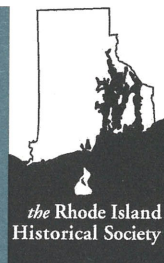


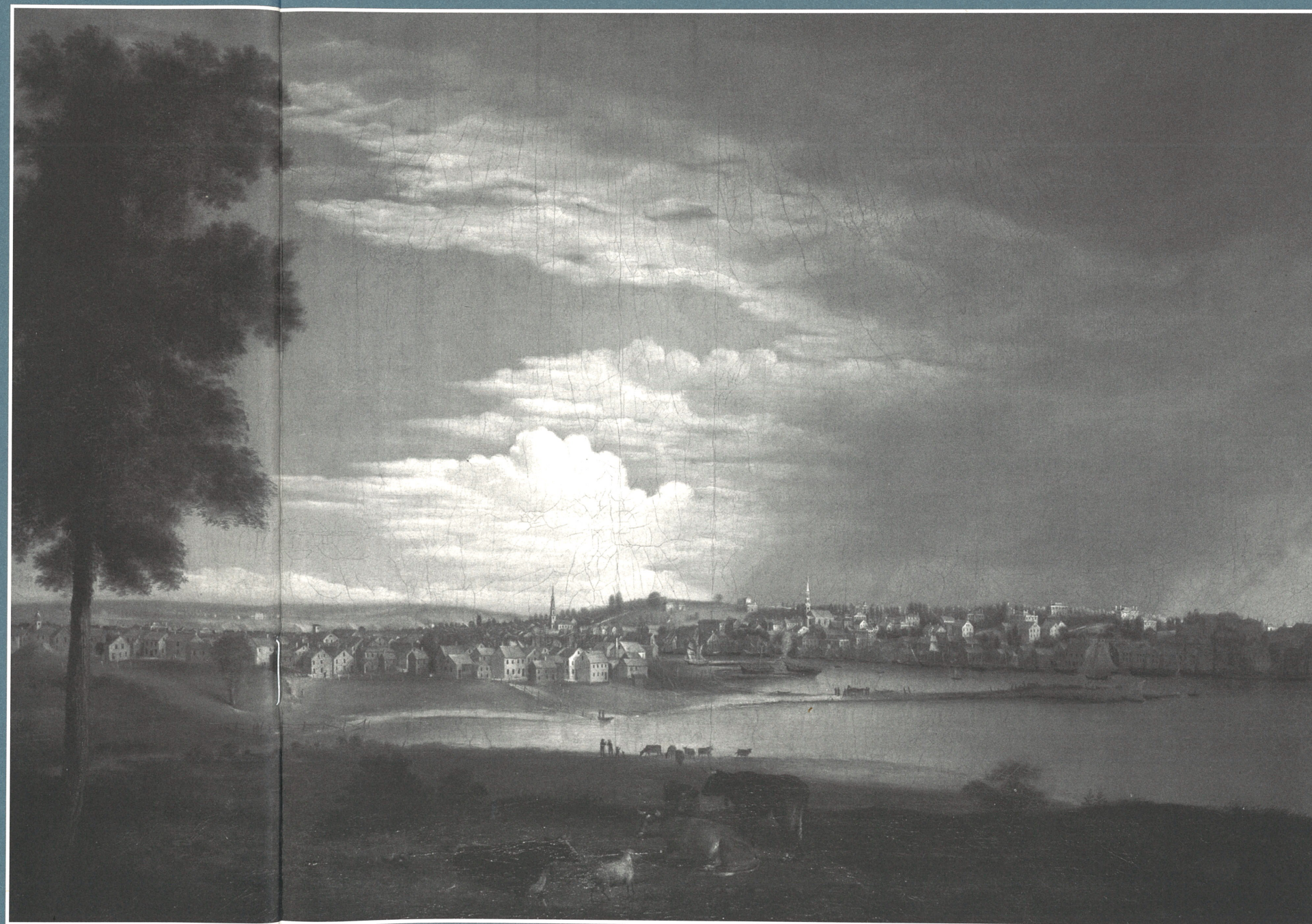
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# Rhode Island History

WINTER/SPRING 2012 VOLUME 70, NUMBER 1



## COVER

### "Providence from Across the Cove"

A view depicting a tranquil scene that contrasts with the turbulent economic distress in the Providence business community in the year the painting was completed. Painting by Alvan Fisher (1792-1863), 1819; RIHS Collection (RH1 X5 11; accession no. 1905.1.1).



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Detail from a contemporary view of the Alamo, the former Spanish mission where scores of Texans were killed by Mexican forces in March 1836; photograph by the author.

## “A Not Unapt Illustration of New England Heroism”

*Albert Martin’s Journey from Rhode Island to the Alamo*

FRANCIS J. LEAZES, JR.

*Died. At Bexar, 6th of March, 1836, Mr. Albert Martin of Gonzales, eldest son of Joseph S. Martin Esq. of this city. His short but eventful life, which was saddened by many trials, was closed on the field of battle. He was one of the devoted brotherhood, whose banner was unfurled in the defense of Texian liberty and he died bravely repelling the attack on the Alamo. In his character were united a mind of energetic enterprise, a fortitude in suffering, and a buoyancy of spirit which rendered misfortune almost stingless. . . .*

Providence Daily Journal April 29, 1836

In *Three Roads to the Alamo*, historian William C. Davis asserts that it was the deaths of the backwoods politician Davy Crockett, the knife-fighter Jim Bowie, and the ambitious lawyer William Barret Travis that made their lives a matter of interest.<sup>1</sup> In Alamo fact and myth those three lives loom large, and the men are the subjects of many books, films, and legends. Rhode Islander Albert Martin died alongside Crockett, Bowie and Travis just five days after he led thirty-two men from Gonzalez, Texas to San Antonio, the only reinforcements to reach the doomed garrison. However, unlike the famed trio of Davis, Crockett and Bowie, the story of Rhode Islander Albert Martin is not known today, even in his native state.

Albert Martin’s story is inextricably bound with that of his father and grandfather. He was the grandson of Joseph Martin, a successful Providence merchant and civic leader in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Albert’s father, Joseph S. Martin,

carried on the family business into the nineteenth century; among his partners were prosperous Providence merchants Sullivan Dorr and Samuel Greene Arnold. In Providence today, however, no Benefit Street mansions, historic markers, or pages in local histories carry the name of Rhode Island’s Alamo hero. A house where members of Albert’s family lived still perches on Cady Street just off Canal Street, a short distance from Alamo Lane and Crockett Street, both now incorporated into the Roger Williams National Memorial. A worn and slightly skewed obelisk in the North Burial Ground in Providence is the only memorial in Rhode Island to Albert Martin; it stands sentinel over a number of fading, tilting, and crumbling Martin gravestones.

Why did Providence merchant Joseph S. Martin, and his sons, Albert and Joseph, abandon their business at 51 South Water Street in the early 1830s just as Providence began to transform into a successful manufacturing center? The Martin men did not leave correspondence or diaries, nor is there any contemporary narrative explaining their lives or actions. Fragments of their story, although difficult to unearth, do exist. When these pieces are assembled, a picture begins to emerge of a family whose economic, social, and civic fires once burned brightly and then began to flicker out. The narrative of Albert Martin’s family illustrates the complicated situation of a Rhode Island merchant family whose fortunes fluctuated with the economy in the New Republic. He was the grandson of a man who succeeded in mercantile dealings and became a civic leader. Despite the success of his grandfather, Albert



Martin's family fell on hard times as war, economic panics, and soured investments took their toll in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Economic hardship drove the Martins from Providence to seek their prosperity elsewhere. Had his father's fortunes flourished, Albert Martin would not have found his moment of glory in faraway Texas as a Rhode Island hero at the Alamo.

#### THE PATRIARCH

Albert Martin was descended from a family that emigrated from England to Plymouth Colony in the seventeenth century. His forbearer, John Martin, was one of the first settlers in Swansea. John Martin and his wife, Johanna, had nine children and many descendants. As a result, the Martins' lands were divided into smaller and smaller parcels. By the 1750s, many family members faced a stark choice: remain on ancestral lands and fall into poverty or move elsewhere, perhaps to Vermont, Nova Scotia, New York, or to a nearby town. In the 1760s, Albert's grandfather, Joseph Martin, and his brother David decided to leave their agrarian roots in rural Swansea and move to the growing town of Providence.<sup>2</sup>

In the 1760s, Providence was a seafaring community, bustling with wharves, warehouses, and new construction. Its growing population had increased from 1,446 in 1708 to 3,159 by 1755. The tax roll expanded from 573 individuals in 1760 to 722 in 1775. Providence merchants, shopkeepers, innkeepers and artisans were the town's wealthiest residents. By 1775, merchants were the principal elected and appointed political officials in Providence.<sup>3</sup>

In Providence, Joseph and David Martin settled west of the cove and river on Weybosset peninsula, where many newcomers to the town established homes and businesses. (The oldest neighborhood in Providence, where Roger Williams and the earliest proprietors settled, was east of the Great Salt Cove

and River on the peninsula known as Providence Neck.) David Martin established a window-glazing business which he and his son would operate into the nineteenth century. Joseph had enough capital, perhaps the result of an early inheritance gift from his father, to become a "shopowner," and to buy and sell real estate, including a house and land located on "the west side of Waybosset Bridge."<sup>4</sup>

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, Weybosset was a thriving new community with its own identity. In 1770, "Weybosset" men, including Joseph Martin, petitioned the Rhode Island General Assembly to separate "all that part of the Town of Providence lying westward of Weybossett Bridge," and to lay out a new town with the name of "Weybosett" or "Westminster." According to the petition Martin was one of twelve hundred residents, including "at least one hundred freemen," who had physically transformed Weybosset from a hilly and marshy place to one with "divers commodious streets and lanes," complete with aqueducts due to a "want of fresh water in a good part of it." However, when the time came to meet with the General Assembly on September 12, 1770, the "petitioners did not appear," and their petition was dismissed.<sup>5</sup>

Joseph Martin was a prominent member of the Weybosset community throughout his lifetime. He married Mary Smith of Dighton, Massachusetts in 1764. Three years later they moved into the Weybosset house he purchased from John Field. Joseph and Mary Martin had three children, John, Mary ("Polly"), and Albert's father, Joseph.<sup>6</sup> The Martins were active members of Weybosset's Second Congregational Church which had split from the First Congregational Church in Providence during the Great Awakening in 1742-43. By 1770, Second Congregational was Providence's largest congregation.<sup>7</sup>

The coming of the American Revolution overshadowed local concerns. With the outbreak of the war, Rhode Island mustered 1500 men to be part of



The Martin House Farm, built in 1728 in Swansea, Massachusetts, was a homestead of the Martin family. The elder Joseph Martin migrated from rural southeastern Massachusetts to Providence, Rhode Island in the early 1760s. (Photograph by Eugene Parulis, courtesy of the Martin House Committee, National Society of the Colonial Dames of America).

the "army of observation" surrounding the British in Boston. The state established a navy on June 12, 1775, fortified Foxes Hill, Fields Point, and Prospect Hill, and constructed Fort Sullivan on Weybosset peninsula. Joseph Martin and others took an oath pledging not to assist the British fleet and armies. A manpower and weapons census was taken that

found many Weybosset men ready for war and counted among the weaponry Martin's two guns with bayonets and two boxes of cartridges. Martin was never in the military; he did serve as a juror for the Providence Maritime Court for the Trial of Prizes, a tribunal that determined the legitimacy of privateer claims to captured vessels and cargo.<sup>8</sup>



The war brought financial pressures to the residents of the town. Wealthy citizens left and refugees streamed into Providence many from Newport, Boston, and even New York, after British forces threatened or occupied those places in 1775-76. Economic burdens fell on Providence freeholders like Joseph Martin who owned enough property and personal wealth to pay the local tax levies. As the war dragged on into 1778, Providence residents, including shop owner Joseph Martin and his brother David, petitioned the Town Council to abate property taxes. They complained of a "stagnation of trade," stating that employers were "discontinuing" their business, and that the tax burden had become "beyond our just and due proportion compared to other towns within the state. . . ." The citizens were "pinching with penury," because of "poor and distressed families from Newport," who had fled to Providence, the petitioners asserted.<sup>9</sup>

The financial and social strains of the Revolution abated when British forces withdrew from Rhode Island in 1779, leaving Newport greatly diminished, but Providence intact, setting the stage for a considerable growth in profits and investment capital for Providence merchants.<sup>10</sup> Joseph Martin's business appeared to prosper in the postwar years. Between 1786 and 1794, he registered vessels to sail along the eastern seaboard, as well as to New Orleans and to European ports, importing goods for his store, "At the Sign of the Red Ball, on the West Side of the Great Bridge."<sup>11</sup>

Joseph Martin was active in the civic and religious life of postwar Providence. Between 1777 and 1792, he served continually as one of three presidents of Fire Wards. He chaired the Committee to Pull Down Houses multiple times, and was an Overseer of the Poor for a number of years.<sup>12</sup> In 1793, Second Congregational Church split along theological lines, pitting staunch Calvinist Pastor Joseph Snow, Jr., against his assistant, Methodist minister James "Paddy" Wilson. Joseph Martin acted as an emissary

between the factions, but the rift was irreparable. Some church members welcomed the charismatic Wilson who attracted many newcomers with his energetic preaching style and his eagerness to open a schoolhouse. Others remained loyal to Joseph Snow who withdrew with part of the congregation to form the Richmond Street Congregational Church in 1795. The Wilson partisans, including Joseph Martin, retained the meetinghouse that eventually became Beneficent Congregational Church.<sup>13</sup>

Despite conflict in his church, in 1794, Joseph Martin had reasons for optimism. He had sufficient capital to be in business, and he was a respected and involved member of the community. After his wife Mary died in 1788, he had married Hannah Smith.<sup>14</sup> Martin's daughter Mary ("Polly") wed Massachusetts lawyer and merchant Timothy Green in 1793.<sup>15</sup> His older son John and younger son Joseph, not yet 21, worked with him in the family's successful mercantile business.

In the midst of prosperity, a turn of events thrust the younger Joseph Martin into a leading role in the family business. On May 25, 1794, while on a business trip with his son Joseph, fifty-five-year-old Joseph Martin died.<sup>16</sup> The size of the elder Joseph Martin's estate revealed that he had prospered by moving to Providence three decades earlier. The estate included land in Vermont and Rhode Island, United States Bank stock, cash, and personal property.<sup>17</sup> However, Joseph Martin's true legacy was the life he led as a solid member of the Revolutionary generation in Providence. He had become a successful merchant who bequeathed significant capital to his sons, an active member of his community, a leader in his church, and the patriarch of a family with a future.

#### THE SECOND GENERATION: UPHEAVALS IN THE NEW REPUBLIC

Little is known of the younger Joseph Martin's early years in the family business.<sup>18</sup> In a letter to

Joseph, who was on his first business trip in North Carolina, sister Polly reminded her seventeen-year-old brother that he was, "stepping forward on the stage of action," and urged him to "do honor to his family."<sup>19</sup> With his father's death, young Joseph Martin's apprenticeship was abruptly terminated, and he soon encountered a business environment that would prove to be far more complex and treacherous than that experienced by his father.

Three years after his father's death, Joseph Martin made a fortuitous marriage to his fourth cousin, Abby Martin.<sup>20</sup> With their nuptials, two branches of the Martin family, both descendants of John and Johanna Martin of Swansea, were united. Sylvanus Martin, Abby's father, had migrated from Rehoboth, to East Windsor, Connecticut, then to Providence during the Revolution.<sup>21</sup> Sylvanus was a prominent and prosperous member of the community, serving as one of Providence's four representatives in the Rhode Island General Assembly and on the Providence Town Council.<sup>22</sup> He provided a significant dowry for his daughter Abby when she married the younger Joseph Martin.<sup>23</sup>

Shortly after his wedding, Joseph Martin took steps to establish a distinct identity. The Martin name was common in Providence where the population in 1800 was about 10,000 residents, almost double that of 1790. Many Martins, including the families of Joseph, David, Philip, John, and Sylvanus (who had thirteen siblings), had settled in Providence. On October 25, 1797, the Rhode Island General Assembly approved a petition from young Joseph Martin who sought to change his name to Joseph Smith Martin, adding his mother's surname as his middle name, because, he argued, "there are several persons in said Town of Providence of the same name . . . of the same family and nearly of the same age . . . and some inconveniences have arisen for want of distinguishing appellations."<sup>24</sup>

By 1799, Providence was a leading port in the United States with three times the risk capital of


Newport.<sup>25</sup> East and west of the Providence river merchant warehouses sprouted alongside newly founded banks and marine insurance businesses. The Providence Bank opened its doors in 1791, and thirteen other banks were established in the town between 1800 and 1831. The Providence Insurance Company was formed on January 5, 1799; Joseph S. Martin was an original stockholder and a company director along with frequent partner Samuel Greene Arnold.<sup>26</sup>

The merchant business was a challenging one. After their father's death, John continued as a ship's master while Joseph formed partnerships with other merchants, raised capital and purchased insurance. When the vessels returned from their long voyages, Joseph sold green coffee, brown sugar, fleece cotton, tea, molasses and "hogsheads of Tobago rum," as well as "Russian duck sheeting and swine bristles, liquorice paste and Morocco leather," and other imported goods.<sup>27</sup> In a business dependent on the skill and honesty of many individuals separated by thousands of miles, profits were hard-earned. After the Revolution, British policy denied Americans access to Caribbean ports, forcing merchants to search for markets all around the world. In 1787, the *George Washington*, a vessel owned by leading Providence merchant John Brown, sailed to China. Well-capitalized merchant houses, such as Edward Carrington & Co., could send their ships regularly to Asian ports. As a merchant with limited funds, Joseph S. Martin sought to create partnerships to finance risky, only sometimes profitable, voyages.<sup>28</sup>

Between 1795 and 1810, Joseph S. Martin's vessels, and those of many Providence merchants, sailed to ports in South America, the West Indies, Europe and Asia.<sup>29</sup> He was not a slave merchant, although his ships often carried cotton and rice that had been produced by enslaved people living on southern plantations. One remunerative Martin venture was the voyage of the *Enterprize* (1799-1801), insured for \$9,000 by Martin and Ebenezer



**For NEW-ORLEANS,**



**THE Ship WILLIAM  
BRADFORD, RATCLIFF  
HICKS, Master, lying at  
Butler's Wharf, will sail by the 10th of  
November next. For Freight or Pas-  
sage, apply to Messrs. SAMUEL G. AR-  
NOLD & Co. or to  
JOSEPH S. MARTIN.  
October 23, 1810.**

A Providence newspaper advertisement for Joseph S. Martin's mercantile business. *Rhode Island American and General Advertiser*, October 23, 1810; RIHS Newspaper Collection, photograph by the author.

Thompson. The *Enterprize* went on a sealing expedition to the Pacific Northwest around Cape Horn, "with liberty to stop and seal at any place or places on the coast of Patagonia and at the Falkland Islands and from thence to Canton." Seal skins were valued commodities in the China trade. The *Enterprize* returned to Providence with a cargo of saleable silks, chests of souchong tea, and thousands of nankeens manufactured from durable Nanking cloth.<sup>30</sup>

Other Martin endeavors were less successful. Martin was a partner with Samuel Greene Arnold when the *Tyre* successfully circumnavigated the world from 1800 to 1803, logging over 40,000

nautical miles. The *Tyre* returned with a hold filled with goods. Soon after the vessel docked in Providence, however, a protracted legal battle erupted over the captain's mistreatment of the First Mate who had died on the voyage.<sup>31</sup>

The tribulations of the Martins' *Cicero* in 1800-1801 illustrate the many problems that could be encountered in a single voyage.<sup>32</sup> The *Cicero* sailed on October 30, 1800 from Providence with a cargo insured for \$8,000; it was bound for Europe, the Azores, and the West Indies. Joseph S. Martin's brother, John, was Master, and Hopkins Carpenter, First Mate. Just six days out from Providence, the vessel was boarded by an English privateer;

fortunately no crewman was seized or cargo taken. In Charleston, New England products were unloaded and hundreds of bales of cotton were stowed on board. Then, Martin sailed to Glasgow in foul North Atlantic weather. Gales prevented the ship from leaving Glasgow. A minor rebellion among the crew ensued because there was an overabundance of tobacco and not enough ballast; the crew refused to set sail until more ballast was taken on. To do so it was necessary to offload profitable tobacco much to the chagrin of owner/master John Martin.

The *Cicero* continued to encounter misfortune. As it sailed down the coast of Norway, a recent British-Danish naval battle zone, John Martin disappeared while on a firewood expedition. The Martins' ship was "embargoed" until Carpenter paid a Norwegian harbor pilot in tobacco. At some point, an ill John Martin returned to the ship; he was on board when the vessel arrived in Rotterdam. In Lisbon, the *Cicero* was "quarantined," a yellow flag nailed to her top-gallant. Underway again, the Rhode Island vessel was boarded by officers of a British frigate near Tenerife before arriving in the West Indies in early November, 1801. John Martin was too indisposed to continue with the ship; he remained in the West Indies. Hopkins sailed the *Cicero* to Charleston, sold its products, took on more freight and headed for Providence. En route, the *Cicero* sank in a gale on December 25, 1801. Fortunately, no hands were lost. The total loss was not settled until July 1806, when Providence Insurance and Joseph S. Martin agreed on a settlement for losses associated with another Martin ship, the *Eleanora*. Joseph's brother, John, succumbed to yellow fever in Santo Domingo in 1802, years before the loss was settled.<sup>33</sup>

In this period, international events posed serious threats to the financial well-being of American merchants like Joseph S. Martin. During the "Quasi-War" with France in the 1790s, American ships

were seized by French privateers. Martin's brother-in-law, Timothy Green, was taken by a French privateer in October 1795, on a homeward journey from London. Green ended up in Rochefort, a French naval base, where he stayed for some months, writing letters home to his wife, vowing never to "leave her again to go wandering upon the waters . . . ." He arrived back in the United States sometime early in 1796.<sup>34</sup> Many other such incidents later spurred a futile American search for neutrality during the Napoleonic wars that resulted in the Non-Importation Act (1806), Embargo Act (1807), Non-Intercourse Act (1809), and Macon's Bill No. 2 (1810), all of which crippled the New England merchant economy. The British response to Macon's Bill was to blockade New York. The United States declared war on Britain on June 1, 1812, and the merchant economy in Rhode Island came to a standstill.<sup>35</sup> United States merchant vessels continued to sail, providing easy prey for the British navy and its allies. Martin lost the *Canton* to a Danish privateer on December 24, 1812.<sup>36</sup> He refrained from privateering although his father-in-law, Sylvanus Martin, did launch a schooner, *Providence*, in August, 1812, only to have it taken seven days later by a British warship.<sup>37</sup>

War also produced opportunity for Rhode Island merchants like Joseph S. Martin who had recognized the coming of a manufacturing economy when he invested in the Lyman Cotton Manufacturing Company about 1807. A few years later, he also bought shares in the Plainfield Union Manufacturing Company in Connecticut, along with Samuel Greene Arnold, Rufus Waterman, and a number of other Rhode Island investors. At the outset of the War of 1812 Martin invested in another textile venture with Samuel Greene Arnold, Daniel Lyman, Sullivan Dorr, and E. R. Randolph. These men concluded that a woolen textile mill would be successful because British woolens could not be imported during the war. They formed the Providence



Woolen Manufacturing Company in June 1812. The merchants commissioned a steam manufacturing engine from Oliver Evans of Philadelphia who built the machine to detailed specifications for woolen manufactures. It was delivered in May or June 1813, and for the next two years, Joseph S. Martin and his co-investors purchased large quantities of Spanish wool to produce the woolen cloth that Americans demanded.<sup>38</sup> Business boomed for the war's short duration, then collapsed when the Treaty of Ghent was signed on February 12, 1815 and Americans resumed buying the preferred imported British woolens.<sup>39</sup>

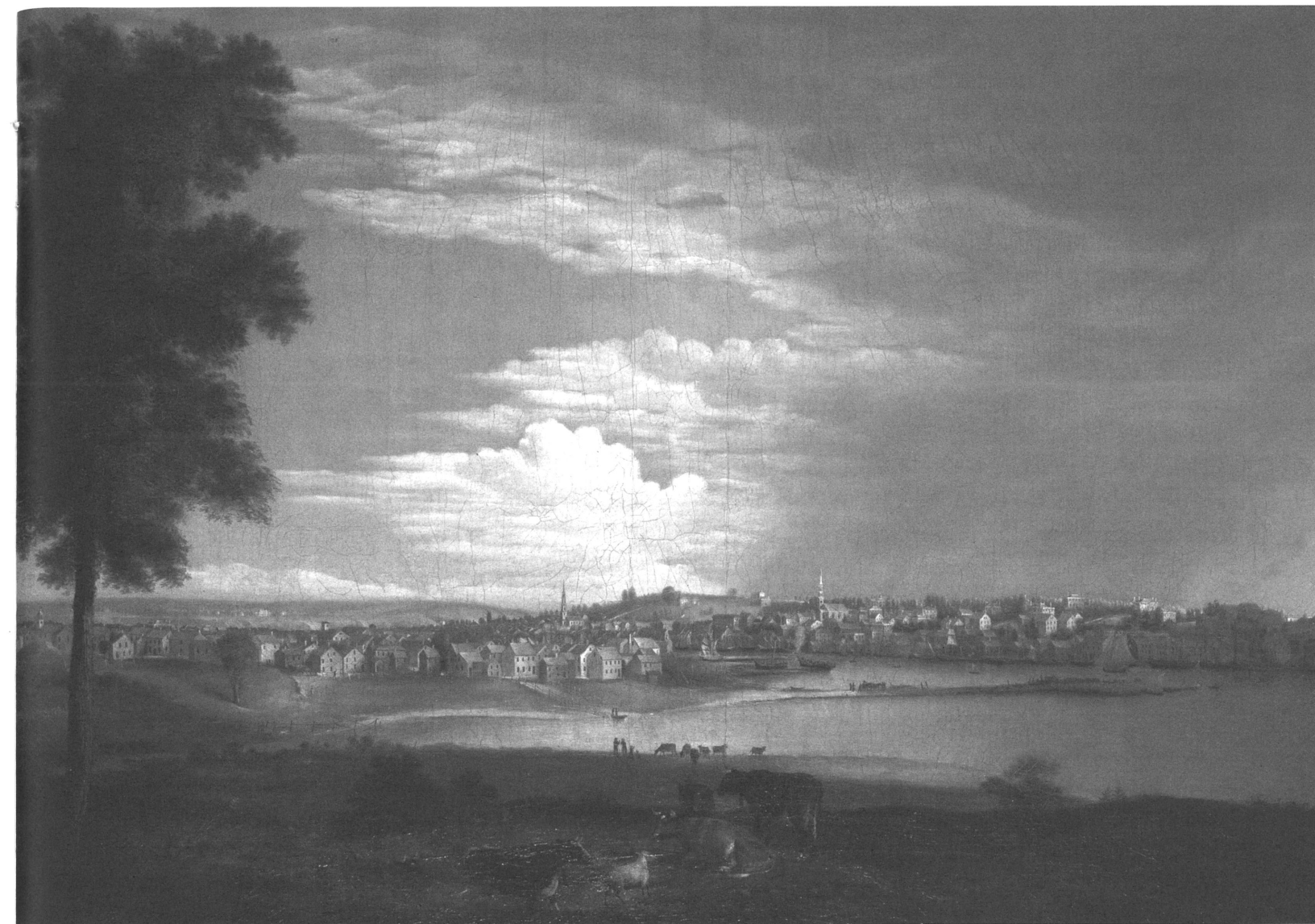
Joseph S. Martin knew that the future belonged to manufacturing, but he would pay a price for his acumen. After the close of the war, Providence Woolen closed its doors leaving its partners liable for approximately \$150,000.<sup>40</sup> Martin had borrowed from his partners to enter the business, and they wanted their capital back. Over the period between October 22, 1817, and January 14, 1822, for \$1.00 paid by Sullivan Dorr, Martin relinquished his interests in the Lyman Cotton Manufacturing Company in North Providence, including "improvements and water privileges," to settle his \$14,857 indebtedness to his Providence Woolen Factory partners.<sup>41</sup> Martin returned to the merchant trade, but its economics had changed. Domestic manufacturing grew and the demand for imports dropped. Ships that sailed full were unable to return to Rhode Island with saleable cargo. The dangers of merchant shipping had not diminished; the Martin-registered *Janson* sank in January 1820, near Texel Roads, Netherlands. Ship's Master Benjamin Mayo wrote: "We narrowly escaped with our lives . . . ."<sup>42</sup>

Joseph S. Martin, Albert's father, participated in good works in Providence, yet he had a much smaller presence than Albert's grandfather, the elder Joseph Martin. Joseph S. Martin was an incorporator of the Rhode Island Bible Society in 1813, an early reform society of the Second Great

Awakening. His subscription to the Bible Society was a modest annual one, not the more robust pledges of many of well-known merchants in Providence like fellow incorporators Obadiah and Moses Brown.<sup>43</sup> Joseph S. Martin remained a member of his father's Beneficent Congregational Church where he owned a pew and was a member of its finance committee in 1814. In civic affairs, unlike his father, Joseph S. Martin did not serve on any town committees, and was only briefly involved with politics.<sup>44</sup> He continued in the family's fire-fighting tradition as a volunteer engineman of Fire Engine Company No. 1 for about twelve years. He then served for nearly two decades as one of seventeen fire wardens along with business associates Sullivan Dorr and Samuel Greene Arnold and other community stalwarts like Edward Carrington.<sup>45</sup>

The biggest challenge to Joseph S. Martin's viability as a Providence businessman was the instability of the postwar economy. After the war, pent-up demand was unleashed, prices and incomes rose, real estate speculation exploded and borrowing reigned. Joseph S. Martin was an active participant in this highly volatile economy. In 1819, he purchased a number of properties on credit including a new home, the former Weybosset "mansion" of Captain James Munroe, for which he borrowed \$4,000 of the \$6,000 purchase price.<sup>46</sup> Just a few years after the War of 1812 brought merchant shipping to a standstill, Joseph S. Martin's taxable wealth was almost all in real estate.

Panic ensued in 1819 when the real estate "bubble" burst and banks called for specie payment. The resulting depression hit Martin very hard as it ruined many small and medium-sized Providence merchants. He still held some interests in Lyman Cotton Manufacturing, and in the Plainfield Union Manufacturing Company, while continuing a modest mercantile business. Between 1821 and 1826, however, Martin mortgaged himself to brother-in-law Samuel Nightingale Richmond and



"Providence From Across the Cove." A view depicting a tranquil scene that contrasts with the turbulent economic distress in the Providence business community in the year the painting was completed. Painting by Alvan Fisher (1792-1863), 1819; RIHS Collection (RHi X5 11; accession no. 1905.1.1).

to longtime partner Samuel Greene Arnold, and then liquidated his holdings in Lyman Cotton Manufacturing and personal real estate. He eventually was forced to sell the Munroe mansion in August 1825.<sup>47</sup> Martin still remained within the circle of those who were adapting to economic realities; he was one of the first subscribers to the

charter of the newly formed Blackstone Canal Corporation in 1825,<sup>48</sup> but his downward slide continued. The next year Joseph S. Martin relocated to a South Water Street storefront where he lived with his wife, Abby, and his surviving children. There he carried on a small merchant business selling products such as Philadelphia butter, New



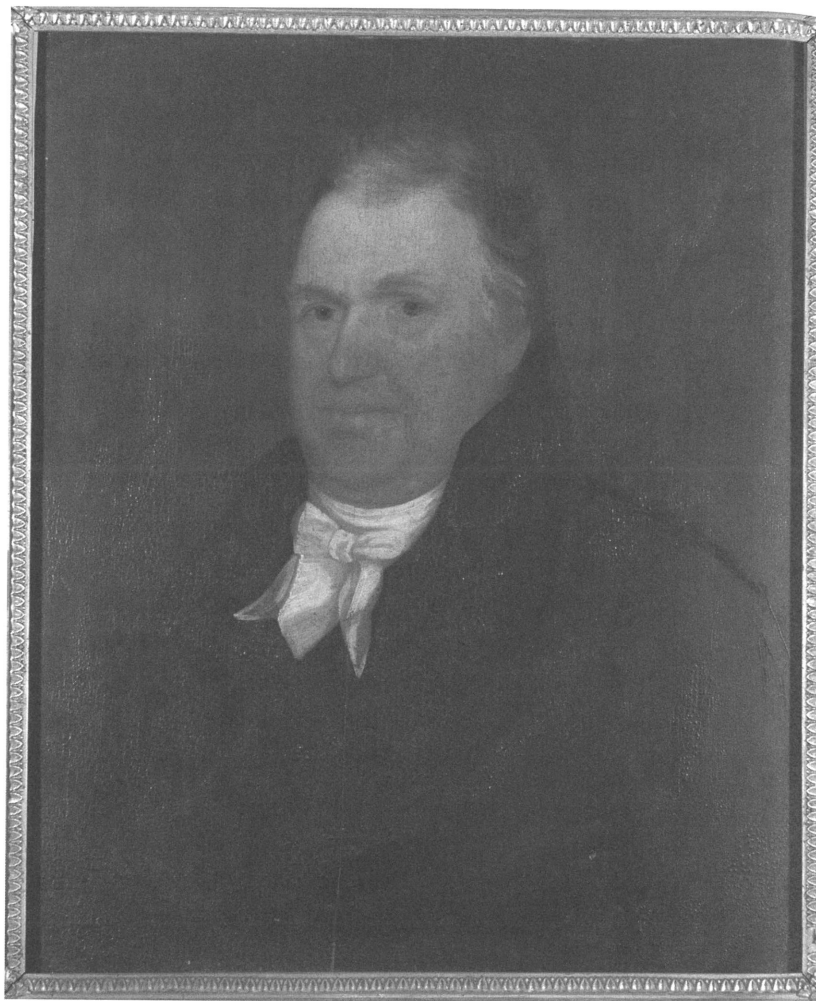
Orleans cotton, and Richmond City flour.<sup>49</sup> In 1827, using a share of his wife's inheritance as collateral,<sup>50</sup> Joseph S. Martin mortgaged himself for \$2000 to Benjamin Hoppin, another charter member of the Blackstone Canal Corporation, and again to his brother-in-law Samuel N. Richmond.<sup>51</sup>

The depression was over by 1823, but for some, like Joseph S. Martin, the damage was done. As a financial player, Martin was almost tapped out as the decade of the 1820s wore on. Although he did not file for bankruptcy, even after a downturn in 1829, it is clear that Martin struggled in the years following the 1819 panic. Tax records indicate that he had regularly paid taxes on real and personal property since 1795, the year his father's estate was settled, but by 1832 he had disappeared from the property tax rolls entirely.<sup>52</sup> Joseph S. Martin was listed as a pew tax delinquent for the years 1817, 1821, and 1826, and again in 1831, which undoubtedly reflected his general financial difficulties and his inability to maintain status in his community.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to financial distress, Joseph and Abby Martin experienced personal loss during this period. Of their thirteen children, only five were still living by 1820. Of their five sons, only Albert and Joseph were still alive in 1832. Amy, the only Martin child to marry (to merchant Samuel Dexter), died in 1826, three years after giving birth to a daughter, Caroline Martin Dexter, Joseph and Abby's only grandchild.<sup>54</sup> Joseph S. Martin also lost his friend, merchant partner, fellow manufacturing investor, and a sometimes source of cash, Samuel Greene Arnold. Arnold died in 1826 in Providence shortly after returning from a land speculating trip to the west.<sup>55</sup>

#### FROM RHODE ISLAND TO THE ALAMO

Virtually nothing is known of the details of Albert Martin's childhood. Born in 1808, he came of age during his father's financial downfall. As a



Wheeler Martin, Joseph S. Martin's brother-in-law, and Albert Martin's uncle, was a Judge of the Providence Court of Common Pleas. Painting by unknown artist, 1825; RIHS Collection (RHi X17 1102).

boy, he undoubtedly attended Reverend Wilson's School on the West Side, one of four Providence public school districts created after the General Assembly's passage of the 1799 Free School Act.<sup>56</sup> Rejecting the financial vicissitudes of his father's mercantile profession, Albert Martin apparently sought a career in the military. He was appointed as a cadet to the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1824, when he was sixteen, but did not graduate and may have attended the Academy

for only a few months into 1825. He then returned to Providence.<sup>57</sup>

Following his departure from West Point, Albert Martin enrolled at the American Literary, Scientific and Military Academy (ALSMA) in Middletown, Connecticut. The Academy was founded in 1825 by Alden Partridge, a former West Point Superintendent, who opened his first Academy in Norwich, Vermont in 1820. The academy paid "particular attention . . . to the full development and due cultivation of all those liberal, manly, noble, and independent sentiments which ought to characterize every American, whether citizen or soldier."<sup>58</sup> Perhaps Albert and his father were present in April 1825, when Partridge and twenty-six cadets from his academy at Norwich arrived in Providence on a "Pleasure and Improvement" marching tour. Over the course of three nights for fifty cents per ticket, Partridge lectured in Franklin Hall on "Internal Improvements," and provided his analysis of the Battle of Waterloo.<sup>59</sup>

The courses offered at Partridge's Academy attracted several young men from Rhode Island. During the three full years of the Academy's operation in Middletown from 1825 to 1828, at least ten Rhode Islanders enrolled including Edward Carrington, scion of the Providence merchant family.<sup>60</sup> Students studied history, literature, language, science, mathematics, and law, as well as "branches of military science and instruction," that included fortifications, artillery and gunnery, tactics, garrisoning and field services for troops, attack and defense, and other military science topics. Separate professional courses were available including bookkeeping.<sup>61</sup> Veterans of the Texas War of Independence recalled that Albert Martin "graduated" from Partridge's Academy.<sup>62</sup>

When Albert Martin returned to Providence from Partridge's Academy at the age of twenty, he joined the family business. He first appeared in *The Providence Directory* in 1828 as both a "merchant"

and as an "accountant" in his father's business at 51 South Water Street. Other than his connection with his father's establishment, little is known of Albert Martin's business dealings in Providence. Likewise, not much is known of Albert's civic involvement although both Albert and his younger brother, Joseph, were members of the "Invincible" Forcing Stationary Engine Company No. 2.<sup>63</sup> He does not appear on any records as a member of the Beneficent Church.

Given the deteriorating situation in his family's mercantile business, it is understandable that Albert Martin would seek financial opportunities elsewhere. In the 1830s, many Eastern men looked to the West and South as avenues to prosperity. For example, Joseph S. Martin's friend and partner Samuel Greene Arnold had explored the land possibilities out west prior to his death. Albert and his brother Joseph witnessed first-hand the financial vicissitudes of their father's business, his failed investments, mounting debts, and loss of status in the Providence community. For Albert Martin, an industrializing Rhode Island no longer seemed to provide expansive opportunities to revive his family's fortunes and to restore his family's standing in the community. By the time Albert joined the business, his family lacked the necessary cash to invest in the thriving manufacturing establishments that would become the great engines of wealth for more prosperous investors.

If Providence's shifting economy represented financial stagnation for their family's finances, then New Orleans offered fresh possibilities for Albert Martin, his brother and father. In 1830, New Orleans was the third largest city in the United States, the banking, finance, and commercial hub for the lower Mississippi.<sup>64</sup> Providence merchants had transacted business in New Orleans for decades. Providence newspapers were filled with announcements of vessels traveling between the cities carrying cargo, often cotton and rice. A



relative, Abigail Martin, also lived in New Orleans.<sup>65</sup> Albert and his brother Joseph departed from Rhode Island sometime prior to 1832; in that year they were no longer listed in *Brown's Providence Directory*, nor on the muster rolls of the Providence fire-fighting brigades.<sup>66</sup>

Joseph S. Martin joined his sons in the South at some point in 1833.<sup>67</sup> By then Joseph and Abby

Martin were living in reduced circumstances at the Blake and Bartlett Mansion House on Benefit Street across from the State House.<sup>68</sup> Martin was nearing sixty and facing a bleak future. It may be that a windfall of cash impelled him to join his two sons in their new ventures in the South. In January 1833, the United States-Denmark Commission, which decided claims of American merchants who had



In his last months before leaving Providence for the South, Joseph Martin lived with his wife at Blake and Bartlett's Mansion House Hotel, 81 Benefit Street in Providence. Engraving by William D. Terry, 1832; RIHS Collection (RHi X3 672).

suffered losses at the hands of Danish privateers during the Napoleonic Wars, awarded Thomas P. Ives, as assignee of J. S. Martin of Providence, the sum of \$5,901 for damages inflicted upon the Martin-registered ship *Canton*.<sup>69</sup> With some cash, merchant experience, and familiarity with the New Orleans region, Martin would be an asset to his sons in Louisiana. It is not known whether he planned to eventually return north after assisting his sons, or to bring his wife, Abby, and his two surviving daughters, Cornelia and Abby, to New Orleans.<sup>70</sup>

It did not take long for the Martins to avail themselves of the abundant commercial opportunities in New Orleans. By 1833, Albert Martin and his father Joseph S. Martin had entered a partnership with Thomas Coffin under the name Martin, Coffin & Co. Their firm did business with merchants in Charleston, New York, Boston, Portsmouth, New Hampshire and Mexico.<sup>71</sup> As the Martins sought new markets from their New Orleans base, the men traveled to Stephen Austin's town of Brazoria in Texas at the mouth of the Brazos River. They also employed agents in Matamoras, the important Mexican trading post on the south side of the Rio Grande.<sup>72</sup> Within a short time of their arrival in the South, the Martins purchased property in Gonzales, the community east of San Antonio within the Mexican land grant of *empresario* Green DeWitt. On December 30, 1833, the Gonzales *alcalde* [mayor], James B. Patrick, deeded a house lot to Joseph Martin, and the following day the Gonzales *Ayuntamiento* [Governing Council] resolved that, "Joseph S. Martin shall be permitted to get sutch [sic] timber off the town tract as he may think proper for erecting a cotton gin, also rail Timber for his farm."<sup>73</sup>

Joseph S. Martin and his sons moved to Gonzales at a time of political turmoil throughout Texas. The Martins had joined the nearly 30,000 North Americans who were attracted to Texas by promises of land and the possibility of economic

opportunity. Catholic Mexico expected the immigrants to convert, to obey the antislavery laws of the territory, and to remain politically loyal to Mexico. The first two requirements were flaunted routinely and the last was only a faint hope from the beginning. Many Texans wanted independence, but others were willing to remain within a Mexican federal republic governed under the Constitution of 1824 that guaranteed Texas and the other Mexican states a great deal of governing autonomy. In 1833, however, General Santa Anna deposed the president and unveiled a centralist government designed to strengthen the Mexican nation-state.

By 1834, the Martins had transferred their economic interests from New Orleans to Texas. They established a store in Gonzales that sold goods necessary to the success of the frontier community—"shoes, flannel shirts, hats, coffee, tobacco, eye-glasses, thread, bridles, blankets, tin cups, skillets, knives, gunpowder," and many other items.<sup>74</sup> Theirs was the only general store in Gonzales, a community that had suffered population loss when a cholera epidemic swept through the DeWitt Colony in 1833. As tensions mounted throughout Texas in 1834, Albert Martin was still in New Orleans resolving disputes with Thomas Coffin as Martin, Coffin & Co. was dissolved.<sup>75</sup> His business in New Orleans concluded, Albert left for Texas and arrived in Gonzales about May 20, 1835.<sup>76</sup>

As soon as Albert Martin joined his father and brother in Texas, he was swept up into the armed conflict that became known as the Texas Revolution. By September 1835, the Mexican government had initiated a crackdown on immigration, slavery, smuggling and taxation in the Texas territory. Texan leaders who favored outright independence soon gained political dominance. Mexican President Santa Anna sent General Martin de Perfecto Cos to Texas to re-establish order. The commander of the Mexican garrison at San Antonio ordered a patrol to Gonzales to demand the surrender of the town's



small cannon. When the Mexican soldiers arrived at the town on September 29, 1835, they were confronted by eighteen militiamen led by newly-elected Captain Albert Martin. Perhaps his military education at West Point and Alden Partridge's Academy were enough to convince his fellow volunteers that Albert Martin was best equipped to lead the Gonzales militiamen at this time of crisis. Albert was then twenty-eight years old and single, like many of his compatriots in the Texas army. His New England roots and relatively short residence in Texas were less usual among the rebels there.<sup>77</sup>

Albert Martin took command of the militia in Gonzales with enthusiasm. He ordered the town's cannon buried, and convinced the Mexican detachment that their message intended for the town's *alcade* could not be delivered because the *alcade* was not in the town. The river separating the two forces was swollen, delaying any immediate action between them. Martin sent riders to San Felipe and Lavaca imploring citizens of the towns to "[g]ive us all the aid & dispatch that is possible. . . ."<sup>78</sup> The ranks of volunteers swelled well beyond the "Old Eighteen" to about one hundred fifty volunteers, and new officers were elected.<sup>79</sup> The Mexican patrol also was re-enforced. The "Battle of Gonzales" that unfolded over three days, at the end of September and beginning of October, 1835, resulted in few casualties despite cannon fire, musketry and charges. Nevertheless, the confrontation between a Mexican cavalry detachment and eighteen Gonzales militiamen led by Martin, "conjured storied images of Lexington and Concord."<sup>80</sup> Following the action at Gonzales, the Texas settlers were ready to fight, some for independence, and others for the Constitution of 1824.<sup>81</sup>

The conflict between the Texans and the Mexican army, in which Albert Martin was now committed, continued. Following the action at Gonzales, Texan forces marched on San Antonio. At some point during this time, Albert Martin seriously injured his

foot and returned to Gonzales. He was not present during the fierce street fighting that resulted in the surrender of San Antonio by General Cos on December 10, 1835. With the capitulation, the rebels acquired a considerable cache of artillery within the walls of the Alamo, an abandoned Spanish mission. Back in Gonzales recuperating from his injury, Albert showed his impatience with the war, in a letter to an unidentified recipient, possibly William Barret Travis: "I shall leave (Gonzales) in a few days for Bexar with an assortment of Spanish goods which I have fought for from the time of their landing in this Country. My business has suffered much during the War."<sup>82</sup> Undoubtedly Albert Martin's zeal for Texas independence was fed by his perception that without the interference of Mexico the territory offered a promising business environment for his mercantile endeavors and the best opportunity he might have to redeem his family's diminished fortunes. Despite Albert's hopes for a pause in hostilities that would allow him to resume his commercial endeavors, the war continued apace.

Events in Texas moved swiftly despite a lack of cohesion among the rebel leaders, and Albert Martin was again in the action.<sup>83</sup> After General Cos departed, few of the Texas volunteers remained in San Antonio. Some believed the fighting was over; others rode off to Matamoros in pursuit of further military action. Albert remained in Gonzales. The Texas armed forces lacked clear leadership as rivalries developed between elected officers of various militia groups and officers of the "regular" Texas army. Sam Houston, the commander in chief of the nascent Texas army, dispatched James Bowie, a leader of volunteer militia, to San Antonio with directions to destroy the fortifications in San Antonio. Bowie decided the Alamo and the artillery within its walls were too valuable to destroy or abandon. Henry Smith, the newly-elected Governor of Texas sent a reluctant William Barret Travis, a lieutenant-colonel in the "regular" Texas army, to provide re-

enforcements.<sup>84</sup> Once there, Travis, too, determined the Alamo was worth defending. After losing a re-election bid, former Tennessee congressman Davy Crockett arrived in San Antonio on February 8, 1835 with a small company of Tennessee Mounted Volunteers. On February 12, the Bowie Volunteers insisted on an election for the command of the garrison; Bowie handily beat Travis. Bowie then offered Travis the joint command on February 14, 1836. At this juncture, Albert Martin returned to join the rebels at San Antonio.<sup>85</sup> Nine days later

on February 23, 1836, General Santa Anna, who referred to himself as the "Napoleon of the West," arrived at San Antonio with his army; he had mounted a surprise winter expedition that caught the Texas forces in San Antonio off-guard. Bowie and Travis ordered the Texan forces to retreat into the Alamo which had many cannons but few defenders. The Texans hoisted a tri-color flag with two stars, symbolizing the Mexican states Coahuila and Texas. Santa Anna ordered his troops to raise the blood-red flag "of no mercy."

A contemporary view of the Alamo the former Spanish mission where scores of Texans were killed by Mexican forces in March 1836; photograph by the author.





Albert Martin played a significant role on the first day of hostilities at the Alamo. The exact sequence of events is unclear. Bowie's emissary to Santa Anna seeking terms was rebuffed. Travis, who knew that Martin had organized the initial defense of Gonzales,<sup>86</sup> sent him to meet with Mexican Colonel Juan Almonte. Almonte reiterated his demand that the Alamo forces surrender "at discretion," that is, to place themselves at the mercy of Santa Anna. This directive presented an uncertain prospect to the Texans because Santa Anna had summarily executed other militias in rebellion in the Mexican state of Zacatecas just a few months before. After Albert Martin delivered the Mexican colonel's message to the Alamo, Travis responded by sending a shell from its largest artillery piece into San Antonio. The thirteen-day siege of the Alamo had begun.

Rhode Island's Albert Martin was at the center of the unfolding drama at the siege of the Alamo. Despite bravado, the garrison there desperately needed assistance to repel a Mexican force of thousands ready for pitched battle. On February 24, 1836, Travis wrote an impassioned appeal: "To the People of Texas and All Americans in the world . . . I shall never surrender or retreat. Then, I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism, and everything dear to the American character to come to our aid with all dispatch . . . VICTORY OR DEATH." Travis entrusted Albert Martin to carry his message to Gonzales in the hope of gaining reinforcements. On the message he carried, Martin added a postscript:

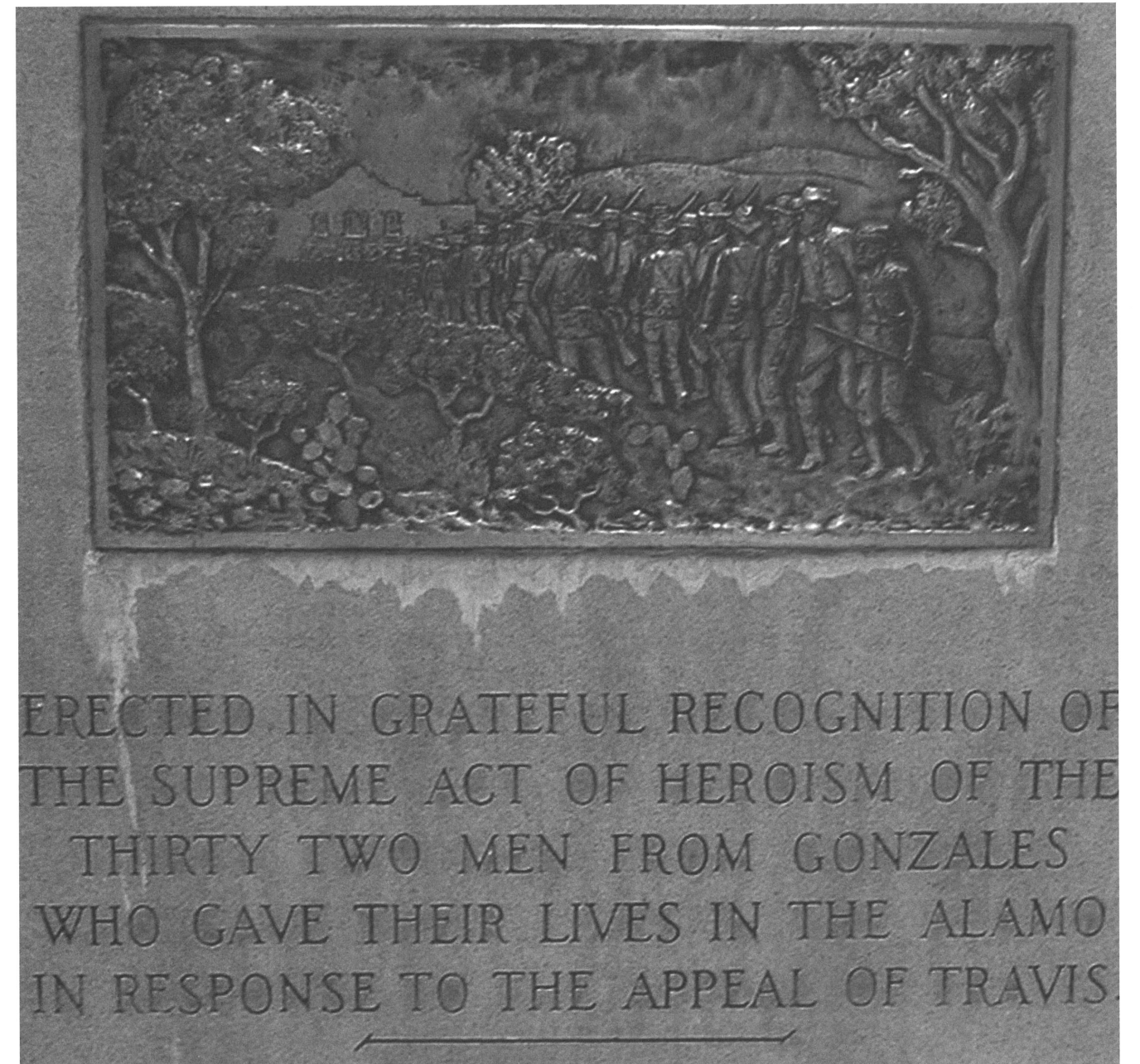
Since the above was written I heard a very heavy cannonade during the whole day [and] think there must have been an attack on the Alamo We were short of ammunition when I left Hurry on all the men you can in haste When I left there was but 150 determined to do or die [,] tomorrow I leave for Bejar with what men I can raise & will be there at all events[.] Col Almonte is there the troops are under the command of General Seisma.

Travis's stirring message, carried by Martin to raise volunteers, eventually appeared in newspapers throughout the United States including the *Providence Daily Journal* of March 30, 1836.<sup>87</sup>

Albert Martin recruited a large contingent from Gonzales and the surrounding area and started back to San Antonio on February 27, 1836. Martin's group from Gonzales, thirty-two men, entered the Alamo early in the morning on March 1, 1836. These meager reinforcements, the only ones to reach the Alamo, could not make a difference in the outcome of the siege. After twelve days of bombardment and skirmishes, General Santa Anna ordered a coordinated assault on all sides of the Alamo before dawn on March 6, 1836. Nearly two thousand soldiers attacked and overwhelmed the Alamo defenses. Just five days after returning with the Gonzales relief force, Albert Martin was killed at the Alamo alongside Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, William Barret Travis and more than 180 other men.

The only account of Albert Martin's death is a romanticized obituary that first appeared in the *New Orleans True American*; it was subsequently reprinted in the July 7, 1836 issue of the *Texas Manufacturers and Farmers Journal*:

Among those who fell at the storming of San Antonio, was Albert Martin, a native of Providence, R.I., and recently of this city, of the firm of Martin, Coffin and Co., aged 29. Mr. Martin had a large establishment at Gonzales, about 150 miles from San Antonio, where, for the last year or two, he has been carrying on an extensive business. He had left the fortress and returned to his residence, when he was apprised of the perilous situation in which his late comrades were placed. His determination was instantly taken. In the reply to the passionate entreaties of his father, who besought him not to rush into certain destruction, he said, "This is not the time for such considerations. I have passed my word to Col Travers [Travis] that I would return, nor can I forget a pledge thus given." In pursuance of this high resolve he raised a company of 62 men and started on his way back. During the route, his company apprised of the desperate situation of affairs, became diminished by desertion, to 32.



A memorial that commemorates the volunteers from Gonzales, Texas, who were led by Albert Martin to reinforce Texan forces at the Alamo. The memorial is located on the grounds of the Alamo, San Antonio, Texas; photograph by the author.



With this gallant band he gained the fort and the reinforcement, small as it was, revived the drooping spirits of the garrison.

Nothing more is known of him until the storming of the Alamo, with the particulars of which all are well acquainted. Three divisions of the Mexican Army were forced up to the batteries by the bayonets of the fourth, only to meet death in another shape. The subject of this sketch was beheld by an officer of the fourth, standing at bay, nearly 6'2" in height; he was seen with a breastwork of dead Mexicans around him, wielding a heavy sword, fraught with death to everyone that approached him. Not caring to try personal combat, a Mexican at last shot him through the heart with a musket ball.

Thus died Albert Martin, a not unapt illustration of New England heroism. He has left a family, and perhaps a nation to lament his loss, and he has bequeathed to that family and perhaps the nation an

example of heroic and high-minded chivalry, which can never be forgotten, and which is worthy of the best days of Sparta or of Rome.

Soon after Albert's death in the war for Texas Independence, his father and brother were swept up in the hostilities. Houston arrived in Gonzales on March 11, where he heard the news that the Alamo had been overrun; Joseph S. Martin and his son, Joseph, supplied Houston's volunteers.<sup>88</sup> Houston ordered that Gonzales be burned, ordinance including the old brass cannon, be tossed into the river, and a general retreat, the "Runaway Scrape," began.<sup>89</sup> One neighbor remembered Albert's father, Joseph S. Martin, at this critical juncture: "On the fifteenth of March a number of families in flight from Gonzales encamped near us. I saw old Mr.

Martin, the father of Captain Albert Martin who fell at the Alamo. He was sitting on the bank of the river, gazing into the flowing stream. He shed not a tear, but his whole body was convulsed in grief. His son had been in command of the thirty-four citizens of Gonzales who had entered the fort on the night of March 1."<sup>90</sup>

Joseph S. Martin's dream of redeeming his Providence failures had imploded in Texas. His eldest son, Albert, was dead, and he and his surviving son, Joseph, were uprooted from their new Texas home. The "Runaway Scrape" ended on April 21, 1836, when Houston's forces defeated Santa Anna's army at San Jacinto and secured Texas independence. Perhaps the achievement of sovereignty, for which his son had given his life, provided some solace to Joseph S. Martin. He died on June 28, 1836, in Washington on the Brazos, Texas. Albert's brother, Joseph, remained in Texas for decades, settling land claims, military pay, and public debt compensation matters on behalf of his mother and surviving sister, Cornelia.<sup>91</sup>

After the battle at the Alamo, Santa Anna ordered that the bodies of the Texan defenders be burned. About a year later, Juan Seguin, a Tejano leader, who had been a messenger at the Alamo, and a combatant at the battle of San Jacinto, returned to San Antonio and gathered what remained of the defenders' ashes. He conducted a burial ceremony on February 25, 1837. The remains of Albert Martin and the other Alamo defenders were deposited in a sarcophagus in San Fernando Cathedral in San Antonio.

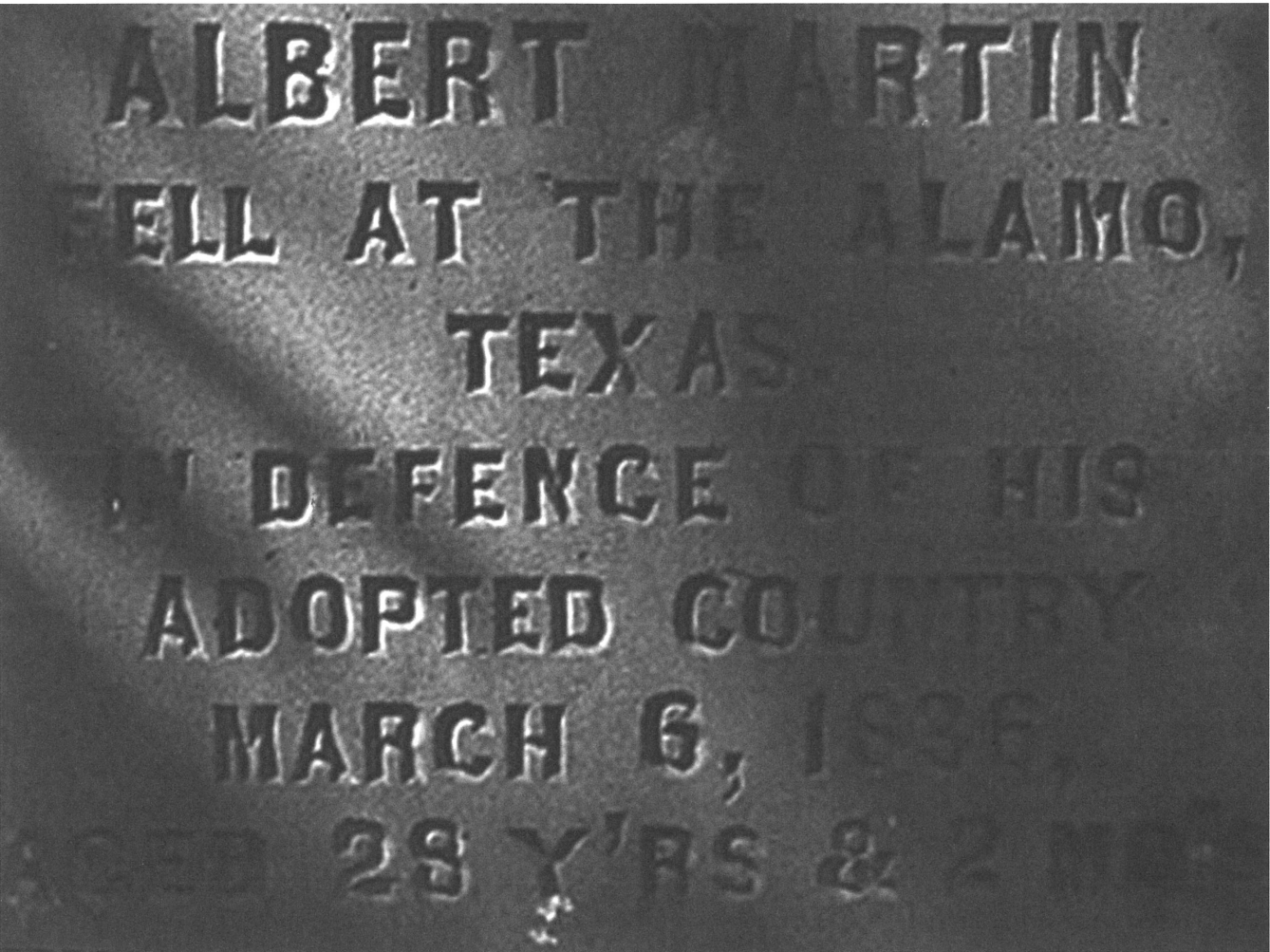
Albert Martin's grandfather migrated to Providence from rural southeastern Massachusetts to establish a more prosperous life for his family. Over several decades he succeeded in business and became a solid citizen of Providence, providing a comfortable inheritance for his sons. Seventy years after the elder Joseph Martin arrived in the town, his son Joseph S. Martin, and grandsons Albert

and Joseph, fled Providence in search of financial security. The downfall of the thriving Rhode Island merchant economy that had bolstered the fortunes of the elder Joseph Martin and his son brought ruin to a family without substantial capital to withstand the shocks of war, financial panic, real estate speculation, and continued financial turmoil during the 1820s. Despite his patrimony and his marital alliance with the daughter of a prosperous merchant, Joseph S. Martin was not able to overcome the challenges wrought by a changing economy. Albert Martin came of age as the vicissitudes of financial turmoil fell heavily on those, like his father, who lacked enough capital to withstand the shocks of volatile economic circumstances. Albert and his brother Joseph, however, revived their grandfather's entrepreneurial spirit when they left Providence behind in the early 1830s to restore the family fortunes. Albert's education as a citizen-soldier thrust him into a prominent role in the Texas Revolution. His intense, brief involvement in the Texas War for Independence, which undoubtedly sprang from a youthful idealism and his desire to protect his promising business interests, ended in tragedy for the Martin family. Joseph S. Martin was shattered by his son's death and died only months afterward. Albert Martin's death at the Alamo—"he died fighting like a man and hero"—was noted briefly by the *Providence Daily Journal*, April 26, 1836. His heroic sacrifice, which is still remembered in Texas, might have restored his family's diminished status in Rhode Island, if not its financial fortunes. Albert Martin's untimely death while defending the liberty of Texan settlers was soon forgotten in his home state of Rhode Island.

A sarcophagus with the remains of the Alamo defenders, San Fernando Cathedral, San Antonio, Texas; photograph by the author.







Albert Martin’s sacrifice at the Alamo is recorded on an obelisk in the Martin family plot, North Burial Ground, Providence, R.I.; photograph by the author.

Notes

1. William C. Davis, *Three Roads to the Alamo* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998), 6.

2. Henry J. Martin, *Genealogical and Historical of the Martin Family, of New England, who settled at Weymouth and Hingham, in 1635, and were among the first planters at Rehoboth (in 1644) and Swansea (in 1667), with some account of their descendants.* (Boston: Lee and Shepard Publishers, 1880) and Wheeler Martin, *The Genealogy of the Martin Family* (1816), found in the Martin Family Papers, MSS 999, box 1, folder 20, Rhode Island Historical Society Manuscript Collection, were useful sources for locating primary documents on Albert Martin’s forebears in rural southeastern Massachusetts. On migration from southeastern New England, see Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 18-19. Historian J. M. Opal describes a cultural shift that encouraged rural mobility in New England between the 1780s and early 1830s in *Beyond the Farm: National Ambitions in Rural New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

3. Lynne Withey, *Urban Growth in Colonial Rhode Island* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1984), 124, 127, 132.

4. David Harris to Joseph Martin, “shopowner,” June 1, 1762, Providence Grantor-Grantee Deeds, 1677-1872 and Mortgages to 1845, book 16, 193, City Archives, Providence City Hall; John Field to Joseph Martin, January 20, 1767, Deeds, book 18, 20.

5. “The Humble Petition of a Number of Freemen,” February 28, 1770, *Petitions to the Rhode Island General Assembly*, vol. 13-2, 1766-1770, Petition 170, Rhode Island State Archives. The dismissal message was written on the first page of the petition.

6. *Vital Records of Taunton, Massachusetts to the Year 1850*, Vol. 2—Marriages (Boston, Massachusetts: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1978), 442. Mary Smith of Dighton and Joseph Martin of Providence, R.I., September 24, 1764, in Dighton, Private Record, 28, “private record from an old record book by John Godfrey and George Godfrey, both Justices of the Peace, in the possession (1928) of Charles Godfrey Washburn of Taunton,” found at Online Database: AmericanAncestors.org, New England Historic Genealogical Society, www.americanancestors.org/PageDetail.aspx?recordId=141541704; accessed 12/12/2011. Birth records have not been located; Joseph, John, and Polly, wife of Timothy Green, are identified as Joseph Martin’s children in the “Last Will and Testament of Joseph Martin of Providence, May 19 1794,” Providence Will Book 7: 607-27, Providence City Archives, Providence City Hall.

7. The history of the Second Congregational Church, later Beneficent Congregational, is found in Arthur Wilson, *Weybosset Bridge* (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1947); Arthur Wilson, *Paddy Wilson’s Meeting House* (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1950); and A. Ralph Barlow, “250 Years in the History of Beneficent Church: A Continuing Dialectic of Liberalism



- and Orthodoxy." (Paper presented at the 41st Annual Meeting of the Congregational Christian Historical Society, Beneficent Church, Providence, May 3-4, 1993)
8. Oath Regarding British Presence, July 29, 1776, *Providence Town Papers*, MSS 214, sg 1, ser. 2, vol. 3, 0886:105, RIHS; "Manpower and Weapons Census," February 9, 1776, in *Providence Town Papers*, MSS 214, sg 1, ser. 2, vol. 3, 0904:115, RIHS; *Admiralty Papers*, vol. 10 (1777-80), Maritime Court for Trials of Prizes, Entry 77, August 4, 1779, Rhode Island State Archives.
  9. "Petition of Mechanics and Laborers to the Providence Town Council," May 8, 1778, *Providence Town Papers*, MSS 214, sg 1, ser. 2, vol. 3, 0904:115, RIHS.
  10. Paul G. Bourcier, "Prosperity at the Wharves: Providence Shipping, 1780-1850," *Rhode Island History* 48 (May 1990): 35-36.
  11. *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, 14 May 1785.
  12. For examples of Joseph Martin's service as Overseer of the Poor, see *Providence Town Papers*, MSS 214, sg 1, ser. 1, vol. 7 (1783), Records 2917, 2920, 2948, 2983, RIHS; for his position as President of Fire Wards and service on the Committee to Remove/ Pull Down Houses, see *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, 14 June 1777; 19 June 1779; 7 June 1783; 11 June 1785; 16 June 1785; 9 June 1787; 11 June 1789; 8 June 1791; 9 June 1792.
  13. The formation of the Beneficent Congregational Society and Beneficent Congregational Church is covered in Arthur Wilson, *Weybosset Bridge*; Wilson, *Paddy Wilson's Meeting House*; and A. Ralph Barlow, "250 Years in the History of Beneficent Church"; also author's interview with Harl Ryder, Beneficent Congregational Church Archivist, and Professor Emeritus, Brown University, September 23, 2011.
  14. Death, Mary Martin, wife of Joseph, Sept. 26, 1788, Recorded in Index Card File, *Providence Births, Marriages and Deaths, Not Recorded 1636-1850*, Providence City Archives; James N. Arnold, *Vital Records of Rhode Island, 1636-1850*, Newspapers, Births, Marriages, Deaths, vol. 14, Deaths, 83, *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*; Joseph Martin and Hannah Smith, Marriage, May 24, 1789, in Marriage Register, Congregational Church West Side of River, 1770-1802, *Rhode Island Vital Records, 1636-1850*, online database: AmericanAncestors.org, New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2002, originally published as James N. Arnold, *Rhode Island Vital Records, 1636-1850: First Series: Births, Marriages and Deaths: a Family Register for the People* (Providence: Narragansett Historical Publishing Company, 1891-1912), www.americanancestors.org/PageDetail.aspx?recordId=2039838; accessed 12/01/2011. Joseph left to Hannah, "my affectionate wife," one third of his real estate, and, "all the property she brought with her at the time of our marriage in lieu of her dower . . ." Last Will and Testament, Joseph Martin, May 19, 1794, Proved August 23, 1794, *Providence Will Book* 7, 607-627, Case A1471, Providence City Archives.
  15. Marriage of Mary Martin of Providence, daughter of Joseph, to Timothy Green of Worcester, March 7, 1793, Congregational Church West Side of River, in *Providence Births, Marriages and Deaths Not Recorded, 1636-1850*, Book 5, 473, Providence City Archives.
  16. James N. Arnold, *Vital Records of Rhode Island, 1636-1850*, vol. 14, *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, Deaths, K-Z, 1762-1825, 83. Joseph Martin Jr. wrote two letters to his siblings, John and Polly, indicating that their father had been ill, and that his condition had rapidly deteriorated. See Joseph

Martin Jr., to sister (Polly) and brother (John), June 2, 1794 (box 1, folder 3), and Joseph Martin Jr. to Timothy Green, June 15, 1794 (box 1, folder 4), in Timothy Green Papers, MSS 450, RIHS.

17. "Last Will and Testament of Joseph Martin, May 19, 1794," Case A1471, *Providence Will Book*.
18. It was common practice for Rhode Island merchants to train their sons for multiple roles in the mercantile business. Peter J. Coleman, *The Transformation of Rhode Island 1790-1860* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1963), 28-33.
19. M. Martin to Joseph Martin, January 18, 1791, Timothy Green Papers, MSS 450, box 1, folder 5, RIHS.
20. See Providence Marriage Records, 5: 183, Reel #P8, Rhode Island State Archives; Church Marriage Register of Beneficent Congregational Church, kept by Reverend James Wilson, and register of First Baptist Church, kept by Stephen Gano; also, James Arnold, *Vital Records of Rhode Island, 1636-1850*, Deaths, Vol. 16, *Chronicle of the United States*, 89.
21. Sylvanus Martin apprenticed in Providence in 1770; he married Amey Brown in 1774. See, "Silvanus Martin, son of Silvanus Martin and Mary Martin his wife of Rehoboth, and Amey Brown, of Col. William Brown and Susannah, November 6, 1774," in *Vital Records of Rhode Island, 1636-1850*, 2: 62, found at Online Database: AmericanAncestors.org, New England Historic Genealogical Society, www.americanancestors.org/PageDetail.aspx?RecordID=2037606; accessed 12/05/2011. In East Windsor, Sylvanus served in the Fourth Connecticut Militia during the siege of Boston, and was the proprietor of a merchant business. He continued as a merchant when he moved back to Providence in 1778. Silvanus Martin (elder) to Silvanus

Martin, Feb 7, 1770, Martin Family Papers, MSS 999, Box 1, Folder 10, RIHS; the "Account Book of Sylvanus Martin of East Windsor Connecticut," and the "Journal Kept on March to Boston of June 7 to June 21, 1775," in Martin Family Papers, MSS 999, Box 1, Folder 8, RIHS. See also, correspondence among Sylvanus and Amy Martin and other family members, Martin Family Papers, box 1, folders 1 and 10, RIHS.

22. Henry J. Martin, *Genealogical and Historical of the Martin Family of New England*, 202.
23. The dowry for Abby Martin, "my eldest daughter," dated March 31, 1797, consisted of furniture, kitchen items and other household goods. The cash value of Abby Martin's dowry was mentioned in a document describing the dowry that Sylvanus Martin provided to Abby's sister, Amy, when she married Samuel Nightingale Richmond in 1806. Their father gave Amy, "no less than what I gave to her sister Abby, the wife of Joseph S. Martin \$568.18." See Martin Family Papers, MSS 999, box 1, folder 12, RIHS.
24. Petition of Joseph Martin of Providence to the General Assembly, Petition 52, October 25, 1797, *Petitions to General Assembly*, vol. 31, 1797-98, Rhode Island State Archives.
25. Robert L. Sherman, "The Providence Washington Insurance Company: Two Hundred Years," *Rhode Island History* 57 (1997): 3.
26. Providence Insurance Company, Stockholder Minutes, May 11, 1801, MSS 22, box 1, folder 2, RIHS; *Providence Gazette*, 9 June 1802; William R. Staples, *Annals of the Town of Providence: from its Settlement to the Organization of the City Government* (Providence: Knowles and Vose, 1843), 358; William Greene Roelker and Clarkson A. Collins III, *One Hundred and Fifty Years of the Providence Washington*

*Insurance Company 1799-1949* (Providence: Roger Williams Press, 1949). The Washington Insurance Company formed in 1804. By 1820, the two companies merged into the Providence Washington Insurance Company.

27. *Providence Journal and Town and Country Advertiser*, 9 Jan. 1799; *Rhode Island American and General Advertiser*, 17 Dec. 1813.
28. Peter J. Coleman, *Transformation of Rhode Island*, 42-44; Alexander Boyd Hawes, *Off-Soundings: Aspects of the Maritime History of Rhode Island* (Chevy Chase: Posterity Press, 1999), 218-29; William G. McLoughlin, *Rhode Island: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1978), 110-12; Withey, *Urban Growth in Colonial Rhode Island*, 96.
29. Bourcier, *Prosperity at the Wharves*, 37; Edward Sanderson, "The Rhode Island Merchants in the China Trade," *Federal Rhode Island: The Age of the China Trade, 1790-1820*, ed. Linda Lothridge Levin (Providence: Rhode Island Historical Society, 1978), 51, 52; and Gertrude Selwyn Kimball, *The East-India Trade of Providence from 1787-1807* (Providence: Preston and Rounds, 1896), 10.
30. Log Book of Sylvester Simmons, Ship's Master, "Voyage of the Enterprize" (1799-1802), Simmons Family Papers, MSS 718, box 2, RIHS; *Providence Insurance Company: Policies 1799-1801*, Policy 313 in Providence Washington Insurance Company Records, MSS 22, box 1, folder 3, RIHS; also Surveyor of Federal Archives, Division of Community Service Project, *Ship Registers and Enrollments of Providence Rhode Island, 1773-1939*, (Works Progress Administration, 1941), vol. 1: 319, entry 1008, Rhode Island State Archives.
31. Stephen Dexter, Supercargo, 1800-1803, "Journal of the Voyage Round the World in the Ship Tyre

of Providence Commanded by Samuel Brown," Samuel Greene Arnold Correspondence, John Carter Brown Library; also, "Mary Andrews (plaintiff), administrator of the estate of deceased Whipple Andrews, a mariner, late of East Greenwich," brought an action against Samuel G. Arnold, Patience Arnold, Joseph S. Martin and Tristram Burgess for the recovery of Whipple's wages earned as Chief Mate of the Tyre during the voyage from Providence to the Southwest Coast of America, *Petitions to the General Assembly*, Petition 18, vol. 37, 1806-1808, Rhode Island State Archives, box 1, folder 3.

32. The following narrative of events is reconstructed from Hopkins Carpenter, Mate, "Journal of a Voyage from Providence Toward Charleston, Ship Cicero, John Martin, Master," John Martin. MSS 9001-M, RIHS; *Providence Gazette*, 16 Jan. 1802; also, *Ship Registers and Enrollments of Providence Rhode Island, 1773-1939*, 1: 205, entry 620, Rhode Island State Archives; Providence Insurance Company Policies, 1799-1801, Policy No. 29, October 29, 1800, in Providence Washington Insurance Company Records, MSS 22, box 1, folder 3, RIHS.
33. Providence Insurance Company, Director Meetings Minutes for March 8, 1800; September 6, 1801; January 4, September 25, 1802; January 18, April 4, November 2, 1803; January 7, March 12, 1804; January 5, March 7, October 29, November 23, 1805, and July 7, 1806, Providence Insurance Company Directors Minutes 1799-1838, in Providence Washington Insurance Company Records, MSS 22, box 1, folder 1, RIHS; also, "From the West Indies The ship Cicero, Captain Carpenter of this port, from Charleston for Norfolk was lost in the gulf stream on the 25th, occasioned by the parting of a butt." *Providence Gazette*, 16 Jan. 1802; John Martin



died in Santo Domingo on November 17, 1802, "of the Yellow Fever." Rhode Island Cemetery Records, Wayne George Tillinghast, Norwich CT. August 31, 1963.

34. Timothy Green ("Aristus") to Mary Green ("Serena"), October 23, 1795, and Timothy Green ("Aristus") to Mary Green ("Serena"), November 11, 1795, in Timothy Green Papers, MSS 450, box 1, folder 9, RIHS.
35. Coleman, *Transformation of Rhode Island*, 40; Hawes, *Off-Soundings*, 242.
36. *Ship Registers and Enrollments of Providence Rhode Island, 1773-1939*, vol. 1, entry 478.
37. Nathaniel Shipton, "War of 1812," in *Federal Rhode Island*, 72.
38. Royall C. Taft, *Some Notes Upon the Introduction of the Woollen Manufacture into the United States* (Providence: Sidney S. Rider, 1882), 41. See also: Samuel Greene Arnold, Joseph S. Martin, and Sullivan Dorr to Oliver Evans, January 12, February 25, and March 13, 1813; Samuel Greene Arnold to Joseph S. Martin, April 26, and May 1, 1813, Letter Book #6, Samuel Greene Arnold Correspondence, John Carter Brown Library, Brown University.
39. Taft, *Woollen Manufacture*, 41-42; Coleman, *Transformation of Rhode Island*, 96.
40. Taft, 42.
41. Providence Deeds, October 22, 1817, book 39, 515; also, *Rhode Island American*, 16 Sept. 1817, and Providence Deeds, December 8, 1818, book 42, 236; January 11, 1822, book 45, 109-12.
42. *Providence Patriot*, 15 March 1820.
43. Constitution and Minutes of the Bible Society of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, August 10, 1813 in Rhode Island Bible Society Records, MSS 922,

vol. 2, p. 1, RIHS; The Bible Society Ledger, 1813-1908, R.I. Bible Society Records, vol. 3, pp. 2, 4; Report of the Board of Trustees of the Bible Society of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, September 7, 1820, Bible Society Records, vol. 1, p. 23.

44. Joseph S. Martin's name surfaced as a Federalist nominee to the Board of Directors for a proposed Branch of The Bank of the United States in Providence. "National Bank," *Providence Patriot & Columbian Phoenix*, 12 Dec. 1816.
45. Patrick T. Conley and Paul Campbell, *Firefighters and Fires in Providence: A Pictorial History of the Providence Fire Department, 1754-1984* (Norfolk Va.: Rhode Island Publications and the Donning Company Publishers, 1985), 7; *Providence Town Meeting Books*: No. 7 (1796-1803); No. 8 (1804-15); No. 9 (1815-27); No. 10 (1827-32), Providence City Archives.
46. Providence Deeds, September 4, 1819, book 43, 269; September 4, 1819, book 43, 275.
47. The following transactions are recorded in Providence Deeds: Martin land sale to Samuel Greene Arnold, February 26, 1821, book 44, 265; Martin sale of parcels and interest in Lyman Manufacturing to Arnold, February 21, 1821, book 45, 106-8; mortgage from Lydia Clark of Philadelphia, October 12, 1821, book 46, 22; Martin mortgage from brother-in-law, Samuel N. Richmond, December 27, 1822, book 46, 25; Martin \$400 mortgage from Arnold, December 28, 1822, book 46, 144; Martin sale of North Providence parcels, January 11, 1822, book 45, 109-12; Samuel Greene Arnold's forgiveness of Martin's debt (but not the \$400 note), "in consideration of said Martin's misfortune," includes Joseph Martin's relinquishment of any claim to profits from the *Two*

*Catherines*, December 14, 1824, book 51, 160-62, and Martin's sale of Munroe house, August 27, 1825, book 50, 180.

48. *Rhode Island American*, 28 June 1825.
49. See, for example, advertisements in the *Providence Patriot*: Feb, 11, 15, 25, 1826; April 5, 15, 22, 1826; May 6, 13, 17, 20, 24, 1826; June 10, 14, 24, 1826; Oct. 14, 21, 1826; Sept. 1, 8, 12, 1827; Feb. 9, 13, 1828; March 1, 8, 29, 1828; April 19, 1828; May 28, 1828; Aug. 14, 1828.
50. When he died in 1818, Sylvanus Martin left a considerable estate to be divided among his children and their spouses, including his daughter, Abby, and her husband Joseph Martin. The estate consisted of parcels of land, a store with saleable goods, a mansion house in Providence (on Cady Street), and stock in the Providence Insurance Company, the Washington and Hope Insurance companies, the Exchange and Roger Williams banks, as well as cash to be distributed to his sons. See, "Last Will and Testament of Sylvanus Martin," December 7, 1818, Case A4473, *Providence Rhode Island Will Book*, No. 12: 532-34, Providence City Archives.
51. Providence Deeds, December 1, 1827, book 55, 25, Providence City Archives.
52. See *The List of Persons Assessed in the Town Tax of Forty Thousand Dollars, June 1827* (Providence: Hutchins and Cory, September 1827) in Providence City Archives. In 1827, Joseph S. Martin was assessed a tax of \$1.26 on personal property; the estate of his deceased friend Samuel G. Arnold was taxed \$204.75 on combined real estate and personal property. Joseph S. Martin does not appear in the 1832 *Providence Town Tax Book*, while his deceased friend's estate was taxed at \$247.50, Providence City Archives.

53. Notes recorded from the First Book of Beneficent Society in the archives of the First Beneficent Church, Providence, R.I., sent to the author by Harl Ryder, April 24, 26, 2007.

54. The Joseph S. Martin children who died in the first decades of the nineteenth century were: Charles F. Martin (ca. 1797-May 6, 1811), Arnold, *Vital Records*, vol. 14, Deaths, 84; Edward S. Martin, (ca. 1798-1819), Arnold, vol. 14, Deaths, 85; Carolina Martin (ca. 1799-July 18, 1822), Arnold, vol.18, Deaths, 596; Joseph S. Martin Jr. (ca. 1803-1807), Headstone, North Burial Ground; Albert Martin (ca. 1805-1806), Headstone, North Burial Ground; Edwin Martin (ca. 1807-1807), Headstone, North Burial Ground; Edwin Martin (ca. 1813-1813), Headstone, North Burial Ground, Mary Josephine Martin (ca. 1815-August 23, 1819), Arnold, vol. 18, Deaths, 575. Another child, Amy Martin (born ca. 1800) married Samuel Dexter, September 10, 1821, Arnold vol. 17, Newspapers, Marriages, 471; see Orlando Perry Dexter, *Dexter Genealogy, 1642-1904* (Astor Place, N. Y.: J. J. Little and Company, 1904), Entry 137, 187-88. For all headstone references, see John Sterling, *North Burial Ground. Providence, Rhode Island: Index of Gravestones* (Friends of North Burial Ground, 1994).
55. Author's interview with Kimberly Nusco, Reference and Manuscript Librarian, John Carter Brown Library, September 22, 2011. Access to the Samuel Greene Arnold business correspondence is limited because it is not yet catalogued. The author is greatly indebted to the John Carter Brown Library for granting access to some material in the collection.
56. The 1799 Free School Act mandated the creation of public schools in Providence. The Act was repealed in 1803, but the

Providence Town Council continued to support the four public schools in Providence. James Wilson was schoolmaster in District 4, "West of the River," there were 338 students in the Fourth District School when Albert Martin would have been a student there. No school records are known to remain at Beneficent Congregational Church. Author's interview with Harl Ryder, September 23, 2011. See Henry Sherbourne, General Treasurer, "Providence, Return of 4 Free Schools," recorded November 2, 1801 and June 21, 1802, Rhode Island State Archives; also, Edwin Martin Stone, "A Concise History of the Rise and Progress of the Public Schools of the City of Providence," in *History of Public Education in Rhode Island 1636-1876*, ed. Thomas B. Stockwell, (Providence: Providence Press, 1876), 157-58.

57. See Name Index, U.S. Military Academy Cadet Application Papers, 1805-1866, file #120, 1824, Albert Martin, Microfilm Serial: M688, Microfilm Reel 1, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Washington, D. C.; also, U.S. Military and Naval Academies Cadet Records and Applications, 1805-1908, Vol. 01, the Register of Cadet Applicants, 1819-1867, Rhode Island, no. 9, Albert Martin, Microfilm Serial: M2037; Microfilm Reel 1, NARA.; also, the Register of Graduates and Former Cadets, U.S. Military Academy, Section 2, p. 80, found at U.S. Military Academy Library, on-line Special Collections and Archives, <http://digital-library.usma.edu/libmedia>; accessed 2/05/2011.
58. *Prospectus and Internal Regulations of the American Literary, Scientific and Military Academy, to be opened at Middletown in the State of Connecticut* (August 1825), 5.
59. *Rhode Island American*, 12 April 1825; *Providence Gazette*, 13 April 1825.

60. *Prospectus and Internal Regulations* (August 1825), 26; also, *Catalogue of the Officers and Cadets together with the Prospectus and Internal Regulations of the American Literary, Scientific and Military Academy at Middletown Connecticut* (August 1827), 6.

61. *Prospectus and Internal Regulations*, 7-8. Albert Martin may have studied accounting at Partridge's Academy; he is listed as an "accountant" in his family's business in the 1828 *Providence Directory*, (Providence: Brown & Danforth, 1828). On trends in the field of accounting at this time, see Gary John Previts and Barbara Dubois Merino, *A History of Accountancy in the United States: The Cultural Significance of Accounting* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998).
62. Charles Mason to Frank N. Johnson, February 4, 1874, found in Frank N. Johnson, *History of Texas and Texans*, [www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/batgoneye2.htm](http://www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/batgoneye2.htm); accessed August 12, 2002. It is difficult to ascertain the course of study that Albert Martin pursued at Partridge's Academy.
63. Providence Town Meeting Book, no. 10 (1827-32), pp. 127, 187, Providence City Archives. In 1827, an exemption from militia duty was granted to young firefighters to entice them into a service that required many additional participants as the city expanded in size and population. Author's interview with Paul Campbell, Providence City Archivist, September 21, 2011.
64. Donald McNabb and Lee Madere, *A History of New Orleans* (revised 1997), pp. 12-13, located at [www.madere.com/history.html](http://www.madere.com/history.html); accessed May 28, 2002.
65. "Supplemental Application of the New Jersey Society of the Sons of the American Revolution," Alvan Doswell Simpson by descent from



- Captain Sylvanus Martin, National Number 83176, and State Number 5053, May 29, 1951. The Martins' cousin, Abby, was married to Martin Fearing, a customs agent in New Orleans.
66. See *Providence Directory* for the years 1832 and following; also Annual Return, Fire Department of the Town of Providence, 1831, Providence Archives. Whether the Martins took an overland route to the Mississippi River and steamboat to New Orleans, or traveled by coastal sailing vessels, is not known. Early Alamo researchers claimed that Albert Martin was from Tennessee. (See Amelia Williams, "A Critical Study of the Siege of the Alamo and of the Personnel of Its Defenders," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 36 (1933): 251-87 and 37 (1934): 237-312. Albert's Rhode Island connection was correctly described in the Bicentennial Project publication of the Alamo, O'Shavano and San Antonio de Bexar DAR Chapters, *The Alamo Heroes and Their Revolutionary War Ancestors* (San Antonio, Texas, 1976).
  67. An account current ledger of Martin, Coffin & Co. of New Orleans, perhaps kept by Albert Martin, shows cash withdrawals for the passage of J. S. Martin aboard the Schooner, *Sabine*, from Brazoria Texas to New Orleans on October 18, 1833. See Case #7360, 1834, *Martin, Coffin and Company v Penny and Harrington*, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library.
  68. See *Providence Directory*, 1832. The Blake and Bartlett Mansion House Inn was formerly the Golden Ball Inn. Also, see Florence Parker Simister, *The Streets of the City* (Old Stone Bank, 1952-71), vol. 1 (1952-53), #1. Scripts used for broadcast on station WEAN-WPJB-FM.
  69. John Connell to Brown & Ives, January 10, 1833, Miscellaneous Spoilation Claims, Vol. 7, as found in James B. Hedges, *The Browns of Providence Plantations: The Nineteenth Century* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1968), 2: 157-58.
  70. Joseph S. Martin's name appeared in the *Providence Directory* in 1836; he was listed as living at Blake and Bartlett's Hotel, although he was in New Orleans and Texas by 1833. The entry for the 1838-39 *Providence Directory* reads, "Martin, Widow of Joseph S., 32 Benefit Street."
  71. "The Petition of Albert Martin, Joseph S. Martin and Thomas S. Coffin, merchants, to the Honorable Charles Maurien, Judge of the Parish Court of the city of New Orleans," contains various petitions, appeals, audits, findings, ledgers and account books of Martin, Coffin & Co., State of Louisiana, Case #7360, *Martin, Coffin and Company v Penny and Harrington*, 1834. The case of Martin, Coffin & Co. v. Penny & Harrington involved a dispute over an 1833 debt owed to the Martins' business. (Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library) A Martin, Coffin and Company account current ledger shows cash withdrawals to Albert Martin as early as September 1833. Also see *New Orleans City Directory*, 1834. (Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library)
  72. Petition of Albert Martin to the Honorable Charles Maurien, Judge of the Parish Court of the City of New Orleans, State of Louisiana, Case #7502, May 22, 1834, *Albert Martin v. Thomas Coffin*. Martin's agents in Matamoros are identified as the merchant firm of Smith and Stillman.
  73. "Lots in the Inner Town of Gonzales," digital image from Ethel Zively Rather, "DeWitt's Colony," The Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association 8 (1904), Appendix II, "Lots in the Inner Town of Gonzales, 168; "Article 5th of the Gonazles Ayuntamineto, " viewed at [www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/gonminutes.htm](http://www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/gonminutes.htm); accessed January 6, 2002.
  74. A more extensive list of goods sold in the Martin store can be found in the biographical sketches of Gonzales residents William Dearduff and William Fishbaugh, found at [www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/gonzalesrangersa-e.htm](http://www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/gonzalesrangersa-e.htm); accessed January 8, 2006 and [www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/gonzalesrangersf-k.htm](http://www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/gonzalesrangersf-k.htm); accessed January 2, 2003.
  75. Orleans Parish, Parish Court Petition #7502, May 22, 1834, *Albert Martin v. Thomas P. Coffin*. The Court considered Martin to be a resident of "said city" (New Orleans); according to the court proceedings, Coffin was "now absent" in May 1834. The dispute centered on the dissolution of the company and disagreement over bills of exchange.
  76. Washington County Board of Land Commissioners, Unconditional First Class Headright Certificate # 265, (February 1, 1838), Archives and Records, Texas General Land Office.
  77. See Paul D. Lack, *The Texas Revolutionary Experience* (College Station: Texas A & M, 1992), Table 3, 123.
  78. Captains Albert Martin, R. M. Coleman and J. H. Moore to "Fellow Citizens of St. Phillipe and the Lavaca," September 30, 1835, in *Military Papers of Texas: The Texas Revolution 1835-1836*, ed. John H. Jenkins (Austin: Presidial Press, 1973), 1:509.
  79. The Texas volunteers elected their own officers; when more volunteers arrived in Gonzales from other towns, the new militiamen chose to elect officers with whom they were familiar.
  80. Lack, *Texas Revolutionary Experience*, 39.

81. See Stephen L. Hardin, *Texian Iliad: A Military History of the Texas Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 13.
82. Albert Martin to "Barret," December 19, 1835, at [www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/oldgonzales18.htm](http://www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/oldgonzales18.htm); accessed January 6, 2002.
83. There are many books and articles written about the political and military events in and around San Antonio between December 1835 and March 6, 1836, the last day of the siege. Walter Lord, *A Time to Stand* (New York: Harper Books, 1961) and Lon Tinkle, *13 Days to Glory* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1958) still remain two of the best. Stephen L. Hardin's *A Military History of the Texas Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), provides an excellent overview of the military situation during the War for Texas Independence. In *The Texas Revolutionary Experience*, Paul D. Lack describes the men who served in the Texas army during the war.
84. At this juncture in Texas politics, decision making was in the hands of a "consultation," composed of individuals elected by the local communities; it met at Washington on the Brazos. Smith had been elected as governor by the consultation, narrowly defeating Stephen Austin. The army consisted mostly of volunteers, with a few units of what were deemed "regular" army men. See Hardin, *A Military History of the Texas Revolution*, 1994.
85. Crockett paid a brief visit to Providence on May 4, 1834, as part of a national tour to assess his Whig presidential prospects. *The [Providence] Republican Herald*, May 6, 1834; Davis, *Three Roads to the Alamo*, 336-37, 389-91.
86. William Barret Travis wrote to Capt Randall Jones, October 3, 1835, that, "The most important news on the carpet is that received by express from Gonzales from Captains Moore, Coleman and Albert Martin, dated 30th September. . . . that the Mexicans appeared in force . . . there were only 18 Americans in arms at Gonzales . . . that on the 30th there were 150 collected . . . That . . . the Americans would attack the Spaniards that evening." *Military Papers of Texas*, 2: 28.
87. William Barret Travis's letter from the Alamo, 1836, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, [www.tsl.state.tx.us/treasures/republic/alamo/travis-about.html](http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/treasures/republic/alamo/travis-about.html); accessed October 9, 2002.
88. The Martins provided lead, powder, wagon wheels, oxen, food and other supplies. See Texas Public Debt Claims, microfilm reel 65, nos. 476, 1393, 6301, 9591, Texas State Archives.
89. Miles S. Bennett, "Battle of Gonzales," *The Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association* 2 (April 1899): 313.
90. William P. Zuber, "Flight from Gonzales," *My Eighty Years in Texas*, [www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/mustergon2.htm](http://www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/mustergon2.htm); accessed August 12, 2002.
91. Little is known about Albert Martin's brother, Joseph, other than his efforts to represent his mother and sister's Texas land and public debt claims. He may have resided in Prairie Lea, Caldwell County, Texas. See, "History of Prairie Lea," *Plum Creek Almanac* 4 (Spring, 1986): 47-48; "Narrative, 1835, T.F. Harwood, Gonzales, Texas," in The Collections in the Center for American History, The University of Texas, Austin. Some examples of Martin land claims that are in the Texas General Land Office Archives and Records Division, found in Thomas Lloyd Miller, *Bounty and Donation Land Grants of Texas, 1835-1888* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967), are: Certificate # 18\_\_\_\_, July 16, 1845; Patent #14 to Heirs of Albert Martin, May 20, 1846, v. 3, Mon B-130 p. 437; Certificate # 409, November 27, 1847; Patent #130 to Heirs August 23, 1847, v. 1; Patent #133 to Heirs, August 23, 1847, v. 1.1, p. 808; First Class Headright Certificate #265, February 1, 1838; Court of Claims Case #5198, Abstract 402-403, in General Land Office File, Bexar Donation 643, Dec 30, 1847.



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*Carte-de-visite* image of “The Heroine of New Bern,” Kady Brownell, in modified Zouave military uniform. Although undated, this image was made sometime after the end of the Civil War; RIHS Collection (RHi X17 1098).

## Sourcing a Rhode Island Legend

C. MORGAN GREFE

Students of history employ many different types of resources to construct their narratives and arguments: diaries, census records, newspapers, letters, books, paintings, artifacts, oral accounts, photographs and many other types of materials. No one of these sources alone tells a complete story of a moment in time, a historical event, or the lives of individuals. However, taken together, information gathered from many diverse sources can be artfully arranged to craft an argument, support a thesis, or tell a story. Where first-hand accounts and verified facts are lacking, contemporary writers are ever eager to step into the void to create a fictionalized version of events, often a version that rapidly becomes a legend in which fact and fiction freely intermingle. Even when “first-hand” accounts exist, memory can be shaped by hearsay, by stressful situations and, later, even by the repetition of legends themselves.

This short essay examines diverse sources that a historian, writer, or student might use to construct an argument about Kady Brownell, a Rhode Islander who participated in the Civil War alongside her husband. The sources include photographic images, poetry, newspaper accounts, previous historical research (part of the Civil War “historiography”), and even myths and legends. This is a brief exploration of how these sources can be arranged to tell all sorts of stories, some scholarly and some popular legend, and how memory can be a mutable part of both.

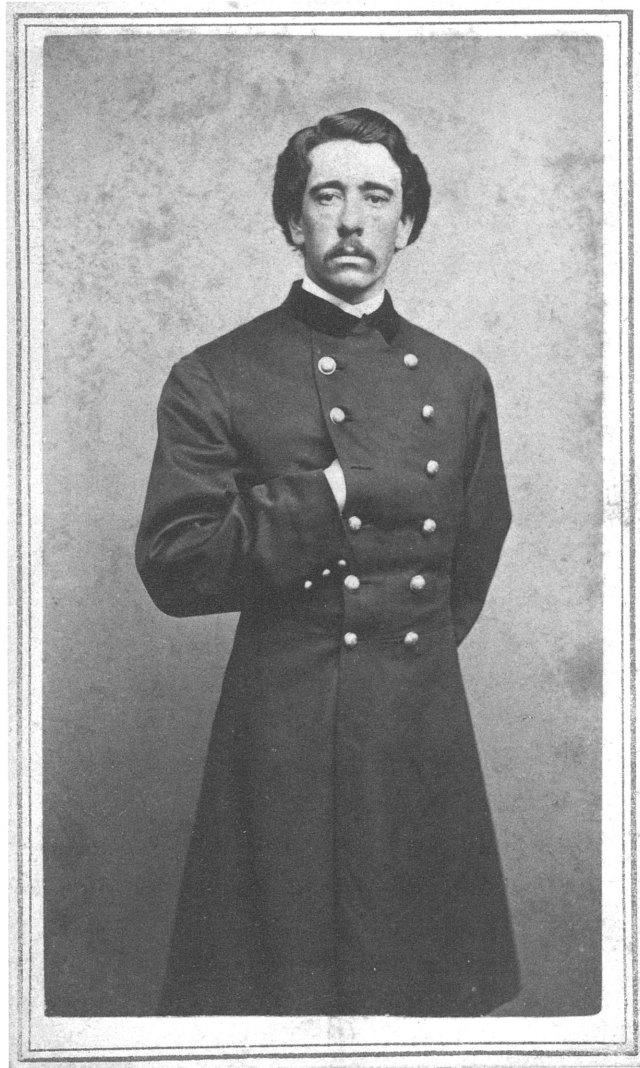
The Civil War was a watershed moment in the history of war journalism. While photography had been used during the Crimean War, in the United States it was the American Civil War that became the first photographically documented military conflict.

These photographic images were combined with poems, memoirs, songs and novels to tell the tales of brave and noble soldiers—from both the North and the South. According to Andrew Huebner, a historian specializing in images of soldiers, historian David Blight notes that “romance triumphed over reality” in many of these accounts. Although images could reveal the gory realities of battle, coupled with triumphant and heroic nostalgic narratives, we are left with a romanticized view of individual soldiers, if not, as some have argued, the entire practice of war.<sup>1</sup>

*Carte-de-visite* photographs—small, posed images—of soldiers, generally in full uniform, form a distinct category within the oeuvre of Civil War photography. These cards were small enough to be placed in envelopes and sent to loved ones. They were also discrete enough to be carried on one’s person, both at war and at home. Today, the archives of libraries and museums throughout the country contain hundreds, if not thousands, of images of mustachioed young men, draped with sashes, wearing shiny boots, kepis firmly on, sabers in hand, staring steadfastly into the camera. The Civil War soldiers’ *cartes-de-visite* represent staged, yet very touching, images of young men who have seen, or are about to see, far too much horror.

Women are represented in a handful of these small, portable images from the Civil War era; they are wearing feminized versions of military uniforms. Who were these women? Why did they don improvised military attire when American women would not be welcomed into combat until the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in the early twenty-first century? The Rhode Island women pictured in this article, Kady Brownell and Julianna Parker





Carte-de-visite image of Rhode Island Civil War soldier, Elijah Hunt Rhodes. Rhodes advanced from private to colonel in the Second Rhode Island Volunteer Infantry. Photograph, n.d.; RIHS Collection (RHi X17 156).

Monroe, served in the Civil War as vivandières. Such women would follow a family member, particularly a husband, into the Civil War volunteer service. Many of the more famous images show women wearing feminized versions of the Zouave uniform, inspired by the renowned North African regiments of the French army. The male uniform was quite flamboyant, featuring a bright blue jacket that was frequently embroidered, a vest, sash, distinctive red baggy knee-length pants, and a fez. Women who

served as vivandières adapted this uniform, and other later, simpler versions, by wearing a matching skirt over their trousers. Sadly, the black and white images cannot capture the vibrancy of their uniforms.

Vivandières served alongside soldiers, occasionally in the midst of combat and close to the battlefield, supplying food and water, and nursing the sick and wounded. Often these women were vital members of a regiment, although not officially “mustered in.” At times, vivandières were so highly regarded that they became regimental mascots, dubbed, “Daughters of the Regiment.” Such apparently was the case with the most famous Rhode Island vivandière, Kady Brownell.

There are two photographs of Kady Brownell that accompany this essay. One, from the Rhode Island Historical Society collections, is a *carte-de-visite* image; the other, from the Library of Congress, may have been a *carte-de-visite* as well. It is not known exactly when the images were made, although it is likely that they were not taken before, or even while, Brownell was serving on the battlefield. Rather, these photographs were probably taken after the war, while Kady Brownell was an amateur actress in Bridgeport, Connecticut. How do we in the twenty-first century understand these post-Civil War images of Kady Brownell, and what part did they play in the legend that exists about her life, before, during and after the war?

#### THE LEGEND OF KADY BROWNELL

Many Civil War enthusiasts are familiar with the legend of Kady Brownell. In her paper, “Kady Brownell, A Rhode Island Legend,” Sara L. Bartlett asserts that the legend begins with Kady Southwell’s birth to the French wife of Colonel George Southwell, a Scotsman in the British army, on a battlefield on the Eastern Cape of South Africa.<sup>2</sup> Since 1815, British troops long occupied this region, engaging in constant skirmishes with indigenous people and Dutch settlers. Many storytellers have traced Kady’s later military service to her birth and upbringing in an army family living

on the frontier. According to Frank Moore, who published his book *Women in War, Their Heroism and Self-Sacrifice* just after the end of the Civil War, Kady was “[a]ccustomed to arms and soldiers from infancy, she learned to love the camp.”<sup>3</sup> Not long after her birth, Moore’s narrative contends, Kady’s mother died, and she was taken in by family friends, the McKenzies, who brought the young child with them to Rhode Island.<sup>4</sup>

Little is known of Kady’s early life in Rhode Island. At some point after arriving in America, she secured a job in a mill, working up to the position of weaver in a Central Falls factory where she met and fell in love with millwright Robert Brownell. According to the popular legend, eighteen-year-old Kady and Robert married in 1861, just days before the Civil War broke out. Not long after they wed, the call went out for ninety-day volunteers to suppress the Southern rebellion. Robert, a member of a militia club called the Mechanics Rifles, joined the war effort immediately as part of the First Rhode Island Volunteers.

Moore’s account then relates the circumstances of Kady’s military service. He asserts that she was so distraught at the prospect of losing her new husband to the Union Army that she attempted to board the ship with his regiment. Robert forcibly removed his wife from the ship, chiding her that, “war was no place for a lady,” according to a newspaper account written some years later that derived from Moore’s seminal account of Kady’s wartime contribution. Plucky Kady, however, would not be deterred. She decided not to dally with functionaries, but instead pleaded with Governor Sprague himself to be allowed to accompany her husband and his regiment to war.<sup>5</sup> Impressed by her spirit, the governor granted her wish and Kady followed Robert to Virginia, where she saw action in the First Battle of Bull Run. She then returned to Rhode Island when her husband’s ninety-day enlistment was up. Robert Brownell re-enlisted

some weeks later; Kady returned to the South with him and, again, saw action on a battlefield in North Carolina, led by Rhode Island’s most famous Civil War officer, Brigadier General Ambrose Burnside.

Frank Moore’s 1866 account attempts to smooth the cultural disquiet created by the story of a woman living among soldiers and taking part in military engagements. He asserts that, “this Daughter of the Regiment was resolved not to be a mere water-carrier, nor an ornamental appendage. She would be effective against the enemy, as well as a graceful figure on parade, and applied herself to learn all the arts and accomplishments of the soldier.”<sup>6</sup> In turn she became an expert shot, known for quickness and accuracy, and handled a sword as well as any man could. In fact, Moore states, in her first battle, at Bull Run, Kady became an “unmoved and dauntless” color-bearer around whom the men could rally amid the smoke and chaos of battle. And despite the confusion that set in as the battle raged, Kady was not shaken and did not move until a young Pennsylvania soldier grabbed her and compelled her to run for safety into the woods. After her rescuer fell, decimated by a cannon ball to the head, Kady grabbed a horse and rode to find her regiment. It was at this point that Kady Brownell heard that her husband had been killed.<sup>7</sup>

In Moore’s version, Kady was ever the intrepid and spunky heroine. Retreating from Bull Run on horseback, she rode on to find her husband. Fortunately for Kady, while injured, Robert Brownell was very much alive. He received a regular discharge after his three-month enlistment was up, and he and Kady headed back to Rhode Island, only to re-enlist, in the Fifth Rhode Island Regiment. The couple left Rhode Island as the regiment travelled to the Neuse River in a Union advance toward New Bern, North Carolina. It was on this expedition, Moore contends, that Kady Southwell Brownell was transformed into “Kady Brownell: The Heroine of New Bern.”<sup>8</sup> Again Kady marched with the men through treacherous





Another image of Kady Brownell in simple clothing adapted to her military role. Her “uniform” in this photograph may more closely resemble the attire that Kady wore into battlefield service during 1861-62. (Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Reproduction No. LC-USZ62-110631).

conditions, but was not satisfied to be a nurse and daughter of the regiment. She yearned to carry the regimental colors into battle once more. It was agreed; she donned the “coast uniform” and crossed the muddy, river terrain. Moore’s version recounts Kady’s bravery as soon as the regiment arrived at the battle location in New Bern:

As the various regiments were getting their positions, the Fifth Rhode Island was seen advancing from a belt of wood, from a direction that was unexpected. They were mistaken for a force of rebels, and preparation instantly made to open on it with both musketry and artillery, when Kady ran out to the front, her colors in hand, advanced to clear ground, and waved them till it was apparent that the advancing force were friends.<sup>9</sup>

Kady had saved the men’s lives. Yet, she was rewarded by having the colors handed to another. Despite this disappointment, she was at the ready when word came that Robert had fallen in battle. She quickly assumed a more culturally proper role as a wife and vivandière, caring for him and tending to other wounded men.

Moore’s nineteenth-century words capture beautifully the essence of Kady Brownell, as a northern, idealized Civil War heroine:

She went out where the dead and wounded were lying thick along the breastwork, to get blankets, that would no longer do them any good, in order to make her husband and others more comfortable.

Here she saw several lying helpless in the mud and shallow water of the yard. Two or three of them she helped up, and they dragged themselves to dryer ground. Among them was a relief engineer, whose foot had been crushed by the fragment of a shell. She showed him the same kindness that she did the rest; and the treatment she received in return was so unnatural and fiendish that we can hardly explain it, except by believing that the hatred of the time had driven from the hearts of some, at least, of the rebels, all honorable and all Christian sentiments.

The rebel engineer had fallen in a pool of dirty water, and was rapidly losing blood, and growing cold in consequence of this and the water in which he lay.

She took him under his arms and dragged him back to dry ground, arranged a blanket for him to lie on, and another to cover him, and fixed a cartridge box, or something similar, to support his head.

As soon as he had grown a little comfortable, and rallied from the extreme pain, he rose up, shaking his fist at her, with a volley of horrible and obscene oaths, exclaimed, ‘Ah you d----- Yankee -----, if I get on my feet again, if I don’t blow the head off your shoulders, then God d----- me!’ For an instant the blood of an insulted woman; the daughter of a soldier, and the daughter of a regiment, was in mutiny. She snatched a musket with bayonet fixed, that lay close by, and an instant more his profane and indecent tongue would have been hushed forever. But, as she was plunging the bayonet at his breast, a wounded Union soldier, who lay near, caught the point of it in his hand; remonstrated against killing a wounded enemy, no matter what he said; and in her heart the woman triumphed, and she spared him, ingrate that he was.

She returned to the house where Robert had been carried, and spreading blankets under him, made him as comfortable as he could be at a temporary hospital. The nature of his wound was such that his critical time would come two or three weeks later, when the shattered pieces of bone must come out before the healing process could commence. All she could do now was simply to keep the limb cool by regular and constant applications of cold water.

From the middle of March to the last of April she remained in Newbern, nursing her husband, who for some time grew worse, and needed constant and skillful nursing to save his life. When not over him, she was doing all she could for other sufferers. Notwithstanding her experience with the inhuman engineer, the wounded rebels found her the best friend they had. Every day she contrived to save a bucket of coffee and a pail of delicate soup, and would take it over and give it out with her own hands to the wounded in the rebel hospital. While she was thus waiting on these helpless and almost deserted sufferers, she one day saw two of the Newbern ladies, who had come in silks to look at their wounded countrymen. One of them was standing between two beds, in such a position as to obstruct the narrow passage. Our heroine politely requested her to let her pass, when she remarked to the other female who came with her, ‘That’s one of our women—isn’t it?’ ‘No,’ was the sneering response, ‘she’s a Yankee -----,’



using a term which never defiles the lips of a *lady*. The rebel surgeon very promptly ordered her out of the house.

It is but justice, however, to say that in some of her rebel acquaintances at Newbern, human nature was not so scandalized.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, Kady was a heroine, but still a woman who was governed by strong passions—saved from becoming a murderer by the cool-headedness of the brave Yankee soldier who defended her honor and her soul, while recognizing and protecting the humanity of his fallen, Confederate enemy.

After the Battle of New Bern in mid-March 1862, Robert Brownell was a convalescent for some months; he and Kady never served in the army again. In the postwar years, after a brief stay in Rhode Island, they moved to Connecticut and spent their time between the Nutmeg State and New York City.<sup>11</sup> The accounts of the Brownells' life at this time are hazy. Robert apparently held a variety of jobs through the years: carpenter, millwright, agent, building custodian and perhaps, according to Bartlett, a maker or seller of tobacco and cigars. Kady, however, seized the opportunity to make something of her experiences at the front. In the 1870s the Bridgeport City Directory listed her as an "amateur actress." Bartlett notes that Brownell presented herself onstage as the valiant heroine of the Moore sketch. Her best-known performance was a tableau entitled, *Our Female Volunteer*, highlighting her war experiences. Bartlett believes that the famous photograph of Kady in her Zouave uniform is probably from this time, and that she never actually wore such an outfit during the conflict.<sup>12</sup>

In September of 1870, Kady was inducted into the Elias Howe, Jr. Post #3 of the Grand Army of the

Republic (GAR) in Bridgeport, Connecticut. From that moment, Kady became legendary as, "the only woman ever to join the GAR." And many male members of the organization were apparently not at all happy about her membership. In 1882, Kady Brownell sought additional, formal recognition of her role in the Civil War: she applied for a pension through a Special Act of Congress. Congress then launched an extensive inquiry into her service and in 1884 she received a government pension of \$8 per month.<sup>13</sup>

By the turn of the century, the Brownells were living in New York City. Kady worked for the city's Park Service in Central Park and then as the custodian for the Morris-Jumel Mansion, the former home of another famous and controversial Rhode Island-born woman, Madame Eliza Jumel, nee Bowen. New York newspapers reported that Kady was a familiar figure in the city's annual Decoration Day parade wearing her impressive Zouave costume, complete with war souvenirs and sword.<sup>14</sup>

Kady Brownell's story was certainly the stuff of legend during her lifetime, and she helped to perpetuate her fame through her tableaux at GAR entertainments and with public appearances in parades. A posed *carte-de-visite* image of Kady accompanies this essay; others exist of a uniformed Kady crouched and crawling, as if in battle.<sup>15</sup> At the turn of the century, poet Clinton Scollard captured Brownell's romantic story in a dramatic ballad:

"The Daughter of the Regiment"<sup>16</sup>

Who with the soldiers was staunch danger-sharer,—  
Marched in the ranks through the shriek of the shell?  
Who was their comrade, their brave color-bearer?  
Who but the resolute Kady Brownell?

Over the marshland and over the highland,  
Where'er the columns wound, meadow or dell,  
Fared she, this daughter of little Rhode Island,—  
She, the intrepid one, Kady Brownell!

While the mad rout at Manassas was surging,  
When those around her fled wildly, or fell,  
And the bold Beauregard onward was urging,  
Who so undaunted as Kady Brownell!

Opposite page: Detail of a Civil War vivandière on the battlefield, depicted pouring a drink for a wounded soldier. This image appeared on an envelope that was mailed in 1862. (Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Reproduction No. LC-DIG-ppmsca-31964; digital file from original item).



When gallant Burnside made dash upon Newberne,  
Sailing the Neuse 'gainst the sweep of the swell,  
Watching the flag on the heaven's broad blue burn,  
Who higher hearted than Kady Brownell?

In the deep slough of the springtide debarking,  
Toiling o'er leagues that are weary to tell,  
Time with the sturdiest soldiery marking,  
Forward, straight forward, strode Kady Brownell.

Reaching the lines where the army was forming,  
Forming to charge on those ramparts of hell,  
When from the wood came her regiment swarming,  
What did she see there—this Kady Brownell?

See! why she saw that their friends thought them foemen;  
Muskets were levelled, and cannon as well!  
Save them from direful destruction would no men?  
Nay, but this woman would,—Kady Brownell!

Waving her banner she raced for the clearing;  
Fronted them all, with her flag as a spell;  
Ah, what a volley—a volley of cheering—  
Greeted the heroine, Kady Brownell!

Gone (and thank God!) are those red days of slaughter!  
Brethren again we in amity dwell;  
Just one more cheer for the Regiment's Daughter!—  
Just one more cheer for her, Kady Brownell!

Despite Kady Brownell's celebrated life, she died impoverished in the Women's Relief Hospital in Oxford, New York on January 14, 1915. Robert and family friends pooled their resources and purchased a plot and gravestone in Providence's North Burial Ground for Kady. For reasons unknown, after Kady's death Robert moved to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. He was eighty years old and not well. He died not long after, the proud husband of the Heroine of New Bern.

#### TEASING REALITY FROM KADY BROWNELL'S LEGEND

According to many sources, Kady Brownell was an uncontested and uncontroversial heroine. However, these uncritical and highly romanticized accounts of her daring exploits, which were created in the years following the Civil War, were spun from a blend of hearsay reports and embellished accounts. Kady's story appears to be far more complex and

multi-layered. Sara Bartlett's recent work is useful in helping us to differentiate "history" from "legend."

The myths, in fact, begin around Brownell's birth. Her death certificate does list Africa as her place of birth, but it also claims that her father was British, not Scottish. Yet, in the 1860 federal census, Kady's place of birth was listed as Scotland. Perhaps a careless census taker confused Kady's place of birth with that of her father. Not surprisingly, the formal records on Kady and the McKenzies' immigration to the U.S. are absent, nor are there any records of her having been adopted by the McKenzies. Therefore, we must rely on hearsay and informal sources to uncover an account of her young life. We do know Kady ended up in Central Falls, and worked in a mill, and we know that by 1860, she worked as a weaver, according to Bartlett.<sup>17</sup>

Far more discrepancies surround Kady's relationship with her husband, Robert Brownell. It appears from divorce decrees that Robert was married at the time he met Kady. His first wife, born Agnes Hutchinson, was a Scottish immigrant. The two were married in 1853 and had three children. In 1861, Agnes filed divorce papers that accused Robert of adultery.<sup>18</sup> These papers, filed March 25, 1861, are also of interest because if we are to believe the popular story, Robert enlisted in April of that year and he and Kady had married three days earlier. That would have required a suspiciously quick divorce; divorce proceedings in the nineteenth century were typically lengthy, especially when brought by a woman. In fact, the Rhode Island Marriage Index lists Robert and Kady as having married on November 11, 1863—a full year after Robert was mustered out of the army, and over two years after the divorce papers were filed by his first wife. According to various accounts, Robert stated that they were married on April 14, 1861 and Kady apparently asserted that their wedding date was April 17, 1861. Kady's pension records include a City of Providence Record Book # 8

reference stating that Pastor William McDonald of the Chestnut Street M. E. church performed their marriage in March, 1861—before Robert's divorce. And later still, Kady listed April 9, 1861 as their wedding date. Bartlett suggests that Robert and Kady may have had a hasty marriage before leaving Providence in 1861 and then a more elaborate ceremony for friends and family on the 1863 date listed in the Rhode Island marriage register. Still, there is a distinct possibility that Robert and Kady were not legally married when they spent their year on the front lines together.<sup>19</sup>

Kady Brownell's service with the Union Army is even more contested, and the real controversy began to stir, not at the time of Frank Moore's sketch, but instead in the early 1880s when the Congressional investigation to establish Kady's pension eligibility took place. Bartlett lists major discrepancies between Kady's accounts of her military service and those of others who served in Robert Brownell's regiment. For instance, Captain J. M. Wheeler of Company A of the Fifth Rhode Island gave two contradictory accounts. In his 1882 statement he asserted that Kady was "attached to the said company; that she was present at the Battle of New Berne, N.C., and [was] conspicuous for bravery in carrying the flag at the head of the battalion. That he believes she saved the lives of many Union soldiers...." Wheeler then recounted much of the story of Kady Brownell's heroic actions that had become standard legend by that time.<sup>20</sup>

However, in the immediate postwar period, before Brownell had become such a well-known figure, Frank Moore had written to Wheeler requesting information about Kady's military actions at the Battle of New Bern. Wheeler's response then differed quite markedly from his account almost twenty years later:

Though I think she is deserving of great praise for her kindness to the sick and wounded, and I have no doubt she would have distinguished herself had she

been allowed to have her way, . . . On the morning of the battle, [she] begged me to allow her to carry the American flag at the head of the regiment just as we were coming under fire of our enemies' rifles. . . When I ordered her to the rear, she complied with the greatest reluctance.<sup>21</sup>

Newspaper reporters played a significant role in propelling Kady Brownell into the national spotlight and perpetuating stories of her legendary heroism. In 1905, the *Providence Journal* featured a story about Kady titled, "Rhode Island 'Vivandiere' in the New York Parade." The reporter noted that, "She was glorified in the New York papers yesterday as a heroine of the war, her battle record being given to the extent of a half column or so." But, the *Providence Journal* reporter went on to add a statement that the New York columnists never did: "By local veterans of the regiment some of the thrilling details of this record are regarded as mythical—the result of somebody's vivid imagination in trying to depict an effective allegory."<sup>22</sup> This disclaimer, however, did not keep the Providence newspaperman from recounting all of the "mythical" stories about Kady Brownell, thus promoting the legends about her as accepted fact. Although he did not include accounts that would have challenged the plucky battlefield heroism of Kady Brownell until near the end of his article, nevertheless, the Rhode Island journalist appeared to give credibility to reports that might have challenged accounts of Kady Brownell's legendary behavior.

Thus, after listing all of Brownell's supposed heroics, the reporter wrote:

A large part of the foregoing would seem to be a beautiful fairy tale. The Army records in the office of the Adjutant General contain no specific mention of Kady Brownell and her name is not on the muster rolls of either the First or the Fourth Rhode Island Volunteers as it certainly would be if she had been an 'enlisted soldier' in either command. [Kady was in the Fifth RI Regiment.].

Col. William Goddard, who went to the front as a Major with the First Rhode Island has an indistinct



Juliana Parker Monroe was a Rhode Island woman who also accompanied her husband while he served in a Rhode Island unit in the Civil War. Her "modified uniform," like Kady Brownell's military outfit, reveals the distinctive attire that women adopted while with the Union Army during the Civil War; RIHS Collection (RHi X3 8831).

remembrance of such a woman, who followed her husband to the front, but he is quite positive that she had no official connection with the regiment and he is unable to remember that she ever went into battle and did any terrific slashing with a sabre.

Col. Charles H. Merriman was Adjutant of the First Rhode Island and he remembers Kady Brownell very well. 'She followed her husband with the regiment,' he said. 'She called herself a vivandier and wore a sort of uniform with knee-length skirts. She never was officially recognized by the regiment and never had any connection with [words indecipherable] marching in the ranks and never heard that she took part in any battle. . .<sup>23</sup>

Also in 1905, the *Providence Journal* included a letter to the editor from James Moran, dated June 8, 1905. Moran was perhaps compelled to write after seeing the article on Kady's participation in the Memorial Day parade in New York that year. ". . . There was nothing particularly noticeable in the record of Mrs Brownell up to the time of the battle of Newbern," Moran wrote, "except that she was patriotic, useful and energetic in many ways in good acts, a devoted wife and respected by all. On the morning of the day of the battle, March 14, 1862, some of us, myself amongst the number, were talking of the fact we had no flag or colors." The men had improvised, Moran recounted, using a "bunting flag," that someone had carried from Woonsocket. Discussion ensued among the men about who should be the color-bearer. Moran remembered:

Finally Mrs. Brownell—in speaking of her we used to call her Kitty, not Kady—wanted to carry it and as we were very soon to fall in and move on to the front, I gave her the flag, and when we did move, she marched with us, not in the ranks, but on the side of the road, until we reached the point where Gen. Burnside and some members of his staff, mounted, were waiting in front of the rebel abbatiss, directing the movements of the troops as they came along. At this point, we were ordered to change direction, we were given the 'double quick' and Kady and the flag were left behind and were not seen by us for the remainder of the day. . .

She certainly had no official connection with our regiment that any of us were aware of, and certainly

there was nothing official in her carrying that flag I gave her the morning of the battle of Newbern, although she exhibited qualities of pluck, patriotism and good intentions.<sup>24</sup>

After so many years have passed, it is hard to decipher where the truth lies about the Battle of New Bern. Were these veterans who minimized Kady Brownell's contribution loath to admit the heroics of a woman in battle? Were they jealous of Kady Brownell's celebrity? Did Kady Southwell Brownell, herself, seek an opportunity to add a layer of fame and valor to her otherwise difficult and unremarkable life by helping to create and expand on her own legend? Was the legend essentially true, perhaps embellished by zealous postwar authors, like Frank Moore, who, in his compendium on women in the war, noted the many women who had stepped out of culturally-prescribed roles to promote the Union cause, not only as vivandières and daughters of the regiment, but as hospital workers, Sanitary Commission officials, Soldiers Aid Society leaders, government clerks, munitions factory workers, and teachers of formerly enslaved people during the conflict?

There are facts we do know that somewhat tarnish the legend of Kady Brownell. She was not the only woman to join a GAR post, for instance. Despite allegedly telling a *New York Times* reporter in 1913 that she was proud of receiving a regular soldier's pension, not one out of a special order, her pension was indeed from a Special Act of Congress. We know that the uniform Kady Brownell wore in performances, typically a feminized version of the colorful Zouave uniform, was not what she wore on the field. Her modified military dress consisted of a light colored blouse, a knee-length dark-colored full skirt and a tasseled sash, trousers and boots. Despite accounts that she wore a cap over her *short* hair while on the battlefield, photographs show her with flowing locks.<sup>25</sup> Notwithstanding the change in coiffure, her "uniform" at Bull Run



and New Bern probably resembled that depicted in the simpler *carte-de-visite* photograph from the Library of Congress, published with this article. Lastly, in a particularly odd twist, Kady’s headstone in Providence’s North Burial Ground is placed next to that of Agnes Brownell, Robert’s first wife, who initiated divorce proceedings against him in 1861. Despite significant evidence that she lived well into the 1870s, this headstone states that Agnes Brownell died two years before she initiated divorce proceedings.<sup>26</sup> The erroneous date on Agnes Brownell’s headstone publically legitimized the alleged 1861 date of Robert and Kady’s marriage; there was no one remaining in Providence in 1915 to contest the death date of Agnes Brownell.

A handful of Southern and Northern women did go to war in 1861, whether as soldiers or vivandières, laundresses or nurses. While those who went to the front were not officially allowed to take up arms, a few armed women stood beside their husbands and brothers on the battlefield, placing themselves in grave danger. Kady Brownell may have created a more colorful and heroic past

for herself, but there was no need to lie about her bravery. Undeniably she stepped outside the typical, socially enforced roles of mid-nineteenth century womanhood when she carried the colors for her husband’s regiment with characteristic pluck.

The legend of Kady Brownell lives on despite any quibbling over facts. Some of the men with whom she went into battle remembered the “facts” of her story differently at different times, due, no doubt, to the plasticity of memory. In the years following the Civil War, Kady Brownell’s legend was repeatedly shared, via photographs, books, a stirring poem, newspaper articles, and her own appearances on stage and in Decoration Day parades. It was a tale of true love and romantic attachment that would brook no separation; a story of utter patriotic devotion to the Northern cause so great that it impelled a fearless woman to brazenly subvert the cultural norms of her era. It was a story of a hard-working immigrant, who took up arms to fight for her new country. It was, as David Blight might observe, romance triumphing over reality.

Notes

1. Andrew J. Huebner, *The Warrior Image: Soldiers in American Culture from the Second World War to the Vietnam Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008) 4-5.

2. Sara L. Bartlett, “Kady Brownell, A Rhode Island Legend,” unpublished paper in Rhode Island Historical Society Collection, CT275.B791B3.

3. Frank Moore, *Women of the War, Their Heroism and Self-Sacrifice* (Hartford, CT: S.S. Scranton & Co., 1866), 55.

4. Bartlett, “Kady Brownell,” 1.

5. Newspaper clipping, undated, reprinted from the “N.Y. Evening Sun.” [in handwriting: “probably from the Narragansett Times, Wakefield, RI, ca. 1902—1912.”] RIHS Vertical File, “Kady Brownell,” MSS B882 K

6. Moore, *Women of the War*, 56.

7. Moore, *Women of the War*, 57-58

8. Moore, *Women of the War*, 55.

9. Moore, *Women of the War*, 60.

10. Moore, *Women of the War*, 60-63.

11. Bartlett, “Kady Brownell,” 7.

12. Bartlett, “Kady Brownell,” 8.

13. Bartlett, “Kady Brownell,” 7.

14. See “Kady Brownell, Civil War Heroine Fighting for Life,” *New York Times*, 16 Feb. 1913 and “A Rhode Island ‘Vivandiere’ in the New York Parade,” *Providence Journal*, 1 June 1905.

15. <http://www.nyduvcw.org/tents/NYCLI.html>.

16. Clinton Scollard and Wallace Rice, *Ballads of Valor and Victory being Stories in Song from the Annals of America* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1903), 87-88. First published in 1897 by the Perry Mason Company; viewed at <http://books.google.com>.

17. Bartlett, “Kady Brownell,” 2.

18. As found in Bartlett, page 2: “Divorce Decree of Agnes and Robert Brownell,” March 25, 1861. In the decree, Agnes accuses Robert of “treating [Agnes] with extreme cruelty . . . and [neglecting] to provide necessaries for the support of [Agnes and the children, and] . . . he has been guilty of adultery.”

19. Bartlett, “Kady Brownell,” 3.

20. Bartlett, “Kady Brownell,” 7.

21. Bartlett, “Kady Brownell,” 7.

22. RIHS Library, Vertical File, “Kady Brownell,” B882K.

23. RIHS Library, Vertical File, “Kady Brownell,” B882K.

24. “Kady Brownell in Newbern Battle,” *Providence Journal*, 11 June 1905.

25. Elizabeth D. Leonard, *All the Daring of a Soldier: Women of the Civil War Armies* (New York: Penguin Publishing, 2001), 115; Bartlett, “Kady Brownell,” 8.

26. Bartlett, “Kady Brownell,” 8.

# Rhode Island Book Notes

## A Selection of Recent Titles

Dan Barry, *Bottom of the 33rd: Hope, Redemption and Baseball's Longest Game*. (New York: Harper, 2011).  
An account of baseball's longest game, played in McCoy Stadium between the Pawtucket Red Sox and the Rochester Redwings. The marathon contest in April, 1981, lasted over thirty-two innings.

Elaine Forman Crane, *Witches, Wife Beaters and Whores: Common Law and Common Folk in Early America*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).  
The author uses legal documents to relate stories of “unexceptional folk who make history happen” in places like Manhattan, Bermuda, and Rhode Island. Among the cases she examines are the alleged rape of a Little Compton woman and an incidence of domestic violence in eighteenth-century Newport.

Harry J. Eudenbach, *Estate Gardeners of Newport: A Horticultural History*. (Newport, R.I.: Harry J. Eudenbach, 2010).  
A history of the gardeners who shaped the landscape of grand Newport estates. The writer covers horticulturalists who worked over the past two hundred years designing and tending Newport's private gardens.

Steven Frias, *Cranston and its Mayors: A History*. (Charleston, S.C.: History Press, 2011).  
A compendium of short chapters on Cranston's twentieth-century mayors, beginning with Edward M. Sullivan, who served as mayor of Cranston from

1910-1914. The volume includes a short history of the evolution of Cranston's town government to a city with a mayoral-council system.

Robert A. Geake, *A History of the Narragansett Tribe of Rhode Island: Keepers of the Bay* (Charleston, S.C.: History Press, 2011).  
A popular history covering the period from the arrival of European settlers in the area to the recent discovery of the remains of an extensive Narragansett settlement near Point Judith, Rhode Island.

Lindsay Leard-Coolidge, *A Sense of Place: Painters of Matunuck, Rhode Island, 1873-1941* (New London, CT: Lyman Allyn Art Museum and Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2010).  
A volume illustrated with color plates, which describes art and artists who lived and worked in southern Rhode Island in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Among the artists were William Trost Richards, Philip Leslie Hale, Susan and Ellen Hale, Anna Richards Brewster, Frank Mathewson and Eleanor Richards Price.

G. Wayne Miller, *An Uncommon Man: The Life and Times of Senator Claiborne Pell*. (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2011).  
A full-length biography of Senator Claiborne Pell, United States senator from Rhode Island, who served from 1961 to 1997. The book includes material derived from the author's interviews with Pell and his family.