

ON THE COVER:

Detail of late 17th-century domestic artifacts excavated from the Jireh Bull House as displayed in Norman Isham's personal collection, including shovels, a hoe, a stirrup, scissors, keys, a ladle, horse and ox shoes, spoons (on wall), European-colonial ceramics (front, center), and a broken pestle (front, left) possibly of Native American manufacture. Most of the artifacts are now curated in the collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society. (Rhode Island Historical Society Collection, photograph taken in 1917; RHi X17 1695)

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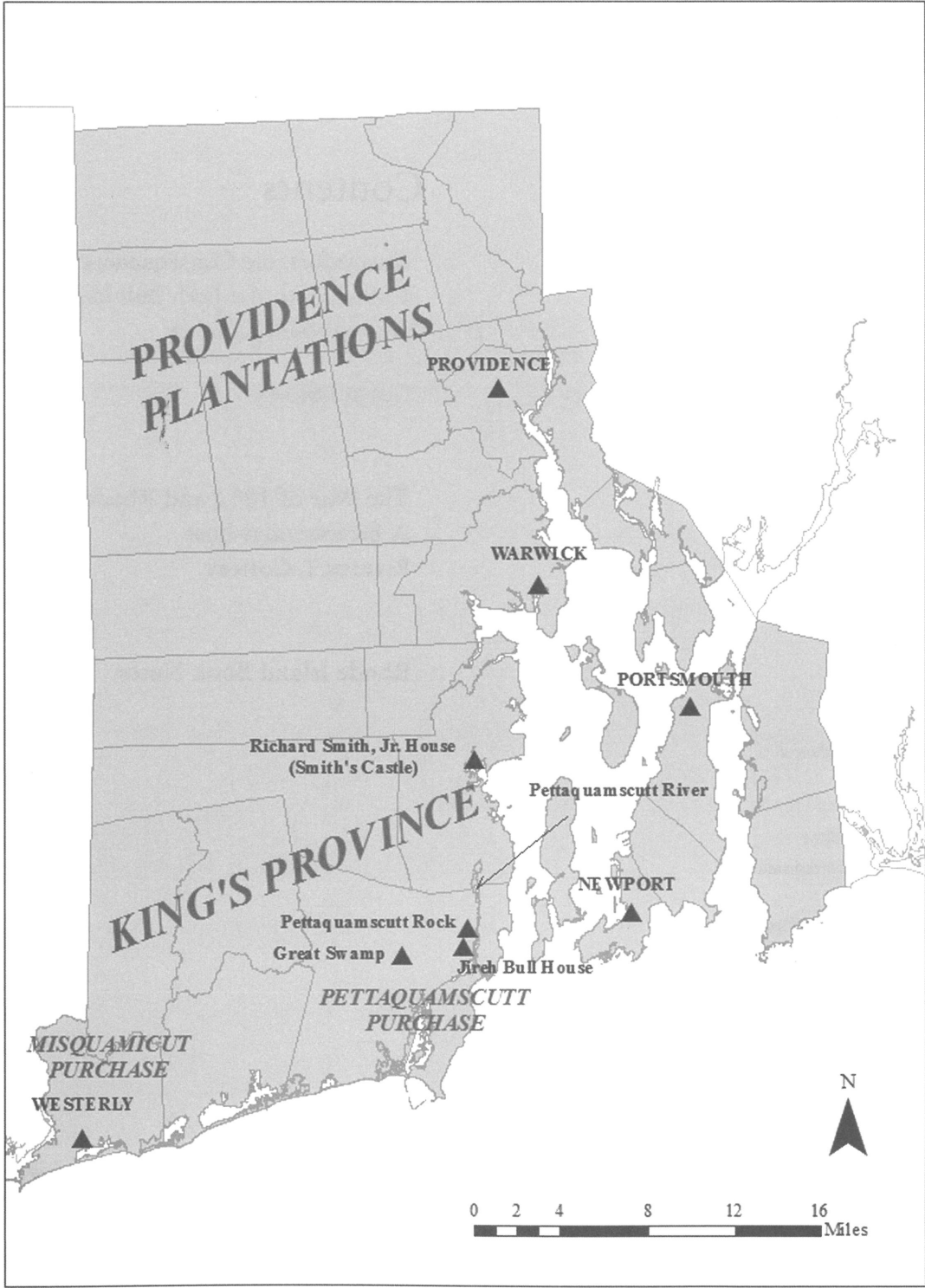
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Colin Porter received his Ph.D. from the Department of Anthropology at Brown University in 2013. This article is based on part of his doctoral dissertation titled, “Monuments to a Nation Gone By: Fortified Houses, King Philip’s War, and the Remaking of a New England Frontier, 1675-1725.”



Map of Rhode Island showing places relevant to the story of the Jireh Bull house. (Map created by author).

“Uncomfortable Consequences”:

Colonial Collisions at the Jireh Bull House in Narragansett Country

COLIN PORTER

Tower Hill, in what is today South Kingstown, Rhode Island, rises sharply from the western bank of the Pettaquamscutt River providing a sweeping vista across marsh grass, still waters, and Boston Neck beyond. During the mid-1660s, Jireh Bull, a young land speculator from Newport, together with his family and new neighbors, constructed a small, stone house atop the hill. Eventually, Bull’s “farme,” as his sons referred to the plantation after their father’s death in 1684, comprised a complex of three small stone houses with adjoining walls forming an enclosure, and orchards, fields, and forests. Today, Bull’s former estate comprises a small community of waterfront cottages and overgrown fields, where stone walls still serve as property dividers. Tensions between residential development and environmental conservation come home on this landscape, echoing historic collisions over space and place. An engraved rock monument supported by a small brick base reports this local history to cars crossing the river:

A FEW RODS WEST
OF THIS SPOT
STOOD THE STONE HOVSE
OF
JIREH BVLL
BVRNED BY THE INDIANS
DECEMBER 15, 1675.

The whole story, at least the parts of it that are known, is more complicated: Jireh Bull wasn’t home when the raid commenced, the exact date of the attack is vague, and the number of persons killed is disputed. Despite these uncertainties, the monument reminds passers-by that this was—and

continues to be—a contested cultural borderland: both the ancestral homeland of the Narragansett Indian Tribe and a territory colonized by Rhode Island settlers.

King Philip’s War engulfed New England between the summer of 1675 and the autumn of 1676; related conflicts continued in northern and western New England into the eighteenth century. During the war, New England colonists designated private dwellings in strategically important locations to serve the collective defense.¹ Histories written during and immediately after the conflict referred to these expedient fortifications as “garrisons,” “garrison houses,” or “fortified houses.” When war broke out, the United Colonies of New England—Connecticut, New Plymouth, and Massachusetts Bay—feared that the Narragansett

Monument to Jireh Bull house on Middlebridge Road, South Kingstown. (Photograph by author).



Indians were secretly supporting the Wampanoag sachem Metacom (called "Philip" by the English), and that the Narragansetts would outwardly join the war against the colonies.² To guard against this possibility, a deputy of the Connecticut governor chose Bull's house to maintain a military presence in Narragansett Country. In the winter of 1675, the United Colonies initiated a plan to muster more than twelve hundred soldiers, including several hundred allied Mohegan and Pequot Indians, at the Bull house in anticipation of a military strike against the Narragansetts at Great Swamp between seven and eight miles west of the Bull settlement. However, after one file of soldiers razed several Narragansett villages en route to the rendezvous at South Kingstown, a group of Narragansett Indians sacked Bull's house before the colonial armies arrived. Nonetheless, the colonial army went on to strike Great Swamp resulting in the deaths of more than one thousand Narragansett and Wampanoags, primarily women, children, and the elderly. The colonists and their allies destroyed the fortified village and a winter's worth of grain.³ By war's end, demographers estimate, several hundred colonists and many thousands of Natives—between fifty-six and sixty-nine percent of the indigenous inhabitants of New England—had died.⁴

During the past decade, historians and archaeologists have begun to reconsider longstanding claims about the scope, conduct, and consequences of King Philip's War. This reassessment is due, in part, to increasing recognition of Native American oral histories about the conflict and alternative Native-centered interpretations of colonial documents.⁵ Archaeological research, often conducted in collaboration with Native peoples, has likewise unearthed evidence of indigenous cultural continuity reflected by material culture and spatial organization in the decades following King Philip's War.⁶ Recent research has disclosed the interrelationship between

Anglo-American practices of monumentalization and collective amnesia involved in disappearing Native peoples and displacing Native histories from colonized spaces.⁷ As sites of violence from King Philip's War, houses like the Jireh Bull house identified as former garrisons remain prominent sites of collective remembrance celebrating triumphal conquest into the twenty-first century.⁸ Although garrison houses were central to engagements between Natives and colonists in New England during the seventeenth century, the history of these sites as places of encounter remains largely unstudied. This article situates the Jireh Bull house in the context of a colonial borderland, a "space-in-between" of negotiation between Narragansett Indians and Rhode Island colonists. It argues that the site was central to a history of intercultural relations—or, perhaps more accurately, it argues that the site was central to a long history of intercultural collisions—not merely relations—between Narragansett Indians and English colonists living near Pettaquamscutt. This history of tension—and later, violence—began long before the seminal raid of December 1675.

NARRAGANSETT COUNTRY REFERS, in its broadest sense, to the ancestral homeland of the Narragansett Indian Tribe. It is not only a territory, but also a source of identity separating the Narragansetts from the neighboring Pequot, Nipmuck, and Wampanoag tribes.⁹ When seen through the cartographer's lens, Narragansett Country comprises nearly all of mainland Rhode Island except for the town of Cumberland and those towns on the eastern shore of Narragansett Bay, the so-called East Bay. Radiocarbon dates derived from archaeological features indicate Native peoples have lived across the homeland for at least 12,500 years. Narragansett oral traditions place inhabitants here millennia earlier, perhaps as early as 30,000 years before present.¹⁰ However, rising sea levels since the last glaciations, and the

inundation of river systems to create Narragansett Bay would have submerged any archaeological sites of this antiquity lying along the ancient coastline. Although the acreage of Narragansett Country owned by Narragansett Indians has dwindled since the first colonial settlement in 1636—through land sales, conquest, adverse possession, the settlement of debts, and illegal detribalization, among other means—contemporary Narragansetts maintain an alternative geography of "ceremonial landscapes" across the entirety of their ancestral homeland.¹¹

The place-name, Narragansett Country, appeared in English colonial documents during the seventeenth century to denote an area to be mapped and brought under colonial control.¹² As John Winthrop observed in 1634, with a mixture of anxiety and expectation, "The country on the west of the bay of Narragansett is all champain for many miles, but very stony and full of Indians."¹³ Roger Williams and fellow exiles established Providence two years later, initiating the process of permanent European settlement in the region. By 1650, the fledgling colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations had added towns at Portsmouth, Newport, Pawtuxet, and Warwick. During the latter half of the seventeenth century, English colonists seized on the remaining Narragansett Indian land as the next province for settlement.¹⁴ This territory, running south from the Pawtuxet River, between what are now the towns of Warwick and Cranston, and west to the Pawcatuck River, in what is now the town of Westerly, represented the border between Connecticut and Rhode Island. It linked the English colonial settlements in New England extending from Boston to New York. Jurisdiction over the land was so fiercely contested by representatives of the various New England colonies that a royal commission from England attempted to settle the dispute in 1665; it did so by resolving to claim the Narragansett Country region for Charles II and renaming it the King's Province thereby prohibiting further colonization. However,

the resolution was accepted by none except the commission itself. Rhode Island colonists continued to populate the region undeterred.¹⁵ By the early eighteenth century, colonists living in New England considered Narragansett Country to be synonymous with the King's Province.¹⁶

The earliest colonial settlements in Rhode Island, from 1636 to approximately 1650, cropped up along the periphery of Narragansett Country, an historically contested area between Narragansett and Wampanoag tribes where the presence of English settlements may have provided a buffer. By contrast, the later, second-stage settlements, from circa 1650 to 1675, in what would become the King's Province struck at the heart of the Narragansett Indian homeland: Aquidnesset called Wickford by the colonists; Misquamicut, called Westerly; and Pettaquamscutt, called Kingstown. Groups of several dozen colonists lived in each settlement, which were surrounded by Narragansett villages populated by hundreds of individuals. Colonists living in the more southern settlements continued to use Narragansett place-names to identify their respective villages acknowledging that they were interlopers in Indian country. Indeed, the so-called Pequot Path or Trail, a thoroughfare for movement across Native New England, connected these colonial settlements to each other and to Narragansett places.¹⁷ For decades after European settlement, Natives carried messages between Rhode Island and the surrounding colonies, leaving the settlers there largely ignorant of the surrounding countryside and its Native villages.¹⁸ In recognition of the precarious position of these intrepid settlers and traders, some early land purchases granted indigenous bands long-term rights to land for planting corn. However, ever increasing numbers of English colonists who populated the region not only ignored these rights, but also brought with them livestock that rooted through Narragansett fields and clam banks.¹⁹

Pettaquamscutt, the second of the major English settlements established in what would become the King's Province, bore the Narragansett place-name for the region along the western shore of the Pettaquamscutt (Narrow) River. The name perhaps derived from the large rock ledge known as Pettaquamscutt Rock, in present-day South Kingstown, which was and continues to be a significant cultural site in the Narragansett Indian homeland. Also known as Treaty Rock, this vertical rock face served as a place of interaction between Narragansett sachems and English colonists beginning in 1638. Somewhere near the

ledge Roger Williams secured permission to settle Aquidneck Island. Between 1658 and 1661, a corporation of five men from Boston and Newport, the so-called Pettaquamscutt Proprietors, convened near the ledge on several occasions to buy land from Kachanaquant, Wemosit, Quequakanut, Wanomachin, Samattock, and Succohan, many of the principal sachems living nearby.²⁰ The Pettaquamscutt Purchase, as this land sale is known today, was not a single act but the result of many meetings between and among various parties of colonists and Indians. Through this process, the corporation procured and secured legal title to

View of Pettaquamscutt River from the Jireh Bull house site. (Photograph by author).



the land to perfect an ever larger and more firm claim to portions of Narragansett Country that could withstand legal challenges raised by either Narragansetts or rival Englishmen. By 1674, the full extent of land acquired totaled twelve square miles and included all mineral rights therein. This territory was so expansive that its northwest boundary was not surveyed and mapped until the eighteenth century. An initial survey was only attempted after King Philip's War, in 1687 and surveying efforts continued through 1727.²¹ The proprietors paid a total of £151 and extended thirteen coats and a pair of breeches on credit, after which they determined Kachanaquant was in their debt for £13 15s.²²

From the outset, the Pettaquamscutt Purchase produced tension between and among Native bands and between Native bands and English groups. Reflecting intra-tribal dispute over the legitimacy of the Purchase, the earlier of two deeds between the Pettaquamscutt Proprietors and Kachanaquant was appended with a "confirmation" made between the proprietors and Kachanaquant's three sons.²³ This undated appendix states that the sons purchased land in March 1657 and in April 1662 from two other Narragansett sachems, Ninigret and Wanomachin, respectively. These purchases conveyed to Kachanaquant's sons nearly all of the land lying south of Pettaquamscutt Rock to the Atlantic coast, and extending westward beyond the Great Swamp, an area referred to as "Point Judith" or "Jude." The existence of this appendix in colonial land documents suggests that the Proprietors feared that Kachanaquant's sons might hold legal rights to a large portion of the Pettaquamscutt Purchase. Yet, three other English settlers contested the sachems' claim by declaring that in April 1661, Wanomachin had "delivered seizin in the English form"—i.e., brought them a branch or some other physical piece of the land—thereby conveying to them the land immediately

south of Pettaquamscutt Rock. The Proprietors favored this second claim, which supported their own deeds, despite its dubious authority over written land deeds in seventeenth-century New England. However, the dispute was not settled legally until 1674, when the Proprietors somehow induced Kachanaquant's sons to sign a document quit-claiming any prior interest in the land.

When English settlers appeared south of Pettaquamscutt Rock in the 1660s, four of the Narragansett Indian sachems in the immediate vicinity appealed to the surrounding colonies to intervene on the Narragansetts' behalf. In 1661, Wemosit, Ninigret, Stulcop, and Quequakanut appealed first to Plymouth Colony over the incursion into their territory. Plymouth warned the Rhode Island governing council in response, "keep youer people from Injuring the heathen or others which they may draw upon youer selues and us uncomfortable consequences."²⁴ Yet, after failing in an initial attempt to peacefully disperse settlers at Pettaquamscutt, the Narragansett sachems sent a formal protest to the United Colonies of New England at Boston in September 1662, accusing the Proprietors of "pretending title to Point Jude and other lands adyouneing." The document was probably drafted by an Englishman, perhaps an associate of the rival Atherton Company who was working as much in his own self-interest as on behalf of the sachems. The protest continues:

[The Proprietors] have indeavoured to possess themselves forceably of the same both by building and bringing cattell, we having given them warning to the contrary, and they not taking warning, nor endeavoured to drive their cattell from off[f] the lande, but they resisted and one of them presumed to shot of[f] a gun at us.²⁵

The sachems claimed none had "sould them [the colonists] any land there."²⁶ Accordingly, the sachems demanded that the Pettaquamscutt Proprietors be brought before a "faire trial, either before yourselves or some other indifferent judges." Should their claim



View west across the Jireh Bull house site. (Photograph by author).

go unheard, the sachems warned that they would begin to remove the settlers by other means.

JIREH BULL CAME to adulthood on the cusp of the English colonization of Narragansett Country. Born at Portsmouth in 1638, he was the eldest living son of Elizabeth and Henry Bull, who was governor of the Rhode Island colony from 1685 to 1686 and once again in 1690.²⁷ The family moved to Newport in 1639, but nothing else is known about Bull's childhood or early adulthood.

His eldest surviving son, Jireh Bull, Jr., was born in 1858. By then, the twenty-year-old had likely completed an apprenticeship and presumably had married. His wife, whose name is thought to be Katharine, bore three more sons, Henry, Ephraim and Ezekiel, and a daughter, Mary; all survived to adulthood.²⁸ Like many of his peers, at an early age Bull realized the potential profit to be earned in speculation on Indian land. On March 22, 1661, at the age of twenty-two, Bull signed the Misquamicut Purchase. The proprietors of

this land purchase, who were different from those involved with the Pettaquamscutt Purchase, laid out thirty-six acres on his behalf, but Bull's name does not appear on any other documents relating to the settlement.²⁹ The Misquamicut Purchasers found great difficulty in encouraging settlers from Rhode Island to either pay for their designated land or to settle on it permanently. The Purchasers eventually offered payment—first £5, then £8—to anyone willing to relocate there.³⁰ Like many of those who originally signed onto the Misquamicut Purchase, Bull probably never intended to move his family to the incipient settlement, and instead viewed the land as an opportunity for investment.

Bull realized his ambitions of land ownership in the Narragansett Country in 1663 when he purchased a twenty-acre house lot at Pettaquamscutt from William Bundy. Five years later, he received title from the Pettaquamscutt Proprietors to an additional 480 acres further inland to create a five-hundred acre share, one of the largest occupied allotments at Pettaquamscutt. Although the language of the deed is ambiguous as to the exact timing of the purchase, Jireh Bull paid for the additional land sometime between 1663 and 1668.³¹ Bull appears to have maintained a home at Newport—either full or part-time—until around March, 1667 when his name first appears in legal documents as a resident of Pettaquamscutt.³² His estate in the fledgling village represented the most southerly extent of English settlement on Tower Hill, far south of Pettaquamscutt Rock. The land immediately south of Bull's plot was then undivided, but later became part of the Hazard family plantation. Some speculation suggests Bull's first house was built by William Bundy before 1663,³³ but this scenario is unlikely given the Proprietors' primary interest in the land as a speculative venture. Rather, Bull probably began construction of a home on the house lot in 1666 or 1667. By 1671, when the Governing Council of Rhode Island assembled at Jireh Bull's

house, nineteen freemen and their families lived at Pettaquamscutt.³⁴

One of the earliest occupants and largest landowners at Pettaquamscutt, Bull quickly rose in prominence and assumed political office as the first Co-Conservator of the Peace on May 21, 1669.³⁵ In a display of political one-upmanship, the Connecticut Colony, which advocated for its jurisdiction over Narragansett Country, later appointed him to the same position. This dual role thrust Bull in a mediating position between the various New England colonies and the Narragansett Indians. In the summer of 1669, the governor of Rhode Island received intelligence from a Long Island Indian, sent from the governors of Connecticut and New York. The messenger related that Ninigret and seven other men from his band of Narragansetts had been at a dance at Mount Hope [Bristol] with the Pokanoket Wampanoag, Metacom's band, for more than a week. Rhode Island subsequently issued a warrant for Ninigret's arrest on suspicion of brewing a plot against the English. Bull probably served the warrant to Ninigret or one of his associates.³⁶ The Narragansett sachem eventually appeared before the Rhode Island Council on July 28, and testified that the tribes were simply celebrating a bountiful harvest.³⁷ After a "broil" next occurred between the colonists and Indians at Pettaquamscutt, on August 19, 1669 the Rhode Island governor appointed Bull and two other colonists to compel Ninigret to reappear before the Governing Council, with the sachem, Wemosit. The sachems were to answer for their role in another alleged plot to attack the settlement.³⁸ The two sachems appeared before the Council at Newport a week later, on August 26, 1669. Similar intimations of Native hostility occurred again in 1671 and 1673; Bull likely continued to serve as one of the primary mediators between the sachems and the Rhode Island government.

When King Philip's War erupted in June 1675, Connecticut assumed direct control over

the King's Province to secure the neutrality of the Narragansett Indians in the burgeoning conflict. The Connecticut governor dispatched his son, Wait Winthrop, to garrison the King's Province should a military campaign become necessary. Winthrop placed conscripted soldiers from Stonington and New London, and perhaps Pequot Indian guides, at Bull's house and at Richard Smith, Jr.'s house, twelve miles north of the Pettaquamscutt settlement at Wickford. (Connecticut did not fortify Westerly, which was firmly allied with Rhode Island; Connecticut viewed the alliance as an illegal incursion of its territory. Residents of Westerly abandoned the settlement.) On July 9, 1675, Winthrop described Bull's house as "a convenient large stone house, with a good ston-wall yard before it, which is a kind of small fortyfication to it."³⁹ At that time, Winthrop wrote that sixteen of the "neighbors" were then in the Bull house, a number that represented the majority of settlers at Pettaquamscutt. While a small group of settlers remained under the watch of the garrison, Bull and some others chose to send their families to Newport where they stayed for the duration of the



Exposed corner of a wall at the Jireh Bull house site. (Photograph by author).

war. From Richard Smith, Jr.'s house, on August 14, 1675, Roger Williams observed, "Just now comes in Sam Dier in a catch from Newport, to fetch over Jireh Bull's wife and children and others of Pettaquamscutt."⁴⁰ The Bull family probably stayed either with Jireh's father or his eldest son, Jireh Jr., who owned adjacent farms in the town.

With his family better protected, Bull remained in Pettaquamscutt for several weeks. He continued to promote further settlement in Pettaquamscutt by Rhode Island colonists. On September 6, 1675, he witnessed a sale of land six miles west of Pettaquamscutt Rock near the edge of Great Swamp and very close to the Narragansetts' winter encampments. The land sold for a price three hundred percent higher than it had sold for a month earlier.⁴¹

Concurrently, Bull worked as an intermediary between the Narragansett Indians and the Connecticut colony. Several Narragansetts, including a representative of the sachem, Canonicus, met with Jireh Bull at his house to ask him to negotiate with colonial officials on their behalf. On one occasion, Bull sent a missive to Connecticut's governor requesting that the colony permit a band of Indians to safely harvest corn. The colony's governing council responded to Bull on September 30, 1675, but the contents of the reply—and the colony's determination of the particular matter—are unknown.⁴² By late fall, Bull had followed his family to Newport where he remained for the duration of the conflict. The reason for the timing of Bull's journey to Newport is unknown. As war with the Narragansetts appeared ever more likely, his pacifist sympathies (Henry Bull was a Quaker, although Jireh Bull was not) may have guided the decision. Or perhaps he was following the advice of his Narragansett neighbors who warned the colonists to leave before a war pushed them out. Bull may also have disliked the presence of the garrison from Connecticut, whose jurisdiction he disfavored despite working on the behalf of the

governor. Whatever the reason, Bull remained in Newport through the summer of 1676.

Jireh Bull's decision to abandon his home for safe harbor in Newport proved fortuitous. During the autumn of 1675, the United Colonies of New England determined to wage a strike against the Narragansett Indians. Their governors believed that the Narragansett Indians were already secretly engaged in the war against the English colonists in central Massachusetts (as evidenced by the capture of several men allegedly from Wemosit's band). The colonies believed that it was a matter of time before the Indians would wage open war. A Council of War decided to mobilize more than 1,200 soldiers to strike against the Narragansett Indians during the upcoming winter when a lack of undergrowth would enable a European-style military engagement against the Indian encampments. The plan was simple, but depended on a series of well-timed and independently executed maneuvers. A combined army from Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay would march south from Dedham, Massachusetts to Richard Smith's house at Wickford, where an advance party of scouts would root out Narragansetts living nearby. Meanwhile, the Connecticut army, accompanied by several hundred Pequot and Mohegan Indians, would assemble in Stonington and then march eastward via the Pequot Path into Narragansett Country. The armies would rendezvous at Jireh Bull's house before making their final strike against the Narragansett Indian encampment in the Great Swamp.

Once the northern army reached Wickford, mounted scouts rode the twelve miles south to Bull's house to ascertain whether the Connecticut army had arrived. The advance party discovered the Jireh Bull house in ruins.⁴³ No eye-witness accounts of the attack on the colonists at Bull's house or the scene of destruction survive. Moreover, the histories of King Philip's War, which probably relied on reconnaissance drafted in the field, diverge

over the exact date of the incursion and the scope of the attack. Based on the scant documentation available, it appears that the attack on the Jireh Bull house occurred either on December 14 or 15, 1675, and that between seven and fifteen colonists died.⁴⁴ Some accounts indicate that two neighbors escaped during the raid, and historians have speculated that they were two local boys who fled north, and that one of them was killed as he fled.⁴⁵ This scenario is plausible, although the exact number of individuals killed and their identities have not been corroborated by other documents. In cases of other attacks on garrison houses in New England during King Philip's War, those who were thought to be sheltering inside were often found to be outside the garrison when raids commenced.⁴⁶

For seventeenth-century New England colonists, the attack on the Bull house and the murder of those sheltering inside provoked alternative interpretations. One Rhode Island colonist, John Easton, who was living on Aquidneck Island during the war, blamed Connecticut and Massachusetts for intruding into Narragansett Country. Easton held Rhode Island colony's neighbors responsible for inciting the raid by the Narragansetts, and for failing to provide advance warning to the settlers so they could properly prepare for an attack:

[T]he war [began] without procleration and sum of our peopell did not kno the English had begun mischif to the indians and being Confedent and had Case therefore, that the indians wold not hurt them exactly, but the indians having reseved that mischif Came unexpected upone them destroyed [14] of them beside other gret lose, but the English army say thay supposed coneticot forses had bine there.⁴⁷

Early New England antiquarians blamed the colonists residing in the Bull house garrison for their own destruction. "A want of Watchfulness was probably the Cause of this sad Butchery. The House was of Stone, and might easily have been defended; but the People probably thought the Presence of the Army warranted Security."⁴⁸

With the passage of more than three centuries, it is impossible to ascertain how much warning, if any, the colonists received in advance of the raid.

An indistinct Narragansett Indian perspective on the attack survives in several testimonies recorded near the end of King Philip's War. On 29 April 1676, Wemosit sent a messenger, Wuttawawaigkessuek Sucqunch, to Connecticut officials to seek a peace agreement. On examination, the messenger revealed that Wemosit had participated in the attack on Bull's house as a reaction to the capture and execution of sixty Narragansetts four days prior to the raid.⁴⁹ The minutes from the court martial of Native captives from the war held at Newport in August 1676 (attended by Jireh Bull), further report that Quonaehewacout, a Narragansett Indian, "saith, that he was informed that all the Sachims was at the takeing and burning of Ireh Bull's garrison."⁵⁰ Although the sachems in attendance at the raid are not identified, the term, "all," suggests that those present included not only Wemosit, but also the other three sachems referenced repeatedly in documents concerning Bull's house: Ninigret, Stulcop, and Quequakanut. Two other testimonies from the court martial by Quanopen and John Wecopeak mention the attack on the Pettaquamscutt settlement, but do not provide any additional information or identify Bull's house by name. These examinations support Easton's version that Narragansett Indian sachems destroyed Bull's house and killed those sheltering inside as a measured response to acts of violence perpetrated against Narragansett peoples—that is, these were the "uncomfortable consequences" initially foreseen by officials in Plymouth arising from incursions into the Narragansett homeland.

Jireh Bull returned to Narragansett Country to rebuild his house sometime between August 1676 and May 1677, when his name reappears in historical documents from Pettaquamscutt. Bull died intestate several years later, in 1684.⁵¹ The

next December, his four sons agreed to distribute their father's "farme," as they called it, which they calculated at 592 acres.⁵² Jireh Bull, Jr., the eldest son, agreed to pay his three younger brothers £1,000 and to vacate his right to the property on the condition that he alone would inherit their grandfather's farm in Newport, which adjoined his own.⁵³ Yet, Jireh Bull, Jr. soon reneged on the agreement by first claiming his lawful inheritance to his father's farm and then selling off the land. In 1692, he sold two hundred and sixty acres to his brother, Ezekiel, and one hundred and eighty acres to a neighbor, Rouse Helme. The next year, he sold two hundred and sixty-eight acres to his brother, Ephraim.⁵⁴ (Henry Bull, Jr., son of Jireh Bull, died in 1691.) Jireh Bull Sr.'s wife, Katharine, likely continued to inhabit a ninety-two acre portion of the original house lot, a privilege commonly afforded to widows, until her death in 1713.⁵⁵ The year after Katharine Bull's death, her grandson, Benjamin Bull, the eldest surviving son of Jireh Bull, Jr., sold ninety-two acres of land and housing—the identical extraneous acreage specified in the broken 1685 agreement among the Bull brothers—to his cousin, Henry Bull, Esq., the orphaned son of Henry Bull, Jr. The eldest son of the eldest son of Jireh Bull, Benjamin Bull probably gained the right to sell the land when his grandmother died.

After purchasing his grandparents' house lot, Henry Bull, Esq. commissioned the construction of a new, larger house built in the northwest corner of Jireh Bull's lot along the Post Road. A practicing lawyer in Newport, later appointed Attorney General of Rhode Island, Henry Bull operated the property as a tenant farm. Like many of the Narragansett plantations of the eighteenth century, it became a successful dairying operation that probably relied on enslaved African and Indian labor. In February 1729, Bull petitioned the General Assembly to nullify a record of a highway running through his land because South Kingstown had failed to give "notice to said petitioner, or his

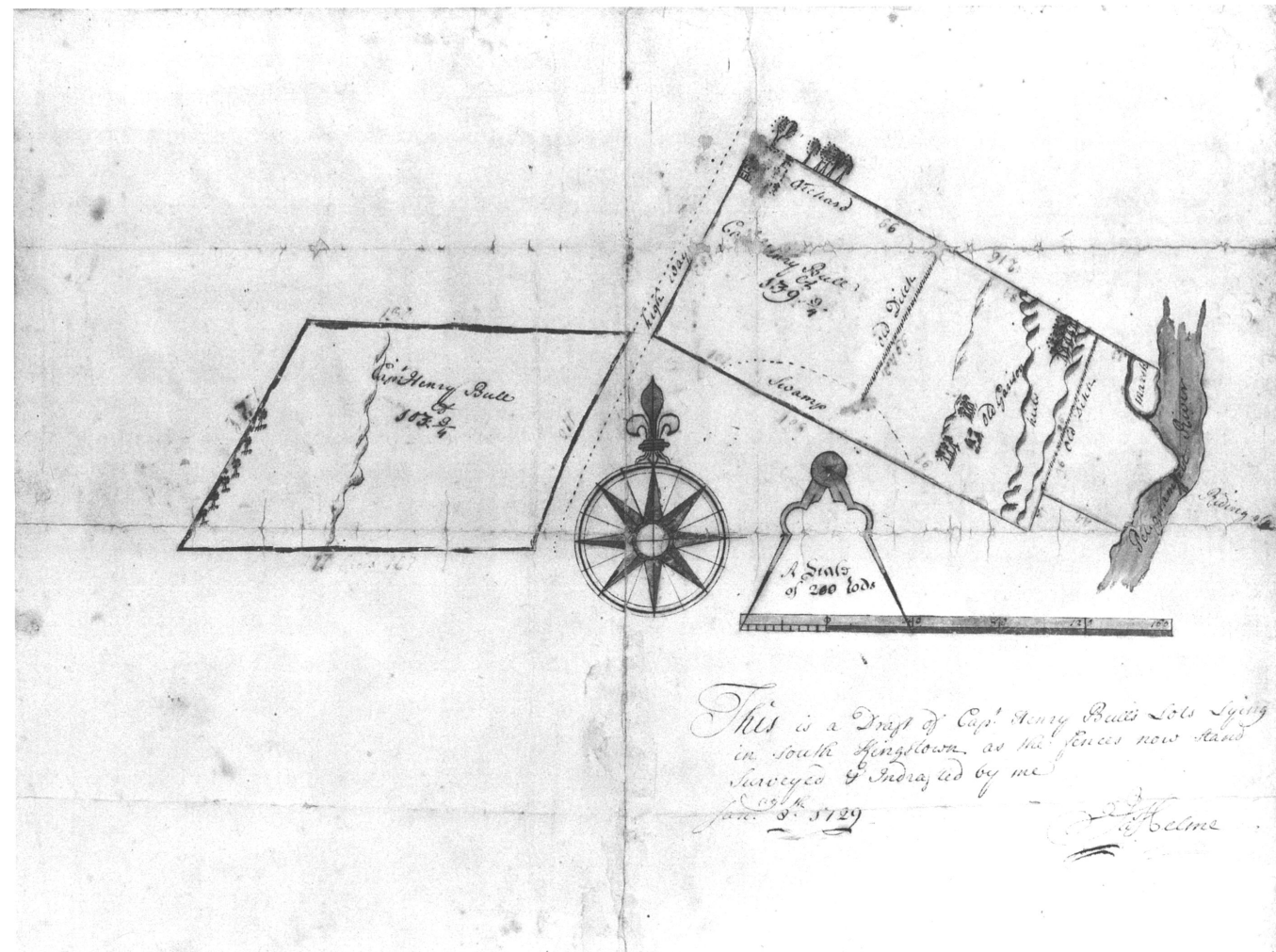


Late 17th-century domestic artifacts excavated from the Jireh Bull House as displayed in Norman Isham's personal collection, including shovels, a hoe, a stirrup, scissors, keys, a ladle, horse and ox shoes, spoons (on wall), European-colonial ceramics (front, center), and a

broken pestle (front, left) possibly of Native American manufacture. Most of the artifacts are now curated in the collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society. (Rhode Island Historical Society Collection, photograph taken in 1917; RHi X17 1695).

tenant."⁵⁶ In response to what he viewed as the town's incursion onto his property, Henry Bull, Esq. commissioned a new survey of the farm by James Helme, a surveyor living nearby. The survey identified the physical remains of the "Old Garison House," as well as the newer two-story Georgian house at the edge of the Post Road. In 1755, Henry Bull, Esq. sold

the property to another Narragansett planter, John Watson, who deconstructed the Georgian house in 1811.⁵⁷ Rediscovery of the Helme plat map of the Bull farm during the twentieth century, after excavation of the site had already been completed, confirmed the identity of the site as having been the location of Jireh Bull's house.



James Helme's "Draft of Capt. Henry Bull's Lots lying on South Kingstown," dated January 8, 1729. (RH*i* X 3 2471).

NARRAGANSETT COUNTRY WAS central to long-term cultural engagements between Natives and Europeans in New England beginning in the sixteenth century—engagements that persist to the present through ongoing legislative battles between the Narragansett Indian Tribe and the State of Rhode Island.⁵⁸ As the most significant of the three settlements in Narragansett Country, Pettaquamscutt serves as a case study for colonization in the region. The history of cross-cultural engagements in this colonial borderland reveals the accumulation of land by eager speculators and the accompanying

dispossession of homelands by Native bands. At the same time, a critical reading of land deeds and associated documents from Pettaquamscutt reveals the precarious tenancy of English colonists and the multiple and diverse efforts at resistance by Narragansett Indians to avoid dispossession. Narragansett sachems not only used the colonial court to petition New Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay to intercede on their behalf against the Rhode Island colonists, but also threatened to forcibly remove colonists who had already settled there should they fail to reach a peaceful resolution.

This legal argument over land ownership persisted between the Narragansett sachems and the Pettaquamscutt Proprietors until 1674, although conflict over space and place persisted long after the 1674 agreements. I suggest that the Native attacks on garrison houses during King Philip's War were, in part, fulfillment of threats to drive English colonists from particular, local places of longstanding tension.

Historical documents convey that cultural engagements between Natives and colonists at Pettaquamscutt frequently involved Jireh Bull and occurred at or around his home in the years leading up to King Philip's War. Before Jireh Bull purchased his twenty-acre house lot from William Bundy, its location—south of Pettaquamscutt Rock indeed, the southern extent of the colonial settlement at Pettaquamscutt—was already a source of tension among the Narragansett sachems and between the sachems and the Pettaquamscutt Proprietors. The intercultural significance of his home undoubtedly increased when Jireh Bull was appointed to intervene between the Rhode Island colony and the Narragansett Indians during several years leading up to King Philip's War. Any ill-feelings between the colonists and Narragansetts would have increased when Bull demanded that several sachems appear before the General Assembly at Newport to answer for supposed threats against the settlement. Nonetheless, Narragansetts' requests for Bull's intervention on their behalf, after the war had already begun, indicate the Narragansetts' desire to remain neutral despite increasing violence across Native New England. Circumstantial evidence suggests that some or all of the Narragansett sachems who presented petitions complaining of

incursions by the colonists were also involved in the orchestrated assault on Bull's house—a garrisoned site. Even so, the questioning of Wemosit's messenger revealed that the assault on the Bull house was also a measured response to attacks by the colonial armies on Narragansetts as the armies crossed into Narragansett Country several days prior. According to the messenger's testimony, the attack on the Bull house could be interpreted as an effort to warn the colonial army against further escalation.

The journey down Tower Hill from the Jireh Bull House ends where it began: at the monument at the base of the hill. This marker represents an early twentieth century effort to lay out a geography of historically significant sites to guide and instruct future generations. The monument serves as a frontispiece to a narrative of warfare on the colonial borderland, inviting passers-by to reflect upon the scars left by an historical conflict, and ultimately the triumph of colonists and defeat of Narragansetts. A critical reading of documents relating to the site and its history as a space of colonial interaction calls into question many of the presumptions about the causes of the Indian raid. As I have argued, the location of Bull's house was central to long-term engagements between Narragansett Indians and Rhode Island colonists at Pettaquamscutt beginning before King Philip's War. The site of Bull's garrison house is no less significant for the shift toward sustained interaction between Native and colonial peoples in Narragansett Country. Its history presents a case study in the complex interpersonal and highly localized disagreements over space and place leading to—and indeed, extending from—incidents of violence.



Left: Excavated walls of Jireh Bull site. (Rhode Island Historical Society Collection, RHi X 17 1694).

Notes

1. On the role of garrison houses in King Philip's War, see Colin A. Porter, “‘Monuments to a Nation Gone By’: Garrison Houses, King Philip's War, and the Remaking of a New England Frontier, 1675-1725” (PhD diss., Brown University, Providence, R.I., 2013). For a description of the practice of conscripting and garrisoning soldiers, see Kyle F. Zelner, *A Rabble in Arms: Massachusetts Towns and Militiamen During King Philip's War* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).
2. The Narragansett Campaign, as this military enterprise has come to be called, is detailed in Douglas Edward Leach, *Flintlock and Tomahawk: New England in King Philip's War* (New York: Macmillan, 1958); James D. Drake, *King Philip's War: Civil War in New England, 1675-1676* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), and Eric B. Schultz and Mike Tougas, *King Philip's War: The History and Legacy of America's Forgotten Conflict* (Woodstock, Vt.: Countryman Press, 1999).
3. For a general description of the Great Swamp Fight, or “Massacre,” see, for example, Leach, *Flintlock and Tomahawk*, 128-135. Alternative interpretations emphasizing long-term, and Native-centered perspectives on the massacre can be found in Christine DeLucia, “The Memory Frontier: Uncommon Pursuits of Past and Place in the Northeast after King Philip's War,” *Journal of American History* 98, no. 4 (2012): 975-97; Ruth Wallis Herndon and

- Ella Wilcox Sekatau, "The Right to a Name: The Narragansett People and Rhode Island Officials in the Revolutionary Era," *Ethnohistory* 44, no. 3 (1997): 433-62; and Patricia E. Rubertone, "Monuments and Sexual Politics in New England Indian Country," in *The Archaeology of Colonialism: Intimate Encounters and Sexual Effects*, ed. Barbara L. Voss and Eleanor Conlin Casella (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 232-51.
4. Drake, *King Philip's War*, 169.
 5. Margaret M. Bruchac, *Historical Erasure and Cultural Recovery: Indigenous People in the Connecticut River Valley* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI/Proquest, 2007); Colin Calloway, ed., *After King Philip's War: Presence and Persistence in Indian New England* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1997); DeLucia, "The Memory Frontier."
 6. Kenneth L. Feder, *A Village of Outcasts: Historical Archaeology and Documentary Research at the Lighthouse Site* (Mountain View, Calif.: Mayfield, 1994); Christina J. Hodge, "Faith and Practice at an Early Eighteenth-Century Wampanoag Burial Ground: The Waldo Farm Site in Dartmouth, Massachusetts," *Historical Archaeology* 39, no. 4 (2005): 73-94; Stephen A. Mrozowski, Holly Herbster, David Brown, and Katherine L. Priddy, "Magunkaquoq Materiality, Federal Recognition, and the Search for a Deeper History," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 13 (2009): 430-63; Christine N. Reiser, "Rooted in Movement: Spatial Practices and Community Persistence in Native Southwestern New England" (PhD diss., Brown University, Providence, R.I., 2010).
 7. Russell G. Handsman and Trudie Lamb Richmond, "Confronting Colonialism: The Mahican and Schaghticoke Peoples and Us," in *Making Alternate Histories: The Practice of Archaeology and History*, ed. Peter R. Schmidt and Thomas Carl Patterson, (Santa Fe, N. M.: School of American Research Press, 1992), 87-117; Patricia E. Rubertone, "Memorializing the Narragansett: Placemaking and Memory Keeping in the Aftermath of Detribalization," in *Archaeologies of Placemaking: Monuments, Memories, and Engagements in Native North America*, ed. Patricia E. Rubertone (Walnut Creek, Calif.: Left Coast Press, 2008), 195-216.
 8. DeLucia, "The Memory Frontier"; Porter, "'Monuments to a Nation Gone By.'"
 9. On the indigenous cultural landscape of southern New England, see, for example: Kathleen J. Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England, 1500-1650* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996); Daniel R. Mandell, *Tribe, Race, History: Native Americans in Southern New England, 1780-1880* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011); Laurence M. Hauptman and James D. Wherry, eds., *The Pequots in Southern New England: The Fall and Rise of an American Indian Nation* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993); Patricia E. Rubertone, *Grave Undertakings: An Archaeology of Roger Williams and the Narragansett Indians* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001); and Alden T. Vaughan, *New England Encounters: Indians and Euroamericans ca. 1600-1850, Essays Drawn from The New England Quarterly* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1999).
 10. On conflicts over the archaeology and interpretation of the Narragansett Indians, see: John B.

Brown III and Paul A. Robinson, "'The 368 Years' War': The Conditions of Discourse in Narragansett Country," in *Cross-Cultural Collaboration: Native Peoples and the Archaeology in the Northeastern United States*, ed. Jordan E. Kerber (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 59-75; Herndon and Sekatau, "The Right to a Name"; Patricia E. Rubertone, "Grave Remembrances: Enduring Traditions Among the Narragansett," *Connecticut History* 35, no. 1 (1994): 22-45, and Rubertone, *Grave Undertakings*.

11. Doug Harris and Paul Robinson, "Nipsachuck: A Place of Ceremony and War during King Philip's War, 1675-1676," Lecture, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, November 10, 2011. Richard Greenwood, Doug Harris, Sarah Holmes, Albert Klyberg, David Naumec, and Paul Robinson, "The Battles of Nipsachuck: Research and Documentation," National Park Service, American Battlefield Protection Program, Technical Report, GA-2255-09-023(2011). <http://nsconservation.org/Documents/110812%20Final%20Report.pdf>. Accessed April 4, 2012.
12. Richard S. Dunn, "John Winthrop, Jr., and the Narragansett Country," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 3d ser., 13, no. 1 (January 1, 1956): 68-86.
13. Elisha Reynolds Potter, *The Early History of Narragansett; with an Appendix of Original Documents, Many of Which are now for the First Time Published*, Rhode Island Historical Society Collections 3 (Providence: Marshall, Brown and Company, 1835), 17.
14. Sydney V. James, *The Colonial Metamorphoses in Rhode Island: A Study of Institutions in Change*, edited by Shelia L. Skemp and Bruce Colin Daniels (Hanover,

N.H.: University Press of New England, 2000), 82-100.

15. James, *Colonial Metamorphoses*, 53-56.
16. The changing colonial conception of the borders of Narragansett Country can be found in Sarah Kemble Knight, *The Journal of Madam Knight: A Woman's Treacherous Journey By Horseback from Boston to New York in the Year 1704* (Bedford, Mass.: Applewood, 1992).
17. Thomas Williams Bicknell, *The History of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations*, vol. 2 (New York: American Historical Society, 1920), 472; Sidney S. Rider, *The Lands of Rhode Island: As They were Known to Caunonicus and Miantunnomu when Roger Williams came in 1636. An Indian Map of the Principal Locations Known to the Nahigansets, and Elaborate Historical Notes* (Providence: Sydney S. Rider, 1904), 235; Leach, *Flintlock and Tomahawk*; William Miller, *Ancient Paths to Pequot* (Providence: Society of Colonial Wars in the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, 1936).
18. For examples of the use of Native messengers, see John Russell Bartlett, ed., *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, in New England*, 10 vols. (Providence: Rhode Island General Assembly, 1856-1865), 1: 421-24; and Daniel Berkeley Updike, *Richard Smith: First English Settler of the Narragansett Country, Rhode Island, With a Series of Letters Written by His Son Richard Smith, Jr., to Members of the Winthrop Family and Notes on Cocumscussoc, Smith's Estate in Narragansett* (Boston: Merrymount, 1937), 79-88.
19. See Lisa Brooks, *The Common Pot: Recovering Native Space in the*

Northeast (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 60.

20. The earliest deed at Pettaquamscutt refers to Wemosit (the name I have used throughout this article for the sake of consistency), by the name, "Quassaquanch" (a derivation of Suckquansh). Other colonial documents call him "Pessicus." Wemosit and Kachanaquant were brothers of Miantonomi, one of the two powerful Narragansett sachems. Another brother, Quequakanut, sometimes called "Gideon" by the English, was either a son or grandson of Canonibus, the other of the two principal Narragansett sachems. Potter, *Early History of Narragansett*, 172.
21. Potter, *Early History of Narragansett*, 110, 290.
22. Land deeds related to the Pettaquamscutt Purchases are extracted in Potter, *Early History of Narragansett*, 276-77.
23. J. R. Cole, *History of Washington and Kent Counties, Rhode Island* (New York: W. W. Preston, 1889), 483.
24. Bartlett, *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island*, 1: 451-53.
25. Potter, *Early History of Narragansett*, 277.
26. Some of the confusion—and anger—appears to concern which sachems signed deeds when and to which areas of land. For example, while Quequaquenuet signed the original 1658 land deed to Pettaquamscutt, his mark appeared on no other deeds conveying further lands. Potter, *Early History of Narragansett*, 275-77.
27. On the genealogy of Henry Bull, see: John Osborne Austin, *The Genealogical Dictionary of Rhode Island: Comprising Three Generations of Settlers Who Came Before 1690, with many Families Carried to the Fourth Generation*, ed. George Andrews Moriarty and Albert Klyberg (Baltimore: Clearfield, 2008); Henry Bull, *The Bull Family of Newport* (Newport: Newport Historical Society, 1931); George Dillahunt, *A Genealogical and Biographical History of Henry Bull of Rhode Island and his Descendants* (Virginia Beach: Published by the Author, 1982); Robert Swisher, *The Newport, Rhode Island Ancestors of Nathan Bull III* (Richmond: R. E. Swisher, 1986); and W. G. H., "Gov. Henry Bull and his Descendants," *Rhode Island Historical Magazine* 5 (July, 1884): 12-17.
28. Austin, *Genealogical Dictionary of Rhode Island*, 267.
29. Potter, *Early History of Narragansett*, 251.
30. Potter, *Early History of Narragansett*, 260.
31. A record of the land deeds is given in Burlingame, Isham, and Cannon, *A Preliminary Report on the Excavations at the House of Jireh Bull on Tower Hill in Rhode Island*. (Providence, Society of Colonial Wars in the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, 1918), 15.
32. Dorothy Washington, ed., *Rhode Island Land Evidences: Abstracts, 1648-1696*, vol. 1 (Providence: Rhode Island Historical Society, 1921), 72.
33. See for example, Burlingame, Isham, and Cannon, *A Preliminary Report*, 14.
34. Bartlett, *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island*, 1: 390.
35. Potter, *Early History of Narragansett*, 71. Connecticut also appointed Bull Conservator of the Peace on May 13, 1672. J. Hammond Trumbull, *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, 1665-1678, with*

the *Journal of the Council of War, 1675 to 1678; Transcribed and Edited, in Accordance with a Resolution of the General Assembly, with Notes and an Appendix* (Hartford: F. A. Brown, 1852), 198.

36. Henry C. Dorr, "The Narragansetts," *Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society* 7 (1885): 205; Potter, *Early History of Narragansett*, 71; Bartlett, *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island*, 2: 267.

37. Potter, *Early History of Narragansett*, 72.

38. Records from this occurrence give the alias "Suckquash" for Wemosit. Potter, *Early History of Narragansett*, 72.; Bartlett, *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island*, 2:281.

39. Trumbull, *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, 1665-1678*, 338.

40. Roger Williams to John Winthrop, June 27, 1675, in *The Correspondence of Roger Williams*, ed. Glenn W. LaFantasie, et. al. (Providence: The Rhode Island Historical Society by Brown University Press/University Press of New England, 1988), 2: 698.

41. Washington, *Rhode Island Land Evidences: Abstracts, 1648-1696*, 1:111-12.

42. Trumbull, *Public Records*, 372.

43. For a seventeenth-century description of this strategy, see William Hubbard, *A Narrative of the Indian Wars in New-England, From the First Planting Thereof, in the year 1607, to the year 1677. Containing the Occasion, Rise and Progress of the War with the Indians, in the Southern, Western, Eastern and Northern Parts of Said Country* (Danbury, Conn.: Stiles Nichols, 1803); Increase Mather, *A Brief History of the Warr with the Indians in New-England*,

(*From June 24, 1675, when the first English-man was murdered by the Indians, to August 12, 1676, when Philip, alias Metacomet, the principal Author and Beginner of the Warr, was slain.*) *Wherein the Grounds, Beginning, and Progress of the Warr, is summarily expressed. Together with a Serious Exhortation to the Inhabitants of that Land* (Boston: John Foster, 1676), *Early English Books Online*, <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>. Date accessed April 12, 2012.

44. Rev. William Hubbard, one of the earliest historians of King Philip's War, gives the most-often cited number of seventeen killed. The narrative also gives a range in the supposed date of the attack, which is more rarely noted. *A Narrative of the Indian Wars in New-England, From the First Planting Thereof, in the year 1607, to the year 1677. Containing the Occasion, Rise and Progress of the War with the Indians, in the Southern, Western, Eastern and Northern Parts of Said Country* (Danbury: Stiles Nichols, 1803 [1677]), 124-25. *Google Books*, <http://books.google.com/books?id=l6g6AAAAcAAJ>, accessed 20 October 2013. Caroline Hazard gives a much lower number of seven killed. Caroline Hazard, *Thomas Hazard, son of Robt call'd College Tom: A study of life in Narragansett in the XVIIIth century* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1893), 10.

45. "The House of Jireh Bull on Tower Hill in Rhode Island," *The Reporter: Quarterly Journal of the Pettaquamscutt Historical Society* (Autumn 1989): 1-6.

46. Porter, "Monuments to a Nation Gone By," 34-71.

47. John Easton, "A Relacion of the Indyan Warre, by Mr. Easton, of Roade Isld., 1675." In *Narratives of the Indian Wars, 1675-1699*, ed. Charles H. Lincoln (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), 16.

48. William Hubbard, *The History of the Indian Wars in New England: From the First Settlement to the Termination of the War With King Philip, in 1677*, by Rev. William Hubbard, Carefully Revised, and Accompanied with an Historical Preface, Life and Pedigree of the Author and Extensive Notes, ed. Samuel G. Drake (Roxbury, [Mass.]: W. E. Woodward, 1865), 142, n. 224.

49. John Allyn, Examination of Pessicus's Messenger, Wuttawawaigkessuek Sucqunch, 29 April 1676, *Yale Indian Papers Project*, <http://jake.library.yale.edu:8080/neips/data/html/1676.04.29.01/1676.04.29.01.html>, date accessed, 20 October 2013.

50. Franklin B. Hough, *A Narrative of the Causes which led to Philip's Indian War, of 1675 and 1676, By John Easton, of Rhode Island. With other Documents concerning this Event in the Office of the Secretary of State of New York. Prepared from the Originals, with an Introduction and Notes* (Albany: J. Munsell, 1858), 181.

51. Potter, *Early History of Narragansett*, 288.

52. The reason for the discrepancy between the acreage reported by Bull in 1678 (five hundred acres) and by his sons in 1684 (592 acres) is unknown. No land deeds indicate that Bull acquired additional property. However, the specificity of the latter number indicates it may have been surveyed sometime between the two dates to provide a more accurate calculation.

53. Washington, *Rhode Island Land Evidences: Abstracts, 1648-1696*, 1:183-84.

54. How Jireh Bull, Jr. came into possession of a total of 708 acres remains uncertain, but this total may represent the surveyed area of Jireh Bull's 500-acre wooded plot deeded in 1668. When the land was

first laid out, it was partitioned into hundred-acre chunks with little attention given to the boundaries, none of which were surveyed at that time. Thus, it is possible Jireh Bull's estate was much larger than he knew.

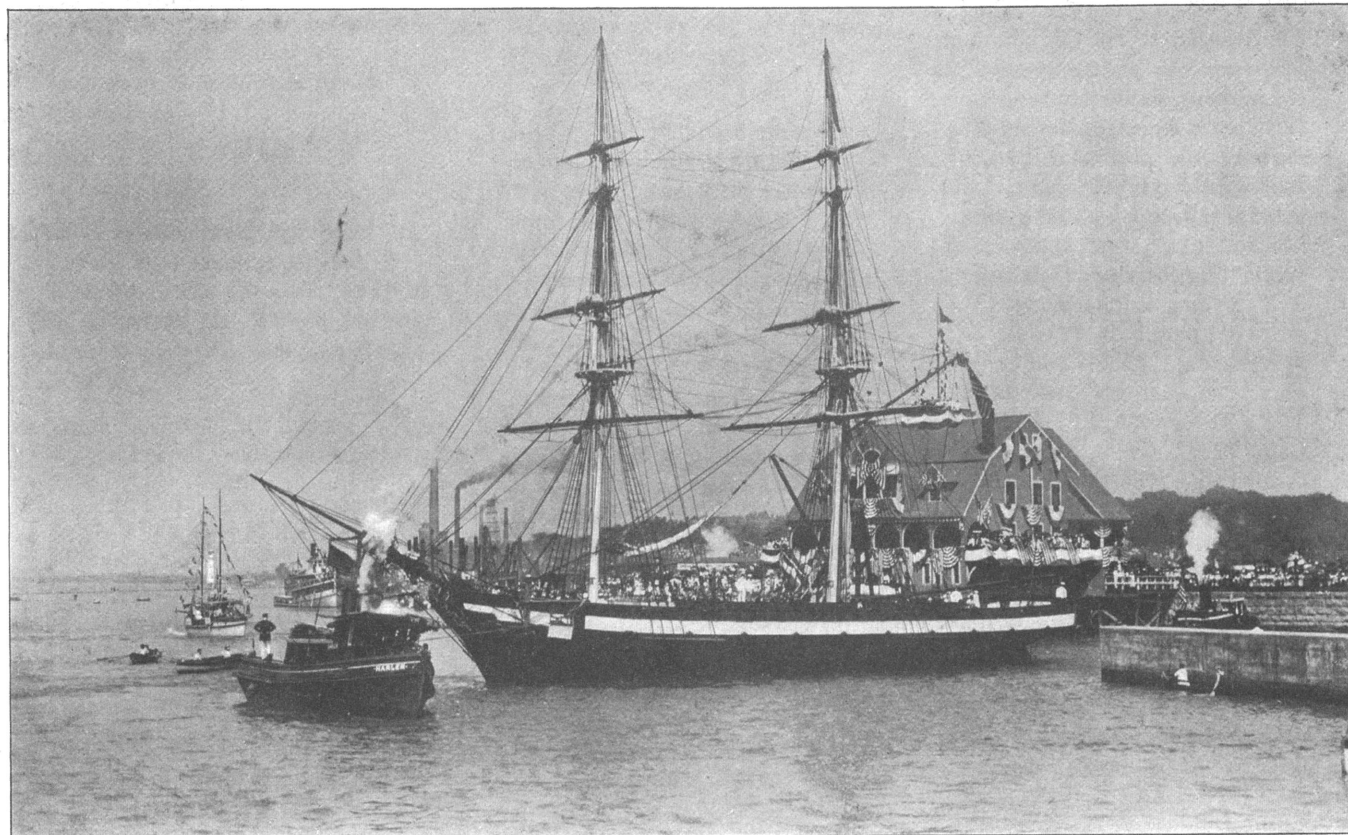
55. Researchers have argued that Ephraim Bull came into possession of Jireh Bull's house and lot. See Elizabeth Reid, "The Jireh Bull Site Reanalyzed: The Formation of a Seventeenth-Century Frontier." (M.A. thesis, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, 1987). However, the location of Ephraim Bull's land can be ascertained from a 1693 land deed between Ezekiel Bull and Joseph Case, which specifies the location of Ezekiel Bull's holding as immediately north of Ephraim Bull's land. Washington, *Rhode Island Land Evidences: Abstracts, 1648-1696*, 1:231. The location of Joseph Case's farm is well-established in documentary records as having been a short distance west of the original Jireh Bull house site. Insofar as Ephraim Bull did not acquire any additional land, he cannot have lived at the Jireh Bull house site.

56. Bartlett, *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island*, 1: 415.

57. *A Plat of the land of Capt. Henry Bull at Pettaquamscutt: drawn by James Helme, surveyor, January 8, 1729.* (Providence: Society of Colonial Wars in the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, 1928); J. R. Cole, *History of Washington and Kent Counties, Rhode Island, Including their Early Settlement and Progress to the Present Time; a Description of their Historic and Interesting Localities; Sketches of Their Towns and Villages; Portraits of Some of their Prominent Men, and Biographies of Many of their Representative Citizens.* (New York: W. W. Preston, 1889), 552.

58. See Brown and Robinson, "The 368 Years' War": The Conditions of Discourse in Narragansett Country," in *Cross-Cultural Collaboration: Native Peoples and Archaeology in the Northeastern United States*, edited by Jordan E. Kerber (Lincoln: Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska, 2006), 59-75.

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THE PERRY FLAGSHIP "NIAGARA"
Arriving at her anchorage at the Buffalo Yacht Club

The *Niagara* arriving at its anchorage at the Buffalo Yacht Club in 1913 for the centennial celebration of Oliver Hazard Perry's victory in the Battle of Lake Erie. (*The Perry's Victory Centenary*, Report of the Perry's Victory Centennial Commission, State of New York, compiled by George D. Emerson, Albany: J. R. Lyon Company, Printers, 1914).

The War of 1812 and Rhode Island:

A Bicentennial Bust

PATRICK T. CONLEY

Rhode Island's observance of the bicentennial of the War of 1812 has been about as enthusiastic as the state's support for the war itself. The current commemoration of the conflict, hailed by historians as "America's Second War for Independence," is in sharp contrast to Rhode Island's enthusiastic observance of our first War for Independence—the American Revolution. As the volunteer chairman of the Rhode Island Bicentennial Commission (1976), I had the pleasure and good fortune to be involved in the myriad of activities associated with America's birthday. These included the largest gathering of Tall Ships in our history, huge parades and reenactments, numerous historical publications, a comprehensive commemorative athletic program, the refurbishing and ground-level display of the *Independent Man*, dozens of cultural events staged by the eighteen specially created Rhode Island ethnic heritage committees, and innumerable local bicentennial activities in the only American state where every municipality became an official bicentennial community. And these were merely the highlights!

The commemoration of the War of 1812, our country's "Second War for Independence," was not enhanced or coordinated by a volunteer state bicentennial commission and elicited very little interest in the state. There were a few notable exceptions: the war exhibit prepared at the Woonsocket Museum of Work and Culture, the reenactments at Lincoln's Hearthside Mansion, and a Newport-based nonprofit group's construction of a 132-foot steel-hulled sail training vessel named the *Oliver Hazard Perry*. Launched in July, 2013, it will

endure as a suitable (and expensive) reminder of the famed Rhode Island commodore's crucial victory in the Battle of Lake Erie on September 10, 1813.¹

Other events in Rhode Island also commemorated the two-hundredth anniversary of the War of 1812. In the late summer of 2013, fifteen months into the war's bicentennial era, Commodore Perry provided another cause for contemplation, if not for celebration. The 200th anniversary of Perry's Lake Erie victory prompted the Rhode Island Department of the Military Order of Foreign Wars to stage an observance at Eisenhower Park in Newport, Perry's boyhood home. The event featured a talk by Professor John B. Hattendorf, chairman of the maritime history department at the Naval War College. Dr. Hattendorf noted that the September 10, 2013 ceremony was "a far cry from Newport's centennial celebration of the event."

Newport's Redwood Library prepared a long-running Perry exhibit, also in the summer of 2013; and the Pettaquamscutt Historical Society of South Kingstown, the place of Perry's birth, organized an exhibit, "War of 1812: A Nation Forged by War," that was fittingly broader in scope. On September 10th, the Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame voted to induct Captain William Henry Allen, another naval hero, whose exploits in waters around the British Isles during the conflict have largely gone unnoticed. Allen joined other subjects of this essay (slave trader James DeWolf excepted) on the Hall of Fame's roster of eminent Rhode Islanders.²

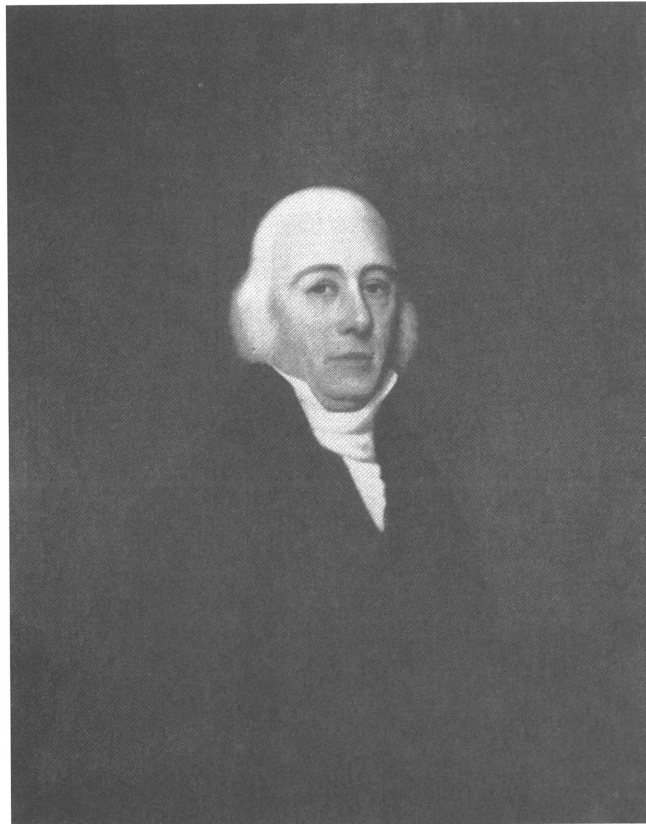
Although Rhode Island's commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the War of 1812 to

date has been somewhat muted, this article serves as a commemorative essay of sorts. Despite strong opposition to the War of 1812 in Rhode Island, there were several key individuals from the state who made significant contributions to the war effort. While this article will address the state's disinclination to support the War of 1812, it will also highlight the actions of a handful of Rhode Islanders who made substantial and even heroic contributions to the federal war effort despite the opposition of the state's civil leaders and its people to the conflict.

TWO CENTURIES AGO most Rhode Islanders opposed the War of 1812 and derisively called it "Mr. Madison's War." The unsuccessful policies of economic coercion employed by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison from 1807 onward, aimed at pressuring warring England and France to respect American neutral rights on the high seas, crippled Rhode Island's commerce. England's impressment of American seamen into the Royal Navy and seizures of American merchant vessels by both England and France nonetheless persisted. This deliberate violation of American rights prompted Madison to propose, and Congress to approve, a declaration of war against England, the greater and more vulnerable offender, in June 1812.

The agrarian based Democratic-Republican Party of Jefferson and Madison generally supported the vote for war in the U.S. Congress. The commercially oriented Federalist Party opposed it. Federalists feared war with England, the "Mistress of the Seas," would destroy all American commerce and expose its eastern coastline to English raids.³

In Rhode Island's elections of 1811, the Federalist Party seized control of state government from the Democratic-Republicans in reaction to the commercial and allegedly pro-French policies of Jefferson and Madison. Under the Federalist leadership of Governor William Jones and the powerful, like-minded General Assembly, Rhode Island opposed the war in various ways, beginning



William Jones, a Revolutionary War veteran, was Governor of Rhode Island during the War of 1812. (Ralph J. Mohr, *Rhode Island Governors for Three Hundred Years 1638-1954*. Providence: Oxford University Press, 1954).

with a demonstration in the coastal towns where flags were flown at half-staff, church bells were tolled, and stores closed for a day, and later by refusing to provide militia until late in the war, and only with many conditions, or to give financial assistance to aid the American military effort. In November 1813 Jones delivered a Thanksgiving Day message that urged the president and American supporters of war to repent "for all their personal and national sins." In February 1814 the General Assembly voted against assuming the state's share of the federal tax to finance the war, rejecting an arrangement that "would release the general government from the odium of collecting the tax which their own mad policy has brought upon the country."⁴

Governor Jones's strong opposition to a second war with England is surprising in view of his distinguished record during the American Revolution. Jones first served as a captain in Colonel Daniel Hitchcock's Rhode Island Continental regiment. His active military term included a winter at Valley Forge. After serving in the army, Jones volunteered for duty as a Captain of Marines under the command of Commodore Abraham Whipple. It was an assignment that began with Jones's delivery of instructions to the American delegation in Paris in June 1778 after the ratification of the treaty of amity and commerce with France and ended with his capture by the British at the Battle of Charleston, South Carolina, in May 1780. Jones was a proud original member of the military Society of the Cincinnati. He held a diploma signed by George Washington and America's first secretary of war, Henry Knox. Jones's extreme patriotism during the War of Independence rendered his obstructionist policies during the War of 1812 and his subsequent pacifism even more perplexing.

In the years after the Revolutionary War, Jones gained political eminence in Rhode Island. During the Revolution the Jones family had moved from British-occupied Newport, Jones's birthplace, to the relative safety of Providence, where William Jones married Anne Dunn, maintained a profitable hardware business, and became active in politics as a Federalist. Prior to his election to the governorship, Jones had served as a representative from Providence in the General Assembly, and in May 1809 he was named Speaker of the House. His legislative leadership position facilitated his subsequent rapport with the General Assembly during the hotly disputed engagement with England that simmered during the early years of the nineteenth century and erupted into the War of 1812.⁵

Historian Harvey Strum has closely chronicled Rhode Island's litany of official opposition to the War of 1812. He has also documented the fact that some Rhode Island shippers actually supplied goods to the

British navy in the waters off Block Island during the war. A few resourceful merchants even arranged to have their ships "captured" by the British and then gave a portion of their cargo as ransom. Others carried on a brisk commercial relationship with Canada's maritime provinces. Such actions made some Rhode Islanders traitors as well as traders, but none were ever prosecuted as such.⁶

As the conflict continued, Rhode Island's Federalist political leaders moved from reluctance and defiance to action that bordered on disloyalty to the Union. In December 1814, Federalist delegations from the New England states (Rhode Island included) met in convention at Hartford, where they approved a series of states' rights proposals that would have seriously crippled the national war effort. Before these resolutions could be presented to Congress, however, news of Andrew Jackson's resounding victory at New Orleans and the signing of a peace treaty by our negotiators at Ghent discredited the Hartford conventioners and their demands. Defiant to the end, the Rhode Island General Assembly tabled a resolution congratulating General Jackson for his success.⁷

Individual Rhode Islanders did make contributions to the War of 1812, principally, although not entirely, on the home front. Rhode Island recruits of the Democratic-Republican persuasion, mostly farm boys, joined with Connecticut volunteers in a few regular units, notably the 25th Infantry Regiment. The unit distinguished itself in battles against the Duke of Wellington's Peninsular veterans on the Niagara frontier in 1814 at Chippewa, Lundy's Lane, and Fort Erie. For the most part, the men of the Ocean State (as it is now called) built and manned coastal fortifications from Newport to Providence. Stay-at-home regular forces in Rhode Island were called "sea-fencibles" in the language of the time, because they defended the coastline. Rhode Island militia activity (and it was considerable) consisted of helping these regulars staff the state's defenses.

These protective facilities extended from the future site of Newport's Fort Adams and the more heavily garrisoned Fort Wolcott on nearby Goat Island to the head of Narragansett Bay, where Fort William Henry on Field's Point guarded the entrance to Providence's harbor. Further northward, fortifications were constructed by militia and apprehensive citizen-volunteers on Fox Point and Kettle Point, the latter on what was then the Massachusetts bank of the Providence River.

The militia's only foreign foray came in September 1814, when Jones sent five companies to defend Stonington, Connecticut, from a threatened British attack. The militia's march was not long; Stonington is a coastal community located just across the Pawcatuck River from Westerly. As England took a more aggressive stance, Governor Jones did comply with Madison's 1814 draft call for 550 Rhode Island volunteers. Although the state corps was to serve under federal control, Jones mandated that the men would at no time leave the state, and that he would appoint the officers. Despite a recruitment bounty offered by the General Assembly, less than a third of the federally requested requisition was met by war's end.⁸

Given this historical scenario, Rhode Island's reluctance to memorialize the conflict in 2012 is understandable. The depth and persistence here of the current Great Recession also dampens enthusiasm for extended civic celebrations. Nevertheless, Rhode Island's situation in the war and the heroic exploits and achievements of a few Rhode Islanders during the War of 1812 should be appropriately noted and remembered.

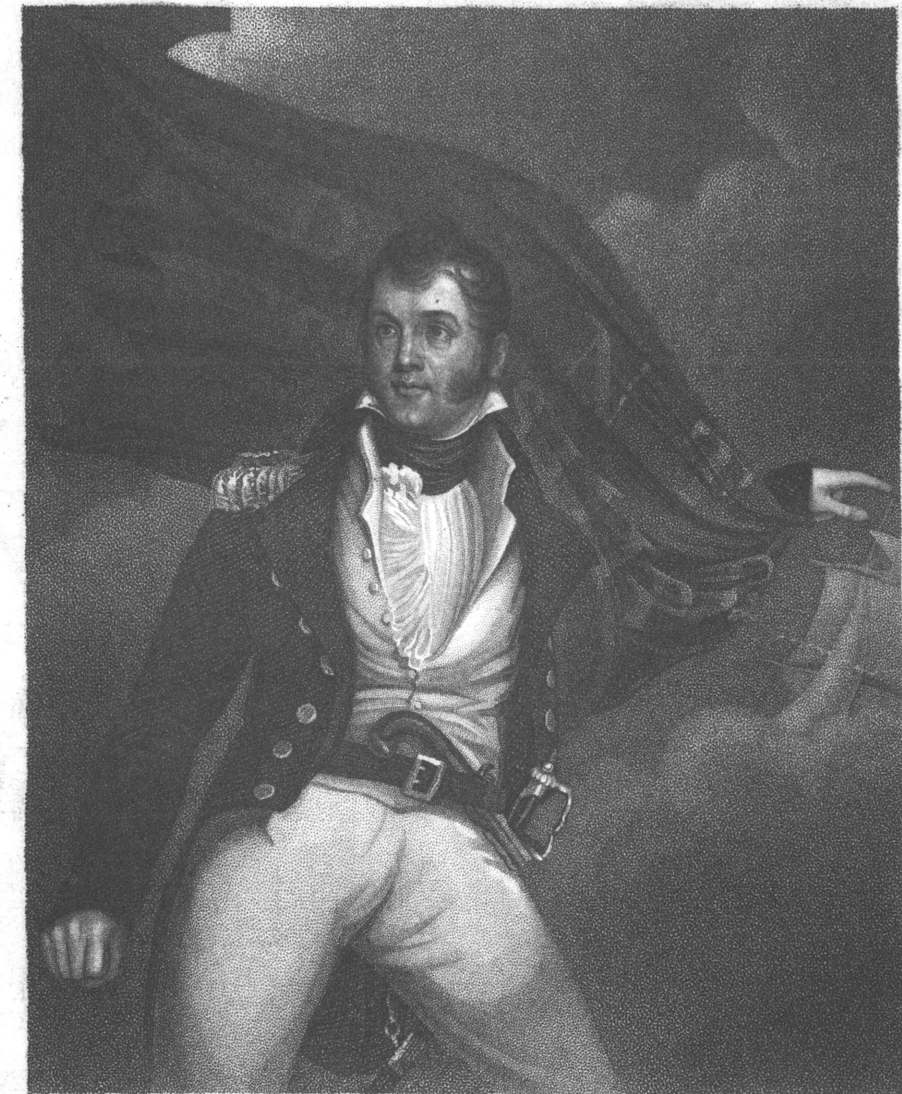
COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY is first and foremost of Rhode Island's heroes of the war. He was born in South Kingstown, Rhode Island, on August 23, 1785, the eldest son of Christopher Perry, a Revolutionary War sailor from an old-line Rhode Island family, and Sarah Wallace (Alexander) Perry, an immigrant from Ireland. Christopher

Perry met Sarah Alexander when he was confined to a British internment camp in Kinsale, Ireland, as a war prisoner. After the conflict Christopher sailed back to Ireland and brought Sarah to America to be his bride. Oliver Hazard Perry and his younger brother, Commodore Matthew C. Perry (1794-1858), who opened Japan to Western trade and influence, both received an educational foundation from their mother. The boys learned maritime sciences from their father and from schoolmasters in Newport, where the family eventually moved.

The newly created Navy Department (established in 1798 under Federalist auspices) appointed Oliver Hazard Perry a midshipman in April 1799 and assigned him to the Warren-built frigate *General Greene* commanded by his father. Perry saw combat during the limited naval war with France in 1799-1800. Then he served in the Mediterranean Sea and engaged in various skirmishes with the Barbary pirates of North Africa to prevent them from raiding American shipping. From 1807 until the outbreak of the War of 1812, Perry was assigned to duty along America's east coast. In 1811 he married Elizabeth Champlin Mason, a member of a prominent Newport family, with whom he had four sons and a daughter.

When the War of 1812 was declared, the experienced Perry sought a naval command, and in early 1813 his request was granted. Perry was given instructions to build, assemble, and lead a fleet on Lake Erie that would prevent the British and Canadians from launching an amphibious attack on the coastline of western New York, Pennsylvania, or Ohio. By September 1813 Perry commanded a squadron of ten ships, mounting fifty-five guns, which he stationed at Put-in-Bay,

Right: Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry of Newport was the most famed naval hero of the War of 1812. (Rhode Island Historical Society Collection. Engraving by J.B. Forrest, original by J. W. Jarvis. RHi X17 1692).



Engraved by J.B. Forrest from the original by J.W. Jarvis, by permission of the CORPORATION OF NEW-YORK.

OLIVER HAZARD PERRY, U.S.N.

O. H. Perry

JAMES HERRING NEW YORK. ENTERED ACCORDING TO THE ACT OF CONGRESS.

located off an island just north of present-day Port Clinton, Ohio.

From this base Perry engaged a British fleet under Captain Robert H. Barclay on September 10, 1813, in the famous Battle of Lake Erie. Lasting almost five hours, the encounter was marked by bitter fighting and heroic determination. Perry's flagship *Lawrence* was in the thick of the action, and when it was disabled, Perry jumped to the *Niagara* to complete his triumph. At 3:00 p.m., when Barclay surrendered his entire Lake Erie squadron, Perry sent his famous message to General William Henry Harrison (known as "Old Tippecanoe"), commander of the northwestern theater of war: "We have met the enemy and they are ours! Two ships, two brigs, one schooner, and one sloop." It is notable that three of Perry's nine ships were commanded by Rhode Island sailors—Thomas Brownell, Stephen Champlin, and Thomas Almy—and many of his seamen were Rhode Islanders.

Perry's great strategic victory transformed the twenty-eight-year-old sailor into an immediate American hero, elevating him to national prominence and earning him a captaincy and command of the frigate *Java*, which he sailed until war's end in 1815. Following a tour of duty in the Mediterranean with the *Java*, Perry was dispatched by President James Monroe to South America to open diplomatic relations with Simon Bolivar (called "the Liberator"), the leader of the colonial revolt against Spanish rule. After a journey into the interior of Venezuela, Perry contracted yellow fever. He died in August 1819; his crew buried him at Port-of-Spain on the island of Trinidad. In December 1826, Perry's remains were brought to Newport and reinterred there in Island Cemetery. Oliver Hazard Perry's death at the age of thirty-four cut short a most promising naval and diplomatic career.

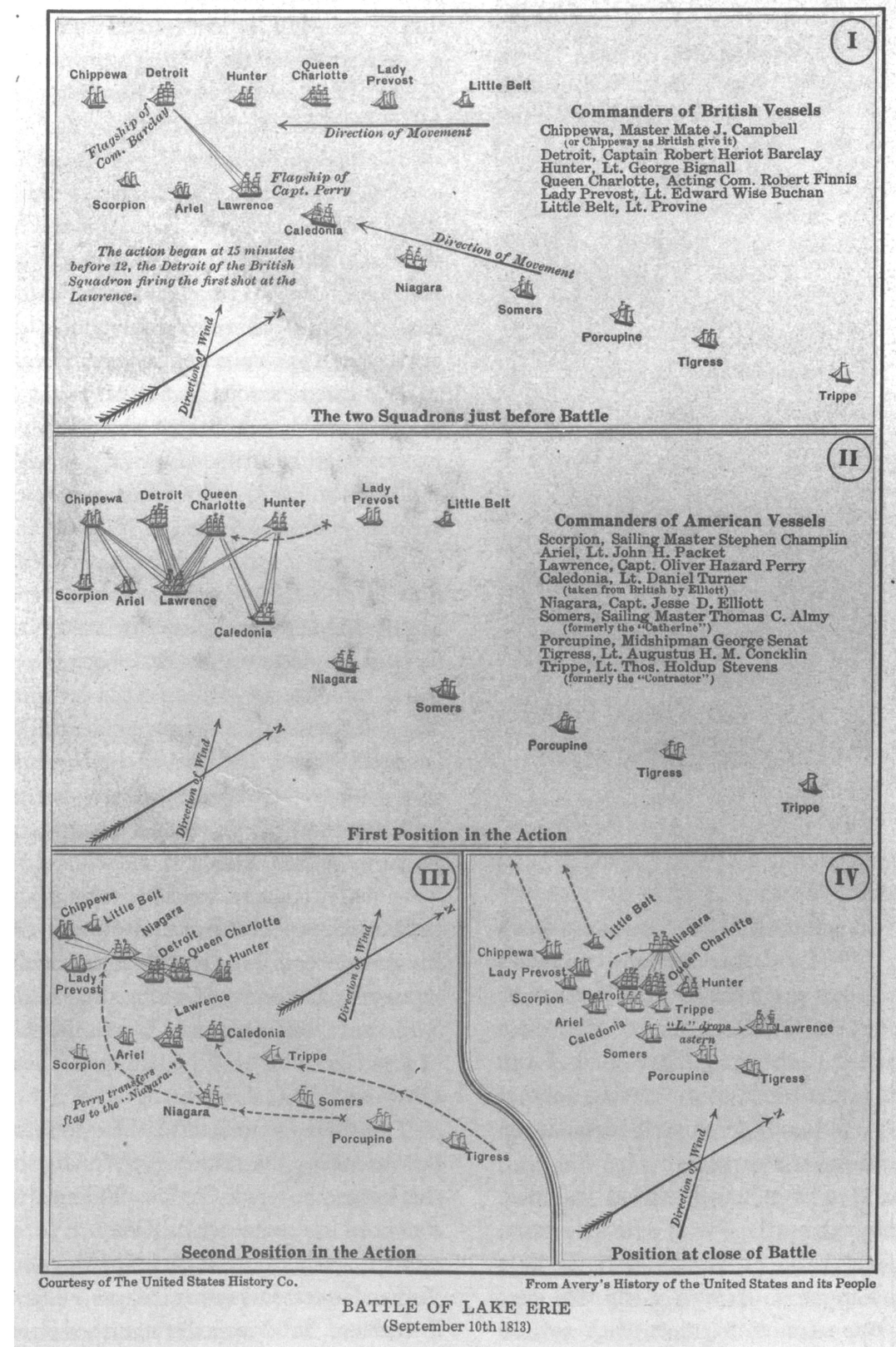
Perry's Lake Erie victory earned him an enduring place in the history of American military engagements. The success of Perry and his fleet in

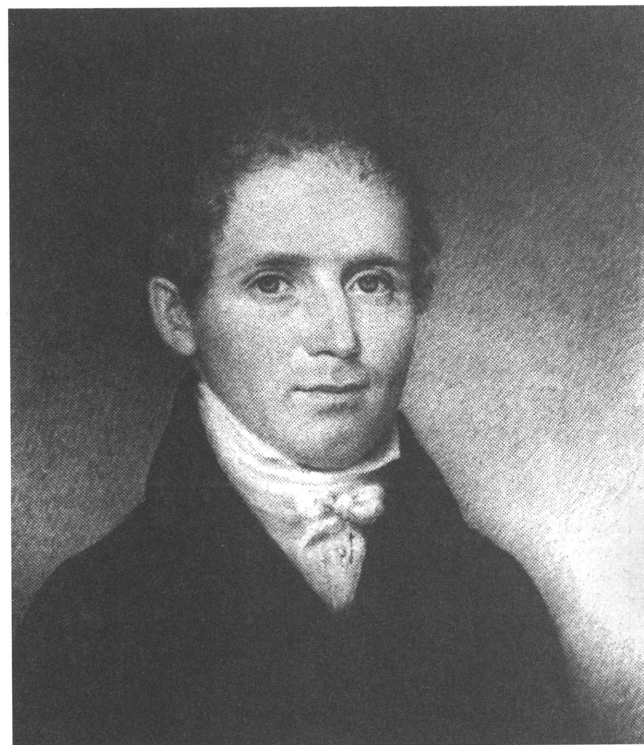
1813 enabled the American invasion of western Ontario by General Harrison, allowing Harrison's American army to defeat the British in the region thereby securing the Northwest Territory and opening the West to future American settlement. Gerard Altoff, former chief ranger at Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial on Lake Erie, near Port Clinton, has become the leading authority on the crucial skirmish, while former Rhode Island Historical Society curator Nathaniel Shipton has documented the role of Rhode Islanders in that fateful encounter.⁹

The battle on Lake Erie also produced another Rhode Island naval hero, albeit one of lesser rank and renown than Perry. Although not a native of the state, Usher Parsons was destined to become Rhode Island's foremost physician of the early nineteenth century. Born in Alfred, Maine on August 18, 1788, Usher was the youngest of nine children born to Abigail Blunt and William Parsons, a farmer and trader. Although Usher had little formal schooling, he began the study of medicine as an apprentice to a physician in Alfred and then trained with Dr. John Warren of Boston. Parsons was licensed to practice by the Massachusetts Medical Society in 1812. He immediately joined the navy where he gained valuable experience as a surgeon's mate for Oliver Hazard Perry in the Battle of Lake Erie. Parsons's distinguished naval service earned him not only a medal and prize money, but also a promotion to the rank of surgeon as well as Commodore Perry's praise and friendship.

Parsons's performance in the pivotal battle was extraordinary. At the time of the engagement, a temporary illness afflicted his two associate medics on Perry's flagship *Lawrence*. Twenty-five-year-old Parsons undertook the entire duty of attending to

Right: A diagram and plan of the Battle of Lake Erie. (From *The Perry's Victory Centenary*, Report of the Perry's Victory Centennial Commission, State of New York, compiled by George D. Emerson, Albany: J. R. Lyon Company, Printers, 1914).





Usher Parsons served as a surgeon's mate under Oliver Hazard Perry at the Battle of Lake Erie; he went on to become a distinguished physician in Rhode Island. (Image of Usher Parsons at about the time he joined the navy as a surgeon's mate in 1812. From a miniature by an unknown artist, in the Dwight-Parsons Collection, Brown University Archives).

nearly a hundred wounded men and as many more sailors sick with fever. In a letter to the secretary of the Navy, Commodore Perry praised Parsons's heroic effort: "Of Dr. Usher Parsons, surgeon's mate, I cannot say too much . . . [I]t must be pleasing to you, sir, to reflect, that of the whole number wounded, only three have died. I can only say that, in the event of my having another command, I should consider myself fortunate in having him with me as a surgeon."

After several years of naval service, including duty with Perry against the North African pirates, and a European cruise on Commodore Thomas MacDonough's frigate *Guerrière*, a trip that gave Parsons the opportunity to meet with several

prominent English and French physicians, Parsons earned his M.D. at Harvard in 1818. He became a professor of surgery and anatomy at Dartmouth College in 1820, staying in New Hampshire for a brief period before coming to Providence in 1822 to assume a professorship at Brown University's short-lived medical school. Also in 1822, Parsons married Mary Holmes of Cambridge, Massachusetts, elder sister of Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr., the eminent poet and father of the noted jurist. Mary died in 1825, leaving Usher with one son, Charles, who also became a prominent physician. His wife's death so devastated Parsons that he never remarried.

At a time when the field of medicine was becoming professionalized, Parsons was active in national as well as local Rhode Island medical circles. In 1820 Parsons published *Sailor's Physician*, a manual of sea medicine for use on merchant vessels. Re-titled *Physician for Ships*, the volume went through four editions and remained a standard work in its field for decades. Dr. Parsons was president of the Rhode Island Medical Society from 1837 to 1839, a founder and president of the Providence Medical Society, and one of the organizers of the American Medical Association, serving as its acting president in 1854. He also led the campaign for the establishment of Rhode Island Hospital and lived just long enough to see his dream realized when the hospital opened in the autumn of 1868. Usher Parsons's eventful life is the subject of a biography written by Dr. Seebert Goldowsky, entitled *Yankee Surgeon* (1988). Parsons's War of 1812 diary has been edited and published by prominent military historian John C. Fredriksen.¹⁰

The Ocean State's third U.S. naval hero is less known locally than either Perry or Parsons, but he was no less intrepid. Captain William Henry Allen was born in Providence on October 21, 1784. His mother, Sarah Jones Allen was the sister of Governor William Jones. His father, Major William Allen of Providence, had been a distinguished Revolutionary

War soldier who was a brigadier general of militia and sheriff of Providence County.

From an early age, William Allen sought a naval career. Little is known of his education, but his surviving journals and letters reveal a skilled penman and artist whose sketches in his writings were well executed. Despite serious misgivings, Allen's influential parents prevailed upon U.S. Senator Ray Greene to secure his appointment as a midshipman in April 1800. The purpose of the fifteen-year-old Allen's first cruise—a voyage from Philadelphia to North Africa aboard the *George Washington*—was to bring tribute to the Dey of Algiers so that the dey's pirates would not attack American shipping. In June 1807, as an officer on the U.S.S. *Chesapeake*, Allen allegedly fired the only shot at the H.M.S. *Leopard* when the British warship boldly impressed American seamen from the decks of Allen's U.S. naval vessel. The incident precipitated the crisis with England that led to President Jefferson's December 1807 embargo.

During the early part of the War of 1812, Allen served as Captain Stephen Decatur's first lieutenant on the frigate *United States* the American vessel that gained a decisive victory over the British ship *Macdonian*. Allen himself brought the British warship into Newport as a prize on December 6, 1812. For his distinguished service, Allen soon earned his own vessel, the brig *Argus*, a two-masted light cruising vessel, 95½ feet long on the upper deck, where eighteen 24-pound cannon and two 12-pound long guns were mounted.

Allen and his ship have been memorialized by naval historian Ira Dye in a meticulously researched book entitled *The Fatal Cruise of the Argus: Two Captains in the War of 1812* (1994). As Dye recounts, Allen boldly sailed his new command into the waters off the British Isles, where he became a scourge to England in the summer of 1813. By mid-August he had attacked twenty vessels—burning, sinking, or destroying the cargo of all but two of



Captain William Henry Allen of Providence was a naval hero of the War of 1812. (This engraving of Allen was done in January 1814 as the frontispiece of a publication entitled *The Portfolio*. It is probably based upon a self-portrait sketch. Courtesy of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library).

them. This tally, asserts Dye, "was more than any other single American warship of any size had done or was to do" during the War of 1812.

Then, in the summer of 1813, Allen made a fatal decision. On August 14, he rashly chose to turn and fight, rather than easily evade, a larger pursuing British warship, the H.M.S. *Pelican*, under the command of Captain John Maples. In a pitched battle the out-gunned *Argus* was beaten, and the *Pelican* took ninety-seven prisoners. Twelve American sailors were killed, including

Allen, who succumbed to wounds four days after the encounter. Ironically, the foes of the heroic Captain Allen gave him a huge military funeral in Plymouth, England, where he now lies buried in St. Andrew's Churchyard, despite the wishes of some to return his remains to Rhode Island for reinterment, as Commodore Perry's body had been returned to Newport from Trinidad.¹¹

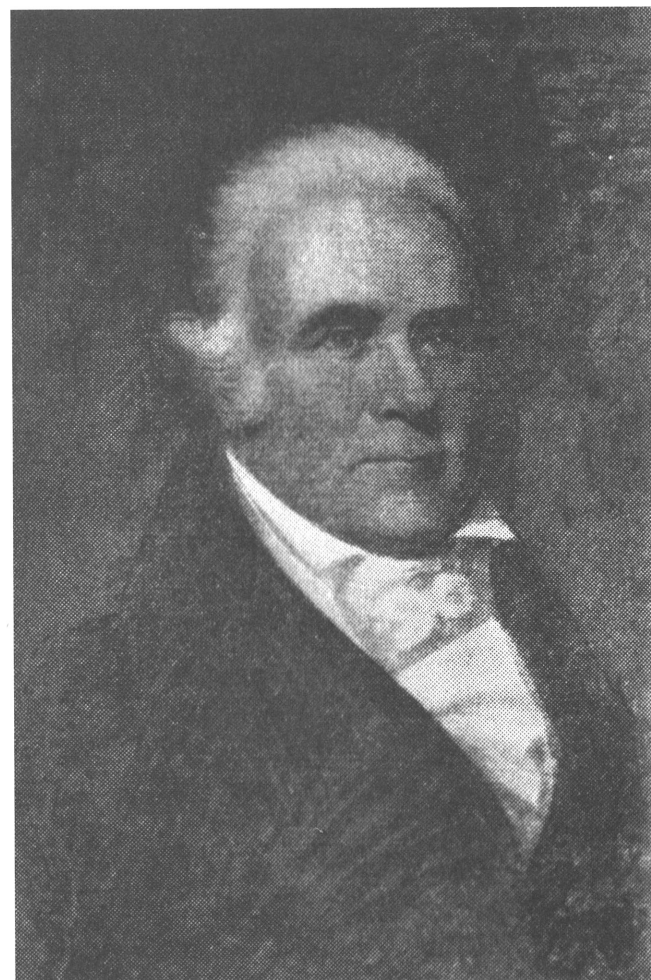
Captain Allen's prowess as a naval officer in the 1812 conflict was matched by Bristol merchant James DeWolf. In wars during the age of sail, it was common for a government to issue "letters of marque and reprisal" to private shipowners. These documents permitted the owners to outfit and arm their vessels—then called "privateers." These quasi-warships were thus empowered to attack commerce of the enemy. The most famous and successful privateer of the War of 1812—fittingly named the *Yankee*—belonged to James DeWolf.

"Captain Jim," as he was known locally, was a most unlikely hero. He was born in Bristol in 1764, the son of Mark Antony DeWolf and Abigail Potter, daughter of Simeon Potter, the town's preeminent merchant. James, who served on a privateer during the American Revolution, was destined for a career in commerce. However, while Providence merchants of his era engaged in the China trade, DeWolf preferred Africa. Prior to 1808, when Congress banned the foreign slave trade, DeWolf brought hundreds of slaves from Africa to Charleston, South Carolina. After 1808 he carried his black cargo to his sugar plantations in Cuba.

When the War of 1812 interrupted his usual and nefarious activity, DeWolf outfitted several privateers including the 160-ton brigantine *Yankee*, which he armed with eighteen six-and nine-pound guns. During her six voyages under four different captains, the *Yankee* seized thirty-six enemy prizes, though some were retaken by the British. These captures inflicted approximately five million dollars of losses upon England and brought about

one million dollars in prize money to DeWolf's home port. According to pioneer Bristol historian Wilfred A. Munro, the *Yankee* "inundated Bristol with her golden stream."

In 1821, the Rhode Island General Assembly, undisturbed by his unsavory past, chose the very wealthy and powerful DeWolf to be a United States senator. At the time of his election, he occupied the position of Speaker of the state's House of Representatives. DeWolf resigned from the U.S. Senate on October 31, 1825, and he returned to



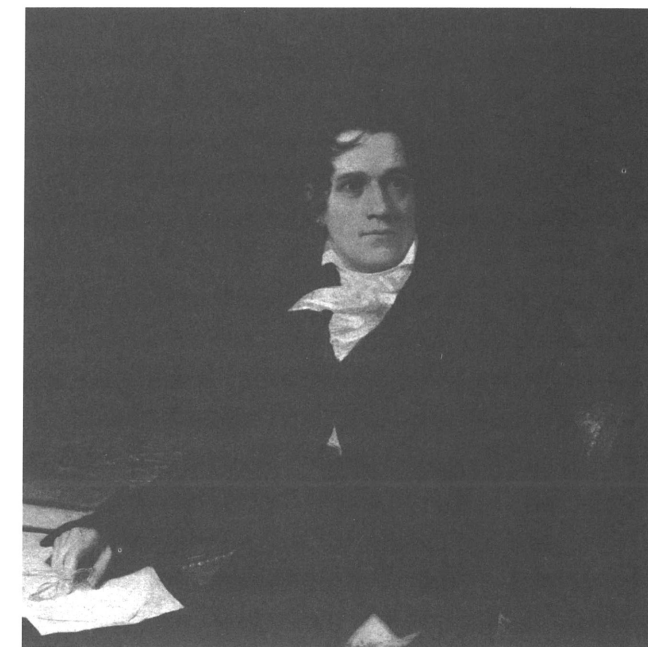
James DeWolf's privateer *Yankee* was extremely successful during the War of 1812. (M.A. DeWolfe Howe, *Bristol, Rhode Island: A Town Biography*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930).

the state legislature in 1829, where he served until his death on December 21, 1837.¹²

DESPITE THE STATE'S official disapproval of the War of 1812, Rhode Island produced one of the war's most persuasive legal defenders, Henry Wheaton. A Providence-born editor, lawyer, court reporter, jurist, diplomat, and expounder of international law, Henry Wheaton was the son of Seth Wheaton, a merchant, civic leader, and banker; Henry's mother was Abigail Wheaton, Seth's distant cousin. Henry Wheaton graduated from the College of Rhode Island (later Brown University) in 1802. He studied civil law in France in 1805-6, and then practiced law in Providence. In 1812, Henry Wheaton's legal defense of the maritime policies of Jefferson and Madison prompted Democratic-Republicans in New York City to offer him the editorship of the *National Advocate*, their local party newspaper.

Henry Wheaton wrote forcefully and with erudition on questions of international law growing out of the War of 1812. He was considered the mouthpiece of the Madison administration during his three-year wartime tenure with the *National Advocate*. Edward Everett, governor of Massachusetts and later, Gettysburg orator, recalled that the complex issues and duties created by the War of 1812 "were elucidated by him [Wheaton] with the learning of an accomplished publicist and the zeal of a sincere patriot." Wheaton's demeanor did not go unrecognized by his contemporaries. In October 1814, the United States Senate unanimously approved attorney Wheaton's appointment as Division Judge Advocate of the Army in an exceedingly rare display of unison from that deeply divided body.

In the aftermath of war, Wheaton received an additional reward when he was appointed as the first U. S. Supreme Court reporter. He performed his job with ability, garnering praise from jurists and lawyers alike from 1816 until 1827, when he



Henry Wheaton was a Providence-born editor, lawyer and court reporter who wrote brilliant legal analysis during the War. (From Elizabeth Feaster Baker, *Henry Wheaton, 1785-1848* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1937], p. 27).

embarked upon a long and successful diplomatic career. In 1847, Harvard offered him a distinguished lectureship in civil and international law, but he died before he could begin his duties in Cambridge.

Wheaton's most enduring achievement was his work as an expounder and historian of international law. His classic study *Elements of International Law* (1836) went through numerous editions and translations. Its excellence has prompted historians to rank Wheaton with John Marshall, James Kent, and Joseph Story as major architects of the American legal system. In addition to his landmark study of international law, Wheaton also translated the *Code Napoléon* into English and wrote a notable essay on the African slave trade in 1842 after the Amistad incident.¹³

Jonathan Russell was yet another Rhode Island luminary who achieved prominence during the War of 1812. He was born in Providence on February 27, 1771, the son and namesake of merchant Jonathan

Russell and his wife Abigail. After his graduation from the College of Rhode Island in 1791 at the top of his class, the young Russell spent several years in the mercantile business. He also became an activist in politics, publishing several pamphlets in support of the Democratic-Republican party of Jefferson and Madison. Impressed by Russell's political advocacy, President James Madison appointed him American diplomatic chargé d'affaires in Paris in 1811, replacing U.S. minister John Armstrong. Soon after, Madison named Russell chargé in London when U.S. Minister William Pinkney departed in frustration. As chargé when the War of 1812 began, Russell had the honor of informing the British ministry of America's declaration of war. Later, he was one of the five American commissioners who negotiated the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the conflict, doing so while also serving as U. S. Minister to Sweden from 1814 to 1818. Upon

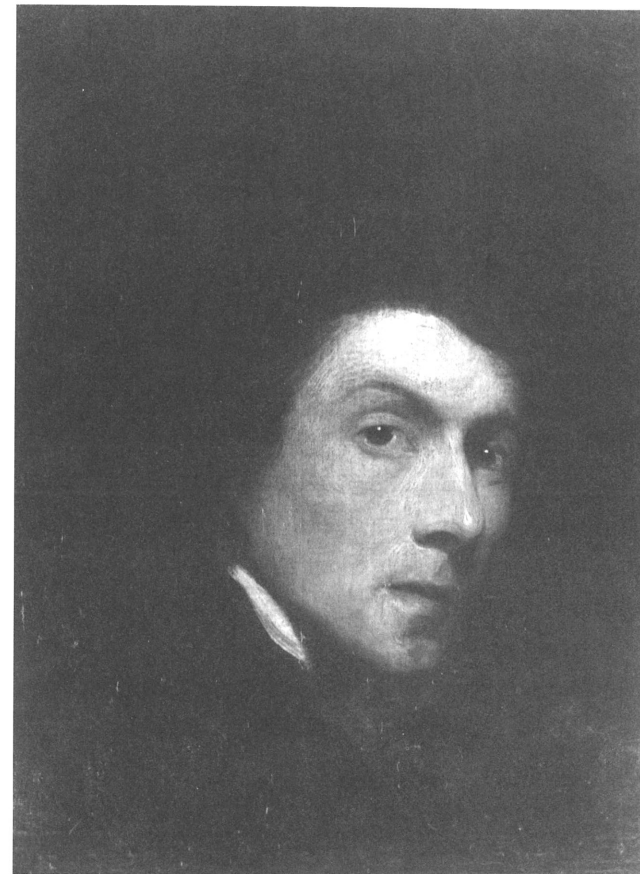


Rhode Islander Jonathan Russell served as a key diplomat during the War of 1812. (Photograph of unattributed portrait, 1811, by an unknown photographer. From the Portraits—Small Collection, Massachusetts Historical Society. Courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society).

his return to America, Russell settled in Mendon, Massachusetts, and secured election to Congress in 1821. Despite serving only one term, Russell was selected as the chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs based upon his European experiences. He died in Milton, Massachusetts, on February 17, 1833, and was interred there in the family plot on his estate.¹⁴

When the contentious and stalemated conflict was over, North Kingstown-born artist Gilbert Stuart painted portraits of its heroes. Among Stuart's subjects were President and Commander in Chief James Madison and his wife, Dolley, who courageously saved a number of White House valuables when the British burned Washington, D.C., in August 1814, including Stuart's famous portrait of George Washington that had been commissioned by Charles Cotesworth Pinckney. Stuart also painted portraits of Secretary of War, and later President, James Monroe; Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin; Major General Henry Dearborn, who commanded troops both in the Revolution and on the Niagara frontier during the War of 1812; Commodore Thomas MacDonough, hero of the 1814 Battle of Plattsburgh on Lake Champlain; Commodore William Bainbridge, commander of the U.S.S. *Constitution* ("Old Ironsides"); and Captain James Lawrence of the ill-fated *Chesapeake*, whose dying words, "Don't give up the ship!" have echoed through American naval history. Stuart even painted portraits of Congressman John Randolph of Virginia, Madison's most vocal and acerbic Democratic-Republican critic, and Harrison Gray Otis, a leading Massachusetts Federalist, who was a voice of moderation at the infamous Hartford Convention.¹⁵

WITH THE COMING OF PEACE, Americans—especially Democratic-Republicans—hailed the victories of Perry, MacDonough, and Jackson as



South Kingstown-born artist Gilbert Stuart, here depicted at age twenty-four, painted portraits of many luminaries of the War of 1812 including President James Madison and Madison's wife, Dolley. (Rhode Island Historical Society Collection, RHi X17 1693).

proof of triumph and denounced the Hartford Convention as evidence of treason. Both claims were partisan and exaggerated. However, the bold confrontation with England gave rise to a burst of national pride, and the encounter was soon regarded as "the Second War of American Independence." In his recent book *Empire of Liberty*, Gordon Wood of Brown University, the most eminent and thoughtful historian of the American founding, concludes that "the War of 1812 did finally establish for Americans the independence and nationhood of the United States that so many had recently doubted."¹⁶

Certainly this war had its vehement doubters and opponents, in Rhode Island as well as elsewhere

in the nation. Federalist politicians, merchants, and anti-administration Democratic-Republican congressional malcontents were not the only ones to take contrary stances during this very unpopular conflict. Many recent immigrants from England legally classified as "alien enemies," as well as apprehensive Native Americans, from the Shawnee of the northwest southward to the Creeks, who saw their lands threatened by the war's supporters, also opposed the War of 1812. It is small wonder that historian Alan Taylor has titled his new book about this struggle *The Civil War of 1812* (2010).¹⁷

Clearly the War of 1812 had a profound impact upon life in America. Among its many effects, the war vindicated America's national honor, re-affirmed the country's independence, intensified national pride, and earned America respect among the nations of the world. On a more mundane level the war dealt a death blow to the dissenting Federalist Party, even as its economic program—a national bank, a protective tariff, and federally financed internal improvements—was embraced by a majority in the opposition party who soon came to be known as "National Republicans." The conflict also dissolved the northwest Indian confederacy, whose leader, Tecumseh, was killed in the 1813 Battle of the Thames. The demise of the Native American coalition and its leader facilitated western expansion by white settlers and the admission of five trans-Appalachian states to the Union by 1821. Conversely, the nation's reluctant involvement in the Napoleonic Wars led America to embrace an isolationist foreign policy towards Europe for the remainder of the nineteenth century.

The 1812 conflict also had a profound effect on the nation's military and diplomatic policy. The war revealed the inadequacy of state militias and the defensive gunboat policy of the Jeffersonians, prompting the federal government to support a regular professional army and a sea-going navy. Ironically, changes in the military and

naval establishments were accompanied by the development of a seminal and significant antiwar movement that some historians have called the “American Peace Crusade.” Rhode Island became an early participant in that campaign when Moses Brown, former governor William Jones, and others formed the Rhode Island Peace Society in 1818, with Jones as its president.

In fairness to Rhode Island’s Federalists, their fears that the state’s maritime future would be irrevocably harmed by the war were realized. Commercial restrictions imposed by the administrations of Jefferson and Madison, the war itself, and the British blockade of America’s coastline combined to cripple the state’s foreign commerce (except for the China trade) and induced an irreversible decline in ship construction. The transition from commerce to manufacturing that began before the war was accelerated by it, but Rhode Island’s resourceful businessmen were quick to snatch economic victory from the jaws of impending defeat. Within a generation following the war’s end, Rhode Island ranked as America’s most urbanized and industrialized state, a process that historian Peter Coleman has aptly described as “the transformation of Rhode Island.”¹⁸

Although the War of 1812 established true nationhood for the United States, it will never have the resonance of the American Revolution, laden with its powerful national symbols of resistance, sacrifice and triumph. There is no “Declaration of Independence,” or “Boston Tea Party,” or “Washington Crossing the Delaware,” or “Valley Forge” equivalent for the War of 1812 in the national consciousness. Most Rhode Islanders fervently opposed the war and support for the war effort in the state was tepid. There almost certainly never could be a massive outpouring of commemoration for the War of 1812 in Rhode Island as was seen in 1976 for the American Revolution. Although the economic downturn of 2008 and subsequent

years may have further dampened enthusiasm for an anniversary celebration, the war will continue to be recognized as it has been during this bicentennial period, with modest exhibits and reenactments, and with a re-telling of the neglected stories of the state’s wartime notables—Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry and his loyal Rhode Island seamen, Dr. Usher Parsons, Captain William Henry Allen, James DeWolf, Henry Wheaton and Jonathan Russell.

This essay is an expanded and revised version of an address delivered on Veterans’ Day, November 11, 2012, to Infantry Lodge Associates at the Squantum Club, East Providence, at the invitation of Brigadier General Richard Valente, commanding, and Thomas Frazer, administrator. The speech was delivered again at the Fabre Line Club in Providence on December 12, 2012.

Notes

1. On the activities of 1812, see my essay “Random Reflections on the Bicentennial of Independence,” in Patrick T. Conley, *Rhode Island in Rhetoric and Reflection* (Providence: Rhode Island Publications Society, 2002), Chap. 9. For the highlights of the statehood observance, see Conley, *The Rhode Island Ratification Celebration, May 28-29, 1990* (Providence: Rhode Island Bicentennial Foundation, 1990).

2. For details on the progress and the purpose of the *Oliver Hazard Perry* project, see Richard Salit, “A Tall Ship to Call Our Own,” *Providence Sunday Journal*, December 4, 2011, D10, and Linda Borg, “Newest Tall Ship, Rhode Island’s Oliver Hazard Perry, is a Floating Classroom,” *Providence Journal*, July 6, 2013, p. 1. On the Perry bicentennial commemoration and exhibitions, see *Newport Daily News*, September 10-11, 2013. For information about the Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame, the reader may consult its website, www.riheritagehalloffame.org. Apathy regarding the 1812 war’s bicentennial observance was the subject of a *Providence Journal* editorial on September 24, 2013.

3. The literature on the diplomatic background and the causes of the War of 1812 is extensive. The most balanced analysis is Reginald Horsman, *The Causes of the War of 1812* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962). On the war itself the best general histories are Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, Bicentennial Edition (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2012); John K. Mahon, *War of 1812* (Gainesville, Fla.: University of Florida Press, 1972); Reginald Horsman, *The War of 1812* (New York: Alfred A.

Knopf, 1969); Harry L. Coles, *The War of 1812* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965) and J. C. A. Stagg, *Mr. Madison’s War: Politics, Diplomacy, and Warfare in the Early Republic, 1783-1830* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983). An excellent reference work is David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, eds., *Encyclopedia of the War of 1812* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 1997).

4. There is no book-length account of Rhode Island’s role in this conflict, but Harvey J. Strum has written useful articles: “Rhode Island and the War of 1812,” *Rhode Island History* 50 (1992): 23-32; “Rhode Island,” in Heidler and Heidler, eds., *War of 1812*, 447-48; and “Rhode Island and the Embargo of 1807,” *Rhode Island History* 52 (1994): 59-67. Also useful is Nathaniel Shipton, “The War of 1812,” in Linda Lottridge Levin, ed., *Federal Rhode Island* (Providence: Rhode Island Historical Society, 1978), and Peter J. Coleman and Penelope K. Majeske, “British Immigrants in Rhode Island during the War of 1812,” *Rhode Island History* 34 (1975): 66-75.

On the rise and fall of the Federalist Party, consult Joseph M. Norton, “The Rhode Island Federalist Party, 1785-1815” (Ph.D. dissertation, St. John’s University, 1975) and Samuel Allen, “Federal Ascendancy of 1812,” *Narragansett Historical Register* 7 (1889): 381-84. Marcus Jernigan, *The Tammany Societies of Rhode Island* (Providence: Preston & Rounds, 1897) is informative on party politics and the background of the war. On commerce and impediments thereto, see William M. Fowler, *William Ellery: A Rhode Island Politico and Lord of Admiralty* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1973), a biography

of William Ellery signer of the Declaration of Independence and collector of customs at Newport; James B. Hedges, *The Browns of Providence Plantations—Nineteenth Century* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1968), 124-38; and Alexander Boyd Howes, *Off Soundings: Aspects of the Maritime History of Rhode Island* (Chevy Chase, Md.: Posterity Press, 1999), 182, 200, 243, 261-2.

5. On Jones, see Ralph J. Mohr, *Governors for Three Hundred Years, 1638-1954* (Providence: Oxford Press, 1954), 200-202; and L. E. Rogers, ed., *Biographical Cyclopaedia of Representative Men of Rhode Island* (Providence: National Biographical Publishing Company, 1881), 155-56.

6. Strum, "War of 1812," 24-27.

7. On this controversial conclave, see James M. Banner Jr., *To the Hartford Convention: The Federalists and the Origins of Party Politics in Massachusetts, 1789-1815* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970).

8. Edward Field, ed., *State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations at the End of the Century*, 3 vols. (Boston: Mason Publishing Company, 1902), 1:292-300, 510-514, 617-23; Strum, "War of 1812," 26-29; and Shipton, "War of 1812," 62-69. Field is still the authority on those early Rhode Island fortifications built during the two wars with England.

9. The best and most recent study of this critical encounter is Gerard Altoff, *Oliver Hazard Perry and the Battle of Lake Erie* (Put-in-Bay, Ohio: The Perry Group, 1999). There is extensive treatment given to Oliver Perry by Samuel Eliot Morison in Morison's biography of Oliver's younger brother, "*Old Bruin*": *Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry, 1794-1858* (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1967), especially pp. 41-49 and 59-60. See also Charles J. Dutton,

Oliver Hazard Perry (New York: Longmans Green & Co., 1935), and Alexander Slidell Mackenzie, *Commodore Perry: His Life & Achievements* (Akron, Ohio: J. K. Richardson & Sons, 1910).

10. Seebert J. Goldowsky, *Yankee Surgeon: The Life and Times of Usher Parsons* (Boston and Providence: Countway Library of Medicine and The Rhode Island Publications Society, 1988); John C. Fredriksen, ed., *Surgeon of the Lakes: The Diary of Dr. Usher Parsons, 1812-1814* (Erie, Pa.: Erie County Historical Society, 2000). There is a profile of Parsons in Patrick T. Conley, *Makers of Modern Rhode Island* (Charleston, S.C.: The History Press, 2012), 115-18. The earliest account of Parsons's career was written by his only son, Charles W. Parsons, M.D., *Memoir of Usher Parsons, M.D. of Providence, R.I.* (Providence: Hammond and Angell, 1870). For Perry's remarks, see Goldowsky, p. 59.

11. Ira Dye, *The Fatal Cruise of the Argus: Two Captains in the War of 1812* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1994). I am indebted to Rhode Islander John C. Fredriksen, a leading historian of the War of 1812 and my former student, for bringing Allen's exploits to my attention. In November 2013, Allen was honored for his exploits by his induction into the Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame, where he joins Oliver Hazard Perry, Usher Parsons, Henry Wheaton, Jonathan Russell, and Gilbert Stuart, but not slave trader James DeWolf. For the tally of Allen's prizes, see Dye, p. 275.

12. Wilfred H. Munro, *History of Bristol R.I.: The Story of the Mount Hope Lands* (Providence: J.A. and R. A. Reid, 1881), 307-15, and *Tales of An Old Sea Port* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1917), 205-88,

containing the journal of the second voyage of the *Yankee* kept by Noah Jones, and Munro's assessment, p. 222. Also informative are M. A. DeWolfe Howe, *Bristol, Rhode Island: A Town Biography* (Cambridge, Mass.: Oxford University Press, 1930), 58-101, and George Howe, *Mount Hope: A New England Chronicle* (New York: The Viking Press, 1959), 170-88. George Howe lists forty-one prizes, but his narrative totals only thirty-six. Calbraith B. Perry, great-grandson of James DeWolf, compiled the family genealogy: *The DeWolf Book* (New York: Tobias A. Wright, 1902).

13. Elizabeth Feaster Baker, *Henry Wheaton, 1785-1848* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1937), the standard work, is both sound and exhaustive. See also, Craig Joyce, "Henry Wheaton," in John A. Garraty and Marc C. Carnes, eds., *American National Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 23: 123-25; G. Edward White, *The Marshall Court and Cultural Change, 1815-35*, in *The Oliver Wendell Holmes Devise History of the Supreme Court of the United States* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988), vols. 3-4, especially 388-424; and Edward Everett "Life, Services, and Works of Henry Wheaton," *North American Review*, 82: 1-32 (1856). The John Hay Library of Brown University contains a collection of the letters and papers of Wheaton as well as the papers of his friend and colleague, Jonathan Russell. For Everett's quote, see Baker, p. 19.

14. John C. Fredriksen, "Jonathan Russell," in Garraty and Carnes, *American National Biography*, 19:105-6; Twila M. Linville, "The Public Life of Jonathan Russell" (Ph.D. dissertation, Kent State University, 1971); Rogers, *Cyclopedia of Representative Men*, 193-94; and Thom M. Armstrong, "Jonathan Russell, 1771-1832:

Merchant, Diplomat, Politician," in Heidler and Heidler, eds., *War of 1812*, 456-58.

15. Richard McLanathan, *Gilbert Stuart* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., in association with the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1986), reproduces all of these portraits. The standard life of Stuart is Charles Merrill Mount, *Gilbert Stuart: A Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1964).

16. Gordon Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 699. While not disputing the effect of the war expressed by Wood, a recent analysis makes a sharp and persuasive argument that the conflict from an economic perspective was not an American victory, but rather, a defeat. Brian Arthur, *How Britain Won the War of 1812: The Royal Navy's Blockades of the United States, 1812-1815* (Rochester, N.Y.: Boydell Press, 2011) stresses the impending economic collapse of the United States at war's end when, "fortunately," Britain was willing to grant a generous peace treaty. Surely, some Rhode Island Federalists subscribed to that view.

17. Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, and Indian Allies* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010).

18. Peter J. Coleman, *The Transformation of Rhode Island, 1790-1860* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1963); Kurt B. Mayer, *Economic Development and Population Growth in Rhode Island* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1953); and B. Michael Zuckerman, "The Political Economy of Industrial Rhode Island, 1790-1860" (Ph.D. dissertation, Brown University, 1982).

Rhode Island Book Notes

WINTER/SPRING 2014

Marilyn Bellmore, *The Night the Music Ended: The Station Nightclub, March 2000—February 2003* (West Warwick, R. I.: The Merry Blacksmith Press, 2013) A history of the Station nightclub, site of a devastating fire in February, 2003.

Erik J. Chaput, *The People’s Martyr: Thomas Wilson Dorr and His 1842 Rhode Island Rebellion* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2013). A scholarly biography of Thomas Wilson Dorr which places Rhode Island’s 1842 Dorr War in the context of national sectionalism, reform and unrest in the antebellum period.

Patrick T. Conley, *People, Places, Laws and Lore of the Ocean State* (East Providence: Rhode Island Publications Society, 2012) A compilation of forty-six essays grouped into four sections. Written by Rhode Island’s first Historian Laureate, the volume includes profiles of individuals and immigrant groups, essays on Rhode Island neighborhoods and institutions, the state constitution and various interesting statutes, as well as a collection of miscellaneous writings on various topics relating to the Ocean State.

Neil Harris, *J. Carter Brown, the National Gallery of Art and the Reinvention of the Museum Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). A biography of Rhode Islander J. Carter Brown, who was Director of the National Gallery of Art from 1969-1992. The author argues that Brown, a “cultural impresario,” had a significant impact on museums and the people who go to them.

J. Stanley Lemons, ed., *Baptists in Early North America—First Baptist, Providence*, Volume II. (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2013). Reproduction of a dozen

original manuscript record books of the First Baptist Church in Providence, with annotations and an historical introduction by J. Stanley Lemons, emeritus professor of history at Rhode Island College. Also included in the volume are eighteenth-century pew rental lists and membership rosters.

Elyssa Tardif and Peggy Chang for the Rhode Island Historical Society, *Providence’s Benefit Street* (Arcadia Publishing, 2013). A collection of nearly two hundred photographs, with commentary, selected to illustrate the history of Providence’s Benefit Street.

Melvin Urofsky, *A Genesis of Religious Freedom: The Story of the Jews of Newport, Rhode Island and Touro Synagogue*. (New York: George Washington Institute for Religious Freedom, 2013). An illustrated history of the eighteenth-century Jewish community of Newport, Rhode Island, the founding of Truro Synagogue, and George Washington’s 1790 letter to the Touro congregation affirming the new country’s values of religious freedom and tolerance.

In the past year, the History Press of Charleston, S.C. has published a number of books on Rhode Island topics including: Paul F. Caranci, *The Hanging & Redemption of John Gordon: The True Story of Rhode Island’s Last Execution*; Bryan Ethier, *A History of Mount Saint Charles Hockey*; Robert Geake, *A History of the Providence River With the Moshassuck, Woonasquatucket & Seekonk Tributaries*; Frank Grzyb, *Hidden History of Rhode Island and the Civil War*; Richard V. Simpson, *Historic Tales of Colonial Rhode Island: Aquidneck Island & The Founding of the Ocean State*; and Kathleen Troost-Cramer, *True Tales of Life and Death at Fort Adams*.