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Detail of a capital of an engaged column in the hall,
John Brocn House

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Newport Tower or Mill

by KENNETH J. CONANT*

This is a difficult bibliographical notice to write, for in it I must say that two of my friends have failed to bring forward conclusive proof in an investigation which has deeply interested them both. I follow the author (a fellow Badger) who is a most patient and indefatigable investigator, and the regretted Philip Ainsworth Means (a classmate) in their conviction that a Norse colony of some sort existed in America, but I feel that their evidence is still inadequate to support any detailed history.

As I understand it, the runestone discovered in 1907 at Kensington, Minnesota, is now quite generally considered to be genuine, though doubt of it (widespread at first) has not quite disappeared among experts. Acceptance of the stone is a tribute to forty years of painstaking investigation by Mr. Holand. He believes that the stone originated with an expedition of Goths and Norse authorized by King Magnus of Norway, Sweden, and Skåne in 1354, and sent under the command of Paul Knutson, presumably to seek a lost and apostate Greenland colony. If Mr. Holand is right, a rescue party passed by way of the Red River of the North in 1362 in the course of their search. The inscription records the loss of ten men in a skirmish with the Indians.

* Kenneth J. Conant is professor of architecture at Harvard. This is a resumé of *America, 1355-1364*, by Hjalmar R. Holand, N. Y., Duell, Sloane & Pearce, Inc., 1946, xiv, 256 p., \$4.00 and *Newport Tower*, by Philip Ainsworth Means, N. Y., Henry Holt, c. 1942, xxi, 344 p.

The matter has aroused considerable local interest, and a considerable number of boulders with drill holes have been pointed out as probable mooring stones used by the expedition. Some of the cuttings are set aside as probably due to blasting or boys' Fourth of July celebrations, but a sufficient number meet Mr. Holand's criteria to indicate a route across the state. The background material of halberds and firesteels picked up in the vicinity, and possible connections with the Mandan Indians are treated with reasonable reserve. The case is frankly admitted to be a tissue of hypotheses in certain particulars, but often it has surprising plausibility. For instance, the halberd heads are unconvincing as backwoods weapons. But Mr. Holand observes that Paul Knutson's commission from King Magnus calls for the expedition to be recruited from the royal bodyguard, which is believed to have been armed with halberds. A considerable mass of other evidence is handled in the same acute manner.

With regard to Newport Tower the results are not so convincing, in my opinion. Philip Ainsworth Means believed that the tower was built as a church, perhaps as a twelfth-century reflection of King Sigurd's famous pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre. The account of this is one of the highlights of Mr. Means's *Newport Tower*. It is a fact that a Norse bishop, Erik Upsi (or Gnuþson) set forth for Vinland in 1121. Mr. Holand's work in localizing Vinland in southern New England has much new material, used with uncanny skill. He gives good reasons for believing that the Norse were at Newport.

Holand is convinced that the tower was built as headquarters while the Red River expedition was in the field, that the upper stage of the tower was a guard hall with defenses, that the middle stage was a sort of house church, and that an annular aisle was planned for the ground level. When thus completed, the building would resemble a mediæval Scandinavian round church. The stonework has mediæval features, and even resemblances to the scanty remains of Norse masonry work in Greenland. Mr. Holand believes that the edifice could not have been a mill because of the open ground story, the fireplace in the middle story,

and the imperfectly circular shape of the upper story.

The argument is inconclusive for the following reasons:

1. The early English colonial masonry in Newport is similar, and, like the wooden structures of the time, strongly reminiscent of mediæval work.

2. The closest actual parallel for the general form of the tower is the so-called Treasury of the Cathedral of Canterbury. The putative annular aisle at Newport is purely a theory, suggested by the offsets above the piers—but these offsets are functional in the *statics* of the tower as actually built. No annular aisle is needed to assure the stability of the tower, because of the offsets above the piers.

3. The open lower story would improve the circulation of wind if the structure were built as a windmill.

4. The middle stage was probably reached by a retractable ladder, but this stage, with its wooden floor, cannot seriously have been thought of as capable of resisting a determined attack. The floor was supported on timbers arranged like a number sign (#) and evidently mortised at the intersections. The cutting would so weaken the timbers that a support (of wood?) would probably be required under each intersection. This is in fact the timbering system of the Chesterton observation tower built by Inigo Jones, and transformed into a mill about the year 1700 (Means, *Newport Tower*, figure 83, and pages 184, 185; see also pages 161 and 162, where this argument is anticipated in connection with another building).

5. Mills actually do have fireplaces in them in some cases (Means, pages 151, 153). If the tower were built as a mill which could serve as a lookout and provisional shelter in wartime, it would naturally have a fireplace. Wall-flues, opening in the face of the outside wall (not in chimneys at the top of the wall) occur in Romanesque Europe; they also occur in more modern mills (Means, page 153) and are in fact the only practical flues for windmills, since the rotating mechanism at the top of a windmill prevents projecting chimneys there.

6. The window frames of the middle stage were of almost the same dimensions as those which were currently

used in seventeenth century construction at Plymouth (Means, figure 24).

7. The recesses were moulded against wooden box-like forms. The present mortar surface seems too fresh and flat for 580 years of exposure. One of these recesses is proposed as the aumbry for a supposed slab altar formerly set in and against the curving wall. Any possible slab would have a most unconvincing shape as an altar. Mediæval altars were stubby rectangles in plan as a rule.

8. Stairs led from near the fireplaces to the upper stage. At that level the floor was supported by two parallel timbers near the middle of the circle. *No proper provision was made for supporting the ends of transverse joists or planking.* This raises the question as to whether there was a full floor—and particularly a floor capable of supporting the piles of stones which the upper story would contain if it were the defensive stage of a mediæval fortified building. The piles of stones would be unsafe, except near the big parallel timbers in the middle.

9. On the other hand, the Chesterton mill has two parallel timbers arranged in just this way. They support and stay the power mechanism. The grinding mechanism is at the middle stage, and is supported on posts and timbers as would be the case at Newport. The Newport structure actually served as a mill, and there are no signs indicating any change in the scheme of the timbering, which was suitable for a mill. A model made at Harvard University some years ago clearly shows the un-mediæval character of the timbering system of the tower if it is to be considered as anything but a mill. A mediæval "fortified headquarters" would be vaulted, or would have the floors laid on parallel timbers laid close together and amply supported by the wall. This seems to me decisive in the matter.

10. Even if the tower were built as a mill, the upper chamber might be a look-out chamber. The tower is documented by 1677, and it was perhaps used as a look-out during King Philip's War. It occupied the same position relative to the town as the block-house at Plymouth—above, and off the corner of the settlement. Several feet of masonry have been removed from the top of the tower. The

imperfectly circular plan could be rectified in that distance, and in any case a circular wooden track would be built above the stonework to carry the power mechanism.

11. The mason who repaired the top of the tower in 1946 reported a brick in the thickness of the wall, just below his work. If integral, this brick would indicate a seventeenth-century date. Another brick, in a window jamb of the middle stage, is set in soft mortar, and was probably introduced during repair work. There is a recent rumor of a runic inscription on the tower, previously unobserved. To be convincing, such an inscription would have to be on original hard mortar, for a stone might be reused.

12. Mr. Brigham of Newport makes the interesting suggestion that the tower was probably a W.P.A. project—of King Philip's War, (June 1675-August 1676). Newport's old windmill blew down on August 23, 1675. Governor Arnold, the richest man in the colony, had a brother who is said to have been a stone-mason. The Governor could most reasonably employ the Aquidneck refugees of 1675-76 in carrying stones for the construction of a more solid windmill suitable for a look-out, and capable, within limits, of providing shelter and defense. As remarked above, the tower is first documented as of February 28, 1677.

13. If indeed as is suggested by William Wood's map of 1634 and Sir Edmund Plowden's petition for a grant of New Albion, there was an "Old Plymouth" with a "rownd stone towre" at Newport (pages 35, 36) we might suppose that the windmill-building Netherlanders constructed and abandoned it. They early built windmills on Manhattan, and they had a settlement not far from Newport, just to the south-east of Narragansett Bay.

The considerations above mentioned seem to put a burden of proof on anyone who would make a mediæval fortress church out of what the Newporters persistently call the "Old Stone Mill". My objections represent a careful consideration of the problem over the period of five years since the appearance of Mr. Means' book. No one is more conscious of the mediævalisms in the tower than I, because of my experience with mediæval buildings. On the other hand

the mediævalisms of early Colonial constructions are often very strong, and will be better understood when Mr. Forman's admirable work on the earliest Virginia architecture (now in manuscript) has been published.

In my opinion Mr. Holand's thesis in its general lines can stand without the support of Newport Tower. Perhaps the real function of Newport Tower has been as a catalyst, to excite adventurous students and so build up a body of knowledge about the Norse colonization. Mr. Holand builds up his Newport background as carefully as his Minnesota background, and the most conservative reader will learn interesting things from his work in both fields.

Book Review

WEYBOSSET BRIDGE IN PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS, 1700-1790. *Being an Account of a quest for Liberty, with Portraits of Many Saints and Sinners, and a Special Study of the Rev'd Joseph Snow, jun'r.*

By Arthur E. Wilson

Boston, The Pilgrim Press, 1947, xii, 275 p., \$3.50

At Weybosset Bridge there met two of the underlying forces in American development, the anarchic individualism of Roger Williams and the strong state church system of Massachusetts. The compromise which was worked out in the churches grouped around the Bridge is of an importance which far transcends the field of church history, for the issues are those which have confronted every state since the dawn of history and now loom in a world-wide crisis. Those particularly who were not brought up in the faiths of these early churches should read this book to see how the foundations of the society in which they live were laid.

Dr. Wilson's theme is an easy one to exaggerate, as he does when he says (p. 57) that the church founded in Providence in 1728 was "the first Congregational church in New England which tried to do all the things a church should without benefit of taxation and the prestige of an ecclesiastical establishment." How about the First Congregational Church of Newport, to take only the most obvious exception? In general, however, he paints a picture which is restrained rather than over-done and which surely is one of the best ever written on the subject of New England intellectual history. He must have read many more books than are listed in his bibliography, for he is fully aware of the long development in which the clash between Roger Williams and the Bay Puritans was an incident.

A Congregationalist himself, Dr. Wilson leans over backward to be fair in his discussion of the conflict between the forces of unity in the Bay Colony and the forces of liberty in Rhode Island. It is not correct to say that "in 1691 liberty of conscience had been granted" in Massachusetts (p. 30), for liberty of conscience had never been denied, and freedom of teaching had some years before been recognized. It did not take Massachusetts three hundred years to revoke its censure of Roger Williams (p. 211); it was revoked during his own life time. The relations between the Baptists and the Congregationalists in Cotton Mather's day were far more cordial than is implied (p. 31). And the reason for incorporating religious societies in Congregational churches was not to give the tax-paying non-church members a voice in the selection of the minister (p. 208), for these non-churchmembers always had a voice through the control of finances in the parish or town meeting. But these are minor matters, which do not affect Dr. Wilson's thesis. The detail of his Providence history might have been improved had he consulted Dexter and Sibley for biographies of Yale and Harvard men who walk his pages, or had he found the material relating to the Providence mission among the manuscripts at the Massachusetts Historical Society, but his own contribution of hitherto unpublished material makes up for what he has missed.

The most important criticism of this book is that it is written for the general reader and does not make the new material readily available for the use of the scholar. No effort is made to identify scores of individuals who cross its pages. For a book which will be an important reference work on the past two centuries, the index is woefully inadequate. It gives a reference to poison ivy, which is mentioned in passing, and omits references to a great number of individuals for whom it will be consulted. The failure to give the source of some of the very important quotations is irritating, and the failure to observe standard practice in the use of parentheses and brackets is confusing. Apparently neither Dr. Wilson nor his publishers realized the permanent importance of this monograph to the scholarly world.

The casual reader, however, will enjoy this book undisturbed by such mechanical failings. It will not be so popular as the Peeping Tom type of "history" which has sold so well of late, for it avoids mere gossip and holds scandal to its proper place. Dr. Wilson exercises no censorship, but with a sympathetic smile tells of such things as the church rule providing that members who turned up drunk at church meetings were denied the right to vote there. There is indeed a good deal of solid social history in the book, including, as well as personal conduct, such matters as waterworks and other essentials in the development of the town of Providence.

It is a long time since we have seen a book which so well served the general reader interested in the development of democracy, the Rhode Islander interested in the past of his community, and the scholar searching for solid case studies.

CLIFFORD K. SHIPTON

American Antiquarian Society

James Brown's Diary (1787 - 1789)

Transcribed and annotated by CLARKSON A. COLLINS, 3RD

(continued from v. 6, no. 4, p. 107)

[June 1788]

- 6th began to move into the new house [John Brown House] 7th completely moved two very hot days
 8th cool M^{rs} Mason & Susan³⁸ in Town went to Spring green with Doct^r Mason,³⁹ Peck and J. Francis, who went to Boston same day Doct^r Mason returned y^e 10th Morn^g.
 12th Raised the barr at S. Green
 13th I was at Cumberland
 14th cool. Wind N.E. 15th very cool
 16th Family dine at S. Green with M^r M. Benson.⁴⁰ 17th & 18th fine rains the weather some warmer for five days has been cold & chilly F. Francis set out 18th for Philad—
 22^d at P. Pleasant sent to Providence J. F.^s Mare & Colt then two weeks old ^{23d} rain
 24th news of N. hampshires accession to the new Constitution came to town. Bells instantly rang & cannon were fired—being the 9th State⁴¹—25th rainy & cold
 26th we dine a large party
 28 Showery
 First of July warm a fine Season

³⁸ Mrs. Mary (Ayrault) Nason (1735-1792) widow of Benjamin Mason (1728-1775) merchant of Newport. Susan Mason, her daughter, was baptized in Trinity Church June 24, 1766, and died in September, 1830. Mason, *Annals of Trinity Church*, p. 110; Arnold, *Vita Records*, v. 10, p. 514; *Rhode Island American*, June 17, 1830.

³⁹ Dr. Benjamin Mason (1762-1801) of Newport was the eldest son of Benjamin and Mary (Ayrault) Mason. (See Note 38.) He studied medicine with Dr. Isaac Senter and in London. He married November 8, 1788, Margaret Champlin, daughter of Christopher. On the death of Dr. Senter in 1799 Dr. Mason succeeded him as Director and Purveyor-General of the Military Hospital of Rhode Island. Mason, *Annals of Trinity Church*, p. 232.

⁴⁰ Martin Benson (1741-1811) son of William and Frances (Gardiner) Benson and brother of George Benson, the partner of Nicholas Brown, was a Newport merchant engaged in the African trade. At one time he was "Governor of Goree," an island off the African coast. He married Jenny Coddington, daughter of Capt. John and Mary (Wanton) Coddington. W. P. Garrison, *The Benson family of Newport* (N. Y., 1872) p. 15, 19.

⁴¹ The Providence *Gazette*, strongly Federalist in outlook, reported June 28: "The Joy of the People burst forth like a Blaze, catching from Breast to Breast, till it pervaded the whole Town . . . All the Bells were set a ringing and continued the joyful Peal, with but short Intermisions through the Day—At Twelve o'Clock a Salute

[July]

- 5th The acc^t of Virginia's accession to the new constitution came to Town & M^{rs}. Mason & Susan from this to the 10th. very hot weather. air unusual moist & Foggy frequent
- 10th came to P^t. Pleasant with M^{rs}. Mason & M. & B Brown
- 11th to Newport
- 12 13 & 14th. at Newport, very hot, returned 15th. to P^t. Pleasant
- 16th to Providence 18th. 19th. & 20th. wind N. E. & calms —the ground very dry & dusty 21st. small showers
- 22^d. Morn^g. Rain 23^d. went to Norton with A. & B. Bowen⁴² & M^r Ward⁴³
- 24th return'd, 25th. Morn^g. very windy very hot too
- 29th the acc^t. of N. York's accession to the new Constitution arrived in town. Colors hoisted and every Demonstration of joy

was fired by the United Train of Artillery on FEDERAL HILL in Honour of the States which had adopted the Constitution."

Miss Susan Lear writes in her *Diary*: "The whole town has been rejoicing. We partook of the general joy and have been hugely entertained up at the College by the proof of the students gave of their joy. They marched two or three times around the green with drums, flutes and violins, each one carrying the different branches of their studies in their hands, some with globes, some with maps and some with large folios."

The usual Fourth of July Festival was made the occasion for celebrating the adoption of the Constitution by nine states, the number necessary to put it into effect. After religious ceremonies in the Baptist Meeting House and a triumphant procession to the "Federal Plain" a dinner consisting of two oxen and a multitude of hams, with wine and punch to wash them down, was spread on a "Table upwards of a Thousand Feet in Length, the whole overspread with a Canopy of Canvas." Five or six thousand persons are estimated to have been present, an amazing figure since the population of Providence in 1790 was 6,380.

Rain during the procession appears not to have dampened the spirits of the celebrants. More threatening, however, was the presence of a large number of armed anti-Federalists, who had come in from the countryside during the night and assembled near the roasting oxen intent on preventing any celebration of the Federalists' success. A committee of prominent citizens met with their leaders and agreed to drop the announced toast "To the Nine States" in favor of one "To the Day," after which the festivities were permitted to continue. *Providence Gazette*, July 12, 1788.

⁴² Possibly Ann and Betsy (Elizabeth) Bowen, daughters of Dr. Ephraim and Lydia (Mawney) Bowen.

⁴³ Of the several members of the Ward family who may have been intended by this reference, the most likely appears to be Henry Ward (1732-1797) son of Governor Richard Ward. He was Secretary of State for Rhode Island from 1760 to 1797. Other possibilities are his cousin Richard Ward (1764-1808) who married Elizabeth, daughter of Joseph Brown, or John Ward (1762-1823) who married Betsy Bowen of Note 42. They and their distinguished brother Col. Samuel Ward, who had sailed for China in the *General Washington* (See Note 1), were the sons of Governor Samuel and Anna (Ray) Ward. John Ward, *A Memoir of Lieut.-Colonel Samuel Ward . . . with a Genealogy of the Ward Family* (N. Y., 1875) p. 16, 17.

- 31 my Father taken ill with the bilious Cholick, Soon better Ostiquette⁴⁴ came 31st to Prov^d.

[August]

- 1st very warm 2^d at the Tea party with M^{rs} Binney & Lear and Otsiquette Chief of the Oneida Indians⁴⁵
- 3^d warm & calm all day. write to J. & A. Francis
- 4th Ostiquette sails for N. York⁴⁶
- 5th I set out on a party to Prudence with some Gentlemen —had a fine time, very hot. Stopt one night at P^t. Pleasant & got home y^e 8th.
9. 10, 11, 12th very cool for the Season & very dry — 13th, 14, 15th still dry & warmer
- 16th rain in plenty wind N.E.
- 17th some rain. N. E. & cool
- 18 & 19th more rain. the ground is well wet. went to see M^r Flagg with M^{rs} Binney & Lear, very high wind
- 23^d to [sic] is very fine growing weather M^{rs} Binney & Lear sail for N. York
- 24th at P^t Pleasant with Col^l Peck
- 25 return. rain
- 30th a very heavy rain
- 31 J. & A. Francis return home

(to be continued)

⁴⁴ Otsiquette was a traveling companion of Miss Lear in the coach from Boston to Providence. She was at first somewhat displeased at having to ride with an Indian. At Dedham where the party breakfasted he broke the ice by entertaining them with "several tunes on his Clarinet." She soon discovered that he was a most uncommon savage, having been educated in France by Lafayette. Throughout the journey he entertained his companions with stories of his life abroad and among the Oneidas, and at each stop treated them to a serenade.

That afternoon the "Prince," as Miss Lear calls him, came to dine at Nicholas Brown's. A striking figure in his gold trimmed scarlet coat, he once again made a great impression. After dinner at the request of Mr. Brown, he danced a cotillion with Miss Lear and terrified the company with an Oneida war dance. In the evening they attended a dance at Mr. Griffith's, where "the room was very much crowded as they had heard the Prince was to be there and everybody was anxious to see him here."

⁴⁵ Miss Lear tells us that "the Tea Party" was a weekly affair. "The inhabitants of this place," she writes, "for want of something better assemble once a week at a Mr. Tweedy's about 5 miles from town, where an entertainment is provided by subscription open to all the people of character in the place."

⁴⁶ In her entry for July 2 Miss Lear said, "He regrets very much that he is obliged to leave so soon. He says he never spent his time so happily. Indeed I don't wonder for the ladies of this place are all in love with him and are striving who shall pay him the most attention."

The Patrol of Narragansett Bay (1774-76)

by H. M. S. *Rose*, Captain James Wallace

*Extracted and transcribed by W. G. ROELKER**

Written and annotated by CLARKSON A. COLLINS, 3rd

For many years the city of Boston had been in the bad graces of the Parliament. The Boston Tea Party was the final straw, which brought about retaliation and punishment by the passage of the Boston Port Act, closing the harbor to commerce and transferring the government to Salem. The news reached Boston, May 10, 1774. Vice Admiral Samuel Graves¹ was already at sea on his way to supervise its enforcement and to take command of the British naval forces on the Atlantic coast; his flagship *Preston* dropped anchor in the blockaded harbor on the last day of June.

On guard Graves found Rear Admiral Montagu with six ships and three schooners "stationed in such a manner," he reported, "that this Port is effectually blocked up." Diversion of these vessels to Boston had left the New England coast unwatched. "Rhode Island and Connecticut places notorious for Smuggling are at present entirely unguarded," Graves wrote to the Admiralty early in August. He advised the purchase of "three or four good Marble Head Schooners" to help plug the leaks through which supplies were reaching the people of Boston.

The entrance to Narragansett Bay was left unobserved, except for occasional visits by cruising vessels, until Novem-

* From Admiral Samuel Graves's reports to the Admiralty, *Admiralty*, 1, 485; transcripts in the Library of Congress. My attention was called to this previously unused material by Allen French, author of *The First Year of the American Revolution* (Boston) 1934.

¹ Samuel Graves (1713-1787) became a lieutenant in the British navy in 1739. By 1770 he had risen to the rank of vice-admiral. As commander-in-chief on the North American station he was hampered by lack of exact instructions and an inadequate force. Made a scapegoat by the vacillating government, he was withdrawn in January, 1776. No charges were brought against him, however, and in 1778 he was advanced to Admiral of the Blue, and in 1782 made Admiral of the White. *Dictionary of National Biography*.

ber 5, 1774, when Captain James Wallace² in the *Rose*, a frigate of twenty guns and carrying a crew of one hundred thirty men, dropped anchor in Newport harbor. Wallace's initial visit was not a long one. The Newport *Mercury* of November 14 told its readers that the *Rose* was preparing to sail, some said for New London, while others maintained "for home, with very afflicting news to Lord North, viz. That the Canadians will not join Gen. Gage in the ministerial plan of enslaving or massacring their Protestant Neighbors." The following day the *Rose* left Newport for a visit to New London and a cruise in Long Island Sound.

During Wallace's absence rumors of intended British actions filled the ears of Newport, Patriot and Tory alike. Chief among these was a purported plan to seize the guns of the fort on Goat Island in Newport Harbor. Alarmed at the possibility, the Rhode Island authorities in Providence took forceful action. Vessels were despatched to Newport, and with the aid of volunteers from the town the guns were put on board and carried up the Bay. The *Mercury* of Monday, December 12, 1774, carries the following report of the coup:

Last Friday and Saturday all the cannon belonging to Fort George, except 4, were carried to Providence, with the shot, &c. from whence they may be easily conveyed into the country, to meet the Indians and Canadians with which the colonies are threatened.

The Tory faction in this town, the beginning of last week grinn'd horrible a gastly smile and prophesied there would be high *fun* by Saturday night; however they have been some how most shockingly disappointed, as 'tis hoped they always will be.

Yesterday the *Rose* man of war arrived here, from New London, and anchored between the north end of Goat-island and this island.

² James Wallace (1731-1803) entered the Royal Navy as a midshipman in 1746 and was promoted to lieutenant in 1755 and to commander in 1762. He took command of the *Rose* in November, 1771, eleven months after attaining his captaincy. Subsequent to his departure from Rhode Island in 1776 he was given the fifty gun ship *Experiment*. The following year he was knighted and in 1778 served with Howe's squadron which followed the French fleet to Newport. In September 1778 Wallace had the misfortune to run into d'Estaing's fleet off Savannah and was captured. Found blameless by a court-martial, he was promoted to the command of the *Nonsuch*, a sixty-four gun ship, in March, 1780, and later in the year to the *Warrior*, a seventy-four, which took part in Rodney's expedition to the West Indies.

Wallace was made Rear Admiral in 1794, Vice Admiral in 1795, and Admiral in 1801, two years before his death. *Dictionary of National Biography*.

If Wallace had orders to remove the cannon, he had been forestalled at the last moment. The only course left him was to protest ineffectively to the impotent governor, Joseph Wanton. The day after his arrival, December 12, 1774, he wrote to Graves reporting on the recent happenings:

Yesterday I arrived in this port, with His Majesty's ship under my command, from New London, on a cruise, of which I had the honor to acquaint you, the 8th instant.

Since my absence from this place, I find the inhabitants (they say here of Providence) have seized upon the King's cannon that was upon Fort Island, consisting of six twenty-four pounders, eighteen eighteen-pounders, fourteen six-pounders and six four-pounders (the latter, they say, formerly belonged to a province sloop they had here), and conveyed them to Providence.

A procedure so extraordinary, caused me to wait upon the Governor, [Joseph Wanton] to inquire of him, for your information, why such a step had been taken. He very frankly told me, they had done it to prevent their falling into the hands of the King, or any of his servants; and that they meant to make use of them, to defend themselves against any power that shall offer to molest them.

I then mentioned, if, in the course of carrying on the King's service here, I should ask assistance, whether I might expect any from him, or any others in the government.

He answered, as to himself, he had no power; and in respect to any other part of the government I should meet with nothing but opposition and difficulty. So much from Governor Wanton.

Then I endeavored to get the best information of what they were at, from all quarters, and enclosed I send it to you. Among some of their votes, you will find they intend to procure powder and ball and military stores of all kinds, whenever they can get them.

Now, Sir, I submit to your Consideration, as there are three large and distant Channells to Providence the place the most probable they will attempt to land them whether the assistance of some smaller Vessels would not be necessary in order to prevent them. What can be done by the *Rose* shall not be neglected.

Jas Wallace

That life on his new station was not to be without its moments of excitement Wallace was soon to learn. Newport was filled with angry murmurings against the presence of the British frigate and her men. Three days after the return of the *Rose* the spark of violence burst into flame, fanned no doubt by liberal amounts of good Rhode Island rum. Wallace's report to Graves belittled the incident in

a manner becoming to a fighting man, but his letter of protest to Governor Wanton shows that he fully realized that matters had reached a point where a choice must be made between "War or Peace."

Rose, Newport Harbour, Rhode
Island 15th December 1774.

[To Admiral Graves]
Sir

I think my Intelligence however trifling, relating to the King's Service, proper for your Information, which is an Apology for the following,—Last Night I was sitting at Mr. Romes,³ with some Gentlemen of the Town of Newport, when a Man came into the House and said there was a Mob raising with an Intent to tarr and feather the Captain of the Man of War, and the Man of the House:—I thought it best to be on my Guard and order my Pinnace and Cutter Mann'd and Arm'd to attend me, determin'd to defend Myself like an Officer and an Englishman; About half an Hour after, We had Intelligence the Mob was up, and had broke the Custom-House Windows and entered two or three Gentlemen Houses and done some damage; I waited six Hours expecting their Attack with about Eighteen of our People, but in all probability they got Intelligence, 'twas likely they would earn their Triumph dearer than they chose, they did not attack Us; As I did not mean to be alarmed at trifles or idle Reports, this Morning I wrote a Letter to the Governor (and inclosed is the Copy) and sent it by the Lieutenant; he has returned no written Answer, but told the Lieutenant he was well assured they did mean to insult me, that he would be glad to give any Assistance, but was afraid of an Attack Himself from the People of Providence, seem'd to think the Town was not safe for the King's Subjects; such Sir is the Situation of the King's Ship here, the Officers, Boats, and Men likely to be seized upon whenever they see a convenient Opportunity:—I sent Mr. Lewis the Purser with a Packet dated the 12th Inst which I suppose you have received.

I am
&c
James Wallace

[The inclosed copy]

His Majesty's Ship Rose, Newport
Harbour, Rhode Island the 15th Decem^r 1774

[To Governor Wanton]

Upon the faith of the general Laws of Society, and imagining Myself in the King's Dominions, I Yesterday did Myself the Pleasure to spend the Evening with some Gentlemen of your Town, when to my great Surprize I was informed that some of your People intended to attack

³ George Rome, a British merchant, came to Newport in 1761 as agent for the London firm of Hopkins & Haley. He succeeded to the extensive estates of Henry Collins after the latter's failure, and thereafter played a prominent part in the business and social life of Newport and Narragansett.

and insult me; Conscious to Myself, I never gave any Cause of Offence to any Person, and that it must be my Office they mean to insult I therefore think it my duty to enquire of You, whether, it is War or Peace, or whether I can have the Countenance and Protection of You and the Laws, as my behaviour and Character entitle me to, I have the Honor to be with great respect,

Your most humble and most
Obedient Servant

James Wallace

Throughout the winter Wallace remained at Newport, receiving a reinforcement of the fourteen gun sloop *Swan* with a crew of one hundred men commanded by Capt. James Ayscough, which reached Newport, January 18, 1775. Under threat of the guns of the men-of-war the town permitted Christopher Champlin, "Agent Victualler of his Majesty's ships at Newport,"⁴ to supply the vessels with beef, beer, and the other necessaries of life. The town in turn was not molested, and Wallace confined his activities to keeping a careful watch on shipping that entered and left the Bay. Some account of his doings can be found in the pages of the *Mercury*. In the issue of December 19 we read: "The people of the Rose frigate, in this harbour, are very diligent in searching every vessel, boat, &c. going up the river from this town." The issue of February 13 carries an account of a Nantucket sloop which was fired on by one of the *Swan's* boats. The sloop drew alongside of the *Swan*, and her master "informed Capt. Ayscough of the behaviour of his officer, who, according to custom, laid the blame on his officer, and took no further notice of the matter."

As an addition to Wallace's forces Graves sent him the schooner *Hope*, commanded by Lt. Dawson. Graves reported to the Admiralty on February 20, 1775, that she left Boston December 25 with orders to "look into Swansea

Among the purloined "Hutchinson Letters" sent to America by Dr. Franklin was a letter written by Rome in which he attacked both the colonists and their system of government and termed America "a turbulent, degenerate, ungrateful continent." Publication of this letter whipped up patriotic fury against him, and in October, 1774, he was arrested and brought before the General Assembly to answer charges based on the statements he had made. Later Rome escaped on board the *Rose* and returned to England. Wilkins Updike, *A History of the Episcopal Church in Narragansett* (Boston, 1907) v. 2, p. 78-91; Lorenzo Sabine, *Biographical Sketches of Loyalists of the American Revolution* (Boston, 1864) v. 2, p. 237.

⁴ Volume 3 of the *Champlin Papers* in the Rhode Island Historical Society contains manuscript material relating to the victualling of British vessels at Newport between 1761 and 1776.

in this Province and upon not finding there any illicit Traders or Vessels with Arms and Ammunition contrary to Law, to proceed to Rhode Island and put himself under the Command of Captain Wallace of the *Rose* who had my directions to employ the *Hope* in guarding one of the Passages to the Town of Providence." Lt. Dawson, however, was driven off his course by a storm and forced to put in at Bermuda. Only his tender, a small schooner, reached Newport; and for the time being Wallace was deprived of a much needed reinforcement.

(to be continued)

News - Notes

The October issue of the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* contains the first installment of "The Manchester family of Rhode Island," by Alden C. and Rita C. Manchester. According to a statement in the first paragraph the article (the parts of which will appear in succeeding issues) is the first attempt to publish a definitive Manchester genealogy and will cover the first five generations.

W. Phoenix Belknap, A.I.A., has written in the *Art Bulletin*, September, 1947, v. 29, No. 3, p. 201-207, an interesting article "The Identity of Robert Feke."

Hon. John Nicholas Brown was elected to membership in the American Antiquarian Society at its annual meeting in October, 1947.

From the estate of the late Professor Robert F. Chambers the Society has received a collection of stamped and stampless covers of Rhode Island. A story of these covers appeared in the *Sunday Journal* December 7, 1947.

In spite of inclement weather more than one hundred fifty people enjoyed the colored slide lecture on "Kenmore, the home of Fielding and Betty (Washington) Lewis," by Mrs. Francis B. Crowninshield at the Society's meeting on November 24.

Among the organizations using the facilities of John Brown House during the late fall and winter are Rhode Island Social Studies Association, Contemporary Affairs Club, Rhode Island Simmons College Club, Providence League of Women Voters, Beacon Pole Hill Chapter (D. A. R.), Monday Morning Musical Club, Junior League Provisionals. As usual the Roger Williams Family Association, Society of Colonial Dames, Sons of the American Revolution, Rhode Island Society of the Cincinnati, and Society of Mayflower Descendants use the House for their stated meetings.

The Director recently addressed the Thomas Smith Webb Chapter, F. and A. M., at the Wannamoisett Country Club. In November he read a paper at a meeting of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia on "The Franklin-Catly Greene Correspondence."

C.P.M.

The Providence Negro Community,

1820-1842

by JULIAN RAMMELKAMP*

Gradual abolition of chattel slavery was secured by law in Rhode Island in 1784. Forty years later only four elderly slaves remained in Providence—vestiges of an age destroyed in the fiery crucible of Revolutionary idealism.¹ But the destruction of legal bondage had in Providence as elsewhere, succeeded only in creating a free Negro population still living in the deep shadows of slaveday ignorance, poverty, and dependence. Utterly devoid of economic opportunity and social self-respect, the Providence Negro eked out a precarious existence as a servant or as a manual laborer at work disdained by the white man. Scattered in the homes of white people and oppressed by the weight of white prejudice, the Negro possessed no community structure or institutions which could provide him with opportunity, recreation, or self-expression.

In 1820, however, a self-emancipation movement was set in motion when the African Union Meeting House, the first all-Negro church in Providence, was opened on Meeting Street. Twenty years later, on the eve of the Dorr War, there existed in the city a thriving, self-respecting colored community possessed of churches, schools, and fraternal societies, a community wherein a Negro not only could breathe an atmosphere of freedom, but also could exert a common pressure of protest against a white world denying him the fruits of civilization.

The pre-Dorr War history of the Negroes of Providence parallels contemporaneous Negro movements occurring in such other cities as Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. A free Negro movement was coming to life everywhere in the Northeast. For a number of years the Providence stirrings were independent of those taking place elsewhere, and, because of a smaller population, the Providence movement developed more slowly than, for example, New York's. But presently, the burgeoning societies in each of

* Julian Rammelkamp is a teaching fellow at Harvard.

¹ E. M. Snow, *Census of the City of Providence, taken in July, 1855* (Providence, 1856) p. 72.

these cities, through various fraternal, religious, and political organizations, coalesced into a general movement, thereby imparting new confidence and strength to the local communities. In 1829, William Lloyd Garrison settled in Boston and began his agitation for the cause of the free Negro as well as the slave. Situated so near Providence, Garrison soon exerted strong influence within the budding local society, firing it with increased self-consciousness and enthusiasm. These two extramural stimulants were supplemented by the presence in Providence of a strong humanitarian spirit which long had animated certain white groups, particularly the Quakers. In 1833, at the behest of Garrison, this spirit was crystallized into a militant anti-slavery society, which became a staunch supporter of Negro welfare. Perhaps most significant of all the forces generating the energy behind the Negro's struggle towards self-respect, however, was the growing movement of democratization which pervaded all regions and elements in the United States after 1820—a movement which in Rhode Island erupted into the Dorr War and helped to raise the lot of all submerged classes. The creation of a Providence colored community between 1820 and 1842 was simply a small manifestation of a development national in scope.

The Negro population of Providence exhibited a number of peculiar characteristics which at the outset were to shape its course. Though in New England its size was second only to Boston's, fewer than one thousand lived in the town in 1820. Moreover, its rate of increase was negligible, as only thirteen hundred called Providence home in 1840. A second characteristic was the homogeneity of its origins. Most Negroes were descendants of slaves brought to Rhode Island in the colonial period. Thus, names prominent in white society, such as Brown, Fenner, Hazard, Congdon, and Eldridge also appear frequently as Negro surnames. Apparently because Boston in New England was the magnet attracting the escaping Southern slave, comparatively few fugitives settled in Providence. In 1860 only three hundred of a total of fifteen hundred were Southern born. A third vital peculiarity was the distribution of the population within the town. In 1820 a majority lived as servants

in white homes. Nuclei for a separate community growth, however, existed on Meeting Street east of the Providence River, the Spring Street area west of the river, the Olney Street-Gaspee Street district, and along the waterfront near Fox Point.²

The small and scattered characteristic of the population was at first, of course, a deterrent factor in the growth of a community. But within a few years, as economic opportunities and wealth permitted more and more colored people to migrate to districts inhabited by their own kind, stability in population and similarity of origin proved to be beneficial. Gains in social organization, economic wealth and opportunity, education, and social consciousness were not continually jeopardized by an influx of illiterate, impecunious fugitives; unlike other cities, social integration assumed the character of steady and sure progress after the earliest years. Moreover, the Providence Negro's energies were directed primarily at the problems of his own self-improvement; precious strength was not wasted on Abolitionist agitation.

Needless to say, the growth of a colored community was based upon a gradually rising curve of economic wealth and opportunity. In 1820 almost all Negroes were servants or laborers; the aristocrats of the Negro world were the few barbers, carpenters, and blacksmiths. A group of transient Negro sailors lived on the waterfront. Colored folk thus were continuing in the humble pursuits they had followed as slaves. After 1820 a slow amelioration of this oppressed condition took place. Though unable to find employment in the rising textile industries, colored men took up the occupation of draymen, carting raw cotton from the docks to the mills. The older arts of cooking and farming became more specialized as grocers, bakers, and confectioners began plying their trades in the rapidly growing city. In the 1830's trades which required a small outlay of capital began to appear. Laborers like Enoch Freeman, who established the first Negro shoe repair shop, invested tiny savings in self-owned businesses. Freeman operated on a shoestring in more than one sense, for "he could hardly take care of himself by his trade." William Brown, however, bought

² Snow, *Op. Cit.*, p. 73-74; E. M. Snow, Director, *Census of the City of Providence, 1860*.

Freeman's equipment and in a few years was doing a business which "promised to be a great success."³ In this precarious manner many shops and trades had sprung up by 1841, including groceries, confectioneries, shoe repair shops, and two second-hand clothing stores.⁴

In time, a few Negroes succeeded in amassing enough wealth to invest in property. One of them was Eleanor Eldridge, who had saved enough from work as a laundress, whitewasher, and nurse to purchase two house lots. By 1840 her holdings were valued at \$4,000. George McCarthy, operator of a refreshment stand, advertised in 1835 his willingness to sell several lots on Meeting Street on which stood substantial dwellings. "All the above property," he announced, "is free from encumbrances."⁵ Altogether, the Negro population already was possessed of \$10,000 worth of property in 1822. By 1830 colored persons owned about \$18,000, and in 1839 estimates ran from \$35,000 to \$50,000. By this time a few other individuals possessed a sufficiency of wealth to deserve notice. The wealthiest of the newcomers were James Hazard, clothier, worth \$2,700, and Edward Barnes, grocer, who owned \$2,900.⁶

The rising scale of wealth gradually permitted more and more Negro families to live separately from the whites, and the colored settlements within the town grew and took on more of the ways of a maturing society. By 1830 half the population lived in their own homes. Nine years later the proportion had increased to two-thirds.⁷

Nevertheless, it should be said that the growing scale of wealth did not include everyone. One-third remained near-slaves in white homes, and of the others, many were "engaged in what are called menial employments, [in which they] do such things as white people are unwilling to do.

³ William Brown, *The Life of William J. Brown of Providence, R. I.*, (Providence, 1883) p. 107-108.

⁴ Brown, *Op. Cit.*, p. 19, 33; *The Providence Directory*, 1824, 1830, 1840, 1841; W. D. Johnston, "Slavery in Rhode Island, 1755-1776," *R. I. Historical Society Publications*, vol. 2, July, 1894, p. 129.

⁵ *The Liberator*, (Boston) May 4-Aug. 29, 1835.

⁶ Eleanor McDougall, *Memoirs of Eleanor Eldridge*, (Providence, 1842) p. 8-13, 70-84; Brown, *Op. Cit.*, p. 85-86, 110, 173; *Providence Directory*, 1841; *List of Persons Taxed in the City Tax*, 1824, 1830, 1840; *Liberator*, Oct. 18, 1839.

⁷ C. G. Woodson, *Free Negro Heads of Families in 1830*, (Washington, 1925) p. 153-154; Brown, *Op. Cit.*, p. 33, 113; *Liberator*, Oct. 18, 1839.

... Some live very comfortable and happy, but the larger part are much straightened in their circumstances, and many live miserably."⁸ Notwithstanding, the economic gains registered between 1820 and 1842, though they benefited only a minority in a material sense, provided the economic foundations on which was built a community which spread its benefits far beyond the comparative few who possessed wealth.

The first outward manifestation of the rise of a Negro community took place in the sphere of religion. Because "the slavish and gross state of ignorance of the people of colour, has of late years excited the commiseration of those who profess [themselves] . . . the active friends of humanity," a group of white philanthropists decided in 1819 to help the Negro members of their churches form a religious society of their own.⁹ They requested a number of what they considered to be pious and upstanding colored men to meet with them at the First Baptist Church. "After solemn prayer for divine direction," plans were laid, and a committee of twelve Negroes was designated to solicit interest and funds from the colored population. The Quaker humanitarian, Moses Brown, donated land on Meeting Street for the erection of a meeting house and the colored people, poor as they were, contributed eight hundred dollars. In June, 1820, the church was opened officially with a gala celebration.¹⁰

Perhaps one of the reasons the whites had interested themselves in the formation of a colored church was that not a "congregation in town . . . desired their attendance."¹¹ In every white church Negroes were "obliged to sit in a certain part of the gallery separated from the whites."¹² This accounts for the small number of church-going Negroes before 1820, and also for the rapid exodus of all but a

⁸ *Liberator*, Oct. 18, 1839.

⁹ *A Short History of the African Union Meeting and School-House, Erected in Providence, (R. I.)*, (Providence, 1821) p. 3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4-7.

¹¹ W. McDonald, *History of Methodism in Providence, Rhode Island*, (Boston, 1868) p. 53.

¹² J. S. Buckingham, *America: Historical, Statistic, and Descriptive*, (London, 1841) v. 3, p. 491.

few elderly servants from white balconies when the Union Meeting was organized.¹³

The whites who engineered the establishment of the African Union Meeting vainly hoped the Negroes could "be induced to forego their own opinions on religious matters . . . [but they] were soon disappointed, for the same causes which produced sects and dissonant creeds throughout Christendom, operated to divide and subdivide the colored people of Providence."¹⁴ However, it was not until 1835, when a fiery Negro evangelist, Rev. J. W. Lewis, conducted several lively revivals in the Union Meeting House, that religious unity was destroyed. The exhortations of Rev. Lewis resulted in the secession of those who favored religion in strong doses; and a Free Will Baptist Church, the only colored one in New England, was formed. It became the largest of the Negro religious groups. In 1840 it built its own meeting house on Pond Street.¹⁵

Two national colored religious organizations appeared next in Providence. The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in 1837 and the African Methodist Episcopal Church a year later established institutions in the city. Permanent religious links with the national Negro world were thus forged. The fourth and smallest of the Providence churches founded prior to the Dorr War was Christ Church, an Episcopal body. Christ Church was chiefly notable for its young pastor, Alexander Crummell, an educated, spirited leader who later became famous in Liberia and Philadelphia as a wise and an inspiring minister of the gospel.¹⁶

In twenty years four churches, basic elements of society in that day, had been spawned, offering colored men and women opportunities for self-expression and leadership,

¹³ *Liberator*, Oct. 18, 1839; Brown, *Op. Cit.*, p. 83; McDonald, *Op. Cit.*, p. 65; H. M. King, *Historical Catalogue of the Members of the First Baptist Church in Providence, Rhode Island*, (Providence, 1908)

¹⁴ W. R. Staples, *Annals: The Town of Providence from its First Settlement to the Organization of the City Government in June, 1832*, (Providence, 1832) p. 489-490.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 641; Brown, *Op. Cit.*, p. 135; *Inventory of the Churches of Rhode Island: Baptists*, (Providence, 1941) p. 166.

¹⁶ Staples, *Op. Cit.*, p. 641; J. J. Moore, *History of the A.M.E. Zion Church, in America*, (York, Pa., 1884) p. 56; *MSS. Documents of Christ Church (Colored) Providence, R. I.*, Historical Society; Benjamin Brawley, *Early Negro American Writers*, (Chapel Hill, 1935) p. 299.

solace and entertainment never before possessed. As a result, though in 1820 only one-twelfth of the population could be induced to join white churches "because they said they were opposed to churches and sitting in pigeon holes," one-sixth were members of colored churches in 1839 and many more attended frequently.¹⁷

In this period, too, the Providence Negro created educational opportunities where none had existed before. Prior to 1820 colored children could rely upon only well-intentioned but sporadic efforts of Quakers and other whites for the rudiments of knowledge, and it was not until the African Union Meeting was conceived that a permanent school was established. The Meeting House, built to accommodate a classroom, opened in 1819. Even this school operated under difficulties. The greatest problem was securing a teacher; colored ones were hard to find, and whites considered it a disgrace to teach Negroes. One white teacher who was hired threatened severe punishment to any of his charges who had the temerity to greet him in public. Consequently, the school was closed much of the time.¹⁸

At last, as a result of humanitarian pressure and a Negro petition, a public school for colored children was established in a Meeting Street building which once housed Brown University. In 1837 a second Negro school was opened on Pond Street. Tender white feelings prevented matriculation of Negroes in white schools until after the Civil War. However, because public schools for colored children were larger than those for white children, they were allocated more funds.¹⁹

Unfortunately, the teachers, always white, were paid less than their colleagues teaching white pupils. This fact, in addition to prejudice, resulted in the employment of instructors of low caliber. By 1840 colored attendance had

¹⁷ Brown, *Op. Cit.*, p. 46; *Liberator*, Oct. 18, 1839.

¹⁸ McDonald, *Op. Cit.*, p. 54; Brown, *Op. Cit.*, p. 40-44. *African Union Meeting*, p. 9.

¹⁹ G. W. Williams, *History of the Negro Race in America*, (New York, 1883) v. 2, p. 178; T. B. Stockwell, *A History of Public Education in Providence, R. I.*, (Providence, 1876) p. 196, 211; *Records and Documents, Relating to the History and Condition of Public Schools of the Various Towns: Providence*, (Providence, 1849) p. 59; *The Charter and Ordinances of the City of Providence*, (Providence, 1845) p. 54-59.

dropped so sharply, because of frequent punishment, that the Pond Street school was closed. An investigation found that "an unhappy prejudice of the colored people against [the schoolmaster], although generally unfounded, . . . goes to destroy his usefulness."²⁰

The growing community was not satisfied with this situation, nor with the lack of public provision for education beyond the common level. Colored pastors taught night classes for adults, and in 1836 the Rev. J. W. Lewis founded the New England Union Academy. With one assistant Lewis taught history, geography, botany, grammar, single and double entry bookkeeping, natural philosophy, and astronomy. Tuition was three dollars a quarter.²¹

Illiteracy, which in 1820 had been well-nigh universal, as a result of these efforts had dropped by 1841 to fifty per cent. The taste of this once forbidden fruit gave to the community young men who supplied the Negroes with intelligent and aggressive leadership. Men like Alexander Crummell, educated in a Massachusetts theological seminary, Jeremiah Asher, an educated Baptist minister, and William Brown, educated in Providence public and private schools, were symbols of a new age.²²

The churches founded after 1820 provided the meeting centers for all sorts of religious and secular societies as well as platforms from which rising leaders of the colored race could organize and exhort their followers. Two fraternal groups, however, antedated the dynamic Negro movement. In 1799 the colored Masons of Boston issued to nine Providence Master Masons a warrant authorizing them to form Hiram Lodge Number Three. This was the second oldest Negro chapter in masonic history. A second lodge was formed in 1826. High sounding titles and responsibilities of office alleviated the menial drudgery of daily living. The other early fraternal group doubtless stemmed from the colored unit which fought so valiantly in the Revolution. The African Greys, a smartly uniformed outfit,

²⁰ Charles Carroll, *Public Education in Rhode Island*, (Providence, 1918) p. 157; *Reports and Documents*, p. 54-59.

²¹ Brown, *Op. Cit.*, p. 126; *Liberator*, Apr. 2, 1836.

²² *Liberator*, Oct. 18, 1839; Brawley, *Op. Cit.*, p. 299; Jeremiah Asher, *An Autobiography*, (Philadelphia, 1862) p. 61-62.

headed the parade which marched through the streets of Providence in celebration of the opening of the African Union Meeting House. On that occasion their commander was "dressed up to represent an African chief, having on a red pointed cap and carried an elephant's tusk in his hand. . . . The other officers [were] carrying emblems, decked with lemons and oranges, represent[ing] the fruits of Africa." The Quaker philanthropists who aided in the founding of the church refused to allow the company to enter the new edifice until it had stacked its guns in the church yard.²³

The most popular society grew out of the nation-wide temperance movement of the day. At a mass meeting in 1832, the Negroes organized the Providence Temperance Society. Forty charter members took the pledge to use liquor for medicinal purposes only. In the event that members transgressed, the constitution provided "they shall be conversed with and shewn the errors of their ways; if they do not reform . . . they shall be expelled from this society. . . ."²⁴ The society moved into high gear when the Rev. Mr. Lewis came to town, expanding to a membership of two hundred. The grandiose Reverend then set about making Providence the capital of a New England temperance movement, calling a convention in 1836.²⁵

Other groups formed after 1820 were dedicated to endeavors more practical. Two mutual aid societies, designed to provide financial assistance in seasons of emergency, were founded in the late 1820's. Dues were twenty-five cents a month. These earliest attempts at mutual insurance were significant of a growing community consciousness and self-reliance. Traces of a literary and debating society on the eve of the Dorr War marked the faint beginnings of a cultural development, indeed an indication of growth.²⁶

The idea implanted by slavery, that Negroes were inferior beings, clung to the whites long after the abolition of

²³ Brown, *Op. Cit.*, p. 83; W. H. Grimshaw, *Official History of Freemasonry among the Colored People of North America*, (New York, 1903) p. 122; W. H. Upton, *Legitimacy of the Masonry Existing among the Negroes of America*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1907) p. 106.

²⁴ *Liberator*, Oct. 13, 1832.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Oct. 27, 1832; Apr. 30-May 7, 1836.

²⁶ Brown, *Op. Cit.*, p. 51-55, 81-83.

that institution. Colored people long were hedged in by discriminatory public laws and oppressed by acts of private prejudice. From the viewpoint of citizenship, the most galling was the explicit denial of an already dubious right of suffrage in 1822. Rhode Island thus joined Connecticut in being the only New England states to disfranchise Negroes as such.²⁷

Not content with legal proscription, lower class whites often amused themselves by tormenting Negroes. "It was a common thing for colored people to be disturbed on the street. . . . On the north side of Market Square . . . were generally found . . . a row of [white] men stretched along the doorways of the stores, . . . knocking off [colored] men's hats, pulling off [colored] ladies' shawls. . . . The corner bore the name of 'Scamps' Corner.'"²⁸

On very few occasions did Negroes become so embittered as to strike back. In the settlement known as "Hardscrabble," located north of the town, a race riot broke out in 1826, and in 1830 a violent riot broke out in that "sink of moral corruption" around Olney Street, a disturbance which was not quelled for three days and then only by the state militia.²⁹

Like his brothers in all northern cities who faced similar circumstances, the Providence Negro had the alternatives of flight, submission, or aggressive protest. Having become conscious of his lot after 1820, the Negro more and more emphatically rejected submission. At first flight seemed preferable. Following the "Hardscrabble" riot, a large group emigrated to Liberia. Since, however, Providence was as much home to the Negro as to the white, the Negro community turned from flight to protest. After 1830 a series of meetings, prompted by Garrison, were held to protest against the Liberian project and its sponsoring organization, the American Colonization Society. A new note of defiance was voiced in a resolution drawn up in 1832, which asserted that though ". . . we are truly sensible

²⁷ J. T. Adams, "Disenfranchisement of Negroes in New England," *American Historical Review*, v. 30, p. 544-546.

²⁸ Brown, *Op. Cit.*, p. 124-125.

²⁹ *Literary Cadet and Saturday Evening Bulletin*, (Providence) Nov. 25, 1826; *The Genius of Universal Emancipation*, (Washington and Baltimore) v. 2, p. 78; Brown, *Op. Cit.*, p. 89; Staples, *Op. Cit.*, p. 397-399.

that we are in this country a degraded and ignorant people; . . . our ignorance and degradation are not to be attributed to the inferiority of our natural abilities, but to the oppressive treatment we have experienced from the whites in general. . . . We will not leave our homes, nor the graves of our fathers, and this boasted land of liberty and Christian philanthropy."³⁰

The American Colonization Society posed such a grave threat to free Negroes throughout the North with its plans to encourage emigration that it was the catalytic agent producing the free Negro Convention movement which met first at Philadelphia in 1830 to map a nationwide protest. To it, as delegates from Providence, went George Willis and Alfred Niger, Garrison's collaborator. The local movement now became a part of a national protest, infusing the Providence community with new strength.³¹

Interestingly enough, with the exception of a group of militant fugitives, the abolition of Southern slavery probably was of only secondary importance to Providence Negroes. Rhode Island born, and with the memory of their own legal bondage fast fading, local Negroes were preoccupied with their own problems. Evidence of this attitude exists chiefly for the period subsequent to the Dorr War and one example must suffice. Upon receiving enfranchisement in 1843, because their benefactors in Rhode Island were Whigs, Negroes became Whigs, in spite of the fact that the Garrisonians labeled the national Whig Party as pro-slavery. In 1848, Providence colored men decided to vote for the Whig Zachary Taylor for President, slaveholder though he was.³²

This is not to say that the Providence Negro was indifferent to the plight of his Southern brother. Anti-slavery papers were "patronized with great avidity by the blacks," particularly *Freedom's Journal* and Garrison's *Liberator*.³³ The meetings of the local white anti-slavery group were attended by Negroes, and when Garrison founded the New

³⁰ W. L. Garrison, *Thoughts on African Colonization*, (Boston, 1832) Part 2, p. 44-45; *African Repository*, American Colonization Society Reports, v. 29, p. 86-89.

³¹ J. W. Campbell, "The Early Negro Convention Movement," *Negro American Academy, Occasional Papers*, (Washington, 1904) No. 9, p. 5, 32.

³² Brown, *Op. Cit.*, p. 159, 167-169.

³³ *Literary Cadet*, Nov. 24, 1827.

England Anti-Slavery Society several Providence leaders became members.³⁴

The events leading to and resulting from the Dorr War were the clearest evidence that a colored community had been created in Providence. A majority of the whites, whether of the Landholder or Suffragist parties, continued to oppose enfranchisement of Negroes. Consequently, if the Dorr War had not occurred to divide white society into two factions, colored enfranchisement might have been long delayed. But though white men of all classes remained unaware of its existence, the agitation over broadening the franchise soon brought to light evidence that a self-reliant colored community had grown up in their midst, a community which demanded political equality in recognition of its growth. At first the Landholder aristocrats chose to ignore the colored demand, and in their proposed constitution of 1841 they not only denied the Negro the vote, but also denied completely the loudly proclaimed principle of political equality voiced by the Dorrites. A majority of the Dorrites, too, did not believe in their own principles to the extent of abolishing racial inequality at the polls. A strong anti-slavery minority threw the Suffragist convention into an uproar in the autumn of 1841 by proposing to strike the word "white" from an otherwise manhood suffrage clause in the Dorrite constitution, but the motion was defeated by a large majority.³⁵

The colored community itself demanded its rights before the Suffrage convention. A committee of six, led by the Rev. Alexander Crummell, presented a petition which not only called upon the delegates to stand by their principles, but announced in clear tones that the Negro community could no longer be ignored. "It is evident," said the petition, "that, repelled and disfranchised as we have been, we have, nevertheless been enabled to possess ourselves of the means and advantages of religion, intelligence, and property. . . . Is a justification of our disfranchisement

³⁴ *Freedom's Journal*, (New York) Apr. 11, 1827; *Liberator*, Jan. 5, 1833, May 14-Aug. 25, 1836; *Annual Reports of the Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society*, (New York) v. 6. The New England Anti-Slavery Society later became the American Anti-Slavery Society.

³⁵ A. M. Mowry, *The Dorr War*, (Providence, 1901) p. 326, 350; *Providence Journal*, Oct. 25, 1841.

sought in our want of Christian character? We point to our churches as refutation. In our want of intelligence? We refer not merely to the schools supported by the state, but to the private schools . . . taught by competent teachers of our own people. Is our industry questioned? This day, were there no complexionable hindrance, we could present a more than proportionate number of our people, who might immediately, according to [present] . . . qualifications, become voters." The petition ended with a warning which the Dorrites might well have heeded. "It is the warrant of history . . . that thus striking off from us the . . . precious birthright of freemen, . . . the poisoned chalice may be returned to the lips of those who departed from their principles."³⁶

To placate anti-slavery dissidents and perhaps to calm uneasy consciences, the Suffragists thereupon provided for an eventual plebiscite to determine whether the people of the state desired to eliminate "white" from the franchise clause. But the concession was too little and too late. Abolitionists sent such orators as Frederick Douglass throughout Rhode Island in a vain attempt to defeat the Suffragist constitution.³⁷

The Dorr War broke out in the spring of 1842. As part of their preparations to destroy the Dorrite government, the aristocrats proceeded to grant tacit recognition to the colored community by endowing it with the public responsibility of helping to keep law and order in the city while Landholders sallied forth to do battle. Colored men were enlisted in units to patrol the streets.³⁸

After the rebellion was crushed, the aristocrats, realizing that substantial concessions must be made to prevent a recurrence of violence, presented a third constitution. They rewarded their ally, the colored community, by at last abolishing the color line at the polls; but they effectively prevented many foreign born whites, who had been Dorrite

³⁶ *Burke's Congressional Report*, Rpt. No. 546, House of Reps., 28th Congress, First Session, p. 111-113.

³⁷ William Goodell, *The Rights and Wrongs of Rhode Island*, (Whitesborough, N. Y., 1842) p. 5; Mowry, *Op. Cit.*, p. 98-99; Frederick Douglass, *Life and times of Frederick Douglass*, (Boston, 1893) p. 272-275.

³⁸ *The New Age* (Providence) Nov. 14, 1842; Brown, *Op. Cit.*, p. 173.

adherents, from voting by demanding a high property qualification for aliens. Colored men for long after amply rewarded their benefactors by consistently voting Whig.³⁹

Victims of their own prejudice, the Dorrites—in other respects the truly democratic party—fulminated against the Negroes' friendship for the Landholders, sneering that the colored people were "their dependents, their laborers, their coachmen, and their domestics."⁴⁰ But coachmen and servants did not motivate the Negro-Landholder alliance; it was independent shoemaker William Brown, preacher Alexander Crummell, store proprietor James Hazard, and teacher Ransom Parker who led their fellows into the aristocratic camp. The Suffragists refused to recognize the existence of a Negro community in Providence, a community no longer composed of obsequious outcasts, but of persons now thoroughly awake to the wrongs which white society had heaped upon it. Fundamentally, though for reasons of expediency, the Landholders recognized, as the Suffragists did not, Rev. Crummell's assertion to the Suffrage Convention, that "we have long, and with but little aid, been working our way up to respectability and confidence."⁴¹

³⁹ Mowry, *Op. Cit.*, p. 370.

⁴⁰ Goodell, *Op. Cit.*, p. 6.

⁴¹ *Burke's Report*, p. 111-113.

The Society's membership has reached an all time high of 1300 members. Lack of space in this issue compels us to omit the names of new members enrolled since October, 1947.

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

LIBRARY HOURS

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

Lecture Program

Wednesday, February 4, 1948 — 8:15 p.m.

The Reverend Arthur E. Wilson

Minister of the Beneficent Congregational Church

WEYBOSSET BRIDGE

* * *

Wednesday, March 10, 1948 — 8:15 p.m.

Henry Salomon, Jr.

Former Lt. Commander, U.S.N.R.

THE SUBMARINE WAR OFF NEW ENGLAND

Illustrated by on-the-spot pictures

* * *

Wednesday, April 14, 1948 — 8:15 p.m.

George L. Miner

Author and artist

ANGELL'S LANE (Thomas Street)

Exhibitions

January 1-30

PASTE JEWELRY

from the collection of Mrs. Philip Wentworth

* * *

February 2-27

HISTORIC GLASS

Miss Eliza F. W. Taft's collection presented to R.I.H.S.

* * *

March 1-April 2

INK WELLS

From the collection of Mrs. Philip Batchelder