

RHODE ISLAND HISTORY

SUMMER / FALL 2017 VOLUME 75, NUMBER 2





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On the cover:

George Washington descending the steps of the Colony House.

Washington came to Newport in March 1781 to confer with Rochambeau.

(Woodcut by Newport artist Edith Ballinger Price from Daniel P. Titus Collection.)

Welcome Arnold Esq.

Welcome Arnold Esq.

Sir, I expect some Cocoa to
Arrive from Coreso Every Day Will you be so kind as
to Lend me One Thousand pounds w^t of Chocolate as soon
as Cole & Grey makes it, and in case I Dont Return the
Chocolate in One Month to pay you the Cash at ~~off~~

Your Complying Will Oblige D^y,

th
November 14. 1786

John Brown

Chasing Chocolate: Chocolate's Voyage from Mesoamerica to Colonial Rhode Island

GERALYN DUCADY

This year the Rhode Island Historical Society is celebrating Rhode Island's food history through our programming theme, "Relishing Rhode Island." In keeping with this topic, GERALYN DUCADY, Director of the Newell D. Goff Center for Education and Public Programs, has shared some of her research on chocolate in colonial Rhode Island.

IN ANCIENT MESOAMERICA CHOCOLATE WAS TAKEN AS A DRINK, cold or at room temperature. The fruit of the plant *Theobroma Cacao* is the cacao pod; inside the pod is a fleshy, sweet substance and a number of cacao beans. It is those beans which are processed and used to make chocolate. *Theobroma Cacao*, meaning "food of the gods," was so-called by taxonomist Linnaeus whose contemporaries indeed thought this delicacy must be of the gods. Ancient Mesoamericans, too, thought chocolate to be a gift from the gods. The Maya left us with books on bark paper called codices, and within them we find references to the importance of cacao beans in rituals. ¶

“Central Falls... was named ‘Chocolateville,’ or ‘Chocolate Mills,’ until ‘Central Falls’ became official in 1824.”

The Dresden Codex claims that the maize god’s sustenance was cacao. The cacao tree was also sacred since, according to the Popol Vuh, when the maize god was sacrificed by the Underworld lords, he was reborn when his head was placed in a cacao tree.¹

The word “chocolate” can be traced back to the Aztec word “*xocolatl*,” which refers to the bitter drink. After cacao beans were removed from the fruit, they were dried, and roasted. Then the hulls were removed through winnowing, ground with a *mano* and heated *metate* over coals, and made into a drink. The drink was not at all like the hot chocolate we enjoy today. Pure chocolate is bitter and gritty, although even in ancient times it would be flavored with vanilla or chili pepper. Cacao beans were also used as a form of currency by the ancient Maya (money *can* grow on trees!). Its value, coupled with its association with the gods, meant that this delicacy was reserved for the elite and was a vital part of rituals and ceremonies, including weddings.²

Chocolate made its way to Europe and North America by way of the slave trade. North Americans began drinking it in the 1660s, soon after England acquired its own chocolate plantations in Jamaica in 1655. Processed chocolate was brought to North America first through Boston. By 1682, chocolate beans were imported into

Boston, marking the beginning of chocolate production in the colonies.³ Rhode Island’s economy at the time relied heavily on the “triangle trade” in which Africans were taken from the west coast of Africa and shipped to the Caribbean to work on plantations, including chocolate plantations. Rhode Island merchants in Providence, Newport, and Bristol found fortune sponsoring slave voyages, outfitting slave ships, and sending goods such as cod fish and candles to the slave plantations in the West Indies. Chocolate’s voyage from Mesoamerica to colonial Rhode Island was a part of this brutal history.

Documents and objects in the Rhode Island Historical Society collections attest to the production, sale, and consumption of chocolate in eighteenth-century Rhode Island. A 1786 letter from John Brown to Welcome Arnold, both elite merchants, notes a shipment of chocolate. The letter reads,

Welcome Arnold Esq. I expect some Cocoa to Arrive from Coreso⁴ Every Day Will you be so kind as to lend me one thousand pounds w/ of Chocolate as soon as Cole Olney makes it, and in case I Don’t Return the Chocolate in One Month to pay you the Cash at [office]. Your Complience will Oblighth. John Brown. November 14th, 1786.⁵

Chocolate traveled from the Caribbean in bean form, and the beans had to be milled once in Rhode Island. Some Rhode Islanders roasted and ground their beans at home or purchased the nibs. Some people made a nib tea rather than have a full chocolate drink. It was also common to purchase a block of chocolate that was ready to melt into the drink.

Two prominent eighteenth-century Rhode Island slave merchants were Obadiah Brown of Providence (John Brown’s uncle) and Aaron Lopez of Newport. Brown owned a watermill to grind the cocoa beans he imported into chocolate. He distributed the chocolate through his store on the waterfront. Aaron Lopez of Newport was also involved in chocolate manufacture. In his

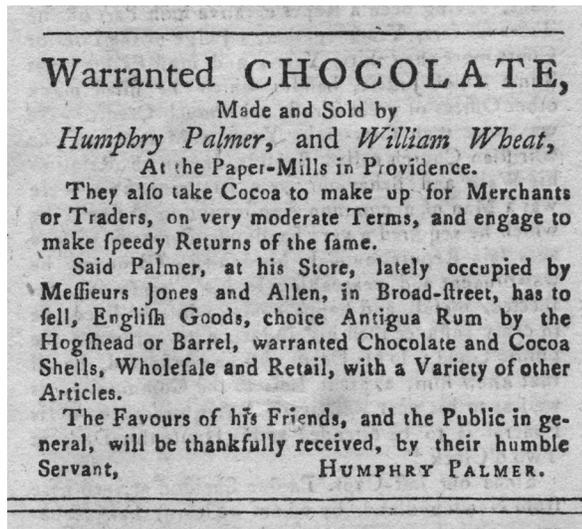
work, *The Colonial American Jew*, Jacob Marcus wrote about Lopez,

In Newport relatively large quantities of chocolate were prepared for Lopez by Negroes whose Jewish masters may have taught them the art of making the confection. Prince Updike, one of Lopez' Negro workers, ground thousands of pounds for the Newport merchant. He received five shillings for every pound he prepared, and one batch of cocoa which he turned into chocolate weighed over 5000 pounds. Another of the Negro craftsmen, a member of the cocoa-grinding Casey family, was so useful that when the man was thrown in jail for drunkenness, Lopez paid his fine and put him to work.⁶

Merchants in the North American colonies used slave labor in their shops, where enslaved people worked as chocolate grinders.⁷

As the ancient Maya consumed chocolate for ceremonies such as marriage, so did at least one Providence merchant. Chocolate was served at the wedding of John Brown's daughter, Abby, to John Francis in 1788.⁸ Abby's friend, Anna Bowen, writes about the occasion, "The ball was given at the new house which is almost finished...we danced above in both rooms, and a merrier crew, I never laughed with. We behaved decorum until about eleven and then we set down to a good substantial supper of meats and chocolate. After which somebody proposed an entout Jigg."⁹ This letter gives us a glimpse into some of chocolate's social uses. Cacao contains caffeine, and a drink of higher cacao content would have more caffeine in it than in today's chocolate bars. In the eighteenth century, people imbibed chocolate in the morning, and during special occasions such as at Abby's wedding, since it was a stimulant.¹⁰

Chocolate was also taken on journeys and was a part of soldiers' packs from the time of the Aztecs, in colonial America, and today, due to its caloric nature.¹¹ In 1816, John Brown Francis, John Brown's grandson, explored John Brown's tract of land in the Adirondacks. Before setting out another time (September 21), Francis makes note of the provisions that were packed:



An advertisement for "warranted" (or guaranteed pure) chocolate sold in Providence. William Wheat later opened a chocolate water-power mill along the Blackstone River in what is now known as Central Falls. The area was nicknamed "Chocolateville" for a time. *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, July 9, 1774.

20 pounds of hard bread besides one loaf of soft, 15 pounds of pork, three pounds of sugar, one pound of chocolate, ½ pound of tea, raw onions, fireworks, axe, 3 qts of whiskey & blankets compose our packs...¹²

The chocolate had been provided by Mrs. Post, "hearing of my distress for that article."¹³ Perhaps this tasty, caffeinated drink gave travelers energy on their journeys.

Around the end of the eighteenth century, advertisements proliferated for chocolate and coffee houses where men would gather to discuss business.¹⁴ A *Providence Gazette* advertisement from April 1, 1786, informed the public that Metcalf Bowler:

Intends opening a coffee-room next week, at the sign of the Queen's head, on the West Side of the Bridge, by the Name of the Providence Coffee-House, for the Accommodation of the Gentlemen of the Town and Country; where Coffee, Tea, Chocolate, and the best of Liquors, will be in constant Readiness, from Morning until Night, and diligent Attendance given.¹⁵

This advertisement gives us a peek into the social life of the gentlemen of Providence and chocolate's association with other popular drinks of



Coffee pots were also used for serving chocolate as a drink. This coffee pot dates to around the 1790s. (From the Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society, Museum Collection, 19461.1.3A-B, RHiX17 2899).

the time. An advertisement from March 24, 1786, reveals that chocolate was sold amongst other items such as wine, almonds, oil, lavender, raisins, rum, molasses, etc. Cocoa was sold by the bag, indicating it was likely in bean form and arrived at the wharf not yet processed as mentioned above.¹⁶ Although coffee, tea, and chocolate were sister beverages in colonial life, their popularity changed over time, with coffee becoming most popular in North America and chocolate drink soaring during the British tax on tea.¹⁷ It was also believed that chocolate had medicinal powers and was used as a home remedy.¹⁸

Along with the new interest in coffee, tea, and chocolate, utensils and vessels to imbibe and serve them were created and sold, such as silver and porcelain tea pots, coffee pots, chocolate pots, sugar bowls, and cream pots. We have a few examples of chocolate-related items in our collections at the Rhode Island Historical Society. The one pictured here is on view at the John Brown House Museum and is called a lighthouse coffee pot. They had the dual use of serving coffee or hot chocolate.¹⁹ Some

chocolate pot covers had a hinged or removable finial for a *molinnet* (or *molinillo*), used to stir the drink. Chocolate had to be frequently stirred to keep its consistency.²⁰

A July 9, 1774, notice from Humphry Palmer and William Wheat advertising the sale of chocolate and cocoa shells from their store, reads:

Warranted Chocolate, Made and Sold by Humphry Palmer, and William Wheat, at the Paper-Mills in Providence. They also take Cocoa to make up for Merchants or Traders, on very moderate terms, and engage to make speedy Returns of the same. Said Palmer, at his Store, lately occupied by Messieurs Jones and Allen, in Broad-street, has to sell, English Goods, choice Antigun Rum by the Hogshead or Barrel, warranted Chocolate and Cocoa Shells, Wholesale and Retail, with a Variety of other Articles. The Favours of his Friends, and the Public in general, will be thankfully received, by their humble Servant, Humphrey Palmer.²¹

Cocoa shells could also be steeped in hot water to make a bitter, stimulating drink, without the fat and was popular among the elite.²² William Wheat later established a chocolate mill near the Blackstone River in 1780 in what is now known as Central Falls. In fact, the area was named "Chocolateville," or "Chocolate Mills," until "Central Falls" became official in 1824. Industrializing the milling of chocolate made it less expensive and more available to those in lower social classes. The mill building was damaged in an 1807 flood and the remaining traces were removed by 1834. The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council created a Chocolate Mill Overlook park that opened in 2012 where the dam built for the mill can still be seen, but the foundation of the mill building lies under two plats of private property.²³

Chocolate production went into a quick decline in Rhode Island and the rest of New England when more lucrative business ventures proliferated in the Industrial Revolution. Textile production won out over cacao's shipping and chocolate's manufacturing expenses.²⁴ But fear

not, chocolate production expanded again in the twentieth century in the form we know and, many of us love today. ♡

Geralyn Ducady, Director of the Newell D. Goff Center for Education and Public Programs at the Rhode Island Historical Society, has a background in archaeology and anthropology, and she has done some work in Belize, Central America. She was excited to trace chocolate's Central American origins and to follow it overseas to colonial New England and Rhode Island.

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From Dangerous Threat to “Illustrious Ally”: Changing Perceptions of Catholics in Eighteenth-Century Newport

JOHN F. QUINN

THROUGHOUT THE COLONIAL ERA, RHODE ISLAND WAS WELL-KNOWN as a safe haven for religious minorities.¹ The colony had no established church and its 1663 charter promised “a full liberty in religious concernments.”² It was especially appealing to those in neighboring Massachusetts and Connecticut who could not accept orthodox Puritan doctrines. For Puritan leaders like Cotton Mather, however, this mixing of “such a variety of *religions* together on so small a plot of ground” was “exceeding[ly] lamentable,” and led him and other ministers to regard Rhode Island as the “sewer of New England.”³ While Providence, Portsmouth and Warwick all had dissidents in their midsts, Newport was the Rhode Island town that attracted and accepted the widest variety of faiths. In the 1650s, Quakers established themselves in Newport and organized annual meetings there at the very time that Massachusetts was strictly forbidding their entrance on pain of death.⁴ ¶

Trinity Church, the Anglican parish in Newport, was constructed in 1726. As there were no Catholic chapels in Newport during the American Revolution, Admiral Charles de Ternay was buried in a corner of Trinity’s graveyard that had been consecrated by Roman Catholic priests who traveled with the French army. (The photograph was taken in the 1970s, reprinted courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.)

Likewise, Jews settled in Newport without incident in the seventeenth century when anti-Semitism was widespread in much of New England.⁵ Newport was home as well to Congregationalists, Anglicans, a variety of Baptist factions and eventually even a contingent of Moravian Brethren.⁶ Yet few, if any, Catholics made their way into Newport in the colonial era and no priest resided in the town before the American Revolution.⁷

In the eighteenth century, Catholics became objects of intense suspicion in Newport and throughout all of New England in response to two wars that set Protestants against Catholics. In the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688, Parliament overthrew King James II, who was a fervent Catholic, and offered the throne to his Anglican relatives, William and Mary.⁸ In the years following, Maryland and Rhode Island moved to disenfranchise Catholics while the Carolinas forbade Catholics from public worship.⁹ In the 1750s anti-Catholicism flared up again with the outbreak of the French and Indian War, which pitted the English and the colonists against the Catholic French and their Catholic Indian allies. While new punitive measures were taken against Catholics in some colonies in the 1760s, the colonists’ attitudes towards Catholics became much more positive after the start of the American Revolution. For Newport’s residents, the alliance with France and the arrival of

thousands of French troops in their town would lead many of them to reconsider their attitudes toward Catholics and the Church of Rome.

Newport at Midcentury

In the first decades of the eighteenth century, Newport rose to become one of the top five colonial seaports, along with New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Charleston, and its population had reached 4,600 by 1730.¹⁰ The town was a center for trading spermaceti candles, rum, furniture, and not least, enslaved Africans. The historian Elaine Crane regards the slave trade as a crucial part of Newport’s economy, noting that by 1770, more than seventy percent of the slave ships coming to the colonies landed in Newport.¹¹

Newport was also gaining renown as an intellectual center. In 1730 the philosopher George Berkeley helped to establish a Literary and Philosophical Society in Newport. Berkeley returned to Ireland in 1731, but the society continued to meet for discussions and debates in the years following.¹² In the 1740s, two members of the group, Abraham Redwood, a Quaker, and Henry Collins, an Anglican, decided to establish a library. Founded in 1747, the library was named for Redwood because he contributed £500 for the purchase of its first books.¹³ From its earliest years, the library was truly an ecumenical enterprise with Aaron

South
End

Forever.



North
End

Forever.

Extraordinary VERSES on POPE-NIGHT.

Or, A Commemoration of the *Fifth of November*, giving a History of the Attempt, made by the *Papishes*, to blow up KING and PARLIAMENT, A. D. 1588. Together with some Account of the POPE himself, and his Wife JOAN; with several other Things worthy of Notice, too tedious to mention.

1 H UZZA! brave Boys, behold the Pope,
Pretender and Old-Nick;
How they together law their Heads.

15. If that his *deeden* Self could see
Himself so turn'd to Fun:
In Rage He'd tear out His

Lopez and several other Jewish merchants in Newport providing generous support.¹⁴

While Newport was flourishing economically and culturally, the religious enthusiasm that had defined many of its residents in the seventeenth century was fading.¹⁵ In 1740, George Whitefield, the famed Great Awakening evangelist, arrived in Newport after a highly successful tour of Georgia. While Whitefield attracted appreciative crowds throughout most of New England with his emotional, open-air preaching, he was disappointed in Newport.¹⁶ After three days of speaking before sizable congregations twice a day at the Anglican parish, Trinity Church, Whitefield remarked in his journal: "All I fear, place the Kingdom of God too much in meat and drink, and have an ill name abroad for running of goods." He concluded his entry with the following prayer for the people of Newport: "Lord Jesus give them to know thee, and the power of thy resurrection, and teach them to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."¹⁷

Whitefield's disappointing experience can be better understood by a study of Newport's demographics in these years. Ezra Stiles, a

This broadside depicts Pope's Night festivities in the 1760s. Wagons with effigies of the pope and the devil were wheeled around town and eventually burned as the crowds cheered. (South end forever cut North end forever. Extraordinary verses on Pope-night. or, A commemoration [of] the fifth of November, giving a history of the attempt, made by the papishes, to blow up king and Parliament, A. D. 1588...). Boston, 1768. Pdf. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/rbpe.03602800/>. (Accessed May 30, 2017).

learned Congregational minister who directed the Redwood Library and later served as president of Yale College, tried to estimate the religious makeup of the city in 1760 and again in 1770. The city's population had grown to eight thousand by this time, almost double what it had been thirty years earlier.¹⁸ In his survey of the residents, Stiles found a sizable number of Congregationalists, Baptists and Anglicans and a handful of Jews and Moravian Brethren, but the largest group by far were what he called "nothingarians"—people with no religious affiliation. A meticulous record keeper, Stiles calculated that approximately forty-two percent of Newporters were not associated with any denomination in 1770.¹⁹

“Fearing for their lives, Howard and Moffat boarded a British ship in Newport’s harbor. Neither man ever returned to Newport.”

Burning Tax Collectors and Popes

Newport’s drift towards “nothingarians” did not lead it to an acceptance of Catholics. In fact, the French and Indian War sparked new anti-Catholic legislation in Pennsylvania, New York and Maryland. Rhode Island, having already disenfranchised Catholics in 1719, did not pass any additional anti-Catholic statutes at this time, but John Burt, a prominent Rhode Island minister, took it upon himself to warn colonists about the threat posed by the Catholic French. Burt, pastor of the First Congregational Church in Bristol, employed apocalyptic imagery to denounce the French.²⁰ The French were to be seen as the children of the “Scarlet Whore, that Mother of Harlots, who is rightly the Abomination of the Earth... Their religion, repugnant to the Religion of Jesus Christ, divests them of all Humanity.”²¹ Newporters would likely have been familiar with Burt’s pronouncements on the French and the Catholic Church because his sermon was published in Newport by James Franklin, Jr., the editor of the *Newport Mercury*.²²

After the war’s end in 1763, the British government sought to recoup some of the debts it had incurred by imposing taxes on colonists, such as the Sugar Act and the Stamp Act. Although the duties were relatively light, angry colonists resisted these measures strenuously, especially in the port cities of Boston, Newport, New York, Philadelphia and Charleston.²³ Both opponents and defenders of the taxes often

drew on anti-Catholic images to express their political views. Martin Howard, Jr., a leader of an influential group of Tories known as the Newport Junto, used anti-Catholic allusions in his defense of Parliament’s authority over the colonies.²⁴ In February 1765, Howard published *A Letter from a Gentleman at Halifax, to His Friend in Rhode-Island* in Newport in which he sharply criticized many of his fellow colonists for their disdainful attitude to the British Crown:

It gives me great pain to see so much ingratitude in the colonies to the mother country, whose arms and money so lately rescued them from a *French* government. I have been told, that some have gone so far to say, that they would, as things are, prefer such a government to an *English* one... I ardently wish that these spurious, unworthy sons of *Britain* could feel the iron rod of a *Spanish* inquisitor... it would indeed be a punishment suited to their ingratitude.²⁵

Howard’s inflammatory letter sparked a pamphlet war in the weeks following its publication. Rhode Island’s governor, Stephen Hopkins, and a Boston politician, James Otis, Jr., wrote lengthy rejoinders. After Howard answered them dismissively, Otis followed with a savage attack on the Junto referring to Howard as “Martinus Scriblerus” and his associate Dr. Thomas Moffat, as “Dr. Small-brain” and “Dr. Murphy.” Otis claimed that Howard and his friends were the ones who sympathized with the French in the late war: “[T]hey were



in hopes to join *Te Deum*²⁶ with their French Catholic Brethren in the churches, chapels and meeting-houses of Boston, New-York and Newport. Upon all occasions during the war, they manifested their joy and exultation at any little success of the French—but kept vigils and severe fasts when they were drubbed.”²⁷ Otis then accused them of being Jacobites²⁸ as well:

He [Howard] is at no loss any ev’ning to find *some of his old gang*, who... have cracked many a bottle of true sterling to the health of J___m___y S___t²⁹...Such is the little, dirty, drinking, drabbing, contaminated knot of thieves, beggars and transports...and made up of Turks, Jews and other Infidels, with a few renegado Christians & Catholics, and altogether formed into a club of scarce a dozen, at N___p___t.³⁰

In August the conflict over the Stamp Act turned violent. In Boston, effigies of the city’s stamp commissioner, Andrew Oliver, and of other officials were paraded around town by a large, unruly crowd. Eventually the effigies were consigned to the flames to the delight of the spectators. Before the night was over, Oliver’s home and one of his commercial properties had been ransacked.³¹ A little more than a week later, a rowdy and largely drunken group of Newporters took to the streets in a similar fashion. Effigies of Howard, Moffat and Augustus Johnston, the town’s stamp commissioner, were carried around and then hung from a gallows before being set on fire. No doubt inspired by Otis’s

Solomon Southwick published the *Newport Mercury* from 1764–76. He was a staunch opponent of both the British Crown and “popery.” (Silhouette from *Printers and Printing in Providence, 1762–1907* [Providence: Providence Printing Company, 1907]).

tracts, the rioters attached to Moffat’s effigy a placard describing him as that “infamous... Jacobite Doctor Murphy.”³² By labeling Moffatt a Jacobite and giving him an Irish surname, the Newport protestors, like Otis, were attempting to tie him to Catholicism.³³

The following night the rioters, now armed with axes, attacked Howard’s home on Broadway: they “broke the Windows and Doors all to Pieces, damaged the Partitions of the House and ruined such Furniture as was left in it.”³⁴ They then walked a short distance and stormed Moffat’s house, slashing paintings and destroying his library and scientific equipment.³⁵ Fearing for their lives, Howard and Moffat boarded a British ship in Newport’s harbor. Neither man ever returned to Newport.³⁶

The Stamp Act Riots had much in common with the raucous and sometimes violent demonstrations which occurred in Newport each year on November 5th to mark Pope’s Day.³⁷ On that night a sizable gang of men and boys carried effigies of the pope and usually one of the devil and eventually threw them into a great bonfire that they had constructed for the occasion. The revelers were commemorating the 1605 Gunpowder Plot, the attempt by Guy Fawkes and several other Catholics to blow up the House of Lords, kill King James I and replace

him with a Catholic sovereign.³⁸ The ceremonies were also meant to celebrate William of Orange's landing in England which occurred on November 5, 1688.³⁹

While Boston had the most elaborate Pope's Day events, Newport's residents also commemorated the Gunpowder Plot with gusto.⁴⁰ The celebrations began in the 1730s and had become elaborate affairs by the mid-1760s, no doubt in response to the French and Indian War.⁴¹ In the 1860s, the *Newport Mercury* provided a detailed description of what the city's celebrations had been like a century earlier:

A great bonfire was established on the lower end of the main street ... Soon after dark, a rude stage ... placed on wheels and drawn by horses, made its appearance, on which was seated ... an effigy of the pope, hideously painted, and behind him stood another representing the Devil ... Two men with masks on their faces and fantastically attired, attended the grotesque figures ... One of these men was furnished with a pole, at the end of which a little basket was suspended in which to receive contributions for drinking the King's health, and the other man carried a small bell; the whole was surrounded with lanterns, and a crowd of men and boys sung the following:

*From Rome! From Rome the Pope has come,
All in 10,000 fears,
With fiery serpents all around
His head, nose, eyes and ears.*

*This is the treacherous dog that did contrive
To burn our King and Parliament alive;*

*God by His grace did this prevent,
And saved the King and Parliament*

*Now if you will a little money give
No longer shall the treacherous creature live
We'll burn his body from his head
And then we'll say the old dog's dead*

*Don't you hear my little bell go
chink-chink-chink?*

Give us a little money to buy a little drink.⁴²

The author went on to say that the entourage would go to the homes of the wealthy, ring the bell and put out their basket for a contribution. If the owner did not offer a donation, "the end of the pole was driven through the glass and the pageant proceeded to some other house amid the shouts and uproar of the crowd." When the parade ended, the pope's effigy was then tossed into the bonfire to great cheering. The author concluded by saying: "It was a night of great license to the lower order ... and the more sober citizens were heartily glad when it was over."⁴³

"The Nature and Danger of Popery in this Land"

While some Newport residents sought to burn imaginary popes, one prominent member of the community, Solomon Southwick, preferred to attack popes in print. Southwick, who purchased the *Newport Mercury* from the Franklin family in 1764, decided to reprint an anti-Catholic polemic that had been popular earlier in the century.⁴⁴ Entitled *A Master Key to Popery*, the book had been written in the 1720s by Antonio Gavin, a Spanish priest who became a Protestant minister in England and Ireland. In June 1773 Southwick announced that he was republishing the tract, which combined attacks on Catholic teachings with tales of nuns' and priests' lecherous behavior.⁴⁵ Southwick assured his readers that he was reprinting Gavin's treatise "as fast as the nature of the work will possibly admit."⁴⁶ By October he reported that it was available for purchase for four shillings. Southwick urged his readers to buy the book, promising them that it

will give a more clear, full and true account of the horrid oppressions and infernal practices of the Romish Priests, Friars and Inquisitors, than any thing ever published before in this country; and ought to be read by people of all ranks and conditions; for what has happened to other countries may, possibly, happen to this, and therefore it behoves every one to be on his guard against—POPERY.⁴⁷



Colonial Newport's leading intellectual, Rev. Ezra Stiles, was long opposed to "popery." After France's entry into the American Revolution, however, Stiles became less critical of Catholicism. (Portrait of Stiles at the Redwood Library [c. 1770] by Samuel King, in the Yale University Art Gallery).

Perhaps Southwick's tracts were making an impression in the colony. John O'Kelly, an Irish Catholic immigrant who settled in Warren, Rhode Island, seemed very aware that his background made him suspect. Writing in October 1773 to the Newport merchant Christopher Champlin about some business they were transacting, O'Kelly assured Champlin that if he was "loath to trust an Irish man," O'Kelly would understand and would not take offense.⁴⁸

By the end of 1773, all of New England was astir over the Boston Tea Party which had sent £10,000 worth of tea into Boston Harbor. While some prominent colonists like George Washington were disturbed by the Tea Party, both the *Newport Mercury* and the *Providence Gazette* vigorously defended the actions of the rebellious merchants.⁴⁹ In late December Southwick noted that "more than three hundred families in this town have lately abandoned the use of that noxious WEED."⁵⁰ A week later, Southwick reported that an association had been formed in Newport "against the use of India TEA, which we hope will effectually extirpate that pestilential herb from every habitation in this colony."⁵¹ While Newport and other New England towns rallied against the colonists' purchase and consumption of tea, the British government considered how to respond to what it took to be Boston's wanton destruction of property. Parliament enacted four Coercive Acts in May to punish the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The most notable measure was the Boston Port Act which closed the city to all shipping until the cost of the tea had been repaid. Angry colonists nicknamed these laws the "Intolerable Acts" and called for a meeting of a congress of all the colonies to determine an appropriate response to Parliament.⁵²

In the summer of 1774, tensions with the British reached even higher levels throughout the colonies in response to the Quebec Act. Enacted by Parliament in June to conciliate the eighty-thousand French Catholics in Canada, this legislation recognized the Catholic Church's prerogatives, including its rights to receive tithes. It also allowed the Canadians to keep



Portrait of General Rochambeau by famed American painter Charles Wilson Peale (c. 1782). Rochambeau spent almost a year in Newport and then played a key part in the defeat of the British at Yorktown. (Rochambeau, Commander of the French Allies, head-and-shoulders portrait, facing front), ca. 1903. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/98517819/>. [Accessed May 30, 2017].

the governmental system established by the French, which had no provision for an elected assembly. For many colonists, especially those in New England, this measure proved as upsetting as the "Intolerable" Acts.⁵³ Parliament was expressly encouraging the spread of popery on the colonists' northern and western borders.⁵⁴ In Newport, Southwick responded with new notices for his exposé on popery. This time his advertisement included a swipe at Parliament: Gavin's book was

highly necessary to be kept in every protestant family in this country; that they may see to what a miserable state the people are reduced in all arbitrary and tyrannical governments, and be thereby excited to stand on their guard against the infernal machinations of the British ministry and their vast host of tools, emissaries, etc. etc. sent hither to propagate the principles of popery and slavery, which go hand in hand, as inseparable companions.⁵⁵

Southwick then began reporting on the Quebec Act in July and proceeded to run a steady series of stories and critical commentaries on it through December.⁵⁶ In late August, the *Newport Mercury* reported that the House of Commons had approved the bill after a “warm debate,” and quoted at length from one of the dissenters, Thomas Townshend:

Little did I think, that a country as large as half [of] Europe and within the dominions of the crown of Great Britain, was going to have the Romish religion established in it as the religion of the state. Little did I think, that so many thousand men, entitled and born to the rights of Englishmen... should... contrary to every idea of the constitution, be subjected to French papists and French laws.”⁵⁷

In October, the *Newport Mercury* reported that an Englishman who returned from Quebec swore that the Protestants were forced “to exercise their religion in secret for fear of the resentment of the Roman Catholics.”⁵⁸ Ezra Stiles, who was already an outspoken critic of the British Crown, was just as exercised on the matter as the *Newport Mercury*’s editor. He wrote in his diary,

The King has signed the Quebec Act, extending that Province to the Ohio and Mississippi and comprehending nearly Two Thirds of English America, and established the Romish Church & IDOLATRY over all that space; in this Act all the bishops concurred. Astonishing that Kings, Lds and Commons, a whole protestant parliament should expressly establish popery over three Quarters of their Empire.⁵⁹

In November, Newporters, no doubt still seething over the Quebec Act, staged an unusually large Pope’s Day commemoration and this time the protesters focused not only on the pope but on their Tory foes as well. Stiles noted that on the afternoon of November 5th, “three popes etc. paraded thro’ the streets, & in the Evening they were consumed in a bonfire as usual—among others were Lord North, Gov. Hutchinson &

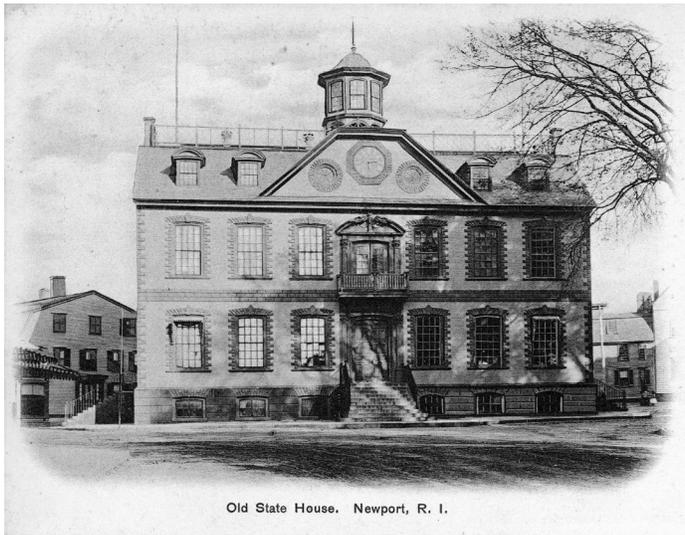
Gen. Gage.”⁶⁰ At the end of the month, Stiles addressed the Quebec Act in a sermon at his parish, the Second Congregational Church in Newport. Drawing on St. Paul’s Second Letter to the Thessalonians—which alludes to the coming of the Antichrist—Stiles preached “on the Nature and Danger of Popery in this Land, from the Operation of the Quebec Bill for the Establishment of the Romish Religion over Two Thirds of the British Empire.”⁶¹

Newport’s Pope’s Day celebrations and Southwick’s and Stiles’s fulminations against popery point to a deep-seated fear of a group that most Newporters had heard much about but never encountered in the flesh. After all, no more than a handful of Catholics lived in Newport before the American Revolution, so many residents had probably never met a Catholic, much less a priest or bishop.⁶² When Stiles calculated Newport’s religious composition in 1760 and again in 1770, he did not come across a single Catholic residing in the town at either time.

While there were no Catholics living openly among them, most Newport residents still harbored suspicions towards them. Elaine Crane notes that when a Frenchman, Francis Vandale, established a French language school in Newport in October 1774—in the midst of the Quebec Act furor—he took out a notice in the *Newport Mercury*, making clear that he was not a Catholic: “[He] will readily attend any young ladies and gentlemen at their dwellings; and as he is a Protestant, he doubts not he shall meet with encouragement equal to his abilities.”⁶³

The Coming of War

By the fall of 1774, many colonial leaders seemed to be of a mind with Stiles and Southwick in seeing popery and British tyranny as twin threats facing them. In September, fifty-five delegates representing twelve of the colonies gathered in Philadelphia to respond to Parliament’s repressive acts.⁶⁴ Rhode Island sent two representatives to this First Continental Congress: Samuel Ward from Newport and Stephen Hopkins from Providence.⁶⁵ Soon



Old State House. Newport, R. I.

after the Congress convened, Paul Revere rode into town with the Suffolk Resolves—Boston’s answer to Parliament’s measures. The document condemned the Coercive Acts for closing the Port of Boston and shutting down the colonial government of Massachusetts. It also included a section denouncing the Quebec Act, “as dangerous in an extreme degree to the Protestant religion and to the civil and religious liberties of all America.”⁶⁶ The delegates approved the Resolves unanimously.⁶⁷ During the next month the Congress focused on economic matters and ended up approving a total boycott of English goods. The colonies would not import any items from Britain after December 1st, and they would stop exports in September 1775 unless the Coercive Acts were repealed.⁶⁸

Although the delegates had taken defiant steps at the First Continental Congress, probably none of them anticipated—or desired—war with England. However, in April 1775, General Thomas Gage, who had been appointed military governor of Massachusetts, sent troops to clear out the munitions that the colonists were rumored to be keeping outside of Boston. At Lexington and Concord, the British fought colonial militiamen and suffered three-hundred casualties to the colonists’ one hundred. After they returned to Boston, the British found themselves under siege by a ring of colonial troops.

In May, when the Second Continental Congress came into session, many of the delegates were more agitated than they had been the previous fall. They readily accepted John Adams’

GAZETTE FRANÇOISE.

Du Vendredi 17 Novembre 1780.

Le projet de donner une Gazette Française, ne m'a paru possible que par la facilité d'y introduire la Traduction des différentes Nouvelles que les Patriotes Américains produisent : c'est sous ce point de vue que j'en ai accepté la rédaction ; vraisemblablement ceux de MM. les Officiers & autres Particuliers qui ne sont pas familiers avec la langue du pays, & qui s'intéressent aux événemens politiques de cette Nation naissante, seront charmés de pouvoir s'en instruire, sans avoir recours au travail de la translation. Je ne m'engagerai donc envers le Public, qu'à répéter en Français, ce que les Américains auront dit dans leur langue. D'ailleurs, peu accoutumé à me faire imprimer, j'ai besoin dans cette entreprise, de toute l'indulgence de mes Lecteurs. Je vous supplie donc Messieurs, si cet Ouvrage peut toucher votre curiosité, de le protéger de vos bontés. Je me ferai un devoir de recevoir les avis de ceux qui me feront l'honneur de s'y intéresser, & d'agir conformément à leurs conseils.

Left: The Colony House, in the center of Newport, was used by the French as a hospital for their sick soldiers; one room on the south side of the building was set aside for use as a Catholic chapel. (Photograph postcard [c. 1900] from Daniel P. Titus collection, in private hands).

Right: The front page of the inaugural issue of *La Gazette Française*, a newspaper published for the French forces in Newport. In this passage, the editor, John Jastram, explained that he would provide translations of articles from American papers for those “who are interested in the political events of this Nascent nation.” (*La Gazette Française*, November 17, 1780).

proposal that George Washington be appointed commander in chief of the colonial army and directed him to go to Massachusetts to oversee the troops. Before he reached Boston, more fighting had broken out. In June the British dislodged the colonial forces from Bunker Hill (Breed’s Hill) but only after suffering heavy casualties.

In the fall, General Benedict Arnold led an invasion into Canada, hopeful that the Canadians would rally to the colonists’ cause. The bishop of Quebec, Jean-Olivier Briand, was convinced that the Americans were anti-Catholic, though, and most of the priests in Canada shared his perspective.⁶⁹ By the end of 1775, the Canadian offensive was failing but the colonists’ prospects in Boston were brightening. As he contemplated an attack on Boston, Washington learned that his troops planned to commemorate Guy Fawkes Day on November 5th. Still hoping for aid from French Canadians and anxious not to alienate the Catholics serving in his army, Washington was not about to tolerate such an event.⁷⁰ From his headquarters in Cambridge, he issued a stern warning:

“Newport’s Pope’s Day celebrations and Southwick’s and Stiles’s fulminations against popery point to a deep-seated fear of a group that most Newporters had heard much about but never encountered in the flesh.”

[Having learned] of a design form’d for the observance of that ridiculous and childish custom of burning the Effigy of the pope—He cannot help expressing his surprise that there should be Officers and Soldiers in this army so void of common sense, as not to see the impropriety of such a step at this Juncture.⁷¹

Washington maintained his siege of Boston through the winter and in March 1776, the British and their Tory sympathizers evacuated and set sail for Halifax, Nova Scotia. The Continental Army then marched triumphantly into the city.⁷²

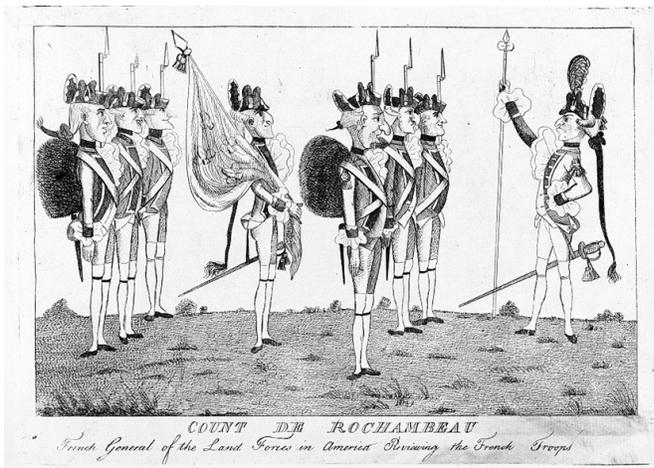
With the conflict escalating, the Continental Congress directed Thomas Jefferson to draft an official declaration of war. In his list of King George III’s “repeated injuries and usurpations,” Jefferson included taxing the colonists without their consent, quartering British troops in the colonies, hiring Hessian soldiers to police the colonies and encouraging attacks by the “merciless Indian savages.” Jefferson also criticized the Quebec Act for “abolishing the free system of English laws” in Canada but was careful to avoid any reference to popery.⁷³ After three days of debate, the document, shorn of any criticisms of slavery and the slave trade, was approved.

Rhode Island’s delegates strongly supported the Declaration once the criticisms of the slave trade were excised.⁷⁴ Indeed, as the historian William McLoughlin noted, Rhode Island had

been the “vanguard of revolution.”⁷⁵ In 1774, Rhode Island sent food supplies to the people of Boston who were suffering under the Coercive Acts, and in the spring of 1775, Newport sent £225 to Boston.⁷⁶ In May 1775, Rhode Island provided one-thousand troops to support the siege of Boston and one-hundred-and-fifty Rhode Island men took part in Benedict Arnold’s failed attack on Quebec.⁷⁷ In May 1776 the Rhode Island General Assembly declared its separation from the king, using language much like the language that Jefferson would use.⁷⁸

However, when the war came to Rhode Island a few months later, the inhabitants reacted much more cautiously. In December 1776 General William Howe, who had been routing Washington’s forces in and around New York, dispatched Lieutenant General Henry Clinton and over seven-thousand British and Hessian troops and more than seventy ships to Newport where they established their winter quarters.⁷⁹ As Clinton’s forces prepared to land on Aquidneck Island, Newporters put up no resistance and in William McLoughlin’s words, the town “fell without a shot.”⁸⁰

While many Newporters had fled the island, roughly five-thousand people were on hand when the British and Hessians arrived and some were quite pleased to see them.⁸¹ The town’s leading Tories were waiting for the British officers, ready to escort them to the Colony House. Over the following days, the British settled themselves in Newport’s finest houses, made use of



A British cartoonist's satirical rendering of Rochambeau's review of the French troops in Rhode Island. (Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2004673388/> (Accessed May 30, 2017).

the Redwood Library and established their own Loyalist newspaper, the *Newport Gazette*.⁸² They then bided their time, waiting for orders from their commanders.

In the summer of 1777, General John Burgoyne planned to come down to New York from Canada and join with General William Howe. These two armies would be met by a smaller contingent under Colonel Barry St. Leger, who would come from the western region of New York. Together these forces intended to cut off New England from the rest of the colonies. The plan was bungled from the start: Howe chose to take his troops to Philadelphia, St. Leger got pinned down in western New York and no effort was made to utilize the troops in Newport. In the end, Burgoyne found himself cornered in Saratoga, running low on supplies. He and five other generals and almost six-thousand British and Hessian soldiers surrendered to General Horatio Gates, who arranged to have them all shipped back to England.⁸³

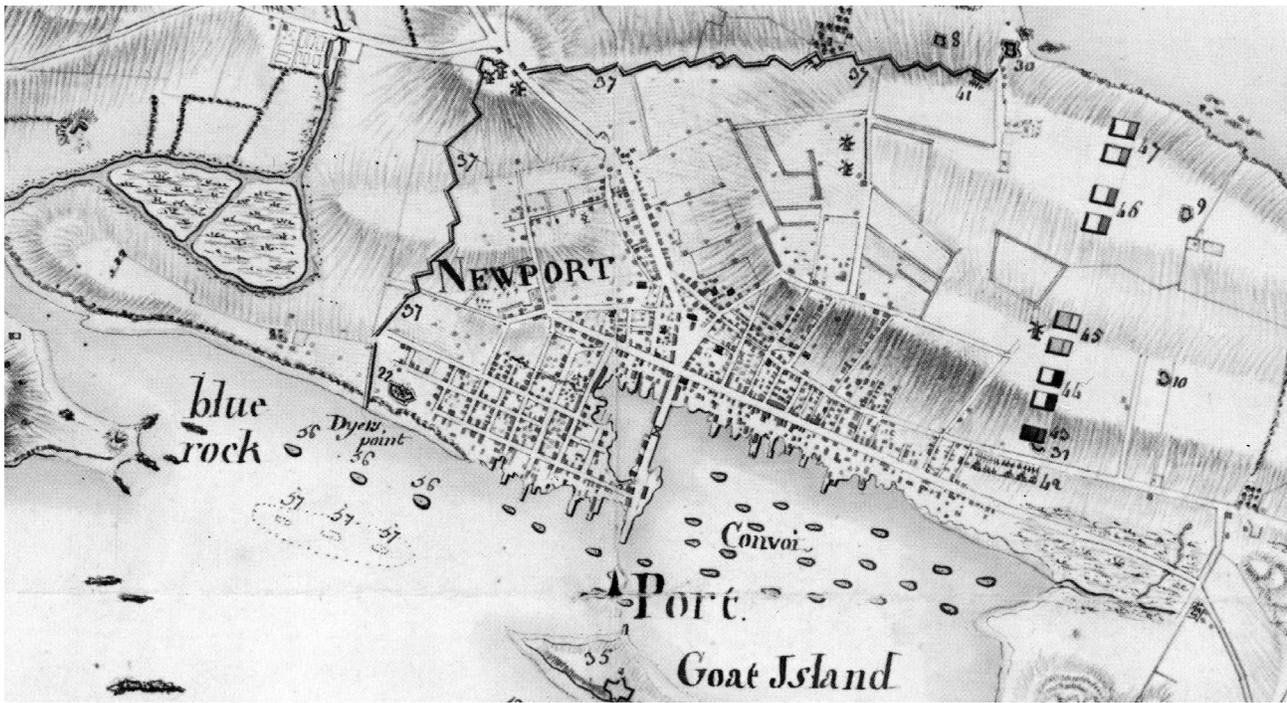
The French Alliance

As news of the colonists' victory at Saratoga reached France, Benjamin Franklin, the American representative, was able to argue that the rebels were a serious fighting force poised to defeat the British. Impressed by the American triumph and eager to exact revenge for the French and Indian War, King Louis XVI agreed to an alliance with the Americans in February

1778, and promised that ships and soldiers would soon be dispatched.⁸⁴

In July the Comte Jean Baptiste D'Estaing arrived in Sandy Hook, New Jersey, at the head of a formidable fleet.⁸⁵ As D'Estaing was unwilling to attack the British in New York City because of the shallowness of New York's harbor, Washington then directed him to work with General John Sullivan who was seeking to expel the British forces from Newport and possibly end the war. With the support of the Marquis de Lafayette and his two-thousand soldiers, and D'Estaing's ships and his four-thousand men, and with eight thousand of his own troops, Sullivan was prepared to attack the British who had only three-thousand troops in Newport at the time.⁸⁶ Sullivan's troops quickly moved to occupy British redoubts in Portsmouth and Middletown, but the rebels' plans soon went awry. Rather than staying in or around Narragansett Bay, D'Estaing decided to pursue Admiral Richard Howe's fleet. While chasing Howe, the French ships were badly damaged in a hurricane so D'Estaing took them to Boston for repairs. Feeling abandoned by D'Estaing and fearful that the British were about to send reinforcements to Newport, Sullivan pulled back to the northern end of the island. At the end of August, Sullivan's troops took on British and Hessian forces at what would be known as the Battle of Rhode Island. After several hours of intense fighting, Sullivan and his men withdrew from the island.⁸⁷ With no further help from D'Estaing forthcoming, Sullivan made no more efforts to drive the British from Newport. The Americans would have to wait another year and a half for more French aid.

In 1779, as the war dragged on with no end in sight, the Continental Congress sought divine aid. In March the Congress called on the states to establish a day of "Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer," and in April Rhode Island's governor, William Greene, issued a proclamation asking for prayer to...



Almighty God that he be pleased to avert those Impending Calamities, which we have but too well deserved...That he will be a Father to the fatherless children, who weep over the Barbarities of a Savage Enemy...That he will bestow on our Great Ally all those blessings which may enable him to be gloriously instrumental in protecting the Rights of Mankind.⁸⁸

Greene set aside the first Thursday in May for Rhode Islanders to pray and fast on behalf of themselves and their French benefactors. The British, too, were getting discouraged with the ever-lengthening war. Spain's decision to enter the conflict in June meant that the British would be fighting on multiple fronts, struggling to defend their holdings in India, Gibraltar and the West Indies. Due to these pressures, they decided to concentrate their forces in the South, where Loyalists were thought to be the most numerous. In October 1779 the British, along with about fifty Tory families left Newport and headed to Halifax.⁸⁹

Although no battles had taken place in Newport, the town still suffered much during the British occupation. To provide wood for the winters, the British chopped down trees all over the island, tore up many of the wharves and demolished two-hundred or more homes.⁹⁰

Map of Newport by Captain Henri Crublier D'Opterre of the Royal Corps of Engineers. The numbered rectangles on the right identify encampments of French regiments outside of Newport. (Reprinted from Howard Rice, Jr., and Anne S. K. Brown, trans. and eds., *The American Campaign of Rochambeau's Army 1780, 1781, 1782, 1783* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972), 2:208.

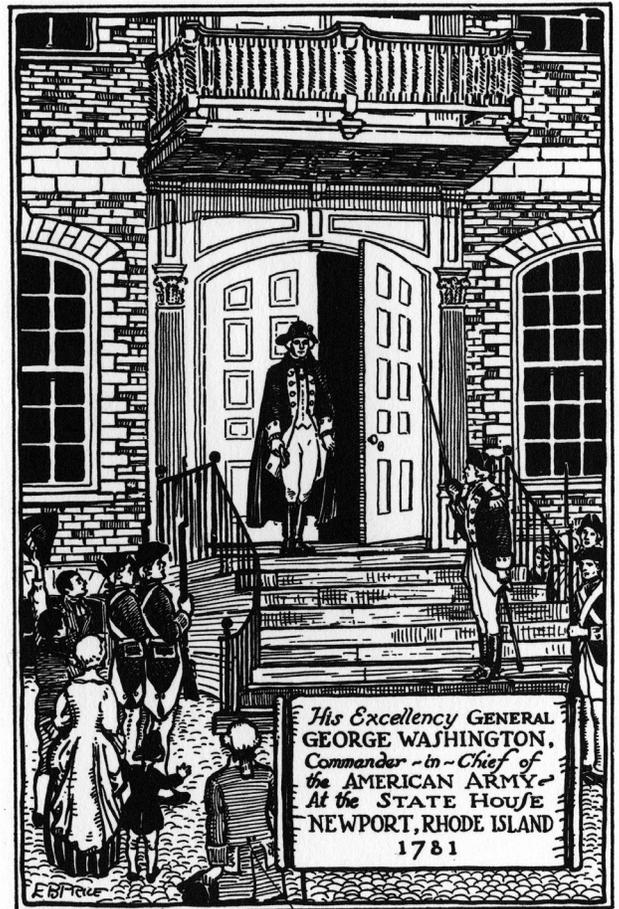
William Ellery, a signer of the Declaration of Independence who returned to Newport after the evacuation, declared that Newport was “a barren city, with shuttered houses, a pillaged library, books burned and commerce practically at a standstill.”⁹¹ In May 1780, when additional French forces set sail for the colonies, they headed to Newport, knowing that it had been evacuated but probably unaware of its dilapidated state. Led by Comte Jean Baptiste Rochambeau and Admiral Charles de Ternay, the force included forty-four ships and almost six-thousand soldiers. Most of the troops were French but there were also some soldiers of Irish descent in the ranks.⁹² As they prepared to land in July, the French commanders had some misgivings about Newport, which they understood to be both a Tory stronghold and a center of corruption.⁹³

Newporters for their part were not excited at the prospect of a second occupation. When Rochambeau arrived in Newport, he found the streets deserted and no one there to greet him.

The next day, however, General William Heath arrived from Providence and arranged a formal welcome. Candles were placed in most Newporters' windows and guns were shot to salute the French. Ezra Stiles reported that the "town was beautifully illuminated...& 13 grand rockets were fired in the Front of the State-house."⁹⁴ Relations improved further when it became clear that Rochambeau was prepared to pay in cash for anything his troops required and would maintain strict discipline over his men at all times.⁹⁵

After his initial meetings with the colonists were concluded, Rochambeau set to work. The sick, who numbered about seventeen hundred, were in need of immediate treatment so primitive hospitals were established at the Colony House and at a number of the churches.⁹⁶ As these buildings could not begin to hold all the ill, several hundred of the troops were sent to Bristol and Providence to recuperate.⁹⁷ Houses in the town center that had been seriously damaged during the British occupation were repaired and French officers moved into them. Some officers like Rochambeau took over vacated properties but others like the Comte de Noailles boarded with Newport families.⁹⁸ Rochambeau occupied the stately Vernon House while Noailles resided with the Robinsons, a Quaker family, on Water Street.⁹⁹ In total, Rochambeau paid 100,000 francs to make the homes into comfortable residences for his officers.¹⁰⁰

Along with the soldiers and sailors, the French brought a dozen chaplains with them. These priests established a makeshift chapel in a room of the Colony House and celebrated Masses there. While "popery" had been of great concern to many Newporters before the Revolution, now the town's residents welcomed the French and their priests. Stiles, who had fled Newport in 1776 and assumed the presidency of Yale in 1778, returned for a visit in August 1780, and enjoyed socializing with the French officers. On one evening he dined with Rochambeau and conversed with him in Latin. He especially appreciated the Marquis de Chastellux, who was a top aide to Rochambeau and a member



George Washington descending the steps of the Colony House. Washington came to Newport in March 1781 to confer with Rochambeau. (Woodcut by Newport artist Edith Ballinger Price from Daniel P. Titus Collection.)

of the French Academy. Stiles noted in his diary that he had dined at Chastellux's grand Newport home on Spring Street "in a splendid manner on 35 dishes. He is a capital Literary Character... the Glory of the Army."¹⁰¹ Stiles must have spent time with one of the French chaplains as well because he received a letter from the Abbé Colin de Sepvigny a few weeks after his return to New Haven. Writing in Latin, the priest assured Stiles of his friendship despite their religious differences.¹⁰² Stiles had even warmed to King Louis XVI, hailing him as "his Most Christian Majesty, the illustrious ally of the States."¹⁰³ Louis XVI's feast day, August 25th, was celebrated by the Continental Congress and by many churches throughout the colonies. In Newport, the day was marked by a parade of the French forces and a review by Generals Rochambeau and Heath followed by fireworks in the harbor.¹⁰⁴ As historian Lee Kennett aptly noted, "Protestant America thus joined in the feast of Saint Louis."¹⁰⁵



Diorama depicting Rochambeau's landing in Newport in 1780. The figurines were handcrafted by Madame Fernande Metayer for Anne S. K. Brown, who was an avid collector of military history memorabilia. (The diorama is in the Museum of Newport History, on loan from the Anne S. K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library.)

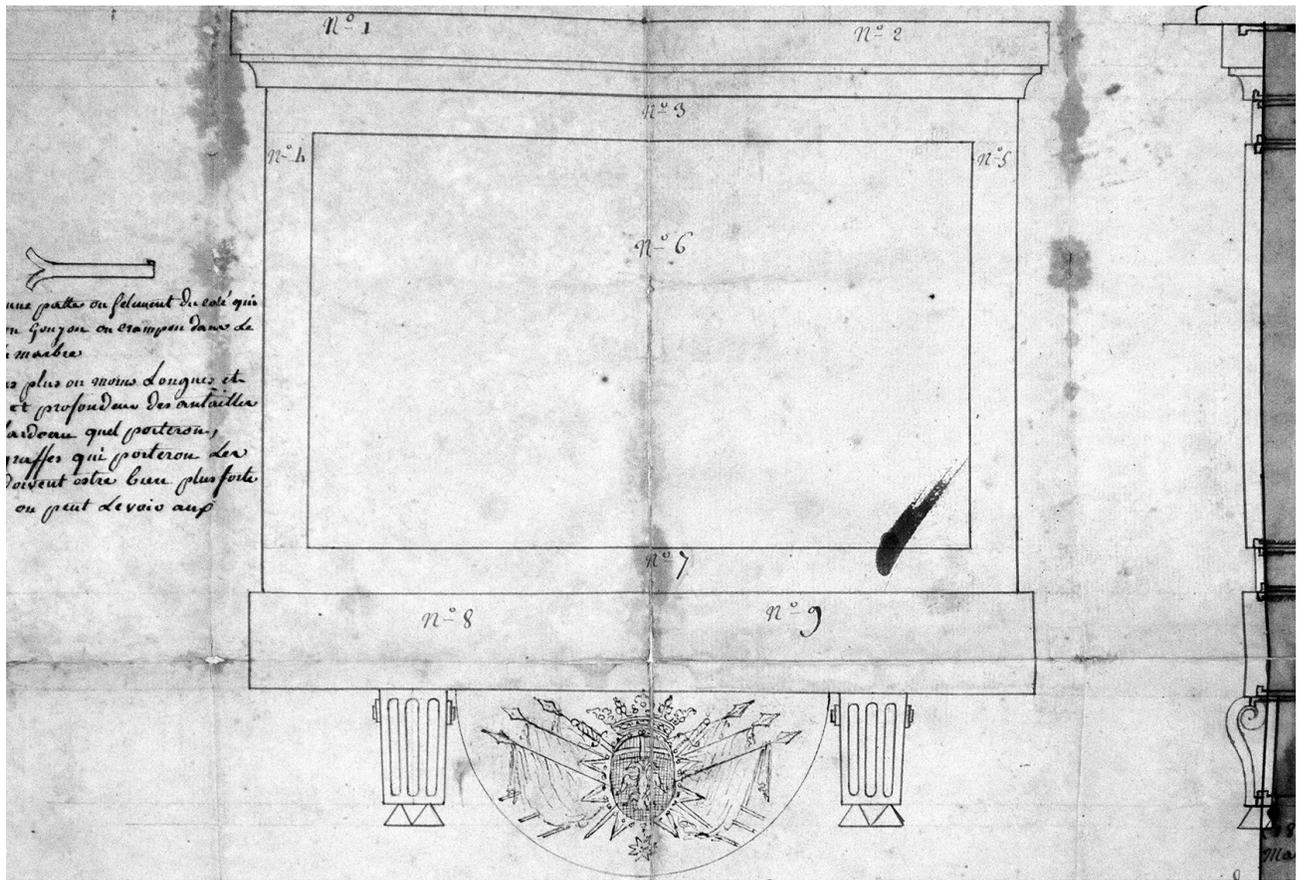
Concerned that the British navy might attempt to retake Newport, Rochambeau ordered his able-bodied men to build defenses around the island. Within a few weeks, though, he concluded that the British were not about to bombard the city after all. Consequently, he could focus more on how his forces could help Washington end the war. In September, Rochambeau met with Washington in Hartford, Connecticut, and they discussed Washington's plans for an attack on New York. Since Rochambeau anticipated as many as ten-thousand additional troops from France, he and Washington agreed to put off any offensive until the spring.¹⁰⁶ In the meantime, Rochambeau sent his son to Paris to ascertain how many ships and soldiers would be coming to America.

Catholic Rites in Protestant Newport

At the end of August, a group of twenty Indian leaders came down from Canada to pay a visit to Rochambeau and de Ternay. The trip had been arranged by General Philip Schuyler who was troubled by the pro-British sentiments of many of the tribes in the Mohawk Valley. When the chieftains arrived in Newport, the French commanders held a grand dinner in their

honor and bestowed blankets and other gifts on them.¹⁰⁷ Then, at the chieftains' request, a Mass was celebrated in an open field with most of the French troops in attendance. Many Newporters were there as well to observe the ceremonies.¹⁰⁸

Four months later, even more Newport residents witnessed their first Catholic funeral. In December, Admiral de Ternay died of typhus at the age of fifty-eight. He had not been especially popular with officers or enlisted men; Lafayette described him as "ill-tempered and stubborn, but firm, clear sighted and intelligent."¹⁰⁹ Still, in recognition of his high rank, de Ternay was afforded especially elaborate rites, which were described by a nineteenth-century historian as the "most imposing funeral scene ever witnessed in the town."¹¹⁰ An eyewitness, Thomas Hornsby, recalled that the casket was escorted through the town by Rochambeau and a long line of other officers, all in their dress uniforms. He noted that the townspeople were very curious to see the ceremonies: "Every eligible place was used by the people to witness the scene; every window and housetop was crowded along the way."¹¹¹ As there were no Catholic chapels in Newport, the procession wound its way to Trinity Church, which was located in the center of town. Officiating at the ceremonies were "twelve Priests... with lighted torches in their hands. Around the grave they chanted the Roman Catholic service, and performed all the customary rites of the Catholic Church, with a genuine feeling of sadness."¹¹² Hornsby concluded by noting

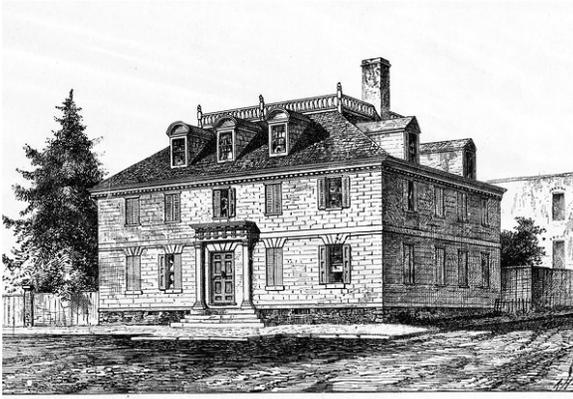


that the ceremony affected the onlookers: “The people were deeply impressed by this strange, fascinating and mournful scene. They seemed to feel for a moment that the pomp of death had a sublime reality, and that the grand ceremony they had witnessed was not the vain thing which their education had taught them to believe.”¹¹³ While the people of Newport were intrigued by these Masses, it is not clear that the French soldiers were as interested in them. As Austin Dowling, a nineteenth-century Catholic historian put it, “religion sat lightly on them.”¹¹⁴ Dowling claims that many of the troops were skeptics influenced by the Enlightenment and that a number were Freemasons.¹¹⁵ Two prominent officers who fit Dowling’s description were Lafayette and Chastellux. Lafayette was an active Freemason and Chastellux had been a friend of both Voltaire and Denis Diderot.¹¹⁶ While Lafayette and Chastellux visited with local dignitaries like Ezra Stiles, most of their comrades whiled away their time riding around Aquidneck Island, playing cards and pursuing the young women (whether single or married) at dinner parties and dances.¹¹⁷

A sketch of the marble tombstone that was planned for Admiral de Ternay’s grave in Trinity Church’s cemetery. The stone cracked in the 1790s and was moved into Trinity’s vestibule in the nineteenth century to protect it from further damage. (Reprinted from George Champlin Mason Papers, Newport Historical Society).

Although not particularly observant themselves, some of the officers were nonetheless quite curious about the Protestant milieu in which they found themselves. One officer, Jean François-Louis Clermont-Crevecoeur, recorded his observations in his diary:

The town of Newport has many Protestant churches, nearly all built of wood, without ornament and regular in shape, for the practice of the different religions that are all tolerated in this country. The predominant religion is Anglican. Much of the town...is inhabited by Quakers. These men are extremely grave in their dress and manner and very temperate. They speak little...and “thee and thou” everyone...Their form of worshipping the Supreme Being seems rather bizarre...It often happens that they leave the meetinghouse without having uttered a word.¹¹⁸



☞ Divine Service will be performed at the Roman Catholic Chapel in this Town, To-morrow, at 10 o'clock A. M. and at 4 o'clock P. M.

Another officer, Louis Berthier, observed that the townspeople saw religion as a private matter: “[They] practice their various religions without dissension or discussion.”¹¹⁹ Still another, Jean Baptiste Antoine Verger, thought that the residents of Newport were mostly a secular lot: “[T]he people in general are very little attached to their religion, and each child has the right to practice his religious duties or not.”¹²⁰

“A Universal Sigh of Regret”

In March 1781 Washington paid a weeklong visit to Rochambeau in Newport. The Continental Army’s commander was greeted with great fanfare by the French and Newporters alike. There were parades and receptions and a formal ball was held in his honor. No strategic decisions were made, however, because Rochambeau still did not know how many reinforcements he would receive and when they would arrive.

In May, Rochambeau’s son returned from France. He brought with him some additional funds but informed his father that no more men or ships would be coming. The king’s top advisors were disturbed about Benedict Arnold’s turn to the British side and were worried about Europe’s stability in the wake of the death of the Holy Roman Empress, Maria Theresa.¹²¹ Consequently, they were not about to release any more regiments for America. While this news was very disconcerting to Rochambeau, it made him realize that he could not accede to Washington’s plan to attack the British stronghold in New York. He simply did not have enough troops. He concluded—and Washington reluctantly agreed—that they would have to bypass New York and pursue Lord Charles Cornwallis’s smaller forces in the South.

Left: Located in the center of Newport, Vernon House served as General Rochambeau’s residence in 1780–81. The home’s owner, William Vernon, was away in Boston working with the Continental Navy. (Retrieved from the New York Public Library Digital Collection, <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-2469-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>, accessed May 30, 2017).

Right: By 1828, Newport’s Catholics had their own chapel on Barney Street but no resident priest. The one priest in Rhode Island, Father Robert Woodley, would travel to Newport about once a month. On the eve of his visits, notices would be placed in the local paper about upcoming Masses. (*Newport Mercury*, July 7, 1828).

In early June almost all of the French troops packed up and prepared to leave Newport for Providence and then points south.¹²² According to Louis Berthier, the soldiers and people of Newport were equally sad about the troops’ departure:

The whole army had spent a delightful winter in Newport, and as each man got the word and prepared to leave, the pleasures ceased and gave way to regrets in which the whole town joined, especially the women.

Although Newport is largely inhabited by Tories... there was now a universal sigh of regret. Everyone’s feelings had changed so much that each officer was like a member of his host’s family.¹²³

Samuel Vernon, whose family home had served as Rochambeau’s headquarters, seemed dejected by the French withdrawal. Writing to his father in August, Vernon declared, “We are at present very dull and defenceless.”¹²⁴

Not all Newporters felt as remorseful as Vernon. Jonathan Easton, reporting his woes to the tax assessors, noted that the British had burned down three of his houses, cut down

his orchard and stolen his farm animals. After they departed, the “French encamped in the meadow... [and] kept there cows and horses in the meadow the whole time they stayed.”¹²⁵ Another Newport resident, Silas Cooke, had had more serious problems: “The French had my still house, store, stabel and two men quartered upon me and will not pay any rent.”¹²⁶ Despite these complaints, it is clear that the French brought new life to the beleaguered town and that many Newporters enjoyed their company and were sorry to see them depart.¹²⁷

As the French troops marched southward, ships under Comte François Joseph de Grasse in the West Indies and Comte Jacques-Melchior de Barras in Newport headed for the Chesapeake Bay.¹²⁸ Meanwhile, Cornwallis, who had been battling the rebels in the Carolinas with mixed results, led his men into Virginia. There he hoped to meet up with Benedict Arnold’s forces and connect with the British fleet in the Chesapeake. Cornwallis settled in at Yorktown and waited for reinforcements. In September Admiral Thomas Graves tried to come to his aid but was blocked by the combined fleets of de Grasse and Barras. In October, a superior French-American army laid siege to Cornwallis and forced him to surrender his eight-thousand troops.

Although Yorktown would prove to be the final campaign of the war, it was not immediately apparent that the Americans had won. The British had heavily fortified New York City and still controlled Charleston, Savannah and Wilmington, North Carolina. While peace negotiations were held in France, sporadic fighting continued throughout 1782. At last, in September 1783, the Treaty of Paris was signed giving America its independence and ending Britain’s struggle with its European foes.

While the negotiations were taking place, the Rhode Island legislature decided to revisit its policies towards Catholics. In February 1783 the General Assembly amended its 1719 law and declared that “all the rights and privileges of the Protestant citizens of this state... are hereby, fully extended to Roman Catholic citizens.”¹²⁹ Attributing Rhode Island’s shift entirely to the

presence of French troops in Newport would be a mistake because efforts were also afoot at this time in Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York and Massachusetts to expand Catholics’ rights to some degree at least.¹³⁰ However, Newport was surely affected in a unique way by its encounters with the French during the Revolution. While some Newporters remained anxious about popery in the years following the Revolution, most became more accepting of Catholicism.¹³¹ Indeed, when Irish immigrants arrived in Newport in the 1820s to construct Fort Adams, they established a Catholic parish in the center of town—the first in Rhode Island—and advertised the Masses in the local newspaper for all to see.¹³²

And when anti-Catholicism flared up with a vengeance throughout much of New England in the 1830s in response to the burgeoning number of Irish immigrants, Newport remained calm. After a nativist mob destroyed the Ursuline Convent near Boston, a Newport newspaper likened the attack to the Salem witch trials and then appealed to the Catholics of Boston “to turn their attention to this Island, to this healthy and delightful spot ... [with its] more liberal standard of public opinion ... where religious freedom runs in the stream and floats in the breeze.”¹³³ ♦

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1. See Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 1: 217–236; Patrick T. Conley, *Rhode Island in Rhetoric and Reflection* (East Providence, R.I.: Rhode Island Publications Society, 2002), 4, 16–17; Martin E. Marty, *Pilgrims in Their Own Land* (New York: Penguin, 1987), 78.
2. Quoted in Sydney V. James, *Colonial Rhode Island: A History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), 70.
3. Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, ed. Thomas Robbins, 2 vols. (1853–1855; reprint, New York: Russell and Russell, 1967), 2: 520. Emphasis in original. William G. McLoughlin, *Rhode Island: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1986), xxix; Carl Bridenbaugh, *Fat Mutton and Liberty of Conscience: Society in Rhode Island, 1636–1690* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1974), 3–4.
4. Bridenbaugh, *Fat Mutton*, 61–69. One determined Quaker, Mary Dyer, was twice banished from Massachusetts and then hanged on Boston Common in 1660 after she returned a third time. Three Quaker men were hanged as well and two others had their ears cut off. See Ruth Plimpton, *Mary Dyer: Biography of a Rebel Quaker* (Boston: Branden Pub., 1994); Richard D. Brown and Jack Tager, *Massachusetts: A Concise History* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 11–57.
5. William Pencak, *Jews and Gentiles in Early America, 1654–1800* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 12–13, 83. For Roger Williams' and the Puritan theologian John Cotton's antipathy to Judaism, see Frederic Cople Jaher, *A Scapegoat in the New Wilderness: The Origins and Rise of Anti-Semitism in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), 92–94.
6. James, *Colonial Rhode Island*, 39–47, 186–228; John Hattendorf, *Semper Eadem: A History of Trinity Church in Newport, 1698–2000* (Newport: Trinity Church, 2001).
7. Catholics were largely absent from all of New England, only amounting to just one-tenth of one percent of the region's population at the time of the American Revolution. See Charles Metzger, SJ, *Catholics in the American Revolution* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1962), 152.
8. James converted to Catholicism when middle-aged, but his daughters Mary and Anne remained Anglicans. See John Miller, *James II* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000).
9. See Thomas J. Curry, *The First Freedoms: Church and State in America to the Passage of the First Amendment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 47–52; Maura Jane Farrelly, *Papist Patriots: The Making of An American Catholic Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 193–206; Steven K. Green, *Inventing a Christian America: The Myth of the Religious Founding* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 33. For Rhode Island's legislation, see Robert W. Hayman, *Catholicism in Rhode Island and the Diocese of Providence* (Providence: Diocese of Providence, 1982), 6; Patrick T. Conley and Matthew J. Smith, *Catholicism in Rhode Island: The Formative Era* (Providence: Diocese of Providence, 1982), 7–9.
10. C.P.B. Jefferys, *Newport: A Concise History* (Newport: Newport Historical Society, 2008), 21, 16.
11. Elaine Crane, *A Dependent People: Newport, Rhode Island in the Revolutionary Era* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1985), 16–23.
12. Berkeley was appointed Anglican Bishop of Cloyne in 1732.
13. George C. Mason, *Annals of the Redwood Library* (Newport, 1891), 9–11; Rockwell Stensrud, *Newport: A Lively Experiment, 1639–1969* (Newport: Redwood Library, 2006), 132–36.
14. Morris Gutstein, *The Story of the Jews of Newport* (New York: Bloch Publishing, 1936), 51–52.
15. Crane, *A Dependent People*, 107; James, *Colonial Rhode Island*, 186–88.
16. Whitefield drew crowds of up to 8,000 listeners in many of the New England cities that he visited. See Mark Noll, *The Work We Have To Do: A History of Protestants in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 43–44.
17. George Whitefield, *A continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Journal from Savannah, June 25.1740. to his arrival at Rhode-Island...* (Boston, 1741), 38–45, quotation on p. 45; McLoughlin, *Rhode Island*, 77.
18. McLoughlin, *Rhode Island*, 57.
19. Stiles worried that “nothingarians” and deists were also numerous in Providence and lamented that “not one sixth attend public worship” in Boston. See Franklin Dexter, ed., *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, D.D.*, 3 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1901), 1:278, August 26, 1772, and 2:465, September 2, 1780 [hereafter abbreviated LD]. See also Elaine F. Crane, “Uneasy Coexistence: Religious Tensions in Eighteenth-Century Newport,” *Newport History* 53 (Summer 1980): 102–103; Franklin Dexter, ed., *Extracts from the Itineraries and Other Miscellanies of Ezra Stiles, DD, LL.D, 1755–1794* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1916), 13, 105.
20. Robert Emmet Curran, *Papist Devils: Catholics in British America, 1574–1783* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 2014), 216–225; Thomas S. Kidd, *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 16–18; Nathan O. Hatch, “The Origins of Civil Millennialism in America: New England Clergymen, War with France, and the Revolution,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 31 (July 1974): 417–422; Green, *Inventing a Christian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 54, 109.
21. John Burt, *The mercy of God to his people, in the vengeance he renders to their adversaries, the occasion of their abundant joy* (Newport, R.I., 1759), 4. Burt was drawing on Rv. 17:4–5. For Burt, see *The First Congregational Church, Bristol, Rhode Island* (Bristol, R.I.: n.p., 2006), 9.

22. He was the nephew of Benjamin Franklin.
23. There were virtually no British soldiers stationed in the port cities at the end of the French and Indian War. See Fred Anderson, *The War that Made America* (New York: Viking, 2005), 245–46.
24. James, *Colonial Rhode Island*, 324–27. For Howard, see Daniel Snyder, Jr., “The Remarkable Career of Martin Howard, Esq.,” *Newport History* 59 (Winter 1988): 2–16. Another prominent member of the Newport Junto was Peter Harrison, the architect who designed the Redwood Library and Touro Synagogue. See Carl Bridenbaugh, *Peter Harrison: First American Architect* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1949).
25. [Martin Howard Jr.], *A Letter from a Gentleman at Halifax, to His Friend in Rhode-Island* (Newport, 1765), in Gordon S. Wood, ed., *The American Revolution: Writings from the Pamphlet Debate, 1764–1772*, 2 vols. (New York: Library of America, 2015), 1: 159–160. Emphasis in original.
26. A Latin hymn of praise sung in Catholic churches to express thanksgiving.
27. [James Otis, Jr.], “Brief Remarks on the Defense of the Halifax Libel,” in Richard Samuelson, ed., *The Collected Political Writings of James Otis* (Indianapolis, Ind.: The Liberty Fund, 2015), 211. Emphasis in original.
28. The term is derived from “Jacobus,” which is Latin for “James.” Jacobites tried to gain the throne for James II’s son in 1715 and rose up again in 1745 in support of James II’s grandson. See Frank McLynn, *The Jacobites* (London: Routledge, 1988).
29. Otis is referring to James Stuart (1688–1766), the son of James II. See note 28, and McLynn, 190–191.
30. Otis, “Brief Remarks,” 211. See also James, *Colonial Rhode Island*, 327.
31. Edmund S. Morgan and Helen M. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (New York: Collier Books, 1967), 161–64.
32. Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763–1789* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 105; Morgan and Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis*, 188; Stensrud, *Newport: A Lively Experiment*, 184–85.
33. John Adams linked Catholics and Jacobites at this time in his *Dissertation on the Canon and the Feudal Law*, declaring that both were “as rare as a Comet or an Earthquake.” See Robert J. Taylor, ed., *Papers of John Adams*, 10 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1977), 1: 120. He also informed his friend James Warren that there were a “few rascally Jacobites and Roman Catholics” in his hometown of Braintree, Massachusetts in 1775. See *Works of John Adams*, 10 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1850–1856), 9: 355.
34. *Newport Mercury*, September 2, 1765 [hereafter abbreviated NM]. Martin’s home at 17 Broadway is now known as the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House and is operated as a house museum by the Newport Historical Society.
35. Bertram Lippincott, the Newport Historical Society’s librarian, thinks that Moffat probably lived on Broadway near Howard, but Moffat rented his home so there are no property records on him.
36. David S. Lovejoy, *Rhode Island Politics and the American Revolution, 1760–1776* (Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1958), 105–106; Morgan and Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis*, 189–191; Crane, *A Dependent People*, 113–114; Snyder, “The Remarkable Career,” 14–15.
37. In Boston the connection between the Stamp Act Riots and Pope’s Day was explicit. Ebenezer McIntosh, a shoemaker, was recruited to lead the Stamp Act Riots because of his prominence in the annual Pope’s Day ceremonies. See Morgan and Morgan, *Stamp Act Crisis*, 159–161.
38. Fawkes and about a dozen other Catholic laymen attempted to kill King James I because he had refused to provide religious liberty to the recusants, the Catholic minority in England. After foiling the plot, the government then arrested and executed several Jesuits even though none were involved in it. See Antonia Fraser, *Faith and Treason: The Story of the Gunpowder Plot* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 15–52, 229–267. Guy Fawkes Day is still celebrated in some parts of England. See Jenny Gross, “Celebrating a Failed Revolution Can Get Crowded on Guy Fawkes Night,” *Wall Street Journal*, November 6, 2013; Fraser, *Faith and Treason*, 293–94.
39. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), 19–20; Owen Stanwood, “Catholics, Protestants and the Clash of Civilizations in Early America,” in Chris Beneke, ed., *The First Prejudice: Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in Early America* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 233.
40. See Francis Cogliano, *No King, No Popery: Anti-Catholicism in Revolutionary New England* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1995), 24. Boston’s Pope’s Day revelry turned deadly on at least one occasion. In 1764 a boy was run over and killed by a wagon carrying an effigy of a pope. See Morgan and Morgan, 159–160.
41. See Peter Benes, “Night Processions: Celebrating the Gunpowder Plot in England and New England,” in *New England Celebrates: Spectacle, Commemoration and Festivity: 2000 Annual Proceedings of the Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife* (Boston: Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife, 2002), 14–17; Curran, *Papist Devils*, 216–225; Anderson, *The War that Made America*, 249.
42. See “Gunpowder Treason,” NM, January 12, 1867.
43. See “Gunpowder Treason,” NM, January 12, 1867.
44. For Southwick’s staunch opposition

- to the British Crown, see C. Deirdre Phelps, "Solomon Southwick, Patriotic Printer of Revolutionary Rhode Island," *Newport History* 77 (Fall 2008): 21–24. For his involvement in publishing, see George Champlin Mason, *Reminiscences of Newport* (Newport, R.I.: 1884), 84–86.
45. Arthur J. Riley, *Catholicism in New England to 1788* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1936), 30; Charles H. Metzger, SJ, *Catholics in the American Revolution*, 17–18; Phelps, "Solomon Southwick," 19; Kidd, *God of Liberty*, 67.
 46. *NM*, June 28, 1773.
 47. *NM*, November 29, 1773.
 48. See John O'Kelly to Christopher Champlin, October 20, 1773, printed in Kerby Miller, et al., eds., *Irish Immigrants in the Land of Canaan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 329–331.
 49. Merrill Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation: A History of the American Revolution 1763–1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 461–62; Lovejoy, *Rhode Island Politics*, 166.
 50. *NM*, December 27, 1773; Lovejoy, *Rhode Island Politics*, 166.
 51. *NM*, January 3, 1774.
 52. Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation*, 464–482.
 53. Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 237; Reginald Coupland, *The Quebec Act: A Study in Statesmanship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 24. Coupland estimates that Catholics outnumbered Protestants by a 350 to 1 ratio. Coupland, *The Quebec Act*, 23.
 54. The text of the Quebec Act is printed in Coupland, *The Quebec Act*, 208–217.
 55. *NM*, March 14, 1774. Emphasis in original. In the following months, Southwick continued to link popery and British tyranny in his advertisements for the book. See, for example, *NM*, January 30, 1775, and February 13, 1775. See also Riley, *Catholicism in New England to 1788*, 30.
 56. *NM*, July 18, 1774; August 22, 1774; September 5, 1774; September 19, 1774; October 3, 1774; and December 19, 1774.
 57. *NM*, August 22, 1774.
 58. *NM*, October 17, 1774.
 59. Dexter, ed., *LD*, 1: 455, August 23, 1774. He had a similar entry a week later. See *LD*, 1: 455, August 29, 1774. See also Edmund S. Morgan, *Gentle Puritan: A Life of Ezra Stiles, 1727–1795* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1962), 266–67.
 60. Dexter, ed., *LD*, 1: 470, November 5, 1774. Lord North was the British prime minister from 1770–1782; Thomas Hutchinson was the Loyalist governor of Massachusetts from 1769–1774; and Thomas Gage succeeded Hutchinson as the military governor of Massachusetts from 1774–1775. Three years earlier, Stiles merely noted, "Powder Plot—Pope etc. carried about." Dexter, ed., *LD*, 1: 182, November 5, 1771.
 61. Dexter, ed., *LD*, 1: 490, November 27, 1774. Stiles drew on the second chapter of Second Thessalonians where St. Paul speaks of a "man of lawlessness...the son of perdition who...takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God." 2 Thess 2: 3–4.
 62. A couple of Portuguese Catholics settled in Newport in the 1750s; see Conley and Smith, 6–7. Kerby Miller, a historian of Irish America, notes that sixty Irish came from Newfoundland to Newport in 1774. It is not clear how many were Catholics. See Miller, *Irish Immigrants*, 329.
 63. Crane, "Uneasy Coexistence," 105; *NM*, October 3, 1774.
 64. Georgia was the only colony not represented at the Congress. See Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation*, 477.
 65. Ward and Hopkins were archrivals, who battled each other for control for Rhode Island's political spoils in the 1750s and 1760s. See McLoughlin, *Rhode Island*, 81–83; James, *Colonial Rhode Island*, 293–313.
 66. Quoted in John Tracy Ellis, ed., *Documents of American Catholic History* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1962), 134.
 67. Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation*, 495–96; James Hennesey, SJ, *American Catholics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 57.
 68. Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 253–54.
 69. Charles P. Hanson, *Necessary Virtue: The Pragmatic Origins of Religious Liberty in New England* (Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 31–36.
 70. Catholics from Maryland and Pennsylvania served in Washington's forces. See Metzger, *Catholics in the American Revolution*, 50; Hennesey, *American Catholics*, 59–60.
 71. Quoted in Ellis, *Documents of American Catholic History*, 136. See also Kidd, *God of Liberty*, 73–74.
 72. Brown and Tager, *Massachusetts*, 85–86.
 73. Pauline Maier, *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence* (New York: Knopf, 1997), 116–119.
 74. Samuel Eliot Morison, *Oxford History of the American People*, 3 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 1: 295.
 75. McLoughlin, *Rhode Island*, 84.
 76. Lovejoy, *Rhode Island Politics*, 169.
 77. McLoughlin, *Rhode Island*, 92–94.
 78. Stensrud, *Newport: A Lively Experiment*, 191–92.
 79. Christian M. McBurney, *The Rhode Island Campaign: The First French and American Operation in the Revolutionary War* (Yardley, Pa.: Westholme Publishing, 2011), 2–3.
 80. McLoughlin, *Rhode Island*, 94.
 81. For Stiles's estimates of the number of Newporters who remained, see

- Dexter, ed., *LD*, 2: 105, 111–112, December 27, 1776; January 13, 1777; McBurney, *The Rhode Island Campaign*, 9.
82. Donald F. Johnson, “Occupied Newport: A Revolutionary City under British Rule,” *Newport History* 84 (Summer 2015): 5.
83. Richard M. Ketchum, *Saratoga: Turning Point of America’s Revolutionary War* (New York: Henry Holt, 1997), 428–440.
84. Ketchum, *Saratoga*, 440–448; Stacy Schiff, *A Great Improvisation: Franklin, France and the Birth of America* (New York: Henry Holt, 2005), 110–134.
85. McBurney, *The Rhode Island Campaign*, 75.
86. James Stokesbury, *A Brief History of the American Revolution* (New York: W. Morrow, 1991), 189–190; Stensrud, *Newport: A Lively Experiment*, 213.
87. McBurney, *The Rhode Island Campaign*, 170–195.
88. *Providence Gazette*, April 17, 1779; Metzger, *Catholics in the American Revolution*, 64–65.
89. Stensrud, *Newport: A Lively Experiment*, 222–23.
90. Johnson, “Occupied Newport,” 7.
91. Quoted in Stensrud, *Newport: A Lively Experiment*, 223. The “pillaged library” was the Redwood which had been used as an officers’ club during the occupation.
92. Arnold Whitridge, *Rochambeau: America’s Neglected Founding Father* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 142. After James II’s defeat at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, considerable numbers of Irishmen left their homeland and enlisted in the French and Spanish armies. See Maurice N. Hennessy, *The Wild Geese: The Irish Soldier in Exile* (Old Greenwich, Conn.: Devin-Adair Co., 1973).
93. Lee Kennett, *The French Forces in America, 1780–1783* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977), 48.
94. Dexter, ed., *LD*, 2: 453, July 26, 1780.
95. Whitridge, *Rochambeau*, 93; Hayman, *Catholicism in Rhode Island and the Diocese of Providence*, 3–4.
96. Forbes and Cadman, *France and New England*, 1: 108.
97. E.M. Stone, *Our French Allies* (Providence, 1884), 218; Conley and Smith, *Catholicism in Rhode Island*, 11; Hayman, *Catholicism in Rhode Island and the Diocese of Providence*, 4.
98. Noailles was the brother-in-law of Lafayette.
99. Alan Simpson and Mary M. Simpson, “A New Look at How Rochambeau Quartered His Army in Newport, 1780–1781,” *Newport History* 72–73 (Fall 2003–Spring 2004): 95; Stensrud, *Newport: A Lively Experiment*, 227. Water Street, in Newport’s Point neighborhood, is now Washington Street.
100. Jean-Edmond Weelen, *Rochambeau, Father and Son* (New York: H. Holt & Co., 1936), 95.
101. Dexter, ed., *LD* 2: 473, October 9, 1780. Chastellux stayed at Captain Mawdsley’s house at the corner of Spring and John Streets. For a description and photograph of the house, see Stensrud, *Newport: A Lively Experiment*, 72–73.
102. Dexter, ed., *LD*, 2: 517–18, March 2, 1781.
103. Allan Forbes and Paul Cadman, *France and New England*, 3 vols. (Boston: State Street Trust Co., 1925–1929), 1: 105; Hanson, *Necessary Virtue*, 159, 201; Dexter, ed., *LD* 2: 472–74, September 30–October 19, 1780. Just two years earlier, Stiles expressed sharp opposition to Catholicism. When the American minister in Paris, Silas Deane, urged him to hire a French professor at Yale, Stiles remarked that its study might encourage “popery.” The Yale Corporation did not approve Deane’s request. See Dexter, ed., *LD*, 2: 296–98, August 22–25, 1778.
104. Mason, *Reminiscences*, 77–78.
105. Kennett, *The French Forces in America*, 55.
106. Weelen, *Rochambeau, Father and Son*, 91.
107. Howard C. Rice, Jr., and Anne S.K. Brown, trans. and eds., *The American Campaign of Rochambeau’s Army, 1780, 1781, 1782, 1783*, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972), 1: 121–23; *NM*, September 2, 1780.
108. Conley and Smith, *Catholicism in Rhode Island*, 12; Whitridge, *Rochambeau*, 111; Stone, *Our French Allies*, 250; De B. Randolph Keim, *Rochambeau* (Washington, D.C.: General Printing Office, 1907), 339.
109. Marquis de Lafayette to Adrienne de Lafayette, February 2, 1781, in *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution: Selected Letters and Papers, 1776–1790*, Stanley J. Idzerda, ed., 5 vols. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977–1983), 3: 310. For de Ternay’s unpopularity, see Eugena Poulin and Claire Quintal, *La Gazette Française: Revolutionary America’s French Newspaper* (Lebanon, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2007), 61.
110. Stone, *Our French Allies*, 338.
111. Stone, *Our French Allies*, 347–48. John Hattendorf notes that on the day preceding the funeral, de Ternay’s flagship fired off a cannon every half hour and as the funeral procession wound its way towards Trinity Church, the ship fired a fifteen-gun salute. See his *Semper Eadem*, 132.
112. Stone, *Our French Allies*, 348.
113. Stone, *Our French Allies*, 348.
114. Austin Dowling, “Diocese of Providence,” in William Byrne, ed., *History of the Catholic Church in the New England States*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1899), 1: 355. Dowling was a priest from Newport who was appointed archbishop of St. Paul, Minnesota in 1919. See Marvin R. O’Connell, *Pilgrims to the Northland: The*

- Archdiocese of St. Paul (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 389–390.
115. Dowling, “Diocese of Providence,” in Byrne, I: 354–55. The newspaper published by the French while they were in Newport, *La Gazette Française*, ran a notice in December 1780 inviting Frenchmen to a celebration at the Newport Masonic lodge. See Poulin and Quintal, *La Gazette Française* 76.
 116. Laura Auricchio, *The Marquis: Lafayette Reconsidered* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), 24–25, and *Marquis de Chastellux, Travels in North America in the Years 1780, 1781 and 1782*, trans. and ed., Howard C. Rice, Jr., 2 vols. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 1: 6–12.
 117. Abbé Claude Robin, one of Rochambeau’s chaplains, thought it likely that several French officers were having affairs with married women in Newport. See his *New Travels through North-America* (1783; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1969), 21–22. See also Whitridge, *Rochambeau*, 94; Stone, *Our French Allies*, 224–27.
 118. Rice and Brown, *The American Campaign of Rochambeau’s Army*, 1: 22. Chastellux was also quite critical of the Quakers. See his *Travels in North America*, 1: 166–67.
 119. Rice and Brown, *The American Campaign of Rochambeau’s Army*, 1: 245. Berthier would later serve as Napoleon’s chief of staff.
 120. Rice and Brown, *The American Campaign of Rochambeau’s Army*, 1: 125.
 121. Whitridge, *Rochambeau*, 129–130. Maria Theresa, who ruled the Holy Roman Empire from 1740–1780, was the mother of Marie Antoinette.
 122. According to Louis Berthier, four-hundred troops remained in Newport to protect it from British invasion. See Rice and Brown, *The American Campaign of Rochambeau’s Army*, 1: 246.
 123. Rice and Brown, *The American Campaign of Rochambeau’s Army*, 1: 245.
 124. Samuel Vernon to William Vernon, August 26, 1781, Box 79, Folder 19, *Newport Historical Society*, Newport, Rhode Island [hereafter abbreviated as NHS].
 125. Jonathan Easton to Assessors of Tax, June 9, 1781, Box 44, NHS.
 126. Silas Cooke to Christopher Ellery, January 4, 1781, Box 44, NHS.
 127. Stensrud claims that the French officers “brought a new and welcome gaiety to the town.” Stensrud, 230. See also, John Hattendorf, “The French Connection in Newport during the American Revolution: An Overview,” *Newport History* 72–73 (Fall 2003–Spring 2004): 5–6.
 128. Admiral Barras assumed command of the fleet in Newport in May 1781.
 129. John Russell Bartlett, ed., *Records of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations IX* (February 1783): 674–75.
 130. Ellis, *Documents of American Catholic History*, 137–140; Hanson, *Necessary Virtue*, 218–19.
 131. Robert H. Lord, John E. Sexton and Edward T. Harrington, *History of the Archdiocese of Boston*, 3 vols. (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1944) 1: 341; Stensrud, *Newport: A Lively Experiment*, 228; Hayman, *Catholicism in Rhode Island and the Diocese of Providence*, 6–7; Cogliano, *No King, No Popery*, 125. For apprehensions about Catholicism in post-Revolutionary Newport, see George Gibbs Channing, *Early Recollections of Newport, R.I. from the Year 1793 to 1811* (Newport, R.I.: A.J. Ward, C.E. Hammett, Jr., 1868), 96–97.
 132. John F. Quinn, “Where Religious Freedom Runs in the Streams’: Catholic Expansion in Newport, 1780–1855,” *Newport History* 80 (Spring 2011): 5–6; Hayman, *Catholicism in Rhode Island and the Diocese of Providence*, 19–20; NM, July 12, 1828; August 9, 1828; and August 23, 1828.
 133. See Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800–1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (New York: Macmillan, 1938); Nancy Lusignan Schultz, *Fire and Roses: The Burning of the Charlestown Convent, 1834* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000); McLoughlin, *Rhode Island*, 109, 140–42; Quinn, “Where Religious Freedom Runs in the Streams,” 8–9; *Rhode Island Republican*, August 20, 1834.



A Tribute to Albert T. Klyberg



INTRODUCTION BY C. MORGAN GREFE
Executive Director, Rhode Island Historical Society

RHODE ISLAND HISTORY, AS OUR READERS NO DOUBT KNOW, IS a peer-reviewed journal that shares with the public the best and most recent scholarship in the area of Rhode Island history, a still under-studied and under-appreciated topic. Despite that charge, there are occasions when events force us to deviate from this mission.

In January of this year, we lost a person who loomed large in the landscape of that history. Al Klyberg, the Executive Director of the Rhode Island Historical Society for a remarkable three decades, passed away and left us to carry forth the mission to protect and share this state's countless stories with as many people around the globe as possible. And to do it with humor, passion, and a relentless dedication to the notion that knowledge of history is the backbone of a civil society and a strong democracy. ¶



| Al Klyberg portrait by Len Hardy, n.d.

About a decade ago, when I was the Director of the Goff Center for Education and Public Programs, my mother came up from New Jersey for a visit. We decided to head out to Lincoln for a walk in the woods and found ourselves at the Captain Wilbur Kelly House. Lo and behold, Al was there working, sharing stories and entertaining the visitors.

Al knew me, of course, and made his way over to meet my mom. As I watched Al relate to my mother, connecting her history in the Delaware Valley to the stories of transportation in Rhode Island, I knew I was watching a master at work. He had a way of making the person with whom he was talking feel as if his or her story was the most remarkable one he had ever heard—or the most fascinating one he had ever told. What's more, it was clear that everyone's story could be related to Rhode Island.

As I got to know Al better, I began to understand what the trick was: He actually believed it. He loved hearing everyone's stories. There was no hierarchy. No "better than." It was all the stuff of life, and illustrated the profound interconnectedness of all of our stories, a beautiful and necessary sentiment these days.

In the reminiscences that follow, you will read the stories of people who worked with Al during his time in Rhode Island. They are a sampling

of the people who worked on some of Al's signature projects: The Greene Papers, the Museum of Work & Culture, the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society, the RIHS move to Aldrich House, and more. Scores could write their own memorials to Al, but we had room to highlight excerpts from just a few. In them, you will see some common threads: the humor, the enthusiasm, the passion, the depth of knowledge, and the dogged dedication to equality. There is also, again, that sense that the project on which each was working with Al was the most important to him. The most fascinating one. And, again, I feel pretty certain that, somehow, they all were.

While his passion for history flourished in Rhode Island, it was not born here, but rather in Hackensack, New Jersey. It was in this community that Albert Thomas Klyberg, when he was in the third grade, had found his first connection to the world of museums. Near his home was a Jersey Dutch farmhouse confiscated by the new state of New Jersey from a Tory owner. The house was then presented to Revolutionary War General Baron von Steuben. The Steuben House has been a New Jersey landmark since 1928 and is now the home of the Bergen County Historical Society.

What I love most about this story is that the house didn't hold much significance for Al at the time, but when leaving the building he noticed a map by the door that depicted the moment when the big names of the Revolution had all gathered at this one site, just down the road from where he lived. And one of those people was Nathanael Greene. This historical map—and the moment it captured—sparked something in this little boy, and his life of researching, writing, and sharing stories took off from that moment of inspiration.

Al continued his study of the Revolution through high school and to the College of Wooster in Wooster, Ohio, joining a Revolutionary War Round Table, and, in his junior year, pursuing an independent study in the area, which took him to the New York Public Library and the Library of Congress.

It was at this point that he began to learn about the William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Ultimately, this is what led him to graduate school at Michigan, pursuing his doctorate in history. He had a graduate assistantship in manuscripts at the Clements Library, during which he helped to catalogue the university's newly acquired letters of Nathanael Greene, to complement the 4,000 letters it already had from the Rhode Island general.

Rarely can one trace his or her intellectual path from childhood to graduate school and then on to a professional career, but shockingly, there you have it! Al left Michigan after he took his doctoral exams, heading to Rhode Island to work in the library of the Rhode Island Historical Society, hoping he'd have time to write while working full-time.

Of course, what happened was that he moved up the ranks at the RIHS very quickly, becoming Executive Director before he was thirty years old. With a young family, Al's focus shifted away from the Ph.D. and to the daily work of public history, dedicating his life to protecting, preserving, and sharing Rhode Island history. Not surprisingly, Nathanael Greene figured prominently in this, too, as you will read in the essays in this tribute.

When Al started at the RIHS, most of our operations existed under one roof at the John Brown House, as we had recently expanded into the “new” library, now known as the RIHS Robinson Research Center. Under Al's leadership, we grew to include the Aldrich House, and his treasure, the Museum of Work & Culture. As an institution, we have been irrevocably shaped by his vision and determination. And since he left the helm of the RIHS, his passion for Rhode Island's extraordinary history only increased, which few thought possible.

The next several pages of this issue of *Rhode Island History* are dedicated to celebrating this man and thinking about what he accomplished here because there are people in this world who change the way we think about a place. Al Klyberg was one of those people. He came to Rhode Island with a passion for history, and not just any history, but the history of every man and woman. And he committed his life to sharing that history with everyone. He had a beautiful vision of the role that history should play in our lives, and I am honored to have gotten to know and work with him. He continues to shape the RIHS every day, and I—we—are so very grateful.

In the pages that follow, you will see the heartfelt words of men and women who called Al their colleague, boss, and friend. To Al, all of their stories were the most fascinating and the most important, because collectively they are all of our stories, and every story matters.

Taken together, these remembrances comprise just a small part of Al's story, but I hope that they inspire us all, historians and laypeople, to ask more questions of our neighbors, to listen more closely to our companions on the bus or in line, and to bring more compassion to every situation in which we find ourselves. That is how we learn their stories. That is how we learn our story. ♡



RAY RICKMAN

*Executive Director of Stages of Freedom and
former Rhode Island Deputy Secretary of State*

These written comments devoted to the memory of Al Klyberg are an opportunity for me to offer deep personal reflections as one adopted son of Rhode Island to the honor of another adopted son. Al was a supreme educator, family man, and history advocate. He was not born here and in fact came when he was in his late twenties. But he became a Rhode Islander. He studied our thirty-nine towns and cities and knew as much about Rhode Island as anyone I know. He could tell you where the village of Moscow is and all about its history.

Al studied the Irish, Italians, Germans, French-Canadians, African Americans and Anglo-Saxons of our state. He also studied the Greeks, Jews, Swedes, Native Americans, and almost every other group of people who make up this community. He knew about the roots of both the factory owners and the factory workers, and he cared deeply about their shared history.

He and I often talked about WPA guides, Ann Arbor, collecting books, and the department stores of Providence and Chicago. He was a brilliant man who knew how to share and to take an interest in the work of others.

In Rhode Island, our heroes often are people who enhance our knowledge and our spirit. In honoring Al Klyberg, this tribute in *Rhode Island History* salutes a man with a great spirit. When Al talked about Roger Williams, you understood the value of our founder. You also understood how honest Al could be about the complex relationships that existed between Roger Williams and the Algonquian-speaking tribes of New England.

Al was my first teacher of the ways of the Narragansett and of the Wampanoag as they functioned in the recent past and in Colonial times. He gave me a sense of direction about many groups and became my first mentor on Rhode Island history. Unlike anyone else I knew,

he brought unsparing talent to the promotion of Rhode Island history. He pushed platitudes aside in favor of a common truth. His understanding of the most basic elements of Rhode Island history made him a teacher and leader par excellence in this community.

Al was quick to point out that the workers were as valuable to a factory's success as the bankers and owners who built it. I served on the Rhode Island Historical Society Board of Trustees when Al was successfully pushing for the creation of the Museum of Work & Culture in Woonsocket as a way to recognize the workers who made Rhode Island history. An organization that once was only interested in the mill owners was now also championing the workers.

Al the historian and teacher became a promoter of Roger Williams and of the role liberty plays in a free society. Al had a loving quarrel with a nation slow to embrace all of its citizens. Let it not be forgotten that Al gathered with leaders of the state's African American community forty years ago to create its own historical society.

Like me, Al was a card-carrying member of the Democratic Party. Like Edward Kennedy, he believed that the fight continues, and like Robert Kennedy, he believed that you sail against the wind. Two decades ago I hosted a party for Patrick Kennedy; Al and his wife Beverly were among the many guests. I overheard Al tell Patrick that if each of us does enough good we at least will be a footnote in history.

At 10:10 a.m. on January 10 of this year, a shocking email arrived from Russell DeSimone telling me that Al had died during the night. I surprised myself with a sudden burst of tears. Al Klyberg went away all too soon. I was looking forward to many more years of working with him in his new role at the Heritage Harbor Foundation.

It happens sometimes that a person must rest on what he or she has already done. I think all will agree that our friend Al had used his lifetime to build a great foundation.

Al, keep that twinkle in your eye. And since I am one-eighth Irish, I feel called upon to say "May God hold you in the hollow of His hand." ♦



DENNIS M. CONRAD

*Historian at the Naval History and Heritage
Command in Washington, D.C., and
Associate Editor, Editor, and Project Director of
The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*

The primary duty of the Director of the Rhode Island Historical Society is to preserve the history of this great state. Albert T. Klyberg did so in spectacular fashion and in many ways. However, Al spearheaded one particularly notable effort. He was responsible for preserving the papers of General Nathanael Greene, thereby insuring that the contributions and legacy of Rhode Island's greatest son would be long- and well-remembered.

Al was a consummate coalition builder, and the Greene Papers is a testimony to his ability. He did what J. Franklin Jameson, one of the titans of the history profession in the United States, could not. He convinced a number of "movers and shakers" in Rhode Island to come together with both their resources and their support to create and sustain a project to preserve and disseminate the papers of Nathanael Greene.

In particular, Al convinced the members of the Nathanael Greene Memorial Association that the collection and publication of Greene's papers was a fitting monument to the general's memory. The Association's funds had been raised at the turn of the twentieth century to erect a statue in Greene's honor in Rhode Island. Apparently, the original committee visited Savannah, the site of Greene's burial, and decided that the obelisk erected in the general's honor in Johnson Square in front of the Savannah City Hall was a fitting monument. The monies collected for the memorial remained unused until 1971 when Al convinced Mrs. Thomas Casey Greene, and other key members of the Memorial Association, that using their fund as seed money to establish the Greene Papers project was in keeping with the original intent of the Memorial Association.



In retirement from the Rhode Island Historical Society, Al Klyberg served in the summertime as a ranger with the Department of Environmental Management. Here, he is giving a presentation to a camp group on the site of Wilbur Kelly's Mill, Blackstone River National Historical Park, Summer 2015. Photograph courtesy of the Klyberg family.

Al Klyberg (right) with Sen. Claiborne Pell and Pell's wife, Nuala, at the Rhode Island Historical Society's one-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary celebration at the John Brown House, May 12, 1972. Silver gelatin print by George C. Henderson, 150th Anniversary of RIHS Photo Album—B13, RHI X17 2934, Rhode Island Historical Society Collections.

Al then enlisted the support of the William Clements Library at the University of Michigan, which holds the greatest number of Greene documents; the National Historical Publications Commission, an arm of the National Archives; and the state of Rhode Island's Bicentennial Commission to back the project, and the Greene Papers was born. The goal of the project was to find and identify every letter and document written from or to Nathanael Greene during his lifetime, in public and private repositories.



Al Klyberg spearheaded the effort to publish the papers of Revolutionary War hero, Rhode Islander General Nathanael Greene. Al and Beverly Klyberg are standing in front of a statue of Nathanael Greene at Valley Forge National Historical Park, n.d. Courtesy of the Klyberg Family.

These thousands of documents were to be organized chronologically, meticulously transcribed by staff members of the project at the Rhode Island Historical Society, annotated, and published by the University of North Carolina Press in a series of volumes.

Al and Dick Showman, the first editor of *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, both anticipated that the project would take no more than three volumes and would be done in less than ten years. In the end, the effort took thirty-four years and required thirteen volumes. Moreover, it was a difficult road, as funders came and went and government support waxed and waned. However, the one constant throughout the

history of the Greene Papers was Al's vision and unwavering support. He continued to believe in the project and do all he could to move it forward. On one occasion when funding had been cut, I was told that Al went to a local fast food franchise and purchased his lunch so he could acquire scratch-off tickets with the hope of winning the monetary prize, which he planned to use to fund the Greene Papers project.

Al not only preserved the legacy of Nathanael Greene, but was the catalyst for the rebirth of interest in the American Revolution in the South. Greene was the general who commanded in the South from 1780 through the end of the war. He was the focal point of the war effort in that region. Thanks to the publication of *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, groups of people in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, again became aware of the history of the Revolution in the South. That awareness led them to band together, to begin once again looking at their history, and to publish new or forgotten material both primary and monographic. The publication of *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene* series impelled them to work to save and to reclaim important Revolutionary sites, to reinterpret, to create awareness among the young and old alike, and, in general, to reanimate a history that had been moribund.

Thanks to the thirteen-volume *Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, the study of the American Revolution will no longer jump from Saratoga to Yorktown, implying that nothing important happened in between the two events. In short, not only is Al responsible for preserving the history of Rhode Island and of Nathanael Greene, but he could also take credit for preserving the Revolutionary War histories of Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, as well. To me, that is a wonderful legacy and the mark of a great man. ♦



DENNIS E. STARK
*Vice-President for Finance, Alderson
Broaddus University, and Former President
of the Rhode Island Historical Society*

When I moved to Rhode Island in January of 1964 to work for Old Stone Bank, I joined three organizations: St. Stephen's Church, the Providence Preservation Society, and the Rhode Island Historical Society. I would later meet Al Klyberg at the John Brown House. He was an impressive young man who knew his history and was devoted to the RIHS.

Al recruited me to join the Finance Committee and then the Board of Trustees. When John Kirk retired as Executive Director in 1970, Al succeeded him. In 1976, we had a spectacular ball at the John Brown House to help celebrate the Bicentennial. My sister, Donna Stark Hayden, joined me at that event. Angela Brown Fischer shared with me that she contributed the last of the spermaceti candles from her family's cache to help illuminate the house. In 1978, I succeeded Duncan Mauran as President.

During that same time period, the Rockefeller brothers donated the Aldrich House on Benevolent Street to the RIHS. The corporate offices were moved there from the John Brown House on Power Street.

Al took our name quite seriously. He was always trying to broaden our focus to include all of the areas of Rhode Island, including Block and Aquidneck Islands. He was justifiably proud of the creation of the Museum of Work & Culture in Woonsocket. He helped local historical societies write grants, do research, and plan events. He was also very successful in securing larger annual grants for the RIHS from the State Legislature.

My banking career took me to New York, California, and Massachusetts between 1986 and 1998. By the time I returned to Rhode Island, Al had retired from the RIHS and transferred his talents and energy to the Blackstone Valley



Al and Beverly Klyberg at the Rhode Island Historical Society's one-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary celebration at the John Brown House, May 12, 1972. Photograph by George C. Henderson, silver gelatin print. 150th Anniversary of RIHS Photo Album-B36, RHi X17 2935, Rhode Island Historical Society Collections.

The publication of the thirteenth and final volume of the Papers of General Nathanael Greene was celebrated at the Rhode Island Historical Society's History Makers event in 2006. David McCullough was the guest speaker. Al Klyberg is in the front, with Greene Papers editors (from left) Roger Parks, Dennis M. Conrad, and Elizabeth C. Stevens. Chromogenic print, RHi X17 2938, Rhode Island Historical Society Collections.

Historical Society and Heritage Harbor. His commitment and vision helped the Blackstone Valley Historical Society grow and prosper, and ultimately resulted in Heritage Harbor providing a substantial endowment for ongoing promotion of history in Rhode Island.

Rhode Island is blessed because Al and his family chose to live here. I am blessed to have known him and to have worked with him. ♣



ANNE CONWAY
Director, Museum of Work & Culture

Bringing history to the public was one of Al Klyberg's most important missions. It was one that was exemplified by his work to make the Museum of Work & Culture a reality. The idea of having a museum in Woonsocket had emerged during the centennial of the city in 1988. The yearlong celebration of the city's rich heritage triggered the enthusiasm to construct a permanent place where the history and culture of the city would be preserved and shared. Mayor Charles Baldelli started the planning process, creating partnerships with public and private corporations. Roundtable discussions among scholars took place, and a storyline started to unfold. The design firm of Christopher Chadbourne and Associates was hired. And, then, the banking crisis of 1990 happened. As the city's economy was deteriorating, grant applications for rehabilitation of an old mill building to become the site of a museum were denied.

In 1992, the city of Woonsocket contacted Al. The role of the Rhode Island Historical Society under Al's management would become essential to re-energize and refocus the project. The RIHS was charged with the development and management of the Museum. Al was successful in securing large grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. Private corporations' and labor organizations' donations followed, and the city purchased the former Barnai Worsted/Lincoln Textile Company as the site of the future museum.

I met Al in the summer of 1997 at a Jubilee Franco-American event in Woonsocket. The buzz was out there about a new museum opening that fall in an old mill building along the banks of the Blackstone River. The museum was going to recall the journey of immigrants who came to work in the textile industry. The story was

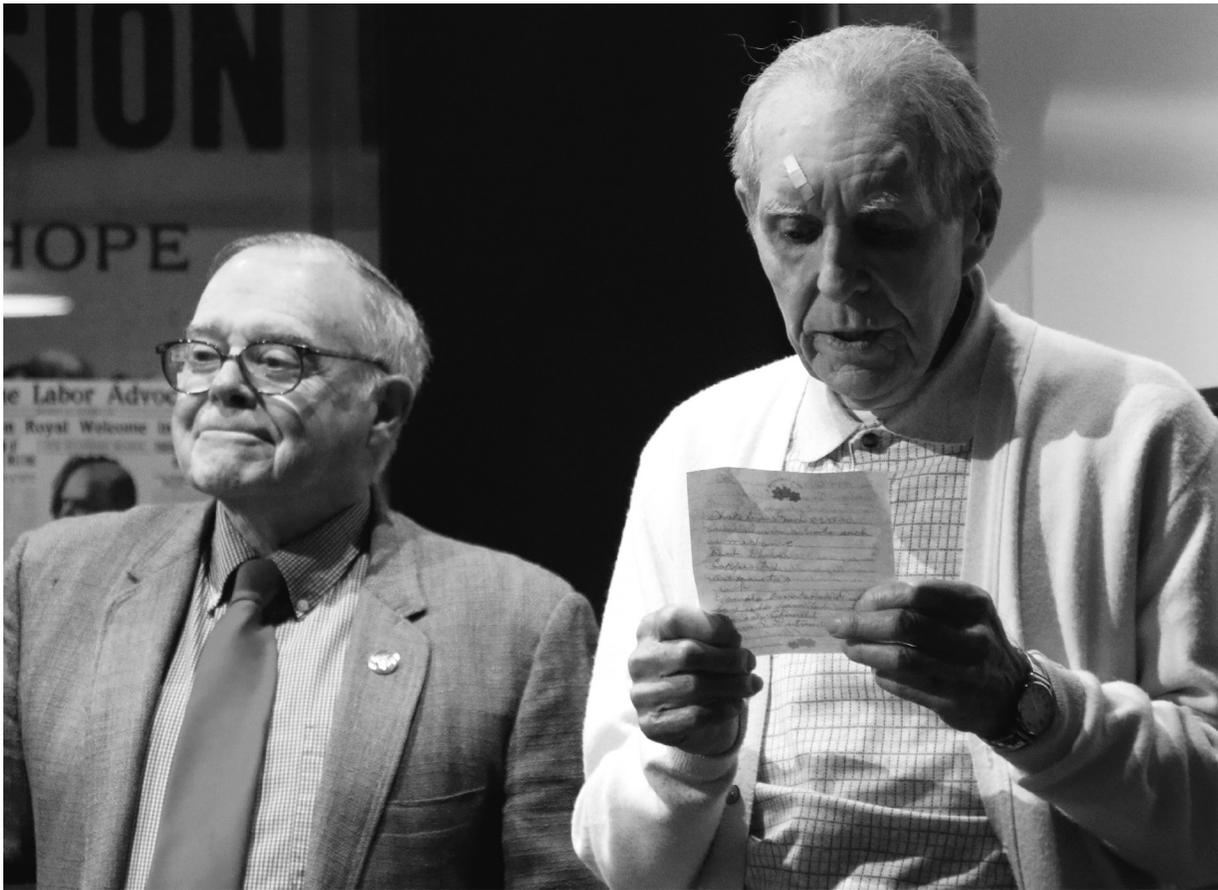


Al Klyberg (in boat), participating in a cleanup of the Blackstone Canal, ca. 2000. Photograph courtesy of the Klyberg family.

One of Al Klyberg's many accomplishments as Director of the Rhode Island Historical Society was the establishment of the Museum of Work & Culture in Woonsocket. This photograph was taken on the night of the museum's opening, October 10, 1997. From left, Al Klyberg, Mayor Charles Baldelli, Senator John Chafee, Mayor Susan Menard, Mayor Francis Lanctot (back), Senator Jack Reed. Photograph courtesy of the Museum of Work & Culture.

to be told through the lens of the French Canadians, the largest group of immigrants to settle in Woonsocket. Being from Quebec myself, with a bachelor's degree in French, a love for history, and the readiness of a mother of three to get back into the working world, I knew I should contact the Director of the RIHS, who was going to manage the museum, Al Klyberg.

My interview for the position of museum store manager took place on a hot summer afternoon. Al showed me a Museum of Work & Culture under construction. I was amazed to watch the exhibit designers and builders as they created the scenes that were going to set the stage for the museum's story. Al and I talked for



a long time; the more he described the project, the more excited I became at the idea of working there. Al hired me. That moment changed my life in so many ways.

On the night of October 10, 1997, as the last painters and rug installers were exiting the building, caterers and florists were walking in to prepare for the opening gala. I recall Al running around with a set of keys in his hands, trying to figure out which key unlocked which door and how to turn lights and sound on and off.

The opening event was just beautiful. Senators John H. Chafee and Jack Reed, Mayors Baldelli, Lanctot, and Menard, along with Al, cut the official ribbon. You could feel the pride of an entire community as it toured its museum for the first time. Al was so pleased. He often talked about the wonderful partnerships he had developed with the people of Woonsocket during the years leading to the museum's opening, and referred to the community as being warm, generous, and embracing.

After Al retired from the Rhode Island Historical Society, he remained involved with the museum, serving on committees, giving

In January 2016, Al Klyberg presented a talk at the Museum of Work and Culture that explored the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps in Rhode Island. A member of the audience, Mr. Jacques Dutremble of Woonsocket (right, in this photograph), who worked with the CCC in Burlingame State Park in Charlestown, spontaneously shared his experiences and received a standing ovation. Jim Hendrickson, photographer.

presentations, and leading tours. Last December, the museum applied for a grant with the Heritage Harbor Foundation to support the development of the Mill Project, a new permanent exhibit due to open in November of 2017 during the Museum of Work & Culture's 20th anniversary celebration. Al, who sat on the board of the Heritage Harbor Foundation, knew how pivotal this grant was going to be for the project, and he knew how anxiously I was awaiting his call. Then the call came: "You can put your dancing shoes on, Anne." I knew our request had been granted.

Al's wake was held at the museum on January 15, 2017, in the same ITU exhibit hall where he had addressed so many during the past twenty years. Hundreds came to pay tribute to a man whose history lessons are going to be greatly missed but never forgotten. ♡



JOYCE L. STEVOS

*Incorporator and Former President of the Rhode
Island Black Heritage Society*

After leading some tours of a freedom trail of African American history in Rhode Island, in 1975, Mrs. Rowena Stewart spearheaded a search for Rhode Island African American history through a series of community meetings seeking oral histories, documents, pictures, and artifacts.

Many residents came forward with documents, records and photographs from their bureau drawers, closets, and attics, and they told stories passed down orally in their families from generation to generation. Embedded in these stories were clues to other sources of information about the African American experience in Rhode Island. These successful forums led to the formation of the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society in 1976.

Al Klyberg was a key player in this groundbreaking movement. In his role as Executive Director of the Rhode Island Historical Society, he was one of the people who helped the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society become a reality. Formational meetings were held on the Aldrich House property. Al was one of the eight incorporators of the RIBHS and served on the Board of Directors for many years. He provided office and display space in the Aldrich House to the fledgling organization and provided conservation and development training to the staff.

The Rhode Island Black Heritage Society became another source for researchers interested in writing about the African American experience in Rhode Island and the United States. In the seventies, pressure was placed upon institutions and schools to include black studies in the curricula. The Rhode Island Black Heritage Society collection from the community added to the meager archive available in Rhode Island collections. Rather than embedded in larger collections of prominent



Al Klyberg enjoyed his interactions with school children. He is seen in this undated photograph in a Rhode Island classroom. Photograph courtesy of the Klyberg family.

white Rhode Island families, the material that came from local African American families and organizations provided a rich background into the institutions, self-help groups, and social life of African Americans in Rhode Island.

Al was an open, helpful, generous friend. He realized how important it was for the African American community to tell its own story, and, in that telling, it made the history of Rhode Island more inclusive.

Lonnie Bunch, founding director of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture writes in promotional literature: "In 2017, the Museum of African American History and Culture claims to tell the full story of the African American experience that has long been ignored, forgotten, and even actually suppressed...denying all Americans a critical understanding of our national heritage."

With the foresight and energies of Al Klyberg and Mrs. Rowena Stewart, first Executive Director of the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society, we were fortunate to have a local initiative that recognized the critical importance of collecting artifacts and documents that illuminate African American history decades before a national collection became a reality. ♡



GLENN W. LAFANTASIE

*Richard Frockt Family Professor of Civil War
History, Western Kentucky University*

I first met Al Klyberg in the old state house at a meeting of the Rhode Island Bicentennial Commission / Foundation in 1974. Al was a commissioner; I was a staff member. Al's work on the commission was exemplary as he sought to guide the commission in appropriate practices. It was when I first gained respect for the Executive Director of the Rhode Island Historical Society.

What also struck me after first meeting him was Al's indefatigable wit. This is not to suggest that he neglected to take things seriously. At the RIHS, Al regarded the state's history as very serious business, but he realized that preserving and promoting Rhode Island's history also could be accomplished with a healthy sense of humor. Most of all, Al spent his time at the RIHS guarding Rhode Island's rich history. In that noble work, Al was a hero.

But I'm a friendly witness. In late 1978, out of work and about to be married, I asked Al for a job. I did not expect that he would have an immediate answer for me, as we stood outside Aldrich House at the corner of Benevolent and Cooke in the freezing cold (why didn't we go inside?). There, on the spot, he offered me the job of Publications Director at RIHS, a job that would include editing the quarterly journal, *Rhode Island History*, helping to prepare exhibit catalogs, and editing and expanding an uncompleted manuscript of Roger Williams's correspondence, which had been compiled by the late Brad Swan of the *Providence Journal*. I was gobsmacked, to say the least, but luckily I had the wherewithal to accept the offer without hesitation. As a result, I worked at Aldrich House for the next seven years.

It was as a staff member of the RIHS that my real training as a historian began, even though I



Al and Beverly Klyberg at a "Spring Forward" event at Aldrich House, 2015. Photograph by Shawn Badgley.

The R.I. Historical Society acquired Aldrich House during Al Klyberg's tenure as Director. The acquisition of this historical dwelling, former home of Sen. Nelson Aldrich, vastly increased the amount of space available to the Society for events and administrative offices. Aldrich House, photograph, 1979, RHi X17 3240, Graphics, place file collection, Dwellings—Aldrich House, RHi X17 3240, Rhode Island Historical Society Collections.

had already received BA and MA degrees in History. Fact is, I loved my job. My family and I lived in Lincoln, where Al also resided (there were numerous commutes together when cars broke down, etc.). The staff at the RIHS was an incredible assemblage of young, bright professionals who worked toward a shared goal—a goal that Al had envisioned for the future of the RIHS and the promulgation of Rhode Island history. Al single-handedly built the RIHS into a modern organization staffed by talented historians, museum curators, educational specialists, librarians, and others. I learned a lot about museum operations by working closely with curators and consultants who planned gallery exhibits at Aldrich House and on other projects that required a catalog or other print media.

Working with Al and everyone on the staff was a pure delight. Al's management kept our ship seaworthy and headed in the right direction. He also proved to be a master at fundraising and obtaining grants from the General Assembly. Department heads of the RIHS met regularly, and it was in these sessions that I learned, by a kind of osmosis, about museum management, historic preservation, and public outreach. With aplomb and a smooth personal style, it seemed like Al could handle any situation with professional grace and calm. He was an excellent public speaker and a very good writer.

As a boss, Al did his share of grumbling. But if there was an important issue to be resolved, he did so by meeting, one-on-one, with the appropriate department head or staff member. He seemed to think he was a taskmaster, and to a certain extent he was, but he trusted his staff and let them do their work without micromanaging them. The Roger Williams project, which was supposed to take two years, ended up taking ten years. Al asked me for periodic updates, which I was happy to give him, but he never pushed me to hurry up the work. He never criticized me for taking too long to complete the project.

The news of Al's death hit me hard. It did not seem possible that he was gone. The funny thing is that Al, a native of New Jersey, became—in a very real sense—Mr. Rhode Island. Everybody

knew him. Everybody liked him. He was peripatetic in his travels around the state to talk to anyone who would listen about the RIHS's work and mission. By setting up the first education department at the RIHS, with funding from the General Assembly, Al made sure that the Society delivered its message to thousands of schoolchildren.

There is no one who can ever really fill Al's shoes. He was a Rhode Island original. In that sense, his birth in New Jersey was a huge cosmic mistake. Luckily, fate made things right. ♦



JOHN MCNIFF

*Park Ranger, National Park Service,
Roger Williams National Memorial*

Al had one of those senses of humor that can catch you off guard. It was always dry, and he waited for you to get it first. Then that smile would spread across his face...

I think I first met Al when we were digging in his back yard. Seriously. I was an archaeologist working for Rhode Island College's Public Archaeology Program in the early 1990s. We were working, studying and digging, around the Kelly House, the factory, and the Blackstone Canal. He would come outside and talk to us, let us know where he thought things might be, and gave us some great information about the entire area, and, if not the ancient history, at least some of its more recent past. He was such a wonderful resource and delighted in sharing what he knew.

I next worked with Al when I was Associate Producer with the Cumberland Company for the Performing Arts and we were putting together a play about the Blackstone Valley's history. Al's knowledge of the history saved us countless hours of research, and his analytical



Al Klyberg in ranger's hat, second from left, with Senator Jack Reed, center, and former Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, right, at Kelly House when Al worked as a ranger for the Department of Environmental Management. Photograph courtesy of the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park.

evaluation of what we were attempting was insightful and humorous at the same time. He mentioned that there seemed to be an inverse ratio between historical accuracy and attendance by the general public: the more historically accurate, the smaller the attendance. This was not to disparage good historical research, but when folks show up to be entertained, the play needs to be entertaining and not bogged down in the details.

For years, as I have been working with the National Park Service in Providence, we would both call or email each other with questions about this or that. When we would run into each other at events it was always pleasantries and then, "What do you think about this...?"

If there is one thing to remember about Al, it was his absolute joy in sharing what he knew, and the delight he showed when someone else "got it."

Al Klyberg was a real treasure, for all of us. 🍷



PATRICK T. CONLEY

*Historian Laureate of Rhode Island
and President, Heritage Harbor Foundation*

Albert T. Klyberg of Lincoln passed away suddenly and quietly in the early morning hours of January 10, less than twelve hours after he had met with me and Heritage Harbor Foundation treasurer Tony Marandola to arrange for the presentation of grant money from the Foundation to nine local nonprofit organizations dedicated to the promotion of Rhode Island history and culture.

How ironic that he lived just long enough to see the first fruits of his thirty-five-year crusade to bring the story of Rhode Island's heritage to the people of his adopted state via a foundation that he was the leader in creating.

Al, a native of New Jersey, came to Rhode Island in 1968 after completing his doctoral courses at the University of Michigan. After serving as the organization's librarian, he would assume the directorship of the staid Rhode Island Historical Society in 1970—a position he held with distinction for three decades. Upon arrival, Al immediately recognized a deficit in accounts of the Ocean State's history. That gap was the neglect of post-Civil War Rhode Island history. This oversight left out the stories of eighty percent of today's state population.

To rectify those gaps in the historical record, Klyberg led the RIHS's effort to microfilm all of the state's newspapers down to present time, and he began a television news film archive.

The Rhode Island Bicentennial Commission (on which Al was a prominent member) created eighteen ethnic heritage subcommittees that opened opportunities for Klyberg's Rhode Island Historical Society to expand its mission and its activities. To accomplish this task, Al advocated for the increase of the state appropriation to the RIHS.



Al Klyberg with his grandson, William, December, 2016.
Photograph courtesy of the Klyberg family.

Al's simultaneous leadership in the RIHS's production of the thirteen-volume *Papers of General Nathanael Greene* and the two-volume edition of *The Correspondence of Roger Williams* proved that he did not neglect the earlier period of Rhode Island history.

While offering courses in museum studies and in the history of Rhode Island at the University of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, Providence College, and Bryant University, Al went through several phases in his attempt to define clearly the field of Rhode Island history. He believed that "inclusiveness" should be the hallmark of such a project.

He suggested that Rhode Island history can be best understood within "Six Big Ideas," which he identified and described with both imagination and great insight. Under the rubric of these six themes, Klyberg devised 240 topics for analysis and further study.

For his efforts, Al Klyberg won many honors. In 1981, he received a presidential appointment to the National Museum Services Board, and in 1986 gained a Doctor of Humane Letters degree from Rhode Island College. He was an incorporator of the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society, the managing developer of the highly successful Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket, the author of several influential booklets and articles about Rhode Island, and a board member of numerous historical organizations.

Although Al's dream of a state historical museum in the former South Street Station of the Narragansett Electric Company was dashed by the economic impact of the Great Recession and the cessation of the state historic tax credit program, the money generated by that project has resulted in the creation of a Heritage Harbor Foundation. The interest on this fund generates annual grants for historical and heritage projects throughout Rhode Island that will further his "Six Big Ideas." This foundation is Al's greatest legacy to his adopted state.

Throughout the course of Al's historical odyssey, the steadfast support and affection of his wife, Beverly, and children, Kimberly and Kevin (who is a National Park Ranger), provided an essential home-life balance for a career dedicated to promoting civic engagement and knowledge based on local history.

For nearly a half-century, Al Klyberg illuminated Rhode Island's past for our citizens to view it—many for the first time. No one ever equaled his dedication and persistence in performing that labor of love. Through the lens of his Heritage Harbor Foundation, Al's light will continue to shine. ♡

A version of this eulogy originally appeared in the Providence Journal on January 19, 2017.

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Below: Albert T. Klyberg. Photograph taken at the John Brown House by JD Kay, March 2013. Rhode Island Historical Society.

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ALBERT T. KLYBERG
(1941–2017), director
of the Rhode Island
Historical Society
for thirty years, was
an indefatigable
promoter of Rhode
Island history.

