



RHODE ISLAND HISTORY

VOL. 12, NO. 2

APRIL, 1953

NEWEL — JOHN BROWN HOUSE
[see inside front cover]

THE RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PUBLISHED BY RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
52 POWER STREET, PROVIDENCE 6, RHODE ISLAND

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NEWEL — JOHN BROWN HOUSE

[reproduced on front cover]

On the cover is a photograph of the newel post on the first floor of John Brown House. The rail forms an interesting, spiral scroll, which has its counterpart in the shadow rail in a vertical position directly to the left on the wall at the foot of the stairs. This scroll finish of the shadow rail seems to be a mark of the architect, Joseph Brown, John's brother, for the only other known example is at 50 South Main Street, Joseph Brown's own home. But far more interesting is the little white insert of ivory in the center. Although not verifiable by historical record, it is said that this bit of ivory is a peace point or point of satisfaction. The legend further states that the placing of this bit of ivory marks the completion of the house and that the owner and the builder of the house had reached an accord satisfactory to both. If any reader has documentary proof of the meaning of the bit of ivory, the Historical Society will be most happy to hear of it.

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TWO RHODE ISLAND IMPRINTS OF 1727

by BRADFORD F. SWAN*

THE RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY recently has made two additions of the greatest importance to its collection of early Rhode Island printing, already the finest in existence and possibly the most comprehensive collection of the early printing of any state held by a single library.

One serious defect only remained to mar the glittering array of early Rhode Island imprints in the Society's possession: The Society owned no example of printing done in Rhode Island in 1727, the year in which the press was first established within the borders of the colony, at Newport, by James Franklin, older brother of the famous Benjamin. Only one example of printing done in Rhode Island in that year was known to be in existence, a Poor Robin's almanac, for 1728,¹ which had been in the Library of Congress ever since it was purchased in 1878 at the auction sale of the library of George Brinley, the famous collector of Americana.²

Another piece printed in that same year, John Hammett's *Vindication and Relation*³ — referring to it by the short title by which it is generally known — is recorded in the bibliographies of Rhode Island printing but no living bibliographer had ever seen a copy of it. Its existence could be deduced only from the fact that earlier bibliographers had made manuscript and typewritten transcripts of

* Mr. Swan is Editor of Entertainment and the Arts, *The Providence Journal* and *The Evening Bulletin*.

¹ See John Eliot Alden, *Rhode Island Imprints 1727-1800* (New York, 1949), hereinafter referred to as *Alden*, Entry No. 1.

² See page [3] of the introduction, signed Philohistoricus [pseudonym of George Parker Winship] in *The Rhode Island Almanack For the Year, 1728. Being the First ever Printed in that Colony. Carefully reproduced in exact facsimile. . . .* (Providence, 1911). The almanac was No. 2410 in the *Catalogue of the American Library of the late Mr. George Brinley, of Hartford, Conn. First Part.* (New York, 1878), and the printed list of prices shows that it fetched \$35.

³ *Alden*, No. 2.

it, because for more than half a century its whereabouts has been unknown and a thorough search to locate it four years ago had led only to dwindling hopes that it might still be in existence somewhere.⁴

This, then, was the situation which prevailed in regard to examples of the first year of Rhode Island printing: an almanac of which only one copy was known to be in existence, and a pamphlet of which the only copy that was ever known to bibliographers had long since dropped out of sight. This was rarity in the extreme sense of that bookish term, and it hardly seemed likely that the Historical Society would be able to do much about the situation. It certainly looked as though the Society would have to content itself within the foreseeable future, if not forever, with the printed facsimile of the almanac which was published in 1911 by the John Carter Brown Library through the enterprise of the late George Parker Winship⁵ and with a typewritten copy of the Hammett work which we now believe was made by the late Fred A. Arnold of Providence from a manuscript copy made earlier by Charles Hammett, Jr., the 19th Century bibliographer of Newport.⁶

Imagine the excitement, then, when a bookseller a few months ago offered to the John Carter Brown Library not only a copy of Hammett's *Vindication and Relation* but also a copy of a hitherto unknown work by Hammett, entitled *A Letter from John Hammett to John Wright*, which was also printed at Newport in 1727 and obviously is earlier than the same author's *Vindication and Relation*.

Dr. Lawrence C. Wroth of the John Carter Brown, displaying the

⁴It was last reported about 1900 as being in the possession of a Quaker family named Gould, on Staten Island.

⁵See Note 2, *supra*, for the title of the facsimile edition.

⁶Examples of the typewritten transcript are in the library of the Rhode Island Historical Society, the collection of the present writer, and probably elsewhere. It is today impossible to trace the derivation of these typescript copies, but it is my belief that Charles Hammett made a holograph transcript from the Gould copy of the printed work and that Fred A. Arnold made from this the copies now in the Society's library and my collection. For many years it was believed that Mr. Arnold, who collected early Rhode Island printing, possessed the printed pamphlet itself. This was based on the fact that Winship gave "Arnold" as the location for a copy of the printed work in his *Rhode Island Imprints . . . 1727-1800*, (Providence, 1915). It now seems more likely that what Arnold had was one of these typewritten copies. His books were divided among several Providence libraries after his death, and the librarians who supervised the division do not recall seeing any such pamphlet in the collection. Since the late Howard M. Chapin represented the Historical Society at this division, it is hardly likely that he would not have claimed such a nugget for the Society's library had it been available.

sort of cooperation which is often talked about but is all too seldom practiced by librarians in these highly competitive days, offered the Historical Society the first chance to purchase the two little books, feeling that in view of the strength and richness of our early Rhode Island printing collection these two pamphlets rightfully belonged in our library.

The administrative wheels of the Society began to grind, and although the price asked for these two treasures was far from low, after careful consideration of all aspects of the problem, the decision was made to purchase them.

Few purchases ever made by the Society have been of equal importance in the bibliographical field. Here, following, are listed a few of the things this acquisition accomplished:

First, it added to the Society's collection two examples of printing done in Rhode Island in 1727, and it must be remembered that previously the collection had contained nothing issued by the Rhode Island press in that first year of printing in the colony.

Second, it gave us the first actual copy of Hammett's *Vindication and Relation* which any living bibliographer has ever held in his hand and been able to examine. It thus laid a bibliographical "ghost" — or, to be more exact, cleared up a situation which was beginning to take on the aspect of a ghost hunt — and makes us far less interested in whether anyone will ever be able to locate the long-lost copy which had been reported as last seen in the possession of a family on Staten Island.⁷

⁷See Note 4, *supra*. When Alden was preparing his bibliography of Rhode Island imprints, in 1948, Clifford P. Monahan, librarian of the Society, instituted a new search for this Gould copy, but it proved completely fruitless. The bookseller who sold the two Hammett pamphlets to the Society held for a short time the theory that this copy of the *Vindication* might be the long-lost Gould copy, for it and the *Letter* had been removed by him from a bound volume which also contained a third Quaker pamphlet the second edition of which, reprinted at New Bedford in the 19th Century, contained a preface by one Stephen Gould. It is the opinion, however, of Dr. Clarence S. Brigham, director of the American Antiquarian Society, of Dr. Wroth, and of the present writer that Charles Hammett, a trained bibliographer, would hardly have been likely to fail to notice the presence of the *Letter* when he was making his transcript of the *Vindication* if he had worked from a bound volume which contained them both. This is especially so as we are able to determine from certain evidence that the two pamphlets were bound side-by-side, the *Letter* followed immediately by the *Vindication*, in the volume from which they were extracted. The bookseller is unable to give the provenance of this volume, but says that it did not come from the vicinity of Staten Island.

A
LETTER
FROM
John Hammett
TO
John Wright:
Giving an Account why
John Hammett turned from the Bap-
tists to the Quakers; also why he
turned back again. Wherein are
discovered the Devices and Temp-
tations of the Devil. Published
from his own Hand-writing, for a
Caution and Inference to all un-
steady Protestants.

Rhode-Island, December 29. 1727

Beloved Brother, JOHN WRIGHT.

HAVING seen a Letter sign'd by you, da-
ted July 20. 1727, wherein you signify
that it is reported amongst you where you dwell

Third, and perhaps most important of all, it gave the Society an even earlier piece of Rhode Island printing, the *Letter. . . . to John Wright*, of the existence of which we had been, perhaps through want of proper perceptiveness, entirely unaware.⁸

Fourth, it brought to the Society the only two known pieces of Rhode Island printing which bear the printed date 1727, for the almanac, although we now know that it was advertised as on sale in Boston by early December of that year, strangely enough is dated 1728 at the foot of its title-page.

Fifth, it gave to the Society the only known copies of the first and second books printed in this state, so far as we know — for bibliographers, who have their hair-splitting definitions in common with the members of other professions, differentiate between books and almanacs, no matter how thin or ephemeral the books may be.

And, finally, it has posed a complicated bibliographical problem, possibly one which never will be resolved to the satisfaction of all parties concerned, as to whether these two pamphlets are not in actuality the first and second products of the Rhode Island press, preceding the almanac and relegating it to third place in the order of issuance from James Franklin's Newport press. The problem is too complicated to warrant examination here — at least at the present stage of the investigation — for, at best, the results would be no more than conjectural. Nevertheless, the thought that the Society might possibly be acquiring the first two works to issue from the press in Rhode Island did nothing to cool our ardor to possess them.⁹

But, the reader may ask, what have these two slim pamphlets to offer except as physical objects? Are they anything more than "souvenirs" of the first year of Rhode Island printing? Do they have any literary merit, are their contents interesting, and will they be

⁸This oversight will be discussed later in the text of this article. The soundest grounds for an excuse for missing it would be the supposition that it might have been printed *outside* Rhode Island and only sold here.

⁹The basic problem involved is to determine what James Franklin was doing in a publishing way between 30 August 1727, the date he wrote at the end of the prefatory note to the almanac, and 4 December 1727, the date on which an advertisement appeared in a Boston newspaper stating that the almanac was "Just Published." If that phrase is to be taken literally, then priority must probably be given to the two Hammett pamphlets. There are, however, other factors involved. It is my hope to sift this evidence in an article I am preparing for the *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*.

John Hammett's
VINDICATION
 AND
RELATION:

Giving an Account,

- I. Wherein he was misrepresented in a Letter lately printed in his Name.
- II. Of his withdrawing from the *Baptists*'s Communion.
- III. Of his uniting to them again.
- IV. Of his separating himself wholly from the *Baptists*, and joining himself in Unity with the People called *Quakers*.

Gal. 6. 4. *Let every Man prove his own Work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself.*

1 Thes. 5. 21. *Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.*

4 Rom. 12. 2. *Be not conformed to this World, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect Will of God.*

NEWPORT, Rhode-Island: Printed and Sold by JAMES FRANKLIN. 1727.

of any value to the student of Rhode Island history?

It is true that they are not important landmarks in the development of the mind of Man, nor great documents of human progress. Few examples of first printing ever can lay claim to such added glamor. The title-pages of both works, illustrations of which accompany this article, reveal the nature of their contents about as well as any resumé that I might give. Both are plainly theological arguments, and today, to the average casual reader, they would probably seem dull stuff, as do most of the theological disputes and debates of our forefathers.

But there is another side to these Hammett pamphlets. They have a special importance for us, for they reveal the acerbity, the earnestness, and, to the participants, the ultimate validity of such disputes, then of paramount importance in the minds of men.

In Rhode Island, at that time, these disputes pitted Baptists against Quakers, as they had in the colony for more than half a century.¹⁰ The conflict, though unlike many disputes of a religious nature in that it never flared into a bloody and hateful war, was conducted with considerable clamor and an astonishing amount of rancor. It displayed a surprising quality of survival as the years rolled by, echoes of it being heard even in the 19th Century. Nor was the division between Baptists and Quakers merely a battle of tenets and dogmas and pure theology; it was important in everyday life not only because of its intellectual aspects but also because, on a very practical level, it provided the basis for a political division within the colony. From even before King Philip's War until the rise of feeling against oppression by the government in England welded the colonists into a united front, it was the chief basis for a political division here in Rhode Island.

Thus, if these arguments over the choice of a route to salvation no longer intrigue us or fix our attention as they did for those who participated in them, it cannot be denied that they deserve increased attention from historians now that the heat of partisanship has died down and the struggle can be viewed calmly and impartially.

¹⁰These flared to a peak in the acrimonious debates between the travelling leaders of the Friends and Roger Williams at Newport in 1672. Williams, of course, was no longer a Baptist when these debates occurred, but he can be said to have represented the Baptists and the Gortonists, as well as his own personal point of view, against the Quaker side of the argument. The books which were subsequently published by contenders on either side did little to quiet the controversy.

It is when they are viewed thus, as parts of a larger picture,¹¹ that these two pamphlets written by a former Baptist minister to explain why he had left that denomination and joined the Friends become important for their contents, even as they are important as symbols of the beginnings within this colony of a medium for the spread of ideas.

Furthermore, taken together, these two pamphlets give us an insight into the position of their author in the prevailing struggle. The appearance in print of a letter he had written explaining his shift of allegiance from the Baptists to the Quakers, and his reasons for returning to the Baptist fold, was a matter of importance at that time.

It mattered not especially that the letter to John Wright had been written some six years earlier; the very fact that it was being given public circulation in Newport made it imperative that Hammett offer a clear statement of his position, and this he promptly proceeded to do, with his *Vindication and Relation*, an account of the religious peregrinations which left him finally — or at least so the bibliographers trust — on the side of the Quakers.

About the man who felt such necessity to make public affirmation of his religious faith we do not know much.¹² Undoubtedly the prominence of his religious position — he had been a minister among the Baptists until he thought of embracing Quakerism, and had been restored to that position when he temporarily abandoned the idea —

¹¹The "larger picture" is delineated by the titles following, all of which are of books, pamphlets and broadsides printed at Newport in the first half-dozen years of the press' existence there: *The Ardent Desire, and Sincere Cry, of a True Believer in Jesus Christ*; James Honeyman, *Faults on All Sides; Mr. Samuel Gorton's Ghost*; John Webb, *The Believer's Redemption by the precious Blood of Christ*; Daniel White, *The True Reasons for Mr. Daniel White and Mr. Thomas Byles disposing of their Interest in the Meeting-House to the Presbyterians*; Robert Barclay, *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity*; Benjamin Bass, *Parents and Children Advised and Exhorted to their Duty; A Confession of Faith*; George Sisson, *An Answer to Richard Harden's Reply to John Earl's Letter*; John Fox, *The Door of Heaven Opened and Shut*; John Walton, *Remarks On, or An Examination of Mr. Bulkly's Account of the Lyme Dispute*; and Valentine Wightman, *Some Brief Remarks On a Book, called, tho' unjustly An Impartial Account of a Debate at Lyme*.

These titles comprise more than 75 per cent of the output of the Newport press during these years. All but two are in the Rhode Island Historical Society library.

¹²Hammett's other known works are: *John Hammett's Confession of Faith* (Newport, 1754) Alden No. 141; *A Printed Sheet of Paper, Intituled, A Caution to erring Christians, relating to the Ministry . . . Replied to . . .* (Jamestown [i.e., Newport or Boston], 1736), Alden No. 49; and *Promiscuous Singing No Divine Institution . . .* (Newport[?], 1739), Alden No. 50.

had a great deal to do with the appearance of these two books. He was thus not only a convert, but a convert of prominence, and his case was probably of great public interest.

Hammett had been born in 1680, where we do not know, and on 10 January 1705 had married Sarah, daughter of Caleb Carr, who was governor of the colony in 1695 and a large landholder at Newport and on Conanicut and Gould Island. Hammett died on Conanicut in 1773, in his ninety-fourth year, and his body was brought to Newport and there interred in the Common Burying Ground. In 1696 Sarah Carr had inherited a house in Newport under her father's will, but whether the Hammetts lived there or at Jamestown, where John died, we do not know.¹³

The introduction to Hammett's *Vindication and Relation*, signed by Jacob Mott, Samuel Bownas, and John Wanton, is authority for his having been a Baptist minister. It states that after he returned to the Baptists he was "reinstated among them as a Minister," and Hammett himself writes in the same tract that "when I had spent some Time in Unity with the Baptists, I was by the unanimous Approbation of the Meeting restored to my former Station of a Minister, and so continued for a considerable Time."¹⁴

Some day bibliographers will learn to read the books they so assiduously describe, collate, and collect. It may be due in part to the power of hindsight but it now seems surprising that no scholar, reading one of the transcripts of Hammett's *Vindication and Relation*, saw fit to remark upon the possibility of his *Letter to John Wright* having been printed in Newport at about the same time, or even to note the existence of such a pamphlet, for Hammett, in the opening phrases of the *Vindication*, gave them a clue. That tract begins:

Whereas the Baptists had a Letter of mine in their Hands, which some Years past I sent to one John Wright, *which hath been lately printed and cryed about the Streets . . .*¹⁵

¹³John O. Austin, *The Genealogical Dictionary of Rhode Island . . .* (Albany 1887), pp. 37-38, for the Carr family data. The typewritten transcript of Hammett's *Vindication and Relation* in my possession has, on the verso of the half-title, a manuscript note as follows: "John Hammett died 5th of 3d Mo 1773 on Conanicut & was brought over to Newport & buried in the Common burying ground aged 93 years & 3 months." And, lower on the page: "March 20 1773 in the 94 year of his age." It is possible that these notes are in Arnold's hand.

¹⁴*op. cit.*, pp. [iv] and 10.

¹⁵*ibid.*, p. [1]. Italics mine.

Hammett then proceeds to give a transcript of the entire title of the *Letter*, and, as if all this information were not enough to alert the bibliographers, he goes on to say in the fourth paragraph:

And although the said Letter is *now published almost Six Years Since the Date of it*,¹⁶ as may be seen by the Letter it self, yet those who read the said Addition [i.e., the title given it, to which Hammett objected] (who are not acquainted with my present Station) will readily conclude, from the Manner of it, that at the Time of its publication I was with the Baptists, (as when the said Letter was written;) and if so, the Conclusion must be, that I publish'd the said Letter and Addition my self; . . .

Hammett implies that the *Letter* was published at the instigation of the Baptists, or at least that they permitted its publication, but he adds that "I am not angry with the Baptists upon Account of the said Letters being published, nor upon any other Account whatsoever."¹⁷ He says that his sole purpose is to make "a modest Defence of my self, when I apprehend my self so much obliged to it . . . And therefore I shall farther endeavour so to do, by publishing the Relation following; . . ."¹⁸

Despite the priority of the *Letter* as a product of the Rhode Island press, the *Vindication* is the better reading and the more persuasive document.¹⁹ Such religious *apologiae* are relatively common and not generally either attractive or interesting reading in this day and age — although those of the period of the Hammett tracts seem on the whole more sincere and certainly less banal than their counterparts of the 19th Century, most of which are fit only for clinical examination by Freudian psychologists. But, surprisingly, Hammett's *Vindication* is quite warmly human and convincing, largely because it is a quiet, careful exposition of the author's reasoning and because its story is told with a minimum of obscurantist argument. Even today, when such matters are taken far more lightly than they were in Hammett's time, his argument has force and clarity and Hammett

¹⁶*ibid.*, p. 3. Italics mine.

¹⁷*ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁸*ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁹The writer feels free to make this judgment with reasonable impartiality, since he is neither a Baptist nor a Quaker. It must be understood, however, that I am considering the two tracts as literary expositions only and do not pretend to judge the validity of the theological positions on which they are based.

himself emerges as a figure of dignity — reasonably understandable and satisfactorily credible.

Thus, even when viewed with the bibliographers's cold eye, these pamphlets take on a meaning above and beyond their value as mere physical objects. That first value, however, should not be minimized. Though these pamphlets are hardly of imposing size,²⁰ they must nevertheless stand as examples of the very beginnings of printing in Rhode Island.

That textually they should be concerned with the age-old religious controversies which vexed the American colonists, especially in New England, and provided the better part of their reading matter and the topics of their debates, is not strange, nor is it out of keeping with what we might expect. The Rhode Island press, in that first year of its existence, as for several years following, was displaying the basic characteristics of most colonial presses and occupying itself with the production of reading matter on the two subjects which lay at the very core of colonial existence: thoughts on the question of the soul's salvation, and handy information by which the farmer could learn the time to plant and the sailor the courses of those heavenly bodies that were his guides by day and in the night.

²⁰The *Letter* consists of only four leaves, or eight pages. The *Vindication and Relation* has 12 leaves, or 24 pages. The copy of the latter work acquired by the Society is lacking the half-title, another indication that it is not the long-lost Gould copy. This opinion is based on the fact that the Arnold typescript, and the collation obtained by Winship from Arnold and written into the John Carter Brown Library's copy of Evan's *American Bibliography* both call for a half-title, a fact which can be determined from the book itself, of course. An attempt has been made to facsimile type ornaments with a pen on the half-title of the Arnold typescript, indicating that whoever made it originally doubtless had an example to work from.



Type Ornament
Hammett's *Vindication*, p. [1]

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY GRENADIER CAPS

by ANNE S. K. BROWN*

OF TWO EIGHTEENTH CENTURY GRENADIER CAPS in the collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society, one is of the utmost rarity and the other is probably unique.

The grenadier or mitre cap, as a military headdress, dates back almost as far as the military uniform itself. Late in the seventeenth century certain members of the regiments of footguards of Charles II were armed with grenades. The new grenadiers found it awkward to sling their firelocks in order to toss the new weapon without interference from the wide brim of the felt hats worn by soldiers at this time; therefore, a close-fitting fur cap with a tasseled woolen crown, falling down in back like the top of an old-fashioned nightcap, was adopted to give them greater freedom.

This fur cap was soon decorated in front with an insignia plate which grew higher and higher, and more and more prominent, until finally the fur was abandoned and the mitre cap was born. The hanging crown, or bag, was eventually lost, and a cloth back provided, sometimes with a stiffening of cane to hold the cap close to the soldier's head, while the front part, or mitre, made of various materials ranging from brass to painted canvas, provided a highly ornamental headdress. In the reign of George II the English cloth grenadier cap reached its most elaborate form, being richly embroidered, usually in white for the soldiers and in gold or silver thread for the officers.

While the soldiers' caps were made of cloth, those of the officers were made of velvet, of which the British grenadier cap in the Rhode Island Historical Society's collection is a fine specimen. This is a mitre-shaped cap measuring ten and one-fourth inches in height and nine and one-fourth inches in breadth. The mitre, or front part, is covered with a deep yellow velvet richly embroidered in gold thread, with the royal cipher GR surmounted by a crown embroidered in gold on crimson tufted silk and flanked on either side by a gold embroidered leaf design. The front flap, or turned-up portion, is of crimson silk bordered with gold galloon and bearing as a device a flaming grenade with banners, the lower portion of the grenade

*Mrs. John Nicholas Brown of Providence has for some years been a student of military uniforms and is one of the founders of the Company of Military Collectors and Historians, Washington, D. C.

being of black wool outlined in gold thread, the flame embroidered in colored silks. Behind the grenade are crossed heraldic banners embroidered in gold thread with spear-headed staffs, the banners both fringed and bearing the St. Andrew's cross of Scotland.

Both front piece and flap are stiffened with buckram and cardboard and have a batten of cane. The back of the cap is of rich crimson velvet, cut in melon-shaped strips to fit the head. A velvet band in back which is attached at either side to the mitre is of deep yellow, embroidered with scrolls in silver thread, and in the center, a silver grenade with a flame in colored silks. The construction of the cap throughout is handsome, even to two silk tapes joining the mitre and band. The embroidery is of the very finest.

This cap, because of its peculiar color, is presumed to be that of an officer of the 35th Regiment of Foot which served in America both during the French and Indian Wars and during the Revolution. Although the British clothing regulations of 1768 substituted fur grenadier caps for the cloth variety, several features of the cap in question lead one to suppose that it dates from the Revolution rather than from the earlier period. Chief among these features is the fact that the regulation grenadier caps prior to 1768 all bear on the front flap the device of the white horse of Hannover, with the motto *Nec Aspera Terrent*; or else, in the case of the Scottish regiments, a thistle. The cap under discussion has neither of those devices but instead, a grenade with two Scottish banners.

It is known that many of the British officers going on service in America left their new regimentals behind and wore out their old ones at this safe distance from the military inspectors. It is also known that the colonels of the regiments, who had complete power over the regimental clothing at this period, very often exercised personal whims in the dress of their officers and men.

The colonel of the 35th Foot, who led the regiment in the Battles of Bunker Hill and of Long Island, was H. Fletcher Campbell, a rabid Scotsman. Two-thirds of his officers were Scotch, and it is quite likely that with the national feeling running high ever since "the 45," he wished to display his Scottish origin on the headdress of his regiment and therefore substituted the banners of Saint Andrew for the white horse of Hannover.

It is interesting to note that the great grandfather of Kenneth



PROVIDENCE GRENADIER COMPANY CAP, 1774

Shaw Safe, a member of the Rhode Island Historical Society, was Daniel Henry Shaw, a Scotsman who fought in the grenadier company of the 35th at Bunker Hill and was promoted ensign for gallantry in this battle. As ensign he fought with the Regiment again at the Battle of Long Island. It is not, therefore, beyond the realm of possibility that Ensign Shaw could have worn this cap in America though naturally such a fancy is quite without historical basis.

Captain Cecil C. P. Lawson, the author of *The History of the Uniforms of the British Army* (London, 1940) inspected this cap very thoroughly during a recent visit to Providence, and it is to him that the writer is largely indebted for the information given above.

He had never seen a cap exactly like this one and pronounced it of the greatest rarity.

The second cap is definitely American, dates from the Revolutionary Period, and is one of three American military headdresses, exclusive of conventional tricorn hats, known to survive from this period. It is the only grenadier's cap of the three and is therefore unique.

It is of exceptional height, measuring thirteen inches in front and eight and three-fourths inches at the base of the mitre. The mitre is made of canvas, stiffened with cardboard, on which is painted in gold on a black ground the anchor of Rhode Island with, at the top, the motto HOPE in black letters on a white scroll, and at either side the initials PG for Providence Grenadiers. Below the anchor is a scroll with tassels inscribed GOD AND OUR RIGHTS. A nearly obliterated gold device appears above the word HOPE, which might be the head of a lion. Holes are punched in the top of the mitre in



BRITISH GRENADIER CAP, REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD

which were once doubtless fittings for a tassel or grenade ornament at the top.

The bottom flap on the mitre is separate and is painted in gold and black with a border and a rampant lion facing right, eyes front, with his right paw resting on a grenade painted in gray and black with a gold flame. The background of the flap is red. On the portion of the mitre under the flap, which is left unpainted, are pasted two labels: the one at the top is printed and reads, "Rhode Island Historical Society, presented by Cyrus Ellis, 1825, Providence Grenadier Cap;" the lower label is inscribed in ink, "The Providence Grenadiers was a military company chartered by the Rhode Island General Assembly, October Session, 1774. See Providence Journal, January 6, 1885."

The rear portion of the cap is made of red wool, cut melon-shaped, with two strips of cane covered in canvas and applied to the outside. There is evidence that this canvas was once gilded. Fragments of a scalloped canvas band, painted in black with a white border and a grenade device with a red flame, are still attached to the back. The lining of the cap is of coarse, homespun linen.

It is known that the Providence Grenadiers were organized in 1774 and disbanded in 1780. Unfortunately, no record of their participation in the campaigns of the Revolution is available, though it may be supposed that as they were continued on the establishment until 1780, they must have played an active part. Since they were organized in 1774, it is amusing to note the slightly seditious character of the inscription in changing the royal motto *Dieu et Mon Droit*, or *God and My Right*, into GOD AND OUR RIGHTS, and also, that though the British lion on the flap replaces the conventional white horse of Hannover, he is shown in quite a different position and temper from that on the royal arms, and is fingering the grenade with an obvious, if belligerent, smile on his countenance.

It is a curious fact, and one to arouse some local pride, that the only three American military caps to survive the Revolution (besides many alleged contemporary tricorne hats that cannot be proved) belonged to Rhode Island units. There is in London in the Museum of the Royal United Service Institution at Whitehall a cap of the Newport Light Infantry, a company chartered in the same year as the Providence Grenadiers. The revolutionary character of its

decoration is somewhat more overt than that of the Providence Grenadiers as, in place of the royal cipher, it bears a cap of Liberty and the motto *Patria Cara Carior Libertas*. The anchor and inscription *Newport Light Infantry* complete the design.

In Fraunces Tavern near the Battery in New York City, there survives a curious leather headdress, also bearing the anchor of Rhode Island, with the inscriptions *For Our Country* and *In Te, Dominus, Speramus*, which was worn at the Battle of Long Island by an officer of the Rhode Island Train of Artillery, who was killed in that battle. No other headdress of this exact shape exists. Rhode Island is therefore to be congratulated; first, on the individuality of its military dress, and second, in the strong instinct for historical preservation which has led these three headdresses to be preserved for posterity.

NEWS-NOTES

The Society of Architectural Historians has given an award to *Architectural Heritage of Newport, Rhode Island*, by Antoinette F. Downing and Vincent J. Scully, Jr., as the outstanding contribution in 1952 to American architectural history. According to an account in *The Providence Evening Bulletin* of February 2, 1953, "the volume, published by Harvard University, is the first history of the architectural development of an American town from the beginning to the early twentieth century. This book has been widely reviewed in this country and abroad because of its unique completeness in this respect."

* * *

The Block Island Historical Society can use a safe for the care of its documents. In the past we have been offered obsolete safes, but because of the lack of space we have been unable to use one. It may be that some reader may be able to aid the Historical Society at Block Island and at the same time rid himself of a white elephant.

* * *

The Society has recently been the recipient of a beautiful Senah-Hamidan rug, which has been placed in the original drawing room

[continued on p. 64]

GIDEON CASEY, RHODE ISLAND SILVERSMITH AND COUNTERFEITER

by KENNETH SCOTT*

GIDEON CASEY, the son of Samuel and Dorcas (Ellis) Casey, was born in Newport, Rhode Island, about 1726.¹ Like his elder brother Samuel, Gideon became a silversmith and carried on his trade in Exeter, where on July 31, 1747, he married Jane Roberts. This match, however, ended in a divorce about twelve years later, and he took as his second wife Elizabeth Johnson of Newport.²

Unfortunately Gideon did not confine himself to his chosen profession, at which he was highly proficient, but turned his talents to counterfeiting. His first known venture in crime occurred in the summer of 1752, when, for reasons unknown, he was in Philadelphia. There on Saturday, August 1, he was committed to jail "for uttering Counterfeit Dubloons, knowing them to be such." During the third week in October he was indicted at the Mayor's Court, tried, found guilty as charged, and sentenced to pay a fine of £50.³ He doubtless paid the sum and was released, for on June 1 of the next year in Rhode Island he purchased from his brother a half interest in his property.⁴ This partnership lasted until May 14, 1763, when Gideon sold back his interest to Samuel and himself removed to Warwick.⁵

Very early in January, 1768, and in any event before the ninth of the month, something took place which in all probability caused Gideon to make haste to leave Rhode Island behind him. A newspaper account, dated Providence, January 9, reads as follows: "A Gentleman from Killingly informs, that a Gang of Villains has just been discovered there, who have counterfeited great Numbers of Dollars and Pistareens. Fifteen of them are taken into Custody, and

* Professor Scott is Chairman of the Department of Modern Languages at Wagner Memorial Lutheran College, Staten Island, New York. He is the author of "The Counterfeiting Venture of Abel and Samuel Chapin," which appeared in *Rhode Island History*, July, 1952.

¹ William Davis Miller, *The Silversmiths of Little Rest* (Kingston, R. I.: 1928), 35.

² *Ibid.*, 35 and John Osborne Austin, *The Genealogical Dictionary of Rhode Island* (Albany, N. Y.: Joel Munsell's Sons, 1887), 40.

³ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Aug. 6 and Oct. 26, 1752; Harrold E. Gillingham, *Counterfeiting in Colonial Pennsylvania* (N. Y.: American Numismatic Society, 1939), 28.

⁴ Land Evidence of South Kingstown, Bk. 5, 399.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Bk. 6, 194.

Endeavours are using to secure the others. Their Business was conducted under Ground, at a subteraneous Habitation, provided for that Purpose, in the Woods near that Place.

"On their examination before a Magistrate, one of them confessed, that 100 Dollars were to have been left at his House the night after they were discovered, and another of the Confederates was to set off the next Morning for Providence, in order to put them off. The Person immediately concerned in making the Money says, he came from Cawass, on Connecticut River, where he was hired by the Gang, and that he left another Nest of them at that Place."⁶ It is to be noted that the man who made the coins came from Cowass, or Cohass, in New Hampshire, for this point indicates a link between Gideon Casey and the coiners at Killingly, which place, though in Connecticut, is near the Rhode Island line and no great distance from Warwick, where Gideon was living.

The situation must, in early January, have seemed extremely threatening for all those involved, though, as it turned out, of the fifteen persons originally apprehended in Killingly "only two," reported the *Providence Gazette* of January 23, 1768, "are detained in Custody, upon whom, it is thought, the Charge may be proved, and that they will meet with their Deserts." It seems, indeed, very likely that about the beginning of the year 1768 Gideon Casey precipitously fled because he was concerned in the counterfeiting at Killingly and feared arrest.

During the second week in February, probably on Friday, February 12, the Honorable William Smith, Jr., in New York received a letter from a gentleman in Fairfield, Connecticut, acquainting him that a schooner had lately been at that place, had remained there six weeks with five men on board, that they had passed some counterfeit New York bills, that they came from Rhode Island, and that he imagined they had gone to New York. This intelligence was communicated to the mayor, who immediately sent officers in search of the schooner. They found it just on the point of sailing, and on board were arrested Gideon Casey, his two sons, Tibbet (or Tibbets) Hopkins, the master of the ship, and Daniel Wilcox, alias Chase. A search

⁶ *Supplement to the Massachusetts Gazette*, Jan. 21, 1768, 1; the same account is found in the *Connecticut Courant*, Feb. 1, 1768, 3; the *New-York Gazette*; and the *Weekly Mercury*, Feb. 1, 1768, 1; the *New-York Gazette*, or, the *Weekly Post-Boy*, Jan. 25, 1768, 3; the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Feb. 4, 1768, 3.

of the vessel revealed a small bag containing all the instruments for coining and milling dollars of the years 1763 and 1764, two plates for North Carolina currency, moulds and stamps for making pistareens, receipts for smelting and varnishing metals, and several forty shilling New York bills, dated April 21, 1760. The New York notes were very badly done from a plate and might easily be distinguished from the true ones by a comparison. It was supposed that many had been passed in different places, but only two had been found in circulation in New York City.

The prisoners were examined on Friday and denied everything, though some of the counterfeit bills had been found in their possession. It appeared from the evidence that the men had passed some of their bills at Fairfield on their way to New York and had changed a sum with a young man in Connecticut for some of the false money. All five were committed to jail and reexamined the next day, when Gideon admitted that some of the bills had been passed in New York. He claimed that about three years before a noted money maker, one Howe from Boston, had left the stamps and moulds in his custody. As Howe never came for them, he had kept them and, being about to leave Rhode Island, he took them with him, but had never made any use of them. Gideon and his companions asserted that they were going up the North River, but this did not find credence, and it was generally thought that they were on their way to Carolina.⁷

Essentially the same account was given by the supplement to *The New-York Journal, or General Advertiser* of February 20, 1768, with, however, the following addition: "We hear from Fairfield, that several Men supposed to belong to the same Gang as the above, are in Gaol in that Town for Counterfeiting Money. That it is said they have established a regular Chain of Communication throughout the whole Extent of the British Dominions in America, and that there are above an Hundred of them concerned in the different Provinces."

Casey and the others were indicted but by April 4 at the latest had been acquitted "for want of sufficient evidence."⁸ Their confederates in Connecticut, however, were all not so fortunate. One New

⁷*The New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury*, Feb. 15, 1768, 2 and *The New-York Gazette, or the Weekly Post-Boy*, Feb. 15, 1768, 3. The same story is found in *The Providence Gazette*, March 12, 1768, 3.

⁸*The New-York Gazette, or, the Weekly Post-Boy*, April 4, 1768, 3 and *The Providence Gazette*, April 16, 1768, 3.

York paper on February 2 contained this item: "We hear from *Fairfield*, in *Connecticut*, that no less than 9 Persons were apprehended there last Week, as Confederates with *Gideon Casey*, and the four others now in our Jail on Suspicion of counterfeiting Money; five of which were committed to Jail there for Trial, the other four admitted to Bail: It is said they have Confederates in several other Governments, and it is to be hoped the Bottom of that iniquitous Affair will be now discovered."⁹

Very likely some of the persons taken into custody came from New Milford, where, according to a dispatch from Hartford, dated March 7, it was reported that a manufacture had lately been opened, "wherein were wrought, or rather imitated, New-York 40 s. Bills of Currency and Spanish mill'd Dollars, to a great degree of Imperfection."¹⁰ Several newspapers gave, under the heading, "New-Haven, February 26," the following account: "Last Friday, pursuant to the Sentence of the Superior Court, then setting at Fairfield, Archibald Fippeny, Lewis Bennet, John Mallet, and Nathaniel Bunnell, were crop't, and branded with the letter C on their Foreheads, for counterfeiting the lawful money bills of this colony, New-York bills, dollars, &c.—Seven others, were try'd, at the same court, on suspicion of being their accomplices with them in the same crimes, but the evidence not being sufficient to convict them, they were discharged.—Seth Porter, and ——— Sturges, not chusing to be try'd forfeited their bonds for appearance, the former one thousand pounds, and the latter five hundred.—They were in partnership with a gang lately taken up at New-York, viz. Tibbet Hopkins, Gideon Casey, and his two sons, and Daniel Wilcox, alias Chase."¹¹

Joshua Howe, who, Casey claimed, had left coining implements with him, was arrested at Cohass, along with a certain John Snow, "on suspicion of their being concerned in counterfeiting dollars, &c." It was said that there was a band of counterfeiters, numbering at least five hundred, who corresponded through all the colonies as far as North Carolina. Howe denied being concerned in manufacturing any money, but acknowledged letting out certain tools at ten dollars

⁹*The New-York Gazette, or, the Weekly Post-Boy*, Feb. 22, 1768, 3.

¹⁰*Supplement to the Massachusetts Gazette*, March 24, 1768, 1.

¹¹*Ibid.*, March 24, 1768, 4; see also the same account in the *Supplement to the New-York Journal, or General Advertiser*, April 9, 1768, 1 and a briefer version in *The Connecticut Courant*, March 14, 1768, 2.

a day.¹² Towards the end of September Howe went on trial before the Superior Court in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, but was acquitted because the evidence was not thought sufficient.¹³ It should be noted that both the counterfeiters taken up at Killingly and also Gideon Casey had connections with the gang in Cohass.

Although Gideon and his companions had been acquitted by the Supreme Court of New York, that by no means meant that some or all of them were not subject to prosecution in other provinces, and, indeed, they may have been wanted by the authorities in Rhode Island. Casey's sons, Gideon, Jr., and Samuel, returned to their native province but there seems to be no record of what became of him or of Hopkins. One fact about Wilcox, however, was brought out on July 16, 1770, when Samuel Casey, the silversmith, under arrest in Newport, was questioned by the justices of the peace concerning Daniel Wilcox. Samuel stated that Wilcox had stayed a week with him about three years before as he "wanted to be secreted from the officers, that he had come from the Southward where he had lost a Vessel."¹⁴ Samuel may have been in error as to the time when Wilcox came to him for refuge, but in any event his statement shows that Wilcox was wanted by the Rhode Island authorities. The vessel lost may have been the schooner seized in New York. It seems probable that Gideon Casey, like Wilcox, was being sought by the officers in Rhode Island and that he did not, openly at least, return to that province. Nothing further seems to be known of him. During the examination of Samuel Casey already referred to it was admitted by Casey that Joshua Howe some five years before had spent the night at his home, where he remarked that Casey could make a fortune by counterfeiting. At that, if one can believe Samuel Casey's story, he indignantly turned Howe out of doors,¹⁵ a statement that scarcely rings true in the light of the revelations made in the course of Samuel's examinations and trial.

¹²The *New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, April 18, 1768, 2; see also *The Massachusetts Gazette and the Boston News-Letter*, April 7, 1768, 3, and *The Newport Mercury*, May 1, 1768, 3.

¹³*Postscript to the Massachusetts Gazette and Boston News-Letter*, Oct. 6, 1768, 2.

¹⁴Ms. examination of Samuel Casey in the October, 1770, file of records of King's (now Washington) County Court, at present deposited in the Superior Court in Providence, R. I.

¹⁵Ms. examination of Samuel Casey made on July 14, 1770, also in the October, 1770, file of the King's County Court.

THE NEWPORT TOWER MYSTERY

by HJALMAR R. HOLAND*

FOR THREE HUNDRED YEARS the round stone tower in Newport, Rhode Island, has been an object of curiosity to thousands of visitors. Inasmuch as it is built of stone and mortar, with round columns and arches, it must have been the most expensive and unusual building in Colonial times; and yet its erection is nowhere mentioned. If it was built by the early colonists, why were they so lavish with time and material that they made the ground floor useless because it is open to wind, rain, and other intruders? If it was built as a windmill, why did they put a fireplace and an altar in the grinding room?

These and other questions have been asked, and many answers have been attempted by more than a hundred writers. Among these was the late historian, Philip Ainsworth Means, who wrote a big book about the Tower without reaching a definite conclusion.

Precolonial Mention of the Tower

Much new evidence, showing that the early English colonists could not have built the Tower, has been found since Means' book came out. One is the fact that a round stone tower, capable of housing thirty men, is mentioned as standing in southern New England in 1632, which was seven years before the first settlers came to Newport. This fact is recorded in a petition addressed by Sir Edward Plowden and associates to King Charles I, asking for a grant of land covering Long Island and part of the mainland. The petitioners list twenty-nine existing commodities which they believe would greatly aid in making the proposed colony a safe and profitable venture for the crown. Among these commodities (i. e. benefits, accommodations) is mentioned "a rownd stone towre," where "30 idle men as souldiers or gent be resident . . . to trade wth the savages . . ."¹ The list of existing *commodities* shows that the persons who furnished the information had spent much time in personal inspection of the region described. This probably took place in 1630 or earlier. The petition

* Mr. Holand is the author of *America, 1355-1364* and other articles concerning Norse explorations in America.

¹*Collections of the New-York Historical Society for the year 1869*, pp. 218-219. The first to call attention to this passage was Robert King, Merrick, Long Island, who mentioned it to Frederick J. Pohl, who in turn mentioned it to me. See further, H. R. Holand, *America, 1355-1364*, 1946, pp. 36-41; Frederick J. Pohl, *The Lost Discovery*, 1952, pp. 181-186.

was granted and a patent was issued, dated July 24, 1632. As there were no settlers in Connecticut, Rhode Island, or Long Island previous to this time, this seems to leave no doubt that this *round towre* was the tower now standing in Newport.

It was probably the presence of this *round stone towre* on the southern point of Rhode Island (Newport) which caused William Wood to mark this spot on his map as the site of a European settlement. He spent about four years in New England, returning to old England in 1634. He then wrote a book called *New England's Prospect*, in which he described most of the settlements existing at that time. He also made a map of the region and marked each town or center by a certain sign. On the eastern side of Narragansett Bay, precisely on the spot now occupied by Newport, he also has this sign, and calls this "town" Old Plymouth, which indicates that it was older than New Plymouth. It is evident that he or his informant saw something at this place which made him think it was a former settlement. The book was published in 1635, and the New York Public Library has a copy.

When I began my study of the Tower, I thought it best to make as complete measurements as possible. This resulted in two very significant discoveries. One was that the top of the building is not a true circle. It is an oval, the diameters varying as much as thirteen inches. This proves that the building was not planned as a windmill, because the revolving cap which carries the sails and their shaft-beam could not rotate on an oval base.

The other discovery was even more important. I was assisted by three friends,² and we obtained the horizontal measurements given in the following table:

Interior diameter	18' 5½"
Mean diameter	21' 7"
Over-all diameter	24' 8½"
Diameter of columns	3' 1½"

These figures seemed highly freakish. It is not reasonable that the men who designed a building with artistic columns and arches would use such fractional measurements in laying out the ground plan of

²These were John Howard Benson, an artist in Newport and a lineal descendant of Benedict Arnold, the reputed builder of the tower; Herbert O. Brigham, Secretary, Newport Historical Society; and Frederick J. Pohl, Brooklyn, N. Y.

the building. An error of an inch or two might be possible, but an error of more than eight inches in a distance of less than twenty-five feet is incredible. Fearing that we had made some blunders, I wrote to Mr. Benson and asked him to get an assistant and make new measurements. He did so with the help of William S. Godfrey, Jr., an archeologist who was then (1948) making excavations beneath the Tower. The following are their measurements:

Interior diameter	18' 5"
Mean diameter	21' 7"
Over-all diameter	24' 9"
Diameter of columns	3' 2"

As will be seen, they are the same as the former measurements with the fractional inches omitted.

As these measurements were thoroughly checked the question arose: Could it be that the builders used a different foot measure from that now in use? Down through the Middle Ages there were and still are many different foot units. After applying a number of former units of measure in vain, I found that the above figures are all divisible into whole numbers of feet by 12.35", leaving a margin of no more than a fraction of an inch in each operation. When this unit is used as a divisor, the measurements of the Tower are resolved as follows:

Interior diameter	18 feet
Mean diameter	21 feet
Over-all diameter	24 feet
Diameter of columns	3 feet

What is this unit of 12.35 inches? It is the length of an ancient foot measure, which in Denmark was known as *den sjællandske fod*. It was also in use in the lower Rhine region. When the Hanseatic League became dominant, this unit became the standard foot measure in Rhineland, Prussia, Denmark, Norway, and other parts where the League controlled the trade. Its length expressed metrically is 0.3139.

Here we have conclusive proof that the Newport Tower was not built by the English colonists, because the English foot was then as now 12 inches in length. In 1588 it was fixed by Queen Elizabeth at the same length it has now. In fact, it goes back farther than that.

"A yard of Henry VII, dated 1490, and one of Elizabeth, 1588, are undoubtedly the oldest British standards of length, and they differ only about one-hundredth of an inch from the present Imperial British yard."³

Professor J. Brøndsted, Copenhagen, Denmark, in his comprehensive discussion of the Newport Tower recognized the importance of finding an antiquated unit of measurement in the dimensions of the Tower. But he doubted the reliability of the measurements because they had not been done by a "scientifically trained architect."⁴ I therefore suggested to The Preservation Society of Newport County that a qualified architect be engaged to make new measurements. The suggestion was accepted, and on March 1, 1952, the Tower was measured again by Architect Thomas Marvell, Fall River, Massachusetts, who was accompanied by Richard Kinnicut, Little Compton, Rhode Island, another architect. They were assisted by Herbert Smales and William King Covell, both of Newport.

Mr. Marvell's measurements were practically the same as the earlier, but what is more important is that he found the key to the dimensions of the Tower. He found that the columns were so equidistant from a common center that a circle drawn with a radius of the length from the central point to the center of any column would pass through the center of all the columns with a variation of scarcely an inch. As such a close correspondence to a true circle could not be accidental, this showed that the builders of the Tower planned the dimensions with much precision. Mr. Marvell wrote: "The measurements of the Tower have been a surprise that they were laid out as carefully as they were; even in modern buildings of this size and type it is not unusual to find distances varying from one to two inches."

This circle was presumably first marked out on the ground, and the position of each pillar was marked on it. Any slight deviation from this line would be merely accidental and would not alter the original plan of the building. The diameter of the circle should therefore reveal the length of the unit employed. It is 21.61 feet (21' 7 $\frac{1}{3}$ "). This number divided by 12.35 gives us exactly 21 feet.

There was in the Middle Ages and long afterward a high regard for the luck and potency of certain numbers. Some of them were

³*New International Encyclopedia*, ed. 1904, Art. "Weights and Measures."

⁴*Aarboeg for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og historie*, 1950, p. 41.

considered sacred. Most important was the number 3 which represented the Trinity. In the measurements of the Tower, this number occurs repeatedly as a factor. The columns are three feet in diameter; the inside diameter of the building is 3 x 6 feet; the mean diameter is 3 x 7 feet; and the overall diameter is 3 x 8 feet. The outside boundary of the building was reached by a radius of twelve feet, and 12 represented the Apostles who carried the gospel in every direction. To these early precolonial men who built their tower in a land of dubious savages, it would seem most promising to appeal to heaven in sacred numbers for divine support. It was probably this same veneration for holy numbers which made them build their edifice on an octagon of eight pillars. The number 8 represented salvation. Baptism was an absolute necessity to salvation, and baptismal fonts were octagonal in shape. So also were the great baptisteries or bishops' churches.

While Mr. Marvel found the dimensions of the Tower were laid out surprisingly precise, he found a serious defect in the alignment of the bases under the columns. They differ in elevation as much as five inches. The same is also true of the imposts of the pillars. It is evident from this that the builders had no proper leveling implement. This is a significant fact, because the early colonists had no trouble in getting their foundations truly horizontal. A level, practically the same as our spirit level, had been in common use in England for centuries before Rhode Island was settled. It is mentioned in Chaucer and Langland's *Piers Plowman*, and there are thirteenth century illustrations of it. As the builders of the Tower evidently did not have any level, this indicates that the Tower was built by a party of transient visitors who were not supplied with the tools needed in making a permanent settlement.

These four circumstances exclude the possibility that it was of colonial or even English origin: (1) the "rownd stone towre" mentioned in Sir Edmund Plowden's petition of 1630; (2) Wood's map of 1634 marking an earlier settlement at the site of Newport; (3) the non-English unit of measurement; and (4) the fact that the builders of the Tower had no leveling instrument. It now remains to show what was the purpose of the Tower and who built it.

Prototypes of the Tower

The only way to learn the origin of the Newport Tower is to find its prototypes. Man is imitative, and when the builders of the Tower raised a stone structure resting on eight columns, it was because they had seen a similar building which they were now trying to copy. Only in this way can we learn what they were planning to do.

Some years ago I read a description of the Benedictine Abbey of St. Bavo in Ghent, Belgium. The article had a picture of a part of the abbey showing a small building much like the Newport Tower. In 1950 I went to Ghent and found that this building was even a closer parallel than I had thought.⁵ It dates from the twelfth century and is a two-story octagonal building of about the same diameter and height as the Tower in Newport, and stands on eight columns with circular arches between. The lower part within the columns was known as the lavatory, where the monks washed their hands before and after eating. The room above was a chapel, known as the sanctuary, where the holy relics of the abbey were kept.

This *lavabo* or sanctuary (both terms are applied to it) was popular with the Cistercian Order, and in Sweden, where it had many houses, I saw the ruins of several. In Varnhem, in the province of West Gothland, was one of the same size as the one in Ghent and Newport Tower. Another was at old Konghelle (now Kungälf) on the southwest edge of West Gothland, now completely destroyed; but its appearance is preserved in the city seal of Kungälf, which shows a tower on eight columns and a chamber above, which once housed the most precious relic in all the North. This was a cross made from the wood of the back side of the original cross of Calvary, which was given to the great Crusader, King Sverre of Norway, when in 1110 with a large fleet he helped greatly to expel the Turks from the Holy Land.

In these lavabos we find the perfect prototype of the Newport Tower except for a few minor differences. One is the indication that the Newport Tower had no glass windows because, in spite of two seasons of excavation, no glass fragments have been found. The other is the fact that, while the abbey lavabos are octagonal, the upper story of the tower is round, probably because the builders

⁵A Guggenheim Fellowship enabled me to make an extensive European tour on which I made the discoveries mentioned above.

had no tools for dressing stone. Special tools were necessary in building an octagon, as all the stones in the eight corners would have to be dressed, and there are no dressed stones in the Tower. This absence of glass in the Tower and the lack of tools for dressing stone are two more proofs that it was not built by the early colonists.

The Altar in the Tower

The ground floor of the Newport Tower corresponds in use to that of the ground floor of the lavabos, because the open arches all around would scarcely permit any employment other than washing. In its upper floor it also corresponded to the sanctuary of the lavabos, because it has an altar and a reliquary. Means mentions that John Howland Rowe was the first to discover a groove, but both he and Rowe merely suggest that "it was designed to receive one edge of a wall table of some kind."⁶ This is quite right, but what kind of wall table was it? I measured the groove and found it was a little more than seven feet long, and about forty-one inches above the floor. An ordinary table is only twenty-eight inches high. This groove is several inches deep in both ends, but almost flush with the wall in the middle. Equidistant from both ends are two corbels, which evidently were placed there for additional support of the table top, which probably was a slab of slate. Halfway between the table top and the floor is a neatly shaped recess about 18"x18" and about 7" deep. There is no window in this part of the room, being almost the only part of the entire wall not broken by a window or obstructed by a stairway.

As the *table-top*, 41 inches high, would be at the height of the shoulders of a man sitting beside it, it is plain that this was no ordinary table. It was an altar table of the same height as is found in all Catholic churches. This conclusion is further supported by the recess below it. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* devotes a dozen pages to the construction and furnishings of an altar. Among other things it requires an altar cavity — "a small square chamber in the body of the altar in which are placed the relics of one or two canonized saints." This altar cavity, it adds, should be "midway between its table and the foot." Precisely the same kind of a table top with an altar cavity beneath is found in the round stone church at Agnestad in West Gothland, Sweden.

⁶Philip A. Means, *Newport Tower*, p. 11.

The presence of this altar and reliquary is another proof that the colonial theory of erection is all wrong because there were no Catholics in colonial Newport. In 1680 the Privy Council of England sent a list of questions to Governor Peleg Sanford at Newport. In answer to the question concerning the religious views of the colonists the Governor replied: "As for Papists we know of none amongst us."⁷

While the idea of an altar in a grist mill is scarcely conceivable, it is eminently fitting in the headquarters of an exploring expedition in the Middle Ages. It is doubtful if mention can be made of a single expedition of Catholics which was not accompanied by one or more priests. It was their duty to promote the religious life and maintain the sacred practices of their faith, no matter where they wandered. To do this an altar for the celebration of the Mass was necessary.

We now come to the purpose of the Tower. The ultimate object of the builders was the erection of a church, because only this purpose can explain the presence of the columns and arches; but temporary circumstances which are mentioned below made it necessary to postpone the completion of the project.

The Tower Planned as a Church

Churches built on and around an octagon of columns are logical developments of the lavabo or baptistery type, which was much in favor throughout the Middle Ages, and there are many surviving examples in Italy, England, and the Scandinavian countries. The grandest is the cathedral in Aachen, Germany. If the Newport Tower had a surrounding ambulatory, it would be a close copy in style of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Cambridge, England, which is practically of the same dimensions. One of the largest and finest of this type is the Church of St. Olaf in Tunsberg, Norway. The Tower has no ambulatory, presumably because such a low structure would enable a possible enemy to climb up and enter the building through the door or windows; but according to R. G. Hatfield, president New York Chapter of Society of American Architects, it was evidently planned to be built later, because there is an offset of twelve inches on the outside of each column, of the right slope for the placement of the roof joists of the ambulatory.⁸

⁷Samuel G. Arnold, *History of Rhode Island*, I, 490.

⁸"The Old Mill at Newport," *Scribner's Monthly* (1879), XVII, 638-639.

[to be continued]



Courtesy of Mrs. Lois (Bliss) Langdon

JOHN BROWN, most adventurous of the four Brown brothers, was not averse to gambling for small stakes as well as large, as the manuscript reproduced above shows. It reads:

Providence 25.th 1780

In Case the Town of Charlestown in South Carolina Should be taken by the British Forces So as to be under their Command Either now or any Time by the 15.th of June Next I promise to pay and Deliver to Cap' Simon Smith or order one Good New Bever Hatt for his own use as Witness my Hand & in Case it is not taken nor Should not be by the time afforesaid } John Brown
Capt Smith is to pay me one

In this case John Brown was less fortunate than in some of his more important ventures; Charleston, after a valiant but futile defense, had already fallen to the British on May 12, two weeks before the bet was made.

Captain Simon Smith, in 1783 master of John Brown's sloop *America*, was himself owner of several vessels around the end of the eighteenth century.

C. A. C., 3rd.

NEWS - NOTES

[continued from p. 49]

(now used as a lecture room). The soft blues and rose colors in the rug blend well with the damask wall covering and the chairs. The rug is the gift of Malcolm G. Chace.

* * *

Mr. G. Andrews Moriarty has sent us a correction of a statement in line 21, page 22, of his article, "Two Early New England Captains of the Hudson's Bay Company," which appeared in *Rhode Island History*, v.12, no.1, January, 1953. The Benjamin Gillam who made the poaching voyage in the *Bachelor's Delight* was the son of Captain Zachariah Gillam and not his brother Benjamin of Boston.

* * *

The Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association held its first open meeting at the Rhode Island Historical Society on February 12, Lincoln's birthday.

The guest speaker was Lee M. Friedman, Esq., noted lawyer, historian, and author, and president of the Jewish Historical Society of America. David C. Adelman, president of the local association, gave an interesting talk about the three hundredth anniversary of the settlement of the Jews in this country, which is to be celebrated in 1955. After the meeting tea was served by Mrs. David Adelman and Mrs. William G. Braude. An exhibition of local documents of Jewish historical interest was exhibited in the museum.

* * *

The cover illustration of the January, 1953, issue of *Rhode Island History* was a photograph of the coach once owned by Senator James DeWolf, which is now at Linden Place in Bristol. We have been told by descendants of James DeWolf that a second coach, which was formerly kept at his home in Bristol, The Mount, was the coach in which the Senator made his trips to and from Washington. A picture of the second coach appears opposite page 91 of *Charles D'Wolf of Guadeloupe, his Ancestors and Descendants . . .* by the Rev. Calbraith B. Perry, (N. Y., 1902).

PUBLICATIONS OF RHODE ISLAND INTEREST

"The Providence Federal Customhouse Papers as a Source of Maritime History since 1790," by Earl C. Tanner, *The New England Quarterly*, March 1953, summarizes the history of Providence commerce from 1790 to 1930 and lists the Providence Customhouse record preserved in the library of this society, the National Archives, and the Rhode Island State Archives. Mr. Tanner's article provides a valuable and much needed tool for students of commercial history.

* * *

"George Scott, Slave Trader of Newport," by Kenneth Scott, *American Neptune*, July 1952, traces the eventful career of a Rhode Island sea captain, including a slave uprising, from 1728 to the disappearance of his vessel in a storm in 1744.

* * *

"A Nineteenth-Century Academic Cause Célèbre" by Elizabeth Donnan, *New England Quarterly*, March 1952, deals with the uproar at Brown in 1897 over President Andrews' monetary views.

* * *

"Repair and Restoration of Eleazer Arnold's Splendid Mansion" by Russell Hawes Kettell, *Old Time New England*, Fall 1952, describes the work recently done on the Eleazer Arnold House in Lincoln by the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.

LECTURES

April 8, 1953, Wednesday 8:15 p.m.

STATED MEETING

125 Years of Business in Providence

WILLIAM G. CHAFFEE
Builders' Iron Foundry

May 13, 1953, Wednesday 8:15 p.m.

History in Our Own Backyards

WILLIAM D. METZ, Assistant Professor
of History and Political Sciences
University of Rhode Island

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEW MEMBERS

December 1, 1952 — March 31, 1953

- | | |
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| Cowesett, R. I. | Mr. Herbert F. Lewis |
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