



The Independent Man

NEWSLETTER OF THE RHODE ISLAND SOCIETY OF
THE SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION
131 SPENCER WOODS DR, EAST GREENWICH RI 02818



Presidents Message:

Dear Compatriots,

Now that Fall is officially here, Dot and I hope you all had a very enjoyable summer and were able to survive the record heat.

While we have been working through the summer months, I am still a little put off by the lack of reply from the various historical and social organizations in response to our efforts to include minorities and men of color in our organization. But it hasn't been for lack of trying. Suffice it to say that Action (or rather lack of action) speaks louder than words. Unless we get some more positive feedback, I will cease my efforts in this pursuit.

We are still working on procuring a headstone or marker for the widow's grave of John Peck Rathbun. Since we are dealing with the VA this may take a little time.

Also I am still waiting to hear from the Narragansett Council of the BSA in order to re-establish our contact with them for the Eagle Scout program.

On October 13th I will be representing the SAR at an information booth at the "What Cheer, Netop" program at the RI Historical Society Aldrich House.

On September 10th, we had our annual luncheon at the Clark -Cooke House in Newport where we were treated to a very interesting presentation by CDR Matt Bonner, 72nd Commanding Officer of the USS Constitution. This event was preceded as usual by the "Champagne and Peanuts" party at Walter Whitley's house in Newport.

I would be remiss if I did not profusely thank Ron Barnes and John Adams for all of their assistance and guidance since I assumed my duties as President. You guys make me look good.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our next official function, Veterans Day Ceremony at the Exeter Veterans Cemetery.

Until next time,

John "JC" Collins
President
RISSAR

Photo: President John Collins with Commander Bonner at the Clarke Cook House Luncheon, September 10, 2012.



Rhode Island never touted freedom from religion PATRICK T. CONLEY

Nearly everyone believes that Rhode Island's famed colonial charter — whose 350th anniversary we will justly celebrate in July 2013 — proclaimed religious liberty for the inhabitants of our microparadise and completely separated the church from the state.

That belief is only a half-truth. Freedom of worship, or "soul liberty," as Roger Williams called it, and "full liberty in religious concernments" as Dr. John Clarke wrote it, has never been denied to Rhode Islanders by government. Nor was there ever an established (i.e., tax-supported) religious sect herein, as afflicted our sister colonies. These facts are great achievements to celebrate; they are Rhode Island's gifts to America and, indeed, the world.

However, strict separation of church and state, or religion and government, is quite a different story. During the current controversies over the Cranston West prayer mural, the Woonsocket military memorial, and the cross exhorting God to bless America placed on the median of Providence's Pleasant Valley Parkway, opponents have claimed that such religious displays are unique departures from Rhode Island's unbroken 350-year tradition of separation. Such assertions are not only wrong, they are ironic when one considers the following facts:

Roger Williams and Dr. John Clarke sought separation, not to free civil society from religious influences and expressions of religious faith, but to prevent the state (as it did elsewhere and nearly everywhere) from interfering with a person's private religious belief. In secular America this intention has been disregarded and reversed over the past three generations.

Indicative of how strongly Williams felt about state domination of the church, this polemical theologian asserted in one burst of vituperation that such a condition would render the church "the garden and spouse of Christ, a filthy dunghill and warehouse of rotten and stinking whores and hypocrites." For Williams, "forced worship stinks in God's nostrils" because it produces persecution and religious wars. Obviously he did not take the issue of separation lightly!

Have Rhode Islanders adhered to the teachings of their founders by keeping religion out of politics? Have they avoided what present-day jurists call "entanglement"? The simple answer is no!

Most of the debates and the balloting that resulted in Rhode Island's ratification of the federal Constitution, with its consequent admission to the Union as the 13th state, took place in New-port's Second Baptist Church, because the Colony House could not accommodate both the delegates to the ratifying convention and the interested citizenry. The ratification of Rhode Island's first operative written constitution — the one produced in the aftermath of the Dorr Rebellion — that governed the state from 1843 to 1986, occurred in East Greenwich, inside that town's Methodist church, because the Kent County State House could not accommodate the participants and spectators. Thus, two of the three most significant political events in Rhode Island history (the ratification of the Declaration of Independence in Newport's Colony House on July 19, 1776, being the third) took place in churches.

A history of East Greenwich (where a religious roadside memorial caused some stir a few years back) reveals that its county state house and courthouse (Rhode Island had five capitals until 1854) hosted religious services for local Baptists and Methodists before those sects built their churches; so in November, 1842, the Methodists merely returned the favor by hosting the state constitutional convention. Religious services and sermons were also delivered in many (if not all) of Rhode Island's local town houses.

During the 1830s Providence city authorities generously allowed Catholics the use of the municipal Town House at what is now the corner of Benefit and College Streets, for masses and lectures. In fact, Rhode Island's first public mass was one celebrated for French troops in New-port's Colony House in 1780 while our French allies occupied that town during the American Revolution.

Another rebuke to the notion of complete separation is the Rhode Island state flag and the state motto, "Hope." The inspiration for both is the Bible. In St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, 6:18-19 we find the phrase, "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul." In displaying both the anchor and our motto, the official state flag flies in the face of separation.

Despite more than 300 years of uncontroversial and relatively innocuous contact by religion with the state, over the past half century Rhode Island has been in the thick of the growing church-state thicket. The state that pioneered religious liberty and church-state separation in America has become a source of three major U.S. Supreme Court rulings relative to the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, namely, *DiCenso v. Robinson* (1971), *Lynch v. Donnelly* (1984) and *Lee v. Weisman* (1992).

The high court has generally supported a wall of strict separation between church and state, prohibiting any direct governmental assistance to any religion. The Catholic view, and that of the religious right, accepts government aid if it is evenhanded and does not support or advance any religious sect at the expense of another.

Curiously, one of the most persuasive, succinct historical defenses of that position has been written by a Rhode Islander about a Rhode Islander. Professor Mark DeWolfe Howe — late professor of law at Harvard, secretary to Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, and author of “Cases on Church and State in the United States” — wrote a book entitled “The Garden and the Wilderness: Religion and Government in American Constitutional History” (1965), a title derived from a metaphor of Roger Williams.

Here Howe, a scholar of Bristol ancestry, demonstrated that the “wall of separation” phrase employed by the modern Supreme Court originated not with Jefferson but with Williams. However, said Howe, “when the imagination of Roger Williams built the wall of separation, it was not because he was fearful that without such a barrier the arm of the church would extend its reach. It was, rather, the dread of worldly corruptions which might consume the churches if sturdy fences against the wilderness were not maintained.”

Howe contended that “there is a theological theory of disestablishment traceable to Roger Williams,” and that “the Court, in its role as historian, has erred in disregarding the theological roots of the American principle of separation” in favor of Jefferson’s secular view.

Professor Howe further stated that the First Amendment’s prohibitions at the time of their promulgation “were generally understood to be more the expression of Roger Williams’ philosophy than that of Jefferson’s.” The conclusion Howe reaches is that the First Amendment was designed to prevent government interference with religion and not to prevent “government advancement” of religion generally.

Those of you who deny the existence of God and wish to eradicate religion and its symbols from civil society are free, as Americans, to make the attempt. Godspeed to your efforts. But please do not use history to validate your position.

Patrick T. Conley is a lawyer, developer and Rhode Island Historian Laureate.

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Jessica Binaldi / Reuters
The USS Constitution passes the Boston skyline as it is tugged back through Boston Harbor in Boston, Mass., Aug. 19. The USS Constitution set sail under her own power in Boston Harbor today for the first time since 1997.

Old Ironsides cruises Boston Harbor: The trip marked the day two centuries ago when the Constitution defeated the British frigate HMS Guerriere during the War of 1812. The Guerriere proved no match for the Constitution, which was heavier and longer. The vessels blasted away at each other at close range, even colliding at one point, during the 35-minute battle. "I cannot think of a better way to honor those who fought in the war as well as celebrate Constitution's successes during the War of 1812 than for the ship to be under sail," Constitution Cmdr. Matt Bonner said in a statement.

Compatriots the following is a recent interview with RISSAR lecturer and guest Janet Uhlar.

General Nathanael Greene: The Unknown & Under-estimated

Author, lecturer, and screenplay writer Janet Uhlar has accepted an invitation to speak at the 2012 Triennial Meeting in Savannah, Georgia.

Janet is a trustee of the Nathanael Greene Homestead in Coventry, Rhode Island, and last year published the acclaimed biographical fiction, *Freedom's Cost: The Story of General Nathanael Greene*.

She addressed the Georgia Society of the Sons of the Revolution at its annual meeting in February. In June, she gave an interview to the *Drumbeat*, looking forward to her presentation at the Triennial in October.

Q. What was your principal source of inspiration in writing *Freedom's Cost*?

A. When researching and writing my first book, *Liberty's Martyr*, I came across bits of information about Nathanael Greene. Certainly, the dichotomy of him being a 'Quaker General' was enough to pull my attention. The more I discovered about him, the more 2012 Triennial Speaker Janet Uhlar intrigued I became. The more I discovered about him, the more frustrated I became in the fact that his role has been so underestimated.

Q. What have you found to be the most under-appreciated aspect of General Nathanael Greene's life and career?

A. Among the mainstream public, nothing is known of him other than the name—and often not even that. Among those with an interest in the American Revolution, very few fully recognize his pivotal role. Were it not for General Nathanael Greene, in all likelihood, the Continental Army would have been forced to disband at Valley Forge. Were it not for General Nathanael Greene, in all likelihood, the South would have succumbed to the British. Were it not for Greene, the Battle of Yorktown would not have been fought.

Q. Why hasn't he received his due?

A. General Greene died three years after the close of the War, and, therefore, did not play a role in the formation of our government and Constitution. This certainly is part of the reason he has not received his due, but there is more. Though having served his positions of Major General and Quartermaster General with all his ability and skill, he had often butted heads with Congress. Even as Congress wanted to extend his term as Quartermaster General beyond the initially agreed-upon year, he refused. As Commander of the Southern Department, Greene had conflicts with various individuals in prominent state positions as well, such as Governor Thomas Jefferson. Also, his expectation of bringing successful, unified action against the enemy, with the help of the militia, sometimes stirred resentment among militia officers. Of course, Southern Loyalists resented him. Then, at the close of the War, when the states of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia thanked him with land holdings, jealousies [among other commanders] arose, bringing slanderous charges against his command, service, and character. The collective outrages against him were so great... that even when his first official biography was published in 1822, (written by William Johnson, Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court and native of South Carolina), there were still those who questioned his character. One thing is certain, however. Those that knew him well—that worked closely with him—defended his character to the end: George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Henry Knox, Lafayette, Anthony Wayne, 'Light Horse' Harry Lee, Otho Williams, Jeremiah Wadsworth, Charles Pettit, John Cox, etc...

Q. How was it that he pulled the Continental Army from the throes of death at Valley Forge?

A. When the Continental Army went into Valley Forge on December 19, 1777, the situation was desperate. Acting Quartermaster General Thomas Mifflin had virtually abandoned his post, and the army was not being supplied. Nathanael Greene was pressed upon by both Congress and George Washington ('day and night,' he stated) to take on the responsibility and position of Quartermaster General. He did not want the position; he 'loathed' it. But he yielded to the situation's need. On March 2, 1778, he was officially appointed. Within a short time, substantial supplies were coming into camp. The Baron Von Steuben arrived at Valley Forge about a week before Greene took command of the Quartermaster's Department. By the time Von Steuben recorded his earliest written orders of drill, he had troops that were properly fed, clothed, and supplied. He now had an army to train.

Q. Nathanael Greene was promoted overnight from private to general. Was that level of promotion common in that day?

A. No, such a promotion was not common. Exactly why it was given, we have no documentation. It was a militia commission granted by the Colony of Rhode Island. He jokingly wrote about his commission, "Since the Episcopalian and the Congregationalist won't [accept it], I suppose the Quaker must." Greene was knowledgeable in the art of war (book knowledge) to the point of impressing the members of the General Assembly in Rhode Island to grant him the commission of brigadier general. He was committed, willing, and courageous to take the command—and to take it seriously. He was a man of high character to be considered for this position. General Washington had no part in Greene's promotion. The militia commission was given to Nathanael Greene before George Washington took

command, and before the Continental Army was officially formed. Washington accepted Greene's military status, for it was honored by the Continental Congress in the formation of the Continental Army. Greene would become the 'favorite' among Washington's generals and his second in command.

Q. How long did it take you to complete the manuscript? What was the easiest part, as well as the most difficult part, in the writing?

A. From research to final manuscript, in truth, it took about seventeen years. When I began my research of Nathanael Greene, I had five children at home, the youngest was four-years-old. Therefore, in a sense, every bit of it was difficult yet every bit of it was easy, as I love the research and writing. What was most difficult for me was finding time to sit and clear my head or write. Also difficult was getting to historical sites, and when there, to be able to fully experience what I was viewing, for often I had my children at my side.

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Three Original Letters at Auction featuring...

Colonel Christopher Greene: Commander of the "Black Regiment" and Hero of the Battle of Red Bank

By Bryan Booher

In late 1777, British General Sir William Howe embarked on a mission to capture Philadelphia, the capital of the fledgling United States and meeting place of the Second Continental Congress. Initially repelled by General George Washington and the Continental Army at the Battle of Brandywine, Howe succeeded in capturing the city on September 26. Howe then split his army, a portion of it posted in the city and the bulk of it in the outlying community of Germantown. Attempting to regain the capital, Washington launched a surprise attack on the British encampment at Germantown eight days later, but was unsuccessful. In an effort to starve the British out of the city, the Colonials attempted to blockade the Delaware River by constructing two forts on either bank, Fort Mifflin on the Pennsylvania side and Fort Mercer in New Jersey. Recently promoted to the rank of colonel, Rhode Island native Christopher Greene was given command of both garrisons. In the upcoming October Historical Manuscripts Auction #6084, Heritage Auctions is thrilled to offer not one, but three lots related to the career of Christopher Greene and the battle for control of the city of Philadelphia: the Battle of Red Bank.

Greene was already in command of the First Rhode Island Regiment, known to history as "the Black Regiment," when he got orders to defend the aforementioned forts. In 1778, with the assent of the Rhode Island General Assembly, an act was passed to enlist slaves (African, mulatto, or Indian), each receiving wages and freedom from their masters. The regiment became the first nearly all-black regiment during the Revolution, with a few whites and Indians serving, but in 1777, when they occupied the twin forts, they were not yet integrated.

The three items that mention Col. Christopher Greene are letters signed by Nathanael Greene (bid estimate \$2,500-3,500), George Washington (bid estimate \$30,000-40,000) and Alexander Hamilton (\$10,000-15,000).

Your State Registrar Carlen Booth reports the following:

Gregory Chandler Ray, Pittsburg, PA, admitted July 24, 2012, national number 184286, state number 1767. He is descended from Robert Jennison, 1758-1835 Townshend, VT - Private, Col Josiah Whitney's Reg't, May 1776 - August 1777; Col James Wesson's Reg't April 1777 - December 1779.

William Huntley Lowell, Warwick, RI, admitted August 8, 2012, national number 184451, state number 1768. He is descended from Joshua Lowell, 1744-1833 Windham, ME - Private, Capt James Merrill's Co., Col. Jonathan Mitchell's Reg't.

Richard Edward Long, Warwick, RI, admitted August 20, 2012, national number 184601, state number 1769. He is descended from James Olney Johnston, RI - Private, RI.

Brett Cardon Marggraff, Westerly, RI, reinstated August 24, 2012 (originally New Jersey), national number 135963, state number 1770. Brett is descended from Joseph Titus, 1758-1845 Washington, CT - Soldier, CT.

Timothy Andrew Ulmschneider, Wakefield, RI, admitted August 29, 2012, national number 184676, state number 1771.

He is descended from Stephen Luther, 1761-1843, Swansea, MA - Private of Artillery, MA and Seaman, RI

Joseph Daniel Brennan, Providence, RI, admitted September 13, 2012, national number 184851, state number 1772. He is descended from Joshua Haynes, 1731-1814, Sudbury, MA - Sergeant, Capt. Aaron Haynes' Co, marched to Cambridge on alarm of April 19, 1775; comm. 1st Lt July 5, 1776.

In memoriam:

Edward G. Wickes, Jr. – Died peacefully at home in Walnut Creek, CA on September 27, 2012 at the age of 89. Ed was born on April 1, 1923 in Buffalo NY. Ed was admitted into the SAR on July 11, 1972. His patriot ancestor was *Uriah Raymond 1745-1821 Norwalk CT-Capt 4th Co 9th Rgt Norwalk Train Band.*

This date in Rhode Island History: November 5, 1776...

Rhode Island Privateer Sloop Independence Captures A Transport

In the early part of November 1776, Rhode Island Privateer Independence (Commander John Tillinghast) was at sea. Independence was armed with eight guns and had already made one successful cruise.

About 5 November, the Independence fell in with the 300-ton British Navy Victualler Friendship (Samuel Broomstone [Bromstone]), en route from Cork, Ireland to New York, New York with a cargo of beef, pork, butter, oatmeal, flour, bread, peas, gunpowder, cannon shot, and cordage. The transport mounted sixteen guns, 3-pounders and 4-pounders, and eight swivels. She had about thirty men aboard, including a sergeant, corporal and eleven soldiers.

Broomstone decided to fight and the Independence began an action that lasted twenty minutes. Tillinghast, whose only advantage probably lay in the size of his crew, closed in and boarded the Friendship. A short but vicious fight followed on the deck before the British were driven from their quarters, leaving Broomstone alone, and wounded, on the deck. He surrendered. The British lost three killed (the sergeant and two privates) and seven men wounded (including Broomstone). Tillinghast was wounded, shot by a musket ball. Three other Americans were wounded and two killed. While this fight was going on two sail had come up to support the Friendship, a fourteen gun ship and a brig mounting eight swivel guns. After exchanging a few broadsides with the Independence, the ship sheered off. The brig never got involved. Independence and her prize got into Providence by 21 November 1776.

Upcoming SAR events:

RISSAR/OFFPA/Dar Veteran's Day memorial – Sunday, November, 11. Luncheon to follow at the Celestial Cafe.

RISSAR Christmas Luncheon – Friday, December 7

RISSAR JPR memorial CPT Thomas Cole – Saturday, December 8

RISSAR Board of Managers – Saturday, January 5 2013