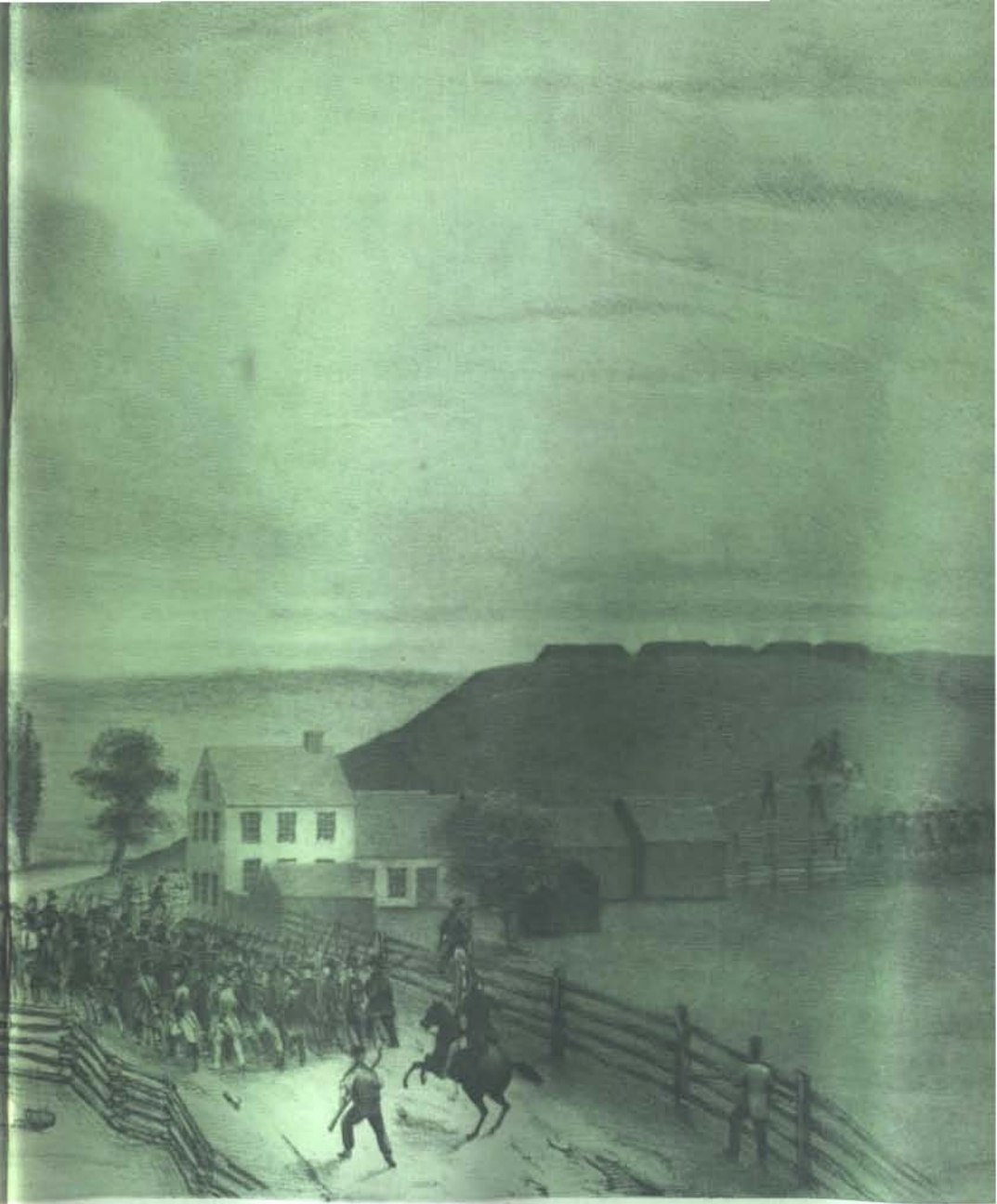


*Drawn by H. Lord Prisoner of War*

*Thayer & Co. Lithography Boston*

THE CAPTURE OF ACOTE HILL AND THE SACKING OF THE VILLAGE OF CHEPATCHET  
BY THE  
BRAVE RHODE ISLAND ALGERINES, under the Command of the GALLANT COLONEL BROWN,  
ON THE 28<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 1842.

*Original Lithograph in The Rhode Island Historical Society.*



# RHODE ISLAND HISTORY

VOL. 17, NO. 4

OCTOBER, 1958

PUBLISHED BY THE RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
52 POWER STREET, PROVIDENCE 6, RHODE ISLAND

ALBERT E. LOWNES, *President*  
FRANK L. HINGCLEY, JR., *Secretary*

NATHANIEL M. VOSE, JR., *Treasurer*  
CLIFFORD P. MONAHAN, *Director*

CLARKSON A. COLLINS, 3RD, *Librarian*

*The Rhode Island Historical Society assumes no responsibility  
for the statements or the opinions of contributors.*

ISSUED QUARTERLY AT PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND  
(Second-class postage paid at Providence, Rhode Island)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE DISENCHANTMENT OF THOMAS W. DORR . . . . .	97
by Chilton Williamson	
EARLY MUSIC IN RHODE ISLAND CHURCHES 1744-1836 . . . . .	108
IV. Music in Beneficent Congregational Church and the Richmond Street Congregational Church	
by William Dinneen	
BOOK REVIEW . . . . .	119
NEW MEMBERS . . . . .	121
LECTURES . . . . .	121
CATALOG OF THE RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY	
FURNITURE COLLECTION . . . . .	
by Ralph E. Carpenter, Jr.	
	122

# RHODE ISLAND HISTORY

VOL. 17

OCTOBER, 1958

NO. 4

## THE DISENCHANTMENT OF THOMAS W. DORR

by CHILTON WILLIAMSON

Department of History, Barnard College

"WHATEVER MR. DORR DOES, he does from principle."<sup>1</sup> In view of what can be learned about Thomas W. Dorr from his correspondence, this was a remarkably acute observation, the more so because it emanated from one of his mortal political enemies, the conservative Democratic leader and ex-Governor of Rhode Island, James Fenner.

Few of Dorr's political opponents were willing to concede that he had acted from intellectual conviction in the events leading to the famous Dorr War in 1842, preferring to believe that this scion of the Providence aristocracy sought compensation in a dramatic political career for his failure to build a profitable and prestigious practice of law. Dorr was understandably sensitive to this interpretation of his political activities, protesting that an average income of \$4500 was more than enough to keep him from having to sponge on his relatives as his enemies insinuated he did.<sup>2</sup>

What troubled Dorr during the eighteen thirties and early forties was not money matters nor a lustreless career before the bar but, as James Fenner's statement implied, injustice, particularly political injustice. By the time he had become a mature young man, Dorr was satisfied that he knew what political injustice was and how it could be remedied. Believing as he did in those ideas which had helped to remake American and French society in the eighteenth century and British society in the nineteenth, he was convinced that men, irrespective of race, color or class were good rather than evil,

<sup>1</sup>Brown University, Thomas W. Dorr Papers, IV, p. 108. At the John Hay Library, Mr. John R. T. Ettliger was particularly helpful.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, V, p. 22.

reasonable rather than unreasonable. If this were so, men by their very nature were capable of exercising, without grief to themselves or to society at large, an extensive number of the most significant civil and political rights. Institutions which could not be reconciled with this philosophy of equal rights would have to go, by reform if possible, by revolution if necessary. Although an aggrieved majority could do as it pleased, what it would please to do would be synonymous with the good. To describe Dorr's thought in such simplistic terms does injustice to the considerable sophistication and breadth of learning he commanded when at the height of his powers. Nevertheless, in broad outlines, it indicates his basic principles.

Why, as distinct from how, Dorr came to these conclusions is difficult, perhaps impossible to determine. As an old friend once said, by inheritance and upbringing, he was a man whose family "and connections are of the first respectability both in Providence and New York."<sup>3</sup> His father had retired to Providence from Massachusetts after a long and distinguished career in the China trade.<sup>4</sup> The Dorr town house, said to be inspired by that of the English poet, Alexander Pope, was something of a local showplace. Thomas' education at Philips Exeter and at Harvard did not particularly prepare him for the life of a reformer. His study of law under the tutelage of Chancellor James Kent of New York introduced him to the most distinguished defender of a freehold qualification to be found anywhere in the United States.<sup>5</sup>

Judging from the record, the decisive influences on Dorr's political thought were his devotion to the memory of Roger Williams as a founder of Rhode Island democracy, and to the philosophy of Thomas Jefferson; the example of the American and French revolutions, the waxing of reform sentiment in France and Britain which led to the July Revolution in Paris of 1830 and the passage of the British Reform bill in 1832. He wrote his mother, on the occasion of the flight of the last of the Bourbon kings of France, Charles X, that the French blood which flowed in their veins entitled them to express sympathy for the defenders of freedom in France and "to

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, I, p. 30.

<sup>4</sup>Essex Institute, *Historical Collections* LXVIII, (1942), pp. 158-175.

<sup>5</sup>See the summary account of his life, Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone (eds.), *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1928-1936), 20 vols., V, pp. 381-382.

hail the glorious result of the late Revolution."<sup>6</sup> As might be expected, he became active in a number of reform movements, particularly antislavery. He numbered among his friends and correspondents the "labor leader," Seth Luther; the poet, John Greenleaf Whittier; the historian, George Bancroft; the writer and reformer, Alexander H. Everett; the British reformer, Joseph Sturge; and after switching from the Whig to the Democratic party in 1837, Robert Rantoul, John L. O'Sullivan, Orestes A. Brownson as well as other spokesmen of the Loco Foco wing of the Democratic party.<sup>7</sup>

With these principles and associations Dorr was bound to affiliate sooner or later with reformers in Rhode Island who began in the eighteen thirties to agitate for reform of the suffrage and of representation, both of which had remained fundamentally unchanged since the eighteenth century. During the first half of the nineteenth century, Rhode Island underwent changes not unlike those which had transformed Britain somewhat earlier, with industrialization being the cause in both instances. A not indefensible plan of suffrage and representation in a predominantly agricultural age became increasingly indefensible in the light of changing ideas about government, to say nothing of changes in the character of the people and shifts in centers of population. That Rhode Island should be, as late as 1840, the home of a freehold qualification for voting and of "rotten boroughs" became in Dorr's mind the very antithesis of democracy and the major impediment to progress, both material and moral, in the state.<sup>8</sup> As he wrote the corresponding secretary of

<sup>6</sup>Dorr Papers, I, p. 59.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, III, pp. 1-2, *et. seq.*

<sup>8</sup>The extent of unenfranchisement of adult males in Rhode Island by the freehold qualification is extremely difficult to determine. Aside from complications involved in meeting residency and citizenship tests, tax lists available in The Rhode Island Historical Society are of very limited value because of the absence of a tax on polls. The proportion of freeholders among males assessed for taxes is so high, 76% in Providence, as to indicate that in the absence of a poll tax and indeed taxation of the poor as a whole, a sizable proportion of males were not paying taxes. See *Lists of Persons Assessed in the City Tax of Sixty-Five Thousand Dollars* (Providence, 1840). A copy of this volume is most easily available in The Rhode Island Historical Society. Material available in the Archive Room of the State Capitol of Rhode Island requires the most careful correlation with other material to be at all reliable. A Providence petition of 1829 estimated that three fifths of the adult males of Rhode Island were not freeholders. See Archive Room, State Capitol, *Petitions Not Granted*, May 1829. See also C. Williamson, "Rhode Island Suffrage Since the Dorr War," *New England Quarterly* (XXVIII, Number 1, March 1955), pp. 34-50.

the Rhode Island Suffrage Association, on May 4, 1841:

It is not only the *Right* but the *Duty* of those now on the stage of action to change the laws and institutions of government, to keep pace with the progress of knowledge, the light of science, and the amelioration of the condition of society. Nothing is to be considered unchangeable but the inherent and inalienable rights of man.<sup>9</sup>

Initially Dorr did not have in mind a particularly radical program. Indeed, he did not agree with critics of the British Reform Act of 1832 when they expressed disapproval that the bill had not been more democratic and hinted that perhaps what Britain needed was a revolution. The poor, Dorr wrote, might be led to think that they could help themselves "without waiting for the slow process of legislation."<sup>10</sup> Until about 1840 Dorr thought wholly in terms of political rather than revolutionary activity to reform the suffrage by admitting all adult male citizens to the vote and to reform representation by giving Providence and other commercial and manufacturing centers a larger voice in government. His aims at this time were supported by many Whigs, leading clergymen in and out of Providence, by the President of Brown University, Francis Wayland, as well as by persons bearing the proud name of Brown.<sup>11</sup> The Constitutional Party with which he affiliated came into existence in 1834 to agitate the cause of reform. So conservative were its proposals that they were later made the basis of the Constitution drafted by his political enemies in 1842. At one time a friend of Dorr's complained to him that their intentions were being misrepresented because some think "our object is unrestricted, unqualified universal suffrage" and are "completely terror-struck."<sup>12</sup>

Despite its efforts at a nonpartisan approach to the problem, the Constitutional Party got nowhere. During the exciting presidential campaign of 1840, reformism was lost sight of so completely as to bring about the party's demise. It was, however, soon superseded by a new organization, the Rhode Island Suffrage Association, which differed considerably from its predecessor. It was distinctly *Loco*

<sup>9</sup>Dorr Papers, III, p. 55.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, I, p. 79.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, I, pp. 92, 94, 99, 137; II, 141, 241, 287. Archive Room, State Capitol, Petitions Not Granted, 1829, "Petition of Citizens and Freeholders of the Town of Providence."

<sup>12</sup>Dorr Papers, II, p. 21.

*Foco* in its approach to reform, sought to identify itself where possible with the Democratic party, advocated universal manhood suffrage and endeavored to tie its purely political objectives to criticism of the "money power" in a way reminiscent of Jackson's war against the Second Bank of the United States. David Henshaw, a Massachusetts Democratic leader, wrote Dorr that Rhode Island reformers were opposed by banks and other corporations which could make and unmake voters by a transfer of landed property so as to control a majority of legal voters. "In truth," he concluded, "Rhode Island owes her subjection to an Aristocracy of corporations. . . ." <sup>13</sup>

Reform was becoming more radical and so was Thomas W. Dorr. "I am a democrat," wrote Dorr in 1842, "and believe that nothing but the loss of my faculties can ever separate me from the faith and practice of democracy."<sup>14</sup> The responsibility for the conversion of a moderate movement into a radical, even a revolutionary one, rests in part upon anti-reform Democrats, such as James Fenner, and Whigs who felt as he did. The defenders of the *status quo* produced in 1841 a constitution which fell far short of the demands of reformers who had by this time drafted their own constitution. It was drawn up by an extra-legal, specially elected convention. During the elections for this convention suffrage reformers made efforts to put into practice their theory that means could be found to ascertain majority opinion, and that the majority could write a constitution and create a new government based upon reform principles without first securing the consent of the existing government. In the real world of politics this proved more difficult than had been believed. Historians are still debating just what the majority willed in Rhode Island in the spring, summer and fall of 1841 which witnessed the writing of two, strongly contrasted constitutions for the state. Suffice it to say, acting upon the theory that *their* majority could do as it pleased, Dorr and his associates set to work to bring a new government under their constitution into existence.<sup>15</sup>

To be able to do so seemed perfectly feasible in the light of the situation as the Dorrists saw it. In the first place, the Democratic

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, III, p. 40.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, V, p. 38.

<sup>15</sup>Arthur M. Mowry, *The Dorr War or the Constitutional Struggle in Rhode Island* (Providence, 1901), pp. 107-165.

party in the northern and western part of the nation was eager to support the cause of Rhode Island democracy by pinning the undemocratic label upon the Whigs as a part of their effort to make a recovery at the polls next election time. Secondly, precedents existed or were thought to exist in the history of Michigan and Maryland for the displacement of an existing government by another through the device of an extra-legal election and constitutional convention.<sup>16</sup> They hoped it might even be possible to persuade the Whig president, John Tyler, of the validity of such proceedings. Lastly, Dorr and other supporters of the People's Constitution, as the reformers' instrument of government was called, had a profound, and for a time, unshakable faith in the people. A cause so inseparably connected with the greatest good for the greatest number, as Dorr maintained, could not but gain support at the polls, and even at the barricades, of the people in whose name and for whose good they acted.

Dorr was particularly convinced that this was so. Letters addressed to him both before and after the event encouraged him in this belief. "Our men," wrote four supporters, "are all young, active, ambitious, determined; they will never be found wanting in their duty to their fellow men should their services be required." Another correspondent, a Negro, demonstrated a revolutionary temper when he wrote Dorr that a war for the rights of man should not be confined merely to Rhode Island but should be fought everywhere. Nicholas Brown of Providence claimed that just as France was called "Young France" after the citizen king was placed on the throne in 1830, Rhode Island in time would be known as "Young Rhode Island."<sup>17</sup>

The success of the daring effort to displace the existing government which ensued in 1842, first by election and then by force, depended to a very great degree upon whether Dorr and his associates had sized up the situation as it actually was or as they wanted to believe it was. On all scores the Dorrists' astuteness was disproven and they were defeated.

The first indication that Dorr's strategy did not square with the facts was the failure of democrats everywhere to close ranks behind him. In Rhode Island rural democrats looked upon the suffrage movement as one to increase the power of urban areas with their

<sup>16</sup>*Daily Express* (extra), Providence, April 17, 1842.

<sup>17</sup>Dorr Papers, I, p. 106; IV, pp. 39, 101.

entrepreneurial and laboring classes at the expense of the farming interests. "We have suffered," wrote a friend of Dorr, "more from the treacherous conduct of such Democrats as James Fenner . . . than from all other sources."<sup>18</sup> Nationally, the Democratic party was divided upon the merits of Dorr theory and practice. In particular, the southern wing of the party suspected a link between the antislavery movement and Dorrism. Besides, it feared that to condone revolution in Rhode Island would set a bad example for extreme abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison and for the slaves.<sup>19</sup>

Whigs, among them Daniel Webster and Francis Wayland, sympathized with the desire to liberalize the suffrage but repudiated Dorr's methods. Some years after the event, Wayland justified his position, saying that although he recognized that sovereign power resided in the people he would not recognize that this power was unlimited and absolute, or that in effect a majority of the people could do as it pleased. He claimed to be a democrat, but a conservative one in the tradition of Jefferson, Washington, and Madison.<sup>20</sup> Comparable reasoning dictated President Tyler's refusal to promise Federal non-intervention if the opponents of Dorr should ask him to provide protection against a domestic insurrection. About all that could be depended upon outside the state would be the moral support of the Loco Foco Democrats and the vociferous, perhaps material support of New York's Tammany Hall and its leader, Mike Walsh.

In Dorr's mind, only one appeal was left, a recourse to arms. Thus the people of Rhode Island would be aroused to defend their rights, win the moral and perhaps material support of the nation and make the truth prevail. Knowing full well that their son was now in a highly emotional state, Dorr's parents, Sullivan and Lydia, implored him in April of 1842 to withdraw from a course of action which would as they wrote, "arouse passions which could not be allayed, produce civil strife which would be attended by bloodshed and murder," thus rendering miserable their remaining years on earth. They beseeched him to pause before he passed the Rubicon.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, IV, p. 130.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, IV, pp. 50, 51, 55.

<sup>20</sup>Brown University, Francis Wayland Papers, File 1843-1850, Wayland to J. Davis, Sept. 29, 1845.

<sup>21</sup>Dorr Papers, IV, p. 17.

Perhaps the most intelligent advice tendered him before he did cross the Rubicon, was that of his brother, Henry C. Dorr, who at this time was practicing law in the city of New York. Sensing the seriousness of the approaching crisis in Rhode Island he wrote Thomas in January of 1842, telling him that he was wrong on grounds of principle and of expediency.<sup>22</sup> In the first place, Henry said, he had not yet taken the prudent step of getting a favorable opinion upon the legality of his plan of action from an eminent constitutional authority as, say, John C. Calhoun. Secondly, the movement was bound to be crushed either at the polls or by force. Believing that Rhode Islanders, with the exception of those in Providence and Newport who might easily be moved to riot, were fundamentally indifferent to what happened, Dorr's brother told him that he did not think they could be roused in opposition to constitutional authorities and that the movement would, as a result, fail as miserably as had the Chartist movement in Great Britain.

What was needed, said Henry, was the emergence of a leader like Daniel O'Connell of Ireland who had awakened his people and created public opinion where, as in contemporary Rhode Island, none as yet really existed. In his view, the majority to which Dorr was appealing, a majority fanatically dedicated to reform either by the ballot box or the cartridge box, was non-existent.

Subsequent events demonstrated the correctness of his brother's views.

The people of Rhode Island turned out to be composed of such antithetical elements as Catholics and Protestants, natives and foreign-born, Whigs and Democrats, rural and urban folk, few of whom were revolutionaries by temperament or convinced that further agitation was desirable in the light of the severity of the crisis and the willingness since February 1842 of the anti-Dorr elements to concede much. "Who will fight," said one Dorrite, "for *any* form when the substance [the vote for native-born citizens] can be gained by peace?"<sup>23</sup>

Dorr, however, was unwilling to retreat an inch from the position he had taken, and was now in a frame of mind to throw caution to the winds. With about two hundred followers he attempted to storm

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, III, p. 76.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, IV, p. 87.

the Providence Arsenal on the night of May 17, and when this failed he tried to rally Rhode Islanders to his cause with the help of a band of Tammanyites and others at Acote Hill on June 28. Neither of these events was productive of that kind of mass support and enthusiasm which his own clouded view of the situation had no doubt led him to anticipate.<sup>24</sup>

Mass desertions from the cause followed these disasters. One correspondent wrote Dorr that his move against the arsenal had left him badly shaken if only because of its implications, that Dorr had acted rashly and indiscreetly to such an extent as to shake the writer's confidence in his sagacity.<sup>25</sup> Dorr acknowledged that the fiasco before the arsenal, when it proved impossible to fire the cannon, "was attributable to want of organization and sufficient preparation," but, he concluded, "let no one be discouraged by it. Our course is straight forward. We have truth and justice and the blessings of God, I trust, on our side."<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, his opponents controlled a government with the force of martial law as its most compelling sanction. Furthermore, it moved in September of 1842 to write a new constitution which would meet some, although not all, of the objectives of the reformers. In addition to conceding greater power to Providence in state affairs, the document rectified the suffrage grievance to the extent of abandoning the exclusive freehold qualification for voting in favor of admitting all male, native-born adult citizens of two years' residency to the vote, provided that they had in addition paid a tax of at least one dollar or met their militia responsibilities. For the foreign-born alone, the old freehold qualification was maintained, and was not to be abandoned until the ratification of the Bourne Amendment in 1887. Nativist sentiment proved to be as strong as reform sentiment itself.<sup>27</sup>

Dorr refused to accept this constitution, believing correctly that it was illiberal in its suffrage and other provisions. From his place of refuge in New Hampshire he advised his remaining supporters to boycott the special election held in November, 1842, to ratify the constitution. By acting upon his advice they rendered the protest vote

<sup>24</sup>Mowry, *op. cit.*, pp. 181-222.

<sup>25</sup>Dorr Papers, IV, p. 70.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, IV, p. 66.

<sup>27</sup>This constitution is printed in Mowry, *op. cit.*, pp. 367-389.

almost wholly innocuous. Sensing his mistake, Dorr advised his friends in December of 1842 to participate in the coming state elections of April, 1843, for the purpose of capturing the government under the new constitution. As before, Dorr was utterly convinced that the men for whose enfranchisement he had fought would turn out at the polls to vote against "law and order" Whigs and Democrats. As before, his enemies won the election.

Success for the "law and order" party in 1843 was far from being the result only of the inherent popularity of the party with the voters. Acting upon the theory that the end justified the means, Whigs and others employed all the arts of persuasion, intimidation, and even blackmail to increase the number of their voters or to decrease the number of Democratic electors. The necessity of paying the registry tax of \$1.00 disenfranchised many poor native-born citizens, the freehold qualification for the naturalized citizens rendered them a nonentity. Furthermore, a large number of voters, illegal and otherwise, were not given the opportunity to vote their convictions because as employees of Whig manufacturers or as tenants of Whig landlords they were threatened with loss of job or with eviction if they would not vote as they were told.<sup>28</sup> Such forms of intimidation had caused Blackstone, the eminent British jurist, to oppose a democratic suffrage because it would increase the power of wealth in elections.<sup>29</sup> Lastly, the militia qualification enabled Whigs to build a formidable block of votes because Whigs in large numbers had done military duty during the recent crisis.

Nevertheless, the extent of the victory for law and order came as a shock and disappointment to Dorr and his remaining adherents, particularly when they learned of the supine way in which many of the old suffrage party had voted as they were told or had sought favors from the Whigs before election. For the first time Dorr's intimates showed open disgust with the actions of the sovereign people in whose behalf so much had been ventured and so much been lost. One of them wrote Dorr that old suffrage party men had sold themselves like sheep and shown themselves to be corrupt and faithless. "If men will be bought," he exclaimed, "sell their rights

<sup>28</sup>Dorr Papers, V, pp. 70, 80, 88, 130; VII, F. L. Beckford to Dorr, April 10, 1843.

<sup>29</sup>C. Williamson, "American Suffrage and Sir William Blackstone," *Political Science Quarterly*, LXVIII, No. 4, December, 1953, pp. 552-557.

for the paltry consideration of dollars and short-lived smiles of wealthy nabobs, they deserve only to be slaves."<sup>30</sup>

Dorr's initial reaction was characteristically buoyant. He wrote on April 12 that though he was surprised by the extent of his enemies' victory, he did not despair. "The cause," he said, "is as true and as great as ever, and should inspire every man with renewed devotion, come what will."<sup>31</sup> By the twenty-seventh of that month, however, he began at last to show his own growing disillusionment with the people of Rhode Island. The party, he now maintained, had been so badly beaten that he could not say, as Francis I had said after the Battle of Pavia, that all was lost save honor. He continued bitterly:

Honor, patriotism, all the noble considerations which ought to animate a man contending for his just rights were cast away by a large part of our suffrage party. . . . If our party will not fight or vote, in God's name what will they do! . . . I think we could select from the whole lot a set of slavish, abject, poor-spirited creatures who would do credit to the serfdom of Russia, and who ought to be attached to the soil, and sold and transferred with it, in its various changes of ownership.<sup>32</sup>

In this profound state of mental depression Dorr returned to Rhode Island and surrendered to the authorities on October 31, 1843. Why he should have done so is not wholly clear from his correspondence. Possibly he hoped to secure from the courts a vindication of his constitutional position, possibly he hoped to achieve what John L. O'Sullivan had suggested previously might be the benefits of a voluntary surrender: namely, a recovery of his prestige and the sympathy of America.<sup>33</sup> If these were his motives, he was disappointed. In the trial which ensued in 1844 he was convicted of treason against the state and sentenced on June 20 to life imprisonment at hard labor.

In reflecting upon this turn of events, a friend bitterly described Dorr's betrayal, not so much by his principles as by his friends. "I almost lose my patience and philosophy at the same time and am almost ready to believe and say, that the mass of mankind are only fit to *work for and be governed by* the better classes."<sup>34</sup> Dorr was considered a tragic figure. He was to be pitied because he had been,

<sup>30</sup>Dorr Papers, F. L. Beckford to Dorr, VIII, April 2, 1843.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, VII, To W. S. Burgess, April 12, 1843.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, VII, To Aaron White, Jr., April 27, 1843.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, IV, pp. 98, 100, 107.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, VIII, Timothy Hawkins to Dorr, March 31, 1844.

as one friend said, "expelled and denounced by his first political associates, deserted and denounced by a large portion of the next, forsaken by friends, denounced by kindred, driven from his native state" and now seized and imprisoned.<sup>35</sup>

In the depth of his personal tragedy, Dorr was beyond the comforts of sympathy or the consolations of philosophy. After his conviction he provided a striking gloss upon the failure to achieve in his life time all for which he had stood. "Blessed are those," he said, "who expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed. . . ." <sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, VIII, Aaron White, Jr. to Dorr, February 19, 1844.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, VIII, To Walter S. Burgess, May 28, 1844.

## EARLY MUSIC IN RHODE ISLAND CHURCHES

### IV. Music in Beneficent Congregational Church and the Richmond Street Congregational Church

1744 — 1836

by WILLIAM DINNEEN

Professor of Music, Brown University

THE HISTORY of the fourth colonial church in Providence, Rhode Island, begins with a secession from the First Congregational Society in March, 1743, when a majority of the congregation led by Deacon Joseph Snow and including Joseph Snow, Jr., later minister of the new society, broke away from the leadership of Josiah Cotton and set up meetings on the west side of the Providence River.

Since they were a majority, the new group claimed to be the First Church, a claim difficult to sustain since both building and society were left with the members remaining with Mr. Cotton. The town called the new religious force the Second Church, or the West Side Church. It was also known as the Congregational Church of Christ on the West Side of the Salt River in Providence, and after its meetinghouse was erected, by May 29, 1744, we find it called the "New Light Edifice" or "Father Snow's Meetin' House."<sup>1</sup> The Beneficent Congregational Society was not chartered by the General Assembly until October, 1785, and the first reference to the Beneficent Congregational Church in print dates from 1798.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See Arthur E. Wilson, *Paddy Wilson's Meeting House*, Boston, 1950 (hereafter referred to as Wilson). Dr. Wilson, p. 49, adds that the terms Congregational and Presbyterian were also used interchangeably at this period.

<sup>2</sup>W. R. Staples, *Annals of the Town of Providence*, Providence, 1843, p. 452, and Wilson, p. 109.

By this time the Reverend Joseph Snow, Jr., had seceded a second time, on the occasion of the ordination of James Wilson as assistant in October, 1793, taking with him a majority of the church members. Since the majority of the Beneficent Congregational Society (as distinct from the Church) remained with Mr. Wilson, the second Snow move was generally known as the Richmond Street Church and its meetinghouse, built by August, 1795, as "Old Tin Top." To complicate matters further, the congregation kept the name Second Congregational Church in their records, and the town at large called them the Third Congregational Church and Society. Joseph Snow, Jr., died on April 10, 1803, sixty years after the original secession from Josiah Cotton.

The record of music connected with this long career and background is in some ways more unclear than involved. Joseph Snow, Jr., whatever his willingness to fight on principle over some points, maintained what amounted to a state of indifference to music. One might almost say that he was associated with music in spite of himself.

We may assume, to begin with, that the practice of lining out psalms was something he could not escape. The record shows that Deacon James Snow had this in charge along with Deacon James Wardwell. Deacons are not to be confused with musical enthusiasts without portfolio. One curious fact emerges in this connection: when William Billings of Boston was in Providence to conduct a singing school in 1774, Deacon Wardwell was one of his pupils. This singing school met at the original First Congregational Church and theoretically it should have been difficult if not impossible for Deacon Wardwell to attend since he was still excommunicated from that church along with all his fellow members, a condition which was not removed until 1783.<sup>3</sup>

The problem of singing by lining out as opposed to singing from notes became an issue in 1788. Joseph Snow, Jr., instead of solving this himself, resorted to the device of a church survey on the subject. The result, worthy of the wisdom of a Solomon, was that the congregation sang by the old method mornings and by book using notes in

<sup>3</sup>Wilson, pp. 243, 247. In 1774 "the pupil turned teacher and conducted a school on the third floor of the house of his wife's uncle, Daniel Snow, on Abbott Park, where the Plantations Club now is. 'He had sixty or seventy pupils, who besides paying their tuition, provided their own fuel and lights.' James Snow, his father-in-law, assisted here as he did in the lining out of the hymns."

the afternoons. The fifth and sixth points of the report noted that tunes would be dropped if there were complaints about any of them and a committee was appointed to watch this. Just two weeks earlier Thomas Jones, a leader in the church, had advertised in the *Providence Gazette* (Jan. 5, 1788):

Psalmody — The following Books on Church Music may be had of Thomas Jones, at his shop near the West End of the Great Bridge in this Town viz: Select Harmony: a collection of Hymn Tunes & Rudiments of Music by Andrew Law, A.B.

As Arthur Wilson very wisely observes, "The insistence in the report that not all the familiar tunes should be abandoned furnished protection against the fear lest Thomas Jones sabotage the situation with Andrew Law's hymn tunes."<sup>4</sup>

James Wilson, the second minister at Beneficent, arrived in Providence in 1791, after breaking with Wesley and Methodism in refusing to abide by a rule forbidding divinity students to marry. He was attracted to the Beneficent Church because Joseph Snow, Jr., was looking for an assistant to help with the ministry, but at the same time we get the impression that he found the church comparable to Christianity in the first century A.D. in its practices and that he missed the Methodist enthusiasm for singing.<sup>5</sup> Joseph Snow, Jr., had given the church some musical distinction by acquiring the largest bell in town, weighing 800 pounds and designated the "town bell," but this was apparently done without any real enthusiasm, because the Richmond Street Church managed without any bell at all until Thomas Williams, the third pastor, provided one out of his own resources in 1807.<sup>6</sup>

Joseph Snow, Jr., stands out even today as a challenging figure

<sup>4</sup>Wilson, p. 244. Andrew Law, Brown University A.B., 1775, was actually more compiler than composer. The reform was not completed until 1794, when the church voted to abandon the "parcelling out of tunes" and sing entirely from books (Wilson, p. 245). By this time Joseph Snow, Jr. and the more conservative church members had departed for Richmond Street.

<sup>5</sup>Wilson, p. 42. On page 190 we learn that the lack of instrumental music in the church had astonished him in 1791.

<sup>6</sup>Although the Richmond Street Church was dedicated on August 16, 1795, the building was not completed until 1807. After Joseph Snow, Jr. died on April 10, 1803, Joseph Cornell, a Baptist, succeeded in the ministry. Cornell's attempt to turn the church Baptist roused Joseph Snow's widow to maneuver Thomas Williams of Pomfret, Connecticut, into the position of minister in 1807. Joseph Cornell withdrew to establish the Pine Street or Second Baptist, now Central Baptist Church.

in the life of Providence, and indirectly he did a great deal for the musical life of the town through the secessions and divisions which marked his career, each of which ultimately provided opportunities in many areas. For example, he fostered the first Methodist sermons in Providence by welcoming Francis Asbury, and he also encouraged the Universalist movement by sponsoring John Murray in Providence. His successor at the Richmond Street Church was a Baptist, and the Richmond Street Church had a large part in starting Grace Episcopal and Westminster Congregational (Unitarian) churches.<sup>7</sup>

The turn of the century brought no new or startling changes in either the Beneficent or the Richmond Street church. Deacon Wardwell seems to have been in command musically at the first and Deacon Snow at the second. David Vinton, chairman of the music committee at *THE* First Congregational Church, was active as a retailer of music books, along with Moses Noyes and others such as William Wilkinson, who advertised Jacob French's *History of Harmony* for sale on January 1, 1803. Daniel Read's music collections and Oliver Holden's *Worcester Collection* were for sale in Providence, but whether there was any sale except for use at home is not known. John Geib, familiar as the builder of the organ at the First Congregational Church, advertised "Church and Chamber ORGANS, of every Size and Price" and "PIANO FORTES, grand and small Ditto, of different prices; also Barrel Organs." The copy in the *Providence Gazette* of January 14, 1804, continued with more assurance than any modern organ builder would dare:

His Church and Chamber Organs he warrants for Life, Piano Fortes, &c. for six months. Applications made to him in New York, or at Mr. D. Vinton, No. 7, Market Square, Providence, will be duly attended to.

Neither Beneficent nor Richmond Street responded. It was almost time for a new church building for Beneficent and the Richmond Street edifice was still incomplete and so not ready for an organ. Even if the situation had been ideal otherwise, both churches still banned instrumental music in any form anyway.

The first evidence of a change in attitude about instruments is recorded in Staples' *Annals*. When Thomas Williams came to the Richmond Street Church in January, 1807, he had "for his hearers,

<sup>7</sup>See Wilson, pp. 25, 87, 77.

Edward Wilbur, who was never able to learn to read; John Clarke, an excommunicated free-will Baptist; and Massa Basset. Mr. Basset sat in the gallery, played on a bass-viol and sang tenor, assisted by Mrs. Elizabeth Sampson, and her sister, Rebecca Snow, nieces of Elder Snow." About a dozen pious women completed the scene.<sup>8</sup>

Much more important than this, Massa Basset seems to have built the first organ made in Providence, sometime between 1808 and 1816, for the Pacific Congregational Church, to use the proper new name for "Old Tin Top" after 1808. The account in Staples' *Annals*, largely provided by Thomas Williams, reads:

While Mr. Williams was their minister, Massa Basset made an organ, which he offered the society, to be used in the public worship of God, and which they accepted, against the avowed sentiments and decided judgment of their minister.

The dating of the organ is before 1816, since Mr. Williams left the position of minister on April 7, 1816.<sup>9</sup> Although the "Old Tin Top" building was used until 1827, no further reference to the Basset organ has been found which would confirm its use or final disposition.

The first use of instrumental music of any kind in the Beneficent Church comes in 1816, seven years after the old meetinghouse had been torn down and replaced by the present stone church with its familiar "Round Top" dome, copied after the Dublin Customhouse of 1788. It was not until 1822 that the church voted it would "not oppose the having an organ if the Society wished one."<sup>10</sup>

The first recorded hymnal at Beneficent Church comes in 1819, midway between the appearance of instruments and the vote for the organ. Herbert Thrasher, for many years organist and music director of Beneficent Church, lists the use of *Dr. Sam Domotee's Christian Psalmody* in that year, leaving room for questions about why the

<sup>8</sup>Staples, p. 457.

<sup>9</sup>Staples, p. 459. Thomas Williams left in April, 1816. In July, 1816, his successor, Willard Preston, split the church and the Calvinist Congregational Church withdrew. Preston was dismissed in 1821 and Williams returned until August of 1823 when he was dropped for trying to reunite the congregations. After a brief interval with Elam Clark, Albert Judson succeeded in merging the two groups again to form the Union Congregational Church in August, 1825. But Judson was never installed as minister and the name was changed again in 1827 when "Old Tin Top" was abandoned in favor of a new building, also on Richmond Street, and the congregation became the Richmond Street Congregational Church and Society. The Plymouth Union Congregational Church is the present successor.

<sup>10</sup>Wilson, p. 171.

congregation did not adopt *Songs of the Temple* — the famous Bridgewater Collection of sacred music — in 1816, or the *Providence Collection of Sacred Music* (Melodia Sacra) by Oliver Shaw, which was advertised on October 19, 1819, at 75c a copy. From the records showing the survey of 1788 it would appear that hymnals were in use earlier than 1819, but these seem to have been personal rather than church property. As late as 1833 the church bought the books to insure uniformity, presumably, and then delivered "a copy to every person who is regularly or generally in the habit of attending and singing at the Evening Meetings for safekeeping and use."<sup>11</sup> The present system of hymnals in pew racks is a fairly recent development.

The decision to allow an organ did not produce one over night. Deacon Wardwell's son was apparently unimpressed, for one. On December 6, 1822, he decided to attempt to learn to play the bass viol "for the use of the singing school and choir of singers of our society." But the Deacon raised the money singlehanded from one hundred and eight subscribers, not without some difficulty. On October 20, 1824, the subscribers voted "to purchase an organ of Mr. Appleton of Boston for 1600 dollars if the money can be raised." When the campaign was over the total pledged was 1900 dollars and the organ was delivered on June 28, 1825. The Deacon's son had shifted from bass viol to piano in September of 1824 in anticipation of serving as organist when the time came.<sup>12</sup> An extant Appleton list from 1833 dates this instrument as Opus 8, from July, 1825, rather than from June for some unknown reason.<sup>13</sup>

Deacon Wardwell's son, Stephen S., was duly appointed organist and his diaries record several milestones, as follows:

Thursday, June 30 (1825). Evening. Attended singing meeting in the upper part of the meeting house where we sang for the 1st time with the Organ, which was played by Mr. O. Shaw. It is an excellent instrument & has a fine tone.

Saturday, July 2, 1825 . . . Organ played by Mr. Shaw. This is the first time it has been used in public worship. Lord bless it to the good of many souls.

Lord's Day, July 3, 1825. Mr. Allen of Boston has played the Organ

<sup>11</sup>Wilson, p. 245.

<sup>12</sup>A complete account may be found in Wilson, pp. 171-2.

<sup>13</sup>Information concerning Appleton organs in Providence has been generously supplied by Miss Barbara J. Owen, president of the Organ Historical Society, Portland, Connecticut.

this day. He is a young man who has played at Mr. Ware's meeting house in Boston and is a fine Organist. He is a very modest young man & I felt considerably affected when I parted with him this afternoon. He is going out of town in the morning if the Lord will.

As Arthur Wilson records: "With the festivities over, Stephen S. now took charge of the console over which he presided for eighteen years.<sup>14</sup> He was twenty-four in 1825.

It is very likely that Stephen S. Wardwell's diaries are the most important private record kept by a musician anywhere in this country in this period. Except for the entries which have been published by Arthur E. Wilson, they have been obscured by the presence of Dwight's *Journal* and similar records designed for public print. Like many private records, these diaries reveal what really interested the man as opposed to what should have interested him. They irritate prying eyes by omitting the obvious time and time again. They reward by revealing aspects of the life of the time which we would otherwise only suspect.

For example, having introduced the organ with Oliver Shaw, Stephen S. Wardwell shows humility as he takes over himself:

Friday, July 8, 1825. Attended singing meeting in the upper part of the meeting house. I played the Organ for the first time with the singers.

Lord's Day, July 10, 1825. This forenoon I played on the Organ for the 1st time in publick worship in service time. Lord help my weakness and grant me skill to play to divine acceptance & the edification of the congregation.

In August, he began to invite guests and Mr. Moses Noyes played on August 7 and 21. Moses Noyes appeared first as a singing master in 1799 and later, in 1805, as organist at the First Congregational Church, but by 1820 he seems to have joined St. John's church. On August 28, 1825, "Mr. D. Lyon" played the organ. On Sunday, September 11, "Mr. Danforth Lyon played the Organ both Forenoon and Afternoon, as I sat down below in the pews."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Wilson, p. 172-3. Stephen S. was a pupil of O. Shaw (Oliver Shaw—blind organist of the First Congregational Church).

<sup>15</sup>See Joyce Ellen Mangler, *Rhode Island History*, Vol. 17, No. 1, January, 1958, pp. 5, 8. Also Vol. 17, No. 3, July, 1958, p. 82. The Wardwell diaries contain the earliest references to date for Danforth Lyon as a musician in Providence. He served as interim organist at the First Congregational Church in 1832, but we do not have a full outline of his musical career as yet.



FIRST ORGAN INSTALLED IN BALCONY OF BENEFICENT CHURCH, JUNE 25, 1825

Another name appears on Sunday, October 2, 1825, when the entry in the diary reads, "James played the Organ the last tune." "James" remains a mystery for quite a while. On May 21, 1826, the diary records that "James played the Organ the first time" which is an error of memory if this is the same James. We finally discover, by means of an accident, that James is a nephew. The entry for February 15, 1830, notes that Stephen S. sprained his left wrist and as a result "James played the Organ during the day & Mr. D. Lyon played in the evening." James played again on February 21 and 28. Finally on March 7, the sprained wrist still being a problem, we find "James, my nephew."<sup>16</sup>

Three other references to the organ from 1825-6 may be of interest to complete this part of the picture. On Monday, October 10, 1825, "Mr. Appleton, the builder of our Organ and Mr. Covey who tuned it were here this day, the latter of whom tuned most of the Organ this afternoon. They are bound for New York." On Monday, October 17, 1825, there was a meeting of "Subscribers to the Organ at the Vestry" and on Monday, June 26, 1826, Stephen S. Wardwell writes in his diary:

Attended meeting of subscribers to the Organ at the Vestry. Voted to present the Organ to the Society.

The coming of the organ seems to have been taken calmly by the choral forces at Beneficent Church. There is a priceless entry for November 17, 1825:

Glorious things of thee are spoken. \*Sung one verse and part of another. The Air & Bass had two different pitches and the tune went so badly that we ceased singing any more. There are but a few Singers who attend the Lectures which makes it difficult to sing.

Did this lead to contrition and improvement? Not a bit of it. The diary entry for the next day, November 18, reads, "Adjourned without singing, there being so few present." The choir of singers apparently did better on July 4, 1826, for a "National Jubilee" at our Meeting House at 4 o'clock." The music included:

100th Psalm	2 Part	Denmark
100th Psalm	1 Part	Old Hundred
Anthem	O Come let us sing unto the Lord.	

<sup>16</sup>The entries from 1825 are contained in volumes 5 and 6 of the diaries. Volume 9 starts with July 28, 1828 and ends with August 1, 1830.

This was apparently the first use of an anthem at "Round Top."

The musically irritating side of Stephen S. Wardwell's diaries may be clearly shown by using volume 9 as an example. This volume covers the period from mid-1828 to mid-1830, the period when Mr. Appleton installed a one-manual instrument at the Richmond Street Church and a similar instrument at Westminster Congregational Church. We discover an amazing miscellany of facts:

- April 5, 1829: "I spoke to the congregation this evening, which hurt my lungs very much."  
 May 30, 1829— the Annual Celebration of Sabbath Schools brought between 1000 and 1200 children to the First Baptist Meeting House, with hymns by the choir.  
 July 12, 1829: "Attended meeting at the Methodist Chapel." [No mention of music.]  
 July 26, 1829: "Attended meeting at Grace Church." [Again no mention of any music.]  
 Sept. 2, 1829— Brown University Commencement was held in exceptionally warm weather.  
 November 15: "I attended meeting at the Richmond Street Congl. [sic] House." [No mention of music except the tunes sung.]

There is no mention of Mr. Appleton or of the two new organs anywhere in the account and no mention of other organists or directors. The fact that so little interest was shown is certainly surprising.

On the other hand, this same volume of the diaries gives an interesting insight into the singing school situation at the time. That season (1829-30) the singing school commenced in the vestry on November 2, with about 130 or 140 scholars attending and with "Brother C. Pratt" as teacher. Chester Pratt, the first superintendent of the Sunday school at Beneficent, had come over from running a similar school at the First Congregational Church in 1828, where he had been paid \$45.00 quarterly. The Beneficent project was a free-will offering, by all the evidence, and since there was no particular pressure it was April 25, 1830, before the singing school scholars appeared in the organ loft for the first time.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Luther Ainsworth billed Beneficent church \$150 for a singing school in 1823, but this was unusual. When Stephen S. Wardwell suggested that he would appreciate being paid in 1835, the society finally voted him \$100 a year. The choir had an upset in 1838 because the Society refused to pay their expenses and it was not until 1848 that a soloist was paid. See Joyce Ellen Mangler, *Rhode Island History*, Vol. 17, No. 1, p. 8, and Wilson, pp. 249-252.

In volume 14 of the diaries, Organist Wardwell manages to avoid all reference to the appearance of the organ at the First Baptist Meeting House. He missed the "Oratorio Concert" there on June 5, 1834, when his diary merely records "At home." But within the next few weeks he mentions visiting the Richmond Street Church, Grace Church, the Masonic Hall, the Pine Street Baptist Church and Mechanic's Hall. Since he even lists being "at Mrs. Coville's" there is no reason to imagine that he overlooked recording anything. With such a record of activity, we can scarcely believe that a chance to try out a new addition to the musical life of the town could or would be ignored, but it most definitely was. The only reference to any organ in the period between November 1, 1833 and January 24, 1835, is the entry for September 27, 1834: "Had our Organ tuned this week by W. Appleton" — the original builder.

On Sunday, November 9, 1834, there was a milestone reached in music in Providence and Stephen S. writes in his diary:

After the benediction we sang the Pilgrim's Farewell, by request of my Father who being now 80 years of age intends to leave the choir of singers where he has faithfully labored for perhaps 50 to 60 years.

James Wilson, who had been minister ever since 1791 (or 1793 when his status changed after Joseph Snow seceded) retired shortly thereafter in 1835 and a new order began at Beneficent Church. Chester Pratt, the Sabbath school superintendent, after trying to build up the musical life with his singing schools, had gone over to form the High Street Church in 1834, leaving Stephen S. Wardwell in charge of both Sunday school and music.

The best summary of the situation has been given by Dr. Arthur E. Wilson, who writes:

By 1836 music had reached a place of importance and dignity at Beneficent — sufficient to justify crowning the dome of the meeting-house with a replica of the Greek Choragic Monument of Lysicrates. Music had come out of the dark cellar of prejudice and crudity of performance to crown the temple itself.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup>About this time Stephen S. Wardwell discovered Lowell Mason and became a disciple. Wilson, pp. 245-51, provides a detailed account. The summary statement is in Wilson, p. 253. After this high point, Stephen S. continued as organist until 1843, when he, too, departed to found the Free Evangelical Church and Sabbath School (Wilson, p. 221).

## BOOK REVIEW

**The Life and Works of Edward Greene Malbone 1777-1807.** By Ruel Pardee Tolman, with an introduction by Theodore Bolton and a foreword by John Davis Hatch, Jr. 322 pages. New York: The New-York Historical Society, 1958. \$12.50.

Rhode Island has been singularly fortunate in its artists and artisans, producing men who were very near if not actually at the top in their respective fields: Gilbert Stuart, the painter; the Townsends and Goddards among furniture-makers; and Edward Greene Malbone among miniaturists. And, of these, it is probably safe to say that there is the least debate about the pre-eminence of Malbone. Certainly America has never produced a finer artist in his field, and as time goes on he grows more firmly established even in competition with the best that Europe has produced.

There are many remarkable aspects of Malbone's career, not the least of which are that he was self-taught and embarked on his career unassisted and unheralded at the age of 17, that he became a success almost at once, that he had all the commissions he could handle, and that he was so highly regarded by his contemporaries that he did not have to wait for the judgment of posterity to be "discovered" long after his death. That death, when he was only 29 years old, is, in fact, the one dark chapter in a brilliant success story. It was caused, undoubtedly, by pulmonary tuberculosis, and Malbone had been ill the better part of a year, in Charleston, Newport, Boston, Jamaica and Savannah, before he finally succumbed at a friend's home in Georgia.

Some measure of his financial success as a miniature painter can be gained from the fact that the inventory of his estate placed a value of \$3,451.38 on his effects, and this even though he had contributed generously to the support of his sisters and supported himself entirely from the age of 17 when he first left his Newport home and went to Providence to look for business as a painter of miniatures.

Malbone was born in Newport, the son of John Malbone and Patricia Greene, who never seem to have married although they had six children and the father clearly and legally acknowledged the paternity of his children. The first Newport Malbone, Godfrey, the grandfather, had accumulated an enormous fortune in privateering and the triangular trade, but most of this had been dissipated by the time Edward Greene was born.

A quiet, studious, withdrawn child who showed artistic genius right from the beginning, Edward Greene came to Providence in the fall of 1794, and in his first letter home to his father informed him that he was adopting the Malbone name. He promptly received commissions from the leading citizens of Providence and one of these is, in many ways — and to Providence readers especially — the most interesting miniature Malbone ever did.

In the extensive catalogue of Malbone's miniatures which is the very backbone of this book and by far the most valuable fruit of the late Mr. Tolman's scholarly researches, there is listed, as No. 71, a miniature which has been

identified, on no sound basis whatsoever, as Nicholas Brown. It has been conjectured by Mr. Tolman that this may be the likeness of John Brown, the master of John Brown House, home of this Society.

Now, great dependence has been placed in this work on a manuscript account book kept by Malbone. The manuscript is regarded as so important to research on Malbone's work that it has been reproduced photographically in its entirety in this book, with all necessary indices. It is interesting to note that on its second page there is a list of "Pictures painted in the years 1794 & 1795 from November until March" — the period when Malbone was working in Providence. Thirty-one clients are listed, from whom Malbone received two guineas each for miniature portraits. There is no Nicholas Brown on this list, but there is a John Brown. And no John Brown miniature has ever been found.

The supposed likeness of Nicholas Brown, however, bears no resemblance to what Nicholas is supposed to have looked like; it is, rather, the portrait of a heavy-set, large-sized man, such as we know John Brown to have been.

But enough of this problem of rather parochial interest. . . .

The descriptive catalogue of Malbone miniatures is extremely valuable. It lists 471 attributed to him, and includes reproductions of every miniature which could be located. There is also a further list of 62 miniatures attributed, without confirmation, to Malbone; Mr. Tolman did not have sufficient information at the time of his death to include them in his main list. A third list is of 108 miniatures which Mr. Tolman believed were misattributed to Malbone.

The book's greatest value lies in these lists and in the facsimile reproduction of the Malbone account book. The sketch of Malbone's life, while excellent in every way, is somewhat overshadowed by the other material. This should not be considered a fault but rather a virtue, for if this is not a definite reference book on Edward Greene Malbone none is ever likely to appear. It should stand as both a tribute to America's greatest miniature painter and to the untiring scholarship of Mr. Tolman. In creating a monument to his subject Ruel Tolman has created one to himself.

BRADFORD F. SWAN



[71] JOHN (?) BROWN

*Courtesy of The New-York Historical Society*

### NEW MEMBERS

*June 1, 1958 — August 31, 1958*

Mr. Windsor C. Batchelder Glenbrook, Conn.	Mrs. Karl H. Hammer Lincoln, R. I.
Mr. Edgar F. Bradley	Mr. Edwin C. Harris Esmond, R. I.
Mrs. David A. Brayton Little Compton, R. I.	Mrs. Thomas P. Hazard Peace Dale, R. I.
Dr. Russell H. Carpenter	Mr. Vincent E. Morris Stamford, Conn.
Mrs. Russell H. Carpenter Barrington, R. I.	Dr. Kenneth A. Scott
Mr. Elmer S. Chace	Mr. Stanton F. Slocum Pelham Manor, N. Y.
Mr. Charles F. Cottam	Mr. Walter B. Smith II Washington, D. C.
Mr. Charles D. Davol Fall River, Mass.	Mr. Peter J. Westervelt
Mr. Roger M. Freeman, Jr.	

### LECTURES

October 23, 1958, Thursday 8:15 p.m.

DEDICATION OF THE NEW EXHIBITION ROOM

HON. JOHN NICHOLAS BROWN

Poetry and Painting: Tasso's Influence in the  
Seventeenth Century

*(illustrated with slides)*

PROFESSOR RENSSELAER W. LEE, Chairman  
Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University

November 23, 1958, Sunday 3:30 p.m.

Touro Synagogue, Newport, Rhode Island

RABBI THEODORE LEWIS, Touro Synagogue

January 8, 1959, Thursday 8:30 p.m.

*(following the Annual Meeting for members)*

Campus Folklore

CHESLEY WORTHINGTON, Editor of the *Brown Alumni Monthly*



## 45. SIDE CHAIR

*Mahogany*

Possible Rhode Island Origin 1750-1780

The pierced vase shaped splat of the back shows a pattern of basic scrolls, following a common Newport design. The addition of a central diamond shaped motif detracts from the harmony of the whole and seems to indicate a less skillful adaptation of the more sophisticated Goddard prototype. However, Edward J. Hipkiss, in his *M. and M. Karolik Collection of Eighteenth Century American Arts* (page 151) shows a similar splat on a very handsome desk chair at the (Boston) Museum of Fine Arts. He assigns this chair to an unknown cabinetmaker of New York.

The rectangular slip seat again indicates a somewhat humble origin. The unadorned "country Chippendale" legs with nicely splayed back posts give a feeling of graceful strength often found in unpretentious pieces. The central crest rail is cut in slightly to give added interest while the corner ears of the rail have sufficient grace to define the silhouette satisfactorily.

This chair belonged to Colonel Augustus Mumford, born July 7, 1744, the son of William and Hannah (Latham) Mumford. Colonel Mumford fell at the Battle of Bunker Hill, June 17, 1775, the first commissioned officer killed in the American Revolution. Before his death, Colonel Mumford was a resident of Newport, Rhode Island. This chair may well have Rhode Island origin.

Bequest of Richard Ward Greene Welling



#### 46. SIDE CHAIR

*Mahogany*

Rhode Island, c. 1800

The back of this chair represents a crude adaptation of the transitional Hepplewhite form. The deep urn in the splat indicates that the chair is a copy if not the work of John Carlile, Providence, Rhode Island, cabinetmaker. It resembles very closely a similar chair formerly owned by Norman M. Isham, but is slightly cruder in every respect. (See *Antiques*, December, 1924, v. 6, p. 311.) Many of these narrow-backed urn-splated transitional chairs are found in the vicinity of Providence, some in maple with rush seats, some in mahogany with slip or overstuffed seats. The original seat of this chair was doubtless overstuffed of horsehair ornamented with swags of brass-headed nails. The base of this chair is decadent and perhaps shows a later origin than the Isham chair.

John Carlile's ancestors, of Welsh extraction, first settled in Boston where one married Paul Revere's daughter. On his mother's side Carlile was a collateral descendant of Benjamin Franklin. John came to Providence after finishing his apprenticeship as a cabinetmaker and set up his business at 113 South Main Street, where he and his brother also dealt in lumber. St. John's Episcopal Church on North Main Street has records of the purchase of lumber and window frames supplied by John Carlile. His home on George Street was where the present Hope Club Extension now stands. Carlile was evidently a substantial Providence citizen who held important town offices. His portrait, painted by Gilbert Stuart, was presented by his son to St. John's Lodge of Masons, but it was, unfortunately, destroyed in the fire that consumed the Masonic Temple, March 19, 1896. A drawing owned by The Rhode Island Historical Society is doubtless a copy of this Stuart painting.

Ex-collection Dr. Louisa Paine Tingley



#### 47. PEMBROKE TABLE

*Mahogany*

*c. 1790-1800*

From the family of Doctor Caleb Fiske of Scituate, Rhode Island, the founder of the Rhode Island Medical Association, this Pembroke table may well have originated in Providence, where John Carlile and Grindell Rawson were carrying on their trade in the Hepplewhite style. Simple inlays of satinwood follow the line of the curved draw-front and the tapering legs, while the usual Federal oval placed at the jointure of leg and drawer is simply but neatly executed.

Ex-collection Dr. Louisa Paine Tingley



## 48. BED

*Mahogany*

1760-1780 Newport

Certain features indicate that this bed is of rather late Chippendale date when Hepplewhite styles had just begun to lengthen the general lines and that it is more than likely of Newport origin. Both the head and foot posts are so slender and delicately worked that the general appearance of the bed is one of unusual fragility. The headposts are cut or chamfered to the square area where the rails join them. There the chamfers resolve into four carefully executed lamb's-tongues. The footposts are exquisitely fluted from the top to the diminutive square, which again is finished with a lamb's-tongue carving at the end of each channel.



The sharply cut and unadorned square knee bespeaks Newport origin as do the crisp details of the carved knuckles of the claws. The ball, grasped by the claw, is slightly elliptical with a marked flatness on the base. One finds a very well-defined web between the claws.

It is surprising to discover flame finials of decidedly Massachusetts air surmounting the posts above the valance. These may well be later additions. It is a temptation to place the puce copperplate bed hangings in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, since the design they portray, the escape of Mary, Queen of Scots, from Loch Leven, is certainly reminiscent of the resurgent interest in the romantic and the baronial styles, initiated by the early nineteenth century British writers. It is regrettable that the tailoring of these bed hangings is not an accurate copy of the correct contemporary styles.

The scroll-shaped mahogany headboard indicates a later date since most of the earlier headboards were plain, and many were of soft wood evidently designed to be hidden by the ever present hangings and bolster.

Because of the hazards of time and the changes of fashion, there is a great rarity of fine colonial beds and even though the bed lacks some of the more ornate features of its earlier Newport relatives, its delicacy is unusual and extremely appealing.

Ex-collection Henry A. Hoffman