express from Newport, One of which was to Gen^l Gage from Gov. Wanton, Since wch. we here the Gate at Boston is Since Shut again, and for fear these letters should not get there, give you this Early Information by Mr Mumford the Post [rider], the Letters are to Several of the Generall Councell on Acc^t. of John Brown's Detainer the Bearer of them Lives In Worcester, and if the[y] should not get to hand, I think it Best to Send to Worcester after them, as they are of Grat Consequence not time to add, all well here at Present—

I am with Truest wishes for your success in this unhappy affair. — There was Also a Packet sent by Young Gill Cont^g. the Invoices &c to Mr Lloyd wch. if not misinformed was del^d. You — We hear the select Men of Boston has some influence One of wch is Our Acquaintance Mr Oliver Wendall — We Understand by T. Lynsey that the Vessell that Brother Jn^o B. went Round in Field Vessell round Nantucket sholes, if so She may not be got round to Boston so soon as was Expected.

this in the graitest Haste

Nich^o Brown

Inclosed is a Let^r from the Rev^d. John Grave[s] of this Town to Doc^t. Canor of Boston Containing Nothing Else but the subject of the Relief of John Brown. Jos & Moses Brown

Moses Brown Papers, R. I. H. S., v. 2, p. 31.

¹¹*Records of Provincial Congress Court Records*, v. 31, p. 152 in Massachusetts Archives. Photostat in R. I. H. S.

¹²*Ibid.* p. 169.

¹³Gage Papers.

¹⁴Brown Papers, John Carter Brown Library.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶*Stiles*, v. 1, p. 544.

¹⁷ . . . There has been Much said about the Schooner *Gaspe*, but there is a piece of History that Arose Out of it has not been so generally Known which as I was then Engaged if possible for a Settlement of the Difficaltes Subsisting between great Brittain and America about the 21st of April 1775 a Town Meeting was Called to Fortifye Our Town below at Fox Point, about that Time or the day before a Letter was recieved from the Earl of Dartmouth inclosing by the King's Direction the proposals of the prime Minister of State for an Accommodation of the Unhappy Difference Subsisting between the Two Countries, instead of proceeding to order built the proposd fort at fox Hill it was concluded to Suspend it and to address the Town of Newport to take into consideration the contents of the said Letter and Meditate some Pacifick and Consiliatory Measures for the Liberation of the Colonys Agent now on board of the Man of War and Such Suspensions of all hostile Attempts on both Sides as May Save the lives and property untill the General Assembly may Sit, this Address to Newport was Signed by a Number of our then leading men, and Moses Brown was named to accompany the Address, and having rec^d many Letters from Newport and this Town to the Number I think of 19 to the Gov^r & Officers of the Army in Boston,

I went down and Obtained a permit to pass the Lines on this Side the Neck and was between the Guards till Night having Sent in some of my Letters and got the promise of return from Some of the Officers, but My Scitition becoming very Unpleasant and Seeing a well Dressed Gold lace Officer on the marches [boundaries] I marched up toward him and got near before he saw Me when he turnd and Saw Me near he was so Angry, that he gave me Such blast as I never had or heard before I did not know for sometime what his fright Might induce him to do, he was as I afterwards found tho unthought of by me giving the Centinals the Watchword for the Night. I stood and felt in an humble State of mind and as Soon as he had left room for a Word I replyd to him in Such a Manner and with Information of my Message that he came down

in Mind as low as he was high before and in a very kind and Gentle Manner offered and did take a Message I propos'd to One of the Officers to whom I had Letters, went in and Soon I had an Officer to wait on Me to the Governor Genl. Gage, who rec'd none with More kindness and Attention than I expected and pritty Soon an Aged Tall Stately Looking Officer Major Pitcairn who commanded the party that went out and had the Battle at Lexington, he was Soon Engaged in a very Grave Scotte's Accent to impress Me with the belief that the Americans fired first and he really Succeeded to impress me with the belief that he really *thought* that was the Case and I had my doubts till I saw Many Evidences to the Contrary—the Interview continu'd till about Ten O'Clock when the Govt Sent an Officer as a Gard and Guide to My friends where I lodged, proposing an Other Meeting in the Morning, when I again waited on him, he Made Me to believe that he Knew More of the disposition and doings of Congress then Sitting at Philadelphia than I had heard of, Even that it was in Contemplation if not dissided on, to declare Independance &c &c. I then went to the Admirals and found rather a Cool Reception and rec'd from him Information he had a complaint that My Brother was Active in Burning the Gaspee &c but as my principals disavowed any Such proceeding he was so kind as to Send an Officer with Me to take a Barge and See him, I found that he was in The Ships Gunroom when he came on deck he was as glad to See Me as ever he was and Mannifested his feelings by his Tears of Joy after some time he shew Me a letter he has began Stating his Business Shewing his Suffering by Detention Stating the Number of Vessels and of the hands and the Various Occupations in Life and Solisiting relief, it hapend well for me and him that I knew nothing of his being concern'd in the Burning of the Gaspe or that he was charg'd with it. his Letter was handed to the Admiral at his Quarters, and having som Acquaintance with Judge Oliver and knowing he was of the Court of Commissioners Specialty Appointed to Investigate the Case of Burning the Gaspe I went to See him and Converse with him on the subject, I met with him and related my Business and the reception I met with by Admiral Graves, he seem'd to Antisipate my further Solisitation Saying Mr Brown, the Admiral can do nothing with thy Brother, It is true there was named before the Court 5 John Brown some black & Some White, but no person was so Identified as to Enable the Court to Issue any prossess and on Considering the Subject we were United in Judgment that nothing further could be done and I will Speak to the Admiral if you wish" Thou may Judge of my feelings and Reply when I went next to the Admiral he appeared in quite a different State and very Kindly Sent an Officer with Me in his Barge^d to bring my Brother on Shore and he Sold the packett Load of flour and the Same was Soon Settld with Our friend and Agent Henry Lloyd and we came home by Land together well, Our General Assembly being sitting we were call'd upon to Attend the Genl Assembly where we was interogated about all that we Saw & heard, and Information Given . . . but as I had never Committed the Circumstances to Writing before Tho have Often Related them to my friends as Ocations have Occurd. I thought I would thus record them. I was the first Man that enterd Boston after the Lexicon Battle, Many Other Occurances might be Added to the history of facts. Boston People as well as Officers &c were much down apprehending an attack from with Out, but the fashines, Brass 24 pounders and Other Extra Obstruptions on the Neck as I lead my Horse among and round about them would I thought render an attack on that Side very destructive to the Assailants.—. . .

Moses Brown Papers, (R. I. H. S.) v. 18, p. 60.

¹⁸Stiles, v. 1, p. 548.

¹⁹Public Records Office, Admiralty Secretary, In-Letters, April 1774-June 1775, v. 485, pp. 245-7. (Transcripts in the Library of Congress.)

²⁰Wallace's anonymous informant wrote: . . . "Messrs — [Brown] are Moderate men, Moses is meek & recommends moderation but his advice is ridiculed by the warm Partisans.—" *Ibid.*

Providence, June 7th, 1775

"Dear Brother I Expected to have Seen You Ere I Determin'd on Suing Capt. Wallace, but on findg. that my not prosecuting him was one argument made use of against me & indeed all the Brothers that we are Toreys, and that we Were in League &, with Genl. Gage & Consequently with Capt. Wallace & others under him, & I haveing allways Determin'd to prosecute Either here or in London thought best to do it here without Further Delay & Accordy did Send a Writt in Ten Thousand pounds LMony [lawful money] Dammages to the Sherriff off [sic] Newport yesterday by Capt. Power returnable to our December Court which I hope will be Searved this Day,

What the Event may prove Time will bring Forth but I thought best to Acquaint You of it by Friend Jn^o. as he Expects you'll be in Newport tomorrow

I have Desired the Sherriff to take [George] Rome for Bail if offered, but if he Should be Committed, I fear he will be Resqued, prehaps it may be necessary to Indeaavor to Git an order from the Court to Remove him from that Jail in case he chuses Reather to be committed then to procure Bail I am Your Affectionate Brother with Hartey thanks for Your Late unspeakable Brotherly Love and Friendship towards me.

J^{no} Brown

Moses Brown Papers (R. I. H. S.) v. 2, p. 34.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 35.

Providence June 21st, 1775

"Dr. Brother

Your kind favour of the 16th Inst is before me I am Really Sorry that my taking out a Writt against Capt. Wallace Should be so Disagreeable to your Centiments. if I am not much mistacon I Said in your presents more then once that I was Determined to take the Law of him Either here or in England, and Should have done it sooner had I have Determined which would Likely have proved the most to my Interest, but the more I thought of it the more Convinced I was that he ought to be sewd [sued] here, and that his being Obloiged to give Bale in so large a Sum of Money would take off [f] so much of his Haughtey Beheaver when he Considered that the more he Oppressed the Colony or its Inhabitants, the Larger the Sum would be Recoverd against him and if it should have this Effect (which I think Very Likely it would) in Lue of the Disadvantage which you Seem to fear mought in Consequence theirow arise to my and my Friends Interest. it would so far bring him to his thoughts as to allter his Tirannical Measures, Espetially when he considered that whatever was Recoverd would be wholly out of his own Estate & what he should take without Law or Right, would not be of advantage to him, as his Estate at Home (tho he Could not be tacon here) would be Subject for the payment theirow with Dammages, I have not the Least Doubt but that the Admiral Expected I should have made a Demand of Wallace for his unpresedented Conduct towards me, or he would not have Desired me in so perticuler a Manner as he Did on our part^s to meet Capt. Wallace in the Most Friendly manner & that we Should Settle the Matter in the best manner possible which I had Determined to do my part towards but after hearing of his Repeated threats and knowg. that aney other procedure with him but Such as the Laws would worrent would be in Vain, took out the Writt as advised you, and am Really Sorry that it Could not have bin Searved being Convinced in my own mind that it would have had the Same Affect on him as Sewg. [suing] others of his Stamp haith heretofore had & when he was once shewn he was not Impregnable he would have Conducted him Self in Quite a Different Manner from what he has —

Did he not threaten Fire & Devastation to the Town of Newport if they offered to Lift their hands in favr. of the Rebbils, as he calls them, but in Lue of this have not their bin a number of men Inlisted their for the army among which he well Knew was a Number of his Men who had Left his Ship why had he not

fired on the Town till he had them Returnd to him, did not the people Rise & take away a Quantity of Flour which had bin purchased for him & what was the Consequence why in Lue of making him wor[s]e it Struck him with Such Fear and Consternation that he in Lue of ordering the Ships to Fire was, I am told Compeasant to the Sherrif when he made him Self known on the Ocation at [George] Romes and Redely Agreed that the Flour Should be Returnd and that his Mareens Should Immediately Return on bord in order to Quiat the Town, as to our Ingaugement to the Admral I hartely wish you was Clear of it, but as to my Self its but of Little Consequence as I am Contious that I have not gone Counter thei[r]to the Incorageing the packetts to be Retacon I did & Still think I had a Just Right so to do, as it was only by the arbetary hand of Wallace they were kep, Mr. Lloyd has wrote me 2 or 3 Letter wherein he said that the Admaril was Supprised that the packetts was not Delivrd up, I Could not Expect to Act Such a part with Wallace after hearing from Saml. Starbuck & others of the threats from him & his Officers concern[ing] me, as would by any means Influence him to Suffer my Vessils to pass unmelested when he was stoping Every other persons property without Distinction; Therefore I was in hopes by haveing Vessils Cruseing off [shore] that my Vessills as well as others might be made Acquainted with the State of the Times & by that means not Run Directly in to the hands of our Innemys

You See by Genl. Gauges proclimation that he makes no Distinction of persons Accept[ing]. Two Gentlemen, and that all others is to be Deemed Equilly Guilty who Doeth not forth with Drop the American Cause Either by bareing Arms or in any Manner whatever Contributing towards the Assistance or Supplying the provincial Troops, by this Can it be Expected that any whoes Religius principles Doeth not Shield them, can Conduct [themselves] in Such a manner as not to be Sencurable by the Troops from home in Case of their Success, for my part I am so Clear in opinion that the Measures now taking to Force America are Rong that its out of my power to Restrain my Self from wishing Success to the Country in which I was Born, and alltho the measures pursuing are not agreeable to my advice to our Assembly Soone after I Came hoo[m]e which I am now more then then if possible Convinced would have bin Infinitely better then to have fought it out, I Can not Rest a Quiet Spectator without Feeling for my own & Neighbour's Interest & am Really of the Opinion that our Navigation will not be in so rait Danger if we Indeavour to provent the Cruseing of the packetts to take them & keep Vessills of our own out to advise them how to Steere Clear as it otherwise would be, but as to this the General Assembly having orderd Two Vessills to be Employd in this Service, I hope I shall give you no farther uneseyness on this head Tho I suppose you'll agree that it would be Right in me to Git advice if possible to my Vessills as they Come in to keep out of the hands of the men of warr, but this will be Very Difficult as Long as they have Armed Vessills Cruseing for them and Indeed I Cant Expect persons to be off Luk[s] out for our Vessills as they Come in, with out being able to Defend them Selves if attacked by the Packett armed by the men of warr, I am Very Sorry the Writ Should have prevented your doing our mutual Friend Jn^o Waterman all the Service in your Power, but weither any thing you Could have Said to so Savage a person as Wallace would have bin of advantage to Waterman I Can't Say, but by his brutal beheaver with the Friends on bord Cap^t Dexters Sloop in Detaining them so long onbord, your application would have bin Fruitless, thus much I can tell you that Cap^t. Waterman Sent me his perticular thanks by Cozen Jere: Brown on Acct. of the Packetts being Retacon, she being the same that tuk him & brot him in to the man of warr. I am of the opinion that Wallace will Let Waterman Leave the Fleet as he passes by Nantuckett & this on Acct. of the advertisement in the paper of the Contentenel Congress adviseing no provisions to be supplyd to the Island of Nantuckett only from the Massachusetts, Suppose you have heard of Wallace Ayscough & the Tenders all going out of Newport the Day before yesterday with Severil

prizes. I am Shure I never ought to forgit your Friendship & Goodness in what you did for my Redemption and am so much Obliged & Indebted to you therefor, that perhaps I may never have it in my power to Discharge the Least part of Said Debt, & I assure you it Gives me pain that you should Suppose that Either your Carrector or Fortin may in the Least Suffer on my Acct.

As to Ransomes in Warr Times I am apt to think they are of a Different Nature by Law from an Obligation given in my Scituation when onbord the man of warr, but Let this be as it may if our Estates are all to be forfeited in Case of Conquest it matters not so much, but this I do not Expect will Ever Happen neither that yours or any part there of will be Ever Demanded on acct of Said Obligations

as to your Saying before the Town or Committee the Terms on Which I was Dismissed or writ[s] the Admiral any thing on said head, I do not See to be necessary but if you think other wise I will Chearfully Submitt to your better Judgment & be perfectly Satisfied with your Conduct therein, as to my bareing arms my Self I do not Expect to do it only in my own defense or if this Town Should be attacked I Shall in Either of these Case's most Certinly Defend the Same to the utmost of my powers

I am much obliged for your advice in Every perticular & shall take it kind at all times when you or any of your Friends are in Town that you'll make as Free at my House as tho at your own, I am your

Affectionate Brother
John Brown

[In Moses Brown's hand]

Brother John
21st 6th mo 1775

P S I Should have bin Glad of an oppertunity to have Consulted you about the writt before I tuk it out but your being for Sum time together about that time from home prevented

Moses Brown Papers (R. I. H. S.) v. 2, p. 36.

²⁴John R. Bartlett, ed. *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island . . .* (Providence, 1856-1865) v. 7, p. 319.

²⁵*The Journals of Each Provincial Congress of Massachusetts in 1774 and 1775 . . .* (Boston, 1838) p. 170.

²⁶It had been propos'd before I went to Boston by my respected friend Stephen Hopkins. If my Brother could not get his Liberty without to make an Exchange of Prisoners under an Expectation that my Brothers Detension would be on Acct. of his buying the provisions for the use of the Troops, but when he [John] came to give an Acct. of the matter himself it did not appear so, but that he had purchased the Pork & Flour he was Apply'd to for, on Acct. of the Colony, Owing partly to the Account of his Appointment geting to Newport before he had Oppertunity and to the Man of War, by which the Transportation would be Obstructed &c^a. This Circumstance rendered his Dismission much Easier. Nothing but necessity could have Induced him or his friends to have Ask'd so great a favor from a Publick Body on account of a private individual, as the Idea of his being Confind as a publick person ceased upon his own Claim of the Flour, however the very respectful manner in which the Congress treated that Matter upon the footing of Judge Hopkins Letter was very Acceptable and will not fail to meritt my best Endeavors as well as that of the family, for a happy Deliverance of your province and this Country from its present Distress.

Moses Brown Papers (R. I. H. S.) v. 2, p. 32.

[to be continued]

NEWS-NOTES

Several additions to the furnishings of John Brown House have been recently made. Mr. and Mrs. Donald E. Jackson gave a crystal chandelier, that has been installed in the dining room. Mrs. John O. Ames of Sharon, Vermont, presented the Society three eighteenth century mirrors. All these gifts enhance the beauty of John Brown House.

* * *

The floors of the office, dining room, parlors, first and second floor halls, as well as the stairs, have been sanded and treated with a wax finish. The Society would appreciate gifts of Oriental rugs to protect the finish and to give the proper atmosphere to the house. The kitchen chairs that were so sadly out of place in the parlors have been replaced by seventy-five folding chairs with velour seats and backs.

* * *

Several books of interest to Rhode Islanders are in the process of publication. Mr. Roelker and Miss Jeannette D. Black are collaborating on *Letters of a Revolutionary War Chaplain, Ebenezer David, 1775-1778*; the City of Providence has made an appropriation to enable Rhode Island Historical Society to publish a cumulated index compiled by Richard LeBaron Bowen of the twenty-one volumes of *The Early Records of the Town of Providence*; Bernhard Knollenberg is editing the letters of Samuel Ward, which the Society is sponsoring, the correspondence having been extracted from the Ward papers, purchased in 1945; Mr. Clarkson A. Collins, 3rd, and Mr. Roelker have written *One Hundred Fifty Years of Providence Washington Insurance Co., 1779-1949*; John Alden is working on a bibliography of Rhode Island printing from its inception through the year 1800. Bradford E. Swan's *Gregory Dexter of Old and New England* has been issued as the third of the Printer's Valhalla series.

* * *

A large oil painting of Mrs. Malcolm G. Chace and her three daughters, painted by Wilfred Gabriel DeGlehn, A. R. A., hangs at present in the museum. It is the gift of Mr. Malcolm G. Chace.

* * *

Miss Sarah Dyer Barnes has given the Society a number of manuscript items relating to the well-known Dyer family of Rhode Island. They include a manuscript account book covering the years 1792-

1800, a photostatic copy of a plan of the Charles Dyer burying ground in Cranston, the first interment in which was made in 1726, and a number of copies of Dyer deeds and wills.

* * *

On January 4 the exhibition of dolls from the collection of Mrs. Edward L. Singsen opened in the museum. So much interest in the collection was shown that the Society requested Mrs. Singsen to extend the period of the exhibition until April 1. Early lighting equipment from the collection of Mrs. William C. H. Brand will be on display in the museum during April and May.

* * *

At a recent meeting of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Richard LeBaron Bowen and Edmund S. Morgan, Professor of Colonial History at Brown University, were elected corresponding members.

* * *

The success of the Western Rhode Island Civic Historical Society during the three and one-half years of its existence is noteworthy. The society was organized July 10, 1945, by about thirty persons who responded to an invitation of Miss Mildred E. Bassett, professor of history at the Rhode Island College of Education, to meet in the Community House at North Scituate. Meetings have since been held on the fourth Tuesday evening of each month, except during the winter, at eight of the towns of western and north-western Rhode Island.

After the business meeting and a talk by a guest speaker, the members enjoy a social hour. The enthusiastic group has already secured a great many articles of historical interest, and the members, hoping to acquire an old house for a museum, are raising a fund for its maintenance. Attendance at meetings has steadily increased, and as many as two hundred fifty attend the meetings. Membership in the society now totals over 500.

It is believed by those familiar with the work of the organization that the following reasons account for its success: (1) meetings are held in different localities rather than at the same place each month, (2) the program centers around local history, (3) there is no competing organization, (4) summer residents, as well as newcomers, have cooperated with the natives of the locality, (5) the good work of the first president, Clarence T. Murdock, has been continued by the second, Stanley S. Gairloch.

C. P. M.

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEW MEMBERS

December 1, 1948 — February 28, 1949

Rev. Joseph U. Bergkamp, O.P.	Dr. Barnaby C. Keeney
Mrs. Clarence E. Bird	Mr. Robert W. Kenyon
Mr. Richard LeB. Bowen, Jr. Cambridge, Mass.	Mr. John T. Nightingale Boston, Mass.
Mr. Don C. Brewer	Dr. William J. O'Connell
Miss Harriet G. Chase	Dr. William S. Powell Raleigh, N. C.
Mr. William George Church	Mr. James F. Reilly
Mr. Robert N. Cool	Mr. Thomas H. Roberts
Dr. Guy H. Dodge	Mr. A. H. Roitman Cranston, R. I.
Miss Mary C. Eaton	Mr. A. Louis Rosenstein East Providence, R. I.
Mr. John English	Mr. Edwin J. Tetlow
Mr. Charles W. Farnham Harmony, R. I.	Mrs. Richmond Viall, Jr.
Mr. Martin B. Horan Woonsocket, R. I.	Miss Edith Wetmore Newport, R. I.
Mr. Elmer H. Hussey	Mr. A. Butler Williams Hon. Ellis L. Yatman
Mr. F. Ellis Jackson	
Mr. Robert E. Jacobson	
Mr. David A. Jonah East Greenwich, R. I.	

LIBRARY HOURS

Mon. through Fri. . . . 9:00 to 5:00
Tuesday evening 7:00 to 9:00
Sunday afternoon 3:00 to 5:00

LECTURE

Wednesday, April 13, 1949 . . . 8:15 p. m.
MODERN RHODE ISLAND INVENTORS
THOMAS ALLEN JENCKES, *Esquire*

EXHIBITION

April and May
EARLY LIGHTING EQUIPMENT
from the collection of Mrs. William C. H. Brand