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COVER

CARVED BUST OF MILTON

"Beautiful images very suitable for book or clock cases . . . of American manufacture . . . may be seen at the printers": so read an advertisement in the *Newport Mercury* of August 8, 1768. It is interesting to speculate on this as it is unlikely in this period it referred to paintings. No known Rhode Island secretary or clock case is known with carved "images." The use of such figures is recognized in Philadelphia and Massachusetts, and there are superlative examples from these states showing such ornamentation. This bust of Milton was originally part of the John Brown House, and has descended in the family since it was removed in the early nineteenth century. It was probably used on the pedestal surmounting the mantel or doorway. It looks perfectly at home there. It has been ascribed to Simion Skillin of Boston, but a comparison of the Milton with another Milton adorning a secretary in the Beverly Historical Society (and credited to Skillin by Homer Eaton Keyes in the April, 1933 *Antiques*) shows substantial differences. Skillin's faces are squarish in form, and this is more angular; Skillin uses a flat lower eyelid and strongly arched eyebrows, while this has curved eyelids and a more normal eyebrow; and there appears to be more modeling in the face structure than in Skillin's work. For other stylistic reasons this bust does not appear to be related to the work of other known carvers, although this is a difficult field to research. The figure carries presumably the original polychrome decoration. It appears to be at least as fine in quality as Skillin's work, and in some details perhaps superior, and is probably the work of some as yet uncelebrated artisan of the New England area. Height: 8¼". Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Henry A. L. Brown. [From *The John Brown House Loan Exhibition of Rhode Island Furniture*.]

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WILKINS UPDIKE to SARAH HELEN WHITMAN: TWO NEW LETTERS

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THE MOST FAMOUS LITERARY ROMANCE that ever took place in Providence, Rhode Island, was undoubtedly that between Poe and Sarah Helen Whitman. Their story has been told over and over by Poe scholars and has been dealt with extensively in Caroline Ticknor's biography, *Poe's Helen* (1916), which contains a lengthy examination of the whole Poe-Whitman relationship. Yet the romance remains something of a mystery, so much so that Arthur Hobson Quinn, author of the definitive biography of Poe, has called Poe's relationship to Mrs. Whitman still "one of the most difficult for a biographer to make clear."¹

Against this background it seems that any new information that comes to light involving Sarah Helen Whitman takes on added interest. If what is discovered has in any way to do with a romance, the interest seems naturally to increase. This is surely the case with two letters recently acquired by The Rhode Island Historical Society and printed here for the first time.

Written by Wilkins Updike to Sarah Helen Whitman in 1846 and 1847, the letters precede by only a short time the famous letters that Poe wrote to Mrs. Whitman. From letters in the Harris Collection at Brown University it is clear that Updike knew Mrs. Whitman at least as early as 1845 and as late as 1853. The dates overlap, in part, the period when Poe was courting Mrs. Whitman and make the two men rivals of a sort. The comparison, which is inevitable, is bound to favor Poe, for among Mrs. Whitman's several suitors none

¹Arthur Hobson Quinn, *Edgar Allen Poe: A Critical Biography*, New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc. (1941), p. 572.

was so brilliantly articulate in confessing his love for the Providence poetess as was he. Poe's letters to her are written in a language so emotionally strong that Updike's, or most anyone else's, must pale before them. That is not, however, to condemn Updike's letters as second-rate or to dismiss them as useless. One must simply read them in other terms and for other interests. In doing so, Updike's letters take on an importance all their own and become valuable documents of the time and place in which they were written.

The Hon. Wilkins Updike was born January 8, 1784, in North Kingstown, Rhode Island, the youngest of eleven children born to Lodowick and Abigail (Gardner) Updike. Like both his father and grandfather before him, Wilkins Updike was prominent as a lawyer in the state and for many years was a leading member of the Rhode Island General Assembly. He was active in legislating for reforms in the public schools and was also instrumental in bringing about the Married Woman's Act. In addition, he was an author, publishing *Memoirs of the Rhode Island Bar* in 1842 and a *History of the Episcopal Church in Narragansett, Rhode Island*, in 1847. Both books are valuable and now very rare.

Updike married Abby A. Watson on September 31, 1809. They lived most of their married life in North Kingstown and Kingston, Rhode Island, where they brought up twelve children. Daniel, their eleventh, is mentioned in the letter to Mrs. Whitman of January 5, 1847. Wilkins Updike died at his home in Kingston on January 14, 1867. His wife had preceded him in death by many years.

Updike was respected as a lawyer and apparently well-liked as a man. Upon his death the General Assembly issued the following resolutions:

Resolved, That we desire to inscribe upon the record some memorial of our respect for this old fashioned gentleman, this vigorous and honest legislator, this hospitable and warm-hearted citizen.

Resolved, That in the decease of Hon. Wilkins Updike, has passed away from earth almost the last of a generation of true Rhode Island men, worthy of our respect and imitation in the walks of private and public life.²

An engraving of Updike in *The History of the State of Rhode*

²Quoted in *The History of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations*, IV, New York: The American Historical Society, Inc. (1920), p. 137.

Island and Providence Plantations (1920) shows him to have been an impressively large man, strong in character but obviously genial. He has been described as having had "a radiant face, suggestive of strength and enjoyment. . . . In whatever company Mr. Updike was, he was a center of attraction, not because he asserted himself, but because he was alive in every part of his nature. He enjoyed himself, and so was a source of joy to all around him. He loved to eat and drink and laugh and work."³

This last description, revealing Updike as a lively and vigorous man, is borne out in his letter to Mrs. Whitman of January 5, 1847, wherein he promises to "clear out" any of her suitors who may be supplanting him in the lady's favor — this, one should keep in mind, at the age of sixty-three! Additional letters of his, now in the Harris Collection, show that he was a persistent suitor for Mrs. Whitman's hand for at least eight years and probably longer. It is uncertain whether she ever visited with him and his children at the homestead in Kingston, but they certainly met frequently in Providence. However, Mrs. Whitman never accepted him, and he remained a widower, as she a widow, until the end.

Updike's two letters to Mrs. Whitman reveal him in his circle of friends, many of whom were among the most prominent men in Rhode Island at the time. In his letter of June 26, 1846, he is writing to Mrs. Whitman about the pseudonymously published *Panidea*, a book that was creating something of a stir then. In reference to the identity of the book's author he offers her the opinions of his friends, who turn out to include Francis Wayland, Rowland Gibson Hazard, Professor Romeo Elton, Henry Barnard, and several Rhode Island judges, the most noteworthy of whom in the present context is Judge Durfee. The heart of interest in the letter of June 26 is of a literary nature, involving the mystery of the *Panidea*, and in this connection Durfee becomes all important.

Job Durfee (1790-1847) was prominent as a representative to the state legislature, as a member of the Rhode Island Congress, and as chief justice of the State Supreme Court, but in Updike's letters we meet him chiefly as an author. In the letter of June 26 Updike alludes to Durfee's "Phi Beta Capa [sic] Oration." Entitled "The Influence of Scientific Discovery and Invention on Social and Political Progress," this was delivered by Durfee before the Phi Beta Kappa Society

³Ibid., pp. 137-38.

of Brown University on commencement day, September 6, 1843. Updike calls our attention to Durfee as an author for a second time in the letter of January 5, 1847, where, by implication, he refers to Job Durfee's *Discourse* on the "Rhode-Island Idea of Government," delivered at the annual meeting of The Rhode Island Historical Society, January 13, 1847. But it is Updike's attention to the *Panidea* that makes Durfee most interesting as an author.

The *Panidea*, published in 1846 under the pseudonym "Theoptes," was Job Durfee's most ambitious book and undoubtedly his most important. Thomas Durfee, who edited his father's *Complete Works* (1849), thought it "the great work of his life—the nucleus of his speculations through many years and the basis of his fame as a thinker."

The book is an involved metaphysical treatise, not unlike others of the period in its positing of a pure or absolute reason, which Job Durfee calls "an Omnipresent Reason" and considers as "the Creative and Sustaining Logos." Like most studies of its kind in the nineteenth century, the book seems to owe a heavy debt to Coleridge. Its inscription is from Wordsworth's "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey" and is perhaps more helpful still in identifying the immediate parent of the work. The seven chapters of the *Panidea* can, in fact, be read as an attempt to formulate in prose the workings of that Wordsworthian "spirit, that impels / All thinking things—all objects of all thought, / And rolls through all things"—lines quoted by Durfee on the title page of his book.

As Updike's letter of June 26 reveals, the *Panidea* aroused great interest among certain of the literati in Providence and Boston, but the book was generally not well received. Perhaps Durfee's decision to publish pseudonymously was a result of foreseeing this. In any case, as is clear from Updike's letter, most people immediately knew it to be his. Mrs. Whitman was an exception, thinking it the work of an unidentified "gentleman in Boston," while Updike seems to have wavered between acknowledging Durfee as the author and not. Durfee himself seems to have enjoyed the guessing game and encouraged it actively from behind his only half-hidden anonymity. In his letter to Updike of June 22, 1846, printed here with the kind permission of the Harris Collection, we find him playfully denying all knowledge of the authorship of the book while at the same time he is

obviously busy distributing copies to his many friends.

The *Panidea* was unquestionably the center of attention among New England intellectuals for a time, but its popularity was not to last. Thomas Durfee, in a revealing "Memoir" about his father, accounted for its lack of gaining a more permanent success partially to the times, which were not receptive, and partially to the book's own basic difficulties:

Its publication and reception form a striking comment upon the intellectual character of the age. Its worth, originality, and reach of thought were acknowledged; but the sublime mystery, how the Infinite One is involved everywhere in the finite many, seemed out of place and old-fashioned as the theme of a book, in this age of novels, periodicals, and light reading, when, like a grub, thought seems only spinning its own sepulchre. . . . To most men its very title-page is a Gorgon's head. They are sure that nothing but infidelity, mysticism, or transcendental puzzles can lurk under such hard names. The critics avoid it utterly. Its solid logic cannot be volatized into a popular review, and such only do they feel themselves called upon to write. So does it fare with metaphysics in this nineteenth century—it does not blend and flow on with the general stream, but to men's fancies is a maelstrom, with vortices whirling and sucking its victims down fearful and bottomless deeps.

So much for Thomas Durfee's indictment of the age. He is also fair enough, however, to recognize the difficulties and possible shortcomings of the book itself, and it will do well to quote him again on these aspects of the *Panidea*:

But, although the book is written with elaborate precision, it must be admitted that the objections to it are not without cause. Coleridge, speaking of an essay by Charles Lamb, written upon a man who lived in past time, said that he once thought of adding to it an essay on a man who did not live in time at all, but one side of it, or collaterally. If such a person should fancy to write metaphysics, his system would perhaps result in a *Panidea*. Theoptes divests himself wholly of the relations of time and space, or rather, retiring entirely from the world of the senses, views them as they exist in the Pure Reason. But this is not all, he requires the reader to retire with him, and, in this empyrean of naked abstractions, to follow out his reasonings with scarcely a sensuous image to assist the apprehension of their logic. . . . The mind is unaided by

outward types. The consequence is that, even when the system is understood, it lies so far out of all ordinary experience that it requires an effort to realize the state of mind necessary to discuss it, and an effort of such sort that only scholars and thinkers will ever be likely to make it.⁴

Unfortunately for Job Durfee's *Panidea*, the "scholars and thinkers" were never forthcoming, and the book has been forgotten. It enjoyed a short-lived popularity during its own day, where it doubtless might have had some measure of influence on young thinkers and writers, but in ours it has been unknown entirely.

Updike's letter of January 5, 1847, is also of literary interest and recalls another popular book of the day, "Davis' *Revelations*." Davis was hailed in the "Introduction," as "a spirit freed, by a certain physical process . . . from the obstructing influences of the material organization, and exalted to a position which gave access to a knowledge of the whole material and spiritual Universe." His book, one of a number in the mid-nineteenth century that claimed to be written under "dictation," actually attempted to incorporate so much, taking as its realm "the whole material and spiritual Universe." It must have been fascinating to Mrs. Whitman and her circle, many of whom were in the forefront of the general spiritualist movement that was causing so much excitement at the time.

Andrew Jackson Davis (1826-1910), "the Poughkeepsie Seer," was one of the most celebrated of the spiritualists and an important founder of the movement. The son of uneducated parents, he was himself almost totally uneducated, receiving only some five months scattered schooling. But at the age of seventeen, he was "magnetized" by a local tailor in Poughkeepsie, one William Levingston, and thereafter lived much of his life in full clairvoyance. He claimed to be in frequent communication with Swedenborg, the eighteenth-century Swedish mystic, whose ideas often colored Davis's writings. This is not to say that Davis was not an original, however, for he certainly was.

Of particular interest for us is the lecture series that Davis delivered in Manhattan between November 28, 1845, and January 25, 1847. Assisted by Dr. S. S. Lyon, a Connecticut physician whom Davis had taken as his "magnetizer," and the Rev. William Fishbough, his "scribe," Davis delivered more than a hundred and fifty "lectures"

⁴Thomas Durfee, "A Memoir," in *The Complete Works of the Hon. Job Durfee, LL.D.*, Providence: Gladding and Proud (1849), pp. 19-20.

while in a state of trance. Whether or not Updike or Mrs. Whitman ever went down to New York to witness these performances is unknown. Certainly they would have read about them in the newspapers. In any case, they came to know them in written form. The Rev. Fishbough was careful to take down everything Davis said verbatim and, with Dr. Lyon, collected and published the "lectures" in 1847 as *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations, and A Voice to Mankind, By and Through Andrew Jackson Davis*—more commonly known as "Davis' Revelations." Updike refers to the book in a letter now in the Harris Collection: "I saw 'Davis' Revelations' in Boston, it is a large volume, & the Bookseller informed me, that he sold many of them. I have not read it, and do not think that there is a copy in this quarter [Kingston]. I should like to run it over, and will try to when I come to Providence." The Boston "Bookseller" told him rightly, for the book was immensely popular, going through thirty-four editions by 1886.

Updike's letter of January 5 is also interesting in its further revelations of the large and active circle of literary friends that he and Mrs. Whitman had in common. Albert Gorton Greene, Elisha R. Potter, William J. Pabodie, and John D'Wolf, not mentioned earlier, are introduced here. Together with Francis Wayland, Rowland Gibson Hazard, and others cited in Updike's letters, these men comprised a distinguished part of a flourishing community of scholars and writers that existed in Providence at the time.

The letters follow.

JOB DURFEE to WILKINS UPDIKE (June 22, 1846)⁵

Dear Sir—

Tiverton 22 June 1846

I have received yours enclosing some lines by Mrs. Whitman⁶ They are beautiful and lovely as the mind from which they emanated [*sic*]. I have read her poetry before, and have always found in it the same

⁵Updike enclosed this letter in his to Mrs. Whitman of June 26, 1846. It is now in the Harris Collection at Brown University.

⁶The poem, which Updike refers to as "your effusion on Adam & Eve," was Mrs. Whitman's "A Vision of Paradise." It was inspired by paintings by Dubufe on the temptation and expulsion, which were being exhibited in Providence at the time. Mrs. Whitman first published the poem in the *Providence Journal* under the signature "Egeria" but later republished it in other journals under her own name. It was included in Mrs. Whitman's first volume of collected poetry, *Hours of Life, and Other Poems*, Providence: George H. Whitney (1853).

death, calm, moon-light beauty — "A day of [the] Indian Summer,"⁷ in the Rhode Island Book is marked by the same easy flow of verse — as natural as if she breathed it. — Accept my thanks for your present — I shall preserve it.

I received the other day a letter from Mr E. R. Potter⁸ in which he *gravely* charges me with the authorship of the *Panidea*!! I wish you would enlighten him upon the subject. It seems a pity that a mind like his should be enthralled by such an error. Tell him that no judge in equity, or at common law, would ever write a book with such a title — You have already heard me say something to that effect. Let no one expect any mere flesh-and-blood man to plead guilty to such a charge. *Theoptes* is the only being who can plead guilty, and it is evident from all he says that he lives on the other side of Time and Space — entirely beyond our jurisdiction. I took a few copies of the *Panidea* for private distribution, among such of my friends as I supposed would be disposed to read it, and make an effort (for effort it requires) to understand it. I would have handed a copy to you, had I not supposed you to be too deeply immersed in antiquarian lore to have any relish for any production of such a shadowy being as *Theoptes*. If I labored under a mistake I will avail myself of an opportunity to correct it. But you may already have a copy; if you have you can at once say whether I erred.

Be pleased to put me down as a subscriber for a copy of your new book⁹ — When will it be out?

W. Updike Esqr

Yours very respectfully
Job Durfee

WILKINS UPDIKE to SARAH HELEN WHITMAN

(June 26, 1846)

My Dear Sarah

Kingston June 26/46

I went to Newport on Monday & arrived at home this afternoon — I saw no one there that I cared a cent about. — I mentioned what you told me to Judge Durfee, he laughed heartily, and said, "It is strange that the public should attribute that book to him." I came from Providence fully satisfied that the work was not his, yet every one that I have seen unequivocally pronounces it as the effusion of the Judge — I saw R. G. Hazard¹⁰ at Newport, he certainly attributes it to him, & was much surprised when I informed him that you attributed [it] to a gentleman in Boston — He said he was confident on the first perusal that it was Mr. Durfee's. He said you could not have read his Phi Beta Capa [*sic*] oration,¹¹ and that if you had, you would not have doubted

for a moment — Mr. Hazard said that Dr Wayland¹² told him that the production lifted the Judge over the heads of all the literati of N. England. Every one coincides with you that it is a work of superior ability, but the Judge is terrified about it. He fears he shall be reputed a sceptic — Your Judge Pitman¹³ very much regrets that he is the Author on account of public reprobation — Sarah, the Judge is the Author beyond doubt. The evidence is conclusive — Mr. Barnard¹⁴ informed me that Dr Webb¹⁵ gave him one, when he was in Boston, when it first came out, and that he told him it was from the pen of a distinguished

⁷"A Day of the Indian Summer" was one of several poems by Mrs. Whitman in *The Rhode Island Book: Selections in Prose and Verse, from the Writings of Rhode Island Citizens*, ed. Anne C. Lynch, Providence: H. Fuller (1841). It was later collected in *Hours of Life, and Other Poems* (1853).

⁸The Hon. Elisha R. Potter, Jr. (1811-1892), famous son of a famous father (Elisha R. Potter, 1764-1835), led a distinguished life in Rhode Island as a lawyer, member of the State Congress, Senate, and House of Representatives, commissioner of Public Schools, cartographer, historian, and author. Among his writings is the *Early History of Narragansett* (1835), still considered a valuable work.

⁹*The History of the Episcopal Church in Narragansett, Rhode Island*, New York: H. M. Onderdonk (1847).

¹⁰Rowland Gibson Hazard (1801-1888), manufacturer, financier, philanthropist, civic leader, and author, was one of the most prominent men in Rhode Island during the middle and latter part of the nineteenth century. Among a large number of important offices that he held were membership in the Rhode Island House of Representatives, in 1851-52, 1854-55, and 1880-81, and in the Rhode Island Senate, in 1866-67. He was apparently a close friend of Wilkins Updike and is often mentioned in his letters.

¹¹Job Durfee's Phi Beta Kappa oration, "The Influence of Scientific Discovery and Invention on Social and Political Progress," was delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Brown University on commencement day, September 6, 1843. It was published by B. Cranston and Company of Providence in 1843 and later collected by Thomas Durfee in *The Complete Works of The Hon. Job Durfee, LL.D.* (1849).

¹²Francis Wayland (1796-1864), minister, author, and the fourth president of Brown University, which office he served from 1826 to 1855.

¹³Judge John Pitman (1785-1864), a United States district judge in Providence from 1824 until his death in 1864.

¹⁴Henry Barnard (1811-1900), educator and author, was Rhode Island's first public school commissioner, a position that he served extremely well. Wilkins Updike, an eager supporter of Barnard, was instrumental in bringing him to Rhode Island and backed him wholeheartedly in his attempts to bring about educational reforms in the state. Barnard was largely responsible for establishing the Rhode Island Institute of Instruction, in 1845, and in setting up the state's public school system. He was later chancellor of the University of Wisconsin (1858-60), president of St. John's College, in Annapolis, Md. (1866-67), and served as the first United States Commissioner of Education (1867-70).

¹⁵Thomas Hopkins Webb, M.D. (1801-1866), Providence physician, historian, and one-time editor of the *Providence Journal*.

Jurist in R Island of his acquaintance & intimated beyond doubt, it was the Judge — Also that Mr. Elton¹⁶ the late Rev. Professor in your college told him, that Judge Durfee had sent him some copies to be sent to his friends in Europe — You must give up that the author is a gentleman in Boston, & probably you have before this turn — Was not that the reason, he did not join with you in commendation of it? Judge Brayton¹⁷ told me, it was from Durfee, and two copies being sent to Judge Staples¹⁸ confirms this impression too strong to be questioned —

Judge Durfee admired, you know, your poetry in the Democratic Review¹⁹ — He said he had not seen your effusion on Adam & Eve²⁰ — I sent him one on my return, his letter acknowledging the receipt of it I enclose.²¹ A notice so flattering must be gratifying — —

My Dear, how have you been since I left you — I hope your health is improving, so that every thing of an objectional [*sic*] character will be removed before or by the 4th of July — You know all my hopes rest on you — I wish I could hear from you as I could wish and hope — I am in your hands and it is for you to dispose of me as you please, for good or for evil — I am here alone and want you — Will you say when you will come down to Narragansett — Every thing is in waiting for you — — I am desirous to show you a great many curiosities in this section — My *Garden* looks finely [*sic*] & only needs your advisory improvements. You must come, and shall come notwithstanding the small objections you can make — — "Hark at night"²² —

Yours forever W Updike

WILKINS UPDIKE to SARAH HELEN WHITMAN

(January 5, 1847)

Kingston R.I. January 5th/47

My Dr Sarah

Your letter would not have remained unanswered this length of time but from circumstances which I will state, for you know that I am a prompt correspondent — Within a few days after your letter arrived, Our favorite, Daniel, was taken sick, so much so as to require medical aid: the Doctor announced his disease dangerous, and in a few days after, the Physician, Daniel, & myself, went up to see Dr Parsons²³ & when he announced to me that his case was an incurable one in all probability, I thought my heart would break²⁴ — He ordered some experiments to be made & when made & transmitted to him, he has come to the conclusion that it is not the same disease he thought it was,

& wrote last Saturday that it is not dangerous — which has cheered us all — When I came home & announced the Doctors opinion I never saw a more mournful house, but we are now restored to our hope & cheerfulness — Can you believe it, that he told the Doctor that he had been in the habit of drinking from one to two pailfuls of water a day & nearer to two than one — This was unknown to us for a long time, he thought it was mere thirst & informed no one & none of the family discovered this great excess in drinking — This course he told Dr Parsons he had indulged in drinking from about August or September last according to his recollection²⁵ — Myself & his sister are incessant in our attentions to him & watch him night & day, for his thirst now, although abated, is so great that if he can get water he will indulge himself in drinking against all our arguments & remonstrations — You know, My Dear, that he is a pet with us, besides being the youngest of the family — He is about house & for a week the Physician has requested

¹⁶The Rev. Romeo Elton (1790-1870), professor of Greek and Latin at Brown University from 1827 to 1843. Job Durfee addressed to Elton the introductory poem of his long narrative poem, *Whatcheer; or, Roger Williams in Banishment* (1832): "What time, dear Elton, we were wont to rove / From classic Brown along fair Seekonk's vale . . ."

¹⁷The Hon. George Arnold Brayton (1803-1880), associate justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court, 1843-68, and later chief justice, 1868-74.

¹⁸The Hon. William Read Staples (1798-1868), associate judge of the Rhode Island Supreme Court, 1835-54, and later chief justice, 1854-56. Judge Staples was also an historian and author, publishing, among other works, his *Annals on Providence in 1843*.

¹⁹Mrs. Whitman's "A Vision of the Night," a poem inspired by lines in Goethe's *Faust*, Part II, appeared in the February, 1846 number of *The United States Magazine, and Democratic Review* (XVIII, 92, pp. 116-18). Three of the original stanzas were dropped and others greatly modified when the poem was collected under the new title "The Past," in *Hours of Life, and Other Poems* (1853).

²⁰See Note 6.

²¹Job Durfee's letter to Wilkins Updike, June 22, 1846; see note 5.

²²Updike is reinforcing his plea for Mrs. Whitman to visit him in Kingston by quoting a line that possibly recalls some from her poem "The Phantom":

How Mournful 't is to hark
To the voices of the silences —
The whisper of the dark!

²³Usher Parsons, M.D. (1788-1868), physician, surgeon, and author, was one of Providence's leading doctors from 1822 until his death in 1868.

²⁴An asterisk at this point in the letter refers to a note written in ink in the left-hand margin, reading "Daniel Updike died Jan. 18. 1847." The handwriting which is not Updike's, may be Mrs. Whitman's.

²⁵Dr. S. J. Goldowsky, of Providence, who has been kind enough to read this letter and offer his observations, thinks that the symptoms described by Updike suggest diabetes insipidus.

him to be kept in a warm room, & such a course has been prescribed as will produce a perspiration on his skin but none has been produced as yet — I hope we shall be enabled to effect a reversion of action in the system, & if we can his danger will be over — I never saw neighbors express so much sympathy as they do for Daniel's recovery; he is very popular with them all —

I feel assured that the goodness of your heart will respond for the causes that have occasioned the delay in answering your very kind & affectionate letter — I hope I shall be enabled to attend the General Assembly a few days, where I shall do myself the great pleasure to see you, & shall certainly, if Daniel's situation will admit of my absence — You stated, you should like to know who was the author of the strictures on Davis' 'Revelations' in the *Bristol Phenix*²⁶ —? it was Professor John De Wolfe²⁷ — I agreed that Mr. Hazard might [be] permitted to deliver his address at Providence in January instead of Kingston at October²⁸ if you could be induced to write a Poem for the occasion²⁹ & this was the sole condition upon which I would consent — & Mr. Greene³⁰ & Mr. Hartshorne³¹ accepted upon that condition, but I have not heard a word about your Poem. I induced Mr. Hazard to prepare the Lecture to be delivered here, & he informed those that desired him to deliver it [in] Providence & omit doing it here, that he could not do it without Myself & Mr. Potter³² would agree to it & I made that the express condition — It will be a gross violation of confidence if it is not complied with — and I shall deem it an affront from them.

How have you passed the winter so far? Have you attended the Lectures. I heard of you at one with Mr. Peabody³³ — but only one — It would have been otherwise if I had been at liberty to have left home — You see by this, that I have an eye upon you & try to enquire of all your movements, but I am often disappointed in hearing of them — I really wish I could hear more of you? Have you been to Mr. Greene's; I understand Arrazelia³⁴ has discarded her admirer, Mr. Cross — I think she is lucky — I understand Mr. Fenner³⁵ dashes in the streets now & then — Mrs. Newcomb³⁶ I saw last Summer with Mrs. G. L. Tillinghast³⁷ — I ask all these questions because I think of those that I esteem — Who has the happiness to be your Beaux now — I envy that rascal, let him be who he will, & I will clear him out when I come or kill him. I am determined that no one shall supplant me in your good affections, and if there is such a fellow & you are desirous that he should retain his head in a sound condition, you had better advise him to conceal himself while I am in the city — You see I call them by hard names, & I am honest enough to give hard names to those I hate & I hate

all those that love you — I must be honest & can't deny it — I am reading a course in Geology for my amusement — & now what are you reading or rather your studies —? But I will enquire when I come — As you did not receive my last until sometime after its date I have enveloped this under cover to Mr. Davis³⁸ — Accept my sincere attachment to you & believe me

yours

W Updike

²⁶There appear to be no files extant for the *Bristol Phoenix* covering the period of Professor D'Wolf's article.

²⁷John D'Wolf (1786-1862), professor of chemistry at Brown University from 1817 to 1834.

²⁸There is no record of an address delivered by Hazard at this time. His *Discourse on the Character and Writings of Chief Justice Durfee* was delivered before The Rhode Island Historical Society the following year, January 18, 1848.

²⁹Mrs. Whitman complied with "Now, while the echoing cannon's roar," a poem written for the annual celebration of The Rhode Island Historical Society, January 13, 1847. The poem was recited by Albert Gorton Greene previous to Job Durfee's *Discourse* and was later bound in with it for publication; see Job Durfee's *Discourse*, Providence: Charles Burnett, Jr. (1847).

The poem was collected and, with deletions and some changes, reprinted under the title "Roger Williams" in *Hours of Life, and Other Poems* (1853).

³⁰Albert Gorton Greene (1802-1868), judge of the Municipal Court in Providence from 1858 to 1867, is more often remembered as a literary figure. He was the author of a large number of poems, the most famous of which is his "Old Grimes Is Dead."

³¹Thomas C. Hartshorn (d. 1854) was secretary of The Rhode Island Historical Society at this time. Another of Mrs. Whitman's friends who was interested in spiritualism, Hartshorn translated from the French J. P. F. Deleuze's *Practical Instruction in Animal Magnetism* (1837).

³²For Elisha R. Potter, see note 8.

³³Probably William Jewett Pabody (1813-1870), close friend to both Mrs. Whitman and Poe, who was a Providence lawyer and also a poet. Poems by Pabody were published in *The Rhode Island Book* (1841).

³⁴Arazelia Greene, who at the time of Updike's letter was still the unmarried daughter of Albert Gorton Greene (see note 30), became the wife of the Hon. Charles C. Van Zandt, governor of Rhode Island from 1877 to 1880. Her "discarded admirer," Mr. Cross, cannot be identified at this time.

³⁵There were numerous Fenners in Providence at this time, making it difficult to identify this particular one with any certainty. He was possibly Arthur Fenner, one of the sons of Governor James Fenner (1771-1846).

³⁶Rhoda (Mardenbrough) Newcomb, the mother of Charles King Newcomb (1820-1894), the Providence author. Mrs. Newcomb was for a long time at the center of Providence society. In one of his letters to her, Charles King Newcomb rebuked his mother for her large "coterie."

³⁷Probably Rebecca (Power) Tillinghast (d. 1860), Mrs. Whitman's older sister, who was the wife of the Hon. Joseph L. Tillinghast.

³⁸Mr. Davis was not the Andrew Jackson Davis of Updike's letter, but apparently a local friend of Mrs. Whitman who cannot now be identified.

THE NAVY AT NEWPORT:

A BRITISH VIEW, 1864*

Edited with an introduction

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SOON AFTER outbreak of the American Civil War Union officials faced an unexpected problem: they realized that the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis was exposed to capture by the Confederates. In fact, shortly after the fall of Fort Sumter Southerners began boasting that the revered *U.S.S. Constitution*, then at Annapolis, would be the first vessel to carry the new flag over the oceans. But more important than providing a status symbol for the South capture of the academy might well provide a base for flank attacks on Washington. Orders were therefore given to abandon the academy and to move the navy to Newport.

The story of its sojourn there, of its magnificent and imaginative achievements under great handicaps, has often been told in naval histories, but recently a British view of the navy at Newport has been uncovered among the admiralty papers in the Public Records Office, London. This report and its supporting documents shed new light on a little understood phase of Anglo-American diplomatic relations during the Civil War era.

Great Britain, leading naval power of the nineteenth century, naturally took great interest in the new naval colossus which seemed to be rising across the Atlantic. A spur to that interest was frequent friction between the two nations from 1861 to 1865. On several occasions, as the reader will recall, Anglo-American relations neared a breaking point, especially during the winter of 1861 in connection with the *Trent* affair. Fortunately, that crisis passed, as did the threat of British intervention in the fall of the following year, but by the summer of 1863 — partly because Northerners feared that Her Majesty's government might permit escape of the powerful Laird ironclad rams — tempers flared again and there was talk of war.

From Washington, the British minister warned London superiors of impending danger: "a war with Great Britain is a contingency

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The Navy at Newport

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never absent from the minds both of the men in power & of the Public at large. . . ." He warned that Federal naval strength had grown to formidable proportions, and he hinted that the increases had "little reference to the present struggle with the Southern States." Anticipating war and believing that knowledge of the American innovations in naval war might prove helpful to the admiralty in such an event, Lord Lyons proposed that an experienced naval observer be sent to America on a fact-finding mission.

The foreign office, seeing merit in the suggestion, advised admiralty officials of it and requested their co-operation in implementing it. In response to this prompting, the admiralty designated one of its bright young officers for this delicate mission. James Graham Goodenough, a thirty-two-year-old recently commissioned captain, had enlisted in the Royal Navy in 1844, had received a lieutenant's commission in 1851, and had served with courage and distinction in the Far East, where he received praise and promotion for his performance under fire. Cool, competent, and discreet, he proved an ideal choice.

His mission had a simple objective: full information about the performance of American ships and guns. But his superiors carefully spelled out the data required. The naval high command wanted to know about American ships, their number, disposition, armament; engineers sought statistics about engine performance, coal consumption, speed; other officials wished to know about the quality, training and performance of naval personnel. In fine, the British demanded full reports of American naval strengths and weaknesses.

With full co-operation of Union officials, Captain Goodenough in late 1863 embarked on a searching examination of the North's naval resources. After a tour of several months he prepared an extensive summary of "the preparations of this country for war with a maritime power." As instructed, he devoted some space to his visit to the "admirably managed college at Newport." Government support of the institution during its days of difficulty impressed him, as did the rigid standards of performance enforced there. He reported that Union officers spoke in glowing terms of the young men educated by the navy at Newport; he himself thought the course of instruction calculated to make the American professionally superior to his English counterpart.

The report, however, reflects the reactions of a trained observer to

a navy and a nation in transition, and it illustrates the great difficulty foreigners had in appraising American attitudes and aspirations. On the basis of Goodenough's report, few would guess that after Appomattox — instead of preparing for a war with a maritime power — America would turn its attention to domestic affairs and allow the magnificent fighting navy of 1865 to decay and disappear from the seas.

NEWPORT NAVAL COLLEGE:

The future supply of officers will be maintained from the naval college now at Newport. In view of the permanent increase of the navy the number of students has been increased by a recent act of congress from 450 to nearly 800. The fruit of this increase will not appear for three years; therefore the measure seems to provide for a permanent increase to the list of regular officers at twice the rate it has increased hitherto.

The naval college has now existed for eighteen years, first at Annapolis (to which it is proposed to return) and since 1861 at Newport, Rhode Island. It is . . . showing its effect among all ranks of officers in the regular service, from lieutenant commanders downward.

I have spoken to many officers of all ranks, and especially to Admiral Dupont, Commodores Hammond[?], Radford, Hitchcock, and Turner (the latter two of whom were for a long time first lieutenants of frigates) and other old officers of the education given [at the academy] and of the officers whom it has produced, and I have heard but one opinion expressed: all speak highly of the superiority of the officers educated at college to their predecessors.

The increase of the navy by the entry of merchant officers, who in America come from the same ranks in society as naval officers, shows very clearly the superiority of men who go through the course of education at Newport to those who go early to sea and pick up their knowledge here and there as best they can.

The academy was first established at Annapolis by Mr. Bancroft when he was secretary of the navy. The midshipmen "waiting orders" and on "dockyard duty" were collected there, and for the first six years a course of two years' study was the utmost which any midshipman received. The grounds at Annapolis were originally the site of Fort Severn, which was given up by the army for the use of the navy in 1845. The town was small and retired; the grounds of the college

consisted of 60 acres surrounded by a high wall, a coupee[?] of exercising ships and boats were given over to the use of the students.

Independent members of congress and [prior] secretaries of the navy had long urged on congress the necessity of establishing a school before Mr. Bancroft took the matter in hand. Among their reports one or two deserve repetition: Mr. Southard, secretary of the navy in 1824, says "The younger officers enter at so early an age that they cannot be accomplished or even accurate scholars. They are constantly on shipboard or in our navy yards, where much advancement cannot be expected. The better instructed an officer is, the more skilfully and precisely and of course the more economically will he perform the duties assigned him. 'Ignorance is always, skill is never, prodigal.' The Navy is also the bearer of our honor to every shore. The naval officer is in fact the representative of his country in every port to which he goes."

This has often been said before and may seem a collection of truisms; but it is also a truism that this applied to the English navy at a later date. [It is also true] that the recent condition of education in the English navy was very accurately given by the secretary of the navy's report for 1842, in which Mr. Upshur said, "Through a long course of years the midshipmen were left to educate themselves and one another. Suitable teachers are now provided for them, but their schools are kept in the midst of a thousand interruptions and impediments which render the system of little value." And, he might have added, as harassing to the teacher as wearying to the pupil. [At this point Captain Goodenough inserted a note stating that "the latter paragraph is true of the greater part of the English system at the present day."]

Three years after this Mr. Bancroft found that he had sufficient power without appealing to congress, and he selected Fort Severn for his future college. The water was deep close to the beach and the instruction ships were moored alongside. In time, the buildings comprised a library, gymnasium, observatory, residence for the professors, and in 1850, besides the depot frigate, a sloop of 600 tons, the *Bebble* was attached to the college for actual practice at sea.

The number of students in 1851 was 84

53 " 116

54 " 160

57 was 176
 58 " 189
 60 " 281

In 1861 the college was removed to Newport and a large hotel taken as a residence. Part of the students now live there and part on board the *Santee* and *Constitution*, two old frigates. Practice aloft and at the guns is carried out on board the *Marion* and *Macedonian*. A small steamer is employed for the instruction of the senior class in steam propulsion. The college now consists of 460 midshipmen and is immediately to be increased to about 750.

The course of study in ordinary times extends over four years; each class consists therefore of 115 members and will consist of from 180 to 190 when the numbers are filled up. When I visited the college no arrangements had been yet made for the increase. I will therefore describe the arrangements as I saw them.

On first entry the cadets are placed on board the *Constitution* and *Santee* (old 50-gun frigates) and pass the first year of their course there, as it is thought that they are more completely under the eye of their instructors than when living on shore. At the end of the first year they pass to the establishment on shore; and after the second year at the close of the examinations which take place in June, they are allowed to go to their homes until October. This is the only holiday which is allowed during the whole course, and the governor has no authority to grant more than twenty-four hours' leave to either student or instructor.

The class which has passed the final examination receives appointments to the navy as ensigns, and the two other classes go on board the drill ships *Macedonian* (frigate) and *Marion* (sloop) and, accompanied by a steam tender, proceed to sea for a summer cruise. They are going this year to Long Island Sound, where there is plenty of anchorage and room for target practice.

Under this system of admission a larger number of students are entered than are required, and a process of weeding is commenced from the first day and is continued throughout until on an average only about 60 per cent of those entered actually obtain appointments. The education being gratuitous, this is not thought any hardship and the rejections are absolutely necessary for the good of the service, for some youths who have received hardly any education at all are

nominated to college by members of congress.

The government of the school is administered by the following officers under the governor: 1) a commandant of midshipmen (who is a commander in the navy, and 2) twelve assistant commandants (who are lieutenant commanders or lieutenants in the navy). Of the latter, three are assistant instructors of seamanship and naval tactics, with the senior [officer] being in charge of the *Marion*. Two are instructors of gunnery infantry tactics and field artillery, and the remainder are attached to the *Santee* and *Constitution*, where they perform duties of commanding officers and instructors as above.

Under these officers discipline is carried out by an adjutant, subadjutant, captains and 2d captains of crews chosen from among the students.

The basis of organization of students for drill and discipline is in gun crews of 18, each commanded by a captain and 2d captain (who wear distinguishing marks) and who muster and report their crews to the adjutant on each occasion of falling in to parade for meals, drills, etc. The adjutant reports to one of the instructors who is officer of the day and receives orders from him to deliver to the captains of gun crews.

The number of a student at his gun gives him the number of his hammock or bed, his place at table, and everything of that description.

In order to accustom them to take command, they are in turn mates of decks, halls or floors for a day, during which time they are excused [from] recitations of study and are responsible for all that happens on their deck or floor, [especially] that there is no infraction of discipline. All infractions of discipline or misbehavior are reported to the commandant of midshipmen or to his assistants in charge of ships who award punishment according to a published scale. At a certain hour a written record of punishments of offenses of the preceding day is read out. On this, any midshipman is allowed to send in a written excuse for his offense.

The whole of the midshipmen are divided into two or more ship crews for exercise on board the practice ships, and they go on board them every Saturday, or oftener for exercise. They fill every position but commanding officer—and are occasionally ordered to take charge during a maneuver. When the practice ships go on their summer cruise, the commandant of the midshipmen takes charge of the squadron.

At Newport a large number of watchmen are employed to see that no student is beyond bounds without leave and that no wine, spirits, or tobacco enters the establishment. At Annapolis this is not required.

A number of civil professors and assistants . . . conduct the studies but have nothing to do with the discipline of the college. They are as follows: professors of astronomy, navigation, and surveying, with assistant[s]; professor of mathematics, with assistant; professor of natural and experimental philosophy, with assistant; professor of ethics and English studies, with assistant; professor of French, with assistant; professor of Spanish, with assistant; professor of drawing, with assistant; two chaplains; two surgeons; a commissary, a paymaster, a librarian, and a storekeeper.

The mess is supplied by the commissary and is excellent and well served; all the servants and colored men are appointed by the commissary.

The conditions of entry to the college being very easy, and the patronage of appointments being thrown into the hands of every variety of class of the population, it is necessary to subject the boys to a severer discipline than with us in England and to treat them with greater formality. With us the home life of all the boys has been much the same and all have passed through a good public or private school, but in America they come from their homes or from small schools where they have learnt but little, and hence the necessity for the dismissal of so many.

Among the defects of the institution I look on the want of a defined play hour as one of the greatest. Gun exercise is made to take the place of play, and no sports or games are entered into for want of time. Another defect is the entire absence of religious instruction beyond attending service once a week. Other minor defects are perhaps attributable to the different state of society in America from that in England.

The great fact which comes out of the establishment of the college — in the opinion of those best qualified by experience to judge — is: more useful officers are now added to the American navy than before the college existed.

JAMES G. GOODENOUGH,
Captain, Royal Navy

PETER EDES'S REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
RHODE ISLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 1787-1790

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[continued from July, 1966, inside back cover]

THE SEPTEMBER 1787 SESSION OF THE LEGISLATURE⁴⁷

Although neither the majority nor minority approved of the convoking the Assembly, the former because they wished to avoid being pushed by the latter to negative a motion for sending Delegates to Congress, and the latter because they were sure the former would not embrace any federal measure that should be proposed, yet the majority chusing rather to risk the consequences of refusing to send Delegates to Congress, than to let the General Assembly fall a second time,⁴⁸ either for want of the attendance of a member of each House, or, which might have been more disgraceful to their party, by declaring the warrant of a convocation [at the request of Governor John Collins] illegal, made provision for an attendance of a member of both Houses, the first day, and for daily attendance until a quorum of the Lower House had assembled, which took place on Tuesday [September 11], and then they proceeded to business.

The Lower House by one of their body requested his Excellency the Governor [John Collins] to lay before them the business on which he had convoked them. He accordingly appeared before the House, and in a short federal speech, informed them that he had called them together on account of a letter he had received from the President of Congress, urging the State in the strongest terms immediately to send on Delegates to Congress for many reasons; but particularly that they might be present when the General [Federal] Convention should report, which was daily expected. His Excellency having finished his speech, laid the letter on the table and retired.

The House then adjourned. The next forenoon, Wednesday [June 12], one of the minority desired that the business on which they were

⁴⁷*Newport Herald*, Sept. 20, 1787.

⁴⁸A scheduled meeting of the General Assembly failed in August of 1787 for want of a quorum to conduct business. The Country Party, eager to avoid needless agitation of the problem of the Federal Convention, canceled the session by not attending.

convoked might be taken up, and was seconded; but the ORACLE [Jonathan J. Hazard] of the majority thought otherwise. He thought, Mr. Speaker [Othniel Gorton], that it would be best to take up this important matter in the *cool* of the morning, that it would be best to consult their *pillows* upon it. It was replied that this could not be an arduous business that required the consultation of *pillows*, that gentlemen had had already one night at least for consulting their *pillows*, intimated pretty clearly that the majority wanted to meet and consult in *full and solemn convention* on the subject, and consented, because, I suppose, he could not help it, that it should be postponed for consideration until the *cool* of the next morning. The morning lowered, and heavily in clouds brought on the day, the important day, big with disgrace and infamy.

The question was proposed, and a debate ensued, in which the minority adduced and urged such arguments on the affirmative side of the question as convinced every spectator, and must have convinced the majority themselves; but bound by the solemn league and covenant they had entered into at the Convention the night before, it was impossible to force them to yield to their conviction. The ORACLE was obliged to stand the contest almost alone; for, excepting a cracker discharged now and then by the little Hypocrite, who sometimes prates so prettily from the south-side of the House, no one came forth to the support of our intrepid Hero. Unabashed he stood, as ever *Money-maker* did in pillory, and, bidding defiance to common sense, and pointed reasoning, as often as he had a chance, he furiously scattered about him fire-brands, arrows and death, swearing he would fight up to his knees in blood for confederation. After raving, until he had put himself out of breath, he closed the debate with declaring that out last Delegates in Congress had, in a letter to the State, hinted that it was one design of the [Federal] Convention to deprive this State of an equal voice with the rest, and that he would never consent to sending Delegates to Congress, until he should be acquainted with the report of the Convention. If imprudence and perseverance intitle to victory in a political contest, the victory, Oh! J-n-th-n was justly thine. The question being put, whether the Assembly would send Delegates to Congress, *now* or *not* was determined against sending Delegates to Congress at this time by a majority of eight. As soon as the question was decided, away marched the majority with their leader at their head to a suitable place of refreshment,

there to talk over and rejoice at their ill-gotten victory . . .

A motion was made this same Thursday [September 13], that citizens of other States who had tendered paper of the late emission for debts due to the citizens of this State, and had lodged it with any Judge who had deposited it in the Treasury, might, upon application to the Treasurer, and producing the proper documents⁴⁹ receive it again. Our *Oracle* arose in opposition to the motion, and by the dint of his sagacity and foresight saw in it gins, traps and snares. The gentlemen who made it, to explain the matter to him, told him that a certain Judge of the Superior Court, when the Assembly held their Session in Kings-County [Washington County] in March last, informed them that a person belonging to the State of Connecticut had tendered and lodged paper money with him for a debt due to a citizen of another State, expressing his doubts whether an inhabitant of another State could legally make a tender in paper for a debt due to a citizen of this according to the emitting act. That the Assembly were of opinion that he could not, and at that Session passed an act to that purpose explanatory of the emitting act. He flatly denied that such an act had ever passed, and persisted in his denial even when the gentleman told him that he drew the act, and that he, the *Oracle*, was by him when he made the draft. The Schedules [of printed laws] were produced, and the act alluded to was read. The gentleman then addressed the Speaker [Othniel Gorton], and turning himself to his antagonist, gave him such a severe dressing as would have made a mule flinch, and have extorted a confession of mistake at least, from the most incorrigible, obstinate offender against truth and common decency; but he attempted to evade the lash by denying that the act was explanatory, and he seemed to me invariably to preserve his muscles and the colour of his cheeks . . .

As the character of the *Oracle* enters into, and is so intimately mixed with the doings of the Assembly, it is hoped that the strictures

⁴⁹The "proper documents" referred to above are obscure since there is no other evidence on this issue except that given in Edes's reports. The General Assembly prohibited tenders of paper bills by out-of-state citizens to their Rhode Island creditors at its March 1787 session. Apparently, however, some tenders were made anyway and lodged with judges who then sent the funds to the treasurer. The proposed bill would have permitted the return of these tenders and the documents in question must be legal evidence of an ineffective tender of paper currency by out-of-state residents.

I have made upon it will not be considered as an unpardonable, if any, digression from the scope of my narrative.

An act passed appointing persons to receive the interest bonds and collect the money thereon.⁵⁰

When the business was upon the tapis, it became a question what the persons were to receive of the obligors for each interest bond, and here the office was put up to auction, to the members of the Lower House and the Lower House only, not as a member wittily observed as at common vendues to the highest bidder but to the lowest bidder of them — a shilling, nine pence and six pence were bid, and, according to the nature of the auction, it was struck off to six pence.

It was about the printing of this act that the majority discovered their spleen against the honest, impartial printer of the *Newport Herald*.

They ordered this act to be printed by both the printers in the county of Providence [John Carter and Bennet Wheeler], but only by one of the printers in this county [Newport], the meritorious printer of the *Newport Mercury* [Henry Barber]. Peter Edes to be sure must not be benefited by publishing their acts. Why? because he is regarded by the minority, is an honest, temperate man, and a publisher of a variety of interesting truths on large paper, with a neat type. Poor Peter! don't be discouraged . . . How that ungenerous order came to be reversed, permit me to inform the public. One of the majority, on Friday morning [September 14], moved to recede from his vote in the evening. Whether this motion sprang from a fear that their partiality might do the printer of the *Newport Mercury* more hurt than good, by inducing some of the minority to drop his paper, who have hitherto continued to take it purely out of pity to the poor printer, or whether it arose from a sense of ungenerous conduct I leave to others to determine, my disposition, as I trust is the case of the reader, always leading me to put the most charitable construction I can on the actions of others. The recession of this member drew others along with it, and this matter ended as well as might be expected. . . .

On Friday another letter was received from Congress, earnestly

⁵⁰There is a reference to the mortgage bonds on real estate which were given as security for the paper money loaned by the state under the emitting act of May 1786. Trustees were appointed to receive the bonds and interest due on loans.

pressing the State to send on Delegates to Congress. It was moved by the minority to resume the question for sending Delegates to Congress, but the majority chose to consult their *pillows*, otherwise to hold and consult in a *Convention* on the occasion as they had done before, and it was accordingly postponed until the *cool of the next morning*. By the by how comes it to pass that the majority who are eternally holding *Conventions* are *so bitterly* opposed to the General [Federal] Convention of the States? because perhaps they may imagine that this Grand Convention will swallow up their delectable little ones.

Saturday [June 15] the morning again lowered, and the question came on. The *Oracle* and some others kept back, but they had arranged their troops so perfectly the preceding night, as to secure a majority of three against sending Delegates to Congress now.

They passed an act, upon the Resolution of Congress, requesting the State to repeal any laws repugnant to the Treaty with Great-Britain, declaring that the said Treaty was a law of the land, and that it was in no respect to be receded from, misconstrued or violated. This act I suppose will be published, and I pray that it may be marked with a white stone.

An act passed granting a tax of thirty thousand pounds in paper to be paid into the Treasury in January next, to be appropriated towards discharging the State debt . . .

The principle acts which passed this Session, were those which have been mentioned; a curious, apologetical letter to Congress, assigning reasons for not sending Delegates to the [Federal] Convention,⁵¹ a protest of the minority,⁵² and a resolution requesting the Governor by letter to inform the President of Congress that two Delegates were directed to attend their body on the first Monday

⁵¹This letter asserted that the General Assembly did not have the power to alter the fundamental law of Rhode Island without consulting the people; for this reason, it had no authority to send delegates to a Federal Convention which would write a new national constitution. The legislature further claimed that Rhode Island had already done its part in strengthening the federal system by giving Congress power over international trade and the right to tax this commerce. For the letter see Governor Collins to the President of Congress, In General Assembly, Newport, Sept. 17, 1787, Papers of the Continental Congress, State Papers of Rhode Island, Mss., National Archives, 587-588, 596-603; Bartlett, *Records*, X, 255, 258-259.

⁵²The minority protest was signed by deputies elected from Newport and Providence. For this document consult State Papers of Rhode Island, Mss., National Archives, 592-594; Bartlett, *Records*, X, 259-260.

in November next, that measures were taken by the Assembly for having the State duly represented, and that they had not given orders for their Delegates going forward previous to that time, under an apprehension that the States would not generally be represented in Congress until their meeting for the next year . . .

The session closed with a scene shocking to humanity. The waiters produced their accounts of days attendance, leaving it to the House to allow such sums as they should judge proper for their services, when some members of the Majority, who had granted abundant sums of nominal money to their favourites, hesitated to give them a reasonable allowance. . . . A severe and long altercation took place on this occasion which would have terminated against the waiters, if the Speaker [Othniel Gorton], to give him his due, had not humanely interposed in favour of, and by his influence procured them a tolerable reward.

Thus ended the third Session of not the *old wise*, but of the present *wise, virtuous, just, federal* administration.

THE OCTOBER 1787 SESSION OF THE LEGISLATURE⁵³

On Wednesday the 31st of October both Houses of Assembly were formed, when the Members of the Lower House for the last half of the year took their seats and re-elected their former Speaker [Othniel Gorton] and Clerk [John S. Dexter].⁵⁴ No alterations of consequence have been made in the new election; the same principles which has [*sic*] for almost two years distracted our State, still forms the ruling characteristics of the majority.

A Bill for *prohibiting the slave trade* presented by the society of Friends, was the first business which engaged the attention of the House. A motion was made to postpone the consideration of it to the next session, as the Bill was new and of great importance; but this motion was overruled, and the Bill passed by a very large majority. To the astonishment of the public, the leading *paper money members* stood forth in support of the Bill, reprobating the trade not only as inhuman, but as unjust and against the *principles of morality and religion* . . . How far this happy prospect of reformation proceeded

⁵³*Newport Herald*, Nov. 8, 1787.

⁵⁴While the upper house and all general officers of the state were elected annually in the spring, the lower house was elected semiannually in the spring and fall. These frequent elections gave a democratic and local tone to the structure of politics in Rhode Island.

will appear by the subsequent proceedings.

Private petitions employed the attention of the House until Friday noon [November 2], when a motion made at a former session was renewed for what is *farcically* called "*a more equal representation*," in the Lower House of Assembly, or in other words, to reduce the large towns to the number of the smallest — two members for each. A motion for referring it was negatived by a majority of one; it was afterwards agreed to, and on Thursday of the next session this important question is to be decided . . .

A report on the public letters was now called for. The letter from Congress and *report of the* [Federal] *Convention* being read, Mr. [Henry] *Marchant*, a member from Newport arose, and observed that perhaps there never was a matter of more consequence before the House; but still as it was the people at large who were to determine this momentous question, and the General Assembly were the medium through which the people were to receive their report, he would not enter into the merits of the question, nor anticipate the sentiments the good people at large entertained of it, but wished that they might consider it with coolness and deliberation. He therefore made a motion in writing, which was seconded by the members of Newport and Providence, for printing the proposed constitution to be transmitted to the several towns, recommending them to appoint delegates to meet in convention to consider and determine thereon, and forward the same to Congress; upon which a warm opposition took place, and the merits of the Constitution were largely entered into, and every suggestion made that might prejudice the minds of the people (too much prejudiced already) to any plan which does not quadrate with their darling privileges of making *paper money*. The weak and groundless suggestions of the majority were answered by the minority with manly truth and decided arguments, but all was in vain; upon the question being put to agree with it, it was negatived by a great majority. However, to preserve the appearance of *federalism*, the House ordered the report of the [Federal] Convention to be printed in handbills and sent to the several towns, to inform them of what they had long been fully advised of by its general publication.

At the former sessions a very singular *apologetical letter* was sent to Congress, giving reasons for not sending Delegates the remainder of the last federal year; but assuring Congress that they had made

provision to have their Delegates forward on the new year which commenced the first Monday of this month. Commodore [Abraham] Whipple, a member from Cranston, called upon the House to perform their promise. He trusted they did not mean to sacrifice all their national honour and to make promises without the least attention of performing them; he accordingly moved, "that the Delegates be ordered forward and provision made for their support," but the House declined acting thereon. It also moved that the requisitions of Congress for the present year might be taken up, but the motion was not attended to . . .

At the last session a vote passed the Lower House, ordering all holders of six per cent. state securities to receive a second quarter thereof in the depreciated paper money under penalty of forfeiture of the same. This vote the Upper House did not act upon; but at this session they sent down a vote directing the holders of them to receive the one fourth part within two months, but upon failure, that the interest only should cease.⁵⁵ Here was a new glimmering of a return of the blessings of *good government* which for a long time had been banished from our little State; but the Lower House were in a flame in a moment, nonconcurrent with it, and sent a vote of a similar complexion with all their paper money acts, ordering this second quarter of the principal and interest forfeit if the holders do not apply for the same within two months. The Upper House with reluctance and by a majority of one only [among ten members] concurred with this extraordinary resolution.

The session was closed with grants to the waiters at six for one, and without repealing an act allowing the tender of it at par . . .

THE FEBRUARY 1788 SESSION OF THE LEGISLATURE⁵⁶

On WEDNESDAY the 27th ult. the Houses were organized, when a motion was made "that a Committee be appointed to inquire into the truth of a declaration made in the late [Ratifying] Convention

⁵⁵Under the common law a tender of payment in lawful money, if refused by a creditor, did not extinguish the debt; such a tender would only suspend further interest payments upon the debt until the creditor was willing to accept the proffered payment. According to Rhode Island's paper money system any offer of paper currency, if refused, canceled the entire debt and interest owed. These rejected tenders, after a complex legal process, were forfeited to the state. The same principle of possible forfeiture was applied when the General Assembly redeemed the state debt.

⁵⁶*Newport Herald*, March 6, 1788.

of Massachusetts, that the Delegates of this State had been recalled from Congress to the great injury of the United States"; it was urged in support of the motion, that these suggestions were groundless, that no Delegate had been recalled, and therefore an inquiry was necessary to retrieve our *public character*, which had suffered much in consequence of this misrepresentation. Some members observed in reply that the motion was not sufficiently extensive; if *inquiries could obliterate reproaches*, it ought to extend not only to that charge but to imputations that were against us of a more disgraceful and aggravated nature. In the process of this debate, the House entered into an investigation of their former proceedings relative to their Delegates in Congress, from whence it appeared, that it was the sense of the House at May session, 1787, that the Delegates should return, from an idea that there would not be a Congress during the sitting of the General [Federal] Convention, and in consequence of the difficulty of supplying them with money to defray the expenses; that a vote to this effect was about to be passed, when it was observed, that such a resolution, if reduced to writing, might be considered as containing a reflection on the gentlemen in this delegation. It was therefore thought more eligible that his Excellency the Governor should communicate the sense of the House by letter to the Delegates. To confirm this relation of facts the original vote granting a sum of money to the Delegates was produced in which were found the following erasements: "*in order that they may be enabled to pay off their bills and return home as soon as may be*" . . .

The Governor not being present during the session, it could not be ascertained whether his Excellency had made these communications or not; the Delegates did return soon after, and the State has not been since represented in Congress nor any provision made for it. The House generally acquiesced in the truth of this detail, but as much had been said on this subject, the motion was agreed to, and a Committee were accordingly appointed, but they have not yet made a report.

The foregoing discussion of the remissness of the State in not keeping up her representation in Congress, together with several letters received from the President and Secretary of that Hon. Body on this subject, proved a favorable crisis for a renewal of the motion, to send forward our Delegates; accordingly an order was made for

defraying the expences of the delegation and instructions given to Peleg Arnold and Jonathan [J.] Hazard, Esquires, to take their seats in Congress as soon as possible.

THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS by a very respectable Committee presented a memorial on the subject of the *Tender and Limitation acts*,⁵⁷ in which, after observing that the continuance of these laws in the present depreciated state of the currency, would be productive of the greatest injustice and oppression as well as a general depravity and corruption of morals, they intreated that a repeal or such amendments of the laws might take place as may in the future prevent these evils. This memorial was received and referred to the next sessions, and copies of it ordered to be printed and transmitted to the several towns for their sentiments on this interesting question. The reception of this memorial and referring it to the freemen fully establish this position: That the General Assembly are convinced of the injustice of the Tender and Limitation acts, and it ought to be considered by all Courts of Justice as a virtual suspension of them. It is therefore presumed that the freemen will have such a regard for their honor and the dignity and happiness of the State as to instruct their Deputies to repeal these unjust laws at the next sessions of Assembly. It must be the wish of every *honest man* that the application of this BENEVOLENT SOCIETY may be blessed with success.

THURSDAY [February 28], agreeable to the order of the day, the bill for restricting the representation of each town to two members in General Assembly, was moved for; in consequence of which a motion was made to continue it to a future session, grounded upon the importance of the subject and the unavoidable absence of several members, by reason of the severity of the weather. It was, however, negatived by a majority of three. The smallness of this majority, and some unfavorable appearances of success, prevented the supporters of this UNCONSTITUTIONAL Bill from prosecuting their motion until they discovered, at the close of the session, that several other

⁵⁷The Tender Acts refer to articles of several statutes which made the paper currency a legal tender in all contracts upon the penalty of forfeiture for refusing the bills. The Limitation Act is a reference to a law which passed the Assembly in December 1786. This statute provided for the redemption of all promissory notes and other informal instruments of short-term credit, including book accounts, within the period of one year; after that time such debts would no longer be recognizable in Rhode Island's courts.

members in opposition to it, were absent when they renewed their motion; but the ungenerous principles which induced this manoeuvre being detected and opposed, they withdrew their motion, and the Bill was referred to the next session.

From the state of the TREASURY laid before the House, it appeared that of the £30,000 tax, payable the first of January last, only £5,440, 17s. hath been paid, that the sum of £12,783, 4s., 8½d. had been paid in discharge of the first quarter's dividend of the State debt, £10,495, 4s., 5d. for the second quarter. And as the period of these two instalments had elapsed, the State gained £28,797, by their act of forfeiture.

An act passed allowing the public creditors to receive the third quarter part of their demands; no period for forfeiture in case of refusal to take the paper money is yet fixed.

The Treasurer and collector of taxes are authorized to receive in payment of taxes, notes not exceeding ten pounds, that were issued at an interest of six per cent. provided the holders of them have taken their two first dividends in paper [money].

The distresses of the INVALIDS forced them again to appear before the House for their slender stipends, exhibiting a most affecting spectacle of human misery; their appearance sanctified the truth of their wants, and their mutilated trunks evidenced undeniable claims. The minority, as usual, were charged with mustering these wretched objects to embarrass the House and excite popular clamour. . . .

A motion having been made, and negatived at a former session, for calling a Convention to take into consideration and decide upon the proposed Constitution of the United States of America, as recommended by the Convention held at Philadelphia in May last, a new motion was now made from that part of the House by whom the former question had been negatived, "That the proposed Constitution should be submitted to the people at large." It was opposed, because it differed from the mode recommended by the Convention who formed the Constitution, and which mode had been adopted by all the states, that the subject would receive a full and satisfactory discussion in a Convention, but this could not be expected in town meetings. It was asked if the Constitution should be rejected by the people, could a Convention be called? It was agreed that it could not be done; but if the people should adopt it, their ratification would

not be valid; consequently a Convention must be called, and might not that Convention act counter to the determination of the people? Notwithstanding the absurdity of this mode appeared in the most glaring colours, and the most important consequences were connected with an adoption or rejection of it, they continued tenacious of the motion, supporting it with this idea, that the Assembly were not empowered to call a Convention, it being with the people only to decide on a Constitution. And upon the question, "shall it be submitted to a Convention or to town meetings?" there were 15 for calling a Convention, and 43 submitting it to the people. A committee was then appointed to draft a Bill directing the mode in which the towns should decide; they accordingly reported a bill on Saturday, providing for calling town-meetings on at which time every freeholder and freeman were to be particularly warned by the constable to attend, and that the yeas and nays should be taken on the Constitution as proposed. As soon as this bill was read it was moved that it should be passed into a law, after filling up the blank with the fourth Monday of March inst. An amendment was proposed, that the freemen should be at liberty not only to adopt or reject the Constitution, *but to instruct their Deputies for calling a Convention*, if this mode of decision should appear to them more proper. In support of the amendment it was said, that there were many freemen who had not made up their judgment on the proposed Constitution, and for want of sufficient information would be unwilling to decide upon the question, that confining the freemen to a particular question as proposed in the Bill was framed; for, if it was true, that the legislature had not power to call a Convention, it would be an invasion of the rights of the people to deprive them of the liberty of adopting it if this mode of decision should appear to them most regular and proper. The Speaker [Othniel Gorton] refused to put the question upon the amendment, altho' called for from different quarters of the House, until the question upon the Bill was taken; this being decided in the affirmative, a vote was taken upon the amendment, which was rejected by the usual majority.

At a former session the majority were for postponing a discussion of the Constitution until it had received a decision in the other states [so] that the people might have the best means of informing themselves on this subject, but a motion for this purpose was now negatived. It seemed to be their wish at this time to hasten a decision

before the passions of the people should subside in expectation that their negative would have an influence upon the States who have not yet decided . . .

[to be continued]

THE RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEW MEMBERS

[continued from back cover]

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Mr. William H. McLaughlin, Jr.	Warwick, R. I.
Mrs. Charles W. Paige	Mr. Donald K. Trescott
Riverside, R. I.	Rumford, R. I.
Mrs. Karl L. F. Poyton	Mrs. Donald K. Trescott
Warwick, R. I.	Rumford, R. I.
Mrs. Nathaniel D. Robinson	Mr. Herbert F. Tucker
Barrington, R. I.	Rumford, R. I.
Mrs. Robert M. Schacht	Mr. Joseph Ungaro
Mr. Philip R. Siener, Jr.	Lincoln, R. I.
Mrs. Philip R. Siener, Jr.	Mrs. Willard W. Viall
Mr. Archie Smith	Barrington, R. I.
Mr. Donald E. Spears	Miss Susan Weatherhead
Newport, R. I.	Barrington, R. I.
Mr. John J. Starke	Mrs. Lawrence M. Weyker
Rumford, R. I.	Seekonk, Mass.
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Mr. Graham P. Teller	Rehoboth, Mass.
Wellesley, Mass.	Mr. Paul E. P. White
Mrs. Graham P. Teller	Silver Spring, Maryland
Wellesley, Mass.	Mr. Richard L. Wonson
Mr. Allen H. Thornton	Fall River, Mass.
Warwick, R. I.	Mr. Robert H. Zexter
	Bristol, R. I.

THE RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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May 1, 1966 to September 14, 1966

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