

Revolutionary Rhode island

An Annotated Time Line



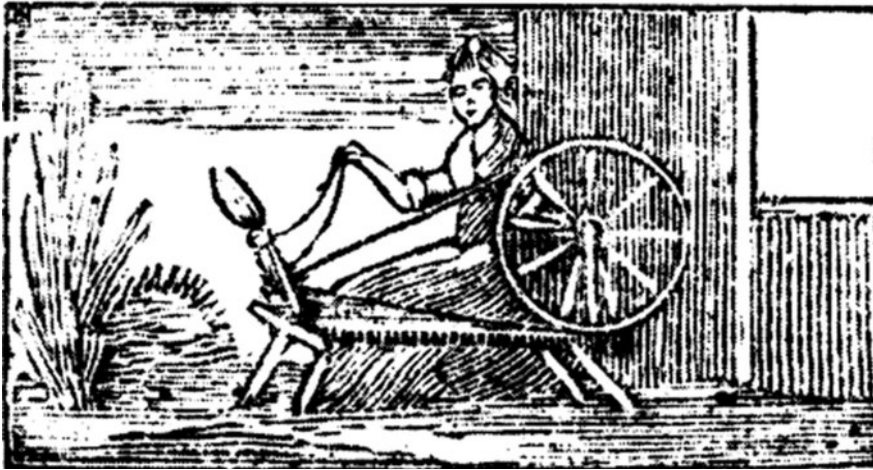
Compiled by Gloria Schmidt



Revolutionary Rhode Island: An Annotated Time Line

Compiled by
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An Annotated Timeline of Revolutionary Rhode Island:

Prelude to War

July 9, 1764: The St. John Incident:

In 1763 the British sent warships to Newport to clamp down on smuggling. One such warship was the custom schooner St. John. The crew of the St. John had been accused of stealing livestock and threatening to impress local seamen (forcing men to serve on British ships).

On July 9, 1764 the Rhode Island Governor (Stephen Hopkins) and General Assembly ordered the gunner at Fort George on Goat Island to fire at the St. John. Accounts vary, but from eight to thirteen shots were taken. The St. John hurriedly left Newport Harbor without sustaining much damage. Some Rhode Islanders consider these the first shots fired in the Revolution.

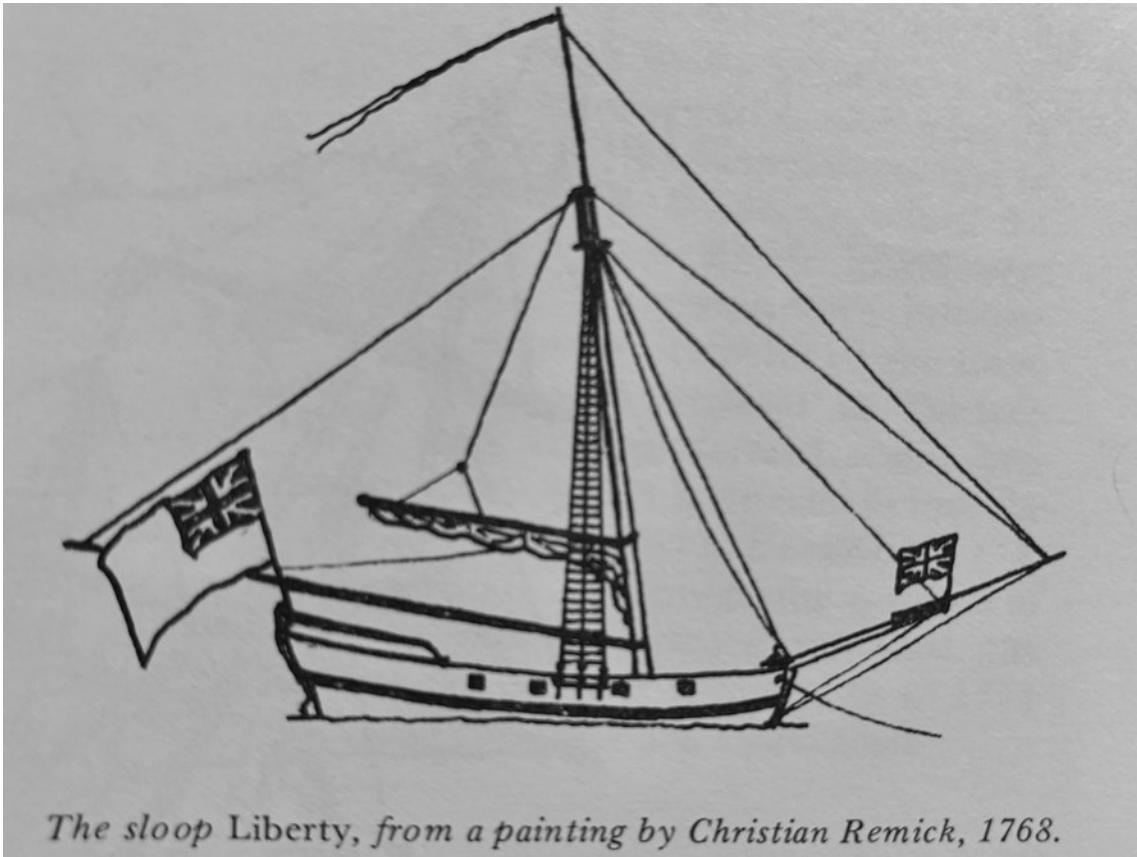
December 1764: Stephen Hopkins publishes Rights of Colonies Examined:

Hopkins was a key figure in Revolutionary Rhode Island. He was an early advocate for unity of the colonies and governor of the colony four times. He wrote the "Rights of Colonies Examined" in 1764 in response to the Stamp Act. Hopkins wrote that British subjects in America had equal rights with those in Britain. Taxes like the Stamp Act, which were passed "without their own consent", had alarmed the colonists.

June 4, 1765 the HMS Maidstone with Captain Charles Antrobus commanding, was on customs duty in Narragansett Bay. The Maidstone's Captain had impressed so many sailors that it effected the trade in Newport. A mob took the longboat from the ship and burned it in a town square

August 26. 1765 a gallows was erected in Queen Anne Square. Effigies (dummies) of the three Stamp Act defenders (Martin Howard, Dr. Moffat and Stamp Master Johnson) had been created and hung in the gallows. These were guarded by William Ellery (who would sign the Declaration of Independence), Samuel Vernon and Robert Crook. These men may have been leaders in the Sons of Liberty. A mob collected and after sundown the effigies were burned. Wanton, Lyman, Hazard House (Now owned by the Newport Historical Society) was the Howard House at the time of the Stamp Act. At 8 in the evening the ring leaders and a band of ruffians carrying axes and other tools, invaded Howard's house. They demolished china, furniture, clothing and linens. They carried away his wines and liquors. They went back at 11 PM and destroyed most of the house before they headed to Dr. Moffat's house which they also ruined. The three Stamp Act defenders had sought safety onboard the Man of War in the harbor. The crowd then surrounded the house of Stamp-Master Johnson, but since he had promised to resign his office, they didn't carry out any destruction. Howard and Dr. Moffat took a ship to England by the first of September. Newport riots were the most violent in the colonies.

March 4, 1766: Daughters of Liberty established in Newport - first in the colonies. In Newport the stamp tax was met with some violence, but the women took more peaceful strategies. The women hoped that if Americans boycotted English goods then British merchants would pressure Parliament to repeal the Act. Colonial women had the responsibility of purchasing and making goods their families needed. They were willing to make the sacrifices needed to make a political statement. It gave women a voice at a time when they couldn't hold public office. Benjamin Franklin appeared before the British House of Commons to argue against the Stamp Act. He noted that while Americans used to take pride in wearing fine imported garments, it was now their pride "to wear their old clothes over again, til they can make new ones." As a protest, women gathered to spin their own cloth instead of buying yarn and fabric from Great Britain. Reports of these spinning bees were mentioned in newspapers and the bees were located throughout Rhode Island. Ninety-two women gathered in Newport. The elite class of



women were not used to spinning and there was a report of a seventy year old women learning to spin for the protest. The women spent the day spinning and produced 170 skeins of yarn.

July 19, 1768: The Liberty Incident - Protests in Boston and Newport

On the 19th of July in 1769 a Newport mob was so exasperated with the captain of a sloop owned by Royal Commissioners that they "went on board the Liberty as she lay at Anchor in the Harbor, and cut her cables, and let her drift ashore, they then set her on fire..." (Boston Chronicles, 24, July 1769). This incident was almost three years before the burning of the Gaspee.

Liberty's full story begins earlier in Boston.

The Revenue Act of 1767, part of the Townshend Acts, placed heavy taxes on goods imported to the colony. The American Board of Customs Commissioners was put in place so that royal officials could inspect incoming merchant vessels and charge the appropriate taxes, but Hancock had refused to allow the officials to inspect one of his

vessels - the Lydia. When the customs official was sent to inspect the Liberty, he accused Hancock's men of offering him a bribe to look the other way while they were unloading. He refused the bribe and he claimed they locked him in the hold of the ship. When news of the incident spread, an angry crowd assaulted the officials involved, broke the windows of their homes and set the officials' personal boats on fire on the Commons. The sloop was seized at Boston Harbor on June 10, 1768. John Adams defended Hancock against the smuggling charges. The case dragged on and the charges were later dropped due to lack of evidence. The sloop Liberty, however, had been seized and Hancock could not get it back. It was condemned in August of 1768 and sold in September.

Newport: The Burning of the Sloop Liberty

Parliament's taxation laws hit the New England economy hard, and some turned to smuggling to avoid the taxes. In 1769 the sloop Liberty came into Newport Harbor. It was the same sloop that had been seized from John Hancock. The captain, William Reid, was authorized to capture smugglers and in return he and his crew would receive a bounty. The Liberty was a private vessel hired by the Commissioners of Customs. Reid had the reputation for being overly zealous in carrying out his orders. He frequently boarded and searched legitimate merchant ships and delayed their sailing. On 17 July 1769 the Liberty took a Connecticut-owned brig into custody on Long Island Sound and brought her to Newport. But Reid could not prove the brig had violated any laws. Captain Packwood, the ship's master, had declared his cargo at the customs house before sailing. Reid's crew continued to hold the ship in the hopes something else would be discovered to justify their bounty for the capture. Captain Packwood visited the Liberty to take control of his vessel, but shots were fired towards him. Local Newporters became outraged and a crowd gathered. Tempers flared when local officials would not help the Captain get his vessel back. A group of men attacked the Liberty, cutting the sloop's mooring lines and drifting her down toward Long Wharf. One report is that they cut down her masts and threw her guns overboard. The hulk drifted out of the harbor on the tide and came to rest on Goat Island, where another mob set her ablaze. The burning of the barge and the boat that accompanied the Liberty are commemorated with a plaque in Newport today.



The Burning of the Gaspee by Charles DeWolf Brownell

June 9, 1772: The Burning of the Gaspee

The burning of the British vessel, the HMS Gaspee on June 9, 1772 was a protest to the British Navigation Acts. The Navigation Acts were meant to force Americans to only trade with the British Empire. The Rhode Island economy was based in trade with the wider Atlantic. Just selling to the Empire was not enough for their molasses trade. That created a tension with the colonies (and Rhode Island in particular) and led to an increase in piracy and smuggling. The acts permitted the customs inspectors to board any colonial ship. In February of 1772, William Duddingston, the commander of the HMS Gaspee, arrived in Rhode Island. He used this permission to search any vessel as he saw fit. Merchants objected to his searches and seizures of their goods. The local Sons of Liberty, looked for an opportunity to retaliate. Their chance came in June 1772. The HMS Gaspee was alone and without a local pilot, but it chased a local boat called the Hannah . The Hannah could manage the shallower water, but the Gaspee ran aground. The Gaspee would be released by the tide early the next morning,. While the ship was in a vulnerable position, the Sons of Liberty rowed out and attacked the crew. Captain Duddingston was wounded. After all crew members were taken off the ship, the Sons of Liberty set fire to the Gaspee.

The event was too blatant to ignore and Parliament wanted prosecution of the attackers. Some famous names associated with the attackers are John Brown,

Abraham Whipple and Ephraim Bowen. Although there was reward money offered, Rhode Islanders refused to cooperate with the British and no one was ever prosecuted. Duddingston, however, was courtmartialed. This event led to the Committees of Correspondence, a network that united the colonies in their resistance to British rule.

Every year for 50 year the village of Pawtuxet (near Cranston and Warwick) celebrates this event with Gaspee Days and a Parade.

October 29, 1774: Rhode Island General Assembly actively organizing militias for war. As the threat of war intensified, the Rhode Island General Assembly passed a resolution on October 29, 1774 which listed militia forces that were to enlist men to fight against Crown forces. The Assembly had already ordered monthly militia drills and war preparations. Among the independent companies were the Kingston Reds, Pawtuxet Rangers, Gloucester Light Infantry, Providence Fusiliers, Providence Train of Artillery, and more. Earlier, in September, the Kentish Guards had received their charter. There was renewed interest in the traditional militias and independent companies were formed or renewed. Independent companies – Smithfield, Cumberland, North Providence, Wickford, Tiverton, Newport and Portsmouth were active. The Assembly had to create a committee to examine requests for establishing independent military companies. In Jan. 1775, these companies were grouped to form the R.I. 1st and 2nd Regiments, to answer the call of the Continental Congress which required two regiments in each colony.

Kentish Guards

April 22, 1775: 1500 troops raised in Rhode Island as an Army of Observation. Upon hearing of the Battles of Lexington and Concord, the Kentish Guards marched toward Massachusetts to help the colonists. The Kentish Guards were a militia group that formed in East Greenwich, R.I. to protect the town from British attacks as tensions grew among the American colonists. The Guard was turned back at the state border at the order of Rhode Island Governor Wanton. Nathanael Greene and others went on to Boston to help. On April 22nd the Rhode Island General Assembly ordered a force of 1500 to be called into service of the colony as an "Army of Observation." The purpose



of this Army was repelling any "insult or violence that may be offered to the inhabitants." The Army was sent to the Boston area where it went into camp. Nathanael Greene of the Kentish Guards was made Commander of this Army of Observation and given the rank of Major General. Greene worked with the Army to bring discipline to the organization. Later this Army would be placed under the control of the Continental Army and Greene would become one of Washington's best generals.

June 12, 1775: Rhode Island becomes the first colony to establish its own navy. Colonial General Assembly enacted a resolution to charter and arm two vessels for the protection of trade. In 1774, the British frigate, the *Rose*, under the command of Sir James Wallace, was sent to Narragansett Bay in Rhode Island. The *Rose* was successful in ending the smuggling that had made Newport wealthy. John Brown and other leading merchants advocated for the protection of Rhode Island trade. The Rhode Island Assembly directed the Committee of Safety to charter two vessels for protection. This action created the Rhode Island Navy, the first American Navy of the Revolution. Merchant Brown chartered one of his sloops, the *Katy*, to this new Navy.

June 15, 1775: First Naval Battle of Revolution

Abraham Whipple assumed command of the Katy and a smaller vessel – the Washington. As the new commodore, Whipple lost no time in trying to clear the smaller ship tenders of the Rose from their positions in Narragansett Bay. Whipple had more fire power than the tenders and he was able to fire on the sloop Diana and take her as a prize. Whipple towed the Diana back to Providence and when the Rose sailed up the Bay to investigate what happened to the Diana, Newport citizens were able to recapture five out of the six Newport merchant ships that Wallace had confiscated.

October 13, 1775: Creation of Continental Navy.

The new Rhode Island Navy was not powerful enough to take on the British frigate Rose, so the Rhode Island Assembly instructed their delegate to Congress, Stephen Hopkins, to introduce a bill to create the national navy. Congress passed the bill on October 13, 1775. The Katy (owned by John Brown) became the first ship of the Continental Navy and was renamed the Providence.

May 4, 1776: RI Legislature breaks allegiance to King George III.. First declaration of independence in the colonies.

Rhode Island's General Assembly rejected King George and broke its legal ties to him two months before the independence was declared by the Second Continental Congress. What it did was repeal an earlier document which pledged Rhode Island to the King and Great Britain and it repealed language that bound the colony to Royal Authority. Before the declaration each elected officer in the colony had sworn allegiance to the king before assuming his duties. The General Assembly would continue to govern itself, and all court proceedings would be performed in the name of the state not the King.



Occupation of Aquidneck Island

December 8, 1776: British Army arrives to occupy Aquidneck Island.

British General Prescott landed his troops on Aquidneck Island in December of 1776. They landed on the Western shore near the border of Middletown and Portsmouth at Weaver's Cove. This was the beginning of the Occupation of Rhode Island (Aquidneck Island). The American militiamen were unable to mount a defense and they escaped by using the ferries to Bristol and Tiverton.

The British had ample reason to invade and occupy Aquidneck Island (called Rhode Island at that time). Newport had a fine harbor from which the British fleet could raid up and down the coast. It would enable them to blockade ships carrying supplies from abroad that were needed by the Americans. The Occupation would last almost three years and brought misery to Aquidneck Islanders.

July 9 - 10, 1777: British General Prescott captured by Col. Barton at Overing Farm in Portsmouth.

In July 1777, while Aquidneck Island was under the control of thousands of British soldiers, American Major William Barton (who was in Tiverton) received word through a runaway slave that the British Commander in Chief, General Prescott was staying at Mr. Overing's house on West Main Road close to the Portsmouth/Middletown border. When Prescott was at his headquarters in Newport he was well protected. Visiting friends in the countryside, Prescott was less well defended. Barton planned to get Prescott so he could be exchanged for American Major General Charles Lee who had been captured in New Jersey. Barton asked for volunteers for a dangerous and secret plan. Out of the many who stepped forward he picked out the best rowers and four who had lived on Aquidneck Island and could serve as guides. Barton had five whaleboats and each boat had eight soldiers and one officer. The river crossing between Tiverton and Portsmouth was closely watched, so Barton and his men rowed to Bristol and then all the way over to Warwick to begin their secret mission. The mission was so secret that even the volunteers did not know where they were going until after their journey had begun.

The night of July 10th was perfect – it was very dark and the weather was good. Barton and his volunteers left Warwick Neck, rowed across the Bay with oars that were covered in wool to keep them quiet. They had to row around British ships that were stationed on the west side of the island. The Americans landed on the west shore of Portsmouth and followed a gully up to the Overing Farm on the Portsmouth/Middletown border. Barton divided his troops and they approached the house quietly. There was only one sentry on guard at the guardhouse. Hearing noise, the guard asked: "Who comes there." Barton responded: "Friends." The guard asked for a countersign and Barton said he did not have one but asked the guard "Have you seen any deserters tonight." With that the guard allowed Barton to pass and the American grabbed his musket. They found Prescott in his nightclothes. Barton asked if he was Prescott and he responded. "I am". Barton said: "You are my prisoner." and Prescott said "I acknowledge it, sir. The men worked quickly and within seven minutes took Prescott, the sentry and Prescott's aide-de camp with them. No shot was fired. They again had to row through British ships on their way back. This capture gave the colonial troops some needed encouragement. There was a prisoner swap in which General Prescott was exchanged for American General Charles Lee, but Prescott made it back to Aquidneck Island.



• Verger, Jean
Baptiste Antoine
de, 1762-1851
Artist.

February 1778: RI Legislature authorizes raising a regiment of Black and Indigenous troops.

Rhode Island had trouble meeting its recruitment quotas with just white men, so General Varnum wrote to George Washington with the idea of allowing the ranks to be filled with Black and Native Americans. He asked Washington to send soldiers from Valley Forge to recruit these men. In the pre-amble to the letter, Varnum wrote that “History affords us frequent precedents of the wisest, freest, and bravest nations having liberated their slaves and enlisted them as soldiers to fight in defense of their country.” (RI Colonial Records VII, 640, 641.) Washington did not comment on the letter, but he sent it on to the Governor of Rhode Island, Nicholas Cooke.

On February 14, 1778, the Rhode Island Assembly voted to allow “every able-bodied Negro, mulatto, or Indian slave in this state to enlist into either of the Continental Battalions being raised.” The Assembly specified that: “every slave so enlightening shall, upon the passing muster before Colonel Greene, be immediately discharged from the service of his master or mistress and be absolutely free.” Owners of the slaves enlisted were to be compensated by the Assembly for the market value of the slave. Rhode Island slave owners opposed the idea of the new regiment. In June of 1778 the Rhode Island Assembly repealed the decree, but during those four months that it was in effect, 100 free and formerly enslaved African Americans enlisted. Forty-four slaves enlisted even after this repeal. The First Rhode Island Regiment had 225 men, 140 of them were African Americans. At first the African Americans comprised a separate company, but slowly the regiment was integrated.

May 25, 1778: British forces raid Bristol - Warren

As the American forces were preparing for an attack on Aquidneck Island in Spring of 1778, the British forces were active in trying to crush the Rebel capability to transport troops across the river from Tiverton. The Rebels would need to reach Rhode Island (Aquidneck) by boat and the British planned to attack shipyards, lumber mills and military stores. On May 25, 1778, British soldier Frederick Mackenzie records that the 22nd Regiment, Companies of the 54th, Notenius's Company of Hessian Chasseurs, ..etc. (500 men in total) moved to Arnold's Point in Portsmouth. They embarked in flatboats and landed at the mouth of the Warren River. Campbell's men were divided into two columns. In the town of Warren itself they burned down the Baptist meeting house and other buildings and ransacked homes and property. The other group of Campbell's men headed to the Kickemuit River. By the Kikemuit Bridge they found and burned 125 boats, large batteaux capable of carrying 40 soldiers. They found a sloop loaded with military stores, a store house, and a corn mill and they burned them. They also burned houses, a bridge and gun carriages. They spiked cannons and set fire to a new Privateer Sloop as well as magazines of gun powder. Campbells troops returned by way of Bristol. They burned houses, a church, ammunition magazines and twenty of the principal houses. The British boats came round from Papasquash Point to the Bristol Ferry. The British ships Flora and Pigot covered the British troops as they crossed over from Bristol Ferry. Having raided Warren and Bristol and destroying American flatboats, Campbell's forces made their way back to Newport on their own flatboats. The raids certainly delayed the American troops as they prepared for the Rhode Island Campaign.

The Occupation of Aquidneck Island dragged on for almost two years when a plan was devised to work with French allies in pushing the British out of the island. On May 4, 1778 Congress ratified a treaty of alliance with France. The Rhode Island Campaign was devised as a wedge action. The Americans, under the leadership of John Sullivan, would cross from Tiverton to Portsmouth and drive south to set up a siege of Newport. Meanwhile the French, led by d'Estaing, would arrive by sea and attack the British from the sea.

July 11, 1778, Continental Congress authorized Washington to request the northeastern states to raise militia for a joint operation with the French.

July 20, 1778, d'Estaing announced he would sail for Newport and not the alternate target of New York.

Rhode Island Campaign Begins

July 22, 1778, Washington's delayed letter informs Sullivan that the French fleet is headed to Newport, and he directs Sullivan to increase the size of his militia forces from 5000 to 7500. Varnum's and Glover's brigades along with an additional attachment under Henry Jackson would head towards Providence.

July 27, 1778, Washington dispatches two Continental Army divisions under General Nathanael Greene and General Lafayette to Rhode Island. Although Greene was the Army Quartermaster, he was anxious to have a command, especially in his home state.

July 29, 1778, French ships arrive at Narragansett Bay. Washington had arranged for pilots to guide the French ships in the Bay. Two or three ships were stationed in the shallow Sakonnet River to the East of Aquidneck Island. Other ships positioned anchored near the entrance to the Sakonnet Channel. Most of the French ships had anchored about three miles south of Conanicut Island (Jamestown). Four British frigates anchored at various points of the west side of Aquidneck Island where they would remove their cannons, ammunition and supplies. On the Sakonnet side the Spitfire and Alarm and the sloop Kingfisher were unloading at Fogland Ferry. In Newport harbor the Flora and Falcon did the same.

July 30, 1778, trapped by the French navy, British ships the Kingfisher, Alarm and Spitfire were ordered to be torched. Ammunition that had remained on the vessels caused explosions.

August 1, 1778, General Sullivan and Admiral d'Estaing meet, agree on simultaneous attacks on the Island on August 8. British Commander Pigot was expecting a siege and he ordered all sheep and cattle in Portsmouth and Middletown (except one per family) to be driven behind British lines in Newport. Carts, wagons, and tools like picks and axes were all collected and brought to Newport. The soldiers' families and regimental



The Languedoc, dismasted by the storm the night of the 12 August 1778, attacked by HMS Renown the afternoon of 13 August 1778

baggage were brought to Newport. Wells in Portsmouth and Middletown were filled in so there would be no drinking water for the enemy.

August 3, 1778, British forces felled trees to block the roads running from Portsmouth and Middletown into Newport. To prevent the French from landing their troops, five or six transports were sunk by Goat Island. One of them (the Lord Sandwich) had been James Cook's ship Endeavour.

August 5, 1778, more British ships (Orpheus, Lark, Cerberus, Juno and Pigot) were purposely sunk in the harbor to hinder the French and to avoid their capture.

August 6, 1778, Due to late arriving militia, Sullivan informs d'Estaing of postponement of the attack. British cannons fire on French ships.

August 7-8, 1778, d'Estaing enters Narragansett Bay, causing the British to withdraw from north end of the Island into prepared positions along the Newport-Middletown border.



French map of American positions - Siege of Newport

August 9, 1778, Realizing the British had withdrawn south, Sullivan moves his forces onto the Island. Two to three thousand French forces land on Conanicut Island.

D'Estaing is furious that the Americans have reached Aquidneck Island early. D'Estaing is alerted to the imminent arrival of Howe's fleet which was coming from New York. He decides to go out and fight Howe's fleet and then go to the aid of the Americans. There was shelling between the French fleet facing Newport and the shore batteries controlled by the British.

August 10, 1778, French head out to sea. Both French and British fleets maneuver for advantage, but before they can engage, both fleets are scattered and damaged by a hurricane. Both leave for port and repairs. American commander John Sullivan prepared to shorten the distance between the American lines and the British line. He was going to lay a siege because by then he had 11,000 men.

August 11 - 12, 1778, General Sullivan prepares to work toward British positions, but the hurricane causes him to delay. The weather during the night of the 12th was especially fierce and the Americans had little shelter from the pelting rain and wind. The camp was a swamp.

For the British and French fleets out on the water, the weather turned to serious wind gusts. Heavy rain, gale force winds and thick fog hampered both fleets. The winds

began to topple the masts. By 4 am on the 12th the French flagship Languedoc had lost its bowsprit, all of its masts and its rudder. It was simply floating without being able to steer.

August 15, 1778, Americans open the Siege of Newport. The Americans needed to construct defensive works, so Sullivan marched them south with banners flying. By 5 PM they halted and pitched camp by Honeyman Hill in Middletown. This was a high point where the Americans could view the British lines. However the 20 day enlistments of many militia units were up and they left. Sullivan was waiting for new units to arrive. Col. Paul Revere commanded the Boston artillery train and John Hancock was major general of the 3000 member Massachusetts militia.

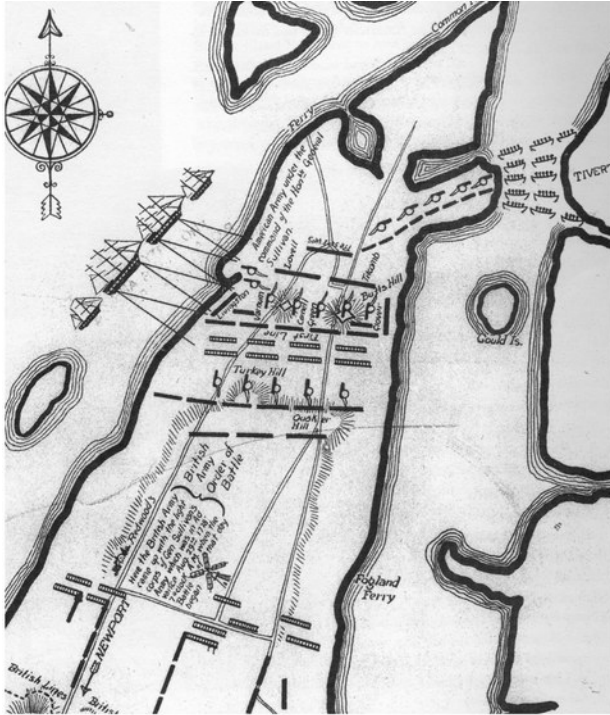
August 16, 1778, Americans were preparing a four cannon battery on the western slope of Honeyman Hill. The British opened fire as the fog lifted, so the Americans worked on the trenches and battery in the dark or fog.

August 20, 1778, d'Estaing's battered ships return to Narragansett Bay. D'Estaing informs Sullivan he must immediately leave for Boston for repairs. His order from the King of France was to protect his fleet.

August 21, 1778, Sullivan sends Nathanael Greene, Lafayette and Col John Langdon to board the Languedoc - d'Estaing's ship and talk with d'Estaing. D'Estang still decides to have the fleet sail for Boston.

August 24, 1778, Sullivan receives word that a British naval force is on its way to Newport. Sullivan and his officers prepare for a quick withdrawal. At a council of war there is unanimous agreement to move the troops to the Portsmouth end of the island to wait for the French return. Sullivan advocated for a gradual and orderly retreat.

August 25, 1778. All unnecessary baggage was removed off the island. Work on the trenches stopped. Volunteers began to leave in large numbers. Revere and his artillery and Hancock and his Massachusetts militia are among those leaving the island. Hancock asks for a letter of introduction to talk to d'Estaing in Boston. Mortars and



Commonwealth
Insurance Map of Battle
of Rhode Island

heavy cannon were taken off the island.

August 27, 1778, Sullivan sends Lafayette to Boston to determine when d'Estaing would come back to Rhode Island. Lafayette made the 70 mile trip in just 7 hours. By this time Sullivan had lost 3,000 volunteers through illness or decisions to leave the island.

August 28, 1778, American council of war decides to withdraw Patriot forces to defensive positions around Butts Hill. They would be close to the ferry landings if they needed to withdraw completely. By 8PM the soldiers put down their tents and marched out with Greene commanding the West column up West Main Road and Glover leading the other column up East Main.

Battle of Rhode Island

August 29, 1778,

At dawn the British forces are alerted that the Americans have left their positions. The British aim to capture the American Army but the American goal is a successful retreat. British Brigadier General Smith and his men marched toward Quaker Hill in Portsmouth by East Road. Meanwhile on West Road Captain von Malsburg and Captain Noltenius with Hessian Chasseurs advanced toward American pickets led by John Laurens. Behind them came Major General von Lossberg and his men. The first skirmish was at the corner of Union and West Main Road close to the Portsmouth/Middletown border. The Americans were driven up West Road. Meanwhile the Americans were positioned behind stone walls by Union Street and East Main Road. The Americans attacked and there were British casualties. At this point the British forces are divided and one column heads up Middle Road and another on East Road.

On the West Laurens American forces have to retreat across Lawton's Valley to Turkey Hill. As the Hessian forces reach Turkey Hill, Laurens is given orders to retreat to the main lines around Butts Hill. On the east side American forces under Wigglesworth are at the intersection of Hedly Street, Middle Road and East Road. This is at the top of Quaker Hill by the Quaker Meeting House. Quaker Hill was the scene of intense fighting and the Americans retreated toward Butts Hill and Glover's lines. From top of Quaker Hill, British General Smith could see strength of Glover's position. Smith was under orders not to begin a general engagement, so he decided against a frontal assault. Smith withdrew forces to top of Quaker Hill. On the West side Americans had positions on Durfee's Hill and Butts Hill. American Samuel Ward and the 1st Rhode Island Regiment (Black Regiment) aided by the 2nd Rhode Island held an Artillery Redoubt. The Americans held the position and repulsed von der Malsberg's men through three attacks. British ships Sphynx, Spitfire, and Vigilant shelled the American positions from the West shore, but they did little damage. American General Greene's men dragged cannon down to beach and forced the British ships to retreat. There was sporadic artillery fire and light skirmishing. Musket and cannon shots were heard for seven hours. The Battle of Rhode Island was basically over. The Americans and British

forces retired to their lines.

August 30-31, 1778, overnight Sullivan's army withdraws across the Sakonnet Straight to Tiverton with all its equipment.

After the Occupation

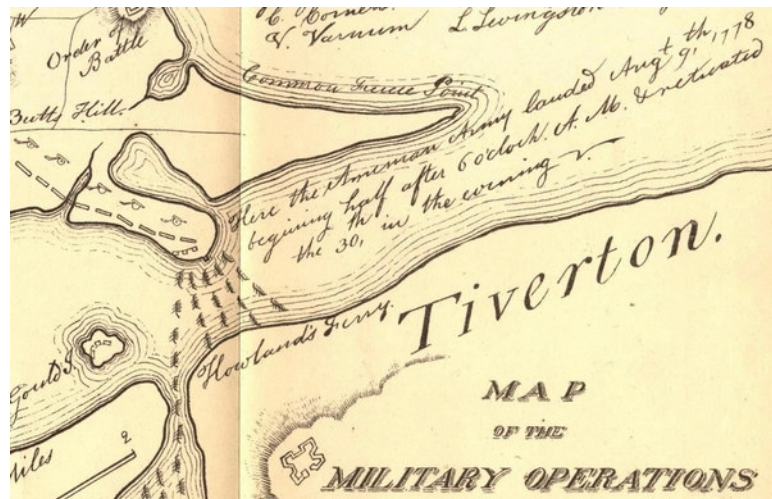
October 25, 1779: British garrison evacuated Newport:

By 1779 strategic changes led the British to abandon Rhode Island of their own accord. Weary of trying to subdue the New England colonies, the British re-directed their efforts to the southern states where the population was thought to be overwhelmingly Loyalist. In addition, with France now firmly in the war on the side of the Americans, the British needed more ships and more soldiers in the West Indies to protect their interests in the Sugar Islands from the French. The money brought to the Crown from the islands far exceeded that from their North American colonies.

July 10, 1780: French Army under Rochambeau arrives in Newport:

The French arrived in Newport in July of 1780. Most of the forces wintered in Newport except the Lauzun Legion which camped in Connecticut. Rochambeau was very skillful in handling his troops, and the Americans began to appreciate their presence. Where the British had demolished defenses, the French engineers worked on rebuilding them.

August 16th - November 28, 1780: American troops help French at Butts Hill. There were American troops assigned to Butts Hill to support the work of the French troops in enlarging the fortifications there. They were stationed at "Camp Butts Hill" from August 16th to November 28, 1780. Major General William Heath's diary for September of 1780 notes that "The batteries were strengthened, a very strong one erected on Rose-Island, and redoubts on Coaster's-Island: the strong works on Butt's-Hill (were) pushed." A few days later he would remark: "The French army continued very busy in fortifying Rhode-Island: some of their works were exceedingly strong and mounted with heavy metal." We know from orderly books (daily records) that the American militiamen were aiding the French masons as they enlarged and fortified Butts Hill Fort.



Rochambeau Map featuring Butts Hill Fort 1781

January 1, 1781: The First and Second Rhode Island Regiments were consolidated into the "Rhode Island Regiment".

March 6, 1781: Washington Visits Rochambeau

General Washington visited Count de Rochambeau to consult with him concerning the operation of the troops under his command. Washington was hoping to encourage Rochambeau to send out his fleet to attack New York City. In an address to the people of Newport, Washington expressed gratitude for the help of the French.

May 14, 1781: Col. Christopher Greene killed in a battle near Fishkill, Col. Christopher Greene had charge of the Black Regiment. After the Battle of Rhode Island, Greene's troops stayed around Rhode Island. They camped around Butts Hill and participated in the construction of Butts Hill Fort. Heading towards the action in the South, Greene and his soldiers camped near Peekskill, New York. They were guarding the Continental lines. On the morning of May, 14th a New York Loyalist unit attacked Greene's men. They put up a fight, but Greene was killed in hand-to-hand fighting.

June 10, 1781: French Army starts its trail to Yorktown.

As the road to Yorktown began, Rochambeau and his general staff left Newport on June 10, 1781. He arrived at Providence the following day. Brigadier General de Choisy was left behind in Newport with some French troops. In August he sailed with Barras' fleet to the Chesapeake area. On the morning of June 11, 1781, the first Brigade of French troops began to load onto the small vessels in the harbor of Newport. All the troops had left by the 12th and camped on the west side of Providence between Westminster and Friendship streets. The French Army performed a grand review in Providence on June 16, then set out for Coventry in four divisions. One division departed each day from June 18 to 21. Rochambeau left Providence with the first division (the Bourbonnais Regiment) and arrived at Waterman Tavern in Coventry in the evening of June 18.

October 14, 1781: Stephen Olney of Providence leads the final charge in the



Stephen Olney

Battle of Yorktown. Olney led the Rhode Island soldiers (including those who had been in the Black Regiment. They served under Lafayette at Yorktown. Olney led them over the top of Redoubt 10 where they were attacked by British soldiers with bayonets. The redoubt was quickly taken, but Olney was badly injured.

September 3, 1783: Final peace treaty signed in Paris.

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Butts Hill Fort