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Street scene on Central Hill, 1943. Photograph by
Carmel Vitullo.

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Introduced and edited by JANE LANCASTER



Ethnic Shops versus Chain Stores: Retailing among Italian Americans in Providence in the Interwar Years

STEFANO LUCONI

In 1937 the guide to the state of Rhode Island of the Federal Writers' Project declared that Providence's Italian American neighborhood on Federal Hill kept "an Old World atmosphere." As the authors put it, in that district "the shopkeepers fill their windows with piles of hard cheese, fresh and dried sausages, bottles of olive oil, and small casks of almonds, dried cherries (used in making wine), and chestnuts, pistachios, and other nuts." This characterization of the city's Italian American colony did not differ much from the 1909 representation by William MacDonald in an overview of the city's population of foreign ancestry in the early twentieth century. MacDonald portrayed Federal Hill as "a veritable little Italy," with "Italian shops . . . on every hand."¹

Similarly, in the words of a 1910 piece that appeared in Providence's *Board of Trade Journal*, "the Italians, according to their varied means, support local stores and American manufactures, but they purchase large quantities of Italian products." Indeed, the data provided in that article showed that during the previous year a community of 17,305 Italian-born people had imported almost 900,000 pounds of macaroni, nearly 16,000 gallons of edible olive oil, more than 11,000 pounds of Italian cheese, and roughly 24,000 gallons of wine. To further corroborate its argument, the *Board of Trade Journal* indicated that the most prominent businessmen in the community included importers of Italian goods, such as Frank P. Ventrone, the local wholesale "Macaroni King." Residents of Federal Hill provided additional evidence of their attachment to Italian and Italian-style products in the summer of 1914, when Ventrone unreasonably increased his prices. Rather than finding substitutes for pasta, a staple of their diets, they took to the streets and pillaged Ventrone's store, originating a series of disturbances that became known as the "Macaroni Riots."²

That the city's Italian American community was heavily reliant on ethnic stores selling Italian merchandise was hardly surprising at the time: the community had been established only recently, and it was receiving a continuous influx of newcomers who strongly contributed to a determination to keep Italian customs and traditions alive. As Carmela E. Santoro has pointed out, over 80 percent of the 54,973 Italian immigrants who landed at the port of Providence between 1898 and 1932 arrived before World War I.³

On the other hand, the survival of ethnically oriented shopping among the city's Italian Americans into the second half of the 1930s, as described in part by the Federal Writers' Project, might indeed seem unexpected. The Quota Acts of 1921 and 1924 had put an end to the wave of mass immigration from Italy that had previously helped ethnic culture thrive, and a second generation, U.S.-born, had already come of age. Moreover, in the view of prevailing scholarship, the spread of consumerism in the 1920s and during the Depression of the 1930s contributed to Americanizing consumers of foreign ancestry in the United States.⁴

The rise of chain stores in the interwar years offers a viable test case for evaluating this view. The 1920s saw an explosion of chain stores, especially in large cities, a trend that

Stefano Luconi is a member of the faculty of political sciences at the University of Florence in Italy. Research for this article was made possible in part by a grant from the Newell D. Goff Institute for Ingenuity and Enterprise Studies at the Rhode Island Historical Society. The author wishes to thank the staffs of both the Rhode Island Historical Society's library and the Providence Public Library for their assistance. An earlier version of this article was presented as an Aldrich Roundtable talk, sponsored by the Goff Institute and the Italian American Society of Rhode Island, at the Rhode Island Historical Society on 27 August 2002.

Pushcarts along Spruce Street on Federal Hill, 1903. RIHS Collection (RHi X3 4662).

continued and strengthened in the following decade. Founded as Gilman & Hartford in New York City in 1859, the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company, the oldest and most prominent grocery chain, had 100 stores in 1880, 991 in 1914, 4,621 in 1920, and 15,737 in 1930; by 1940, following the company's decision to introduce supermarkets that combined and replaced smaller units, the number of its stores dropped to 7,230, but its sales grew from \$1,066 million in 1930 to \$1,116 million in 1940. The variety chain F. W. Woolworth & Company, which started operations in 1879, grew from 596 stores in 1911 to 1,111 in 1920, 1,881 in 1930, and 2,027 in 1940. J. C. Penney, the nation's largest apparel chain, founded in 1902, increased the number of its stores from 14 in 1910 to 312 in 1920, 1,395 in 1930, and 1,586 in 1940. Independently owned neighborhood stores might well have seemed doomed by the growth of chains such as these.⁵

Although the clientele of chain stores was at first generally confined to middle-class consumers, the appeal of these stores spread to the working class during the Depression years, when the chains' low prices drew more and more shoppers from the higher-priced neighborhood retailers. In addition, the chain stores specialized in nationally advertised brands with wide but standardized consumer appeal, and thus they potentially helped to Americanize immigrants and their offspring by turning them into consumers of U.S. national brands, merchandise that often bore little relation to the ethnic products available at neighborhood stores.⁶

But this was hardly the case with the Italian Americans of Providence, whose experience suggests a rather different story. To tell that story, the present article will examine the survival of ethnic retailing in the city's little Italy, in the face of the expansion of chain stores, during the interwar years. Within this framework the expression "ethnic retailing" will be used with a double meaning: it will refer, on the one hand, to stores with owners of Italian descent and, on the other, to marketing strategies that appealed to the ancestral identity of prospective customers of Italian background.⁷

Like many other U.S. cities, Providence underwent a far-reaching penetration of chain stores after the end of World War I. In 1920, for example, the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company operated 46 stores in the city, Mayflower Stores (later taken over by First National Stores) 54, and Thackary Nicholson Company 33. Ten years later the numbers had grown to 79, 76, and 39 respectively. Similarly, there were no Woolworth stores in Providence in 1920, but as many as 4 in 1930.⁸

The presence of chain stores citywide had become so pervasive by the late 1920s that the situation worried independent retailers. In 1929 the *Providence Magazine*, a monthly publication of the local Chamber of Commerce, reported that a "tremendous controversy had arisen by the development of chains of both department and specialty stores," although it concluded that "chain stores are here to stay and . . . they are entitled to the patronage of the public as much as are the independent stores when they give service and quality."⁹

Chain stores made inroads, though of a limited sort, into Providence's little Italy. The city's largest and densest Italian American neighborhood was located on Federal Hill in the area bounded by West Exchange Street, Aborn Street, LaSalle Square, Broadway, Tobey Street, Grove Street, and Ridge Street. The heart of the community was a quadrangle formed by Atwells Avenue, Barker Street, Federal Street, and Arthur (subsequently renamed Balbo) Avenue. In 1920 only 5 of the city's 133 chain groceries were located on Federal Hill. Although chain groceries increased by 45.8 percent throughout the city during the next ten years, Providence's principal Italian American district continued to

be home to as few as five of these stores. More significantly, the development of chain groceries citywide in the 1920s did not affect the growth of independent Italian American groceries, whose number in Providence as a whole rose from 182 in 1920 to 299 in 1928, before declining to 266 in 1930 after the onset of the Depression.¹⁰

One might wonder whether chain groceries really intended to target potential customers of Italian extraction in the 1920s. Advertisements for the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company, Mayflower Stores, First National Stores, and Thackary Nicholson Company were conspicuously missing from the columns of *L'Eco del Rhode Island*, Providence's leading Italian-language weekly, until the 1930s. Woolworth, too, initially failed to advertise in this newspaper, although it opened one of its four stores on Atwells Avenue, within Providence's major Italian American neighborhood, in 1930.¹¹

In his 1909 essay, William MacDonald suggested that "ignorance of English still gives the Italian stores a profitable field." It was, of course, much easier to transact business in one's own native language, or even in one's own dialect. Moreover, distrust of anyone who did not belong to the narrow circle of one's fellow villagers was a side effect of the subnational sense of identity and allegiance that characterized most Italian immigrants, an attitude known as *campanilismo*. As *L'Eco del Rhode Island* reported in 1915, immigrants of Italian extraction hardly ever went into business with someone who had not come from the same village.¹²

If Italian Americans tended to be suspicious of fellow countrymen from other regions in Italy, they could hardly trust people of different national ancestries. Not all the owner-operators of small shops on Federal Hill were Italian Americans. Pushcart peddlers, an important part of the retailing business in the district, also included members of other immigrant minorities; in 1905 the *Providence Journal* reported that Sicilians had to share the monopoly of the city's fruit-peddling

business with Greeks. But *campanilismo* usually defended Italian American merchants against outside competition within their own ethnic community. As late as the mid-1930s, for instance, the *Italian Echo* (as *L'Eco del Rhode Island* had been renamed) warned its readers against purchasing olive oil from retailers who were not of Italian

I'll take it without
 his right.
 deceiving me—God
 shall see. Adjoining
 the place nearest
 to I hurried toward
 and stepped
 on. "You are not
 safe." "That
 is not what will be
 of the you under-
 standing. I am, in you
 as being melo-dram-
 atically reacting
 a. "She said that
 at which time you
 saw her with exaspe-
 rated or "anything"
 "I'm not much,"
 "think so if you had
 her hand."
 "I'm" she exclaimed,
 "I looked like a vi-
 ded toward me and
 a thos. Do you un-
 der me. I lost con-
 sion. Annetta, who
 ring for the count-
 down."
 "They will kill each
 other, coming up from
 the as death from
 rest. "and let
 wasn't anything to
 What came out of
 at that. I can't re-
 sponse to say that
 servants she aland-
 ered my name with
 and said. "And
 at her without say-
 ing her and me for
 she became infuri-
 ated and abused.
 "I'm a parson!"
 swiftly, as if suffer-
 ing intense humili-
 ation. She dared make
 never, on the stro-
 ful not to humiliate
 I around in her a
 standing pity.
 "I further, Robert."
 "I'll find a means of
 of her somehow."
 "I should cost my
 d without
 it without any fur-
 is of caution."
 "Can you think
 that when they
 did to me. You've
 and I'd rather even
 of the thing that
 to the ground for
 the least safety
 are. There will be
 that he able to be
 safe."

of the United States recognition of
 Russia.

→ VERY
 LATEST
 ←

It took a few weeks for designers
 and manufacturers of women's
 coats to learn the outstanding sub-
 stances of the year and this was
 achieved only through the sale of
 winter coats to Miss and Mrs. Am-
 erica.



It is the elaboration of the scarf
 in the flat simple types of fur
 that caught madame's fancy. There
 are butterfly scarfs, ascot scarfs and
 vertical scarfs. An illustrated ex-
 ample, the vertical scarf adjustable
 with brown bone ring, tells the
 story of how fur scarfs are treated
 on the popular coat models.
 To relieve the dull woollen, im-
 parted diagonals and ribbed boucles
 are the favorites... and in colors
 too if one wishes to get away from
 black for a change.

two weeks, but not low enough, it
 seems, to enable the repeated de-
 mands to know how we stand on
 the question.
 Frankly, judging from the gurg-
 lent attack made by the distin-

400 Attend
 K. of C. Dedication

More than 400 members and
 friends attended the dedication ex-
 ercise for the new classrooms of the
 St. Anthony Council 1618, Knights
 of Columbus, in the old Greeley
 street school, last Sunday afternoon.
 The council paid homage to the
 late Mgr. Antonio Bova, who found-
 ed the organization 21 years ago
 by unveiling a memorial tablet in
 his memory.

Following the invocation by Rev.
 Benjamin D'Amico and an address
 of welcome by Albert Ricci, the
 general chairman, the tablet was
 unveiled by Dr. C. V. Barbone. Rev.
 D'Amico pronounced the blessing.
 Valentine M. Mariani, acted as
 master of ceremonies, and introdu-
 ced the following speakers: Marion
 Coppola, Joseph V. Broderick, State
 Deputy, Knight of Columbus; Dr.
 Angelo Parente, Dr. Frank A. Mar-
 tino, Grand Knight, St. Anthony

Change, adaptation to new con-
 dition is a common law of nature.
 Failure to adapt means death.
 To the victor belong the spoils
 then. Bettino proved his point
 beyond a doubt.

Council: Raymond Belangh, Walter
 W. Goff, Rev. Carmine Mariani,
 Alderman Frank J. Duffy, Mr. Rossi
 and Dr. Stitano.

The reception committee con-
 sisted of Dr. Angelo M. Parente, Al-
 berto St. Angelo, Frank Rao, Man-
 uel Addeo, John Capuano, Antonio
 Redocci, Domenico Madonia,
 Dominic Albanese, Carl Testa, Al-
 berto De Cesare, Paul M. Ricciardi,
 John Barona, Thomas Anello, An-
 gelo Adamo, Octavius M. Dal.

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 CUTAWAYS
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Royal Suit Dress Co.
 A. F. LOMBARDOZZI, Mgr.
 121 Washington St. 2nd Floor

A & P **Week End Specials**

FINE GRANULATED **SUGAR** 10 lbs 48c
 SILVER BOOK **BUTTER** 2 lbs 49c
 PURE REFINED **LARD** Bulk or Package 2 lbs 17c
 SUNNYFIELD **FAMILY FLOUR** 24% B 93c
 SUNNYFIELD **PASTRY FLOUR** 24% B 87c
STORE CHEESE lb 19c

DELMONTE RAISINS 3 lbs 25c
 PLUM FUDGING can 10c
 CRANBERRY SAUCE ocean spray 2 cans 15c
 MIXED PEANUTS lb 25c
 BEE'S TOILETRY BRUSHING 2 tubes 15c
 GUARANTEE CHOCOLATES lb box 25c
 FRUIT CAKE can 10c

A & P FOOD STORES of NEW ENGLAND

This A&P advertisement appeared in the Italian Echo, 24 November 1933.

background: “in some foreign stores in Atwells Avenue, run by some worthy descendants of Attila,” declared the paper, “the Health Authorities discovered falsified and adulterated oil that was sold as the purest olive oil of the finest quality, imported from Italy at a very low price, while it was not even cotton oil.” According to the *Echo*, retailers who were not of Italian extraction were “foreign deceivers” who were likely to sell phony macaroni “manufactured by Negroes.”¹³

Like almost any other immigrant colony in the United States, Providence’s Italian Americans offered their ethnic merchants a protected market. As Howard E. Aldrich and Roger Waldinger have suggested, “if ethnic communities have special sets of needs and preferences that are best served by those who share those needs and know them intimately, then ethnic entrepreneurs have an advantage.” In shops that their own fellow ethnics operated, Italian newcomers and their offspring could find traditional food that was either produced in the United States to meet their old-world tastes or imported from their area of origin in Italy. An examination of the advertisements carried by the city’s Italian-language newspapers offers some insight into the retention of ethnic-oriented shopping preferences among Italian Americans over the years. In 1903, for example, Giuseppe Migliaccio sold “Neapolitan-style ice cream”; in 1921 John Marzullo’s shop boasted its large selection of Sicilian cheese; eight years later M. Thomas Marcello imported “genuine oil packed in Italy” and retailed it at his store on Canal Street. Even during the Depression, Gaetano D. Del Rossi advertised his “high grade Macaroni-spaghetti, fresh egg noodles, and vermicelli,” while the Calise & Sons Bakery specialized in Sicilian bread. The Ranaldi Bakery advertised its “real and healthy Italian bread” as late as 1941.¹⁴

The Italian diet of most members of Providence’s Italian American community also generated a significant demand for certain characteristic food-processing implements. Devices to squeeze grapes or tomatoes, to grate parmesan, or to make macaroni at home were items that were not usually available at chain stores, but all were advertised for sale at such shops as Angelone’s on Atwells Avenue or Capotosto’s on Cranston Street.¹⁵

The preference for Italian-style products extended to other sectors besides food. As late as 1934, for instance, the Cappelleria del Vesuvio—a hat shop named after the volcano overlooking Naples—showed off its stock of “Italian imported hats from the famous factories of G. Borsalino.” Even local pharmacies appealed to an Italian American clientele. In the 1920s Caio Alianello’s Colonial Pharmacy, Vincenzo Scalera’s Broadway Pharmacy, the Farmacia del Popolo (People’s Pharmacy), Romano’s Pharmacy, and the Farmacia del Leone (Lion’s Pharmacy) emphasized both their Italian-speaking staffs with degrees from Italian universities and their vast choice of “unadulterated products imported from Italy.”¹⁶

Music stores, too, offered their customers merchandise that was not generally available in stores outside the Italian American community. “I spent much time at the Morgera Piano and Music Store in order to listen with fascination to the pianolas and the scratchy gramophones,” recalled Providence resident Francis A. DelDeo. “It was here that I was initiated to the cult of Caruso, Galli Curci, Tito Schipa and the opera. . . . Another locale of great attraction for me was Paolilli’s Music Store. Here we heard the latest songs from Italy.” Both stores were still in business at the end of World War II.¹⁷

In 1909 William MacDonald remarked that “the large department stores report a steady increase in Italian custom and profess to welcome it.” Indeed, in the early 1920s *L’Eco del Rhode Island* and *Il Corriere del Rhode Island* published sizable advertisements by the Boston Market, the Flint Adaskin Furniture Company, and John Curran Dress Goods.

Stores such as these further sought to cultivate the patronage of Italian Americans by catering to their sense of ethnic identity. Thus department stores employed salespeople of Italian descent not only because they could speak Italian but also because their fellow Italian Americans would consider them trustworthy. When Bond opened a clothing store in Providence in 1936, it placed two Italian Americans, Bill Bottis and John Rotondi, in charge of dealing with their fellow ethnics; as advertisements in the *Italian Echo* put it, the presence of “these ‘Italian’ Bond Boys” made the Bond store “a friendly store for Italian people to trade in.” Advertising General Electric shortwave radio sets on the eve of the 1937 Christmas festivities, the Adams Radio Company stressed that they would be able to receive the broadcast of the Mass from St. Peter’s Square in Rome and other Christmas programs from Italy.¹⁸

In view of retailing strategies like these, Italian Americans were not necessarily succumbing to Americanization when they patronized large non-neighborhood stores. Moreover, accommodating ethnic needs and sensibilities was certainly not universal policy among such stores, and Italian Americans remained suspicious of most stores, large or small, that were located outside their neighborhoods and were not operated by their fellow ethnics. Referring to such an establishment, in 1934 the *Italian Echo* indignantly contended that “there is one large department store . . . which has never shown a disposition to patronize anything Italian. One never hears that its owners have contributed to any one of the good causes sponsored by Italo-Americans.”¹⁹

Advertisements published in the Italian American press provide evidence of the vitality of Italian American ethnic retailing even when confronted by the powerful forces of consumer culture during the interwar years. When record players began to flood Providence’s little Italy in the 1920s, residents did not need to buy them in department stores; they could obtain them from neighborhood retailers with such Italian-sounding names as Eduardo Guerriero, Umberto Lantini, and Alfredo Pino, just as they could buy Dubied Knitting Machines from shopkeeper Anthony Antuono. When the demand for radios increased in the following decade, Italian Americans could purchase them at stores such as Pietro Vessella’s Electric Shops, or at the Eagle Battery store of Joseph, Anthony, and John Giorgianni, which also sold Hotpoint refrigerators. Likewise, Italian Americans could get DeBlois oil stoves from Mario Paparello, or they could get Leonard Glenwood duplex stoves, RCA Victor radios, or Leonard Electric Refrigerators at the People’s Furniture shop, owned by Luigi Geremia.²⁰

As such advertising indicates, neighborhood shops in Providence’s little Italy long managed to coexist with chain stores that retailed merchandise of the same kind. In the mid-1920s, for example, both the Rogers Company and Domenico Castaldi’s Continental Store advertised clothing in *L’Eco del Rhode Island*. As late as 1941 *L’Eco d’America* (formerly the *Italian Echo*, renamed that year) carried almost side-by-side advertisements for clothing by the Shepard department store downtown and by Almonte’s and Vincent’s shops on Federal Hill, and for refrigerators by both the Narragansett Electric Company and Carmine Nardonillo’s store.²¹

Even the Depression of the 1930s failed to bring the demise of Italian American neighborhood-based ethnic retailing. Although the number of Italian Americans’ independent stores declined during that time, it remained large enough to demonstrate that the growth of chains would hardly push all small Italian American shops out of business. Indeed, in 1940 Providence was home to as many as 14 druggists, 31 dry-goods retailers, 61 bakers, 65 butchers, 135 variety stores, and 223 grocers with Italian-sounding names.

addition, a practical element involved: during hard times it was easier to purchase goods on credit from a fellow ethnic than from a chain store, especially in the case of supermarkets where the introduction of self-service further separated patrons from store operators. Besides extending credit to their customers, neighborhood retailers helped them make ends meet in other ways. As Evelyn Cavalloro Denucci recalled, "Market owners and peddlers would throw their food out at the dump which was located where the Almacks is near the Neutaconkanut Park. Peddlers and market owners would tell the people when they would be dumping their goods, and some of the people would go there in time to get some fruit and vegetables. They would bring the food home and wash it."²⁷

In addition to the preexisting bonds of solidarity based on common ancestry, a strong sense of Italian American ethnic identity was fostered during the 1930s by the Fascist regime in Italy. The prominent international status that Italy achieved under the dictatorship of Benito Mussolini and his aggressive foreign policy for the alleged defense of Italian prestige abroad made individuals of Italian ancestry proud of their national origin.²⁸

The popularity of Fascism among Italian Americans, and the ethnic pride it encouraged, reached a climax when Italy invaded Ethiopia in October 1935 and established a colonial empire in May of the following year. Like most of their fellow ethnics throughout the United States, many Italian Americans in Providence condemned the economic sanctions that the League of Nations imposed against Italy in retaliation for its unprovoked attack on the African nation. During the eight months of the Italo-Ethiopian War, members of the community raised over \$37,000 for the Italian Red Cross in a fund-raising scheme that was actually nothing more than an ingenious way of funding the war efforts of Italy's Fascist regime under a false humanitarian facade. Some also donated their wedding rings and other gold objects to further finance the Fascist colonial venture.²⁹

Italian Americans' sympathy with their ancestral land had implications for consumption too. In early 1934 the *Italian Echo* informed its readers that "protecting the Italian commerce and the products imported from Italy is the duty of every Italian." The newspaper also identified the Italian grocer as the best patriot and propagandist of Italian values. This campaign gained momentum after the outbreak of the Italo-Ethiopian War. In the fall of 1935, in the aftermath of the League of Nations' stand against the Fascist regime, the Italian Chamber of Commerce in New York City launched a nationalistic crusade to encourage Italian Americans to buy Italian products, arguing that it was necessary to increase the import of Italian goods to the United States in order to offset the harm being done to Italian exports by the League's sanctions. Further, said the Chamber of Commerce's Pietro P. Carbonelli, "by consuming Italian products, not only will you make your own interest, but you will also contribute to the final victory of your brothers who are fighting to secure the Italian people a better position in the world."³⁰

The *Italian Echo* promptly followed suit and reiterated its 1934 calls for the purchase and consumption of Italian goods. This time the newspaper did not confine its appeal to food, as it had in 1934, but extended it to include a wide range of goods, from gloves and hats to glass and leather. The *Echo* acknowledged that such Italian-made goods were more expensive than their American counterparts, but it advised its readers that "a few additional cents will be compensated by better quality. Moreover you will take pride in having contributed, though to a small extent, to provide your mother country with the foreign currency she needs."³¹

Since many of Providence's Italian Americans were rushing to support the war efforts of the Fascist regime through donations to both the Italian Red Cross and the Italian government's treasury, it can be assumed that the *Italian Echo's* appeal to "buy Italian

HAIL TO ITALY!



We congratulate Italy and the Italian people on the successful conclusion of the Ethiopian campaign and the reclaiming of an enslaved and barbarous country for humanity and civilization. May the new Italy ever prosper and hold aloft the torch of Roman Enlightenment!



CO-MAKER LOANS

Loans Made On One Or More Signatures Are Based on Character and Earning Power

We Have Made Over 300,000 Loans Of This Type Totalling Over \$67,691,000

The confidence these thousands have placed in us for twenty years is ample assurance to others of our reasonable and easily understood methods of lending money.

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COMPANY OF RHODE ISLAND

Providence, R. I. Pawtucket, R. I. Woonsocket, R. I.
Newport, R. I. Attleboro, R. I. Westerly, R. I.

Compliments of

PETRO-NOKOL

Domestic — Industrial Oil Burners and Fuel Oil

AIR CONDITIONING EQUIPMENT
OIL BURNING BOILERS

32 Franklin Street Providence, R. I.

Telephone: Gaspere 9165

Quando scegliere una Bara, domandate al vostro distributore di pompe funebri di condurvi alle nostre sale di esposizione. Sono in mostra 75 Bara per soddisfare qualsiasi bisogno. Il prezzo è chiaramente segnato su ogni bara.

NATIONAL CASKET COMPANY

108 Elmwood Ave. Providence, R. I.

Compliments of

Vincent Sorrentino

Compliments of

Salvatore Chiappinelli

E. S. CRANDALL

MILK and CREAM

Grade "A" Milk From Local Tested Herds

12 Lowell Ave. West 4358

I. Golini & G. Monchetti

Importers of ITALIAN PRODUCTS

185 Canal St. Providence, R. I.

Compliments of

Bickford Enraving & Electrotype Co.

51 Matthew St. Providence, R. I.

Compliments of

M. Thomas Marcello

Dexter 8168

375 Canal St. Providence, R. I.

Broadway Storage Company

14 Merrill Street. Providence, R. I.

Compliments of

NEW ENGLAND BEVERAGES

A. F. ROTE, LLL Prop.

120 Silver Lake Avenue

Providence, R. I.

Compliments of

REPUBLICAN STATE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Compliments of

UNITED ELECTRIC RAILWAY

Compliments of

NEW YORK LACE STORE

Pawtucket's Largest Apparel Store For

WOMEN — MEN — CHILDREN AND INFANTS

Where You Can Shop In Comfort. Entire Store Air Conditioned

28-30 Broad Street

Pawtucket, R. I.

Telephone: Gaspere 0328

G. L. DEL ROSSI, Inc.

High Grade Macaroni and Spaghetti, Fresh Egg Noodles, Vermicelli, Alphabets and Bologna Style

240 India Street

Providence, R. I.

Compliments of

MICHAEL PALIANO

Meat Market And Grocery Store

Importers Of ITALIAN OLIVE OIL

321 41st Avenue

Providence, R. I.

goods" did not fall on deaf ears. Ethnic retailers were obviously likely to profit from the growing demand for Italian products that were usually unavailable in chain stores. Indeed, Italian American owners of neighborhood shops sought to increase their sales by exploiting the patriotic feelings of their fellow ethnics. After the Fascist conquest of Ethiopia, for instance, grocer Michael Paliano and a number of other merchants of Italian extraction purchased a whole page in the *Italian Echo* in order to "congratulate Italy and the Italian people on the successful conclusion of the Ethiopian campaign and the reclaiming of an enslaved and barbarous country for humanity and civilization." Similarly, an advertisement for Joseph Personeni, an importer of Italian wine and medicines as well as of the renowned Ferrochina Bisleri bitter drink, depicted a soldier embracing the Italian flag, with a caption that read "sons of our race, wherever you are, defend and spread Italian products." A year later the Italian American owner of a variety store on Federal Hill, Giustino Angelone, celebrated the first anniversary of the proclamation of Italy's empire in eastern Africa by declaring his "homage to the *Duce* and the King" in his advertisement. Likewise, Gaetano D. Del Rossi, the manufacturer of "macaroni, spaghetti, vermicelli, and fancy pastes," expressed his best wishes for "Imperial Italy's greater accomplishments" on that occasion.³²

The prevalence of such sentiments in the community evidently encouraged some companies and local stores with no real Italian connection to jump on the bandwagon of the Italian Americans' devotion to their ancestral land. A number of non-

Italian businessmen joined Michael Paliano and his fellow ethnic merchants in saluting the Fascist victory over Ethiopia from the columns of the *Echo*. In a series of advertisements in the paper, the Hollen Brewery Company urged Italian Americans to drink its Hollenbru ale in their toasts to "the success of our army in Africa," to the establishment of the "Roman Empire," and to "the glory of the King and the *Duce*"; those of Italian descent should remember the sanctions of the League of Nations and protect Italian products, which, according to the advertisements, included Hollenbru. Although led by a president with the unlikely Italian name of Harry E. Price, the brewery claimed to be Italian because it had an administrator of Italian descent, Mario Ingraffia, who boasted that he was the nephew

This notice in the Italian Echo of 8 May 1936 congratulated Italy on its success in its Ethiopian campaign. RIHS Collection (RH1 X3 7669).

of General Ruggiero Santini, an allegedly heroic fighter in the Italo-Ethiopian War and the governor of Italy's colony of Somaliland.³³

Another business that tried to capitalize on the nationalistic enthusiasm aroused by the conflict in Africa was Woolworth. According to an article in the *Echo*, the committee that raised money for the Italian Red Cross in Providence's little Italy operated from an office that Woolworth let it use free of charge.³⁴

A further contribution to the survival of ethnic retailing came from the Italian-language programs of local radio stations. These programs were very popular in the interwar years among the members of an immigrant generation who could hardly understand English and were eager to listen to both Italian music and news from their native country. Merchants of Italian ancestry and producers of Italian-style consumer goods, usually food available only at neighborhood shops, were the main sponsors of these broadcasts. In the mid-1930s, for instance, Joseph Personeni and the Prince Macaroni Company took turns at sponsoring WPRO's *Italian Hour*, which included daily news from Italy. Effervescente Brioschi, a well-known Italian soft drink, sponsored an Italian-language program on WSAR, its sponsorship explained as a way of thanking that beverage's consumers. Soap operas like *Le avventure di Frichino* (Frichino's adventures) on WEAN were sponsored by Medaglia d'Oro coffee, while a competitive product, Old Dutch coffee, advertised itself as "Italian-style roasted coffee" on the *Italian Hour* on WPRO. Thus the airwaves were flooded with appeals urging Italian Americans to practice ethnic-oriented consumption, and these appeals encouraged them—sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly—to patronize neighborhood shops rather than chain stores.³⁵

This, however, does not mean that Italian Americans did not shop at chain or department stores at all. After all, those stores—especially the latter—often had an attractiveness that neighborhood ethnic shops could not match. For instance, one young girl, Antonetta Filippone, developed a sort of infatuation with the Outlet Company, but it was an attraction that did not necessarily result in actual shopping and purchases; "when I was a youngster," she recalled, "I used to love to go there just to ride the elevators."³⁶

In addition, a few Italian Americans themselves got involved in the operation of chain stores. In 1941, for example, Vincent Lucreziano established a small chain, named Colonial Food Stores, with one store on Balbo Avenue and three on Atwells Avenue. Unlike the A&P or the First National Stores, which catered to the general public, Lucreziano specialized in Italian-style products and primarily targeted his fellow ethnics. Colonial Food Stores were still advertising Prince Macaroni and Mazola olive oil as late as 1959. Even the typical American foods that the stores carried were the products of such Italian American companies as Del Monico, a producer of popcorn.³⁷

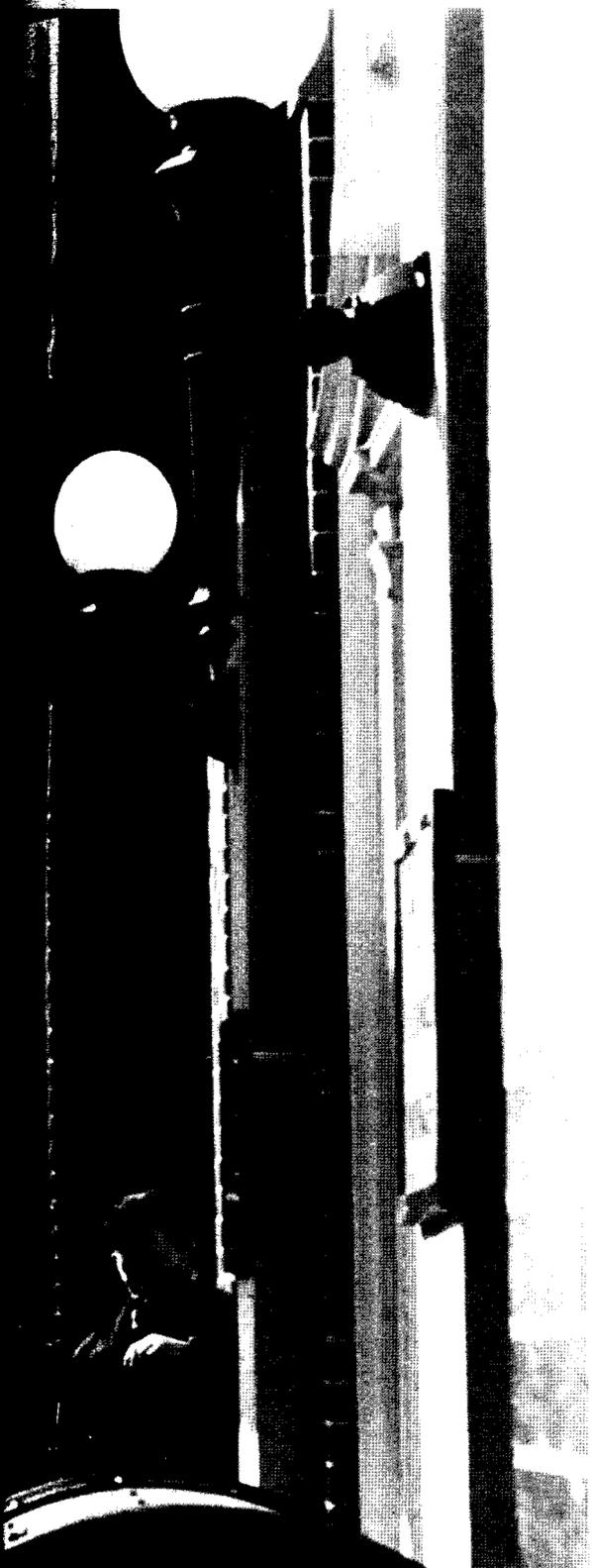
The participation of Providence's Italian Americans in the consumer culture of the interwar years did not come about through a demise of their ethnic identity, nor did it generally result in their Americanization. In fact, the persistence of ethnic awareness in Italian American shopping preferences helped neighborhood retailers survive despite the spread of chain and department stores. The community's ethnic shops did not die easily. After the outbreak of World War II suspended imports from Italy or made them particularly expensive, ethnic retailers sought to retain the patronage of their customers by turning to American-made substitutes for Italian products. This strategy saved their shops from yielding to the competition of chain stores and closing down. "I am pushing the domestic products now," said an Atwells Avenue storekeeper. "They are better packed and better in every way than the stuff we used to import. I find that many of my



Street scene on Federal Hill, 1943. Photo by longtime Federal Hill resident and photographer Carmel Vitullo.

customers like the stuff they are putting out here and I doubt if they will ever go back to imported products." Similarly, advertisements for local manufacturer Gaetano Del Rossi boasted in 1943 that "our macaroni and spaghetti are most popular and are served on the tables of more people than ever before in our history."³⁸

As late as June 1949 Italian Americans continued to crowd the Eastern Live Poultry Company, an Atwells Avenue store operated by Frank and Mike Antonelli, in order to



purchase eggs and chickens, although both could be had at First National Stores. As local historians Joe Fuoco and A. P. Lothrop have pointed out, “in those days nobody went to a supermarket for frozen fowl—it was unthinkable.” Indeed, neighborhood shops were still so lively in Providence’s main Italian American neighborhood in 1949 that the Federal Hill Businessmen’s Association, which had not met since the outbreak of World War II, resumed its activities that year.³⁹

But the Italian Americans’ patronage of ethnic shops did not last much longer. In 1951 the *Providence Evening Bulletin* noted the closing of Frank Ventrone’s store and a number of other previously thriving ethnic shops on Federal Hill as residents of Providence’s little Italy began to move to the suburbs. By the end of the decade Stop & Shop had taken over Ruggeri’s, a longtime Italian American store on Atwells Avenue, and turned it into one of its own chain supermarkets.⁴⁰

According to a 1979 article on the Italian American neighborhood around Charles Street, “the small businessmen in the North End (and other neighborhoods) cannot compete with prices in discount stores and super-sized markets. The result of this competition can be seen in the large number of empty stores along Charles Street. Hopefully, they will not remain empty for much longer. By renewing the appearance of the commercial area, some of these stores may once again be opened, attracting people from the surrounding neighborhoods who may rediscover the personal services available only in small shops.”⁴¹

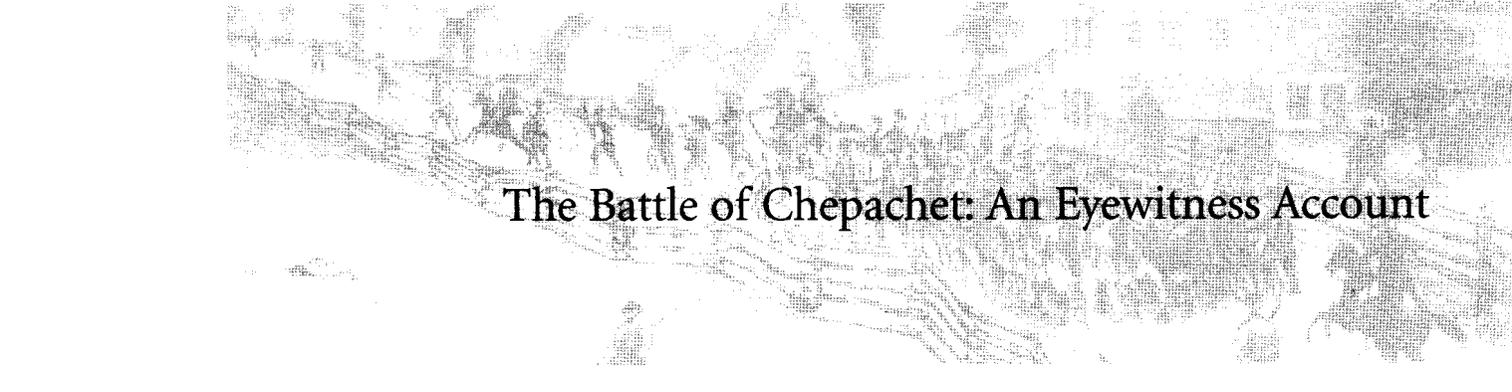
This wish has apparently been realized, at least in the case of Federal Hill. The Eastern Live Poultry Company, now named the Antonelli Poultry Company, is still in business, as are several other Italian American stores mentioned in the present article. Yet one can reasonably suggest that they have survived less as neighborhood stores serving Italian American residents than as ethnic attractions for visitors to a district that, like many other little Italys throughout the United States, has become one of what sociologist Jerome Krase calls “Ethnic Disneyland” or “Pompeian-like ruins,” retaining their Italian flavor primarily for tourists. After all, as Fuoco and Lothrop have noted, fewer than six thousand Italian Americans lived on Federal Hill at the end of the twentieth century, and although the Antonelli Poultry Company remained in business, its owner bore the distinctly un-Italian name of Chris Morris, and most of the store’s patrons were Hispanic.⁴²

Notes

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2. "The Italian Colony: Its Wonderful Growth in the Last Thirty Years," *Board of Trade Journal* (Providence) 22 (April 1910): 153, 156-57; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910: Population* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1913), 3:624; Joseph W. Sullivan, *Marxists, Militants & Macaroni: The I.W.W. in Providence's Little Italy* (Kingston, R.I.: Rhode Island Labor History Society, 2000). At a Socialist and IWW rally that helped precipitate the Macaroni Riots, speakers charged that wholesalers and retailers were putting foreign labels on domestic pasta as a way of raising prices. Sullivan, *Marxists*, 53.
3. Carmela E. Santoro, *The Italians in Rhode Island: The Age of Exploration to the Present, 1524-1989* (Providence: Rhode Island Heritage Commission and Rhode Island Publications Society, 1990), 4.
4. Andrew Heinze, *Adapting to Abundance: Jewish Immigrants, Mass Consumption, and the Search for American Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); Charles McGovern, "Consumption and Citizenship in the United States," in *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern, and Matthias Judt (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 37-58. For immigration restriction, see Robert A. Divine, *American Immigration Policy, 1924-1952* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 10-16; Marion T. Bennett, *American Immigration Policies: A History* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1963), 47-58. For Italian Americans' second generation, see Irving Child, *Italian or American? The Second Generation in Conflict* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943).
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8. *Providence Directory and Rhode Island State Business Directory*, 1920 (Providence: Sampson & Murdock, 1920), 871, 890-91; *ibid.*, 1930 (Providence: Sampson & Murdock, 1930), 1430, 1447-48. For department stores in Providence, see also John S. Gilkeson Jr., *Middle-Class Providence, 1820-1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 302, 305.
9. Paul L. Ladd, "Consumer Demand—The New Emphasis in Business," *Providence Magazine* 40 (March 1929): 116.
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14. Howard E. Aldrich and Roger Waldinger, "Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship," *Annual Review of Sociology* 16 (1990): 115; *L'Eco del Rhode Island*, 5 Sept. 1903, 10 Mar. 1921; *Italian Echo*, 28 June 1929, 11 Oct. 1935, 15

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 18. *L'Eco del Rhode Island*, 17 June 1920; *Il Corriere del Rhode Island*, 16 Oct. 1920; *L'Eco del Rhode Island*, 28 Oct. 1920; *Italian Echo*, 27 Mar., 3, 10 Apr. 1936, 17 Dec. 1937.
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 20. *L'Eco del Rhode Island*, 10, 18 Dec. 1920, 27 Jan. 1921, 26 Feb. 1925, 13 Oct. 1927; *Italian Echo*, 11, 25 Dec. 1936, 12, 26 Feb., 7, 14 May, 8 Oct. 1937.
 21. *L'Eco del Rhode Island*, 2 July 1925; *L'Eco d'America*, 13 June, 11 July, 19 Dec. 1941.
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The Battle of Chepachet: An Eyewitness Account

Introduced and edited by
JANE LANCASTER

Rhode Island, unlike most of the former British colonies, did not rewrite its constitution after the War of Independence, and thus it continued to be governed by its 1663 charter. The inequities that eventually resulted—a severely limited voting franchise and a badly apportioned legislature—gave rise to what has been called “the most important single event in Rhode Island history”—the Dorr Rebellion of 1841-42.¹

With the franchise based on the ownership of \$134 worth of freehold property, by 1840 only about 40 percent of the state’s white male population could vote. (Black property-owning men had lost their voting rights in the 1820s, and women, of course, were denied suffrage altogether.) Although population had shifted from southern Rhode Island to Providence and the new textile towns of the Blackstone Valley, legislative malapportionment allowed the General Assembly to be dominated by representatives of the state’s rural areas. Numerous efforts at constitutional reform, beginning in 1821, were all blocked by vested interests in the Assembly.

Distressed by their inability to bring about change, a number of reformers turned to the revolutionary notion of popular sovereignty to draft a “People’s Constitution” and secure its ratification in a popular referendum in December 1841. Voting under the provisions of the new document, in April 1842 an expanded electorate chose Thomas Wilson Dorr, a Harvard-educated lawyer and member of a wealthy and prominent Rhode Island family, as the state’s “People’s governor.” But the old Charterite government, headed by Governor Samuel Ward King, refused to step down, and Rhode Island found itself with two governors and two sets of officers.

Returning from an unsuccessful attempt to gain support from President John Tyler, Dorr was lionized in New York by Tammany Hall Democrats, who promised to send New York militiamen to Rhode Island to aid him and his cause if necessary. Emboldened by this pledge of support, and deciding that the time had come for a show of force, in the early hours of 18 May Dorr attempted to seize the state arsenal on Cranston Street in Providence. The attempt failed miserably when his old cannon refused to fire, and with his resort to arms alienating his moderate supporters, Dorr fled to Connecticut.

By late June several hundred of his firmest supporters had gathered in Chepachet, not far from the Connecticut border, and built barricades on Acote’s Hill, just outside the village. Dorr arrived in Chepachet on Saturday, 25 June, planning to reconvene the People’s Legislature. Meanwhile the Charterite government declared martial law, and there was great excitement in Providence. That Saturday banks and shops closed, and college rooms and church halls were used as assembly points for the militias, which arrived from all over the state by boat and train. By Sunday approximately 3,000 troops were assembled.² As one author described it, “the continual sounds of the fife and drum converted the usual quiet of that holy day into the ‘hubbub’ of martialled forces.”³

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William M. Rodman. Photograph, circa 1850.



Dorr supporters attempted to seize the state arsenal in Providence during the early morning hours of 18 May 1842. Drawing by Edward Lewis Peckham, 1842. RIHS Collection (RHi X3 2).

Dorr had only about 275 supporters at Chepachet, a very limited supply of ammunition, and almost no money in his war chest. On hearing of the 3,000 troops assembling in Providence, he disbanded his own forces and left once again for Connecticut.⁴

This is where William Rodman's story, transcribed below, begins.

William M. Rodman (1814-1868) was born into a Quaker family in Newport and educated at his father's school. He moved to Providence in 1830 when he was sixteen years of age. After completing his apprenticeship at E. C. and T. Wells, the city's leading tailors, he went into business as a merchant tailor and eventually opened a store on Westminster Street.⁵ Like other ambitious young men, he joined the Providence Marine Corps of Artillery, a locally prominent militia, where his talent for light verse made him the life and soul of many a convivial evening.⁶ An active participant in civic affairs, he served on the Providence school committee and city council, and as mayor of Providence from 1857 to 1859. In the 1860s he worked in the insurance business; at the time of his death on 11 December 1868, he was the secretary of the Firemen's Mutual Insurance Company of Providence.

According to Providence historian Welcome Arnold Greene, Rodman "was a man of more than ordinary ability. He possessed a poetic temperament, and was a ready writer both of prose and verse, and also a good public speaker. He had a great tact for public duties in general. As a man he was above reproach, and in private relations enjoyed universal esteem and regard."⁷

Appalled by the "mobocracy" of the Dorrites, in 1842 Rodman was firmly on the side of the Charterite regime. Serving as master clerk of the Providence Marine Corps of Artillery, which was one of the militias mobilized to counter the perceived threat posed by Dorr's return to Rhode Island in June 1842, Rodman penned the following eyewitness

account of the events at Chepachet and of the PMCA's role in that episode. His narrative appears in the PMCA Records, box 1, book 1, pages 62-68, in the Rhode Island Historical Society's manuscript collection.

WILLIAM M. RODMAN'S ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE OF CHEPACHET

Monday Morning June 27, 1842

By warrant, the Corps assembled this morning for dress parade at the Cadet Armory.⁸ The company having been formed and roll called, left the Armory, and formed a line upon Benefit Street. The order for dress review and parade, was then and there countermanded, and the Company was dismissed for thirty minutes, to afford the members an opportunity to prepare for active duty. The order being to march immediately for Chepachet, the Post of the insurgent Army.

At the appointed time the Corps again assembled, armed "cap a pie" and *all ready*.⁹ The Tumbrill was then packed—and the Ammunition Cart duly supplied.¹⁰ All things being announced as ready, we were ordered to leave the Armory and form a line on Benefit Street—we were there joined by the 1st Light Infantry, and other bands of military from different portions of the state, mustering for the whole batallion about 500 under the direction of Col. William W. Brown.¹¹ Our Corps leading the extreme right, the whole battalion took up its line of march, and proceeded up Benefit St, down Church Street, up North Main St., thence over smith's to fruit hill direct, where we arrived about noon—The whole battalion here halted at the residence of Mr. Fisher, and on the surrounding grounds, the commissarys of the different companys served out such food as the state had procured for them. The repast finished, the battalion formed and proceeded on their march to Greenville, where they arrived at seven o'clock P.M., where quarters were taken for the night. Guards were stationed at the several roads, from the different companies. The quarters of the Marine Artillery being the Tavern in the town. Soon after we arrived it commenced raining violently and continued with but little intermission, until midnight. Notwithstanding the severity of the weather, the whole of our Company were on duty, as guards, exposed to all the ferocity of the storm.—At 12 aclock orders were receiv'd by Col. Brown, to march immediately to Chepachet, the head quarters of the insurgents. The Baggage Waggon having been packed, the drum beat, the battalion formed at 2 oclock; and at about 3¹/₂ aclock commenced its march, "through mud and mire, through rain and mist" for the fortifications of Dorr; Little worthy of record occurred along the road, excepting the constant capture of prisoners, a set of men apparently as forsaken by heaven, as they proved to have been by their leaders in rebellion, until we reached within a quarter of a mile of the enemys camp. The Batallion was then order'd to halt, in the rear of a hill which stood between us and Dorrs fortifications, while the Col. reconnoiter'd the advance posts. During this pause, for some trivial affront a private in the Company of Rhode Island volunteers from Portsmouth, deliberately shot his brother in law, a Mr Gould, through the head, who expired almost immediately.¹² (The individuals name was Barker, and he was evidently deranged. He was badly wounded by those immediately around him; but he will doubtless recover, though wildly insane.) While marching from Greenville toward the encampment of Dorr we heard at irregular intervals the roar of Cannon, which we naturally supposed to be the guns of the enemy, firing upon the batallion which had proceeded by another route under Command of Gen. Steadman, but which proved to be the firing of blank cartridges from Dorrs fort, for the purpose of intimidating the troops.¹³

The colonel after proceeding far up the road and meeting with no obstacles, returned and order'd us to proceed: whereupon the battallion marched, in an uninterrupted course, directly to the fort. The advance guard were the first to enter it. They were of the 1st Light Infantry. The members of our Corps not being allowed, to scout, being Artillery; one or two of them however were with the advance guard when they entered the fortifications.

Colonel Brown then mounted the rampart, and exclaimed, "three cheers for Rhode Island," which was heartily responded to by the whole batallion. Simultaneous with the shout of triumph from the fort, came a cry of "help" from the village, situated just below the fortifications. Col. Brown was hailed from the batallion, by members of *our* company, and by *them* informed of the danger in the village—Standing upon the embankment of the fort on the hilltop, he called aloud "Infantry! To the Rescue"—The Infantry immediately started at double quick time from the rear of the column, and were instantly joined by our Company, which with its Guns and Ammunition Cart, rushed into the Village—The two Companies instantly surrounded the Tavern, where the assailing rebels had taken refuge, and after the passing of one or two pistol shots, (the *exact* acc't of which seems to be difficult) the prisoners were secured save one who took flight across a field. He was order'd to stand, but refused to do so, whereupon Lieut. Tower order'd his platoon to fire, which order was promptly obey'd, but the prisoner was not taken, he having succeeded in secreting himself in the dense foliage of a tangled braken; this scene over, the Col. ordered the remains of the column march into the village.¹⁴ A national salute was then fired by our Company, from the brass pieces, which made the hills and valleys echo with the glad notes of joy—joy for the triumph of law over misrule, and mobocracy—joy, for the victory of truth over error—joy, for the safety of our institutions, our lives, our privileges, our kindred and our homes.¹⁵

The remainder of the day was spent in searching every nook and corner of the rebel camp and its environs, for arms ammunitions and utensils of war—The first place search'd by our Company was the Fort, were there found balls—slugs, axes, pikes, &c &c, together with a letter, directed to "Samuel Mathewson," which may be seen in the Armory framed.

During the day scouting expeditions were on the run in all directions, and scarcely one returned without some substantial evidence of the bloody intentions of the rebels. Swords, Pikes, Dirks, Guns & Powder, were found in abundance. Packed under, and in beds, wrapped up in womens under clothes, stored away in all places, yet all ready for immediate use.¹⁶ Wandering through the dense woods, a scouting party discovered and brought to our quarters (the house of Pardon Hunt) a fine new tent of large dimensions marked "W. B."—¹⁷

This was signal success; others went forth and ere night fall our prizes numbered "Eight good tents." The Guns &c were all brought down from the Fort to the village by order. After their removal, all that remained in the fort, such as Hay, charcoal, shantys &c—were fired and consumed.

Thus passed an eventful day. At night some quartered in the tents, which were pitched in the yard of P. Hunt (a portion of the Company was on guard duty through the night, watching prisoners, and property) and a part with the officers in the House.

In addition to the Tents, mentioned in the foregoing paragraph, many muskets, pistols, swords, Drums, and Powder, together with a large nine pound, iron Gun, strongly limbered, were found by members of our Company and brought to the camp.

The morning of the next day brought our orders for our return march. Early the note for preparation was sounded, and our camp presented an animated scene. The spoils of

victory, consisting of the Baggage Waggon, and six iron pieces, taken from Dorrs Camp, together with powder, balls, Tents, pikes &c &c, were all placed in a line—The prisoners, to the number of about 140 were safely secured. All things being ready the batallion formed, our company occupying our former position, the *right* of the column.

Leaving the Village, we marched directly to Greenville, by the same road that we proceeded to Chepachet.

Our march to Greenville was unaccompanied by anything worthy of remark, save the munificent supply of refreshments, presented to us by Mr John Weld, a resident farmer on the road.¹⁸

Arrived at Greenville, and halted on the plain in front of the church. The prisoners were placed in the church, and guarded.

Refreshments were then served to all by the commissaries to their respective companies, and to the prisoners, all sharing *exactly alike*.¹⁹

Dinner over, the batallion again formed in order, and proceeded directly for Providence. An incident occurred during our march of a painful and alarming character—a pistol falling from the belt of a member of the Corps, struck a stone with sufficient force to explode the cap, which discharged the piece and lodged its contents in the person of L H Arnold. He fell into the quartermasters arms.²⁰ Surgeons were in immediate attendance, who expressed great fears that the wound would soon terminate his life. The ball, having apparently pierced his vitals—he was left with the physicians, at a neighbouring house, and the line moved on again in order, though with saddened and depressed hearts, causing them to feel little sympathy with the shouts of gladness and joy about to break upon them as they entered the City—As we entered the City we were greeted by the whole

The Capture of Acote Hill and the Sacking of the Village of Chepachet, 1842. Drawing by Henry Lord, who was taken as a prisoner of war by Charterite troops. RIHS Collection (RH*i* X3 107).



body of City guards by whom we were escorted through high, down Westminster St to the bridge—Then up N. Main St. to St Johns Church, where they left us, taking with them our Army of Captives, and proceeding directly to the gaol.

The companies comprising the batallion, then separated and marched to their respective quarters, provided for them by the state authorities, with the *exception of our own and the first Light Infantry who repaired to Smiths Hill, from whence our Company fired a full salute of twenty six guns, in honor of the triumph of law, over wild and mad ambition, over the plans and schemes of one whose only attribute of greatness, is an indomitable will.

[*Added at the bottom of the page:*] *The whole battalion went up. The above is wrong.

After the firing of the salute, the Corps marched to the Cadet Armory, partook of refreshments and dismissed; to retire once more to our respective homes, there to enjoy that peace and repose, so grateful to the weary, and which perhaps, never before, were we all so fully prepared to call blessed.

The streets of the City of Providence, through the whole period of her history, never presented so animated a scene, as they did on the day of our return. It seem'd like the triumphal occasions of the ancients. Her whole military brigade of "City Guards" were in waiting to receive us, as we entered the city: and strangely did their appearance contrast with that of our returning soldiery—They embodied neatness, not concentrated *dirt*—They fresh as the early morning, we weary as declining day—We entered the City from Olneyville and paraded down High, and Westminster Streets as before stated.

Brilliant was the spectacle, which old Westminster presented. From the side walk to the house tops, all was life, aye, life in its most attractive forms—and with boquets and wreaths, only excelled in beauty by their own personal attractions, they literally smothered the advancing columns.

William M. Rodman, Master Clerk

Saturday Evening, July 2, 1842

The Corps assembled this evening at the Cadet Armory for drill.

The company having been formed and roll called, the remainder of the evening was passed in the manner assigned.

At 9¹/₂ a'clock the roll was called, and the Corps dismissed to meet on Monday morning in full dress for parade.²¹

William. M. Rodman, Q'Master

Monday July 4, 1842

Duly warned the Corps assembled this morning at the Cadet Armory in full uniform, and for the first time for a series of years, left the Armory for Parade in full dress.

The uniform, Scarlet Cap, trimmed with Brass—Black fountain plume, with scarlet tips—Blue coat trimmed with scarlet, with scarlet Epaulets and white pantaloons. Black belts. Cartouch box &c.²²

Our Corps together, with the other bodies of military of the city, having formed a batallion, marched through the principal streets to Smiths hill, where we were receiv'd by the Gov. after which the batallion was formed into solid column, when, from a rostrum

erected for the purpose, Dr. Wayland offered a prayer, full of noble and patriotic thought, and humble thankfulness.²³ The prayer concluded, John Whipple burst upon us with a full tide of fulsome flattery, and promiscuous praises, telling us, that as soldiers of the Rhode Island line “You have covered yourselves all over with glory.”²⁴

Tis true the soldiers, all have perform’d their duty manfully—nobly—in rescuing their state from the hands of ruthless demagogueism, and deserved, among the most deserving stood our band of good marines, still we could not but feel that Mr. Whipple stepped over the mark of true discretion.

The review over, we marched from the hill, up N Main, down Benefit—up S. Main streets to Market Square, where the column was broken, and the different companies paraded at will.

The Corps then proceeded up N Main, up Meeting street, to Benefit, pausing in front of Gov. Arnolds residence.²⁵ The object of this, was that Colonel Nightingale on behalf of the Corps, should call on our wounded fellow soldier, L. H. Arnold Jr.—²⁶ Having learned that he was rapidly recovering, the Company united heartily, in three loud cheers for Mr. Arnold. We then proceeded directly to the Armory and dismissed.

William M. Rodman, Master Clerk.

Notes

1. Patrick T. Conley, “Popular Sovereignty or Public Anarchy? America Debates the Dorr Rebellion,” *Rhode Island History* 60 (2002): 71.
2. Estimates of the number of Charterite troops mustered vary: Welcome Arnold Greene, *The Providence Plantations for Two Hundred and Fifty Years* (Providence: J. A. & R. A. Reid, 1886), 84, says “some three thousand,” as does the anonymous author of *The History of the State of Rhode Island* (Philadelphia: Hoag, Wade & Co., 1878), 42; William G. McLoughlin, *Rhode Island: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 135, says “twenty-five hundred strong”; Patrick T. Conley, introduction to *The Broadides of the Dorr Rebellion*, by Russell J. DeSimone and Daniel C. Schofield (Providence: Rhode Island Supreme Court Historical Society, 1992), 10, says “almost 3,500 armed troops.” Black residents shrewdly volunteered to help protect the city. For their loyalty to the Charterite regime, blacks had their suffrage restored in the new state constitution drafted later in 1842.
3. *History of the State of Rhode Island*, 42.
4. Dorr spent his ensuing exile in New Hampshire, from where he returned to Providence on 31 October 1843. Convicted of high treason against

the state, he was sentenced to hard labor, in solitary confinement, for the remainder of his life. After a year in the state prison, during which a vigorous campaign was waged for his liberation, he was released in June 1845. He died in 1854.

Accounts of the Dorr Rebellion include Arthur May Mowry, *The Dorr War* (Providence: Preston & Rounds, 1901); Marvin E. Gettleman, *The Dorr Rebellion: A Study in American Radicalism, 1833-1849* (New York: Random House, 1973); Patrick T. Conley, “The Dorr Rebellion and Its Legacy,” in *Democracy in Decline: Rhode Island’s Constitutional Development, 1776-1841* (Providence: Rhode Island Historical Society, 1977), 309-79, and “No Tempest in a Teapot: The Dorr Rebellion in National Perspective,” *Rhode Island History* 50 (1992): 67-100; and Joyce M. Botelho, *Right and Might: The Dorr Rebellion and the Struggle for Equal Rights* (Providence: Rhode Island Historical Society, 1992). William G. McLoughlin provides a perceptive overview of the conflict in his *Rhode Island: A History*, 126-37. Though short-lived, the Dorr Rebellion provoked an outpouring of print; the Brown University library catalog lists 267 items relating to the event, most of them contemporary with the rebellion.

Notes continued

5. According to the *Providence Directory*, in 1841 Rodman was employed as a clerk working at 6, the Arcade, and living in the Mansion House; by 1844 he had a tailor shop in partnership with Daniel Martin and Sullivan Moulton at 9, the Arcade, and was living in the Franklin House. By 1850 Martin was no longer a part of the business.
6. The Providence Marine Corps of Artillery was founded in 1801 by a group of Providence merchants and sea captains concerned by incoming president Thomas Jefferson's decision to cut naval expenditures. The organization was formed, as its incorporating charter stated, "for the purpose of improving in the use of cannon, and in the tactics employed in the attack and defense of ships and batteries." Until the charter was amended in 1830, all PMCA officers had to be members of the Providence Marine Society, a provision that effectively meant that they were all ships' captains. But the PMCA never served as a marine artillery, and it was at the 1842 Battle of Chepachet that it saw its first field service.
7. Welcome Arnold Greene, *Providence Plantations*, 104. Apart from the quoted sentences, the rest of Greene's account of Rodman in this volume also appears verbatim in Rodman's obituary in the *Providence Daily Journal*, 12 December 1868.
8. The Cadet Armory was on Benefit Street, but it should not be confused with the present PMCA armory, which was erected in 1843 two hundred feet south of its present position. The latter armory was moved in 1906 to make way for the East Side railroad tunnel. At the time of the Dorr Rebellion, the PMCA usually drilled at the Providence Arcade.
9. Literally "head to foot," *cap a pie* also describes a type of medieval body armor.
10. The PMCA supplied two field pieces and 89 muskets for the attack on Chepachet. Greene, *Providence Plantations*, 180.
11. The First Light Infantry, which was founded in 1818, had an armory in Providence on Meeting Street west of Benefit Street. William Waterman Brown (1806-1887) was a Providence merchant with a business address on Long Wharf and a residence on Westminster Street.
12. Lt. Robert Gould (circa 1818-28 June 1842) is buried in Middletown. The other person killed during the Dorr Rebellion was Alexander Kelby (circa 1801-27 June 1842), a bystander who was killed by a militiaman's stray bullet in Pawtucket, which was then in Massachusetts. It has been claimed that no one in Rhode Island lost his life in the war, but this, it would seem, is not accurate.
13. Gen. John B. Steadman (1813-1899) is buried in River Bend Cemetery, Westerly.
14. Augustus M. Tower (?-1864) was born in Newport. He served as colonel of the PMCA in 1845-46 and as a lieutenant in PMCA colonel Charles H. Tompkins's First Battery in the Civil War. He was working in the U.S. Treasury Department at the time of his death from consumption.
15. A national salute consists of as many guns as there are states in the Union. There were twenty-six states in 1842.
16. According to Welcome Arnold Greene, Dorr "had not ammunition sufficient to continue an active combat for half an hour." *Providence Plantations*, 84.
17. Pardon Hunt (circa 1786-1848) is buried in a family cemetery just off Putnam Pike in Glocester, presumably on the grounds of his house.
18. John D. Weld (circa 1804-1882).
19. Although this may be true, martial law remained in effect for almost six weeks, during which time local militia forces arrested about three hundred Dorr supporters, some of whose homes and some of whose stores were ransacked. The search of Luther Borden's home in Warren led to a United States Supreme Court case, *Luther v. Borden*. See Botelho, *Right and Might*, 48-54, for the poor conditions endured by many of the prisoners.
20. In 1842 Lemuel Hastings Arnold Jr. (1823-1894)—the son of Lemuel H. Arnold of Kingston, governor of Rhode Island from 1831 to 1833—was a clerk living at Providence's Mansion House, which was Rodman's residence as well. By 1844 both young men had moved to the Franklin House. As Rodman described himself as "Q'Master" in his 2 July entry in the PMCA minutes, it would seem that it was into Rodman's arms that the young Arnold fell.
21. Nonattenders at drill were fined. In 1814 the PMCA had added a new bylaw requiring that the roll be called not only at the beginning of a meeting but also at a later, unspecified time, a measure taken to prevent the crafty from slipping away.
22. During its early years the PMCA was preoccupied with its dress uniform. The uniform in 1842 sounds not dissimilar from the one proposed in 1808, namely, "Round black hat—black Cockade ornamented with the figure of a fowl Anchor—mettle gilt—Blue broad Cloth out side Jacket without skirts with lappels ornamented with Gold Lace & appropriate Buttons—Red broad Cloth Waistcoat single Brested ornamented with gold Lace & 3 Rows Buttons—Blue brd Cloth Pantaloons welted with Red ornaments as before—White Stockings & black shoes—White Shirt ruffled at the Bosom only—Black Collars." Report of Committee on Uniform and Equipment, 2 May 1808, scrapbook A (1801-1861), PMCA Records, Rhode Island Historical Society.
23. The Reverend Francis Wayland (1796-1865) was the fourth president of Brown University, where he served from 1827 until his retirement in 1855. A nationally known Baptist and moral philosopher, in politics he was a conservative Whig. Although he supported the extension of suffrage, he was a firm believer in law and order, and thus he opposed Dorr.
24. John Whipple (1784-1866) was a Providence attorney. According to Patrick T. Conley, he was "Rhode Island's foremost legal craftsman of the era." *Democracy in Decline*, 250.
25. The *Providence Directory* listed former governor Lemuel H. Arnold as a merchant with business premises "over 27 South Water" in 1841 and at 31 South Water in 1844.
26. George Corlis Nightingale (1812-1892) took command of the corps in 1841. Born and raised in Warwick, he began work as a clerk for a commission merchant at age thirteen and later became a prosperous manufacturer and bank director. After the Dorr Rebellion some ladies of Providence who were "ever appreciative of true gallantry" presented him with an elegant sword as a memorial to "the days that tried men's souls." Adjutants Records, Veteran Association, 1887-1908, pp. 97-101, PMCA Records.