Rhode Island History

Contents

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Ann Burlak, the "Red Flame." Photograph, 1931, mounted on a bookmark of the Dorr War Bookstore, Providence; Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College.

Red Flame Burning Bright:

Communist Labor Organizer Ann Burlak,
Rhode Island Workers, and the New Deal

Quenby Olmsted Hughes

In 1931 a youthful beauty named Ann Burlak arrived in Rhode Island, charged by her union with organizing local workers and the unemployed. Within a few years she had collected a number of colorful nicknames, such as "Seditious Ann" and the "Hunger March Queen," and she soon became the focus of media obsessed with the spread of Communism. Now, in the early twenty-first century, she has been given a prominent place in exhibits at the Rhode Island Historical Society's Museum of Work & Culture, and she was featured in the *Providence Journal*'s 1999 showcase of men and women significant in twentieth-century Rhode Island history.[1] She is usually remembered today as the "Red Flame," fiery, passionate, eye-catching, and entirely focused upon her effort to organize workers and the unemployed; but Ann Burlak was also a Communist organizer in the New England area, a role with which Rhode Islanders are now generally unfamiliar. Both her meteoric rise to media prominence and her equally rapid disappearance from the headlines reflect the larger role that Communists played in Rhode Island and in the United States. Although the Communists failed to develop a lasting organization or to foment revolution, their dramatic methods and newsworthy organizers and demonstrations brought increased attention to the demands of the workers and unemployed. The story of Ann Burlak's efforts in Rhode Island during the Great Depression—particularly in the organization of textile workers and the creation of massive demonstrations of the unemployed—illustrates this in dramatic fashion.

From Ann Burlak's perspective and that of the Communist Party, Rhode Island offered fertile ground for organizing. As the "Birthplace of the Industrial Revolution," it was the most industrialized state in the country; by 1908 Pawtucket had 236 mills, Central Falls had 47, Woonsocket 127, and Providence 1,044. Because of this concentration of industry, by the 1920s Rhode Island was also the nation's most densely populated state, with Central Falls, its most crowded city, closely followed by Providence, where an average of 15,774 people were crammed into each square mile.[2] There had been some increase in union membership in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but the number of workers still to be organized in the state was high, and the possibilities of labor unrest were commensurately elevated. Even after the textile industry began to migrate south, and despite the state's small size, in 1923 Rhode Island ranked third nationally in woolen and worsted manufacturing and fifth in cotton manufacturing.[3] Many towns in Rhode Island and nearby Massachusetts were, as Ann Burlak later remembered, "pretty-much one-industry towns."[4] These conditions seemed to bode well for the development of the Communists' chosen form of labor organization, the industrial union.

The 1920s and 1930s were a time of economic struggle for Rhode Island, which by 1923 already had the highest unemployment rate in the country.[5] The closing of factories, already in progress before the stock market crash of 1929, continued at an accelerated pace in the early 1930s. Between 1923 and 1938 Rhode Island textile production fell by two-thirds, and the number of workers in the industry declined from 33,993 to about 12,000.[6] Forty percent of the state's textile workers lost their jobs in the first two years of the Great Depression, while workers lucky enough to keep their jobs made, on average, less than nine dollars a week. By 1932, a year after Ann Burlak's arrival, 115,000 Rhode Islanders had joined the ranks of the unemployed.[7] The Communist Party and radical labor unions, such as Burlak's National Textile Workers Union, sought to attract both the unemployed and those Rhode Island workers who were managing to cling to their jobs.

Rhode Islanders joined the Communist Party for a variety of reasons. Some were motivated by strong

identification with the working class and a desire to end poverty. Margaret Cann, once the vice chairman of the Communist Party in Rhode Island, wrote of her experiences with want: "As I visited with my father [a minister] over the country side, I saw much poverty and learned to care for the poor; I was about seven years old and suggested giving a surplus to someone poor; my mother looked me in the eyes and said: 'we are poor.' That day I became deeply identified with the working class."[8] John Hovan, also a significant voice in the Rhode Island Communist Party, joined in 1935 because the national party's Unemployed Councils seemed to be the most active organizations confronting the rampant unemployment and poverty in the country.[9]

Ann Burlak sought an organization that would fight for the well-being of the working class. She became interested in unions as a result of her family's experiences.[10] In 1925 her family was struggling to survive because Bethlehem Steel had cut her father's employment to two days a week.

This 1935 passport identifies Ann Burlak as a silk weaver. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College.

Anastasia Burlak and her daughter, Ann, circa 1912-13. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College.

The factory owners "thought they were being fair, they were sharing the work," Burlak later laughed. But her family could not live on such wages, and so at fourteen she left school to work in a textile mill in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. On her first day on the job, she was offered training to become a weaver at the rate of nine dollars for a fifty-four-hour week. She was shocked, however, to hear the interviewer offer a young boy the same position for twelve dollars a week. When she protested, the company man smirked condescendingly at her and said, "Well, Annie, you KNOW boys need more money than girls."[11] That night, when she told her father about her first day at work, Harry Burlak told her that she needed a union.[12]

But Ann Burlak's first experience with unions was disappointing. When a small committee of workers from her factory that she had helped organize approached the already-established AFL craft union local in Bethlehem to ask for assistance in organizing her mill's textile workers, the committee found that "they weren't interested in us. They were too busy with their own locals and couldn't take on another organizing job. . . . That told us something about

SOME union leaders."[13] After that rejection Burlak turned toward a more radical alternative: industrial unionism. The proponents of industrial unionism welcomed all workers in an industry, regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity, and argued that all of an industry's workers, whatever their craft, should join together.

It was in 1925, when curiosity prompted her to attend a Pennsylvania meeting supporting strikers involved in a violent and bitter textile dispute in Passaic, New Jersey, that Ann Burlak encountered Communists for the first time.[14] The drive for public support was led by the feisty Ella Reeve Bloor, affectionately known, in her sixties, as "Mother Bloor."[15] "Since most of the weavers were women," Bloor later explained, "one of our jobs was to organize groups of women sympathizers."[16] Burlak was deeply impressed by Mother Bloor: "I was fascinated by her. . . . She was a

Ann Burlak is shown with her father, mother (seated), and brothers in this photograph from the mid-1920s. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College.

little woman, white hair, very energetic . . . [with a] strong speaking voice, and she spoke without notes. . . . She looked at the audience . . . and every once in awhile our eyes would meet and I felt—'She spotted me; she's talking to *me*.' (laugh) . . . I guess I was mesmerized, because at the end of the meeting she sought me out. . . . She sat down and began talking to me."[17] Bloor told Burlak about the Young Communist League, explaining that it might help her find answers to her questions regarding unions and unionization and provide her with the support of other young people with similar goals.

Burlak joined the Young Communist League in 1926. As a member, in 1928 she represented workers from her Bethlehem plant at the first convention of a new Communist-affiliated industrial union, the National Textile Workers Union. That year leaders of the NTWU asked her to become an organizer, and soon her entire family was involved in radical organizing. In May 1929, as a result of a police raid on a union meeting, Ann Burlak was arrested, along with her father and a younger brother.[18] Shortly thereafter her father was fired from his job at Bethlehem Steel after being informed that he was being terminated because of his daughter's union activities. Within a few years Harry Burlak took a job in the Soviet Union and moved the rest of his family there, leaving Ann in the United States to continue her organizing work.[19]

AFTER TWO YEARS of working to develop multiracial textile unions in the South—a dangerous undertaking that led to death threats and prison time for her[20]—Burlak traveled to New England, where she would focus her energies for much of the rest of her life. She arrived in Rhode Island, where "strikes were brewing," in early 1931.[21] She had just been released on bail from a southern jail, in which she had been imprisoned on charges of insurrection that earned her the nickname "Seditious Ann."[22] Quickly becoming known in Rhode Island as the Red Flame, by the spring and summer of 1931 she was embroiled in a series of strikes involving mills in Pawtucket and Central Falls.[23] In May 1931 she assumed leadership of a strike in Pawtucket that soon spread to Central Falls mills as well. "Revolting against starvation wages of five and eight dollars a week for a 44 to

Burlak (with her arm raised) leads a labor march in the early 1930s.
Labor Defender Photo Group; Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College.

48 hour week," the Communist newspaper *Young Worker* reported, "the workers at the General Fabrics Mill [in Pawtucket] are out solidly on strike behind the leadership of the National Textile Workers Union."[24] The strikers were seeking to remove efficiency experts from the mills, roll back wage cuts, and increase overtime pay.[25]

On June 16, in the first real violence of the strike, police attempted to arrest Burlak for allegedly throwing pepper in the face of Louise King, a forelady of the General Fabrics Corporation in Central Falls. Her supporters quickly rallied to her side to protect her. According to the *Providence Evening Bulletin,* only after prolonged negotiations and the summoning of "every officer in the city" could the police convince strikers

to allow the arrest of the "girl striker Annie Burlock [*sic*]."[26] Burlak conducted her own defense at her trial at the Eleventh District Court in Central Falls, vehemently denying the assault charge brought against her, while five hundred strikers gathered outside the courthouse awaiting the verdict. Calling her a "bold and unafraid woman" and declaring that the workers would be better off if they sought leaders from their own ranks rather than following an "outside agitator," Judge Roscoe M. Dexter found Burlak guilty as charged, and he gave her two weeks to leave Central Falls and escape sentence.[27] Burlak refused the offer as the strikers cheered. Fourteen days later, after accusing her of wishing to become a martyr, Dexter sentenced her to thirty days in jail and a fine of two hundred

dollars.[28] Released on bail, Burlak triumphantly greeted a cheering crowd that sang "The police are having a hell of a time, Trying to break our picket-line!"[29]

On that same day, July 10, the police attempted to contain some three thousand strikers and sympathizers who marched on a Central Falls silk mill. When Burlak appeared, the demonstrators broke through police lines and attacked the officers with tomatoes, eggs, and bricks.[30] During the rioting, which lasted until midnight, over five hundred windows were broken, and the police resorted to tear gas and water hoses to regain control.[31] Local papers reported that the riot was precipitated by an "invasion of communists" and "outside hoodlums, juveniles and agitators."[32] The *Evening Bulletin* published a story describing the "Burlac [*sic*] Woman" as a "worker for [a] Communist group."[33] On July 12 state police informed Burlak that she had to leave Central Falls. "Sure, I'll go now," she replied, and she promptly crossed the bridge to the neighboring city of Pawtucket, where she continued her agitation.[34] The *New York Times* reported that Ann Burlak, "well to the forefront in her red attire," had "done more than any one else to keep up the spirit of the strikers."[35]

An array of Rhode Islanders condemned the Communist labor agitation that Burlak led. In May, Rhode Island businessmen set up a citizens' committee in an attempt to end the strike. That spring and summer a local Catholic priest, James MacDonald, preached a series of antistrike sermons, including one with the message "Only [the] weak will go to heaven," implying that the use of union strength would endanger the workers' souls.[36] On July 11 the Polish American Citizens Club tried to persuade strikers to ignore the Communist organizers and agree to mediation by the citizens' committee.[37] Attempts at federal mediation were made in July by Anna Weinstock, commissioner of conciliation of the United States Labor Department.[38] The strikers for the most part ignored these efforts. Ann Burlak, "the storm centre of the strike," confidently predicted in a speech to two thousand strikers in a field near the Royal Weaving Plant in Pawtucket, "We will win the strike."[39]

Much to the dismay of more conservative labor leaders, the strikers placed their confidence solely in Burlak. John T. Burns, the president of the Rhode Island Federation of Labor, expressed his chagrin: "I want to say that I greatly regret that men and women who are employed in the textile industry cannot see the importance of aligning themselves with the [American Federation of Labor's] United Textile Workers of America instead of accepting the assistance of an organization whose purpose, it has been demonstrated, is inimical to the aims, objects and ideals of our labor movement, and is also destructive to our American institutions."[40]

Burlak (described in local newspapers as fond of vibrant red garments and with a "Joan Crawford" hairstyle) "again had centre of the stage" on July 15, when federal immigration authorities arrested and attempted to deport her.[41] "Ann Burlak," the *Evening Bulletin* reported, "will be ordered to Poland if she cannot prove citizenship" and demonstrate "why she should not be deported as an undesirable alien."[42] A full page of photographs in the *Providence Journal* pictured a beaming Burlak, obviously much amused by her latest tangle with the government.[43]

Federal officials apparently could not find her birth certificate in Pennsylvania and thus thought they could deport her as an "undesirable alien." Burlak later commented that the officials must have believed that there were "no Americans that are fighters" and that "they all have to come from somewhere else." When told that the U.S. government wanted to deport her to Poland, she laughed, "Well, I've never been to Poland, and it will be an interesting trip but I don't see why you pick on Poland!"[44] Burlak's parents had in fact immigrated from Ukraine. As an American citizen, she felt quite sure that the government would be unable to deport her, and as the authorities led her to a train waiting to take her to Boston for the deportation proceedings, she waved at her supporters and called, "I'll be back!"[45]

During the next week Communists and strikers demonstrated in her support both in Rhode Island and in Boston.[46] The national Communist Party (CPUSA) and the Young Communist League denounced this new attempt "to intimidate the strikers by terror and arresting Anna [*sic*] Burlak."[47] Roger Baldwin, of the American Civil Liberties Union, announced that the ACLU would send speakers and lawyers to Rhode Island in support of the NTWU strikers and to "insist upon the right of the strikers to assemble

peacefully and to picket."[48] When relative calm descended upon Pawtucket and Central Falls, police pointed to the absence of Burlak as a key reason for the peace; a *New York Times* article reported that "police placed much of the responsibility for the mob excesses" on Burlak.[49] With Burlak gone, state troopers occupying a Central Falls mill took off their steel helmets and dismantled two machine guns that they had installed on the mill roof.[50] The mill management, meanwhile, still refused to negotiate with the NTWU: "We are not opposed to unionism as such, but we are opposed to radical and communistic groups which we feel cannot possibly represent the calm thought of the vast majority."[51]

The authorities hoped that they had rid themselves of a troublesome agitator. Burlak's lawyer, Israel Praeger from the International Labor Defense, dashed their hopes, however, when he announced that he had a copy of her baptismal certificate, sufficient proof that she was an American. Released by federal immigration officers on July 21 after the baptismal certificate was authenticated, Burlak promptly announced that she intended to continue her work as an organizer in Rhode Island, even after the strike was settled. On her first night back in Rhode Island, she addressed 1,500 strikers in Pawtucket and then, accompanied by a group of 150 cheering supporters, went on to Providence, where she exhorted strikers from the Weybosset Mill in Olneyville not to return to work.[52]

During this time Ann Burlak was the focus of extensive regional press coverage, which led the manager of a New York City vaudeville theater to write to her asking her to perform as an act on his stage. Thinking she might be able to capitalize on such an appearance, she wrote to ask if she could "make an appeal for strike relief" if she appeared. But "the theater management replied that would not be possible. They wanted me to appear in a flowing red gown, and they would write a script for me. Then both their letters went into the waste basket."[53]

By LATE JULY the strike she had been leading was losing momentum. While she was in federal custody, 250 of the 1,300 striking workers from the General Fabrics Corporation in Central Falls returned to work.[54] On the very day when she

was released, workers at the Weybosset Mill of the American Woolen Company in Olneyville voted 496 to 14 to return to work, disregarding her appeals.[55] In a July 26 speech Burlak suggested to mill owners that the strike could be settled by a return to former wage levels, but with an accompanying reduction in the number of looms each worker was to tend from six to four. These conditions were distinctly less than the original strike demands, which had included an increase in the prices for piece work, a 10 percent bonus for night work, and a 5 percent bonus for an afternoon shift.[56] On the same day that Burlak advanced her settlement proposals, Joseph Ott, president and general manager of the Pawtucket Royal Weaving Company, reopened his mill's weaving department and reported that 335 of 800 strikers had returned to work and that "troublemakers" had been told not to return.[57] Pressured by the presence of unemployed workers who would gladly "scab" and frustrated by the violence and bad press associated with the Communist-led union, tired strikers gradually returned to work. Although the strike continued through August, it effectively was lost in late July. Burlak's later efforts, including a march to the State House protesting a ban on picketing, failed to reinvigorate the strike.[58]

At the same time that Communist-led strikes were faltering, however, Ann Burlak's work on another front was picking up speed: the organization of Rhode Island's unemployed. During the early 1930s American Communists and businessmen alike were predicting revolution, or at least massive social change; "In every material respect," CPUSA leader Earl Browder declared, "the United States is fully ripe for socialism."[59] With mass unemployment and discontent racking the nation, politicians and theoreticians debated the best way to end the crisis. Many favored privately run neighborhood relief organizations, while others thought that relief could best be organized by the states. The Communists argued vehemently that the depression necessitated national unemployment insurance to uniformly deliver relief across the country. CPUSA general secretary William Z. Foster declared that "a fundamentally necessary measure against actual starvation among the workers is the establishment of a system of federal unemployment insurance, financed by the government and the employers."[60]

In 1929 the national unemployment rate was 3.2 percent, but only two years later it stood at 16 percent and was climbing. President Hoover's attempts to alleviate the growing economic depression had failed.[61] In Rhode Island, state and local officials attempted to deal with the situation by providing private relief and by initiating public works projects to create jobs. In September 1930 the Salvation Army opened the first Providence soup kitchen on Westminster and Sumner Streets. By Christmas 1931 an average of five hundred people stood in line each day in front of Providence's Catholic Cathedral Hall to receive shoes, coats, and sweaters.[62] Authorities urged people to ignore the panhandlers on the streets and to donate their funds instead to the Family Welfare Society's "Santa Fund," which expected to provide presents for 7,496 more children in poverty-stricken homes than it had donated in Christmas 1930.[63] Governor Norman Case continued to insist that the state did not want, or need, direct relief from the government: "We are opposed to anything approaching a dole. What we want here is work and not charity. . . . The people here will respond amply, as there is plenty of money up here, and the people do come through nicely."[64] But many in the state were less optimistic.

The Communists began their battle against unemployment through the organization of Unemployed Councils. The Trade Union Unity League, the Communist group in charge of the development of radical labor unions such as Burlak's NTWU, undertook the leadership of these councils. The Unemployed Councils highlighted joblessness as a national issue through numerous demonstrations and repeated demands for unemployment insurance. In 1930 the Soviet Comintern instructed all of its international components to hold a worldwide unemployment demonstration on March 6, and that month hundreds of thousands of angry unemployed people gathered in cities around the world.[65] Violence erupted at many of these demonstrations, including those in New York and Detroit. "The brilliantly successful demonstration of March 6 was only a victorious beginning," the CPUSA declared.[66]

In October 1931 the Trade Union Unity League announced that the next major action "battle" would occur in December, when the CPUSA was to stage its first National Hunger March to coincide with the opening of the Seventy-second Congress.[67] Ann Burlak, busy organizing textile workers in Rhode Island, did not attend this first march, but she participated in the numerous preparations for it. In addition to helping the unemployed marchers as they arrived in Providence seeking relief at various agencies, she actively sought volunteers to provide transportation for them, as well as mechanics to travel with the procession to repair its constantly failing truck parts and tires.[68]

The Hunger Marchers arrived in Washington singing the "Internationale" over the "faulty exhaust roars of the seventy-five or more coughing engines of the motorcade." Police Superintendent Pelham "Happy" Glassford granted them permission to march on Capitol Hill and managed to find housing for the sixteen hundred marchers, calmly reporting that they were "just tourists coming to Washington, but with a lot of publicity."[69] Both Congress and President Hoover refused to meet any of the marchers' representatives, and police, armed with tear-gas bombs, guarded the entrance to the Capitol. The marchers organized a national unemployment committee and quietly disbanded.[70]

By December 1932, however, when the second National Hunger March took place, Washington authorities regarded mass demonstrations in a less charitable manner. During the intervening year a series of violent demonstrations in cities across the country—including a deadly demonstration at the headquarters of the Ford Motor Company in Dearborn, Michigan, in March and the veterans' Bonus March on Washington in June—resulted in a much harsher official attitude.[71] Pelham Glassford, the diplomatic Washington police chief, had been replaced, and the rout of the "Bonus Army" by the military in June had set a precedent for intolerance. Nevertheless, the CPUSA and the Unemployed Councils were undeterred. Marchers from all over the country again traveled toward Washington, sleeping in unheated halls, listening to lively speeches in favor of unemployment insurance, and eating donated suppers along the way. In late November 1932 a group traveling from Boston stopped in Providence, where Ann Burlak greeted them and delivered two speeches in support of the march. That night, after the

speeches and a supper provided by local Communists, the tired travelers slept in the hallways and rooms of the CPUSA headquarters on Westminster Street.[72]

Burlak joined the demonstrators in the morning and led the slow but steady trip south, with the marchers increasing in number as others joined the procession along the way. In New York the marchers held a happy and boisterous demonstration in Union Square. The *New York Times* described a partylike atmosphere there, with a parade led by "a high-stepping Georgia Negro in a rainbow-colored beret, with scarf to match," who "stepped jauntily around Union Square" to the music of the "Internationale." A young woman from Worcester led a chant of "Hoover's having a helluva time—Trying to stop the hunger line. Hinkey Dinkey—Parlez Vous!" Demonstrators "yelled themselves into a state of good humor" while the "police looked on complacently." The New England contingent, which seemed "youthful and taking the march as a lark," was led by "a deep-voiced, blond-haired leader, Anna [*sic*] Burlak," who "stood on the tailboard of one of the trucks, waving at the crowds." The next day a photograph of a beaming Burlak, flanked by cheering New England textile workers, appeared on page 3 of the *Times.*[73]

If the marchers expected to receive a similar welcome in Washington, they were very much mistaken. Upon their arrival they attempted to proceed to the center of the city, where sympathetic citizens had volunteered housing, but Washington officials herded the twenty-five hundred demonstrators into a dead-end alley near the park where the Bonus Marchers had set up camp that summer. Tension and tempers ran high as the leaders of the march negotiated with the police for permission to allow one truckload of food through police lines to the confined marchers. Eventually six hundred of the most vulnerable marchers were allowed to proceed to the city center to meet with the sympathizers there, leaving the remaining nineteen hundred to sleep in their vehicles.[74]

The marchers sparked much curiosity and some degree of apprehension among Washington residents the next day. Organized into ranks in the middle of the day, the marchers appeared to be moving toward the police lines that hemmed them in, as tense policemen prepared to throw tear gas grenades should they be challenged. But organizers directed the marchers instead into a massive mile-long parade that circled around and around the area in which they were confined. A "young girl," probably Ann Burlak, led the march. As she reached the police lines, she "looked toward the police gas squad and grinned," and the police hooted at her. Instead of using violence, the Communists led their protesters in song, with rousing choruses of the "Internationale" and "verses condemning the administration to the tune of 'John Brown's Body.'"[75]

Two of the more unusual visitors to the marchers' camp were Lord Waldorf Astor and his wife, Lady Nancy Astor, a prominent English politician and one of the first female members of Parliament. Lady Astor was warned that the camp might be dangerous, but she was undeterred: "I've fought Communists all my life," she declared. "Come on, let's go." What was more alarming than a crowd of Communists, she said, was the fact that Washington did not "wake up to the need of social legislation here." The Washington police nevertheless insisted upon providing a "heavy cordon of police" for her, at which she suggested that with only five patrolmen, she could take on the entire camp. She then proceeded to meet (according to the *Times*'s account) with a "pretty girl, who said she was from Rhode Island." When Burlak described for her the working conditions in the textile mills, Lady Astor was appalled; "There is no danger of communists if you do the decent thing for workers," she said after her meeting with Burlak.[76]

The next day the police allowed the marchers to deliver speeches and parade to the Capitol, their line of march— led by Burlak and Herbert Benjamin, the national leader of the Unemployed Councils—confined on either side by armed policemen riding on motorcycles and sidecars.[77] Over seventy-five thousand spectators gathered to watch.[78] After further speeches, two committees of ten demonstrators each were allowed to present petitions to Vice President Charles Curtis and House Speaker John Garner. Burlak cochaired the committee that delivered the petition to the vice president.[79] After the petitions were grudgingly accepted by Curtis and Garner, the marchers returned

did bring temporary growth to the Communist Party. As a result of the first drive to organize the unemployed in 1930, over 6,000 men and women, many of them jobless, joined the CPUSA; 12,000 new members enrolled in 1931, and over 19,000 in 1932.[82] However, since members were also leaving the party, the net increase in membership rarely reflected the gain in new members. In 1930, for example, 5,000 left the party, and thus the party's membership of 7,500 at the end of that year reflected an actual gain of only 1,000.[83] Over the next two years the party grew by only 4,000 to 5,000 members. Application cards were filled out and initiation fees paid by 60,000 people between 1930 and 1934, but the CPUSA's membership increased by only 16,000.[84]

The new recruits came largely from the ranks of the unemployed. Dissatisfied with their economic situation, the angry and frustrated jobless joined the Communist Party because it promised them drastic change from the system that they felt was oppressing them. Unfortunately for the CPUSA, however, the unemployed often made unreliable members; the party's membership dues could be a burden, and new members often drifted away as soon as their situation improved or they realized that the Communists could not provide them with instant results. The spirited and newsworthy demonstrations staged by the CPUSA exploited the anger and frustration that exploded during the Great Depression, but they did not produce many new recruits for the party from among employed workers or from other of the more stable sectors of society. The party's failure to achieve greater gains in membership or to demonstrate movement toward its revolutionary goals, in combination with the Comintern's increasing fear of fascism, prompted the CPUSA leadership to turn to other tactics, including electoral politics and cooperation with non-Communist organizations.

Communists were continuously critical of local and national political leaders. In May 1932, for example, Burlak strongly criticized the Hoover administration for the maintenance of a "starvation wage scale" and "rotten working conditions." Burlak believed that Hoover, as a mining engineer, "had discovered that 'men were cheaper than the lumber [necessary] to make their employment even

LADY ASTOR SEES RED.—Having been to Russia with Bernard Shaw to inspect the genus Red on his home grounds, Lady Astor, American born member of the British Parliament, interviews a local product. Ann Burlak, member of the New England contingent, is the one submitting to the test.

(NEWS photo)

Ann Burlak (left) encountered Lady Nancy Astor in Washington during the National Hunger March in 1932. *New York Sunday News,* Dec. 11, 1932; Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College.

home.[80] For the leading role she had played in the march, Burlak now received yet another nickname: the "Hunger March Queen."[81]

ALTHOUGH COMMUNIST UNEMPLOYMENT demonstrations rarely resulted in immediate gains for the unemployed, they

As the Communist Party's candidate, Burlak received 160 votes for mayor of Pawtucket in 1932. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College.

outlined the party's goals in Rhode Island, which included unemployment insurance and relief, the right to organize and strike, and the suppression of "New Imperialist Robber Wars." Emphasizing Burlak's role in the textile strikes of the previous summer, the poster declared that "We cannot exist on promises—we must have guarantees that not one unemployed worker or his family is without decent housing, food and clothing this winter. Vote For BURLAK & BREAD For Your Families."[87]

Despite the media attention paid to Burlak and other Communists, the CPUSA failed to attract many votes. In the 1932 national elections 100,990 Americans voted for the Communist ticket; in Rhode Island only 546 voted for the Communists. Burlak received 160 votes in the Pawtucket mayoral election, a meager total considering that Pawtucket's population

reasonably safe.'"[85] In hopes of attracting a wider base for the CPUSA, the Communists began actively working within the United States electoral system, nominating candidates for state and national offices in 1932. That year Ann Burlak ran on the Communist ticket for the mayoralty of Pawtucket, and the Communist Party fielded a full slate of statewide candidates.[86] The Communist candidates sought to appeal to both the employed and the unemployed. A campaign poster titled "Workers of Pawtucket, VOTE COMMUNIST"

at that time was approximately 77,000 residents.[88] At both the state and national levels, however, the voting public did call for political change. Theodore Francis Green, who ran on a platform of "humanity first," was elected governor of Rhode Island. The state's first Democratic governor in nearly a decade, Green promised to establish state-run relief programs to replace the largely private and local efforts that could not keep up with the needs of the unemployed.[89] At the national level, Democrat Franklin Delano Roosevelt won the election

by a landslide. Roosevelt accepted the challenge of the Great Depression in his first inaugural address: "In their need, [the nation's citizens] have registered a mandate that they want direct, vigorous action. . . . They have made me the present instrument of their wishes. In the spirit of the gift I take it."[90]

In an attempt to pull Rhode Island and America out of the Great Depression and alleviate unemployment and mass discontent, both Green and Roosevelt initiated programs to assist the unemployed, the most significant of which was the national New Deal program. By easing social pressures, the New Deal challenged the belief that a socialist revolution was imminent. The National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 formed the cornerstone of the New Deal's effort to rescue industry, creating the National Recovery Administration (NRA), which would oversee the establishment of national industrywide codes. These codes were to include minimum working conditions for specific industries.

Despite the CPUSA leaders' routine condemnations of the New Deal as "fascist," Ann Burlak, elected national secretary of the National Textile Workers Union in 1932, participated in drafting the textile industry's NRA code.[91] At a July 1933 hearing to establish a code for the woolen textile industry, she declared that "the workers are not going to wait until the government or arbitrators settle things for them. . . . The workers are striking now and they are going to strike, and they will be led by the National Textile Workers."[92] During congressional hearings on the textile code, Burlak, the only woman to hold such a high union post, proposed a section preventing discrimination based on race, sex, or creed, but Congress quickly rejected this proposal, arguing that southern manufacturers would not agree to a ban on racial discrimination.[93] Although voluntary, the NRA program Burlak helped craft swept the country. On the first full day of the program in July 1933, businesses in New York alone signed eighteen thousand pledges to abide by the NRA provisions.[94] Wanting to do their part, managers and owners of shops and factories displayed the Blue Eagle of the NRA in their ads and on shop windows.

But for the NTWU and other revolutionary unions of the Trade Union Unity League, other elements of the New Deal proved to be a disaster. Section 7a of the National Labor Relations Act, which gave workers the right to collective bargaining, legitimized the American Federation of Labor, and workers flocked to this craft union federation and not, as Burlak had predicted during the NRA hearings, to the more radical unions that had been fighting so strenuously for worker rights. Media attention generated by the passionate organizers and revolutionary goals of the Communist movement also spread fear and distrust of these organizers and goals among the workers themselves. In August 1933, when Burlak attempted to take over the direction of a strike in Central Falls, where she had enjoyed such great worker support during the 1931 textile strike, workers rejected her. A column in the *Pawtucket Times* entitled "'Red' Flame Snuffed Out by the Mighty Wings of N.R.A. Eagle" labeled her 1933 efforts a failure: "President Roosevelt has done what police, state courts and federal labor and immigration authorities were powerless to accomplish. He has, for the time being at least, squelched the formerly irrepressible Ann Burlak, discrediting her in the eyes of hundreds of her erstwhile followers here."[95]

With government acceptance of the AFL encouraging workers to reject revolutionary unions and their colorful leaders in favor of more conservative and "safer" labor leaders, William Green, John L. Lewis, and others in the AFL leadership made it clear that "violent tactics" would not be tolerated. In the summer of 1934 rumors spread that the AFL hierarchy was conducting a purge of radical organizers within its ranks. According to a *New York Times* article, "weeding out of alleged Communists in labor ranks is assured, but the conservative leaders have been most concerned with the development of a 'rank and file' movement within the A.F. of L.," a movement sparked by advocates of militant action such as "Anne [*sic*] Burlak of the National Textile Workers." With twenty million workers now open to organizing because of the NRA's approval of collective bargaining, the article concluded, "the A.F. of L. is convinced . . . that it must 'fight it out' on traditional lines and is going to take strong measures to this end."[96]

Those "strong measures" included working with state and local officials to prevent radicals like Burlak from even speaking to strikers. In the autumn of 1934 hundreds

of thousands of textile workers from both southern and northern mills, supported by the American Federation of Labor-affiliated United Textile Workers' Union, went out on strike to force acceptance of national wage standards set by the NRA codes that Burlak had helped to write. At that time AFL officials successfully petitioned police to bar Burlak from a strikers' rally in Fall River, warning that "20,000 strikers were ready to tear the grand stand down if the Reds were not kept out."[97] Wherever Burlak went in Fall River, six police detectives followed her, refusing to let her organize rallies or even to stop and speak. After a fruitless attempt to hold a meeting while walking, she had to admit defeat and left Fall River.[98] Fears of Communism were repeatedly invoked during the massive 1934 walkouts, although Burlak and her party had little to do with the agitation or the strike. Invited to give a speech in support of the textile strikers to Harvard's National Student League members in October 1934, she met with a mixed response: the cheering by some students was "so tumultuous that the ordinarily well-poised strike organizer was flustered," but the meeting ended when, "perturbed" by the loud and vigorous defense of "capitalistic institutions" by two students, she requested an early exit and "fled."[99]

AS A RESULT OF the rejection of left-wing labor organizers by workers and continued red-baiting by authorities, the radical unions now held little power in the labor movement, and the Trade Union Unity League dissolved in 1935. Yet Communist organizers continued to exert a significant, if less public, impact in other unions, and they became renowned as some of the most energetic and effective labor movement organizers.[100] Ironically, just as the Trade Union Unity League was collapsing, increased interest in industrial unionism prompted the creation of the Committee for Industrial Organization—the forerunner of the Congress of Industrial Organizations—within the AFL. Communists later found numerous opportunities for advancement within the CIO and certain independent unions, which actively recruited Communists because of their excellent organizational skills and dedication to the labor movement.[101] Ann Burlak, however, discovered that the press attention that had brought such public focus to her

activities in the 1920s and early 1930s would be a detriment to her efforts to work within those unions, and it is possible that the Communist Party leaders themselves responded to this polarizing attention by directing her to other areas of progressive activism, such as community organization and civil rights.[102]

New Deal legislation snuffed out much of the most visible fire of the Communist movement of the early 1930s. During the Hoover administration the CPUSA capitalized on mass discontent and developed strong protests backed by thousands of angry Americans. With the government failing to meet the demands of the people, the idea of a revolution of the proletariat appealed to some unemployed workers. When New Deal measures successfully incorporated a number of the positions that Ann Burlak and the Communists advocated, her direct influence and that of the party waned. The very press coverage that helped to catapult her to prominence in the early 1930s, and brought attention to issues of significance to the Communist Party, also helped to limit her role as fears of radicalism increased. At the same time, New Deal legislation legitimized less radical options to Burlak's Communist unions, which then became home to many less-publicized and less-polarizing Communist labor organizers.

Passionately dedicated to her cause, Ann Burlak survived to see the institution of a number of the social changes for which the CPUSA battled during the 1930s. Americans joined the Communist Party in order to fight for these changes at a time when the CPUSA, loud in the expression of their demands, appeared to be the organization doing the most to improve the lot of hungry and homeless Americans. Burlak herself joined the Communist Party because it promised "unorganizable" workers, such as women and minorities, a chance to fight for equality and better wages within industries that were being slighted by the AFL. Others, such as Rhode Islanders John Hovan and Margaret Cann, joined the party because it seemed to be the most vocal group battling unemployment and poverty. The Communists held out the promise of combating the status quo and working to improve lives.

Burlak continued to fight for social change in New

England as a member of the Communist Party for the rest of her life, although her efforts were continually hampered by red-baiting and workers' fears of radicalism. In 1951 she was indicted under the Smith Act and spent eight months in hiding to avoid prosecution, leaving her child with friends and family. In the 1960s she was once again arrested and charged under the McCarran Act, which required Communists to register with the government and prevented them from holding positions of leadership in labor unions. In both cases charges were later dropped when the Supreme Court held that the two acts were unconstitutional. In 1981 Burlak retired from her job as a bookkeeper and devoted the rest of her life to political activism on behalf of the Communist Party. By the 1990s, when this author had the opportunity to interview Burlak at her home on several occasions as part of research for an undergraduate senior honors thesis, Burlak was a fixture in Boston's progressive community. She died on July 9, 2002, at the age of ninety-one.[103]

Ann Burlak holds a unique and important role in Rhode Island history. At the Museum of Work & Culture in Woonsocket, a videotaped interview with an aging Burlak conveys her vibrancy, determination, and fire. Lighting up the screen, the "Red Flame" continues to inspire new generations of Rhode Islanders with her passion and determination.

For more information and educational materials on this subject, see under Education at www.rihs.org.

Still active in her seventies, Burlak appeared outside a welfare office, holding a newspaper headlined "war n against l ow wage bil l ," in this 1984 photo. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College.

Notes

1. "R.I. Century: Heroes," http://www. projo.com/specials/century/ month12/heroes.htm (accessed Dec 9, 2008).

2. Lillian Burleigh Miner, *Our State: Rhode Island* (Providence: Oxford Press, 1925), 8.

3. Ibid, 177.

4. Ann Burlak Timpson, interview by unknown interviewer, Sept. 11, 1997, transcript, box 1, folder 9, Anne Burlak Timpson Files, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. (hereafter cited as ABT Files).

5. Miner, *Our State,* 176.

6. William McLoughlin, *Rhode Island: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1986), 196.

7. George H. Kellner and J. Stanley Lemons, *Rhode Island: The Ocean State* (Sun Valley, Calif.: American Historical Press, 2004), 122.

8. "Autobiography of Margaret R. Cann," unpublished document in possession of author, courtesy of John Hovan. See also "Communism 'People's Party,' She Says," *Providence Journal,* June 1, 1976; "Margaret Cann, Was Vice Chairman of Communist Party in Rhode Island," *Providence Sunday Journal,* Oct 30, 1994.

9. John Hovan, interview by author, Providence, Feb. 8, 1995. For more information about John Hovan, see Bill Collins's article about him, "'This Is What Being a Communist Means to Me,'" *Providence Sunday Journal,* Dec. 7, 1980.

10. Ann Burlak Timpson, speech, New England Labor History Conference, May 14, 1994, Woonsocket.

11. Ann Burlak Timpson, interview by author, Jamaica Plains, Mass., Feb. 22, 1995.

12. Timpson, speech, New England Labor History Conference.

13. Ibid.

14. In 1925, under the direction of a "United Front Committee," sixteen thousand textile workers had marched out of the Passaic mills in response to a 10 percent wage cut. Ella Reeve Bloor, *We Are Many* (New York: International Publishers, 1940), 199. A number of Communist leaders organized the walkout, labeled by the CPUSA "the first mass strike under Communist leadership." Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes, *The American Communist Movement* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), 44.

15. Ella Reeve Bloor (1862-1951) was active in a number of causes, including the suffrage, temperance, and pacifist movements, and she had a particular interest in improving the conditions of women and children. Bloor was one of the founding members of the CPUSA; "It has been a privilege and joy to carry the torch of socialism," she wrote in her autobiography. *Encyclopedia of the American Left,* ed. Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle, and Dan Georgakas (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990), s.v. "Bloor, Ella Reeve."

16. Bloor, *We Are Many,* 201.

17. Quoted from interview by Adena Meyers, Mar. 9, 1990, in Meyers, "Rhode Island Women Activists in the 1934 General Textile Strike" (honors thesis, Brown University, 1990), 46.

18. "Two Agitators Sent to Prison: Albert Bierbaum Alias Brown and William Murdock, Alleged Leaders of 'Reds,' All Others Secure Bail," unidentified newspaper clipping, May 6, 1929, box 9, folder 14, ABT Files.

19. "Anne Burlak Timpson" (draft of autobiography), p. 4, box 1, folder 1, ABT Files.

20. For more information on this period, see Quenby Olmsted, "Red Flame: Ann Burlak and the American Communist Movement, 1928-1934" (honors thesis, Rhode Island College, 1995).

21. Ibid., 3. Several textile strikes occurred in 1930 and 1931 in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Some of these, like the 1931 strike in Lawrence, Mass., were directed by the AFL's United Textile Workers. The failure of this strike inspired the creation of the Independent Textile Union in Woonsocket in autumn 1931. This union, which sought to apply more radical policies and philosophies to the textile industry, successfully led a strike in Woonsocket in early 1932, a rare success during the Great Depression. See Gary Gerstle, *Working-Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City, 1914-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 103-4.

22. "The Atlanta Six," sheet from August 1930 *Labor Defender,* box 9, folder 16, ABT Files.

23. "300 Mill Strikers Threaten Police at Central Falls," *Providence Evening Bulletin,* June 17, 1931; "Ann Burlak Will Lead Washington Delegation," *Providence Journal,* May 3, 1932. Burlak inherited the title "Red Flame" from Edith Berkman, another NTWU organizer of the late 1920s and early 1930s. Berkman was arrested in Lawrence, Mass., shortly after Burlak arrived in Rhode Island, and after being charged with radical activities, she found herself detained for deportation from the country, a tactic often used by the federal government to rid itself of troublesome foreign-born agitators. While awaiting deportation, Berkman contracted tuberculosis, and despite the protests of the CPUSA and the International Labor Defense, she was held in prison for several months. She was eventually released and traveled to the West Coast for a cure, but her health was ruined. With Berkman gone from New England, Burlak began to be called the Red Flame in her stead. Timpson,

interview by author, Feb. 22, 1995; "Edith Berkman's Freedom Sought," *Providence Journal,* Mar. 28, 1932.

24. "Pawtucket Strike Rapidly Spreading Out to All Mills," *Young Worker,* May 25, 1931.

25. See Ann Burlak Timpson, hand-written autobiography research notes, n.d., box 9, folder 13, ABT Files.

26. "300 Mill Strikers Threaten Police in Central Falls," *Providence Evening Bulletin,* June 17, 1931.

27. "Woman Organizer Guilty of Assault," *Providence Journal,* June 27, 1931.

28. "Central Falls Strike Rioters Badly Damage Textile Plant," *Pawtucket Times,* July 10, 1931.

29. "Police Use Tear Gas Bombs as Central Falls Strikers Cross Line," *Providence Evening Bulletin,* July 10, 1931.

30. "Riot Twice in Day at Central Falls," *New York Times,* July 11, 1931.

31. "Central Falls Strike Rioters."

32. "Outside Radicals Blamed for Riots in Central Falls," *Pawtucket Times,* July 11, 1931.

33. "Burlac [*sic*] Woman Worker for Communist Group," *Providence Evening Bulletin,* July 13, 1931.

34. "Ann Burlack [*sic*] Told by State Police She Must Depart," *Pawtucket Times,* July 13, 1931.

35. "Police Ordered to Shoot Strikers," *New York Times,* July 14, 1931.

36. See Timpson, handwritten auto-biography research notes.

37. "Citizens to Urge Strikers Spurn Labor Agitators," *Providence Journal,* July 12. 1931.

38. "Anna Weinstock Attempts to Settle Textile Strikes," *Pawtucket Times,* July 14, 1931.

39. "Act for Mediation in Textile Strike," *New York Times,* July 13, 1931.

40. "Communists in R.I. Condemned by Labor Head," *Pawtucket Times,* Aug. 29, 1931.

41. "Ann Burlac Taken to Boston; Faced with Deportation," *Providence Journal*, July 16, 1931.

42. "Ann Burlac Is Arrested, Faces U.S. Deportation," *Providence Evening Bulletin,* July 15, 1931.

43. "Ann Burlac, Strike Agitator, Arrested in Pawtucket, Delivered to Immigration Officers, Faces Deportation," *Providence Journal*, July 16, 1931. The Burlak photo caption reads, "Apparently she is enjoying the situation."

44. Timpson, speech, New England Labor History Conference.

45. "Ann Burlac Held, May Be Deported," *Providence Journal,* July 16, 1931.

46. "Boston Radicals Protest Holding of Girl Agitator," *Providence Evening Bulletin,* July 16, 1931.

47. "Mill Strike Spreads," *Young Worker,* July 27, 1931.

48. "Boston Radicals Protest"; "Ann Burlac Held." Walter Frank, the acting chair of the ACLU, wrote to Secretary of Labor William N. Doak later in July regarding Burlak's arrest, stating that he was continuing the ACLU's repeated protests "against the use of Federal immigration agents in breaking strikes." Anna Tillinghast, the immigration official responsible for Burlak's arrest, was not worried: "It looks as though they want to get a stranglehold on the Government," she said. "Action Sought in Burlak Case," *Providence Evening Bulletin,* July 28, 1931.

49. "Situation Calm in Strike Areas," *Providence Journal,* July 17, 1931; "Hundreds on Strike in Textile Centres," *New York Times,* July 19, 1931.

50. "Ann Burlac Held."

51. "Situation Calm."

52. "Counsel for Girl Agitator to Seek Release Monday," *Providence Evening Bulletin,* July 18, 1931; Ann Burlac Free, Is Citizen of U.S.," ibid., July 21, 1931; "Miss Burlak Addresses Strikers," *New York Times,* July 22, 1931.

53. Edited autobiography draft, Box 10, Folder 2, ABT Files.

54. "Ann Burlac Taken to Boston."

55. "Woolen Strike Is Ended," *New York Times,* July 22, 1931; 19. "Miss Burlak Addresses Strikers," ibid.

56. "Ann Burlac Hopes for Settlement," *Providence Evening Bulletin,* July 27, 1931; "Strikers Claimed Split on Question of Citizens' Help," ibid., July 13, 1931.

57. "Reopens More of Mill," *New York Times,* July 27, 1931.

58. Untitled article, *New York Times,* July 30, 1931.

59. "Report of the Central Committee to the Eighth Convention of the Communist Party," in Earl Browder, *Communism in the United States* (New York: International Publishers, 1935), 18.

60. William Z. Foster, *Toward Soviet America* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1932), 11.

61. Lester Chandler, *America's Greatest Depression, 1929-1941* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 34.

62. Norma Lasalle Daoust, "The Perils of Providence: Rhode Island's Capital City during the Depression and New Deal" (Ph.D. diss., University of Connecticut, 1982), 94, 95.

63. "4000 Providence Families Face Severe Test This Christmas," *Providence Journal,* Dec 5. 1931.

64. Quoted in Daoust, "Perils of Providence," 95.

65. Although the Comintern directed the organization of unemployment demonstrations across the world, the USSR did not have any such demonstrations. The U.S. press, including the *New York Times,* criticized the Soviet Union for its hypocrisy, pointing out that an estimated seven to ten million Russians were unemployed. According to the *Times,* demonstrations in the USSR were labeled "counter-revolutionary" by Moscow leaders. "Jobless in Russia Meet Red Bayonets," *New York Times,* Mar. 6, 1930.

66. Two demonstrators were killed in Halle, Germany, and many more were injured in Berlin and Hamburg. Demonstrations were held in most major European cities except Paris, where a ban on the protest was effectively enforced by the presence of twenty thousand armed police and guardsmen. In the United States more than one hundred arrests and many more injuries occurred; mounted police charged seventy-five thousand demonstrators in Detroit, and riots in New York City resulted in over a hundred injuries and the arrests of four national Communist Party leaders: William Z. Foster, Israel Amter, Robert Minor, and Samuel Darcy. That night the Communist Party Central Committee issued a statement blaming police for the riots and calling the workers and the unemployed "forward to new battles." Ibid.

67. *Recent History of the Labor Movement in the United States, 1918-1939* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 197.

68. Ann Burlak Timpson, interview by author, Jamaica Plains, Mass., Mar. 8, 1995.

69. "Weary 'Marchers' Reach the Capital," *New York Times,* Dec. 7, 1931.

70. One of the spectators at the march through the streets of Washington was Jacob S. Coxey, leader of "Coxey's Army" of unemployed workers who had marched on Washington in 1894 to "demand help of Uncle Sam." "I'm just an onlooker this time," said Coxey, who had recently been elected mayor of Massillon, Ohio. "Coxey, Who Led 'Army' in '94, Views Hunger March," *New York Times,* Dec. 8, 1931.

71. In March 1932 the CPUSA organized a Hunger March of three thousand to four thousand in Dearborn, Michigan. Parading to the Ford Motor Company headquarters with demands for jobs, the demonstrators were met by police armed with tear gas and water hoses, and four demonstrators were shot in the ensuing riot. In June 1932 the Bonus March on Washington—which was not Communist-led, although Communists participated—twenty thousand war veterans demanded early payment of veteran bonuses. The marchers took possession of empty buildings and set up a tent camp to wait for the passage of a pending bonus bill. When the bill was rejected in July, Gen. Douglas MacArthur directed troops to forcibly remove all of the demonstrators from their shelter and burn their tent camp. Klehr and Haynes, *American Communist Movement,* 63.

72. "Reds Speed March on Capital: 100 Demonstrators Camp Here," *Providence Journal,* Nov. 28, 1932.

73. "Red 'Hunger March' Gets Gay Send-Off," New York Times, Dec. 1, 1932.

74. "'Hunger Marchers' Arrive at Capital; Police Hem Bivouac," *New York Times,* Dec. 5, 1931.

75. "Marchers Jeered by Capital Police," *New York Times,* Dec. 6, 1932.

76. Ibid.

77. Timpson, interview by author, Mar. 8, 1995. "The parade was held over a six-mile route under the most rigid police supervision on record in Washington," the *Times* reported. "'Marchers' Parade, Petition Congress," *New York Times,* Dec. 7, 1932.

78. A young demonstrator in the crowd, Arthur Timpson, the editor of a Communist Farmer-Labor paper in Wisconsin, fell in love with the attractive blond organizer who gave one of the scheduled speeches. He and Ann Burlak were married seven years later, after his return from the Spanish Civil War. Along with hundreds of other American Communists, including John Hovan, Timpson volunteered as part of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade to fight the fascist forces of General Franco that were menacing the democratic government of Spain. Timpson, interview by author, Mar. 8, 1995.

79. Franklin Folsom, *Impatient Armies of the Poor: The Story of Collective Action of the Unemployed: 1808-1942* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1990), 338. Historian Philip Foner tells a similar story, although in his version the committees were made up of twenty-five marchers each and Burlak was the sole chair of the delegation that met with House Speaker Garner. According to Foner, Garner "made a vague promise to see what he could do about the demand for unemployment insurance." Philip Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement: From World War I to the Present* (New York: Free Press, 1980), 267-68.

80. "'Marchers' Parade, Petition Congress," *New York Times,* Dec. 7, 1932.

81. Burlak was still referred to by that nickname more than six months later. "Wool Code Terms Opposed by Labor," *New York Times,* July 25, 1933.

82. Nathan Glazer, *The Social Basis of American Communism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1961), 101.

83. Earl Browder, quoted in U.S. House, *The Communist Party of the United States of America: What It Is, How It Works: A Handbook for Americans,* 84th Cong., 2d Sess., 1956, 35; Klehr and Haynes, *American Communist Movement,* 68.

84. Glazer, *Social Basis,* 101.

85. "Doak Passes Lie to Textile Worker; Labor Secretary Resents Charge of Union Official That He 'Sold Out' to Railroads," *New York Times,* May 11, 1932.

86. "Ann Burlak Is Nominated for Mayor of Pawtucket," *Providence Journal,* June 20, 1932; "Ann Burlak Files Nardella Papers," *Providence Evening Bulletin,* Sept. 13, 1932.

87. "Workers of Pawtucket, VOTE COMMUNIST," poster (handwritten date 1932), box 9, folder 16, ABT Files.

88. When she ran for secretary of state in 1938, she received 365 votes. See Timpson, handwritten autobiography research notes. The population for Pawtucket is drawn from the 1930 U.S. census.

89. Kellner and Lemons, *Rhode Island,* 123.

90. Franklin D. Roosevelt, first inaugural address, 4 March 1933, *FDR Speaks: Authorized Edition of Speeches, 1933-1945* (record collection, Washington Records, 1960).

91. Buhle, Buhle. and Georgakas, *American Left,* s.v. "Textile Workers Unions."

92. "Wool Code Terms Opposed by Labor," *New York Times,* July 25, 1933.

93. Philip Foner, *Women and the American Labor Union: From the First Trade Unions to the Present* (New York: Free Press, 1979), 280.

94. "18,000 NRA Pledges Signed Here So Far," *New York Times,* Aug. 1, 1933.

95. *Pawtucket Times,* Aug. 3, 1933.

96. "A.F. of L. Combats Labor Radicalism," *New York Times,* July 27, 1934.

97. "Flying Squadrons Active in North; Effective Shutdown of All Big Mills in Blackstone Valley of Rhode Island," *New York Times,* Sept. 7, 1934.

98. "Police 'Picket' Ann Burlak Out," *Boston Traveler,* Sept. 7, 1934; "Scrapbook of Newspapers Covering the Textile Industry Strike of 1934," Rhode Island Historical Society Library, Providence.

99. "Harvard Cheers Rout Red; Ann Burlak Flees After Students Drown Her Out," *New York Times,* Oct. 27, 1934.

100. "The Communist Party unconditionally pledges its full resources, moral and material, to the complete execution of this great project [the CIO]," Earl Browder declared in a report to the ninth convention of the CPUSA, held in 1936. "Report to the Ninth Convention," *The People's Front* (New York: International Publishers, 1938), 40.

101. One of the more significant Rhode Island labor leaders strongly influenced by the Communist Party was Lawrence Spitz, who worked within the United Textile Workers' Union and then with the fledgling CIO in the mid-1930s. Although never conclusively proven to be an official member of the Communist Party, Spitz belonged to such Communist-dominated unions as the National Maritime Union and actively participated in such Popular Front organizations as the American League against War and Fascism. Gary Gerstle suggests that Spitz may have remained a clandestine member of the Communist Party through the mid-1940s, although there is also evidence to the contrary. If Spitz was indeed a clandestine party member, Gerstle argues, Spitz's support of "an Americanized radicalism" fit well with the Communist Party line of the late 1930s. The development of this type of Americanism within the Independent Textile Union led by Spitz in Woonsocket would indicate the Communists' success in furthering their ideals and goals through the use of organizers who hid their ties to the party. Gerstle, *Working-Class Americanism,* 158-66. This would clearly have been impossible in the case of Ann Burlak, who was too provocative and well known in her connection with the CPUSA.

102. Paul Buhle, e-mail correspondence with author, Jan. 30, 2008.

103. For more information about Burlak's life, see the biographical note accompanying the finding aid for her papers at Smith College: http://asteria.fivecolleges.edu/findaids/sophiasmith/mnsss189_bioghist.html.

George M. Goodwin coedited The Jews of Rhode Island *(Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press and University Press of New England, 2004) and is the editor of* Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes.

The gateway to the Jewish cemetery in Newport; designed by Isaiah Rogers and built in 1842. All photographs with this article are by the author.

The Gateway to Newport's Jewish Cemetery

George M. Goodwin

It may be Rhode Island's strangest edifice: a Jewish monument built in an Egyptian style. Nevertheless, the mysterious gateway to Newport's Jewish cemetery has attracted scant attention. For example, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow said nothing about it in his melancholy poem "The Jewish Cemetery in Newport," published in 1854. In their otherwise definitive study, *The Architectural Heritage of Newport, Rhode Island, 1640-1915,* published in 1952, Antoinette F. Downing and Vincent J. Scully Jr. failed to comment on the haunting structure. As recently as 2004, when William H. Jordy's masterful *The Buildings of Rhode Island* was published posthumously, the gateway was once again overlooked.

Even more perplexing has been the neglect by Jewish writers. Rabbi Morris A. Gutstein of Touro Synagogue, who published the first comprehensive study of Newport Jewry in 1936 and probably encountered the gateway on a daily basis, found it unremarkable. Since it began publication in 1954, *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* has presented more than seventy articles about Newport's Jewish community, yet none has focused on the gateway. Alas, the most recent and thorough analysis of Newport's Jewish burial ground, David M. Gradwohl's *Like Tablets of the Law Thrown Down,* published in 2007, also fails to mention the cemetery's only entrance and exit.

Built of Quincy granite in 1842, the Jewish cemetery's forbidding gateway is a pylon approximately 18 feet high. The piers, each 3½ feet wide, provide for a 7-foot-wide passageway and support an overhanging cornice approximately 16 feet wide. The rear of the gateway is undecorated, but the street side displays three otherwordly carvings: a finely wrought inverted or extinguished torch on each pier, and a winged sun, carved in much higher relief, on the lintel. There are no inscriptions in either Hebrew or English. Indeed, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when few gravestones were visible to passersby, it may not have been entirely clear what lurked within the enclosed space.

This article will show how the seemingly incongruous design of the Newport cemetery gateway can best be understood with reference to the Egyptian Revival style

Newport's Jewish cemetery, view from Touro Street.

popular in nineteenth-century America. That style influenced the construction not only of public monuments but even of synagogues and gateways to burial grounds in New England and elsewhere in the country. An additional trend that influenced the construction and design of the gateway in Newport was the inclusion of symbols of Freemasonry in public monuments and grave markers. A number of architects and their clients—including the gateway's designer Isaiah Rogers and some members of the Newport Jewish community—were in fact Freemasons.

IN 1656, TWO YEARS after arriving in New Amsterdam, Jewish settlers consecrated their first cemetery in North America. Their second, also in Manhattan, was consecrated in 1682 and still exists. Nevertheless, the word *cemetery,* derived from Greek and meaning "a sleeping chamber," was not popularized in the United States until the nineteenth century.[1] Traditional Hebrew meanings of a burial place are quite different. In Ecclesiastes (12:5), for example, a *bet olam* refers to a house of eternity; a more common name, *bet hayyim,* refers to a house of the living.[2]

Jews may have emigrated from Barbados to Newport as early as 1658; the documentation is unclear. Knowing that they would not be allowed interment within the Common Burial Ground, laid out in 1665, they purchased land for their own burial ground in 1677. A copy of the deed, made in 1767, shows that Nathaniel Dickens sold the property, approximately 30 feet by 30 feet, to Mordecay Campanall and Moses Pachaekoe ("Jews and to their Nation Society of Friends") for a "burial Place."[3] Newport's original Jewish community soon dispersed, and no record exists of the number or the names of individuals buried there.

By 1738, when North America's fourth Jewish burial ground was consecrated in Philadelphia, a new community of Jews—many with Sephardic (Spanish and Portuguese) backgrounds—began to assemble in Newport. Not until 1763 did Congregation Jeshuat Israel (Salvation of Israel) erect its synagogue. A masterpiece of Georgian simplicity and sophistication, it was designed by a local architect, Peter Harrison.[4] In 1768 Jeshuat Israel nearly quadrupled the size of its burial ground when it purchased adjacent property from John and Susanna Bennett.[5]

At its height before the Revolution, the largely prosperous Jewish community consisted of approximately twenty-five families, about two hundred individuals.[6] Following the decline of Newport's economy, Newport's Jewish community gradually dispersed. Moses Lopez, the last Jewish resident, departed for New York City in 1822.

While some consider the survival of Newport's Jewish cemetery and synagogue a miracle, others point to the visionary generosity of Abraham and Judah Touro, whose father, Isaac (1738-1783), had been Jeshuat Israel's first *hazan* (a liturgical leader but not a rabbi).[7] Shortly before his death, Abraham (1774-1822), who settled in Boston, paid $1,000 for the construction of a brick wall around the cemetery, which replaced a dilapidated wooden fence. He may have known that Nathaniel Dickens' deed for the cemetery land required the perpetual care of its fences; otherwise, the land would revert to his heirs.

Abraham's bequest of $10,000 to the Jewish community, known as the Touro Jewish Synagogue Fund, was administered jointly by the Rhode Island General Assembly and Newport's Town Council. Abraham also bequeathed $5,000 to Newport for the repair and preservation of Griffin Street, which led from Main Street, past the synagogue, to the cemetery.[8] In 1824, in recognition of such generosity, Griffin Street was renamed Touro, and the congregation soon acquired its informal name.

In 1842 Judah Touro (1775-1854), a former Newport resident who had settled in New Orleans, donated $12,000 to replace the cemetery's brick wall with a granite and iron railing and to erect the gateway.[9] A strong wall would not only exclude animals, vandals, and grave robbers, but would bestow a sense of dignity.[10] Judah's lavish gift may have been suggested by a Newport friend who was aware in August 1841 that the Town Council was planning to erect a fence around the new "burial ground" on Warner Street, which had been laid out in 1837. The cost of that fence, as documented in the council's minutes of December 7, 1841, was $179.88. A more substantial fence, wall, and gateway around the Warner Street Cemetery were erected in 1844 at the cost of $831.33. Judah Touro's gift led the General Assembly and Town Council to allocate $6,835

from Abraham's trust to erect a granite wall and an iron railing around the synagogue and to build an imposing and inscribed neoclassical gateway.

Both the cemetery and synagogue improvement projects were designed and probably overseen by the Boston architect Isaiah Rogers. The projects were completed in 1842.[11] No contracts or letters regarding Rogers's designs are extant. Any personal connection between Judah Touro and Rogers is unknown; one remote possibility of an intermediary, however, is Titus Wells, a Boston merchant who was a coexecutor, with Judah, of Abraham Touro's will.[12] The highly skilled craftsmen who actually carved the stone and cast and chased the metal for the gateway designs are also unknown.

As one of America's wealthiest and most philanthropic Jews, Judah bequeathed nearly $500,000 to numerous synagogues and to an even larger number of Christian and secular charities around the country and in Palestine.[13] In Newport he left $3,000 to the Redwood Library, $10,000 for the purchase of the Old Stone Mill as a public park, and $10,000 to Jeshuat Israel. The third bequest, known as the "Judah Touro Ministerial and Cemetery Fund" and overseen by the Town Council, was intended to pay the salary of a "reader" or a "minister," once the congregation was revived, and for the continual maintenance of the cemetery, which would eventually receive new burials. According to their wishes, both Touro brothers were buried there.

Indeed, Judah Touro and his cousin, Sloey Hays, were the last people buried in Newport's Jewish cemetery. The first person identifiable by an extant gravestone is Rachel Rodriguez Rivera, who died in 1761. In his definitive study of the cemetery's gravestones and markers, the anthropologist David M. Gradwohl explained that only forty-two burials are known.[14] A monumental gateway may today seem extravagant for what was the equivalent of a family burial ground, and the gateway may in fact also seem overbearing for a rite of passage traditionally shrouded in understatement.

LONG BEFORE THE nineteenth century, when the Egyptian Revival style of architecture reached American shores, there were actual Egyptian artifacts—obelisks incised with hieroglyphics—exhibited in many European cities.[15]

As told in Exodus and celebrated in the festival of *Pesach* (Passover), Egypt is Judaism's most potent symbol of slavery and oppression. The Hebrew word for Egypt, *Mizrayim,* actually means imprisonment or constriction (both physical and metaphorical). Yet a small number of northern European synagogues were sheathed in the Egyptian Revival style during the early nineteenth century in Karlsruhe, Germany, between 1798 and 1806; on Munich's Westenriederstrasse in 1825; and in Copenhagen in 1833. In addition, three Egyptian Revival synagogues were constructed during this time in Tasmania and Australia.

In late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century America, there was ample evidence of a fascination with things Egyptian. America did not display an actual Egyptian obelisk until 1881, when "Cleopatra's Needle" arose in New York City's Central Park,[16] but obelisk-shaped monuments abounded. The first was erected in 1792 in Baltimore to honor the tercentenary of Columbus's voyage.[17] The second, built in 1799, paid homage to the fallen at the Battle of Lexington. The third, constructed of granite in Charlestown, Massachusetts, honored the heroes of Bunker Hill. It was begun in 1825 but not completed until 1843.

Several lesser-known examples of obelisk-shaped monuments were erected in New England, including the Bloody Brook Monument in South Deerfield, Massachusetts, 1825; the Reverend John Harvard Monument in Charlestown, 1828; the Governor Enoch Lincoln Monument in Augusta, Maine, 1829; the Castle Island Monument in Boston harbor, 1830; the Fort Griswold Monument in Groton, Connecticut, also 1830; and the Battle of Concord Monument in Concord, Massachusetts, 1836. Although no comparable monument was erected in Rhode Island, one erected in 1830 in Savannah's Johnson Square honored Maj. Gen. Nathanael Greene, the Revolutionary War hero and Rhode Islander who died near that city.

During the early nineteenth century, America's fascination with Egypt was expressed in numerous other ways. Between 1800 and 1830, for example, more than thirty travel books about Egypt were published. In 1823 an actual Theban mummy and its coffin were exhibited at Massachusetts General Hospital, and that same year a collection of Egyptian artifacts was donated to Salem's

Peabody Museum. In 1835 Col. Mendes I. Cohen (1796-1879), a Jewish banker and writer from Maryland, brought nearly seven hundred artifacts gathered in Egypt to the United States. Perhaps the first American to explore the Nile, Cohen bequeathed his collection to Johns Hopkins University.[18] The New Yorker Joseph Smith, the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, claimed that the Book of Mormon was written in hieroglyphics and that some of his papyrus scrolls belonged to the Egyptian Book of the Dead. American Egyptomania is further revealed in place names: considered an American Nile, the Mississippi River nourished such towns as Alexandria, Cairo, Karnac, Luxora, Memphis, and Thebes.

Both of America's Egyptian Revival synagogues were erected in Philadelphia.[19] Only one predates the Newport cemetery gateway, however; it was built in 1825 for the Sephardic Congregation Mikveh Israel (Hope of Israel), which had been organized in 1773. The selection of such an exotic and fanciful style as the Egyptian Revival must have

The gateway to Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, Massachusetts; designed by Jacob Bigelow, built of wood in 1832, rebuilt in stone in 1842.

been suggested by the congregation's architect, William Strickland, who would later design three obelisks that were placed outside the refurbished Washington tombs at Mount Vernon in 1837.

The first American example of an Egyptian Revival cemetery gateway consisted of piers with cavetto cornices and engaged obelisks (but no lintel). It was designed in 1815 by Maximilian Godefroy for Baltimore's First Presbyterian (or Eastern) Cemetery.[20] Godefroy's Baltimore gateway is also notable for the unusual relief carving on each obelisk, a winged hourglass symbolizing the inevitability of death. By 1815 Godefroy had designed five tombs for the First Presbyterian Cemetery—a granite pyramid and four freestone mausoleums—all decorated with Egyptian motifs as well as winged hourglasses.[21]

Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts, had a monumental gateway that was designed by an amateur architect, Dr. Jacob Bigelow, and erected on Mount Auburn Street in 1832.[22] This awesome tripartite structure consisted of a towering central pylon, intended primarily for horse-drawn vehicles, and two attached smaller entrances, intended primarily for pedestrians. The gateway's outermost

features were two lodges, whose undecorated piers and patterned cavetto cornices resembled pylons. Only the central pylon was decorated, bearing an enormous carving of a winged sun and an inscription underneath.

Originally made of wood but painted to resemble granite, the Mount Auburn gateway was demolished in 1842, during Dr. Bigelow's cemetery presidency, to build a granite replica, which cost $10,000.[23] Only one granite contractor in Quincy, Octavius T. Rogers, was able to cut and install a cornice 22 feet long. Indeed, this was the largest piece of stone ever quarried and carved in Massachusetts.[24] In 1844 a cast-iron fence with granite posts, designed by Dr. Bigelow and costing $15,000, replaced the wooden original. Seven years later the fence was extended, and by 1852 a granite obelisk was placed on each side of the gateway.

The oldest example of an Egyptian Revival gateway patterned after Mount Auburn's was erected at Rochester, New York's, Mount Hope Cemetery in 1838.[25] Judah Touro surely knew the second example, at Cypress Grove Cemetery, built in 1840 in New Orleans, where he had moved to from Newport in 1801.[26] Cypress Grove's elaborate gateway, designed by civil engineer Frederick Wilkinson (1812-1841), resembles Mount Auburn's. Two sets of stone piers topped with cavetto cornices support wrought iron gates and are linked by fencing to two outer lodges. These small enclosures sheltered a guard or served as storage. According to a drawing published in 1845, the stone piers supported a lintel, but it fell or was removed by 1895.[27]

The third American example of an Egyptian Revival cemetery gateway inspired by Mount Auburn was erected in Boston at the Granary Burying Ground. It was designed by the prominent Boston architect Solomon Willard (1783-1861), who had received the commission for the Bunker Hill Monument in 1825.[28] In 1831 Willard received a contract from Martin Brimmer of Boston to provide granite for the Granary Burying Ground's new fence and gateway.[29] The Egyptian Revival gateway over the Tremont Street entrance was not completed until 1840, however.[30] Its architect was Isaiah Rogers (1800-1867), who had unfortunately been no stranger to mourning. Between the end of 1838 and the beginning of 1839, he had lost four of his eight children

The gateway to the Granary Burying Ground, Boston; designed by Isaiah Rogers, built in 1840.

to smallpox.[31] Two years later Rogers would replicate the Granary Burying Ground's gateway (with slight variations) for Newport's Jewish cemetery.

Although he was one of America's most versatile and successful mid-nineteenth-century architects, Rogers has been largely forgotten.[32] All but a few of his buildings have been demolished.[33] Born in Marshfield, Massachusetts, he

The gateway to the Grove Street Cemetery, New Haven, Connecticut; designed by Henry Austin, built in 1848.

founded in 1796 as the New Burial Ground. Completed in 1848, the Grove Street gateway coincided with another built for Forest Hills Cemetery in Roxbury, Massachusetts. Originally made of wood, the one in Roxbury was replaced by a stone Gothic Revival gateway in 1865.

WHILE THE GATEWAY to Newport's Jewish cemetery can be understood within the context of the Egyptian Revival style in America, there is another context that helps explain the actual symbols used on the gateway. Several members of Newport's colonial Jewish community were Freemasons (as were a number of America's founding fathers), and Freemasons venerated various Egyptian and Jewish symbols. Many of the American architects who experimented with the Egyptian Revival style were also Freemasons. Indeed, by honoring the Jewish belief that a cemetery is a house of eternity, Freemasonry places the Newport cemetery gateway in a favorable light.

According to Masonic iconography, obelisks symbolize not only power but also continuity and regeneration.[37] Solomon's Temple, reflecting knowledge of Egyptian architectural sources, is seen as embodying architectural perfection, with the columns of Boaz and Jachin, described in 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles as standing to the right and left of the eastern entrance, representing the entire temple. Jerusalem itself represents an earthly paradise and an ideal city.

Jews were admitted to several Masonic lodges in British North America.[38] Surely the most distinguished American Jewish Mason during the eighteenth century was Moses Michael Hays, the brother-in-law of Isaac Touro and the uncle of Abraham and Judah Touro, whom he reared in

was the son of a farmer and shipwright, who apprenticed him to a house wright in Boston.[34] During his early twenties Rogers was Willard's assistant and thus involved with the construction of the Bunker Hill Monument. Even after establishing his independent architectural practice, he remained connected to Willard's granite business in Quincy (and named his son, also an architect, Solomon Willard Rogers). A Universalist, Isaiah Rogers built five churches, all in Massachusetts, most in the Greek Revival style. Among his early commissions was Boston's Tremont House Hotel, completed in 1829,[35] which led to an even grander commission, the Astor House Hotel, in New York City. Five years later he relocated to Manhattan, where he received numerous commercial commissions, especially for banks.

Rogers's commission for Newport's Jewish cemetery gateway was only his second foray into the Egyptian Revival style, but it was also his last. Several more Egyptian Revival cemetery gateways were built after 1842, however.[36] The most imposing in New England was Henry Austin's design for New Haven's urban Grove Street Cemetery, which had been

Boston. Born in New York City in 1739, Hays was married to Rachel Myers, whose brother, Myer, was one of colonial America's most distinguished silversmiths and a charter member and then senior warden of King David's Lodge in New York City.[39] Having become active in the same lodge, by 1768 Hays was appointed deputy inspector general of the Rite of Perfection for the West Indies and North America.[40] A year later he became master of King David's Lodge, but in 1780 he moved to Newport, where he reorganized this lodge. (Rhode Island's oldest lodge, St. John's in Newport, had been founded in 1749.) Two years later business opportunities took Hays to Boston, where he was the only Jew in the Massachusetts Lodge. Within a decade he was elected the lodge's master, then its grand master, and he organized the Massachusetts Grand Lodge.

There being no Jewish cemetery in Boston, Hays was buried in Newport's Jewish cemetery in 1805 besides his daughter, Rebekah, who had died three years earlier. His wife, Rachel, was interred in the cemetery in 1810, and their only son, Judah (who had belonged to the Massachusetts Lodge), joined them there in 1832.[41]

Of the three members of the Seixas family buried in Newport's Jewish cemetery, the youngest and most illustrious was Moses, a merchant and an officer of the Bank of Rhode Island. As *hazan* of Jeshuat Israel, he is widely known as the member of the Jewish community who wrote to George Washington on August 17, 1790, congratulating him on his election as president and welcoming him on his forthcoming second visit to Newport. On the same day that Seixas wrote to Washington, who was also a Mason, on behalf of Newport's Jewish community, he also wrote to him on behalf of King David's Lodge.[42] Seixas had been senior warden of the lodge under Michael Hays, and he then served as its master until 1808. He was also the Masons' deputy inspector general for Rhode Island, and later he was grand master of the Grand Lodge of Rhode Island. He was buried at the cemetery in 1809.[43]

Even before 1842, when Isaiah Rogers designed the gateway, Newport's Jewish cemetery displayed six Masonic symbols, all obelisks: three for the Touro family and three for the closely related Hays family. That Isaac Touro was a

Mason is further indicated by the Masonic emblem carved at the top of the west side of his obelisk. Rogers's design for the cemetery's granite and iron fence also included several obelisk-shaped columns.

Although membership in American Freemasonry had reached a nadir by 1840, there was a significant reason why

The Bunker Hill Monument, Charlestown, Boston; designed by Solomon Willard, built between 1825 and 1843. The statue of Col. William Prescott at the base was sculpted by William Story in 1881.

Inverted torches on the gateways of the Granary Burying Ground (left) and Newport's Jewish cemetery (right).

Opposite page:
A winged hourglass on an abutment at the Granary Burying Ground; designed by Solomon Willard, built ca. 1831.

the cemetery's seventh and largest obelisk, erected in 1854, would be considered appropriate for Judah Touro's grave. Judah Touro was not a Mason, but he had been deeply involved with one of America's and Freemasonry's greatest monuments.[44] In 1840, after funds had become scarce, he contributed $10,000 toward the completion of the Bunker Hill Monument, an amount equaled only by Amos Lawrence, the Monument Association's chairman.[45]

Solomon Willard, who was involved with the repair of Boston's Granary Burying Ground, was a Mason.[46] So too was his protégé, gateway designer Isaiah Rogers, who became a Mason in 1826.[47] That year Rogers won a competition to design the Masonic lodge in Augusta, Georgia, which stood until 1888.[48]

WHEN EXAMINED FROM a Masonic perspective, the gateway to Newport's Jewish cemetery can be seen in a philo-Semitic light—or at least in the light of universal brotherhood. But although there is no basis for believing that Rogers was anti-Semitic, he did make a considerable (if not heretical) error by including the symbol of an inverted or extinguished torch on each pier of the Newport gateway.

Light is Judaism's most precious symbol. "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3) were the Lord's first words. The Sabbath, the holiest day of the week, begins and ends with blessings over candles. The *Menorah*, a seven-branched candelabrum, symbolizes the Second Temple. The *Hanukkiah,* an eight-branched Hanukkah candelabrum, symbolizes the miraculous survival of that temple. Light not only symbolizes divinity and truth; Jews have traditionally seen themselves as "a light of nations" (Isaiah 42:6, 49:6).

A central symbol of Jewish worship is the *Ner Tamid,* or eternal lamp, which represents the Burning Bush: "The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out" (Leviticus 6:13). A *Ner Tamid* is displayed above the *Aron haKodesh* (ark) in every synagogue. In 1842 Touro Synagogue's *Ner Tamid* may have been in storage, but the significance of Judaism's eternal faith in the Almighty had been clearly demonstrated by the Touro brothers' protection of the Newport synagogue and cemetery. The belief that Jewish life is inextinguishable was nonetheless lost not only on Rogers but also on Longfellow when he wrote his poem about the Jewish cemetery in 1852.[49]

The inverted torch, representing defeat and submission, was never a Masonic symbol.[50] Neither was it a common symbol in America's Protestant churchyards or cemeteries during the eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries.[51] However, the exiled French architect Maximilian Godefroy, drawing on neoclassical sources, did use carvings of inverted torches in his designs for Baltimore's First Presbyterian Cemetery in 1815,[52] and it is possible that Isaiah Rogers may have known about this use.

Before establishing his career as an architect, Solomon Willard, Rogers's mentor, worked as a carpenter, decorative carver, sculptor, and model maker, and during the first six months of 1818 he was employed by Godefroy in Baltimore to provide such "ornamental furnishings" as moldings, cornices, and doors for that city's First Unitarian Church, built in an elegant neoclassical style.[53] Willard's decoration of the church altar includes two upright torches within an arrangement of a wreath and a garland. Willard surely knew of Godefroy's use of the winged hourglass motif in Baltimore's First Presbyterian Cemetery, for winged hourglasses are prominently displayed in Willard's design of two corner abutments in Boston's Granary Burying Ground. Rogers could have learned of various symbols, including the inverted torches he used in his design of the Newport gateway, under Willard's tutelage.

THE INCONGRUITY OF Newport's Jewish cemetery gateway's design can be largely understood within the context of the Egyptian Revival movement in the United States. Incorporating obelisks, winged suns, and other ornamentation, this movement was reflected in some public buildings, monuments, synagogues, and cemetery gateways designed and constructed during the nineteenth century. Further, the Masonic connections both of Newport's Jewish community and of the architects who designed tombs, monuments, and even cemetery portals and gateways render the symbolism of an Egyptian Revival gateway in nineteenth-century Newport more understandable. Nevertheless, the inverted-torch symbolism was, and remains, incompatible with Jewish belief.

For more information and educational materials on this subject, see under Education at www.rihs.org.

Notes

1. David C. Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 55.

2. Meir Ydit, "Cemeteries," *Encyclopedia Judaica,* 2006 ed., 4:538.

3. Morris A. Gutstein, *The Story of the Jews of Newport* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1936), 37-8.

4. George M. Goodwin, "The Designation of Touro Synagogue as a National Historic Site," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* 13 (2000): 177-207; Barry Stiefel and George M. Goodwin, "Three New World Synagogues: Symbols of Toleration, Pride, and Continuity," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes,* 15 (2007): 39-69.

5. Bernard Kusinitz, "The Enigma of the Colonial Jewish Cemetery in Newport, Rhode Island," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* 9 (1985): 233-34; Kusinitz, "An Update," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* 9 (1986): 318. The cemetery's current contours closely resemble William Dames's plat plan of 1872. The gravestones, walls, and fences have been cleaned and restored several times since 1889. The most recent and comprehensive effort was conducted in 1985-86 by Jeshuat Israel and the Society of the Friends of Touro Synagogue. It included the pruning and removal of several trees and stumps and the erection of a marker made of Quincy granite. A sign posted by the Rhode Island Cemeteries Program of the Office of Veteran Affairs shows that this is number 13 of the state's historical cemeteries.

6. Marilyn Kaplan, "The Jewish Merchants of Newport, 1749-1790," in *The Jews of Rhode Island,* ed. George M. Goodwin and Ellen Smith (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press and University Press of New England, 2004), 16.

7. The following account is derived primarily from Gutstein, *Jews of Newport,* 243-49.

8. Zion Place, which intersects with Touro Street alongside the cemetery, was named in 1935. The name refers to Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, which stood behind the cemetery until it was destroyed by fire in 1974. I am grateful to Bertram Lippincott, librarian of the Newport Historical Society, for this information.

9. The figure of $12,000, cited by Gutstein, *Jews of Newport,* 244, is probably inaccurate. The cost of the entire Bunker Hill Monument, completed after eighteen years in 1843, was approximately $100,000. Gutstein's error is probably derived from A. P. Mendes, "The Jewish Cemetery at Newport, Rhode Island," *Rhode Island Historical Magazine* 6 (October 1885), 83.

10. The oldest Jewish cemetery in Philadelphia, consecrated on Spruce Street in 1738, also required continual reinforcement. In 1751 a low brick wall replaced wooden fencing. In 1803 a higher brick wall with wrought iron gates was added. Edwin Wolf 2nd and Maxwell Whiteman, *The History of the Jews of Philadelphia from Colonial Times to the Age of Jackson* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1957), 260, 262. Similarly, the Jewish cemetery on Cohen Street in Savannah, consecrated in 1773, was vandalized in 1800 and 1812. A new iron gate, costing $150, was installed in 1830 and is still in use. Saul J. Rubin, *Third to None: The Saga of Savannah Jewry, 1733-1983* (Savannah: Congregation Mickve Israel, 1983), 70, 96.

11. News about the cemetery and synagogue projects was reported in two local newspapers: the *Newport Mercury,* July 9, 1842, and Newport's *Herald of the Times,* July 14, 1842. Ronald J. Onorato included the gateway in his excellent study *AIA Guide to Newport* (Providence: AIAri Architectural Forum, 2007), 149, but dated the gateway 1841.

12. Wells was identified by Gutstein, *Jews of Newport,* 291; the suggestion is mine.

13. See ibid., 293-94, for the details of Judah Touro's will.

14. David M. Gradwohl, *Like Tablets of the Law Thrown Down: The Colonial Jewish Burying Ground, Newport, Rhode Island* (Ames, Iowa: Sigler Printing, 2007). Inscriptions in a combination of languages—Hebrew, Latin, Spanish, Portuguese, and English—are found on 37 stones, representing 39 individuals. All of the deceased were born during the British colonial era. Six individuals died in Boston, where Jewish burials were prohibited until 1843. The gravestones and markers are carved in a rich variety of shapes, and six are decorated with anthropomorphic or symbolic images in the antiquated Puritan tradition. Gradwohl believes that at least one and possibly five marble gravestones were imported from Amsterdam at considerable expense.

15. My major source of information about the various stages of the Egyptian Revival in Europe and America is James S. Curl, *The Egyptian Revival: An Introductory Study of a Recurring Theme in the History of Taste* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982). See also Carol H. Krinsky, *Synagogues of Europe: Architecture, History, Meaning* (New York: Architectural History Foundation and MIT Press, 1985), 73-78, 403-4.

16. Martina D'Alton, "The New York Obelisk, or How Cleopatra's Needle Came to New York and What Happened When It Got Here," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 50 (spring 1993).

17. This 44-foot high obelisk was commissioned and probably designed by Charles François Adrian le Paulmier, "Chevalier d'Anmour." Beginning in 1778 he served as France's first consul in Maryland; by 1783 he was also consul general for Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. The Columbus obelisk was erected on his estate, near North Avenue and Hartford Road, which became the Samuel Ready Asylum. *Columbus and America,* vol.

10 of John Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, ed. Herbert B. Adams (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1892), 30-33. The obelisk was moved to Herring Run Park in 1964.

18. Vivian D. Lipman, "Cohen Family in the United States," *Encyclopedia Judaica,* 2007 ed., 5:6.

19. Rachel Wischnitzer, "The Egyptian Revival in Synagogue Architecture," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 4 (September 1951): 69-71.

20. Robert L. Alexander, *The Architecture of Maximilian Godefroy,* Johns Hopkins Studies in Nineteenth-Century Architecture, ed. Phoebe B. Stanton (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 86; Richard G. Carrott, *The Egyptian Revival: Its Sources, Monuments, and Meanings, 1808-1858* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 97.

21. Alexander, *Architecture of Maximilian Godefroy,* 87-94.

22. My major source on Mount Auburn is Blanche M. G. Linden, *Silent City on a Hill: Picturesque Landscapes of Memory and Boston's Mount Auburn Cemetery* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, with the Library of American Landscape History, 2007). In 2003 Mount Auburn was designated a national historical landmark by the Department of the Interior. Inside the gateway is a bronze plaque with this inscription: "Established as the nation's first large scale designed landscape open to the public, Mount Auburn was the first American rural cemetery. It initiated the great age of American cemetery building and influenced the design of public parks, monuments and suburbs." There is no mention of the gateway's Egyptian Revival style.

23. *Dearborn's Guide through Mount Auburn, with Seventy-Six Engravings, for the Benefit of Strangers Desirous of Seeing the Clusters of Monuments with the Least Trouble,* 7th ed. (Boston: Dearborn, 1854), 10.

24. Blanche Linden-Ward, "The Heritage of Mount Auburn" (reprint from *Cemetery Management* magazine, 1986), 5.

25. Curl, *Egyptian Revival,* 166.

26. Touro may have had some personal involvement with Cypress Grove through the Reverend Theodore Clapp (1792-1866), who was buried there. A native of Easthampton, Mass., and a graduate of Andover Theological Seminary, Clapp was called to the pulpit of New Orleans's First Presbyterian Church in 1821. A year later, when it was burdened with debt, Touro purchased the building and allowed the congregation to remain rent-free. Having been excommunicated in 1832, Clapp later established a Unitarian church, which Touro helped after a fire in 1851. With Rabbis Isaac Leeser and Moses Nathan, Clapp became an executor of Touro's estate, and he also received a bequest of $5,000. Bertram W. Korn, *The Early Jews of New Orleans* (Waltham, Mass.: American Jewish Historical Society, 1969), 217-18, 256; Mary L. Christovich, ed., *New Orleans Architecture,* vol. 3, *The Cemeteries* (Gretna, La.: Pelican Publishing Company, 1974), 29.

27. Christovich, *New Orleans Architecture,* 3:97.

28. William W. Wheildon, *Memoir of Solomon Willard, Architect and Superintendent of the Bunker Hill Monument* (Boston: Monument Association, 1865), 227. Perhaps comparable to the erection of Eero Saarinen's St. Louis Arch in 1968, the Bunker Hill Monument represented an unprecedented construction effort. Rising 221 feet and 5 inches, it required 6,600 tons of granite and included a circular stairway of 294 steps. The monument took eighteen years to complete and cost $101,963.68. Willard found the ideal quarry in Quincy, and it became known as the Bunker Hill Quarry. The distance from Quincy to Bunker Hill was twelve miles, and it necessitated transportation by ship. In order to

haul the granite from the quarry to the Quincy wharf, a railway was necessary, so in 1825 America's first—the Granite Railway—was constructed. With Quincy having provided all of the stone for the monument, other quarries were opened there, and Quincy became known as Granite City.

29. Ibid., 230. Martin Brimmer was buried at Mount Auburn. *The Picturesque Pocket Companion, and Visitor's Guide, through Mount Auburn* (Boston: Otis, Broaders, 1839), 173.

30. Carrott, *Egyptian Revival,* 90.

31. Denys P. Myers, "The Recently Discovered Diaries of Isaiah Rogers, Architect," *Columbia Library Columns* 16 (November 1966), 31.

32. The following biographical information is from Denys P. Myers, "Isaiah Rogers," *American National Biography,* 18:761-63.

33. Among Rogers's few extant buildings are the Captain Robert Forbes House, Milton, Mass., 1833; Quincy Town Hall, 1845; portions of Harvard University's observatory, 1845; "Hillforest," the Thomas Gaff House, Aurora, Ind., 1854.

34. Portions of the Rogers Homestead, built in 1720 in the former village of East Marshfield, are extant. The architect was born there but built his own home in 1838 at 392 Summer Street. It was remodeled in 1922. Cynthia H. Krusell and Betty M. Bates, *Marshfield: A Town of Villages, 1640-1990* (Marshfield Hills, Mass.: Historic Research Associates, 1990), 177.

35. The French travelers and penologists Alexis de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont stayed at the Tremont House Hotel in September 1831.

36. Carrott, *Egyptian Revival,* 90-92.

37. James S. Curl, *The Art and Architecture of Freemasonry* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1993), 242.

38. However, the claim that Mordecai Campanall and Abraham Moses

were Masons in Newport in 1656 or 1658—a claim made in Henry W. Rugg, *Freemasonry in Rhode Island* (Providence: State Printers, 1895)—is apocryphal.

39. David L. Barquist, *Myer Myers: Jewish Silversmith in Colonial New York* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 47. Between 1760 and 1770 Myers created a gold snuffbox, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which portrays King David's first meeting with King Saul (1 Samuel 16:19-21) on its cover. Given the reference to King David and the prominence of the pillars of Boaz and Jachin, this object, Barquist suggests, could have been commissioned by a Mason. Ibid., 136-37.

40. Ellen Smith, "Strangers and Sojourners: The Jews of Colonial Boston," in *The Jews of Boston,* ed. Jonathan D. Sarna and Ellen Smith (Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston, 1995), 37-39.

41. Although Isaiah Rogers probably did not know it, there were fifteen other Jews who had belonged to Newport's King David's Lodge but were not buried in the Jewish cemetery. These men were Eleazer Elizer, Isaac Elizer, Baruch Hays, Joseph Jacobs, Isaac Isaacs, Jacob Isaacs, Moses Isaacs, Isaac Jacobs, David Lopez, David Lopez Jr., Moses Lopez, Abraham Perreira Mendes, Solomon A. Myers, Myer Pollock, and Sheftall Sheftall. Bernard Kusinitz, "Masonry and the Colonial Jews of Newport," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* 9 (1984): 189.

42. For Masonic portrayals of Washington, see William D. Moore and John D. Hamilton, "Washington as the Master of His Lodge: History and Symbolism of a Masonic Icon," in *George Washington: American Symbol,* ed. Barbara J. Mitnick (New York: Hudson Hills Press, with the Museums at Stony Brook and the Museum of Our National Heritage, 1999), 71-89.

43. Kusinitz, "Masonry," 185.

44. In 1794 Masons erected an 18-foot wooden column in memory of Gen. Joseph Warren, grand master of the Ancient Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, who was killed at Bunker Hill. A miniature marble replica of the column was erected within the new monument's base. Mark A. Tabbert, *American Freemasons: Three Centuries of Building Communities* (Lexington, Mass.: National Heritage Museum, 2005), 57; Wheildon, *Memoir of Solomon Willard,* 269.

45. Wheildon, *Memoir of Solomon Willard,* 192.

46. Ibid., 227. I am grateful to Cynthia Alcorn, librarian of the Samuel Crocker Lawrence Library, Massachusetts Grand Lodge, for verifying his membership in the Columbian Lodge, which commenced in 1809.

47. I am once again grateful to Cynthia Alcorn for verifying this point.

48. Myers, "Isaiah Rogers," 761.

49. Not merely fascinated by death, Longfellow was drawn to cemeteries; see, e.g., "In the Churchyard at Cambridge," 1858, and "In the Churchyard at Tarrytown," 1878. Longfellow also had an ongoing fascination with Jews: in 1872 he published a play, *Judas Maccabaeus,* and his *Tales of a Wayside Inn,* based on Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and published serially in 1863, 1872, and 1873, included in each part "The Spanish Jew's Tale." The character of the Spanish Jew was based on a man Longfellow had met, Israel Edrehi, who has been described as "a Dutch émigré who had translated Hebrew texts" in Charles C. Calhoun, *Longfellow: A Rediscovered Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 233, and as "a dealer of oriental goods in Boston" in Christopher Irmscher, *Longfellow Redux* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 192.

50. There are no examples of inverted torches in William L. Fox, ed., *The Valley of the Craftsmen: Scottish Rite Freemasonry in America's Southern*

Jurisdiction, 1801-2001; A Pictorial History (Washington, D.C.: Supreme Council, 2001); W. Kirk MacNulty, *Freemasonry: Symbols, Secrets, Significance* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2006); or Tabbert, *American Freemasons*—all lavishly illustrated volumes.

51. No examples of inverted torches are found in Allan I. Ludwig, *Graven Images: New England Stone Carving and Its Symbols, 1650-1815* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1966). Between 1700 and 1848 there were approximately 28,133 burials in Providence's North Burial Ground, but only 5,155 were marked by gravestones. About 80 percent of these stones date from the nineteenth century. No inverted torches appear among the 133 photographs of gravestones in John E. Sterling, *North Burial Ground, Providence, Rhode Island: Old Section, 1700-1848* (Greenville: Rhode Island Genealogical Society, 2000). The inverted torch symbol has not been studied in *Markers,* the journal published annually since 1980 by the Association for Gravestone Studies. There are three published studies of American Jewish cemeteries, all by David M. Gradwohl.

52. Alexander, *Architecture of Maximilian Godefroy,* 93.

53. Wheildon, *Memoir of Solomon Willard,* 34; Alexander, *Architecture of Maximilian Godefroy,* 140.
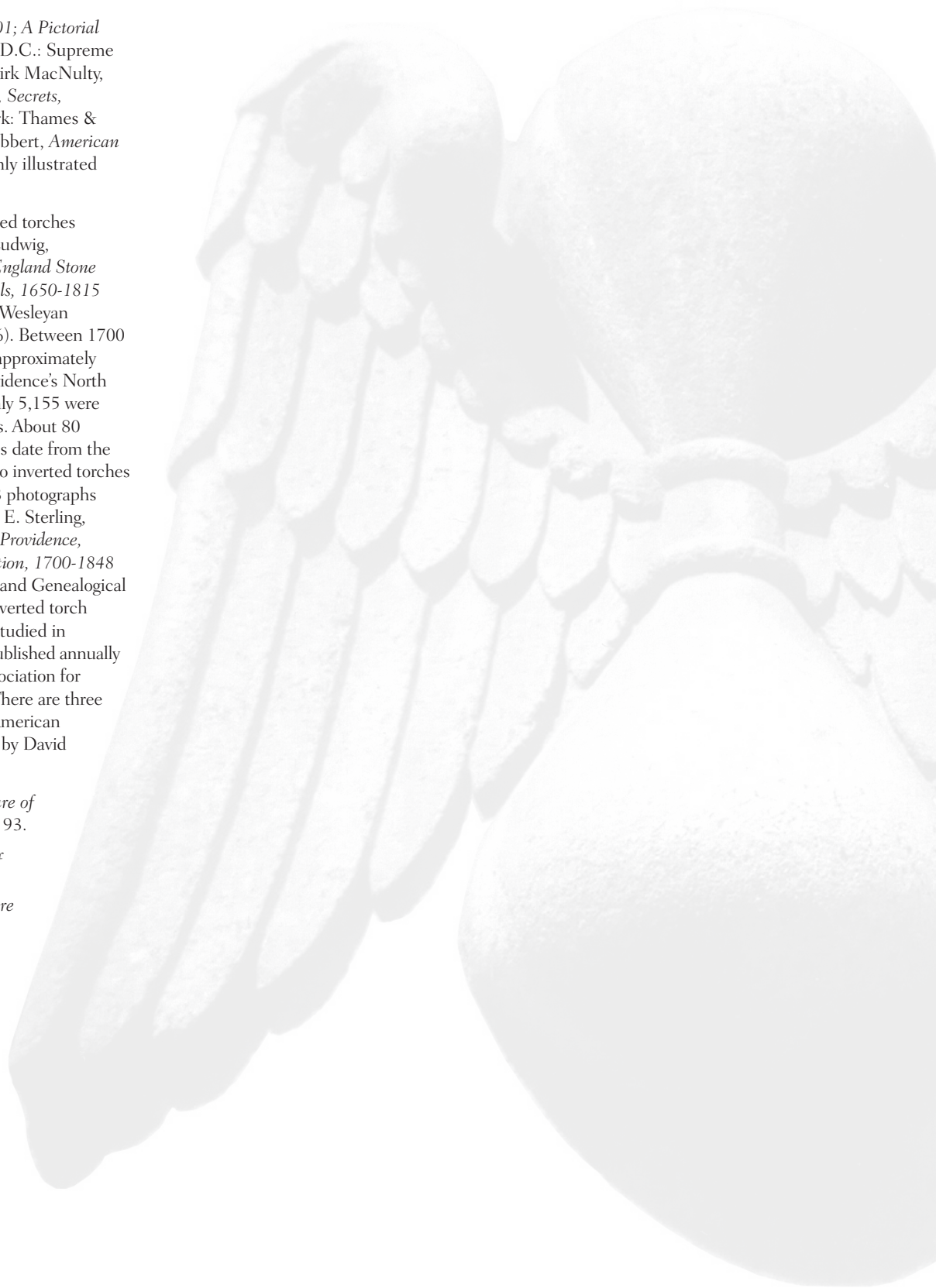
J. Stanley Lemons is a professor emeritus of history at Rhode Island College and church historian of the First Baptist Church in America. This article is adapted from a talk that the author presented at the Rhode Island Historical Society's John Brown House on March 20, 2008.

The Meeting House of the First Baptist Church in America was a radical departure from the plain meetinghouse style of the Baptists. "A S.W. View of the Baptist Meeting House, Providence, R.I.," engraved for the *Massachusetts Magazine,* August 1789; RIHS Collection (RHi X3 6403).

The Browns and the Baptists

J. Stanley Lemons

The famous Rhode Island Brown family—"The Browns of Providence Plantations"—played a major role in the life of Providence's First Baptist Church during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Their influence continued into the nineteenth century, when it faded as the latter generations ceased being Baptists and stopped participating in the church's affairs. The Browns' involvement with the church began with Chad Brown in 1639; John Carter Brown, who died in 1874, was the last family member surnamed Brown to own a pew, but he was never a member of the church.

During its first century the church—the first Baptist congregation in America—did not have large numbers, and its members were concentrated in certain families: the Browns, Fenners, Winsors, Olneys, Jenckeses, Tillinghasts, Spragues, Whipples, Watermans, Thurbers, Dexters, Sheldons, and others. The Browns were pillars of the church, supplying it, during their eight generations of involvement, with pastors and elders, but as they became increasingly wealthy, the Browns tended to become Episcopalians.[1]

Chad Brown (?-died before 1650) was not among the original members of the church when it was founded in 1638, but the received tradition is that he became the second pastor when Roger Williams resigned from the church in 1639. Chad Brown's accession is attested to by all the earliest writers about the church.[2] Some old Brown family sources claim that Brown was the church's first pastor—a claim repeated three times in Charles Rappleye's 2006 book, *Sons of Providence*—but it is a claim not supported by the evidence.[3] Thomas Olney, one of the church's founding members, was ordained as its third pastor, and he served along with Chad Brown for a number of years before leaving the church in 1652 in a split over what kind of Baptist church it was to be.

Chad Brown was likely a moderating force in Providence and in the Baptist church. He played a very important role in the town—among other things, he surveyed the original lots that were laid out along Towne Street (North and South Main Streets)—and he was described as having a "cooler temperament" than Roger Williams.[4] After Williams's resignation Brown was chosen by church members to be their preaching elder, and he remained so until his death sometime before 1650. It is notable that the church's first schism occurred in 1652, after Brown had died; it may well have been Brown's cool temperament and conciliatory manner that kept the congregation together in the 1640s as the Providence church was being transformed from a Particular Baptist to a General Baptist church.

Disagreements between General Baptists and Particular Baptists split the Providence church twice and nearly caused a third division. The controversy was an ongoing problem, and the Browns were right in the center of these battles. The General Baptists (who were the original English Baptists in 1610) believed that everybody had a chance to be saved, provided that one made the right decision. The Particular Baptists (who first appeared in England about 1630) were Calvinists who believed that only those whom God had chosen—the elect of God—would be saved. This was the doctrine of predestination.

Roger Williams was a Particular Baptist; so too was John Clarke of Newport, who founded the first Baptist church in that town. Both these original Rhode Island Baptist churches began as Particular (or Calvinist) Baptist, but both suffered schisms in the 1650s as the number of General Baptists increased. The Particular Baptists seceded from the Providence church in 1652, following Thomas Olney, a strict Particular Baptist, into a new church that eventually dissolved by 1718. Under the leadership of

William Wickenden and Gregory Dexter, the General Baptists came to control Providence's First Baptist Church, which remained a General Six-Principle Baptist church until 1771. When John Clarke's Newport church split in 1656, the seceding General Baptists formed the Second Baptist Church of Newport.[5]

The Browns remained in the original Providence Baptist church, where they clearly were prominent members. Chad Brown's son, John (1630-1706), was chosen to be an elder, but not the church's pastor. Elders were leaders chosen from the congregation and ordained by the congregation (then as now, each Baptist church picked its own leaders).[6] The Providence church usually had concurrent "plural elders," with one elder recognized as the pastor; another elder, often called the "teacher," served as a kind of assistant pastor. During the eighteenth century a number of elders of the Providence church became the pastors of other Baptist churches in Rhode Island: these included Jonathan Sprague, John Hawkins, and Joshua Winsor in Smithfield; Peter Place in Smithfield and Glocester; and Daniel Averitt in Richmond.[7]

John Brown was not a preaching elder, but his son, James, was. James Brown (1666-1732) became the eighth pastor of the First Baptist Church at age sixty, six years before his death. He was in the middle of a dispute that nearly split the church again. The issue was how rigid the church would be in requiring people to "go under hands" before being admitted to the church and to the Lord's Supper. The ritual "laying-on-of-hands" before one could join or take part in the communion service was one of the six cardinal principles of the General Six-Principle Baptists. Laying-on-of-hands was a widespread practice among Christians; but in the hierarchical, liturgical churches it was reserved for the ordination of priests and deacons. The practice was the ritual manifestation of the doctrine of Apostolic Succession, which held that the authority of Jesus Christ was passed to the Apostles, who then passed it on to those who followed all through the centuries.

Although rejecting the doctrine of Apostolic Succession, Baptists did practice laying-on-of-hands as part of the "priesthood of all believers." Except for the Quakers, the General Six-Principle Baptists were the most democratic denomination in the seventeenth century. Their practice of laying-on-of-hands was meant to level everyone, nearly abolishing the clergy itself.[8] At General Six-Principle Baptist meetings anyone could "testify" (a form of preaching); this included women, who also had voting rights at these meetings.[9]

By 1730-31 the Browns and the Jenckeses sought to relax the requirement of "going under hands."[10] However, a strong faction led by Deacon Samuel Winsor strenuously objected, and at one point the two factions were meeting separately. In May 1732 a pact was signed by the leading elders and men of the congregation to require that the ritual of going under hands be strictly adhered to. Communion services were closed to anyone who had not gone under hands. When James Brown died five months later, he was replaced by Samuel Winsor himself.[11]
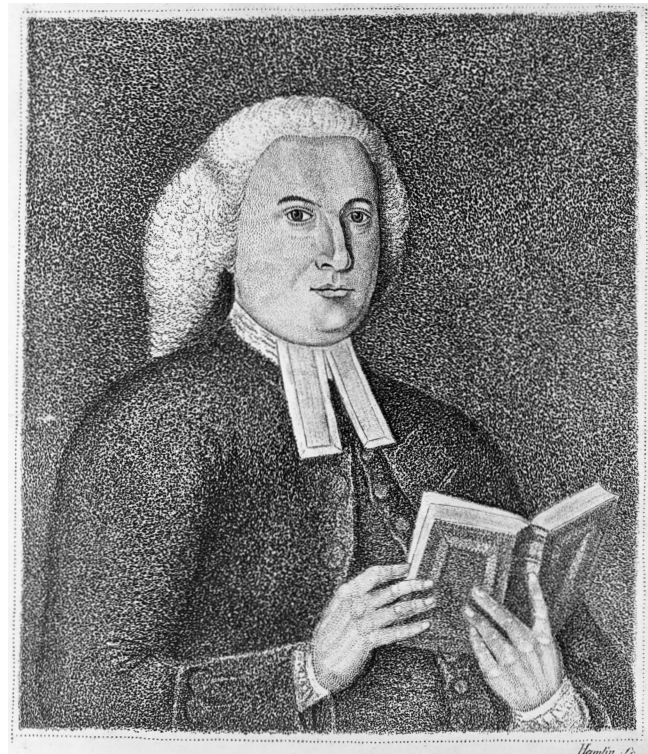
Dr. James Manning, the first president of the college that would become Brown University, was the pastor of the First Baptist Church when its Meeting House was erected in 1774-1775. RIHS Collection (RHi X3 601).

The Brown and Jenckes families remained in the church, and they eventually got their way. James Brown's son, Captain James Brown (1698-1739), the founder of the family fortune, sired the famous four Brown brothers and their sister Mary;[12] and with that generation the grandchildren of the Elder James Brown and Joseph Jenckes triumphed in the laying-on-of-hands controversy. When Samuel Winsor died in 1758, he was succeeded as pastor by his son, also named Samuel; and when the younger Samuel Winsor was maneuvered out of the church by the Browns and Jenckeses in 1771, the strict adherence to the practice of laying-on-of-hands went with him. Indeed, his successor, Dr. James Manning (1738-1791), turned the Providence Baptist church back into a Particular Baptist church. The General Baptists lost in the great schism of 1771, and 47 percent of the members followed the younger Samuel Winsor out of the First Baptist Church, leaving it in the possession of Manning and his patrons, the Browns and the Jenckeses.[13]

We know that Nicholas Brown (1729-1791) and Daniel Jenckes had worked to achieve this objective because the Reverend Ezra Stiles, the minister of Newport's Second Congregational Church and the future president of Yale College, wrote in his diary on May 1, 1770, that the Baptist college (now Brown University) in Warren had voted to move to Providence, and that "the Browns and Jenkes intend to turn off Elder Windsor & put in President Manning for their minister."[14] Stiles knew about the plan a year before it came to fruition.

Nicholas Brown and Daniel Jenckes were wealthy merchants who wanted greater respectability and formality for the Providence church.[15] They were part of a movement among urban Baptists in Providence, Boston, Newport, New York, and Philadelphia to gain the respect of the more established denominations—the Anglicans, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians. This effort included a number of initiatives: establishing a college to produce educated ministers (the college became Rhode Island's Brown University); introducing more formality in worship services; observing the Lord's Supper on a regular monthly schedule; placing a cloth on the communion table;

eliminating such lesser rituals as foot washing and anointing with oil; keeping minutes of church business meetings; and taking away the right of women to speak and to vote. All of these things were accomplished in the Providence church by the 1790s, the last being the elimination of women as speakers and voters.

Another manifestation of this quest for respectability was the First Baptist Church's erection of its Meeting House in 1774-75, and the Browns were major figures in this undertaking. The new Meeting House on North Main Street, which replaced the congregation's small old meetinghouse up the street, represented a dramatic departure for Baptists in New England. Until then, Baptist meetinghouses were constructed in the New England plain meetinghouse style. The Baptist Meeting House in Providence was the first in New England to have a steeple, and many of the details were copied from the English Renaissance or Palladian style. While plain in many other respects, it was a radical declaration of a more formal and refined style. The Meeting House was, in fact, so shocking to the sensibilities of some Baptists that they denounced it as "popish."[16]

Nicholas and John Brown (1736-1803) were among the petitioners who in 1774 gained the Rhode Island General Assembly's charter for the Charitable Baptist Society, the legal entity that bought the property and built the building (and continues to own the Meeting House to this day). Nicholas Brown was named the society's first moderator, Joseph Brown (1733-1785) was selected to be the architect of the new meetinghouse, and John Brown was appointed the "Committee man for carrying on the building." John and some other men scouted certain Anglican and Congregational churches in Boston as models, but in the end they used a design book published by James Gibbs, the architect of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields in Trafalgar Square in London.

The members of the Charitable Baptist Society did not have to be members of the church; in fact, not one of the men named in the charter was a church member, and only six of these thirty-nine men joined the Baptist church later.[17] Although Nicholas, Joseph, and John Brown all bought pews in the new meetinghouse, Joseph was the only one of the
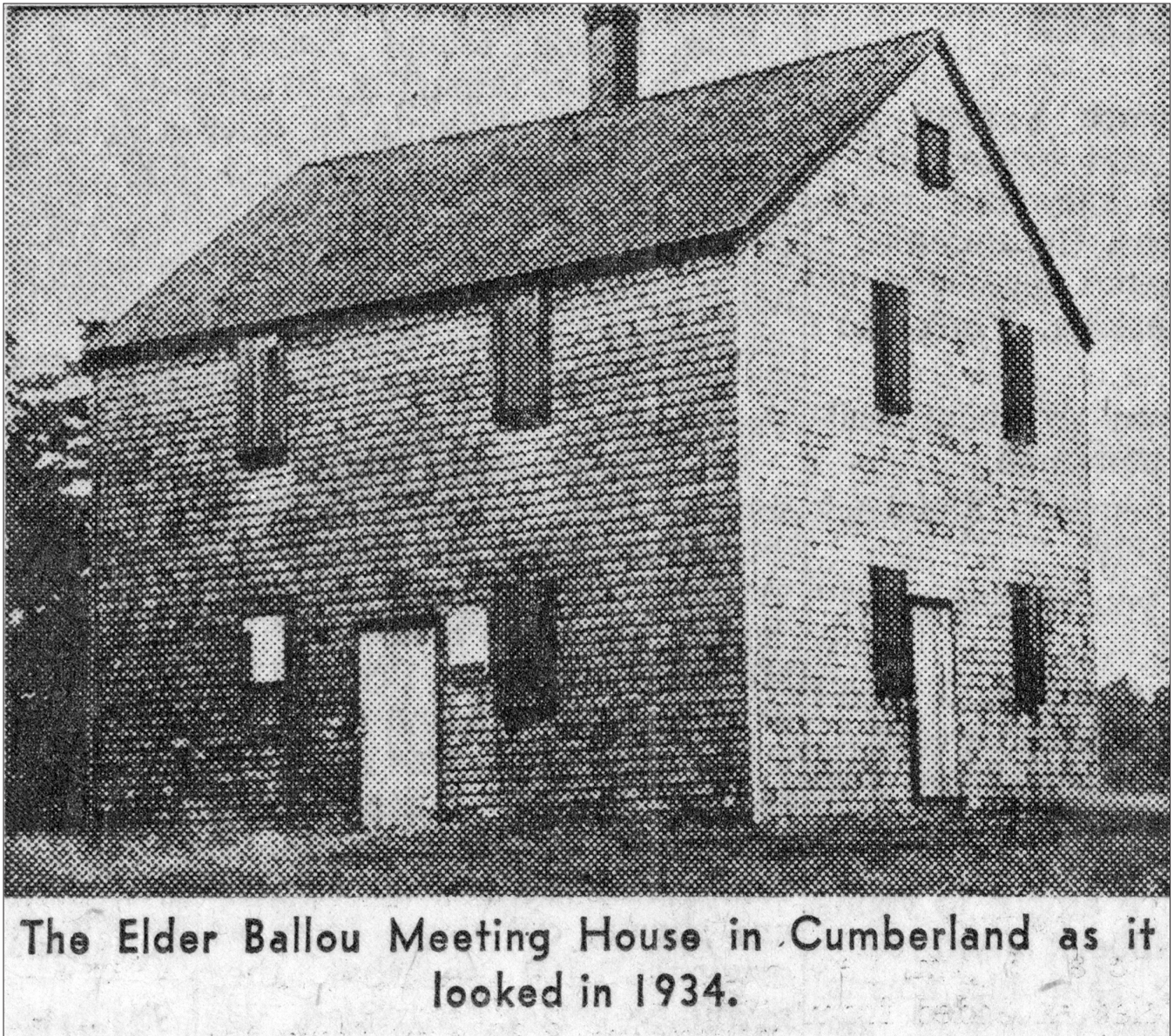
The Elder Ballou Meeting House in Cumberland was a typical Baptist meetinghouse of the colonial era. Built in 1746 by General Six-Principle Baptists, it was burned by vandals in 1962. *Providence Evening Bulletin,* Oct. 26, 1962; copyright © 2009 The Providence Journal; reproduced by permission. RIHS Collection (RHi X1 7321).

four Brown brothers ever to become a First Baptist Church member, and he was not baptized until April 2, 1775, when he was about forty-two years old.[18] Nicholas and John were only " hearers " (attending but not joining the church), and Moses (1738-1836) renounced his Baptist upbringing to become a Quaker in 1773.

John Brown later resigned from the Charitable Baptist Society and gave up his pew. His letter, dated July 2, 1790, said he was resigning because "of a molishous lawsuit against me," a suit whose principal promoters were "several members of the [Baptist] Society who have lately opposed me in so unchristian, ungentleman & unfriendly a manner . . .

in their late conduct in depriving me of the benefit of my slaves[.] I can not sitt at worship of the Supreme being till they purge themselves of their unheard of wickedness. I am with perfect respect and esteeme to every member of the Society but those Abommonable abolitioners."[19]

The abominable abolitionists included the church's pastor, Dr. James Manning; former congressman David Howell, who was then moderator of the Charitable Baptist Society; Governor Arthur Fenner; George Benson, a partner with Nicholas Brown the elder (John's brother) in the firm of Brown & Benson; and Nicholas Brown the younger (Nicholas the elder's son). These members of the Charitable Baptist Society were also members of Moses Brown's Abolition Society, which had brought an action against John that resulted in his having to relinquish a slave.[20] John bitterly complained to Moses that the Abolition Society "had as good a right to Claim his Coat on his Back as his Negro."[21] Since John could not retaliate against the Abolition Society, he attacked the Charitable Baptist Society. The "Abommonable abolitioners" never purged themselves of their wickedness, and as far as is known, John Brown never came back to the First Baptist Church.

Nicholas Brown the younger (1769-1841) was a generous benefactor of the church. During his long association with it he served as the Charitable Baptist Society's moderator for thirty years, donated money to buy a lot and build a parsonage, gave the clock that hangs in the auditorium of the meetinghouse today, furnished the magnificent organ, and owned several pews (so that the church would get full income from pew rents). He was the man for whom Brown University was named in 1804. He was extremely generous to the college over his lifetime, providing its first endowment, building Manning Hall and Hope College, and donating other gifts as well. His benefactions to Brown exceeded $160,000, a substantial sum of money at the time.[22] But Nicholas Brown was never a member of the First Baptist Church—or any other church.

His sister, Hope Brown Ives (1773-1855), provided the great chandelier that has hung in the Meeting House since 1792, donating it in memory of their father, who had died the previous year. In 1837 she gave the church a silver-plated
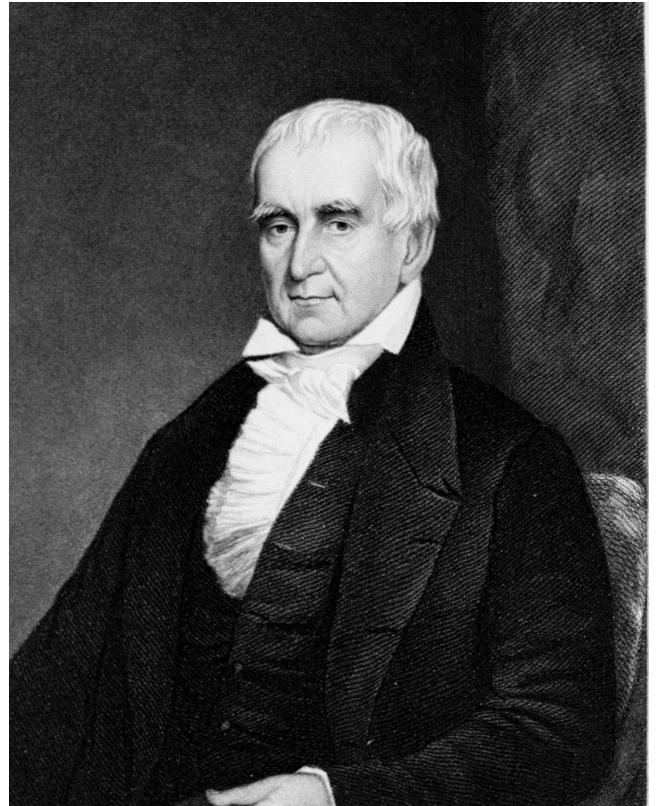
Nicholas Brown the younger was a major benefactor of the First Baptist Church and Brown University, but he was never a member of any church. RIHS Collection (RHi X3 4466).

communion set, still used for the Lord's Supper each month, and she and her husband, Thomas Poynton Ives, owned a pew in the church for sixty years. But it was not until 1840, when she was sixty-seven years old, that she was baptized. The church had installed a baptistry in the meetinghouse in 1837, but she insisted on an outdoor baptism in the Seekonk River.

THE INVOLVEMENT OF the Browns in the First Baptist Church diminished as the nineteenth century went on, and by 1900 they were gone. Several members of the family owned pews, and thus were part of the Charitable Baptist Society, but the Browns no longer participated in the society's committees. Moses Brown Ives (1794-1857) and Robert Hale Ives (1798-1878), sons of Hope Brown and Thomas Poynton Ives, both owned pews, but they never joined the church and took little part in its affairs. John Carter Brown (1797-1874), the son of Nicholas Brown the younger, owned a pew, but he too was
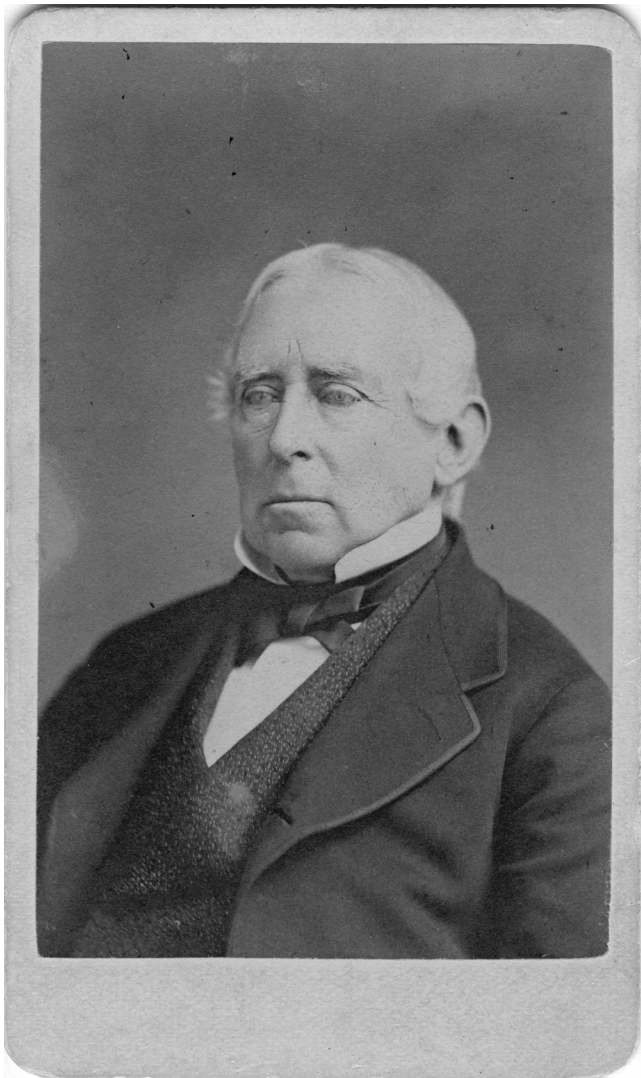
John Carter Brown was the last family member surnamed Brown to own a pew in the Meeting House, but he was not a member of the First Baptist Church itself. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

Baptist Church in America, and no direct relation has been a member since the death of Anne Brown Francis Woods.

The Brown family's final connection with the First Baptist Meeting House was an unsolicited gift that caused a furor within the congregation. The grandchildren of Hope Brown Ives persuaded the leaders of the Charitable Baptist Society to include a stained-glass window in the back of the projection that was added to the building in 1884. These grandchildren, who were not members of the church, bought and donated a fine stained-glass window that memorialized their grandmother. It was a typical Episcopalian memorial window, inscribed "In Memory of Hope Brown Ives" at the bottom. The only memorial in the building, it was (and remains) totally incompatible with the architecture and spirit of the Meeting House, violating the plain style that used only clear glass windows. When it was installed without consultation with the members of the church, it occasioned an uproar, and it was soon covered with shutters.[25] The window was unshuttered in 2007, but since it is now behind the restored east wall of the auditorium, its presence does not clash with the plain style nor offend any of the worshipers inside.

For more information and educational materials on this subject, see under Education at www.rihs.org

never a member of the church, and the trustee of his estate sold the last Brown-owned pew in 1906.

It appears that the last church member who was closely related to the Brown family was Anne Brown Francis Woods (1828-1896), the wife of the industrialist and financier Marshall Woods.[23] She was doubly related, as her grandfather was Nicholas Brown the younger and her father was the grandson of Nicholas's uncle John Brown.[24] No one named Brown is currently a member of Providence's First

Notes

1. The desire for respectability may have been a factor here. Richard Hofstadter quotes what he calls "Protestant folklore": "A Methodist is a Baptist who wears shoes; a Presbyterian is a Methodist who has gone to college; and an Episcopalian is a Presbyterian who lives off his investments." Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1963), 90.

2. See Isaac Backus, *A History of New England, with Particular Reference to the Denomination of Christians Called Baptist* (Boston, 1777); Morgan Edwards, "Materials for a History of the Baptists in Rhode Island," manuscript, Rhode Island Historical Society, ca. 1770; David Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America and Other Parts of the World* (Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, 1813); and every history of the First Baptist Church itself, beginning with John Stanford's account in 1789 (First Baptist Church in America MSS [FBCIA], Rhode Island Historical Society).

3. Charles Rappleye, *Sons of Providence: The Brown Brothers, the Slave Trade and the American Revolution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 9, 87, 129. Rappleye provides no documentation on this matter, and he probably consulted only old Brown family sources, such as Abby Isabel Buckley, *The Chad Browne Memorial, consisting of Genealogical Memories of a Portion of the Descendents of Chad and Elizabeth Browne*, 1638-1888 (Brooklyn, N.Y., 1888). By the late eighteenth century the Browns were making the claim that Chad Brown was the first pastor; see, e.g., the letter from Moses Brown to Francis Wayland in Reuben Aldrich Guild, *History of Brown University, with Illustrative Documents* (Providence: Providence Press, 1867), 207.

4. William Hague, *An Historical Discourse Delivered at the Celebration of the Second Centennial Anniversary of the First Baptist Church, in Providence, November 9, 1839* (Providence: B. Cranston, 1839), 8; Reuben Aldrich Guild, *Early History of Brown, Including the Life, Times and Correspondence of President Manning, 1756-1791* (Providence: Snow & Farnham, 1897), 208.

5. J. Stanley Lemons, *First: The First Baptist Church in America* (Providence: Charitable Baptist Society, 2001), 13-15. See also Sydney James, *John Clarke and His Legacies: Religion and Law in Colonial Rhode Island, 1638-1670* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999).

6. Baptist clergy did not take the title "Reverend" until the nineteenth century, and this occurred only when increased formal education and a desire for general recognition of ministerial credentials became important. See William H. Brackney, *A Capsule History of Baptist Principles* (Atlanta: Baptist History and Heritage Society, 2009), 77. The first pastor of Providence's First Baptist Church to be addressed as Reverend was Robert Pattison, who became the minister in 1830.

7. Lemons, *First*, 15.

8. The General Six-Principle Baptists rejected a paid or professional clergy. The Quakers abolished the clergy altogether in the seventeenth century. Both groups banned music from their worship services.

9. Lemons, *First*, 14; William H. Brackney, *The Baptists* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1987), 67. General Baptists originally encouraged "she preachers" but the Particular Baptists did not, and a male-dominated clergy reigned by the end of the seventeenth century. Brackney, *Capsule History*, p. 76.

10. With Martha Brown—the sister of James Brown, the church's eighth pastor—married to Joseph Jenckes, the Brown and Jenckes families were intermarried allies. Ebenezer Jenckes (1669-1726), the seventh pastor, had wanted to relax the practice of going under hands; his brother Joseph (1656-1740), who was governor of

Rhode Island from 1727 to 1732, wanted the church to become more sophisticated and respectable by having a college-educated, professional minister and by discarding various practices of the Six-Principle Baptists, such as going under hands and foot washing.

11. Backus, *History of New England,* 2: 23; Samuel Lunt Caldwell and William Gammell, *History of the First Baptist Church in Providence, 1639-1877* (Providence, 1877), 10.

12. Capt. James Brown, his wife Hope Power (1702-1792), and their daughter Mary (Brown) Vanderlight (1731-1795) were all baptized members of the First Baptist Church.

13. Among the secessionists were 17 Winsors, 7 Dyers, 8 Carpenters, 8 Spragues, 4 Fenners, 4 Kings, and a number of Eddys, Jenckeses, Dexters, Burlingames, and Higgenbottoms. See Lemons, *First*, 18-19.

14. *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles,* ed. Franklin Bowditch Dexter, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901), 49.

15. The family alliance continued with the marriage of Nicholas Brown to his cousin Rhoda Jenckes (1741-1783), the daughter of Daniel Jenckes (1701-1774) and Joanna Jenckes (1703-1796). Daniel was the son of Gov. Joseph Jenckes and Martha (Brown) Jenckes.

16. Lemons, *First*, 25-26

17. Five of the six were baptized on April 2, 1775, as the meetinghouse neared completion. All of the baptisms took place outdoors in frigid weather. Conversion in that time required a strong commitment and a sturdy constitution.

18. Joseph Brown was one of nine persons baptized that day. Four of the others were African Americans, including Providence Brown, a slave freed by Moses Brown in 1773.

19. John Brown to the Charitable Baptist Society, July 2, 1790, Charitable Baptist Society folder, FBCIA.

20. The incident that led to John Brown's resignation from the Charitable Baptist Society is recounted in John Wood Sweet, *Bodies Politic: Negotiating Race in the American North, 1730-1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2003), 225-26.

21. Ibid., 226.

22, See Lemons, *First,* 25, 40, 41, 43; James B. Hedges, *The Browns of Providence Plantations: The Nineteenth Century* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1968), passim; Walter C. Bronson, *History of Brown University, 1764-1914* (Providence: Brown University, 1914), passim.

23. Both parents of Marshall Woods had been members of the First Baptist Church, but he himself never joined, although he owned a pew with his wife.

24. The Browns married into other families, including the Gammells, as their connections expanded. The last   Gammell member of the church was Asa Messer Gammell, who died in 1903.

25. Lemons, *First,* 56, 59-60.

Index to Volume 67

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...'s winter relief from the Federal Treasury for each dependent!
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ANN BURLAK

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AT

SMITH'S HALL

Across From Ca...

Sunday, September 25th - 3 P. M.

...S Main Street

ANN BURLAK led and fought with the textile workers of Central Falls and Paw...
...strikes of last summer.   As the only workers' candidate for Mayor she will expose the...
...Administration and the Department of Public Aid, and she will present the Communist...
No matter what your political beliefs are now, if you are a worker who...
...if you are working at starvation wages—come and hear these workers'...
...se their conditions through organized struggle.   We cannot exist...
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