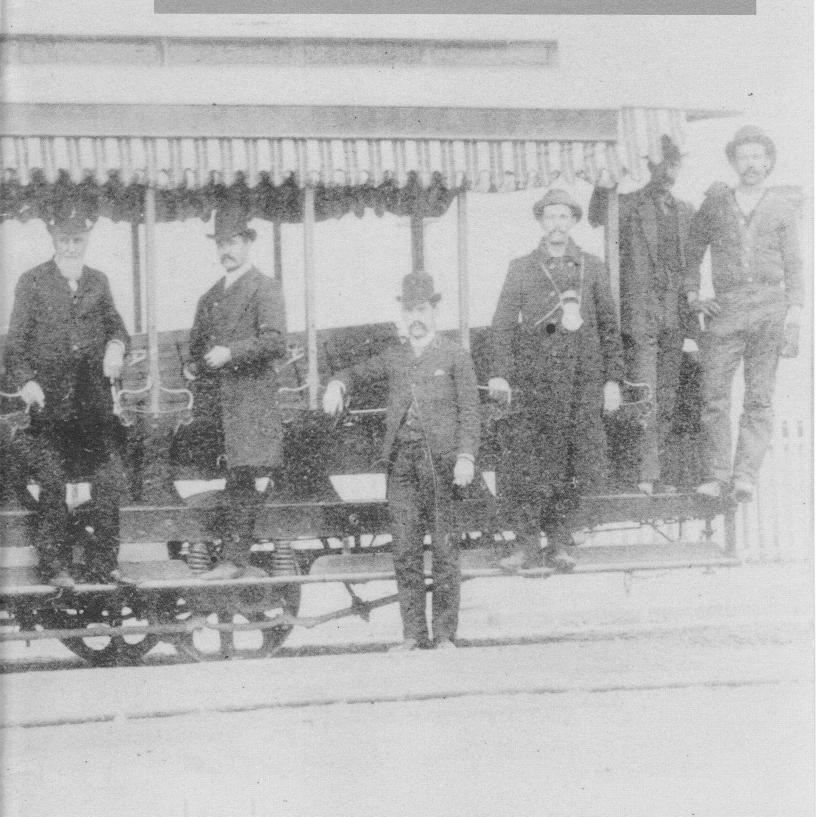
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# Rhode Island History

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Volume 59, Number 2



## Rhode Island History



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## Introduction

ROBERT W. HAYMAN

hen the *Providence Visitor* printed Charles Carroll's "Six Decades in These Plantations" as part of an anniversary issue on 27 October 1933, the *Visitor*'s editor hailed the article as "the most complete and comprehensive history of the last six decades that has ever been published." Because it was printed in a newspaper, however, Carroll's work has received little attention. In the year previous to his writing this article, Dr. Carroll published a multivolume work, *Rhode Island: Three Centuries of Democracy*, in which he offered a chronological survey of Rhode Island's history up to the Civil War, with a topical review of the state's history after the war. In his piece for the *Visitor*, Carroll sought, for the first time, to interweave the political, social, educational, and economic developments of the period after the Civil War into a single narrative.

Since the appearance of Carroll's article in 1933, others have authored studies of the same six decades. Mary Cobb Nelson discussed the political history of the first part of the period in depth in her doctoral dissertation, "The Influence of Immigration on Rhode Island Politics, 1865-1910," and Erwin L. Levine covered the second part of the period in his Theodore Francis Green: The Rhode Island Years, 1906-1936. William G. McLoughlin surveyed the period in his Rhode Island: A Bicentennial History, but apparently without being aware of the earlier work of Carroll or Nelson; focusing essentially on the Republican politicians and businessmen who controlled the state during these years, McLoughlin's study does not discuss the turmoil within the Democratic party and the challenges the Democrats successfully mounted to Republican control during the period covered by Carroll's article. George H. Kellner and J. Stanley Lemons offered more information about the economic, ethnic, and educational developments of the period in their Rhode Island: The Independent State.3 However, with the notable exception of Mary Cobb Nelson, none of these authors provided further insight into one of the main themes found in Carroll's article—that the period between 1870 and 1930 saw a shift in the political fortunes of the state as the children and grandchildren of the immigrants of the nineteenth century rose to challenge, and then to share, political power with the state's earlier inhabitants.

Charles Carroll was well situated to write on the decades between 1870 and 1930, years that saw the political refashioning of the state, the rise and fall of many of its most important economic enterprises, the increasing diversification of its population, and the resulting educational changes that had to be made to meet the new challenges. Carroll was born in Providence on 8 June 1876. His father, William Carroll, was a first-generation Irish American who had come to Rhode Island from his native Connecticut in 1872 after wandering the country as he pursued his craft as a typographer. The elder Carroll found work at the *Providence Journal* in 1887, and in 1890 he was made foreman of its composing room, a position he held until he retired. A staunch Democrat, William Carroll served as chairman of Providence's Democratic Committee in 1891-92.

The eldest of William and Mary Elizabeth Carroll's five children, Charles Carroll received his early education in Providence's public elementary schools and Classical

Charles Carroll. Halftone photograph from Carroll's Rhode Island: Three Centuries of Democracy, vol. 1 (1932). RIHS Collection (RHi X3 7272).

Robert Hayman is an associate professor of history at Providence College.

High School. Following his graduation from Classical in 1894, he entered Brown University. As Carroll noted in his Visitor article, "The first distinctively sons of aliens who were graduated from Brown University were numbered with the classes between 1875 and 1880." The admission of Irish-American Catholics to Brown began under Ezekiel Gilman Robinson, who became president of Brown in 1872. Following the installation of E. Benjamin Andrews as Brown's president in 1889, the number of Catholic students enrolled at the university increased substantially. In 1892, two years before Charles Carroll matriculated there, the Catholic undergraduates and graduates of Brown (many of the latter still lived in Providence) established Phi Kappa Sigma fraternity.<sup>5</sup> Its initial members included Edwin D. McGuinness, who had been elected secretary of state in 1887, when he had become the first Catholic to run for statewide office, and John J. Fitzgerald, who in the 1890s would oust Hugh J. Carroll (no relation to William or Charles Carroll) as boss of the Democratic party in Pawtucket and later become an unsettling factor in state Democratic circles. A later Phi Kappa Sigma member, James H. Higgins, would become Fitzgerald's law partner in Pawtucket and, in 1906, the first Irish Catholic to be elected governor of Rhode Island.

After graduating from Brown in 1898, Charles Carroll enrolled at Harvard University, from which he received a law degree in 1901. Following his admission to the Rhode Island bar, he combined the practice of law with newspaper work. In 1912 he returned to Brown to study political and social science and education, and in 1915 he was awarded the degree of doctor of philosophy in education. In 1916 he received a joint appointment as an instructor in Rhode Island education at the Rhode Island State Normal School and assistant to Walter E. Ranger, the state commissioner of education. As Dr. Ranger's assistant and legal adviser to the old State Board of Education, Carroll was the author of more than fifty bills that were enacted into law, and he continued to write on both legal and historical topics throughout his service for the state.<sup>6</sup>

Carroll was a close observer of the events he recounted in his *Visitor* article. Like his fellow Brown alumni and other Irish Catholics who prepared for business and legal careers at Holy Cross, Georgetown School of Law, or Boston University School of Law, he followed the path to influence and power that had been blazed by Charles E. Gorman, the first Irish Catholic to be admitted to the Rhode Island bar (in 1865) and the first Irish Catholic to be elected to the state legislature (in 1870). Carroll was well aware of the successful legal, business, and political careers of the first and second generations born to the early Irish and French Canadian immigrants in Rhode Island, and he included biographies of many of them in the last two volumes of his history of the state. His essay on the six decades during which these sons and daughters of immigrants helped to reshape the political, economic, social, and religious landscape in Rhode Island is reprinted here in the hope that it may encourage renewed interest in this important, but understudied, period of Rhode Island history.

#### Notes

- 1. Although the 27 October 1933 issue was intended to mark the *Visitor*'s sixtieth anniversary, the paper actually began publication in 1875.
- Charles Carroll, Rhode Island: Three Centuries of Democracy, 4 vols. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1932).
- Mary Cobb Nelson, "The Influence of Immigration on Rhode Island Politics, 1865-1910" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1954);
- Erwin L. Levine, *Theodore Francis Green: The Rhode Island Years*, 1906-1936 (Providence: Brown University Press, 1963); William G. McLoughlin, *Rhode Island: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W. W. Norton, & Co., 1978); George H. Kellner and J. Stanley Lemons, *Rhode Island: The Independent State* (Woodland Hills, Calif.: Windsor Publications, 1982).
- 4. For William Carroll's obituary, see the *Providence Journal*, 18 Oct. 1931.
- 5. The 1892 date for the founding of Phi Kappa Sigma is taken from an article in the *Providence Visitor* of 27 June 1892. It may be noted, however, that an article in the fraternity's journal ("The Story of the Founder's Photographs," by Joseph E. Maguire, in *The Temple*, March 1944) placed the founding in 1889.
- 6. For Charles Carroll's obituary, see the *Providence Journal*, 5 Feb. 1936.

## Six Decades in These Plantations

CHARLES CARROLL

ne might marvel at the courage of the young man, Andrew P. Martin, who founded The Weekly Visitor 60 years ago, if Faith, rather than Courage, were not the watchword of Catholic crusaders. Faith well may blend with Hope, the motto of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. Both Faith and Hope were needed in 1873, for the country at the time was in the throes of one of those disagreeable experiences called panics or depressions, which intervene between periods of contentment and prosperity. Rhode Island was feeling the panic as much as, if not more so than, any other part of the United States.

The same financial catastrophe which had overwhelmed the internationally known banking and brokerage house of Jay Cooke had shaken also the Rhode Island house of Sprague, which for three generations had been a prominent and sometimes a controlling factor in the financial and industrial life of Rhode Island. Two savings banks—the Cranston and Franklin—closed their doors never to be reopened and never to repay the dollars committed to their care by thousands of thrifty working people, some of whom lost the savings of nearly a lifetime. Both banks had loaned most of their deposit resources to the Spragues.

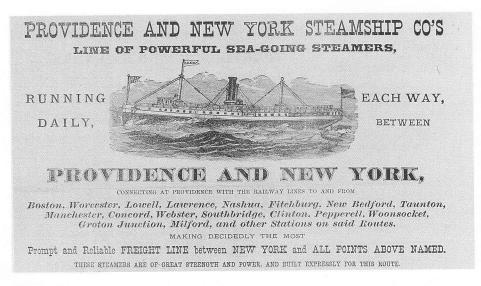
Three national banks—the Globe, the First and the Second—were involved, but were saved, temporarily at least, by reduction of capital stock and assessments upon stockholders. The Sprague textile factories had employed nearly 10,000 Rhode Islanders; many of these had no work, and formed a nucleus for a horde of unemployed as the depression spread and reached other industries. Scarcely a major corporate enterprise of the period had been underwritten without assumption in part by the Spragues. They controlled transportation lines—steam railroad, horse street railway and steamboat—as well as manufacturing enterprises.

Their resources were believed to be inexhaustible, their position in finance and industry impregnable, their fortunes and incomes princely if not regal. But all had been swept away in a catastrophe which had not spent its effect in Rhode Island completely within a decade following 1873. Shrinkage of values diminished the assessed valuation of property in the city of Providence alone by \$8,000,000, and the city did not for nearly a decade return to valuation equalling that before the panic. For relief of the unemployed reduced to actual want, a major public enterprise was undertaken in Providence—the leveling of Corky Hill as part of the Brook and Gano street improvement.

Yet there were compensating factors in the total situation which warranted at least a little optimism. Rhode Island had returned quickly and joyfully to the processes of peace after the war between the States, and had been building a material prosperity before the Sprague failure. The Providence waterworks—a marvel for the time—had been carried forward to the delivery of water in the city in 1871. The political state, recognizing an obligation to achieve a better solution of trying social problems, was building new penal, corrective and charitable institutions in Cranston.

#### TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM DEVELOPED

Even more progressive measures, related to a broader and more liberal education for the body politic, were the reestablishment of Rhode Island Normal School in 1871 and annual appropriations for evening schools beginning in 1873 and for the promotion of free public libraries beginning two years later. Butler Exchange, which gave way only recently to the modern tower building housing the Industrial Trust, but which half a century ago had been magnificent, imposing and unique because of all-steel construction, was built in 1876.



Providence experienced a proliferation of steamboats carrying freight to and from its harbor in the late nineteenth century. Broadside, engraved and published by the Providence and New York Steamship Company, 1871. RIHS Collection (RHi X3 7283).

street railway and interurban system wadeveloping. The golden age of steamboaring on Narragansett Bay and Long Islam Sound was at hand. Rhode Island's iro and steel industry never was more properous, Besides the internationally know American Screw Company, Nicholso File, and Brown & Sharpe, the last moring from cramped quarters east to ne buildings west of the river, Rhode Islam was building steam engines—stationary and locomotive—for the world.

Steam railroad building had been practi

cally completed on all main lines befor

1870, and the state had an excellent transportation system; a new and comprehensive

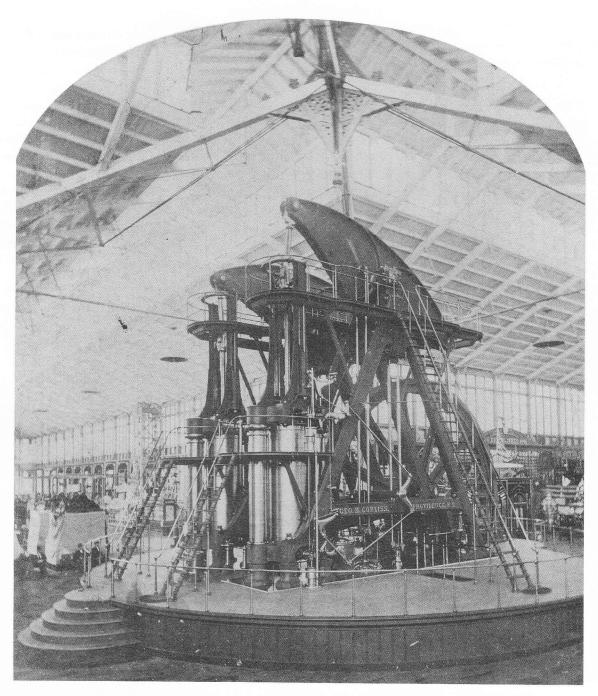
George H. Corliss had achieved such reputation that his engine drove all the machiner at the Centennial Exposition in 1876. William Harris was fashioning improvements of the Harris-Corliss engines. The Greenes were building engines, and Armington & Sin had produced the perfect, light, high-speed engines that were to contribute so much the development of electrical power on a commercial basis. Edison, whose first successf commercial electric plant was equipped with Rhode Island engines, questioned the posibility of further improvement. As it was, the substitution of electric for steam pow was soon to be accomplished, and the knell of the steam engine was to be sounded; by that had not been foreseen in the two decades between 1870 and 1890.

#### INDUSTRIES EXPANDED

A significant development of woolen and worsted industries was near, with the buildi of monster factories soon to be undertaken. Jewelry and silversmithing was an important industry, and the beginnings of a rubber industry were being made. While the hu of the Sprague failure was tremendous, and the catastrophe had been staggering in tactual loss of millions of dollars, Rhode Island had been saved from the desolation despair by a multiplicity of enterprises and the versatility of its industries.

The state was concerned with other matters than material wealth, as indicated by t educational program outlined above. President Robinson had been called to Brow University in 1872 to start the college on its modern career. Affecting Catholics matericularly, the forward movement included the establishment of La Salle Academy 1871, of Elmhurst Academy in 1872, of St. Mary's Academy at Bay View in 1874.

Bishop McFarland in 1872 had divided the Diocese of Hartford, so called in spite of t fact that Providence was the cathedral city, and had chosen for himself the western secti with Hartford as his seat. A new bishop had come to Providence in 1872 in the pers



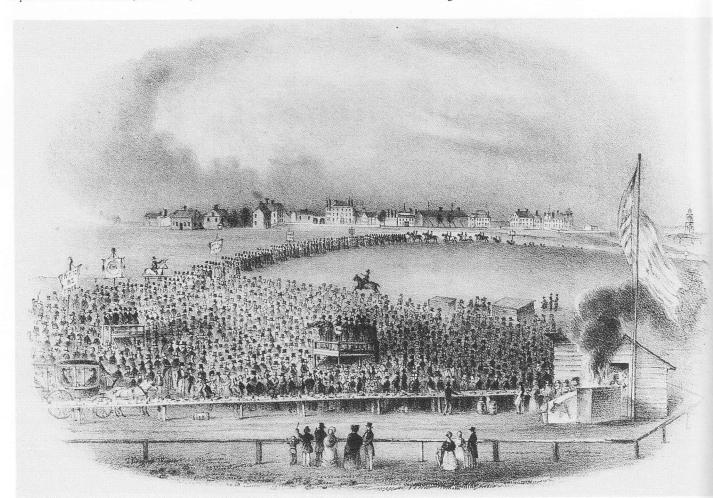
Rhode Island manufacturer George Corliss produced the steam engine that powered the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. Stereoview photograph by the Centennial Photographic Company, 1876. RIHS Collection (RHi X3 7284).

of Thomas F. Hendricken. Perhaps it was a sense of newness and of great things to be accomplished in a "new deal" that inspired young Andrew P. Martin. Bishop Hendricken saved a failing enterprise when he took over The Weekly Visitor in 1875 and launched it on a new career.

If there has been any period in Rhode Island history in which politics were not partisan and in a condition of ferment, no historian has discovered it. The first quarter century after 1636 had been such as to warrant the words of the Charter of 1663—"to hold forth a lively experiment." Then it had been an experience with democracy in its most direct and popular forms, and with liberties so novel and unusual as to recall the words of the Roman Tacitus and his description of an ideal political state somewhere, a "Rara temporum felicitas, ubi sentire quae velis et quae sentias dicere licit."

From 1663 to the Rhode Island Declaration of Independence on May 4, 1776, the colony has waged a vigorous battle continually both to broaden the Charter by liberal construction favoring perhaps the most characteristically American development of republicand democratic principles in the New World, and to stress the literal language favoring Rhode Island in contests to preserve its independence against the aggression both of Kingand Parliament. Nowhere else had the question of reconstruction after the Revolutionar War produced a struggle equalling that which preceded ratification of the Constitution of the United States in 1790, and the issues were related principally to the safeguarding of human rights as much as property rights and commerce. A democracy or republicant throughout its long history from 1636, the secondary revolution related to suffrage which had been accomplished quietly elsewhere, became the Dorr War in Rhode Islanda war which involved no bloodshed within the state and only one death, the latter beyond the border; a war which seemed to have been futile in its immediate results, but which was significant because it produced a public opinion and the constitutional reforms which the Dorrites had sought.

Engraving from sheet music for Convention Quick Step, composed by Henry S. Cartee and dedicated to the Rhode Island Suffrage Association. Engraving, 17 April 1841. RIHS Collection (RHi X3 6630).



#### RISE AND FALL OF POLITICAL PARTIES

The Republican party, the dominating party since 1863, split on the issue of prohibition in 1875. Rowland Hazard, Republican and Prohibitionist, polled more votes than he Republican opponent, Henry Lippitt, and his Democratic opponent, Charles R. Cutle who was third in the race for office. Hazard had less than the 11,133 votes necessary establish majority in a total of 22,264 votes. The majority rule had prevented an election

by the people; the General Assembly chose Henry Lippitt. Again in 1876 Henry Lippitt was chosen as Governor by the General Assembly after the popular vote had failed to produce a majority. The party reunited in 1877 and Charles C. Van Zandt, Republican and Prohibitionist, was elected in 1877, 1878 and 1879.

The election of 1877 produced a close struggle between Van Zandt and Jerothmul B. Barnaby, who had become a financial Santa Claus for the state Democratic party, waxing strong for the time being because of fresh rigor in the national party noted in the elections of 1874 and 1876. Albert C. Howard, Republican and Prohibitionist, ran third in the election of 1880, in which Alfred H. Littlefield, Republican, failed by a narrow margin to obtain a majority; Littlefield was chosen by the General Assembly.

Thereafter the Prohibitionist party, if and when it presented a candidate, maintained an identity separate from the Republican party. A bone-dry prohibition amendment to the Constitution was ratified in 1886, but was annulled after three years of trial in 1889. In 1884 the General Assembly enacted the statute, still in force, which requires the teaching in the public schools of "physiology and hygiene with emphasis upon the effects of alcoholic beverages and narcotic drugs upon the human system."

The proposition to establish a literacy qualification for suffrage, rejected by the electorate in 1871, was related to the disclosure, in the census of 1870, of an alarming increase in adult illiteracy in Rhode Island. The gross figures for illiteracy, revealing spread at a rate vastly exceeding increase in population, were exploited by the zealous new Commissioner of Public Schools, Thomas W. Bicknell, in an assault upon the efficiency of the public school system and in a vigorous effort to obtain progressive legislation.

The Commissioner of Public Schools was justified amply in his campaign to reduce illiteracy, but was entirely wrong in his interpretation of the figures. A careful analysis of the census figures reveals that the increase in adult illiteracy was confined to population recruited through immigration, and that, as a matter of fact, illiteracy among the native born was decreasing steadily. The only efficient remedy for adult illiteracy, of seven proposed by Commissioner Bicknell, was enacted into law in 1873 in the form of an annual appropriation for evening schools.

The same failure to understand the problem of illiteracy which had appeared in the instance of Commissioner Bicknell was repeated in a message written by Governor Van Zandt, Prohibitionist-Republican and zealous champion of progressive causes as he saw them. "The lesson of our late census (1875)," wrote the Governor, "teaches only too plainly that the balance of political power is passing into the hands of our illiterate classes, who will become by force of circumstances a caste by themselves through whose barriers it will be found well nigh impossible to break."

#### DEBATE ON RIGHTS OF ALIEN TO OWN PROPERTY

The Governor's error lay in failure to distinguish the alien immigrant as such from the children of the alien. The alien immigrant could attain political rights in Rhode Island only through the process of naturalization followed by the acquisition of title to land. As an alien he was disbarred from holding land in Rhode Island; the statute forbidding alien ownership was repealed only after the Supreme Court had sustained an escheat for want of legal heirs in the instance of a landholder whose only heirs were aliens.

After naturalization the new citizen could obtain political rights only by acquisition of title to land; one of the prominent leaders in a liberal suffrage movement at the period, the late Charles E. Gorman, argued that in Rhode Island the federal naturalization law was nullified by restriction of suffrage involved in the property qualification. The alien immigrant might be illiterate; the danger that he might establish a political caste was

remote while suffrage was restricted. But the sons of immigrants might become, as did, a powerful factor in the political life of Rhode Island. They, as a rule, were not erate; they belonged to the class of native-born inhabitants of Rhode Island, as whom illiteracy was steadily decreasing. They, as male native citizens of the U States, were eligible for political citizenship in Rhode Island by complying with the try provision of the Constitution.

The first distinctively sons of aliens who were graduated from Brown University numbered with the classes between 1875 and 1880; the number increased rapidly 1880. Among the earliest of these graduates were George J. West, of the class of afterward distinguished leader of the Rhode Island Bar; Edwin D. McGuinness, of the of 1877, who was Secretary of State and Mayor of the city of Providence, and Pa Whitney, of the class of 1877, who was ordained as a Catholic priest and was paste many years of churches in Ontario.

#### RHODE ISLAND'S VOTE FOR HAYES

The income of the Morrill land grant of 1862, transferred later to Rhode Island College, was available at the period for state scholarships at Brown University, and of alien immigrants were among those who became beneficiaries. To the graduathe university were added sons of alien immigrants who had been graduated from colleges and universities and who entered the learned professions, and sons of immigrants who, while not trained in college or university, had been well prepareschool and workshop for life and citizenship. This was the nucleus of a group of Island citizens, who while not hidebound by caste and not identified exclusively one or other of the major political parties, would furnish force for the movement liberalize suffrage.

The single vote which elected Rutherford B. Hayes as President of the United Sta 1877 might have been cast by a Rhode Island elector for Samuel J. Tilden just as trany of the votes counted for Hayes by the Electoral Commission. George H. C. nominated as presidential elector by the Republican party, was declared ineligible federal officeholder, because of his membership on the commission for the Cente Exposition. A court might have decided that, as Corliss was ineligible, the electorar returned three Republicans and the Democratic candidate receiving the largest vot the court permitted the three eligible Republicans to fill the vacant place by subtion. Thus Rhode Island's four votes were cast for Hayes instead of three for Hayes one for Tilden.

#### SPRAGUE DEFENDED HIS PIER HOME WITH SHOTGUN

As it was, both the Democratic enthusiasm of 1876 and a reaction against the ele of Hayes instead of Samuel J. Tilden contributed to produce the Democratic 11,783, for Jerothmul B. Barnaby, candidate for Governor in 1877. Barnaby's vot been exceeded by the vote for William Sprague, candidate for Governor in 1861, and was not to be equalled or surpassed until John W. Davis in 1887 won th Democratic victory after the war between the States. Adroit advantage of the regist also had helped J. B. Barnaby, as the Democratic party managers outmanoeuvre Republican organization and qualified an unprecedented number for suffrage by night last-day payments of the registry tax. Governor Van Zandt's majority was only

Democratic interest receded. The electorate in 1882 rejected a proposition to call a stitutional convention. Fresh interest in the Democratic party was awakened in 18 the candidacy of William Sprague. The assignment of the Sprague interests for the b

Governor William Sprague. Undated engraving by A. H. Ritchie. RIHS Collection (RHi X3 5701).



of creditors had been followed by an effort on the part of William Sprague to recover possession of the Sprague property. Litigation in the courts of Rhode Island, continuing for almost a decade, had ended invariably in decisions against Sprague. His offer to purchase the Sprague estates from the assignee had been rejected, and he had been dispossessed of factory and home property until only Canonchet, his estate at Narragansett Pier, remained, and William Sprague defended that with a shotgun.

#### ALLEGED CORRUPTIONS IN 1883 ELECTIONS

William Sprague sought vindication in the election of 1883. Had he been successful in winning election as Governor, and carrying with him a General Assembly sympathetic with his views, his program included removal of the justices of the Supreme Court from office and the election of justices more favorably disposed to him. Of Governor Sprague's party regularity, question might be raised. He had been elected Governor in 1860 as a Democrat and Conservative, running against Seth Padelford, Republican, whose views on the trying questions of the time were so clearly defined as to lead many Republicans to desert him in the hope of allaying the danger of war. As a member of the United States Senate, William Sprague had supported the Republican party policies to the extent even of voting for the impeachment of President Andrew Johnson.

One wing of the Democratic party deserted him in 1883 and named Charles R. Cutler as rival candidate for Governor; other Democrats made opposition to William Sprague more effective by voting for Augustus O. Bourn, the Republican candidate, who was elected decisively after one of the most vigorously contested campaigns in the history of Rhode Island. Prominent newspapers accused both parties of extensive corruption by buying of votes. If the Sprague movement had failed as the effort of an individual to recoup a fortune, it had produced a militant Democratic party, which was strengthened and maintained in vigor by the success of the national Democratic party in electing Grover Cleveland as President in 1884-85, and by the federal patronage which could be and was used to maintain party regularity.

The issue of suffrage remained unabated. The electorate rejected in 1884 a proposed constitutional amendment which would strike the "native born" requirement from the qualifications of the voter, but would establish a restrictive tax payment requirement for cities similar to that established for Providence. The electorate approved in 1886 an amendment which extended to honorably discharged soldiers and sailors of foreign birth, naturalized citizens of the United States, the same political privileges exercised by native-born citizens.

This amendment could scarcely be classified as political in the sense of being partisan; it had been advocated by Republicans and Democrats, and particularly by members of the Grand Army of the Republic, which had become an influential factor in both national and state governments. The approval was almost overwhelming, 15,903 for, 1477 against. The electorate rejected woman suffrage decisively in 1887.

In the following year the Bourn amendment was ratified, to become effective after the November election of presidential electors. It enfranchised foreign-born citizens of the United States on the same qualifications as native-born citizens, and substituted an assessed poll tax for the voluntary registry tax of the Constitution of 1884. It also applied to cities the same property tax payment qualification already applied in Providence. Under the Bourn amendment the earlier suffrage amendment favoring soldiers and sailors became obsolete. Affecting suffrage, the Constitution remained unchanged for 40 years after the ratification of the Bourn amendment, until the property qualification was abolished in 1928.

Because the soldier-sailor suffrage amendment had been essentially nonpartisan, it was scarcely to be expected that the first fruits of it should accrue to the Democratic party. Yet in the first state election following ratification the Democratic candidate for Governor, Honest John W. Davis, appeared to have received all of the 8000 additional votes cast. He was elected by 1054 plurality in an election in which the Republican vote cast for George Peabody Wetmore was larger than in the preceding election, but in which the Democratic vote was approximately doubled.

Causes contributing to the Republican defeat were the renewed strength of the Democratic party as a national party under the leadership of Grover Cleveland and his associates; the defection of The Providence Journal, for many years stalwart exponent of Republicanism, but which, while nominally Republican, had become so independent as to support national economic policies of the Democratic party and to criticize the state Republican party; and the notorious "May deal" of 1886.

#### THE BRAYTON RULE AND THE "MAY DEAL"

Following the approval of the bone-dry prohibition amendment of 1886, the General Assembly in May elected Charles R. Brayton as Chief of State Police charged with the enforcement of prohibition, and also set up an entirely new system of district courts, which replaced the older system of town courts and justice courts. For the 12 new judicial district courts, 18 justices and six clerks were elected by the General Assembly. Five of the justices chosen in 1886 were members of the General Assembly which created their offices and elected them. The district court system had been recommended by the Governor as early as 1884, and it has since 1886 more than justified its creation by an unquestioned improvement in the administration of justice. Yet doubt attached to the need for 12 district courts in 1886 and the creation of 18 new state offices to be filled by the General Assembly.

The "May deal" aroused the electorate and precipitated Republican defeat. Additional contributory causes were opposition to prohibition, and, curious as it may seem, withdrawal of support from the Republican party by Prohibitionists who believed that the "May deal" could be interpreted as a betrayal of their cause. Governor Davis in the election following the "May deal" carried along with him the Democratic candidates for Attorney General and General Treasurer, a Democratic House of Representatives, and a sufficient number of Senators to enable the Democrats to control the grand committee and elect their candidates for Secretary of State and Lieutenant Governor.

The tide turned in 1888 when Royal C. Taft defeated John W. Davis in an election in which the vote cast was 4500 larger. The campaign had been intensive, and the result had been affected somewhat probably by the coincidence of a national election, although that influence was not so certain in 1888 as it has been in Rhode Island since national and state elections have occurred on the same day.

The development of the political state, as indicated by new institutions and expansion of old institutions, has been noted. The Providence County Courthouse, the state's most pretentious judicial edifice until it was replaced by the new Providence County Courthouse recently completed and occupied, was dedicated in 1877. Rhode Island School of Design was incorporated in the same year.

The School of Design never has been publicly controlled, and operates as a self-perpetuating corporation, in spite of liberal support from the General Treasury, and membership in the corporation assigned to state officers ex-officiis. Yet it was founded as an

institution devoted to the training of artisans capable of applying in industry the principles of art and design, and as such it has contributed tremendously to the position which Rhode Island has continued to maintain as leading in industry because of the quality of its products even under conditions in which quantity and gross production seem to have departed. To the fineness of manufactures in cotton and woolen textiles, in jewelry and silversmithing, in iron and steel, in rubber, and in other lines Rhode Island owes its prominent position as a manufacturing state.

The City Hall in Providence was dedicated in 1878. Sockanosset and Oaklawn Schools, juvenile corrective, were completed in 1880. The State Home and School was organized in 1883. One year earlier Rhode Island Institute for the Deaf became a state school under the direction of the State Board of Education. In 1882 the state public school statutes had been made mandatory in the sense that an irrecusable obligation to support schools was imposed upon towns and cities, and the General Assembly increased the annual appropriation for general support of public schools to \$120,000, an amount which remained unchanged for 40 years, until 1922.

#### APPROVAL GIVEN TO RELIGIOUS TEACHING

New compulsory attendance legislation in 1883 was praised by the State Board of Education as an advance over previous laws, but not yet entirely satisfactory as establishing a right-out square declaration that every child should be educated. The attendance law of 1883 incorporated an important principle of toleration, in that it required attendance at school, but recognized attendance at other than public schools as legal compliance with the compulsory provision, provided the other school had been approved by the town or city school committee as offering a course of study substantially equivalent to that offered by the public schools. Private instruction could not be disapproved because of the teaching of religion.

Through this statute Rhode Island achieved a solution of the problem of the relation between public and private education which recognized the right of the parent in the education of his children. Substantially the statute of 1883 reached the principle of toleration enunciated by the United States Supreme Court in the Nebraska and Oregon cases.

The construction of an all-steel bridge across the Seekonk River to replace the wooden Washington Bridge was authorized in 1883, and the bridge was completed five years later. In 1888 the first electric street car operated with an overhead trolley was introduced in Woonsocket, and Rhode Island was started on the way to replacing horse-drawn cars with electric cars. Joseph Banigan in the decade between 1880 and 1890 was applying the Midas touch to rubber, building a fortune which made him a millionaire and making rubber manufacture one of the leading industries in Rhode Island.

#### BASEBALL, REGATTAS AND EARLY THEATRES

The Providence baseball team had won the National League Championship in 1879; in 1881 it won both National League and World championships. Rhode Island was prosperous and a lively commonwealth. Its interest in sports had brought to it the famous "Hop Bitters" regatta of 1880, in which oarsmen with international reputation contested races upon the Seekonk River. On the day of the race even the league baseball game was played at an earlier hour than usual to permit attendance at the greater attraction.

Five theatres in Providence offered amusement as follows: Providence Opera House, Harrigan and Hart; Lowe's Opera House, Maude Forrester and her trained horse, Lightning, in "Maseppa, or the Wild Horse of Tartary"; Park Garden, "the Ambassador's Daughter"; San Souci Garden, "Contrabandists, or the Law of the Ladrones"; Theatre Comique, "The Modern Don Juan."

#### PAWTUCKET IS INCORPORATED

Pawtucket was incorporated as a city in 1885, and in the following year Providence celebrated the 250th anniversary of its founding. Woonsocket was incorporated as a city in 1888. In the same year the General Assembly created Rhode Island School of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts at Kingston; this school, to become Rhode Island State College, was reorganized as a college in 1892 and became beneficiary of federal and state appropriations for its support as one of the series of federal-state colleges extending into every member of the Union.

Bishop Hendricken had begun in 1878 construction of the Cathedral in Providence; eight years later, in 1886, it had been completed sufficiently to permit its use for a Solemn Requiem Mass for Bishop Hendricken, who died June 11, 1886. Bishop Harkins was consecrated as Bishop of Providence in the Cathedral on April 14, 1887; the Cathedral was opened for regular service in November, 1887, and consecrated June 30, 1889.

E. Benjamin Andrews became President of Brown University in 1889, opening the era in which the university acquired its greatest reputation for freedom of teaching, and accomplished its most rapid growth in enrollment of students. The work of filling the cove, at the junction of the Moshassuck and Woonasquatucket rivers, long a most prominent feature of Providence, was undertaken in 1889, and continued four years. In 1892 all Rhode Island participated in the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus.

The features of the particular observance on Oct. 21 were a military and civic procession in the daytime, long remembered as among the most notable in a state which had a reputation for parades, and an even more imposing spectacle at night, when an army of thousands of Catholic men, carrying torches, shaped as crosses, paraded in review for nearly five hours before Bishop Harkins, standing on the steps of the Cathedral.

Central Falls was incorporated as a city in 1895, and in the following year the cornerstone of the new State House was laid in Providence. The walls of Rhode Island Normal School were rising on the old State Prison grounds, as the cornerstone was laid; the completed Normal School building was opened in 1898, with a complete graded school incorporated to be used as a model, demonstration and clinic school, and for practice teaching by students in the Normal School. The last decade of the century was progressive in many ways.

#### THE LAST DECADE OF THE CENTURY

Rhode Island's electoral votes were cast for Benjamin Harrison in 1889 following a closely contested popular election in the fall of 1888. But in the spring of 1889 Honest John W. Davis, as candidate for Governor, received 4419 votes more than Herbert W. Ladd. Davis had not the majority required by the Constitution because 3597 votes had been cast for the Law Enforcement candidate, and 1346 for the Prohibition candidate. The General Assembly disregarded the popular verdict indicated by the plurality for Davis, and elected Herbert W. Ladd, Republican, as Governor.

In 1890, Davis had a plurality of 1560 over Ladd, but not the constitutional majority. The Democrats controlled the grand committee of the General Assembly and elected John W. Davis as Governor. The Prohibition party was the principal obstacle to a satisfactory popular election in 1890 and again in 1891; it could prevent a majority election, although it polled barely 1800 votes. In 1891, Davis again had a plurality over Ladd, but the General Assembly elected Herbert W. Ladd as Governor. In 1892 D. Russell Brown had a majority of 243, defeating William T. C. Wardwell as candidate for Governor. It



Thomas F. Hendricken, first bishop of Providence. Undated photograph published by S. S. Collins. RIHS Collection (RHi X3 7277).

was the year of the presidential election, and the Republican and Democratic parties divided nearly equally the increase of nearly 10,000 in the number of votes cast in both state and national elections.

The constitution rule of election by majority was not working satisfactorily. It had failed in 1806, when Isaac Wilbour, elected as Lieutenant Governor, served as acting Governor. It had failed again in 1832 when no choice of Governor, Lieutenant Governor and assistants was achieved in spite of four special elections ordered after the initial failure in April. In 1839 Samuel Ward King, first Senator, served as Governor, when neither Governor nor Lieutenant Governor had been elected by the people. Byron Diman, whose plurality was not a majority in 1846, was elected Governor by the General Assembly. Henry Lippitt had been elected by the General Assembly in 1875 and 1876, as was Alfred H. Littlefield in 1880. In three years, 1889 to 1891, the choice of Governor had devolved upon the General Assembly.

The decisive failure of the majority rule occurred in the election of 1893. The situation was complicated somewhat by the process of counting ballots established by long practice by the General Assembly. Strict construction required an actual counting by the General Assembly of the ballots cast in state elections, but the Assembly for many years had been content to refer the counting to a committee on elections, which merely tabulated the returns made by election officers. While majorities were substantial there was no disposition to challenge the practice established; as elections were more closely contested dissatisfaction arose, particularly as it appeared that returns were not made carefully, and bundles of ballots were received in broken packages and with other evidence of careless handling.

Irregularities in the election of 1893 were reviewed in court procedure, and the bitter quarrels engendered by the failure of election machinery continued. In the fall of 1893 the electorate approved an amendment to the Constitution providing for election by plurality. In the spring of 1894 D. Russell Brown was reelected by plurality and majority over David S. Baker, his opponent in the doubtful election. For the time being, the control of the state government by the Republican party was assured by pluralities from 1894 to and including 1900 which averaged almost 10,000 votes. In the same period no Governor was elected who did not achieve majority as well as plurality. A factor contributing to Democratic weakness, indicated by diminishing popular support, was the division of the national party in 1896 on the silver issue.

In the presidential election in 1896-97 bolters cast 1116 votes for the second Democratic candidate, additional to the votes cast for William McKinley by men who had been Democrats but who abandoned the party when it nominated William J. Bryan. Among other reforms which followed the crisis in 1893 were statutory changes in election laws requiring care in counting ballots and returning them in sealed packages, the creation of a state returning board to count all ballots, legal regulation of party primaries for nomination of candidates for office, and a new type of secret ballot.

#### SEEK REFORM OF CONSTITUTION

The General Assembly in 1897 authorized the Governor to appoint a commission of 15 to draft a revision of the Constitution, incorporating proposed changes. The commission was bipartisan and unusual in personnel, including prominent jurists and distinguished citizens. It reported a thorough revision, including incorporation of many provisions for political reforms that had been agitated for years in Rhode Island. It was rejected summarily, 17,660 against, 15,510 for, on Nov. 8, 1898, and a second time, even more decisively, 12,742 against, 4097 for, in a special referendum election on June 20, 1899.

Had the revised constitution been ratified, a constitutional convention might have been achieved as early as 1910 under a provision of the revised constitution which ordered a referendum every 10 years on the question of calling a convention. As it was, with failure of the revised constitution settled beyond the venture of a doubt, recourse was taken to piecemeal amendment. Beginning with Article XI of amendments, ratified in 1900, the major provisions for change incorporated in the revised constitution have been ratified when presented to the referendum singly. The amendment of 1900, dealing with elections and the organization of the General Assembly, abolished the May session and the dual capitals, providing for an annual session of the General Assembly in Providence in January. The first meeting of the General Assembly in the new State House in Providence was held on the first day of the 20th century, Jan. 1, 1901.

Although the Democratic party was never in the period from 1894 to the close of the 19th century strong enough to challenge seriously the ascendancy of the Republican party in Rhode Island, the years were not quiet years in Rhode Island, politically or otherwise.

Following the introduction of the overhead trolley car in Woonsocket in 1888, a rapid transformation of the street railway systems and an extension of them proceeded in Rhode Island. The reconstruction of old and construction of new street and interurban lines proceeded while a major financial and industrial disturbance was troubling the nation, and gave employment to so many persons that the depression was felt to minimum extent in Rhode Island.

By 1900 the electric railway system had attained approximate completion, and with 218 miles under operation had exceeded the 210 miles of steam railroads. Nearly 53,000,000 passengers were carried on electric railways in 1900. The rapid extension of the electric system had been paralleled by the chartering of operating and holding corporations and by financial operations scarcely exceeded in volume in the history of the state.

Millions of dollars were involved in the financing of the new enterprises, and fortunes amounting to millions were derived as profits by the promoters. The General Assembly was generous in granting charters; it was accused of being excessively generous in granting franchises and valuable privileges to the new electric transportation companies and other public utilities. A statute in 1891 authorized municipal grants of exclusive franchises for 20 years. The limit of exclusive franchises was extended to 25 years in 1895, and in 1898 legislation enabled street railway corporations to obtain perpetual franchises by complying with a state tax law limiting earning to eight per cent annually.

The street railways came into conflict with municipalities first in quarrels involving the widening and care of streets; secondly, because of public demand for the use of fenders and other safety devices, and third, because of a popular demand for reduced fares and free transfers based upon the assumption that low operating cost and large profit warranted cheaper service. Eventually a conflict between steam railroad and street railway developed from the competition for interurban passenger and freight service.

## BATTLE FOR CONTROL OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

The Rhode Island Company obtained a control of practically all electric systems; in the field of stream railroading the New York, New Haven and Hartford was supreme. The decisive battle for control of both was fought in Wall Street, and the New Haven, known in the international telegraph code as "Marauders," emerged from this conflict with the spoils of victory in 1907.

Although political campaigns evoked vigorous criticism of the General Assembly for its alleged neglect of the rights of the people and for its friendliness with the street railways and other public utilities, party control was not changed. In the field of finance the same period witnessed a consolidation of national banks of the new type of banking corporation—the trust companies operating under state charters—which were absorbing and replacing national banks.

Marsden J. Perry, one of the most prominent promoters of street railways, was also prominent in the work of consolidating banks. The trend toward the 20th century control of finance by a small number of trust companies reaching small communities through branch banks was definitely underway. In retail trade new methods of merchandising, selling and advertising were being developed. Advertising became particularly significant as it brought to newspapers a prosperity which tended to raise the editor and publisher from shabby gentility to opulence.

The size of newspapers increased because of liberal advertising by merchants; at the same time the invention of new machines for type setting, stereotyping and printing made possible the extensive development. Profit accrued to established newspapers; the cost of the new type of plant needed to start a fresh venture became a deterrent.

The closing decade of the century witnessed also the Andrews controversy at Brown University. E. Benjamin Andrews, President of the university, as an economist was also a free trader and bimetallist, theoretically while bimetallism was a moot economic question, practically when the issue was presented to the people in the presidential campaign of 1896. Yet he took no part in the campaign, being in Europe on leave of absence seeking health and recuperation. In June, 1897, the corporation of the college appointed a committee to confer with the President "in regard to the interests of the university." The committee requested "not a renunciation of . . . views honestly entertained by him, but a forbearance, out of regard for the interests of the university, to promulgate them." President Andrews resigned because he could not comply with the request "without surrendering that reasonable liberty of utterance—in the absence of which the most ample endowment for an educational institution would have been but little worth."

The resignation precipitated a storm within and without the university. After a summer in which the press of the entire country rang with discussion of the Andrews controversy, the resignation was withdrawn with conciliation on both sides, and President Andrews returned to the university for another year of service. Toward the end of his administration President Andrews had fostered development in the university of a college for women, which later became Pembroke College.

Rhode Island's answer to the call to arms for the Spanish War in 1898 was prompt and generous. The Rhode Island Regiment did not reach the battlefield in the short and decisive contest. A contingent of Rhode Island skilled metal workers operated on the repair ship Vulcan, and rendered notable service. Rhode Island citizens rendered unique and valuable service in relieving unsanitary and other unwholesome conditions at the camps for returned soldiers established at Montauk Point. A dozen relief expeditions were organized to carry wholesome food and medicine to soldiers suffering from tropical fevers and camp diseases, until the United States Government was aroused to close the camps and remove the invalids to better quarters.

The Republican party remained in possession of the government, in spite of dissatisfaction centering upon its alleged excessive friendliness for great corporations. In April, 1902, the General Assembly enacted a statute regulating the employment of motormen



Members of the Rhode Island Regiment gather in Exchange Place, Providence, for a procession, circa 1898. RIHS Collection (RHi X3 7281).

and conductors, and restricting hours of labor to 10 per day within 12 consecutive hours. The Supreme Court, in an advisory opinion, sustained the constitutionality of the legislation, but the street railway companies, on the advice of counsel, refused to obey it. Street railway employes resorted to a strike, and the general public, sympathetic with the strikers because of memory of conflict over streets, fenders and transfers, walked.

#### CREATION OF THREE POLICE COMMISSIONS

Effective measures were taken to provide police guards for the few cars operated in Providence, by the police commission created for the city in 1901. In Pawtucket, Mayor Fitzgerald refused to order police protection for a company which was engaged in defying the law, and riotous demonstrations occurred. For the first time in 60 years, since the Dorr Revolution, the militia was called for active service, when Governor Kimball ordered 700 soldiers to guard electric cars in Pawtucket. The strike occurred in June, precipitating an issue which caused an extraordinary registration before June 30 for the fall election of 1902.

In November the normal Republican vote was reduced by 11,000, and the Democratic vote was increased by 10,000. Lucius F. C. Garvin was elected Governor with 7788 plurality. Governor Kimball called a special session of the General Assembly of 1902 to meet after election; the 10-hour law was repealed. Governor Garvin was reelected in 1903 with a reduced plurality, defeating Samuel P. Colt, whose candidacy was accepted as anticipatory of a contest for the United States Senate in 1906. Governor Garvin was defeated in 1904 and 1905 by George H. Utter, Republican.

The street railway strike of June, 1902, while a decisive factor in the election in the November following, was not the only factor that had contributed to Democratic victory and Republican defeat. Three state police commissions, created for Newport, Providence and Tiverton, had aroused resentment, because of alleged interference with home rule and the local autonomy beloved by Rhode Islanders. By statute the General Assembly in 1901 transferred to control by the Senate practically the appointment of most state officers excepting the general officers who were elected by the people as required by the Constitution.

Street railway strikers march through Providence, 6 June 1902. Halftone photograph from microfilm, courtesy of the Providence Journal. RIHS Collection (RHi X3 7273).



The effect of the statute was to leave the Governor's function of appointing officers, and members of boards and commissions, subject to confirmation by the Senate, with power in the Senate to substitute its choice by election for the Governor's choice as nominated. The statute also took from the grand committee of the General Assembly much of its power to elect officers. In past experience the Democrats occasionally had elected the Governor, controlled and organized the House of Representatives and the grand committee; the Senate remained stalwart Republican in all tides of Democratic victory.

#### ENACTMENT OF CAUCUS RULES

The Supreme Court, in an advisory opinion, resolved the doubt as to constitutionality of the transfer of power from the General Assembly to one house of the Assembly in favor of constitutionality. The creation of a state returning board to count ballots and issue certificates of election, much as the need for reform of methods of canvassing had been indicated in the crisis of 1893, was criticized by some as a further measure to lodge power in the strong men who were in control, for the time being, at the State House. The creation of a board of registration and canvassers for Providence, and the enactment of a caucus law placing the regulation of party nominating primaries in an official body, were hailed as indicating a purpose to control all party machinery of all parties by the party which controlled the General Assembly.

In addition to complaint because of aggressive measures to regulate political activity, grievances against the General Assembly for its apparently favorable disposition toward public utility corporations were nursed, and fires were smoldering and ready to blaze when the strike presented issues of lawlessness and contempt of law which were no longer theoretical or questionable, but clear and readily understandable. All was not serene and peaceful within the Republican party, however, much as its diligence and efficiency in lawmaking to serve its purposes were plainly to be appreciated. Factional forces within the party were beginning preparations for a struggle to control the organization and party machinery, the major prize being the seat in the United States Senate to be filled by the General Assembly to be elected in 1906.

Although maintaining its stranglehold on the Rhode Island Senate, the Republican party experienced fierce dissension within its ranks during the early years of the twentieth century. Cartoon by Milton R. Halladay, circa 1904, courtesy of the Providence Journal. RIHS Collection (RHi X3 7275).



George Peabody Wetmore, incumbent, was not disposed to step out at the end of his term. Samuel P. Colt was ambitious to become Senator; he was a candidate for Governor in 1903, but was defeated. Had Colonel Colt been elected in 1903, and reelected in 1904 and 1905, as might be expected under normal conditions, he would be a logical candidate for the Senate. Nomination and a second defeat in 1904 would be fatal to his ambition for political promotion. Hence George H. Utter was nominated in 1904.

Preparations continued for the campaign of 1906, and the breach between the factions widened. The Republican state convention in 1906 did not name a party candidate for Senator; perhaps neither faction dared risk putting fortune to the test. Instead of making an open battle in convention for indorsement of its candidate, each faction turned attention to primaries and conventions nominating candidates for the General Assembly. Even primary meetings of the Democratic party were invaded and contested vigorously, as the results of these might yield possibly an assemblyman who might be helpful to

one faction or other of the Republican party in a close contest in joint assembly for electing a Senator.

## OLD TELEGRAM BECOMES TRIBUNE

The Democratic party meanwhile was in process of rejuvenation, which meant that younger men were pushing themselves forward in the party organization, many of them lawyers and most of them graduates of Brown University, products of the modern Brown of Robinson and Andrews. They were alert and successful in finding an issue in "bossism." For many years the guiding influence of Republicanism at the State House had been General Charles R. Brayton, veteran of the war between the states, referred to as the "Blind Boss," because he had lost sight with the infirmities of advancing age. Boss Brayton's control of his party was thoroughly well understood.

With "bossism" as the issue, Boss Brayton became the personification of evil. The new Democratic party became a reform party; it promised to save the state from bossism. The new Democratic party promised good government. To the support of the Democratic program of reform many Republicans who had become dissatisfied with their party and its leaders were won. The Democratic state convention, besides nominating a state ticket, headed by James H. Higgins, who, barely 30 years of age, had already been a member of the General Assembly and Mayor of Pawtucket, named Robert H. I. Goddard as its candidate, with "good government" support, for the United States Senate. One of the most intensive campaigns in the history of the state was in progress.

The Providence Journal supported Colonel Goddard and the Democratic candidates. The attitude of The Journal, never sympathetic toward Wetmore and hostile to the ambitions of Colonel Colt, had been foreseen. Failing to obtain control of The Journal through purchase of capital stock, Colonel Colt acquired a controlling interest in The Providence Evening Telegram, which was renamed Providence Tribune.

#### FAMOUS JOURNAL EXODUS EPISODE

Then occurred the episode in Journal history which is known as Exodus. The transformation of The Journal from a newspaper supporting the Republican party generously as it had since 1896 into a newspaper hostile to continuance of control by the men who led the Republican party in the state had begun before Exodus; it was inevitable after Exodus. The plan for the new Tribune included printing a morning edition to compete with The Journal, which for a time had been the only morning paper published in Rhode Island; a new dress of type for both morning and evening editions which should make The Tribune closely resemble The Morning Journal and Evening Bulletin; recruiting a new editorial and reportorial force, and even foremen and other employes in the production departments from The Journal to such an extent as to warrant a statement that the real Journal had gone out of The Journal building and had entered The Tribune; secession at a particular time of such numbers of Journal employes as to handicap production of the newspaper.

The plot was discovered and recruiting for The Journal was undertaken in and outside of Rhode Island. The recruits came in numbers and in haste, sometimes directly from the railroad station to The Journal, carrying their baggage. Thus it came to pass that they were known as "carpetbaggers." Among those who came were a new managing editor, John R. Rathom, and with him a strange new figure who within a short time became a contributor frequently to the columns of The Journal and Bulletin under the name and style of Linkaby Didd, who announced himself as candidate for the United States Senate. Linkaby Didd was a jester, who relieved a bitter campaign of some of its intensity.

The campaign of 1906 was remarkable if for no other reason than for the discussion of pending issues in monster public meetings. Both Governor Utter and candidate Higgins were splendid public speakers, and neither spared himself in effort to make a wide appeal to the electorate. Higgins persistently presented the issue of bossism, and challenged Governor Utter to answer a question as to what Utter would do to drive the Blind Boss from the State House. Toward the close of the campaign Governor Utter answered the question in the city of Pawtucket; he, too, would drive the Blind Boss out.

That was the anticlimax of the campaign for Governor Utter; his defeat was inevitable after he had denounced General Brayton. James H. Higgins won, while, except Governor Utter, Republican candidates were elected to other general offices. He was the first of those whom Governor Van Zandt had stigmatized as "our illiterate classes" to reach the chief executive office. He was a graduate of two universities, and one of the new alert Rhode Islanders who had been nourished in the ancient cradle of liberty in the Narragansett country. The Republican party elected a majority of members of both branches of the General Assembly. The choice of a United States Senator remained to be determined. In the session of the General Assembly following in 1907, 81 ballots were taken as the Assembly met in joint assembly to elect a United States Senator.

#### GOVERNOR HIGGINS RETURNED TO OFFICE

The General Assembly elected in 1907 chose George Peabody Wetmore as Senator to succeed himself, the division being Wetmore 68, Goddard 36, Colt 5. Governor Higgins was reelected in 1907. He fulfilled his promise to drive Boss Brayton from the State House. In 1908 he announced that he was not a candidate for renomination. In that year the Republican party began to elect a line of Governors which was not broken until 1922, in spite of the activity of the Progressive party in 1912 in strength sufficient to give Rhode Island's electoral votes to Woodrow Wilson, and in spite of the victory which Peter G. Gerry, Democrat, achieved over Henry F. Lippitt, Republican, in 1916 in the first popular election of United States Senator. Governor Beeckman's plurality in 1916 was 13,000; Senator Gerry's nearly 8000.

The electorate ratified Article XII of amendments to the Constitution in 1903. The amendment provided for a reorganization of courts, including the creation of a Supreme Court exercising final revisory and appellate jurisdiction. The General Assembly, carrying the amendment into effect, erected a Supreme Court of five justices, and a Superior Court, to the latter of which was assigned general trial jurisdiction of actions at law and suits in equity. The incidental legislation included the important Court and Practice Act. Six years later Article XIII provided for a House of Representatives of 100 members, apportioned to the several towns and cities approximately in proportion to population, but elected by districts instead of on a general ticket. The fraction of representation assigned to Providence was increased from one-sixth to one-fourth, but the strength of the city was divided by the change to the district plan of election.

In the same year the Governor was given the veto power denied him under the Charter of 1663 and the Constitution in its original form. The Lieutenant Governor replaced the Governor as presiding officer in the Senate and in grand committee. Two years later annual elections yielded to biennial elections, the first of which occurred in 1912. Two amendments to the Constitution of the United States affected Rhode Island politics—Article XVII, popular election of Senators, and Article XIX, woman suffrage. The former transferred power from the General Assembly to the electorate, and would obviate campaigns similar to that of 1906, in which a seat in the United States Senate was a major prize. Woman suffrage, to the extent of voting for presidential electors, had been

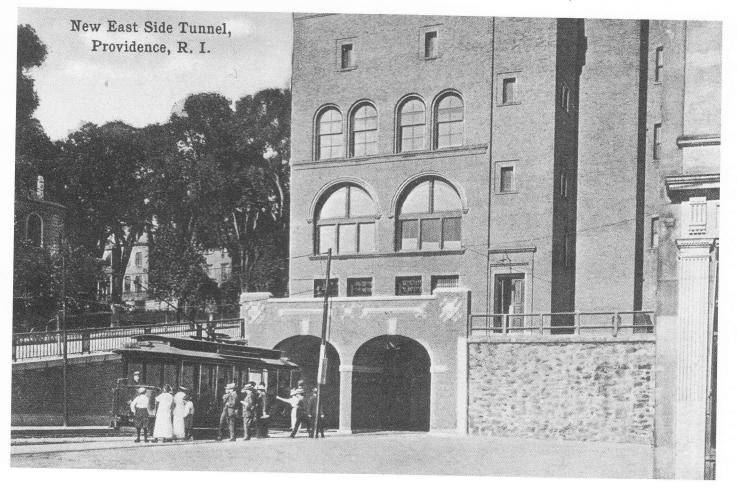
anticipated in Rhode Island, and the machinery for participation of women in the first election after the amendment became effective had been set up. The immediate consequence was almost doubling the number of ballots cast in all elections.

The filling of the cove basin in Providence in the last decade of the 19th century was followed by the construction of a new railroad station in Providence, which was completed in 1898. The old station had been destroyed in part by fire in 1896; the remainder of it was removed. Construction of a railroad tunnel through the East Side hill and a bridge across the Seekonk River was authorized in 1904. The work was completed, but the project of running trains through the tunnel on a direct line to East Junction was not realized; the principal use of the tunnel has been by electric trains to the east shore of Narragansett Bay.

## FAILURE OF GRAND TRUNK RAIL PLAN

The exclusive control of steam railroads in Rhode Island by the New York, New Haven and Hartford was not challenged until 1910, when a charter was obtained for the New England Southern, which planned a new road to connect the Canadian Trunk and Central Vermont with tidewater at Narragansett Bay. Unfortunately, Charles M. Hayes, leading spirit in the new venture, was lost at sea in the wreck of the Titanic, Aug. 14-15, 1912, and construction was abandoned after the right of way had been acquired and much preliminary work in clearing it had been done. For the street railway system in Providence another tunnel through the East Side hill was cut in 1914; it solved the problem of an easy approach to the East Side, replacing the counterweight system which had been installed with the abandonment of the cable tramway constructed in 1892.

Construction of Providence's East Side Tunnel, completed in 1914, allowed eastbound streetcars easier access to College Hill. Color postcard, circa 1916. RIHS Collection (RHi X3 4646).



The first bicycle club was incorporated in 1886, but bicycling did not become popular until a few years later, when the safety model had succeeded the old high wheel types and the pneumatic tube had vastly improved wheeling. Legislation in 1896 and thereafter reflected a gaining interest, and a project for building side-paths to accommodate bicyclists was undertaken. Bicycle riding focused attention on the improvement of public highways; a good roads commission was authorized in 1892, and in 1895 the state began the building of sample half-mile roads.

#### IMPROVEMENT OF ROADS IS BEGUN

A State Board of Public Roads was created in 1902, and a road building program was financed principally by bond issues approved in 1905, 1908 and 1911. Two years later this program reached a conclusive pause when the electorate rejected a proposed bond issue, following criticism emphasizing the futility of building short-lived, water-bound macadam highways and bonding them for long periods of years. Thereafter bond issues for highway improvements were limited to financing the building of bridges. The most imposing of these is the Washington Bridge across the Seekonk River, which was completed in 1930. The Mount Hope Bridge, completed in 1929, was authorized as a toll bridge operated by a chartered company. Road building, threatened with termination by the decisive rejection of the bond issue proposed in 1913, was salvaged by revenues derived from licensing automobiles, registration of which was required by statute in 1904.

#### "JITNEY," TAXI COMPETITION

In the third of a century since 1900 the state has built a network of magnificent roads reaching every section, and has bridged rivers and streams. Automobile traffic has increased to such proportions that almost everybody rides. A passenger automobile system, called "jitney" because of the five-cent fare, threatened in 1915 such effective competition in street transportation as to alarm the street railway corporation. The "jitney" was abandoned when licensing and other regulatory legislation made its continuance almost impossible. Automobile service, called "taxi" because of the use of a taximeter to record distances and fares earned, has replaced livery service, public and private; the hack and hansom cab have passed completely.

Improvement of the automobile has brought to Rhode Island both tracks for freight and express service and every type of carting, and passenger busses, which threaten on interurban lines the elimination of trolley tramway and local railway. Both steam railroad and electric railway have substituted automobile busses for trains and cars on many lines. The electric street and interurban railway seems destined for abandonment completely less than half a century since the first successful operation of trolley cars occurred in Woonsocket. Transportation service is reasonably safe in Rhode Island for passengers; the increase in rapid traffic on streets and roads has made these less safe for pedestrians than when transportation was principally in vehicles drawn by horses.

Two major disasters were recorded for the 20th century—the sinking of the Sound passenger steamer Larchmont, Feb. 11-12, 1907, with loss of 131 lives; the explosion of a boiler on the excursion steamer Mackinack near Newport, Aug. 18, 1925, with loss of 53 lives immediately, and other deaths from injuries later. Rhode Island has been interested in flying, and in the development of a satisfactory airport much has been expended with more in prospect. The channel in Narragansett Bay has been improved by dredging, removal of shoals, ledges and other obstructions; the state has built piers and warehouses to accommodate water traffic. This work has been additional to the development of wharves and storage tanks for oil and other petroleum products, which has made

Narragansett Bay the greatest Eastern oil port and a distribution centre for most of New England. A similar position in lumber brought to New England principally from the Pacific coast seems likely of achievement.

## 20TH CENTURY SEES STATE PROPERTY RISE

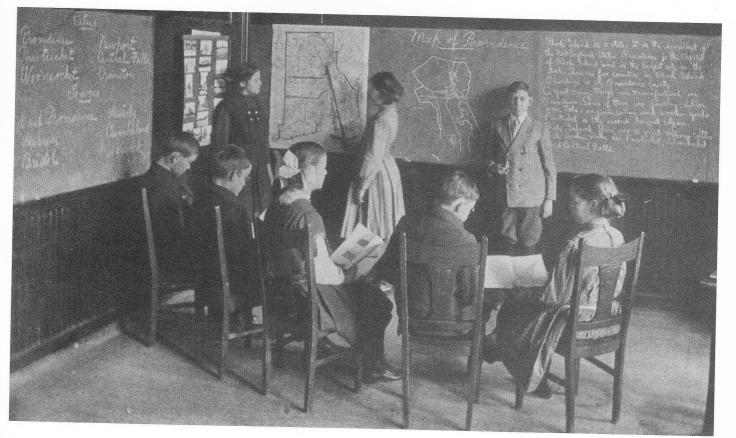
The state's investment in public property has increased rapidly in the twentieth century, including roads and bridges, court houses, public institutions, armories, police barracks and other public buildings. Crowding at the State House and need for additional office space to accommodate officers, boards and commissions as new types of public service were inaugurated led to the construction of the State Office Building in 1928. Henry Barnard School was added to the College of Education; a group of new buildings was constructed at Rhode Island State College.

## MUNICIPAL ENTERPRISES LIKEWISE ARE EXPANDED

Besides smaller court houses in convenient locations, Providence County Courthouse, dedicated Sept. 28 [1933], and the beautiful Newport Court House, have been constructed at a cost exceeding \$5,000,000. A state hospital at Wallum Lake, and a group of hospital buildings at Howard, besides several new structures in the corrective and penal institutions grouped in Cranston, indicate new ventures toward the solution of social problems. Building of a state home and school for feeble-minded began at Exeter in 1907. Additional buildings for the Rhode Island School for the Deaf have been constructed from time to time. With the organization of the state police in 1925 the construction of barracks in various places was undertaken.

Municipal enterprises in the same period have included vast expenditures for public water systems, school houses, drainage systems, and streets. The state has acquired as

Students at the Rhode Island Institute for the Deaf study Rhode Island geography, circa 1910. Halftone photograph from 1911 Reports Presented to the General Assembly, vol. 2. RIHS Collection (RHi X3 7274).



public reservations many beautiful places, besides public parks, the whole constituting a metropolitan park system.

In public education the end of the 19th century was reached almost with the enactment of a statute still cited as "general provisions to secure a more uniform high standard in the public schools of this state." The act provided for state examination and certification of teachers, state support in part of public high schools, and an annual appropriation to encourage consolidation of small ungraded schools as graded schools. State certification for superintendents of schools followed, with an annual appropriation to encourage school committees to employ trained professional superintendents. In 1904 school districts were abolished, and administration, control and support of schools was centralized in town and city school committees. Pensions for public school teachers were authorized in 1907; state aid for medical inspection was offered in 1911. Physical education and dental inspection were ordered in 1917.

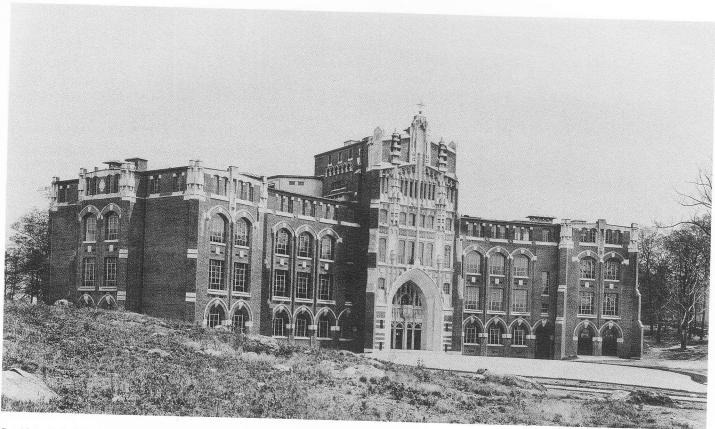
In 1907 free public library service was supplemented by a state system of traveling libraries to be circulated in places not located conveniently near free public libraries. Traveling libraries circulate 50,000 volumes annually additional to the more than 2,000,000 loans made annually by free public libraries. An annual appropriation for vocational education was made first in 1912, following a survey made by the Commissioner of Education; the work was extended rapidly after 1917, when the federal government entered the field and offered substantial apportionment of federal money for vocational education in agriculture, trades and industries, and home economics, besides money for supervision and teacher training.

#### SYSTEM OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEVELOPED

Civilian rehabilitation was inaugurated as an educational service in 1919, and the work was extended with federal support in 1921. The State College at Kingston, its early development retarded because it seemed to be "only an agricultural college," a waif scarcely tolerated in a state in which the dominating economic interests were manufacturing and commerce, began to grow apace after the name was changed to Rhode Island State College.

The late Dr. Howard Edwards, a great educator, had much to do with the remarkable development of this public college in a quarter of a century. Rhode Island Normal School became Rhode Island College of Education in 1920, reorganizing with power to confer degrees and a program for extending the period of professional preparation of teachers to four years beyond graduation from high school. A system of state free scholarships was expanded to include opportunities for instruction at Rhode Island School of Design, Brown University and Rhode Island College of Pharmacy, established in 1902. The 20th century witnessed a steady increase of enrollment in all schools, but greater growth of high schools than of elementary schools, and extension of higher education to the enrollment of thousands as compared with hundreds earlier. For 28 of the 33 years the hands of Walter E. Ranger, as Commissioner of Education, have steered the good ship of Public Education.

In the same period a parallel system of schools offering education to one-fifth to one-quarter of the school population has been developed steadily in growth and excellence by the Catholic Church. The system includes parish elementary schools and diocesan high schools and academies, as well as Providence College. While Catholic secondary education is almost as old as the diocese, marked impetus to it was given by the drive conducted by Bishop Hickey to accomplish the raising of \$1,000,000 for Catholic high



Providence College was chartered in 1917 under the Dominican Fathers. Photograph by John Hess, 1919. RIHS Collection (RHi X3 7260).

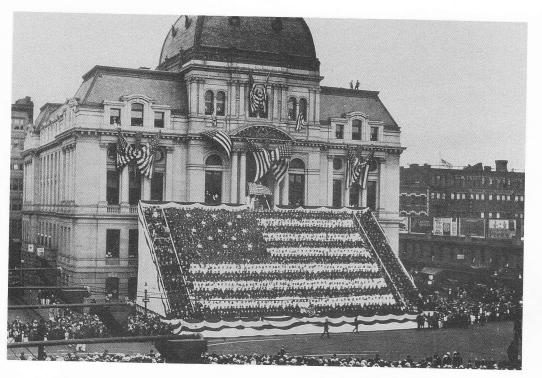
schools in three years, 1921-1924. New buildings were erected in Providence and Woonsocket, and new schools were organized in Pawtucket and Newport. With parish high schools, Catholic secondary schools in Rhode Island number 15.

Providence College was chartered in 1917 and entrusted by Bishop Harkins to the Dominican Fathers, or Order of Preachers. It was opened on the completion of Harkins Hall. It has been a thriving institution of higher learning, with physical accommodations doubled by an addition to Harkins Hall, and a new science building planned for construction within the year. The student body overtaxes present physical capacity, and is served by 35 professors of the Dominican Order. For teachers of the Catholic schools, diocesan summer institutes were inaugurated in 1920; out of this venture came Providence Catholic Teachers' College, which graduated its first class in 1933.

The first effect in Rhode Island of the World War was a speeding up of industry and commerce to meet the demand for standard wares and commodities of all kinds needed to supply the needs of armies and people at war. As the war progressed, Rhode Island manufacturers undertook the production of war supplies and munitions, and workers from peace time occupations were drafted to apply their skilful labor to producing destructive devices. Professor Henri F. Micholeau of Brown University sailed for France to join his regiment; he was killed at the Battle of the Marne, and the war seemed to be nearer than before. Other Rhode Islanders went away and enlisted.

## VISIT OF GERMAN U-BOAT TO NEWPORT IS RECALLED

The war seemed very near indeed on October 7, 1916, when the German submarine U-53 sailed into Newport in order "to post a letter" and sailed away. The next day six merchant vessels were torpedoed near Nantucket. Nov. 1 brought the German submarine



Rhode Islanders gathered at Providence City Hall for a Preparedness Parade in June 1916. RIHS Collection (RHi X3 7282).

Deutschland to New London. Rhode Island and the United States were "watchfully waiting" or "waiting watchfully." Early in June, 1916, 53,000 men and women marched in a "preparedness" parade. Detachments of the Rhode Island National Guard were sent to the Mexican border in midsummer, 1916, when war was threatened with our southern neighbor. Rhode Island was ready for war when Congress adopted a declaration of war on April 6, 1917. The first Rhode Island troops away were 3898 men, who paraded on July 25. Rhode Island's answer to every call for service—selective draft, organized home service, food and fuel conservation, Liberty Loans—was generous beyond a doubt. All requests were exceeded by response.

The service of Rhode Island soldiers on the battlefield and in the trenches was glorious in a war which had little

romance to enliven it. The war was short, but the period between April 6, 1917, and Armistice Day, Nov. 11, 1918, was longer in experience than the number of days indicated, for those were days of anxiety. The welcome prepared for the returning soldiers was worthy of the struggle for Democracy in which they had been engaged.

The winter of 1917-18 was unusually severe in Rhode Island; to heavy snowfall and intense cold which carried frost to depths which reached underground watermains and cut off the water supply in many places were added the terrors of an epidemic of influenza or of several diseases which were diagnosed as influenza. Many deaths resulted from exposure, pneumonia or the epidemic disease, and much suffering from cold, deprivation of water, and limited fuel supply. All was forgotten in the joys of Armistice Day and the return of the soldier boys. There were others "who went forth and returned not, whose souls are marching on."

The street railway strike in June, 1902, precipitated Republican defeat in the November election; a strike in several large industrial plants contributed much to the defeat of Henry F. Lippitt, candidate for the United States Senate, in 1916. Militia were sent to Bristol in 1920 because of a strike in the rubber factory. Early in 1922 a general strike of textile workers in cotton and woolen mills was ordered, and militia were sent to several places to patrol and maintain order. Railroad shopmen went on strike in July. Street railway employes opposed the introduction of one-man cars, one man being eliminated of the earlier two-men crews.

Economic readjustment was underway, but the discontent of workers indicated political action in the election of 1922. Governor San Souci was one of the most popular ever elected, but the situation was passing beyond his control. The Republican party was distressed by factional quarrels. At the January session, 1922, the General Assembly received the report of a commission appointed to make a survey of school administration and finance, and enacted into law a bill recommended by the commission, and known subsequently as the "Peck bill."

The Peck bill in its most important provisions increased state appropriations for the support of public schools and included several measures to promote efficiency of school administration. When the bill reached the calendar toward the close of the session, a debate was precipitated which was one of the longest on a single measure in the history of the Assembly.

#### STIRRING TIMES IN STATE SENATE

The outstanding opponent of the bill was Felix A. Toupin. His attack was directed to a section of the bill which transferred from town and city school committees to the State Board of Education the function of approving schools for purposes of the compulsory attendance law. Representative Toupin voiced opposition, principally Franco-American, to the bill because of fear that the change involved the elimination of the teaching of the French language in schools maintained in French parishes. The bill was passed at the end of the debate as recommended by the committee which had reported it, and was passed also by the Senate after midnight on the last day of a session extended into early morning hours. It would become a law unless the Governor vetoed it.

The Governor held the measure nearly two weeks before returning it to the Secretary of State with a veto message. A question as to the constitutionality of the veto was raised immediately, the points involving the legislative day to which the passage of the bill should be assigned, and the question of counting or not counting Sundays in computing the 10 days within which the Governor might use the veto power. The Supreme Court was asked to give an advisory opinion, and departed from precedent to the extent of requesting an argument by counsel. The court held that the Governor's veto had been too late, and that the bill had become a law without his signature.

Agitation against the Peck bill, denounced in many political meetings during the campaign, made it an issue in the campaign particularly effective in towns and cities in which Franco-American voters were numerous. Factional fighting in the Republican party deprived Governor San Souci of the renomination, and the party entered the campaign with much less enthusiasm than had been customary.

Governor William S. Flynn represented Rhode Island's "Young Democrats" in the 1922 election. Photograph circa 1922. RIHS Collection (RHi X3 7259).



In the Democratic convention adroit tactics accomplished the nomination of William S. Flynn, who had been Democratic leader in the House of Representatives, unexpectedly on the first ballot. This victory for "Young" Democrats over the Old Guard, after threatening a split in the organization, resulted ultimately in an enthusiastic campaign. Besides state officers a United States Senator was to be elected. Almost at the end of the campaign, on the eve of election, came "exposure" of alleged wholesale bribery by the Republican candidate for the Senate, consisting in the payment of a large amount of money to a prominent Democrat for "campaign expenses."

#### CAMPAIGN "EXPOSURE"

The accusation of bribery was denied at first categorically, but later an explanation was made "on the advice of counsel," that payment of money for campaign expenses was not necessarily bribery. The "exposure" and equivocation were fatal to ambition; along with other contributing causes, these helped to reelect Peter G. Gerry as United States Senator. All general officers except the Secretary of State were Democrats.

In the House of Representatives the Republicans saved a bare majority to organize the body. The Senate remained Republican. In the House the Republicans had the advantage of a Speaker whom they had chosen; in the Senate Felix A. Toupin, who had been elected as Lieutenant Governor, began demonstration of a new and novel political theorem: that a minority plus a presiding officer may be more powerful than a "mere majority." The session of 1923 continued to June 9, the longest of record save in the following year.

#### REFORMS ARE SOUGHT

From the beginning the Democrats, led by Governor Flynn, demanded constitutional reforms and filibustered, particularly in the Senate, delaying legislation and appropriation bills with the purpose of forcing compliance with their program. After 10 weeks of filibustering on the annual appropriation bill, the Lieutenant Governor ruled that it had not been passed because the majority for, 22-16, was not the two-thirds majority required to pass the sections of the bill carrying appropriations to private corporations.

The House asked the Supreme Court for an advisory opinion, and the court advised that the bill had been passed by the Senate except the "private sections" and must go back to the House for concurrent action. The House then passed the bill without the private sections, and Governor Flynn vetoed it. The bill had failed; the Republicans could not muster in the House the three-fifths majority necessary to pass the bill over the Governor's veto. Compromise was resorted to, and the Assembly adjourned in 1923 after enacting an annual appropriation bill and several measures demanded by the Democrats as their price for the appropriation bill.

Filibustering opened early in the January session, 1924, and the calendar was not reached as the Senators debated correct recording of The Senate Journal and points of personal privilege. Several times the daily sessions became tests of endurance. Crowds attended the sessions daily, and reports were current of weapons and armed gangsters. The appropriation bill was not reached, and accounts against the state remained unpaid. State institutions were without money to carry on. When the Republican majority in the Senate tested the endurance of the Lieutenant Governor by refusal to adjourn, he was fed, shaved and cared for in other ways by faithful attendants, who ministered to him as he remained on the rostrum.

#### THE "BOMB" INCIDENT

Early in the morning of June 19 a "bomb," consisting of an ordinary chemical test tube filled with a mixture which emitted a suffocating gas, placed in the Senate Chamber, brought the endurance test to a decisive end. The perpetrator of the outrage has not been discovered. Several Senators alleged incapacity because of the "bomb," and all Republican Senators except one left Rhode Island on June 22 when the Lieutenant Governor and his colleagues were preparing to issue writs to compel the attendance of a quorum. A minority of the Senate continued to meet from day to day, and to adjourn for want of a quorum.

The House, unable to adjourn sine die without joint action by the Senate, met twice a week by agreement, to avoid the rule forbidding adjournment for more than two days. Thus the General Assembly continued in session through the year; it never adjourned. It was replaced by a new General Assembly on the first Tuesday in January, 1925.

In the fall election of 1924 Governor Flynn was candidate for the United States Senate, and Lieutenant Governor Toupin was candidate for Governor. The Issues were the filibuster, law and order, and the danger to the state from failure of the General Assembly

to function. The Republican party was returned to power with an indorsement that assumed the proportions of a landslide.

#### CONSTITUTION CHANGES OF 1928

In 1925 the new Assembly enacted measures planned to prevent another failure of the annual appropriation bill, including the creation of the office of State Commissioner of Finance. The Peck law, so far as it affected private schools, was amended in such a manner as to restore approval of private schools to town and city committees and to define the obligation of private schools with respect to teaching certain school subjects in the English language.

The Assembly also proposed three amendments to the Constitution, which were advanced by the following Assembly and ratified in 1928. These provided for biennial registration of voters, increased representation for Providence in the Senate, and abolition of the property qualification.

In the election of 1928 Rhode Island chose presidential electors pledged to vote for Alfred E. Smith as President, but gave Felix Hebert, Republican candidate for Senator, a plurality of nearly 3000, and Governor Norman S. Case, candidate for reelection, a plurality of 8000. In the election of 1930, the first after abolition of the property qualification, Democratic gains were made in city elections, the control of the City Council in Providence passing for the first time to that party.

The creation of a Safety Board for Providence, appointed by the Governor to administer police and fire departments and the department of public works, aroused enmity as interference with home rule. State police commissions for other cities were resented. State assumption of responsibility for the relief of unemployment was delayed. The old conflict of factions in the Republican party was revived.

As the election of 1932 approached, Rhode Island participated in the growing opposition to the Republican national administration, due in large part to discontent because of economic depression and unwillingness or incapacity to deal with it. Rhode Island chose presidential electors pledged to vote for Franklin D. Roosevelt, sent two Democratic Representatives to Congress, and elected an entire Democratic general state ticket and a sufficient number of Representatives in the General Assembly to enable the Democrats to organize the House, while control of the Senate rested with Republicans.

## COSMOPOLITAN COMMONWEALTH

Rhode Island in 1933 is a cosmopolitan commonwealth if emphasis is placed upon national origins. The state census of 1925 revealed nearly 27 per cent of the state population as foreign born; if to the foreign born were added native inhabitants born of foreign-born parents, the percentage of population closely akin to foreign origin would exceed half the total. Governor Van Zandt's fear that the population of alien origin might establish a "political caste through which it would be impossible to break" has not been realized.

The story told above of the vicissitudes of fortune attending political parties is impressive refutation of the prophecy. Rhode Island opened its eyes wide and stared on Columbus Day, 1910, as it viewed thousands parading in honor of the discovery of America; Oct. 12, 1910, was a new discovery day in Rhode Island. Every three years also Rhode Island witnesses an imposing demonstration by Catholic men of their respect for clean speech in the Holy Name parade of thousands.



William A. Hickey, third bishop of Providence. Undated halftone photograph from The Catholic Church in Rhode Island, by Thomas F. Cullen. RIHS Collection (RHi X3 1704).

In spite of the hope of returning prosperity, indicated by a parade of 70,000 supporters of the National Recovery Act on Oct. 2, Rhode Island is deep in sorrow now because of the death on Oct. 4 of Most Reverend William A. Hickey, for nearly 15 years prominent in promoting every good cause.

It is noteworthy that neither foreign origin, nor the fact that approximately three-fifths of the inhabitants of Rhode Island are active members of the Catholic Church, has produced political caste; voters of similar racial origins adhere to different political parties, so also it is with Catholics, who are prominent in both major political parties.

#### LESSON OF TOLERANCE

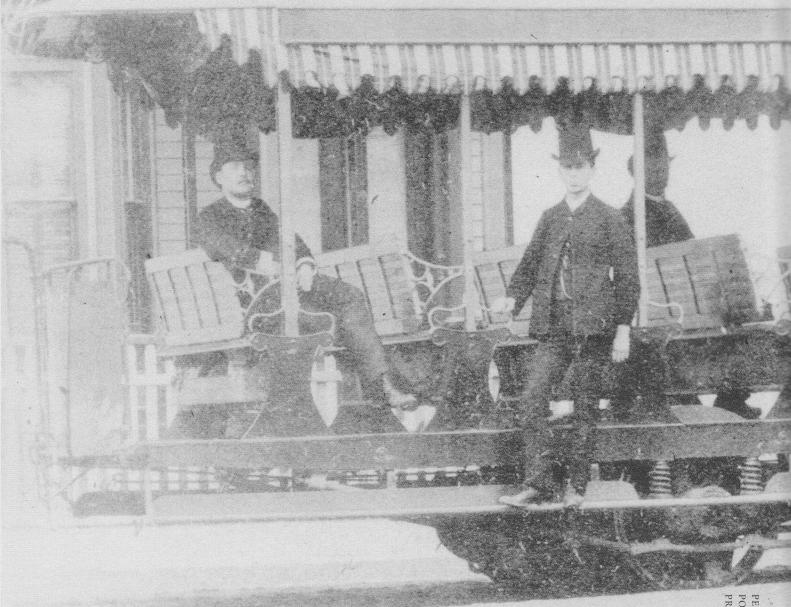
Rhode Island exemplifies in practice the lesson of toleration it has presented to the world for nearly 300 years. One of the impressive events of recent years was an interdenominational conference on human relations participated in by Catholics, Hebrews and Protestants; another, a monster mass meeting to protest against religious persecution in Germany, Mexico and Spain, the speakers including ministers, priests and rabbis, and representative laymen from the three religions. Truly the Wonder Working Providence of God continues in the Narragansett Country.

Rhode Island History
110 Benevolent Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02906-3152
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Cover

Passengers ride the electric street railway on its first run in Woonsocket, 25 September 1887.

Photograph by Albert L. Pease Sr. RIHS Collection (RHi X3 7279).



PERIODICALS
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PROVIDENCE, RI