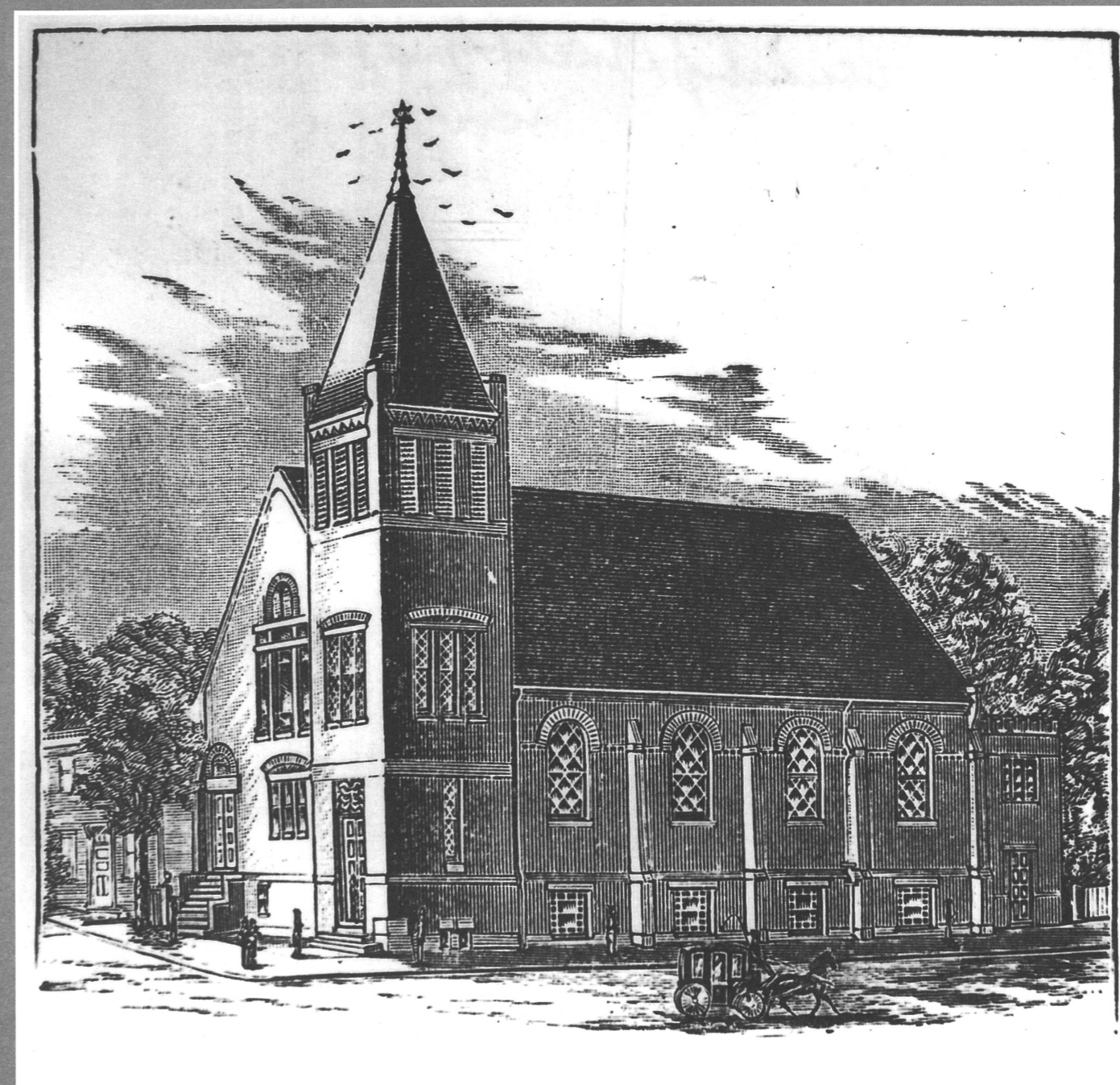


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COVER

Dedicated in 1890, the Sons of Israel and David synagogue on Friendship Street was the first synagogue building constructed in Providence. It was used by the congregation until 1911. (Sketch, "Friendship Street Synagogue") Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.

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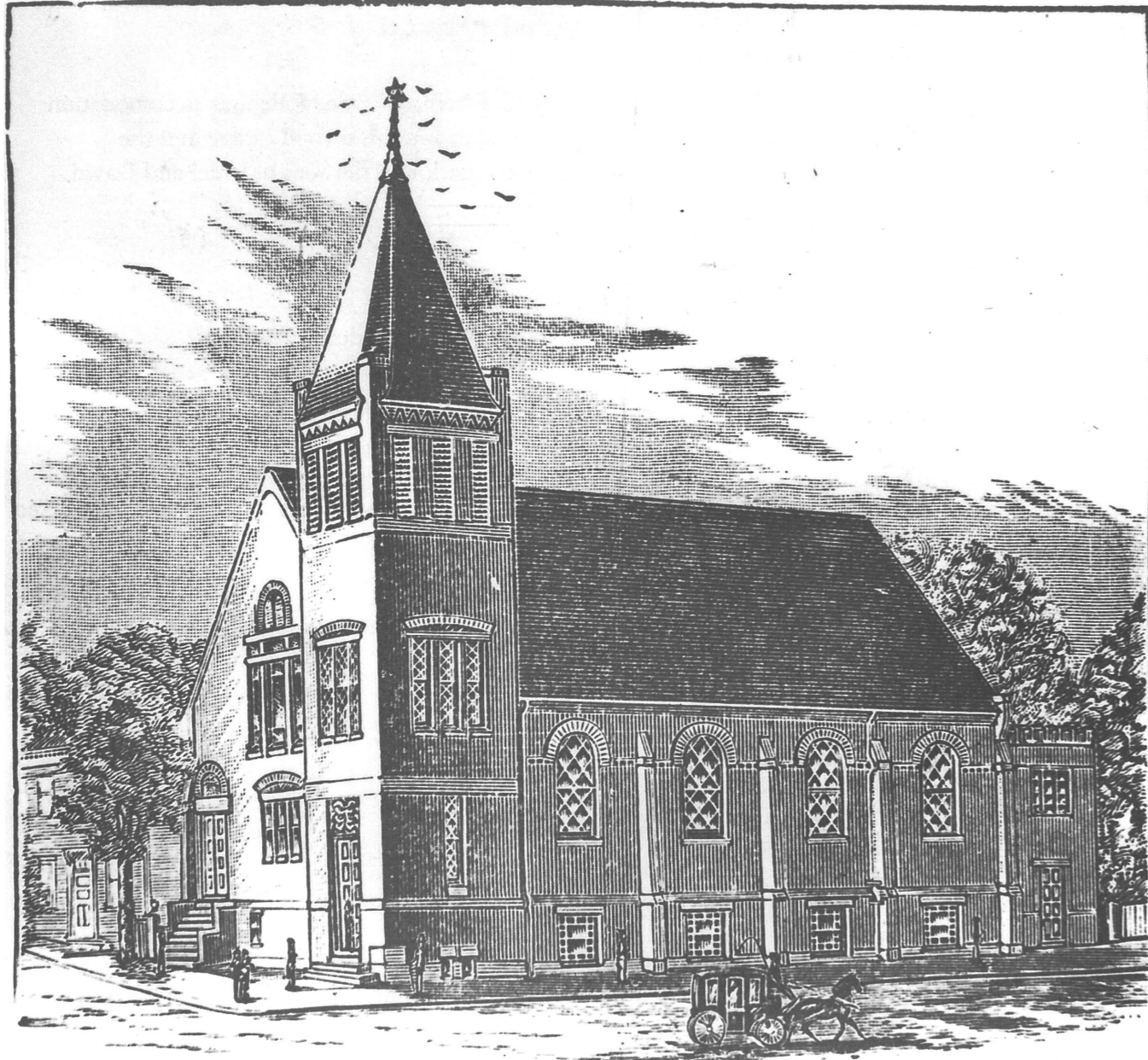
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Dedicated in 1890, the Sons of Israel and David synagogue on Friendship Street was the first synagogue building constructed in Providence. It was used by the congregation until 1911. (Sketch, "Friendship Street Synagogue") Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.

Jews, Freemasons and Religious Accommodation:

Rhode Island's Redwood Lodge and the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David

SHAI AFSAI

On September 23, 1889, the members of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David converged on a lot at the corner of Providence's Friendship and Foster Streets. The occasion was the laying of the cornerstone for the first synagogue building in the city, which would house Rhode Island's Moderate Reform congregation. The Sons of Israel and David (better known today as Temple Beth-El) had enthusiastically fostered interfaith relationships with Christian neighbors, hundreds of whom supported the synagogue's construction in principle, while offering material assistance. Also turning out to sanction the endeavor were officers of the Grand Lodge of Rhode Island and members of its subordinate Masonic lodges. That afternoon, a Masonic procession had set out from Freemasons Hall, the Grand Lodge building at Dorrance and Pine Streets, making its way to the Sons of Israel and David's recently purchased land.¹

Following the arrival of the procession at the corner lot, the Sons of Israel and David's president, Alexander Strauss, delivered a brief address on the congregation's history. He then asked Grand Master George H. Kenyon, the leader of Rhode Island's Freemasons, to lay the cornerstone. Strauss began: "Most Worshipful Grand Master of Masons of the State of Rhode Island: The Congregation Sons of Israel are about to have this structure erected for the purpose of worshipping God the Almighty, and perpetuating our faith, and in their behalf I most respectfully request you to lay the corner-stone, according to the ancient rites and usages of Free Masons."² An article in the *Providence Journal*

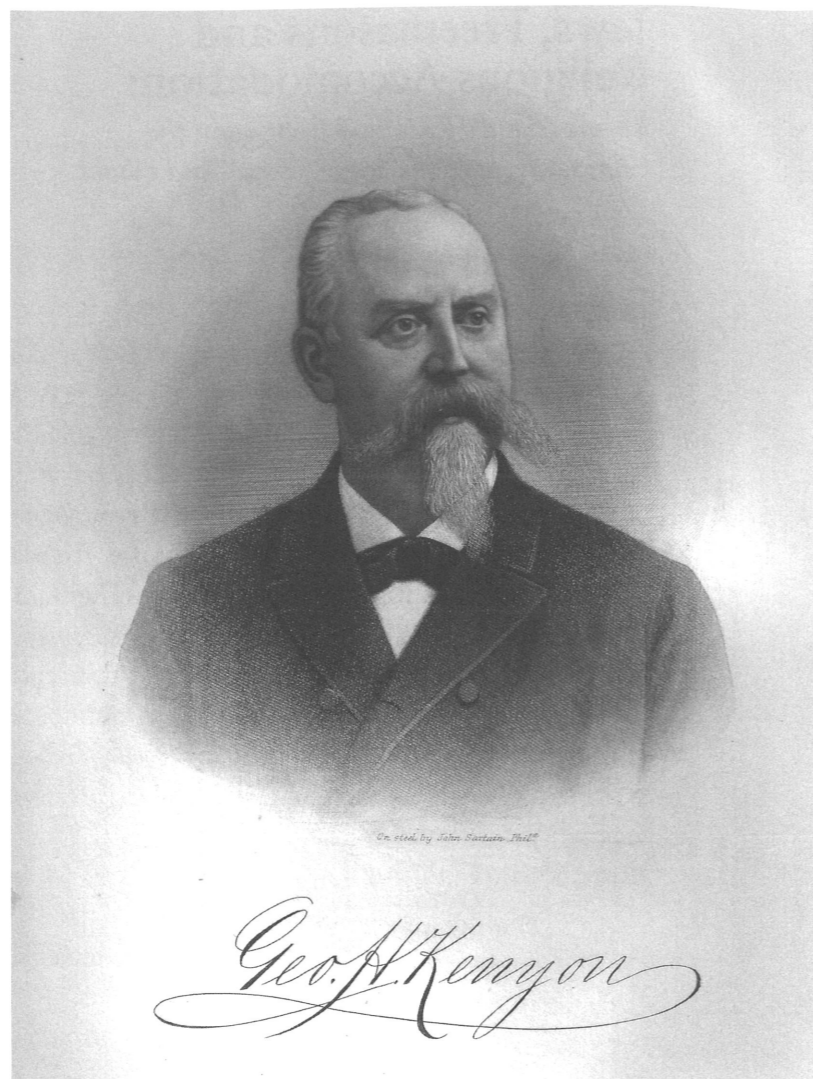
claimed that the Masonic ritual at the synagogue ceremony included the Lord's Prayer and the invocation of Christian saints. Prior to consecrating the synagogue's cornerstone, the article related, "[t]he Grand Master approached the stone, and, striking it three times with his gavel, said: 'To the glory of God, under the patronage of the Holy Saints John the Baptist and the Evangelist, I declare this stone to be well formed, true and trusty, and laid by us in ample form.'"³

The success of Rhode Island's Moderate Reform Jews in integrating their congregation into the Christian social fabric of the state, and in gaining the recognition and respect of their non-Jewish neighbors, as well as the role Freemasonry had played in this process, was fully evident that September day. An array of Masonic and Jewish communal documents were placed in a box beneath the synagogue's cornerstone, among them the by-laws of Redwood Lodge No. 35, whose members had acted as an escort to the Grand Lodge officers during the procession.⁴ Redwood has often been referred to as Providence's first Jewish Masonic lodge.⁵ Yet Jewish affiliation with a decidedly Christian branch of the Masonic fraternity, particularly through the formation of Redwood Lodge, also resulted in the utilization of Christian symbolism and doctrine by the fraternity's Jewish members in Rhode Island.

Between 1865 and 1877, the Jewish population of Providence and Pawtucket grew from perhaps several dozen people to about five hundred.⁶ This community was comprised mainly of immigrants from Western Europe, primarily Germany. In her

brief history of Rhode Island's Jews, Geraldine S. Foster emphasizes the degree to which these immigrants wanted "to become Americanized . . . and sought to acquire those manners and customs that would make them appear more like their American neighbors."⁷ Founded in 1854, the Sons of Israel and David shifted from Orthodox to Moderate Reform Judaism in 1877. The congregation's leadership hoped that by embracing Moderate Reform Judaism they would be able to draw in more of the city's Jews and increase membership.⁸ This shift also demonstrated its members' desire for greater Americanization. According to Foster, forming and joining fraternities was one aspect of an acculturation effort for which the Jews from Germany were especially well-suited. "In addition to an appreciation of social amenities," she asserts, "the German Jews had a genius for communal systems; by tradition they were organizers and joiners."⁹

Although Rhode Island Jews had already formed several Jewish fraternal organizations by 1877, it is not surprising that some were also drawn to the idea of opening a new Masonic lodge. The earliest Masonic lodges in America were established at Pennsylvania in 1730 and at Boston in 1733.¹⁰ Rhode Island's first lodge, St. John's, was warranted at Newport in 1749. In 1757, a second St. John's Lodge was established in Providence.¹¹ Rhode Island's third lodge, King David's, with which Newport Jews enjoyed a close connection, was opened in 1780 by Moses Michael Hays, who became its first Master (leader of the lodge); Hays was later Grand Master of Massachusetts from 1788 to 1792.¹² His successor as King David's Master, Moses Siexas, was instrumental in forming the Grand Lodge of Rhode Island in 1791. He subsequently served as the state's Grand Master from 1802 to 1809.¹³ Writing of Jewish involvement in American Freemasonry during this era, Samuel Oppenheim suggests that "[t]he relationship of the Jews to the [Masonic] Order brought them naturally



Grand Master George H. Kenyon laid the cornerstone of the Sons of Israel and David's synagogue on Friendship Street. He maintained that the Masonic cornerstone ceremony had been slightly modified in order to "make it conform to the Jewish faith." Frontispiece, Henry W. Rugg, *History of Freemasonry in Rhode Island* (Providence: E.L. Freeman and Son, 1895).

more directly in contact with their Christian brethren than would otherwise have probably been the case, and the respect and esteem with which the individual members of the race were regarded no doubt tended to the advantage of their coreligionists as a body."¹⁴ Redwood's Jewish founders sought similar results in 1877, hoping for more contact with their Christian neighbors in an amiable setting, while also maintaining Jewish cohesion.¹⁵

American Freemasonry moved through several phases from its colonial beginnings up to the time Redwood was founded. It had generally enjoyed a steady and successful expansion until the virulent anti-Masonic activism that occurred between 1826 and 1840 threatened to decimate the fraternity in the United States.¹⁶ Rhode Island was the scene of some of the worst of this activity.¹⁷ By the 1870s, however, Rhode Island Freemasonry had recovered in numbers and respectability, its former troubles gone, if not entirely forgotten.¹⁸ In his sestercentennial *The Providence Plantations for Two Hundred and Fifty Years* (1886), Welcome Arnold Greene was able to confidently assert, "[t]he Free Masons of to-day, secure in the esteem of the community, can afford to smile at the falsities then so recklessly thrown at them, but at the time it was no laughing matter."¹⁹ This widespread communal esteem was evident in 1889, when the Sons of Israel and David requested that the Masonic fraternity participate in the cornerstone ceremonies for its new synagogue.

There was a close connection between the members of the Sons of Israel and David and Redwood Lodge. As described in Henry Rugg's *History of Freemasonry in Rhode Island*, "[i]n the year 1877 some of the Israelitish Masons residing in Providence, felt the need of uniting themselves together, more closely, by the establishment of a Masonic Lodge. The idea of forming such a new Lodge originated with Bro[ther] Myer Noot."²⁰ According to Redwood tradition, Noot "visualized a lodge wherein the question of religion or race should be no criterion of membership."²¹ In addition to founding Redwood that year, Noot also led the 1877 restructuring of the then-Orthodox Sons of Israel and David into Rhode Island's first Moderate Reform congregation.²² Most of the other men whose names appear in Redwood's 1878 petition for a charter from the Grand Lodge of Rhode Island, including Henry Green, Leopold Hartman (Hardman, Hortman),

Joseph Schwarz (Schwarz, Swartz, Schwartz), and Charles Jacobs, were members of the Sons of Israel and David, as well.²³ After its formation, Myer Noot became Redwood's first Master. In addition, he served the Sons of Israel and David congregation in such varied capacities as secretary, vice-president, teacher, dues collector, cantor, and—though not ordained—rabbi.²⁴ Green and Hartman held the other highest offices in the lodge. Green, who served as the congregation's president for some twenty years, became the lodge's first Senior Warden, while Hartman became its first Junior Warden.²⁵ Like Noot, Green and Hartman drove the Sons of Israel and David's Moderate Reform restructuring.²⁶

Several of Redwood's founding members already belonged to exclusively Jewish fraternities in Rhode Island. Green had been among the organizers of three such Jewish non-Masonic lodges: Haggai Lodge (B'nai B'rith), Providence Lodge (Free Sons of Israel), and Isaac Leaser Lodge (Free Sons of Benjamin).²⁷ Hartman, Schwarz, and Jacobs, along with Green, had been charter members of Haggai Lodge in 1870.²⁸ Hartman also co-established Providence Lodge in 1876.²⁹ Redwood's first meeting was held at Haggai Lodge's hall and it continued to make use of the hall on other occasions.³⁰ However, Redwood's Jewish founders were not satisfied to direct their energies toward the already-existing Jewish fraternities. Though closely associated with the Sons of Israel and David and of great importance to many of Redwood's founders, Rhode Island's exclusively Jewish fraternities did not satisfy their cosmopolitan aspirations.³¹

Nineteenth-century Reform Jews were particularly preoccupied with integrating themselves into the Christian social fabric of Europe and America. The formation of Redwood Lodge in 1877 united the Jewish Freemasons of Providence and also served an integrationist function, linking the Sons of Israel and David with an established, respected, and largely Protestant fraternity. Similar correlations of



The originator of Redwood Lodge and its first Master, Myer Noot led the 1877 restructuring of the Sons of Israel and David which became Rhode Island's first Moderate Reform synagogue. From Louis Baruch Rubinstein, *A Centennial History of Redwood Lodge Number 35 A.F. & A.M. in the Grand Jurisdiction of Rhode Island* (ca. 1982).

nineteenth-century Reform Judaism with Masonic membership have been observed in other contexts.³² In his article "Religious Assimilation in a Fraternal Organization: Jews and Freemasonry in Gilded Age San Francisco," Tony Fels argues that "[c]rucial to an understanding of the Reform position is the realization that it was always thoroughly intermixed with secular aspirations." He maintains that "the principle of Masonic universalism, which promised that the distinctions based on blood and birth would be washed away in the solvent of brotherhood, shone as a beacon from the Protestant world pointing toward fulfillment" of Jewish hopes to escape from "intellectual, political and economic restrictions."

According to Fels, "[n]early every Jewish Mason whose writings have survived from the nineteenth century—both in Europe and the United States—emphasized this aspect of Freemasonry above all others."³³ Myer Noot's vision of a Masonic lodge "wherein the question of religion or race should be no criterion of membership" exemplifies such hopes.

The naming of Redwood Lodge attests to the cosmopolitan aspirations of its founders, who had originally considered calling their unique Masonic lodge "Liberty."³⁴ As explained by Earl H. Mason in his history of Redwood Lodge, in deciding to name the lodge after Abraham Redwood, "the organizers chose to honor a non-Mason from Newport, famed for his philanthropy, broadmindedness and general good citizenship . . . a staunch Quaker, who numbered many Masonic and Jewish leaders of his day among his closest and most loyal friends."³⁵ In naming a Masonic lodge with a Jewish majority after a tolerant Newport Quaker who had "befriended many of the Jewish people in that city," Redwood's founders demonstrated their hopes for acceptance into the wider Rhode Island social fabric.³⁶

Jewish cosmopolitanism, integration, and societal acceptance were central to Noot's Moderate Reform vision of Judaism in America. In 1885, for example, he gave an address to the members of the Rhode Island Veteran Citizens Historical Association at a meeting convened "to secure as far as possible a record of the Jews in Rhode Island and their manners of worship."³⁷ The focus of Noot's talk, delivered in his role as the state's Moderate Reform rabbi, was the recent positive transformation in Gentile attitudes toward Rhode Island's Jews. He attributed this development to Moderate Reform Judaism's progressive religious approach, which differed from the previously prevailing and more insular Orthodox one.³⁸ Noot told the Historical Association's members:

[W]e [Moderate Reform] Israelites have worked towards commanding the respect as a religious sect



A charter member of Redwood Lodge and its first Senior Warden, Henry Green served as president of the Sons of Israel and David for some twenty years. Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association (G-TBE-18).

from those who do not believe as we do. I have only to go back ten years to rehearse before you how things were in this city as far as the mode of worship was concerned . . . [T]he service was entirely in the Hebrew language, and to have introduced English into the synagogue at that time would have been considered an innovation . . . If a non-Israelite happened to enter the synagogue it was so much Greek to him, to comprehend what was going on. . .

Our doors are open now to any one who is desirous of hearing our service . . . Our Christian brethren have access to our place of worship, can understand what we are doing and may perchance become interested in what might be termed a Jewish worship . . . In this direction, my friends, we have done much to diffuse among our people and the community at large a certain amount of respect which must ultimately give rise to a better feeling for the Israelites of this city.³⁹

Noot's Historical Association address reflected his optimism about the continued benefits that Moderate Reform Judaism would bring to Rhode Island's Jews. He contended that prior to the advent of Moderate Reform Judaism in the state, its Jewish residents had been living "in oblivion, our Christian brethren could not find out anything about them."⁴⁰ Now, though, the situation was much improved:

Everybody is aware that there are Israelites living here, have lived here for many years, but how have they lived? *in obscurity, so to speak.*

What has time wrought for our people, however, during the past ten years? Wonders, if I may use the term. *Miracles.* You may ask in what manner; in what particular? I will answer thus wise.

The Israelites of Rhode Island to-day as a religious class are respected . . . There is a bright future in this city for our people. Although few in numbers compared with other cities, we have the satisfaction of knowing that we command the respect due from one to the other notwithstanding what his belief may be.⁴¹

The September 1889 cornerstone ceremony for the Sons of Israel and David's new synagogue represented a public fulfillment of the Moderate Reform congregation's desire for the esteem and support of its Christian neighbors.

In his *Centennial History of Redwood Lodge* (ca.1982), Louis Baruch Rubinstein emphasized that the "relationship between the Congregation Sons of Israel and David and Redwood Lodge continued [after the cornerstone ceremony] and persists to the present, with many of Redwood's membership also active in that congregation."⁴² Eventually, Redwood Lodge attracted not only Rhode Island's Reform Jews, but its Orthodox, Conservative, and unaffiliated ones as well.⁴³

However, an examination of the dedication ceremony of the Grand Lodge's new Freemasons Hall, in February 1886, shows that from Redwood Lodge's inception its Jewish members were part of a Rhode Island Masonic society that employed Christian perspectives and practices. While presiding

over the dedication services, Grand Master Lyman Klapp stood at the altar and prayed that “[t]hy great mercy hallow this building erected for the greater Glory of Thy Sacred Name, under the patronage of the Holy Saints Johns, and for the celebration of the rites of our Order . . . All which we ask, O FATHER Almighty, through the LION of the Tribe of Judah.”⁴⁴ As part of the dedication, Reverend George McClellan Fiske, rector of Providence’s St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church, delivered an oration on “The Mission of the Masonic Order.” Fiske told the assemblage:

Masonry stands ranged beside the Church of God, as one of the great interpreters and monitors of human



Leopold Hartman, a charter member of Redwood Lodge as well as its first Junior Warden, was president of the Sons of Israel and David from 1898 to 1902. Image courtesy of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association (G-TBE-94).

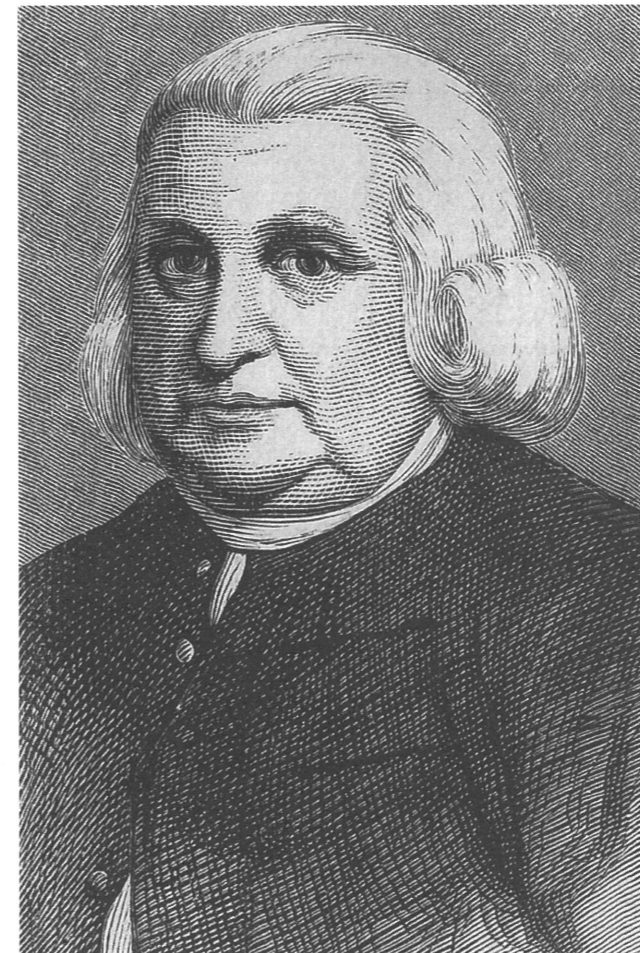
life. It bears to that Divine Society, a relation much like that, which the Holy Saint John the Baptist, whom Masonry delights to honor as a Patron, bore to the Prophet of Prophets, Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth, of Galilee. It goes before the Church’s face to prepare her way, to be a herald and forerunner of the fuller truth, and of the mightier office, of which the Church is the sole and only instrument, of reconciling of human souls to God.⁴⁵

The dedication ceremony continued with more overtly Christian rhetoric. Rhode Island’s Grand Chaplain, Henry Rugg, had prefaced the Grand Master’s words by praying: “Here let no contentious thoughts divide those who are united in One Holy Brotherhood, but . . . by the strong hand and mighty arm of the LION of the Tribe of Judah, raise us all to that House not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”⁴⁶ Grand Master Klapp, in turn, concluded by stating that “we, following the precepts of this earthly brotherhood, and as children of one Almighty Father, ever seek, in all humility, to build up our lives according to the principles of that heavenly brotherhood, so that, at last, through the merits of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, our souls and bodies shall be raised from the tomb of corruption.”⁴⁷

This overtly Christian approach to Freemasonry was by no means unusual, and a few months later, at the annual meeting of the Grand Lodge during May 1886, Grand Master Klapp addressed the legitimacy of using sectarian language in Masonic ritual:

[W]henver a Jewish brother, as he stands at our altars waiting for the promised Messiah, offers his prayers to the GOD of Abraham, the GOD of Isaac and the GOD of Jacob, the Christian brother recognizes the ancient faith of the chosen people of GOD. In like spirit, the devout Israelite joins with those who on bended knee offer their devotions to the Great JEHOVAH through the merits of the LION of the Tribe of Judah, JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

. . . If the sad day should ever come—which God forbid—when all reference to the Christian religion is eliminated from our work and ritual, and Christian prayers are no longer allowed in our Lodges, then genuine Freemasonry will disappear from among the



Redwood Lodge was named for Abraham Redwood (1709-1788), a Newport Quaker and one of the founders of the Redwood Library. Image from Samuel Adams Drake, *Nooks and Corners of the New England Coast* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1875).

institutions of every Christian country, or if perchance it remain for a time, it will only be as a dead and putrifying body, alike offensive in the sight of GOD and man.⁴⁸

The desire of Rhode Island Jews to integrate into a Christian-oriented branch of the Masonic fraternity thus resulted in some remarkable circumstances. Redwood’s coat of arms, adopted by its founders in 1878, shows the disjuncture between Jewish identity and a Rhode Island Masonic tradition steeped in Christian doctrine.⁴⁹ Redwood’s crest is the profile of a prominent demi-lion. On its shield are two eagles, a six-pointed star (the Seal of Solomon/Star

of David) enclosing the Tetragrammaton (one of the Biblical Hebrew names of God), and a compass and three turrets. Beneath the shield is the lodge’s motto: “Leo de Judah est Robur Nostrum,” a Latin phrase meaning “the Lion of Judah is our strength.”⁵⁰ As explained in Albert Gallatin Mackey’s 1874 *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences*, “all allusions to the lion, as the *lion’s paw*, the *lion’s grip*, etc., refer to the doctrine of the resurrection taught by Him [i.e., Jesus] who is known as ‘the lion of the tribe of Judah.’ The expression is borrowed from the Apocalypse (v. 5): ‘Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.’”⁵¹ Similarly, the Biblical Index to Freemasonry provided in the Heirloom Masonic Bible gives the following catechistic explanation of the phrase “Lion of the Tribe of Judah”:

Q: What is the symbolism of this phrase?

A: . . . The Masonic use of the phrase “Lion of the tribe of Judah” is Messianic in its significance; it refers to Christ, who “brought life and immortality to life.”⁵²

In other words, in selecting the Latin phrase “Leo de Judah est Robur Nostrum,” Redwood’s Jewish founders embraced a motto that means “Jesus Christ is our strength.”

To be sure, the phrase “Lion of Judah” has different meanings, depending on the context in which it appears, and also has its own symbolic meaning in Judaism. The patriarch Jacob’s blessing to his sons in the Book of Genesis establishes Judah as the royal tribe of Israel, and the lion as the banner of that tribe.⁵³ Jacob compares Judah to a lion, the archetypal regal animal, a symbol of strength and royalty in different parts of the world. In Jewish tradition, in addition to being a broad symbol of bravery, courage, and nobility, the lion is also a symbol of the tribe of Judah itself, and by extension sometimes a symbol of the entire Jewish nation, which takes its most commonly used name today (*Yehudim*, in Hebrew) from Judah (*Yehuda*).⁵⁴

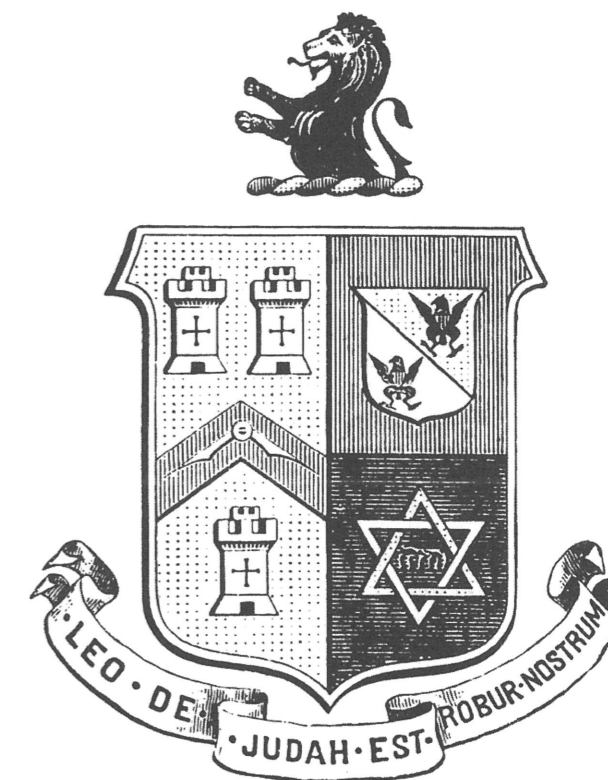


Regardless of its meaning in a Jewish context, however, the phrase “the Lion of Judah” or “the Lion of the tribe of Juda” in Masonic ritual and Redwood Lodge’s motto refers unambiguously to Jesus, the Christian deity and messiah. The Masonic identity of “the Lion of the Tribe of Judah” and its centrality in Rhode Island Masonry was reiterated by the Reverend Marion Law, of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in his April 1897 oration at the laying of the cornerstone of a new Masonic temple in Pawtucket. Paraphrasing the Reverend George McClellan Fiske’s oration at the dedication ceremony of the Grand Lodge’s new Freemasons Hall a decade before, Law declared:

Masonry stands ranged beside the church of God as one of the great interpreters and monitors of human life. It is to the church of God what St. John the Baptist was to Jesus of Nazareth, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. For, as John the Baptist, whom Masonry delights to honor as one of its patrons, even as he went before the Savior of Mankind, a prophet and a herald, so Masonry goes before the church, to prepare her way, to be a herald and forerunner of that mightier office, of which the church is the sole and only instrument, the reconciling of human souls to God.⁵⁵

Although Redwood Lodge was formed over a century ago as a Masonic organization with enduring ties to the Sons of Israel and David and other synagogues in Rhode Island, its Masonic rituals continue to endorse Christian doctrine, and even assert that Christianity is superior to Judaism. Likewise, an allusion to Jesus as “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” is found in one of the concluding lectures of Rhode Island’s Master Mason Degree (as one of Rhode Island’s Craft/Symbolic lodges, Redwood has three separate initiation ceremonies, or degrees—Entered

Opposite page: In September 1889, a Masonic procession set out from Freemasons Hall on Dorrance Street and made its way to the land recently purchased by the Sons of Israel and David at the corner of Friendship and Foster Streets. Redwood Lodge’s members escorted the Grand Lodge officers, and Redwood’s by-laws were among the Masonic documents placed beneath the synagogue’s cornerstone. Freemasons Hall was destroyed by fire in 1896. RIHS Collection (RHi X17 1298).



Redwood Lodge’s Coat of Arms. Louis Baruch Rubinstein, *A Centennial History of Redwood Lodge Number 35 A.F. & A.M. in the Grand Jurisdiction of Rhode Island* (ca. 1982).

Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason—in which Freemasonry’s symbols and philosophy are imparted to members through lectures, catechistic questions and answers, and dramatic reenactments of Masonic lore). The lecture discusses Christianity and the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and states that a Christian, thanks to Christian revelation and “Faith in the merits of the Lion of the tribe of Judah”—that is, faith in the virtues of Jesus—can be certain of his own immortality. The new Master Mason in Redwood, as in other Rhode Island lodges, is told:

Thus, my brother, we close the explanation of the emblems, upon the solemn thought of death; which, without revelation, is dark and gloomy; but the Christian is suddenly revived by an *ever-green*, ever-living *sprig* of Faith in the merits of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, which inspires him to look

forward with calmness and composure to a blessed immortality; so that he doubts not, that on the glorious morn of the Resurrection, the body will be raised and become as incorruptible as the soul.⁵⁶

Statements about resurrection in Rhode Island's Master Mason Degree extol the superiority of "the Christian dispensation" over "the Jewish hierarchy." The statements link the Master Mason Degree with Christianity, while proclaiming Christianity to be the most complete religious stage humanity has passed through. These passages assert Christianity's superiority over Judaism by positing that Christianity proves the doctrine of future bodily resurrection from the grave, while a search through the Hebrew Bible does not yield a single passage on the subject.⁵⁷ In this way, Rhode Island's Master Mason Degree reaffirms supercessionist/replacement theology—the belief that Christianity has superseded and replaced Judaism—within a Masonic framework. Similarly, *An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry* states:

[Resurrection] is, as we all know, an essential part of the Christian faith, and was exemplified, in his own resurrection, by Christ to his followers. In Freemasonry, a particular degree, the Master's, has been appropriated to teach it by an impressive symbolism. "Thus," says Hutchinson [in *Spirit of Masonry*], "our Order is a positive contradiction to Judaic blindness and infidelity, and testifies our faith concerning the resurrection of the body."⁵⁸

Other overtly Christian features of Rhode Island Freemasonry have endured in Redwood Lodge since its inception. Thus, the lodge is dedicated to "the Holy Saints John"—John the Baptist and John the Evangelist—and it is asserted in the Entered Apprentice Degree that modern Freemasons are homogeneously Christian: "Masons in modern time, professing Christianity, dedicate [their lodges] to St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist, two eminent Christian Patrons of Freemasonry."⁵⁹

It is probable that for some of Redwood Lodge's founders and early members, like many liberal Jews in Germany who flocked to Freemasonry during

the nineteenth century, "the impetus . . . to break through the barriers of social isolation prompted certain rationalizations for Jewish participation in a fraternity which, despite accommodations, employed overtly Christian allusions."⁶⁰ According to Alice M. Greenwald, "[t]he focus on ethical conduct, universalistic humanism, and the symbolic source of Masonry in biblical events and personages, seemed to most [Reform Jews] sufficient cause for Jewish Masonic activity."⁶¹ Yet, it is perplexing that the occurrences of overt Christian dogma in Rhode Island Freemasonry would continue to remain acceptable to its Jewish members over the decades. In over one hundred and thirty years of existence, Redwood Lodge has retained its "Lion of Judah is our Strength" motto and its dedication to two Christian saints. It continues to follow the same Christianized Masonic ritual as other Rhode Island lodges, a ritual that includes lectures that emphasize faith in Jesus and assert Judaism's inferiority to Christianity.

There are several possible explanations for this dissonance between faith and practice in Redwood Lodge's ceremonies and insignia. Masonic historian F. W. Seal-Coon argues that many non-Christian Freemasons in North America have not articulated any discomfort with, or opposition to, Christian aspects of Craft Freemasonry because its rituals and symbolism have been largely unintelligible to them. He asserts that this has been an ignorance born of apathy; many non-Christian Freemasons have been philosophically oblivious to much of what has been seen, said, and heard within their lodges, and to the instruction taking place there.⁶² He also posits that "for the generality of freemasons peace and harmony may best be served by the acceptance of things as they are."⁶³ Tony Fels has suggested that "in presenting a version of the story

Opposite page: A 1796 playbill for a Providence Masonic presentation of Richard Cumberland's *The Jew, or, The Benevolent Hebrew*, whose leading character's kindheartedness causes his formerly intolerant Christian acquaintances to conclude that "for your single sake, we must reform our hearts, and inspire with them candour towards your whole nation." RIHS Collection (RHi X17 1297).

A-1450
1796

By Desire of the most Ancient and Honorable Society of
Free and Accepted Masons.
T H E A T R E,
P R O V I D E N C E.

THIS EVENING, June 24, 1796, will be presented

A COMEDY, called

The J E W,

O R,

The BENEVOLENT HEBREW.

Sheva (the Jew)
Frederick,
Charles Ratcliffe,
Fabal,
Saanders,
Sir Stephen Bertram,

Mr. Harper. ♀
S. Powell. ♀
Taylor. ♀
Hughes. ♀
Radcliffe. ♀
Kenny. ♀

Eliza Ratcliffe,
Dorcas,
Mrs. Goodison,
Mrs. Ratcliffe,

Mrs. S. Powell,
Hughes,
Ahton,
Harper.

End of the Comedy,

An EULOGY on MASONRY,
By Brother Harper in Character of a MASTER MASON.

To conclude with a MASONIC ODE,
by Brothers Harper, S. Powell, Kenny, Hughes, Ashton and Chambers.

To which will be added, an Entertainment called

The Spoil'd Child.

Little Pickle, (the Spoiled Child)
Tag,
John,
Old Pickle.

Mrs. Harper. ♀
Chambers. ♀
Ashton. ♀
Hughes. ♀

Maria,
Margery,
Susan,
Miss Pickle,

Mrs. Pick.
Hughes.
Miss Harrison.
Mrs. Ashton.

In the Course of the Entertainment, "TALLY HO." By Mrs. Pick.
And a SONG, by Miss Sully.

The Public are respectfully acquainted that by particular Request, the Performance will not begin this Evening till 8 o'Clock.

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of Christ in Old Testament clothing, Masonry may have made acceptable to Jews sentiments regarding death and immortality that were virtually the same as those held by Christians.” Focusing as it did more on deeds than on ideas, “the fraternity’s indifference to exegetical discussion enabled such diverse interpretations to coexist unexamined.”⁶⁴

It is possible that many of Rhode Island’s Jewish Freemasons have recognized Christian manifestations in Freemasonry, but have been willing to overlook them, even if their presence caused some unease, for the benefits of belonging to the fraternity.⁶⁵ The experience of many Jewish Rhode Island Freemasons may parallel that of Masonic author Paul M. Bessel and his father, Martin Bessel. In “Freemasonry & Judaism,” Paul Bessel writes:

My father, Martin Bessel, was a Freemason from 1946 until his death in 1977. He was brought up in a religious Jewish family and he was orthodox in following more of the traditional rules than most Jews in the United States. He was very proud to be Jewish, as well as a Mason and an American . . . I recall hearing rumors that Freemasonry required members to say or do things in accord with the Christian religion and that it was not really an American institution, but I knew my father would not belong to an organization that had these characteristics . . . While there are many common aspects of Judaism and Freemasonry, it also should be recognized that because of the history of centuries of attempts to force Jews to convert to Christianity, they can be uncomfortable about being asked to say Christian prayers or otherwise indicate non-Jewish beliefs. Some parts of Masonry use New Testament prayers, references to Saints, the cross as a religious symbol . . . and at least one Masonic organization requires aspiring members to swear to support the Christian faith. Jews can deal with these references to other religions by remaining quiet or not participating in those parts of Masonry. I do not want to overemphasize these matters, though, since they are outweighed by the deepest meanings of Freemasonry—the universality of all people.⁶⁶

For the most part, Jewish Freemasons in Rhode Island have accepted the Masonic fraternity as it is. Whatever their degree of personal discomfort with

Christian aspects of the ritual, lectures, and symbolism, it was not so great that they were dissuaded from joining the fraternity, driven to argue for change, or compelled to withdraw from it altogether. Tony Fels suggests that in their desire to be part of the Masonic fraternity, Jews were willing to ignore the Christian aspects of Freemasonry, even though “[t]he Hiram [resurrection] myth and other Christian aspects of the fraternity’s practice must have created anxieties.” Fels writes that “[f]or the most part, one suspects, Jewish members chose to ignore those aspects of Masonry which were susceptible to a specifically Christian interpretation and to concentrate instead on those features of the fraternity’s faith, such as its monotheism, universalism and rationalism, which seemingly placed it above any particular religion.”⁶⁷

Another explanation for Jewish Freemasons’ acceptance of Christian ritual and symbolism over the years is the power of tradition. A Jewish Freemason who knows that other Jews—his father or grandfather, his relatives or neighbors, his rabbi or fellow synagogue congregants—are or were Freemasons, and sees no sign that these men have protested or expressed discomfort with Christian aspects of Freemasonry, is also unlikely to do so. If a Christianized Freemasonry has been acceptable to them, he may decide, it is good enough for him too. He may also reason that since these Jewish relatives and friends have been enthusiastic participants in Freemasonry, what seems overtly Christian must not really be so.⁶⁸

It is possible that Myer Noot and the other Jewish founding members of Redwood Lodge were unaware of the Christian meaning of the Latin phrase chosen as the lodge’s motto. Since the coat of arms includes a large Star of David and the Tetragrammaton, it is even possible that they thought the motto, with its “Judah,” had a Jewish meaning.⁶⁹ As Tony Fels observes, the joining together of Protestants and Reform Jews in the Masonic fraternity has “not [been] without its ironies and subtle misunderstandings.” The success of this merging was due to “the convergence of religious

outlooks” among the members of these two groups,⁷⁰ but where such an affinity was lacking, “Protestant and Jewish fraternity members retained somewhat divergent interpretations of their common Masonic tradition.”⁷¹ This difference in understanding Freemasonry also extended to the reading—or misreading—of Masonic concepts and symbols.

Early on in the history of Redwood Lodge, one Rhode Island Grand Master alluded to the possible disjuncture between Rhode Island Freemasonry and Jewish tradition. At the one hundredth annual meeting of the Grand Lodge of Rhode Island, in May 1890, George H. Kenyon spoke of the 1889 Masonic cornerstone ceremony for the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David, which he had overseen the previous year. His account contradicted the *Providence Journal’s* portrayal of the event, which described Christian prayer and the invocation of Christian saints. According to Kenyon, “the corner stone was laid in ample form according to the ritual adopted by Grand Lodge,⁷² with only such slight modification as would make it conform to the Jewish faith.” He told his Masonic audience:

I wish here to correct an impression which has been circulated extensively, and commented upon not only in the Masonic journals of our country but abroad, wherein we were represented as performing this ceremony in terms inconsistent with the religious faith of our Jewish brethren. Such was not the case, and all who were present and gave attention to the services can well remember the omission of the words which were said to have been used, and to have been distasteful to the people for whom we were laying the corner stone.⁷³

In an acknowledgement of the potential tension between Rhode Island Masonic ritual and Jewish beliefs, Kenyon felt it necessary to correct what he perceived to be a widespread misapprehension about aspects of the cornerstone ceremony.

Whether or not the Grand Lodge slightly modified its 1889 cornerstone ceremony in consideration

of the members of the Sons of Israel and David, it made no similar modifications for internally used Masonic ritual. Yet the contradictions between Rhode Island Masonic practice and Jewish doctrine were rendered inconsequential, as Redwood Lodge’s Jewish founders either did not pay close attention to Freemasonry’s ritual, lectures, and symbolism—and therefore did not recognize its Christian features—or were quite willing to overlook those features for the sake of belonging to the Masonic fraternity. Once a concentrated number of Jews had affiliated with Rhode Island Freemasonry, it was simpler for others to follow in their footsteps, and the contradictions continued to be considered inconsequential. The movement of the Sons of Israel and David away from Orthodoxy and toward Moderate Reform Judaism in the 1870s had been motivated in part by its members’ desire to better integrate into American society, while at the same time retaining their Judaism. The parallel formation of a Jewish-majority Masonic lodge was an extension of this goal. Such integration came at a cost, however. Rather than challenging the existing state of affairs, in which Rhode Island’s Masonic lodges operated in an openly sectarian manner, its Jewish members prized belonging over egalitarianism. Whereas in early nineteenth-century England, for example, Masonic lodges underwent a comprehensive process of de-Christianization, Jewish Freemasons in Rhode Island tacitly continued to accept a ritual based on doctrine that was alien to their own religious beliefs, and that elevated the merits of Christianity over Judaism. Aside from its Jewish beginnings and many Jewish members, Redwood Lodge has not differed in any substantial way from other Rhode Island lodges, and Redwood’s Jewish members continue to accommodate themselves to Rhode Island Freemasonry’s Christian ritual, lectures, and symbolism.

Notes

My thanks to Peter J. Millheiser and Anthony (Tony) D. Fels for their thoughts and comments on drafts of this article.

1. *Proceedings of the M. W. Grand Lodge, of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons, of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, for the Year Ending May 19, A. L. 5890, A. D. 1890* (Providence: E. L. Freeman & Son, 1890), 5, 13; Earl H. Mason, "Historical Sketch and other Pertinent Data of Redwood Lodge Number Thirty-Five A. F. & A. M.," in *Redwood's Diamond Jubilee* [unpaginated booklet, available in Redwood Lodge box at the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association] (1953); and Louis Baruch Rubinstein, *A Centennial History of Redwood Lodge Number 35 A.F. & A.M. in the Grand Jurisdiction of Rhode Island* (ca. 1982), 9.
2. "Jewish Synagogue, Laying of the Corner Stone with Masonic Ceremonial," *Providence Journal*, 24 Sept. 1889, 6; *Proceedings of the M. W. Grand Lodge . . . 1890*, 3-11; and "Jewish Synagogue, Dedication Ceremonies at the Temple on Friendship Street," *Providence Journal*, 8 Dec. 1890, 8. Although its name was changed to "the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David" in 1874 as part of the merger of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and the Congregation Sons of David, the shorter name "Congregation Sons of Israel" was still commonly used fifteen years later. See David C. Adelman, "Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David (Temple Beth-El), the Early Years," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* 3 (1962): 249.

3. Adelman reproduces most, but not all, of the *Providence Journal's* account of the cornerstone ceremony in his "Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David," 240-48. He omits the section in which Grand Master Kenyon is described as invoking "the patronage of the Holy Saints John the Baptist and the Evangelist." Kenyon later contested that depiction of the cornerstone events, as discussed later in this article.
4. "Jewish Synagogue, Laying of the Corner Stone with Masonic Ceremonial," 6; *Proceedings of the M. W. Grand Lodge . . . 1890*, 5, 9, 13; Rubinstein, *Centennial History*, 9; Mason, "Historical Sketch."
5. See, for example: Henry W. Rugg, *History of Freemasonry in Rhode Island* (Providence: E.L. Freeman and Son, 1895), 582; *State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations at the End of the Century: A History*, ed. Edward Field (Boston: Mason Publishing Company, 1902), 3:524; Adelman, "Sons of Israel and David," 200, 235; Seebert J. Goldowsky, *A Century and a Quarter of Spiritual Leadership: The Story of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David (Temple Beth-El), Providence, Rhode Island* (Providence: The Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David, 1989), 25; and Carol J. Frost, "An Annotated Bibliography of Materials Relating to the History of the Jews in Rhode Island, Located in Rhode Island Depositories (1967-1989)," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* 10 (1989): 251.

Such a characterization of Redwood is accurate only in terms of the

religio-ethnic background of most of the lodge's founders and of its demographic makeup during much of its existence. As John M. Shaftesley explains, "There is actually no such thing [as a 'Jewish' lodge] in the official sense, as no lodge is divided off according to religion and it may, and many do, contain members of various religions and sects . . . Jewish lodges have non-Jewish members among them and always have had." See "Jews in English Regular Freemasonry 1717-1860," *Jewish Historical Society of England—Transactions* 25 (1977): 162. This is as true of American lodges as of English ones. The Masonic concept of a "Jewish lodge," as distinct from a "Christian lodge," appears to have gained currency in England by 1756, the year Lawrence Dermott published *Ahiman Rezon*, which contained, among other texts, "the Prayers used in the Jewish and Christian Lodges." See "Jews in English Regular Freemasonry," 153.

6. Adelman, "Population of the Jewish Community of Providence 1877," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* 1 (1954): 72; Goldowsky, *Spiritual Leadership*, 13, 36. There was great growth in Providence in general during these years: "In the single decade from 1865 to 1875 the city's population jumped from 68,904 to 104,850 as Providence nearly tripled in size . . . [growing] from a walking city of 5.31 square miles into a dispersed metropolis of 14.76 square miles." John S. Gilkeson, Jr., *Middle-Class Providence, 1820-1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 137.
7. Geraldine S. Foster, *The Jews in Rhode Island: A Brief History*

(Providence: Rhode Island Heritage Commission, 1985), 9.

8. Goldowsky, "Reform Judaism Comes to Rhode Island: An Eventful Weekend," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* 8 (1982): 448. See also Alexander Strauss's historical address during the Masonic cornerstone ceremony for the Sons of Israel and David in *Proceedings of the M. W. Grand Lodge . . . 1890*, 6.
9. Foster, *Jews in Rhode Island*, 9.
10. Welcome Arnold Greene, *The Providence Plantations for Two Hundred and Fifty Years* (Providence: J. A. & R. A. Reid, 1886), 201; Henry Wilson Coil, et al., "America, Introduction of Freemasonry into," *Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia: Revised Edition* (Richmond: Macoy Publishing, 1996), 34.
11. Greene, *Providence Plantations*, 201; Rugg, *Freemasonry in RI*, 30, 34, 37, 431.
12. Rugg, *Freemasonry in RI*, 44-45, 433; Albert M. Friedenberg, "A List of Jews who were Grand Masters of Masons in Various States of this Country," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 19 (1910): 97; Coil, et al., "Hays, Moses Michael," *Masonic Encyclopedia*, 311.
13. Rugg, *Freemasonry in RI*, 45, 50, 54-56, 437; Friedenberg, "A List of Jews who were Grand Masters of Masons in Various States of this Country," 99-100; Coil, et al., "Hays, Moses Michael," *Masonic Encyclopedia*, 311.
14. Samuel Oppenheim, "The Jews and Masonry in the United States before 1810," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 19 (1910): 2-3.
15. Most of the founders belonged to lodges outside Rhode Island; Henry Green and Joseph Schwarz belonged to Rhode Island lodges. See Rubinstein, *Centennial History*, 19-20.
16. Rugg, *Freemasonry in RI*, 88; and Coil, et al., "Anti-Masonry," *Masonic Encyclopedia*, 57-58.
17. Rugg, *Freemasonry in RI*, 88; and Coil, et al., "Rhode Island," *Masonic Encyclopedia*, 523.
18. See Greene, *Providence Plantations*, 202; and Rugg, *Freemasonry in RI*, 123-27.
19. Greene, *Providence Plantations*, 79.
20. Rugg, *Freemasonry in RI*, 582. Rugg's section on Redwood is drawn from the history of the lodge compiled and presented to him by William H. T. Mosley and Lorenzo Traver for use in *History of Freemasonry in Rhode Island*, which was published in celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the Grand Lodge of Rhode Island. Traver was one of Redwood's founders. See also Adelman, "Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David," 235; and Goldowsky, *Spiritual Leadership*, 84-85, 100 n. 45.
21. Mason, "Historical Sketch." See also *A Bicentennial Review of Rhode Island Freemasonry* (Providence: The Grand Lodge of the Most Ancient and Honorable Society of Free and Accepted Masons for the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, 1976), 80.
22. Adelman, "Sons of Israel and David," 196, 207; Goldowsky, *Spiritual Leadership*, 44.
23. See *Proceedings of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, for the Year Ending May 20, A. L. 5878, A. D. 1878* (Providence: T. S. Hammond, 1878), 65; Adelman, "Sons of Israel and David," 211, 235; Goldowsky, *Spiritual Leadership*, 85.
24. Adelman, "Sons of Israel and David," 201-202, 207, 209, 211, 216, 221-24, 226, 235-36.
25. Adelman, "Sons of Israel and David," 196; Goldowsky, *Spiritual Leadership*, 23, 55; *Proceedings of the M. W. Grand Lodge . . . 1878*, 89; Rugg, *Freemasonry in RI*, 582.
26. Adelman, "Sons of Israel and David," 202-206; Goldowsky, *Spiritual Leadership*, 36-44.
27. Adelman, "Sons of Israel and David," 196, 200; and Goldowsky, *Spiritual Leadership*, 25.
28. Adelman, "Chartered Organizations," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* 2 (1956): 22; and Adelman, "Sons of Israel and David," 200.
29. Greene, *Providence Plantations*, 207.
30. Rugg, *Freemasonry in RI*, 582-83; Adelman, "Sons of Israel and David," 211, 235; and Rubinstein, *Centennial History*, 12, 16.
31. Within days of the synagogue's dedication in 1890, the board "received inquiries from Judah Touro Lodge, Free Sons of Benjamin; Haggai Lodge, Bnai Brith; and Providence Lodge, Free Sons of Israel as to whether they might use the vestry as a lodge room." The board assented to these requests. See Goldowsky, *Spiritual Leadership*, 120.
32. See Tony Fels, "Religious Assimilation in a Fraternal Organization: Jews and Freemasonry in Gilded Age San Francisco," in *Freemasonry on Both Sides of the Atlantic*, ed. R. William Weisberger (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 626. Fels notes that the "correlation of Masonic membership with Reform Judaism in San Francisco confirms a similar judgment by historian Jacob Katz [in *Jews and Freemasons in Europe, 1723-1939*] on Jews who sought entry into the Masonic lodges in Germany." (p. 648, n. 41). See also Fels's extended discussion of Reform Judaism and Freemasonry (pp. 634-39), as well as his discussion of Freemasonry's attraction for San Francisco's Jews from Germany (pp. 623-25).
33. Tony Fels, "Religious Assimilation in a Fraternal Organization," 636.
34. *Bicentennial Review*, 80.
35. Mason, "Historical Sketch."

36. Rubinstein, *Centennial History*, 11; Mason, "Historical Sketch"; *Bicentennial Review*, 81.
37. "The Israelites in Rhode Island," *The Narragansett Historical Register* 4 (1886): 299.
38. Although Newport's Orthodox rabbi, A. P. Mendez, was also invited to participate, he did not attend the event. See "Israelites in Rhode Island," 299.
39. "Israelites in Rhode Island," 318-19.
40. "Israelites in Rhode Island," 321.
41. "Israelites in Rhode Island," 322.
42. Rubinstein, *Centennial History*, 9-10. Goldowsky's claim (*Spiritual Leadership*, 85) that "by 1891 there were only four Jews in a membership of 48" is incorrect. Goldowsky provides no source for this assertion; it appears he has misread Adelman, who wrote that in 1891, Redwood "had a membership of 48 and 13 officers of whom only 4 were Jews" ("Sons of Israel and David," 235). There were four Jewish officers at the time, not four Jewish members. For a listing of officers in 1891, see *Proceedings of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, During its One Hundred and First Year, Ending June 24, A. L. 5892, A. D. 1892* (Providence: T. S. Hammond, 1892), 112. For a listing of members in 1890, see *Proceedings of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, During its One Hundredth Year, Ending June 24, A. L. 5891* (Providence: T. S. Hammond, 1891), 160-61.
43. See, for example, Rubenstein, *Centennial History*, 3-35, 41, 64, 68, 74, 94-95, 108, 116-17. As another example, Mason's "Historical Sketch" in *Redwood's Diamond Jubilee* is preceded by the "75th Anniversary Dedicatory Invocation" by Bro. Rabbi Israel M. Goldman."
44. *Proceedings of the M. W. Grand Lodge, of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons, of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, for the Year Ending May 17, A. L. 5886, A. D. 1886* (Providence: E. L. Freeman & Son, 1886), 39.
45. *Proceedings of the M. W. Grand Lodge . . . 1886*, 47-48.
46. *Proceedings of the M. W. Grand Lodge . . . 1886*, 55.
47. *Proceedings of the M. W. Grand Lodge . . . 1886*, 56.
48. *Proceedings of the M. W. Grand Lodge . . . 1886*, 65-67. Klapp appears to be entirely unaware that a more de-Christianized Freemasonry had already been flourishing in England for about half a century.
49. Rubinstein, *Centennial History*, 17. Information on the coat of arms may also be found in Shai Afsai, "The Lion and the Lamb: A Look at the Symbolism of Redwood Lodge's Coat of Arms," *The Journal of the Masonic Society* 11 (2010/2011): 12-14.
50. Rugg, *Freemasonry in RI*, 743.
51. Albert Gallatin Mackey, "Tribe of Judah, Lion of," *An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences* (Philadelphia: Moss & Company, 1874), 831.
52. *Holy Bible* (Wichita: Heirloom Bible Publishers, 1988), 49.
53. Genesis 49:8-10: "Judah, thou [art he] whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand [shall be] in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah [is] a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?"
54. In Jewish parlance, as in the idiom of other cultures, a significantly brave or prominent person may also be said to be a "lion." The Lion of Judah is also associated with Jewish charitable organizations. The Jewish Federation of Rhode Island, for example,

currently has a giving category called "Lion of Judah," an honorific title suitable for a generous donor. "Lion of Judah" is also the name of a Jewish women's philanthropic organization.

55. *Proceedings of the M. W. Grand Lodge . . . 1897*, 68.
56. *The Trestle-Board for the Use of the Subordinate Lodges under the Jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of the Most Ancient and Honorable Society of Free and Accepted Masons for the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations* (Providence: The Grand Lodge, 1988; 39th ed.), 50-51. The text used in the three Craft/Symbolic degrees is preserved in Rhode Island Freemasonry's Trestle-Board booklet and in its coded Cipher. The first Trestle-Board prepared and approved by the Grand Lodge of Rhode Island was published in 1890. This was followed by an 1897 Revised Edition in which previous errors and omissions were corrected. Although it had gone through thirty-nine editions by 1988, the Trestle-Board's content has essentially remained unchanged since 1897. Mentions of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, as well as other Christian references discussed here, are found in Trestle-Boards that were used in Rhode Island prior to 1890. See for example, Charles W. Moore, *The Freemason's Monthly Magazine* (Boston: Tuttle & Dennett, 1844), 3:8, 3:373-74; and Moore and S. W. R. Carnegy's *The Masonic Trestle-Board, Adapted to the National System of Work and Lectures, as Revised and Perfected by the United States Masonic Convention* (Boston: Tuttle & Dennett, 1846; 2d ed.), 19, 34. The words concerning lodge dedications—"Masons in modern times, professing Christianity, dedicate theirs to Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist, two eminent Christian Patrons of Freemasonry"—are found in the first Trestle-Board put out by the Grand Lodge of Rhode Island (1890). See n. 59, below. The passage dealing

with the Lion of the tribe of Judah was omitted from that edition, but the omission was corrected in the Revised Edition of 1897. See *The Trestle-Board for the use of the Lodges under the Jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Rhode Island* (Providence: The Grand Lodge, 1897, rev. ed.), 55-56. For a sense of the evolution and consolidation of Rhode Island's authorized Masonic ritual, see *Proceedings of the M. W. Grand Lodge . . . 1890*, 13-14, 30-31; *Proceedings of the M. W. Grand Lodge . . . 1892*, 31-32; and *Proceedings of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, During its One Hundredth and Sixth Year, Ending June 24, A. L. 5897, A. D. 1897* (Providence: T. S. Hammond, 1897), 46-47, 81-82, 85-89.

57. See *Revised Cipher for Subordinate Lodges, Jurisdiction of the Most Ancient and Honorable Society of Free and Accepted Masons for the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations* (1986), 72.
58. Mackey, "Resurrection," *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, 644. It should be noted that contrary to what is suggested in the Master Mason Degree, and stated by Hutchinson in *Spirit of Masonry*, a belief in the resurrection of the dead is in fact central to traditional Judaism, as plainly evidenced, for example, by the Amidah prayer, Maimonides' Thirteen Principles, and the popular Yigdal hymn.
59. *Trestle-Board* (1988), 14. See also *The Trestle-Board for the use of the Lodges under the Jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Rhode Island* (Providence: E. L. Freeman & Son, 1890), 12; and *Trestle-Board* (1897), 19.
60. Alice M. Greenwald, "The Masonic Mizrah and Lamp: Jewish Ritual Art as a Reflection of Cultural Assimilation," *Journal of Jewish Art* 10 (1984): 94.
61. Greenwald, "The Masonic Mizrah and Lamp," 95. See also Jewish

Masonic author Paul M. Bessel's interview with Sarah Breger ("Beyond Dan Brown's The Lost Symbol: The True Story of Jews & Freemasons," *Moment Magazine*, January/February 2010, <http://www.momentmag.com/Exclusive/currentyear/02/201002-Freemasons.html>; accessed August 19, 2011), where he articulates just such a rationalization: "A lot of Masonic ritual is derived from the Jewish Bible or Old Testament. The rituals are based on the story of King Solomon's Temple . . . when you go through it, you feel you are at home [as a Jew] because you are hearing stories and learning lessons from the Temple of Solomon." See also, n. 66, below; Oppenheim, "The Jews and Masonry in the United States before 1810," 1-2; and Fels, "Religious Assimilation in a Fraternal Organization: Jews and Freemasonry in Gilded Age San Francisco," 647, n. 37.

62. See Dwight L. Smith, "The First Charge: Its Slow Acceptance in the United States," *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 97 (1984): 166. In a different context, Masonic author Andrew Hammer has also recently written of "a fundamental lack of curiosity" about Masonic spirituality and philosophy that seems to be pervasive among American Craft Masons in general. See "Restoring our Lodges, Observing our Craft: An Interview with Andrew Hammer," *Philaethes* 63 (Summer 2011): 94.
63. See N. Barker Cryer, "The De-Christianizing of the Craft," *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 97 (1984): 63.
64. Fels, "Religious Assimilation in a Fraternal Organization," 639.
65. See, for example, Cryer's mention of the Masonic scholar Harry Carr's "concern as a believing and practising Jew" over Christianized parts of present-day Craft ritual in England in "The De-Christianizing of the Craft," 34.
66. Paul M. Bessel, "Freemasonry & Judaism" (1995), http://bessel.org/masjud.htm#N_23, (accessed September 28, 2012).

67. Fels, "Religious Assimilation in a Fraternal Organization," 638-39.
68. This is precisely the line of reasoning expressed by Bessel in "Freemasonry & Judaism." See n. 66, above.
69. However, as Gershom Scholem explains in "The Curious History of the Six-pointed Star: How the 'Magen David' Became the Jewish Symbol" (*Commentary* [September 1949]: 243-51), there is nothing intrinsically Jewish about the Star of David. Although now commonly associated with Judaism, the Star of David has also been used as a Christian symbol and as a Masonic symbol.
70. Fels, "Religious Assimilation in a Fraternal Organization," 621. On pp. 631-34, Fels outlines what he considers to be six major "religious affinities" between Protestant Freemasonry and Judaism.
71. Fels, "Religious Assimilation in a Fraternal Organization," 630.
72. For this ritual, see *Trestle-Board* (1890), 101-109. It includes the Lord's Prayer (p. 103) and the invocation of John the Baptist and John the Evangelist (p. 106). See also *Proceedings of the M. W. Grand Lodge . . . 1890*, 13.
73. *Proceedings of the M. W. Grand Lodge . . . 1890*, 26-27.

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A depiction of Roger Williams's 1636 arrival at the site where he would establish Providence; this image formerly appeared on the official seal of the city. (Print, after 1832; reprinted by permission of Willis H. White, Herndon, Va.)

When Was Providence Founded?

LINDA MACLACHLAN

Every knowledgeable Providence schoolchild and citizen aware of the story behind their city's seal can draw a mental picture of the founding of Providence: Roger Williams's canoe was paddled across the Seekonk River. Williams was greeted by some Indians as he passed what was thereafter called What Cheer Cove, and rounded Fox Point to pull to shore at what is now called Roger Williams Landing. But when did this event occur?

On December 17, 1885, in connection with the approaching celebration of the 250th anniversary of the settlement of Providence, a committee of the Providence City Council reported that, "The best historical authorities name the date of the founding of Providence as between the 20th and 25th of June [1636]."¹ Consequently, Providence's two-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary was celebrated on June 23 and 24, 1886.²

In 1936, however, the Providence Tercentenary Committee announced that "A New Theory is Propounded" about the founding of Providence. The Committee suggested that when Roger Williams and his companions came to Providence in June 1636, his follower William Arnold had already been residing in the area (purportedly at the mouth of the Pawtucket River) with his large family for two months.³ While the report cites no sources, it is undoubtedly based upon an early family record in which William Arnold's son wrote: "Mem^m, We came to Providence to Dwell the 20th of April, 1636. per me Benedict Arnold."⁴ Yet the Tercentenary Committee's startling "new theory" does not explicitly challenge Williams's status as founder of Providence.

An additional record by William Arnold himself further underlines the problem of establishing the date

Providence was founded. On 27 April 1659, William Arnold wrote the Rhode Island General Court concerning his land holdings and reminded the Court that: "...I was that the very first day entred with some others vpon the land of Providence..."⁵ It is noteworthy that both of these original sources of primary information explicitly locate Arnold not near the mouth of the Pawtucket River, as the Tercentenary Committee had asserted, but at what would become Providence itself.⁶

The inference seems unavoidable. If the Arnold party was already well-settled at Providence when Roger Williams first paddled ashore in June, then the founder of Providence is not Roger Williams, but William Arnold, father of the distinguished Rhode Island governor, Benedict Arnold, who was great-great-grandfather of the infamous General Benedict Arnold. Does the weight of historical evidence require us to unseat Providence founder Roger Williams in favor of the ancestor of this traitor?

This article reviews all the evidence currently available and argues that its weight supports the alternative conclusion that Williams founded Providence, not in June 1636, but before 20 April 1636, when he and the Arnold family concurrently settled there.⁷ The historians and writers who have maintained for years that Roger Williams founded Providence in June 1636 misunderstood both the planting season in southern New England and Roger Williams's own words. The evidence presented below integrates the Arnold records with all other available documentation related to the circuitous route by which Roger Williams came to select the site of Providence, one to three weeks prior to his settlement there with the Arnold family on 20 April 1636.



A postage stamp commemorating Roger Williams's settlement of Rhode Island, issued on May 4, 1936 in Providence, Rhode Island. (Courtesy of the Rhode Island Postal History Society, Thomas E. Greene, President).

HOW ROGER WILLIAMS CAME TO PROVIDENCE

Roger Williams was first employed in New England by the Pilgrim church of Plymouth Colony from 1631 to 1633.⁸ During this time he befriended the area's Indians, learned their languages, and wrote a tract implying that the King lacked authority from the Indians to grant colonists title to Indian lands.⁹ When Williams removed from Plymouth to Massachusetts Bay's Salem Church in 1633, Williams's "treasonous" tract was immediately requested and challenged by Bay officials. Williams was compelled by Massachusetts Bay magistrates to retract and destroy this writing, but before the issue could be fully addressed by the Bay General Court, it was eclipsed by a series of new controversies in which Williams variously objected to what he regarded as improper interference by the Massachusetts Bay civil magistrates into religious matters.

For his heretical conduct Williams was convicted by the Massachusetts Bay General Court in October 1635, and sentenced to be banished from the colony

within six weeks. However, Williams was ill and his wife was about to give birth. The Court extended the time he could remain in the colony until spring, with the proviso that he was "not to go about to draw others to his opinions" in the interim.¹⁰ By January 1635/6,¹¹ Massachusetts officials were convinced that Williams was violating this condition and that, "[h]e had drawn above twenty persons to his opinions, and they were intending to erect a plantation about the Narragansett Bay, from whence the infection would easily spread into these [Massachusetts] churches, (the people being many of them, much taken with the apprehension of his godliness)."¹²

The Massachusetts Bay magistrates resolved to deport Williams to England on a ship then anchored at Nantasket. They sent a marshal to fetch him. The marshal returned empty-handed, having been told that Williams was too ill to travel in bitter winter weather without hazard to his life. The magistrates immediately sent the ship captain with a warrant to apprehend Williams, but it was too late. The captain reported back that Williams had fled three days earlier, "but whither they [i.e., the Bay magistrates] could not learn."¹³

This entry about Williams's flight in the journal of Massachusetts Bay Governor John Winthrop is dated only as "11 mo. January [O.S.]."¹⁴ The next entry is labeled 18 January 1635/[6], and it establishes Williams's departure from Salem as no later than 15 January. After careful study, one Williams biographer has concluded that the most likely date that Williams left Salem was the 8th or 9th of January.¹⁵

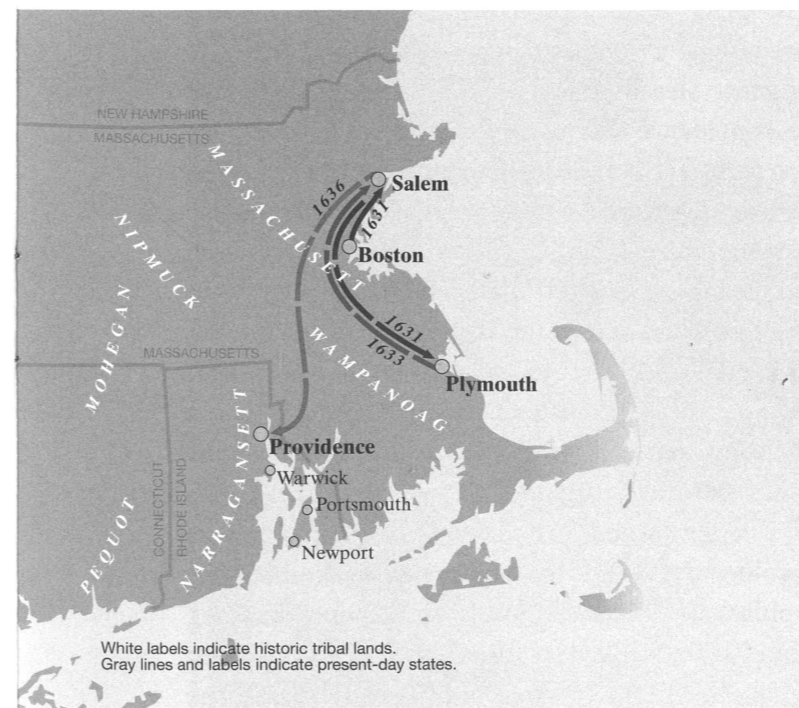
The date Williams departed from Salem is critical to establishing the date of the settlement of Providence, as Williams later recalled that he was in flight for "fourteen weeks" before arriving in Providence.¹⁶ After what was probably close to a 100-mile overland trek, circling the Boston area on less-traveled trails and then hiking southward, Williams settled at Manton's Neck on Seekonk

Cove.¹⁷ There, just above the narrows where the Central Bridge was to be built in 1792, Williams later recalled, he and a few companions began to build and plant in the spring of 1635/6:

"I gave leave to W. Harris then Poor and destitute to Come along in my Company. I Consented to John Smith[,] Miller at Dorchester (banished allso) to goe with me, and at John Smiths desire, to a Poore young fellow Frances Wicks allso to a lad of Rich. Watermans. These are all I remember."¹⁸

Williams was to remain in Seekonk only a short time. The Indian sachem (leader) of Plymouth Colony's territory notified Plymouth's Governor, William Bradford, that Williams had settled within that tribe's territory. To Bradford, this meant that Massachusetts Bay would hold Plymouth Colony responsible for Williams's future conduct—a burden that Bradford did not wish to undertake. In a letter

Roger Williams's route from Massachusetts to Seekonk and Providence is traced in this map. (Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, the University of Texas at Austin, [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/national_parks/roger_williams_route99.pdf], accessed 5 October 2012).



known only from Williams's description of it, Edward Winslow, who had taken over as Plymouth governor on the first Tuesday in March (4 March 1635/6), urged Williams to cross the Seekonk River and resettle beyond Plymouth's jurisdiction.¹⁹

Williams promptly heeded Winslow's directive to cross into indisputably Narragansett territory. He met with the Narragansett sachems and acquired, "[T]he lands and meadows upon the two fresh rivers called Mooshausick and Wanasquatucket [bounded] from the river and fields at Pawtucket, the great hill of Neotaconkonitt on the northwest and the town of the Mashpaug on the west."²⁰

The deed containing these words is dated March 24th of Providence Plantation's "second year," but is said by Williams to commemorate an oral agreement to the same effect made one year earlier. There is no reason to believe that Williams traveled to the Indian encampment to execute this deed precisely on the anniversary of the date the Narragansetts originally granted him this land. Indeed, as discussed below,²¹ there is good reason to believe that this original agreement with the Narragansetts was reached a week or two later than March 24, 1635/6. But Williams obviously made his first canoe trip to the desired site—and thereby "founded" Providence—just before the date the Narragansetts actually agreed to give him the land he had selected.²² If the date of Williams's settlement at Providence can be determined, the actual date of the original land grant will become clearer. When all other available information is analyzed, it is possible to create a timeline that smoothly incorporates Williams's oral agreement with the Narragansetts.

WHEN DID ROGER WILLIAMS MOVE TO PROVIDENCE?

In a 1670 letter to Major John Mason, Williams complained that it took him a total of fourteen weeks, following his departure from Salem, to reach Providence:

Sometime after Plymouth's great Sachim (Ousamaquin) upon occasion affirming that Providence was his land, and therefore Plymouth's Land, and some resenting it. The then prudent and godly Govr Mr Bradford and others of his godly Councill answered, that if, after due Examination it should be found true what the Barbarian said, Yet having (to my losse of a Harvest that yeare), bene now (though by their gentle Advice) as good as *banished from Plymmouth, as from the Massachus*. And I had quietly and patiently departede from them (at their Motion) to the place where now I was[,] I should not be molested and tost [tossed] up and down againe while they had Breath in their Bodies. And surely *betweene those my Friends of the Bay and Plymmouth I was sorely tost for one 14 weeks* (in a bitter Winter Season) not knowing what Bread or Bed did meane.... [emphasis added]²³

Writers who claim that Roger Williams took fourteen weeks to arrive at Seekonk do not appear to have examined Williams's account closely. In it Williams expressly states that William Bradford (the predecessor of Edward Winslow, who became governor on March 4th) was still Governor at Plymouth when he arrived at Seekonk. Furthermore, Williams twice attributed the fourteen-week duration of his odyssey to *both* "my Friends of the Bay" and "Plymmouth, as from the Massachus [Bay]" (emphasis added).

Williams's letter clearly asserts that he came to his final place of settlement fourteen weeks after he left Salem. If he came to Providence fourteen weeks after January 8th to 15th, he would have arrived between April 13th and 20th, 1636. April 20, 1636 is the date William Arnold's son Benedict says his family "came to Providence to Dwell."²⁴ Could it be that William Arnold and Roger Williams "came to Providence to Dwell" at the same time?

William Arnold's letter to the General Court can be read to support such a conclusion. In 1659 Arnold wrote:

"...I was [one] that the very first day entred with some others vpon the land of Prouidence and so laid

out my money to buy and helpe pay for it, besides [much] hardship and danger *I and mine with others* dide vnder goe to possesse and keepe the same a good while after & therefore I was one of the firste in choice of any lands to bee laid out to the Townes men afterwards...." [emphasis added]²⁵

Arnold's first reference to "some others" could simply be a reference to his own family, but the second one cannot. The "others" in "I and mine with others" must refer to people outside his family. If these "others" were Europeans—and it is hard to believe that Arnold would have regarded anyone else as worth remarking upon—they must have been members of the Williams party.

There is no reason to doubt the veracity of Governor Benedict Arnold's assertion of the date his family "entred" Providence, i.e., "came to Providence to Dwell." If Arnold was accompanied then by members of the Williams party, they would have come with the same intent: to create dwellings and fields there. Since Williams would never have condoned anyone coming "to Providence to Dwell" without permission from the Narragansetts, we must place his selection and negotiation for the purchase of Providence prior to 20 April 1636.²⁶ We must also assume that Williams's selection of the Providence site occurred after he planted his corn at Seekonk because he would not have planted there after he knew he had to abandon the site.

Some interpret William Arnold's letter as meaning that his family joined Williams at Seekonk on April 20 and moved across the river to Providence with Williams and his named companions in June.²⁷ If, however, the Arnolds were among the companions who had settled with Williams at Seekonk, he would not have forgotten to mention them in his 1677 letter naming his companions.²⁸ The sizable Arnold party would have more than doubled the population of the Seekonk settlement. Further, when Roger Williams wrote the 1677 letter quoted above, William Arnold's son Benedict was the

sitting Governor of Rhode Island, and therefore an impossible personage for Williams to overlook at that particular time.

Williams's fourteen-week calculation matches the date of the Arnold party's settlement "with others" at Providence so well that—but for one additional fact—one might wonder why anyone ever thought that Roger Williams founded Providence as late as June, 1636. That critical fact is Williams's complaint in his 1670 letter about "my losse of a Harvest that yeare."

If Williams had settled Providence before the end of May, he would not have arrived too late to plant

a crop in Providence that year. Plymouth Governor Thomas Prentice's *New England Chronology*, notes that, in nearby Plymouth, corn must be set between mid-April and the latter end of May.²⁹ The dozens of histories and biographies that discuss this question cite Williams's "losse of a Harvest" as the sole reason for dating his settlement at Providence after the close of Plymouth's planting season.³⁰

If, however, one actually parses the complex paragraph in which Williams refers to the harvest he lost as a result of being "banished from Plymmouth," it seems most likely that he is complaining about his loss of the crop he had planted at Seekonk, rather

An illustration showing Roger Williams crossing the Seekonk River to found Providence in 1636. The title of the drawing erroneously states that the scene depicts Williams crossing the Pawtucket River; the Central Falls of Pawtucket are in the background. RIHS Collection (RHi X3 2290).



than a crop at Providence. It is also noteworthy that, although Williams complained of his great suffering during the winter of 1635/6 for the rest of his life, he never mentioned privation during the following winter, as he should have in the absence of adequate food for both himself and his wife and children, who had arrived at Providence by spring 1637.³¹ Thus, Williams's reference to "my losse of a Harvest that year" meant that he lost the produce of the hard-won fields he and his men had cleared at Seekonk.

CREATING A TIMETABLE FOR PROVIDENCE'S FOUNDING

Is it physically possible for Williams to have planted at Seekonk and then acquired an alternative settlement site at Providence in time to have accompanied William Arnold's party there on 20 April 1636? It would seem to be a tight time frame, but for two other considerations.

First, the last frost of the winter now tends to occur about eighteen days earlier in Providence than in Plymouth.³² In colonial days the difference is likely to have been even greater because climatologists have determined that Plymouth has incurred significantly more warming in the twentieth century than the rest of the New England coast.³³ So the question is not whether Williams could have planted at his Seekonk camp in about mid-April and still have founded Providence before 20 April 1636; it is whether Williams could have planted at Seekonk in about late March and still have founded Providence before 20 April 1636—a much easier question to answer affirmatively.

Second, Thomas Prence specified mid-April as the time seed corn is actually planted at Plymouth, and placing the seed in the ground is the last task, not the first chore to be done when planting. Roger Williams was clearing new fields at Seekonk, and the back-breaking work of clearing virgin ground of rocks and trees, and then plowing it for the first time, would have commenced at Seekonk as soon as the ground surface thawed. Thus, if all that was

left to do after further frost became unlikely was to actually place the seed in prepared fields, that process easily could have been completed within a day or two.

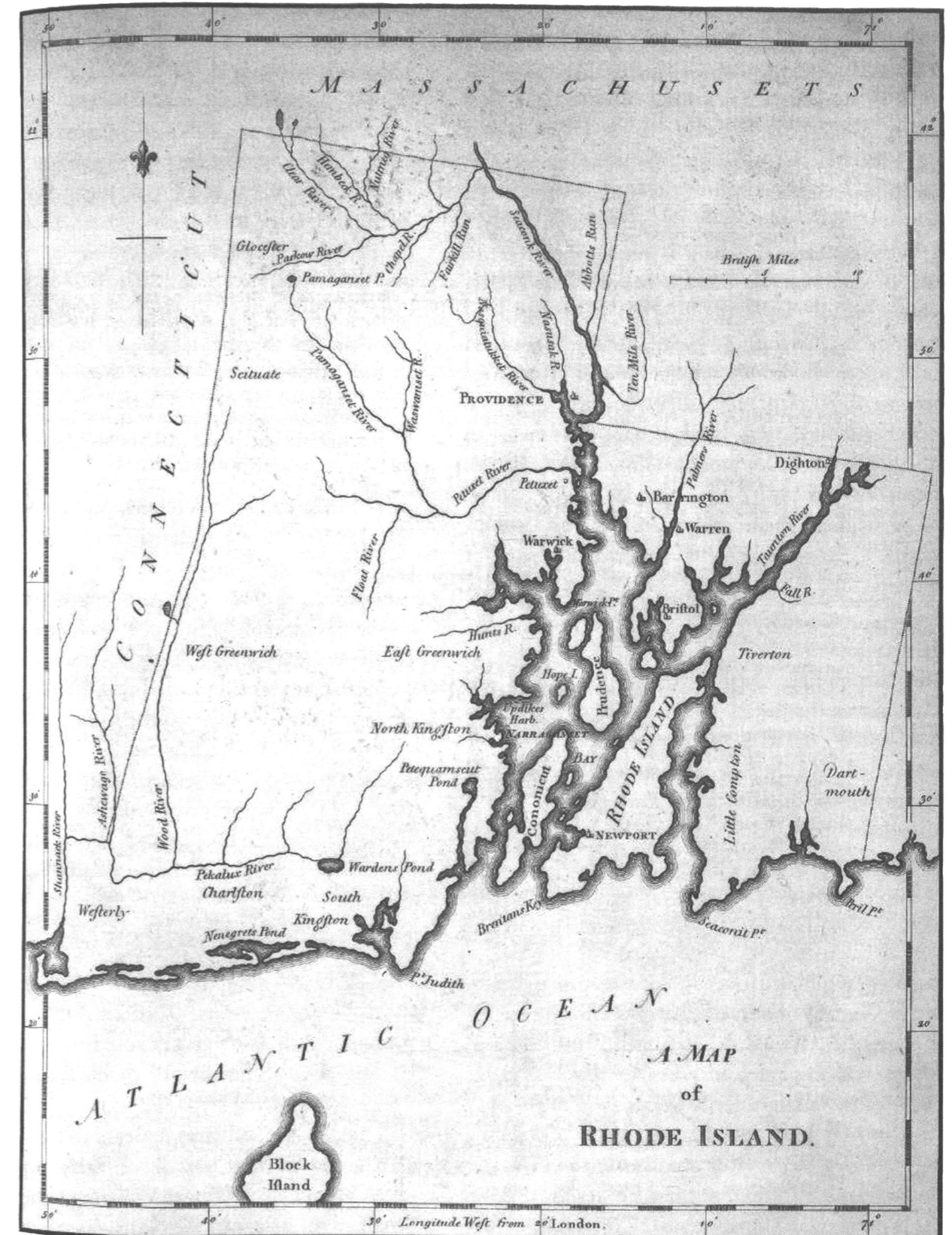
TIMELINE FOR THE FOUNDING OF PROVIDENCE

8-15 Jan 1635/6	Roger Williams flees Salem for Narragansett Bay.
Before 4 Mar 1635/6	Williams arrives at Seekonk while William Bradford is Governor of Plymouth.
4 Mar 1635/6	Edward Winslow becomes Governor of Plymouth.
29 Mar 1636	Earliest planting date at Providence (18 days before planting can begin at Plymouth).
15 Apr 1636	Prence's earliest date for planting at Plymouth.
13-20 Apr 1636	Fourteen weeks after Williams's flight. Williams moves to Providence.
20 Apr 1636	Arnold arrives at Providence "with some others."
End of May	Prence's last date for planting at Plymouth
24 Mar 1636/7	Williams signs deed for Providence with Narragansetts about one year after the fact. ³⁴

When the approximation of March 29 (eighteen days before Prence's calendar for the earliest time to plant at Plymouth) is substituted for April 15 as the earliest planting time at Providence, the timeline of events related to the settlement of Providence seems clear.

Roger Williams may well have planted at Seekonk shortly before the month of April began in

Opposite page: A close-up of the Providence area from a 1794 map of Rhode Island that best shows the location of Roger Williams's Seekonk encampment (where Ten Mile River enters the Seekonk), relative to Providence. The camp was on the north bank of Ten Mile River as it joins the Seekonk, in the vicinity of what is now Roger Williams Avenue. (David Rumsey Map Collection, www.davidrumsey.com; accessed 5 October 2012).



1636. He probably received Governor Winslow's notice to vacate that area very soon thereafter. He would have immediately selected the new site for his settlement and secured the Narragansetts' assent to the grant by early April, which would make the founding date for Providence implied by his 1636/7 commemorative deed just about a week or two short of one year prior to 24 March 1636/7.

It seems clear that Roger Williams first surveyed and selected the land which became Providence, Rhode Island after planting his first crop at Seekonk but before 20 April 1636. The actual date upon which Williams founded Providence became important only after the fact. It would have been immaterial – and perhaps unknown – to William Arnold. Nor would Williams himself have considered the date he first landed at Providence as particularly memorable. Unlike most famous founders, Roger Williams had no intention of claiming land in the name of the Crown.

DOCUMENTATION OF THE TRADITIONAL FOUNDING OF PROVIDENCE

The assumption that Providence was founded after it was too late to plant at the new location is therefore incorrect. There are other questionable aspects of the founding of Providence as presently portrayed on the city seal. Early Rhode Island historians offer significant evidence that Williams made an exploratory trip to Providence in advance of his permanent move there.

Governor Stephen Hopkins (1707-1785), Providence's first serious historian, was convinced that Roger Williams first paddled over to Providence in the company of only one person: Thomas Angell. It is generally thought that Angell is the youth to whom Williams referred when he recalled, in his 1677 letter, "a lad of Rich. Watermans."³⁵

Governor Hopkins³⁶ had given up completing his *Historical Account of the Planting and Growth of Providence*³⁷ by the time he resigned from the Continental Congress in 1776. Long before

Governor Hopkins's death in 1785, Hopkins turned his extensive collections over to a younger historian, Senator Theodore Foster, and the two began to meet weekly to discuss the work.³⁸ According to what Theodore Foster describes as "Senator Foster's deposition" of 6 June 1821:

In one of those interviews he told me that Thomas Angell, one of the first settlers and purchasers of Providence, when a young lad belonging to and living in the family of Roger Williams, the founder and afterwards the president of the state for some years, came with him, the said Williams, in a canoe down the Seekonk river on Mr. Williams' first visit to the Indians settled at Moshawsuck (now Providence), in the former part of the same year in which Mr. Williams first came to settle with his family there; no other person except the said Thomas Angell, being then in company with him.³⁹

Foster stated that Williams and Angell named What Cheer Cove because they were greeted by Indians with the words "What Cheer." He acknowledged that other versions of the "What Cheer" story place Williams and Angell in the company of four others on a later trip to this location,⁴⁰ but concluded that, "There is every reason to consider this [i.e., the story quoted above] the true version of this interesting affair."⁴¹

Analyzing all available documents, historian Howard M. Chapin concurred:

It would seem probable that Roger Williams purchased from his friends, the sachems Canonicus and Miantonomi, the lands at Moshassuck [Providence] either on or shortly after his first visit there in company with Thomas Angell.⁴²

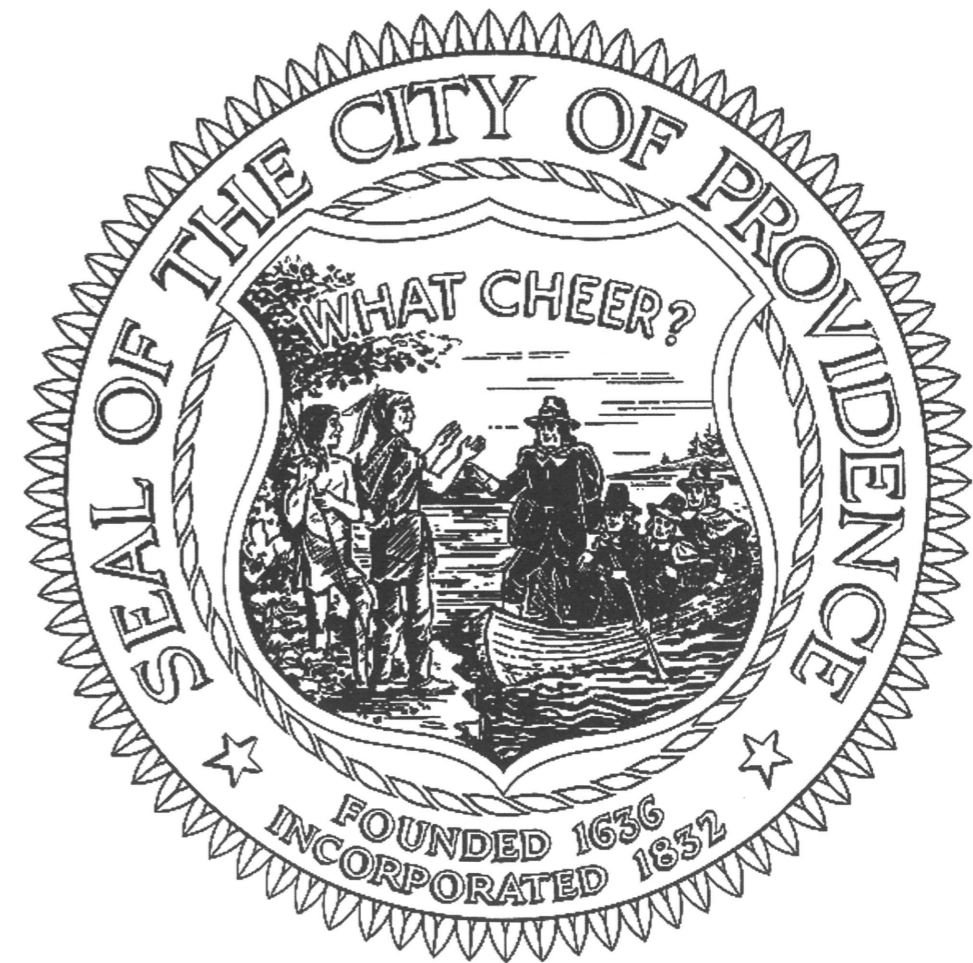
Foster's final writing of this portion of the *History* begins: "When Roger Williams first came to Providence..., he was accompanied only by a young domestic [illegible]⁴³ of his family, named Thomas Angell..."⁴⁴

Thus, Roger Williams appears to have founded Providence in late March or early April 1636 when he landed at "Roger Williams Landing" and obtained the assent of the Narragansetts to occupy

that land. Williams's own dating of the deed with the Indians as "the 24th of ... March, in y^e second yeare of our plantation," and the subsequent information gathered by Hopkins and Foster support this account.

Williams may well have started transporting equipment and supplies⁴⁵ across the river for the settlement of Providence before 20 April 1636, when his party and the Arnold family actually moved there. Williams's assertion that it took him "fourteen weeks" to arrive at Providence after he left Plymouth colony in early to mid-January, is consistent with Benedict Arnold's claim that he and his father arrived in Providence on April 20th.

Williams's complaint of a "losse of a harvest" the year he founded Providence is presumed to refer solely to the crop he planted and abandoned at Seekonk, just before leaving that site, as Williams never complained of privation during the winter following his removal to Providence. Williams and his followers would have had ample time to plant a crop in Providence had they arrived in mid-April; and Williams himself never explicitly said he lost a harvest at Providence. Thus, when all the evidence is examined, it appears most likely that Roger Williams founded Providence nine to twelve weeks before the accepted date of June 20, 1636.



The seal of the City of Providence.

Notes

- For example, James D. Knowles, *Memoir of Roger Williams* (Boston: Lincoln, Edmonds & Co., 1834); Romeo Elton, *Life of Roger Williams The Earliest Legislator and True Champion for a Full and Absolute Liberty of Conscience* (Providence: G.H. Whitney, 1853); Edwin M. Stone, *Life and Recollections of John Howland, late President of the Rhode Island Historical Society* (Providence: G.H. Whitney, 1857); Samuel G. Arnold, *History of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations* (New York: 1859); John Russell Bartlett, ed., *Letters of Roger Williams, 1632-1682* (Providence: Narragansett Club Publications, 1874); Welcome Arnold Greene, *The Providence Plantations for Two Hundred and Fifty Years* (Providence: J.A. and R.A. Reid, 1886); and perhaps, Reuben Guild, *Footprints of Roger Williams* (Providence: Tibbetts & Preston, 1886); but probably not Welcome Arnold Greene, compiler, "When Was Providence Founded?" (a compilation of four authorless newspaper tracts), *Narragansett Historical Register* [hereafter *NHR*], (July 1886): 29; images online at <<http://www.scribd.com/doc/12991787/The-Narragansett-Historical-Register-Vol-34-Part-2>> [accessed 25 May 2012].
- March 23, 2010 e-mail from Jordan Goffin, Assistant Reference Librarian, Rhode Island Historical Society, citing the *Rhode Island Historical Society Proceedings, 1886-7*, 18-19.
- The author of the Tercentenary report asserted that, when Roger Williams arrived, "The only people in the neighborhood of Narragansett Bay were Indians, with two exceptions—William Blackstone had come to Pawtucket two years earlier, and that spring William Arnold with his family had settled at the mouth of the Pawtuxet river...." Lucia Hammond Wheeler, *Official Chronicle and Tribute Book of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations* (Providence: G.D. Hall, 1936), 9. William Blackstone's residence had nothing to do with Williams's settlement. See Robert Charles Anderson, "William Blackstone," *The Great Migration Begins: Immigrants to New England 1620-1633* [hereafter *GMB*], 3 vols. (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society [hereafter *NEHGS*], 1995), 1:177. Arnold, however, clearly moved to the area to be a part of Roger Williams's new settlement.
- Edwin Hubbard, "Early Records of the Arnold Family," *New England Historical Genealogical Register* [hereafter *NEHGR*], (1879) 33:428.
- John Russell Bartlett, *Early Records of the Town of Providence*, 21 vols. (Providence: A Crawford Green & Brother, 1856), 15:77-78; images online at <http://archive.org/details/earlyrecordstow00commgoog> (accessed 27 May 2012); quoted in Robert Charles Anderson, George F. Sanborn, Melinde Lutz Sanborn, "William Arnold," *The Great Migration: Immigrants to New England 1634-1635* (Boston, NEHGS, 1999) 1:87.
- The Arnold family probably moved to the Pawtuxet River mouth about a year after arriving at Providence. The future Arnold plantation land was not deeded to Williams until the second year of his settlement. See note 21, below. That area could not have been occupied by Arnold before Roger Williams legally acquired it. See discussion at note 22, below.
- This theory was first published by an unidentified contributor to Greene's "When Was Providence Founded" compilation at *NHR*, 4:28. In his 1966 work on Williams, biographer Cyclone Covey asserted that, "Williams obviously founded Providence no later than April 20, 1636, and presumably three or four days before." (Roger Williams: *The Gentle Radical* [New York: Macmillan Co.], 128).
- Robert Charles Anderson, "Roger Williams," *The Pilgrim Migration*. (Boston: NEHGS, 2004), 503.
- This now-lost tract apparently accused the King of lying for claiming that "Christian Kings (so called) are invested with a right, by virtue of their Christianity, to take and give away the lands and countries of other men." Isaac Backus, *A History of New England With Particular Reference to the Baptists*, two volumes in one, 2nd ed. (New York: Arno Press, 1969, 45; originally pub. London: Sold by Mr. Johnson, St. Paul's Church Yard; and Mr. Thomas Thomas, Houndsditch, 1793); images online at <<http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433082247945>> [accessed 25 May 2012]; *Winthrop's Journal: "History of New England," 1630-1649*, ed. James Kendall Hosmer (New York: Scribner, 1908), 122-23, images online at <<http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89008425878>> [accessed 25 May 2012].
- Winthrop's Journal*, 168.
- At this time the Julian Calendar was still in effect in England and its colonies and March 25 was still accepted as the first day of the official calendar year. Dates between January first and March 25 are frequently identified with double dating to indicate both the old style date (O.S.) and the new style date (N.S.). See, e.g., Peter Meyer, "The Julian and Gregorian Calendars," published online by Hermetic Systems, <http://www.hermetic.ch/cal_stud/cal_art.html> (downloaded 22 Jan 2011).
- Winthrop's Journal*, 168.
- Winthrop's Journal*, 168.
- Sources which date this entry in *Winthrop's Journal* as January 11 misapprehend his "Old Style" dating. At this time the Julian Calendar was still in effect in England and its colonies and January was referred to as the eleventh month of the year. See, e.g., Meyer's online article cited at note 11, above. Thus, all that can be inferred of the date of Winthrop's *Journal* entry is that it was made some day in January before January 18.
- Covey, *Gentle Radical*, 124.
- See quotation at note 23, below.
- According to George Tilton, "The spot in Seekonk where he pitched his tent is believed to have been at "Manton's Neck," below modern Phillipsdale and not far from the mouth of the Ten-Mile River, where a spring of cold water still bubbles up... The place is marked by a tablet suitably inscribed and fixed to a tree by the roadside." George H. Tilton and Leonard Bliss, *A History of Rehoboth, Massachusetts: Its History for 275 Years, 1643-1918, in Which Is Incorporated the Vital Parts of the Original History of the Town*. (Boston, Mass: The author, 1918), 15; images online at <http://www.archive.org/stream/ahistoryrehobot00blisgoog/ahistoryrehobot00blisgoog_djvu.txt> (accessed 12 May 2012). This location later became part of Rehoboth, Massachusetts. With state boundaries redrawn, the land is now contained in East Providence, Rhode Island near the bridge for Roger Williams Avenue over the Ten Mile River. Greene, "When Was Providence Founded?" *NHR*, 4:28.
- Roger Williams's letter to an Assembly of Commissioners, 17 November 1677 [hereafter 1677 letter], *The Correspondence of Roger Williams* (based upon a 1976 manuscript by Bradford E. Swan), ed. Glenn W. LaFantasie, 2 vols. (Providence: Brown University Press, 1988), 2:750.
- William Bradford, Edward Winslow, and Henry Martyn Dexter, *Mourt's Relation or Journal of the Plantation at Plymouth*. (Boston: J. K. Wiggin, 1865); images online at <<http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044020658449>> [accessed 25 May 2012].
- This deed was created "At Nanhiggansick the 24th of the first month commonly called March, in the second year of our plantation or planting at Mooshasick or Providence." The deed includes a new, additional grant of "all that land from these rivers reaching to Pawtuxet river, as also the grass and meadows upon the said Pawtuxet river." Bartlett, *Early Records of Providence*, 1:18; images online at Google.books.com. Note that the first volume of *Early Records of the Town of Providence* is not a true chronological record but a volume which its editor, in his introduction, admitted to patching together. Only "detached fragments" were found by John Bartlett in the Providence town clerk's office in 1892 when he was charged by the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations with transcribing all of their early records. Bartlett, *Early Records of Providence*, 1:12.
- See discussion following the timeline chart in the text, below.
- Any analysis of the founding of Providence must recognize that Williams would never have settled upon any Indian land—or condoned any of his followers doing so—without the express consent of the Indian tribe that lived there. See discussion at note 9, above.
- Williams's letter to Major John Mason, (hereafter 1670 letter), LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 2:610-11.
- See note 4, above.
- Bartlett, *Early Records of Providence*, 15:77-78; images online at Google.books.com.
- At this time, Arnold did not possess an understanding of Narragansett customs and language necessary to conduct such a transaction himself.
- For example, "The Arnolds ... had joined Roger Williams ... the 20th of April 1636 ... on the eastern bank of the Seakonk River ... and ... moved about two months later to the other side of the river" Eugene Cole Zubrinsky, "The Immigration and Marriage of William¹ Carpenter of Amesbury, Wiltshire, and Providence, Rhode Island," *NEHGR* 159 (2010):39.
- See discussion at note 18, above.
- In his *New England Chronology*, Plymouth Governor Thomas Prentice wrote, "... April m. We begin to set our corn, the setting season being good till the latter end of May." Thomas Prince [sic], *A Chronological History of New England in the Form of Annals*, ([Boston]: Cummings, Hilliard, 1826), 216; images online at <<http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044069762169>> [accessed 25 May 2012]. Prentice's calendar was first analyzed in Arnold's 1886 compilation: "The *m* following April means middle. And the year was 1623. Thus the inference seems to be sound that had Williams been finally settled in Providence before the latter end of May, he might have planted a corn crop there. But coming in June, too late to prepare the ground, as he has written, he has lost it." Greene, *NHR*, 4:34.
- See, e.g., sources cited at note 1, above.
- Covey, *Gentle Radical*, 133-34.
- The *Old Farmer's Almanac* online states that there is now a fifty percent probability of frost-free planting after April 16 (at PROVIDENCE GREEN AP, RI climate station, <www.almanac.com/gardening/planting-dates/RI/Providence> [accessed 14 May 2011]). In contrast, it reports that there is now a fifty percent probability of frost-free planting after May 4 at PLYMOUTH-KINGSTON, MA climate station. <www.almanac.com/gardening/planting-dates/MA/Plymouth> [accessed 14 May 2011]. Note that these dates may be considered applicable to 1636 only

- in comparison with each other and not in any absolute sense. Recall the significant adjustments to our calendar made in 1752. See notes 11 and 14, above.
33. Cameron Wake, "Indicators of Climate Change in the Northeast over the Past 100 Years," *Climate Change and Agriculture: Promoting Practical and Profitable Responses*, online at <www.climateandfarming.org/pdfs/FactSheets/1.2Indicators.pdf> [accessed 14 May 2011].
34. The event the year before necessarily occurred after the earliest date for planting at Plymouth. The assigned date in 1636/7 is precise because it is the date that Williams and the sachems met "two years since" to document their prior agreement. There is no reason, however, to believe that they met on the exact anniversary of their original oral agreement. Indeed, if Williams had known before planting season that he was going to resettle west of the Seekonk River, he would not have experienced the "losse of a Harvest that yeare."
35. See note 18, above. See also, LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 2: 753, n. 18; Zubrinsky, *Register*, 159:39; Rogers, et al., *Early Records*, 3.
36. Hopkins would have been well acquainted with Angell family traditions. His aunt was married to the great-grandson of Thomas Angell. Avery F. Angell, *Genealogy of the Descendants of Thomas Angell, Who Settled in Providence, 1636* (Providence: A Crawford Greene, 1872), images online at <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89062845326> [accessed 25 May 2012]. In addition, Covey reports that Hopkins's sister married General James Angell (*Gentle Radical*, 129).
37. Gov. Hopkins's published work covering the period 1636-63, titled, "An Historical Account of the Planting and Growth of Providence," was printed in seven issues of the *Providence Gazette* about 20 October 1762; this story was excluded from his final account.
38. William E. Foster, Stephen Hopkins, and Theodore Foster, eds., "Early Attempts at Rhode Island History," *Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society* (Providence: Kellogg Printing Co., 1855), 7:7-8. Foster never completed the history either, and the combined collation was finally published by William E. Foster, one of Foster's heirs.
39. Foster, "Early Attempts," 7: 83-84.
40. For example, Bartlett annotates Williams's 1670 letter detailing his journey from Seekonk to Providence as follows: "Finding himself upon lands claimed by Massachusetts and Plymouth, Williams embarked from Seekonk in a canoe, with five others, viz.: William Harris, John Smith, miller; Joshua Verin, Thomas Angell and Francis Wickes. [Bartlett cites Moses Brown in the *R.I. Register* for 1828.] They are believed to have crossed Seekonk River near where Central Bridge now crosses. As they approached the opposite shore, they were accosted by the Indians, with the friendly interrogation of 'Whatcheer,' a common English phrase, which they had learned from the colonists, equivalent to 'How do you do.' [Knowles, *Memoir of Roger Williams*, 102] Others say this word meant 'Welcome.' They probably landed on a rock which here juts out into the river, and remained for a short time. They then pulled round India Point and Fox Point, and proceeded up the river to a spot near the entrance of the Moshassuck river, where the party landed...." *Letters of Roger Williams*, 335-36.
41. *Documentary History of Rhode Island*, ed. Howard M. Chapin (Providence: Preston and Rounds Co., 1916), 1: 22.
42. Chapin, *Documentary History*, 1: 22.
43. This bracketed word is part of the quotation and not this author's insertion. Foster, in an earlier draft of this paragraph, transcribed the word which the published version of his work calls "[illegible]" as "Snt," an abbreviation then used to mean "servant." See Chapin, *Documentary History*, 1:5, citing *Foster Papers*, (RIHS) 9, 20. If Thomas Angell was "a lad of Rich Watermans" loaned to Roger Williams for the duration of his trip, it would have been entirely appropriate for him to be referred to as Williams's "Snt," pending the arrival in Providence of Richard Waterman.
44. Foster, et al., eds., "Early Attempts at Rhode Island History," in *Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society*, 7:83, quoting "An Historical Account of the Planting and Growth of Providence" by Stephen Hopkins. Hopkins never published any part of "An Historical Account of the Planting and Growth of Providence" other than in the newspaper series cited in note 37. Foster's book identifies the words quoted as from Hopkins's unpublished work, rather than part of his own [Foster's] subsequent account which is also in "Early Attempts at Rhode Island History." "Early Attempts at Rhode Island History" was finally assembled for publication by Foster's heir. It is important to note that the quotation is from Hopkins, rather than from Foster, who may not have known Thomas Angell's sons and grandsons, presumably Hopkins's sources.
45. Roger Williams and fellow immigrants would have been familiar with the large amount of equipment and supplies required to settle in the wilderness. See, e.g., "A [1630] Catalogue of such needful things as every planter doth or ought to provide to go to New England," in Alexander Young, *Chronicles of the First Planters* (Boston: Charles C. Little & James Brown, 1896), 266-67; images online at <http://archive.org/details/chroniclesofpilg00you> [accessed 29 May 2012]. In addition to everything listed by Young, Williams also would have brought large quantities of trade goods for the Indians.

Rhode Island Book Notes

2012

John M. Barry, *Roger Williams and the Creation of the American Soul: Church, State and the Birth of Liberty* (New York: Viking Press, 2012). A biography of Roger Williams which describes the English roots of Roger Williams's beliefs concerning the separation of church and state. This volume traces Williams's path from England to Massachusetts and his expulsion from the Massachusetts Bay Colony that precipitated his flight to Rhode Island.

Patrick T. Conley, *The Makers of Modern Rhode Island* (Charleston, S.C.: The History Press, 2012). A thorough compendium of biographical essays on scores of notable Rhode Islanders organized by topic. Areas covered include: "Entrepreneurs," "Philanthropists," "Politicians," "Legalists," "Clergy," "Physicians," "Artists and Architects," "Literati," and "Reformers."

Robert Grandchamp, Jane Lancaster and Cynthia Ferguson, *Rhody Redlegs: A History of the Providence Marine Corps of Artillery and the 103d Field Artillery, Rhode Island National Guard, 1801-2010* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland Publishers, 2012). A detailed history of the Providence Marine Corps of Artillery, founded in 1802 to protect the shipping interests of Rhode Island merchants. Members of the corps formed the basis for Rhode Island's Civil War artillery units and served in both twentieth-century world wars as well as in Iraq and Afghanistan. Appendices include several maps.

Frank L. Gryzb, *Rhode Island's Civil War Hospital: Life and Death at Portsmouth Grove 1862-1865* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland Publishers, 2012) A history of Rhode Island's Civil War military hospital which opened in Portsmouth in the summer of 1862. Personnel at the hospital cared

for thousands of Civil War casualties; many of the soldiers there were prisoners of war.

Marietta Donnelly Lee, *Sissieretta Jones, "The Greatest Singer of Her Race," 1868-1933* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2012). A comprehensive biography of Sissieretta Jones who was born in Virginia and moved to Providence with her family when she was a girl. Jones trained in Providence and Boston and launched her career singing in churches on Providence's East Side. During some thirty years, the classically-trained Jones performed on stage both in the U.S. and abroad. She retired to Rhode Island in 1915.

Bruce G. MacGunnigle (with an introduction by Cherry Bamberg, FASG), *Regimental Book, Rhode Island Regiment for 1781 &c* (Rhode Island Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, 2011). A meticulous transcription of the "regimental book" of the First Rhode Island Regiment, which fought in the Revolutionary War. The regiment was the first unit in the Continental Army to include free and formerly-enslaved African Americans. The regimental book includes names, birthplaces, towns, soldiers' physical characteristics, occupations, records of enlistments and other details.

History Press of Charleston, S.C. has recently published a number of Rhode Island titles including: *North Providence: A History and the People Who Shaped It*, by Paul F. Caranci; *Historic Taverns of Rhode Island*, by Robert A. Geake; *Rhode Island and the Civil War: Voices from the Ocean State*, by Robert Grandchamp; *Burning of the Gaspee: Revolution in Rhode Island*, by Rory Raven; and *The Quest for America's Cup: Sailing to Victory*, by Richard V. Simpson.