Welcome to the Museum of Newport History
The Perfect Place to Begin a Visit to Newport!!

The Museum of Newport History is the perfect place to begin a visit to Newport. The Museum provides the whole family with an engaging introduction to the area's rich history and the beauty of its architecture. Glimpse into the lives of the people--past and present--who have made Newport one of America's most historic cities.

The museum offers a spectacular overview that brings Newport's history to life. The Newport Historical Society uses the finest of decorative arts, artifacts of everyday life, graphics, historic photographs, and audio-visual programs to tell Newport's story. The museum contains fine ship models, brilliant paintings, exquisite colonial silver, the printing press used by James Franklin, a ball gown worn by a member of the Summer Colony, the figurehead from the yacht Aloha, and much more.

- The men and women who have worked and played along Newport's bustling waterfront
- The 17th century English settlers who started a community based on a religious toleration which shaped the town's later history
- Newport's Goddard-Townsend craftsmen, the finest furniture makers in America.
- Wealthy Americans who, along with gifted artists, writers, and architects, made Newport their summer resort during the Gilded Age.

http://www.newporthistorical.org/museumof.htm
29 Touro Street
Buliod-Perry House

circa 1750
Architectural Style: Georgian
Look for: Wooden siding made to look like rusticated stone.
*Home to a prominent Jewish merchant in the colonial period, the house was purchased by Oliver Hazard Perry, who lived here with his family after his heroic victory in the Battle of Lake Erie.

This house was built for Peter Buliod about 1750. The building is important architecturally because of its rusticated wood exterior. In this treatment, the wood is fashioned and painted to look like the rough, un-mortared blocks of stone often used in classically-inspired European buildings. The Redwood Library is sided in similar material, and, as a result, its architect, Peter Harrison, is thought to have played some role in the design of this house.

By 1760 the house had been sold to the prominent Jewish merchant Moses Levy, who joined other wealthy Jews, such as Aaron Lopez and Abraham Rodriques Rivera, who were also living in houses around the Square. Thus, as the city grew and thrived during the middle of the 18th century, the religious toleration of the 17th century still was a major force in Newport.

After the Revolution, the first Rhode Island Bank briefly was located here. In 1818, the house was purchased by Oliver Hazard Perry. Perry became a national hero when he defeated the British in the Battle of Lake Erie during the War of 1812. Perry and his brother Matthew Calbraith Perry had grown up in Newport in the Point section of town. They were baptized together at Trinity Church. Oliver Hazard Perry had been stationed in Newport shortly after the Revolution and was in charge of a detachment of gunboats. After Oliver’s death in 1819, the Perry family made this building their home until 1865.

The building underwent many transformations after the Perry family sold it. From 1901 to 1908, it was the site of the Touro Dining Rooms, owned by James T. and Henry L. Allen, two African-American brothers who also owned a restaurant at Easton’s Beach. Later, it was the headquarters of the Salvation Army of Rhode Island from the 1950s to the 1970s and is now a property of the Newport Restoration Foundation. For more on the Foundation, see the entry on the Joshua Wilbour House on the Colony House station located at the top of Washington Square.
140-144 Bellevue Ave.
Clarendon House
Between 1850 and 1859
Architectural Style: Late Victorian with Italianate details
Look For: Three bays with paired windows, a reminder of the building’s previous use as a hotel.
*The Kazanjian Company, which was located here from 1884 until 1988, was a landmark for summer visitors and year-round residents.

Prior to the Civil War, as Newport began to reinvent itself as a summer resort, a cluster of hotels and boarding houses sprang up in this area, and Clarendon House was one of them. Others included the Atlantic House, Bellevue House, Ocean House, and, in the 20th century, the Hotel Viking. To learn more about the historic hotels of Newport visit the Newport Historical Society’s Museum of Newport History at the Brick Market.

By the 1880s, many of the summer visitors to Newport had purchased or built their own “cottages.” Reflecting that change, in 1882, Clarendon House was sold to Henry Fearing and Frederick Sheldon, who converted it into bachelor apartments with stores below. Nevertheless, the Ocean House and other hotels continued to do well up to the end of the century. Even as the cottages were built, hotels provided accommodations for seasonal visitors who did not have the means to invest in property in Newport.

In 1882, John Kazanjian and his sons, John and Bedros, emigrated from Armenia and established B. Kazanjian and Company in the building, selling oriental rugs, Japanese goods, and other imported items. In 1906, John Kazanjian established a new store in the Travers Block (also on this station) while Bedros remained at this location in partnership with Arakel Bozyan, a fellow Armenian oriental rug expert. The business continued at this site owned by his daughter, Edith Bozyan, until 1988.
162-174 Bellevue Avenue
Travers Block
1870-1871
Architectural Style: "Stick" Style, or Modern gothic
Look for: Chamfered exposed beams on the second story finished with lamb's tongues.
*The second half of the 19th century saw the development of a number of purely commercial architectural forms such as the shopping center.

Built in 1870-71 for William R. Travers, this block of 11 stores is Newport's first deliberately designed shopping center. It was designed by Richard Morris Hunt, the architect of several other buildings in the area, including the J. N. A. Griswold House, now the Newport Art Museum. The building is a late example of Hunt's Stick Style, with its exposed timbering, celebration of vernacular materials, and rustic appearance.

Richard Morris Hunt studied at the renowned École des Beaux Arts in Paris where he learned the essentials of the classical styles then so popular in Europe. When he returned to America, however, his first buildings were in a much more rustic flavor. Historians attribute this to a reaction on Hunt's part against the overblown quality of the Beaux Arts Style and to the rural architecture he saw when traveling to visit his brother, the artist William Morris Hunt, who was in France at the same time painting rural landscapes. His paintings from the period are filled with loving depictions of barns and chalets from the South of France which echo in the early buildings his brother Richard designed in Newport. Later in his career, with wealthy patrons demanding more formal, monumental residences, Hunt returned to the Beaux Art tradition to bring the Gilded Age to an extravagant climax.

The Travers Block was built to service the growing Summer Colony, and the tenants in the shops often closed for the winter to follow the Summer Colony to New York or Palm Beach. Many others who were not able to move with their clients failed during the winter months and the turnover in shops was high. The Travers Block originally had bachelor quarters on the second floor and in the Mansard-roofed third floor.

In 1973, a serious fire almost destroyed the Travers Block. It was restored by local architect Richard Long and the second floor was adapted for commercial use. A second fire in 1998 started on the second floor and quickly jumped across the alley to the Casino building. Thanks to the rapid and skilled response of the Newport Fire Department, these two internationally recognized buildings were saved.
Kingscote (1839-41) is a landmark of the Gothic Revival style in American architecture. Its appearance in Newport marked the beginning of the “cottage boom” that would distinguish the town as a veritable laboratory for the design of picturesque houses throughout the 19th century.

In 1839 Southern planter George Noble Jones commissioned architect Richard Upjohn to design a summer cottage along a country road, known as Bellevue Avenue, on the outskirts of town. Upjohn created a highly original “cottage orne,” or ornamental cottage, in the Gothic Revival style. The general effect was romantic—a fanciful composition of towers, windows, Gothic arches and porch roofs inspired by medieval tournament tents.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, the Jones family left Newport never to return, and the house was sold in 1864 to China Trade merchant William Henry King. His nephew David took over the house in 1876, and several years later decided to enlarge Kingscote. He engaged the firm of McKim, Mead and White to make the renovations, including the new dining room. The roof combines Colonial American details with exotic ornament—reflecting the architects’ interest in combining eastern and western motifs. The innovative use of materials was also important, such as cork tiles as a covering for the wall frieze and ceiling, and an early installation of opalescent glass bricks by Louis Comfort Tiffany.

The house remained in the King family until 1972, when the last descendant left it to the Preservation Society.

Today, Kingscote is a National Historic Landmark. It is a rare example of a Gothic Revival house and landscape setting preserved intact with original family collections.

Buy tickets now!
Check operating schedule
Explore the Newport National Historic Landmark District and the city's rich architectural heritage on an interactive computer. Board a reproduction 1890s omnibus to watch a video tour of historic Bellevue Avenue.

HOURS: Monday & Wednesday - Saturday 10-5, & Sunday 1-5, April-October. Friday & Saturday 10-4, & Sunday, 1-4, November-March.

ADMISSION: Adults $5, ages 6-18 $3, children under 6 free. Group, senior, and family rates available.

GUIDED WALKING TOURS leave the Museum of Newport History Thursday through Saturday mornings, June through September.

Validated parking is available at Long Wharf Mall, Brick Market Place, and the Gateway Center. Directions.
Newport’s Early Catholic Community

The Catholic Church is noticeably absent in Newport’s first hundred-plus years. While there were some Catholics here, there were not many, nor was there a church or even a priest.

The first Catholics to come to Newport as a large group were French soldiers who quartered in Newport in the latter years of the American Revolution. The French military brought with it multiple Catholic priests, who held mass in the Colony House beginning in 1783. When the French Admiral de Ternay died in Newport, he was given a Catholic funeral, but since there was no Catholic cemetery, he was buried in a sanctified grave in the Trinity churchyard.

Newport’s guarantee of liberty of conscience protected people from religious persecution, but it did not mean that people in all religions were equal in the eyes of the law. Only Christians were allowed to vote, and, from 1719 to 1783, Rhode Island law said that although they were Christians, Catholics still did not have the right to vote. After 1783, Catholic landholders regained the right to vote.

From the end of the Revolution until the 1820s, there were no priests in Newport, and only small numbers of Catholic residents. A priest from Boston would sometimes stop in Newport as he traveled to other cities and towns. We know that Catholic families lived here, because on the few occasions that a priest was in Newport, he reported that he had baptized Catholic children. Many of these children had parents who were of French heritage, and some were from Spanish families. Catholic families were growing, but there were still few Catholics in Newport.

In the early 1800s, Irish Catholics began to leave Ireland to find work in America. Many communities in New England did not welcome the Irish and the Catholics. Some Protestants believed that Catholics worshiped the Pope and saints, rather than God. These people wrongly believed that “Popery” was a conspiracy to undermine American government, and that Catholics were going to take over the country and deprive other people of their rights. Many Irish came to this country to find economic opportunities they did not have in Ireland. In some places, they were harassed and discouraged from settling. On Aquidneck Island in Rhode Island, many Irish worked as laborers in the construction of Fort Adams in Newport and in coal mines in Portsmouth.

In 1827, Boston’s Bishop Fenwick noticed the growing numbers of Catholics in Newport, and determined that it was time to send a priest to Rhode Island. A year later, a young priest, Father Robert Woodley, was charged with ministering to Catholics in an area that stretched from Providence to Newport. That same year, the Boston diocese bought an old school house to serve as a chapel, and soon Catholic services were held every month or two in Newport. Soon after Father Woodley began serving the Newport Catholic community, the congregation converted a plot of land adjacent to the small chapel at the corner of Barney and Mount Vernon streets into a cemetery. Today, tombstones from that congregation stand on the site of the church as a visible reminder of that first congregation who came to Newport looking for economic opportunity.

As more Catholics arrived in Newport, the demand grew for a larger church building. In 1834 a new church adjacent to the original Catholic chapel and cemetery was blessed and dedicated under the patronage of Saint Joseph. Soon, a second church was needed, and in 1868 construction on St. Mary’s Church on Memorial Boulevard was completed.
Living conditions got worse in Ireland in the 1830s and 1840s. England had conquered Ireland many years before, and the English government was not friendly towards Irish Catholics. After the Irish people tried to gain their freedom from England in the 1790s, England passed new laws restricting the rights of the Irish. In the 1800s, crops failed, and many people were starving. The Irish Catholics were required to pay taxes to the Church of England, their chosen leaders were not given a voice in English Parliament, and they more often than not had to rent land from English landlords. When the potato crops failed in the middle of the 1800s thousands of Irish Catholics came to America, either because they thought they could improve their lives by leaving or because their landlords gave them no choice.

As the population grew, the prejudice against Irish and Catholics in America increased. In Charlestown, Massachusetts, a convent and Catholic school were the victim of angry newspaper articles that said that students were mistreated and held there against their will. In 1837, the school was burned. The harassment continued. Some Newport residents wrote to the Bishop of Boston to invite the convent to move to Newport, and some Rhode Island newspapers agreed with that idea. Instead, the convent moved to Quebec, where French Catholics welcomed the nuns.

Nothing like the burning of the Charlestown convent ever happened in Newport, and we do not know exactly how Newporters reacted to the arrival of Catholics. Sometimes the Newport newspaper described Irish workers as “honest” and “industrious.” Other times, however, the workers were involved in riots, and those involved were described as drunk. Judging by the newspaper accounts, however, Newport had far fewer problems with riots in this time than did cities like New York, Boston, or Baltimore.

Attitudes towards the Irish Catholics clearly were mixed, but when one priest left Newport in 1837, he wrote to a Protestant minister that “our church stood for two years with its windows unprotected by blinds and during that time not one pane of glass was broken.” Clearly, in Newport the Catholics were free to practice their faith, and were apparently spared much of the angry prejudice that they found in other cities in the northeast.

"Barney Street Cemetery." Photos Courtesy of Kathy Forrestd, 2002.
St. Joseph's Cemetery

The Irish immigrants who built St. Joseph's Church were one of many ethnic groups who came to Newport during the 19th century. Others included Greek, Italian, Portuguese, and Scandinavian immigrants. This ethnic diversity added to the religious diversity that resulted from the town's commitment to religious toleration when it was founded in 1639.

Corner of Mt. Vernon and Barney Streets
St. Joseph's Catholic Cemetery
After 1828

Architectural style: Not applicable
Look for: Inscription on stones laid flat to protect them.
*St. Joseph's Cemetery silently tells the story of Newport's first Irish immigrants.

St. Joseph's Church was the first Irish-Catholic congregation in Newport, organized by priests from Boston in 1828. The parishioners were Irish immigrants who came to this area to work in the Portsmouth coal mines and later as laborers in the construction of Fort Adams. Together, they bought a small abandoned school house on this site and used it as a mission chapel until 1835. It was sold at auction to Mr. Michael Butler of Perry Street, who tore it down in 1864 and used the lumber to build small rental houses.

The cemetery consists of at least 25 plots marked by white marble stones and a large Celtic cross in the center. All the stones were laid before 1851 and, while some have become illegible, those that can be deciphered tell of a short, hard life for these early immigrants. The stones have been laid flat, and the property is currently used as a neighborhood park.

The early chapel and cemetery form the humble cornerstone from which Newport's Irish-American community has grown and prospered. In 1847, the parish purchased land on Spring Street and work on a new stone church began. Completed in 1868, the new church was named St. Mary's. In 1885, a second parish was formed which reclaimed the name of St. Joseph's and purchased the Zion Episcopal Church on Washington Square. In 1912, St. Joseph's built a new church on Broadway, north of City Hall.
Spring Street and Memorial Boulevard
St. Mary's Church
1868
Architectural Style: Gothic Revival
Look For: Pointed arch windows and random ashlar masonry typical of the Gothic revival style.
*The Catholic population of Newport arrived only in the 19th century, but by 1929 there were four Catholic churches thriving in the city.

Until the establishment of Rhode Island's first permanent Catholic parish in 1828, the Catholic community in Newport was small. In the 1820s the Catholic population began to grow with the immigration of a large number of Irish Catholics drawn here to work in the coal mines at the northern end of Aquidneck Island in Portsmouth and on the construction of Fort Adams, the early 19th century fort which still stands guard over Newport's harbor.

In April of 1828, the Bishop of Boston first established a parish in Newport, and a small building on Barney Street was purchased and converted into a church which was named St. Joseph's. (Visit the station on Barney Street to learn more about the early Catholic Church in Newport). In 1847, with an increase in immigration, the parish began to grow again and the land where the current church is located was purchased. The parish was renamed St. Mary's and Patrick C. Keely of Brooklyn was employed to design the new church. Lt. William Starke Rosecrans, who was stationed at Fort Adams, supervised the construction of the church. Work on the building was not finished until 1868. In 1854, the Sisters of Mercy came to Newport and helped run the parish school. They established a convent in wings that were added to the original building. A separate building to house the parish school was completed in 1867.

In the meantime, the Catholics living in the northern part of the city used the First Congregational Church on Mill Street until they purchased the Zion Church building on the corner of Clarke and Touro and reclaimed the name of St. Joseph's, after the first church on Barney Street. In 1885, St. Mary's parish was divided, the northern part of Aquidneck Island forming the new St. Joseph's parish. In 1911 the southern portion of St. Mary's parish was divided and St. Augustin's parish. In the North end of Newport, Jesus Savior Church was formed in 1926 and their church built in 1929 on Broadway to serve the large number of Portuguese immigrants living in that area.

St. Mary's church was the location in 1953 of the wedding of then Senator John Fitzgerald Kennedy to Jacqueline Lee Bouvier, whose mother lived at Hammersmith Farm in Newport. Kennedy returned to Newport many times during his presidency and Hammersmith Farm became known as the "Summer White House."
Trifle recipe (Mrs. Samuel Whitehouse's Sugar House Book, 1801, handwritten cookbook in the NHS archives)

Soak a piece of cake in wine, lay it in your dish, make some rich custard in cups, turn them out on the cake, then lay on the whipt syllabubs, you can omit the custard if you choose.

**Trifle (modern update with kid-friendly additions)**

This trifle uses the recipes below to make the layers. When cold, cut your cake into \( \frac{3}{4} \)-inch thick slices and either arrange the pieces on one large plate or bowl or in individual cups. Pour the hot cherry sauce over the cake. While the cake is soaking, make the syllabub. Spoon the syllabub over the cake and enjoy!

**Mrs. Samuel Whitehouse's recipe for a Delicate Cake**

One pound Sugar pounded & sifted, three quarter pound flour, six ounces butter, the whites or sixteen eggs, mace or essence of lemon.

**Delicate Cake (modern update)**

- 1 pound sugar
- \( \frac{3}{4} \) pound rye flour
- \( \frac{1}{2} \) pound white flour
- 6 oz butter
- the whites of 16 eggs
- mace or essence of lemon to taste

Preheat the oven to 375. Because this cake has no baking soda, the 16 egg whites are used to make it rise. Beat the egg whites to stiff peaks. You can do this in a mechanical mixer, but it is fun to use the colonial method and beat them by hand. (This will look like a lot of egg, but it will reduce in size when you add the flour later.) Cream the butter and sugar, then add the rye flour, white flour and mace or lemon essence. Slowly, about a cup at a time, fold the flour mixture into the eggs, being careful not to lose too much of their lift. Pour the cake batter into a greased 9x13 baking pan and place it in the oven for 20 minutes or until the top bounces back when your touch it.

**Cherry Sauce (in lieu of wine)**

- 1 bags frozen cherries
- \( \frac{1}{2} \) cup water
- sugar to taste (about 1 Tbs)

Pour the cherries, water and sugar into a pot and place over medium heat. Let the mixture simmer, stirring occasionally, until the cherries are very soft. Push the mixture through a sieve until you are left with smooth cherry sauce.

**"To make Whipt-Syllabubs"** (Mrs. Glasse’s *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy*, 1st pub England 1747)

Take a quart of thick cream, and half a pint of sack, the juice of two Seville oranges or lemons, grate in the peel of two lemons, half a pound of double-refined sugar, pour it into a broad earthen pan, and whisk it well, but first sweeten some red-wine or sack, and fill your glasses as full as you choose, then as the froth rises take it off with a spoon, lay it on a sieve to drain, then lay it carefully into your glasses till the are as full as they will hold. Do not make these long before you use them.

**Whipped Syllabub (modern and kid-friendly update)**

- 1 quart heavy cream
- the juice of two oranges or lemons
- the zest of two lemons
- half a pound superfine sugar

While the syllabub above was a drink, the type used in the trifle is more like flavored whipped cream. Like the cake, the syllabub can be made in a mixer, but it is fun to use the colonial method and beat the cream by hand. Beat the cream until very thick and fold in the rest of the ingredients. It was also common to make syllabubs with whipped egg whites instead of cream.
Ice Cream (circa 1820 from a handwritten cookbook in the NHS archives)
To a quart of Milk, add the beaten yolk of 4 Eggs, & the rind of a Lemon, set it on a few coals make it very sweet with White Sugar, stir it constantly until scalding hot, remove it from the fire & take out the lemon peel. When perfectly cold put it in an Ice Cream form. Set the form in the centre of a tub that is large enough to leave a space of 5 or 6 Inches from the form to the Outside of the tub, fill the space round the form with alternate layers of finely Cracked Ice & Rock salt, leaving a layer of Ice last and the whole just as high as the form, let the form be constantly turned in the Ice & Salt until it is frozen, when ready to be used dip the form in warm water, turn it out in a desert dish.

Ice Cream (modern update)

1 quart light cream
4 egg yolks, beaten
the rind of one lemon

Mix the cream, egg yolks, sugar and lemon peel in a pot over medium/ high heat, stirring constantly until very hot but not boiling. Take off the heat, remove the lemon peel, and pour into a bowl or ice cream mold. Cover and leave in the refrigerator until completely cold.

In a second bucket or larger bowl (feel free to improvise, colonial cooks did!), make a layer of ice about two inches thick. Next add a layer of rock salt, enough to cover the ice. Place the bowl with the cream mixture (still covered!) inside the bucket, and continue to make layers of ice and salt around it until you reach the height of the inner bowl. Remove the cover from the cream mixture, being careful that no salt gets into the bowl. Then begin to stir slowly with a whisk. You will hopefully begin to see ice cream lumps forming around the edges of the bowl early on, but keep stirring. This will take a LONG time (30-45 minutes) and a LOT of stirring. Make sure to scrape the sides and bottom of the bowl as you stir so that the ice cream remains smooth. You may have to pour off the excess water or replace your ice and salt mixture as it melts. If you can rotate the bowl within the ice as you stir, that’s even better, but not necessary. When the ice cream begins to thicken, move from a whisk to a sturdy wooden spoon and keep stirring. Still be careful to scrape all the sides and bottom. When the ice cream is thick, it’s ready to eat!

If you freeze your left over ice cream, it will turn into a solid block. Move it from the freezer to the refrigerator about 30 minutes before you want to eat it, and then break it up and give it a good stir right before serving. Or, if you like, you can use the colonial method of allowing it to freeze solid, dipping the mold or bowl in warm water, and then tipping it out onto a dessert plate. Then you can eat your ice cream in slices like cake!
CHAPTER IV
Rhode Island in the New Republic, 1790-1845

During the early years of the republic, the always romantic and sometimes lucrative China trade with the ports of the Orient flourished, then declined, and finally expired in 1841. In this age Rhode Island weathered a major hurricane (the Great Gale of 1815) and a locally unpopular confrontation with England (the War of 1812). Its major municipality, Providence, evolved from town to city (1832) and its political party system experienced two phases of opposition: Federalists vs. Democratic-Republicans (1794-1817) and National Republican-Whigs vs. Democrats (1828-1854). Its transportation system progressed from turnpikes utilizing horse-drawn wagons, carriages, and stages to railroads with steam-powered locomotives. From 1824 to 1828 a canal was constructed through the Blackstone Valley from Worcester to Providence in a vain attempt to capture the central Massachusetts market for Rhode Island entrepreneurs -- an attempt which the Boston and Albany Railroad soon trumped and which the Providence and Worcester Railroad rendered obsolete in 1847.

With Providence civic leader John Howland in the vanguard, a system of free public education was established by the School Act of 1828 after a false start twenty-five years earlier. During the 1830s and 1840s that system grew and prospered, especially in Providence, owing to the exertions of Samuel Bridgham, Nathan Bishop, and Thomas Wilson Dorr. Henry Barnard was imported from 1843 to 1849 as the first state commissioner of education, with the aim of bringing the other towns to the high educational level achieved by Providence.

The large-scale immigration of foreigners of non-English stock also had its origins in this era. From the mid-1820's onward, Irish Catholics came to Rhode Island in ever-increasing numbers to labor on such public works projects as Forts, Adams in Newport (begun 1824), the Blackstone Canal (begun 1824), and the railroads (begun 1833), or they found employment in the textile mills and metals factories that had begun to dot and to darken the local landscape.

The most momentous developments in this formative era, however, were a transformation of the state's economy from an agrarian-commercial to an industrial base and a governmental transformation from colonial charter to written state constitution, accomplished after a long period of reform agitation and a serious political upheaval known as the Dorr Rebellion. The economic metamorphosis occurred first and contributed to the constitutional crisis.

The impact of the American Revolution and the state's consequent release from the industrial restrictions of the British mercantile system were the first factors to effect a gradual shift in Rhode Island's economy. Newport, under military occupation during most of the war, declined and yielded its economic ascendancy to Providence, whose merchants and entrepreneurs (most notably the famous Brown family) began to experiment with manufacturing.

The year 1790 was marked by an event that served as the catalyst for the state's economic transition. That occurrence was the reconstruction of a cotton-spinning frame similar to those used in England and its employment in a mill at Pawtucket Falls on the Blackstone River. It was the first time cotton yarn was spun by water power in America. The men chiefly responsible for this promising venture were Providence merchant Moses Brown and Samuel Slater, a young English immigrant with technical knowledge and managerial experience acquired in the cotton mills of his native land.

The Rhode Island cotton industry developed slowly, with Providence businessmen supplying most of its funds, managers, and expertise. The significant shift of commercial capital into cotton manufacturing began in 1804, prior to the Jeffersonian embargo and even before the peaking of the state's maritime operations (which now
included the China trade. By the late 1820s the processing of cotton displaced commerce as the backbone of the Rhode Island economy, and the river valleys in the northeastern quadrant of the state hummed with activity.

In this era woolen production also flourished, especially in South County, and the need for textile machinery gave rise to a base-metals industry centered in Providence. Another early and important area of industrial endeavor was the manufacture of precious metals, especially gold and silver jewelry. For a century these four industries -- cottons, woolens, base and precious metals -- steadily expanded and dominated the state's economic life. But while these developments were transpiring, agriculture declined, many farms reverted to forest, and many rural towns experienced a substantial out-migration.

Industrialization and its corollary, urbanization, combined by the 1840s to produce an episode known as the Dorr Rebellion -- Rhode Island's crisis in constitutional government. The state's royal charter, then still in effect, gave disproportionate influence to the declining rural towns; it conferred almost unlimited power on the General Assembly; and it contained no procedure for its own amendment. State legislators, regardless of party, insisted upon retaining the old real estate requirement for voting and officeholding, even though it had been abandoned in all other states. As Rhode Island grew more urbanized, this freehold qualification became more restrictive. By 1840 about 60 percent of the free adult males were disenfranchised.

Because earlier moderate efforts at change (beginning as early as 1817) had been virtually ignored by the General Assembly, the reformers of 1840-1843 decided to bypass the legislature and convene a People's Convention, equitably apportioned and chosen by an enlarged electorate. Thomas Wilson Dorr, a patrician attorney, assumed the leadership of the movement in late 1841 and became the principal draftsman of the progressive People's Constitution, which was ratified in a popular referendum in December 1841. Dorr was elected governor under this document in April 1842. The reformers were resisted by a "Law and Order" coalition of Whigs and rural Democrats, who returned incumbent Governor Samuel Ward King to office in a separate election and then used force and intimidation to prevent the implementation of the People's Constitution. When Dorr responded in kind by unsuccessfully attempting to seize the state arsenal in Providence on May 18, 1842, most of his followers deserted the cause, and Dorr fled into exile. When he returned in late June to reconvene his so-called People's Legislature in Chepachet, a Law and Order army of twenty-five hundred marched to Gloucester and sent the People's Governor into exile a second time.

The turmoil and popular agitation against the charter which produced the Dorr Rebellion forced the victors to consent to the drafting of a written state constitution. Author May Mowry, the first major historian of the Dorr War, calls this instrument "liberal and well adapted to the needs of the state," but his appraisal neglects one important item: the 1842 constitution established a $134 freehold suffrage qualification for naturalized citizens, and this anti-Irish Catholic restriction, not removed until 1888, was the most blatant instance of political nativism found in any state constitution in the land. The stranglehold on the senate which the 1842 document gave to rural towns (there was one senator from each town regardless of its population) is also a fact of paramount importance and remained so at least until the "bloodless revolution" in 1935. Cumbersome amendment procedures made reform of the document a very difficult task.

This constitution, overwhelmingly ratified in November 1842 by a margin of 7,024 to 51, became effective in May 1843. Despite the margin of victory, the turnout was meager; for there were more than 23,000 adult male citizens in the state. That the opposition, in mute protest, refrained from voting explains in part the Constitution's apathetic reception and the lopsided vote.

A disillusioned Dorr returned from his New Hampshire refuge in October 1843 to surrender to local authorities. Immediately arrested and jailed until February 1844, Dorr was prosecuted for treason against the state. In a trial of less than two weeks, he was found guilty by a jury composed entirely of political opponents and sentenced to hard labor in solitary confinement for life. He served one year before Governor Charles Jackson -- elected on a "liberation" platform -- authorized his release. A Democratic General Assembly restored Dorr's civil and

http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/studteague/rihis/RhodeIslandHistory/chapt4.html 7/13/2004
political rights in 1851 and in 1854 reversed the treason conviction. These gestures did little to cheer the vanquished reformer, whose spirit and health were broken. Disillusioned, he died in December 1854 in the midst of a local Know-Nothing campaign directed against immigrant Irish attempts to secure the vote.

As always, your comments concerning this page are welcomed and appreciated.

Thank you for stopping by!
CHAPTER V

Change, Controversy, and War, 1846-1865

The twenty-year period from 1846 to 1865 was characterized by modernization, political and social friction, and conflict. The Mexican War, which a majority of Rhode Islanders opposed as an act of aggression, began the era, and the Civil War, which a majority of Rhode islanders tried vigorously to avert, brought this turbulent age to a close.

The theme of modernization is apparent in the extent of technological and institutional change. Several major public works projects were instituted to meet the demands of rapid demographic and economic growth. The most important of these was railroad construction. In 1847 the first train ran over the Providence and Worcester line. This railroad (which is still a major factor in the state's economy) built a massive Providence terminal in 1848, the Union Passenger Depot, to service its operations.

In the 1850s other railroads traversed the state. The Hartford, Providence, and Fishkill line was completed in 1854, connecting Rhode Island with the Hudson River. In the following year the Providence, Warren, and Bristol line provided transportation for the East Bay region, an area whose dimensions were altered in 1862 when the Massachusetts towns of Pawtucket (east of the Blackstone) and East Providence were acquired in exchange for the Rhode Island town of Fall River (north of Tiverton).

Internal routes of travel were also improved. In 1847 the Providence Gas Company was incorporated. Its initial project was the lighting of streets. Mains were laid first in the principal downtown thoroughfares, and gradually gas superseded whale oil for highway illumination throughout Providence and in other urban areas of Rhode Island.

Waterborne transport also improved when the United States Army Corps of Engineers surveyed the Providence River in 1853 prior to dredging a channel south of Fox Point to a depth of ten and a width of one hundred feet. This improvement allowed the Port of Providence to accommodate most of the new and larger vessels used in coastal trade.

Apart from transportation and public works, another development that loomed large in this era was the establishment of institutions for the care or treatment of the unfortunate. For the mentally ill, the innovative Butler Hospital was opened in a pastoral setting overlooking the Seekonk River in 1847, and the General Assembly in 1851 offered a blueprint for reform by promulgating a report by Thomas Hazard on the status and treatment of the poor and insane.

For wayward children, the Providence Reform School was organized in 1850, housed in spacious Tockwotton Mansion near India Point. It became the forerunner of the state reform school for juvenile offenders. Orphaned and neglected children also became an important social concern. To supplement the work of the Children's Friend Society (established in 1835), the Association for the Benefit of Colored Children (organized in 1838) constructed a Providence facility, called The Shelter, in 1849. Two years later the Roman Catholic Sisters of Mercy established St. Aloysius Home in their convent on Claverick Street near the Cathedral of SS. Peter and Paul. By 1862 this orphanage -- the oldest continuous social welfare agency in the diocese -- occupied a spacious, modern building on Prairie Avenue. Providence Catholics also established a local branch of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, a lay organization dedicated to aiding the destitute. The cathedral unit (founded in 1853) was the first of many parish chapters throughout the state.

To care for the elderly, the Providence Home for Aged Women was organized in 1856. Its present building at
Front and East streets, overlooking the harbor, was opened in 1864. Elderly men waited ten years longer for a comparable facility.

These activities were humanitarian responses to the increasingly impersonal nature of an emerging urban-industrial society. They were commendable attempts by civic-minded reformers to deal with victims of the rapid change, growth, and modernization that affected what had become the nation's most urbanized, industrial state.

One notable departure from contemporary humanitarian sentiment (other than the weakness of local abolitionism) was the incendence of nativism in the 1850s. Prejudice towards Irish Catholic immigrants, fanned by the Providence Journal, used as its vehicle the American, or "Know-Nothing" party, a secret organization that swept town, city, and state elections in the mid-fifties. Its candidate, William W. Hoppin, captured the governorship in 1855. Some of the party's more zealous adherents even planned a raid on St. Xavier's Convent, home of the "female Jesuits" (the Sisters of Mercy), but the angry mob dispersed when confronted by Bishop Bernard O'Reilly and an equally militant crowd of armed Irishmen.

Fortunately, this virulent strain of nativism subsided as quickly as it had reared its evil head. By 1860 bigotry again became subtle rather than overt as Rhode Island and the nation braced to face yet another challenge -- the specter of disunion. By the time that challenge came, the state had experienced a significant political realignment, one which might be called the development of the third (and present) party system. By 1854 the Whig Party -- split nationally over the issue of slavery into Cotton and Conscience Whigs -- disintegrated locally. Those who considered the spread of slavery the country's greatest evil embraced the newly formed Republican party, while those who saw Catholic immigration as the main menace joined the American (Know-Nothing) party.

Rhode Island Democrats also divided. Reform-oriented followers of Thomas Dorr and his uncle and ally Governor Philip Ali (1851-1854) maintained their party allegiance, but many rural Democrats who had supported the cause of Law and Order during the Dorr Rebellion affiliated with the Know-Nothings. When that one-issue party also declined after 1856, both these rural Democrats and nativist Whigs gravitated toward the rapidly growing Republican party, bringing with them their anti-Irish Catholic attitudes. From this decade until the 1930s, the Democrats were Rhode Island's minority party.

Rhode Island, like every state in America, keenly felt the impact of the Civil War. This conflict many Rhode Islanders hoped to avoid. Yankee businessmen, especially those producing cotton textiles, had economic ties with the South, ties which war would (and did) disrupt. As some critics remarked, there seemed to be an unholy alliance between the "lords of the boom" (the cotton textile manufacturers) and the 'lords of the lash,' as the slaveholders were called. In addition, many foreign-born Irishmen, resentful that they needed land to vote while blacks were subjected to no such discrimination, had little sympathy for freeing those who could become their rivals for jobs on the lower rungs of the economic ladder.

Consequently, when the Rhode Island Republican party nominated Seth Padelford for governor in 1860 -- a man whose antislavery views were extreme -- a split occurred in the party ranks. Supporters of other Republican aspirants and Republican moderates of the Lincoln variety joined with Democrats (who were softer on slavery) to nominate and elect a fusion candidate on the "Conservative" ticket. Their choice was twenty-nine-year-old William Sprague of Cranston, the heir to a vast cotton textile empire and a martial man who had attained the rank of colonel in the Providence Marine Corps of Artillery. Sprague outpolled Padelford 12,278 to 10,740 -- a victory celebrated as a rebuke to abolitionism by the citizens of faraway Savannah, Georgia, who fired a one-hundred-gun salute in Sprague's honor.

But if Rhode Island and Sprague were soft on slavery, they were still strong on Union. After the Confederate
attack of April 12, 1861, on Fort Sumter, the local citizenry rallied behind their once conciliatory governor and rushed to the defense of Washington. President Lincoln issued his call for volunteers on April 15. Just three days later the "Flying Artillery" left Providence for the front, and on April 20 Colonel Ambrose Burnside and Sprague himself led 530 men of the First Regiment, Rhode Island Detached Militia, from Exchange Place to their fateful encounter with the rebels at Bull Run.

During the war there were eight calls for troops, with Rhode Island exceeding its requisition in all but one. Though the state's total quota was only 18,898, it furnished 25,236 fighting men, of whom 1,685 died of wounds or disease and 16 earned the Medal of Honor. During the conflict Melville in Portsmouth became the site of a military hospital while nearby Newport became the home of the United States Naval Academy, relocated from Annapolis for security reasons. The academy occupied a hotel known as Atlantic House which stood at the corner of Bellevue Avenue and Pelham Street, and it also had training ships and instructional facilities on Goat Island.

The state's contribution to the Union victory went beyond mere military and naval manpower. Some historians have claimed that the productive capacity of Northern industry was the decisive element in the outcome of the Civil War. Here again Rhode Island was prominent. Its woolen mills, especially Atlantic and Wanskuck, supplied federal troops with thousands of uniforms, overcoats, and blankets, fashioned on sewing machines made by Brown and Sharpe, while metals factories such as Providence Tool, Nicholson and Brownell, and the Burnside Rifle Company provided guns, sabers, and musket parts. Builders Iron Foundry (established in 1822 and still operating in West Warwick) manufactured large numbers of cannons; the Providence Steam Engine Company built the engines for two Union sloops of war; and Congdon and Carpenter (established in 1792) supplied the military with such hardware as iron bars, bands, hoops, and horseshoes.

On the home front, the Civil War decade was a time of continued growth and modernization, especially for Providence. The city's most important and dynamic mayor Thomas A. Doyle began a nineteen-year reign in 1864. He promptly reorganized the police department into an efficient, modern force and converted the historic Market House into a municipal office building. City health and sanitation programs, under the capable direction of Dr. Edwin M. Snow, were models for other municipalities to emulate. Elsewhere in the field of medicine, the urgings of Dr. Usher Parsons combined with the philanthropy of Thomas Poynton Ives to establish Rhode Island Hospital, giving the state a first-class medical facility at last.

In education, business and commercial schools such as Scholfield's and Bryant and Stratton flourished as they provided a growing white-collar work force with the office skills needed to administer the affairs of Rhode Island's burgeoning industries. And in the public schools a momentous event, inspired by the outcome of the war, occurred in 1866: racial segregation was abolished throughout the state.

It was during the Civil War decade that urban mass transit came to Providence. Its vehicle was the horsecar, a mode of travel over the streets of the city that combined the old (actual horsepower) and the new (iron rails). The horsecar lines, extending from the Union Depot in Market Square over the surface of every major thoroughfare, where essential factors in the growth and settlement of the city's "streetcar suburbs" - the outlying neighborhoods of Providence. With the war a partial stimulus, industrial Rhode Island began to scale its greatest heights, pulled from above by its wealthy Yankee entrepreneurs and investors, pushed from below by a growing immigrant work force that now began to include migrants from Germany, Sweden, England, and especially, French Canada. As the war clouds lifted, the state's Golden Age of economic and social prominence was about to begin.

As always, your comments concerning this page are welcomed and appreciated.

http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/studteaguide/RhodeIslandHistory/chapt5.html

7/13/2004
School Programs

The Newport Historical Society is pleased to offer a wide variety of exciting interactive programs for grades 1-12. Tours are available Tuesday through Friday at 10 am and 12:30 pm. Classes can be customized to suit your goals and schedule. Please contact us about your curriculum needs, or for information and reservations, at (401)846-0813.

Diversity Works: the History of Liberty of Conscience in Colonial Newport

Program Goal: The goal of this program is to teach students about the special status of Rhode Island as a haven where liberty of conscience and religion attracted a remarkable diversity of religious groups.

Program Abstract: The precepts upon which John Clarke of Newport and Roger Williams founded Rhode Island and Providence Plantations included not only the concept of religious freedom but also early convictions about the separation of church and state. The importance of religious freedom to the American system of government is so much a part of our contemporary society that students frequently take it for granted. The Rhode Island Royal Charter of 1663, drafted for King Charles’ approval by John Clarke, stated that a civil government can exist alongside freedom of worship, and that no man could be called into question for differences of opinion in matters of religion. The philosophy expressed in the Freedom of Expression Clause of the Royal Charter was later incorporated into the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

Program Description: Students will visit four of Rhode Island’s oldest and more significant religious landmarks: the Great Friends Meeting House, Trinity Church, the Seventh Day Baptist Meeting House, and Touro Synagogue. Students will explore the reality of religious freedom in 18th-century Newport with tours of the building’s interiors, and a walking tour. In each house of worship, students will be surrounded by the architectural context in which each religious group worshiped. The belief systems of each faith will serve as background to understand the nature of religious tolerance and early acts of persecution in New England. The program will provide an intimate observation of the colonial religious community in Newport.

The Museum: A Self Guided Tour--This program is a simple tour of the Museum of Newport History done on your own. A staff person will provide an introduction to the group when they arrive. Teachers may also schedule a separate time with the Director of Education to have an orientation tour of the Museum prior to their class visit.

The Museum: A Guided Tour--Students learn about the history of Newport through a guided tour of the Museum of Newport History. This program can specifically be tailored to younger students who have never visited a museum before. Students are taught about the past from objects on the Museum. The class examines maps, paintings, and other exhibits in the Museum for clues that teach them about the city’s history.

Architecture Tour: Newport’s Historic Hill--Newport has the largest collection of 18th and 19th century houses in the country. The story of these houses is the story of the city.
class is conducted entirely on the streets of Newport’s Historic Hill. It introduces the history of the city and its architecture. Included in the session is a handout which identifies various architectural elements and their names. For grades four through six this handout takes the form of a scavenger hunt.

Colonial Home Life: A House Tour--This program is an in-depth look at mid-eighteenth century domestic life, portrayed at Newport’s oldest residence, the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House. Students learn from the house, its furnishings, and a series of activities with reproductions of early artifacts.

African-Americans in Newport--African Americans have played a vital role in Newport’s history for the last two hundred years. This walking tour charts the course of African-Americans in Newport from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century.

Custom Designed Programs--The Newport Historical Society Education Department is pleased to custom design tours for your school group. Tours may be a combination of other programs or an entirely new program which makes use of our facilities and collections. Time constraints prohibit us from doing all custom designed programs. Past programs have included School Centennial programming and Religious Heritage tours.

Teacher In Service Training--The Newport Historical Society offers accredited local history seminars for the professional development of teachers through Salve Regina University. The courses cover the colonial period, the Gilded Age, and the beginnings of religious tolerance, and make use of the broad range of resources of the Historical Society and the city itself through slide lectures, walking tours, and historic sites. For more information, call the office of the Teacher Professional Development Institute at Salve Regina University at 847-6650, or the Society at (401) 846-0813.