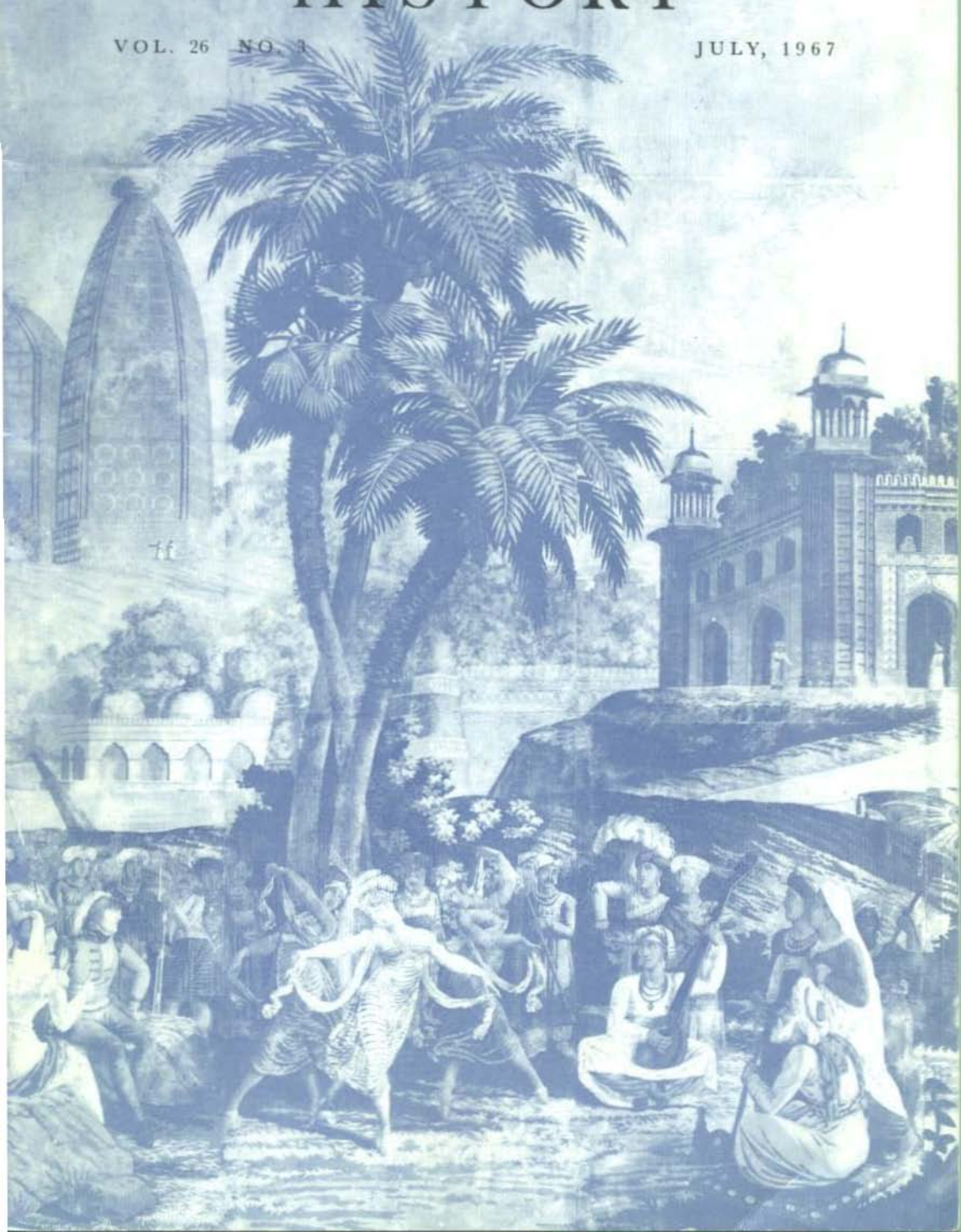


RHODE ISLAND HISTORY

VOL. 26 NO. 3

JULY, 1967



PUBLISHED BY THE RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
FIFTY-TWO POWER STREET, PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02906

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(Second-class postage paid at Providence, Rhode Island)

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COVER

Paysage Indien

In 1962 the Dufour wallpaper in the northeast room of the first floor of Carrington House was generously presented by the new owners, Mr. and Mrs. Washington Irving, to the Providence Preservation Society for any use they might have for it. The Preservation Society defrayed the expense of having the various strips cleaned and removed and eventually offered them to the Handicraft Club for the double parlors of their headquarters, the Truman Beckwith House (ca. 1821), at 42 College Street. The Club this year has had the wallpaper installed by Constantine Tsalousis, the newly decorated room being a source of great satisfaction to all its members.

In past issues of *Rhode Island History* we have depicted old scenic wallpapers that have survived in homes in this area. According to Nancy McClelland in *Historic Wall-Papers* (Philadelphia, 1924), "Paysage Indien (Hindustan Scenery) was printed by Dufour of Paris in 1815. The set consisted of twenty strips in colour. A set still exists in the Putnam-Hanson house at 94 Boston Street, Salem, Mass."

The Rhode Island Historical Society is grateful to the Handicraft Club for permission to use a reproduction of a portion of the wallpaper from the west wall of the northwest room on the first floor.

RHODE ISLAND HISTORY

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RHODE ISLAND JUSTICE—1772 VINTAGE

by SAMUEL W. BRYANT

The Graduate School, Brown University

WHEN H.M.S. *Gaspee* was boarded and burned by colonists in the early morning of 10 June 1772, seven miles south of Providence, her commanding officer, Lieutenant William Dudingston, R.N., was gravely wounded. He did not expect to live. Nevertheless, on 12 June the High Sheriff arrested him on the suit of Jacob Greene and others who sought in this way to recover the value of rum, Jamaica spirits and sugar he had seized and caused to be carried to Boston where they were condemned as smuggled goods.

The case came first before the Court of Common Pleas, Kent County Courthouse, East Greenwich, in the July term, 1772, with the following results: "Be it remembered that William Dudingston now residing in Cranston in the County of Providence, gentleman alias mariner, was attached to meet the complaint of Jacob Greene of Warwick, Nathaniel Greene of Coventry, William Greene, Elihu Greene, Christopher Greene, and Perry Greene of Warwick aforesaid, all in the County of Kent, merchants in Company. . . ."¹ So begins the judgment handed down against Dudingston on the third Monday in July, by which time the lieutenant had been moved to the safety of a ship in Newport harbor.² The record continues,

Whereupon the said Jacob Greene and Company complain of the said William Dudingston in the custody of the Sheriff in an action of the case upon trover³ for that whereas the Plaintiffs on the

¹Book 4, Court of Common Pleas, July Term 1764–January Term 1776, Kent County Courthouse, East Greenwich, Rhode Island, pp. 720-21.

²Bartlett, p. 47 (Dudingston to Montagu).

³An action to recover value of goods wrongfully taken or detained.

seventeenth day of February last past were possessed of twelve hogsheads of West India rum, containing about fourteen hundred gallons, forty gallons of Jamaica spirits and one hogshead of Brown sugar, all of the value of two hundred and ninety-five pounds lawful money (as their own proper estate and be so possessed) they afterwards on the same day and year at Warwick aforesaid casually lost the said rum, Jamaica spirit and sugar out of their hands and possession, which Rum, Jamaica Spirits and Sugar aforesaid, on the same seventeenth day of February, last past, at said Warwick came to the hands and possession of the Defendant by Findings, who knowing the said Rum, Jamaica Spirits and Sugar to be the goods and chattels of the plaintiffs and of right to belong and appertain to them the plaintiffs, and intending craftily and subtilly to deceive and defraud, the plaintiffs in this behalf, hath not delivered the said Rum, Jamaica Spirits and Sugar to the Plaintiffs although the Defendant was by the Plaintiffs often thereto requested.⁴ But the Defendant afterwards, on the nineteenth day of February last past at said Warwick converted and disposed of the said Rum, Jamaica Spirits and Sugar, to the proper use and benefit of him the Defendant, which is to the damage of the Plaintiffs six hundred pounds lawful money. And be it further remembered that here cometh the said William Dudingston and saith he is not guilty in manner and form as the Plaintiffs have declared against him, and of this puts himself upon the county, and the Plaintiffs in like manner: let therefore a Jury come before the justice here, to try the issue aforesaid. And afterwards (to wit) on Wednesday, the third day of the term, Latham Spence, Jonathan Tibbits, Peleg Salisbury, Arnold Stafford, John Levalley, Thomas Rice the 4th, Elisha Potter, Elisha Greene, David Hopkins, Job Vaughn, Benjamin Nichols and Thomas Arnold⁵... are duly impanelled and sworn the better to try the facts aforesaid, who upon oath return the following verdict, (to wit), 'We find for the plaintiffs two hundred and ninety-five pounds⁶ lawful money and cost.' Which verdict is accepted by the court, and afterwards (to wit) on Wednesday aforesaid, here come as well the said Jacob Greene [et al], by James Mitchell Venum their attorney, as the said

⁴This seizure was reported in the *Newport Mercury* of 24 February 1772.

⁵The family names of Greene, Hopkins and Potter appear also among those who attacked the *Gaspee*.

⁶The sum of £300 had been set arbitrarily by the General Assembly as the limit below which no appeal could be made to the King in Council.

William Dudingston by James Brenton, his attorney, and the said Jacob Greene [and company] demand judgement of and upon the premise aforesaid, which being by the justices here seen and fully understood, it is therefore considered that the said Jacob Greene [and company] recover and have of the said William Dudingston as well the aforesaid sum of two hundred and ninety-five pounds lawful money for the damages they have sustained by means of the conversion aforesaid, and one pound eighteen shillings and two pence, like money, for their cost in and about the prosecution of this suit expended. The Defendant appealed and bond is given as the law requires.

Dudingston must have known that the cards would be stacked against him. Captain Linzee of *Beaver* (so wrote that loyal old busy-body, Governor Hutchinson of Massachusetts, to Hillsborough),

kept on board his ship in that colony (Rhode Island) and avoided their law suits which the Lieutenant who had command of the schooner [Gaspee] has been forced to submit to after a very narrow escape with his life from the wounds he received. They have brought three or four actions against Capt. Linzee since his arrival in Boston. He has a much better chance here than he would have had in that Colony though they have taken care to bring their actions in the County of Bristol⁷ which adjoins to Rhode Island. As far as I have been acquainted with them from Admiral Montagu they appear to be groundless and vexatious. I cannot answer for a Jury but the Judges⁸ I am very sure will do their part that the Law may have its due course.⁹

If Hutchinson was unsure about the dedication to justice he might find in a Massachusetts jury, it follows that a Rhode Island jury, instructed by judges who were elected, not appointed, would be guided by their chauvinism.

There remained the practical matter, from Dudingston's point of view, of getting the support of the Customs Office in Newport. They had let him down badly before, when they advised him to send a prize to Boston, and then denied it. And indeed there was friction between the two Services; Captain Talbot, of H.M.S. *Lively*, wrote a plaintive letter to Montagu from Delaware Bay, dated 28 June

⁷Bristol County court records are now in the Taunton, Mass., courthouse.

⁸All of them firm Tories.

⁹Colonial Office 5/761 (Massachusetts Bay), No. 34, folio 432-3, Boston, 4 September 1772. Public Record Office.

1772, in which he said

As my purport of my being here is to put in force the laws relating to trade, I beg, Sir, your opinion how far the Revenue will support me and my officers when an action is laid. Justice is out of the question. We are sure it will go against us; no one will be our bail, not a lawyer in the Province that has a salary from the Crown, and any we may employ will seem to act for us, but strictly against us.¹⁰

Montagu sent Captain Talbot's letter to Stephens, at the Admiralty, asking that it be presented to the Lords of the Treasury,

that the officers of the King's ships may know what protection they are to expect from the Customs if they are arrested for executing their duty. At present it is impossible for them to comply with their orders and the service is exceedingly disagreeable to both Captains and Officers.¹¹

This exchange brought a ruling from the Treasury Chambers that the Customs House was to support the naval officers in legal matters arising out of their performance of Revenue duties. And Dudingston was to need all the help he could get.

His appeal went to the Superior Court in East Greenwich which styled itself "The Superior Court of Judicature, Court of Assize and General Gaol Delivery." On the third Monday in October 1772, Jacob Greene, accompanied by his kinsmen Nathanael, William, Elihu, Christopher, and Perry Greene, brought transcripts of the judgment they had obtained at the Inferior Court of Common Pleas and demanded judgment of the Superior Court. "Whereupon," reads the record,

... on the third day of the term, the said William Dudingston is three times solemnly called but cometh not. Whereupon it seemeth to the Justice here that the judgement of the Inferior Court be affirmed ... and that the said William Dudingston is in Mercy of this Court.¹²

Dudingston could not appear; he had gone to England to stand trial at a court-martial. His attorney, James Brenton of Newport,

¹⁰Colonial Office 5/145, No. 34 (d.), 28 June 1772. Public Record Office.

¹¹Colonial Office 5/145, No. 34 (b.).

¹²Book 1, Superior Court, October Term 1751–April Term 1789, Kent County Courthouse, pp. 394-95.

was unable to reach East Greenwich because

it so unfortunately happened that on the Day of the sitting of said Supreme Court, at said East Greenwich, aforesaid, the weather for that and succeeding days proved so exceeding tempestuous and dangerous that your petitioner's Attorney could not by any possibility cross the ferries to attend in season for his trial before the adjournment of said Court, by which means your Petitioner defaulted, and a complaint [was] filed against him for costs.¹³

In fact the weather must have been foul; only three of the Superior Court judges arrived in court: Stephen Potter, Benoni Hall and James Helme; Stephen Hopkins, Chief Justice, and Metcalf Bowler stayed home. So Brenton petitioned the General Assembly that execution of the judgment be stayed, the judgment set aside, and a new trial granted at the next Supreme Court. He filed his petition on 4 November 1772; the General Assembly met on the second Monday in December, and on Friday the 18th the Lower House voted to permit the appeal provided the petitioners lodged the amount of the judgment "in custody of the clerk of said court to be immediately paid to the Respondants if they obtain judgement in their favor but otherwise to be delivered to the Petitioner or his Attorney."¹⁴ The Senate concurred.¹⁵

At the next term of the Superior Court, which started in April 1773, Brenton arrived on time, and a jury was chosen after he showed the judges the Act of the General Assembly that granted his petition for a new trial, and the Court began "to inquire into the facts." Brenton offered as evidence a copy of a decree he said was given in the Court of Vice Admiralty in Boston. The attorneys for Jacob Greene and Company objected, saying

The Court in which said Decree was given had no jurisdiction of seizures made within the limits of the Colony of Rhode Island, in the first instance, as appears by the Statute of the Eighth of George the Third, His present Most Gracious Majesty, Chapter twenty-second; also, for that of said copy it appears that said decree was made in condemnation of goods seized on the High Seas, whereas the goods said to be converted were taken by the said William Dudingston in Narragansett Bay and within the Colony of Rhode Island; and also, for that a copy attested by a

¹³General Assembly, House Journal, 18 December 1772.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵General Assembly, Senate Journal, 18 December 1772.

Court of Vice Admiralty is not matter of evidence in a Court of Record without Oath made of the Truth thereof.¹⁶

But Brenton argued that the decree ought to be accepted as evidence and that the Court of Vice Admiralty had full jurisdiction of the seizure, "it being made at sea, agreeable to the Acts of Parliament." The colonists believed that the term "High Seas" applied to those waters outside the colony's jurisdiction, that is, to that part of the ocean beyond a headland to headland line in which the seas ran high, and not to the waters in the bay and estuaries. But Brenton had other ideas, and although the court does not record his argument, it is likely that he quoted the Statute 28 Henry VIII, which claims jurisdiction over things done not only upon the sea, and in havens, creeks, and rivers, but also "in all places whatsoever within the flowing of the water, to the full sea-mark; and in all great rivers from those bridges downwards that are next the sea."¹⁷ He also claimed that an attested copy of the proceedings of the Vice Admiralty Court was "sufficient matter of evidence in law."

But the judges refused to admit it in evidence, and "let the jury from founding a Verdict thereon be exonerated."

Brenton then offered the jury a copy of Dudingston's commission to serve as a customs officer (his Royal Navy commission was not questioned at this trial), and the attorneys for Jacob Greene and Company looked it over gingerly and said

the same appears to be a Copy of a Commission from William Burch, William Shelton, — Robinson, John Temple, Charles Paxton [the Commissioners of Customs in Boston] and the said John Temple was removed from his office, as Commissioner, before the said Seizure was made, also for that said Copy is neither attended with the Seal of any Office, or the Oath of the said Richard Reeves, or any other person; also for that the Commission, of which this is said to be a copy, was never recorded in this colony. Neither doth it appear that the said William was ever sworn to make seizures either by the Board of Commissioners in Boston or any Magistrates in this Colony.

Brenton replied

the said copy is authenticated in the usual and common form of

¹⁶Book 1, Superior Court, October Term 1751 – April Term 1789, Kent County Courthouse, pp. 398-99.

¹⁷See Arthur Browne, "Civil and Admiralty Law" (2 vols., Dublin, 1802), Vol. 2, pp. 464-67.

copies issued by the said Board; that it is also continued in force notwithstanding the removal of John Temple, Esquire, before said Seizure; neither was it essential or necessary that said Commission should be recorded in the Colony, and sworn before any Magistrate in this Colony.

The Court ruled that the copy "is rejected."

The case then went to the jury, whose verdict was, "We confirm the former judgement with costs." The Court ruled that Jacob Greene and Company be paid 295 pounds lawful money, and costs, making a total of 300 pounds, eight shillings, and one half penny lawful money. The damages were set at less than half the value placed on the shipment for a very good reason; when Brenton moved for an appeal to the King in Council, the Court would not admit the appeal, "the Damages given by the Jury being less than the sum limited by Act of the General Assembly upon which appeals are granted."

There remained only to issue a writ, commanding the sheriff in Newport County to execute the judgment, and, if he could not for want of sufficient estate of the said William Dudingston . . . we further commend you to take the body of the said William into your custody and him safely secure in our gaol in Newport . . . till he satisfy and pay the aforesaid Jacob Greene and Company the aforesaid sum or be therefrom discharged.

The writ was signed by Stephen Hopkins, a professional politician who served as chief justice.

Charles Dudley, customs officer at Newport, paid the money to Sheriff Walter Chaloner and on May 20, 1773, the Greens collected their loot.¹⁸ Dudingston, fortunately for him, was still in England, where he had been judged by a far different type of justice — a naval court-martial. At his court-martial he was "honourably acquitted" and soon thereafter promoted. He returned to sea duty off the New England coast during the Revolution and, one may assume, continued to display his habitual zeal in the service of his King.

¹⁸I have been unable to find the original of this writ in the Kent County Court-house records. There is, however, a certified true copy of it among the unclassified *Gaspee* papers in the library of The Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, Rhode Island. The itemized bill Dudley paid was as follows:

July 1772	£ 295	costs	£ 1	18 sh.	2 d.
October 1772			1	14	7½
April 1773			1	14	4
plus 11 pence for execution, making a total of £ 300 8½.					

NOTES FROM THE SHELVES OF THE SOCIETY'S LIBRARY

selected by NOEL P. CONLON

It is difficult to find one's way through Rhode Island history; one Indian name is spelled in more than forty ways; settlers spelled according to taste; but imagine the pitfalls and pity the sorrows of one who discovers thirty-two Tom Hazards in Narragansett.

Mary Agnes Best, *The Town That Saved a State* (Westerly, Utter, 1943).

You will go, then, remembering that you are the representatives of your native New England, the land of the puritans, of schools, and colleges, and churches, and sabbaths, and sanctuaries, and bibles. You will be thrown into the midst of adventurers from all nations, and from under all forms of government, from nations catholic and protestant, pagan and christian. Exhibit to them all, the true Yankee character. The honor of your dear native State is entrusted to your keeping. Do not tarnish, do not betray it. Make your corporation a little model *republic*, free, orderly, law respecting, and law obeying. Let not the credit of our free institutions suffer in your hands.

Constantine Blodgett, *An Address to the Narragansett Trading and Mining Association, on Their Departure for California* (Pawtucket, Sherman, 1849).

In fashionable schools, needlework was an accomplishment required of every well educated young lady. As part of her training, she produced a sampler under the guidance of her teacher, which was often publicly exhibited upon graduation as proof of the successful completion of her studies. The sampler made by Lucy Potter in 1791 in Providence, Rhode Island, is typical of those made at Miss Polly Balch's Select Female Academy, established sometime before 1785 and attended by girls from the best families in Rhode Island. The unknown teacher of needlework in this school had unusual artistic ability, a wide knowledge of stitches, and a well developed sense of color, composition, and understanding of materials. Her ability to impart her knowledge to her pupils produced many outstanding samplers.

Mildred Davison, "Early American Textiles in the Art Institute of Chicago," *The Lake Forest Antiques Show*, 1964.

[continued on inside back cover]

THE DORR REBELLION IN RHODE ISLAND: THE MODERATE PHASE

by ROBERT L. CLABURRI

Instructor in History at Carnegie Institute of Technology

FOLLOWING HIS RETIREMENT to the Hermitage in 1837, former President Andrew Jackson, although enfeebled by the pain of old wounds and suffering with tuberculosis, dropsy and diarrhea, regularly corresponded with his friend and confidant, Francis Preston Blair, publisher of *The Globe*. In May, 1842, Jackson wrote Blair that "... the people of Rhode Island will triumph as they ought in establishing their republican constitution ... and democracy will triumph there.¹ Jackson was referring to an episode in American political history known as Dorr's Rebellion which occurred in Rhode Island during most of 1842. The Rebellion was much like a three-act play. While more attention has been given to the revolutionary phase, or second act, and slightly less to the later reactionary phase, little or no emphasis has been placed on the pre-revolutionary moderate phase. This paper is concerned with the opening act of the Rebellion when the moderate inclinations of the leadership were paramount. An evaluation of this moderate phase is necessary to an understanding of the full Rebellion because the basic issues at contention are clear, and a view of the uprising can be seen unobstructed by the emotion and anxiety associated with revolution.

While historians have assiduously tried to formulate some theory of political tradition in America, they have often chosen either to ignore Dorr's Rebellion or to imply by omission that the Rhode Island revolution was an unimportant political uprising. Louis Hartz, in his most able and stimulating study of the liberal tradition, has suggested by innumerable examples that the American liberal tradition is ever present and involuntarily erupts with great virulence when a need arises.² Dorr's Rebellion, in many ways, suggests that Hartz's liberal tradition may not be quite so universal. Of those authors who have given some attention to the Rebellion, the majority have explained this incident by cryptically describing the revolution-

¹Andrew Jackson to Francis P. Blair, May 23, 1842, Blair Family Papers, Jackson-Blair Correspondence, Library of Congress.

²Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*, New York, 1955.

ary activities of its namesake, Providence attorney Thomas Wilson Dorr, and implying that he was nothing more than a political demagogue and a radical revolutionary. Although this paper is not an apologetic evaluation of Dorr's part in the Rebellion, it is aimed at showing that Dorr exhausted every known means within the constitutional and legal structure of Rhode Island so as to avert an armed uprising *before* he carried through the revolutionary tactics with which he has traditionally been associated.

An understanding of the political behavior of the state in the 1830's is essential to a comprehension of the factional interplay which took place during the moderate phase of the Rebellion. Rhode Island's small population might suggest that its political structure was simple. This was not the case. Much like most of the eastern states in the 1830's, Rhode Island was represented by both the Democrats and the Whigs. Except for the election of 1836, when the state voted Democratic in opposition to the Whig commitment to the Bank of the United States, Rhode Island voters after 1824 supported National Republican and Whig candidates.³ The Whig defeat in 1836 was far from a serious political setback since they lost the state by only 325 votes.⁴ The action of the state's voters in crossing party lines to vote on an issue was quite common. While not successful under the Jackson banner, the Democrats had devised a political strategy which focused on issues rather than party in an attempt to draw voting strength from the Whig ranks.⁵ The Whig success in Rhode Island was not due as much to party ideology as it was to its image as the opposition to the liberalizing effects of Jacksonianism. The Democrats, therefore, with little support among the voting population, tried to attract support from the newer elements in the Rhode Island population, the industrial capitalists and the unpropertied nonvoters. The Whigs, on the other hand, pursued a course aimed at effecting a coalition of agrarian interests and industrialists. Thoroughly convinced for some time that the industrialists in collusion with the banking community were trying systematically to wrest control of the state from them, the rural landholders opposed any

³*Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957*, p. 685.

⁴W. Dean Burnham (ed.), *Presidential Ballots 1836-1892*, Baltimore, 1955, pp. 720-721.

⁵John Brown Francis to Elisha R. Potter, April 25, 1834, John Brown Francis Mss. (1834-1863), The Rhode Island Historical Society.

such coalition.⁶ In effect then, Rhode Island Whiggery was a shifting coalition of interests which represented a minority of the population composed of landholders with a minimum property value of \$134.

The Whig domination of Rhode Island politics in the 1830's continued in the national election of 1840. Of the 8,510 votes cast in the state, 5,213 chose the Harrison-Tyler ticket.⁷ Rhode Island's behavior at the polls, however, was not a reflection of the national political scene. The state's voting behavior was complicated when Democratic freemen voted Whig in support of local candidates and local issues which had more effect on the election than the Harrison image.⁸ By 1840, then, the political contest in Rhode Island centered on at least two manifestations of the liberal tradition. The Whigs, trying vainly to promote a liberal republican philosophy, chose to support the minority under the state constitution. The Democrats, looking for support from reformed Whigs, chose to support a majority of the population of the state by advancing a liberal democratic philosophy.

The key to the Rhode Island controversy was its state constitution. With the repudiation of royal authority in 1775, Rhode Island retained her colonial charter as the state constitution. This document embodied no changes, except in title, and was a total reproduction of the royal charter granted to the colony in 1663 by Charles II. It failed to provide any democratic mechanisms or incorporate republican principles. With respect to the situation in the 1840's the Rhode Island constitution allowed the freemen of the state to determine the qualifications for admittance to that rank, and did not institute a system whereby the constitution could be amended. In effect, any change in the constitution must necessarily be initiated and carried through by a majority of freemen, a minority of the adult, white males in 1840. As early as 1724, the freemen of the colony agreed that a property qualification was necessary in order to discourage transients and immigrants from remaining in the colony. Serious consideration for freemanship could only be given to those who demonstrated a dedicated and absolute affection for the state and

⁶"To the farmers and landholders of Rhode Island!", March, 1828, Warwick Mss., The Rhode Island Historical Society.

⁷Burnham, *Ballots*, pp. 720-721.

⁸*Providence Journal*, September and October, 1840. Local issues predominated in letters to the editor.

its traditions by acquiring land. Between 1724 and 1840 there were many modifications of the freehold requirement. As the number of new white male adults coming into the state increased, the freehold qualification was increased. The freehold which existed in 1840 was established by the colony's freemen in 1760. They determined that anyone desiring freemanship should own property valued at £40 (later \$134), or property which would bring an annual rental of £2, or approximately \$7.⁹

On the basis of this freehold, the landholding minority of the population successfully perpetuated minority rule of the state with little or no formidable opposition. In protecting their political interests, the state's landholders chose to define "majority" as a majority of freeholders which was actually a minority of the adult white male population. The nonvoters, on the other hand, readily accepted the liberal democratic interpretation that a "majority" was a majority of all adult white males with legal residence in the state. Rather than qualifying themselves by acquiring property as had been suggested by the minority, the disfranchised elected to petition for a liberalization of the voting law, specifically a revocation of the freehold requirements.¹⁰

In light of the unmanageable constitution that the state was burdened with, the nonvoting Rhode Islanders were faced with a number of unpalatable alternatives. If they resolved to concede to the will of the landholders, they were confronted with a scarcity of land in view of the state's small size. Furthermore, if they decided to persist in a reformation of the voting law, the landholders could easily defeat such proposals by legislative means. On these two points, the machinations of the landholders were well calculated. The freemen avowed not to sell off portions of land, a tactic which stymied the landless in their attempt to qualify themselves. They likewise refused to amend the voting law. The final alternative of the nonvoters was to petition for a state constitutional convention aimed at ridding the state of its undemocratic, non-republican form of government and, hopefully, to bring into being a new liberal constitution.¹¹ The reali-

⁹*Rhode Island Colonial Records*, V (August 18, 1760); Samuel Greene Arnold, *History of Rhode Island, 1636-1790*, 2 vols., New York, 1859-60, II, 225.

¹⁰John Brown Francis to Elisha R. Potter, March 30, 1837. John Brown Francis Mss. (1837-1863), The Rhode Island Historical Society.

¹¹*Pawtucket Chronicle*, February 3, 1834, as quoted in the *Providence Journal*, February 5, 1834; *Providence Journal*, April 17, 1841.

ties of this predicament, however, were quite clear to the disfranchised. With the freeholders refusing to sell land or change the law, a constitutional convention seemed the most likely course to pursue. Of course, only freemen were permitted to vote on the referendum and they regularly defeated the "calls" by large majorities or, having met in convention, sidetracked reform of the voting law by legislative means.¹²

The general consensus among nonvoters in 1840 was that little or nothing could be accomplished in the direction of extended suffrage reform without an active, well-directed organization. Their experience in the 1820's and 1830's, when the transformation of Rhode Island society from a predominately agrarian population to an industrial working-class population was in its infancy, had given the disfranchised much experience in dealing with the landed minority. During this early stage in the suffrage movement, Rhode Island landholders had found it advantageous, in response to liberal harangues, to incorporate legislative means to subdue the majority. In May 1829, a petition from the town of North Providence was presented to the General Assembly. This petition had been signed by over 800 citizens of that municipality — a majority of its residents. The petition requested the legislature to inquire into an extension of the suffrage. It was referred to the Committee on Suffrage in June 1829, but the Committee did not report its findings until the October session.¹³ The official results of the Committee's proceedings were intended to establish a quasi-legal precedent with respect to constitutional reform. This report, referred to as Hazard's Report, named for its chairman, Benjamin Hazard, made two important points with respect to the future of liberal reform in Rhode Island. First, government should be based upon the rights of property, and secondly, land ownership as an indication of permanent residence was necessary to achieve the great blessings of republican government. The patent

¹²Votes given 11 October 1824 for ratification of the Constitution, Warwick Mss., The Rhode Island Historical Society. The vote was 2 to 1 against adoption; *Providence Journal*, September 6 and September 8, 1834. Text of the proceedings of the state Constitutional Convention for September 5 and September 7 appeared in these issues. The 1834 Convention failed to make any changes in the property qualification.

¹³*Journal of the House of Representatives (Rhode Island)*, May 8, June 27, and October 31, 1829.

concern of Hazard's Report with the increasing number of landless residents is indicative of the transformation of Rhode Island's population and the pressure brought to bear upon the minority for reform. As an outspoken representative of this minority, Hazard affirmed their intentions of denying the right of suffrage in order to retain power in the hands of those dedicated to the welfare of the state. He melodramatically portrayed the dire consequences of submitting to an extension of the franchise, for:

... if the great right of suffrage, upon which the welfare and existence of the commonwealth ... depends ... if this power is put into the hands of that class of people which ... embraces ... all the loose and floating; all the dependent and mercenary population—all those who having little or nothing at stake themselves; care little or nothing for the rights of others—people, who in voting exercise no judgment of their own nor have any wish to form any; taking their impulses and directions from their leaders, and ready to fight their battles, not merely by voting, but by ... brawling and violence ...¹⁴

There was little reaction to Hazard's Report by the nonvoters due mainly to a political inertia which resulted from poor organization and the failure of the leadership to sponsor an effective program agreeable to all interested parties. One of the first efforts at forming a state-wide suffrage organization came in 1833 when the Rhode Island Committee for the Extension of Suffrage was begun by the unification of a number of local, independent "suffrage committees" in existence since the 1820's. The newly formed association was successful in agitating for a constitutional convention in 1834. The convention met in February of that year and dragged on through the early months of 1835 without accomplishing anything significant relative to voting reform.¹⁵ With the Democratic victory in 1836, the Committee assumed that the Party would assist them in getting the constitutional reforms for which they had labored. Democratic control, however, was short-lived as the Whigs gathered impetus after 1837, and the Suffrage Committee lost what ground it had gained by adhering to

¹⁴*Report of the Committee on the Subject of an Extension of Suffrage*, 1829, p. 26.

¹⁵*Providence Journal*, numerous issues from February 22, 1834, through December, 1834. One *Journal* editor commented that the "... Convention was so constituted that a minority could govern a majority."

the waning Democrats. It was during the four-year period from 1833 to 1837 that Thomas Wilson Dorr became active in the movement. As an inspiring young politician, he served as a Democratic state legislator from Providence during these years.¹⁶ In 1837, representing the suffrage-sponsored Constitutional Party, Dorr stood for election to the Twenty-fifth United States Congress and was soundly beaten primarily because of his association with the "suffrage people."¹⁷ Yet it was not Dorr or his attitudes on suffrage that blackened his image. That was done by the radical labor element within the Constitutional Party under the leadership of New England laborite Seth Luther. Public opinion was strongly opposed to Luther and his activities. The labor leader had joined the suffrage movement in 1833 and was quick to realize that power at the polls was one of the most effective weapons his working-class followers could muster.

The association with radical labor, compounded by the political demise of the Democratic Party in Rhode Island, ultimately resulted in a splintering of the Suffrage Committee. Luther and his radical faction departed from the movement leaving a small hard-core group of moderate liberals under the leadership of Thomas Dorr.¹⁸ The departure of Luther from the Committee and the Constitutional Party in 1837 did not change the public image which this alliance had created. Dorr decided to dissolve the party and present a new front to the public which would not alienate the moderates.¹⁹

With the Constitutional Party dissolved and the Democratic Party an ineffective political instrument in Rhode Island, Dorr and his followers set about the task of reorganizing a competent group to promote the cause of extended suffrage. In March 1840, they formed the Rhode Island Suffrage Association and maintained it independent of any national party. It was the initial aim of the Association to perform an educational function. They were convinced that additional support could be had from many Whigs if they were properly

¹⁶John Brown Francis to Elisha R. Potter, March 30 and December 23, 1837, John Brown Francis Mss. (1837-1863), The Rhode Island Historical Society.

¹⁷Election Returns, August 29, 1837, Rhode Island Manuscripts, X, 93-98, The Rhode Island Historical Society.

¹⁸Louis Hartz, "Seth Luther, Working Class Liberal," *New England Quarterly*, XIII (September, 1940), 406.

¹⁹Francis to Potter, December 23, 1837, John Brown Francis Mss.

informed as to the objectives of the Association. The new suffrage organization made it clear from the beginning that its objective was "A liberal extension of the suffrage to the *native white* male citizens of the United States, resident in Rhode Island."²⁰

By early 1841 the Association's plan was well under way. The members held meetings, made impromptu speeches, sponsored parades, formed local suffrage groups, and supported liberal candidates for state offices.²¹ The freemen, however, continued to maintain a strong legislative defense against any liberalization of the franchise.²² In response, the Suffrage Association called for a "People's Constitution" to be drawn up and submitted to all adult white male residents of voting age for approval. A vote, unsanctioned by the legal government of the state, was taken and the suffrage leaders claimed that a majority of the qualified voters — resident white males of legal age — had voted to adopt the "People's Constitution." The Association immediately demanded that the General Assembly put the new constitution into effect. However, no amount of intimidation from the suffrage men could force the established government to accept this "unlawful" frame of government.²³

While these constitutional activities were taking place during 1841 and early 1842, there were innumerable demands for revolutionary action should the General Assembly not recognize the "will of the majority."²⁴ Dorr was known to have spoken of taking violent action in his public addresses,²⁵ but in his private correspondence there is considerable evidence to indicate that during this moderate phase he sought a legal solution to Rhode Island's difficulties rather than a radical overthrow of the government. Even though the legislature

²⁰*Providence Journal*, March 28, 1840; Jacob Freize, *A Concise History of the Efforts to Obtain an Extension of Suffrage in Rhode Island; from the Year 1811 to 1842*, Providence, 1842, pp. 29-30.

²¹*Providence Journal*, April and May, 1841.

²²Journal of the House of Representatives (Rhode Island), January Session, 1841, and June Session, 1841.

²³*Providence Journal*, August 27, 1841; October 27, 1841, published text of the "People's" Constitution; January 14, 1842, issue carried proclamation of the Convention President that the Constitution had been declared adopted.

²⁴*Providence Journal*, January 15, January 27, and February 1, 1842.

²⁵*Providence Journal*, February 1, 1842.

failed to accept the "People's Constitution," Dorr, still pursuing a moderate course, began an active campaign in early 1842 to arouse national concern for the suffrage movement by communicating with prominent Democrats throughout the country. Among the politicians of national stature Dorr exchanged correspondence with was the capable New Hampshire Democrat, Levi Woodbury. An early Jackson supporter, Woodbury was twice elected to the United States Senate and served as Secretary of the Navy during Jackson's second administration. His most distinguished cabinet post was as Secretary of the Treasury, succeeding Roger B. Taney, and he continued in this capacity during Van Buren's presidency. Woodbury averted the loss of his federal influence in 1841 by successfully winning the support of the New Hampshire legislature in selecting him as United States senator.²⁶ His established reputation as a staunch Democrat and an advocate of state sovereignty afforded Dorr the opportunity of encouraging sympathy for the free suffrage movement in Rhode Island.

By April 1842, Dorr's stand centered on two critical issues. He maintained that submitting a constitution directly to the people was not an illegal act, and that the interference of the Federal Government because of a violation of the "domestic violence" clause of the United States Constitution (Article IV, Section 4) would be contrary to the American tradition of state sovereignty. The interpretation of the expression "domestic violence" is important to Dorr's case. At this time there were differences of opinion as to its meaning. First, that as a frame of government, the United States Constitution delegated authority to the President to protect each state from invasion and domestic violence. It was unclear as to whether the "domestic" meant interstate or intrastate. Those who accepted this version chose to interpret the phrase as interstate. In such an instance, the President's task would be to settle disagreements among the states and protect all involved from violence. Secondly, and the most commonly accepted version of "domestic violence," was that upon a request from a state legislature or the governor (should the legislature be out of session) the President would intercede in behalf of the established government and protect it from intrastate violence no matter what the circumstances. In a letter to Senator Woodbury, Dorr explained that the suffrage men would respond to violence by violence, but would not

²⁶*Dictionary of American Biography*, XX, 488-489.

initiate such action. He hoped that "... the rights of a Sovereign People will not be hastily disposed of, by the President and his Cabinet, upon an allegation of 'domestic violence' by our infuriated opponents. The People will act on the defensive; but they will protect themselves, and maintain their [People's] Constitution, as they have the right, and are bound in honor to do."²⁷

At this point it is difficult to ascertain how sincere Dorr and his followers were in their desire to keep the peace. It is a certainty, however, that the enactment by the established government of the "Algerine Law" in early April 1842, incited the Dorrists to speak more freely and vehemently of armed rebellion. This "Law" was in actuality an executive proclamation of the governor of Rhode Island and not a legally constituted law of the state. It declared any actions of those supporting or participating in the "unlawful enterprise" of the suffrage men as treasonable.²⁸ The tyrannical nature of this "Law" was apparently unacceptable to Rhode Islanders. "The Algerine Law," Dorr explained to Woodbury, "is very generally condemned by those who are not friends of the People's Constitution, as impolitic, unnecessary & unjust. The People regard it as null and void, as conflicting with the higher authority of this Constitution [the People's], which commands the acts, which the pretended law forbids."²⁹ The people might regard it as "null and void," but there was still the possibility of President Tyler using force to overwhelm and crush the suffrage movement forever. Dorr clearly feared this for he suggested to Woodbury that if Washington would adopt a policy of noninterference, democracy and States' rights would triumph unopposed in Rhode Island. His fear of presidential action was evident when he wrote Woodbury that:

The sole hope of the Tories is now directed toward the Executive of the U.S. No "domestic violence" has yet occurred; and, of course, the President cannot send hither any of the forces of the U.S. to suppress it. But the Tories are using every exertion to

²⁷Thomas W. Dorr to Levi Woodbury, April 7, 1842, Woodbury Papers (Series I), Library of Congress.

²⁸Proclamation of the President of the United States, 1842, Peck Mss., XIII (1828-1849), The Rhode Island Historical Society; *Providence Journal*, April 5, 1842.

²⁹Dorr to Woodbury, April 11, 1842, Woodbury Papers.

obtain from Mr. Tyler some promise, or proclamation, or promise of a proclamation to strengthen themselves; and then, if they dare they would create a necessity for interference on the part of the government, by laying hands on some of us through their Algerine Law, and compelling our friends to defend themselves.³⁰

By mid-April, Dorr's letters to Woodbury mirror the increasing gravity of the situation. The senator had not been successful in developing Congressional support for the People's cause; Dorr's communication of April 13 manifestly portrays his anxiety over federal intervention by asking, "Will the friends of American Democracy in the two Houses of Congress permit such a proceeding to take place in violation of the rights and expressed opinions of the Sovereign People of a State however small its territorial dimensions, without one word of remonstrance?"³¹ Even while writing, the suffrage leader was well aware of the military preparations of the freeholder government. Two days before the "Algerine Law" was officially proclaimed, militia units had been alerted and placed on thirty minutes warning.³² Dorr realized that this action would undoubtedly provoke his supporters to take up arms in defense. Sensing that he and his followers were standing alone, he beseeched Woodbury: "Will any friend of States Rights in either House do us the favor of saying by letter what we are to expect? I trust that someone will give us the reply..."³³

A favorable response to Dorr's petitions was not forthcoming. It was clear to Dorr that the opposition had decided to exercise the "domestic violence" clause of the United States Constitution in order to avoid public embarrassment by having the matter debated in the Congress. Such a debate would undoubtedly attract national attention to Rhode Island's questionable constitutional practices.³⁴ In order to preserve and protect minority rule without having to justify the existing system of government in the state, Governor Samuel Ward King, beginning April 4th, exchanged a series of official notes

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹Dorr to Woodbury, April 13, 1842, Woodbury Papers.

³²Militia Returns. Miscellaneous Papers, General Orders of April 3 and April 5, 1842, Rhode Island State Archives.

³³Dorr to Woodbury, April 13, 1842, Woodbury Papers.

³⁴*Ibid.*

with Tyler which sought to influence the President to take action against Dorr's "People's" movement. In his reply to King on April 11th, Tyler was wary of the governor's suggestion of April 4th that he might take action before real violence had occurred. The President's response was cautious, but bluntly asserted that there must be an "actual" insurrection and not merely a "threatened" uprising as King had proposed. He instructed the governor that the Executive could not anticipate insurrectionary movements, but that "... when an insurrection exists *against the government* of Rhode Island ... the Executive ... [will] furnish that protection which is guaranteed to each State by the Constitution. ..."³⁵

John Tyler had been a difficult man to understand politically. Selected as the vice-presidential running mate of William Henry Harrison in 1840 by the Whigs, the former Democrat was not a unanimous party choice and was selected only to appease Henry Clay who had failed to get the presidential nomination. Tyler was not really trusted by the Whigs and when Harrison died suddenly in April 1841, the Party had little indication what political path the new president might follow.³⁶ It was soon apparent to the Whig leadership that Tyler would confirm their suspicions of distrust. His veto of the new Bank Bill in 1841 came as no shock to the Whigs, but it was a disarming turn of events for the Democrats.³⁷ John Tyler was a constitutionalist. He did not feel compelled to conform to party programs or lead the Whigs against the Democrats. His primary concern centered on the responsibility and power of his office within the limits of the Constitution.³⁸ In the case of the Rhode Island controversy, he tactically considered his actions within this context. The President was especially concerned with the fact that unwarranted executive interference in the internal affairs of a state might lead to the establishment of some unsavory precedent. He carefully explained to Governor King that: "To throw the Executive power

³⁵John Tyler to the Governor of Rhode Island, Samuel Ward King, April 11, 1842, Letters to the Governor (folio 24), Rhode Island State Archives. Tyler quotes King's comments of April 4 in this reply.

³⁶Oscar Doane Lambert, *Presidential Politics in the United States 1841-1844*, Durham, North Carolina, 1936, pp. 10, 53.

³⁷*The Washington Globe*, September 14, 1841.

³⁸Lambert, *Presidential Politics*, pp. 43-45.

of this Government into any such controversy would be to make the President the armed arbitrator between the people of the different States and their constituted authorities, and might lead to a usurped power dangerous alike to the stability of the State governments and the liberties of the people."³⁹

The President's decision not to judge the moral merits of the claims of either side in the Rhode Island controversy but to confine himself to the rigidity of the United States Constitution was both a statement of principle and a tactical move. He did not wish to jeopardize his political position on States' rights in general, and secondly, he hoped to shame the rebellious faction in Rhode Island into believing that their actions would be forever damned as "un-American." Understandably, Tyler hoped that by threatening to use force against the Rhode Island rebels, they would back down, and he would not have to carry through his threatened deployment of federal troops. If he chose to take immediate action and support the established government on constitutional grounds, or if he decided to ally his office with the suffrage people and insist that the Congress investigate the constitutional form of the state, he chanced the total loss of support from an already alienated Whig Congress, as well as from some Democrats who were unsure of his political intentions. In keeping with his desire to stalemate the entire situation, he wrote Governor King that: "No portion of [the] people . . . will be willing to set an example, in the bosom of this Union, of such frightful disorder, such needless convulsions of society, such danger to life, liberty, and property, and likely to bring so much discredit on the character of popular governments."⁴⁰ From Tyler's point of view, these words accomplished two objectives — to shame the rebels and to assure the freemen of his affection for American Constitutional principles, especially the rights of property.

The Tyler-King correspondence was a serious setback for Dorr's rebels. The stalemate that Tyler and King both desired meant defeat for the suffrage movement. For many of the lukewarm liberals associated with Dorr, their cause was lost and they left the movement in increasing numbers. A resort to violence would not be in keeping with the principles of law and order. The remaining elements in the Dorr

³⁹Tyler to King, April 11, 1842, Letters to the Governor (folio 24).

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

camp reckoned that since all avenues of legal reform had been exhausted, rebellion was not an outrageous breach of the American tradition.⁴¹

Although doomed to choose between failure and revolution, Dorr continued his efforts to elicit Congressional support in Washington. Woodbury acknowledged increasing sympathy for the constitutionalists, but did not suggest that sufficient backing for their position could be found. James Buchanan, then United States Senator from Pennsylvania, and his colleague William Allen of Ohio attempted to bring the Rhode Island matter before the Senate,⁴² but the Whig opposition, led by Rhode Island's William Sprague and William Ballard Preston of Virginia, resisted any discussion of the matter on the Senate floor, at least for the present.⁴³ Following Tyler's self-imposed removal from the internal affairs of Rhode Island, Woodbury sadly admitted that: "The whole fabric of American liberties rests on sand or stubble." "If this be sound position," Dorr replied, "then the American doctrine of Popular sovereignty is a mere pretense. . . ."⁴⁴ The frustration which Dorr and Woodbury experienced in their different ways was distinctly representative of the confusion and indecision rampant within the two major parties during the 1840's. The Whigs strained to retain the power they acquired in 1840 even though internally divided by Tyler's compromising actions. Yet the Democrats, already politically insecure, could not safely back the Rhode Island liberals in a unilateral action without risking another defeat.

The end of April 1842, marked the close of the moderate phase of the Dorr Rebellion. Dorr's appeal to bring the liberal tradition to Rhode Island had been denied. Facing a stalemate with the freeholder government and having exhausted all legal alternatives, Dorr could no longer restrain the revolutionary activities which he had been able to contain earlier with reasonable success, and the Rhode Island situation worsened. As the revolutionary phase began in early May, Tom Dorr emerged as a sword-wielding demagogue whose

⁴¹*Providence Journal*, April 14 and April 16, 1842.

⁴²*The Congressional Globe*, XI, no. 27 (27th Congress, 2d Session), Senate, April 18, 1842.

⁴³*Ibid.*, Senate, April 20, 1842.

⁴⁴Dorr to Woodbury, April 19, 1842, Woodbury Papers.

alleged "secret" plan had been, from the beginning, the radical overthrow of the state government. Dorr had envisioned an enlarged electorate which could in the democratic tradition destroy minority rule in Rhode Island. Under the conditions in 1842, the Whigs would not condone the intimidation by "mob rule" of Rhode Island's "republican" government, even if they did sympathize with limited extension of the franchise. The Democrats also could hardly give support to a cause which tried to achieve liberal democratic reform by subverting the established government through illegal and unconstitutional means in an atmosphere of threatened revolution.

Professor Louis Hartz's prodigious effort to illustrate the existence and practice of a liberal tradition in America does not include a discussion of Dorr's Rebellion, except a brief reference to Seth Luther and his connection with the suffrage movement.⁴⁵ The Rebellion, however, would have provided an excellent example of the confusion and conflict of the American democrat in battling the inconsistency "... of accepting the liberal notion of equality and then excluding the masses from power."⁴⁶ The Dorr Rebellion was inevitable as long as the majority could not legally express its will. In 1842, Rhode Island freemen, the propertied minority, had proved that the liberal tradition was controllable, and that it functioned far less universally without the democratic political machinery to provide the majority with the means of expressing their wishes.

⁴⁵Hartz, *Liberal Tradition*, p. 127.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 130.

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OLNEY WINSOR'S "MEMORANDUM" OF THE PHENOMENAL "DARK DAY" OF MAY 19, 1780

by WILLIAM G. McLOUGHLIN
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THROUGH THE COURTESY OF Mr. Robert S. Preston of East Providence, I am able to make an addition and a correction to the memorandum of Olney Winsor which was printed in *Rhode Island History*, volume 25, number 3 (July, 1966), pp. 84-86. The correction is that Winsor's account of the great hurricane of September 23, 1815, was not in the third volume of Backus's history of New England owned by the John Carter Brown Library but in the third volume which is in the John Hay Library of Brown University. The addition is that in the front and back flyleaves of volume one of Olney Winsor's copy of Backus's history (now owned by Mr. Preston) is written the following eyewitness account of the famous "Dark Day" of May 19, 1780—an account which has not heretofore been printed. Mr. Preston has kindly let me see his copy of this volume from which I have transcribed the account as it appears in Winsor's hand:

Memorandum

That on the 19th of May 1780,

a very uncommon [*sic*], & in the present age unheard of, Darnkness [*sic*] covered the Earth—the morning was cloudy, but not darker than usual—at about 11, O'Clock the Clouds appeared of a yello[w] cast, the reflection of wch. gave that cast to all around us, the darkness still increasing untill about half after 12 O'Clock, at which time it was so dark that People in general made use of Candles to dine [word torn out] The darkness then began to decrease very much in the same degree that it came on—At about three O'Clock The Clouds resumed their natural [*sic*] black & it continued to be a dark after noon—It began to rain at about 8 O'Clock in the Evening—

Peoples conjectures of this uncommon Phenomenon were various—as the moon full'd the day past, it could not be a common eclipse of the Sun (if she was eclipsed it must be by some planet [*sic*] of whose course the Astronomers have no knowledge,

none having mentioned it) — There appeared a great collection of Clouds & they very low, which may be the natural Cause. —

Memo. the 20th May — Those that were out the last Night say that it was as much darker than common Nights as yesterday was than common Days. —

O. W.

It may be worth comparing this account to those of John Howland and the Rev. Isaac Backus, both of which reveal that many persons, including President James Manning of Brown, found divine portents in the phenomenon. Howland's eyewitness account reads:

In the forenoon, say nine o'clock, I was reading Voltaire's life of Charles XII, of Sweden. Near the close of the volume, I found it grew very dark, but supposed it to be nothing more than a thickening up of the clouds. But the darkness increased, and having arrived at the last page, I threw some shavings on the fire, and by the light finished it. I then went into the street, where many persons were assembled, apparently in astonishment at the darkness, among others Dr. Manning. A powerful man, but profligate, advanced up to the president, and said, 'how do you account for this darkness, sir? What does it mean?' The president, with great solemnity of manner, replied, 'I consider it, sir, as a prelude to that great and important day when the final consummation of all things is to take place.'

The Darkness appeared as if something palpable was mixed with the air, and everything assumed the color of dry oak leaves. At noon I observed candles lighted in the neighboring houses, when I went home to dinner. Though we had fine roast veal and asparagus, none of the large family had appetite to partake of them but myself. In the evening, the blackest darkness was so palpable that a candle at the window gave no light outside. I placed a candle at the window and went out to observe the effect. The alley was but twenty feet wide, yet the large building on the opposite side could not be discerned. The light did not appear to penetrate more than half a yard from the window. [Edwin M. Stone, *Life and Recollections of John Howland* (Providence, 1857), pp. 289-290.]

The Rev. Isaac Backus of Middleborough, Massachusetts (and a trustee of Brown University) noted in his unpublished diary entry for

that date that rural people shared President Manning's view of the phenomenon:

May 19, 1780. The clouds and vapors were so thick over us that at noon day it was darker than ordinary moonlight so that many light up candles to eat their dinner by; and many in town and country [*sic*] thought the day of judgment was come. Elnathan Wood, Asael Shaw, Waelthy Pool, and others were brought out of soul darkness today. [The manuscript diary is currently on loan to the John Carter Brown Library from Andover Newton Theological School, Newton Centre, Massachusetts.]

Those who would like to read a more detailed and scientific contemporary account of the Dark Day may refer to the article by Samuel Williams, professor of mathematics and philosophy at Harvard, which appeared in the *Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, volume I (Boston, 1785), pp. 234-246. Professor Williams concluded after a thorough study of all the evidence, that the darkness was caused by a combination of smoke and heavy clouds; the smoke came from "large and extensive fires" in the woods of York, Maine, of New Hampshire, and of Vermont where "the people in the new towns had been employed in clearing their lands" for "two or three weeks before" by burning them off. A combination of southwest winds and cloudy skies produced "this extraordinary darkness" throughout the whole of southern New England on May 19. In fact, Williams reported, "from the accounts that have been received, it seems to have extended all over the New England states. It was observed as far east as Falmouth. To the westward, we hear of its reaching the furthest part of Connecticut and Albany. To the southward it was observed all along the sea-coasts, and to the north as far as our settlements extend." And "with regard to its duration, it continued in this place [Cambridge] at least fourteen hours." Williams stated that one observer noticed upon the water in rain tubs after showers that day "a light scum . . . which rubbing between my thumb and finger, I found to be nothing but the black ashes of burnt leaves." Williams found a similar substance upon the seashore when the tide fell and noted, for those who were expecting the fire and brimstone of the Judgment Day, that it was merely the same "black ashes of burnt leaves without any sulphureous or other mixtures."

GLOCESTER, RHODE ISLAND, VITAL RECORDS

by CHARLES W. FARNHAM, F.A.S.G.

An old store account book in the possession of Ella Hopkins of Chepachet, Rhode Island, loaned to the writer, includes births, marriages, and deaths, most of which are not of public record.

The account book had been handed down for many generations and apparently was owned by Sayles Brown who married Free love Keech, the daughter of Nicholas and Lucy (Wade) Keech.

The vital records:

- 1784 Sayles Brown was born Jan. 9th.
- 1791 Free love (Keech) born Aug. 20th.
- 1810 Almira Brown was born May 24 on Monday morning at 11 o'clock.
- 1812 Harriet Brown was born July 20 on Monday morning at 3 o'clock. Died Aug. 16 in the same year, aged 24 days.
- 1815 Polly Brown was born November 13 on Monday morning.
- 1814 Lucy W. Brown was born January 7 on Thursday morning at 3 o'clock.
- 1821 Urana Brown was born July 4 on Sunday morning at 6 o'clock.
- 1823 Caroline Amanda Brown, Catherine Miranda Brown, twins, were born May 12 on Monday morning at 11 o'clock.
- 1824 John Quincy Adams Brown was born June 2 on Thursday morning at 9 o'clock.
- 1827 James Bugbee Brown was born July 15 on Sunday evening at 8 o'clock.
- 1829 Ann Maria Theresa Brown was born Feb. 3 on Tuesday evening at 7 o'clock.
- 1831 Ann Nancy Jane Brown was born April 20 on Wednesday evening at 7 o'clock.
- 1836 Martin VanBuren Brown was born Nov. 3 on Thursday evening at 11 o'clock.
- 1877 Nathan Angell's wife died June the 4th.
- Ada Sprague died the 15th day of March. She was 91 years old, 1880.
- George Sprague died 1877 in February the 18th day.
- 1862 Sister Peckham and Henry and his wife and child came here April the third day. Henry stayed seven weeks.

- 1855 Ann Owen, wife of Daniel Owen Esq., deceased July 22. She was 47 years old.
- 1864 Daniel Owen Esq. the 13th day of June fell from a lightning rod wagon and broke the spine of his back. He lived until the 19th day and then deceased. He had his senses until the very last. He was 56 years, 10 months and 23 days old. He died in the city of Providence.
- 1864 Suicide on Thursday last, Mr. Uriah Colwell, North Scituate, cut his throat, inflicting a wound from which he died on Monday morning. He had been in ill health for some time and not expecting to recover had fallen into a state of despondency. The wound was sewed up by a surgeon although much against his will and in spite of his efforts to resist, but death finally ensued, as stated above. He was 77 years of age and was always a hard working persevering business man, having amassed a fortune of twenty thousand, of which he died possessed.
- 1864 Mary Sheldon died in August. She was Joseph Sheldon's daughter.
- Dec. 30 1859 James Reynolds of Glocester committed suicide by hanging himself. He was buried New Year's Day, 1860.
- 1873 Samuel Potter Esq. died in February, 86 years and six months old.
- 1881 Uranah Potter was buried the 24th day of November.
- 1768 Nicholas Keech, son of Capt. Stephen Keech, was born June the ninth. He died Sept. 10th, 1814. He was 54 years and three months old.
- 1860 Lucy Keech, his wife, daughter of Nathaniel Wade, Esq., died Oct. the ninth. She was born in 1768, Dec. 25, Christmas Day.
- 1786 Deborah Keech was born February, the eighth day.
- 1788 Uranah Keech was born June the 18th.
- 1789 Dorcas Keech was born.
- 1791 Free love Keech was born August the 20th day.
- 1794 Polly Keech was born January the 10th day.
- 1807 Miranda Keech was born March the 10th day.
- 1804 Nicholas Keech Jr. was born December the 29th day.
- 1807 Molly Sayles, wife of Esick Brown Jr. died April the sixth day. She was 42 years old. She was the daughter of Israel Sayles and Mercy Whipple.

- 1839 Esek Brown died October the 23rd day. He was the son of Elisha Brown. Sarah Olney was his mother.
- 1875 Elder Scott's wife died in Chepachet May 22.
- 1878 Nicholas Keech was born in 1804. He died January the 29th, 69 years and some months old.
- 1879 William Luther died January 14. He left a second wife, no children by either wife. He was 87 and 10 months old.
- 1855 Miranda Keech, wife of Adnah Sackett, died October the 10th day.
- 1857 Polly Keech, wife of Amasa Sayles, died August the sixth day by hanging herself. She was 63 years and six months old.
- 1858 Amasa Sayles died June the 26th by falling down stairs. He broke his neck and lived 10 months after his wife died.
- 1868 Seth Peckham died September the second at his own residence in Woonsocket Falls.
- 1865 Deborah Peckham died October 30 at Samuel Crosman's in Fruit Hill. She was in her 80th year and was the wife of Seth Peckham.
- 1872 Rhoba Keech died April the tenth. She was the wife of Humphrey Wood. She was 91 years old.
- 1873 Theodore Keech died April the 23rd day. He was 86 years, three months and 21 days old. He was born in 1786.
- 1873 Mrs. Maria Smith died March the 29th day. She was the mother of Joseph B. Smith.
- 1872 Stephen Keech died in August.
- 1863 Martha Keech died in July.
- 1866 Ann Keech died October 12 days.
- 1866 The widow Sanders died November.
- 1865 Elizabeth Peckham died January 30. She was the wife of Elias Peckham.
- 1865 John Peckham's wife died the same day, January 30, buried Feb. the first and second day. She was Elias Peckham's mother.
- 1866 William Houston died October the 13th day.
- 1812 Hariette Brown died August 16th day, aged 28 days.
- 1833 Nancy Jane Brown died May 24, aged two years, one month and four days.
- 1849 Uranah Brown, wife of Daniel Mathewson, died January 11, aged 27 years, six months and three days.

- Sayles Brown died March the 13th, 1860.
 Freelove Brown died March the 30th, 1882.
 1844 Nicholas Brown December the 23rd day.
 1851 Uranah Mathewson Brown was born in June the 15th day.
 1855 Isadora Peckham Brown was born October 15.
 1855 Eller Florene Brown was born on October 15.
 1858 Victoria Ann Brown was born in February.
 1860 Earnest A. Brown was born in April.
 186[?] Falcom Caroy Brown was born.
 1867 Druscilla Brown was born.
 1871 Mary Amanda Brown was born.
 1852 Edward Potter died October 19th day.
 1854 Jesse Potter died April the 15th day. He died in San Francisco by being blowed up in a steamer.
 1863 George R. Potter died May the first day. He was 50 years old the January before.
 1863 Arnold Pheteplace died April 19 [?] day.
 1864 Eliza Ballou, wife of Jesse Ballou, died Feb. 25, daughter of John Plumer.
 1863 Jefferson A. Smith died May 12th day.
 1864 John Plumer died March 5th day, 47 years old.
 1864 Ira Evans died March 5th day, 77 years old.
 1864 Sally Sheldon died May 1, heart disease in her 70th year, wife of Jeremiah Sheldon.
 1864 Uriah Colwell died June 7th by cutting his throat. He was about 79 years old.
 Uranah Potter was buried the 24th day of November, 1881.
 1857 Martin E. [?] Brown went in to Providence to work for Stephen Crary. He was 21 years old that year.
 1865 Arnold Owen died November the 6th day. He was in his 74 [?] year.
 1866 Polly Owen, wife of Arnold Owen, died March the 31. She was the daughter of the late Esek Brown. She was in her 70th year.
 1866 The widow Lydia Sprague died in June. She was 84 [?] years old.
 1870 Ira Potter died December the first day by hanging himself. He was keeping a boarding house, living with his third wife. He was 57 years old last May.

- 1846 George Angell was born in February in Mendon, Mass. He died in August the same year.
 1882 Mary Angell died April the 28th day. She was the wife of Henry Angell of Greenville.
Names of Mary and Henry Angell's children:
 1837 William Angell was born April 12 in Newport, R.I.
 1839 Nathan Porter Angell was born in February in Providence.
 1840 Sayles Brown Angell was born July the third in Glocester, R.I.
 1842 Urope Ann Angell was born May 2 in Smithfield, died Aug. 30.
 1843 Alfonso Angell was born May 12 in Smithfield.
 1844 Preserved Angell was born in June in Mendon, Mass.
 1846 George Angell was born.
 1807 Miranda Keech was born March 10th in Glocester, R.I.
 1808 Nicholas Keech was born Dec. 29th in Glocester.
 1809 Sarah Ann Peckham was born June 2 in Glocester.
 1818 Nicholas Peckham was born in April in Glocester.
 1819 Richard Peckham was born in Glocester.
 1825 Henry Peckham was born in July in Glocester.
Names of Almira and Jefferson Smith's children:
 1827 Freelove Smith was born May 30th in Glocester.
 1829 Frances Laroy Smith was born Feb. 12 in Glocester.
 1831 Fredrick Smith was born in September in Glocester.
 1841 Jefferson Smith Jr. was born May 1 in Waterford Village, Mass.
 1843 Godfrey Moffet Smith was born June 12 in Waterford Village, Mass.
 1847 Victoria Ann Smith was born in March in Waterford Village.
Names of Lucy and William Hacston
 1842 James Edwin Hacston was born Sept. 20 in Rehoboth, Mass. Clara Hacston.
Children of Urana and Daniel Mathewson:
 1844 Ellen Mathewson was born Feb. 22 in Glocester, R.I.
 1834 Mendon, Mass. Polly Brown was married Wednesday, Feb. 12 by Ahab Read at her father's house.
 1834 Nicholas Keech was married in Mendon Feb. 23 by Aldin Ballou. Went to Mendon town and took supper.
 1826 Almira Brown was married Oct. 25 in Glocester at her father's home.
 1841 Lucy W. Brown was married Oct. 14. She was married at

Greenville tavern by Elder Reuben Allen.

1841 Uranah Brown was married in East Killingly by Elder Daniel Williams.

1847 This certifies that John Q. Brown and Amanda M. Phetteplace, both of Glocester, were joined in marriage this 14th day, February, 1847, at Killingly, Ct., by me the subscriber, Daniel Williams, minister of the gospel.

1850 Ann M. T. Brown and James B. Phetteplace were married Oct. 13 at her father's home.

1850 James Bugbee Brown and Caroline E. Sprague were married at East Douglas, Mass. Oct. 14th day.

1867 Martin V. B. Brown and Mary Sayles were married March 21 at Greenville by Elder Woodworth.

1867 James Bugbee Brown was married to his second wife, Lucy E. Hopkins.

1833 Nancy Jane Brown died May 24, aged two years, one month and four days.

1849 Uranah P. Brown, wife of Daniel Mathewson, died Jan. 11, aged 27 years, six months and three days.

LIBRARY HOURS

OCTOBER Monday . . . 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

through Tuesday-Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

MAY Saturday . . . 9 a.m. to 12 noon

JUNE thru Monday-Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

SEPT. Closed Saturday

Closed on Sunday and the following holidays:

Jan. 1, Feb. 22, May 30, July 4, Aug. 14, Labor Day, Oct. 12, Nov. 11, Thanksgiving, Christmas

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They are not so strait laced in religion here [Newport] as in the other parts of New England. They have among them a great number of Quakers. The island is the most delightfull spot of ground I have seen in America. I can compare it to nothing but one intire garden. For rural scenes and pritty, frank girls, I found it the most agreeable place I had been in thro' all my peregrinations.

Carl Bridenbaugh, ed., *Gentleman's Progress, The Itinerarium of Dr. Alexander Hamilton, 1744* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1948).

Other American business families have achieved greater prominence within a single generation; but it is doubtful that the chronicle of any other family would show so much substantial achievement in so many areas through so many years of changing conditions and circumstances. The story of these varied commercial and industrial undertakings of the Browns becomes then in a sense the history in microcosm of many of the evolving forms and facets of the growth of business in the United States.

James B. Hedges, *The Browns of Providence Plantations, Colonial Years* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1952).

One of the most precocious schoolmasters in the early days of the Yankee exodus was a Massachusetts man, Jonathan Maxcy, of Attleboro. At the age of twenty-three he became president of Rhode Island College, later Brown University, which "flourished under his administration, and his fame was extended over every other section of the Union." At the age of thirty-four, he resigned to take over the presidency of new Union College at Schenectady, New York, where ill health caused him to leave two years later. Thereupon he moved to the South and was invited to become the first president of the University of South Carolina. He accepted and for the next fifteen years labored hard to make the school something more than the mere academy of its plans. In 1820 Maxcy died, aged fifty-two, a past president of three colleges.

Stewart H. Holbrook, *The Yankee Exodus, An Account of Migration from New England* (New York, Macmillan, 1950).

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When I first knew Newport it was a southern resort for the summer. The old Bellevue, and the present Touro House, then Whitfields, sufficed for the strangers. It was before the Polka — before the days of music after dinner — and when the word “hop” was unknown even at Saratoga. Every body bathed in those days, and all bathed together. There was a little bowling, some driving and riding, but no fast horses or fast men — above all, no fast women. The area on the hill, of which the Ocean House is the centre, was an unsettled region. There were not a dozen cottages, and the quaint little town dozed quietly along its bay, dreaming only of the southern silence, which the character of the climate and of the visitors, who were mainly southerners, naturally suggested.

George William Curtis, *Lotus-Eating* (New York, Harper, 1852).

The first spinning jenny constructed in the United States is said to have been made in 1786, by Daniel Anthony, Andrew Dexter, and Lewis Peck, of Providence. In 1788 Anthony's sons Joseph and Richard experimented with a spinning frame for which “the cotton was carded by hand and roped on a wooden wheel, by a female.” But the resulting yarn proved uneven, and they soon sold their frame to Moses Brown. The next year Brown obtained the services of Samuel Slater, an Englishman who understood the new machinery, and in December, 1790, they started in Pawtucket what proved to be the first successful textile mill in this hemisphere.

Elisabeth Anthony Dexter, *Career Women of America, 1776-1840* (Francesstown, New Hampshire, Marshall Jones, 1950).

A characteristic American breed, the Narragansett Pacers, was reared in Rhode Island. They were famous saddle-horses, giving ease of motion to the rider, being sure-footed and most tough and enduring. For a century they were raised in large numbers and sold at good prices, but became little valued after trotting-horses were bred and folk drove instead of riding horseback. I saw the last of the Narragansett Pacers. She died about twenty years ago; of an ugly sorrel color, with broad back and short legs and a curious rocking pace, she seemed almost a caricature of a horse, but was, nevertheless, a source of inordinate pride to her owner.

Alice Morse Earle, *Stage-Coach and Tavern Days* (New York, Macmillan, 1900).

Wm. E. Swarth