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Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin,  
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# THE DOCUMENTARY HISTORY OF THE RATIFICATION OF THE CONSTITUTION

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Volume XXIV

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Ratification of the Constitution  
by the States

## RHODE ISLAND

[1]

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Editors

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**W**E, the People of the United States, in a more perfect Union, establish Justice, Tranquility, provide for the common and secure the General Welfare, and promote the Liberty to Ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain a Constitution for the United States of America.

### A R T I C L E I.

*Sec. 1.* ALL legislative powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.

*Sec. 2.* The House of Representatives shall be composed of members chosen every second year by the people of the several States, and the electors in each State shall have the qualifications requisite for electors of the most numerous branch of the State Legislature.

No person shall be a Representative who shall not have attained to the age of twenty-five years, and been seven years a citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an inhabitant of that State in which he shall be chosen.

Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole number of free persons, including those bound to service for a term of years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three-fifths of all other persons. The actual enumeration shall be made within three years after the first meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent term of ten years, in such manner as they shall by law direct. The number of Representatives shall not exceed one for every thirty thousand, but each State shall have at least one Representative; and until such enumeration shall be made, the State of New-Hampshire shall be en-

## RATIFICATION OF THE CONSTITUTION BY THE STATES

RHODE ISLAND was the last of the original thirteen states to ratify the Constitution. For three tempestuous years, the state's freemen virulently contested the Constitution within the context of their own state politics, which was dominated by a radical economic policy begun in the spring of 1786. Out of the mainstream of British America from its very origins, when its first English settlers were banished from Massachusetts, Rhode Island continued its unconventional ways during and after the War for Independence. In 1782 it was the only state to reject the Impost of 1781 that would have given Congress the power to levy a tariff that would have provided it with an independent source of revenue to pay the wartime debt. Without this tariff, Congress relied on requisitions on the states for money, which state legislatures were not always willing or able to supply. Throughout the Confederation years, Rhode Island was vilified for killing the Impost and perpetuating the country's economic distress during the 1780s.

Rhode Island's radical economic policy relied upon an emission of paper money in 1786 that, after it greatly depreciated, was used to retire the state wartime debt, largely in the hands of hated speculators. A bitter partisan political struggle between the dominant Country party (Antifederalists) and the minority Mercantile party (Federalists) ensued from the spring of 1786 until the Constitution was ratified in the spring of 1790. Having a large majority of supporters in all but a few of the state's thirty towns, the Country party controlled all branches of state government. Although the state had appointed commissioners to the Annapolis Convention of 1786, the legislature on three occasions refused to appoint delegates to the Constitutional Convention that met from May to September 1787.

The legislature, dominated by the Country party, defeated the Mercantile party's motions for a state convention to consider the Constitution as the Philadelphia Convention and Congress had recommended. Instead, it called a statewide referendum to be held on 24 March 1788 in town meetings in which the freemen voted individually for or against the Constitution—a procedure unique to Rhode Island. Many Federalists boycotted the referendum, particularly in the large Federalist towns of Providence and Newport. The vote—2,714 to 238—reflected the overwhelming opposition to the Constitution in Rhode Island. Only two of the state's thirty towns voted for the Constitution.

In January 1790, after Rhode Island had paid its state wartime debt with depreciated paper money, the legislature called a convention to consider the Constitution. The Convention, with a sizable Antifederalist majority, met in early March 1790 in South Kingstown, an Antifederalist stronghold. After debating the Constitution for almost a week,

*(continued on back endflap)*



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MADISON  
WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESS  
2 0 1 1

*The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution* is sponsored by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Preparation of this volume was made possible by grants from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission; the Division of Research Programs of the National Endowment for the Humanities, an independent federal agency; the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation; the E. Gordon Fox Fund; the William Nelson Cromwell Foundation; the Hamilton Roddis Foundation; Barbara A. and Peter Brinkley; and Harlow Giles Unger. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Publication was made possible in part by a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

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LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING IN PUBLICATION DATA [REVISED]

Main entry under title:

The Documentary history of the ratification  
of the Constitution.

Editors for v. 24: John P. Kaminski, Charles H. Schoenleber, Gaspare J. Saladino, Richard Leffler, Jonathan M. Reid, Margaret R. Flamingo, Patrick T. Conley.

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I. United States—Constitutional history—Sources.

I. Jensen, Merrill. II. Kaminski, John P. III. Saladino,

Gaspare J. IV. Leffler, Richard. V. Schoenleber, Charles H.

VI. Reid, Jonathan M. VII. Flamingo, Margaret R. VIII. Conley, Patrick T.

KF4502.D63 342'.73'029 75-14149

ISBN 978-0-87020-468-5 347.30229 AACR2



*To*

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## Acknowledgments

This volume was supported principally by grants from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the E. Gordon Fox Fund of the University of Wisconsin Foundation, and the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation. Substantial aid also was provided by the William Nelson Cromwell Foundation, the Hamilton Roddis Foundation, Barbara A. and Peter Brinkley, and Harlow Giles Unger.

We thank Kathleen Williams and Timothy D. W. Connelly of the NHPRC; Jim Leach and Lydia Medici of the NEH; Michael W. Grebe, Dianne J. Sehler, Daniel P. Schmidt, and Yvonne Engel of the Bradley Foundation; John D. Gordan III of the Cromwell Foundation; and Philip Prange of the Hamilton Roddis Foundation.

A continuing debt of gratitude is owed to the administration, faculty, and staff of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, especially former Chancellor John D. Wiley; Dean Gary D. Sandefur, assistant deans Margaret M. Sullivan, Linda J. Johnson, Mehdi Rezai, and John G. Varda of the College of Letters and Science; E. Diane Barrett, Charles L. Hoffman, Thomas G. Handland, and Dawn-Marie M. Roberts of Research and Sponsored Programs. In the Department of History, we thank chair Florencia Mallon, Margaret Brandenburg, Michael R. Burmeister, Nicole S. Hauge, John J. Persike, Amy Schultz, Theresa K. Tobias, and Leslie Abadie. Also helpful were several students employed by the department: Susan Burns, Kristen Cassarini, Katie Dreps, Will Marx, and Melissa Sharafinski.

For aid in fund raising, we are indebted to the University of Wisconsin Foundation, especially to past president Andrew A. (Sandy) Wilcox, President Michael M. Knetter, Marion F. Brown, Walter H. Keough, Martha A. Taylor, Anne Lucke, Jennifer L. Kidon-DeKrey, and Michelle Koran.

In addition to being our publisher, the Wisconsin Historical Society is our primary research library. The Society's staff continues its invaluable support as does the staff at the University's Memorial Library and the Law Library.

Others have provided essential information or documents: Kenneth R. Bowling and William C. diGiacomantonio of the Documentary History of the First Federal Congress; Douglas E. Clanin, formerly of the Indiana Historical Society; Tracy N. Hay, town clerk of Richmond, R.I.; Helena Bowen, deputy town clerk of Richmond; and Celeste Beauparlant, planning clerk of Foster, R.I.; and Ruth Wallis Herndon, Bowling

Green State University. The Gilder Lehrman Collection at the New-York Historical Society has given permission to print items from its holdings.

Finally, we thank Isaac Dorsch who, under the direction of Tanya Buckingham of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Cartography Laboratory, prepared the Rhode Island map found on the endpapers.

At a moment when public workers face particular uncertainty, we gratefully acknowledge the assistance we have received over the years from librarians at the various University of Wisconsin-Madison libraries, the staff at the Wisconsin Historical Society, and the administrators in the Graduate School, Research and Sponsored Programs, the College of Letters and Science, and the Department of History.

We have dedicated this volume to two very special individuals who have been particularly important to us—Margaret M. Sullivan and Linda J. Johnson—both assistant deans in the College of Letters and Science. In the past we have regularly mentioned both Maggie and Linda in each volume's acknowledgments. It is now time to show our deep appreciation for these two outstanding members of the University community. For forty years Maggie Sullivan has been a friend and colleague, greasing the administrative wheels in a variety of ways dealing with personnel and finances. Maggie played a crucial role in keeping the project afloat during the difficult transition after the death of Merrill Jensen in January 1980. There is no doubt that the project functioned much more smoothly with the extraordinary assistance rendered by Maggie. The existence of the project at the UW-Madison was perhaps dependent on Maggie's involvement. She worked hard and long (as she still does) behind the scenes in a way that allowed us to continue our work. Now, after she has retired from a distinguished career of University service, she has been rehired and continues to provide her expertise to our project, as well as many others. We are indeed truly grateful for all she has done over four decades.

Linda Johnson's involvement with the project has been of shorter duration—slightly over a decade—but with greater and more intimate involvement with the project's finances. At first Linda eliminated the bureaucratic impasse that had developed over a variety of financial matters. Initially Linda handled all of the project's applications for federal and private grants. Soon this expanded to the complete control of virtually all financial aspects of the project including grant applications, account management, federal effort reporting, and payroll management. Through her extraordinary talents, she has made a complex financial system function smoothly and in the process has lightened the editors'

burden by diminishing stress and increasing the time for editorial matters. To a great extent we measure the chronology of the Ratification project as “before Linda Johnson” and “after Linda Johnson.”

While assisting the project in their administrative capacities, Maggie and Linda have also become personal friends of the project staff, especially of the director. We consider them both colleagues and friends.

## Organization

*The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution* is divided into:

- (1) *Constitutional Documents and Records, 1776–1787* (1 volume),
- (2) *Ratification of the Constitution by the States* (21 volumes),
- (3) *Commentaries on the Constitution: Public and Private* (6 volumes),
- (4) *The Bill of Rights* (2 or 3 volumes).

### *Internet Availability*

The four volumes on Massachusetts ratification (volumes IV–VII) and their supplemental documents can be found on the web site of the Wisconsin Historical Society at [www.wisconsinhistory.org/ratification](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/ratification). These volumes, and all other volumes, including the Rhode Island volumes, will be found at the web site of “Rotunda: American Founding Era Collection,” maintained by the University of Virginia Press at <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu>. The Rhode Island supplemental documents will be found on the web site of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries at <http://library.wisc.edu>.

### *Constitutional Documents and Records, 1776–1787* (Vol. I).

This introductory volume, a companion to all of the other volumes, traces the constitutional development of the United States during its first twelve years. Cross-references to it appear frequently in other volumes when contemporaries refer to events and proposals from 1776 to 1787. The documents include: (1) the Declaration of Independence, (2) the Articles of Confederation, (3) ratification of the Articles, (4) proposed amendments to the Articles, proposed grants of power to Congress, and ordinances for the Western Territory, (5) the calling of the Constitutional Convention, (6) the appointment of Convention delegates, (7) the resolutions and draft constitutions of the Convention, (8) the report of the Convention, and (9) the Confederation Congress and the Constitution.

### *Ratification of the Constitution by the States* (Vols. II–XII, XIX–XXVIII).

The volumes are arranged roughly in the order in which the states considered the Constitution. Although there are variations, the documents for each state are organized into the following groups: (1) commentaries from the adjournment of the Constitutional Convention to the meeting of the state legislature that called the state convention, (2) the proceedings of the legislature in calling the convention, (3) commentaries from the call of the convention until its meeting, (4) the

election of convention delegates, (5) the proceedings of the convention, and (6) post-convention documents.

*Supplements to Ratification of the Constitution by the States.*

The supplemental documents for Massachusetts, New York, Rhode Island, and all future volumes are no longer placed on microfiche. The Massachusetts supplemental documents can be found on the Wisconsin Historical Society's web site. The Rhode Island supplemental documents can be found on the web site of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries at <http://library.wisc.edu>.

Much of the material for each state is repetitious or peripheral but still valuable. Literal transcripts of this material are placed in the supplements. Occasionally, images of significant manuscripts are also included.

The types of documents in the supplements are:

- (1) newspaper items that repeat arguments, examples of which are printed in the state volumes,
- (2) pamphlets that circulated primarily within one state and that are not printed in the state volumes or in *Commentaries*,
- (3) letters that contain supplementary material about politics and social relationships,
- (4) images of petitions with the names of signers,
- (5) images of manuscripts, such as notes of debates, and
- (6) miscellaneous documents, such as election certificates, attendance records, pay vouchers and other financial records, etc.

*Commentaries on the Constitution: Public and Private* (Vols. XIII–XVIII).

This series contains newspaper items, pamphlets, and broadsides that circulated regionally or nationally. It also includes some private letters that give the writers' opinions of the Constitution in general or report on the prospects for ratification in several states. Except for some grouped items, documents are arranged chronologically and are numbered consecutively throughout the six volumes. There are frequent cross-references between *Commentaries* and the state series.

*The Bill of Rights.*

The public and private debate on the Constitution continued in several states after ratification. It was centered on the issue of whether there should be amendments to the Constitution and the manner in which amendments should be proposed—by a second constitutional convention or by the new U.S. Congress. A bill of rights was proposed

in the U.S. Congress on 8 June 1789. Twelve amendments were adopted on 25 September and were sent to the states on 2 October. These volumes will contain the documents related to the public and private debate over amendments, to the proposal of amendments by Congress, and to the ratification of the Bill of Rights by the states.

## Editorial Procedures

All documents are transcribed literally. Obvious slips of the pen and errors in typesetting are silently corrected. When spelling, capitalization, punctuation, paragraphing, and spacing between words are unclear, modern usage is followed. Superscripts and interlineations are lowered to the line, and marginalia are inserted where the author intended. The thorn is spelled out (i.e., “ye” becomes “the”). Crossed-out words are retained when significant. Obsolete meanings of words are supplied in footnotes.

Square brackets are used for editorial insertions. Conjectural readings are enclosed in brackets with a question mark. Illegible and missing words are indicated by dashes enclosed in brackets. However, when the author’s intent is obvious, illegible or missing text (up to five characters in length) is silently provided.

All headings are supplied by the editors. Salutations, closings of letters, addresses, endorsements, docketings, and postmarks are deleted unless they provide important information, in which case they are retained in the document or placed in editorial notes. Contemporary footnotes and marginal citations are printed after the text of the document and immediately preceding editorial footnotes. Symbols used by contemporaries, such as stars, asterisks, and daggers, have been replaced by superscripted letters (a), (b), (c), etc.

Many documents, particularly letters, are excerpted when they contain material that is not relevant to ratification. Whenever an excerpt is printed in this edition and a longer excerpt or the entire document appears elsewhere in this edition or in other editions, this is noted. “Editors’ Notes” have been used frequently to discuss important events as well as out-of-state newspaper essays or pamphlets that circulated in Rhode Island but are printed elsewhere in the edition.



## General Ratification Chronology, 1786–1791

### 1786

21 January	Virginia calls meeting to consider granting Congress power to regulate trade.
11–14 September	Annapolis Convention.
20 September	Congress receives Annapolis Convention report recommending that states elect delegates to a convention at Philadelphia in May 1787.
11 October	Congress appoints committee to consider Annapolis Convention report.
23 November	Virginia authorizes election of delegates to Convention at Philadelphia.
23 November	New Jersey elects delegates.
4 December	Virginia elects delegates.
30 December	Pennsylvania elects delegates.

### 1787

6 January	North Carolina elects delegates.
17 January	New Hampshire elects delegates.
3 February	Delaware elects delegates.
10 February	Georgia elects delegates.
21 February	Congress calls Constitutional Convention.
22 February	Massachusetts authorizes election of delegates.
28 February	New York authorizes election of delegates.
3 March	Massachusetts elects delegates.
6 March	New York elects delegates.
8 March	South Carolina elects delegates.
14 March	Rhode Island refuses to elect delegates.
23 April–26 May	Maryland elects delegates.
5 May	Rhode Island again refuses to elect delegates.
14 May	Convention meets; quorum not present.
14–17 May	Connecticut elects delegates.
25 May	Convention begins with quorum of seven states.
16 June	Rhode Island again refuses to elect delegates.
27 June	New Hampshire renews election of delegates.
13 July	Congress adopts Northwest Ordinance.
6 August	Committee of Detail submits draft constitution to Convention.
12 September	Committee of Style submits draft constitution to Convention.
17 September	Constitution signed and Convention adjourns <i>sine die</i> .
20 September	Congress reads Constitution.
26–28 September	Congress debates Constitution.
28 September	Congress transmits Constitution to the states.
28–29 September	Pennsylvania calls state convention.
17 October	Connecticut calls state convention.

25 October	Massachusetts calls state convention.
26 October	Georgia calls state convention.
31 October	Virginia calls state convention.
1 November	New Jersey calls state convention.
6 November	Pennsylvania elects delegates to state convention.
10 November	Delaware calls state convention.
12 November	Connecticut elects delegates to state convention.
19 November– 7 January 1788	Massachusetts elects delegates to state convention.
20 November– 15 December	Pennsylvania Convention.
26 November	Delaware elects delegates to state convention.
27 November– 1 December	Maryland calls state convention.
27 November– 1 December	New Jersey elects delegates to state convention.
3–7 December	Delaware Convention.
4–5 December	Georgia elects delegates to state convention.
6 December	North Carolina calls state convention.
7 December	Delaware Convention ratifies Constitution, 30 to 0.
11–20 December	New Jersey Convention.
12 December	Pennsylvania Convention ratifies Constitution, 46 to 23.
14 December	New Hampshire calls state convention.
18 December	New Jersey Convention ratifies Constitution, 38 to 0.
25 December– 5 January 1788	Georgia Convention.
31 December	Georgia Convention ratifies Constitution, 26 to 0.
31 December– 12 February 1788	New Hampshire elects delegates to state convention.
<b>1788</b>	
3–9 January	Connecticut Convention.
9 January	Connecticut Convention ratifies Constitution, 128 to 40.
9 January–7 February	Massachusetts Convention.
19 January	South Carolina calls state convention.
1 February	New York calls state convention.
6 February	Massachusetts Convention ratifies Constitution, 187 to 168, and proposes amendments.
13–22 February	New Hampshire Convention: first session.
1 March	Rhode Island calls statewide referendum on Constitution.
3–27 March	Virginia elects delegates to state convention.
24 March	Rhode Island referendum: voters reject Constitution, 2,714 to 238.
28–29 March	North Carolina elects delegates to state convention.
7 April	Maryland elects delegates to state convention.
11–12 April	South Carolina elects delegates to state convention.
21–29 April	Maryland Convention.
26 April	Maryland Convention ratifies Constitution, 63 to 11.
29 April–3 May	New York elects delegates to state convention.
12–24 May	South Carolina Convention.

23 May	South Carolina Convention ratifies Constitution, 149 to 73, and proposes amendments.
2–27 June	Virginia Convention.
17 June–26 July	New York Convention.
18–21 June	New Hampshire Convention: second session.
21 June	New Hampshire Convention ratifies Constitution, 57 to 47, and proposes amendments.
25 June	Virginia Convention ratifies Constitution, 89 to 79.
27 June	Virginia Convention proposes amendments.
2 July	New Hampshire ratification read in Congress; Congress appoints committee to put the Constitution into operation.
21 July–4 August	First North Carolina Convention.
26 July	New York Convention Circular Letter calls for second constitutional convention.
26 July	New York Convention ratifies Constitution, 30 to 27, and proposes amendments.
2 August	North Carolina Convention proposes amendments and refuses to ratify until amendments are submitted to Congress and to a second constitutional convention.
13 September	Congress sets dates for election of President and meeting of new government under the Constitution.
20 November	Virginia requests Congress under the Constitution to call a second constitutional convention.
30 November	North Carolina calls second state convention.

**1789**

4 March	First Federal Congress convenes.
1 April	House of Representatives attains quorum.
6 April	Senate attains quorum.
30 April	George Washington inaugurated first President.
8 June	James Madison proposes Bill of Rights in Congress.
21–22 August	North Carolina elects delegates to second state convention.
25 September	Congress adopts twelve amendments to Constitution to be submitted to the states.
16–23 November	Second North Carolina Convention.
21 November	Second North Carolina Convention ratifies Constitution, 194 to 77, and proposes amendments.

**1790**

17 January	Rhode Island calls state convention.
8 February	Rhode Island elects delegates to state convention.
1–6 March	Rhode Island Convention: first session.
24–29 May	Rhode Island Convention: second session.
29 May	Rhode Island Convention ratifies Constitution, 34 to 32, and proposes amendments.

**1791**

15 December	Bill of Rights adopted.
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# Calendar for the Years 1787–1790

## 1787

S M T W T F S	S M T W T F S	S M T W T F S	S M T W T F S
<b>JANUARY</b>	<b>FEBRUARY</b>	<b>MARCH</b>	<b>APRIL</b>
1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7 8 9 10 11 12 13	4 5 6 7 8 9 10	4 5 6 7 8 9 10	8 9 10 11 12 13 14
14 15 16 17 18 19 20	11 12 13 14 15 16 17	11 12 13 14 15 16 17	15 16 17 18 19 20 21
21 22 23 24 25 26 27	18 19 20 21 22 23 24	18 19 20 21 22 23 24	22 23 24 25 26 27 28
28 29 30 31	25 26 27 28	25 26 27 28 29 30 31	29 30
 <b>MAY</b>	 <b>JUNE</b>	 <b>JULY</b>	 <b>AUGUST</b>
1 2 3 4 5	1 2	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4
6 7 8 9 10 11 12	3 4 5 6 7 8 9	8 9 10 11 12 13 14	5 6 7 8 9 10 11
13 14 15 16 17 18 19	10 11 12 13 14 15 16	15 16 17 18 19 20 21	12 13 14 15 16 17 18
20 21 22 23 24 25 26	17 18 19 20 21 22 23	22 23 24 25 26 27 28	19 20 21 22 23 24 25
27 28 29 30 31	24 25 26 27 28 29 30	29 30 31	26 27 28 29 30 31
 <b>SEPTEMBER</b>	 <b>OCTOBER</b>	 <b>NOVEMBER</b>	 <b>DECEMBER</b>
1	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3	1
2 3 4 5 6 7 8	7 8 9 10 11 12 13	4 5 6 7 8 9 10	2 3 4 5 6 7 8
9 10 11 12 13 14 15	14 15 16 17 18 19 20	11 12 13 14 15 16 17	9 10 11 12 13 14 15
16 17 18 19 20 21 22	21 22 23 24 25 26 27	18 19 20 21 22 23 24	16 17 18 19 20 21 22
23 24 25 26 27 28 29	28 29 30 31	25 26 27 28 29 30	23 24 25 26 27 28 29
30			30 31

## 1788

S M T W T F S	S M T W T F S	S M T W T F S	S M T W T F S
<b>JANUARY</b>	<b>FEBRUARY</b>	<b>MARCH</b>	<b>APRIL</b>
1 2 3 4 5	1 2	1	1 2 3 4 5
6 7 8 9 10 11 12	3 4 5 6 7 8 9	2 3 4 5 6 7 8	6 7 8 9 10 11 12
13 14 15 16 17 18 19	10 11 12 13 14 15 16	9 10 11 12 13 14 15	13 14 15 16 17 18 19
20 21 22 23 24 25 26	17 18 19 20 21 22 23	16 17 18 19 20 21 22	20 21 22 23 24 25 26
27 28 29 30 31	24 25 26 27 28 29	23 24 25 26 27 28 29	27 28 29 30
		30 31	
 <b>MAY</b>	 <b>JUNE</b>	 <b>JULY</b>	 <b>AUGUST</b>
1 2 3	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5	1 2
4 5 6 7 8 9 10	8 9 10 11 12 13 14	6 7 8 9 10 11 12	3 4 5 6 7 8 9
11 12 13 14 15 16 17	15 16 17 18 19 20 21	13 14 15 16 17 18 19	10 11 12 13 14 15 16
18 19 20 21 22 23 24	22 23 24 25 26 27 28	20 21 22 23 24 25 26	17 18 19 20 21 22 23
25 26 27 28 29 30 31	29 30	27 28 29 30 31	24 25 26 27 28 29 30
			31
 <b>SEPTEMBER</b>	 <b>OCTOBER</b>	 <b>NOVEMBER</b>	 <b>DECEMBER</b>
1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4	1	1 2 3 4 5 6
7 8 9 10 11 12 13	5 6 7 8 9 10 11	2 3 4 5 6 7 8	7 8 9 10 11 12 13
14 15 16 17 18 19 20	12 13 14 15 16 17 18	9 10 11 12 13 14 15	14 15 16 17 18 19 20
21 22 23 24 25 26 27	19 20 21 22 23 24 25	16 17 18 19 20 21 22	21 22 23 24 25 26 27
28 29 30	26 27 28 29 30 31	23 24 25 26 27 28 29	28 29 30 31
		30	

1789

S M T W T F S	S M T W T F S	S M T W T F S	S M T W T F S
JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL
1 2 3	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4
4 5 6 7 8 9 10	8 9 10 11 12 13 14	8 9 10 11 12 13 14	5 6 7 8 9 10 11
11 12 13 14 15 16 17	15 16 17 18 19 20 21	15 16 17 18 19 20 21	12 13 14 15 16 17 18
18 19 20 21 22 23 24	22 23 24 25 26 27 28	22 23 24 25 26 27 28	19 20 21 22 23 24 25
25 26 27 28 29 30 31		29 30 31	26 27 28 29 30
MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST
1 2	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4	1
3 4 5 6 7 8 9	7 8 9 10 11 12 13	5 6 7 8 9 10 11	2 3 4 5 6 7 8
10 11 12 13 14 15 16	14 15 16 17 18 19 20	12 13 14 15 16 17 18	9 10 11 12 13 14 15
17 18 19 20 21 22 23	21 22 23 24 25 26 27	19 20 21 22 23 24 25	16 17 18 19 20 21 22
24 25 26 27 28 29 30	28 29 30	26 27 28 29 30 31	23 24 25 26 27 28 29
31			30 31
SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5
6 7 8 9 10 11 12	4 5 6 7 8 9 10	8 9 10 11 12 13 14	6 7 8 9 10 11 12
13 14 15 16 17 18 19	11 12 13 14 15 16 17	15 16 17 18 19 20 21	13 14 15 16 17 18 19
20 21 22 23 24 25 26	18 19 20 21 22 23 24	22 23 24 25 26 27 28	20 21 22 23 24 25 26
27 28 29 30	25 26 27 28 29 30 31	29 30	27 28 29 30 31

1790

S M T W T F S	S M T W T F S	S M T W T F S	S M T W T F S
JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL
1 2	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3
3 4 5 6 7 8 9	7 8 9 10 11 12 13	7 8 9 10 11 12 13	4 5 6 7 8 9 10
10 11 12 13 14 15 16	14 15 16 17 18 19 20	14 15 16 17 18 19 20	11 12 13 14 15 16 17
17 18 19 20 21 22 23	21 22 23 24 25 26 27	21 22 23 24 25 26 27	18 19 20 21 22 23 24
24 25 26 27 28 29 30	28	28 29 30 31	25 26 27 28 29 30
31			
MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST
1	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
2 3 4 5 6 7 8	6 7 8 9 10 11 12	4 5 6 7 8 9 10	8 9 10 11 12 13 14
9 10 11 12 13 14 15	13 14 15 16 17 18 19	11 12 13 14 15 16 17	15 16 17 18 19 20 21
16 17 18 19 20 21 22	20 21 22 23 24 25 26	18 19 20 21 22 23 24	22 23 24 25 26 27 28
23 24 25 26 27 28 29	27 28 29 30	25 26 27 28 29 30 31	29 30 31
30 31			
SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
1 2 3 4	1 2	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4
5 6 7 8 9 10 11	3 4 5 6 7 8 9	7 8 9 10 11 12 13	5 6 7 8 9 10 11
12 13 14 15 16 17 18	10 11 12 13 14 15 16	14 15 16 17 18 19 20	12 13 14 15 16 17 18
19 20 21 22 23 24 25	17 18 19 20 21 22 23	21 22 23 24 25 26 27	19 20 21 22 23 24 25
26 27 28 29 30	24 25 26 27 28 29 30	28 29 30	26 27 28 29 30 31
	31		

## Introduction

The land that became known as Rhode Island and Providence Plantations was first occupied by English colonists from Massachusetts who were banished because of their religious unorthodoxy. (Roger Williams, Anne Hutchinson, William Coddington, and Samuel Gorton were such prominent religious outcasts.) Beginning in 1636, the towns of Providence, Newport, Portsmouth, and Warwick were established. Leaders in Rhode Island drew up compacts or patents under which they governed themselves as “a DEMOCRACIE, or Popular Government; that is to say, It is in the Powre of the Body of Freemen orderly assembled, or the major part of them, to make or constitute Just Lawes, by which they will be regulated, and to depute from among themselves such Ministers as shall see them faithfully executed between Man and Man.”<sup>1</sup> In 1643 Parliament issued a patent for Rhode Island, and a constitution was created in 1647. In 1663, three years after the restoration of the English monarchy, Charles II issued a new charter for Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. During the years of the American Revolution, when the Continental Congress asked the colonies to disregard their royal charters and create constitutions amenable to the people, Rhode Island modified its colonial charter, which then served as the state’s constitution until the adoption of a new constitution in 1842.

The royal charter of 1663 provided that Rhode Island would have a corporate government in which each town could determine freeman-ship. Freemen would annually elect a governor, a deputy governor, and ten assistants. At least twice each year (in May and October, or sooner if necessary), the governor and assistants would meet in a unicameral General Assembly with deputies elected semi-annually from the towns. The governor would preside. Newport could elect six deputies, while the other three original towns each could elect four. Future towns would elect two deputies. Not until 1696 did the General Assembly sit as a bicameral body. The upper house, or the House of Magistrates, consisted of the governor, deputy governor, and assistants. The lower house was the House of Deputies. The deputies’ salaries were determined by their respective towns. The governor and deputy governor received modest salaries and the assistants had no regular salary.

Under the charter, the legislature could make laws that were not “repugnant” to the laws of England. It could set or alter the times of its meetings, and it could grant commissions. It had broad powers over the judiciary; it could prescribe punishments, grant pardons, regulate elections, and grant freeman-ship. Between 1703 and 1750, five counties

were created. The legislature provided for a county house, which doubled as a court house, in each county and regularly rotated its meetings among the buildings. The state used the five counties as administrative units with the legislature electing justices of the Inferior Court, sheriffs, militia officers, revenue collectors, and other officials for each county.

Freemanship was obtained at both the town and colony level. A person would first secure the right of residency in a town after which he would achieve a “competent estate.” He could then apply directly for freemanship or be nominated by a person of substance in the town. When granted freemanship by the town, the town clerk would submit the person for colony freemanship, which was usually granted. In 1723 a statute provided that freemanship required land ownership of £100 or rental value of 40 shillings per annum. This act also provided that the eldest son of a qualifying freeholder could be a freeman.<sup>2</sup> The value of land for suffrage was raised to £200 in 1729 and to £400 in 1746, but by 1760 it was reduced to £40. It has been estimated that 75 percent of Rhode Island’s white adult males met this franchise qualification, although only 50 percent of eligible men bothered to vote. Various observers described Rhode Island on the eve of the American Revolution as being “dangerously democratic” and “the nearest to a democracy of any of your colonies.” In 1773 New York Chief Justice Daniel Horsmanden described Rhode Island as a “downright democracy” whose government officials were “entirely controlled by the populace.”<sup>3</sup>

The governor, deputy governor, secretary, attorney general, treasurer, and ten assistants were chosen in town meetings across the colony in the annual April election. Deputies to the General Assembly were elected every six months in April and August by the towns. A system of balloting was adopted in which the existing political parties nominated candidates on a prox. (See “Glossary,” RCS:R.I., 318–19.)

The fulcrum of political power was always in the town, not the General Assembly. Rhode Island was a federal government made up of towns—four in the beginning; thirty by the time of the American Revolution. At the colony and, later, the state level, the General Assembly was always more powerful than the governor. Freedom of religion was protected, and freemen enjoyed the rights of Englishmen. The Assembly elected all military and civil officers and served as an appeals court of last resort.

\* \* \* \* \*

On 29 May 1790, Rhode Island ratified the Constitution and rejoined the Union, following more than a year of separation. Controlled by the Country party since May 1786, Rhode Island opposed the Constitution until its large wartime debt had been redeemed with depreciated state

paper currency. The Country party's radical fiscal policies divided the state and alienated Rhode Island from the other states, keeping the state aloof from federal affairs until it ratified the Constitution.

*The Setting: Economic Anxieties*

After the American Revolution, Rhode Island's economy was in serious straits. In addition to the extensive destruction on the islands of Narragansett Bay, the war had saddled Rhode Island with a large public debt. Before the Revolution, the colony's annual expenses slightly exceeded £2,000. After the war, the annual interest payments alone on the state debt exceeded £10,500. The taxes necessary to support state government and pay wartime debts fell mostly on ordinary citizens because, unlike other states, Rhode Island had no western lands and few confiscated Loyalist estates that could be sold to ease the tax burden. To make matters worse, much of the public debt had gravitated into the hands of wealthy speculators. An unfavorable balance of trade also contributed to the state's economic problems, as specie was shipped out of state to pay for imports. Although farmers were unable to obtain hard currency for their produce, the state government, shopkeepers, and private creditors, often merchants, insisted on payment in specie. Thus, at a time when the state was being forced to increase taxes, the circulating medium of exchange contracted, making it difficult if not impossible for many Rhode Islanders to pay their state taxes and private debts.

Rhode Islanders hoped to solve their economic problems by reestablishing their lucrative prewar commerce. They felt threatened when in February 1781 Congress proposed an amendment to the Articles of Confederation giving it the power to levy an impost of five percent to raise revenue to pay the wartime debt. Some Rhode Islanders thought this impost would make Congress independent of the states; others did not want to see the federal debt (much of which, like Rhode Island's state debt, had been purchased by speculators at low rates) paid at face value. For these reasons, most Rhode Islanders opposed the Impost of 1781, and in November 1782 the state legislature refused to ratify it—the only state to withhold its assent. Because the Articles of Confederation required that amendments be unanimously approved by the state legislatures, the impost was defeated. Rhode Island's lone dissent made it the scapegoat of the Confederation, as America's economic ills were attributed to Rhode Island.

In April 1783 Congress again proposed a five percent impost and the following year it proposed that it be given the power to regulate commerce for fifteen years. Rhode Island merchants soon realized that



Congress needed the power to regulate commerce. The Mercantile party, in control of the state government until the spring of 1786, granted Congress the power to regulate commerce in October 1785, but Congress asked Rhode Island to reconsider its grant and make it “agreeable” to the 1784 proposal. In March 1786 the legislature adopted a bill acceptable to Congress and approved the Impost of 1783. Three months later the legislature appointed Jabez Bowen and Samuel Ward as commissioners to the Annapolis Convention in September 1786 in order to consider granting Congress additional commercial powers. The Convention quickly prepared a report to the states and Congress and then adjourned while Bowen and Ward were traveling to Annapolis.

The short postwar period of prosperity in Rhode Island was followed by a deep economic depression. Farmers, who had been encouraged to produce more to feed the troops during the war, had borrowed money to purchase additional land to increase their production. The market for these crops disappeared as the armies left the state, but the debts did not. Farmers faced insolvency and foreclosure proceedings. The state soon became divided into two hostile political parties. A merchant-creditor party, dominant in the coastal towns, opposed debtor relief measures, preferring instead a strengthened central government that could encourage economic recovery through a coordinated federal commercial policy. The second party, centered in the interior towns, supported debtor relief from the state legislature.

Ideologically these two parties were generally in agreement; however, on the means to restore the economy their disagreement was profound. William Ellery of Newport, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, ominously wrote that “we have been for many years free from party strife. This paper frenzy is like to kindle a war which may last for years.”<sup>4</sup> The debtor relief party advocated state paper money that would be loaned with real estate as collateral. This fiscal measure had been used frequently and successfully during colonial times, but the disastrous experience with state and continental currencies during the American Revolution was fresh in the minds of merchant-creditors. Fear of uncontrollable inflation caused creditors, along with many Rhode Islanders in general, to oppose any new emission of paper money, no matter how serious the state’s economic plight.

The struggle over paper money began in early 1784 when the towns of Westerly and Hopkinton petitioned the legislature for a state currency. These requests were rejected by the Mercantile party in power. In February 1786 the Assembly rejected another appeal for paper money from ten of the state’s thirty towns. The strong demand for relief, however, prompted the legislature to request the towns to consider the

emission of paper money and to instruct their deputies. This action was critical; the town meeting was the seat of political power. If enough towns favored paper money, the legislature would be obliged to enact some sort of fiscal relief. Twenty-seven towns instructed their deputies to support paper money. Despite such an endorsement, the lower house defeated a paper-money proposal in March 1786 by a vote of 43 to 18.

Proponents and opponents of paper money realized that the state's fiscal policy depended on the upcoming elections in April 1786. Consequently, a concerted effort was made to convince the public of the virtues and vices of paper money.

### *The "Revolution" of 1786*

The state election of 1786 constituted a revolution. The Country party, running on a pledge "To Relieve the Distressed," swept the elections for governor, deputy governor, and the legislature. "Paper money has carried all before it," stated William Ellery.<sup>5</sup>

The new Assembly met in early May and suspended the collection of the last tax. Before the end of the month, the legislature authorized the emission of £100,000 of paper money to be loaned for fourteen years to any Rhode Islander who owned real estate worth double the value of the amount borrowed. Four percent annual interest was to be collected during the first seven years; thereafter one-seventh part of the principal was to be repaid annually. The money was declared legal tender. Creditors who refused a tender in paper money were liable to forfeit the debt to the state, eliminating the debtor's obligation. Never before had such a radical legal-tender provision been established.

Almost immediately insults and ridicule were hurled at the state. A correspondent from Hartford styled the act as "the most extraordinary that ever disgraced the annals of democratical tyranny." He lamented "the depravity of human nature" that could "sanctify such palpable fraud and dishonasty, by a solemn act of legislation."<sup>6</sup> "'Rogue-Island' " was charged with committing a crime against its people and the other states. A Boston writer maintained that "Fool-Island" had demonstrated that it was incapable of governing itself "*and therefore one of the Sister States must take them into her care and protection.*"<sup>7</sup>

By mid-June £40,000 of paper money had been loaned, but the opposition persisted. Consequently the Country party decided to take drastic action. At its June 1786 session, the legislature passed a penalty act. Anyone refusing to accept the currency at face value was subject to a £100 fine for the first offense, half going to the state and half to "the Person who shall inform." Conviction of a second offense carried

the same fine and disenfranchisement. Despite the penalty act the opposition to paper money continued. Country party leaders admonished farmers to withhold their produce from Providence and Newport—centers of the opposition. The shortage of foodstuffs caused uneasiness in the coastal towns, and open violence occurred in Newport. A correspondent charged that “the country people, influenced by a few designing worthless characters, are determined, by starving us out, as they style it, to compel us to swallow the paper money.”<sup>8</sup> Only the timely intervention of Governor John Collins, the assistants, and a few influential citizens prevented a major conflict.<sup>9</sup> The governor, because of “the great Uneasiness now prevailing,” called a special session of the legislature to consider the matter.<sup>10</sup>

The governor set the tone for the special session that convened on 22 August 1786, when he condemned the machinations of “a Combination of influential Men” who were attempting to defeat the intent of state laws. “The public Good must be the Pole Star,—the Legislative must be wise—and the Executive decisive.”<sup>11</sup> The legislature responded with an amendment to the penalty act aimed at producing swift and final judgment. The act provided that all paper-money cases were to be tried in special courts without juries and without the right to appeal. The legislature also resolved that Rhode Islanders could pay continental taxes in state paper money.<sup>12</sup>

On 13 September 1786, delegates from Providence County towns met in convention at Smithfield to consider the merchants’ continued opposition. The delegates attacked the subversive tendencies “of the mercantile Interest” and proposed that the legislature consider several plans, one of which called for a state-trade system that would have effectively eliminated the merchant class. As envisioned by a writer in the *Providence Gazette*, the state would own all stores, ships, wharves, shipyards, and the like. A state commission would send ships on fishing and mercantile ventures while severely limiting the importation of luxuries. The legislature would “take the lead in this business, and will order it carried on in such manner, and under such regulations, as they in their wisdom shall think most convenient for the welfare, advantage, and well-being of the State.”<sup>13</sup> The governor called a special session of the legislature to meet on 2 October to consider the proposal. On 28 September, Noah Mathewson reported that the governor had acted at the request of the Smithfield Convention and that “A State trade is now proposed & should it be adopted, would complete the mad system.”<sup>14</sup>

Shortly after the Smithfield Convention adjourned, the state Superior Court considered a case under the provisions of the second penalty

act. In the case of *Trevett v. Weeden*, the defendant had allegedly refused paper money at par in his butcher shop. The defense attorney, James Mitchell Varnum, argued that, according to the second penalty act, a special court (not the Superior Court) should hear the case and that the penalty act itself was unconstitutional because it had no provision for a jury trial. Four of the five justices ruled that their court had no jurisdiction in the case. Despite the court's disclaimer of authority, several judges stated that the penalty act was unconstitutional.<sup>15</sup> At about the same time, the Country party suffered another rebuff. On 18 September 1786, Congress resolved that Rhode Island could not use state-issued paper money to pay its continental requisition.<sup>16</sup>

In this atmosphere of discontent a special session of the legislature met on 2 October 1786. By removing "party Spirit and Prejudice" and promoting "a Union of Sentiment . . . among the various Classes of Citizens," the House of Deputies hoped to establish paper currency "on a firm and proper Basis." It therefore appointed a bipartisan committee. The committee recommended a modification of the tender provision of the paper-money act that was slightly more favorable to creditors, that the payment of the state excise and state impost duties in paper money should be allowed, and that the state debt should be paid in paper money as soon as practicable. The lower house voted that the report "be not received." Rejecting further compromise, Country party leaders introduced a bill that would require everyone in Rhode Island to take an oath supporting paper money. Any freeman who refused would be disenfranchised; any lawyer who refused would be disbarred; any merchant who refused could not send or receive vessels; and any government official who refused would be turned out of office. This "test act" was so controversial that the legislature sent it to the towns for their consideration.<sup>17</sup> When the legislature reconvened on 30 October, it found that only three towns (Foster, North Kingstown, and Scituate) favored the bill. The House of Deputies decisively defeated the measure. Instructions from four towns (Little Compton, Portsmouth, Warren, and Westerly) asking for the repeal of the tender provision of the paper-money act were read, but the lower house refused to debate the issue. The deputies appointed a committee to report on paying off the state debt. When the committee could not agree on what to do, the lower house appointed a committee to report to the next session. At the request of the House of Deputies, three of the five judges of the Superior Court appeared to explain their actions in *Trevett v. Weeden*. The deputies were not satisfied with their explanations but decided not to bring criminal charges against the judges for their decision.<sup>18</sup>

When the legislature reconvened in December 1786, the Country party acted decisively to buttress its paper-money program. The legislature repealed the two penalty acts. However, it strengthened the tender provision by making it easier for debtors to lodge the money tendered with a court. The legislature also put severe limitations on mercantile lending practices and private promissory notes, considered the repeal of Newport's city charter, and passed an excise tax, which fell heavily on the larger towns and the wealthy. Finally, the legislature voted to redeem one-quarter of a portion of the state debt with paper money. The committee appointed at the last session to study the repayment of the entire state debt was continued and instructed to report to the next session.<sup>19</sup> To some, these measures were still too limited.

The *Providence Gazette* of 6 January 1787 (Mfm:R.I.) reported that a bill introduced in the December session would abolish all debts and distribute all property equally among heads of families and repeat the process every thirteen years. Whether or not such a leveling bill was introduced in the legislature is uncertain. The newspaper report of the bill contributed to the mounting fear of Rhode Island's radical fiscal policies—fear not only within the state, but nationwide. Within two and a half months of the report's publication, the alleged bill was reprinted in at least fourteen newspapers from Vermont to Georgia.

Much was made about the supposed widespread abandonment of private debts under the legal-tender provisions of the paper-money act. In reality, relatively few debtors took advantage of the provision allowing them to lodge paper money with a judge, which forced creditors to accept it or forfeit the money. More often the fear of forfeiting entire debts compelled Rhode Islanders to accept the currency and thus absorb a sort of hidden tax as the money continued to depreciate.

Rhode Island's fiscal policies, including the depreciation of paper currency, had a much greater impact on holders of the state's debt as the Country party moved quickly to redeem it. In March 1787 a legislative committee estimated that the state debt amounted to slightly over £153,000, or about \$521,000. This public debt was composed primarily of two types of securities—£50,665 in six percent notes and £46,071 in four percent notes. Both kinds of securities had become concentrated in the hands of speculators. The legislature passed an act implementing the December 1786 resolution to redeem one-fourth of the state debt (excluding the four percent notes) with paper money.<sup>20</sup>

With fiscal policy as the overriding issue, both parties prepared for the April 1787 state elections. The Country party "carried all before them."<sup>21</sup> The Country party took the landslide victory as an endorse-

ment of the proposed redemption of the state debt with depreciated paper money—money that had fallen to only one-sixth of its face value. Additional acts were passed redeeming the balance of the six percent notes in quarterly installments in June 1787, February 1788, and May 1788. Public creditors who failed to submit their certificates to the treasurer within six weeks for payment of a quarter part of the face value in paper money would forfeit future claims on that quarter part of the securities and interest would stop. The legislature conveniently financed this redemption plan by levying taxes easily payable in paper money immediately after each quarter of the debt was paid. Thus a ready supply of paper money was available for the next quarter's payment of the debt. The result was that the six percent notes were redeemed with no excessive tax burden.

In October 1788 the legislature provided that the first quarter of the four percent notes should be redeemed. Opponents attacked the “procrastinated” payment of the debt as a way “at the next election to induce the people to reappoint them to complete so glorious a work.”<sup>22</sup> Country party leaders moved to deflect this criticism by providing in December 1788 that all of the four percent notes should be redeemed in full by 1 March 1789. When March arrived, the legislature extended the payment period to 8 May for all notes except the six percent notes that had been forfeited.<sup>23</sup> After 8 May all of the state debt would be paid or forfeited.

The funding of the state debt with depreciated currency had drastically changed Rhode Island's fiscal situation. Once the entire state debt was either redeemed or forfeited, state expenses were reduced to less than £10,000 annually, forty percent of which was paid by the interest on paper-money loans. With the state in healthy fiscal condition, the Country party was willing to compromise. In September 1789 the legislature temporarily suspended the tender and lodgement provisions of the paper-money act of May 1786 until the next session. During its first session in October, the legislature admitted that paper money had depreciated “from various and unforeseen Causes” and that continuing paper money as “a Tender will be productive of the highest Injustice.” It therefore repealed the tender and lodgement provisions and made real estate and certain personal property at an appraised value payable for debts. During the second October session a committee was appointed “to ascertain the gradual Depreciation” of the state's paper money. The committee reported at the January 1790 session that as of October 1789 the depreciation rate was fifteen to one (i.e., fifteen paper dollars to one dollar of gold or silver coin). But “after a lengthy Debate in the Lower House, [the scale of depreciation that the com-

mittee reported] was negatived by a Majority of four Voices.”<sup>24</sup> Rhode Island had completed the most extensive fiscal program in the United States. By paying the public debt in depreciated currency, the Country party had redistributed the state’s wealth. Had the redemption of the state debt not occurred, the gulf between the most wealthy speculators and the state’s farmers would have widened significantly. Rhode Island’s fiscal policy prevented this polarization and alleviated some of the farmers’ hostilities that elsewhere erupted in violence. At the same time, however, Rhode Island had alienated its public creditors, the Confederation Congress, and the other states.

*Rhode Island and the Constitutional Convention*

By 1787 the conflict over paper money in Rhode Island had become enmeshed in national issues. On 21 February 1787, Congress called a general convention to revise and amend the Articles of Confederation. One reason for calling a convention was to give Congress power to restrict the radical fiscal policies of state legislatures, especially those of Rhode Island. Rhode Islanders recognized that the proposed convention would consider measures antagonistic to the state’s paper money policy and the impending redemption of its state debt with depreciated currency. Congress had already rebuked Rhode Island in 1786 when it refused to accept the state’s currency in payment of the congressional requisition. Consequently, Country party leaders were suspicious of any attempt to broaden federal power at the expense of the states.

Soon after it convened in mid-March 1787, the legislature read the congressional resolution calling a general convention. A motion to appoint delegates to the convention was rejected by a two-to-one majority. When the new legislature met for the first time after the April elections, the deputies resumed consideration of the motion to appoint delegates to a convention. The deputies agreed to the appointment by a majority of two. The measure was killed when the upper house, seemingly in a well-orchestrated Country party maneuver, defeated the appointment by a majority of four.<sup>25</sup>

In response to their state’s isolationist policy, a committee of thirteen, on behalf of the merchants and tradesmen of Providence, wrote to the Constitutional Convention scheduled to meet on 14 May in Philadelphia. “Deeply affected with the evils of the present unhappy times,” the committee expressed the hope “of the well inform’d throughout this State” that Congress might be given additional powers over commerce and taxation. The committee wanted General James Mitchell Varnum, a delegate to Congress, who had carried the letter to Philadel-

phia, to “Communicate (with your permission) in person more particularly Our Sentiments on the subject.” In a separate letter to Varnum the committee hoped that he would be permitted to take a seat in the Convention “when the Commercial Affairs of the Nation are discuss’d.”<sup>26</sup> The Convention read the letter on 28 May but tabled it.

When the state legislature reconvened in mid-June, the upper house reversed its previous action and agreed to send a delegation to Philadelphia. On 16 June the lower house rejected the measure by a majority of seventeen.<sup>27</sup> Two days later, Varnum wrote to George Washington, the president of the Convention:

. . . the measures of our present legislature do not exhibit the real character of the State. They are equally reprobated & abhorred by Gentlemen of the learned professions, by the whole mercantile body, and by most of the respectable farmers and mechanics. The Majority of the administration is composed of a licentious number of men, destitute of education, and many of them, void of principle. From anarchy and confusion they derive their temporary consequence, and this they endeavour to prolong by debauching the minds of the common people, whose attention is wholly directed to the abolition of debts public & private.<sup>28</sup>

The response to Rhode Island’s boycott of the Convention was heated. A southern correspondent in the *Newport Herald* of 12 April (CC:13) hoped “when the convention meets in Philadelphia, that measures will be taken to reduce you to order and good government, or strike your State out of the union, and annex you to others; for as your Legislature now conducts, they are dangerous to the community at large.” The *Pennsylvania Herald* of 9 June (CC:35–A) reported that the Convention had resolved that “Rhode-Island should be considered as having virtually withdrawn herself from the union, and . . . upon no account shall she be restored to her station.” By contrast, the 19 May *Massachusetts Centinel* (Mfm:R.I.) maintained that Rhode Island’s failure to appoint delegates was “a circumstance far *more joyous than grievous*; for her delinquency will not be permitted to defeat the salutary object of this body.” In Virginia, William Nelson, Jr., a lawyer and member of a prominent family, hoped that Rhode Island “may not again attempt to shew, how the machine may be retarded, by one of it’s most trifling wheels refusing to perform it’s office.”<sup>29</sup> William Grayson, a Virginia delegate to Congress, charged that the “cry” in Rhode Island “is for a good government, after they have paid their debts in depreciated paper: first demolish the Philistines (i.e. their Creditors) & then for *propriety*.”<sup>30</sup> On 2 September Francis Dana, a Massachusetts delegate to the



Convention who was unable to attend because of illness, wrote his fellow Massachusetts delegate Elbridge Gerry that Rhode Island's "neglect will give grounds to strike it out of the Union & divide their Territory between their Neighbours" (Mfm:R.I.).

Because of this universal condemnation, the failure of the August session of the legislature to achieve a quorum, and continual pleas from Congress to send delegates to that body, Governor John Collins called a special session of the legislature to meet in mid-September to appoint Convention delegates and delegates to Congress. Instead, the legislature approved letters to Congress explaining why the state had refused to send delegates to both bodies. One of the letters, adopted on 15 September, acknowledged that "many severe and unjust sarcasmes [had been] propagated against us" for refusing to send a delegation to Philadelphia. The legislature maintained that it could not constitutionally appoint such a delegation because a state law provided that only the people could elect delegates to a convention intended to amend the Articles of Confederation. Nevertheless, the legislature intended to join "with our Sister States in being instrumental in what ever may be advantageous to the Union, and to add strength and permanance thereto, upon Constitutional principles" (RCS:R.I., 19–20). An official protest from the Newport and Providence deputies stated that "the Legislature have at various times agreed to Conventions with the Sister States" without violating "the Rights and Liberties of the Citizens of this State" (RCS:R.I., 21–23). The letter and the protest were sent to Congress on 17 September, the day that the Constitutional Convention adjourned. Congress read the Rhode Island communications on 24 September, four days after it read the newly proposed Constitution.

#### *The Struggle to Call a State Convention*

On 28 September 1787 Congress adopted a resolution sending the Constitution to the states with a recommendation that the state legislatures call special conventions of delegates chosen by the people to consider the new form of government (CC:95). The previous day the Constitution was printed by the *United States Chronicle*. On 3 November the state legislature ordered over one thousand copies of the Constitution to be printed and distributed to the towns. The House of Deputies, however, rejected a motion calling a convention to ratify the Constitution, the first of many rejections during the next two years.

The Constitution fared poorly in Rhode Island for several reasons, foremost among which was the states' rights philosophy of most of the inhabitants. Because of its religious and economic unorthodoxy, Rhode Island for years had been maligned. Occasionally proposals were made

to obliterate it as a political entity. The state's opposition to the new Constitution increased such suggestions. These proposals only strengthened the Country party's resolve to maintain its opposition to the Constitution.

Many Rhode Islanders opposed the Constitution because it threatened their fiscal system. The Country party favored paper money and opposed the Constitution, while the Mercantile party opposed state currency and supported the Constitution. Since the Constitution banned state paper money and protected the sanctity of contracts, there was some doubt about the effect ratification would have on the money in circulation and the public-debt redemption program. Would all money have to be recalled immediately? Could the state debt still be paid in depreciated currency? What measures could the legislature enact to protect the currency? These were critical questions that no one could answer with complete assurance.<sup>31</sup>

The new year started well for the Mercantile party. On 1 January 1788 Little Compton instructed its deputies to "use your utmost endeavors" to obtain a state ratifying convention.<sup>32</sup> Sixteen days later news arrived in Rhode Island that Georgia and Connecticut had ratified the Constitution, followed less than a month later by news of Massachusetts' accession.

When the legislature convened on 25 February, the minority demanded a state convention. Four days later such a measure was defeated 43 to 15. Country party leaders proposed that the Constitution, like any other controversial issue, be submitted to the towns where the freemen could express their opinions. Such a referendum was approved on 1 March by a vote of 42 to 12. The legislature defeated a minority amendment to the referendum asking that the freemen instruct their deputies to call a state convention (II-A, below).

The Rhode Island referendum was held on 24 March 1788, when the Constitution was rejected by a vote of 2,714 to 238. Only two of the thirty towns supported the Constitution—Bristol and Little Compton. Federalists in Newport and Providence boycotted the referendum. Providence, with about five hundred freemen, voted 1 to 0 against the Constitution, while Newport, with three to four hundred freemen, voted 10 to 1 against it. Newport instructed its deputies to try to get a state convention called to consider the Constitution, and Providence and Bristol petitioned the legislature asking that a state convention be called (II-B, below).

The legislature met in late March. The House of Deputies rejected a motion calling a state convention by a majority of twenty-seven. The referendum results were tabulated and a letter was prepared to inform

Congress that the referendum process was based “upon pure Republican Principles.” Although the Constitution had been overwhelmingly defeated, the General Assembly believed that it contained some necessary provisions that “could well be added and adapted to the present Confederation.” Rhode Island, the letter indicated, would be willing to grant Congress “sufficient Authority” to regulate commerce so that the public debt could be discharged (II–C, below).

As the annual April statewide elections approached, Rhode Islanders faced a clear choice. They could support either the Mercantile party and the new Constitution or the Country party and its fiscal policies. The election was another landslide victory for the Country party. William Ellery lamented: “We are like to have much the same administration this as we had the last year.—Indeed there is no proba[bi]lity that any material alteration will take place until our State debt is paid.”<sup>33</sup> When a proposal was made for a state convention during the June legislative session, the lower house brushed it aside without taking a vote.<sup>34</sup>

On 24 June 1788, news arrived in Rhode Island that New Hampshire had ratified the Constitution. Since it was the ninth state to do so, the Constitution could be implemented among the ratifying states. Soon a new general government would be organized, excluding Rhode Island. On 5 July, news of Virginia’s ratification was received. A few weeks later, William Ellery expressed the opinions of many Rhode Islanders that their state would “stand out as long [as] it can;—but if Newyork accedes,—it will, it must soon come in.—If it should continue to be obstinate to the last;—it is not invincible. It may be annihilated, and divided.” Coincidentally, the next day news arrived that New York had ratified the Constitution.<sup>35</sup> Rhode Island’s debt had not been completely redeemed, though, which encouraged the Country party to continue the fight.

The legislature met again in late October 1788. Federalists hoped that a convention would be called. Peleg Arnold, one of the state’s delegates to Congress, wrote Governor John Collins that a convention could consider the Constitution “and make their objections to the particular parts that are Incompatible to a good System of Government, and make Known to the States in the Union on what terms the State would Join them.”<sup>36</sup> On the last day of the session, the House of Deputies again defeated a motion for a convention, this time by a vote of 40 to 14, and also rejected a motion to repeal the tender provision of the paper-money act of May 1786. The legislature then resolved to send to the towns copies of the New York Convention’s proposed amendments to the Constitution and its circular letter that called for a second

general convention to consider such amendments. The towns were asked to instruct their deputies whether Rhode Island should comply with the circular letter and appoint delegates to a proposed general convention.<sup>37</sup>

Eight towns voted to send a delegation to a second convention and five voted to call a state convention. After considering these instructions, the House of Deputies, on 1 January 1789, rejected another motion for a state convention by a vote of 34 to 12.<sup>38</sup>

By March 1789 Rhode Island Federalists were more alarmed than ever. The new federal Congress was scheduled to convene on 4 March, and the state still had not called a ratifying convention. On 10 March a Providence town meeting instructed its deputies to seek a convention, asserting that “a new æra in the political affairs of this country has taken place”—an era that saw Rhode Island “stand perfectly alone, unconnected with any State or sovereignty on earth.” Unless the legislature called a convention, the state would be ruined economically (IV, below). On 13 March the lower house again rejected a motion for a convention.<sup>39</sup> The Country party had not yet “completely extinguished the State debt.”<sup>40</sup>

Two weeks after this defeat, prominent Providence Federalists wrote to President George Washington asking him and Congress to make a public appeal to Rhode Islanders. Only in this way could enough upright men be elected to the legislature in April 1789 to pass an act calling a convention.<sup>41</sup> Washington, however, was not inaugurated until 30 April, after the state elections. Jeremiah Wadsworth, a Connecticut member of the U.S. House of Representatives, advised Rhode Island Federalists to make public, “Manly” overtures to Congress requesting that body to use force, if necessary, to command obedience from the recalcitrant state. If public overtures were considered too dangerous, Federalists should make them in private. Wadsworth added that “a number of friends” in Connecticut were ready to assist Rhode Island Federalists in their struggle.<sup>42</sup>

The Country party again easily won control of the legislature at the April 1789 elections. In May the House of Deputies postponed consideration of the convention question until June. The legislature provided that Rhode Island would collect the same impost duties as those in Congress’ expected tariff act. Federalists attacked this “sham acquiescence” that was obviously an effort to appease Congress and avoid economic sanctions.<sup>43</sup> When the legislature reconvened in June, the lower house again defeated both a motion calling a convention and the repeal of the tender provision of the paper-money act of May 1786.<sup>44</sup>

By September 1789 the entire state debt had been paid or forfeited. Country party leaders realized that Rhode Island would have to ratify the Constitution soon if they wanted to maintain political power within Rhode Island. A prolonged delay might result in military or economic intervention by the central government. In either case, Federalists would blame the Country party. The Country party had to find a way to ratify the Constitution without appearing inconsistent, while at the same time not giving credit to its opponents. Since the Country party controlled both houses of the legislature and the executive offices, it would be difficult to ratify the Constitution without appearing to repudiate its position of the previous two years.

On 15 September 1789, a special session of the legislature convened. Three days later, at the request of Country party leaders, the legislature passed an act requiring the towns to hold meetings on 19 October at which the freemen would be asked to vote on whether or not the legislature should call a convention. On 19 September the legislature approved a letter to President George Washington and Congress explaining why the state had not yet ratified the Constitution and affirming its loyalty to the Union.<sup>45</sup> A week later Congress recommended that twelve amendments to the Constitution be sent to the state legislatures for their consideration. At its next session in mid-October, the Rhode Island legislature ordered that 150 copies of the amendments—the basis for the U.S. Bill of Rights—be printed and one copy sent to each town for consideration on 19 October.<sup>46</sup> When the legislature convened on 26 October it was thought that a majority of the deputies favored calling a state convention, but enough towns had instructed their deputies against the measure that it was again defeated.<sup>47</sup>

The year 1790 looked ominous for Rhode Island. North Carolina had ratified the Constitution in November 1789, leaving Rhode Island as the last state out of the Union. Congress had previously set 15 January 1790 as the date when economic sanctions against Rhode Island would commence if the state had not called a ratifying convention. No one knew what else Congress might do, but Federalist James Manning of Providence believed that the federal government would “address our feelings, as they cannot operate on our reason.”<sup>48</sup> Federalists in the mercantile towns asked President Washington if he and Congress would protect any seceding towns that joined the Union.<sup>49</sup>

When the legislature convened on 11 January, the outlook for calling a convention was uncertain. Benjamin Bourne thought “the House are about equally divided in sentiment on this subject and what will be the result requires more prescience, than I possess, to predict.”<sup>50</sup> On Friday,

15 January, the lower house narrowly passed a convention bill by a vote of 34 to 29. The following day the upper house defeated the measure 5 to 4. The magistrates wanted to resubmit the question to the freemen in their towns, but the deputies rejected this idea. The lower house passed another convention bill which the upper house rejected around 10:00 P.M. on Saturday. In an extraordinary Sunday session on 17 January, the House of Deputies passed its third convention bill by a vote of 32 to 11. When the House of Magistrates considered this bill, it was split 4 to 4—one of the opponents being absent. Governor Collins, a Country party member but a friend of the Constitution, cast the deciding vote in favor of calling a convention. On Monday Collins sent the act to President Washington along with a resolution asking Congress to suspend its imminent discriminatory measures against Rhode Island.<sup>51</sup>

### *Convention Politics*

The election of seventy Convention delegates occurred on 8 February. An optimistic Federalist reported that opponents of the Constitution had a majority of six delegates. More pessimistic Federalists feared the majority was as high as twelve.<sup>52</sup>

The Convention assembled on 1 March at Little Rest in South Kingstown, the county seat and a Country party stronghold. The Convention read the Constitution and considered it “Generally” and then by paragraphs. A committee drafted and reported a bill of rights and amendments to the Constitution. Federalists wanted to vote on the Constitution, but Country party leaders wanted to delay the vote. On 6 March the Convention voted 41 to 28 to adjourn without taking a vote on the Constitution. The delegates agreed to reconvene eleven weeks later in Newport. Deputy Governor Daniel Owen, the Convention president, admitted privately that adjournment was necessary to ensure a Country party victory in the annual April elections. In the interim, the proposed bill of rights and amendments adopted by the Convention were distributed to the towns to be considered by the freemen on 21 April, the annual election day.<sup>53</sup>

During the week that the Convention met, Country party leaders held secret “nocturnal conventions” or caucuses. On 6 March, after the Convention adjourned, a final caucus occurred at which a slate of candidates for state offices was adopted. Governor John Collins was dropped and replaced by Deputy Governor Daniel Owen. This publicly unexpected switch was carefully planned. Even though the Country party controlled both houses of the legislature, they had maneuvered

the voting so that all the attention and opprobrium was focused on Governor Collins' casting of the deciding vote that had enabled a convention to be called. Although an ardent paper-money man, Collins was a friend of the Constitution and was considered expendable by the Country party. In this way the Country party tried to escape responsibility for calling the Convention. Even though the Country party-dominated legislature had called a convention, the Country party could still run in the April elections as opponents of the Constitution. Two weeks later, Owen withdrew himself from consideration for office and was replaced on the slate by Arthur Fenner of Providence, described as "a violent Anti."<sup>54</sup> The Country party again won control of the upper and lower houses, although only with a majority of five in the latter.<sup>55</sup>

Some Antifederalists spoke of circumventing the Convention by having the legislature at its May session resubmit the Constitution directly to the people. Enough Country party members sided with Federalists to thwart such action. William Ellery reported "that the Antis, in private conversations with the Feds, have talked more favorably respecting an accession" to the Constitution. A resubmission to the people was tantamount to rejection. Most legislators believed that ratification was inevitable, and they wished to do nothing to jeopardize the chances of adoption.<sup>56</sup>

For months Rhode Island Federalists had advocated for Congress to pass restrictive legislation that would affect Rhode Island's commerce. Finally, on 18 May 1790, the U.S. Senate took decisive action, passing a bill stating that no American ships could enter Rhode Island and no Rhode Island ships could enter other states. The same restrictions applied to commerce by land. Violators would be punished with forfeiture of goods, a fine of \$500, and imprisonment not exceeding six months. To place more pressure on Rhode Island, the Senate bill demanded that the state pay \$25,000 to the United States by 1 December 1790 to discharge Rhode Island's share of the expenses under the Confederation.<sup>57</sup> When newly elected Governor Fenner heard about the bill, he immediately wrote President George Washington saying that there was no reason for Congress to pursue such harsh actions. "Many persons of influence who have heretofore opposed the Adoption of the New Constitution here, have withdrawn their opposition." The state would very likely ratify the Constitution at the next session of the Convention.<sup>58</sup> Rhode Island Federalists were not so confident. A Providence town meeting instructed its Convention delegates to meet with delegates from Newport and other towns if the Convention failed to ratify

the Constitution. The delegates were empowered to apply to Congress for protection.<sup>59</sup>

*Rhode Island in the Union*

The second session of the Convention met in Newport on 24 May. For several days little of real importance occurred. A few amendments to the Constitution were proposed and accepted. Newport delegate Henry Marchant wrote that “We had, an anxious, arduous & distressing Week—nor were we much encouraged in Success till within a few Hours of the Question’s being taken—For when we met at the beginning of the Week They were twelve majority against us.”<sup>60</sup> Finally, on 29 May, the important question was called. A roll call was taken and the Constitution was ratified 34 to 32, after which a proposed bill of rights and amendments were also accepted.<sup>61</sup>

Federalists needed support from their opponents to ratify the Constitution. Five Antifederalists voted to ratify, while four Antifederalists did not vote.

On 29 May, prior to the vote, Middletown instructed its two delegates to vote to ratify the Constitution. One of Middletown’s delegates, William Peckham, Jr., resigned and was replaced with Federalist Elisha Barker, who with his Antifederalist colleague Joshua Barker voted to ratify. Portsmouth’s delegates were instructed to vote to ratify on 26 April and again on 29 May. Two of the town’s four Antifederalist delegates voted to ratify, one did not vote, and one (despite the town’s instructions) voted against ratification. The two Antifederalist delegates from New Shoreham left the Convention without voting, and the two Antifederalist delegates from Hopkinton voted to ratify. President of the Convention Daniel Owen of Gloucester, an Antifederalist, as presiding officer did not vote.

Immediately after the Convention adjourned, Convention President Daniel Owen sent word to President Washington that Rhode Island had ratified. Two weeks later, Congress acted to put several federal laws into effect in the state. President Washington congratulated Rhode Island “upon this event which unites under one general government all the branches of the great American family.”<sup>62</sup>

1. Thorpe, VI, 3207–8.

2. An Act for Directing the Admitting Freemen in the several Towns of this Colony, *Acts and Laws of His Majesty’s Colony of Rhode-Island and Providence-Plantations, in America* (Newport, 1730) (Evans 3346), 131.

3. Conley, *Democracy in Decline*, 53.

4. Ellery to Benjamin Huntington, 11 April 1786, Thomas C. Bright Autograph Collection, NRom.



5. Ellery to Benjamin Huntington, 25 April 1786, Huntington Autograph Book, NRom.
6. Hartford *American Mercury*, 22 May 1786.
7. "Jonathan," *Boston Gazette*, 22 May 1786.
8. "Extract of a letter from a gentleman in Providence, Rhode-Island, to his friend at the southward, dated July 1, 1786," *New Jersey Gazette*, 28 August 1786 (reprinted from Baltimore, 15 August).
9. John Brown, *Providence Gazette*, 8 July 1786; *New Haven Gazette*, 27 July 1786; and *Newport Mercury*, 7 August 1786.
10. *United States Chronicle*, 17 August 1786.
11. *Ibid.*, 7 September 1786.
12. General Assembly Schedule, August 1786 Session (Providence, [1787]) (Evans 19954), 4, 5–7.
13. *Providence Gazette*, 30 September 1786; and "W. B.," *United States Chronicle*, 21 September 1786.
14. Mathewson to Noah Webster, 28 September 1786, Webster Papers, New York Public Library. Mathewson represented the town of Johnston in the state Convention where he voted not to ratify the Constitution in May 1790.
15. James M. Varnum, *The Case, Trevett against Weeden . . .* (Providence, 1787) (Evans 20825); *United States Chronicle*, 5 October 1786.
16. JCC, XXXI, 662–64; and *United States Chronicle*, 12 October 1786.
17. *United States Chronicle*, 12 October 1786. See also Evans 44937 and 44959, broadside versions of the act.
18. *United States Chronicle*, 2, 9 November 1786.
19. General Assembly Schedule, December 1786 Session (Newport, [1787]) (Evans 20679), 6, 10–19, 19–20, 21–22, 22–23, 23. See also *United States Chronicle*, 11 January 1787.
20. General Assembly Schedule, March 1787 Session (Providence, [1787]) (Evans 20680) 11–12, 15–17.
21. William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington, 10 May 1787, Huntington Autograph Book, NRom; and "Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman in Newport, Rhode-Island, to his friend in this city," Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 18 May 1787.
22. "Newspaper Report of General Assembly Proceedings," 29 October–1 November 1788; and *Newport Herald*, 27 November 1788 (both III, below).
23. General Assembly Schedule, December 1788 Session ([Providence, 1790?]) (Evans 21428), 9; March 1789 Session (Providence, [1790]) (Evans 22101), 14.
24. General Assembly Schedule, September 1789 Session (Providence, [1789]) (Evans 22104), 27; October 1789 First Session (Providence, [1789]) (Evans 22105), 9–16; October 1789 Second Session (Providence, [1790]) (Evans 22106), 8; and *Providence Gazette*, 16 January 1790 (Mfm:R.I.).
25. *Newport Herald*, 22 March and 10 May 1787, and Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 18 May (Mfm:R.I.).
26. File copies of the letters dated 11 and 14 May are in the Brown Papers, RPJCB (Mfm:R.I.). See also Farrand, III, 18–20.
27. *Newport Herald*, 21 June 1787 (Mfm:R.I.).
28. Abbot, *Washington, Confederation Series*, V, 231–33.
29. William Nelson, Jr., to James Madison, 7 May 1787, Rutland, *Madison*, IX, 410.
30. William Grayson to James Monroe, 29 May 1787, Smith, *Letters*, XXIV, 292–93.
31. See William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington, 30 September 1788 (III, below).
32. See *Newport Herald*, 10 January 1788 (RCS:R.I., 83–84).

33. Ellery to Benjamin Huntington, 22 April 1788 (RCS:R.I., 255–56).
34. See “The Rhode Island General Assembly,” 9–14 June 1788 (RCS:R.I., 269).
35. See “Newport and Providence Celebrate New Hampshire’s Ratification of the Constitution,” 24 June–3 July 1788; “Providence Celebrates Virginia’s Ratification of the Constitution,” 5–17 July; Ellery to Benjamin Huntington, 28–29 July; and “Providence and Newport Celebrate New York’s Ratification of the Constitution,” 29–31 July (III, below).
36. 20 October (III, below).
37. See “The Rhode Island General Assembly,” 29 October–1 November 1788 (III, below).
38. See “The Rhode Island General Assembly,” 1 January 1789 (IV, below).
39. See “The Rhode Island General Assembly,” 11–13 March 1789 (IV, below).
40. William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington, 10 March 1789 (IV, below).
41. Gentlemen of Providence to George Washington, 27 March 1789 (IV, below).
42. Wadsworth to Welcome Arnold and Brown & Francis, 19 April 1789 (IV, below).
43. See “The Rhode Island General Assembly,” 8–9 May 1789; *Newport Mercury*, 11 May; and William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington, 14 May and 15 June (IV, below).
44. See “The Rhode Island General Assembly,” 10–11 June 1789; and William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington, 15 June (IV, below).
45. See “The Rhode Island General Assembly,” 16–19 September 1789 (IV, below).
46. See “The Rhode Island General Assembly,” 15–17 October 1789 (IV, below).
47. See “The Rhode Island General Assembly,” 29 October 1789; and *United States Chronicle*, 29 October (IV, below).
48. Manning to Timothy Green, 9 December 1789 (IV, below).
49. Jabez Bowen to George Washington, 15 December 1789 (IV, below).
50. William Ellery to Nathaniel Appleton, 2 January 1790; and Bourne to Silas Talbot, 9 January (IV, below).
51. See V–A, below.
52. Jeremiah Olney to Alexander Hamilton, 12 February 1790; John Francis to John McClellan, 5 March; Henry Marchant to John Adams, 7 March (VI, below).
53. See V–B (below) and Henry Marchant to John Adams, 7 March 1790 (VI, below).
54. Henry Marchant to John Adams, 7 March 1790; Daniel Owen’s Circular Letter, 19 March; William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington, 28 March and 5 April; and John Collins to George Washington, 24 May (VI, below). See also John P. Kaminski, “Political Sacrifice and Demise—John Collins and Jonathan J. Hazard, 1786–1790,” *Rhode Island History*, 35 (1976), 91–98.
55. William Ellery to John Adams, 13 May 1790 (VI, below).
56. Ellery to Benjamin Huntington, 11 May 1790 (VI, below).
57. See “United States Senate: Proceedings on Bill to Prohibit Commerce with Rhode Island,” 28 April–18 May 1790 (VI, below).
58. 20 May 1790 (VI, below).
59. “Providence: Instructions to Town Delegates to the State Convention,” 24 May 1790 (VI, below).
60. Marchant to Sarah Marchant, 9 June 1790 (VII–B, below).
61. See VII–B (below).
62. 29 May 1790 (VII–B, below); and Washington to Owen, 19 June (VIII–D, below).

## Note on Sources

### *Legislative and Executive Records*

The manuscript journals of the House of Deputies and House of Magistrates are in the Rhode Island State Archives. The Archives also possesses: Acts and Resolves of the Rhode Island General Assembly, Letters Sent by the Governor (Vol. 4), Letters to the Governor (Vols. 20–21), Miscellaneous Papers, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution of the United States, and Rhode Island Records (Vol. 13). Correspondence between Rhode Island's governors and the central government is also in the Papers of the Continental Congress (RG 360) and the Records of the Department of State (RG 59), both in the National Archives in Washington, D.C. (DNA).

For each session the state legislature printed a summary or schedule of its proceedings. These schedules included a roster of members of both houses, civil and military officers elected, acts and resolves, and payments made. They did not include bills or resolutions that were introduced but not enacted. The schedules are in Early American Imprints (Evans). Schedules were also printed by the state in a limited facsimile edition. Lengthy excerpts from the schedules appear in John Russell Bartlett, ed., *Records of the Colony [State] of Rhode Island, and Providence Plantations, in New England* (10 vols., Providence, 1856–1865). Several acts, printed as broadsides, are also in Early American Imprints.

Private letters commented on legislative actions and the state's four newspapers printed brief accounts of legislative proceedings. Peter Edes printed in his *Newport Herald* a report on each legislative session from March 1787 through January 1790. These reports, the best available, summarized what the legislature did and occasionally offered hints of what was said in debates. They also contained editorial comments hostile to the Country party, its paper money policies, and its opposition to ratifying the Constitution.

### *Town Records*

Most town records in these volumes come from the offices of town and city clerks located in town or city halls. Many records were obtained by using the microfilm held by the Family History Library of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah. Newport's town records are in the Newport Historical Society, Jamestown's are in the Rhode Island State Archives, and Warwick's are in the Rhode Island Historical Society. Documents from the town record books for Coventry, Exeter, and Johnston have not been located. The results of the

24 March 1788 referendum on the Constitution, election certificates for delegates to the state ratifying Convention, and instructions to members of the state House of Deputies and Convention delegates are in the Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution of the United States at the Rhode Island State Archives.

Towns instructed their deputies on how to proceed on the Constitution. Instructing town deputies was a time-honored practice in Rhode Island. The legislature, before taking final action on a resolution or act, sometimes asked towns to instruct their deputies. The legislature requested towns to act on the Constitution on four occasions. It asked freemen to vote on the Constitution in their town meetings (24 March 1788). In November and December 1788, towns, at the request of the legislature, voted to instruct their deputies on whether or not Rhode Island should send delegates to a second general convention of the states, which was recommended by the New York Convention's circular letter to the states. In response to a legislative resolution, the towns on 19 October 1789 instructed their deputies on whether or not to call a state convention. Finally, the legislature in January 1790 called upon the towns to meet on 8 February to elect delegates to a state convention. On 6 March the state Convention sent its proposed bill of rights and amendments to the Constitution to the towns for their consideration on 21 April.

Towns also met on their own accord to deal with issues surrounding the ratification of the Constitution. The first such meeting took place on 8 November 1787 and the last on 29 May 1790, the day the Rhode Island Convention ratified the Constitution. The towns paid their Convention delegates in 1790 and 1791.

#### *Personal Papers*

The personal papers of Rhode Islanders involved in the debate over the Constitution are disappointing. There are fewer letters than in other states. While there are many collections that contain one or two letters, the bulk of the correspondence is concentrated in a few collections and limited to a handful of correspondents. The letters have an overwhelmingly pro-Constitution bias and were written primarily from the Federalist strongholds of Newport and Providence. Few letters contain a substantive discussion of the provisions of the Constitution, but they are informative about the workings of Rhode Island politics and the prospects for Rhode Island ratifying the Constitution. Most of the letters were written in 1789 and 1790, after the new government under the Constitution went into effect. Rhode Islanders watched that government closely to determine how the state would be affected by legislation passed by the new Congress.

The John Carter Brown Library at Brown University has the Brown Papers and several smaller collections. The Brown Papers includes the correspondence of several mercantile firms (e.g., Brown & Benson) and the personal letters of Nicholas Brown, John Francis, and James Manning. Letters of James Manning can also be found in the Brown University Archives, John Hay Library, Brown University.

The Rhode Island Historical Society has the Theodore Foster Papers consisting largely of letters to him. Other important collections in the Society include the Benjamin Bourne Papers, the Moses Brown Papers (mostly covering slavery, the slave trade, and antislavery activities), the Henry Marchant Papers, the Jeremiah Olney Papers, and the Shepley Library Collection (letters to and from Olney).

Additional correspondence of Theodore Foster is in the Dwight Foster Papers at the Massachusetts Historical Society and the Foster Family Papers in the American Antiquarian Society. Jeremiah Olney's correspondence can also be found in the papers of Alexander Hamilton, Henry Knox, and George Washington. The Hamilton and Washington Papers are in the Library of Congress, while the Knox Papers are in The Gilder Lehrman Collection, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, New-York Historical Society.

The most prolific Rhode Island letter writer on the Constitution was William Ellery, a Newport lawyer, whose letters are in the Rhode Island State Archives, the Newport Historical Society (primarily a letter book), the Maine Historical Society, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the New York Public Library, the New-York Historical Society, The Gilder Lehrman Institute (at the New-York Historical Society), and the Jervis Public Library in Rome, N.Y. The Ellery letters in the Jervis Public Library are in the Thomas C. Bright Autograph Collection, which contains numerous letters from Ellery to Benjamin Huntington, a Connecticut member of the U.S. House of Representatives. The Jervis Public Library also has the Huntington Autograph Book that includes only typescripts of Ellery letters.

Many letters of Rhode Islanders can be found in the Massachusetts Historical Society's papers of John Adams, the U.S. Vice President, who corresponded with Jabez Bowen, John Brown, Brown & Francis, William Ellery, and Henry Marchant. The papers of George Washington at the Library of Congress contain the letters of numerous Rhode Islanders, especially those of Jabez Bowen, John Collins, Daniel Owen, and a joint letter from John Brown and John Francis. Many Rhode Islanders wrote to George Washington seeking federal government positions. Letters of Rhode Islanders are also in the papers of Secretary of War Henry Knox located in The Gilder Lehrman Collection. Letters

to Silas Talbot from Rhode Islanders are in the G. W. Blunt White Library at the Mystic Seaport Museum.

### *Newspapers*

From 17 September 1787, the day the Constitutional Convention promulgated the Constitution, to 29 May 1790, the day the Rhode Island Convention ratified the Constitution, four weekly newspapers were published in Rhode Island, two each in the Federalist strongholds of Newport and Providence. The *Newport Herald* and the Providence *United States Chronicle* were printed on Thursdays and the *Providence Gazette* appeared on Saturdays. (See below for the various days on which the *Newport Mercury* was printed.) Complete runs for this period are available for the *Herald*, *Chronicle*, and *Gazette*. Only about sixty percent of the issues of the *Mercury* are extant.

The *Providence Gazette* and the *Newport Herald*, in particular, supported the Constitution. The *United States Chronicle* was apparently neutral, devoting roughly an equal amount of space to essays supporting and criticizing the Constitution. The type of items generally published in extant issues of the *Newport Mercury* makes it impossible to determine conclusively if the paper had a political bias.

All four Rhode Island newspapers printed a variety of items on the Constitution. They published essays written by Rhode Islanders, either unsigned or signed with a pseudonym. There were extracts of letters from writers identified only by their locations, occasional editorial comments, and poems. More common were observations of unidentified correspondents and news reports. Newspapers reported on legislative and state Convention proceedings, town meetings, and celebrations. The mix of items printed varied by newspaper. The four newspapers also reprinted items that originated in the other states. The variety of out-of-state items was similar to the Rhode Island material, and again the mix of reprinted material on the Constitution varied. Some items were printed or reprinted at the request of a newspaper's readers.

In addition to discussing the Constitution, newspapers also covered local and state politics, with especial emphasis on the politics of paper money. The articles on state and local politics, as well as those on the Constitution, were often laced with bitter personal invective as individuals were frequently described with unflattering sobriquets. The individuals described were apparently well known to many inhabitants in this small, compact state, but historians have had difficulty identifying to whom the descriptions referred. Because the state was small, newspapers were within the reach of many people who discussed them in several venues, especially in town meetings. From newspapers Rhode

Islanders learned the arguments for and against the Constitution and the chances for its ratification in Rhode Island and other states.

*The Providence Gazette: and Country Journal* was established in 1762 by William Goddard, and for a time it was operated by his mother Sarah. In September 1767 Sarah Goddard took on as a partner John Carter (1745–1814), a native of Philadelphia who had apprenticed with Philadelphia printers Benjamin Franklin and David Hall. Carter became sole owner of the *Providence Gazette* in 1768, printing his first issue on 12 November. He was a firm supporter of the patriot cause during the revolutionary movement against Great Britain. An active job printer, he also published numerous broadsides, pamphlets, and books, including Rhode Island laws and statutes. Carter published his newspaper on Saturdays. He was also the postmaster of Providence from 1772 to 1792.

Carol Sue Humphrey, a historian of journalism, published a detailed analysis of Rhode Island newspapers and the ratification of the Constitution. She found that John Carter, despite supporting the Constitution, published a significant number of Antifederalist essays. Between September 1787 and May 1790, states Humphrey, Carter printed 90.50 columns of pro-Constitution essays and 39.50 columns against the Constitution. Carter, she asserts, was more impartial early in the debate over the Constitution. After 19 July 1788, he printed no more Antifederalist essays (“‘The Rhode Island Pillar’: Rhode Island Newspapers and the Ratification of the Constitution,” *Rhode Island History*, 52 [1994], 52). Some of the disparity in the space allotted to Federalist and Antifederalist essays was possibly the result of Carter’s reprinting all nine of the Federalist “Fabius” essays between 3 May and 2 August 1788 (see RCS:R.I., 257–58).

Even though the *Providence Gazette* was somewhat impartial early in the debate over the Constitution, John Carter’s impartiality was called into question. (See “Cid Hamet,” *Providence Gazette*, 22 December 1787, and “A Pamphlet-Monger,” *United States Chronicle*, 27 December, Mfm: R.I.) On 29 December Carter responded to the criticism:

Whatever may have been my private sentiments respecting public measures, I have never suffered them to interfere with what I conceive to be the indispensable duty of an impartial Printer; nor have I at any time suffered myself to become the *dupe* or *tool* of a party. My sentiments are well known in this and most of the other States, particularly on the subject of paper money (to which an allusion seems intended by another writer on this occasion) and the suggestions of my adversaries cannot fix a stain on my reputation. Although a *Federalist*, and perhaps zealous as the “*Pamphlet-*

*Monger*” himself, yet my conduct as a Printer would certainly merit the severest reprehension, were I impertinently to attempt the preclusion of *free enquiry*. For this purpose was the constitution sent to the several States. The cause of truth can never suffer from argument; indeed argument would of course cease, were the papers partially to hold up *one* side of a question only.—On the broad basis of an *uncontroled* and *liberal* press, I found a humble claim to public patronage. On these principles I have hitherto had “*spirit*” and “*stability*” to conduct it, and I trust that the frowns of *disappointed ambition* will not swerve me from the path of rectitude (Mfm:R.I.).

The controversy over Carter’s editorial policy escalated in early 1788 into a scurrilous and personal newspaper war in which the freedom of the press was a major issue. See the Editors’ Note entitled “The Rhode Island Reprinting of Extracts from ‘A Citizen of America,’ ” 22–29 December 1787 (RCS:R.I., 77–79) for a listing of some of the essays involved in this bitter dispute. All of these essays, plus others not cited in this Editors’ Note, can be found as a grouping under 22 December 1787 (Mfm:R.I.).

On 17 April 1790, as Rhode Island was on the verge of ratifying the Constitution, John Sullivan, U.S. district judge for New Hampshire, wrote to one of that state’s U.S. Senators, John Langdon, about a post office position for John Carter. Sullivan described the Providence printer “as high a federalist as he was a whig when you knew him” during the struggle for independence from Great Britain. Carter had served in the post office “for years under Doctor Franklin & conducted to approbation.” Sullivan concluded his letter: “I should not give you the Trouble but I am bound in Justice to his merit to use every effort to serve a man whom I have known in the worst of times & has ever been a True friend to the Interest of his Country and now is an avowed Enemy to antifederalism paper money and Tender Laws even though countenanced by the Rhode Island assembly” (Mfm:R.I.).

Bennett Wheeler (c. 1753–1806), a native of Halifax, Nova Scotia, arrived in Providence in September 1776, and after a few months he began working for the *Providence Gazette*, remaining there until December 1778. In March 1779 Wheeler formed a partnership with Solomon Southwick to publish *The American Journal; and General Advertiser* in Providence. Southwick left the firm in December 1779, and Wheeler printed the paper until August 1781, after which he continued working as a job printer. On Thursday, 1 January 1784, Wheeler published the first issue



of *The United States Chronicle: Political, Commercial, and Historical*. The *Chronicle* continued to appear on Thursdays and by 1788 “circulated in every town in the State” (“A Rhode-Island Landholder,” *United States Chronicle*, 20 March 1788 [RCS:R.I., 151]).

The *United States Chronicle*, as historian Carol Sue Humphrey has demonstrated, devoted more space to the publication of essays about the Constitution than any other Rhode Island newspaper. Moreover, declares Humphrey, Wheeler’s publication of these essays was “remarkably balanced.” The *United States Chronicle* devoted 71.75 columns in support of the Constitution and 75.25 columns opposing it. The latter figure considerably exceeded the amount of space allotted to pieces opposing the Constitution in either the *Providence Gazette* or the *Newport Herald*, which together printed only 45.50 such columns (Humphrey, 52).

Beginning on 6 March 1788 Wheeler printed reports of the proceedings of the Rhode Island legislature. Not referring to arch-Federalist Peter Edes’s legislative reports in his *Newport Herald* (see below), Wheeler gave his reasons for publishing the legislature’s proceedings:

*It being the Wish of almost every Man in the State, that the Proceedings of the Legislature should be regularly published, as soon after their Meeting as possible, the Editor of the Chronicle attended at the late Session, in order, as far as in his Power, to gratify the Wishes of the Public.—Having but a very imperfect Knowledge of Short-Hand Writing, he has not been able to do Justice to the Debates—but thus far he engages, that the Votes are accurately stated, and that all the Ideas here found fell from some or other of the Gentlemen speaking.—His Aim is to be of Service in the Line of his Profession, and he hopes this first Attempt, in this Way, will meet the Candour of the Public (RCS:R.I., 126–27).*

Wheeler’s efforts to provide a balanced view of the debate over the Constitution were not appreciated by some Federalists. “Marplot, Jun.” in the *Newport Herald*, 9 April 1789, charged that the printer of the *United States Chronicle* “assiduously” attended every legislature in order “to pay his court to the paper money majority” and that the printer “was in fact admitted into the *sanctum sanctorum* of the late grand nocturnal convention at East-Greenwich!—These things, it is true, seem to be directly in the face of the *federalism* of the Printer of the *United States Chronicle*.” “Marplot, Jun.” admitted that, while some readers looked upon Wheeler as an Antifederalist, others viewed him as a Federalist (IV, below).

On 23 April 1789 Wheeler apparently left it to essayists to make it easier for him to demonstrate his impartiality when he published this

notice: “*The printing of controversial, or Party Pieces, being attended with much extra Trouble—in future we shall expect PAY for all such inserted in the Chronicle—as is the Custom in other Places.*”

On 5 December 1789 “Veritas,” writing in the *Providence Gazette*, was angered by “the snarlings of certain demagogues of power” who used the *United States Chronicle* “to set the mechanic interest of this town at variance with the mercantile . . . making discord the constant source of their importance.” These “restless beings” had discharged their “venom so often and copiously” in the *Chronicle*. “Veritas” asserted that economic difficulties were not brought about by any class but that these difficulties “have arisen from the nature and present situation of our government, which has sunk both public and private credit in one common vortex of destruction” (Mfm:R.I.).

Peter Edes (1756–1840), the printer of the *Newport Herald*, was a native of Boston and the son of patriot Benjamin Edes, who with John Gill published *The Boston Gazette, or Country Journal* from 1755 to 1775. The *Gazette* was in the forefront of the revolutionary movement in Massachusetts against Great Britain. In 1779, Peter Edes and his brother joined the paper and Peter continued in that partnership until 1784, when he established in Boston *The Exchange Advertiser*, the first issue of which was published on 30 December. The newspaper’s final issue appeared on 4 January 1787. Shortly thereafter Edes moved to Newport, where he established the *Newport Herald*.

The *Newport Herald* could be described as an organ of the town’s merchants since the newspaper voiced its fierce opposition to the Country party and its paper-money system. Moreover, when the Constitutional Convention promulgated the new Constitution in September 1787, the *Herald* vigorously supported its ratification. Edes’s partisanship led one observer to note that “The majority [Country party] call it [the *Newport Herald*] the scourge—It indeed makes them bleed and groan” (Henry Channing to David Daggett, 28 September 1787 [RCS:R.I., 28]). William Ellery, a member of Newport’s mercantile community, referred to Edes as “Our printer” (to Benjamin Huntington, 30 September 1788 [III, below]).

The first issue of *The Newport Herald* appeared on Thursday, 1 March 1787, and Peter Edes quickly revealed his hostility to the Country party. Perhaps his most valuable contribution to the political battle was his publication of the proceedings of the state Assembly. On 22 March 1787 Edes started printing a series of reports of these proceedings, completing the series on 21 January 1790. In all, Edes described eighteen sessions, including the “fallen” session of August 1787. These reports are printed below and in Mfm:R.I.

Peter Edes's legislative reports focused on paper money. In them he excoriated its proponents who threatened to cut funding to the *Newport Herald* for government printing. Since official records covering the legislative sessions are sparse, Edes's reports provide considerable information on the politics of legislation, demonstrating the powerful influence of paper-money forces. Some of Edes's reports were widely reprinted in out-of-state newspapers.

The purpose of Edes's report of the proceedings of the March 1788 session of the Assembly, which he printed on 10 April, was evident from his preface: "The history of our government for two years past, is the history of a PAPER MONEY SYSTEM, as all our measures have been subservient to it.—We have therefore conceived it our duty, to continue an impartial detail of the progress of this system, not with a view of familiarizing injustice, nor with an intent of immortalizing the patrons of it, but to guard our fellow citizens from artful misrepresentations, and to arouse them from the apathy of past delusions to a sense of our common danger, trusting that we may thereby revive the dormant virtues in this State, and that our deviations from justice and honor may prove a salutary monitor to others" (RCS:R.I., 229). Edes's reporting impressed William Ellery who wrote that "The General Assembly finished their Session last Saturday.—The Newport Herald will I suppose according to custom give a true account of their proceedings" (to Ebenezer Hazard, 16 June 1788 [RCS:R.I., 277]).

On 15 May 1788 Edes published four paragraphs under the heading "*A succinct view of affairs.*" In the first three paragraphs, he attacked the paper-money system, the refusal of the Country party to accept criticism of its policies, and the rejection of the Constitution by Anti-federalists. The fourth paragraph states: "Thus engaged in a civil contest, novel as well as severe, we have become the political phenomenon of the day, and the world stands gazing for the event,—We shall therefore, from duty as well as information, faithfully continue an impartial detail of every interesting occurrence, unbiassed by party and undaunted by the threats of power, trusting that honor, virtue and justice will, ere long, illumine this degraded State" (RCS:R.I., 261). Seventeen newspapers reprinted these four paragraphs.

The Country party punished Peter Edes's partisanship, in particular by refusing to pay him for printing the state's laws. Convinced that legislative transparency was closely linked with the *Newport Herald's* "extensive circulation," Edes continued to publish the acts "*gratis*" in order to ensure their wide availability (RCS:R.I., 278).

On 22 October 1789 Peter Edes rejoiced in the suspension of the tender provision of the paper-money act of 1786 and the improved

chance of Rhode Island's ratifying the Constitution. He prefaced his report of this October legislative session with an editorial policy statement:

The printer of the Newport Herald with the highest satisfaction announces to the public the following sketch of the proceedings of the Legislature of this State at their last session, as affording a prospect that the discordant sentiments which have too long agitated the minds of the citizens of this State will soon subside. On this occasion he begs leave to observe, that addicted to no party, he has repeatedly declared his press to be impartial—*It is to contradiction, consequently to the liberty of the press, that physics, morality and politics, owe their improvement*, is the motto of this paper; and he conceives that the sentiment is founded in truth—he shall therefore, in consistency with his motto, continue to publish any pieces which may be offered to his press on these subjects, leaving it with the public to decide who has the best of the argument, or on which side the truth lies—all he wishes from his readers is, that they would not attribute to him any impropriety in such publications, remembering that they, and not the printer, should be the judges of their propriety.—If printers were to undertake to determine upon the fitness of pieces for publications, they would certainly give offence to many writers, and might, by forestalling the public judgment, deprive the community of many useful observations.—Agriculture, manufactures, morality and politics, not party politics, but politics in general, considered as the science of legislation and government, are themes copious and beneficial:—and pieces on these subjects, he trusts, will embellish his paper when harmony and concord shall commence their peaceful reign.

While Peter Edes paid particular attention to the Country party's paper-money system, the *Newport Herald* campaigned for Rhode Island's ratification of the Constitution. According to Carol Sue Humphrey, the *Herald* devoted 64.25 of its columns to essays favoring the Constitution and only 6.00 columns to those opposing it. The *Herald* printed more essays originally written in Rhode Island than any other Rhode Island newspaper but reprinted fewer out-of-state essays on the Constitution. Hence the *Herald's* total of 70.25 columns hardly compares to the 147 columns of the *United States Chronicle* or the 130 columns of the *Providence Gazette*. The *Herald's* low figure on essays is due, in part, to the many editorial comments and observations of correspondents that it printed, the great space devoted to legislative proceedings, and the more extensive reprinting of non-partisan out-of-state news items. The *Herald's* readers knew that Edes was biased. He persisted in his views, but in 1791 he ended publication of the *Herald* and returned to Boston.

Rhode Island's fourth newspaper, the *Newport Mercury*, was established in June 1758 by James Franklin as *The Newport Mercury, or, the Weekly Advertiser*. Early in 1759 the title was shortened to *The Newport Mercury*. After Franklin died in April 1762, his mother Ann took over and soon thereafter Samuel Hall became her partner. Hall was sole proprietor from 1763 to 1768. Solomon Southwick, a strong supporter of the revolutionary movement against Great Britain, was proprietor from 1768 until December 1776, when he suspended publication just before the British occupied Newport. Henry Barber resumed the publication of the *Newport Mercury* in January 1780, and in 1785 Solomon Southwick joined him as a partner. In January 1787 Southwick became the sole owner, but illness and a paper shortage forced Southwick to suspend publication from 8 November to 22 December 1787. The next extant issue is for 28 January 1788, at which time Henry Barber was listed as the publisher. Barber continued as publisher until his death in 1800.

Solomon Southwick (1731–1797), a native of Newport, attended the College of Philadelphia (now the University of Pennsylvania) beginning in 1754 but left before his class graduated in 1757. The college eventually granted him an honorary A.B., and in 1780 he received an A.M. from Yale College. From 1778 to at least 1780, Southwick was Continental deputy commissary general of issues for Rhode Island, and he was a justice of the peace for Newport, 1780–81. (For an account of Southwick's career before 1780, see Patrick T. Conley, *Rhode Island's Founders: From Settlement to Statehood* [Charleston, S.C., 2010], 91–93.) Henry Barber (c. 1748–1800), whose family emigrated from England and settled in Westerly, R.I., was a bookseller as well as a printer.

The days of publication for the *Newport Mercury* varied for the period from September 1787 through May 1790. From September 1787 through June 1789 all but three extant issues appeared on Mondays. For the period from July 1789 through January 1790, all extant issues were published on Wednesdays. From February through May 1790 the *Mercury* appeared on either Mondays, Fridays, or Saturdays.

From 17 September to 31 December 1787, either no issues of the *Newport Mercury* were printed or few survive. Because Southwick reprinted only one essay on the Constitution, his position on the Constitution cannot be determined. In January 1788 Henry Barber became publisher. He printed or reprinted news items but published few essays on the Constitution. A piece in the *Newport Herald* of 31 July 1788 may explain why Barber printed so few essays. The author of the item asserted that Barber had “lately received pieces *favouring of party-spirit or personal reflections*” but allegedly refused to publish the pieces “*thrust under his door*” unless they were “*signed or brought by the authors or some other respectable gentleman.*” The piece concluded that the press “should

be entirely free and unrestrained” (Mfm:R.I.). What Barber’s position on the Constitution was cannot be determined from the surviving issues of the *Mercury*.

*Pamphlets and Broad­sides*

The Fourth of July oration by the Reverend Enos Hitchcock in Providence (Evans 21145) was the only pamphlet published in Rhode Island on the debate over the ratification of the Constitution. (See RCS:R.I., 291–94.) There is evidence that pamphlets on the Constitution circulated in Rhode Island. Two newspaper items in the *Newport Herald* alleged that New York Antifederalist John Lamb had sent Antifederalist pamphlets to Rhode Island (RCS:R.I., 266–67, 271–72). Other evidence suggests that three pamphlets and three books supporting the Constitution printed in other states reached Providence. John Carter printed excerpts in the *Providence Gazette* from the pamphlet edition of James Wilson’s 24 November 1787 speech in the Pennsylvania ratifying Convention and excerpts from Noah Webster’s pamphlet signed “A Citizen of America.” Bennett Wheeler of the Providence *United States Chronicle* printed excerpts from John Jay’s pamphlet signed “A Citizen of New-York.” Peter Edes of the *Newport Herald* offered for sale on 27 March 1788 Thomas Lloyd’s *Debates of the Convention, of the State of Pennsylvania, on the Constitution . . .* (CC:511). In November 1788 John Carter of the *Providence Gazette* advertised for sale both volumes of *The Federalist* written by “Publius” (Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay). (For Editors’ Notes on the newspaper reprints of these three pamphlets and the sale of *The Federalist*, see RCS:R.I., 63–64, 75–76, 77–79, 263–64.)

Most of the broadsides below concerning the Constitution published in Rhode Island were official documents. Arranged chronologically, Rhode Island’s broadsides were:

- In late September or early October 1787 John Carter of the *Providence Gazette* printed for sale a two-page broadside of the Constitution (Evans 45182).
- In early November 1787 Carter, acting upon the order of the state legislature, printed more than 1,000 copies of the Constitution for distribution to the Rhode Island towns (Evans 20822).
- In March 1788 Bennett Wheeler of the *United States Chronicle* printed the 1 March 1788 act providing for the 24 March 1788 referendum on the Constitution (Evans 21430).
- In early November 1788 Wheeler printed a three-page broadside of the New York Convention’s circular letter of 26 July 1788 and the Convention’s recommendatory amendments to the Constitution to be distributed to the Rhode Island towns (Evans 21431).

- In mid-September 1789 Carter printed an act requesting the towns to meet to consider instructing their Assembly deputies on whether or not to call a state convention to deliberate on the Constitution (Evans 22109).

- Probably in late September 1789 Wheeler printed a preliminary version of the act for suspending two paragraphs of the paper-money act of 1786 (Evans 22110).

- In mid-October 1789 Wheeler printed the twelve amendments to the Constitution proposed by the United States Congress in September 1789 to be distributed to the Rhode Island towns (Evans 22202).

- In mid-October 1789 Carter printed the act for suspending two paragraphs of the paper-money act of 1786 (Evans 22111).

- In mid-January 1790 Carter printed the act calling the state Convention (Evans 22840).

- In March 1790 Carter printed a broadside of the bill of rights and amendments proposed to the Constitution by the first session of the Rhode Island Convention (Evans 22845).

- In late May or early June 1790 Edes, in accordance with a resolution of the second session of the Rhode Island Convention, printed 300 copies of a three-page broadside that contained the Constitution, the Convention's form of ratification, and its recommendatory amendments to the Constitution (Evans 22849).

- In late May or early June 1790 Carter printed the Rhode Island Convention's ratification of the Constitution (Evans 22847).

- In mid-June 1790 Carter printed a broadside of Governor Arthur Fenner's proclamation concerning oaths supporting the Constitution for state officeholders (Evans 22844).

Lastly, nomination slates called proxes were printed for the statewide elections held every April. For a fuller description of proxes, see the "Glossary" (RCS:R.I., 318–19).

#### *Convention Sources*

The Rhode Island Convention met in two sessions, in March and May 1790. The official documents for both sessions are found in the Rhode Island State Archives as the Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution of the United States. They include election certificates, lists of delegates, Convention minutes, draft motions, draft amendments, committee reports, and a draft and the final retained copy of the form of ratification. The minutes of the Convention kept by Secretary Daniel Updike, along with some papers and documents, were printed in William R. Staples, *Rhode Island in the Continental Congress, With the Journal of the Convention that Adopted the Constitution, 1765–1790* (ed. Reuben Aldridge Guild, Providence, 1870), 640–80. Theodore Foster, a Convention observer, took notes of the debates and proceedings of the

March session that are at the Rhode Island Historical Society. Foster's notes have been printed as Robert C. Cotner, ed., *Theodore Foster's Minutes of the Convention Held at South Kingstown, Rhode Island, in March 1790, Which Failed to Adopt the Constitution of the United States* (Providence, 1929). Although Cotner did a remarkable job of transcription, the present edition corrects some of his errors.

Several broadsides relating to the two sessions are in *Early American Imprints* (Evans). (See above.) Private letters also discuss the Convention. Some are in personal papers and others are extracts of letters printed in newspapers. All four Rhode Island newspapers printed some reports detailing what happened at the Convention.

For greater detail on the Convention sources, see RCS:R.I., Part VII (below).

### *Secondary Accounts*

The secondary literature on colonial and revolutionary Rhode Island is considerable. An excellent synthesis for the entire colonial and revolutionary periods, with a first-rate critical bibliography, is Sydney V. James, *Colonial Rhode Island: A History* (New York, 1975). Other useful general works are James, *The Colonial Metamorphoses in Rhode Island: A Study of Institutions in Change*, eds., Sheila L. Skemp and Bruce C. Daniels (Hanover, N.H., 2000); David S. Lovejoy, *Rhode Island Politics and the American Revolution, 1760–1776* (Providence, 1958); Frank G. Bates, *Rhode Island and the Formation of the Union* (New York, 1898); Patrick T. Conley, *Democracy in Decline: Rhode Island's Constitutional Development, 1776–1841* (Providence, 1977); Irwin H. Polishook, *Rhode Island and the Union, 1774–1795* (Evanston, Ill., 1969); Florence Parker Simister, *The Fire's Center: Rhode Island in the Revolutionary Era, 1763–1790* (Providence, 1979); William R. Staples, *Rhode Island in the Continental Congress, With the Journal of the Convention that Adopted the Constitution, 1765–1790* (ed. Reuben Aldridge Guild, Providence, 1870); and William G. McLoughlin, *Rhode Island: A Bicentennial History* (New York, 1978).

A selection of the major published and unpublished accounts on government, politics, economics, and religion for the years just before and during the Revolution are: Joel A. Cohen, "Rhode Island and the American Revolution: A Selective Socio-Political Analysis" (Ph.D. diss., University of Connecticut, 1967); Cohen, "Democracy in Revolutionary Rhode Island: A Statistical Analysis," *Rhode Island History*, 29 (1970), 3–16; Peter J. Coleman, *The Transformation of Rhode Island, 1790–1860* (Providence, 1963); Sydney V. James, *A People among Peoples: Quaker Benevolence in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963); Daniel P. Jones, "From Radical Yeomen to Evangelical Farmers: The Transformation of Northwestern Rhode Island, 1780–1850" (Ph.D. diss., Brown



University, 1987); Jones, *The Economic & Social Transformation of Rural Rhode Island, 1780–1850* (Boston, 1992); John P. Kaminski, “Political Sacrifice and Demise—John Collins and Jonathan J. Hazard, 1786–1790,” *Rhode Island History*, 35 (1976), 91–98; Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765–1776* (New York, 1972); Jackson Turner Main, *The Sovereign States, 1775–1783* (New York, 1973); William G. McLoughlin, *Soul Liberty: The Baptists’ Struggle in New England, 1630–1833* (Hanover, N.H., 1991); Joseph Michael Norton, “The Rhode Island Federalist Party, 1785–1815” (Ph.D. diss., St. John’s University, 1975); Irwin H. Polishook, “The Collins-Richardson Fracas of 1787: A Problem in State and Federal Relations During the Confederation Era,” *Rhode Island History*, 22 (1963), 117–21; and Mark S. Schantz, *Piety in Providence: Class Dimensions of Religious Experience in Antebellum Rhode Island* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2000).

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For studies of Rhode Island’s towns and counties, especially the principal towns of Newport and Providence, in which support for the Constitution was centered, see Richard M. Bayles, ed., *History of Providence County* (2 vols., New York, 1891); Bayles, ed., *History of Newport County* (2 vols., New York, 1888); Bruce M. Bigelow, “The Commerce of Rhode Island with the West Indies before the American Revolution” (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1930); Paul G. Bourcier, “Prosperity at the Wharves: Providence Shipping, 1780–1850,” *Rhode Island History*, 48 (1990), 35–49; Elaine Forman Crane, *A Dependent People: Newport, Rhode Island in the Revolutionary Era* (New York, 1985); Bruce C. Daniels, “Poor Relief, Local Finance, and Town Government in Eighteenth-Century Rhode Island,” *Rhode Island History*, 40 (1981), 75–87; Daniels, “The ‘Particular Courts’ of Local Government: Town Councils in Eighteenth-Century Rhode Island,” *Rhode Island History*, 41 (1982), 54–65; Daniels, *Dissent and Conformity on Narragansett Bay: The Colonial Rhode Island Town* (Middletown, Conn., 1983); William M. Ferraro, “Localism in Portsmouth and Foster During the Revolutionary and Founding Periods,” *Rhode Island History*, 54 (1996), 67–89; Ferraro, “Lives of Quiet Desperation: Community and Polity in New England Over Four Centuries: The Cases of Portsmouth and Foster, Rhode Island” (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1991); Ruth Wallis Herndon, “On and Off the Record: Town Clerks as Interpreters of Rhode Island History,” *Rhode Island History*, 50 (1992), 103–15; Herndon, “Governing the Affairs of the Town: Continuity and Change in Rhode Island, 1750–1800” (Ph.D. diss., American University, 1992); Herndon, *Unwelcome Americans: Living on the Margin in Early New England* (Philadelphia, 2001); John C. Pease and John

M. Niles, *A Gazetteer of the States of Connecticut and Rhode Island* (Hartford, 1819); Richard Henry Rudolph, "The Merchants of Newport, R.I., 1763–1786" (Ph.D. diss., University of Connecticut, 1975); and Lynne E. Withey, *Urban Growth in Colonial Rhode Island: Newport and Providence in the Eighteenth Century* (Albany, N.Y., 1984).

On Rhode Island's ratification of the Constitution, see Hillman Metcalf Bishop, "Why Rhode Island Opposed the Federal Constitution: The Continental Impost; The Paper Money Era; Paper Money and the Constitution; Political Reasons," *Rhode Island History*, 8 (1949), 1–10, 33–44, 85–95, 115–26; Patrick T. Conley, "First in War, Last in Peace: Rhode Island and the Constitution, 1786–1790," in Patrick T. Conley and John P. Kaminski, eds., *The Constitution and the States: The Role of the Original Thirteen in the Framing and Adoption of the Federal Constitution* (Madison, Wis., 1988), 269–94; Conley, "Rhode Island: Laboratory for the 'Lively Experiment,'" in Patrick T. Conley and John P. Kaminski, eds., *The Bill of Rights and the States: The Colonial and Revolutionary Origins of American Liberties* (Madison, Wis., 1992), 123–61; Conley, "Rhode Island in Disunion, 1787–1790," *Rhode Island History*, 31 (1972), 99–115; Carol Sue Humphrey, "'The Rhode Island Pillar': Rhode Island Newspapers and the Ratification of the Constitution," *Rhode Island History*, 52 (1994), 49–57; John P. Kaminski, "Rhode Island: Protecting State Interests," in Michael Allen Gillespie and Michael Lienesch, eds., *Ratifying the Constitution* (Lawrence, Kans., 1989), 368–90; Kaminski, "Democracy Run Rampant: Rhode Island in the Confederation," in James Kirby Martin, ed., *The Human Dimensions of Nation Making: Essays on Colonial and Revolutionary America* (Madison, Wis., 1976), 243–69; Irwin H. Polishook, "Peter Edes's Report of the Proceedings of the Rhode Island General Assembly, 1787–1790," *Rhode Island History*, 25 (1966), 33–42, 87–97, 117–29, and 26 (1967), 15–31; and Polishook, "An Independence Day Celebration in Rhode Island, 1788," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 30 (1966), 85–93.

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Only a few biographies exist for the principal political players in Rhode Island. Useful collective and brief biographies are:

- Patrick T. Conley, *Rhode Island's Founders: From Settlement to Statehood* (Charleston, S.C., 2010).
- Welcome Arnold: Franklin Stuart Coyle, "Welcome Arnold (1745–1798), Providence Merchant: The Founding of an Enterprise" (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1972).
- The Browns: James B. Hedges, *The Browns of Providence Plantations: The Colonial Years* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952); J. Stanley Lemons, "The Browns and the Baptists," *Rhode Island History*, 67 (2009), 75–83; Charles Rappleye, *Sons of Providence: The Brown Brothers, the Slave Trade, and the American Revolution* (New York, 2006).
- Moses Brown: Mack Thompson, *Moses Brown: Reluctant Reformer* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1962).
- The Champlins: George Joseph Lough, Jr., "The Champlins of Newport: A Commercial History" (Ph.D. diss., University of Connecticut, 1977).
- William Ellery: William M. Fowler, *William Ellery: A Rhode Island Politico and Lord of Admiralty* (Metuchen, N.J., 1973).
- Theodore Foster: William E. Foster, "Sketch of the Life and Services of Theodore Foster," *Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society* (1885), 111–34.
- James Manning: Reuben Aldridge Guild, *Life, Times, and Correspondence of James Manning, and the Early History of Brown University* (Boston, 1864).
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Roger Parks, ed., *Rhode Island: A Bibliography of Its History* (Hanover, N.H., 1983), and additions by Roger Parks to Rhode Island bibliography can be found in volumes 7–10 of *Bibliographies of New England History* (Hanover, N.H., London, and Boston, 1989–2003); Parks, ed., “Writings on Rhode Island History, 1999–2000,” *Rhode Island History*, 59 (2001), 123–27; Parks, ed., “Writings on Rhode Island History, 2001,” *Rhode Island History*, 60 (2002), 107–8; and Joseph Jencks Smith, comp., *Civil and Military List of Rhode Island, 1647–1800* (Providence, 1900).

## Symbols

### FOR MANUSCRIPTS, MANUSCRIPT DEPOSITORIES, SHORT TITLES, AND CROSS-REFERENCES

#### Manuscripts

FC	File Copy
MS	Manuscript
RC	Recipient's Copy
Tr	Translation from Foreign Language

#### Manuscript Depositories

DLC	Library of Congress
DNA	National Archives
MHi	Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston
NRom	Jervis Public Library, Rome, N.Y.
R-Ar	Rhode Island State Archives, Providence
RHi	Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence
RNHi	Newport Historical Society
RPJCB	John Carter Brown Library, Providence

#### Short Titles

Abbot, <i>Washington, Confederation Series</i>	W. W. Abbot, ed., <i>The Papers of George Washington: Confederation Series</i> (6 vols., Charlottesville, Va., 1992–1997).
Abbot, <i>Washington, Presidential Series</i>	W. W. Abbot, Dorothy Twohig, et al., eds., <i>The Papers of George Washington: Presidential Series</i> (Charlottesville, Va., 1987–).
Bartlett, <i>Records</i>	John Russell Bartlett, ed., <i>Records of the Colony [State] of Rhode Island, and Providence Plantations, in New England</i> (10 vols., Providence, 1856–1865).
Blackstone, <i>Commentaries</i>	Sir William Blackstone, <i>Commentaries on the Laws of England. In Four Books.</i> (Re-printed from the British Copy, Page for Page with the Last Edition, 5 vols., Philadelphia, 1771–1772). Originally published in London from 1765 to 1769.

- Boyd Julian P. Boyd et al., eds., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (Princeton, N.J., 1950–).
- Conley, *Democracy in Decline* Patrick T. Conley, *Democracy in Decline: Rhode Island's Constitutional Development, 1776–1841* (Providence, 1977).
- DHFFC Linda Grant De Pauw, Charlene Bangs Bickford, Kenneth R. Bowling, et al., eds., *Documentary History of the First Federal Congress of the United States of America, March 4, 1789–March 3, 1791* (Baltimore, 1972–).
- DHFFE Merrill Jensen, Robert A. Becker, and Gordon DenBoer, eds., *The Documentary History of the First Federal Elections, 1788–1790* (4 vols., Madison, Wis., 1976–1989).
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- Staples William R. Staples, *Rhode Island in the Continental Congress, 1765–1790 . . .* (edited by Reuben Aldridge Guild, Providence, 1870).
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**Cross-references to Volumes of  
*The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution***

- CC References to *Commentaries on the Constitution* are cited as “CC” followed by the number of the document. For example: “CC:25.”

- CDR                   References to the first volume, titled *Constitutional Documents and Records, 1776–1787*, are cited as “CDR” followed by the page number. For example: “CDR, 325.”
- RCS                   References to the series of volumes titled, *Ratification of the Constitution by the States*, are cited as “RCS” followed by the abbreviation of the state and the page number. For example: “RCS:R.I., 325.”
- Mfm                   References to the microfiche supplements to the “RCS” volumes are cited as “Mfm” followed by the abbreviation of the state and the number of the document. For example: “Mfm:R.I. 25.” No microfiche supplement will be published for RCS:N.Y. and RCS:R.I. All Mfm:N.Y. and Mfm:R.I. documents will be placed on the web site of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries at <http://library.wisc.edu>.



## Rhode Island Chronology, 1772–1790

	<b>1772</b>
9–10 June	H.M.S. <i>Gaspee</i> revenue schooner burned off the coast of Warwick
	<b>1773</b>
January, May–June	Witnesses boycott hearings on the burning of the <i>Gaspee</i>
	<b>1774</b>
17 May	Providence Town Meeting calls for a continental congress
15 June	Legislature appoints delegates to First Continental Congress
12 December	H.M.S. <i>Rose</i> arrives in R.I. to suppress smuggling
	<b>1775</b>
2 March	Providence Tea Party burns tea in Market Square
25 April	Legislature votes to raise “Army of Observation” (1,500 men)
7 May	Nathanael Greene given command of “Army of Observation”
May–June	Legislature replaces Loyalist governor-elect
15 June	Legislature creates state navy
26 August	Legislature asks First Continental Congress to establish a navy
	<b>1776</b>
4 May	Legislature instructs R.I. delegates to Congress to work for a Union and to fight to preserve liberty
19 July	Legislature ratifies Declaration of Independence
8 December	British occupy Newport
	<b>1778</b>
16 February	Legislature instructs delegates to Second Continental Congress to sign Articles of Confederation and to submit three proposed amendments
23 June	Congress rejects R.I.’s proposed amendments
9 July	R.I. delegates to Congress sign Articles of Confederation
29 August	Battle of Rhode Island concludes unsuccessful siege of Newport
	<b>1779</b>
25 October	British evacuate Newport
	<b>1780</b>
10 July	French fleet and troops arrive in Newport

**1782**

1 November House of Deputies unanimously rejects Impost of 1781

**1783**

6 March Legislature admits Roman Catholics to rights of citizenship

**1784**

1 March R.I. law for the gradual abolition of slavery goes into effect

**1785**

March House of Deputies rejects 1783 Confederation amendment to apportion federal expenses by population

5 March Legislature adopts Impost of 1783 with qualifications

5 March Legislature adopts 1784 grant of temporary power for Congress to regulate commerce

2 November Legislature adopts for a second time 1784 grant of temporary power for Congress to regulate commerce

**1786**

3 March Congress requests R.I. to revise its 1784 grant of temporary commercial power for Congress

4 March Legislature adopts Impost of 1783

15 March Legislature revises previous adoption of 1784 grant of temporary commercial power for Congress

19 April Country party wins control of state government in annual state elections

6 May Legislature passes paper-money act

28 June, 1 July Legislature appoints commissioners to Annapolis Convention

30 June Legislature passes first penalty act

26 August Legislature passes second penalty act

13 September Smithfield Convention of Providence County towns proposes radical state trade system

26 September Superior Court decides *Trevett v. Weeden*

7 October Legislature asks town meetings to instruct deputies on draft test act

1 November House of Deputies reads instructions on test act indicating freemen overwhelmingly oppose the act

**1787**

1 March Legislative committee estimates state's debt to be £153,000

12–17 March Legislature rejects sending delegates to Constitutional Convention

17 March Legislature begins redeeming first part of state debt in quarterly installments

18 April Country party landslide in annual state elections

2–5 May Legislature rejects sending delegates to Constitutional Convention

25 May–17 September Constitutional Convention meets without R.I. being represented

- 11–16 June Legislature rejects sending delegates to Constitutional Convention
- 20–22 August Legislature fails to obtain a quorum
- 15 September Legislature adopts letter to Congress giving reasons for not sending delegates to Constitutional Convention
- 17 September Newport and Providence deputies protest legislative letter to Congress
- 17 September Governor John Collins sends legislative letter and protest to Congress
- 31 October Legislature prohibits foreign slave trade by R.I. citizens
- 3 November Legislature rejects calling a state convention, but votes to print copies of Constitution for distribution to towns
- 1788**
- 14 February News of Massachusetts ratification with recommendatory amendments first printed in R.I.
- 29 February House of Deputies defeats motion for a state convention, 43–15
- 1 March Legislature passes act submitting Constitution to referendum of freemen in town meetings
- 24 March Freemen in town meetings vote against Constitution, 2,714–238
- 2 April House of Deputies defeats motion for a state convention by a majority of 27
- 5 April Legislature adopts letter to President of Congress explaining referendum results
- 16 April Country party again wins annual state elections
- 7–10 May Legislative session takes no action on the Constitution
- 14 June Motion for a state convention is “not noticed” by House of Deputies
- 24 June News reaches R.I. of New Hampshire’s ratification
- 27 June Providence resolves to celebrate the adoption of the Constitution by nine states and the anniversary of American independence on Fourth of July
- 3–4 July Antifederalist threats of violence and Providence celebration
- 5 July News reaches R.I. of Virginia’s ratification
- 29 July News reaches R.I. of New York’s ratification
- 21 August News reaches R.I. of North Carolina Convention’s adjournment without ratifying the Constitution
- 1 November Legislature begins redeeming second part of state debt in quarterly installments
- 1 November House of Deputies defeats motion for a state convention, 40–14
- 1 November Legislature orders New York Convention’s circular letter and amendments sent to towns for their consideration
- 22 November–29 December Town meetings consider New York circular letter
- 1789**
- 1 January Legislature reviews instructions from towns on New York circular letter

- 1 January House of Deputies rejects motion for a state convention, 34–12
- 4 March New Constitution goes into effect without R.I. in the Union
- 13 March House of Deputies rejects motion for a state convention, 36–19
- 15 April Country party wins annual state elections
- 9 May Legislature postpones motion for a state convention until its June session
- 11 June House of Deputies rejects motion for a state convention by a majority of 11
- 27, 28 August Providence and Newport petitions to Congress asking exemption from payment of foreign tonnage duties
- September Entire state debt redeemed or forfeited
- 18 September Legislature asks freemen in town meetings on 19 October to vote on calling a state convention
- 19 September Legislature temporarily suspends tender provision of paper-money act of 1786
- 19 September Legislature approves letter to President and Congress asking for exemption from foreign duties
- 19 September Gov. John Collins sends legislative letter to President and Congress
- 2 October President George Washington transmits amendments to Constitution proposed by Congress to state executives, including Gov. Collins
- 15 October Legislature orders congressional amendments to Constitution printed and sent to towns for their 19 October meetings
- 17 October Legislature repeals tender provision of paper-money act of 1786 and allows real estate and personal property to be used to repay debts
- 19 October Town meetings instruct deputies on calling a state convention
- 29 October House of Deputies defeats motion for a state convention, 39–17
- 12 December News of North Carolina's ratification first printed in R.I.

### 1790

- 15–17 January Legislature considers bills calling a state convention
- 16 January House of Deputies votes to call a state convention, 32–11
- 17 January Gov. John Collins breaks tie vote in House of Magistrates to call a state convention
- 17 January Legislature orders act calling a state convention to be sent to Congress with a request for further commercial indulgences
- 2 February Antifederalist convention held at East Greenwich to influence state convention elections
- 8 February Election of delegates to state convention
- 1–6 March State Convention meets in South Kingstown
- 6 March Convention votes 41–28 to adjourn until May
- 6 March Convention sends proposed bill of rights and amendments to towns for their consideration on 21 April

6 March	Antifederalist “nocturnal convention” proposes election prox with Daniel Owen as candidate for governor
18 March	Antifederalist convention substitutes Arthur Fenner for Daniel Owen
6 April	Federalist convention held at East Greenwich proposes a coalition prox
21 April	Country party wins annual state election
21 April–1 May	Town meetings deliberate on R.I.’s proposed bill of rights and amendments
8 May	Gov. Arthur Fenner, in council, states he will call a special session of legislature if Convention ratifies Constitution
18 May	U.S. Senate passes bill discriminating against R.I. in commerce
20 May	Gov. Fenner writes to President George Washington indicating R.I. will soon ratify
25–29 May	R.I. state Convention meets in Newport
29 May	R.I. Convention ratifies Constitution, 34–32
29 May	Convention recommends that the state legislature should adopt congressional amendments
29 May	Convention President Daniel Owen informs President Washington of R.I.’s ratification
29 May	News arrives in Providence of R.I. ratification at 11:00 P.M.
1 June	President Washington transmits word to Congress of R.I.’s ratification
3 June	Gov. Fenner informs Mass. Gov. John Hancock of R.I.’s ratification
4 June	President Washington congratulates Gov. Fenner on R.I. ratification
9 June	Convention President Owen sends President Washington official form of ratification
10 June	Officers at legislative session take oath to Constitution
11 June	Adoption of 11 of 12 congressional amendments
12 June	Legislature passes election bill
12 June	Legislature elects Joseph Stanton, Jr., and Theodore Foster as U.S. Senators
12 June	Legislature orders Gov. Fenner to issue proclamation notifying all state officers to take oath to Constitution
14 June	Gov. Fenner issues proclamation on oaths
14 June	Congress passes act putting federal tariff into effect in R.I.
16 June	President Washington transmits official R.I. form of ratification to Congress
25 June	R.I. Senators take their seats
17–19 August	President Washington’s entourage visits R.I.
31 August	Towns vote for R.I.’s U.S. Representative
9 September	Legislature declares Benjamin Bourne elected U.S. Representative

## Officers of the State of Rhode Island 1786–1790

### *Governor*

John Collins (May 1786–May 1790)  
Arthur Fenner (first elected April 1790)

### *Deputy Governor*

Daniel Owen (May 1786–May 1790)  
Samuel J. Potter (first elected  
April 1790)

### *Justices of the Superior Court of Judicature*

*Elected May 1786*

Paul Mumford, Chief  
Joseph Hazard  
Thomas Tillinghast  
Gilbert Devol  
David Howell

*Elected May 1787*

Paul Mumford, Chief  
William West  
Stephen Potter  
Walter Cooke  
John Waite (declined)  
Simeon Clarke, Jr. (elected in Sept.)

*Elected June 1788 and May 1789*

Othniel Gorton, Chief  
William West  
Stephen Potter  
Walter Cooke  
Simeon Clarke, Jr.

*Elected May 1790*

Othniel Gorton, Chief  
Daniel Owen  
Sylvester Robinson  
Walter Cooke  
Ezekiel Gardner, Jr.

### *Secretary*

Henry Ward

### *Attorney General*

William Channing (elected April 1786)  
Henry Goodwin (elected April 1787 and  
April 1788)  
David Howell (elected April 1789)  
Daniel Updike (elected April 1790)

### *Treasurer*

Joseph Clarke

### *Annapolis Convention Commissioners*

*Elected June 1786*

Jabez Bowen\*  
Christopher Champlin (declined)  
Samuel Ward\*  
\*Did not arrive before adjournment

### *Delegates to Congress*

*Elected May 1786*

James Mitchell Varnum  
Nathan Miller  
George Champlin\*  
Peleg Arnold

*Elected May 1787*

Peleg Arnold  
Jonathan J. Hazard\*  
Daniel Manton\*  
Sylvester Gardner\*

*Elected May 1788 and May 1789*

Peleg Arnold  
Jonathan J. Hazard  
Thomas Holden\*  
John Gardner (\* in 1788)  
\*Did not take seat in Congress

### *Continental Loan Officer*

William Ellery

### *Judge, Northwest Territory*

James Mitchell Varnum

## The Rhode Island Legislature 1786–1790

### HOUSE OF MAGISTRATES (ASSISTANTS)

	1786	1787	1788	1789	1790
First	John Mathewson	John Mathewson	John Williams	John Williams	Thomas G. Hazard
Second	Joseph Stanton, Jr.	Joseph Stanton, Jr.	Sylvanus Sayles	Sylvanus Sayles	Peleg Arnold
Third	John Williams	John Williams	James Arnold	James Arnold	James Arnold
Fourth	Richard Searle	Sylvanus Sayles	Caleb Gardner	Caleb Gardner	Caleb Gardner
Fifth	James Arnold	James Arnold	John Cooke	John Cooke	John Cooke
Sixth	William Hammond	William Congdon	William Congdon	James Congdon	James Congdon
Seventh	Gideon Clarke	Caleb Gardner	Joseph W. Tweedy	Joseph W. Tweedy	Thomas Hoxsie
Eighth	Thomas G. Hazard	Thomas G. Hazard	Thomas Coggeshall	Cromel Child	Thomas Holden
Ninth	John Cooke	John Cooke	Thomas Hazard (Prov.)	John Dorrance	Job Watson
Tenth	Oliver Durfee	Oliver Durfee	Thomas Hoxsie	Thomas Hoxsie	John Harris

*Alphabetically with years:*

James Arnold, 1786, 1787, 1788, 1789, 1790  
 Peleg Arnold, 1790  
 Cromel Child, 1789  
 Gideon Clarke, 1786  
 Thomas Coggeshall, 1788  
 James Congdon, 1789, 1790  
 William Congdon, 1787, 1788  
 John Cooke, 1786, 1787, 1788, 1789, 1790

John Dorrance, 1789  
 Oliver Durfee, 1786, 1787  
 Caleb Gardner, 1787, 1788, 1789, 1790  
 William Hammond, 1786  
 John Harris, 1790  
 Thomas Hazard (of Providence), 1788  
 Thomas G. Hazard, 1786, 1787, 1790  
 Thomas Holden, 1790

Thomas Hoxsie, 1788, 1789, 1790  
 John Mathewson, 1786, 1787  
 Sylvanus Sayles, 1787, 1788, 1789  
 Richard Searle, 1786  
 Joseph Stanton, Jr., 1786, 1787  
 Joseph W. Tweedy, 1788, 1789  
 Job Watson, 1790  
 John Williams, 1786, 1787, 1788, 1789

## HOUSE OF DEPUTIES (TOWN REPRESENTATIVES)

*\*Speaker of the House*

	1786		1787		1788		1789		1790	
	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.
<b><i>Barrington</i></b>										
Matthew Allen					X					
Samuel Allen	X				X	X	X			
Vial Allen		X	X							
Joshua Bicknell			X				X	X	X	X
Josiah Humphry	X	X								
Josiah Humphry, Jr.								X	X	X
Nathaniel Martin				X						
Ebenezer Tiffany						X				
<b><i>Bristol</i></b>										
Shearjashub Bourne				X	X		X	X	X	X
William Bradford	X*		X	X*	X	X	X	X*	X	X
Stephen Smith	X	X	X							
Samuel Wardwell										X
<b><i>Charlestown</i></b>										
Robert Congdon										X
Peleg Cross, Jr.								X		
Jonathan J. Hazard	X	X	X	X		X				
Jonathan Hazard, Jr.					X		X			
Joseph Hoxsie								X		
Stephen Hoxsie										X
Thomas Hoxsie	X	X	X							
Jonathan Macomber									X	
Joseph Stanton, Jr.					X	X*	X*		X*	
Lodowick Stanton				X						
<b><i>Coventry</i></b>										
Benjamin Arnold								X		X
William Burlingame	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
John Clarke										
Jeremiah Fenner	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Job Greene									X	X
<b><i>Cranston</i></b>										
Jeriah Hawkins								X		
Nehemiah Knight			X							
Matthew Manchester	X	X				X	X		X	
William Potter					X	X	X			
Stephen Sprague	X									
Peter Stone										X
George Waterman		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Abraham Whipple				X						



	1786		1787		1788		1789		1790	
	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.
<b><i>Cumberland</i></b>										
Levi Ballou								X	X	X
Elijah Brown						X	X			
John S. Dexter							X	X	X	
John Gould, Jr.	X				X					
John Lapham	X	X	X		X		X			
Roger Sheldon				X						
Stephen Whipple		X	X			X				
<b><i>East Greenwich</i></b>										
Job Comstock	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Joseph Fry	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Benjamin Howland										X
James Sweet							X	X	X	X
<b><i>Exeter</i></b>										
Christopher Champlin	X									X
Joseph Reynolds	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Charles Tripp										
Abraham Wilcox, Jr.									X	
Job Wilcox		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
<b><i>Foster</i></b>										
Christopher Colwell	X	X	X							
Jonathan Hopkins, Jr.					X	X	X	X		X
Daniel Howard										
William Howard					X	X	X	X	X	X
William Tyler										
John Westcott	X	X	X							
John Williams									X	
<b><i>Glocester</i></b>										
Seth Hunt	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Timothy Wilmarth							X			
Stephen Winsor	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
<b><i>Hopkinton</i></b>										
Ross Coon					X					
Oliver Davis				X				X	X	X
David Nichols				X	X	X	X			
Abel Tanner	X	X	X							
George Thurston						X	X	X	X	X
Thomas Wells II	X	X	X							

	1786		1787		1788		1789		1790	
	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.
<b><i>Jamestown</i></b>										
Edward Carr									X	
John Eldred				X	X		X			
John Franklin			X							
John Gardner			X							
Job Hopkins										X
Isaac Howland									X	
John Howland	X						X			
Benjamin Remington					X	X				
Rowland Robinson	X	X		X						
John Weeden								X		
<b><i>Johnston</i></b>										
Philip Arnold				X	X	X				
Abraham Belknap	X	X	X							
Andrew Harris	X	X	X							
William B. King								X		
Noah Mathewson							X	X	X	X
William Waterman				X	X	X	X		X	X
<b><i>Little Compton</i></b>										
John Davis						X		X	X	X
Fobes Little							X			
Thomas Palmer					X					
William Richmond						X		X		
Nathaniel Searle	X	X	X	X						
George Simmons	X	X	X	X	X		X			
Philip Taylor									X	X
<b><i>Middletown</i></b>										
Elisha Allen				X						
Joshua Barker						X	X	X	X	
Pardon Brown									X	
Joseph Coggeshall			X	X	X					
Thomas Coggeshall		X	X							
John Gould	X									
William Peckham, Jr.	X				X					X
James Potter						X	X	X		X

	1786		1787		1788		1789		1790	
	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.
<b>Newport</b>										
Robert N. Auchmuty										X
John L. Boss										X
Francis Brinley										X
George Champlin	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Peleg Clarke	X				X	X	X	X	X	X
George Hazard	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Henry Marchant	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Daniel Mason	X	X	X	X						
George Sears							X	X	X	
John Topham	X	X	X	X	X					
William Tripp		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>New Shoreham</b>										
Rowse J. Helme					X		X			
Edward Hull	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
William Littlefield	X									
John Sands		X							X	
Ray Sands			X	X						
<b>North Kingstown</b>										
Bowen Card	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
James Congdon	X	X	X	X	X					
Sylvester Gardner						X	X	X	X	X
<b>North Providence</b>										
Elisha Brown							X	X	X	X
Esek Hopkins	X									
Thomas Olney			X	X	X					
Edward Smith	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jabez Whipple						X				
<b>Portsmouth</b>										
Tillinghast Almy								X		X
Burrington Anthony			X	X	X	X	X			
William Anthony, Jr.	X									
Benjamin Brownell	X		X							
Holder Chace									X	
Elijah Cobb	X	X	X	X	X		X			
Job Durfee				X	X	X	X			
Benjamin Hall	X		X		X		X			
Henry Lawton								X	X	X
Robert Lawton								X	X	X
Thomas Potter								X	X	X

	1786		1787		1788		1789		1790	
	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.
<b><i>Providence</i></b>										
Welcome Arnold			X	X					X	X*
Amos Atwell										X
William Barton					X	X				
Benjamin Bourne		X	X	X			X	X	X	
Jabez Bowen					X	X	X	X	X	
John Brown	X	X	X							
John I. Clark								X		
Amasa Gray							X	X	X	
John Jenckes	X	X			X	X	X			
Charles Keene	X	X								
Sylvanus Martin										X
Robert Newell										X
Joseph Nightingale			X	X						
Amos Throop					X	X				
Thomas Truman	X									
Nathaniel Wheaton				X						
<b><i>Richmond</i></b>										
Thomas James	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
James Sheldon	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b><i>Scituate</i></b>										
James Aldrich					X	X	X	X	X	X
Nathan Bates	X	X	X	X						
Peleg Fisk					X	X	X			
John Harris								X		
Nathaniel Medbury									X	X
Thomas Mowry	X	X	X							
Caleb Westcott				X						
<b><i>Smithfield</i></b>										
Job Aldrich									X	X
John Sayles	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Andrew Waterman	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Stephen Whipple								X		
<b><i>South Kingstown</i></b>										
Rowland Brown									X	X
John Gardner	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
Jonathan J. Hazard							X	X	X	X
Samuel J. Potter	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
<b><i>Tiverton</i></b>										
Joseph Almy	X	X							X	X
Thomas Durfee			X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Benjamin Howland	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Philip Sisson								X		

	1786		1787		1788		1789		1790	
	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.
<b>Warren</b>										
William Barton	X									X
Benjamin Bosworth										X
Smith Bowen		X	X	X	X					
Robert Carr	X									
Cromel Child		X	X	X	X					
Nathan Miller						X	X	X	X	
Samuel Peirce						X	X	X	X	
<b>Warwick</b>										
Benjamin Arnold							X		X	
Gideon Arnold	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Moses Arnold								X		X
Joseph Brown										X
Samuel Budlong						X	X			
Jonathan Gorton			X	X	X				X	X
Othniel Gorton	X	X*	X*	X*	X*					
Benjamin Greene							X			
Anthony Holden			X		X	X		X	X	X
Thomas Holden	X	X								
John Low	X	X								
Thomas Rice, Jr.						X		X		
<b>Westerly</b>										
Joseph Noyes	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
George Stillman									X	X
Walter White	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>West Greenwich</b>										
Jonathan Comstock										X
Caleb Hall						X	X			
Thomas Joslin	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
William Mathewson		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
William Nichols								X	X	
Jonathan Niles	X									
Benjamin Tillinghast										X
<b>Clerks</b>										
Benjamin Bourne	X									
John S. Dexter		X	X							
Ray Greene										X
Rowse J. Helme			X	X	X	X				
Daniel Updike							X	X	X	



**The Ratification of the  
Constitution by  
the States**

**R H O D E I S L A N D  
[1]**





**I.**  
**THE DEBATE OVER THE**  
**CONSTITUTION IN RHODE ISLAND**  
**20 August 1787–22 March 1788**

**Introduction**

*Public Commentaries on the Constitution*

From 17 September 1787 to 23 March 1788, the newspaper debate over the Constitution in Rhode Island was superimposed over the virulent, partisan public debate on the economy, especially over the role of paper money. The public debate began even before the Constitutional Convention adopted the Constitution. In mid-September the Rhode Island General Assembly met in special session called by the governor because the regularly scheduled August session had failed to attain a quorum. The Country party (Antifederalists), which had controlled the legislature since May 1786, did not attend in August because it did not want to deal with the criticism directed at the legislature's failure to send delegates to the Constitutional Convention.

At the special session in September 1787, the legislature adopted a letter to Congress explaining why the state had not appointed delegates to the Convention. In protest, Assembly deputies from Newport and Providence challenged the reasons offered by the legislature. At this time, Rhode Island did not know that the Constitutional Convention had adopted the Constitution.

The proceedings of this session and the October 1787 session were reported fully in the *Newport Herald* whose reporting favored the Mercantile party or Federalists. Although highly partisan, these reports are the most informative accounts originating in Rhode Island in the early months of the debate over the ratification of the Constitution.

Between about 27 September and 8 October, all four Rhode Island newspapers published the text of the Constitution. On 3 November the General Assembly ordered that more than 1,000 copies of the Constitution be distributed to the towns. This two-page broadside also included the two resolutions of the Constitutional Convention, the letter of its President to Congress, and Congress' 28 September resolution transmitting the Constitution to the states for their consideration. (See "The Publication of the Constitution in Rhode Island," c. 27 September 1787–1790, below.)

In each of the General Assembly's sessions of October 1787 and February 1788, it rejected resolutions calling a state convention to consider

the Constitution, as requested by the Constitutional Convention and by Congress' resolution of 28 September 1787. The October session also adopted an historic act prohibiting the slave trade, in which Rhode Island had been deeply involved. (See "Rhode Island General Assembly Prohibits the Slave Trade," 31 October 1787, below.) On 1 March 1788, the day after the Assembly rejected a resolution calling a state convention to consider the Constitution, it adopted an act submitting the Constitution directly to the state's freemen in a referendum to be conducted in the towns. For the February legislative session and the referendum on the Constitution, which took place on 24 March, see Part II, below.

The major newspaper articles originating before 23 March 1788 that are printed in this part are: "Philelaetheros," *United States Chronicle*, 22 November (Antifederalist); "Vir.," *ibid.*, 13 December (neutral); "Columbus," *Newport Herald*, 17 January 1788 (Federalist); "Anarch," *ibid.*, 7 February (Federalist); "A Rhode-Island Man," *Newport Mercury*, 25 February (Federalist); and "A Newport Man," *ibid.*, 17 March (Antifederalist).

It should be noted that some major original pieces published before 23 March 1788 are printed in II, below. These articles anticipating the referendum of 24 March include: "A Freeman," *Providence Gazette*, 15 March (Federalist); "A Friend of Rule and Order," *ibid.*, 15 March (Antifederalist); "A Freeman," *Newport Herald*, 20 March (Federalist); and "A Rhode-Island Landholder," *United States Chronicle*, 20 March (Antifederalist).

Rhode Island newspapers were a fount of information for events in other states related to the Constitution. Newspapers reprinted reports of the proceedings of public meetings and religious and political societies on the Constitution; the texts or accounts of speeches of state executives forwarding the Constitution to their legislatures; the speeches of prominent men; statements of state legislatures on calling state ratifying conventions; reports of the election of delegates to conventions; reports of the proceedings and debates of conventions; accounts of ratification by conventions; a false report of North Carolina's ratification; and descriptions of celebrations of ratification. They also told their readers about violence for and against the Constitution; the state of the American economy and politics; foreign opinion on the Constitution and the United States; speculation about the impact of ratification on non-ratifying states; opinions of prominent Americans, such as George Washington and John Jay, on the Constitution; and seemingly innumerable squibs about the prospects of ratification in the states, including Rhode Island.

The early debate over the Constitution in Rhode Island consisted largely of articles that originated in other states and then were reprinted in Rhode Island, sometimes with comment, other times without. The most significant of these out-of-state articles have been provided with Editors' Notes that give background on the articles, their authorship, and their national circulation and, importantly, their circulation and the commentary upon them in Rhode Island. Editors' Notes have also been provided for such important out-of-state events as the ratification of the Constitution by Massachusetts and the adjournment of the New Hampshire Convention.

The two Providence newspapers were most active in reprinting Federalist items from other states. Some of these articles have been provided with Editors' Notes (indicated by an asterisk). The major Federalist writings produced before the end of October 1787 that were reprinted include: David Daggett, Fourth of July 1787, New Haven, Conn., oration (pamphlet excerpt) (CC:47-B); "Curtius" I, New York *Daily Advertiser*, 29 September 1787 (CC:111); "Foreign Spectator" (Nicholas Collin), Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 2 October (CC:124); "Matters of Fact," *Pennsylvania Packet*, 5 October (Mfm:Pa. 103); \*James Wilson: Speech at a Public Meeting in Philadelphia, *Pennsylvania Herald*, 9 October (extra) (CC:134); "A Federal Centinel," *South Carolina Weekly Chronicle*, 9 October (CC:143); "Foederal Constitution," *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 10 October (CC:150); "Meeting of Philadelphia Association of Baptist Churches," *New York Packet*, 12 October (CC:156-A); Charles Pinckney, *Observations on the Plan of Government . . .* (New York, 16 October) (Evans 20649); "One of the People," *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 17 October (RCS:Pa., 186-92); \*"A Citizen of America" (Noah Webster) (CC:173; Mfm:Pa. 142); \*Governor John Hancock: Speech to the Massachusetts General Court, *Massachusetts Gazette*, 19 October (CC:177); \*The Report of Connecticut's Delegates to the Constitutional Convention, *New Haven Gazette*, 25 October (CC:192); "A Citizen," *Carlisle Gazette*, 24 October (Mfm:Pa. 152); and \*"Publius," *The Federalist* I-III (Alexander Hamilton and John Jay), New York *Independent Journal*, 27, 31 October, 3 November (CC:201, 217, 228).

The Federalist articles originally published from November 1787 through 23 March 1788 include: "A Federalist," *Boston Gazette*, 5 November (RCS:Mass., 199-200); "Uncus," *Maryland Journal*, 9 November (CC:247); "Plain Truth," Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 10 November (RCS:Pa., 216-23); and \*"Landholder" IV-VI, VIII, XII-XIII (Oliver Ellsworth), *Connecticut Courant*, 26 November, 3, 10, 24 December, 17, 24 March 1788 (CC:295, 316, 335, 371, 622, 641); \*James Wilson:

Speech in the Pennsylvania Convention, 24 November (RCS:Pa., 340–50; CC:289); \*Benjamin Franklin’s Last Speech to the Constitutional Convention, *Boston Gazette*, 3 December (RCS:Mass., 369–81); \*George Washington’s letter to Charles Carter, *Maryland Journal*, 1 January 1788 (CC:386–A); “An Old Man,” *Carlisle Gazette*, 2 January (CC:407); John Sullivan: Speech to the New Hampshire General Court, *New Hampshire Mercury*, 30 January (CC:339–B); spurious “Centinel” XV, *Pennsylvania Mercury*, 16 February (CC:534); “A Yankee,” *Pennsylvania Mercury*, 21 February (CC:552); and John Adams on the Constitution, *New York Journal*, 23 February (CC:557).

The Antifederalist articles reprinted from original out-of-state sources that were first printed from October through December 1787 include: \**“The Address of the Seceding Pennsylvania Assemblymen,”* Philadelphia broadside, 2 October (CC:125–A); \**“Centinel”* I, III, VII (Samuel Bryan), Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 5 October, 8 November, and 29 December (CC:133, 243, 394); \**“Centinel”* II (Samuel Bryan), Philadelphia *Freeman’s Journal*, 24 October (CC:190); “A Republican” I, *New York Journal*, 25 October (CC:196); “M.C.,” *Pennsylvania Herald*, 27 October (CC:203); “John De Witt” II, *Boston American Herald*, 29 October (RCS:Mass., 156–61); “Cincinnatus” I–II (Arthur Lee), *New York Journal*, 1, 8 November (CC:222, 241); \*Elbridge Gerry to the Massachusetts General Court, *Massachusetts Centinel*, 3 November (CC:227–A); “An Officer of the Late Continental Army” (William Findley?), Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 6 November (RCS:Pa., 210–16); “Portius,” *Boston American Herald*, 12 November (RCS:Mass., 216–20); \*George Mason’s Objections to the Constitution, *Massachusetts Centinel*, 21 November (CC:276–A); “A Countryman” I (Hugh Hughes), *New York Journal*, 21 November (RCS:N.Y., 271–74); \**“Philadelphiensis”* III, VI, VIII (Benjamin Workman), Philadelphia *Freeman’s Journal*, 5, 26 December 1787, 23 January 1788 (CC:320, 382, 473), and “*Philadelphiensis*” V, Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 19 December (CC:356); Richard Henry Lee’s objections to the Constitution and his recommended amendments in his letter to Governor Edmund Randolph, *Petersburg Virginia Gazette*, 6 December (CC:325); \**“The Dissent of the Minority of the Pennsylvania Convention,”* *Pennsylvania Packet*, 18 December (CC:353); and \*Governor Edmund Randolph’s letter to the Virginia House of Delegates, Richmond pamphlet, c. 27 December (CC:385).

The original out-of-state Antifederalist articles first printed from January 1788 through 23 March 1788 include: “An Address to the Minority of the Pennsylvania Convention,” *Carlisle Gazette*, 2 January 1788 (CC:408); Elbridge Gerry defends his conduct in the Constitutional

Convention, *Massachusetts Centinel*, 5 January (CC:419); “Tamony,” *Virginia Independent Chronicle*, 9 January (CC:430); George Clinton’s Speech to the New York Legislature, *New York Daily Advertiser*, 14 January (CC:439); “Luther Martin to the Printer,” *Maryland Journal*, 18 January (CC:460); Elbridge Gerry to William Cushing, 21 January, and “A State of Facts,” *Massachusetts Centinel*, 23 January (letter), and *Boston American Herald*, 28 January (facts), both items respecting Gerry’s role as an invited observer to the Massachusetts Convention (RCS:Mass., 1265–71n, 1180–81); “Massachusettensis,” *Massachusetts Gazette*, 29 January (RCS:Mass., 830–33); “Maria,” *Worcester Magazine*, 14 February (RCS:Mass., 1630); and “Z,” *Philadelphia Freeman’s Journal*, 27 February (Mfm:Pa. 455).

Perhaps most important to Rhode Islanders, as fellow New Englanders, was the reprinting of both Governor John Hancock’s proposed amendments to the Constitution as a member of the Massachusetts Convention and that same Convention’s final recommendatory amendments. Three Rhode Island newspapers reprinted Hancock’s propositions, while all four Rhode Island newspapers reprinted the Convention’s amendments. For Hancock’s propositions, see *Massachusetts Centinel*, 2 February (RCS:Mass., 1381–82, 1387–88), and for the Convention’s amendments, see *Massachusetts Gazette*, 8 February (CC:508). See also “The Rhode Island Reprinting of the Massachusetts Convention’s Amendments and Boston’s Celebration of Massachusetts Ratification,” 7–25 February 1788 (below).

#### *Private Commentaries on the Constitution*

In Rhode Island, during the six months after the Constitutional Convention adopted the Constitution, the extant private correspondence on ratification is minimal. Only fourteen letters are printed in this section—six each from the Federalist towns of Newport and Providence, one from Lyme, Conn., and one from Philadelphia. Also printed are six extracts of letters written by Rhode Islanders that were published in out-of-state newspapers. In Part II, below, there are two briefly excerpted Federalist letters that were printed before 23 March. One letter was written from Providence and the other from Philadelphia.

Letter writers extolled the Constitution; described, praised, and criticized the politics and political parties of Rhode Island; praised and attacked the two legislative sessions dominated by the Country party (Antifederalists); commented on the poor state of the Rhode Island economy; speculated on the possibility of ratification in other states; declared that Rhode Island would not ratify the Constitution unless

compelled to do so by events in other states; declared that a strong central government was needed to replace the ineffective Confederation government; and asserted that anarchy or civil war would follow the failure to ratify the Constitution. No letter writer made a substantial and careful analysis of the provisions of the Constitution, although Samuel Hopkins in two letters and Moses Brown in one excoriated the slave-trade clause of the Constitution and extolled the Rhode Island Assembly's prohibition of the slave trade.

Three letters written by the prolific William Ellery are informative on the politics of Rhode Island and the progress and process of ratification. Two letter writers from other states had pronounced anti-Rhode Island feelings. Henry Channing of Lyme, Conn., called Rhode Islanders a "wretched people" and pitied the "Paper money gentry." Philadelphian John Francis thought Rhode Island was infamous, and he denounced the state Assembly for bringing to perfection a new species of villainy.

#### *Town Meetings*

The proceedings of town meetings from five towns (East Greenwich, Hopkinton, Little Compton, North Kingstown, and Portsmouth) are printed in this Part. They reflect town action on receiving the official broadside version of the Constitution, drafting instructions to the town's deputies to oppose the Constitution, and instructing deputies to support calling a state convention to consider the Constitution.

### **Rhode Island Fails to Send Delegates to the Constitutional Convention, 20 August–18 September 1787**

On 21 February 1787 the Confederation Congress adopted a resolution calling upon the states to appoint delegates to a convention to meet in May in Philadelphia "for the sole and express purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation" (CDR, 187). James Mitchell Varnum, Rhode Island's sole delegate in Congress, was a member of the grand committee that drafted the resolution. However, he did not vote on the resolution, perhaps because as the state's sole delegate his vote would not have counted. But Varnum supported the calling of a convention and Rhode Island's representation in it. He also advocated measures to strengthen the central government's power over "whatever respects the citizens collectively, or as immediately relating to the whole confederacy, whether foreign or domestic" (to John Collins, 4 April, and to Samuel Holten, 4 August, Smith, *Letters*, XXIV, 203, 388–89).

Recognizing that enhancing the powers of Congress would jeopardize the state's paper money policies, the Rhode Island legislature—controlled by the Country party—rejected proposals to elect delegates to the proposed constitutional convention in three consecutive sessions. In March 1787 the motion to send delegates lost "by a majority of 23," ostensibly because of the majority's

“professed regard to the Articles of Confederation” (*Newport Herald*, 22 March, Mfm:R.I.). At the May session the motion to appoint delegates “was reassumed and urged with such force of reason and eloquence, as obtained a majority in the Lower House of two; but it was rejected in the Upper House by a majority of four, and no appointment took place” (*ibid.*, 10 May, Mfm:R.I.). In June the upper house, convinced that its vote in the previous session “was ruinous to government,” voted to send delegates. The lower house, however, voted to non-concur “by a majority of 17—although but the last session a similar vote originated and passed that house” (*ibid.*, 21 June, Mfm:R.I.).

Shortly after the second rejection in the May session, a committee of thirteen, on behalf of the merchants and tradesmen of Providence, wrote to the Constitutional Convention on 11 May requesting that congressional delegate James Mitchell Varnum be permitted to sit in the Convention when it discussed commercial matters. The Convention “ordered that the said letter do lye upon the table for farther consideration.” (See “Introduction,” RCS:R.I., xxx.)

Rhode Island was vigorously attacked publicly and privately from one end of the continent to the other, especially in newspapers. These criticisms of Rhode Island had begun early in the 1780s when the state had rejected the congressional Impost of 1781 and intensified with the adoption of its paper money policies. (See “Introduction,” RCS:R.I., xxx, xxxvi–xxxvii. For examples of the criticisms just before and during the meeting of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, see CC:13, 25 [p. 109], 30–D, 35–A, 35–B, 43 [p. 147], 62.)

When the General Assembly met at its next regularly scheduled session on Monday, 20 August, the Country party majority found a new way not to send delegates to the Constitutional Convention. No member of the upper house attended. On Wednesday the lower house decided that it could not proceed and the members began leaving “without doing any business.” The Mercantile party minority, which favored sending delegates to the Constitutional Convention, desired “to hear the public letters, and to advise his Excellency the Governor respecting the propriety of specially convening the Assembly before October Sessions: a message was accordingly sent to the Governor requesting the letters, but before they could be obtained so many members retired that the letters were not read and no advice was given.” A correspondent in the *Newport Herald* speculated that Country party leaders feared that they could not hold together their majority in the face of truth if the public letters were read (*Newport Herald*, 23 August, Mfm:R.I. See the document immediately below for another comment on the “falling” of the August session.).

Francis Dana, a Massachusetts delegate to the Constitutional Convention who had been too ill to attend, wrote fellow Massachusetts delegate Elbridge Gerry from Newport on 2 September. Dana stated that Rhode Island would not send delegates to either the Constitutional Convention or Congress. He believed that Rhode Island should be cast out of the Union and that its territory should be divided among its neighbors. Rhode Island was ruled by “the most ignorant & unprincipled of their fellow Citizens.” It was “too insignificant to have a place on an equal footing with any of the others in the Union, unless it be Delaware.” The time was “fully ripe” for “annihilating them as a separate Member of the Union” (Mfm:R.I.).

Without the advice of the General Assembly, Governor John Collins called a special session of the legislature to elect delegates to the Constitutional Convention. Instead, on 15 September, the legislature adopted a letter addressed to the President of Congress, stating its reasons for not sending delegates. This letter, along with an official protest by the Assembly's deputies from Newport and Providence, was forwarded to Congress by Governor Collins on 17 September (Mfm:R.I.), the day that the Constitutional Convention adjourned *sine die*. The letter was read in Congress on 24 September (JCC, XXXIII, 528n), four days after Congress had read the new Constitution.

See Mfm:R.I. for a grouping of documents concerning Rhode Island's failure to send delegates to the Constitutional Convention.

*Newspaper Account of the Falling of the General Assembly  
20–22 August 1787*<sup>1</sup>

As the *falling* of the General Assembly, which was to have convened on the 20th of August last at Bristol in this State, is a matter of much speculation, and the *falling* of such a body may be a thing altogether new in the other States it may not be improper to give a particular account of that *fall*, and to premise it with an extract of two paragraphs from the act of this State regulating the sitting of the General Assembly, one of which at least, was made for the express purpose of preventing the *falling* of the General Assembly.

The paragraphs referred to are in the following words:—

“*And be it further Enacted, Resolved and Declared*, That it is the true intent and meaning of the Charter of this Colony that notwithstanding it is necessary that there should be seven members of the Upper House present to make a quorum for doing public business; yet the Governor, Deputy-Governor, or any one or more of the Assistants have and always had power to adjourn that house from day to day until there should appear a sufficient number for doing business.”

“*And be it further Enacted*, That so many of the Deputies from the several towns in this Colony as shall be present shall be empowered to adjourn that house from day to day *to prevent the falling* of the General Assembly.”<sup>2</sup>

By the Charter it is necessary that, of the members who should compose a General Assembly, “the Governor, Deputy-Governor, and six of the Assistants at least should be present;”<sup>3</sup> but it says nothing about the power of adjourning from day to day, until there should appear a sufficient number of the Upper House for doing business. Indeed it makes not the distinction of Upper House and Lower House; nor doth it mention a word about quorum, or adjournment, or *falling* of the General Assembly.



Whether the *falling* of the General Assembly which was to have convened at Bristol, as already mentioned, was a *legal falling* or not, I shall not undertake to decide. That the *majority* intended it should fall is I believe at least the universal opinion of the *minority*.

One or more members of the Lower House attended at Bristol on Monday, the day to which the Assembly was adjourned, and adjourned regularly from day to day until Wednesday, when the *majority* left their seats, quitted the house, and gave an effectual *fall* to the General Assembly. No member of the Upper House, *it seems*, was at Bristol on the first day of the adjournment. I say *it seems*, because it is said the Lower House let the Assembly fall on that account. We are yet to learn that the members of the former had any written information from the members of the latter that no one of their House was present on the first day of the adjournment: And we do not know that the Lower House have a right to determine whether the Upper House are legally assembled or not. This perhaps can legally appear only by an act of the latter. But taking it for granted that no member of the Upper House was present on the first day of the adjournment, considering that several members of this House live but a few miles from the spot, how can this event be well accounted for but by recurring to design.—Besides how happened it, that when the *majority* had *overthrown* the General Assembly, if I may so express myself, and the *minority* proposed that the Governor should be requested to call the General Assembly immediately, and it could have been done in the space of twenty-four hours (for fifty Deputies, and the Governor and some of the Assistants were present) how happened it, I ask, that the members of the *majority* did not join with those of the *minority* in this proposal? Why did they refuse to unite with the latter if they wished that the public business should at that time be transacted?

The *minority* desired to peruse the public letters and sent a messenger to the Governor requesting his Excellency to favour the members present with a view of them. How came it about that, when the messenger reported that the Governor would attend presently, and produce the letters, the *majority* quitted the House, and the letters did not appear? The only reason I can assign for it is this,—that if they had staid and the letters had been produced the *minority* might have been furnished with such cogent arguments for an immediate convoking of the General Assembly as the *majority* could neither answer nor evade;—and they were determined not to hear any thing about federal measures if they could avoid it before the next October Session, when by the Constitution they will be compelled to meet,<sup>4</sup> and when a falling of the General Assembly might be fatal. Thus regardless of the time and expence of

those whom business had collected at Bristol; regardless of the trouble and expence which the inhabitants of that town had been at in providing for the members of the Assembly, and others; regardless of the repeated, and pressing requests of Congress that the Legislature would immediately send on Delegates to Congress, and regardless of the reputation of the State in this critical situation of our public affairs, the *majority* occasioned the *falling* of the General Assembly.

If any one should ask, what views they could have in suffering the General Assembly to fall, I should answer,—that they expected the State would receive the recommendation of Congress, in consequence of the report of the Convention, before the next October Session,—that at the Bristol Session the minority would urge the sending Delegates to Congress and the Convention,—the repeal of any laws which might have been passed repugnant to the treaty with Great-Britain, and, in general, a compliance with the recommendations and requisitions of Congress,—that a scale of depreciation for the paper emission might be pressed upon them,—and they were afraid least by some faulty evasion, or by yielding some point they might injure themselves in the opinion of their constituents, or that by assenting to some federal act they might be considered as having pledged themselves to comply with the measures that Congress may recommend in consequence of the report of the General Convention.—These are the probable reasons of the late extraordinary manœuvre of the majority.

Permit me now, courteous reader, to give thee an account of some occurrences upon the falling of the Assembly, previous to the issuing of the famous warrant printed and commented upon in your last Herald.<sup>5</sup>

After the General Assembly had *fallen*, his Excellency the Governor, at the table of a gentleman in Bristol, in the company of a number of the *minority*, produced the public Congressional letters, and asked their advice as to calling a special Assembly.—They told him, that if he thought he could influence the *majority* to send Delegates to Congress and the Convention, they would advise him to call one immediately.—He replied, that he could, and that he was determined to call the Assembly.—Soon after his return home, he *threw* himself into the company of a junto of the majority who were assembled, *on weighty business*, at the house of the immaculate FORGERARO.—He asked their advice on the same subject.—They were all against convoking a General Assembly, excepting the Political Diver and one of the Smithfield deputies.<sup>6</sup>—The motives of the latter for calling a General Assembly I shall not attempt to develop.—The Superior Court was soon to meet, and the former, since his reformation, and the tender made him in paper

for rent, has grown so squeamish that he wished to have the advice of the legislature relative to the redemption of mortgages with the paper emission at par.

The majority stood buff<sup>7</sup> against our federal Governor, our tender-conscienced Political Diver, and the Smithfield Money-changer.

What now could be done?—The triumvirate were aground.—The Political Diver, after musing some time, cried out, I have found it!—I have found it!—Go Governor,—go immediately to the Deputies for the town of Newport.—They will be for the measure, and if any evil should spring out of it, the blame will fall upon them.—Away runs his Excellency, and asks their advice; which, to his great mortification, was similar to that he had received from the minority at Bristol.

The only resort of the poor Governor now was, to Providence. Thither he goes; but alas! it seems, he did not find any one there propitious to his wishes.

He returned disgusted as he well might be; and took the magnanimous resolution of calling the General Assembly against the advice of the *majority*.

How deeply is it to be lamented! that our Chief Magistrate, who ought, in imitation of some other great men, to conceal himself to be revered the more, should deem himself obliged to run forward and backward from Newport to Middletown, and from Middletown to Newport,—from Newport to Providence, and from Providence to Newport, to obtain advice about calling a General Assembly, when by an act of government he was invested with ample authority, on any emergent occasion, to convoke a special Assembly without consulting any members of either House.<sup>8</sup>—How degrading is it, that his Excellency the Governor of the State, should instead of requesting by billet the members of both Houses who were in the vicinity to attend him, if he wanted their advice, to *heave* or *throw* himself for direction among a cabal, assembled at the house of a man of blasted reputation?—And after all this, how disgusting must the unauthenticated paper signed John Collins, purporting to be a warrant for convoking a General Assembly, and declaring to be issued by the advice of *my Council* appear!—Blush LITTLE SISTER,—Blush RHODA for thy degenerate brethren—for the folly and false pride of thy Guardian and Protector!—How did the General Assembly of thy Great ones *fall!*—How is the mighty *fallen!*<sup>9</sup>

1. Printed: *Newport Herald*, 20 September. For another description of the “falling” of the August session of the General Assembly, see *Newport Herald*, 23 August 1787 (Mfm:R.I.). Commentaries on the “falling” appeared in the *Newport Herald*, 23 August, and *Providence Gazette*, 25 August (both Mfm:R.I.). As a result of the “falling,” a special session was called to meet in September. (See the document immediately below for the proceedings of the September session.)

On 20 September the Antifederalist *New York Journal* printed an extract from a letter of a Providence gentleman to the printer, dated 6 September, which stated that “Our honorable general assembly, notwithstanding their late disaster, in *falling through*, are this day returning to the charge, and hope their present attempt may prove more successful. I do not learn that the members bring any important information from the ANTIPODES, therefore conclude all is peace and quietness there. Should any thing curious, however, transpire, via this honorable body, from *that distant region*, during the session, you may rely on receiving it early for your paper.”

2. For this act, see *Acts and Laws of the English Colony of Rhode-Island . . .* (Newport, 1767) (Evans 10749), 135–37. Completed in 1766, this volume is a digest of all laws in effect at that time.

3. The charter of 1663 declared that the legislature “shall bee called the Generall Assembly; and that they, or the greatest parte of them present, whereof the Governour or Deputy-Governour, and sixe of the Assistants, at least to bee seven . . .” (Thorpe, VI, 3214–15).

4. Under the charter of 1663, the General Assembly was required to meet at least twice a year, on the first Wednesday in May and on the last Wednesday in October (Thorpe, VI, 3214).

5. Dated 31 August, Governor John Collins’ warrant was printed in the *Newport Herald* on 13 September and addressed to the sheriff of Providence County. Collins informed the sheriff that, with the advice of his Council (i.e., Assistants), he had called a special session of the legislature to meet in Newport on 10 September at 11 a.m. to take the place of the fallen August session. The special session was needed to consider important matters relating to Rhode Island. The publication of the warrant was done at the behest of an anonymous individual who appended a long commentary challenging the warrant’s legality (Mfm:R.I.).

6. In the paragraph below, this deputy is described as “the Smithfield Money-changer,” and was probably John Sayles. Sayles was ordered by the legislature in May 1787 to exchange £200 in paper money for “solid coin” that would be given to Rhode Island’s delegates to Congress. See “Newspaper Report of General Assembly Proceedings,” 27 February–1 March 1788 (II, below).

7. “To stand firm, not to flinch; to endure.”

8. See note 2 (above).

9. 2 Samuel 1:19, 25, 27.

### *Newspaper Report of General Assembly Proceedings 10–15 September 1787<sup>1</sup>*

This document is part of a series of articles, beginning in March 1787 and completed in January 1790, reporting on the proceedings of the Rhode Island Assembly begun by Peter Edes, the printer and publisher of the *Newport Herald*. (For more on this series, see “Note on Sources,” above.)

*A narrative of the proceedings of the General Assembly of the State of Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations, specially convened at Newport in said State, on Monday the 10th day of September, 1787.*

Although neither the majority nor minority approved of the convoking the Assembly, the former because they wished to avoid being pushed by the latter to negative a motion for sending Delegates to

Congress, and the latter because they were sure the former would not embrace any federal measure that should be proposed;—yet the majority chusing rather to risk the consequences of refusing to send Delegates to Congress, than to let the General Assembly fall a second time,<sup>2</sup> either for want of the attendance of a member of each House, or, which might have been more disgraceful to their party, by declaring the warrant of convocation illegal, made provision for an attendance of a member of both Houses, the first day, and for daily adjournments until a quorum of the Lower House had assembled, which took place on Tuesday [11 September], and then they proceeded to business.

The Lower House by one of their body requested his Excellency the Governor to lay before them the business on which he had convoked them.—He accordingly appeared before the House, and in a short federal speech, informed them that he had called them together on account of a letter he had received from the President of Congress,<sup>3</sup> urging the State in the strongest terms immediately to send on Delegates to Congress for many reasons; but particularly that they might be present when the General Convention should report, which was daily expected.—His Excellency having finished his speech, laid the letter on the table and retired.

The House then adjourned.—The next forenoon, Wednesday [12 September], one of the minority desired that the business on which they were convoked might be taken up, and was seconded;—but the ORACLE<sup>4</sup> of the majority thought otherwise.—He thought, Mr. Speaker, that it would be best to take up this important matter in the *cool* of the morning,—that it would be best to consult their *pillows* upon it.—It was replied that this could not be an arduous business that required the consultation of *pillows*,—that gentlemen had had already one night at least for consulting their *pillows*,—intimated pretty clearly that the majority wanted an opportunity to meet and consult *in full and solemn convention* on the subject, and consented, because, I suppose, he could not help it, that it should be postponed for consideration until the *cool* of the next morning.—The morning lowered, and heavily in clouds brought on the day, the important day, big with disgrace and infamy.

The question was proposed, and a debate ensued, in which the minority adduced and urged such arguments on the affirmative side of the question as convinced every spectator, and must have convinced the majority themselves;—but bound by the solemn league and covenant they had entered into at the Convention the night before, it was impossible to force them to yield to their convictions.—The ORACLE was obliged to stand the contest almost alone; for, excepting a cracker discharged now and then by the little Hypocrite, who sometimes prates

so prettily from the south-side of the House, no one came forth to the support of our intrepid Hero,—Unabashed he stood, as ever *Money-maker* did in pillory,<sup>5</sup> and, bidding defiance to common sense, and pointed reasoning, as often as he had a chance, he furiously scattered about him fire-brands, arrows and death, swearing he would fight up to his knees in blood for confederation.—After raving, until he had put himself out of breath, he closed the debate with declaring that our last Delegates in Congress had, in a letter to the State, hinted that it was one design of the Convention to deprive this State of an equal voice with the rest,—and that he would never consent to sending Delegates to Congress, until he should be acquainted with the report of the Convention—If impudence and perseverance intitle to victory in a political contest, the victory, Oh! J—n—th—n was justly thine.—The question being put, whether the Assembly would send Delegates to Congress, *now* or *not*, was determined against sending Delegates to Congress at this time by a majority of eight.—As soon as the question was decided, away marched the majority with their leader at their head to a suitable place of refreshment, there to talk over and rejoice at their ill-gotten victory. . . .

On Friday [14 September] another letter was received from Congress, earnestly pressing the State to send on Delegates to Congress.—It was moved by the minority to resume the question for sending Delegates to Congress, but the majority chose to consult their *pillows*;<sup>6</sup> otherwise to hold and consult in a *Convention* on the occasion as they had done before, and it was accordingly postponed until the *cool of the next morning*.—By the by how comes it to pass that the majority who are eternally holding *Conventions* are so bitterly opposed to the General Convention of the States?—because perhaps they may imagine that this Grand Convention will swallow up their delectable little ones.

Saturday [15 September] the morning again lowered, and the question came on. The *Oracle* and some others kept back, but they had arranged their troops so perfectly the preceding night, as to secure a majority of three against sending Delegates to Congress now.<sup>7</sup>

They passed an act, upon the Resolution of Congress, requesting the State to repeal any laws repugnant to the Treaty with Great-Britain—declaring that the said Treaty was a law of the land, and that it was in no respect to be receded from, misconstrued or violated. This act I suppose will be published, and I pray that it may be marked with a white stone.<sup>8</sup>

An act passed granting a tax of thirty thousand pounds in paper to be paid into the Treasury in January next, to be appropriated towards discharging the State debt. Some votes which passed the Lower House

were lost on the table or on their passage and did not reach the Upper House.

The principal acts which passed this Session, were those which have been mentioned;—a curious, apologetical letter to Congress, assigning reasons for not sending Delegates to the Convention, a protest of the minority, and a resolution requesting the Governor by letter to inform the President of Congress that two Delegates were directed to attend their body on the first Monday in November next,—that measures were taken by the Assembly for having the State duly represented, and that they had not given orders for their Delegates going forward previous to that time, under an apprehension that the States would not generally be represented in Congress until their meeting for the next year.<sup>9</sup>

Some remarks may be made on these acts hereafter; suffice it at present to say, that the letter is incorrectly drawn, and the reasoning is futile, and not founded in, but directly against the letter & spirit of the Confederation. It is said that Janus and the Political Diver have discovered a difference between the definite article *The* and the indefinite article *A*, which escaped the diligent grammatical researches of Noah Webster, and have from thence most sagaciously inferred that *A* Congress of the United States is quite a different political being from *The* Congress of the United States. Admitted to such a profound discovery who can refrain from laughter.

With regard to the information the Governor is to give to the President by the resolution referred to, it may be remarked that the necessary measures have not been taken to send on Delegates to Congress,—that they have not been furnished with money to proceed, nor is any money yet provided for the Delegates who it seems are to attend Congress the first Monday of November.

As to Delegates not being ordered on because it was apprehended that the States would not be generally represented in Congress until the first Monday in November next, it is altogether farcical. Every one knows that upon the rising of the Convention, all the States will be represented but this, to take into consideration the report of the Convention. In truth the reason why Delegates have not been sent to the Convention, and why they were not ordered on to Congress, at the last Session, was because the majority, by standing buff<sup>10</sup> against the urgent recommendations of Congress, may with a better face, oppose the recommendation which Congress may present to them in consequence of the report of the Convention.

The session closed with a scene shocking to humanity. The waiters produced their accounts of days attendance, leaving it to the House to allow such sums as they should judge proper for their services, when

some members of that Majority, who had granted abundant sums of nominal money to their favourites, hesitated to give them a reasonable allowance,—among these shown illustriously the duck-seller of Tiverton<sup>11</sup>—the meal-seller of Exeter,<sup>12</sup> and the tanner of Hopkinton;<sup>13</sup>—the first, who had in the early days of the paper emission sold his ducks at the rate of four for one,—the second who had lately sold his meal in the Newport market at the rate of six or seven for one,—and the last who had during the Session offered to exchange paper at seven for one, declared they would allow the poor waiters but one paper dollar a day for their services. A severe and long altercation took place on this occasion which would have terminated against the waiters, if the Speaker [Othniel Gorton], to give him his due, had not humanely interposed in favour of, and by his influence procured them a tolerable reward.

Thus ended the third Session of not the *old wise*, but of the present *wise, virtuous, just, federal* administration.

1. Printed: *Newport Herald*, 20 September. Reprinted: *Massachusetts Gazette*, 25 September; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 2 October. See also note 9 (below). For another account of the legislative proceedings see the *United States Chronicle*, 20 September (Mfm:R.I.). The *Chronicle's* account was reprinted in the *Boston American Herald*, 24 September.

2. For the “falling” of the legislature in August 1787, see the document printed immediately above.

3. See President of Congress Arthur St. Clair to Certain States, 13 August 1787 (Smith, *Letters*, XXIV, 403–4).

4. Jonathan J. Hazard.

5. The reference is to a swindler and forger Seth Hudson, who with his partner Joshua Howe, was imprisoned in Boston in October 1761 for forging treasurer's notes. In March 1762 both men were tried in Boston before a large crowd and found guilty. Hudson, on each of four indictments, was sentenced to stand in the pillory for an hour, to receive twenty stripes, to serve a year in prison, and to pay a fine of £100. Howe, on each of two indictments, was sentenced to stand an hour in the pillory, to receive thirty-nine lashes, to serve a year in prison, and to pay a fine of £100. Nathaniel Hurd, a noted silversmith and engraver, wickedly immortalized Hudson in a broadside engraving sold in Boston in 1762 that was entitled *H—ds—n's Speech from the Pillory* (Evans 9144).

6. Caucuses of the majority Country party were described pejoratively as “Nocturnal Conventions.”

7. Possibly using this and the preceding paragraph as reference, the *New York Journal*, 4 October, noted that “We learn from Newport, Rhode-Island, that the general assembly of that state, in their late sessions, in consequence of a letter received from Congress, earnestly pressing the state to send on delegates to Congress, had warm debates on this important subject; finally a majority of three negated sending members.” This account was reprinted in the *State Gazette of South Carolina*, 15 November, and *Georgia State Gazette*, 1 December.

8. See William Ellery to the Commissioners of the Treasury, 18 September, note 6 (below). In ancient times, days of pleasures or great festivals were marked by a white stone.



9. This paragraph and the preceding one, with variations, were reprinted in the *New York Journal*, 4 October, and the Middletown, Conn., *Middlesex Gazette*, 8 October.

10. "To stand firm, not to flinch; to endure."

11. Tiverton was represented in the Assembly by Benjamin Howland and Thomas Durfee. The likely choice as "the duck-seller" is Howland, a farmer, who represented Tiverton from 1782 to 1790 and who was a U.S. Senator from 1804 to 1809.

12. Exeter was represented by Joseph Reynolds and Job Wilcox, Jr. Reynolds represented Exeter from 1786 to 1789, while Wilcox did so from 1787 to 1790, 1791. Reynolds was a judge of the Court of Common Pleas for Bristol County, 1776–83, and chief judge, 1787–89.

13. Abel Tanner was one of Hopkinton's two representatives. He represented Hopkinton, 1769–72, 1775, 1779–80, 1782–83, 1786–87, and he was a judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Kings County (later Washington County), 1780–84.

*Rhode Island General Assembly to the President of Congress  
Newport, 15 September 1787<sup>1</sup>*

State of Rhode-Island & Providence Plantations.

In General Assembly September Session AD 1787.

Sir,

Permit the Legislative of this State to address you on a Subject Which has engaged the attention of the confederated Union; the singularity of our not sending forward to the Convention at Philadelphia, Delegates to represent us there, agreeably to a Resolution of Congress passed the 21st. February AD 1787, for the purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation. Our conduct has been reprobated by the illiberal, and many severe and unjust sarcasmes propagated against us, but Sir, when we State to you the reason, and evince the Cause the liberal mind will be convinced that we were actuated by that great principle which hath ever been the Characteristic of this State, the Love of true Constitutional liberty, and the fear we have of making innovations on the Rights and Liberties of the Citizens at Large.

Our conduct during the late trying contest, has shewn forth conspicuous, that it was not from sinister motives but to prevade over the whole. And we presume Sir, that we shall be enabled to Fix the same sentiments now.

Your Hoñ. Body informed us that the Powers invested in Congress for the Regulation of Trade were not sufficient for the purpose of the great national Regulations requisite, we granted you by an Act of our State the whole and sole power of making such Laws as would be effectual for that purpose, Other States not passing similar Laws it had no effect.<sup>2</sup>

An impost was likewise granted but other States in the Union not acceding thereto that measure has proved abortive,<sup>3</sup>—The Requisition

[i.e., Resolution] of the 21st. Feby Last hath not been acceded, too, because, we conceived that as a Legislative Body, we could not appoint Delegates, to do that which only the People at large are intitled to do; by a Law of our State the Delegates in Congress are chosen by the Suffrages of all the Freemen therein and are appointed to represent them in Congress;<sup>4</sup> and for the Legislative body to have appointed Delegates to represent them in Convention, when they cannot appoint Delegates in Congress, (unless upon the Death or other incident[al] matter) must be absurd; as that Delegation in Convention is for the express purpose of altering a Constitution, which the people at large are only capable of appointing the Members.

By the 13th. Article in the Confederation “every State shall abide by the determinations of the United States in Congress assembled, on all questions which by this Confederation are submitted to them. And the Articles of ⟨this⟩ Confederation shall be inviolably observed by every State and the Union shall be perpetual; nor shall any alteration at any time ⟨hereafter⟩ be made in any of them unless such alteration be agreed to in a Congress of the United States and be afterwards confirmed by the Legislatures of every State.”<sup>5</sup>—as the Freemen at large here have the Power of electing Delegates to represent them in Congress, we could not consistantly appoint Delegates in a Convention, which might be the means of dissolving the Congress of the Union and having a Congress without a Confederation.—You will impute it Sir, to our being diffident of power and an apprehension of dissolving a compact, which was framed by the Wisdom of Men who gloried in being instrumental in preserving the Religious and Civil rights of a Multitude of people, and an almost unbounded territory, that said Requisition [i.e., Resolution] hath not been complied with, and fearing when the Compact should once be broken we must all be lost in a Common ruin.

We shall ever esteem it a pleasure to join with our Sister States in being instrumental in what ever may be advantageous to the Union, and to add strength and permanance thereto, upon Constitutional principles.

We are Sir, with every sentiment of respect and Esteem, Your very obedt. Ser̄vts

Signed at the request of the General Assembly  
John Collins Gov

1. RC, PCC, Item 64, State Papers of New Hampshire and of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, 1775–88, pp. 600–603, DNA. This document, addressed “His Excellency the President of Congress,” was endorsed by Secretary Charles Thomson: “Sept Session 1787/Reasons of Rhodeisland &c./for not sending delegates/to Convention/

read, 24 Sept 1787.” Congress also read Governor John Collins’ cover letter of 17 September to the President of Congress (Mfm:R.I.), along with several acts of the legislature respecting “our Federal concerns.” For a list of the letter’s enclosures, see JCC, XXXIII, 528n.

The Assembly’s letter to the President of Congress was printed in the *Newport Mercury* on 8 November.

2. The Rhode Island legislature in March 1786 passed an act in response to the congressional resolution of 30 April 1784, which granted Congress the power to regulate commerce for fifteen years (CDR, 153–54). Several states passed acts that did not fully comply with the resolution so that the grant never went into effect.

3. The reference is to the Impost of 1783 (CDR, 146–48) that was adopted by all the states, but New York adopted with conditions that were unacceptable to Congress so that the impost never went into effect. Rhode Island had been the only state to reject the Impost of 1781 (CDR, 140–41), although Virginia eventually rescinded its adoption and New York repealed its adoption. Nevertheless, it was Rhode Island’s rejection that had doomed the Impost of 1781.

4. In March 1777 the Assembly decided that freemen, voting in their annual town meetings in April, should elect delegates to Congress “in the same manner” as the governor and assistants (see Bartlett, *Records*, VIII, 179).

5. See CDR, 93. With the omission of two words, placed within angle brackets, the text of the first paragraph of Article XIII printed here differs only in punctuation and capitalization from the original.

### *Newport and Providence’s Protest of Rhode Island*

*General Assembly’s Letter to Congress, 17 September 1787*<sup>1</sup>

#### State of Rhode Island & Providence Plantations

In General Assembly September Session AD 1787.

We the Subscribers beg leave to protest against the Report of a Letter to the President of Congress, assigning the reasons for the Legislature of this State’s refusing to send Members to the Convention at Philadelphia for revising the Articles of Confederation &c. For the following Reasons.

1st. For that it has never been thought heretofore by the Legislature of this State, or while it was a Colony, inconsistent with or any Innovation upon the Rights and Liberties of the Citizens of this State to concur with the Sister States or Colonies in appointing Members or Delegates to any Convention proposed for the General Benefit, but with the highest approbation of the good people of this State and while a Colony, the Legislature have at various times agreed to Conventions with the Sister States and Colonies, and found their Interests greatly served thereby.<sup>2</sup> That to the Congress appointed in the begining of the late arduous struggle with Great Britain,<sup>3</sup> the Members sent from this then Colony were appointed with the fullest powers for carrying on a Defensive War with and finally for declaring these States Independant

of Great Britain, and for forming Articles of Confederation, both which Glorious events were received and confirmed by the Legislature of this State with the loudest Acclamations of the people at large.

2dly. That the Powers mentioned in said Letter, to have been invested in Congress, for the regulating Trade were granted by the Legislature of this State, as also finally granting the Impost, which is inconsistent with the Ideas contained in said Letter;<sup>4</sup> That all such powers are not in the Legislature, but in the people at large.

3dly. That by the Articles of Confederation which hath become part of the Constitution of the State it is expressly provided, That when any Alteration is made in the Articles of Confederation it shall be agreed to in a Congress of the United States and be afterwards confirmed by the Legislatures of every State. Which is plainly expressive, that, this Power is in the Legislature only.

4thly. By the Articles of Confederation, the appointment of Delegates in Congress is declared to be by the Legislatures of the several States in such manner as the Legislatures of each State shall direct,<sup>5</sup>—That therefore as the power of appointing Delegates did begin and was continued in the Legislature of this State for several Years, and until by Act of the same Legislature the Election of Delegates to Congress was committed to the people at large;<sup>6</sup> and as the General Assembly still on the Death or Resignation of any of the Delegates of this State, or on the recall of any Delegate or Delegates, do exercise the power of appointing others in their Stead,<sup>7</sup> And do by a Law they have enacted prevent their Delegates from proceeding to Congress until special Order or Direction from the Legislature; so it is certain the Legislature had Constitutionally the power of sending Delegates to Congress,—and to presume they have not Power to send Members to a proposed Convention, recommended by Congress, and under the Invitations of their Sister States, must be inconsistent with those powers which all Legislatures must be presumed to possess for the preservation of the Rights Liberties and Priviledges of the People, Inconsistent with the most common Apprehension; and that a Contrary supposition is most absurd.

5thly. As it would have been our highest Honor and Interest, to have complied with the tender Invitations of our Sister States, and of Congress,—So our Non-compliance hath been our highest Imprudence, And therefore it would have been more Consistant with our Honor and dignity to have lamented our mistake, and decently appologised for our Errors, than to have endeavoured to support them on ill founded reasons and indefensible principles.—For these and other reasons which might have been added had we not been expressly limited to one Hour

for making our protest, We dissent from the Reasons suggested in said Letter.

H[enr]y Marchant	} Members	John Brown	} Members	
Geo: Champlin		for the		Welcome Arnold
John Topham		Town of		Benja. Bourne
Daniel Mason		Newport <sup>8</sup>		Joseph Nightingale
Wm. Tripp				

A true Copy,

Witness Hen[r]y Sherburne D[eput]y Secry.

1. RC, PCC, Item 64, State Papers of New Hampshire and of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, 1775–88, pp. 592–95, DNA. Secretary Charles Thomson endorsed this manuscript: “Protest of members agt reasons/of legislature of Rhodeisland for/not sending delegates to Convention.” This protest does not appear to have been read in Congress.

2. Rhode Island sent delegates to the Albany Congress (1754) and the Stamp Act Congress (1765), to which all colonies were invited. In 1780 and 1781, respectively, the state was represented in the regional conventions held in Hartford and Providence. Rhode Island had appointed a delegate to the Boston Convention (1780), but he did not attend. Rhode Island also appointed commissioners to the Annapolis Convention (1786), who did not arrive before the Convention adjourned.

3. In 1774, 1775, and 1776, Rhode Island’s two delegates to the First and Second Continental Congress were appointed by the state legislature and each time their commissions included instructions. See Staples, 10–11, 21–22, and most especially, 71–72, for these instructions. The instructions for 1776 are described in Newport and Providence Protest.

4. See “Rhode Island General Assembly to the President of Congress,” 15 September, notes 2 and 3 (above).

5. See Article V (CDR, 87).

6. See note 3 (above) and note 4 to “Rhode Island General Assembly to the President of Congress,” 15 September (above).

7. This power was given to the states in Article V of the Articles of Confederation (CDR, 87). The March 1777 act providing for the popular election of delegates kept the power of filling vacancies in the General Assembly (Bartlett, *Records*, VIII, 179).

8. Marchant was a lawyer, Tripp was a tanner, and Champlin, Topham, and Mason were merchants.

9. Brown, Arnold, and Nightingale were merchants, while Bourne was a lawyer. All three merchants signed the 11 May 1787 letter of the Providence merchants and tradesmen to the Constitutional Convention (Mfm:R.I.).

**William Ellery to the Commissioners of the Treasury  
Newport, 18 September 1787 (excerpt)<sup>1</sup>**

The General Assembly of this State which was to have convened at Bristol in August last by adjourment fell through as you may have heard.—

It was specially convoked, and convened here the last week on account of a letter or letters from the President of Congress urging that our Delegates might be immediately sent on to Congress.<sup>2</sup>—

The question was agitated on wednesday last [12 September] whether they should be ordered on now or not, and on being put a majority of eight were against sending now.

On friday [14 September] a letter arrived from Congress repeating, and pressing their former requests.<sup>3</sup>—The question was resumed, and negatived by a majority of three.—

The Antifederal party, as they are called by some, or the Majority as they are commonly called then moved that a Com̄tee might be appointed to draft a letter to Congress assigning reasons for this States not sending Delegates to the General Convention, which was carried, and a letter was accordingly reported and accepted.—

The Minority, that is to say, the Deputies for this town [Newport] and the town of Providence, protested against the letter on account of the supposed futility of the reasons assigned in it.—The letter and protest will I suppose be transmitted by this post. The deputies for the town of Bristol did not attend the Session. If they had attended they would probably have joined in the protest.—After this an act passed requesting The Governor to write a letter to Congress excusing the Assembly for not sending delegates on now, and assuring that Hoñble Body, that delegates should attend on the first monday in November next, when it was imagined the States would be generally represented in Congress.<sup>4</sup>

The Minority moved that agreeably to the resolution of Congress, an act might be passed repealing any laws which might have been passed by this State repugnant to the Treaty with Great Britain,<sup>5</sup> which produced an Act declaring that the Treaty between the United States & His Britannic Majesty was a law of the Land and was in no respect to be receded from, misconstrued or violated.<sup>6</sup> . . .

1. FC, Ellery Letterbook, 1786–1794, RNHi. The three commissioners of the Confederation Board of Treasury were Arthur Lee of Virginia, Walter Livingston of New York, and Samuel Osgood of Massachusetts.

2. See President of Congress Arthur St. Clair to Certain States (Georgia, Maryland, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire), 13 August 1787 (Smith, *Letters*, XXIV, 403–4).

3. This letter has not been found.

4. On 17 September 1787, Governor Collins (Mfm:R.I.) forwarded to Congress a resolution of the Rhode Island legislature declaring that it would send two delegates to Congress for the new federal year beginning on 1 November. It had not sent delegates to Congress earlier “under an Apprehension that the States will not be generally represented until the meeting of Congress for the next Year, and that the more Important matters of the Union will not be acted upon by Congress until that time.” The legislature

told the President of Congress that “it is the desire and intention of this State to do every thing in their power for promoting the great objects of the Confederacy, The General Welfare and happiness of the Whole” (PCC, Item 64, State Papers of New Hampshire and of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, 1775–88, pp. 596–99, DNA).

5. The reference is to a resolution adopted by Congress on 21 March 1787, stating “That all such acts or parts of Acts as may be now existing in any States repugnant to the treaty of Peace ought to be forthwith repealed . . .” (JCC, XXXII, 125). This resolution was transmitted to the states by Secretary Charles Thomson in his circular letter of 13 April (Smith, *Letters*, XXIV, 220, 220n. See also Rhode Island Delegates to Governor John Collins, 24 April, *ibid.*, 255–56.).

6. The September 1787 session of the Rhode Island legislature responded with this enactment: “Be it enacted by this General Assembly, and by the authority thereof it is enacted, that the treaty of peace entered into between the United States of America and His Britannic Majesty, is fully binding upon all of the citizens of this state as a law of the land, and is not in any respect to be receded from, misconstrued or violated” (Bartlett, *Records*, X, 257).

### **Pennsylvania Herald, 22 September 1787<sup>1</sup>**

It is said that the Rhode Island delegates in Congress proceeded to New York, as soon as it was known, with any certainty, that the foederal convention was about breaking up. There is great reason to expect a rapid reformation in the politics of that State.

1. This item was also printed in the Philadelphia *Evening Chronicle* on 22 September. It was reprinted eleven times by 13 October: N.H. (1), Mass. (1), N.Y. (1), Pa. (5), Va. (3).

### **Editors' Note The Publication of the Constitution in Rhode Island c. 27 September 1787–1790**

The Constitutional Convention adjourned on 17 September 1787. Peter Edes, the publisher of the *Newport Herald*, struck a two-page broadside (without his colophon) that was entitled “Proceedings of the Federal Convention.” It included the Constitution, the two 17 September resolutions of the Constitutional Convention, and the 17 September letter of the President of the Convention (George Washington) to the President of Congress. (One of these broadsides was tipped into a bound file of the *Newport Herald* between its issues of 20 and 27 September. This bound volume is located in the Yale University Library.)

On 27 September the Providence *United States Chronicle* printed “*The Proceedings of the Federal Convention*,” and two days later the *Providence Gazette* printed the “PROCEEDINGS of the FEDERAL CONVENTION, held at Philadelphia.” John Carter, the printer of the *Providence Gazette*, also struck a two-page broadside of the Convention’s proceedings (Evans

45182). The *Newport Mercury* reported on 24 September that “The Proceeding of the Federal Convention are so long and came so late, that they could not be inserted in this Paper, but will be in our next.” The *Mercury* printed the proceedings on 8 October.

On 3 November 1787 the Rhode Island legislature adopted a resolution ordering that copies of the Constitution be printed as soon as possible and sent to the town clerks of Rhode Island “to be distributed among the Inhabitants, that the Freemen may have an Opportunity of forming their Sentiments of the proposed Constitution.” (A draft of this resolution had ordered that “One thousand Copies be printed.” See RCS:R.I., 46–47.) The act listed the thirty towns and designated the number of copies earmarked for each town. The total number designated was 1,017. On 10 November John Carter of the *Providence Gazette* submitted a bill for the printing of 1,030 copies of a two-page broadside that included his colophon. The broadside included the Constitution, the two resolutions of the Constitutional Convention, the letter of the President of the Convention to the President of Congress, the 28 September resolution of the Confederation Congress transmitting the Constitution to the states for their ratification, and the Rhode Island legislature’s resolution of 3 November ordering the printing and distribution of the Constitution (Evans 20822).

In 1790 Peter Edes of the *Newport Herald* printed 300 copies of the Constitution in accordance with a resolution of the Rhode Island Convention. The imprint (Evans 22849), which lacks a colophon, consists of the Constitution on the first two pages with the Convention’s form of ratification and amendments on the third page. In June 1790, shortly after the Convention ratified the Constitution, Edes submitted a bill for “paper and printing 300 constitutions of the United States with ratification, Bill of Rights and amendments of this state.” The General Assembly ordered payment of the bill at its September 1790 session. An alternative version of the third page (with only twenty amendments instead of twenty-one) is owned by the American Antiquarian Society and is headed with this handwritten statement: “The Gift of Peter Edes at Newport Rhode Island to Thomas Wallcut 9 Sepr 1791” (Evans 22828).

### **Newport Herald, 27 September 1787<sup>1</sup>**

A correspondent observes, that this is a period of momentous concern,—to be a united nation of importance, or petty anarchies is now the question.—The inefficacy of our present government is fully proved



by the incroachments on our commerce, the decline of national honour, and the confusion pervading *every* State. Thus maturated in knowledge by painful experience we are called on to adopt a system, produced and organized by the deliberations of men whose virtues and abilities will be an immortal honour to America.—Should any state reject this salutary system, unbiassed posterity will consign their names to an infamous immortality,—should it be rejected by the union it will involve in consequences the most fatal—some bold usurpers will establish governments for us pregnant with all the evils of the most abject slavery.

1. Reprinted eleven times by 3 December: Vt. (1), N.H. (3), Mass. (4), N.Y. (1), Pa. (2).

### **Providence United States Chronicle, 27 September 1787<sup>1</sup>**

The United States of America, says a Correspondent, now exhibit to the World a most unusual Spectacle—that of a great and numerous People, calmly and deliberately, in Time of Peace, unawed by Arms, and uninfluenced by Party Faction, appointing their wisest and best Men to form a Constitution of Government, adequate to the great Purposes of the general Confederacy, and most productive of the Prosperity, Felicity, Safety and Welfare of the Whole. It would hardly have been credible in Europe, or in any Part of the old World, that States so different in their Situation, Extent, Habits, and particular Interests, would have so far divested themselves of all Jealousy and Apprehensions of mischievous Consequences, as to have fallen in with a Measure, which Minds less enlarged than those of the Americans in general would have supposed tended to shake to Pieces the former Constitution, and to give Opportunity for Cabal and Faction, to enterprize their own Purposes.—But when it is seen that so far from this being the Case, or that any unjustifiable Measures are intended, that every Freeman in the United States is to be consulted and to give his Voice, by his Representative, on that very Constitution which it is proposed should be adopted, it must raise an exalted Idea of the Patriotism, Liberality of Sentiment, and mutual Confidence which pervade these States, and remove those groundless, anxious Fears with which some may have been impressed, that it is the Good only of a Part of the Community that is intended. At this important Period, when, if ever, it is easy to excite groundless Jealousy and Uneasiness, it is the Duty of *every Man*, and especially of *every Man of Influence*, to think for himself, coolly and deliberately—and not hastily to determine, before he has weighed and

considered every Clause of the proposed Constitution—and the probable Consequences, on the one Hand, of its *Adoption*—on the other, of its *Rejection*. The People ought to be guarded against those who may at any Time endeavour to stir them up, under Pretence of Patriotism, to any Measures inconsistent with that peaceable Demeanour, prudent Conduct, and united Firmness so necessary for their Well-Being and Happiness.—Let them conduct all their Affairs peaceably—prudently—firmly—jointly—considering the United States as one great Family, whose general Good being promoted, will augment and secure the Safety, Freedom and Happiness of every individual Member, and it is certain that the Result will be—“*a Spirit of Amity, and of that mutual Deference and Concession which the Peculiarity of our political Situation renders indispensable.*”<sup>2</sup>

1. Reprinted: *Boston Gazette*, 1 October; *New York Morning Post*, 6 October; *Hartford American Mercury*, 8 October.

2. Quoted from the President of the Constitutional Convention (George Washington) to the President of Congress, 17 September (RCS:R.I., 322–23).

**Henry Channing to David Daggett  
Lyme, Conn., 28 September 1787 (excerpt)<sup>1</sup>**

My dear Friend

... A word on Politics—What say you to the result of Convention? Mr. Edwards,<sup>2</sup> I perceive is enthusiastic in its favour & sanguine in his expectations of its adoption.—He tells me your good Friend Chauncey<sup>3</sup> is as he was.—he is representative—I cannot think that he is really the representative of the influential—The representation in general is good & I hope that we shall yet see the reestablishment of government—Rhode-Island will reject the proposed constitution for the D—I hath great wrath knowing that his time is short. They are a truly wretched people & have no prospect of speedy relief, unless there be a union of the other States. In this case I should hope to see them *governed*.—You know that I have always been a Friend to government.—The Paper money gentry considered me as greatly reprehensible because when at Newport I publicly prayed for & pitied them. I don’t know that they considered themselves political apostates for whom prayer ought not to be made.—I pity the minority their situation is truly unhappy—they keep up their spirits & lash with satire—The Herald<sup>4</sup> you doubtless read—The majority call it the scourge—It indeed makes them bleed and groan—I expect to visit Newport, the next week. I intend to go as far in boldness of speech as will consist with the dignity of the Pulpit

& the spirit of the Gospel, which is undaunted as well as meek.—  
Adieu—Write me soon and assure yourself & your better self of the  
best wishes of. . . .

1. RC, Daggett Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University. The letter was addressed to Daggett in New Haven and “Obliged by Pierpoint Edwards, Esqr.” (See note 2, below, for Edwards.) Channing (1760–1840), a native of Newport and a graduate of Yale College (1781), was a Congregational minister in New London, Conn. He was in Lyme, Conn., courting Sally McCurdy, who became his wife in October. Daggett (1764–1851), a New Haven lawyer, represented that town in the Connecticut House of Representatives, 1791–97 (speaker, 1794–97), 1805–06. He was a member of the state Council, 1797–1805, 1809–13, and a U.S. Senator, 1813–19. He delivered the Fourth of July sermon in New Haven in 1787 (CC:47–B).

2. Pierpont Edwards (1750–1826), a New Haven lawyer, was a member of the Connecticut House of Representatives and the state Convention, where he voted to ratify the Constitution on 9 January 1788. His father was the Reverend Jonathan Edwards.

3. Charles Chauncey (1747–1823), a lawyer, represented New Haven in the Connecticut House of Representatives.

4. *Newport Herald*.

### Philadelphia Freeman’s Journal, 3 October 1787<sup>1</sup>

The legislature of Rhode Island, after receiving several letters from Congress on the subject of the representation of their state in the national assembly,<sup>2</sup> have at length transmitted to them a curious apologetical letter, assigning reasons for not sending delegates to the late convention in this city, a protest of the minority,<sup>3</sup> and a resolution requesting the governor, by letter, to inform the president of Congress that two delegates were directed to attend their body on the first Monday in November next.<sup>4</sup> This intended representation, however, appears to be altogether farcical, as every one knows that upon the rising of the convention, every state was actually represented in Congress, except Rhode Island.—It is observable too, that the necessary measures have not been taken to send on delegates to Congress—*no money has been directed to be furnished for the delegates who are to attend Congress on the first Monday in November*. In short, the real reason why Rhode Island delegates have not been sent to the convention, or to Congress, seems to be, that the majority by opposing the recommendations of Congress *may*, with a better face also oppose the Congressional recommendation in consequence of the report of the convention.

1. Reprinted: Charleston *Columbian Herald*, 15 October; *Connecticut Gazette*, 19 October.

2. In particular, see the 13 August 1787 letter from President of Congress Arthur St. Clair to Certain States (Smith, *Letters*, XXIV, 403–4. See also Charles Thomson to Certain States, 7 July 1787, *ibid.*, 349–50.).

3. For the “apologetical letter” and the “protest of the minority,” see RCS:R.I., 19–23.

4. See William Ellery to the Commissioners of the Treasury, 18 September, note 4 (above).

### **Newport Herald, 4 October 1787<sup>1</sup>**

A Correspondent informs that we are in a *falling* state.—That our credit is *falling*—our commerce is *falling*, and both of them have almost *fallen* through:—That our General Assembly not long since *fell* through<sup>2</sup>—our Superior Court lately *fell* through,<sup>3</sup> and that if they, whose duty it is to uphold and support the State, don’t hold by the other States, even the State itself will *fall* through, and great will be the *fall* thereof.—It will *fall* to rise no more.

1. Reprinted eight times by 31 October: N.H. (2), Mass. (3), N.Y. (2), Md. (1).

2. A reference to the failure of the August session of the legislature to obtain a quorum.

3. A reference to the refusal of the legislature to reappoint four of the five judges in the *Trevett v. Weeden* case.

### **Providence United States Chronicle, 4 October 1787**

One happy Effect of adopting the proposed Form of Continental Government (says a Correspondent) will be the entire Destruction of the aristocratic Influence in the Seaport Towns;<sup>1</sup> and a sure Preventative against Cabals being formed by those in the different States, who have too long supposed that *they* and *their Connections* were the only proper Persons to fill the Seats of Government—to the Exclusion of the honest and independent Farmers.

1. In Rhode Island the three major seaport towns were Newport, Providence, and Bristol, but there were several minor ports of significance, e.g., Pawtuxet, East Greenwich, Wickford, Warren, Tiverton, and Westerly.

### **Albany Gazette, 4 October 1787**

The Legislature of Rhode-Island have, at their late session, passed an act declaring the treaty of peace the law of the land, within their state; and in their other proceedings, shewn a more federal disposition, than was to have been expected from that Hon. Body.—The loss of Mr. Chousling has very sensibly affected the ANTIFEDERALISTS and KNOW YE’S in that state.

### **Benjamin Talbot, Jr., to Silas Talbot Providence, 7 October 1787 (excerpt)<sup>1</sup>**

... I have Nothing new to acquaint you of in our parts. we are all here in Confusion, Quarreling, by words with each other, Our present

Government makes every well minded person Look sad at what they fear will be the consequence hereafter, If not some blessed way opens that we may be more united, I Don't no [i.e., know] what will be the event in our State No Law, No Justice here O' for the New Federal Government might take place but I find the people very much avers'd to it (in a word every thing that is right[]). Trade here is very dull, the great scarcity of circulating Cash renders it very difficult to carry on trade to advantage, I think Sometimes Seeking Some other place better, Then again I think I can't leave my dada In his Infirm'd State And I am abridged to content myself here. . . .

1. RC, Silas Talbot Collection (Coll. 18), G. W. Blunt White Library, Mystic Seaport Museum, Inc., Mystic, Conn. Benjamin Talbot, Jr., probably a kinsman of Silas Talbot, was originally from Dighton, Bristol County, Mass. In a portion of his letter not printed here, he said he had "Enter'd into Partnership in Trade" with his father. They operated a shop in Providence. Silas Talbot (1751–1813), a native of Dighton, Mass., a former resident of Providence, and a very distinguished officer in the Continental Army and Navy, moved to New York in 1786 and settled as a farmer in Montgomery County. He was a member of the New York Assembly, 1792–93, and the U.S. House of Representatives, 1793–94. He was captain of the frigate U.S.S. *Constitution* during the Quasi-War with France, 1799–1801.

### Newport Herald, 11 October 1787

A Correspondent observes, that "If the form of government prescribed by the convention be rejected, it is by no means probable, the States can ever convene another body of men on the same business; & even, if it were possible, another convention, in all respects equal to the present, cannot be found.

"Although I sincerely believe, the body of the citizens of the United States honestly wish to adopt, and further such measures as appear to them well calculated to promote the general good, yet, if by any means, or for any reason they should be induced to reject the proposals of the convention, there are in this country, like all others, ambitious, aspiring, & intriguing men, who stand ready to avail themselves of the advantages which the confusion, naturally & unavoidably resulting from such a rejection would put in their hands.—The variety of evils that would necessarily be produced by such an event, it were in vain to attempt to describe: Imagination can better suggest them.

"The reasons therefore, for accepting the form of government, proposed by the convention, independent of its merit, are many and great; so great, that if there be reasons sufficient to reject it, they must be weighty indeed."

**Editors' Note**  
**"Crito," Providence Gazette, 13 October 1787**

On this day was printed the second installment of a two-part essay written by Samuel Hopkins, a leading advocate for the prohibition of the slave trade and the abolition of slavery. See "Rhode Island General Assembly Prohibits the Slave Trade," 31 October 1787 (below).

**William Ellery to Ebenezer Hazard**  
**Newport, 16 October 1787 (excerpt)<sup>1</sup>**

... I hope the affairs of the United States will be soon on a more respectable footing than they are at present.—The Majority in this State wear long faces.—The prospect of an abridgment of their power to do mischief, is extremely painful to them.—Massachusetts from the best information I can obtain will assent to the Conventional Constitution, and New-Hampshire will follow Massachusetts.—Connecticut will embrace it.—The State of Rhode-Island &c will stand out as long as it can; but if nine States agree to it they will be compelled to come in.—The conduct of Newyork will have great influence upon this State.—How that State will behave on this occasion you know much better than I do, and also what probably will be the determination of the Southern States.—Our Genl. Assembly will meet the last monday in this month [29 October].—I wish the Deputies of this town might be able then to tell the Majority that they have good authority to say that nine States will assent to the new Constitution.—

Any information you may be pleased to give me on this important subject will add to the obligation with which I am Sir Your very hble servt.

1. FC, Ellery Letterbook, 1786–1794, RNHi. Hazard (1744–1817), a 1762 graduate of the College of New Jersey (Princeton), was Confederation postmaster general, 1782–89.

**Virginia Journal, 18 October 1787<sup>1</sup>**

Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman in Providence, Rhode-Island, to his Correspondent in this Town [Alexandria], dated Sept. 15, 1787.

"We have had a Shadow of an Assembly at Newport, which has resolved, by a Majority of 12, to send no Members to Congress nor to accept any Constitution the Convention may offer.

"Ought not the whole Continent to be much alarmed and to doubt their Opinion of the salutary Effects of the new Constitution, when they see it is likely to be rejected by an Administration that has given such unprecedented Proofs of political Integrity and Virtue, since their

having come to the Management of State Affairs? Or rather ought they not to wish the Time not far distant when the Chief Magistrate of that State should be obliged to quit his native Soil with as little Property as he was obliged to leave New-York in the Year 1776, with his Saddle-Bags over his Shoulders, attended by his present Adherents, who in Fact are a Disgrace to human Nature?"

1. Reprinted in full in the *Pennsylvania Packet*, 25 October, and the Charleston *Columbian Herald*, 12 November, while the first paragraph appeared in the *Pennsylvania Herald*, 27 October; *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, 7 November; *Trenton Mercury*, 4 December; October issue of the Philadelphia *Columbian Magazine*; and December issue of the Philadelphia *American Museum*.

**Editors' Note**  
**The Rhode Island Reprinting of James Wilson's**  
**State House Speech, 18–27 October 1787**

On 6 October 1787 Federalist James Wilson, a former Pennsylvania delegate to the Constitutional Convention and one of its most prolific and influential debaters, spoke before “a very great concourse of people” at a public meeting in the Pennsylvania State House Yard called to nominate candidates to represent the city of Philadelphia in the Assembly. In this speech, first printed on 9 October in an extra issue of the *Pennsylvania Herald*, Wilson advanced arguments defending and explaining the Constitution that would be reiterated by Federalist writers throughout America.

The most controversial part of his speech concerned his concept of reserved powers, which he used to answer the criticism that the Constitution lacked a bill of rights. Wilson declared that “in delegating foederal powers . . . the congressional authority is to be collected, not from tacit implication, but from the positive grant expressed in the instrument of union. Hence it is evident, that . . . every thing which is not given, is reserved.” Wilson used this idea to demonstrate that a bill of rights was unnecessary. As an example, he declared that Congress could not violate the freedom of the press because it had not been given power over the press. The day before Wilson made his speech, the Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer* published “Centinel” I (CC:133), the first in a series of eighteen Antifederalist essays by Samuel Bryan that would be widely reprinted throughout America. In particular, “Centinel” criticized the lack of a bill of rights in the Constitution. Although Wilson did not explicitly refer to “Centinel,” there is no question that the speech was, in part, a reply to “Centinel.” (See “The Rhode Island Reprinting of the Centinel Essays,” 6 December 1787–2 February 1788, below.)

The *Pennsylvania Herald* described James Wilson's speech as "the first authoritative explanation of the principles" of the Constitution. By 29 December the speech was reprinted in thirty-four newspapers in twenty-seven towns, in the October issue of the nationally circulated monthly *Philadelphia American Museum*, in a broadside, and in a pamphlet anthology.

In Rhode Island, the speech appeared in the *Newport Herald*, 18 October; *United States Chronicle*, 25 October; and *Providence Gazette*, 27 October. On 15 November, the *United States Chronicle* reprinted "A Republican" I, a reply to Wilson's speech that first appeared in the Antifederalist *New York Journal* on 25 October (CC:196). The *Chronicle* prefaced this reprint with a note to the printer from "A Friend to the Confederation," who wrote from Cranston on 9 November that "As you published, in your Chronicle of the 25th of October last, a speech of Dr. Wilson's, of Philadelphia, on the Subject of the proposed *national Constitution*, your known Impartiality will not allow you to omit the Publication of the enclosed Answer thereto,—especially when you are informed that a Number of your Readers wish to see it in your Paper."

On 8 December, the *Providence Gazette*, at the request of "Impartialis," reprinted "Cincinnatus" I and II, *New York Journal*, 1 and 8 November (CC:222, 241), that were responses to Wilson's speech written by Virginia Antifederalist Arthur Lee. "Cincinnatus" criticized Wilson's statement that a bill of rights was unnecessary and asserted that the freedom of the press was especially in danger as was the lack of protection for juries in civil cases.

The *Providence Gazette* prefaced its reprints of "Cincinnatus" with the following statement by "Impartialis," dated Providence, 4 December, and addressed to the *Gazette's* printer: "As on all subjects interesting to the public your press has always been perfectly free for writers of every class, I request you to republish, from the New-York Journal, two essays, under the signature of CINCINNATUS, No 1 and 2.—The proposed new Constitution was confessedly sent abroad for *examination*, and every attempt to obstruct *free enquiry* is a sure indication of a *little mind*, as well as a *bad cause*. 'FAIR PLAY IS A JEWEL.'—shame then on those men of narrow souls—those peddling politicians—those little aspiring despots and office-hunters—who by their illiberal censure would aim to influence the press, that sure and best preservative of the rights of free-men."

For the text of James Wilson's speech, its circulation, and the commentaries upon it, see CC:134.



**Editors' Note****The Rhode Island Reprinting of the Address of the Sixteen Seceding Pennsylvania Assemblymen, 20–25 October 1787**

The Pennsylvania Assembly received the new Constitution on 18 September, the day after the Constitutional Convention adjourned. Scheduled to adjourn *sine die* on 29 September, the Assembly had to decide whether or not to remain in session until the Confederation Congress, meeting in New York City, considered the Constitution. Federalists, in control of the Assembly, wanted to call a state convention by 29 September, while Antifederalists wanted an official congressional transmittal of the Constitution, even if that meant waiting until a new Assembly was elected before calling a state convention.

On Friday morning, 28 September, the Assembly adopted a resolution calling a convention, but adjourned to 4:00 P.M. before adopting provisions for the election of delegates and the time and place of the convention's meeting. When the Assembly reconvened, it lacked the necessary two-thirds quorum because nineteen delegates, mostly Antifederalists, had absented themselves. Whereupon, the Assembly adjourned to 9:30 the next morning.

Around 7:00 A.M. on the 29th, an assemblyman received an unofficial copy of Congress' resolution of 28 September transmitting the Constitution to the states for their consideration. The Assembly reconvened at 9:30 A.M. and read the congressional resolution even though it lacked a quorum. It ordered two of its officers to "require" the return of the absent members. Aided by a mob, the officers returned two members so that a quorum was obtained. The Assembly adopted the remaining resolutions providing for a convention and adjourned *sine die*.

Sixteen of the nineteen seceding assemblymen signed an address, dated 29 September, giving their version of the events of 28–29 September and listing their objections to the Constitution. The author(s) of the address have not been identified.

Eleazer Oswald, the printer of the Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, printed the address as a broadside on 2 October under the title *An Address of the Subscribers Members of the late House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to their Constituents* (Evans 45026). Oswald also printed the Address in the *Gazetteer* on 3 October and by 8 November the Address was reprinted in twenty-six newspapers, in a German-language broadside, and in the nationally circulated Philadelphia *American Museum*.

In Rhode Island, the Address was reprinted in the *Providence Gazette* on 20 October and the *United States Chronicle* on 25 October. Contributors to Rhode Island newspapers were largely silent about the Address, although some Rhode Island newspapers reprinted out-of-state responses to the Address. On 1 November the *United States Chronicle* published the widely reprinted reply of six assemblymen to the Address that first appeared in the *Pennsylvania Packet* on 8 October (RCS:Pa., 117–20). Two of the six were George Clymer and Thomas FitzSimons, two of Pennsylvania’s eight signers of the Constitution.

On 1 November the *United States Chronicle* also reprinted an excerpt from “Foederal Constitution,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 10 October (CC:150), a scathing and lengthy refutation of the Address. “Foederal Constitution” set the tone of his essay at the beginning when he stated “The first remark that occurs is, that the paper [the Address] was neither written by any *one* of them, nor signed by *all* of them. They are too illiterate to compose such an Address, and it can be proved that several of the persons whose names are subscribed to it left the city on Saturday, before there was time to collect the materials of the address, or to receive it from the *person* [George Bryan?] who is well known to have written it.” On 25 October and 1 and 8 November the *Newport Herald* reprinted excerpts from “Foederal Constitution,” and on 3 November the *Providence Gazette* reprinted a single excerpt.

On 1 November, the *Newport Herald* reprinted a lengthy refutation of the Address by “One of the People,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 17 October (RCS:Pa., 186–92). “One of the People” sought to “repel the poison which the late dissenters . . . in their insidious and inflammatory address, have endeavoured to infect them with.” In the same issue the *Herald* also reprinted this humorous item: “We hear that a farmer in the neighbourhood of Philadelphia, who had exactly *sixteen sheep*, sold one of them to a butcher last week, and gave as a reason for it, that he did not wish to have any thing on his plantation, that would remind him of the *sixteen* addressing Assemblymen, that refused to concur in calling a Convention.” (Originally printed in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 10 October [CC:Vol. 1, p. 584].)

On 21 November the *Pennsylvania Gazette* reprinted an extract of a 7 November Rhode Island letter, which stated that “Every *conscientious* and *honest* man in our devoted republic is employed in contemplating with admiration, and devoutly wishing for the *speedy* adoption of the NEW CONSTITUTION, tho’ their fears are occasionally on the alarm from the ill-founded suggestions of a G-r-y [Elbridge Gerry], and the more sly insinuations of *your* SIXTEEN seceding members; performances too well adopted to blow up the flame of disunion, and to imbitter the

minds of the people against all *good and virtuous government*” (below). Although James Wilson did not mention the Address explicitly in his 6 October speech, his speech was partly a response to it. (See “The Rhode Island Reprinting of James Wilson’s State House Speech,” 18–27 October, immediately above.)

For the text of the Address of the Seceding Pennsylvania Assemblymen, its circulation, and the commentaries upon it, see CC:125 A–B.

**Samuel Hopkins to Moses Brown**  
**Newport, 22 October 1787<sup>1</sup>**

My kind friend,

I thank you for your two letters of the 9th and 15th Inst. and for the news papers you have sent me. I have received those which contain the last part of Crito.<sup>2</sup> Those containing the first part, which you say you ordered to be forwarded to me, have not yet come to hand. Perhaps they have not been sent. Mr. Foster<sup>3</sup> has undertaken to get the transcript you sent me inserted in the *Herald*. I did not receive it soon enough to be inserted last week. I have been hoping for Ramsey’s treatise,<sup>4</sup> and am sorry to inform you, I have not yet received it. Hope it will come safe.

I am hurt by the doings of the convention respecting the *Slave Trade*.<sup>5</sup> It is as you suppose. They have carefully secured the practice of it in these States for 20 years, and prevented any Asylum for slaves during that term, unless every individual State, should suppress this trade. They have taken it out of the hands of Congress. We cannot determine that the major part of the delegates were pleased with this. Some of the southern delegates no doubt, insisted upon it that the introduction of slaves should be secured, and obstinately refused to consent to any constitution, which did not secure it. The others therefore consented, rather than have no constitution, or one in which the delegates should not be unanimous. I fear this is an *Achan*,<sup>6</sup> which will bring a curse, so that we cannot prosper. At the same time it appears to me that if this constitution be not adopted by the States, as it now stands, we shall have none, and nothing but anarchy and confusion can be expected.— I must leave it with the Supreme Ruler of the universe, who will do right, and knows what to do with these States, to answer his own infinitely wise purposes; and will vindicate the oppressed, and break the arm of the oppressor in his own way and time; and cause the wrath of man to praise Him.

It has been objected by some of the ministers against preferring a memorial to the General Assembly respecting the Slave trade; That the

present ruling part in the Assembly, have appeared to be so destitute of all principles of justice, or regard to it; and have acted such an iniquitous part, that there is an impropriety in applying to *them* for justice; especially for the ministers of the Gospel to do it, whom they hold in the highest contempt, and would embrace any opportunity to pour contempt upon them, which we should give them by laying such a petition before them. This prevents any thing of that kind being done at present.<sup>7</sup>

I am, with respect and esteem, Your obliged friend

1. RC, Moses Brown Papers, RHi. Endorsed: "Answd the 23d, 11th Mo. 87." Hopkins used a diagonal line to represent the word "the." The editors have replaced these diagonals with the word. Hopkins (1721–1803), a native of Connecticut and a graduate of Yale College (1741), was pastor of the First Congregational Church in Newport from 1770 until his death except for a few years during the Revolution when the British occupied Newport. Hopkins began his opposition to slavery and the slave trade before the Revolution, and his efforts intensified after the war as he sought to unite the New England clergy against the trade. He formed alliances with Moses Brown and the Reverend Levi Hart of Preston, Conn., both antislavery leaders in New England.

2. The second or "last part" of "Crito," which was written by Hopkins, was printed in the *Providence Gazette* on 13 October. The first part appeared in the *Gazette* on 6 October. For more about "Crito," see Editors' Note "Rhode Island General Assembly Prohibits the Slave Trade," 31 October (below).

3. Perhaps Theodore Foster.

4. Probably James Ramsay's *Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies*, which was published in 1784. Ramsay (1733–1789), an Anglican minister in Kent County, England, had been a clergyman in the British West Indies.

5. For some of Hopkins' comments on the slave trade, see Editors' Note "Rhode Island General Assembly Prohibits the Slave Trade," 31 October (below).

6. Achan's actions brought the wrath of God upon the people of Israel (Joshua 7).

7. See Editors' Note "Rhode Island General Assembly Prohibits the Slave Trade," 31 October (below).

### Theodore Foster to Dwight Foster

Providence, 23 October 1787 (excerpts)<sup>1</sup>

My Dear Brother,

. . . I wish to Know Your Sentiments of the Proposed New Constitution and what is said of it in your Quarter of the Country among the *Chaisites* [i.e., Shaysites].—It is a Matter interesting to us all That a Good General Government should be established—No person acquainted with History & Mankind can Suppose these States can exist any considerable length of Time without the most horrid Convulsions unless a General Government takes place, or to speak more properly if the present Confederacy is abolished and no other is adopted in Leiu of it. . . .

I am as always your sincerely Affectionate Brother and Friend

1. RC, Foster Family Papers, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass. Address: "To Dwight Foster Esqr./Brookfield." Endorsed: "Br. Theodore Foster Esqr./Letter Recd. Ocr./25th 1787." Dwight Foster (1757–1823), a 1774 graduate of Rhode Island College (Brown University) and a lawyer, represented Brookfield in the Massachusetts House of Representatives, 1791–92. He was a U.S. Representative, 1793–1800, and a U.S. Senator, 1800–1803. Like his brother, Dwight supported the Constitution (RCS:Mass., 837, 941–43).

### Newport Herald, 25 October 1787<sup>1</sup>

America, destined by nature to be the carriers of her own produce, yet tamely suffers this valuable branch of trade to be monopolized by foreigners.—In the harbour of New-York there are now sixty ships, of which fifty-five are British. The produce of South-Carolina was shipped in 170 ships, of which 150 were British: The other Southern States freight their produce in the same proportion. In addition to the loss of being carriers of our own produce, we suffer greatly by the free importation of the gewgaws of Europe and many articles of produce. Our cheese and barley which formerly realized a handsome income to the farmer, are now hawked about at an under price for a market. Surely there is not an American who regards the interest of his country but must see the immediate necessity of an *efficient federal government*; without it the Northern States will soon be depopulated and dwindle into poverty, while the Southern ones will become silk worms to toil and labour for Europe.

*Heaven* (says a Correspondent) seems preparing America for greatness and importance, by gradations that no nation in the world were ever blessed with. When her rights were infringed by an ungrateful mother, it diffused a spirit of liberty and virtue. When foreign mercenaries, aided by a parent's sword, threatened havock and desolation, numerous armies, from hidden sources, were brought into existence and led on to victory and success. When the avarice of foreign powers thwarted the natural system of commerce, and internal corruptions enervated the principles of government, and brought us to the alarming crisis of pusillanimously expecting some bold usurper to assume the reigns and sport with the invaluable rights of men, the goodness of our GOD was truly apparent in having influenced the people to constitute a convention to remedy these disorders, and in leading them on to organize a government upon the lasting basis of liberty and order. This is the seed time of union—the State that should be now unfederal will plunge herself into merited disgrace, if not annihilation.

1. The first paragraph was reprinted eleven times by 29 December: N.H. (1), Mass. (1), Conn. (3), Pa. (2), Md. (1), Va. (1), S.C. (1), Ga. (1). The second paragraph was

reprinted thirteen times by 28 November: N.H. (2), Mass. (2), Conn. (3), N.J. (1), Pa. (4), Va. (1). Six newspapers reprinted both paragraphs: N.H. (1), Mass. (1), Conn. (2), Pa. (2).

### **Newport Herald, 25 October 1787<sup>1</sup>**

It is presumed that those States who have heretofore granted powers to Congress *for regulating trade*<sup>2</sup> cannot disapprove of the *New Constitution*; for the grant to Congress implied that they were vested with full powers to enact all laws relative thereto, to be adjudged and executed by officers of their appointment; if they were not vested with such powers, the grant was a mere nullity, as the local policy of individual States would render their regulations abortive.

The Constitution therefore defines those powers which in the grants for regulating trade were indefinite; thereby it secures and perpetuates the liberty of the people, and becomes the Magna Charta of the Union to check any encroachments of our rights.

1. Both paragraphs were reprinted in the *New Hampshire Mercury*, 1 November, while only the first paragraph appeared in the *Pennsylvania Herald*, 14 November, and the *Pennsylvania Packet*, 17 November.

2. On 30 April 1784 the Confederation Congress adopted resolutions granting Congress the power to regulate commerce for a term of fifteen years. The resolutions were adopted and sent to the states for their approval (CDR, 153–54). In 1785 Congress considered an amendment to the Articles of Confederation granting Congress permanent power to regulate commerce, but the opposition to it was so great that it was never sent to the states (CDR, 154–56).

### **Editors' Note**

#### **The Rhode Island Reprinting of Governor John Hancock's Speech to the Massachusetts General Court, 25–27 October 1787**

On 18 October 1787 Governor John Hancock addressed a joint session of the Massachusetts General Court and turned over to it several papers, including the Confederation Congress' official four-page broadside of the Constitution and the congressional resolution of 28 September recommending that the states call conventions to consider the Constitution (CC:95). Hancock's speech covered a number of matters. He praised the Constitutional Convention and acknowledged the importance of the Constitution.

Governor Hancock told the Legislature that "It not being within the duties of my office to decide upon this momentous affair, I shall only say, that the characters of the gentlemen who have compiled this system, are so truly respectable, and the object of their deliberations so vastly important, that I conceive every mark of attention will be paid to the report. Their unanimity in deciding those questions wherein the

general prosperity of the nation is so deeply involved, and the complicated rights of each separate state are so intimately concerned, is very remarkable; and I persuade myself that the delegates of this state when assembled in convention, will be able to discern that, which will tend to the future happiness and security of all the people in this extensive country.” On 25 October the legislature adopted resolutions calling a state convention.

Hancock’s speech was widely reprinted. In neighboring Rhode Island, the entire speech was reprinted in the *United States Chronicle*, 25 October, and the *Providence Gazette*, 27 October, while the paragraph on the Constitution was printed in the *Newport Herald* on 25 October. The entire speech, or at least the paragraph on the Constitution, might also have been reprinted in a no longer extant issue of the *Newport Mercury*.

For the text of the entire paragraph on the Constitution in Governor Hancock’s speech, which was first printed in the *Massachusetts Gazette* on 19 October, and for the circulation of and commentaries on the speech, see CC:177. See also “Massachusetts Calls a State Convention,” 18–25 October 1787, in RCS:Mass., 124–48.

### **Henry Marchant to Levi Hart**

**Newport, 30 October 1787 (excerpt)<sup>1</sup>**

. . . Our Assembly sits this Week at South Kingstown—I mean to go over this Afternoon with the young Gentlemen—What will be the Conduct of Our Assembly I know not.—But have not any exalted Hopes from Them—But from the Union at large I think we may flatter Ourselves That Heaven hath not deserted Us, but will bring good out of Evil, Order out of Confusion,—And give Strength & Energy to Our Weakness—May His Blessing ever rest upon this Land!—And may we be a grateful People!—

I am Dear Sir, with Sentiments of pure Esteem Your obliged Friend

1. RC, Dreer Collection, Old Congress, PHi. The letter was addressed to the Reverend Levi Hart in Preston, Conn., and was carried to him by his son William who was in Newport visiting Marchant. Hart (1738–1808) was pastor of the Second or North Congregational Parish in Preston. In 1775 he published an attack on the slave trade entitled *Liberty Described and Recommended* . . . (Evans 14100). Hart refused election to the Connecticut Convention even though he supported the Constitution. On 12 January 1788 he notified Marchant that Connecticut had ratified the Constitution on 9 January. (See RCS:Conn., 567.)

### **James Manning to Isaac Backus**

**Providence, 31 October 1787 (excerpts)<sup>1</sup>**

Lordsdays last I returned from New York and have had a most agreeable tour—We had a very agreeable Association, as you will learn by

the minutes, which I herewith inclose you.<sup>2</sup> . . . It is my request & that of other friends that the Minutes should be read publicly in all the Congregations, not only that the people at large may be acquainted with this design; but that by the notice taken of the new form of the federal Governmt., recommended by the Convention, our friends in New England may see the remarkable Unanimity of our western Brethren in the Adoption of it—It is the general opinion wt: our friends westrd. that the Sword will soon be again Stained with Civil blood, if it is not adopted—Probably your interest may place one, at least in the Convention who may be for it. . . .

1. RC, Backus Papers, Andover Newton Theological School, Newton Centre, Mass. Manning (1738–1791) was the first president of Rhode Island College (Brown University) and was pastor of the First Baptist Church in Providence. He was moderator of the Philadelphia Association of Baptist Churches that met in New York City from 2 to 5 October and adopted a circular letter endorsing the Constitution. Backus (1724–1806) was pastor of the First Baptist Church of Middleborough, Mass., 1756–1806, and a trustee of Rhode Island College, 1765–99. As a member of the Massachusetts Convention, he voted to ratify the Constitution in February 1788.

2. The Association's circular letter endorsing the Constitution and the minutes of its New York City meeting were printed for distribution to Baptist congregations (Evans 20218). For a summary of the meeting's proceedings and for some of the reactions to it, see CC:156 A–B.

### **The Rhode Island General Assembly Considers the Report of the Constitutional Convention, 31 October–3 November 1787**

On 17 September 1787 the Constitutional Convention sent its report to Congress. The report consisted of the Constitution, two resolutions, and the letter of the President of the Convention (George Washington) to the President of Congress. One of the resolutions laid the Constitution before Congress, which was to send the Constitution to the states where conventions, chosen by the people, would assent to and ratify the Constitution (Appendix II, below).

Congress received and read the Constitution on 20 September and heatedly debated it on 26 and 27 September. Critics of the Constitution wanted it sent to the states with a statement that the Constitutional Convention had violated Article XIII of the Articles of Confederation (CDR, 93) and the congressional resolution of 21 February 1787 calling the Convention. Supporters of the Constitution wanted Congress to approve the Constitution. On 28 September, Congress reached a compromise. All opposition to the Constitution was removed from the journal and the Constitution was transmitted to the states without approbation but with a recommendation that the states call conventions.

The Rhode Island General Assembly met in South Kingstown on 29 October. On Wednesday, 31 October, the House of Deputies obtained a quorum and appointed a committee of three (George Champlin, Gideon Arnold, and Daniel Mason) to report upon the public letters previously submitted by Governor John Collins. Among these was Congress' letter of 28 September enclosing the



report of the Constitutional Convention. On Saturday, 3 November, the committee's report was called for and the documents were read. Henry Marchant, a leader of the minority Mercantile party and a Newport deputy, then moved that the Convention's report be printed and sent to the towns with a recommendation that they appoint delegates to a convention that would make a determination on the Constitution.

The Assembly debated and then rejected Marchant's motion by "a great majority." The majority Country party proposed a substitute motion that was adopted. The motion ordered that a thousand copies of the report of the Constitutional Convention be printed and distributed to the towns "as soon as may be" so that "the Freemen may have an opportunity of forming their Sentiments" on the Constitution. (More than a thousand copies were actually printed and distributed.) For more on the printing of the two-page broadside of the Convention's report, see "The Publication of the Constitution in Rhode Island," c. 27 September 1787–1790 (above).

The last document in this grouping is the response of the East Greenwich town meeting upon receiving its copies.

*House of Deputies Proceedings, Wednesday, 31 October 1787 (excerpt)*<sup>1</sup>

. . . Messr Champlin Arnold, & Mason are appointed a Comt. to Report upon the Public Ltes now lef upon the board. . . .

1. MS, House of Deputies Journal, R-Ar.

*Newspaper Report of House of Deputies Proceedings  
31 October–3 November 1787 (excerpt)*<sup>1</sup>

Proceedings of Government.

On Wednesday the 31st of October both Houses of Assembly were formed, when the Members of the Lower House for this last half year took their seats and re-elected their former Speaker and Clerk.<sup>2</sup>—No alterations of consequence has been made in the new election; the same principles which has for almost two years distracted our State, still forms the ruling characteristics of the majority.

A Bill for *prohibiting the slave trade* presented by the society of Friends, was the first business which engaged the attention of the House.—A motion was made to postpone the consideration of it to the next session, as the Bill was new and of great importance; but this motion was overruled, and the Bill passed by a very large majority.<sup>3</sup>—To the astonishment of the public, the leading *paper money members* stood forth in support of the Bill, reprobating the trade not only as inhuman, but as *unjust* and against the *principles of morality and religion*.<sup>4</sup> It was a pleasing presage to see the leading characters in a legislature advocating *justice, morality and religion*, who for eighteen months past had been the *authors*

and *patrons* of *iniquitous tender laws*, whereby the *widow*, the *orphan*, and the *helpless*, have been stript of their all: how far this happy prospect of reformation succeeded will appear by the subsequent proceedings.

Private petitions employed the attention of the House until Friday noon, when a motion made at a former session was renewed for what is *farcically* called "*a more equal representation*," in the Lower House of Assembly, or in other words, to reduce the large towns to the number of the smallest—two members for each. A motion for referring it was negated by a majority of one;<sup>5</sup> it was afterwards agreed to, and on Thursday of the next session this important question is to be decided.—*What are charters? What are our rights? if an House of Assembly can thus make innovations upon our government; as well might they resolve that their offices should be hereditary and their powers indefinite.*

A report on the public letters was now called for: the letter from Congress and *report of the Convention* being read, Mr. *Marchant*, a member from Newport arose, and observed that perhaps there never was a matter of more consequence before the House; but still as it was the people at large who were to determine this momentous question, and the General Assembly were the medium through which the people were to receive their report, he would not enter into the merits of the question, nor anticipate the sentiments the good people at large entertained of it, but wished that they might consider it with coolness and deliberation, he therefore made a motion in writing, which was seconded by the members of Newport and Providence, for printing the proposed federal constitution to be transmitted to the several towns, recommending them to appoint delegates to meet in convention to consider and determine thereon, and forward the same to Congress; upon which a warm opposition took place, and the merits of the Constitution were largely entered into, and every suggestion made that might prejudice the minds of the people (too much prejudiced already) to any plan which does not quadrate with their darling privileges of making *paper money*; the weak and groundless suggestions of the majority were answered by the minority with manly truth and decided arguments, but all was in vain; upon the question being put to agree with it, it was negated by a great majority.<sup>6</sup>—However, to preserve the appearance of *federalism*, the House ordered the report of the Convention to be printed in handbills and sent into the several towns, to inform them of what they had been long before fully advised of by its general publication.<sup>7</sup>

At the former sessions a very singular *apologetical letter* was sent to Congress, giving reasons for not sending Delegates the remainder of

the last federal year; but assuring Congress that they had made provision to have their Delegates forward on the new year which commenced the first Monday of this month.<sup>8</sup> Commodore Whipple, a member from Cranston,<sup>9</sup> called upon the House to perform their promise, he trusted they did not mean to sacrifice all their national honor and to make promises without the least attention of performing them; he accordingly moved “that the Delegates be ordered forward and provision made for their support,” but the House declined acting thereon.<sup>10</sup> It was also moved that the requisitions of Congress for the present year might be taken up, but the motion was not attended to.<sup>11</sup> . . .

1. Printed: *Newport Herald*, 8 November. This report was reprinted in its entirety in the *Norwich Packet*, 15 November, and *Philadelphia Independent Gazetteer*, 17 November. The *Pennsylvania Packet*, 16 November, reprinted the first four paragraphs. On 22 November, the *New Haven Gazette* reprinted the fourth paragraph dealing with the proceedings on the Constitution and the fifth paragraph concerning Rhode Island’s relations with the Congress. On 1 December, the Charleston, S.C., *City Gazette* reprinted only the fourth paragraph.

On 12 November the *Boston Gazette* reprinted portions of the second paragraph (respecting the act on the slave trade), the fourth paragraph, and the *Newport Herald*’s last two paragraphs (not printed here). The *Boston Gazette*’s account was reprinted in sixteen newspapers by 7 December: N.H. (1), Mass. (4), Conn. (3), N.Y. (4), N.J. (2), Pa. (1), S.C. (1). It also appeared in the December issue of the *Philadelphia American Museum*. The *Boston American Herald*, 2 November, reprinted parts of the second paragraph on the slave trade. The *Boston Independent Chronicle*, 15 November, summarized the proceedings and reprinted the last two paragraphs (not printed here). The Newburyport, Mass., *Essex Journal*, 21 November, reprinted the *Chronicle*’s account without the last paragraph.

2. Othniel Gorton and Rowse J. Helme, respectively.

3. See “Rhode Island General Assembly Prohibits the Slave Trade,” 31 October (below).

4. Jonathan J. Hazard, a Charlestown deputy and a Country party leader, was a Quaker.

5. In March 1787 the Country party, wishing to curtail the power of the commercial towns, sought to amend the charter by a statute giving equal representation in the House to all of the towns. Under the original charter, all towns had two representatives each, except Newport, which had six deputies, and Providence, Portsmouth, and Warwick, which each had four. Since the issue was so volatile, the Country party decided to consult the freemen in town meeting assembled. Whereupon, the towns voted and instructed their deputies on how to vote. The bill was considered and referred to the next session by close votes on 3 November 1787, 28 February 1788, and in early April 1788. (See Polishook, 147–48, and Conley, *Democracy in Decline*, 103–5.)

6. See immediately below under 3 November for Henry Marchant’s motion.

7. See below under 3 November for this act. See also “The Publication of the Constitution in Rhode Island,” c. 27 September 1787–1790 (above).

8. See William Ellery to the Commissioners of the Treasury, 18 September, note 4 (above).

9. Abraham Whipple (1733–1819), a native of Providence, led a party of forty to fifty men in 1772 that burned the British revenue cutter *Gaspee*, one of the first openly revolutionary acts of the American colonists. During the Revolution, Whipple served with

distinction in the Continental Navy as a captain and a commodore until he was captured at the siege of Charleston, where he was in charge of the port's defense. In 1787 he was living at his farm in Cranston. He represented Cranston from the September 1787 session through the March session of 1788.

10. The legislature took action on this matter in its February 1788 session and sent Antifederalists Peleg Arnold of Smithfield and Jonathan J. Hazard of Charlestown to represent Rhode Island in Congress (Bartlett, *Records*, X, 273).

11. Congress adopted the requisition for 1787 on 11 October 1787 (JCC, XXXIII, 649–58), and on 18 October Secretary Charles Thomson sent the requisition to the states (Smith, *Letters*, XXIV, 487–88).

*Motion in the Assembly to Call a State Convention, 3 November 1787<sup>1</sup>*

The following is a copy of a motion made at the last session of our Assembly by Henry Marchant, Esq. with the certificate of the Clerk of the decision of the House thereon:

*Moved,*

“That copies of the doings of the late Honourable Convention at Philadelphia, recommending a Constitution for the United States of America, be printed and sent to the respective Town Clerks within this State; that town meetings be directed to be called upon the day of                    next, then and there to appoint Delegates in the same manner as they appoint members for the Lower House of the General Assembly for May and October sessions; That said Delegates meet in Convention at                    on the                    day of                    that they then and there appoint a Chairman and Secretary, and proceed to take into consideration the said Constitution so as above recommended, and to determine thereon as proposed, and forward the result of their deliberations sealed up and directed to the Honourable the Congress of the United States.”

In the Lower House, November 3d, 1787.

This motion is rejected,

R. J. HELME, Clerk.

1. Printed: *Newport Herald*, 8 November. Reprinted seven times by 13 December: Mass. (1), Conn. (1), Pa. (2), Md. (1), Va. (1), S.C. (1). The motion was rejected by “a great majority.” See “Newspaper Report of House of Deputies Proceedings,” 31 October–3 November, at note 6 (immediately above).

*An Act for Reprinting the Doings of the Federal Convention  
3 November 1787<sup>1</sup>*

State of Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations.

*In GENERAL ASSEMBLY, October Session, 1787.*

It is Voted and Resolved, That the Report of the Convention, lately held at Philadelphia, proposing a new Constitution for the United

States of America, be printed as soon as may be: That the following Number of Copies<sup>2</sup> be sent to the several Town-Clerks in the State, to be distributed among the Inhabitants, that the Freemen may have an Opportunity of forming their Sentiments of the said proposed Constitution, *to wit*: For Newport 10,<sup>3</sup> Portsmouth 25, Middletown 15, New-Shoreham 15, Jamestown 16, Tiverton 40, Little-Compton 36, Providence 10, Smithfield 75, Scituate 55, Foster 55, Glocester 60, Cumberland 40, Cranston 50, Johnston 30, North-Providence 20, Westerly 31, North-Kingstown 50, South-Kingstown 100, Charlestown 25, Richmond 25, Exeter 31, Hopkinton 30, Bristol 20, Warren 10, Barrington 10, Warwick 56, East-Greenwich 25, West-Greenwich 22, and Coventry 30.

*A true Copy:*                      *Witness,*                      HENRY WARD, Sec'y.

1. The text of this act is taken from the two-page broadside of the Constitution printed by John Carter in Providence on order of the legislature (Evans 20822). It is at the bottom of the right-hand column on page two, following the texts of the Constitution, the two 17 September 1787 resolves of the Constitutional Convention, the letter of the President of the Convention to the President of Congress, and the 28 September resolution of Congress transmitting the Constitution to the states. The act is also printed on page twelve of the General Assembly Schedule for the October 1787 session (Evans 20685).

A manuscript copy of the schedule version is Rhode Island Records 13:429 at the Rhode Island State Archives. The original draft of the act with the changes made as it passed both legislative houses is page 150 of the Acts and Resolves of the Rhode Island General Assembly at the Rhode Island State Archives.

Notes 2–3, below, indicate significant differences between the draft and broadside version. The draft is in Mfm:RI.

2. The draft resolution ordered that 1,000 copies be printed. The number allotted to the towns (listed below) was 1,017. John Carter of the *Providence Gazette*, the printer of the broadside, submitted a bill for printing 1,030. (See “The Publication of the Constitution in Rhode Island,” c. 27 September 1787–1790, above.)

3. The draft resolution had “50” copies for Newport, but “50” was deleted and replaced by “10.”

#### *East Greenwich Town Meeting, 8 November 1787 (excerpts)*<sup>1</sup>

At a Town Meeting Called and held at East Greenwich on the 8th. Day of November AD 1787

Preserved Peirce Esqr Chosen Moderator . . .

Whereas the General Assembly at their Last Session ordered a Thousand Copies of the Doings of the Late Convention held at Philadelphia, to be Distributed to the People of this State that Each Towns Proportion to be Sent to the Several Clerks of the Towns, it is therefore Voted That Pardan Mawney, Andrew Boyd, Benjn. Fry, and Robert Bailey be a Committe to Receive of the Clerk of this Town our Proportion and to Distribute the same as they Shall think Proper . . .

1. MS, Town Meeting Records, 1752–1793, Town Clerk’s Office, Town Hall, East Greenwich, R.I. East Greenwich was allotted 25 copies of the Constitution.

**Editors' Note**  
**Rhode Island General Assembly Prohibits the Slave Trade**  
**31 October 1787**

In the eighteenth century the slave traders of Rhode Island and Massachusetts were the primary carriers of slaves from Africa to North America and the Caribbean islands. Beginning in 1719, Rhode Island Quakers publicly criticized the trade and were soon joined by Anglicans and Congregationalists. In 1774 the town of Providence—encouraged by Quaker leader Moses Brown and Congregationalist minister Samuel Hopkins—petitioned the colonial legislature to prohibit the importation of slaves into the colony. The legislature responded by adopting a law stating that any slave imported into the colony would be free. In the same year the First Continental Congress specifically prohibited the slave trade and incorporated that prohibition into the Articles of Association that was adopted by all of the colonies. During the Revolution, the slave trade was virtually non-existent.

After the Treaty of Peace of 1783 the slave trade was revived and the opposition to it in Rhode Island intensified, with Moses Brown and Samuel Hopkins in the forefront of the movement. The Rhode Island act of 1774 had not prohibited Rhode Island merchants from participating in the slave trade, which was what Moses Brown and Samuel Hopkins wanted. They were opposed by, among others, Moses Brown's brother John, who did not want Rhode Island or any other government to tamper with what he considered to be free enterprise. In 1784, while representing Providence in the House of Deputies, John Brown violated the town's instructions and voted against a bill to prohibit the slave trade. The bill did not pass, but in February 1784 the legislature adopted an act for the gradual abolition of slavery by providing that no children born to slave mothers after 1 March 1784 should be considered "as Servants for Life, or Slaves" (Bartlett, *Records*, X, 7–8). This did not satisfy Moses Brown or Hopkins.

In June 1787 Brown prevailed upon the Yearly Quaker Meeting to petition the legislature "to prevent that cruel and unjust trade, and finally to abolish that barbarous custom of holding mankind as slaves." The June session of the legislature received the petition and referred it to its next session for further consideration (*United States Chronicle*, 2 August). The next session of the legislature was scheduled to meet on 20 August but failed to obtain a quorum. (A special session was called by Governor John Collins for 10 September, but it did not consider the petition.)

After reading the petition, Hopkins tried to organize ministers of other faiths to support it. In the summer he also began writing an essay on the slave trade, apparently directed toward the Constitutional Convention of 1787 then in session, that he wanted printed in the *Newport Herald*. Peter Edes, the printer of the *Herald*, decided against printing the essay because many of the paper's subscribers engaged in the slave trade. Hopkins wrote Moses Brown on 13 August that the "wicked set of men in this town [Newport] have got the printer in their hands, and have silenced the press, as other tyrants have done before them." Whereupon, Hopkins requested that Brown try to get the essay published in Providence (*The Works of Samuel Hopkins, D.D. . . .* [3 vols., Boston, 1852], I, 121–22). Signed "Crito," the essay appeared in two parts in the *Providence Gazette* on 6 and 13 October (Mfm:R.I.).

On 22 October, probably in anticipation of the legislature's convening on 27 October, Hopkins expressed his dismay to Brown on the new Constitution's provision on the slave trade. The Constitutional Convention had "carefully secured the practice of it in these States for 20 years," stated Hopkins, "and prevented any Asylum for slaves during that term, unless every individual State, should suppress this trade." Hopkins and some ministers had little faith that the state legislature would take the desired action. He declared "That the present ruling part [i.e., the Country party] in the Assembly, have appeared to be so destitute of all principles of justice, or regard to it; and have acted such an iniquitous part, that there is an impropriety in applying to *them* for justice." He did not expect the legislature to do anything that session (above). Moses Brown distributed fifty copies of "Crito" among the members of the legislature. He also lobbied the members of both houses on this issue. His brother John, despite his opposition to the prohibition of the slave trade, had advised Moses to become a member of the legislature and fight for his beliefs.

On 31 October the bill to prevent (or prohibit) the slave trade and to encourage the abolition of slavery was discussed briefly in the lower house of the legislature after which it was adopted by a vote of forty-four to four. The bill was sent to the upper house where it was adopted unanimously (Bartlett, *Records*, X, 262). Moses Brown was surprised by the easy victory. He was happy that the act had been adopted not "upon mere commercial views but the more noble and enlarged principles exprest in the memorial and act" (Mack Thompson, *Moses Brown: Reluctant Reformer* [Chapel Hill, N.C., 1962], 191–92). Hopkins was also delighted and surprised. On 27 November he wrote Levi Hart that "Is it not extraordinary, that this State, which has exceeded the rest of the States in carrying on this trade, should be the first Legislature on this

globe which has prohibited that trade?" (*The Works of Samuel Hopkins, D.D. . . .*, I, 123). In 1789 Moses Brown and some of his friends organized the Providence Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, a function of which was to guard against violations of the 1787 act. Hopkins joined the Society soon after its formation, and John Brown became a vigorous opponent of it. (On the feud between Moses and John Brown, see Charles Rappleye, *Sons of Providence: The Brown Brothers, the Slave Trade, and the American Revolution* [New York, 2006].)

**Providence United States Chronicle, 1 November 1787<sup>1</sup>**

The General Assembly of this State are now sitting at South-Kingstown.

"A Correspondent observes, That the General Assembly of this State have *no Right* to refuse calling a Convention of the People, to consider of the proposed Federal Constitution,—as the People at large have a *Right* to judge of the Propriety or Impropriety of adopting it, however the present Members may be opposed to it."

1. The second paragraph was reprinted in the Boston *Independent Chronicle*, 8 November, and the *Pennsylvania Packet*, 20 November.

**Providence United States Chronicle, 1 November 1787<sup>1</sup>**

"From present Appearances (says a Correspondent) there is every Reason to suppose the new Federal Constitution will be adopted by every State in the Union, unless *this State* should dissent—In *that Case we* shall be in a hopeful Situation—Without an Ally, surrounded by jealous Neighbours, and our Credit (in Case we should undertake to fight the World) not in the most prosperous Situation."

1. Reprinted: Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 19 November; *Pennsylvania Gazette* and *Pennsylvania Journal*, 21 November; Baltimore *Maryland Gazette*, 27 November; *Maryland Chronicle*, 5 December.

**Massachusetts Centinel, 7 November 1787<sup>1</sup>**

A gentleman from Rhode-Island informs us, that the General Assembly of that state sat last week at South-Kingston, and adjourned, without taking any procecedure on the new Constitution—offering as a reason therefor, that it had already got to the *people* through the channels of newspapers, &c. and that the *people* might consider it as they thought best—and if they pleased to, might adopt it. Is this *conduct* suited to the dignity of the Legislature of a sovereign State? Or is it the "*loose*"



proceeding of a time-serving assembly of mobmen?—O *shame, where is thy blush?*<sup>2</sup>

1. Reprinted fifteen times by 6 December: Vt. (1), N.H. (1), Mass. (4), Conn. (2), N.Y. (4), N.J. (1), Va. (1), Ga. (1). The report was incorrect. On 3 November the Rhode Island legislature ordered that over 1,000 copies of the Constitution be printed and distributed to the towns. The legislature, however, refused to call a convention to consider the Constitution. (See “The Publication of the Constitution in Rhode Island,” c. 27 September 1787–1790, and “The Rhode Island General Assembly Considers the Report of the Constitutional Convention,” 31 October–3 November 1787, both above.)

2. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act III, scene 4, line 81.

## Argus

### Providence United States Chronicle, 8 November 1787<sup>1</sup>

*Rehoboth, November 1, 1787.*

Mr. WHEELER, The Liberty of the Press, or the Liberty which *every Person* in the United States *at present* enjoys, of exhibiting his Sentiments on all public Measures to his Fellow-Citizens, through the Medium of the News-Papers, is a Privilege of infinite Importance—a Privilege, for which (among others) we have fought and bled, and for which I would again shoulder my Musket. I confess the Attempt lately made in Boston, by some of our aristocratical Gentry, to have every Person’s Name published who should write against the proposed Federal Constitution, has given many of us a just Alarm.<sup>2</sup> Why, if the proposed Constitution is a good one are its Supporters afraid to have any Thing said against it? Why are they for hurrying it down our Throats, before we have opened our Mouths? For what Purpose is it that the Names of its Opposers should be published? Why all this extraordinary Exertion? If it is *very good, very just, and wisely calculated* to make us respectable and happy, no Doubt it will be adopted—But pray, my good Friends, give us a Chance to read it once or twice over before we say whether we like it or not. I had written thus far, and intended to have gone on to state my Opinion on this important Subject, when my Son brought me in Mr. Powars’ last Boston Paper—I laid down my Pen to read it, and I found a Piece, signed JOHN DE WITT,<sup>3</sup> on the Subject I had proposed to write; who the Author is I know not, but his Sentiments so exactly coincide with mine, that I concluded to write no more, at present, but to request you, Mr. Printer, to publish that Piece in your next Chronicle: By so doing you’ll oblige at least one of your Readers.

1. For a response to “Argus,” see *United States Chronicle*, 15 November (below).

2. On 10 October Federalist printer Benjamin Russell of the *Massachusetts Centinel* informed his readers that he had refused to print an Antifederalist piece by “Lucius” until the author identified himself so that his name could be made public if anyone

requested it. Russell declared that he would not print Antifederalist pieces unless “the writers leave . . . their names to be made publick if desired” (CC:131–C). Russell’s policy caused an immediate uproar. (See CC:131 A–N.)

3. “John De Witt” II was printed by Edward Eveleth Powars in his Boston *American Herald* on 29 October (RCS:Mass., 156–61), and was reprinted in the *United States Chronicle* on 8 November, in the same issue as “Argus.”

### Editors’ Note

#### The Rhode Island Reprinting of Elbridge Gerry’s Letter to the Massachusetts Legislature, 8–10 November 1787

Elbridge Gerry, a Massachusetts delegate to the Constitutional Convention, was a frequent speaker who not only supported strengthening the central government but also insisted that the rights of the states and the liberties of the people be protected. By the end of the Convention, he had concluded that he could not support the Constitution, and on 17 September he refused to sign it.

After the Convention Gerry went to New York City where he remained until 27 October before returning to Massachusetts. In New York he voiced his objections in private letters and conversations. On 18 October Gerry, “pursuant to my commission,” sent a printed copy of the Constitution, accompanied by a letter outlining his objections to it, to the Massachusetts legislature. Among his objections, the Constitution created a national, not a federal, government. The people were not adequately represented, and their rights and liberties were not fully protected. Congress and the executive were also too powerful, and the judiciary would be oppressive.

On 18 October Governor John Hancock transmitted a copy of the Constitution to the legislature. After some debate, both houses on 25 October passed resolutions calling a state convention. Gerry’s 18 October letter subsequently arrived and was read in the Senate on 31 October and in the House of Representatives two days later. A motion to have the letter printed was debated in the House and then tabled.

On 3 November Gerry’s letter was printed in the Federalist *Massachusetts Centinel* and circulated throughout the country. In Rhode Island, Gerry’s letter was reprinted in the *United States Chronicle*, 8 November, and the *Providence Gazette*, 10 November.

On the same days they reprinted Gerry’s letter, the *United States Chronicle* and the *Providence Gazette* also reprinted a criticism of it by “A Federalist,” which first appeared in the *Boston Gazette* on 5 November (RCS:Mass., 199–200). “A Federalist” could not understand why so many great men in the Federal Convention signed the Constitution if it was as defective as Gerry maintained. He called upon the Massachusetts delegates who had signed the Constitution to respond to Gerry.

A letter writer from Rhode Island was disturbed at the alarm over Gerry's "ill-founded suggestions" (*Pennsylvania Gazette*, 21 November, below). On 22 November the *Chronicle* printed "Philelaetheros," who defended Gerry against the charges of "A Federalist" (below).

Among the prominent critics of Gerry's letter was the Connecticut "Landholder," who attacked Gerry in his numbers IV, V, and VIII that were printed in the *Connecticut Courant* and *American Mercury* on 26 November, and 3 and 24 December (CC:295, 316, 371). These three numbers were reprinted in the *United States Chronicle* on 6 and 20 December, and 17 January 1788. "Landholder" issued a point-by-point response to Gerry's unfounded objections. "Landholder" VIII became personal and charged that Gerry's objections to the Constitution surfaced only after the Convention refused his proposal to redeem the Continental currency, of which Gerry allegedly held substantial amounts. (See "The Rhode Island Reprinting of the Landholder Essays," 6 December 1787–8 May 1788, below.) On 5 January 1788, in the *Massachusetts Centinel*, Gerry defended himself against "Landholder" VIII (CC:419). The *Chronicle* reprinted this defense on 17 January. Gerry, along with George Mason, Edmund Randolph, and the minority of the Pennsylvania Convention, also came under attack by "Philanthropos" (Tench Coxe) (*Pennsylvania Gazette*, 16 January 1788, CC:454). (For "Philanthropos'" comments, which were probably reprinted in the no longer extant *Newport Mercury* of 11 February, see "A Rhode-Island Man," *Newport Mercury*, 25 February, at note 9, and note 9, below.)

For the text of Gerry's 18 October 1787 letter to the Massachusetts General Court, its circulation, and the commentaries on it, see CC:227–A.

### **John Francis to Nicholas Brown**

**Philadelphia, 11 November 1787 (excerpts)<sup>1</sup>**

. . . Politicks are the only Topics in all Companies—Tories were never detested with half the Zeal, that Antifederalists are now—And there needs no greater confirmation of a Villain than an Opposition to the Favorite Government. . . .

Your Unhappy deluded State still adds Infamy to Infamy, no new projects of Villainy are any where brought to such rare perfection as in your Political Assemblies—Well, times must alter, the Virtuous have tumbled, the Wicked cannot ever ride Triumphant—Patience you must exercise, to keep comfortably Happy—I shall address you by the Sloop, though I please myself with the satisfaction of seeing you in [a] few Days after the Receipt of this. . . .

1. RC, Brown Papers, RPJCB. Francis (1763–1796), a native of Philadelphia, was the son of Tench Francis, a Philadelphia merchant and the cashier of the Bank of North America. John Francis moved to Providence and married John Brown's daughter Abby on 1 January 1788. Francis and John Brown (Nicholas Brown's brother) formed a partnership that endured to Francis' death. For the complete letter, see Mfm:R.I.

**Moses Brown to James Thornton, Sr.  
Providence, 13 November 1787 (excerpt)<sup>1</sup>**

Dear friend

... This Subject havg unexpectedly Occur<sup>2</sup> since I began I shall leave it, and touch on An Other where we seem to be happily United; that is the Stopping of the African Slave Trade the Effect of Our Application to the Assembly of this state having been Satisfactory I Inclose thee a Copy of Our Address & the Act Obtained thereupon which I had struck of[f] for my friend,<sup>3</sup> doubtless thou hast heard by the friend from your way of the Application to the Massachusets allso. On my getting home from Our Assembly the 1st. of this mo. I sent off a Copy of the Act with a Letter to their Committee,<sup>4</sup> no friend on the Committee being ready to accompany me or I should have gone down to Boston again on the subject, I am in hopes of hearing dayly of their doing something to the like purpose, I may now mention my desire you may be favourd to bring about an Act similar in Pennsylvania<sup>5</sup> Seeing there is now no hopes from Congress, the present not being Competent and the new if it Takes place have Bard that Door of hope for 21 years & I fear from that Concession much Longer, indeed their doings on this subject aspecialy the 3d paragraph of the 2d sectn. of the 4th Article appears Calculated on purpose 'tho, Plauseably Coverd, to distroy the present Effect of the 1st Article of the Massachusets Bill of Rights<sup>6</sup> by which all Negroes when in that Jurisdiction are Declared free, as well and on the same ground as in England and no Law there can support a Claimmer in Carrying One Out of that Assylim or City of Refuge which it has been to many, many Others have agreed with their masters to Serve a Certain time and then take manumissions, by means of this, their Retreat from the Injuries of Slavery, but alas instead of Extending Humanity and good Will to that People the Convention has, I think very Unhapily Wounded the Cause of Liberty & the rights of Men, the Justice of Such an Assylim is supported by the Divine Law Deut 23.15-16 which Grenvill Sharp<sup>7</sup> has Adopted in an Argument proving the Right of protection & of Protectors to slaves who Escape from their masters, which I could Wish had been laid before that Assembly as it appears to me Conclusive on the point, tho I must Confess till I saw it I had some doubts whether it was best for friends to protect them

'tho this doubt arose from a fear of Blame and so hurting Our Testimony, not from the Right they had to Take their Liberty when Ever they Could, I mentiond this matter in a L[ette]r sometime since to James Pemberton<sup>8</sup> & Queryd how We could Unite in the present federal system, & answer Our Query “Whether we bare a faithfull Testimony against slavery” Once a Quarter I Wish for the Cause of Humanity, Justice, Liberty & Religion that this Usurpation Over the Massachusets Constitution [The remainder of the letter is missing.]

1. RC(?) (incomplete), Quaker Collection, Haverford College, Haverford, Pa. This letter has no addressee, but internal evidence indicates that the letter was addressed to James Thornton, Sr. For his reply, see his letter of 17 December (CC:Vol. 2, p. 527). Thornton (1727–1794), a Byberry, Pa., farmer and an esteemed Quaker minister, had emigrated to America from England in 1750.

2. The subject discussed was the controversy over whether or not Quaker families should set “apart a certain portion of the day for Religious Retirement” for reading the Bible frequently and publicly.

3. See Brown to James Pemberton, 17 October, note 1 (CC:Vol. 2, p. 508).

4. Brown’s letter was addressed to the Committee on the Revision of the Laws of the Massachusetts legislature, which in June 1787 had been directed to report a bill upon “the subject matter of negroes in this Commonwealth at large.” This action had been prompted by a Quaker petition against the slave trade. (For Massachusetts’ prohibition of the slave trade in March 1788, see Jeremy Belknap to Benjamin Rush, 12 February 1788, note 1 [CC:Vol. 2, pp. 529n–30n].)

5. On 8 January 1788 Dr. Benjamin Rush informed the Reverend Jeremy Belknap that the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery “are about to address our legislature in favor of a law to prohibit the fitting out, owning, or insuring vessels in Pennsylvania that are to be employed directly or indirectly in the African slave trade. It is expected this law will meet with no opposition” (L. H. Butterfield, ed., *Letters of Benjamin Rush* [2 vols., Princeton, N.J., 1951], I, 448). The Society drew up a petition asking that the legislature pass an act supplementing the 1780 act for the gradual abolition of slavery. The petition was circulated and signed by about 2,000 people. In March 1788 the Pennsylvania legislature prohibited the building and fitting out of vessels intended to engage in the slave trade. Commenting upon this act, Rush wrote that “The commerce in African slaves has breathed its last in Pennsylvania. I shall send you a copy of our late law respecting that trade as soon as it is published. I am encouraged by the success that has finally attended the exertions of the friends of universal freedom and justice to go on in my romantic schemes (as they have often been called) of serving my countrymen” (to Belknap, 6 May, *ibid.*, 460).

6. Article I of the Massachusetts Declaration of Rights (1780) states “All men are born free and equal, and have certain natural, essential, and unalienable rights; among which may be reckoned the right of enjoying and defending their lives and liberties; that of acquiring, possessing, and protecting property; in fine, that of seeking and obtaining their safety and happiness” (RCS:Mass., 440).

7. For Granville Sharp (1735–1813), an English philanthropist, political reformer, biblical scholar, and leading opponent of slavery and the slave trade, see Moses Brown to James Pemberton, 17 October 1787 (CC:Vol. 2, p. 509n).

8. See Brown to Pemberton, 17 October (CC:Vol. 2, pp. 506–10).

**Newport Herald, 15 November 1787<sup>1</sup>**

A Correspondent observes, that the paper money leaders are so interested in the existence of the present system, that no sacrifices are too great for them to make for its preservation.—Not content with perverting the administration of justice, stabbing public faith at its vital, and introducing poverty among the citizens, they even seem to view a dissolution of the Federal Compact as of no magnitude, when placed in competition with their favorite Paper Money.—Else why are Delegates not to be sent to Congress, agreeably to the promises of the Legislature at a former Session?—Why is the liberty of the people sported with in not having permission to meet in convention to consider of the proposed constitution?—The unfederal conduct in this instance, and the insidious reports which are industriously circulated by these inflammatory leaders, though it may lead astray the incautious here, will have a counter effect in all our sister States—It will evince the necessity of a speedy adoption of THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES.

1. Reprinted in seven newspapers by 20 December: N.H. (1), Conn. (1), N.Y. (1), N.J. (1), Pa. (2), S.C. (1), and in the December issue of the *Philadelphia American Museum*.

**Providence United States Chronicle, 15 November 1787**

*To the Printer of the United States Chronicle.*

Your correspondent, from Rehoboth, appears to be under violent apprehensions, that the liberty of the press is in danger<sup>1</sup>—and his co-adjutor, that the liberties of the people are struck at: But I think the press takes great liberties with the people, and the people with the press—I believe there is an even balance.—He has assumed a title (ARGUS) which implies clear and strong sight:—This may be true of his organs of vision, but not of his understanding.—He thinks he sees objects which have no existence—but does not appear at all to understand subjects which evidently exist, and are capable of the clearest demonstration.—He threatens “again to shoulder his musket.”—Shoulder your firelock!—If we may judge of your use of that by the manner of your handling a quill, I feel entirely safe. This alarm is taken from a request which appeared in the *Boston Centinel*,—“that any person who should send a piece to the Printer of it, against the Federal Constitution, would send his name;”<sup>2</sup> and was this any crime? It was but a request, and binds no one.—He asks, “why, if the proposed Constitution is a good one, are its supporters afraid to have any thing said against it?”—And why, if it is a bad one, are its opposers ashamed of their names?—If they are honest in their opposition, and not governed

by sordid motives, why do they not come out, and shew cause, if any there be, why it should not be adopted?—He asks, “why are they for hurrying it down our throats before we have opened our mouths? [”]—To the first part I answer, because, “their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongue they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips.”<sup>3</sup> The latter part I deny—for their mouths were opened against it before they saw it: This is a well known fact in this town;—therefore, Mr. *Argus*, though you have “a chance to read it, *not* once or twice only,” but an hundred times, it avails nothing—you have already made up your mind to oppose it—not for its defects and imperfections—but for that which is its perfection, and would be highly honourable to Americans in their adoption of it, viz. its being a plan of efficient government, wisely accommodated to the various interests of the United States—securing the liberties of the whole, protecting the property of the industrious against the fraudulent practices of the dishonest.

At the critical moment in which poor *Argus*, the strength of whose genius is forcibly represented by the poverty of Rehoboth soil, was trying to think of something to say, a very fortunate circumstance took place.—His son—probably a hopeful youth! came in and brought the means of supplying his own deficiencies—“Mr. *Powars*’ last paper,” containing [“]a piece signed JOHN DE WITT:”<sup>4</sup>—This piece I read with attention, expecting from the signature to find something new and worth reading—but when I had gone over it with care, and found it a mere declamation on an hacknied subject, and seeing *John De Witt* at bottom, it reminded me of the following anecdote:—A gentleman of ingenuity having read a book, written by Mr. JOHN WISE,<sup>5</sup> was asked how he liked the performance, replied—“If I had not seen *John Wise* at the bottom, I should have thought it had been written by TOM FOOL.”

1. See “Argus,” *United States Chronicle*, 8 November (above).

2. See *Massachusetts Centinel*, 10 October (CC:131–C).

3. Romans 3:13.

4. See “Argus,” *United States Chronicle*, 8 November, note 3 (above).

5. John Wise (1652–1725), an Ipswich, Mass., Congregational minister, was noted for two pamphlets (1713, 1717) on religious and civil governments that took a democratic position. These pamphlets were reprinted in 1772 for use as propaganda in the revolutionary movement against Great Britain.

### Providence United States Chronicle, 15 November 1787

It having been propagated (says a Correspondent) that in Case the proposed Federal Constitution should be adopted, the *State* Judges of the Superior and Inferior Courts would be appointed by the Federal

Legislature, it is necessary only to refer every Person to the Constitution, as nothing in that authorizes any such Supposition.—Indeed, that Body will have no more to do with those Appointments than the King of Great-Britain.

**Providence United States Chronicle, 15 November 1787**

“It is disagreeable (says a Correspondent) to observe the scurrilous Pieces, which weekly appear in *Mr. Edes’ Newport Herald*, against this State, and indeed against all who do not agree in political Opinion with a certain *Junto* in that Town. It is an old Adage that—*It is a bad Bird that bewrayeth*<sup>1</sup> its own Nest—These Folks therefore must be *bad Birds*, not to say *factious and seditious Citizens*.”

1. Bewray (archaic), to betray, disclose perfidiously.

**Editors’ Note**

**The Rhode Island Reprinting of the Report of Connecticut’s Delegates to the Constitutional Convention, 15–22 November 1787**

This brief letter, addressed to Governor Samuel Huntington and dated 26 September, was required by the act of the Connecticut legislature that appointed the state’s delegates to the Constitutional Convention. It was written from New London where Roger Sherman and Oliver Ellsworth were serving as judges to the state’s Superior Court. William Samuel Johnson, the state’s third Convention delegate, was in New York City attending Congress. Sherman and Johnson signed the Constitution. Ellsworth, also a firm supporter of the Constitution, had left the Convention in late August.

Most importantly the letter assured Connecticut—a small state—that it would have the same proportion of representatives in the new Congress as it had in the Confederation Congress and that there was an equal representation of states in the Senate. The letter hoped that Connecticut would ratify the Constitution, which created an energetic government and secured “the rights of the particular states, and the liberties and properties of the citizens.”

Governor Huntington submitted the Sherman-Ellsworth letter to the state legislature on 11 October, and on 25 October it was printed in the *New Haven Gazette*, along with the legislative resolution calling a state convention. By early December the letter was reprinted in twenty-three newspapers and in the widely circulated monthly *Philadelphia American Museum*. In Rhode Island, the letter appeared in the *United*



*States Chronicle* on 15 November and the *Newport Herald* on 22 November. The letter received little response throughout America and none has been found for Rhode Island.

For the text of the Sherman-Ellsworth letter and its circulation, see CC:192.

### Lansingburgh, N.Y., Northern Centinel, 20 November 1787<sup>1</sup>

*Extract of a letter from a fellow in Newport, (Rogue-Island) to a gentleman in this town.*

“We have nothing new this way but the new constitution—it will not go down *here*—*nine-tenths* of the people are against it—in MY opinion it is a DAMN’D *impudent* composition, and an *insult* on the *understandings* and *liberty* of the KNOW YE’S.”<sup>2</sup>

*Extract of a letter from a gentleman in Providence, to his friend in Albany.*

“It is with pleasure I inform you, that all *honest* men in Rhode-Island, (who, alas, are not very numerous) are anxious for the adoption of the new constitution, knowing it to be the only thing that can extricate us from present distress, and prevent future slavery.”

1. By 27 December, seven newspapers reprinted both items: N.H. (1), Mass. (1), Conn. (1), N.Y. (1), Pa. (1), S.C. (1), Ga. (1). The Providence letter was reprinted three more times in Massachusetts and once more in Connecticut, while the Newport letter was reprinted in the *Newport Herald*, 13 December.

2. See Glossary.

### Pennsylvania Gazette, 21 November 1787<sup>1</sup>

*Extract of a letter from Rhode-Island, dated the 7th instant.*

“By the papers now forwarded, you may form some idea of the politics of this state. From the proceedings of our Legislature last week, you may reasonably conclude that *our rulers* have not yet completed their diabolical Schemes.<sup>2</sup> How far they mean to carry their vile plans, time alone must make known. A viler and more abandoned sett of beings never disgraced any Legislative, Judicial or Executive Authorities since the Fall of Adam. Every *conscientious* and *honest* man in our devoted republic is employed in contemplating with admiration, and devoutly wishing for the *speedy* adoption of the NEW CONSTITUTION, tho’ their fears are occasionally on the alarm from the ill-founded suggestions of a G-r-y,<sup>3</sup> and the more sly insinuations of *your* SIXTEEN seceding members;<sup>4</sup> performances too well adapted to blow up the flame of disunion, and to imbitter the minds of the people against all *good* and

*virtuous government.* (Such men, I am sorry to find, you have in Pennsylvania. Were we favored with a *civil constitution* immediately from Heaven, I have no doubt but that THEY, with our abandoned *leaders*, would enter their objections.)<sup>5</sup> God grant that there may be wisdom and goodness enough still found among the *majority* to adopt, without hesitation, what a WASHINGTON, a FRANKLIN, a MADISON, &c. so warmly recommend. Without this adoption, a civil war, I am afraid, will take place. This *must* arise from the present confusion of our different state governments.—The proceedings of the *Baptist* Association, lately convened at New-York,<sup>6</sup> are highly approved here. Their brethren throughout the eastern states are also highly federal. May all other christian denominations evidence the same zeal, in cordially recommending and fervently espousing a *firm, vigorous* and *well-established* government, so admirably calculated for the preservation of our dear-bought liberty, CIVIL and RELIGIOUS.”

1. Reprinted: Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 22 November; New York *Daily Advertiser*, 24 November; Philadelphia *American Museum*, December. An abbreviated version of this item was also published in the *Pennsylvania Packet* on 21 November (see note 5, below) and was reprinted in both the Annapolis *Maryland Gazette* and the Charleston *Columbian Herald* on 6 December.

2. On 3 November the Rhode Island legislature rejected a resolution calling a convention to consider the Constitution. See “Motion in the Assembly to Call a State Convention,” 3 November (RCS:R.I., 46).

3. See “The Rhode Island Reprinting of Elbridge Gerry’s Letter to the Massachusetts Legislature,” 8–10 November (above).

4. See “The Rhode Island Reprinting of the Address of the Sixteen Seceding Pennsylvania Assemblymen,” 20–25 October (above).

5. The text in angle brackets was omitted in the version printed in the *Pennsylvania Packet*.

6. For the Baptist meeting held in New York City the first week in October, see James Manning to Isaac Backus, 31 October, and the notes thereto (above).

### **Philadelphia Freeman’s Journal, 21 November 1787<sup>1</sup>**

A correspondent says, that the abuse which has been lately thrown upon the State of Rhode-Island, seems to be greatly unmerited. Popular favour is variable, and those who are now despised and insulted may soon change situations with the present idols of the people. Rhode-Island has outdone even the State of Pennsylvania in the glorious work of freeing the negroes in this country, without which the patriotism of some States appears ridiculous.—The General Assembly of the state of Rhode-Island has prevented the farther importation of negroes, and have made a law, by which all the blacks born in the State after March, 1784, are absolutely and at once free.<sup>2</sup> They have fully complied with

the recommendations of Congress in regard to the late treaty of peace with Great Britain, and have passed an act declaring it to be the law of the land.<sup>3</sup> They have never refused their quota of taxes demanded by Congress, excepting the five per cent. impost,<sup>4</sup> which they considered as a dangerous tax; and for which, at present, there is perhaps no great necessity, as the western territory, of which a part has very lately been sold at a considerable price, may soon produce an immense revenue; and, in the interim, the Congress may raise in the old manner the taxes which shall be found necessary for the support of the government. The State of Rhode-Island refused to send delegates to the State Convention,<sup>5</sup> and the event has manifested that their refusal was a happy one, as the New Constitution, which the Convention has proposed to us, is an elective monarchy, which is proverbially the worst government. This new government would have been supported at a vast expence, by which our taxes, the right of which is solely vested in Congress, (a circumstance which manifests that the various states of the Union will be mere corporations) would be doubled or trebled; the liberty of the press is not stipulated for, and therefore may be invaded at pleasure; the supreme continental court is to have, almost in every case, “appellate jurisdiction both as to law and fact,” which signifies, if there is any meaning in words, the setting aside the trial by jury; Congress will have the power of guaranteeing to every State a right to import negroes for twenty-one years, by which some of the States who have now declined that iniquitous traffic, may re-enter into it,—for the private laws of every state are to submit to the superior jurisdiction of Congress; a standing army is to be kept on foot, by which the vicious, the sycophantic, and the time-serving will be exalted, and the brave, the patriotic, and the virtuous will be deprest. Our correspondent, therefore, thinks it the part of wisdom to abide, like the state of Rhode-Island, by the old articles of confederation, which, if re-examined with attention, we shall find worthy of great regard; that we should give high praise to the manly and public spirited sixteen members, who lately seceded from our House of Assembly;<sup>6</sup> and that we should all impress with great care this truth upon our minds, That it is very easy to change a free government into an arbitrary one, but that it is very difficult to convert tyranny into freedom.

1. Reprinted: Baltimore *Maryland Gazette*, 27 November; Winchester *Virginia Gazette*, 7 December (excerpt); *Massachusetts Gazette*, 7 December; and *United States Chronicle*, 13 December. The latter two entitled the item “*On the ABUSE bestowed upon RHODE-ISLAND. A SCRAP.*”

2. For the 1784 and 1787 laws, see “Rhode Island General Assembly Prohibits the Slave Trade,” 31 October (above).

3. For this act, see William Ellery to the Commissioners of the Treasury, 18 September, note 6 (above).

4. For the Impost of 1781, see CDR, 140–41.

5. In reprinting this item, the *Massachusetts Gazette* and the *United States Chronicle* changed “State Convention” to “Federal Convention.” For Rhode Island’s refusal to send delegates to the Constitutional Convention, see “Rhode Island General Assembly to the President of Congress,” 15 September (RCS:R.I., 19–21).

6. See “The Rhode Island Reprinting of the Address of the Sixteen Seceding Pennsylvania Assemblymen,” 20–25 October (above).

## Philelaetheros

### Providence United States Chronicle, 22 November 1787<sup>1</sup>

(Mr. WHEELER, On perusing your useful Chronicle, of November 8, among a variety of other matter, I observed a piece (from the Boston Gazette) fraught with invective against the Hon. E. Gerry, Esq; and signed *A Federalist*.<sup>2</sup> The impossibility there stated of any injustice or error resulting from the deliberations of his capital MAJORITY, and his severe disquisitions on the procedure of the minority, and their enormous disparity, brought to my mind) an Anecdote of King James I. of England, and his Privy-Council.—It is as follows:—“JAMES, having called together his Privy-Council on some special business, after some deliberations, it seems, he distrusted their adhearance to justice—leaving his seat he went immediately out at the door, and after a few minutes calls to his Council to come out and see a strange phænomenon, *a star in the sun*. Out they come, and each took a view—Don’t you see it? says his majesty: To which the Prime Minister replied, Yes, my liege; and immediately the vote for a star in the sun became general by a majority, which left but *one* dissenter in all his Privy Council. What! don’t you see it, says James to the individual dissenter? No, replies he, and with an unshaken firmness, unmoved as Mount Atlas, calls in question the veracity of his liege, with ‘nor do I believe my liege sees it.’ In consequence of this undissembled reply, James laid his hand on the shoulder of the faithful counsellor, and exclaimed, Well, I find there is *one* honest man in my Council.”—Now, with your leave, I would ask Mr. Federalist, whether it is not as probable that the *three* dissenters<sup>3</sup> mentioned are as likely to be honest men, as King James’ *one*?—and whether MAJORITY is *surely* and *always* right?

*North-Providence, Nov. 10, 1787.*

1. On 15 November the publisher of the *Chronicle* stated that he had received “A piece, signed PHILELAETHEROS” and that it would appear in the next issue of the paper. “Philelaetheros” was reprinted in the Boston *American Herald* on 26 November. The *Massachusetts Centinel*, 28 November, reprinted most of the piece under the heading “ANTI-FEDERAL WIT.” However, the *Centinel* replaced the text in angle brackets with the following: “A WRITER in a Providence paper animadverting upon a piece published in

this town, containing observations on Mr. Gerry's letter—in the true style of antifederal witicism, says, that the high opinion the federalists entertain of the majority of the Federal Convention, and their 'disquisitions' on the minority, brought to his mind." The *New York Journal*, 12 December, reprinted the *Centinel* version.

2. "A Federalist," which appeared in the *Boston Gazette* on 5 November. See "The Rhode Island Reprinting of Elbridge Gerry's Letter to the Massachusetts Legislature," 8–10 November 1787 (above).

3. The reference is to Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts and Edmund Randolph and George Mason of Virginia, the three delegates in attendance who refused to sign the Constitution when the Constitutional Convention adjourned on 17 September.

### Editors' Note

#### The Rhode Island Reprinting of "Publius," *The Federalist* Essays 22 November–27 December 1787

*The Federalist* essays, signed "Publius," were written by Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison. Hamilton and Madison were the principal authors, and Jay contributed five essays. Published in New York City between 27 October 1787 and 28 May 1788, the eighty-four essays were addressed to the people of the state of New York. (When the essays were first printed in book form, one of them was divided in two making a total of eighty-five essays.) The primary purpose of *The Federalist* was to convince the people to elect Federalists to the New York ratifying convention.

Twenty-four numbers of *The Federalist* were reprinted outside New York City, appearing in twenty-one newspapers and one magazine in fifteen towns in nine states. Six newspapers and one magazine reprinted six or more essays. The essays also circulated as volumes. The authors on occasion sent individual copies to friends. Large shipments, with as many as sixty copies, were also distributed. In 1788 printers and book-sellers advertised the sale of the volumes in New York City; Norfolk and Richmond, Va.; Philadelphia; and Providence.

In Rhode Island, *The Federalist* I–III (New York *Independent Journal*, 27, 31 October, and 3 November 1787, CC:201, 217, 228) were reprinted in the *United States Chronicle* on 22 November (I–II) and 27 December (III). In reprinting numbers I–II on 22 November 1787, the *Chronicle* informed its readers that the essays were reprinted from the *Independent Journal* at New York. A year later, on 15, 22, and 29 November 1788, the printer of the *Providence Gazette* advertised the sale of volumes I and II of *The Federalist* which he had "Just received."

Rhode Island commentary on *The Federalist* was sparse in 1787 and 1788. In reprinting an Antifederalist essay from the *Boston American Herald* of 12 November 1787 (RCS:Mass., 216–20n), the *United States Chronicle* of 29 November made this prefatory remark: "I have read the Pieces in your last [i.e., 22 November, see above], under the signature

of PUBLIUS; and altho' I do not agree with him in Opinion concerning the new Constitution, yet I cannot help being pleased with the candid Manner in which he has treated the Subject:—It is the only Way we can come at the Truth—the Ravings of intemperate Zeal will answer no good Purpose, and therefore I wish not to see them published. . . .”

On 4 February 1788 the *Newport Mercury* reprinted a filler from the Antifederalist Philadelphia *Freeman's Journal* of 2 January, in which the printer said that he had been informed by “a gentleman of veracity and information,” who had just arrived in Philadelphia from New York, that New York would not ratify the Constitution. The gentleman noted that the Dissent of the Minority of the Pennsylvania Convention “has done great execution there, but the last numbers of Publius have done still more.” These numbers (probably 23–27) supported the necessity of “a *standing army* in time of peace” (CC:409).

On 26 May the *Newport Mercury* reprinted related fillers from two Philadelphia newspapers—the Federalist *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 30 April (CC:719), and the Antifederalist *Independent Gazetteer*, 9 May (CC:737). The item in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* asserted that the writings of “Publius” and other named polemicists were “full of profound political wisdom” and were superior to the impudence and ribaldry of Antifederalist pieces. In a parody of this item, the *Independent Gazetteer* maintained that the writings of “Centinel” and other named Antifederal polemicists were “full of political wisdom” and that the Dissent of the Minority contained “a complete system of republican government.” On the other hand, Federalist pieces were described as being full of sophistry and scurrility while the “150 numbers” of “Publius” were described as “dry trash.”

For a full discussion of the authorship and circulation of *The Federalist* and for commentaries upon it, see CC:201.

### Plain Truth

#### Providence United States Chronicle, 29 November 1787

Mr. WHEELER, I observed in the last Providence Gazette, a Publication under the Signature of “An Officer of the late Continental Army”—containing a Number of Objections to the proposed Federal Constitution.<sup>1</sup>—The Signature is doubtless as spurious as the Objections are futile.—No one can imagine that those disinterested Bands of Veterans can wish to prevent the Adoption of the Federal System, and plunge their Country in all the Horrors of Anarchy. I should conjecture it was the Performance of the redoubtable General Shays, or some of his Adherents: But it appears deficient in one capital Characteristic of those *illustrious Worthies*—though this may possibly be an Omission of the

*patriotic Printer*—he or the Author has certainly forgot to insert a very material, and perhaps the only real Objection to the new Constitution, viz.—that it forbids the exercise of those abominable Engines of Wick-edness, *Paper Money* and *Tender Laws*, and thereby deprives Rogues of all Descriptions of cheating their honest Creditors, and ruining the Widow and Orphan; and this is certainly a sufficient Reason why the new Constitution should be rejected, and why those distinguished and excellent Characters who framed it should be slandered, vilified and abused.

*Scituate, November, 1787.*

1. “An Officer of the Late Continental Army,” perhaps written by Pennsylvania Anti-federalist leader William Findley, was printed in the Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer* on 6 November (RCS:Pa., 210–16). In Rhode Island “An Officer” was reprinted in the *Providence Gazette* on 24 November at the request of “a number” of the *Gazette’s* “Customers.”

In the 10 November issue of the Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, “An Officer’s” twenty-three objections to the Constitution were answered point by point by “Plain Truth” (RCS:Pa., 215–23). On 1 December the *Providence Gazette* reprinted “Plain Truth.”

#### Editors’ Note

#### The Rhode Island Reprinting of George Mason’s Objections to the New Constitution, 29 November 1787

On 17 September George Mason, one of Virginia’s delegates to the Constitutional Convention who was active in the debates, refused to sign the Constitution even though he advocated strengthening the central government. According to Mason, the Constitution created too powerful a central government and did not sufficiently protect the rights and liberties of the people. Consequently, Mason wanted a bill of rights appended to the Constitution. After the Convention adjourned, Mason and others widely circulated manuscript copies of his objections to the Constitution.

To combat Mason’s objections and those of the Constitution’s two other non-signers (Edmund Randolph and Elbridge Gerry), some newspapers let loose a barrage of brief negative items against the three men, several of which were reprinted in Rhode Island. On 17 October the *Pennsylvania Gazette* reported that it had heard from Virginia that Mason “has been treated with every possible mark of contempt and neglect, for neglecting to sign the Fœderal Constitution” (CC:171–B). The *Providence Gazette* reprinted this item on 27 October. On 17 October the *Pennsylvania Journal* reported that the mayor and corporation of Alexandria came out “to express their abhorrence” for Mason’s failure to sign the Constitution and to advise him to leave town quickly for “his personal safety” (CC:171–A). This item appeared in the *Newport Herald* on 1 November. On the same day the *United States Chronicle*

printed a brief item that was apparently based on the two items appearing above. “By authentic Advices from Virginia,” declared the *Chronicle*, “we learn, That there can be no Doubt it will be adopted there by a very great Majority of the Citizens; and that George Mason, Esq; a Member from that State to the Federal Convention, who refused to sign the Constitution, had received many Marks of Indignity and Insult from the Populace in his County” (Mfm:Va. 13).

On 25 October George Mason debated the merits of calling a state convention in the Virginia House of Delegates. Mason refused to give his reasons for not signing the Constitution, saying he would do so at “a proper season.” He declared that “no man was more completely federal in his principles than he was” and that “some general government” had to be established. He had “weighed” every article of the Constitution “deeply and maturely” and declared that he could not approve it. Had he signed the Constitution, stated Mason, “I might have been justly regarded as a traitor to my country. I would have lost this hand, before it should have marked my name to the new government” (Petersburg *Virginia Gazette*, 1 November [RCS:Va., 113–14]). This speech, which reflected well on Mason’s actions, was reprinted in the *United States Chronicle* on 29 November from the *Alexandria Virginia Journal* of 8 November.

On 21 November the *Massachusetts Centinel* printed Mason’s objections under the heading “*The Hon. GEORGE MASON’S Objections to the New Constitution.*” In a prefatory statement the *Centinel* informed its readers that it had received the objections from “a correspondent at New-York, who frequently furnishes us with authentick information from that quarter.” The *Centinel*, however, did not include the paragraph critical of the constitutional provision allowing a simple majority of Congress to enact navigation laws. The omitted paragraph was printed by the *Centinel* on 19 December, preceded by an extract of a letter from the New York correspondent. The correspondent explained that he had received the objections from “a certain antifederal character” who had deliberately deleted the paragraph. Such conduct, stated the correspondent, was “Machiavelian”; Antifederalists “ought no longer to complain of deception.” The *Centinel’s* incomplete version was reprinted in twenty-two newspapers by 7 January 1788, while the omitted paragraph was reprinted in four of these newspapers by 3 January. (A second version of Mason’s objections was printed in the *Virginia Journal* on 22 November 1787 [CC:276–B] and a third version in the *Winchester Virginia Gazette* on 23 November. Neither the second nor the third versions of Mason’s objections were reprinted in Rhode Island.)

On 29 November the *United States Chronicle* reprinted Mason’s objections from the *Massachusetts Centinel* under the heading provided by the



*Centinel*, but it did not reprint the prefatory statement. On 27 December the *Chronicle* reprinted the omitted paragraph concerning navigation laws and the extract of the New York correspondent's letter.

Mason's objections were widely criticized, though no original critique of them was printed in any Rhode Island newspaper. One of Mason's chief critics and the most important reprinted in Rhode Island was "Landholder" (Oliver Ellsworth). "Landholder" VI and VIII first appeared in the *Connecticut Courant* and *American Mercury*, 10 and 24 December (CC:335, 371). "Landholder" VI was reprinted in the *United States Chronicle*, 27 December, and the *Providence Gazette*, 5 January 1788, while VIII was reprinted in the *Chronicle* on 17 January.

"Landholder" VI, aimed directly at George Mason, charged that Mason's objections were revised in New York by fellow Virginian Richard Henry Lee "and by him brought into their present artful and insidious form." Mason, stated "Landholder," turned against the Constitution in the Convention when the two-thirds rule for the passage of navigation laws by Congress failed. The lack of a bill of rights, one of Mason's chief objections, did not concern "Landholder," who claimed that since the government originated "from the people" such bills were unnecessary. "Landholder" VIII accused Mason and Gerry of being duplicitous and disingenuous. "Landholder" reiterated his charge about Mason and the passage of navigation laws. (See "The Rhode Island Reprinting of the Landholder Essays," 6 December 1787–8 May 1788, below.)

On 3 April the *Newport Herald* reprinted a brief item from the *Pennsylvania Gazette* of 16 January in which a correspondent asserted that Mason had moved in the Constitutional Convention to make wealth a qualification for officeholding. The correspondent also maintained that Mason "never bestowed a single hour of all his long and numerous speeches" on the need for a bill of rights. (There was no truth in either charge.)

For the text of Mason's objections, the omitted paragraph that was printed later in the *Massachusetts Centinel*, the circulation of the objections, and commentaries upon them, see CC:276 A–D.

### Editors' Note

#### **The Rhode Island Reprinting of Benjamin Franklin's Last Speech in the Constitutional Convention, 6–20 December 1787**

On 17 September, the final day of the Constitutional Convention, the engrossed Constitution was read and emended. James Wilson read a speech written by fellow Pennsylvania delegate Benjamin Franklin in which Franklin gave his reasons for supporting the Constitution, even though he did not approve its every provision. Franklin did not list his

objections, nor did he express them outside the Convention. He believed that a strong central government was needed and it was unlikely any other convention could produce a better constitution. Franklin was astonished the Constitution approached “so near to perfection.” He expected “no better” and was “not sure that it is not the best.” To give the people greater confidence in the document, Franklin asked each delegate to sign it. All but three delegates did so.

On 14 November Franklin sent a copy of the speech to Nathaniel Gorham of Massachusetts. Gorham had requested it so that he could get it published. He then edited the speech and submitted it to the *Boston Gazette*, a newspaper that had been in the forefront of the revolutionary movement against Great Britain and that had printed letters or extracts from Franklin in previous years. The *Gazette* prefaced its publication of the letter: “The following ADDRESS of His Excellency BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, Esquire, to the PRESIDENT of the late Continental Convention, was delivered by him *immediately* before his Signing the proposed Constitution for the United States.—It may be relied on as AUTHENTIC—coming from a gentleman of respectability.”

By 21 December the speech was reprinted twenty-six times throughout America. In Rhode Island, it appeared in the *United States Chronicle*, 6 December, the *Providence Gazette*, 8 December, and the *Newport Herald*, 20 December. Another version of the speech was printed in the *Virginia Independent Chronicle* on 5 December. By 16 February 1788 this copy was reprinted in ten newspapers, a Richmond pamphlet anthology, and the December issue of the nationally circulated Philadelphia *American Museum*.

In Rhode Island, “Candidus” encouraged every writer on the Constitution to write with Franklin’s “generous spirit” and “if all who read would consider the fallibility of their own judgment, how much would it facilitate a fair enquiry into its merits?” (For the complete statement by “Candidus,” which appeared in the *Providence Gazette* on 22 December, see “The Rhode Island Reprinting of Extracts from ‘A Citizen of America,’ ” 22–29 December 1787, below.)

For the text of Franklin’s speech, its circulation, and the commentaries upon it, see RCS:Mass., 369–80, and CC:77 (manuscript version).

#### Editors’ Note

#### The Rhode Island Reprinting of the Centinel Essays 6 December 1787–2 February 1788

Eighteen Antifederalist essays signed “Centinel” were printed between 5 October 1787 and 9 April 1788, primarily in two Philadelphia

newspapers—the *Independent Gazetteer* and the *Freeman's Journal*. The essays circulated widely. For example, “Centinel” I was reprinted in thirteen newspapers (with seven more papers reprinting a lone paragraph); “Centinel” II six times; and “Centinel” III and VII five times. Only these numbers were reprinted in Rhode Island (see below).

The author of the essays was Philadelphian Samuel Bryan, the eldest son of Antifederalist leader George Bryan, who was himself often accused of writing them. The essays analyzed the nature and provisions of the Constitution and the motives and methods of its framers and supporters. According to “Centinel,” the drafting of the Constitution, done in secrecy, was a conspiracy to establish a despotic aristocratic government. The Constitution created a consolidated government that would annihilate the sovereignty of the states. The powers of Congress were too extensive, especially in the areas of taxation and the military, and the Senate was an aristocratic body. Most importantly, the Constitution lacked a bill of rights. These sweeping criticisms by “Centinel” were issued with considerable personal invective.

“Centinel” I (*Independent Gazetteer*, 5 October 1787, CC:133), was reprinted in the *Providence Gazette*, 3 November (brief excerpt), and the *United States Chronicle*, 6 December (long excerpt); II (*Freeman's Journal*, 24 October, CC:190), in the *United States Chronicle*, 20, 27 December; III (*Independent Gazetteer*, 8 November, CC:243), in the *United States Chronicle*, 3 January 1788; and VII (*Independent Gazetteer*, 29 December 1787, CC:394), in the *Providence Gazette*, 2 February 1788.

On 16 February 1788, eleven days after “Centinel” XIV (CC:501) appeared, the Federalist *Pennsylvania Mercury* published a spurious “Centinel” XV, a devastating satire that was reprinted, in whole or in part, sixteen times (CC:534). (See below in this Editors’ Note for the Rhode Island reprinting of the spurious “Centinel” XV.)

When the *United States Chronicle* reprinted a long excerpt from “Centinel” I, it prefaced the reprint with a 29 November 1787 note from “A” to the editor: “SIR, Some Pieces have appeared in the Philadelphia Papers, under the Signature of ‘Centinel’ containing Animadversions on the proposed national Constitution; a Number of your Readers, particularly in the Country, wish to see them republished in your Paper—I enclose you three of them, and request you to insert them, as soon as possible.”

On 10 January 1788, a week after the *United States Chronicle* reprinted “Centinel” III, the editor of the *Chronicle* printed a note addressed to him by “A Friend to good Government,” which stated: “I observe you have begun the Publication of the PHILADELPHIA CENTINEL—when you have got through the three Numbers announced, you will oblige several

of your Readers by publishing, from the Papers enclosed, the Pieces signed UNCUS; which, I think, every candid Mind must allow, contain complete Refutations of the principal Charges brought by that Writer against the new Constitution.”

“Uncus,” which appeared below this note, goaded “Centinel” to produce a plan superior to the Constitution. He also defended Benjamin Franklin and George Washington from criticism by “Centinel.” Franklin was too old to know what he was doing, and Washington had been duped, according to “Centinel.” “Uncus” saw no need for a bill of rights, and he denied that Congress would be controlled by an aristocratic junto (*Maryland Journal*, 9 November 1787, CC:247). (In the same issue, the *United States Chronicle* printed a second essay by “Uncus” attacking “Centinel” that had appeared in the *Maryland Journal* on 30 November, RCS:Md.).

On 10 January 1788 the *Newport Herald* reprinted a satirical “ADVERTISEMENT” from the *New Haven Gazette*, 13 December 1787 (CC:283–C), about “a large overgrown Creature marked *and branded* CENTINEL” that had broken into Connecticut from New York, where it had been kept and pampered by New York Antifederalists. This creature “was considerably *galled* and *fretted* before she left Pennsylvania, by the lash of Mr. Wilson, which caused her to quit the place of her nativity.” Although James Wilson did not mention by name “Centinel” I, which was printed on 5 October, his 6 October speech was in part a response to it (see “The Rhode Island Reprinting of James Wilson’s State House Speech,” 18–27 October, above).

On 22 and 27 March 1788, respectively, the *Providence Gazette* and the *Newport Herald* continued the assault on “Centinel” by reprinting the spurious “Centinel” XV. The *Providence Gazette* remarked that the essay was “Inserted by particular desire” from the *Pennsylvania Mercury*, while the *Newport Herald* noted only that the essay was from a Philadelphia newspaper.

For the texts of the “Centinel” essays reprinted in Rhode Island, see the citations to *Commentaries on the Constitution* in this Editors’ Note. For general remarks about “Centinel’s” circulation and the commentaries upon it, see CC:133.

#### Editors’ Note

#### The Rhode Island Reprinting of the Landholder Essays 6 December 1787–8 May 1788

“Landholder,” written by Oliver Ellsworth, a Connecticut delegate to the Constitutional Convention and future chief justice of the United

States, consists of thirteen essays supporting the Constitution. Each essay appeared simultaneously in two Hartford newspapers: the *Connecticut Courant* and the *American Mercury*. Numbers I–IX were printed weekly between 5 November and 31 December 1787, and X–XIII weekly from 3 to 24 March 1788. Another essay, “Landholder” X, probably not written by Ellsworth, was printed in the *Maryland Journal* on 29 February.

Ellsworth’s thirteen essays were among the most widely circulated in America. In Rhode Island, numbers IV–VI, VIII, XII, and XIII were reprinted. Numbers IV–V (26 November, 3 December 1787, CC:295, 316) were reprinted in the *United States Chronicle*, 6, 20 December; VI (10 December, CC:335) in the *Chronicle*, 27 December, and *Providence Gazette*, 5 January 1788; VIII (24 December 1787, CC:371) in the *Chronicle*, 17 January 1788; XII (17 March, CC:622) in the *Chronicle* and *Newport Herald*, 27 March, and *Providence Gazette*, 29 March; and XIII (24 March, CC:641) in the *Chronicle*, 10 April. The Maryland essay numbered X (29 February, CC:580) was reprinted in the *Chronicle* on 8 May.

Numbers IV–VI and VIII of the “Landholder” were responses to Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts and George Mason of Virginia, two of the three men who had refused to sign the Constitution in the Constitutional Convention. Numbers IV, V, and VIII were remarks upon Gerry’s letter of 18 October 1787 to the Massachusetts legislature enumerating his reasons for not signing the Constitution. (For the text of Gerry’s letter, see *Massachusetts Centinel*, 3 November [CC:227–A].) The *United States Chronicle* prefaced its reprinting of “Landholder” VIII with this statement: “A Customer requests you to publish the following, from a late Connecticut Paper, in your next Chronicle.” Number VI was a response to George Mason’s objections to the Constitution that had circulated in manuscript and printed forms for months. (For the manuscript version of Mason’s objections, dated 7 October 1787, see CC:138–B; and for the printed versions, see *Massachusetts Centinel*, 21 November [CC:276–A], and the *Virginia Journal*, 22 November [CC:276–B].) (See also “The Rhode Island Reprinting of Elbridge Gerry’s Letter to the Massachusetts Legislature,” 8–10 November 1787, and “The Rhode Island Reprinting of George Mason’s Objections to the New Constitution,” 29 November [both above].)

“Landholder” XII was addressed “To the Rhode-Island Friends of PAPER-MONEY, TENDER ACTS and ANTIFEDERALISM.” The reprinting by the *United States Chronicle* included a preface signed by “A”: “A Number of your Readers request you to publish, in our impartial Chronicle, the following ADDRESS.—That it may have a proper Effect upon the Minds

of our present Rulers, as well as upon the great Body of the Freeholders, is the earnest Wish of every real Friend to the State.” The reprint in the *Providence Gazette* noted that the essay had been “Inserted by Request.” The reprint of number XIII was prefaced by the *United States Chronicle* with the following: “The following REMARKS apply, in a particular Manner, to the State of Rhode-Island—we have therefore copied them, not doubting but that they will be acceptable to our Readers.”

Scathing criticisms of “Landholder” XII were published by “A real Federalist” in the *United States Chronicle* on 27 March and by “Lycurgus” in the *Chronicle* on 3 April. Both writers accused “Landholder” of being a public defaulter. On 8 May the *Chronicle* printed an item from “the Author of the *Landholder*” that responded to “A real Federalist.” Historians have not attributed the item to the Connecticut “Landholder.” (See III below for all three items.)

“Landholder” X, the one written by the Maryland “Landholder,” was a response to Antifederalist Luther Martin’s defense of Elbridge Gerry. Martin, a Maryland member of the Constitutional Convention and an opponent of the Constitution, left before the Constitution was signed. He published his objections as *Genuine Information* in twelve installments in the Baltimore *Maryland Gazette* between 28 December 1787 and 8 February 1788 (CC:389).

For general comments on the circulation of “Landholder” and the commentaries upon the essays, see “Landholder” I, *Connecticut Courant*, 5 November 1787 (CC:230). For the texts of the “Landholder” essays reprinted in Rhode Island, see the citations to *Commentaries on the Constitution* in this Editors’ Note.

### **Brown & Benson to Champion & Dickason Providence, 8 December 1787 (excerpt)<sup>1</sup>**

... We notice in your Letter of the 6th July, the regret you express “on the situation of your friends in this Town” and the enquiry you subjoin wether a remedy is not in the power of the respectable families in this Place & others in the state—on this remark we must observe that you Cannot Conceive the embarrassments which we suffer as the Great Majority of our Rulers are Compos’d of the Common People in the Country who are uninfluenc’d by the Principles of reputation or Justice. . . .

1. FC, Brown Papers, RPJCB. George Benson (1752–1836), a former Boston merchant, was a partner of Nicholas Brown, Sr., in a Providence mercantile firm. Alexander Champion and Thomas Dickason were London merchants. In 1792, this firm successfully argued in federal court that a Rhode Island statute, which gave Silas Casey, a Rhode Island

debtor, a three-year exemption “from all arrests and attachments” arising from his indebtedness, was an unconstitutional violation of the contract clause of the U.S. Constitution (Article I, section 10). The decision marked the first exercise of judicial review by a federal court.

**Vir.**

**Providence United States Chronicle, 13 December 1787**

*To the Editor of the United States Chronicle.*

SIR, In your paper of the 6th inst. I observed a small anonymous piece, entitled “*An Anecdote of the Author of the Centinels, and other anti-federal pieces in Philadelphia;*”<sup>1</sup> in which anonymous piece is related a certain dishonest piece of conduct, of which it is asserted (*though much doubted*) that the author of the said Centinel was guilty;—after which the anonymous assertor puts the following question—“*Whose opinion or advice should we now follow, respecting the new Federal Government—this dishonest old Scribbler’s, or the great and good General Washington’s?*” —I will answer Mr. Querist, that, I would not *implicitly* follow the advice or opinion of *either*; especially in matters of great moment and concern, where I (as a free-born American) had a *right* to judge and act for *myself*. It is true that the name of *Washington* carries with it a lustre that is not easily to be defaced—but this respects *only* his *military* character;—as a *politician* or *legislator* he is not known: But supposing him to be as renowned in this *latter* as in the *former* character, does it of course follow, that his advice or opinion, respecting the new Constitution, is *implicitly* to be followed by a *free* and *enlightened* people? That *liberty*, for which America is *renowned*, starts at so *horrid* an idea;—such an *implicit* obedience will answer for those who are *base* enough to relinquish their dear-bought privileges; but a *true* American, who is willing to have an opinion of his *own*, *despises* the thought of thus meanly deserting his American *birth-right*.

This is not the first time that the name of *Washington* has been used in this *pusillanimous* manner, in order to hurry an acceptance of the new Constitution: Even before any of the proceedings of the Convention had transpired, the names of *Washington*, *Franklin*, &c.<sup>2</sup> were banded about to get the people’s minds ready for reception of whatever should transpire from that *illustrious body of patriots*.—Whether the *bantling* would be *black* or *white*, was not to be a matter of *free* discussion with the people, but *they*, forsooth, must at all hazards *adopt* and *foster* the new-born ruler, in whatever *garb* it might come attired; and after its introduction to the public, for want of better arguments, still a list of *patriot’s names* has been sounded to enforce it on the unwary and unthinking part of the community; and thus distinguished *characters*

have been used as *poking-sticks* to *ram* down their highly estimated plan of (*tyrannic*) government.—And after a free discussion of the subject by the Centinel, of Philadelphia,<sup>3</sup> and others, the *sticklers* for this *new* plan, instead of confronting its opponents with reasonable arguments, *for want thereof*, they betake themselves to their old *hacknied* argument of—“*it is General Washington’s opinion and advice;*” and in order to enforce the said *much-caressed* argument, Mr. Querist pretends to have found something against the moral character of the *Philadelphia Centinel*, which he pleasingly contrasts with the character of *General Washington*, thereby intending to invalidate the *force* of the Centinel’s reasoning: But who are there amongst us of so degenerate minds, as to judge of pieces whether reasonable or unreasonable, from the character of the writer?—It matters not with me whether a *Gabriel* or a *Lucifer* may be the author—are his *productions* worthy of acceptance (without consideration of the person) is the only query of a *free-thinking* mind:—On this *free mode* of thinking (without pinning *my* faith on the sleeves of *others*) I dare credit the testimony of a known *villain*, if what he declares appears to be *true*; and on this same *free mode* of thinking, I dare *discard* whatever appears fallacious, if coming *even* from a *Gabriel* or a *Washington*. The *free* genius of America is not to be thus *bullied* into the sinister views of the *designing* part of the community, by the glare of *titles*, the shining string of *dignified names*, and the *pompous* parade of *illustrious patriots*.—Such stale arguments will not answer with *those* who are *sagacious* enough to judge of *persons* by their *performances*, instead of judging *performances* by the dignity of their *authors*. By this candid mode of judging, it will be easy to ascertain who are the *real* friends of America, and who are *inimical* to the *true* cause of liberty—however dignified they may *appear* in character or title.

*Providence, December 8, 1787.*

1. See *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 14 November (CC:258).

2. For George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, especially the former, see CC:40–B, 42, 47–B, 49, and 52.

3. See especially “Centinel” I, *Philadelphia Independent Gazetteer*, 5 October (CC:133), and the editorial note thereto. In addition to outlining in detail his objections to the Constitution, “Centinel” criticized the use of the reputations of Washington and Franklin in encouraging support for the Constitution. Advocates for the Constitution were particularly critical of these statements by “Centinel”: “These characters flatter themselves that they have lulled all distrust and jealousy of their new plan, by gaining the concurrence of the two men in whom America has the highest confidence, and now triumphantly exult in the completion of their long meditated schemes of power and aggrandisement. I would be very far from insinuating that the two illustrious personages alluded to, have not the welfare of their country at heart; but that the unsuspecting goodness and zeal of the one, has been imposed on, in a subject of which he must be necessarily



inexperienced, from his other arduous engagements; and that the weakness and indecision attendant on old age, has been practised on in the other" (p. 330).

**Providence United States Chronicle, 13 December 1787<sup>1</sup>**

Mr. WHEELER,

I request you to publish the following in your impartial Paper.

After the proposed Federal Constitution takes place—suppose you, or some other patriotic Printer, should publish a Piece, in which some Proceedings of the Continental legislature were freely commented upon—and the Attorney-General should be ordered to prosecute the Printer for a Libel; in that case, I take it, as the United States are a Party, the Continental Court will have *appellate* jurisdiction, both as to law and *fact*;—of course in that Court the Printer would be tried, and condemned *without a jury*, and by judges appointed by one of the parties, viz. the United States.—I desire some candid friend to the constitution would inform me whether this would not be the case?

Again,—Suppose the Continental legislature should pass an act appointing in every State a person, whose duty it should be to examine all pieces, previous to their being published in the news-papers, and directing that no Printer, on penalty of £500, should publish any pieces, unless they had been previously approved by said *Licenser*—I say, in case such an act should be passed, would it not "*be the supreme law of the land;—any thing in the Constitution, or laws of any State to the contrary notwithstanding?*"<sup>2</sup>—Some friend to the new constitution would oblige me, and several others, by giving a candid answer to these queries.

Glocester, Dec. 11, 1787.

1. Reprinted: *New York Morning Post*, 7 January 1788. On 3 January the *United States Chronicle* printed an item by "Z," which asked the "Friends of the proposed Federal Government" why some of them did not "answer the Glocester-Man, who asked some Questions about the Press" (below).

2. From Article VI, clause 2, of the Constitution.

**Editors' Note**

**The Rhode Island Reprinting of James Wilson's Speech to the Pennsylvania Convention, 15 December 1787**

The Pennsylvania Convention convened on 20 November and for the next three days it considered housekeeping matters. On Saturday, 24 November, Federalist Thomas McKean, chief justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, moved "That this Convention do assent to and ratify the Constitution." He did not desire an immediate vote; rather, he was seeking to have the Constitution discussed fully and fairly. Following

McKean's brief remarks, James Wilson, a former delegate to the Constitutional Convention, discussed the difficulties encountered by the Constitutional Convention, where much diversity of opinion, interest, and prejudice had existed. He spoke about the deficiency of ancient and modern republics in governing for an extensive empire. Wilson harshly criticized the present government under the Articles of Confederation for its lack of energy and praised the Constitution, which had created the kind of energetic government needed to restore credit and happiness in America. Wilson's speech attracted much attention, and he faced criticism and praise alike.

The text of Wilson's speech was reprinted in newspapers throughout America and was printed as a pamphlet offered for sale on 28 November by its printer, Thomas Bradford of the *Pennsylvania Journal* (Evans 20889). At about the same time, summaries of Wilson's speech were printed in the *Pennsylvania Packet* and *Pennsylvania Herald* on 27 and 28 November, respectively. On 15 December the *Providence Gazette*, "at the Request of a Number of our Readers," reprinted the text of Wilson's speech from the pamphlet. On 13 and 22 December, respectively, the summaries of the speech were reprinted in the *United States Chronicle* and *Newport Mercury*. By 27 December these summaries were reprinted throughout America in twenty-five newspapers.

For the texts of the summaries of Wilson's speech and the pamphlet version of his speech, see RCS:Pa., 334–36, 339–50. For the circulation and commentaries upon Wilson's speech, see CC:289.

### **Hopkinton Town Meetings, 17 December 1787–14 February 1788<sup>1</sup>**

#### *17 December 1787 (excerpts)*

At a Town Meeting (held by adjournment) at Mr. Thompson Wells' in Hopkinton, in the County of Washington, in the State of Rhode Island & Providence Plantations on Monday December 17th AD 1787

Voted that Samuel Babcock Esq. be Moderator in Stead of Matthew Maxson Esqr who is absent—

Voted that Matthew Maxson Esqr. Edward Wells Esqr. Samuel Babcock Esqr. Hezekiah Babcock Esqr. Henry Clarke Esqr. Francis West Esqr. Col George Thurston Joseph Witter Jun Esqr. Thomas Wells Esqr. Majr Thomas Wells, Phinehas Miner Esqr. Ross Coon Esqr. Mr. Joseph Barber, Mr. Samuel Gardner Mr. Zebulon Weaver & Mr. Daniel White be a Committee to consider the System or federal Constitution, of the Convention held at Philadelphia on the 17th of September last & that they Receive or Reject the Same, or any particular part or Clause thereof; & that they Serve agreeable to sd appointment without Expence to the

Town; & Report thereon in Town Meeting at Mr. Thompson Wells' on the 1st. Wednesday in Feby. next. . . .

Voted that this Town Meeting be adjourned to Thursday the 27th Day of December Inst at 12 o'Clock then to meet at this place—

*27 December 1787*

At a Town Meeting (held by adjournment) at Mr. Thompson Wells' in Hopkinton on Thursday the 27th Day of December AD 1787—

Samuel Babcock Esqr. Moderator—

Voted that John Maxson Esqr. be a Committee Man in addition to the Committee appointed at our last Town Meeting, to Consider with Regard to the proceedings of the Convention held at Philadelphia in Sept. last, and that he Serve as the others of said Committee (viz) without Expence to this Town—

Voted that this Town Meeting be adjourned to Wednesday the 6th. Day of Feb. next, then to meet at this place at Twelve of Clock Noon on sd Day

*14 February 1788 (excerpts)*

At a Town Meeting held in Hopkinton on the 14th Day of February AD 1788. at Mr. Thompson Wells' by Adjournment—

Capt. Samuel Babcock Moderator. . . .

Whereas the Town of Hopkinton on the 17th. Day of December last, appointed a Committee to consider with regard to the proposed Constitution, of the Grand Convention, of the United States held at Philadelphia in September AD 1787—And agreeable to the appointment of said Committee they met and agreed that a Convention be appointed &c.—

Voted that the Report of the Committee aforesd. be not Received—

Voted that the Representatives for this Town use their Endeavours, in the General Assembly, to be holden at Providence, on the last Monday in February Inst. that the proposed Constitution, of the United States Convention held in Sept. last be Rejected—

Copy given . . .

1. MS, Town Records, 1786–1824, Vol. 2, Town Hall, Hopkinton, R.I.

#### Editors' Note

#### The Rhode Island Reprinting of Extracts from "A Citizen of America," 22–29 December 1787

In early October 1787 grammarian and educator Noah Webster wrote a pamphlet supporting the new Constitution. In the previous year, Webster, a native of Connecticut living in Philadelphia, had published a tract

supporting the establishment of a strong central government (Evans 19366).

Signed "A Citizen of America" and dated 10 October, Webster's fifty-five-page pamphlet was printed and offered for sale on 17 October by Prichard and Hall of Philadelphia under the title *An Examination into the Leading Principles of the Federal Constitution Proposed by the Late Convention Held at Philadelphia. With Answers to the Principal Objections that Have Been Raised Against the System* (Evans 20865).

"A Citizen of America" is comprised of (1) a defense of two-house legislatures, (2) a comparison of the Constitution with the Roman and British constitutions, (3) a delineation of the powers of the central government vis-a-vis the powers of the state governments, (4) specific answers to nine Antifederalist objections to the Constitution, (5) a discussion of the nature of government and freedom, and (6) a statement praising the Constitution and the men who drafted it.

The pamphlet sold briskly in Philadelphia in 1787 and 1788 and it was also advertised for sale in New York City, Lancaster, Pa., and Norfolk, Va. Webster himself sent copies to people in different parts of America. Long extracts from the pamphlet were reprinted in three newspapers: the *New Haven Gazette*, 29 November; the *Springfield, Mass., Hampshire Chronicle*, 11 December; and the *Providence Gazette*, 22, 29 December. The *Providence Gazette* reprinted the last twenty-six pages of the pamphlet that were concerned with such matters as the powers of Congress, answers to the nine principal but "mostly frivolous" objections to the Constitution, the correction of "erroneous opinions" of freedom and tyranny, government and military power, the relations of freedom and power to property, the historical role of the struggle for liberty, and the reasons why the Constitution had to be adopted. Webster concluded that the Constitution was "an *improvement* on the *best* constitutions that the world ever saw."

The pamphlet extract that was reprinted by the *Providence Gazette* was done at the request of "Candidus," whose following address to the printer appeared as a preface to the extract:

As the present moment is pregnant with concerns of the greatest consequence to the community, and may involve the condition of unnumbered millions yet unborn, so it becomes us candidly to examine that subject which will mark the present day as a new æra in the progress of society.—The public mind is violently agitated about questions of a political nature, and I doubt not is honestly seeking after truth, and will readily embrace that side of the question which shall appear to contribute most to the public weal.

The writers on either side should not therefore attempt to mislead the public, by false glosses and misconstructions—nor alarm them

by groundless jealousies and surmises—nor irritate their opponents, and fix them on the broad basis of resentment, by polluting fair reasonings with personal abuse and invective.

If every writer on the proposed Constitution would write with the generous spirit which actuated Dr. Franklin when he signed it—and if all who read would consider the fallibility of their own judgment, how much would it facilitate a fair enquiry into its merits? [See “The Rhode Island Reprinting of Benjamin Franklin’s Last Speech before the Constitutional Convention,” 6–20 December 1787, above.]

When I advocate the present plan, I desire to do it, Sir, not because I think it a perfect one, but “because I expect no better, and because I am not sure that it is not the best.” With these sentiments and feelings, I wish you to present to the public eye, through the channel of your extensively useful paper, the following extract from a pamphlet published in Philadelphia, October 10, 1787, containing “answers to the principal objections that have been made against the system, by a Citizen of America.”

The *Providence Gazette*’s publication of the extract from Webster’s pamphlet touched off a newspaper exchange between Federalist printer John Carter (perhaps “Cid Hamet” and “J. Carter,” *Providence Gazette*, 22, 29 December) and two writers who published in the *United States Chronicle* on 27 December—“A Pamphlet-Monger” and “One of the Pamphlet-Mongers.” This scurrilous and personal newspaper war, in which the freedom of the press was a major issue, included: “A Country Customer,” “A Pamphlet-Monger,” and “Thorn,” *United States Chronicle*, 3 January 1788; anonymous and “Upland Thorn,” *ibid.*, 10 January; “A Customer” and “A Customer,” *ibid.*, 17 January; anonymous, *Providence Gazette*, 19 January; “Original Thorn,” *United States Chronicle*, 24 January; “Satietas,” *Providence Gazette*, 26 January; “The Operator,” *United States Chronicle*, 31 January; “Satietas,” *Providence Gazette*, 2 February; and a piece by David Howell denying he was “Cid Hamet” in the *Providence Gazette*, 2 February. (All of these items are in Mfm:R.I.)

For a photographic facsimile of “A Citizen of America,” see Mfm:Pa. 142. (For the text reprinted by the *Providence Gazette*, see Mfm:Pa. 142, pp. 738–63.) For an editorial note providing information on the pamphlet’s circulation and commentaries upon it, see CC:173.

#### Editors’ Note

#### The Rhode Island Reprinting of the Philadelphiensis Essays 22 December 1787–3 March 1788

Between 7 November 1787 and 9 April 1788, two Philadelphia newspapers—the *Independent Gazetteer* and the *Freeman’s Journal*—published

a series of twelve Antifederalist essays signed “Philadelphiensis” that were written by Benjamin Workman, a mathematics tutor at the University of Pennsylvania. The *Gazetteer* published all twelve essays; the *Journal* published all except V, VII, and XI. Seven numbers were reprinted outside of Philadelphia and only VIII was reprinted in its entirety more than twice. In Rhode Island the *Providence Gazette* reprinted “Philadelphiensis” III, V, and VIII in their entirety and an excerpt of VI. The *Newport Mercury* reprinted “Philadelphiensis” III and VIII.

“A Rhode-Island Landholder” dismissed “Philadelphiensis,” “Centinel,” “and some other inflammatory writers” as men who “grossly misrepresent matters” (*United States Chronicle*, 20 March, RCS:R.I., 146–51).

For the circulation of and commentaries upon “Philadelphiensis,” see CC:237 A–C. For the texts of the “Philadelphiensis” essays reprinted in Rhode Island, see CC:320, 356, 382, 473.

## Hampden

**Newport Herald, 3 January 1788**

### TO THE PEOPLE.

When invasions are made upon the rights of property, when the name of Justice is debased to cover the vilest frauds, how can the virtuous citizen restrain his resentment? But, alas! as if born to be deluded, we have become the dupes of wicked and designing men, who raise their wealth by injustice, and perpetuate their power by artifice.

Did we but follow that excellent rule laid down by the great Searcher of Hearts, “*By their fruits ye shall know them,*”<sup>1</sup> we should not have thus long wandered in the mazes of deception and error; for their vaunted professions of “*Relief to the distressed*”<sup>2</sup> have long since vanished as the courtiers promise, and their predictions of prosperous times under their *wise* administration have passed over, unfulfilled, like the Gipsy’s tale.—Overheated in their system, they have unguardedly exposed their monster, while we gaze at it with astonishment as the harpy of society; but either from depravity or cowardice refuse to destroy it.

Know Ye’s after Know Ye’s still stigmatize our papers—tenders by iniquitous bills are yet received by our Supreme Judiciary while setting as a court of equity, and under solemn oath to do justice.—Inconsiderable in territory, in numbers and in wealth, as a State, yet we foolishly aspire after a separation from the Union.—The Convention when in session we treated with contempt by refusing to send delegates, and their recommendations of a new constitution, which is well calculated to render us once more respectable if we adopt it, are hung up to be forgotten.

Thus are we regardless of the dignity and well-being of the State.—Inattentive to the distresses that many have experienced by an unjust

tender law, and callous to the remonstrances of a virtuous minority who have nobly stemmed the unprincipled system—But we shall be aroused from this supineness when it may be too late to remedy—When the widows and orphans suffering by tenders assault our property, what law will be more infamous? when we are rejected from the confederacy, or divided among the adjacent States, what revolution will be more fatal and degrading.

Arouse then, my fellow-citizens, and shew that you still possess those virtues for which you were laureated in the late glorious struggle for independence.

“When the wolf is found devouring the flock, no hierarchy forbids a seizure of the victim for sacrifice; so also when impostures are caught destroying those whom their arts deceived and their stations destined them to protect,—the sabre of justice flashes righteousness at the stroke of execution.”<sup>3</sup>

1. Matthew 7:20. See also Matthew 7:16.

2. See “Glossary,” RCS:R.I., 319.

3. Josiah Quincy, Jr., *Observations on the Act of Parliament Commonly Called the Boston Port-Bill* . . . (Boston, 1774) (Evans 13561), 80–81.

### Newport Herald, 3 January 1788<sup>1</sup>

A Correspondent informs, that the paper money leaders flatter themselves that their unfederal conduct in not sending Delegates to Convention and not permitting the people to meet to consider the new Constitution, may cause them to be thrown out of the Union, and then they will become the Algiers of America: But if the United States should endeavor to suppress them, they will invite Britain to retake possession, and then they shall have the leeks and onions,<sup>2</sup> for which they long, as a reward.—But these harpies of society, says our Correspondent, may be assured, that Britain nor no power in Europe will ever be permitted to have a footing within the boundaries of the United States.—Sooner than such an event should take place, we should see our country wasted with destruction, our fields drenched with blood, and our little territory parcelled out among the adjacent states.

1. Reprinted seven times by 11 February: Vt. (1), N.H. (1), Mass. (2), Conn. (1), Pa. (2).

2. See Numbers 11:5.

“Z.”

### Providence United States Chronicle, 3 January 1788

Friend WHEELER, *Supposing thee to be an impartial Printer, I have enclosed a few Lines, which I expect to see published in thy next Chronicle.*

To the Friends of the proposed Federal Government.

A Friend of mine, at Philadelphia, sometime ago sent me an exact List of the Members who composed the late Federal Convention, in which I find 17 Names which are not signed to the proposed Plan of Government,—the List contains 54 Names,<sup>1</sup> so that but 3 Names more than Two-thirds of the Members are signed to it—although we are told, over and again that but Three refused signing it.—I believe, my Friends, you will be puzzled to reconcile this Matter.—One Word more—Why do not some of you answer the Gloucester-Man,<sup>2</sup> who asked some Questions about the Press, in the Paper before the last?

*E. Greenwich, 23d of 12th Month, 1787.*

1. Seventy-four delegates were elected to the Constitutional Convention but only fifty-five attended. On 17 September, the day the Constitution was signed, only forty-one delegates were present. Of the forty-one, three did not sign. However, there are thirty-nine signatures because Delawarean John Dickinson, who was absent on 15 and 17 September due to illness, asked fellow Delawarean George Read to sign for him.

2. See *United States Chronicle*, 13 December (above).

### Newport Herald, 10 January 1788<sup>1</sup>

#### A CARD.

The MINORITY of the *State of Rhode-Island and Providence-Plantations*, present their thanks to the late *federal* members of the State Convention of *Pennsylvania* for the obliging manner in which they expressed their approbation of their conduct, at the entertainment on the accession of the good people of that State to the new constitution.<sup>2</sup>

The approbation which their steady opposition to bad men and bad measures has received from the meritorious citizens of other States, and especially this mark of it from the *federal* delegates of *Pennsylvania*, the minority of this State esteem as the highest honor and the noblest recompence.

They look forward with pleasing expectation to that great epocha, which, by introducing the new constitution, will effectually check the daring violators of the sacred rights of men, secure property and freedom, and establish the liberty of the *United States of America*.

Then will the now oppressed minority of the *State of Rhode-Island and Providence-Plantations* with grateful hearts return the compliment, and in overflowing glasses toast the *glorious majority* of the *respectable State of Pennsylvania*.

1. Reprinted: Middletown, Conn., *Middlesex Gazette*, 4 February; *Maryland Journal*, 26 February; *Pennsylvania Mercury*, 4 March; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 5 March.

2. On 13 December 1787, the day after the Pennsylvania Convention ratified the Constitution, the members of the Convention, the members of the Pennsylvania Supreme



Executive Council, several members of Congress, and a number of citizens dined at Henry Epple's tavern in Philadelphia. They gave thirteen toasts, the eighth of which was "The virtuous minority of Rhode Island" (*Pennsylvania Packet*, 14 December [RCS:Pa., 607]). The *Packet's* report was reprinted thirty-seven times by 14 January 1788. In Rhode Island, it was reprinted in the *Newport Herald*, 27 December 1787; *United States Chronicle*, 3 January 1788; and *Providence Gazette*, 5 January.

### Newport Herald, 10 January 1788<sup>1</sup>

#### THE DAWN OF FEDERALISM.

At a town-meeting specially convened at Little-Compton, in this State, on the first day of January inst. for the purpose of considering the new federal constitution, it was voted that a committee be appointed to draw up instructions for their deputies in General Assembly, who reported accordingly instructions to Capt. George Simmons and Nathaniel Sailes,<sup>2</sup> Esq. their deputies, of which the following is an extract:—

"That being deeply impressed with a sense of the extreme need we stand in of a well organized and energetic national government; and viewing the New Federal Constitution as a plan of government well adapted to the present critical situation of our national affairs, we do therefore enjoin it on you (Gentlemen), as your<sup>3</sup> positive instructions, that you and each of you do use your utmost endeavors at the next session(s) of the General Assembly of this State, to have an act passed recommending it to the several towns in this State to choose delegates (to Meet in a State Convention) as soon as may be for the purpose of adopting or rejecting the new federal constitution agreeable to the requisition of the honorable the Continental Convention: And these our positive instructions, Gentlemen, you must not fail to execute on pain of procuring<sup>4</sup> our highest displeasure.

Submitted by (your humble Servts.),

<i>David Hilliard,</i> <i>Perez Richmond,</i> <i>John Davis,</i> <sup>5</sup>	}	Committee."
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Which report was accepted and passed as the instructions of the town of Little-Compton to their deputies in the General Assembly.

1. This item was reprinted in the *United States Chronicle*, 17 January, and in twenty-eight out-of-state newspapers by 3 March: N.H. (3), Mass. (7), Conn. (4), N.Y. (1), N.J. (2), Pa. (7), Md. (1), Va. (1), S.C. (2). It also appeared in the January issue of the nationally circulated *Philadelphia American Museum*, while the *New York Daily Advertiser*, 24 January, summarized the report. The summary was reprinted three times by 5 February: Pa. (1), Md. (2). Manuscript copies of the instructions are in the Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution at the Rhode Island State Archives and the Town Records, 1759–1855, Vol. 2, Town Hall, Little Compton, R.I. (The latter version is in Mfm:R.I.) The manuscript differs in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation from the *Newport Herald* version. Significant textual differences are noted in angle brackets and in notes 2–4.

2. Nathaniel Searle in both manuscripts, which is correct.
3. "Our" in both manuscripts.
4. "Incurring" in both manuscripts.
5. When Rhode Island finally called a convention to consider the Constitution, Little Compton was represented by Davis and William Ladd, both of whom voted to ratify in May 1790.

### **Worcester Magazine, 10 January 1788<sup>1</sup>**

A gentleman from Rodeisland says, that the inhabitants of that State begin to think seriously of calling a State Convention to take into consideration the proposed Federal Constitution.

1. Reprinted nineteen times by 27 March: N.H. (3), Mass. (6), Conn. (4), Pa. (4), Md. (1), S.C. (1).

### **Columbus**

#### **Newport Herald, 17 January 1788**

That every thing will work together for our good, is a truth applicable in politics as well as in morals; for though vice may prevail, and impious men bear way, yet we may presume that if we faint not in a continuance of well doing, the disorders of society will be so directed by HIM who governeth every event, as to produce the greatest national happiness. How unbecoming then, is it the dignity of a virtuous man to despair, even when assailed by the most virulent perverters of justice!—how disgraceful to the character of a christian, to relinquish a well grounded trust, and bemoan, for whom does he labour and bereave himself of rest!—yet such is the frailty of human foresight that present prospects too often bound the mind.

When insurrections reared its hydra head in a neighbouring state,<sup>1</sup> and fraud usurped the seat of justice in another;—in the first, government was vibrating between a laudable firmness and base pusillanimity; in the latter, industry threw away her implements of labour as the garb of servitude, or to secure the salvage of her earnings from the further wrecks of Know Ye's;—while the widow already bitterly wounded, embraced the parchment conveying her dower and her orphans legacy, as the corps of her last earthly friend:—Painfully aggravated were these evils inasmuch as they were perpetrated by those whom we once dignified with the title of brethren,—illy prepared were we to support so base degeneracy, having but just terminated a long and bloody war, and flattered ourselves, that every principle essential to a rising republic was fixt as the eternal hills,—but had we attended to the history of ancient and modern nations, which have figured on the earth, we

should have found that none ever was established in peace and order, without repeated struggles and severe conflicts;—examine the progress of Britain, in attaining her zenith of glory in 1763, and this remark will be verified in all her gradations;—but let us turn to scenes that we have been more conversant in, those in which we were the actors.—How arduous were they?—without, a powerful and implacable enemy; within, lurked vultures preying on our vitals;—yet that Being who led our ancestors into this new land, who caused the wild places to become fruitful, and the savages to give way for their peace, also crowned us with a victor's prize of independence and liberty;—thus flushed with honours, thus elated with liberty, we laid aside our virtues with our swords, to revel in pleasure, but we were soon checked in this ruinous career; heaven wisely permitted anarchy and fraud to ravage our country, to correct us of our degeneracy, to resuscitate our pristine virtues and draw us from the apathy of unmanly ease and luxurious effeminacy.

What would have been the fate of Massachusetts had not Shays aped a Massinello,<sup>2</sup> and arrayed himself in all the pomp of military prowess to overturn the fair fabric of order and justice, before he had counted his strength?—had he continued to a later period sowing the seeds of sedition by his flattering lies;—that Commonwealth would have fallen to as contemptible an usurper as ever disgraced the era of a republic.

Had the partizans of fraud in this state, disguised their paper bubble under greater appearances of integrity,—had they emitted a smaller bank, and made it a tender only for executions, they might have deceived the people so as to have gained it a currency, and under plausible pretences, would have palmed the public with aggregated sums until the quantity had depreciated its value to that of the rags which formed it; then it would have produced the *wished-for* bankruptcy among all men of property, to the emolument of the indolent and the abandoned. In addition to so remediless an evil that we should have felt here, our Sister States would have been dupes to this iniquitous system, for they were giddy after an emission of paper, but our zeal disclosed the fallacy and was a constant pharos to them to avoid the reef of national perfidy. Had this State, while prosecuting its present *system*, sent delegates to the continental convention; had they, agreeably to the requisition, recommended a convention to consider the new constitution, and unanimously ratified it, the other States would have felt some new jealousies; for if Troy had reason “*to fear the Greeks even when they offered presents,*”<sup>3</sup> how much more would those States which have adopted the new constitution had to fear that there was some *latent fraud*, some *dangerous innovation in order and justice* if Rhode-Island had adopted it, and thus, from hasty prejudices, they would have rejected the only basis

of national honor. Our present federal government, already a shadow, would then have lingered out but a few days or months to the pity of surrounding spectators, when the drama of liberty would have been closed for ever, whilst a Shays would have arisen to tyrannize over our species and degrade our name.

But the clouds are vanishing, anarchy trembles at her fate, and her antifederal sons find their satannic maxim “Divide et impera”<sup>4</sup> to be fruitless and unavailing.

Experience hath diffused so convincing proofs of the impotence of our present form, that no wiles nor machinations can longer delude, the dormant virtues are revived, and the spirit of the day opes a flattering prospect of closing it with honor.

1. A reference to Shays’s Rebellion in Massachusetts, 1786–87.

2. Masaniello (Tommaso Aniello, c. 1620–1647), a fisherman, led a successful tax revolt in Naples against Spanish rule. His success caused insanity and he was soon murdered by either Spanish authorities or his own disappointed followers.

3. Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book II, line 49. “Whatever it is, I fear Greeks even when they bring gifts.”

4. Latin: Divide and conquer.

### Newport Herald, 17 January 1788

#### A COUNTRY DIALOGUE.

Rural Chloe and her swain,  
 Tripping o’er the russet plain,  
 Fell to chat and conversation  
 ’Bout the matters of the nation.  
 Tom, says he, ’tis my intention  
 That our State shall hold convention,  
 And complete the institution  
 Of that noble constitution  
 Formed by the grand convention,  
 Which has caus’d no small contention;  
 But I hear there is great plenty  
 Of the antifederal gentry;  
 I don’t so rightly understand ’em,  
 I wish, my Chloe, you would brand ’em  
 With some opprobrious epithet,  
 Which, when they hear, will make ’em sweat.  
 Chloe, smiling, thus reply’d,  
 Your request can’t be deny’d;  
 I ’spose you’ve read in antient story,  
 The mighty feats of whig and tory,

As how they fought tremend'ous battles,  
 Destroying lives, and goods and chattles;  
 But what I am about to relate  
 Is something of more modern date,  
 And first of all then be my plan,  
 To sketch you out a federal man,—  
 A federal man is one content  
 With our new plan of government;  
 And in the next or second place,  
 I'll paint you one of spurious race;  
 The caitiff<sup>1</sup> is illegitimate,  
 And wants to overturn the state,  
 And should we judge by reason's rule,  
 An antifederal is a fool;  
 It puts him on the rack of pain,  
 To think we must refund again  
 The money which we took on loan,  
 (The knave would keep it as his own)  
 It give the villain ague-fits,  
 To think of paying his just debts.  
 Thus you may see the antifederal's way,  
 They love to borrow, but they hate to pay;  
 And I aver, by sacred reason's rules,  
 That antifederal men are knaves and fools.

1. A base, mean, despicable “wretch,” a villain.

#### Editors' Note

#### The Rhode Island Reprinting of a George Washington Letter Expressing Support for the Constitution, 17–28 January 1788

In the public debates over the Constitution, Federalists capitalized on George Washington's support for the new frame of government. On 15 March 1787, roughly two months before the Constitutional Convention met, the *United States Chronicle*, to demonstrate Washington's advocacy for a stronger central government, reprinted his circular letter to the state executives written in June 1783 while he was still commander in chief of the Continental Army. One of the principal points of the letter was its plea for strengthening the powers of the Confederation Congress (CC:4). Supporters of a strong central authority continued to emphasize Washington's support for strengthening the Articles of Confederation before and during the proceedings of the Constitutional Convention. (For examples of Washington's relationship to the

Convention reported in Rhode Island newspapers, see CC:10, 11, 29, 30–A, 49, 52, 68.)

On 17 September Washington, as president of the Constitutional Convention, sent a letter enclosing the Constitution and the resolutions of the Convention to the President of Congress. The three documents were printed in newspapers, broadsides, and pamphlets—almost always appearing together. By 31 October at least seventy newspapers had printed the Constitution. All four Rhode Island newspapers printed both the Constitution and Washington's letter. The letter was frequently quoted or paraphrased in the ratification debates, especially the statement that the Constitution was the result of "mutual deference and concession."

In the first months after 17 September, newspapers contained a number of brief items on Washington, some of which were reprinted dozens of times. For example, on 26 September the *Delaware Gazette* reported that Washington had narrowly escaped a bridge collapse near Wilmington, Del., which could have cost him his life. This item was reprinted forty-six times, three times in Rhode Island (CC:96–A). The *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 10 October, saw Providence at work in Washington's survival during both the French and Indian War and the bridge collapse. This item was reprinted twenty-five times, once in Rhode Island (CC:96–B). Both writers remark on Washington's significance to the country, and the latter sees in Washington's preservation the hope of establishing good government in America.

On 7 November the *New Jersey Journal* reported that, as Washington was about to sign the Constitution, he declared that if the states rejected it "*the next will be drawn in blood!*" This item was reprinted thirty-eight times, twice in Rhode Island (CC:233–A). An anecdote in the *Pennsylvania Herald* of 7 November quoted Washington's only speech in the Constitutional Convention in which he moved for an enlarged representation in the U.S. House of Representatives. His motion was adopted unanimously. The *Herald* praised the influence of this "good and great man" and America's "darling Hero." This item was reprinted sixteen times, once in Rhode Island (CC:233–B). On 21 November the *Pennsylvania Gazette* incorrectly reported that Washington had consented to represent Fairfax County in the Virginia Convention. This item was reprinted forty-four times, three times in Rhode Island (CC:Vol. 2, p. 456).

These filler articles kept Washington's name before the public, but Federalists sought a definite statement demonstrating Washington's support for ratifying the Constitution. Washington's private letters plainly revealed his support. On 14 December 1787 he wrote such a letter to

Charles Carter, a fellow Virginia planter who owned a home in Fredericksburg. On 27 December a portion of this letter commenting on the Constitution was printed in the Fredericksburg *Virginia Herald* apparently under the heading of an “Extract of a letter of the late date from a member of the late Fœderal Convention, to his friend in this town.” This issue of the *Herald* has not been located, but on 3 January 1788 the *Pennsylvania Mercury* verified the *Herald’s* publication when it reprinted the extract under the dateline, “FREDERICKSBURG, December 27.” Two days earlier, on 1 January, the *Maryland Journal* reprinted the *Herald’s* extract as a letter “from the illustrious President of the late Federal Convention.”

By 27 March Washington’s letter was reprinted in the widely circulated monthly Philadelphia *American Museum* and in forty-nine newspapers. All but two of these newspapers—the *Pennsylvania Mercury* on 3 January and the Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer* on 4 January—identified Washington as the letter writer.

In Rhode Island, the extract of Washington’s letter was reprinted in the *United States Chronicle*, 17 January; *Providence Gazette*, 19 January; *Newport Herald*, 24 January; and *Newport Mercury*, 28 January. The reprinting by the *United States Chronicle* italicized many extra words. Seven newspapers reprinted all of the *Chronicle’s* italics, while four newspapers reprinted some of them.

For the text of the extract of Washington’s letter, its circulation, and the commentaries upon it, see CC:386 A–H.

On 22 March the *Massachusetts Centinel* reprinted another extract from a Washington letter. It was sent on 29 February to Major Caleb Gibbs of Boston, who had commanded Washington’s bodyguard during the Revolution. In a preface to the extract, the *Centinel* described Washington as “that great—and good as he is great—man, the American Fabius.” In the letter Washington praised “the candid and conciliatory behaviour” of the minority of the Massachusetts Convention. He also claimed that Massachusetts’ ratification would “be greatly influential in obtaining a favourable determination” in the states which had not yet ratified the Constitution. Furthermore, Washington believed that Virginia would ratify the Constitution. This item was reprinted forty-nine times by 10 May. Only six newspapers reprinted the preface.

In Rhode Island, the letter extract (without the preface) was reprinted in the *Newport Herald* and *United States Chronicle* on 27 March and in the *Providence Gazette* on 29 March.

For the text of the letter extract, its circulation, and the commentaries upon it, see CC:638 A–B.

**An Antifederalist****Providence Gazette, 19 January 1788**

Mr. CARTER, Although opposed to the new plan of foederal government, I find that a doubt can no longer remain of this State's unanimously adopting it; more especially as the *crafty* foederalists, in order to *ensure* their final success, are quarrelling among themselves—and a *political Divine*, with a becoming evangelical spirit, (though his salary is *small*) lends *his* helping hand, and has been a prime mover in setting his friends by the ears.

**Samuel Hopkins to Levi Hart****Newport, 29 January 1788 (excerpt)<sup>1</sup>**

I received yours of the 12th inst. Yesterday. I thank you for your exertions with regard to the *slave trade*. I should have been glad to be informed, whether what was reported to mr. Brown be true, viz. that they are going into this trade at Middletown and Norwich. I hear they threaten to carry it on here and at Providence yet; but question whether they will do it, as they will expose themselves so much by it.<sup>2</sup>

The new constitution, you observe, guarantees this trade for twenty years. I fear, if it be adopted, this will prove an Achan<sup>3</sup> in our camp. How does it appear in the sight of Heaven, and of all good men, well informed, that *these States*, who have been fighting for liberty, and consider themselves as the highest and most noble example of zeal for it, cannot agree in any political constitution, unless it indulge and authorize them to inslave their fellow men?—I think if this constitution be not adopted, as it is, without any alteration, we shall have none, and shall be in a state of anarchy, and probably of civil war: Therefore, I wish to have it adopted: but still, as I said, *I fear*—And perhaps civil war will not be avoided, if it be adopted. Ah! These unclean spirits, like frogs—They, like the furies of the poets, are spreading discord, and exciting men to contention and war, wherever they go: And they can spoil the best constitution that can be formed. When Congress shall be formed on the new plan, these frogs will be there; for they go forth to *the kings of the earth* in the first place. They will turn the members of that august body into devils, so far as they are permitted to influence them. Have they not already got possession of most of the men who will or can be chosen and appointed to a place in that assembly? I suppose that even good christians, are not out of the reach of influence from these *frogs*. “Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments.”<sup>4</sup> . . .



1. RC, Misc. Mss., S. Hopkins folder, NHi. Hopkins used a diagonal line to represent the word “the.” These diagonals have been replaced with the word.

2. For a list of Rhode Island vessels suspected of engaging in the slave trade from 1787 to 1807, see Jay Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade, 1700–1807* (Philadelphia, 1981), 263–85.

3. For Achan, see Hopkins to Moses Brown, 22 October 1787, note 6 (above).

4. Revelation 16:13–15. “And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *come* out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, *which* go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed *is* he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.”

### North Kingstown Town Meeting, 2 February 1788<sup>1</sup>

At a Town Meeting held at the [house?] of Benjamin Davis in North Kingstown 2d day of February A.D. 1788. [– – –] [– – –]

Voted that William Congdon Esqr. Chosen [Moderator in?] the Roome of Wm Hammond Esqr.

On Motion Whether this Meeting [will consider?] the proposed New Constitution

Voted that we will not act upon [sd Constitution?] . . .

1. MS, Town Council Records, 1696–1803, Vol. 2, Town Clerk’s Office, Town Hall, Wickford, R.I. The original was damaged by fire.

### Editors’ Note

#### The Rhode Island Reprinting of Edmund Randolph’s Letter to the Virginia House of Delegates, 4 February–6 March 1788

Virginia Governor Edmund Randolph first attended the Constitutional Convention as a proponent of a stronger central government, a position he maintained throughout the Convention. In time, however, he had doubts about the Constitution, which he believed did not adequately protect Virginia’s interests or sufficiently safeguard the rights and liberties of the people. In the final days of the Convention, Randolph moved for the calling of a second constitutional convention to recommend amendments to the Constitution. When the motion was unanimously defeated, he refused to sign the Constitution. His refusal, he said, did not mean “he should oppose the Constitution without doors.”

On his return to Virginia, Randolph continued to support amendments. When he transmitted the Constitution to the legislature, he did not inform that body of his objections to it, although he later said that

he had been drafting a letter to the state's House of Delegates. Randolph's public stance on the Constitution caused much speculation in Virginia. On 2 December 1787, four members of the House of Delegates, who had heard that his reasons for opposing the Constitution no longer existed, asked him for permission to publish his earlier objections. On 10 December, Randolph sent them a copy of his letter to the House of Delegates dated 10 October.

The most important part of Randolph's letter came near the end where he stated that he would support the Constitution if that was what was necessary to preserve the Union. By 27 December, the letter and other documents were published in a pamphlet, probably by a Richmond printer. On 2 January 1788 the letter was printed in the *Virginia Independent Chronicle*, and by 31 March it was reprinted in seventeen newspapers and the nationally circulated monthly *Philadelphia American Museum*. In April it was included in an Antifederalist pamphlet anthology printed in New York.

In Rhode Island, the letter was reprinted in the *Newport Mercury* on 4 February and in two parts in the *United States Chronicle* on 28 February and 6 March.

Federalists throughout America praised Randolph's letter, while Antifederalists ignored it for the most part. Only one original item was printed in Rhode Island about the letter. On 6 March, the day the *United States Chronicle* reprinted the second installment of the letter, it printed this brief item: "We learn, from Maryland, by a Gentleman who is just returned from that State, That the Friends to the Federal Constitution there increase daily—That Governor Randolph's Letter to the Speaker of the Virginia Assembly had been of infinite Service to that State and Virginia, in convincing the People of the absolute Necessity of an energetic Continental Government—and that the Constitution will certainly be adopted in Maryland, by a great Majority" (CC:Vol. 4, p. 532).

The *Newport Herald* and *United States Chronicle* on 3 and 17 April, respectively, reprinted a paragraph from the *Pennsylvania Packet* of 14 January, which praised both Randolph and his fellow Virginian Richard Henry Lee for not joining other Antifederalist essayists who criticized the Constitutional Convention and some of its delegates using such epithets as "*Conspirators*," "*Enemies of Liberty*," and "*diabolical Schemers*" (CC:448). "*Philanthropos*," *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 16 January (CC:454), was one of the few newspaper items reprinted in Rhode Island, probably in the *Newport Mercury* of 11 February, in which a criticism of Randolph appeared. (See "A Rhode-Island Man," *Newport Mercury*, 25 February, note 9, for a discussion of "*Philanthropos*" [below].)

For the text of Edmund Randolph's letter, its circulation, and the commentaries upon it, see CC:385.

### **Pennsylvania Herald, 5 February 1788<sup>1</sup>**

By a gentleman lately arrived from Rhode Island, we learn that the minority in that state are gaining ground rapidly. The chief cause is said to be the opposition of their legislature to the proposed constitution. At the next election, every exertion will be made to change their rulers, whose conduct is equally destructive to honour—national character—patriotism—and American unanimity. Should this event take place, the adoption of the constitution, in Rhode-Island, may be regarded as certain.

1. Reprinted: *Pennsylvania Journal*, 9 February; *Maryland Journal*, 15 February; *German-tauner Zeitung*, 19 February; *Virginia Independent Chronicle*, 27 February.

### **Newport Herald, 7 February 1788<sup>1</sup>**

⟨A Correspondent observes, that no State in the Union hath such *interested motives* for adopting the NEW CONSTITUTION as this State. The chief dependance of our *Farmers, Merchants and Tradesmen, is the carrying trade, and a free entry of beef, barley, cheese, New-England rum, and our manufactured goods into our Sister States.* But these advantages we are unjustly deprived of for want of a Federal Power to control and equalize commerce. Most of the States have long had imposts on our exports to them, whether foreign or the growth and manufacture of this country.)<sup>2</sup> Virginia, by a late act,<sup>3</sup> have laid new duties, the particulars of which we are favored with, in a letter from a gentleman at Alexandria, dated the 8th of January, as follow:

⟨“Duties to take place in Virginia the 1st of March 1788.—

*American articles.*

New-England Rum 1s. per gal. Loaf and lump Sugar 3*d.* per lb. Dressed Leather 6*d.* lb. Tanned ditto 4*d.* lb. Cheese 2*d.* lb. Butter 4*d.* lb. Candles 4*d.* lb. Soap 4*d.* lb. Cordage 4s. cwt. Bar Iron 4s. cwt. Hollow Ware 4s. cwt. Nail Rods 6s. cwt. Axes 8s. per doz. Hoes 6s. doz. Mens and Womens Shoes 1*l* per pair. Salt Beef 20s. cwt. Pork 20s. cwt.

*Foreign articles.*

Brandy and other distilled Spirits 1s. per gal. Madeira Wine 1*l*6. gal. Other Wines 1s. gal. Porter 9*d.* gal. Pepper 6*d.* lb. Other Spices 4*d.* Bohea Tea 1s. Other Teas 2s. [”]

These duties are so high as to amount almost to a prohibition.—Not content with thus excluding us from a share in commerce, they suffer

the British to outrival us in carrying their produce to market. Confederate States thus divided against themselves cannot stand.)<sup>4</sup> Our interest, our honor, and our liberty, all depend on our adopting the NEW CONSTITUTION—reject it and we fall.

1. Reprinted six times by 22 March: N.H. (2), Mass. (1), Conn. (1), S.C. (1), Ga. (1). See also notes 2 and 4.

2. The text in angle brackets was reprinted eight times by 9 April: N.Y. (1), N.J. (1), Pa. (3), Md. (1), Va. (2).

3. This act, passed on 7 January 1788, was entitled “An act to amend the several acts of Assembly concerning naval officers and the collection of the Duties” (William Waller Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia* . . . [13 vols., Richmond, 1809–1823], XII, 438–52).

4. The text in angle brackets was reprinted three times by 18 March: Mass. (1), Conn. (1), Md. (1).

## Anarch

Newport Herald, 7 February 1788<sup>1</sup>

### EDICT OF PENANCE, BY ANARCH,

*Emperor of the East and of the West, of the North and of the South, the Puissant Monarch of Disorder, and Prime Defender of Fraud, Injustice, &c. &c.*

The Great Emperor finding that his plans to overturn the rising republics of America, have hitherto proved abortive—that his General and his legions have been discomfited and driven to the wilds of the North—that his good friends the patrons of depreciated paper, are appalled at the opposition to their system—and that his beloved sons the antifederalists, are borne down by the weight of large majorities,—Therefore, to appease the anger of his *Satanic Devilship*, that dissensions may once more extend her wings for a *Shays* to resume the hatchet, that the eyes of the illumined may be again enfilmed as to catch at the delusive *sign of money*, and that jealousies may pervade the States, as to induce them to smother the NEW CONSTITUTION in infancy—His Anarchial Majesty DOTH ORDER, that on the first day of April next, his Generals, his Lawgivers, his Judiciaries, his Pamphleteers, and all other officers and subjects under his sceptre, do clad themselves in penitential habits, and assemble in some public place within their respective districts, at the sound of discordant Instruments, Yells and Lamentations, with cast-down eyes and unshorn beards, rending their garbs and scattering ashes in the air,—His Majesty *doth further order*, that upon the aforesaid day, when the sun is turned the meridian, they shall make a general procession in the following solemn order, through the chief streets and squares of the city or town where they shall thus assemble.

*First.* The penitential march shall be preceded by three coffins covered with black, and emblazoned with devices emblematical of the respective orders of *Antifederalists*, *Paper-moneyites* and *Insurgents*, and borne by a band of Jack-Ketches<sup>2</sup> in the habits of office.

In the first coffin shall be deposited Seceders Address, Pamphlets, anonymous Publications, and Paragraphs against the NEW CONSTITUTION, wrapt in an ass's skin, with this label on it—*Nostri est Farrago libelli*.<sup>3</sup>

Device—The rising sun half hidden in a cloud—a flock of vultures hovering over a convalescent eagle that is dormant, preparing to destroy with their beaks his renovated constitution.

Motto—*Occulo vigilante quiescit*.<sup>4</sup>

In the second shall be deposited R. I. Paper-money, Emission-Act, Statute Limitation, Know Ye's, and Bills in Equity.

Device—A falling Bubble.

Motto—*In Te Diabolo Speramus*.<sup>5</sup>

In the third shall be deposited the withered Boughs, edgeless Swords, pointless Bayonets, lockless Guns, tattered Colors, and martyred Sculls of our late flying army.

Device—A ruined Village—a Wilderness—and a Gallows.

Motto—*Cursu brevi*.<sup>6</sup>

*Second.* The chiefs of these respective orders, mounted reversely on lame and hacknied asses, holding their tails with their teeth, rending their garments, and scourging their bodies with cords—deploring with a lamentable cadence the fatal miscarriage of their measures.

*Third.* The rest of the officers, civil and military, partizans and their agents, without their insignias or robes of office, without sandals or caps, with asses ears, shall draw on the ground the entrails of unclean beasts to diffuse an unsalubrious order, and cloud the air with dust, and shall immolate three asses and three swine, and wallow in the mire.

*Fourth.* The inveigled and deluded multitude, naked from their breast upwards, shall march on the flanks of the second and third column, pelting them with addled eggs and animal excrement, crying aloud at fixed intervals, *Pardon us, since we do it for your good*.

*Fifth.* The Emperor's Grand Almoner will distribute a chest of *R. I. Paper Money* for the people, but it shall not be taken up until this penitential day is closed on pain of being empaled alive.

*Sixth.* Detachments from the Emperor's guard will close this solemn procession, with drawn sabres to instantly execute any of his officers or subjects who shall not perform this penance, their bodies shall be cast to the dogs, and their bones remain unburied.

Thus orders the Grand Emperor, ANARCH.

1. Reprinted: *New Haven Gazette*, 21 February; *New Hampshire Mercury*, 27 February; Exeter, N.H., *Freeman's Oracle*, 29 February.

2. "An appellation for the common executioner or hangman." John Ketch (d. 1686) was an English executioner noted for excessive brutality.

3. Juvenal, *Satires*, I, 86: Hodgepodge is our pamphlet.

4. Latin: It became quiet.

5. Latin: In you devil, we place our trust.

6. Latin: A short speech.

### Editors' Note

#### **The Rhode Island Reprinting of the Massachusetts Convention's Amendments and Boston's Celebration of Massachusetts Ratification 7–25 February 1788**

The Massachusetts Convention met on 9 January 1788 in Boston. At first neither Federalists nor Antifederalists felt confident that they had a majority. After three weeks of debate, Federalist leaders recognized that they had to compromise to ratify the Constitution. The compromise consisted of their willingness to have recommendatory amendments to the Constitution affixed to the state's ratification in order to convince enough Antifederalists to ratify the Constitution.

Late in January, Federalists turned to Governor John Hancock, a delegate who had been elected President of the Convention, but who had not yet attended the debates. Gout had supposedly prevented the fence-sitting Hancock from attending. Federalists wanted Hancock to present their recommendatory amendments. In exchange, they promised to support him for reelection as governor in the spring and for vice president of the United States. In addition, if Virginia failed to ratify (thus making George Washington ineligible), they would support Hancock for president of the United States.

On the morning of 30 January, Governor Hancock attended the Convention but did not take part in the debates. The next morning the Convention ended the discussion of the Constitution by paragraphs. A motion was made to ratify the Constitution. Hancock told the assembled delegates that he would like the Convention to entertain "a proposition" he would make during the afternoon session. When the Convention reassembled in the afternoon, Hancock submitted recommendatory amendments. Antifederalist leader Samuel Adams supported the amendments in a speech immediately following Hancock.

On 2 February Hancock's amendments were submitted to a committee consisting of members from each county. The committee altered Hancock's amendments and reported them favorably to the Convention. On 5 February Antifederalists moved that the Convention adjourn, but the motion was defeated 214 to 115. On the afternoon of 6

February, the Convention ratified the Constitution with nine recommendatory amendments by a vote of 187 to 168. Ratification at this juncture would not have been possible without the recommendatory amendments.

Because the outcome of the ratification debate in Massachusetts was uncertain and because it was one of the most populous and influential states, the state Convention was closely watched and the debates were widely reported. As a neighbor of Massachusetts, Rhode Island was especially interested in the outcome. Outside Massachusetts, nearly complete coverage of the Convention's debates occurred in six newspapers, three of which were the *Newport Herald*, the *Providence Gazette*, and the *United States Chronicle*. For four days of the Convention, some debates were reported in all four of Rhode Island's newspapers, the fourth newspaper being the *Newport Mercury*.

Governor Hancock's proposition of 31 January was printed in the *Massachusetts Centinel* on 2 February and was reprinted in thirty-five newspapers by 3 March. In Rhode Island, the proposition was reprinted in the *Newport Herald* and the *United States Chronicle* on 7 February and in the *Providence Gazette* on 9 February. The recommendatory amendments in the Form of Ratification first appeared in the *Massachusetts Gazette* on 8 February, and by 17 May they were reprinted in twenty-six newspapers and in the *Philadelphia American Museum* and the *New York American Magazine*. In Rhode Island, the recommendatory amendments were reprinted in all four newspapers—the *United States Chronicle*, 14 February; *Providence Gazette*, 16 February; *Newport Herald*, 21 February; and the *Newport Mercury*, 25 February. These newspapers also covered the proceedings and debates for 6 and 7 February. For praise of the Massachusetts amendments, see "A Rhode-Island Landholder," *United States Chronicle*, 20 March (II–A, below).

Not only was the Massachusetts Convention well covered in the newspapers, but so was the Boston celebration honoring Massachusetts' ratification of the Constitution. On 8 February a grand federal procession was held in Boston, the reports of which were among the most widely reprinted events of the ratification process. This was a new kind of celebration in which about 4,500 people marched in an elaborate procession, designed to create a sense of unity and patriotism. Later processions would follow on other occasions, with the processions in Philadelphia (Fourth of July) and New York City (23 July) being even larger.

On 9 February the *Massachusetts Centinel* printed an incomplete version of the procession which became the report that was most widely circulated. This version was reprinted in forty-one newspapers and the

Philadelphia *American Museum* and the New York *American Magazine* by 29 March. In Rhode Island, the *Centinel* version was reprinted in the *United States Chronicle*, 14 February; the *Providence Gazette*, 16 February; and the *Newport Mercury*, 25 February. The *Newport Herald*, 21 February, reprinted the more complete version of the procession that had first appeared in the *Boston Gazette* on 11 February.

For the text of Governor Hancock's proposition of 31 January, see RCS:Mass., 1380–83, and for the recommendatory amendments as they appeared in the Form of Ratification, see RCS:Mass., 1468–71. For the circulation of the proposition and the recommendatory amendments and the commentaries upon them, see CC:508. For a fuller discussion of Boston's federal procession that includes the account printed in the *Massachusetts Centinel* on 9 February, see RCS:Mass., 1615–30.

### **Pennsylvania Gazette, 13 February 1788<sup>1</sup>**

While twelve legislatures have submitted the proposed constitution to the people, and the paper-money district of Little Compton in Rhode-Island have instructed their representatives to endeavor to procure a convention;<sup>2</sup> while too the conventions of all the five states that have determined the question, have adopted the government, and the approbation of the sixth is absolutely certain,<sup>3</sup> it is with infinite satisfaction we observe that not a single town meeting or public body, but the contemptible and infamous Majority of Rhode-Island, have shewn a mark of disapprobation. It is an unanimity most honorable to America—a virtue, which will prove its own reward.

1. Reprinted: *New York Morning Post*, 16 February; *Massachusetts Gazette*, 26 February.
2. See *Newport Herald*, 10 January (above).
3. Massachusetts, the sixth state, ratified the Constitution on 6 February.

### **Newport Herald, 14 February 1788<sup>1</sup>**

SEVEN STATES have ratified the NEW CONSTITUTION.<sup>2</sup>—New-Hampshire Convention are now in session, South-Carolina meets the 3d of March,<sup>3</sup> from authentic intelligence we are informed that both these States will adopt it by large majorities—Maryland meets the last of April—Virginia in June—New-York Assembly have 'ere this recommended a Convention.—From this state of the progress of the New Constitution, sound policy dictates to the leading members of our administration to recommend the appointment of a Convention as speedily as possible, and to exert their influence in the adoption of it.—Great good may they expect from this change of measures—for their systems are too much deranged to encourage *perseverance*, and their



powers are too languid to be rendered efficient—this step of repentance will be a mantle to cover in oblivion many secret crimes, and a virtue which will obliterate many foul stains. Various are the opinions what will be the policy of our leading characters in government—Whatever it may be, this observation will ever be indisputable, that a perseverance in unfederalism will bring on this State the merited punishment for our national degeneracy, and establish us as a monumental example of the truth of that adage, “*Those whom GOD wills for destruction he first makes mad.*”<sup>4</sup>

1. Reprinted fourteen times by 1 March: N.H. (3), Mass. (4), N.Y. (2), N.J. (2), Pa. (3).

2. In the same issue of 14 February, the *Newport Herald* printed a brief item stating that “By a vessel arrived here last Tuesday [12 February], in five days from North-Carolina, we have a confirmation of the pleasing intelligence of that State’s adopting the New Constitution by a very large majority.” The *Herald* of the 14th also reprinted an item from the *Massachusetts Gazette* of 5 February, which also falsely reported that North Carolina had ratified the Constitution, only two delegates dissenting. According to the *Gazette*, this made North Carolina the sixth state. (See CC:Vol. 4, pp. 507–9.) When Massachusetts ratified on 6 February, the *Herald* incorrectly reported that it was the seventh state to adopt.

3. The South Carolina Senate had proposed that a state convention meet on 3 March, but the House of Representatives wanted a later date. The legislature scheduled the convention to meet on 12 May.

4. Or, more commonly, “Those whom God wishes to destroy, he first makes mad” (a Latin saying based on a fragment from Euripides).

### Editors’ Note

#### The Rhode Island Reprinting of Richard Henry Lee’s Letter to Virginia Governor Edmund Randolph, 16 February 1788

On 20 September the Constitution was read in Congress, and it was reported that delegate Richard Henry Lee was “forming propositions for essential alterations in the Constitution, which will, in effect be to oppose it.” On 26 and 27 September Congress debated the manner in which the Constitution would be transmitted to the states. During the debate, Lee recommended several amendments to the Constitution (including a bill of rights). A compromise was agreed upon. Congress was to send the Constitution to the states without approving or disapproving it and all opposition to the Constitution, including Lee’s bill of rights, was deleted from the journals. Congress only recommended unanimously that the states call ratifying conventions.

Not intending to keep his amendments private, Lee sent copies to several people and even allowed some of his correspondents to make them public. Lee wrote Governor Edmund Randolph on 16 October

and enclosed a copy of the amendments. On 6 December, Lee's letter and the accompanying amendments were printed in the Petersburg *Virginia Gazette*.

Between 20 December and 16 February 1788, Lee's letter and amendments were reprinted in twelve newspapers, a Richmond, Va., pamphlet anthology, and the nationally circulated monthly Philadelphia *American Museum*. The letter alone or a summary of it was also printed in five newspapers by 24 January.

In Rhode Island, the letter and the amendments were reprinted in the *Providence Gazette* on 16 February. The *Gazette* prefaced its reprint with this statement: "The following is inserted by particular desire, and has been omitted some weeks for want of room." Since 24 November the weekly *Gazette* had reprinted a large number of both Federalist and Antifederalist articles from the newspapers of other states.

Federalist criticism of Lee's letter and amendments was voluminous, both privately and publicly, especially in Virginia. In Rhode Island, both the letter and amendments received little comment. While attacking a Federalist "Landholder" essay critical of Rhode Island, "A real Federalist" described Lee and several other Antifederalists as "patriots . . . who like a constellation will clear the mists, too long suffered to blind the eyes of the honest yeomanry of our country, and who are now exhibiting their talents for that purpose" (*United States Chronicle*, 27 March, III, below). On 3 April the *Newport Herald* reprinted an item from the *Pennsylvania Packet* of 14 January that praised both Lee and his fellow Virginian Edmund Randolph for not joining other Antifederalist essayists who criticized the Constitutional Convention and some of its delegates using such epithets as "Conspirators," "Enemies of Liberty," and "diabolical Schemers" (CC:448). (The *United States Chronicle* reprinted this Pennsylvania item on 17 April.)

For the text of Richard Henry Lee's letter and amendments, its circulation, and the commentaries upon it, see CC:325.

### Massachusetts Centinel, 20 February 1788<sup>1</sup>

All the States, except Rhode-Island, have called Conventions—and as the Assembly of that State is to meet next week, it is expected that she will not remain an exception to the measure—Should it be the case, it will be a very pleasureable event—for, saith the scripture, *there is more joy over one sinner that repenteth, than, &c.*<sup>2</sup>

1. Reprinted in the *Newport Herald*, 28 February, and in sixteen out-of-state newspapers by 17 March: Vt. (1), N.H. (3), Mass. (2), Conn. (2), N.Y. (2), N.J. (2), Pa. (3), Md. (1).

2. Luke 15:10.

**Portsmouth Town Meeting, 21 February 1788 (excerpts)<sup>1</sup>**

At a Town Meeting of the Free:men of Portsmouth in the County of Newport and State of Rhode Island &c. Held on the 21st Day of the month called February AD 1788 at Susannah Brownells

The Warrant being Read

Voted & Jonathan Freeborn Esqr. is Chosen Moderator of this Meeting . . .

Voted that the Deputies be Instructed to Vote & Act against the new proposed Constitution . . .

1. MS, Portsmouth Town Meeting Records, 1697–1835, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Portsmouth, R.I.

**Newport Herald, 21 February 1788<sup>1</sup>**

The enemies of the New Constitution, says a Correspondent, consist of jealous, and uninformed characters, who oppose it for conscience sake.

Ambitious men, who aspire after unbounded popularity.—And last of all,

The indolent, the abandoned and the offscouring of the earth, who have no prospects but in a state of anarchy, where marauders, freebooters and knaves are licensed and encouraged.

1. Reprinted six times by 19 March: N.H. (1), Mass. (1), N.Y. (1), Pa. (2), Va. (1).

**Newport Herald, 21 February 1788<sup>1</sup>**

It is the wish of a Correspondent, that the General Assembly of this State who sit at Providence the next week, would recommend the appointment of a Convention, to take into consideration the proposed Constitution.—Although they did not think it expedient to send Delegates to the late Hon. Convention, yet they may shew their wish to belong to the Union. Seven States<sup>2</sup> have adopted the Constitution—Shall this State forget the ties that bind her? Shall we persist in our obstinacy, and be the *butt* of ridicule?<sup>2</sup>—No,—on the contrary, let us act wisely, and retrieve, if possible, that dignity and character which, as a State, we have lost.—Should we continue to be refractory, and not lend a hand to rear the Grand Fabric of American Liberty, we shall be despised by the other States, and fall into unavoidable confusion.

1. Reprinted: *Boston Gazette*, 25 February (first sentence only); Portland, Maine, *Cumberland Gazette*, 6 March.

2. See *Newport Herald*, 14 February (above).

### A Rhode-Island Man

Newport Mercury, 25 February 1788<sup>1</sup>

Mr. PRINTER, I have read with attention the various publications on the subject of our new government, and have been pleased with the fine reasoning and good sense with which they generally abound; and even those which have nothing else to recommend them, among which perhaps ⟨this⟩ piece of mine will be numbered, are so many strong, ⟨and timely⟩ proofs, of the perfect freedom of our country.—When I read the strong, clear reasoning of Wilson, ⟨and⟩ Ames and others,<sup>2</sup> with the ingenuous representations of Washington, I seem to turn to Cicero and Pitt, and ⟨---⟩ they ever spoke better than that; or what I mean ⟨as it⟩ is a still higher honor, when I read the doings of Massachusetts and Connecticut,<sup>3</sup> I fancy myself in an assembly of Swifts noble Houyhnhnms.<sup>4</sup> I have endeavored with the most rigid impartiality to compare the ⟨strengths⟩ and defects of the new constitution, while the ingenuity of its opponents has had no small share in persuading me of its propriety, for to me it seems impossible that ⟨nothing⟩ but truth, can triumph against such able and ⟨eloquent⟩ adversaries, what knowledge, what candour, what eloquence, what absurdity, is displayed in the ⟨letter⟩ of Randolph, after giving the most just and mournful detail of what we have suffered for want of a supreme controlling power, and declaring that a continuation of ⟨that⟩ defect must be attended with multiplied mischiefs, ⟨he⟩ concludes with an absurdity, of which human nature ⟨---⟩ is capable, that the adoption of a constitution framed ⟨with so⟩ much care, by men of the first abilities, for the attainment of an end which he himself allows to be the ⟨most⟩ desirable, should still be procrastinated, while we ⟨approach⟩ the confines of civil discord from the partial ⟨impulses⟩ of particular States.<sup>5</sup>

Let us attempt to enumerate the probable advantages ⟨that⟩ will attend the establishment of this constitution,—⟨in⟩ the first place, the way will be laid open to British subjects to recover their debts, and the posts on our frontiers ⟨given⟩ up, or, at least, the British will be left without ⟨excuse⟩<sup>6</sup>—in the next place, Congress will have power to make ⟨its own⟩ laws of navigation, and thereby either exclude ⟨--- --- --- --- or procure their countrymen⟩ the beneficial employment of carrying their own produce to market, an object of great magnitude this, as ⟨giving⟩ bread to thousands who now languish for want of business; nor need Mr. Lee be concerned for his tobacco.<sup>7</sup> New-England can find hands and vessels sufficient to carry all the southern produce to market—in the next place Congress may lay such duties on manufactures of ⟨leather⟩, iron and wood, that no smith, saddler, shoemaker

⟨carpenter⟩, shall want employment.—In the next place Congress, when they are known to have power to fulfil ⟨their⟩ engagements, may, by a tax of no more than half a ⟨copper⟩ a head, keep one hundred and fifty stout rangers ⟨on⟩ the frontiers to chastise the lurking Indians and horse ⟨stealers⟩, and thereby greatly facilitate the sale and settlement of that fine, vast country, sufficient to pay the national debt,—in the next place when Congress shall have power to make every member of our continent from Nova Scotia to Florida do his duty, by contributing his proportion by easy yearly payments, the public debt may be ⟨diminished⟩, until it is finally paid or brought within such ⟨a⟩ manageable compass as to give no concern, and an ⟨inexhaustible⟩ source of wealth may be found in the iron mines of our continent, the erection of iron-works in an effectual manner being frequently far beyond the undertakers ⟨purse⟩, whereby what has been laid out is wholly lost but government being able, might, from time to time, lend ⟨small⟩ sums on good security, at low interest, on the ⟨certificate⟩ of an able engineer of the suitability of the place, ⟨whereby⟩ the price of iron might be greatly reduced, probably so as to under sell every nation, when we consider ⟨the⟩ vast forests, mines and rivers of Vermont, Kentucky and Ohio with its branches.—But even for home use we ⟨can⟩ hardly have too much iron, when we consider that ⟨it is⟩ principally if not wholly to this, that the ⟨civilized owes⟩ his superiority over the savage man, every country that abounds in wrought iron, from its great use in building, in subduing and pulverizing the ground, in forming every thing to the use of man, must be rich, while on the ⟨contrary⟩ every people that wants [i.e., needs] it must be poor, in the ⟨next place⟩ when it shall be known that Congress possesses ⟨power⟩ to direct the arms of the United States to any particular point, it will be such a discouragement to foreign invasion or domestic insurrection, that in all probability ⟨we⟩ shall never experience any,—In the next place when a ⟨lasting⟩ and uniform government shall be established, great numbers of wealthy people from the crowded and oppressed ⟨nations⟩ of Europe will settle with us, and assist in paying ⟨our⟩ public debt.—Now let us consider the objections that are laid against it, it is said to be a consolidation, ⟨and — — —⟩ if by consolidation is meant the union of several ⟨smaller⟩ societies into one supreme council for the sake of uniformity, efficiency, and dispatch,—it is confessed the constitution is and was meant to be so far a consolidation of the powers of the United States;—The supremacy of the General Assembly of the State of Rhode-Island over the several towns and town meetings ⟨is⟩ just such a consolidation of the various towns, as the new constitution is of the United States,—and there is no argument against a union of States, but what is equally

forcible against a union of towns in our General Assembly, for our Assembly has a sovereign unlimited power; but let us suppose for a moment this doctrine was put in practice by dissolving our Assembly and restoring sovereignty and independence to the towns, their power of refusing state taxes would soon be sanctified by pretended reason, and each town would prove, by endless arguments that they had been ever over taxed, and least they should pay too much, would take care to pay nothing, town taxes would soon be thought inconvenient and tyrannical, and therefore abolished, we should soon enjoy the blessed freedom of savages, we should be free from the fees of sheriffs and judges, every man would judge his own cause and execute his own judgment, if my neighbor kills my pigeons, I kill one of his children, I fall next, and retaliation goes on until each family is extinct, (that is just) the case among savage tribes, this (is) the happy (tendency) of cautiously keeping our power in our own (hands), but Judge Blackstone says, that to suppose a government without a supreme controlling power some where lodged, is the highth of political absurdity<sup>8</sup>—(why) may not supreme power be as secure from abuse in (the) Congress, as in a General Assembly of Massachusetts, Rhode-Island, or any other State,—in order to reconcile us to (the power) proposed for Congress, let us consider that (--- ---) the direction of honesty and prudence (--- --- --- ---); but what security have we that Congress (--- --- ---) its power? why truly we have (--- --- --- ---) Congress must be an inhabitant (--- --- --- ---) that he must be a land-holder so (--- never ---) any law without being obnoxious (--- its operation.) Whoever votes for an unpopular (--- --- ---) his place, and mix again with (the mass of the people) loaded with disgrace and popular (odium.) A member of Congress under the new constitution (will hold) an office on board of a ship, of which (--- --- --- ---) extravagant bills to carpenters, smiths, caulkers, and riggers. he loses his part, if careless of the tackle, if (he) makes long passages, wastes the provision, or (---) the ship, he is ever part loser in point of (---), and doubly so in point of reputation, his partners and employers have every possible security for his faithful administration, that the constitution is equal and impartial appears from the southern critics supposing it partial to the northern States, while the northern politicians think it partial to the south, and that nothing better can ever be agreed on out of Congress or by way of convention is in the highest degree probable, from what (was) shrewdly observed by one who signs himself Philanthropos,<sup>9</sup> that hardly any two of its adversaries agree on the parts that they wish to have amended; therefore, if this plan is rejected, we have the greatest reason to fear

that another will never be agreed on, and that the United States in the midst of every natural advantage that human nature can wish or enjoy, will remain a poor, weak, divided people. But all concur that Congress should have more power, that something like this constitution is wanted, in short, that it should not be rejected but amended, why then may (not) the sincere, the honest, the ingenuous enemies of the constitution in its present form, consistent with all that anxiety and care they express for their constituents and posterity, consent to its adoption and trust to its being amended as speedily and effectually by the same men under the denomination of Congress as that of convention, by this means those powers in which all agree, might be immediately exerted, to the unspeakable profit of the public in regulating trade, and the exceptionable parts repealed as soon as the people shall be persuaded of their impropriety, I consider the new constitution as a large solid building, reared by the ablest architects, according to the rules of art and good taste, for the accommodation of a large family, and equally calculated for duration and convenience; but so contrived, that after the family shall have moved in, it may be altered with infinite ease whenever a majority of the family should require a change—The (completion) of the fabric was announced and the family called on to take a view, all parties confessed they wanted (the) house and the major part approved the work, declaring they could expect nothing more perfect from such a number of designers, who had (such) a variety of interests to accommodate, and determined to move in; while the minority were loud in their objections,—a party declared it was (---) without any apartment (of) organization,—a second, who had studied building (and) house-keeping in Virginia, declared in a long (--- ---), that they could not live in it with safety, (unless the) cooks and bakers were responsible and liable (to be) hanged, if they did not roast and bake to the taste of the family—a third said, there should have been a (---) press framed with it—a fourth said that so large a house could not stand without a steeple,—a fifth objected to its being so contrived as to oblige the tenants of the manor to furnish provisions, declaring that the only sure way for the house to prosper was to trust to manna, quails, and a compliance with requisitions—a sixth said, it was too expensive,—a seventh said, it was not large enough, a party circulated with great earnestness that the designers had placed all the panes of glass upside down—a ninth<sup>10</sup> said, he thought all these faults trivial, but that he had observed something in it truly abominable, which was, that they had so contrived the doors that a Turk, or a Jew might go in and out like a Christian,—a tenth said, such a house should be three square like a cocked hats as that is nearly the shape of the United States,—

the eleventh said, it should have been round, because that figure contains the greatest space within a given line,—a twelfth said, that such an house should have been a regular polygon, with thirteen sides, one fronting to every State, except Rhode-Island,—a thirteenth declared, that he had <---> building all night long by the north star for <---> and that he was clear that it did not front <due north> by an angle of two minutes, which consideration <alone> was sufficient to reject it,—a fourteenth objected <to> hiring servants for two years, insisting that the safer way was to engage them every morning, this man was extremely attached to old custom, always ballancing his grist with a stone—a fifteenth, who had practised œconomy in Virginia, after relating in a very handsome discourse, how much they had suffered for want of shelter, and how much more they were likely to suffer, very gravely advised them to lie out doors all winter, and if no alteration should be agreed on <---> in the spring, what made this advice the more surprising was, that no two critics placed their <blame> on <the same> point, and, therefore, were as little likely to <agree> on their amendments as the parson's parishioners were to concur in the time when he should pray for rain. These, with numberless other objections, too tedious to mention, were heard with great patience and good humour by the majority, and confuted with superior mechanical reasoning.—When the family moved in, the apartments were light, warm, and clean, and on trial required much fewer alterations than were expected by its most sanguine admirers; among the male-contents, those who <some time> had been to school in Boston and Connecticut, who like Roman gladiators fought with vigour and skill until overpowered by numbers, and yielded with a grace and decorum that gave them as much credit, if not as much pleasure, as a victory—by degrees the minority all came in, and when time had softened the asperity of opposition, they frankly owned they were glad they were out voted, all which was very agreeable to one who signs himself,<sup>11</sup> A RHODE-ISLAND MAN.

1. The only extant issue of the *Newport Mercury* of 25 February is mutilated. The editors have placed questionable readings and unreadable words in angle brackets. Despite these difficulties, "A Rhode-Island Man" is a valuable addition to the debate over the Constitution in Rhode Island.

For a response to this article, see "A Newport Man," *Newport Mercury*, 17 March (below).

2. Two of James Wilson's important speeches were reprinted in Rhode Island. See "The Rhode Island Reprinting of James Wilson's State House Speech," 18–27 October 1787, and "The Rhode Island Reprinting of James Wilson's Speech to the Pennsylvania Convention," 15 December (both above).



Fisher Ames of Dedham spoke often and eloquently in the Massachusetts Convention, the debates of which were widely reprinted. Outside Massachusetts, nearly complete coverage of the Convention's debates occurred in six newspapers—three of which were the *Newport Herald*, the *Providence Gazette*, and the *United States Chronicle*. For four days of the Massachusetts Convention, some debates were reprinted by all four of Rhode Island's newspapers, the fourth being the *Newport Mercury*. The debates in book form were advertised for sale in the *United States Chronicle* on 27 March, and 3 and 17 April 1788. (See RCS:Mass., 1129, 1132–33, 1145–51.)

3. Both states had recently ratified the Constitution, Connecticut on 9 January and Massachusetts on 6 February. See note 2 above for reprintings of the Massachusetts Convention debates in Rhode Island. The 4 January speech delivered by Oliver Ellsworth in the Connecticut Convention was reprinted in the *Newport Herald* on 17 January and the *Providence Gazette* on 19 January, and the 4 January speech delivered by William Samuel Johnson was reprinted in the *Providence Gazette* on 26 January (CC:413).

4. The Houyhnhnms, found in Book IV of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), were a race of intelligent horses whose society was based upon reason and benevolence.

5. See "The Rhode Island Reprinting of Edmund Randolph's Letter to the Virginia House of Delegates," 4 February–6 March 1788 (above).

6. For a response to this charge, see "A Newport Man," *Newport Mercury*, 17 March, at note 3 (below).

7. The reference is to a comment made by Virginian Richard Henry Lee in his 16 October 1787 letter to Governor Edmund Randolph that was first printed in the Petersburg *Virginia Gazette* on 6 December and then widely reprinted. In Rhode Island, it was reprinted in the *Providence Gazette* on 16 February 1788. Lee, a critic of the Constitution's provision requiring only a simple majority for the passage of navigation acts, was fearful that this provision would allow a Northern-dominated Congress to pass measures excluding British vessels from carrying American goods and produce, which would result in increased rates to transport Southern staples in Northern ships. In the case of Lee himself, a Virginia planter, the staple in question was tobacco.

For the text of Lee's letter, which included Lee's recommended amendments to the Constitution, its circulation, and commentaries upon it, see CC:325. See also "The Rhode Island Reprinting of Richard Henry Lee's Letter to Virginia Governor Edmund Randolph," 16 February 1788 (above).

8. See Blackstone, *Commentaries*, Book I, section IV, Introduction, 97–98. The text (found in a footnote) reads: "It may justly be doubted, whether even such an infringement (though a manifest breach of good faith, unless done upon the most pressing necessity) would consequentially dissolve the union; for the bare idea of a state, without a power somewhere vested to alter every part of it's laws, is the height of political absurdity." The "union" was a reference to the union between England and Scotland in 1707.

9. "Philanthropos" (Tench Coxe) was printed in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 16 January 1788 (CC:454). No extant Rhode Island newspaper reprinted "Philanthropos," although it might have been reprinted in the no longer extant 11 February issue of the *Newport Mercury*, the same newspaper that printed "A Rhode-Island Man." After making a comprehensive analysis of the three non-signers' objections to the Constitution (Elbridge Gerry, George Mason, and Edmund Randolph) and those of the Pennsylvania Convention minority, "Philanthropos" ended with this statement: "The objections severally made by the three honorable gentlemen and the Pennsylvania Minority are so *different*, and even *discordant* in their essential principles, that all hope of greater unanimity of opinion, either in *another convention*, or in *the people*, must be given up by those who know the human heart and mind, with their infinitely varying feelings and ideas."

10. "A Rhode-Island Man" skipped the eighth objection.

11. The reference is to the well-publicized acquiescence of the minorities of the Connecticut and Massachusetts conventions, both of which were reported in Rhode Island newspapers. For Connecticut, see RCS:Conn., 594, 595–98; and CC:Vol. 3, pp. 570–71. For Massachusetts, see RCS:Mass., 1645–57 (see especially the *Newport Herald* of 14 February, p. 1650).

### **Boston Gazette, 25 February 1788<sup>1</sup>**

*Extract of a letter from Providence, dated Feb 20.*

"Our Assembly convenes here next week:—it is asserted they intend PROTESTING against the TREASONABLE ATTEMPTS made by their *Sister States* to *expunge* the *Old Constitution* by *adopting* the *New!* !!"

1. Reprinted: *Connecticut Gazette*, 29 February. On 26 February the *Salem Mercury* paraphrased this item: "The purport of a letter received by the last Saturday's mail, from Providence, state of Rhodeisland, is—That a Protest was signing, to be presented to the Assembly of that state, which are to meet at Providence this week, impeaching the several states who have adopted the new constitution, with treason."

The *Mercury's* version was reprinted seventeen times by 12 April: N.H. (4), Conn. (1), N.Y. (2), Pa. (4), Md. (1), Va. (3), S.C. (1), Ga. (1).

### **Newport Herald, 28 February 1788**

A Correspondent flatters himself, that the adoption of the FEDERAL CONSTITUTION by the United States of America, will be productive of much harmony, peace and happiness to the Union.

Independence introduced many pleasing scenes to this young empire, while Peace, with her balmy wings, promised us many blessings; but, no sooner were these privileges granted us, than we leaped over the barriers of virtue, and plunged ourselves into the depths of luxury. We soon found that *luxury* could not render us a respectable nation, and if our righteousness and integrity fled from us, we must consequently be lost to every principle of honor and justice.

The unsettled situation of the government of the respective States, the want of power in our federal head to regulate the finances of the continent, &c. have involved our commercial resources in such poverty and confusion, as that in a short time no resources could be drawn from them, either for State or Continental purposes,—these were sufficient to enkindle the coals of faction, and produce anarchy among the States. A CONSTITUTION is now proposed to the people, which will, if adopted, remedy these evils—will preserve the dignity of these United States—will strengthen the pillars of our tottering fabric, and establish our INDEPENDENCE upon a basis as lasting as it is glorious. When that happy period arrives, we may look forward with the most pleasing expectations, and from thence date the era of our political happiness.—

Tranquility, the daughter of Harmony and Peace, will revisit our land—Injustice will then droop her head—Anarchy and confusion will no longer threaten our destruction—Commerce and agriculture will flourish on a more solid foundation—Our harbors will be clothed with ships—Indolence will resign her sorrows to the pleasures of Industry—Honest tradesmen will find sufficient employ, and no branch of business will be retarded—In short, that glorious period will be emblematical of the beautiful spring; the summers of innocence and the millennium of paradise—every generous bosom will beat with the liveliest rapture, while Fame, on her joyful wings, will waft our glories to distant lands.

**Editors' Note**  
**Rhode Island Receives News of the Adjournment**  
**of the New Hampshire Convention**  
**28 February–13 March 1788**

The New Hampshire Convention met in Exeter on 13 February 1788. Federalist leaders quickly realized that the majority either opposed the Constitution or were instructed by their towns to vote against ratifying it. Consequently, on 22 February Federalist leader John Langdon, a signer of the Constitution, moved that the Convention “adjourn to some future day.” The Convention voted 56 to 51 to adjourn for four months to meet in Concord on 18 June.

On 25 February the Antifederalist Boston *American Herald*, claiming to have obtained news by the Portsmouth post, reported (erroneously) that the New Hampshire Convention had rejected the Constitution by a vote of 54 to 51. Whereupon, stated the *Herald*, the question was reconsidered and a motion was passed by a vote of 53 to 52 to adjourn to June. The *Herald's* report appeared in nine newspapers, among them the *United States Chronicle*, 28 February, and the *Newport Mercury*, 3 March. (For the *Herald's* report, see CC:Vol. 4, p. 185, note 3.)

On 28 February the *United States Chronicle* printed an original report that corrected and amplified the report of the Boston *American Herald*. The *Chronicle* stated: “By a Gentleman of respectable Character from Exeter (New-Hampshire) who attended the Convention of that State the Three last Days of their Session, we are informed—That after the proposed Federal Constitution had been discussed by Paragraphs, which ended on Thursday Evening last, the next Morning, viz. on Friday [22 February], Judge [Samuel] Livermore [i.e., John Langdon] made a Motion for an Adjournment to some future Day, that the Sentiments of their Constituents might be taken, before the Decision of the grand

Question of Ratification or Rejection—which was seconded, and finally carried by a Majority of 6—there being 56 for the Motion, and 50 [i.e., 51] against it.—The Convention is to meet at Concord, on the *third* Tuesday [i.e., Wednesday] in *June* next.”

On 1 March, the *Providence Gazette* reprinted two sentences from the *Massachusetts Centinel* of 28 February that provided a correction: “In order to give time to those Delegates in the Convention of New-Hampshire, who were instructed to vote against the Constitution, to return home, and get their instructions taken off, that Hon. Body, on Friday last, adjourned to meet at Concord, in that State, on the 3d Wednesday in June next. No other question was taken.” (These were the first two sentences of the *Centinel’s* long article on the New Hampshire Convention that refuted the Boston *American Herald’s* erroneous report of 25 February [above]. For the *Centinel’s* article, see CC:554–B.)

George Washington believed that the adjournment of the New Hampshire Convention would “possibly” make “Rhode Island more backward than she otherwise would have been, if *all* the New England States had *finally* decided in favor of the measure” (to Henry Knox, 30 March [CC:Vol. 4, pp. 180n–81n]).

**William Allen to Ephraim Kirby**  
**Providence, 6 March 1788 (excerpt)<sup>1</sup>**

Dear Kirby

. . . I have only to add my Congratulations On Accot. of the Establishment of the New Constitution by the Conventions of Six States.—and that you may be assured that nothing gives me greater Satisfaction than to have it in my power to oblige a Friend, especially One I ever held Dear, be therefore not discouraged, but Renew your commands when you Please

I am Dear Sir, Your affectionate Friend & Servt.

N.B. I Recd. a letter from Our Friend Tenny,<sup>2</sup> Dated in Decr. last, he was then well and sent Compliments to all Friends The Genl. Assembly of this State, Last week Passed an Act Submitting to the People at Large (in Town Meetings) the New Constitution. This Specious mode of giving it out was carried (not withstanding great exertions were made by the Minority to form a Convention) by a Majority of Twenty. . . .

1. RC, Kirby Papers, Duke University Library. Two endorsements identify Allen as a major. Allen served in the Continental Army from 1775 through 1783, rising in rank from ensign to Brevet Major in September of the latter year. Allen and Kirby (an ensign) served together in Colonel Jeremiah Olney’s Rhode Island Battalion in 1782 and 1783. Kirby (1757–1804), a Litchfield, Conn., lawyer, received an honorary master’s degree

from Yale College in 1787. Between 1791 and 1801, he served fourteen semi-annual terms in the Connecticut House of Representatives.

2. Probably Samuel Tenney who in 1783 served as a surgeon in Jeremiah Olney's Rhode Island Battalion, along with Allen and Kirby.

**William Ellery to Ebenezer Hazard  
Newport, 10 March 1788 (excerpt)<sup>1</sup>**

... The conduct of New Hampshire with respect to the new Constitution was altogether unexpected;—it was thought by everyone that, that State would have followed the example of Massachusetts.—The federalists however acted prudently, and it is thought that at the adjournment N. Hampshire will adopt the constitution.<sup>2</sup>—From your expression “there seems little doubt with me that *all* the rest will”—I conclude that the State of Newyork will adopt it. If they should it will have a considerable effect upon this State, a great majority of which at present is as much opposed to the new constitution as they are attached to paper money.—They will stand out to the end, and nothing but necessity will compel them to embrace a measure which will put it out of their power to do mischief.—

For the proceedings of the Genl. Assembly at the last session, which closed last saturday week, I refer you to the Newport Herald of last thursday where I am informed they are truly stated.<sup>3</sup>

By their fruits you may know them.<sup>4</sup>—

1. FC, Ellery Letterbook, 1786–1794, RNHi. Ellery is responding to Hazard's letter of 1 March which has not been located.

2. On 22 February the New Hampshire Convention, meeting in Exeter, voted 56 to 51 to adjourn and to meet in Concord on 18 June. Federalists believed that if the Convention did not adjourn the Constitution would be rejected by a majority of the delegates, who either opposed the Constitution or who had been instructed by their towns to vote against the Constitution. Federalists hoped that the delegates might convince their constituents to change their instructions. (See CC:554.)

3. See “Newspaper Report of General Assembly Proceedings,” 27 February–1 March, RCS:R.I., 121–26.

4. Matthew 7:16. See also Matthew 7:20.

**Editors' Note**

**The Rhode Island Reprinting of the Dissent of the Minority  
of the Pennsylvania Convention, 13 March–12 April 1788**

On 12 December 1787 the Pennsylvania Convention, which had convened on 20 November, ended its debate on the Constitution. Before a vote was taken on ratifying the Constitution, Antifederalist Robert Whitehill read fifteen proposed amendments to the Constitution and moved that the Convention adjourn to allow Pennsylvanians to con-

sider his amendments and any others that might come from sister states. The Convention rejected the motion 46 to 23 and then ratified the Constitution by the same vote. On 13 December the Convention refused to place Whitehill's amendments on the Journal. Earlier in its proceedings, the Convention had defeated a motion by Whitehill that would have allowed any member to place his reasons for dissent on the Journal, a customary practice in the Pennsylvania Assembly.

The *Pennsylvania Herald* published Whitehill's amendments on 15 December. On 18 December, "The Address and Reasons of Dissent of the Minority of the Convention of the State of Pennsylvania to their Constituents" was printed in the *Pennsylvania Packet* and also printed as a three-page broadside (Evans 20618) by Eleazer Oswald of the Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*. Dated "*Philadelphia, Dec. 12, 1787,*" the "Dissent" was signed by twenty-one of the twenty-three members who voted against ratification. The "Dissent" advanced the arguments against the Constitution as enunciated in the Convention and public debates. Not only had the proceedings of the Constitutional Convention been conducted in secrecy, declared the dissenters, but the Convention had had no authority to enact a new constitution. The "Dissent" denounced the force used to secure a quorum in the state Assembly in calling a state convention and the procedures employed by the majority in the state Convention.

Most importantly, the "Dissent," as a formal statement of the Convention's minority, presented Whitehill's amendments to the public and clearly demonstrated why the dissenters had refused to vote for ratification. It also sanctioned the growing demand for amendments in Pennsylvania and provided an example for Antifederalists throughout America as more conventions met to consider the Constitution. The Pennsylvania Convention was the first convention to meet, although the Delaware Convention ratified the Constitution on 7 December 1787, five days before Pennsylvania.

By early April 1788 the "Dissent" had been widely circulated and commented upon. It was reprinted in thirteen newspapers, in the widely circulated monthly Philadelphia *American Museum*, in Richmond and Boston pamphlet editions, in a Hudson, N.Y., broadside, and in a New York City pamphlet anthology. In Rhode Island, it was serialized in the *United States Chronicle*, 10, 17, 31 January; 14, 28 February; and 13 March; and in the *Providence Gazette*, 12, 19, 26 January. The *Gazette's* printer had announced its publication on 5 January.

The Federalist response to the "Dissent" was voluminous and harsh, especially in Pennsylvania. Federalists were particularly distressed by the inflammatory nature of the "Dissent." But the public reaction was not

entirely negative. One of the defenses of the “Dissent,” filled with praise, was “An Address to the Minority of the Pennsylvania Convention” that appeared on 2 January in the *Carlisle Gazette*, a Federalist newspaper printed in the Antifederalist stronghold of western Pennsylvania. Among other things, the signers of the “Dissent” were praised for their support of liberty and the rights of their constituents and for their “unanswerable, solid, and well-founded arguments” (CC:408). By 1 March the address was reprinted in six newspapers, among them the *Newport Mercury*, 4 February, and the *Providence Gazette*, 1 March. Both Rhode Island newspapers reprinted the address at the request of their readers.

In mid-March, the “Dissent” touched off a series of brief articles in the *United States Chronicle* and *Providence Gazette*, the two Rhode Island newspapers that had reprinted the “Dissent.” On 13 March “Z” asked Bennett Wheeler, the printer of the *Chronicle*, to reprint “a judicious and candid Reply and Refutation” to the “Dissent” that was allegedly being published in Philadelphia (Mfm:R.I.). Two days later, “Y” made a similar request of John Carter of the *Gazette* (Mfm:R.I.). The reprinting of the reply and refutation, “Y” argued, would be evidence of both the impartiality and freedom of the press. “Y” also criticized “Z” and was joined in this criticism by “An Observer” and “Senex,” *Providence Gazette*, 15 and 22 March, respectively (Mfm:R.I.). Remembering the furor over the *Providence Gazette*’s reprinting of “A Citizen of America” on 22 and 29 December 1787 (above), “An Observer” noted dryly that he “strongly suspect[ed] that we are soon to have another importation of *Pamphlets*, in order to *muffle* our public papers, to the exclusion of every other kind of matter.”

Finally, on 12 April 1788 the *Providence Gazette* put to rest the matter of the reply and refutation to the “Dissent” by printing an extract of a Philadelphia letter, dated 2 April. The writer stated: “Yours of the 17th ult. came to Hand Yesterday. I immediately sat out in Quest of the Answer to the Protest of G. B——n [Antifederalist leader George Bryan], alias the Pennsylvania Minority. After making due Enquiry of some political Connoisseurs, I found they knew nothing of any such Answer, either prepared or preparing. Should any such Thing appear, ‘*pamphletwise or otherwise,*’ I will instantly forward it. The Report, I think, must be without Foundation. There were indeed a Number of Pieces published in the Papers; in the Course of the Winter, with the Signatures of *A Freeman*, and *A Pennsylvanian*, as full Answers to said Protest” (Mfm:Pa. 622).

“A Freeman” I–III, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 23, 30 January, and 6 February (CC:472, 488, 505), and “A Pennsylvanian,” *ibid.*, 6, 13, 20, 27

February (Mfm:Pa. 408, 430, 439, 459), were written by Tench Coxe, a Philadelphia merchant and a prolific Federalist essayist. Not one of these essays was reprinted in Rhode Island. “A Freeman” circulated more widely and attracted more commentaries. (See CC:472.)

For the text of the “Dissent” and for more on its circulation and the commentaries upon it, see CC:353.

### **A Newport Man**

**Newport Mercury, 17 March 1788**

Mr. BARBER,

*Please to insert the following in your impartial paper.*

Trusting to the force of truth, and the ingenuity of abler men, I had determined to continue, as I have hitherto been, silent on the subject of the new Constitution; but seeing the unwearied attempts for innovation by a set of men who seem to consider government as

“intended

For nothing else, but to be mended.”<sup>1</sup>

I think it my duty, however feeble the effort, to throw in my mite to oppose the torrent of sophistry and misrepresentation that is weekly obtruded on the public.

I perceive in your last a piece signed “*A Rhode-Island Man*,”<sup>2</sup> it seems wrote with an air of confidence and triumph—he speaks of reason and reasoning, I wish he had known or practised some of that reasoning he so much pretends to, his essay had been much shorter—We are told in this piece, as well as others on the same side, that an ability given to British subjects to recover their debts in this country will be one of the blessings of a new government, by inducing the British to abandon the frontiers, or be left without excuse,—but the British have no other reason for holding the posts, after the time named in the treaty for their evacuation,<sup>3</sup> than the last reason of Kings, that is, their guns,—and giving them the treasure of the United States is a very unlikely means of removing that,—if the British subject met with legal impediments to the recovery of his debts in this country, for [the] British government to have put the same stop on our citizens would have been a proper, an ample retaliation; but there is nothing within the compass of possibility, of which I am not perfectly sure, that I am more fully persuaded of, than I am, that the British will never relinquish the posts in question until compelled by force; because no nation pays less regard to the faith of treaties than the British, witness their conduct to the French in 1755, when they took a very great number of men of war



and merchant ships before war was declared, because the French had built some forts on the south side of an imaginary line in the wilds of America,—and again, the violation of the articles by which the people of Boston resigned their arms, and the violation of the capitulation of Charles-Town,—again we are told that Congress has no credit with foreigners, because they have no power to fulfill their engagements, and this we are told, with a boldness exceeded by nothing but its falshood, perhaps in the same paper that announces to the world the loan of a million of Holland guilders, if I mistake not the sum—a sum equal to 250,000 Spanish Dollars, and all this done by the procurement of that very Congress whose insignificancy and want of power had been constantly proclaimed for two or three years before,—The Dutch are the most cautious people on earth, and it is reasonable to suppose they were abundantly persuaded of the permanency and efficacy of our government by their risking so much money on it.<sup>4</sup>

We are told that so long as we withhold this power from Congress we shall be a weak, despised people—we were long contending for Independence, and now we are in a passion to be rid of it—but let us attempt to reason on this subject, and see to which side that will lead us—Reason is truly defined, in all cases short of mathematical demonstration, to be a supposing that the like causes will produce the like effects; let us proceed by this rule—the Swiss Cantons for an hundred years have remained separate Independent States, consequently without any controlling power; even the little Republic of St. Marino,<sup>5</sup> containing perhaps but little more ground than the town of Newport, and about five thousand inhabitants, surrounded by powerful and ambitious neighbours, has kept its freedom and independence these thirteen hundred years, and is mentioned by travellers as a very enlightened and happy people; if these small republics, in the neighbourhood of the warlike and intriguing Courts of Paris, Vienna, and Berlin, have kept their freedom and original form of government, is it not reasonable to suppose, that the same good sense and love of freedom, on this side the Atlantic, will secure us from all attempts within and without; and the only internal discord that has happened in Switzerland was on a religious account, and a supreme controlling power is no security against this, as appears by what happened in Ireland in the time of Charles the first, and in France in the time of Henry the fourth,—It seems rational in a case of this importance to consult the opinion of the ablest men, and to whom can we better appeal than to J. J. Rousseau, a republican by birth and education, one of the most exalted geniuses and one of the greatest writers of his age, or perhaps any age, a man the most disinterested and benevolent towards mankind, a man the

most industrious in the acquisition of knowledge and information, by travel, conversation, reading, and thinking, and one who has wrote a Volume on Government entitled the Social Contract, wherein he inculcates, that the people should examine and determine every public act themselves, his words are, that “every law that the people have not ratified in person, is void, it is no law. The people of England think they are free, they are much mistaken, they are never so but during the election of members of Parliament, as soon as they are elected, they are slaves, they are nothing, and by the use they make of their liberty, during the short moments they possess it, they well deserve to lose it.”<sup>6</sup>—This is far from advising that thirty thousand souls<sup>7</sup> should resign their judgments and wills intirely to one man for two years, to a man, who, perhaps, may go from home sincere and patriotic, but by the time he has dined in pomp for a week with the wealthy citizens of New-York or Philadelphia, will have lost all his rigid ideas of œconomy and equality—he becomes fascinated with the elegancies and luxuries of wealth, these splendid appearances with some hints from his prerogative acquaintance, that if Government were fixed, and the perquisites of office sufficient to induce a man of abilities to accept, no doubt you, or one of your sons, would be the man for your quarter; objects and intimations like these soon change the champion for the people to an advocate for power, and the people finding themselves thus basely betrayed, cry that virtue is but a name. We are not sure that men have more virtue at this time and place than they had in England in the time of George the 2d. let any one look into the history of those times, and see with what boldness men changed sides and deserted the people in pursuit of profit and power. If to take up the cross and renounce the pomps and vanities of this sinful world, is a hard lesson for divines, ’tis much harder for politicians,—a Cincinnatus, a Cato, a Fabricius,<sup>8</sup> and a Washington, are rarely to be found. We are told that the Trustees of our powers and freedom being mostly married men, and all of them inhabitants and proprietors of the country, is an ample security against an abuse of power, whether human nature be less corrupt than formerly I will not determine; but this I know that Julius Cæsar, Oliver Cromwell, and the nobles of Venice, were natives and inhabitants of the countries whose power they usurped and drenched in blood. Again, our country is compared to a ship of which we are all part owners, and from thence ’tis gravely concluded that no officer can ever betray or abuse his trust; but that men will sacrifice the public to their private interest, is a saying too well known to need repeating, and the instances of designed shipwrecks, and ships run away with by a combination of masters, supercargoes, and part owners, is so great that nothing can

equal them, but those instances in which pretended patriots and politicians have raised themselves and families to power and greatness, by destroying that freedom, and those laws, they were chosen to defend.

If it were necessary to cite more precedents to prove that the people ought not to trust or remove their power any further from them, the little Republic of Lucca may be mentioned, which, surrounded by the Dukedom of Tuscany, has existed under its present constitution about five hundred years, and as Mr. Addison says, is for the extent of its dominion the richest and best peopled of all the States of Italy—and he says further, that “the whole administration of the government passes into different hands every two months.”<sup>9</sup> This is very far from confirming the doctrine of choosing those officers for two years who were before chosen for one. The want of a decisive efficient power is much talked of by the discontented, and that we are in danger of being conquered by the intrigues of European powers.—But it has already been shewn that we have delegated a more decisive power to our Congress than is granted by the Republic Swiss Cantons to their General Diet; these Republics have enjoyed peace some hundreds of years, while those governments which possess this decisive, efficient power, so much aimed at, are as often as twenty or thirty years, drawing their men from the plough and loom to be shot at and cut each others throats for the honour of their respective nations. And by how much further we are from Europe than the Swiss Cantons with their allies, and Lucca and St. Marino are from France, Prussia, and Austria, by so much less are we in danger of being conquered than those Republics, which have existed some earlier than others, but the youngest of them one hundred and thirty years, without being conquered. As for the United Provinces of Holland they are but nominal Republics, their Stadtholder, very much like our intended President, making them in reality a monarchy, and subject to all its calamities; but supposing that the present constitution penned by the ablest men, four or five years in completion, and its adoption considered as the happiest event—supposing, I say, the present Constitution destroyed, can a new one be ratified with more solemnity, agreed to in stronger or more binding terms? What security can be given that in seven years hence, another Convention shall not be called to frame a third Constitution? And as ancient Greece counted by olympiads, and monarchies by their Kings reigns, we shall date in the first, second, or third year, of the seventh, eighth, or ninth Constitution.

In treating this subject I have not presumed to advise, and have intruded but few comments. I have mentioned the state of those countries which most resemble our own and leave to the natural sense of

the reader to make his own conclusions. The male-contents, the lovers of novelty, delight much in allegory. Should I be indulged a few words in that way, I should not compare the new Constitution to a house, I should fetch my simile from the country, and compare it to Siberian Wheat (otherwise called Siberian chear) which is known to have been the most praised, the most dear, the most worthless, and most short lived thing that was ever adopted<sup>10</sup>—but if the freemen of this continent are weary of that power and freedom they have so dearly bought, and so shortly enjoyed—the power of judging and determining what laws are most wholesome, what taxes are requisite and sufficient, I say, if the people are tired of these privileges, now is the time to part with them forever. Much more might be said to shew the bitterness and mischief contained in this gilded pill, but being fond of brevity, I shall rely on the good sense of the public to keep themselves out of the trap, and sign myself in plain English, A NEWPORT MAN.

March 3, 1788.

1. See Samuel Butler, *Hudibras. The First Part . . .* (London, 1663), 8: “As if Religion were intended/For nothing else but to be mended.”

2. See “A Rhode-Island Man,” *Newport Mercury*, 25 February (above).

3. See a reference to the act concerning the Treaty of Peace (1783) passed by the legislature in September 1787 (William Ellery to the Commissioners of the Treasury, 18 September, at note 6, above).

Because British creditors had difficulty in American courts obtaining debts owed them, the British government retaliated by refusing to abandon seven forts in American territory near the Great Lakes.

4. On 1 June 1787, John Adams signed an agreement for a loan from Dutch bankers of one million florins (\$400,000). The loan was necessary, in part, to pay the interest on previous Dutch loans. On 11 October 1787, Congress approved the loan (JCC, XXXIII, 412–15, 649).

5. The landlocked and mountainous Republic of San Marino embraces twenty-four square miles in north central Italy near the Adriatic Sea. John Adams stated that “This petty republic has lasted thirteen hundred years, while all the other states of Italy have several times changed their masters and forms of government” (*A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America* [3 vols., London, 1787–1788], I, Letter III, pp. 8–16).

6. Jean Jacques Rousseau, *A Treatise on the Social Contract . . .* (London, 1764), Book III, chapter 15, pp. 163–64. The volume originally appeared in Amsterdam in 1762.

7. A reference to Article I, section 2, clause 3, of the Constitution: “The Number of Representatives shall not exceed one for every thirty Thousand, but each State shall have at Least one Representative.”

8. Fabricius, a Roman plebeian, was consul in 282 and 278 B.C., and censor in 275 B.C. A hero of the war against Pyrrhus, he was known for his austerity and incorruptibility. He was a prime example of Roman virtue.

9. Joseph Addison, *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy, &c. In the Years 1701, 1702, 1703* (London, 1705), 406.

10. Siberian wheat was introduced into New Hampshire in 1774 and produced good crops in the early 1780s before yields declined.

**Newport Herald, 20 March 1788**

*Extract of a letter from a gentleman in a neighboring State,  
dated March 7, 1788.*

“What is the state of politics with you?—The New Constitution is referred to the *virtuous* freemen of the state, ergo,—A virtuous Constitution will be rejected:—The *minority of Rhode-Island* have deservedly the merit of suffering for the interest of the union.—Their opposition hath stripped national injustice of its mask, and exhibited what is the true interest of the people—the effect has been great and productive of very extensive advantage.—It has made iniquity hide its head in the three New-England states, and has wrought a conviction of the injustice of paper money, and the imbecility of our present governments more effectually, than the most conclusive arguments grounded on theory.”

**Newport Herald, 20 March 1788**

A letter from a gentleman at the Westward, says, “I have no doubt but all the States will sooner or later, adopt the Federal Constitution, not even the State of Rhode-Island excepted, as they must be convinced that it will be for the interest of all the States.”

**Newport Mechanick’s Meeting, c. 20–22 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

The disorders that have pervaded this State for two years past—the inadequacy of our national government to regulate commerce and control the general interest, have become very alarming considerations; for, in addition to the loss of public honor and credit, we have to lament the decay of our trade, the ruin of our mechanicks, and the want of employ for the industrious labourers. The MECHANICKS of this town, fully sensible of this our melancholy situation, and emulous to exhibit a like laudable example with that of their brethren in our sister State,<sup>2</sup> convened a very respectable body of their order on the last week, to consider of the proposed Federal Constitution which was to be submitted to the people the Monday following,<sup>3</sup> when they unanimously agreed that this Constitution was the only probable method of rescuing them and their country from impending ruin, and unanimously resolved that they would endeavor to obtain an adoption of it, by pursuing such measures at the ensuing town-meeting as should appear most eligible to carry into effect this desirable end.—How flattering is the prospect of returning prosperity when we contemplate so large & respectable a class of our fellow-citizens, instead of being dupes to the delusions of the State or resorting to the violence of faction, deliber-

ately associating to render government once more permanent and respectable.

1. Printed: *Newport Herald*, 27 March. Reprinted seven times by 14 April: N.H. (1), Mass. (2), Conn. (4).

2. Probably a reference to the Boston Tradesmen Meeting of 7 January 1788 (CC:424). The *Newport Herald*, 17 January, reprinted the account of the meeting that originally appeared in the *Boston Gazette*, 14 January. The *Herald's* printer, Peter Edes, was the son of Benjamin Edes, the printer of the *Boston Gazette*. For the *Boston Gazette's* version, see Mfm:Mass. 628.

3. For "The Rhode Island Referendum on the Constitution," 24 March, see Part II (immediately below).

**II.**  
**THE RHODE ISLAND REFERENDUM**  
**ON THE CONSTITUTION**  
**24 March 1788**

**II–A. The General Assembly Calls for**  
**a Referendum on the Constitution**  
**27 February–20 March 1788**

On 17 September 1787 the Constitutional Convention sent its proposed Constitution to Congress along with two resolutions and a cover letter. The Convention's first resolution called for Congress to transmit the Constitution to the states so that their legislatures could call state ratifying conventions. On 28 September Congress complied with the Convention's request by passing a resolution transmitting the Constitution to the states with a recommendation that they call conventions to consider the Constitution. Every state except Rhode Island called a state convention by 1 February 1788.

The Rhode Island Assembly first considered the Constitution at its October 1787 session, and on 3 November ordered slightly over one thousand copies of the Constitution printed and distributed to the towns. However, the House of Deputies rejected a motion to call a state convention. When the legislature reconvened for its February 1788 session, Federalists demanded that a convention be called. On 29 February the lower house rejected a convention by a vote of 43 to 15. Country party leaders then proposed that freemen vote individually in their town meetings on 24 March to accept or reject the Constitution. On 1 March this referendum was accepted by a vote of 42 to 12. The deputies then rejected an amendment to the referendum that freemen instruct their deputies to call a state convention.

**Newspaper Report of General Assembly Proceedings**  
**27 February–1 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

*HISTORY OF THE PROCEEDINGS of the fifth Session of the General Assembly of this State for the last year, held by adjournment at Providence, on the last Monday of February last.*

On WEDNESDAY the 27th ult. the Houses were organized, when a motion was made "that a Committee be appointed to inquire into the truth of a declaration made in the late Convention of Massachusetts, that the Delegates of this State had been recalled from Congress to the

great injury of the United States;<sup>2</sup> it was urged in support of this motion, that the suggestions were groundless, that no Delegate had been recalled, and therefore an inquiry was necessary to retrieve our *public character*, which had suffered much in consequence of this misrepresentation;—some members observed in reply that the motion was not sufficiently extensive—if *inquiries could obliterate reproaches*, it ought to extend not only to that charge but to imputations that were against us of a more disgraceful and aggravated nature.—In the process of this debate, the House entered into an investigation of their former proceedings relative to their Delegates in Congress,—from whence it appeared, that it was the sense of the House at May session, 1787, that the Delegates should return, from an idea that there would not be a Congress during the setting of the General Convention, and in consequence of the difficulty of supplying them with money to defray their expences, that a vote to this effect was about to be passed, when it was observed, that such a resolution, if reduced to writing, might be considered as containing a reflection on the gentlemen in this delegation, it was therefore thought more eligible that his Excellency the Governor should communicate the sense of the House by letter to the Delegates.—To confirm this relation of facts the original vote granting a sum of money to the Delegates was produced in which were the following erasements “*in order that they may be enabled to pay off their bills and return home as soon as may be.*”

The whole vote, with the Secretary’s Certificate thereon, stands as follows:

*In the Lower House May 5, 1787.*

Resolved, That *John Sayles*, Esq. be, and he is hereby empowered to draw two hundred pounds lawful money out of the General Treasury, and invest the same in solid coin, or in such produce as will answer at New-York, and remit the same unto Messieurs *Varnum* and *Arnold*, the Delegates at New-York, *in order that they may be enabled to pay off their bills and return as soon as may be*, to be paid equally to them, and to be accounted for by them in settling their accounts.

Voted and passed.

By order, R. J. HELME, Clerk, pro. tem.

*In the Upper House, read the same day and concurred.*

By order, H. SHERBURNE, Dep. Sec’y.

*Rhode-Island, &c.*

*The within is a true copy of the original resolve,—the words “in order that they may be enabled to pay off their bills and return home as soon as may be,” being in the original vote of the Lower House, and erased before it arrived to the Upper House, the words being still plainly legible.*

Witness, HENRY WARD, Sec’y.



The Governor not being present during the session, it could not be ascertained whether his Excellency had made these communications or not;—the Delegates did return soon after, and the State has not been since represented in Congress nor any provision made for it.—The House generally acquiesced in the truth of this detail, but as much had been said on this subject, the motion was agreed to, and a Committee were accordingly appointed, but they have not yet made a report.

The foregoing discussion of the remissness of the State in not keeping up her representation in Congress, together with several letters received from the President and Secretary of that Hon. Body on this subject, proved a favorable crisis for a renewal of the motion, to send forward our Delegates, accordingly an order was made for defraying the expences of the delegation and instructions given to Peleg Arnold and Jonathan Hazard, Esquires, to take their seats in Congress as soon as possible.

THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS by a very respectable Committee presented a memorial on the subject of the *Tender and Limitation acts*, in which, after observing that the continuance of these laws in the present depreciated state of the currency, would be productive of the greatest injustice and oppression as well as a general depravity and corruption of morals, they intreated that a repeal or such amendments of the laws might take place as may in future prevent these evils.—This memorial was received and referred to the next sessions, and copies of it ordered to be printed and transmitted to the several towns for their sentiments on this interesting question.—The reception of this memorial and referring it to the freemen fully establish this position—That the General Assembly are convinced of the injustice of the Tender and Limitation acts, and it ought to be considered by all Courts of Justice as a virtual suspension of them.—It is therefore presumed that the freemen will have such a regard for their honor and the dignity and happiness of the State as to instruct their Deputies to repeal these unjust laws at the next sessions of Assembly.—It must be the wish of every *honest man* that the application of this BENEVOLENT SOCIETY may be blessed with success.

THURSDAY [28 February], agreeable to the order of the day, the bill for restricting the representation of each town to two members in General Assembly, was moved for; in consequence of which a motion was made to continue it to a future session, grounded upon the importance of the subject and the unavoidable absense of several members, by reason of the severity of the weather: it was, however, negatived by a majority of three.—The smallness of this majority, and some unfavorable appearances of success, prevented the supporters of this UNCONSTITUTIONAL BILL from prosecuting their motion until they discovered, at

the close of the session, that several other members in opposition to it, were absent when they renewed their motion; but the ungenerous principles which induce this manœuvre being detected and opposed, they withdrew their motion, and the Bill was referred to the next session.<sup>3</sup>

From the state of the TREASURY laid before the House, it appeared that of the 30,000*l.* tax, payable the first of January last, only 5440*l.* 17*s.* hath been paid—That the sum of 12,783*l.* 4*s.* 8½ had been paid in discharge of the first quarter's dividend of the State debt—10,495*l.* 4*s.* 5*d.* for the second quarter.—And as the period of these two instalments had elapsed, the State gained 28,797*l.* by their act of forfeiture.

An Act passed allowing the public creditors to receive the third quarter part of their demands—no period for forfeiture in case of refusal to take the paper money is yet fixed.<sup>4</sup>

The Treasurer and collector of taxes are authorised to receive in payment of taxes, notes not exceeding ten pounds, that were issued at an interest of six per cent. provided the holders of them have taken their two first dividends in paper.

The distresses of the INVALIDS forced them again to appear before the House for their slender stipends, exhibiting a most affecting spectacle of human misery—their appearance sanctified the truth of their wants, and their mutilated trunks evidenced undeniable claims. The minority, as usual, were charged with mustering these wretched objects to embarrass the House and excite popular clamour, because they advocated their demands in the House, and were disposed to be liberal: we are, however, happy to inform that in general, grants were obtained in some proportion to their demands.

⟨A motion having been made, and negatived at a former session, for calling a Convention to take into consideration and decide upon the proposed Constitution of the United States of America, as recommended by the Convention held at Philadelphia in May last<sup>5</sup>—A new motion was now made from that part of the House by whom the former question had been negatived, “That the proposed Constitution should be submitted to the people at large.” It was opposed, because it differed from the mode recommended by the Convention who formed the Constitution, and which mode had been adopted by all the States, that the subject would receive a full and satisfactory discussion in a Convention, but this could not be expected in town meetings. It was asked if the Constitution should be rejected by the people, could a Convention be called? It was agreed that it could not be done; but if the people should adopt it, their ratification would not be valid, consequently a Convention must be called, and might not that Convention act counter to the determination of the people? notwithstanding the absurdity of this mode

appeared in the most glaring colours, and the most important consequences were connected with an adoption or rejection of it, they continued tenacious of the motion, supporting it with this idea, that the Assembly were not empowered to call a Convention, it being with the people only to decide on a Constitution. And upon the question, “shall it be submitted to a Convention or to town-meetings?” there were 15 for calling a Convention, and 43 for submitting it to the people.)—A committee was then appointed to draft a Bill directing the mode in which the towns should decide, they accordingly reported a bill on Saturday [1 March], providing for calling town-meetings on —— at which time every freeholder and freeman were to be particularly warned by constable to attend, and that the yeas and nays should be taken on the Constitution as proposed.—As soon as this bill was read it was moved that it should be passed into a law, after filling up the blank with the fourth Monday of March inst.—An amendment was proposed, that the freemen should be at liberty not only to adopt or reject the Constitution, *but to instruct their Deputies for calling a Convention*, if this mode of decision should appear to them more proper: In support of the amendment it was said, that there were many freemen who had not made up their judgment on the proposed Constitution, and for want of sufficient information would be unwilling to decide upon the question; that confining the freemen to a particular question as proposed in the Bill, would be inconsistent with the avowed principles upon which the Bill was framed; for, if it was true, that the legislature had not power to call a Convention, it would be an invasion of the rights of the people to deprive them of the liberty of adopting it if this mode of decision should appear to them most regular and proper. The Speaker [Othniel Gorton] refused to put the question upon the amendment, altho’ called for from different quarters of the House, until the question upon the Bill was taken; this being decided in the affirmative, a vote was taken upon the amendment, which was rejected by the usual majority.

At a former session the majority were for postponing a discussion of the Constitution until it had received a decision in the other States—That the people might have the best means of informing themselves on this subject, but a motion for this purpose was now negatived—It seemed to be their wish at this time to hasten a decision before the passions of the people should subside in expectation that their negative would have an influence upon the States who have not yet decided.

SATURDAY, the Assembly adjourned to the fifth Monday of March, and are then to convene in East-Greenwich.

1. Printed: *Newport Herald*, 6 March 1788. Reprinted in the *Massachusetts Gazette*, 11 March. The text in angle brackets appeared in the *Boston Gazette*, 10 March, and was reprinted in ten other newspapers by 9 April: N.H. (1), Conn. (2), N.Y. (3), Pa. (2), Va. (2).

2. On 16 January 1788 Theodore Sedgwick and Rufus King asserted in the Massachusetts Convention that Rhode Island had recalled its delegates to the Confederation Congress in the winter of 1786–87 “without any reason.” Sedgwick justified Article I, section 4 (authorizing Congress to regulate federal elections), because “The same may happen under the general government.” See RCS:Mass., 1211, 1212n–13n, for Sedgwick’s remarks, and RCS:Mass., 1214–15, 1219, 1221–22, 1284, 1673–74, 1674n, for the on-going discussion. (See also Mfm:Mass. 630 for an unpublished essay drafted by King on this matter.) The *Newport Herald* reported on 10 May 1787 that the Rhode Island legislature did not see the need to have delegates in Congress while the Constitutional Convention sat. In September the legislature appointed new delegates to attend Congress in November.

3. For an account of the bill reapportioning the towns in the House of Deputies, see “Newspaper Report of House of Deputies Proceedings,” 28 February 1788 (below).

4. In March 1787 the legislature provided for the payment of one-quarter of the six percent notes (that constituted a majority of the state debt) in paper money, which had depreciated significantly. Subsequent acts passed in June 1787, February 1788, and May 1788 provided for the payment of the remaining three-quarters of these notes.

5. At its October 1787 session, the legislature rejected a motion to call a state convention to consider the Constitution (RCS:R.I., 42–47).

### **Newspaper Report of House of Deputies Proceedings Wednesday, 27 February 1788<sup>1</sup>**

Monday last was the Day appointed for the Meeting of the General Assembly—but a House was not formed until Yesterday Morning—when Mr. *Childs* (from Warren) opened the Business of the Session, by a Motion to the following Purport:—“That whereas it had been asserted, by Two Members of Congress from the State of Massachusetts, in the late Convention of that State, that this State had recalled her Delegates, and the Union thereby suffering a Loss of 7 or 8 Millions of Dollars in the Sale of Lands<sup>2</sup>—he moved that a Committee might be appointed, to enquire into the Facts and report immediately.”—After some Debate, a Committee, consisting of Mr. *Comstock*, Mr. *Marchant*, and Mr. *Sheldon*, were chosen.

1. Printed: *United States Chronicle*, 28 February. Reprinted in *Newport Mercury*, 3 March; *New Hampshire Spy* and *Salem Mercury*, 11 March; *New York Packet*, 18 March; and *Pennsylvania Packet*, 19 March.

2. See “Newspaper Report of General Assembly Proceedings,” 27 February–1 March, note 2 (immediately above).

### **Newspaper Report of House of Deputies Proceedings Thursday, 28 February 1788<sup>1</sup>**

*(It being the Wish of almost every Man in the State, that the Proceedings of the Legislature should be regularly published, as soon after their Meeting as*

*possible, the Editor of the Chronicle attended at the late Session, in Order, as far as in his Power, to gratify the Wishes of the Public.—Having but a very imperfect Knowledge of Short-Hand Writing, he has not been able to do Justice to the Debates—but thus far he engages, that the Votes are accurately stated, and that all the Ideas here found fell from some or other of the Gentlemen speaking.—His Aim is to be of Service in the Line of his Profession, and he hopes this first Attempt, in this Way, will meet the Candour of the Public.)*

*In the LOWER HOUSE of ASSEMBLY of RHODE-ISLAND.*

THURSDAY, February 28, 1788. P. M.

The Question, for an Alteration of the Representation of some of the Towns in this State, was brought on by a Motion from Col. Winsor (*Gloucester*) and seconded by Mr. Sayles (*Smithfield*)—upon which the Bill referred to the Towns at March Session, 1787, for altering the Representation, was read: The Instructions from the several Towns were then called for and read—by which it appeared, that the Towns of *Newport, Providence, Portsmouth, Warwick, New-Shoreham, Middletown, and North-Providence*, had instructed their Deputies to oppose the Passing of the Bill, as unconstitutional and unjust:—That *West-Greenwich, North-Kingstown, Westerly, South-Kingstown, Smithfield, East-Greenwich, Coventry, Exeter, Cumberland, Gloucester, Richmond, Cranston, Scituate, Hopkinton, and Foster*, had instructed their Deputies to vote for the Bill, as necessary and proper.—*Barrington and Warren* (it was said) had directed their Deputies to vote against the Bill—but their Instructions did not appear.—The other Towns, viz.—*Bristol, Jamestown, Charlestown, Tiverton, Little-Compton, and Johnston*, did not give Instructions on the Subject. After the Instructions were read, Mr. Champlin (*Newport*) moved, that the Consideration of this Bill be referred to the next Session—as the inclement Season of the Year had prevented several Members from attending, and that 2 or 3 were confined by Sickness—particularly, that 6 were absent from Towns which had instructed their Deputies to vote against the Bill.—The Motion was objected to by Mr. Hazard (*Charlestown*) Mr. Comstock (*East-Greenwich*) and others.—It was said, that the House was as full as usual:—That the next Session, it was probable, would be in May, when the Election would take up the Attention of the House:—That the Bill had been under Reference to the Towns, and they had instructed their Deputies—if the Towns who were opposed to the Bill were not represented, it was their own Fault—as at the last Session it was agreed, and entered on the Journals, that Thursday of the present Session the Question should come on.—Several other Gentlemen spoke for and against the Motion, particularly Mr. Arnold and Mr. Bourne (*Providence*) Mr. Bradford (*Bristol*) Mr. Joslyn (*West-Greenwich*) Mr. Sheldon (*Richmond*) Mr. Sayles (*Smithfield*) but it was finally rejected by a Majority of 3—27 voting for the Motion, and 30 against

it.—After hearing some private Petitions, the House adjourned to Friday Morning.

1. Printed: *United States Chronicle*, 6 March.

**Newspaper Report of House of Deputies Proceedings  
Friday, 29 February 1788<sup>1</sup>**

FRIDAY, *February* 29, 1788. A. M.

The House proceeded in hearing private Petitions, until they adjourned for Dinner.

P. M.

A Motion was made by Mr. *Sayles* (*Smithfield*) and seconded by Mr. *Childs* (*Warren*) that the House do now proceed to the Consideration of the Dispatches from Congress, on the Subject of the proposed Federal Constitution.—Upon which Mr. *Joslyn* (*West-Greenwich*) made a Motion to the following Purport:—“That the Constitution for the United States, proposed by the late Federal Convention, be submitted to the Freemen of the several Towns in this State, in Town-Meetings assembled, for their Decision; and that the Yeas and Nays be registered in the several Towns, in the same Manner as it is now done for the Choice of General Officers.”—This Motion was seconded by Mr. *Hazard* (*Charlestown*.)

After a pretty lengthy Discussion of the Propriety of submitting it in this Way, the Vote was finally put—Whether it should be submitted to a Convention, chosen as in the other States—or to the People at large, and was carried against a Convention, by a Majority of 28—15 voting for a Convention, and 43 for submitting it to the People at large.<sup>2</sup>

In Course of discussing this Question, it was observed—That by the proposed Constitution the People were called upon to surrender a Part of their Liberties; that they were the best Judges what Part they ought to give up:—That the Legislature had no legal Right to appoint a Convention to alter the Constitution:—That they were not deputed for that Purpose:—That the Citizens of some other States, had by the Means of appointing Conventions, been decoyed into an Adoption of the Constitution, when, it was asserted, at least Two-Thirds of the Inhabitants of some of the States that had agreed to it, were against the Constitution:—That submitting it to every Individual Freeholder of the State was the only Mode by which the *true* Sentiments of the People could be collected.—It was replied—That this Mode was without Precedent on the Face of the Earth:—That all the United States, except this, had appointed Conventions; and that we ought to pay some Deference to the Opinions, at least of those in the different States who oppose the

new Constitution, if not of those who wish it adopted—in not one of which such a Motion as this had been made:—That by Meeting in Convention the Sentiments of the best Men in the State would be collected;—the different *Interests* would there be represented—the *Mechanics* might there shew how far it would be advantageous or disadvantageous for *their* particular Interest to have it adopted or rejected: The *Farmers*—the *Merchants*—might in the same Manner be satisfied: All this would be lost by Meeting in the different Towns, in each of which but *one Interest* or at most but *two*, could be considered.

The principal Speakers were, for a Convention—Mr. *Bradford*, Mr. *Marchant*, Mr. *Champlin*, Mr. *Arnold*, and Mr. *Bourne*:—For referring it to the several Town-Meetings—Mr. *Hazard*, Mr. *Joslyn*, and Mr. *Comstock*.—After the Question was decided, Mr. *Hazard*, Mr. *Joslyn*, and Mr. *Sheldon* were appointed a Committee to draft a Bill, agreeable to the Vote, and lay the same before the House.—Adjourned to Saturday Morning.

1. Printed: *United States Chronicle*, 6 March. Excerpts of varying lengths were reprinted six times by 29 March: N.H. (1), Mass. (3), Conn. (1), N.Y. (1).

2. In a one-paragraph account, the *Providence Gazette*, 1 March, indicated that the vote was 42 to 15 (CC:Vol. 4, p. 530). This account was reprinted in the *Newport Mercury*, 3 March, and in fourteen out-of-state newspapers by 9 April: Conn. (4), N.Y. (2), N.J. (1), Pa. (5), Md. (1), Va. (1).

### Newspaper Report of House of Deputies and House of Magistrates Proceedings, Saturday, 1 March 1788<sup>1</sup>

SATURDAY, *March 1*, 1788. A. M.

The House proceeded to hear private Petitions.—Just before they adjourned for Dinner, the Committee appointed last Evening reported a Bill, which was read, and ordered to lie on the Table.

P. M.

⟨The Bill for submitting the Federal Constitution to the People at large, reported by the Committee, was taken up for Debate—when Mr. *Whipple* (*Cranston*) motioned, as an Amendment, that the People at large, when the Constitution is before them in Town-Meeting, have Liberty to propose a Convention, which Motion was seconded by Mr. *Bourne* (*Providence*) but the Speaker [Othniel Gorton] said, this was contrary to the Rules of the House—as their Sense on that Subject had been fully taken the preceding Evening by the Vote, Whether it should be submitted to the Towns or a Convention.

Upon this, Mr. *Marchant* (*Newport*) stated a Motion in Writing, to this Purport:—“That when the Federal Constitution is before the People in Town-Meeting, that any Freeman or Freeholder of the State may,

instead of giving his Yea or Nay on the Question, give his Voice for calling a Convention of the State, by Delegates, to take up and discuss the Subject.”

This Motion met the same Opposition from the Speaker, and some of the Members, as that made by Commodore *Whipple*, and on the same Ground.—It was said, that the Sense of the House had been already taken on the Subject:—That the People could, if they saw fit, give Instructions to their Representatives in General Assembly to have a Convention called, and if there should be a Majority of them, no Doubt the House would agree to call one; but the Bill was drawn agreeable to the Sense of the House—and, at present, there was no Need of calling on the People to vote for a Convention—it would be distracting the State, already much convulsed by Parties, and answer no good Purpose whatever.

It was replied—That no Doubt many Persons in each Town in the State would think a Convention chosen purposely to discuss the Subject, would be more eligible than voting singly, either to adopt or reject the Constitution—and would the House undertake to deprive such of the Privilege of having a Convention called;—it had been said it was submitted to the People at large, in Deference to the Privileges of the Citizens—but if this Mode was adopted, many would be deprived of their Privileges.

After a lengthy and warm Debate, in which Mr. *Bradford*, Mr. *Marchant*, Mr. *Arnold*, Mr. *Champlin*, and Mr. *Bourne*, in Favour of the Amendment, and Mr. *Hazard*, Mr. *Joslyn*, Mr. *Comstock*, and Mr. *Sheldon*, against it, exerted themselves pretty strenuously, the Question was put—not, whether the proposed Amendment should be adopted—but, whether the Bill should pass—and was carried by a Majority of 30—42 voting for the Bill, and 12 against it.—Those who voted against the Bill generally declaring that with the Amendment they would not oppose it.

After the Bill was passed, a Motion was made and seconded, That it be amended—but it was lost by a Majority of 20—16 voting for the Motion, and 36 against it.)

In the Evening a Vote was passed, directing the Hon. *Peleg Arnold*, and *Jonathan J. Hazard*, Esq'rs. Two of the Delegates from this State, to proceed immediately to New-York, and take their Seats in Congress; and a Grant on the Treasury for a Sum of Money was made each of them. A Vote was also past, directing the General-Treasurer to pay a third Quarter Part on the public Securities, to all Persons applying for the same.—Some private Business closed the Session.

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When the aforementioned Bill, for referring the proposed National Constitution to the several Town-Meetings, came before the Upper House, it did not meet with the concurrence of all the Members.—The following is a very brief statement of the arguments on the question of concurrence.—It was objected, that the whole body of the people, individually and collectively, have a right to be consulted, and to give their voices in forming a Constitution, by which they are to be governed—That as the body of the people collectively considered, and who form the State, consists of a number of individuals, all personally interested in the proposed government, they ought to have an opportunity of meeting and consulting together, on the propriety and expediency of adopting it—of rejecting it—of proposing amendments, or any other measures they may think will promote the public good—That as it is inconvenient, and perhaps even impossible, in a State no larger than this for all the individuals to assemble together, it was therefore necessary from the nature of things to introduce the idea of representation, in which case the mode of calling upon the people to join in appointing agents, or representatives, for themselves in a Convention of the whole, appears the only proper method—That in this way every man who chooses it may personally aid and give his voice in the formation and establishment of a body, which coming from every part of the State could conveniently meet, consult and act together, and representing all parts of the community, with all the different interests, trades and professions, and having the collected sense and wisdom of a free people, could reason, confer with and convince each other, that finally they might judge and determine what was best for the whole—That the proposed Bill, though it gave every person an opportunity to enter his assent or dissent, precluded all the before-mentioned advantages arising from a general Convention, and excluded the light and information which one part of the State could afford to the other by means thereof—That it gave opportunity for misrepresentations to be made, to influence a decision, either one way or the other, and had a tendency to throw the State into parties opposed to each other, to raise jealousies and animosities, without any apparent benefit therefrom, especially if some towns, as would probably be the case, should be generally in favour of the proposed Constitution, while others were as generally opposed to it, without knowing the particular motives of each other's conduct, or having the means, by argumentation and neighbourly conference, of persuading each other into an harmonious concurrence in such measures as would probably promote the real interest and happiness of the whole.—It was also argued, that taking the sense of the people in the manner proposed by the Bill, was not complying

with the recommendation of the Convention, or of Congress, and that it tended to deprive the people at large in this State, of that weight and influence in forming or directing the national government of the United States, which they would have by means of a Convention—That this measure was unprecedented in history—and that after the question was taken in this way, it could not be considered as decisive, because not taken from the people in their assembled collective capacity, the only mode in which a major vote is considered to be binding on the minority—a sentiment advanced and established by the writings of Puffendorf, Grotius, and the greatest civilians, on the nature and origin of government.

On the other hand, in favour of the Bill, besides what is contained in the preamble, it was argued, that as this State had not sent delegates to the Convention at Philadelphia, and had not, as a State, joined in forming the proposed Constitution, the business was reduced simply to this question—*Will this State agree to this Constitution or not?*—That had this State joined in the appointment of the Convention at Philadelphia, the matter would have rested on a different footing, as such an appointment would have implied the assent of the people to alterations or amendments of the Confederation; in which case a Convention might be proper to ratify or reject it—That the people individually have a right to determine for themselves, whether they will consent to any alterations in the constitutional form of their government; and as they had not been consulted upon the matter, it was therefore proper to refer the proposed national Constitution to them, as individuals, that they might declare, whether it was agreeable to them or not, which would appear on the question being taken in the manner proposed by the Bill—That in either case a Convention could then be called, to ratify and establish the proposed Constitution, if a majority of the people were in favour of it.—But if it appeared that they were not in favour of it as it stands, to propose such alterations or amendments, or other measures, as a majority of the Convention empowered for that purpose might agree to—That submitting the Constitution to the consideration of the freemen in the manner pointed out by this Bill, was the only proper mode of clearing the way, and opening a door for a State Convention, if the people in general should think one necessary:—It was also argued, That as no provision is made by the Convention, at Philadelphia, for alterations or amendments, it was uncertain whether it would answer any purpose to propose them; so that a Convention might be attended only with a fruitless expence, and that the sense of the people could be more fully and better taken in their respective

towns, than by a Convention, who possibly might act contrary to the sentiments and wishes of their constituents.

The question, of concurrence in favour of the Bill becoming a law, was finally carried by a great majority.

1. Printed: *United States Chronicle*, 6 March. The text in angle brackets was reprinted in the Boston *Independent Chronicle*, 13 March, and *New York Journal*, 29 March.

### **Rhode Island Act Calling a Referendum on the Constitution 1 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

STATE of RHODE-ISLAND, &c.

In GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *February Session*, A. D. 1788.

*An ACT submitting to the Consideration of the Freemen of this State, the Report of the Convention of Delegates for a Constitution for the United States, as agreed on in Philadelphia, the 17th of September, A. D. 1787.*

WHEREAS the Honorable the Continental Congress did heretofore recommend to the Legislatures of the respective States, to appoint Delegates to meet in Convention, at Philadelphia, in May, A. D. 1787, to make such Alterations and Amendments in the present Confederation of the United States as would tend to promote the Happiness, good Government and Welfare of the Federal Union: And whereas the said Delegates, on the 17th Day of September, 1787, did agree upon, and report to the Congress of the United States, a Form of a Constitution for the United States of America: And whereas the said United States in Congress assembled did, by a Resolution passed the 28th Day of September, A. D. 1787, transmit said Report to the Legislature of this State, to be submitted to the Consideration of the People thereof: And whereas this Legislative Body, in General Assembly convened, conceiving themselves Representatives of the great Body of People at large, and that they cannot make any Innovations in a Constitution which has been agreed upon, and the Compact settled between the Governors and Governed, without the express Consent of the Freemen at large, by their own Voices individually taken in Town-Meetings assembled: Wherefore, for the Purpose aforesaid, and for submitting the said Constitution for the United States to the Consideration of the Freemen of this State:

*⟨BE it Enacted by this General Assembly, and by the Authority thereof it is hereby Enacted, That the Fourth Monday in March inst. be, and the same is hereby appointed, the Day for all the Freemen and Freeholders within this State, to convene in their respective Towns, in Town-Meetings assembled, and to deliberate upon, and determine each Individual*

(who hath a Right by Law to vote for the Choice of General Officers) by himself by Poll, whether the said Constitution for the United States shall be adopted or negatived.)

*AND be it further Enacted by the Authority aforesaid,* That the Town-Clerks in the respective Towns shall forthwith issue their Warrants, for the convening of the Freemen and Freeholders to meet, on said Fourth Monday of March inst. at such Place where the Town-Meetings are usually holden: And the same shall be directed to the Town-Serjeants and Constables of the respective Towns, who shall cause Notifications to be set up in the most public Places of Resort within such Towns; and also shall repair to the usual Place of Abode of the Freemen and Freeholders in such Town, and give them Notice of the Meeting aforesaid, for the Purpose aforesaid. The said Town-Serjeants and Constables to have particular Districts pointed out to them, to warn the Freemen and Freeholders, so as not to interfere with each other's District, that all the Freemen and Freeholders may, if possible, have Notice and attend accordingly. And upon the Convention of said Freemen, they shall appoint a Moderator, who shall regulate such Meeting; and the Voices of the Freemen and Freeholders shall be taken by Yeas and Nays, and the Town-Clerk of each Town shall register the Name of each and every Freeman and Freeholder, with the Yea or Nay, as he shall respectively give his Voice aloud, in open Town-Meeting, and shall keep the Original in his Office, and shall make out a true and fair certified Copy of the Register aforesaid, with the Yeas and Nays of each and every Person thereon, and carefully seal the same up, and direct it to the General Assembly, to be holden by Adjournment, at East-Greenwich, in the County of Kent, on the last Monday of March inst. and deliver the same to One of the Representatives of such Town, or other careful Person, who will take Charge of the same, to be delivered to the said General Assembly, then and there to be opened, that the Sentiments of the People may be known respecting the same.

*AND it is further Enacted by the Authority aforesaid,* That in Case it shall so happen that the said Fourth Monday of March inst. shall prove to be stormy or boisterous Weather, so that the Freemen and Freeholders in general cannot conveniently attend, the said Town-Meeting may adjourn, from Day to Day, not exceeding three Days, so that the Voices of the People may be taken.

*AND it is further Enacted by the Authority aforesaid,* That the Secretary shall forthwith transmit to each Town-Clerk of the respective Towns within this State a Copy of this Act.

*A true Copy:*

*Witness,*

HENRY WARD, *Secretary.*

1. Broadside (Evans 21430). Printed or reprinted in the *United States Chronicle*, 6 March; in the *Providence Gazette*, 8 March; in the *Newport Mercury*, 17 March; and six more times by 1 April: Mass. (3), N.Y. (1), Pa. (1), N.J. (1). The text in angle brackets was reprinted nineteen times by 26 April: N.H. (1), Mass. (1), Conn. (3), N.Y. (3), Pa. (3), N.J. (1), Md. (1), Va. (3), S.C. (1), Ga. (2). The broadside version of the act sent to Congress was endorsed on the back: "State of Rhode-Island &c/April 8th 1788/What is on the other Side hereof is a true Copy of/an Act passed by the General Assembly at the Session/held on the last Monday in February last/Witness Henry Ward Secry." It was also docketed on the back: "New Constitution—/submitted to the Freeman." The broadside is in the Papers of the Continental Congress, DNA. Manuscript versions of the act are in the Rhode Island State Archives in the General Assembly Papers, Misc., 1780–90 (amended draft as approved by both houses), and in Rhode Island Records, 13:446–48 (smooth copy).

**William Allen to Henry Knox**  
**Providence, 4 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

Inclosed I send you an Act of the Genl. Assembly of Rhode Island for Submitting to the People at Large the New Constitution, this Spurious Measure was warmly opposed by the Minority, but notwithstanding it was carried by a Majority of Nineteen or Twenty—

Mr. Peleg Arnold, and the well-known A— F— Hazard, will soon be at Congress—

Permit me Sir to Congratulate you on the happy adoption of the New Constitution by the Convention of your Native State.<sup>2</sup>

1. RC, Knox Papers, GLC 02437.03813, The Gilder Lehrman Collection, courtesy of The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, at the New-York Historical Society. Knox (1750–1806), a former Boston bookseller, served in the Continental Army, 1775–82, rising in rank from colonel to major general. He was commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, 1783–84; Confederation Secretary at War, 1785–89; and U.S. Secretary of War, 1789–94. Living in New York City in 1787–88, Knox was a clearinghouse of information on national and state politics, writing to persons throughout America.

2. See "The Rhode Island Reprinting of the Massachusetts Convention's Amendments and Boston's Celebration of Massachusetts Ratification," 7–25 February 1788 (I, above).

**Massachusetts Centinel, 8 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

*RHODE-ISLAND CONVENTIONS.*

The General Assembly of the State of Rhode-Island, the 1st inst. passed an act, "*for submitting the consideration of the proposed Federal Constitution, to the freemen of that State*"—who are to meet in their respective towns, in town-Conventions, on the FOURTH MONDAY of March; (the 24th instant) when after discussing it, they are to give their assent, or disapprobation of it, by yeas and nays; which are to be sealed up by the Town-Clerk, and forwarded to the General Assembly, at their meeting

on the last Monday in March:—Provision was sometime since made for the distribution of the Constitution.

We are happy in being able to assure the publick, that the above paragraph is authentick—and that the legislatures of ALL the States have now referred the proposed Constitution to the consideration of THE PEOPLE; and that the mode adopted in Rhode-Island is, as we are assured, most likely to insure the ratification of the Constitution there. When we consider that this system has been readily adopted in SIX STATES—unanimously, or by respectable majorities—and been rejected by none, we have abundant reason to hope, that the time is not far distant, when the citizens of America, represented by one general and permanent government, will rise to that dignity and importance among the nations of the world, as they are entitled to from their native genius—their extent of country—and from their being a free, united, and virtuous people.<sup>2</sup>

*Extract of a letter from Providence, March 2.*

“The General Assembly last night ordered the Hon. Peleg Arnold, and Jonathan J. Hazard, Esquires, two of our delegates to Congress, to proceed immediately to New-York, to take their seats in that Hon. Body. Our State is divided on the great question of the Constitution, as they were on the subject of paper-money, with scarcely an exception.”

A gentleman of undoubted veracity assures a correspondent, that his Excellency JOHN COLLINS, Esq. Governour of Rhode-Island, is decidedly in favour of the adoption of the federal Constitution—he was therefore hurt at seeing in one of the late papers an attack upon him, as being in an opposite principle.

1. The first paragraph was reprinted eighteen times by 12 April: Vt. (1), N.H. (2), Mass. (5), N.Y. (1), N.J. (2), Pa. (4), Md. (2), S.C. (1). The second paragraph was reprinted twelve times by 10 April: N.H. (1), Mass. (2), Conn. (1), N.Y. (2), N.J. (1), Pa. (3), Md. (1), S.C. (1). Nine newspapers reprinted the first and second paragraphs as a unit by 10 April: N.H. (1), Mass. (2), N.Y. (1), N.J. (1), Pa. (2), Md. (1), S.C. (1). The third paragraph was reprinted in the March issue of the *New York American Magazine* and in twenty-six newspapers by 9 April: Vt. (2), N.H. (4), Mass. (5), Conn. (2), N.Y. (4), N.J. (1), Pa. (4), Md. (1), Va. (3). The fourth paragraph was reprinted twenty times by 9 April (seven reprints excluded the last independent clause): N.H. (2), Mass. (3), Conn. (3), N.Y. (2), Pa. (4), Md. (1), Va. (5). Only three newspapers reprinted all four paragraphs: the *Salem Mercury*, 11 March; Portland, Maine, *Cumberland Gazette*, 13 March; and *Pennsylvania Packet*, 19 March.

For a response to the first two paragraphs, see “A Federalist,” *Massachusetts Centinel*, 15 March (below).

2. The last sentence in this paragraph was derived from a paragraph in the *New York Independent Journal*, 16 February (CC:Vol. 4, p. 518).

**Providence United States Chronicle, 13 March 1788<sup>1</sup>***A new STROKE of POLICY.*

We hear, says a Correspondent, that the Town of —— is to meet on —— Day of this Month, for the Purpose of determining, in *one Afternoon*, the Merits of a System of Federal Government, which employed the Talents of a Convention of the ablest Politicians from 12 States, four Months unremitting Attention to frame—the thorough Investigation of which cost the numerous and very learned Convention of Massachusetts, four Weeks incessant Application and unwearied Labour.

QUERY.—Would it not have been great Policy as well as Economy, for the United States to have employed the Sages of that *little* Town to have furnished the necessary Form of energetic Continental Government?

1. Reprinted: *New Haven Gazette*, 27 March.

**A Freeman****Providence Gazette, 15 March 1788**

Mr. CARTER, Your last Gazette having presented to public view the novel mode, devised by the General Assembly of this State, for deciding on the new Constitution,<sup>1</sup> a few cursory observations upon the act at this time perhaps may not be deemed either unseasonable or improper.—It is well known, that the Fœderal Convention proposed, that the Constitution should be submitted to a Convention of Delegates chosen in each State, under the recommendation of the Legislatures; and no one is ignorant that Congress approved of this mode of submitting it to the people, and passed a resolution requesting the several Legislatures to call State Conventions, for the purpose of considering the new system of government. The public have further long since been informed, that every Legislature, from New-Hampshire to Georgia (except Rhode-Island) have passed acts for calling Conventions, in compliance with the resolutions of Congress and the Fœderal Convention. Opponents to the Constitution have appeared in nearly all the States, but no one has yet been found in any State but this to oppose the *mode* pointed out for taking the sentiments of the people upon it. This singular species of opposition was reserved to be exhibited in the State of Rhode-Island: Here, it seems, the Legislature conceived *they* had no power to make innovations upon the present form of government, without the consent of the people. In the name of common sense, I would

ask, if it ever has been suggested by any one that the *Legislatures* were to decide on this Constitution? and if not, why is the objection raised that *they* have no authority for this purpose? In short, it never has been contended, that the Legislatures could legally take any agency in this business, but merely to serve as machines or vehicles to hand the Constitution from Congress, from whom they received it, to the State Conventions, who alone are competent constitutionally to ratify or reject the proposed form of government.—If the freemen of the State, on the fourth Monday of March, should *unanimously* vote for the Constitution, it cannot be considered as a valid ratification by Congress; for the Constitution itself provides only for a ratification by *State Conventions*<sup>(a)</sup>. The proceedings of the Town-Meetings therefore, in conformity to the act which is the subject of these remarks, will be perfectly nugatory. The decision in this mode, either for or against the Constitution, will not prevent the necessity of the Legislature resuming the question, and passing an act for calling a Convention, in the same manner which every other State has adopted. The votes of the freemen, individually taken, cannot answer any beneficial purpose whatever; but, on the contrary, will serve only to embarrass and perplex the future discussion of this important business in a State Convention. As there is nothing in the act in question which makes it obligatory on the people to give in their votes, but it being left perfectly at their option to vote or not, I have no doubt but their good sense on this occasion will clearly discern the impropriety of expressing their sentiments on the Constitution. Is it possible that the freemen throughout the State can have had either leisure or opportunity to examine the proposed Constitution, so as to be competent to form an adequate judgment on this very momentous question? Can the freemen individually, collected in their respective towns, be possessed of the information necessary to enable them to decide on the Constitution? In a State Convention, all the light and information which may be collected from every part of the State will be afforded, and this body, when convened, will not be confined to a single day to deliberate and decide. The determination, made by the freemen individually, must be totally indecisive; but the decision of a Convention, on the contrary, will be final and conclusive. I will not hesitate, therefore, to believe, that the freemen, instead of voting in conformity to the mode prescribed by the Legislature, will instruct their Deputies to pass an act for calling a State Convention, in conformity to the examples set us by every Legislature on the continent.

(a) 7th Article. “The ratification of the *Conventions* of nine States shall be sufficient for the establishment,” &c.



1. A reference to the “Rhode Island Act Calling a Referendum on the Constitution,” 1 March (above), that had been printed in the *Providence Gazette* on 8 March.

### **A Friend to Rule and Order**

#### **Providence Gazette, 15 March 1788**

*Friend* CARTER, Since the sitting of our General Assembly, I have heard many observations respecting their resolve for submitting the plan of the late Continental Convention, as it is called, to the people at large. I have attended in silence to these observations, as many of them have been made in the spirit of contention; but as the minority-men, or fœderalists (falsely so called, they not being fœderalists who are for destroying the Confederation) have taken occasion to speak evil of our rulers, and to bring in a false report, as if they were opposed to rule and order (when it is well known that they rule with a steady hand) thou wilt do well to let thy customers know, that the General Assembly were consistent in their doings; for they refused to join in that Convention, which according to their prudent foresight have recommended a scheme of their own devising, artfully stiled *A Constitution*, whereby it is manifest they intended to lord it over the peaceable inhabitants, hereby depriving them of the power of discharging their debts, without making of those heathenish idols, which the men of this world worship as a god; to have appointed another Convention, therefore, would have been drinking of the same pollution which produced the first, and would have admitted an error in their former refusal: But being assured that their opposition was just, they were determined to silence gainsayers, by convincing them that the people harbour the same opinion; for they have spent both their time and money (such has been their zeal in the good cause) in convincing their harmless neighbours that mischief is intended; and that should they appoint Delegates to meet in Convention, certain learned men (called lawyers and divines) might deceive them, by sophistry and fair speeches, even to believe a lie. Moreover it is now reported (and verily the report is generally credited) that the sons of liberty (I trow sons of Belial)<sup>1</sup> have borne sway long enough; and it is commendable to follow the counsel of those they oppressed, because, forsooth, they would not raise carnal and deathly weapons against the King and his people; albeit these oppressed and persecuted men, having long groaned in silence, now speak with boldness; and if we remain stedfast in hearkening to the words of their mouth, we shall soon be as gold seven times refined, and again glitter in the diadem of our offended master.

1. In the Old Testament, “sons of Belial” referred to worthless and wicked men. See Judges 19:22 or I Samuel 2:12.

### A Federalist

#### Massachusetts Centinel, 15 March 1788

Mr. [Benjamin] RUSSELL, In your last,<sup>1</sup> you lay before the publick the following paragraph: “The General Assembly of the State of Rhode-Island, the 1st inst. passed an act, ‘*for submitting the consideration of the proposed Federal Constitution to the freemen of that State*’—who are to meet in their respective towns, in town-Conventions, on the FOURTH MONDAY of March; (the 24th instant) when after discussing it, they are to give their assent or disapprobation of it by yeas and nays; which are to be sealed up by the Town-Clerk and forwarded to the General Assembly, at their meeting on the last Monday in March:—Provision was sometime since made for the distribution of the Constitution.”

My sensations on reading the above paragraph were very different from yours, if we are to judge of them by your declaration, that “We are *happy* in being able to assure the publick that the above paragraph is *authentick*.”<sup>(a)</sup> I do not indeed at all question the truth of it, for it carries on the face of it, such strong features of resemblance to the whole tenour of the conduct of the General Assembly of that State, respecting our national affairs, that independent of your vouching for its authenticity, I should venture to declare it the genuine offspring of that body. ANTIFEDERALISM is written in capitals upon it. The Continental Convention have resolved, “That the Constitution be laid before the United States in Congress assembled, and that it is *their* opinion that it should afterwards be submitted to a *Convention of DELEGATES*, chosen in each State, by the people thereof, under the recommendation of their legislature, for their assent and ratification, and that each *Convention*, assenting to and ratifying the same, should give notice thereof to the United States in Congress assembled.”<sup>2</sup> In consequence Congress resolve, “That the said report, with the resolutions and letters accompanying the same, be transmitted to the several legislatures, in order to be submitted to a *Convention of Delegates* chosen in each State by the people thereof, in *conformity* to the resolves of the Convention made and provided in that case.”<sup>3</sup>

Now, Mr. Russell, is there a single feature of federalism in this procedure of the General Assembly of our little perverse sister? Can we conceive it possible that *they* should suppose it was consistent with the design of the Continental Convention, composed of a fair representation of every State in the union, (Rhode-Island excepted) or of the United States in Congress assembled, to submit the plan of a national government to be “discussed” by the people of any State *immediately* in their *disconnected* condition, at their several *town-meetings*? Was it their

intention to call upon the people, thus to assent to and ratify a system of government, formed upon the most mature deliberation, upon the state of our national concerns, and a comparative view of the interests, habits, customs and laws of the several States in this union? Is not the absurdity of this conduct so obvious as to render a serious endeavour to point it out, useless, if not ridiculous? A people may be thus lead on *blindfold* to their own *perdition*. Why then was this measure adopted by the General Assembly of Rhode-Island? Because they still are the same antifederal Assembly they have long been—Paper Money and Know Yes are still their favourites.—They perceive the adoption of the federal government, will put an end to their abominable practices committed under the cloak of law.—They fear that the federal Constitution, if considered fairly, in a Convention of Delegates chosen by the people, will be vindicated against all the objections that the enemies of truth, justice, order and good government have brought against it.—They have seen the effect that such a publick examination, into the real interests of the members of this great union, and the real principles of the federal Constitution hath had in this State—They apprehend that many who are opposed to the Constitution in its present form, should the people be assembled together by their delegates, might be reconciled to its ratification, by adopting the plan of the recommendatory amendments of our Convention.—They knew no amendments can be agreed upon by the people, if they are called upon for their assent, and ratification in the unconnected separate manner now proposed to them—They likewise knew that by thus submitting it to the people, it would give an opportunity for the dealers of misrepresentations to impose upon and prejudice the publick mind against it—that therefore the chance of obtaining its rejection is much greater in this mode of procedure, than in that proposed by the Continental Convention, and by the United States in Congress assembled. Upon such like motives as these, I am alone able to account for the conduct of the General Assembly of Rhode-Island, in refusing or neglecting to adopt the above mode of obtaining the ratification of the federal Constitution, by the people of that State. I must differ therefore from your informant, “That the mode adopted in Rhode-Island is most likely to insure the ratification of the Constitution there,” though it is wished that such may be the effect, by yours, A FEDERALIST.

*March, 10, 1788.*

(a) *Our happiness was not derived from the consideration that this mode of submitting the American Constitution to their constituents, was adopted by the Legislature of Rhode-Island, but from the*

*circumstance of this system being laid before the People of ALL the States, by the legislatures thereof. It would not have added to our pleasure, if the legislature of Rhode-Island had complied with the recommendation of the Convention—for even her ACCEPTING and RATIFYING it, is an event which can hardly be seriously desired—and, but for the sake of the virtuous MINORITY in that district, her REJECTION of the Constitution would, by honest men, be a “consummation devoutly to be wished.”*<sup>4</sup>

1. See *Massachusetts Centinel*, 8 March (above).
2. For the first of two resolutions passed by the Constitutional Convention on 17 September 1787, see Appendix II (below).
3. For the 28 September 1787 resolution of Congress transmitting the Constitution to the states, see CDR, 340, or CC:95 (p. 241).
4. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act III, scene 1, lines 62–63.

**Hewes & Anthony to Brown & Benson  
Philadelphia, 19 March 1788 (excerpt)**<sup>1</sup>

... We do Not altogether approve of the Proceedings of your assembly Respecting a Convention, but at the Same time Cannot but flatter ourselves, they will Not be so wicked as to Reject the perpos'd Fedreal Constitution, and thereby Involve the Country in Confusion—with the most Cordial and Constant Esteem we Remain your affectionate Friends

1. RC, Brown Papers, RPJCB. Addressed to “Messrs. Brown & Benson/Merchts./Providence,” this letter was endorsed “NYork 21 March 1788/Recd. under cover this day &/transmitted by Gentn/yr. most obedt. servts./Murray Mumford & Bowen.” Hewes & Anthony were Philadelphia merchants.

**Samuel Hodgdon to Timothy Pickering  
Philadelphia, 20 March 1788 (excerpt)**<sup>1</sup>

... Pscript

No other state has as yet adopted the New Constitution, Rhode Island meets in Town meeting through the State on the business next Monday—it is generally beleived they will receive it—they have ordered Delegates on to Congress; and are about repealing paper Money tender Laws—Bravo!—

1. RC, Pickering Papers, MHi. Hodgdon (1745–1824), a Philadelphia merchant, was Pickering’s close friend and business associate. Pickering (1745–1829), a native of Salem, Mass., was adjutant general of the Continental Army, 1777–78; a member of the Board of War, 1777–80; and quartermaster general, 1780–85. In 1787 he moved his family from Philadelphia to Luzerne County, Pa., where he farmed as a large landowner. He voted to ratify the Constitution in the Pennsylvania Convention in December 1787.

**A Freeman****Newport Herald, 20 March 1788***To the FREEHOLDERS and FREEMEN of this State.*

A question of great magnitude is submitted to your decision on the fourth Monday of this month, *that of deciding in town-meeting upon the proposed Federal Constitution*—six states have already ratified it, and the others, excepting this, have appointed conventions.—This alteration of the mode of decision subjects us to great inconveniences in investigating the truth, for it cannot be expected that our information can be so extensive in separate meetings as in a collective one; besides, we are liable to be imposed on by artful and designing men, whose only prospect is in a state of anarchy, and are excluded from the benefits which frequently result from accommodations.—We are not only deprived by the Legislature *of an unalienable right*, that of determining whether we would decide ourselves on the constitution, or refer it to a convention of our appointment, where it might have a complete discussion—but insidious men have been incited to circulate falsehood after falsehood to destroy this fabric of order, justice and liberty, and flushed with their apparent success, they have presumed so far on our ignorance as to declare, that the Federal Constitution is more despotic than the British.—Let us therefore, my fellow citizens, candidly compare these two constitutions, and then we shall not hesitate to pronounce the superior excellence of the Federal Constitution;—for this purpose I have impartially selected from the celebrated Judge Blackstone, the powers of the British Government, and contrasted those of Congress under the proposed constitution with them.

## BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

*The Parliament.*

They are the supreme Legislative, their powers are absolute, and extend to an abolition of Magna Charta itself.

Its constituent parts are the King's Majesty, the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and the Commons, each of which parts has a negative in making Laws.

## PROPOSED CONSTITUTION FOR THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

*The Congress.*

Their powers are not supreme, nor absolute, it being defined by the Constitution: and all powers therein not granted, are retained by the State Legislatures.

Congress consist of a Senate and House of Representatives; the President may disapprove of Bills; but if upon reconsideration, they are approved by two-thirds of the two Houses, they become Laws, notwithstanding his disapprobation.

*The King.*

By the positive Constitution of the Kingdom the Crown hath ever been descendible, and so continues by becoming hereditary in the Prince, to whom it is limited.

The Constitution of England not only views the King as absolute in perpetuity, but in perfection. *The King can do no wrong*, is an established maxim.

The King has the sole right of sending and receiving Ambassadors, of making treaties, of proclaiming war or peace, of issuing reprisals, of granting safe conduct.

The King is considered as the General of the Kingdom, may raise fleets and armies, build forts, confine his subjects within the realm, or recall them from foreign parts.

The King is the supreme Head of the Church, and receives appeals in all ecclesiastical causes.

The King hath the power to prorogue, nay to dissolve the Parliament.

*The House of Lords.*

The Lords who compose this House were originally created by the King, and, excepting the sixteen elected by Scotland, retain their seats for life, their powers

*The President,*

Is elected by the people for the term of four years only, consequently these States are not exposed to the disadvantages and dangers of hereditary descent.

The Constitution of the United States supposes that a President may do wrong, and have provided that he shall be removed from office on impeachment and conviction of high crimes and misdemeanors.

The President cannot, without the advice and consent of the Senate, appoint Ambassadors, nor make treaties. The powers of declaring war, raising armies, and granting safe conduct, are vested in Congress only.

The President is only Commander in Chief of fleets and armies, when called into actual service: he cannot confine our citizens within the States, nor oblige them to return from foreign parts.

The Constitution disclaims the exercise of any such powers.

The President hath no power to adjourn Congress, but in cases of disagreement between the Senate and Representatives. The President cannot dissolve them.

*The Senate,*

Hold not their seats for life, nor are their powers descendible to their heirs; but they are elected by the State Legislatures for six years only: They are liable to be re-

descending to their heirs. The King may also constitute Lords at pleasure. The House of Lords are not only vested with Legislative powers, but are the High Court of Appeals in civil causes.

*The Commons,*

Are elected for seven years, and not more than one-twentieth part of the natural free subjects of Great-Britain are privileged to be electors or hold any office of honor or trust under the Crown.

moved for misconduct by impeachment, & are not vested with judicial powers.

*The Representatives,*

Are elected for two years only, by the independent freemen of these United States, who compose a great majority of the citizens. No further requisites are necessary to invest citizens with the privileges of freemen, than a small freehold that is prescribed by our particular State Laws; and when admitted free, they are capable of electing and being elected to any office of honor & trust within the United States.

*State of Rhode-Island, &c. March 14.*

**Newport Herald, 20 March 1788**

A Correspondent remarks, that Monday next is the day on which Town-meetings are to be holden throughout this State, in order to determine whether we will adopt the Constitution or not. It is to be hoped that we shall not reject it, but that this State be the next in rotation to erect another Federal Pillar to support the Grand Temple of American Liberty.<sup>1</sup> For want of a more energetic government, the wheels of business are entirely obstructed, and *Poverty*, with her dismal train of evils, never appeared so evidently in our streets as at present. Each *corner* has its share of indolent persons—they are not indolent because they prefer idleness to work, but because there is nothing to encourage industry.—Are not many of our hardy, laborious men entirely destitute of business? Daily experience teaches us this.—The merchant who has his store largely furnished with goods, stands behind his counter, and no one enters to purchase.—Money is scarce, and those who have it keep it very close.—The mechanic is idle, and his tools rust for want of employ.—From these considerations, shall we hesitate to adopt a Constitution wisely calculated to give energy to government,

and which will introduce industry and every other blessing we can desire.—Remember, that *now* is the time for your *political salvation*.—The doors of happiness are *now* thrown open to you—Let the heat of passion subside—Feel yourselves interested in this excellent plan of government proposed to the people at large—and should this Constitution be adopted by the United States, or by nine of them, we need not travel to the Ohio or to any other place for business—the farmer will be able to cultivate his fields in this part of America, and reap, unmolested, the fruits of honest industry.—The mechanic will be employed, and the merchant will have sufficient purchasers.—Let us, my fellow-countrymen, make a trial—for our present situation is truly deplorable—let us be federal, and we shall be a happy people.

1. For the use of pillars to represent the states that ratified the Constitution, see “The Pillars of the American Republic,” 9–16 January 1788 (CC:Vol. 3, pp. 564–67n). The metaphor of the pillars was popularized by the *Massachusetts Centinel*.

### **A Rhode-Island Landholder**

**Providence United States Chronicle, 20 March 1788**

*To the FREEMEN of the State of RHODE-ISLAND, &c.*

The Honorable General Assembly, at their last Session, passed an act appointing “*the fourth Monday of this month, for all the Freemen to convene, in their respective towns, in town-meetings, to deliberate upon, and to determine, each individual by himself, by poll, whether the Constitution for the United States, agreed upon by the Convention, at Philadelphia, the 17th of September last, shall be adopted or negatived.*”

The author of the following observations upon this measure, hopes they will not offend, when he solemnly declares that they originate from the purest motives of disinterested regard, for the real happiness and welfare of the State at large. The principal reason assigned in the preamble to this act for the measure is, that the General Assembly cannot make innovations in the Constitution of the State, without the express consent of the Freemen, by their own voices, individually taken, in town-meetings. Nothing is more true. The General Assembly have no such power. They cannot make any alteration whatever, in the form of the government which brings them together, merely to act for the good of their constituents, agreeably to the Constitution by which they are convened. But it by no means follows, from these premises, that the people ought to have been called upon individually, to decide on the national Constitution, in the manner above mentioned. I shall be asked—*How then are the People to be consulted?* I answer, by the whole body of the People being individually notified to assemble, at their



usual places of meeting, in their respective towns, at a certain time—then and there to choose wise, virtuous and honest men, in whom they can confide, to represent them, in a Convention of the whole.—Here is the beginning of government, originating from the individual act of every Freeman, after having agreed to this great republican principle, *that the vote of the majority shall be binding on the whole*. This is the only true and rational mode of taking the voice of the People, on any question, affecting the constitutional form of their government. For it is absurd to suppose, that one part of the community should be bound by a decision against them in another part, where they are *unheard and unrepresented*.—It is like a trial and condemnation *without hearing the party*.

The most natural and simple idea of government is that of the People's assembling together, *in their own persons*, for consulting, debating and enacting laws, and forming regulations which are to be binding on all, and by which the general liberty, property and safety are provided for. But such a scheme of government can be compatible only with a very small district. In a State no larger than ours, it is impossible to assemble together the whole body of the People, in a deliberative capacity, so as to avoid confusion; and to obtain the unconstrained opinion of a majority, recourse must necessarily be had to an adequate and freely elected REPRESENTATION.

And do the People lose of their respect and dignity by such a *Representation*? No.—They augment it:—They thereby become something more than themselves:—They obtain the assembled majesty of the whole concentrated.—And what can be imagined more august, than a numerous set of wise, virtuous, free, and honest men, sitting, in consultation, on the means of promoting, establishing and securing the happiness of the whole? The People of themselves can effect nothing without Representation—unless it be to destroy a government: They cannot exercise the powers of government in person:—By their Representatives they deliberate and determine, and by their servants THEY govern:—Their voice, strong and powerful in this way, pervades every part of the community. The People are therefore gainers by the election of Representatives.—To a CONVENTION *of the Representatives of the whole People* we are therefore naturally led, as the only way of obtaining their collected sense and wisdom.

*But as the General Assembly have pointed out another mode, what is to be done?*—I answer, that I have as high a respect for all legislative proceedings as any man. I know the importance to society of having their Legislature duly honoured, and their just laws respected; I know the Assembly of this State, as is natural, wish to please, while they serve

their constituents in the manner they think will be most acceptable; and I have no doubt but they have sincerely at heart, what they suppose will be for the real good and happiness of the great body of the People: But where is the Legislature who never made a mistake in their measures?—Do we not remember mistakes acknowledged on all sides, in enacting the Penal Laws of 1786,<sup>1</sup> respecting the paper money, which answered no good purpose, and were repealed without having ever been executed? I hope it will not give offence to any Member of either House of Assembly to observe, that this measure of calling for the individual yeas and nays, on the national Constitution, in the town-meetings, without a discussion of it, in a Convention *may* be wrong.—Did I not suppose it big with mischievous consequences to the State, I should not have troubled the Freemen with this address. But as I am clearly of opinion that it will not be prudent or honorable for those who wish for any national government (which I trust we all do) to negative this Constitution, unless they propose something else in lieu of it; and supposing that there are many who have objections, and who will not agree to it without amendments, I have been induced to solicit my fellow-citizens to think for themselves—to be cautious of the ground they tread upon—to look before they leap—to exercise candour towards each other—to think coolly and dispassionately—to “*speak their minds, and yet be not divided;*”<sup>2</sup>—knowing that we are all on board of the same ship, and that rash and indiscreet proceedings will injure the voyage.

I therefore proceed to observe, that this act merely appoints the day for the People to assemble to give their voices for or against the Constitution, if they see fit, without even *requiring* them to vote: So that it is altogether matter of choice whether they will give in their votes as proposed or not.—This being the case, will it not be best to follow the example already set by the Town of Little-Compton,<sup>3</sup> of instructing our Representatives to apply to the General Assembly for an act recommending it to the several towns in the State, to elect Delegates to meet in a general Convention, for the purpose of freely discussing the proposed national Constitution?

The Convention may be appointed to assemble in May next, if it is thought we shall have influence enough with the other States who have not already acted upon the Constitution to obtain such alterations or amendments as the Convention of this State might propose. The circumstances of the Union may possibly be such at that time, that this State, if put in a proper situation, may have it in her power to obtain such amendments:—She hath as good right to propose them as her sister Massachusetts.—She will thereby make herself of some consequence. But without a Convention, she will appear inoperatively insignificant—it being impossible for the People in any other way to act as

a body, or to make any propositions whatever. But if it is supposed that she cannot materially influence the decisions of the States who have not already taken up the business, the time of the Convention may be postponed to September or October next, when it is probable it will have been decided upon by all the other States, so that she may then conduct as shall appear most rational and prudent.

What benefits can possibly arise from voting on the Constitution in the manner proposed by this Act?—It cannot be considered as decisive, even if a majority of the Freemen should appear to vote upon the question.—For as the People will not act in their assembled collective capacity, the vote will not be binding; and those who do not vote at all, or are dissatisfied with the determination, will have a right of themselves to propose and to hold a Convention, if they can, *at any time hereafter* obtain a majority of the Freemen to concur with them.—This however would tend to introduce animosity, disturbance and confusion. It will be disagreeable to many to become opposed to a *formidable phalanx* of their suspicious, offended neighbours, and to have their names returned as proposed by the act, not knowing to what inconveniences it may subject them in the warmth of party zeal.—This measure therefore tends to bias the minds of the people not to act agreeable to their real judgment and sentiments, and (if voting at all) to fall in with the strongest side.—This act was opposed in its progress, in both Houses of Assembly.—A majority of the Legislature however chose to refer the business in this way, without recommending a Convention, in order that the People might do what appeared to them to be right. The way is therefore open for the People themselves to call for a Convention. The People in their collective capacity must certainly sooner or later take up the matter: Will it not then be best for them at once to instruct their Deputies to recommend a Convention, without deciding themselves individually on the question?

Let us a moment consider on what ground we stand.—Six States have already adopted the Constitution, viz.—Massachusetts, Connecticut, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Georgia:—Three unanimously:—Connecticut by a majority of more than four to one:—Pennsylvania by a majority of two to one: Massachusetts by a smaller majority—but with the general acquiescence and satisfaction of her People. And what are the accounts from the other States, all of whom have called Conventions? That there is the utmost probability that it will be finally adopted by them all. For *Centinel*, *Philadelphiensis*, and some other inflammatory writers grossly misrepresent matters.—Most probably some amendments will be introduced, perhaps the same, or some which are similar to those proposed by Massachusetts.<sup>4</sup> Will the sensible and discerning citizens then of this small, but important State

to the Union, now proceed to tie their hands, by giving in their yeas and nays, to be recorded in the manner proposed?—Will they thus exclude themselves from the privilege of proposing and insisting on amendments?—Will not this State assist her sister Massachusetts in establishing those amendments she has offered, dictated by wisdom and sound policy?—And do we feel ourselves so sufficiently informed of the different interests, habits, customs and laws of the several States, collectively, comparatively and individually considered, and of the consequences of our refusing to assist in forming a system of government for the whole, as to be willing to decide upon this important matter, *individually, in a town-meeting*, without a public investigation of it, by a general Convention of the State?—An astonishing revolution is taking place all around us, in the peaceable erection of a new Confederacy, in which we are invited to join, and shall THE PEOPLE not be allowed an opportunity of publicly and unitedly deliberating and consulting together in a Convention, whether it be best to join therein or not? It will certainly be best for us to keep ourselves at liberty, and in such a situation that we may be of some consequence in the Union. Who knows but this State, small as she is, if she does not tie her hands in this preposterous and extraordinary manner, by conducting her influence with prudence and discretion in a Convention, may yet like an umpire or balancing power, propose measures which all will finally agree to. To bind ourselves by recorded yeas and nays, as proposed, will answer no good purpose: It will excite jealousies and uneasiness among the People, not knowing the grounds and motives of each others conduct, and greatly embarrass us with perplexity and confusion.

I do not advocate the proposed new Constitution, nor give my opinion of the expediency of adopting it as it is; because the merits of it are not now under consideration.—I wish for amendments, and doubt not *they may be obtained*, at least those proposed by Massachusetts, if a Convention is seasonably called. It may however not be amiss to observe, that it can be most abundantly and satisfactorily shewn, that from the local and other circumstances of this State, no one in the Union will derive *so great advantages* from the present proposed new Confederacy.

As I most sincerely wish for the prosperity and happiness of the great body of the People of this State, I am therefore anxious that they should not be led into this mistaken measure of voting on the Constitution by their individual yeas and nays—which there is the strongest reasons to suppose will be attended with bad consequences. Had we been represented in the Convention at Philadelphia, we should undoubtedly have been on a better footing in many respects in the new

Confederacy than we now are, especially with respect to representation. What may be the consequences of our totally rejecting the proposed Constitution, should it be adopted by the other States, I know not.— It is probable that our situation will not be very eligible. Let me then recommend to my fellow-citizens not to fetter themselves with recorded yeas and nays in this unheard-of, unprecedented manner: But at the day appointed for their meeting let them assemble in their respective towns, and in a suitable and decent manner express their wishes to the General Assembly, by instructions to their Representatives, for calling a Convention, where we may have the collected sense and wisdom of the State, and thereby be of some consequence in determining the great and important measures, now in agitation, and have it in our power to act as prudence, policy and patriotism may dictate.

*March 18th, 1788.*

P. S. As the Chronicle is circulated in every town in the State, will it be deemed presumption unpardonable, in the author of this address, to request any gentleman, possessing similar sentiments, to communicate them as generally as may be at the town-meetings respectively?

1. For the penalty acts of 1786, see the “Introduction” (RCS:R.I., xxx–xxxii) and “Glossary” (RCS:R.I., 318).

2. Quoted from “A Yankee,” a poem first printed in the *Pennsylvania Mercury*, 21 February (CC:552), and reprinted thirty-one times by 21 April, including three times in Rhode Island: *Newport Herald*, 13 March; *United States Chronicle*, 20 March; and *Providence Gazette*, 22 March.

3. For the Little Compton instructions, see *Newport Herald*, 10 January (I, above).

4. See “The Rhode Island Reprinting of the Massachusetts Convention’s Amendments and Boston’s Celebration of Massachusetts Ratification,” 7–25 February 1788 (I, above).

## **II–B. Freemen Vote in Town Meetings on the Constitution 24 March–23 April 1788**

The Rhode Island referendum on the Constitution was held on 24 March. In only two of the state’s thirty towns (Bristol and Little Compton) did a majority of those voting support the adoption of the Constitution. Throughout the state Federalists were encouraged to boycott the referendum. The town of Newport instructed its Assembly deputies to call a state convention and freemen in Bristol and Providence signed petitions to the Assembly asking that a state convention be called. Two town meetings (Newport and Providence) met for several days by adjournment before they completed their action. No record for the town of Foster survives and no recorded names survive for the town of Bristol.

The towns are arranged alphabetically with multiple items grouped under each town heading. Part B concludes with general commentaries on the town voting. An asterisk (\*) indicates the name of a freeman's eldest son who, although not meeting the property qualification for voting, was allowed to vote under the provisions of the 1723 election law. Some of the names of the freemen voting are difficult to determine. Correct spellings have occasionally been obtained by consulting the First United States Census for Rhode Island (1790).

### BARRINGTON

(9-34)

#### Town Meeting, 24 March 1788 (excerpts)<sup>1</sup>

At a Town Meeting Legally called and held in Barrington Monday March 24th. 1788 Agreeable to an act of the Honbl. Genl Assembly passed at their Sessions in February last past. For Consideration of the Proposed Constitution as agreed on in Philadelphia by the Convention in September last Past

Moses Tyler Esqr. Chosen Moderator . . .

After the proposed Constitution for the United States being Read. And the debate for and against the same being fully and lengthly heard. The Yeas and Nayes were Taken which Stand Thus

Yeas	Ebenezer Bishop
Asa Bicknall	Ebenezer Peck
Nathel. Smith	Thomas Barnes
William Andrews	John Short
Thomas Alten	Sylvester Violl
Charles Yonge	Benjamin Martin
William Brown	Comfort Stanley
Joseph Gladding	Solomon Peck
Matthew Watson Junr.	James Martin
Moses Tyler	John Martin
	Josiah Violl
Tota[1] (9)	Joshua Kent
Nayes	Benjamin Drown Junr
Matthew Alten	Samuel Kent
Newtigate Adams	Edward Martin
Joshua Bicknall	John Humphry
James Bowen	Samuel Barnes
Elkanah Humphry	Spicer Hughes
Josiah Humphry Jun.	John Barnes
Joseph Alten	

Nathel. Heath	Samuel Alten	
Joseph Bicknall	Daniel Kinnicutt	
Samuel Humphry	James Brown	
George Sallisbury		Tota[1] (34)
Jona J Drown		

1. MS, Barrington Records, 1770–1793, Vol. 1, Town Hall, Barrington, R.I.

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**BRISTOL**  
**(26–23)**

**Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

At a Town meeting duly Warnd and Convened at Bristol on Monday the 24th. day of March AD 1788

Shearjashub Bourne Esqr. Chosen Moderator

A vote being called agreeable to an act of Assembly made and passd. at Febr. Session AD 1788 Intituled an act Submitting to the considration of this State the Report of the convention of Delegates for a Constitution for the United States as agreed on in Philadelphia the 17th. of Sepr. AD. 1787

when was voted for the Constitution yeas 26	
against it	Nays 23

1. MS, Bristol Town Meeting Records, 1781–1811, Vol. 3, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Bristol, R.I.

**Bristol Freeholders Petition to the General Assembly**  
**pre-31 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

To the Honorable the General Asembly of the State of Rhode Island &c. to be Convened at East Greenwich on the Last Monday of March AD 1788—

The Petition of the Subscribers Freeman and Freeholders of the Town of Bristol in said State most Respectfully Sheweth—that your Petitioners are deeply impressed with The Conviction of the Expediency of having a State Convention holden in this State for the purpose of discussing and deciding on the New Constitution proposed for the United States. This measure in the opinion of your Humble Petitioners is become Expedient not only from that decent Respect which is due to those who first Recommended it—but we conceive it will afford the Advocates and opponents of this New System of Goverment an Opportunity fully to Examine and display all its Excellences, and all its defects and the People of this State, from so liberal a discussion will be fully

Qualified in point of Information to decide on the important Question by their Delegates in the State Convention Your Petitioners therefore most humbly pray that your Honors will be pleased at the Next Session, to Recommend to the freemen of this State to Elect Delegates in the Several towns to meet in a State Convention fully and freely to Examine and discuss the new Constitution fully and to decide thereon—

And your Petitioners as in duty bound will ever [pray?]

Josiah Finney	Nathaniel Smith 2d
Richard Smith	Jeremiah Diman
Willm Gladding	James Diman
Sam Church	Samuel Smith
John Waldron	John May
George Coggeshall	John Gladding
Jonathan Peck	John Norris
Jonathan Peck Jr	John Gladding Junior
Seabury Manchester	Joseph Diman
Joshua Gladding	Richd. Smith Jr.
Isaac Wardell	Jonn. Russell
William Smith	Stephen Smith
Benjamin Wardwelle	Samuel R Pain
Jos. W. Greene	Jeremiah Ingraham
Tho Church 2d.	Nathl. Smith
Saml. V Peck	Moses Van Doorn
Simeon Munro	Saml Wardwell
Daniel Lefavour	A Bonam
Charles DWolfe	Jonathan Diman
Josiah Smith	William Coggeshall
William Fales	Thomas Swan
William Munro. 2d	Jonathan Fales
Simeon Ingraham	Solomon Drown
Newton Waldron	William Lindsey
[Eza?] Cooke [sr?]	Benjamin Hoar
John Waldron 2d	John Howland

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar.

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### CHARLESTOWN

(6-51)

#### Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>

At A Town Meeting held in Charles Town at the dwelling House of Lucy Kinyon this 24 day of March AD 1788 agreeable to the act of the



General Assembly for rejecting or approving the Federal Constitution as proposed by the National Convention:—

the Warrant being read; and Peleg Cross Esqr being chosen Moderator.—

and the question being put whether the said constitution for the United States shall be adopted or negatived:

yeas	23 Griffith Hazard
1 Stephen Hoxsie Junr	24 Nathan Tucker
2 James Congdon	25 Christopher Wording
3 Christopher Babcock	26 Joseph Pettee
4 Gideon Hoxsie Junr	27 Bradick Greene
5 Gideon Hoxsie	28 Ichabod Closson
6 Robert Congdon	29 William Purkin
nayes	30 Benjamin Potter
1 Joseph Stanton Junr	31 Allen Greene
2 Thomas Greene	32 James Peckham
3 Jonathan J Hazard	33 Joseph Davis
4 Samuel Cross	34 John Kinyon
5 Gideon Johnson	35 Stephen Stanton
6 Jonathan Hazard Junr	36 Joshua Card Junr
7 William Card	37 Jonathan Macomber
8 Joshua Card	38 Josiah Utter
9 John Greene	39 Oliver Clarke
10 Joseph Holloway	40 Thomas Knowles
11 Thomas Healy	41 William Clarke
12 Isaac Saunders	42 Samuel Wording
13 Amos Greene	43 John Closson
14 Thomas Greene Junr	44 Joshua Kinyon
15 Simeon Clarke	45 Kinyon Larkin
16 Jonathan Clarke	46 Benjamin Wording
17 Joseph Sheffield	47 Rhodes Hall
18 Thomas Hoxsie	48 Thomas Sheffield
19 John Collier	49 Stephen Ney
20 Gideon Holloway	50 Joshua Kinyon Junr
21 William Clarke	51 Benjamin Hoxsie Junr.
22 Rawlon Clarke	

the above and foregoing is a true copy

Test Benja. Hoxsie Junr.

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar. Another version of the minutes of this town meeting is in Town Council and Probate Record, 1767–1787, Vol. 3, Town Hall, Charlestown, R.I. (Mfm:R.I.).

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**COVENTRY**  
**(0-180)**

**Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

At a Town Meeting held in Coventry in the County of Kent in the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations at the Dwelling House of Thomas Watermans Innholder on Monday the Twenty fourth day of March AD 1788. called by a Warrant from the Town Clerk by Order of the General Assembly of said State—

Stephen Potter Esqr. Chosen Moderator—

The following Freeman In their own proper Persons in Open Town Meeting by their own Voices Voted for and against the New plan for a Feederal Constitution by their Yeas and Nays as are Respectively Set to their Names.—

Stephen Potter nay	Philip Potter nay
William Burlinggame nay	Henry Gardner nay
James Green of Jas nay*	Jonathan Nichols nay
Abel Bennet nay	Charles Comstock nay
Nathaniel Green nay	Increase Greene nay
Benjamin Westcot nay	John Wood nay
Ebenezer Johnson nay	Michael Letson nay
Richard Matteson nay	Westcot Stone nay
Thomas Wood nay	Spink Tarbox nay
Isaac Green nay	Daniel Matteson nay
Ebenezer Rice nay	Joseph Colvin nay
John Green of Jas nay*	Ichabod Potter nay
Isaac Johnson nay	Benjamin Arnold nay
Jonathan Wever nay	Ebenezer Green nay
Benjamin Matteson nay	Job Arnold nay
Benjamin Hackstern nay	Wardwell Green nay
Joseph Matteson nay	David Bucklin nay
Samuel Price nay	John J Kilton nay
John Johnson nay	Nathan Potter nay
David Potter nay	Benedict Colvin nay
Pardon Potter nay	Samuel Bailey nay
Benjamin Green nay	Samuel Johnson of Jos nay*
Daniel Commin nay	Francis Brayton nay
Josiah Potter nay	Joseph Scott nay
Charles Andrew nay	Joseph Bennet nay

Daniel Green nay	Henry Collins nay
John Rice of Ricd. nay*	James Colvin nay
Caleb Roberts nay	Jonathan Brayton nay
Stephen Green nay	Joseph Stafford nay
Henry Johnson nay	Thomas Whaley Junr nay
John Matteson nay	Robert Cook nay
Nicholas Whitford nay	Nathan Scott nay
Josiah Gibbs nay	James Phillips Jur nay
William Roy nay	Nathaniel Lindall nay
Benjamin Carr nay	George Gorton nay
Job Whaley nay	Robert Green nay
William Letson nay	Stephen Colvin Junr nay
George Potter nay	Thomas Remington nay
Hosea Johnson nay	Samuel Basset nay
Thomas Phillips nay	William Havens nay
Joseph Burlingame nay	John Arnold nay
William Green of Othl nay*	John Stafford nay
Stephen Matteson nay	Robert Wood nay
William Greene of Job nay*	William Brayton nay
Benedict Johnson nay	Joseph Manchester nay
Samuel Green Junr nay	Thomas Utter nay
Benedict Arnold nay	Stephen Capwell Junr nay
Charles Arnold nay	Benjamin Burlingame nay
James Phillips nay	Benedict Wickes nay
George Johnson nay	Benjamin Andrew nay
Jonathan Johnson nay	Philip Arnold nay
Anthony Edmunds nay	Joseph Johnson nay
Daniel Burlingame nay	James Capwell nay
John Wood of Thos nay*	Esek Burlingame nay
Jonathan Wever of Benja. nay*	William Stone Junr nay
Ephraim Westcot nay	Fones Potter nay
Nathan Matteson nay	Arthur Love nay
Joseph Wickes Junr nay	Samuel Straight nay
Parden Pierce nay	Thomas Colvin of Jas. nay*
Jabez Stone nay	Jonathan Wilbur Junr nay
Caleb Wood nay	Adam Love nay
Ebenezer Matteson nay	Benjamin Pearce nay
Benjamin Carr Jur nay	Daniel Rice nay
Rufus Brayton nay	Benjamin Waterman nay
Philip Aylsworth nay	Thomas Waterman nay
Thomas Greene nay	Benjamin Brayton nay
	Amos Perry nay

Moses Matteson nay	John Rice Junr. nay
Johnson Jordan nay	Robert Green of Ebenr. nay*
Caleb Wightman nay	Job Green of Charles nay*
Stephen Pearce nay	Johnson Fisk nay
Lory Jenckes nay	Joseph Arnold nay
Samuel Burlinggame nay	Henry Briggs nay
Thomas Whaley nay	Timothy Green nay
Thomas Manchester nay	Reuben Potter nay
Reuben Johnson nay	Peter Colvin nay
Nathan Fisk nay	William Andrew nay
Samuel Wall nay	Job Manchester nay
William Goff nay	David Nichols nay
Nathaniel Arnold nay	Elisha Green nay
Yelverton Weight nay	Henry Green of James nay*
Abel Wickes nay	Russel Green nay
John Wever nay	Henry Green nay
Jeremiah [Fenner?] nay	Jonathan Nichols 2d. nay
Jonathan Matteson nay	Thomas Arnold nay
William Stone nay	Solomon Whitford nay
Slade Gorton nay	Job Matteson nay
Daniel Wever nay	Ephraim Westcot Junr nay
Ebenezer Perkins Junr nay	Langford Wever nay
Elnathan Andrew nay	Jesse King nay

John Rice nay until Large Amendments and alterations are made and a Constitution planed that the Common People can understand and that cannot be Construed two or three ways plain[ly?] & Expressing the Rights of the Several States and the Rights of Congress in Feederal Union.

The Petition of the People called Quakers Voted out by a large Majority Both in Respect of the Emitting act and the Law of Limitation for Notes and Book accounts—

This Meeting Disolved—

1. MS, Coventry Town Records, Vault, Town Hall, Coventry, R.I.

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**CRANSTON**  
(0-101)

**Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

At a Town-meeting held in Cranston, specially called, and legally assembled on monday, the 24th. day of March, 1788.—

In order to deliberate upon, and determine each Individual who hath a Right by Law to vote for the Choice of General Officers, by himself by Poll, whether the Constitution, recommended by the Convention, held at Philadelphia, on the 17th of September last, shall be adopted or negatived.—Caleb Potter, Esqr. Moderator.

And the Freemen being called upon, by the Moderator, to give their Voices for the Purpose aforesaid, the following Persons declared aloud, in open Town-meeting Nay, to Wit.

John Randall	Ephraim Robarts
Elisha Wightman	Joseph Knight
Rhodes Arnold	Stephen Fenner, Junr.
Anthony Aborn	Benjamin Knight
Thomas Corpe	James Knight
Joseph Lockwood	Pearce Salisbury
Robert Knight	Elisha Arnold
Samuel Fenner	Ezra Dean
Niel Salisbury	Peleg Arnold
Josiah Battey	Jeremiah Knight
John Wightman	John Dyer
William Knight	Henry Knight
Barzillai Knight	Oliver Robarts
Thomas Field	William Hayle
Samuel Henry	William Warner
Joseph Aborn	Jonathan Westcott
Anthony Potter	Benjamin Williams
George Waterman	Joseph Burgis, Junr
John Payn	Joseph Potter
Job Knight	Samuel Bennett
John Dyer, Junr.	John Andrews
William Collins	Nehemiah Rhodes
Thomas Potter	Stephen Field
James Sheldon	Randall Smith
Robert Briggs	Sylvester Potter
Jeriah Hawkins	Caleb Burlinggame
Philip Burlinggame	William Aldrich
John Harris	Nathan Williams
Joseph Brayton	Jonathan King
Jonathan Sprague, Junr.	Henry Randall
Abraham Whipple	Joseph Burgis
Christopher Waterman	Nathan Westcott
William Burton	Nicholas Sheldon, Junr.

Stephen Sprague	Elisha Carpenter
Caleb Potter	Zuriel Randall
Nehemiah Knight	Stephen Dyer
Charles Dyer	John Arnold
Henry Randall Junr.	John Burton, Junr.
John Stafford	William Randall
Caleb Baker	Holloman Potter
Jeremiah King	Stephen Sheldon
John Williams	Nicholas Sheldon
Asa King	Zuriel Waterman
Elisha Williams	William Potter
Frederic Williams	Samuel Westcott
Joseph Sarle	Urian Westcott
Philip Arnold	Waterman Randall
Pardon Burlingame	Ezekiel Sarle
James Burlingame	Remington Sheldon
Pardon Sheldon	John Waterman
Nathaniel Carpenter	

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Nays                    101 }  
 Yeas none—                }

The above and preceding is a True Copy from the Minutes:

Witness

Nehemiah Knight *T. Clerk*

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar. Another copy is in the Record of Town Meetings, Births, Marriages, Deaths, and Earmarks, 1754–1828, Vol. 1, City Hall, Cranston, R.I. (Mfm:R.I.).

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**CUMBERLAND**  
(10–113)

**Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

At a Town Meeting held in and for the Town of Cumberland in the County of Providence on the fourth Monday in March being the 24th. day of said Month A.D. 1788—in pursuance of an Act of the Honorable General Assembly of the State of Rhode-Island &c. passed at their Session in this present Month intituled “An Act submitting to the Consideration of the Freemen of this State the Report of the Convention of Delegates for a Constitution for the United States as agreed on in Philadelphia the 17th. of September A.D. 1787[”]—

Levi Ballou Esquire chosen Moderator—

The said Constitution being read and considered the Freemen and Freeholders whose Names here follow gave their Voices in said Town Meeting assembled upon the Question Whether the said Constitution should be Adopted or Not as follows—

Reuben King Nay	Jeremiah Amsbury Nay
John Gould junior Nay	Jesse Ballou Nay
Benjamin Wilkinson Nay	Levi Tower Nay
Simon Wilkinson Nay	George Ide Nay
Amos Whipple Nay	John Fisk Nay
Roger Alexander Nay	Jeremiah Bartlet Nay
Eseck Cook Nay	Abiel Brown Esqr. Nay
John Lapham Nay	Enoch Weatherhead Nay
Thomas Joslen Nay	Ichabod Brown Nay
Joseph Arnold Nay	Abraham Cook junr. Nay
Eleazer Whipple Nay	Stephen Inman Nay
Elisha Waterman Yea	John Wallcutt Nay
Jonathan Aldrich Nay	Enos Jillson Nay
John Grant Nay	Abraham Cook Nay
William Carpenter Yea	Amos Sprague Nay
Moses Whipple Nay	Jeremiah Scott Nay
Jeremiah Inman Nay	Daniel Bartlet Nay
Henry Ray Nay	William Emerson Nay
Peter Miller Nay	Samuel Chamberlain Nay
Daniel Jenks junior Nay	John Bishop Nay
Abraham Follett Nay	William Chaffee Nay
Nathan Jillson Nay	Annianias Cook Nay
Elijah Brown Nay	Joseph Ray Nay
John Haskell Nay	Eliphalet Lovett Nay
Edward Ballou Nay	Nathaniel Cook Yea
Stephen Whipple Nay	Gideon Bishop Nay
Levi Weatherhead Nay	Peter Darling Esqr. Nay
Joseph Lee Nay	Ephraim Whipple Nay
Anthony Raze Nay	Noah Ballou Nay
William Follett Nay	Joseph Chase Nay
Joseph Whipple junr. Nay	Simon Whipple 2nd. Nay
Daniel Whipple Nay	James Arnold Nay
Eleazer Cook Nay	Timothy Bennett Nay
Abner Haskell Nay	Jonathan Mason Yea
Nehemiah Allen Nay	Simon Whipple [- - -] Yea
Stephen Brown Nay	Daniel Willcox Nay
Hezekiah Cook Nay	Jeremiah Whipple Esqr. Yea

Jeremiah Whipple junr. Yea	Samuel Estes Nay
Gilbert Grant Nay	Samuel Grant Nay
David Dexter junr. Nay	Abraham Sprague Nay
John Jenks Nay	Roger Hill Nay
Levi Arnold Nay	Christopher Whipple Nay
Peter Darling junr. Nay	Nathaniel Jillson Nay
Ezekiel Ballou Nay	Joseph Whipple Nay
Job Chamberlain Nay	Isaac Raze Nay
John Butterworth Nay	Nathaniel Gould Nay
Rufus Bartlet Nay	Simeon Bishop Nay
David Jenks Nay	John Wilkinson Nay
Ariel Ballou junr. Nay	Jotham Carpenter Esqr. Nay
Stephen Staples Nay	Nicholas Brown Nay
Samuel Arnold Nay	James Cargill Nay
Joseph Staples Nay	William Gaskill Esqr. Nay
Ariel Cook Nay	Ibrook Whipple junr. Nay
John Weatherhead Nay	Joseph Raze Nay
Amaziah Weatherhead Yea	Roger Alexander junr. Nay
Nathan Arnold Nay	Benjamin Peck Nay
Joseph Jenks Nay	Enoch Arnold Nay
Preserved Whipple Nay	Abner Lapham Esqr. Nay
Gideon Jenks Nay	Isaac Martin Nay
Comfort Haskell Nay	William Ballou Yea
Silas Clarke Nay	Abel Aldrich Nay
	Isaac Otis Yea

A true Copy

Attest Jn. S. Dexter T. Clk.

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar. Another version of the minutes (without the names) is in Council Records, Vol. 1, City Hall, Cumberland, R.I. (Mfm: R.I.).

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**EAST GREENWICH**  
(2-91)

**Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

At a Town Meeting Called, by Act of the Honorable General Assembly And Held at East Greenwich on the 24th. day of March AD 1788 To Take into Consideration, the Report of the Convention of Delegates for a Constitution for the United States as agreed on in Philadelphia the 17th. of September AD 1787.



The following Persons Voted by Yeas and Nays for and against the said Constitution—

Yeas—	Saml. Wightman
Arnold Stafford	Job Card
William Sweet Jur.	Morgan Carven
Nays	Joseph Baley
Caleb Briggs	Richard Aylsworth
James Wightman Jur	Saml. Tarbox
Thos. Vaughan	David Northup
Pardan Allen	Allen Fry
Caleb Hall	Thos. Coggeshall
John Pierce S[on of] Benj:*	William Marks
David Austin	Wilson Spencer
Edward Weedan	William Gardner
Elisha Greene	George Spencer
Gardner Spencer	Benoni Healey
Richard Briggs	David Vaughan 3d
John Vaughan	Amos Vaughan
Denis Carven	Benjn. Vaughan Jur.
John Gardner	Thos. Hall
Wm. Briggs	Christopher Vaughan
Benjn. Langford	Jonathan Capron
Caleb Whitford	William Pierce
David Vaughan	Joseph Cornell
S[on of] David*	Moses Spencer
Wilson Spener Jur	James Wightman
James Sweet	Saml. Reynolds
S[on of] Silvester*	Joshua Godfrey
Amos Spencer	Anthony Spencer
Benjn Vaughan	Jonathan Niles
Henry Spencer	Michel Spencer
Wm. Baley	John Fry
Caleb Coggeshall	Thomas Hawland
David Vaughan	Joseph Fry
John Spencer	William Foster
John Tarbox	Dute Weaver
Joseph Wightman	Robert Baley
Remington Kinyon	Job Comstock
John Carpenter	Jonathan Weaver
Thos. Shippie Jur.	Oliver Arnold
Robert Vaughan	Stephen Greene

Benjn. Fry	Thos. Aldrich
Silas Spencer	Thos. Briggs
Wm. Weaver	Amos Jones
Christopher Weaver	Pardan Mawney
Wm. Spencer	Wm. Greene
Josiah Jones	(S[on of] Elisha)*
Nathan Spencer	Thos. Spencer
Jeremiah Spencer	(S[on of] Abner)*
Henry Whitman	George Nichols
Thos. Plaice	Benjn. Hawland
Silvester Sweet	

Two Persons Voted in favour of the said Constitution And Ninety one against it—

A True Copy

Witness H. Cooke T. Clk

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar. Another version of the minutes (without the names) is in Town Meeting Minutes, 1752–1793, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, West Greenwich, R.I. (Mfm:R.I.).

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**EXETER**  
(6–142)

**Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

At A Town Meeting Calld. By Request of Hounourable General Assembly & Held at Exeter 24th of march AD 1788

The Following Persons Appeared in open Town meeting And Voted For & against the Proposed Constitution for united State of America under the words Yea & Nay as they Respectively Give Their Voices

Yea	Job Willcox
Pardon Tillinghast	Joseph Baker
George Peirce	Joseph Crandal
Oliver Spink	George Willcox
Daniel Tillinghast	James Lewis
Samuel Tillinghast	Gardner Lillibridge
Stuckly Tillinghast	John Tefft
Nay	Hopson Willcox
Robert Reynolds [e]sq	George Reynolds
Henry Herington	Daniel Whitman
Thomas Weedon	William Potter
John Hoxsie	Robert Willcox

Jeremiah Smith	Samuel Bissell
Michael dawley	Samuel Money
Joseph Money	Silas Terry
John Joslin Jur.	James Baker
Stephen Watson	Eber Shearman Jur
Benja. Potter	Edward Richmond
David Dawley	Roger Shelden
Nathan Dawley	Sweet Hill
Benja. Brown	Amos Whitford
John Richmond	Isaac Chapman
Davis Hill	John Ney
Timothy Lawton	Josiah Lawton
George Rothbun	Nicholas Watson
Daniel Sunderlin	John Kinyon
William Holloway	Henry Albro
Oliver Dawley	Nicholas Dawley
William Hiams	John Joslin
Moses Barber	Jonathan Reynolds Jur
John Browning	Beriah Brown Jur
Joseph James	Benja. Dawley
Nathaniel Barber	Moses Shearman Jur
John Cottrell	Able Gardiner
Stephen C. Gardiner	John Rhodes
Christopher Herington	George Reynolds of .R*
Simeon Rothbun	Daniel Dawley
John Champlin	Phineas Kenyon
Daniel Sunderlin Jur	Joseph Reynolds
Robert Willcox	John Baker
Joseph Rothbun	Benja. Lillibridge
Ebenezer moon	Samuel Bissell Jur
Benja. Reynolds of .C*	John Sweet
Benja. Benlly Jur.	Moses Shearman
John Bates .B*	Samuel Gorten
Augustus Sunderlin	John Gardiner Jur
William Strangue	Ezekiel Whitford
Earl King	Joseph Holloway
Stephen Richmond	oliver Lawton
Samuel Champlin	Ephraim Codner
Eber Shearman	Caleb Arnold
Jonathan Reynolds	Ebenezer Willcox
Nathan Willcox	Jabez Sweet
John Herington	John Magwire

Henry G Gardner	Jonathan Barber
Joseph Lewis	Henry Reynolds
Reynolds Shearman	Jeffery Hazard
Caleb Arnold of Jo*	Sanford moon
Samuel Gardiner	Able Reynolds
Benja. Lewis	Beriah Hopkins
David Cottrell	Tobias Pilsbury
Obediah Rothbun	Edward Armstrong
John Willcox	Benja. Wait
Abraham Willcox Jur	John Sweet Jur
John Lewis	Daniel Barber Jur
John Bates	Samuel Arnold of Jo*
Noah Willcox	Richard Boon
Jonathan Lewis Jur	Benajah Shearman
Josiah Arnold	Jeffery Willcox
Robert Shearman	Stephen Reynolds
Henry Reynolds of Job*	Isaac Willcox
William Terry	John Whitford
George Codner	Joseph Reynolds Jur
Daniel Barber	Lillibridge Barber

I Hereby Certify that the Above & Before Written is A True Copy  
Taken from the original Register Lodged in the Town Clk office in  
Exeter March 26th AD 1788

Witness

Stephen Reynolds T Clk

It further appears that there is 142 Votes against sd Constitution

Passing in a Law & But

6 for sd Constitution

Majority of

136

The act Concerning Taking of the Tender of Paper money or amend-  
ment to the Same & the act of Limetation of the Stattute Was Red [in?]  
Open Town meeting & Voted that sd acts Be not appealed or amended  
But Remain in full force in Law

Exeter March 26th. AD 1788

Witness

S Reynolds T Clk

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar.

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**GLOUCESTER**  
(9-228)

**Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

At a Town-Meeting Held at Gloucester the 24th. of March AD  
1788—

The Free-Holders of the Town Give their Voices by Yea's And Nay's to Determine whither to Adopt or Reject that Constitution Agreed Upon at Philadelphia on the 17th. of Septemb AD 1787. As follows

Benjamin Wilkinson—yea	Samuel Cook—nay
Thomas Owen—yea	Israel Sayles—nay—
Joseph Olney—Nay	Timothy Jenne—nay
Arnold Smith—nay	Esek Smith—nay
Benjamin Colwell—nay	William Coman—nay
Ebenezer Handey—nay	Jocktan Putnan—nay
John Smith—nay	Asa Burlingame—nay
Jeremiah Brown—nay	Thomas Howland—nay
Timothy Willmarth—nay	Stephen Evens—nay
Stephen Cooper—nay	George Hunt—nay
Abraham Winsor—nay	Benjamin Salsbery—nay
Jonathan Harris—yea	James King Jur.—nay
Uriah Hawkins—nay	Joseph Howland—nay
Jeremiah Sweet—nay	Nathan Pain the 3rd—nay
John Durfey—nay	Zacheus Aldrich—nay
Hezekiah Tinckom—nay	Jeremiah Ballard Jur—nay
Caleb Logee—nay	Josiah Brown—nay
Stephen Cook—nay	Daniel Smith—nay
John Andrews—nay	Nathaniel Wade—nay
Daniel Owen—nay	Stephen Woodward—nay
William Ross—yea	Esquire Williams—Nay
Stephen Smith—nay	Presarved Harendeen—nay
Jirah Ballou—nay	John Phetteplace—nay
Stephen Steere—nay	Ezekiel Sayles—nay
William Colwell Jur—nay	Stephen Colwell—nay
Ezekiel Brown—nay	Michael Cook—nay
Enoch Steere—nay	Stukley Turner—nay
Samuel Phetteplace—nay	Caleb Arnold—nay
Elisha Inman—nay	Gideon Bishop—nay
Richard Coman Nay	William Turner—nay
Charles Wood—nay	Joshua Mathewson—nay
David Inman—nay	James Harris—nay
Esquire Luther—nay	Robert Sanders Jur—nay
John Kimball—nay	Thomas Smith—nay
Daniel Brown—nay	Othniel Sanders—nay
Amasa Eddy—nay	John Salsbery—nay
Amos Winsor—nay	Ebenezer Darling Jur—nay
Stephen Whipple—nay	Gideon Cook—nay

Jacob Ballard—nay  
 Asahel Stone—nay  
 Adam Phillips—nay  
 Obadiah Inman—nay  
 Barsilla Dexter—nay  
 Jonathan Cowen—nay  
 George Brown—nay  
 Andrew Darling—nay  
 Thomas Steere—nay  
 Robert Colwell Jur—nay  
 David Colwill—nay  
 James Lewis—nay  
 Joseph Davis—nay  
 Elkanah Bowen—nay  
 Amos Williams—nay  
 Oziel Hopkins—nay  
 Olney Eddy—nay  
 Chad Brown—nay  
 David Ballou—nay  
 John Inman—nay  
 William Eddy—nay  
 Joshua Cook—nay  
 John Davis nay  
 Joseph Esten—nay  
 Moses Cooper—nay  
 Caleb Bartlet—nay  
 Charles Colwell—nay  
 Willard Eddy—nay  
 Aaron Arnold—nay  
 John Stone—nay  
 Edward Davis—nay  
 James Runnolds—nay  
 Ishmael Sayles—nay  
 Esek Whipple—nay  
 Thomas Sayles—nay  
 Barak Benson—nay  
 John Whippel—nay  
 Zebulon Wade—nay  
 Ezra Bowen—nay  
 Solomon Harendeen—nay  
 Asa Ballou—nay  
 John Wells Jur—nay

Job Steere—nay  
 Thomas Barns—nay  
 Samuel Potter—nay  
 Daniel Barns—nay  
 Jesse Eddy—nay  
 Christopher Sayles—nay  
 James Stone—nay  
 Aaron Logee—nay  
 Simeon Place—nay  
 Daniel Evens—nay  
 Henry Sanders—nay  
 Ezra Stone—nay  
 William Wilkinson—nay  
 Stephen Salsbery—nay  
 Ebenezer Darling—nay  
 John Howland—nay  
 David Ballou son of Saml.  
 nay\*  
 Samuel May—nay  
 Samuel Winsor—nay  
 Jesse Potter—nay  
 Simeon Sweet—nay  
 Benajah Whipple—nay  
 Anon Winsor—nay  
 James King—nay  
 Charles Salsbery—nay  
 Nicholas Potter—nay  
 Jesse Armstrong—nay  
 Silas Thayer—nay  
 Elkanah Shearman—nay  
 Simeon Smith—nay  
 James Cowen—nay  
 Thomas Wood—nay  
 Eleazer Harris—yea  
 Benedict Burlingame—nay  
 Eleazer Ballou—nay  
 Jesse Lapham—nay  
 John Mathewson Jur—nay  
 Noah Steere—nay  
 Zebedee Hopkins Jur—nay  
 Bazaleel Pain—nay  
 Caleb Steere—nay

Nathan Cooper—nay	David Richardson—nay
Andrew Harendeen—nay	Stephen Aldrich—nay
William Tourtellot—nay	Jesse Aldrich—nay
Eliakam Phetteplace—nay	David Vallet—nay
Joseph Shippee—nay	Simon Smith—yea
Thomas Owen the 3rd—nay	Seth Hunt—nay
Andrew Phillips—nay	Jonathan Eddy Jur—nay
William Wood—nay	David Burlinggame—nay
Elisha Burlinggame—nay	Samuel Phetteplace Jur—nay
Elisha Steere—nay	William Hawkins Jur—nay
William Wade—nay	Jesse Winsor—nay
Martin Smith—nay	Jesse Keech—nay
Salvanus Cook—nay	Stephen Barns—nay
Thomas Burlinggame—nay	David Richmond—yea
Ahab Sayles—nay	Elijah Armstrong—nay
Stephen Winsor—nay	John Steere—nay
Reuben Mason—nay	Abraham Clarke—nay
Benjamin Warner—nay	Joshua Luther—nay
Jethro Lapham—nay	Joseph Phillips—nay
Rufus Williams—nay	William Page Jur—nay
Solomon Lapham—nay	Jesse Brown—yea
William Arnold—nay	John Cowen Jur—nay
Aaron Phillips—nay	Moses Taft—nay
Ezekiel Phetteplace Jur—nay	Ezekiel Phetteplace nay
Obadiah Fenner—nay	Abia Luther—Nay
Benjamin Hawkins nay	Peter Aldrich—nay
Joseph Hawkins—nay	John Pray—nay
Jeremiah Irons Jur—nay	Nathaniel Bowdish Jur—nay
Moses Cooper Junr—nay	David Mowry—nay
Jonathan Bowen—nay	Solomon Owen—nay
Jonathan Vallet—nay	John Esten Jur—nay
Edward Greene—nay	Esek Brown—nay
William Hawkins—nay	John Smith son [of] B—nay*
Stephen Blackmarr— <del>nay</del> yea	Stephen Sanders—nay
Benjamin Cowen—nay	Noah Eddy—nay
John Wells—nay	Benjamin Pain—nay
Daniel Page—nay	Stephen Cowen—nay
Joseph Keech—nay	Jesse Smith—nay
Joseph Brown—nay	William Steere—yea—

The Above and Foregoing is a Copy Witness: R: Steere Town [Clerk?]

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar.

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**HOPKINTON**  
(33-95)

**Town Meeting, 24 March 1788 (excerpts)<sup>1</sup>**

At a Town Meeting held in Hopkinton in the County of Washington, in the State of Rhode Island &c on Monday the 24th. Day of March AD 1788—at Mr. Thompson Wells' it being a call'd Town Meeting by Order of the Genl. Assembly of sd. State at their last Session held at Providence in sd. State in Feby. last; to [Deliberate?] upon and Determine whether the late proposed Constitution for the United States Shall be adopted or not, &c—

Voted that Samuel Babcock Esqr. be Moderator. . . .

Voted that the Report of the Convention, of the late proposed Constitution for the United States, be not discussed or argued upon at this time

Voted that the late proposed Constitution for the United States be Negatived, by 62 Majority of Nays—

Voted on the matter Respecting the taking off the Tender of the Paper Money, it being Read and Sundry Arguments heard thereon, and being put whether the Tender act should be Repealed, or not, it passed not Repealed—

And on the Vote of Repealing the late Statute for limitation for two Years, it passed to be Repealed, and that the Deputies for this Town be Instructed to proceed accordingly—

Copy given—

Voted that this Town Meeting be Dissolved

1. MS, Town Records, 1786-1824, Vol. 2, Town Hall, Hopkinton, R.I.

**Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

At a Town Meeting held in Hopkinton, in the State of Rhode Island, and Providence Plantations, on the 24th. Day of March AD 1788—By Order of the Honble. the Genl. Assembly of sd. State, at their Session held at Providence in February last—(viz)—

The following are the Names of the Freemen & Freeholders Inhabitants of Hopkinton aforesd. Who Voted that the late proposed Constitution for the United States be Adopted.—



Yeas—	Oliver White
Joshua Clarke Eldr.	John Maxson Jur.
Fones Palmer	Benjamin Maxson
Frances West	Zaccheus Maxson
William West	Matthew Maxson
Thomas Wells	Samuel Gardner
Thompson Wells	Oliver Davis
Elnathan Wells	William Thurston
Thomas Wells Jur.	Gardner Thurston
Samuel Wells	Joseph Witter Junr.
Amos Wells	Rowland Thurston
Henry Wells	Amos Langworthy
Jonathan Wells	Benjamin Langworthy
Hezekiah Babcock	Henry Clarke
David Coon	Abram Utter
Joshua Coon	Abram Utter Junr
Joshua Coon Jur.	Yeas—33.
Abram Coon	

The following are the Names of the Freemen & Freeholders Inhabitants of Hopkinton aforesd. Who Voted that the late proposed Constitution for the United States be Negatived—

Nays—	William Coon
Gideon Allen	Samuel Coon
Lawton Palmer	Elias Coon
John Palmer	Thomas Coon
Lawton Palmer Junr	Benjamin Coon
Edward Wells	Daniel White
Thomas Wells 2d	Thomas Barber
Matthew Wells	Levi Barber
Randal Wells	Joseph Barber
Clarke Wells	Moses Barber
Edward S. Wells	John Coon
Hezekiah Carpenter	Samuel Maxson
Daniel Carpenter	Samuel Maxson Jur
Joseph Larkin	John Maxson
Aaron Davis	George Maxson
Zephaniah Brown	Joseph Burdick Jur
John Brown	Stephen Burdick
Christopher Brown	Stephen Rose Burdick
James Brown	Robert Burdick

Abel Burdick	William Tanner
Isaac Burdick	William Tanner Jur
Luke Burdick	Joseph Tanner
Timothy Larkin	William Tanner 2d.
Phinehas Miner	Joshua Tanner
William Pettyes	John Tanner
Uriah Saunders	Eliphalet Buddington
Caleb Saunders	Joseph Langworthy
Daniel Crumb	John Phillips
Richard Maxson	Samuel Champlin
Ebenezer Burdick	Nathan Champlin
John Fenner	Thaddeus Sweet
Henry Saunders	Jonathan Dyer
Amos Rogers	Josiah Hill
George Kinyon	Zaccheus Reynolds
Ichabod Paddock	Nicholas Vincent
Caleb Church	Rowland Lanphere
Benjamin Kinyon	Joshua Lanphere Junr.
Benjamin Kinyon 2d	Robert Peckham
Nathaniel Kinyon	Greene Lewis
Caleb Nye	John Stanborough Junr
Thomas Brightman	Benjamin Hall
Benjamin Crandal	Azariah Crandal
David Crandal	Jonathan Potter
Cary Crandal	Amos Palmer
Isaiah Button	John Wright
Caleb Nye Junr.	Thomas Wright
Henry Brightman	Nays 95 Total
Samuel Witter	Yeas 33 Total
Abel Tanner	_____
David Nichols	Nays 62 Majority

1. MS, Town Records, Town Hall, Hopkinton, R.I. This four-page document was found in the attic of the town hall in the spring of 1992.

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**JAMESTOWN**  
(5-11)

**Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

Jamestown at a meeting Legally held in Said Town March 24th. 1788  
John Weeden Esqr. chosen Moderator

Yeas	John Franklin
Isaac Howland	George Franklin
Edward Carr	John Howland
Nicholas Carr	Richard Tew
Peleg Carr	William Battey
John Weeden	John Eldred—Esqr.
Yeas—5	Thomas Hazard
Nays	Abel Franklin
Rowland Robinson	Samuel Hopkins
Hazard Knowles	Nays 11—

This is to Certify that the above is a True Register of the Names of the Freemen and Freeholders as they gave their voices in Open Town meeting Respecting the Constitution as was Ordered by the Honourable General Assembly February Sessions 1788—

Witness Tiddeman Hull Town Clerk

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar.

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**JOHNSTON**  
(2-79)

**Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

At a Town Meeting Legally Convened and held in Johnston in the County of Providence on the fourth Monday of March 1788—

The yeas, and Nays of Eighty one of the Freemen of the Town of Johnston taken in Town Meeting Assembled, on the said Fourth Monday of March, and are as Follows—

Jonathan Arnold nay	William Borden Nay
Daniel Angell nay	Abrām Belknap Junr. Nay
Natheniah Atwood nay	Benja. Carpenter Nay
William Angell nay	Samuel Dyer Nay
Philip Arnold nay	Parden Fenner Nay
William Alverson Nay	John Greene yea
Joseph Borden Nay	Caleb Harris Nay
John Brown Nay	Andrew Harris Nay
Charles Brown Nay	Christopher Harris Nay
Jacob Belknap Nay	John Harris Nay
John Brown Junr. Nay	Cyrus Harris Nay
David Brown Nay	Josiah King Nay
Obadiah Brown Jr. Nay	William B. King Nay
Oliver Borden Nay	Benjamin Kimbell Nay

William Latham Nay	Daniel Thornton nay
Consider Luther Nay	Richd. Thornton nay
James Mathewson Nay	Solomon Thornton Jr. nay
Noah Mathewson Nay	Christor. Thornton nay
Edward Manton Nay	Seth Tripp nay
William Mathewson Nay	Jonathan Thornton nay
Barak McDonald Nay	Borden Thornton nay
Thomas Man Nay	John Waterman nay
Jeremiah Manton Nay	Job Waterman nay
John McDonald Nay	Peleg Williams nay
Esek Olney Nay	Benjamin Waterman nay
Isaac Olney Nay	William Waterman nay
Samuel Pearce Nay	Daniel Waterman nay
Jonathan Patt Nay	Nathaniel Waterman nay
John Paine Nay	Job Waterman Junr. nay
Benja. Paine Nay	Isaac Winsor nay
Squire Paine nay	Laben Waterman nay
Joseph Randall nay	Samuel Winsor nay
Joshua Remington nay	James Winsor nay
William Rhodes nay	Joseph Wilbur nay
John Smith yea	Daniel Wilbur nay
Jeremiah Sheldon nay	Wilbur Williams nay
James Sweet nay	Oliver Williams nay
Rufus Sprague nay	Caleb Williams nay
Valintine Sweet nay	Daniel Williams nay
Nehemiah Sheldon nay	William Williams nay
Philip Sweet nay	

I hereby Certify, that the foregoing List is a True Copy of the Names of each and every Freeman and Freeholder, with the yea & nay Registered in the Town of Johnston Agreeable to act of Assembly—

Witness Joseph Borden Jr. T, Clk

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar. Another version (without the vote on the Constitution) of the minutes is in the Johnston Town Meeting Records, 1754–1791, RHi (Mfm:R.I.).

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**LITTLE COMPTON**  
(63–57)

**Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

At A Town Meeting Legally Warned and held in Little Compton March the 24th AD 1788.

At this Meeting the yeas and Nays Were Taken agreeable to an act of the General Assembly Whither This Town Would Adopt or Reject the federal Constitution Drawn up and Concluded upon By the [Federal?] Convention held at Philadelphia September the 17th AD 1787 and unannimously Ratified By Congress<sup>2</sup> and Sent to Each State &c—

and here followeth the Names of the Persons Who Gave their yeas & Nays in open Town Meeting

Yeas	Ichabod Wood
John Baley	Aaron Willbur
Benjamin Coe	David Hilliard
Constant Seabry	Robert Woodman
Zebedee Greenell	Enos Gifford
Thomas Briggs	Samuel Gray
Billings Greenell	Robert Taylor
Gideon Simmons	William Brown
Zebedee Stoddard	William Baley
Joseph Brownell	Elisha Woodworth
Joseph Willbur	Thomas Brownell
Job Manchester	William Southworth
Ebenazar Church	William Woodman
Nathaniel Tompkins	Thomas Richmond
Silvenous Brown	Isaac Simmons
David Hilliard Jur	John Tompkins
Nathaniel Searle	Barnabas Clap
Joseph Gifford	Arnold Stoddard
George Wood	John Greenell
John Woodman the 2d	Benjamin Tompkins
Nathaniel Church	David Tompkins
Burden Willbur	Abill Simmons
Isaac Wood	William Richmond
Samuel Coe	Peris Richmond
Adam Simmons	John Davis
Thomas Deavenport	Philip Taylor
Isaac Baley	Nathaniel Taylor
William Simmons	Nathaniel Simmons
Gamaliel Tompkins	Nathaniel Stoddard
William Ladd	John Woodman
Caleb Church the 2d.	yeas Number 63
Lemuel Sawyer	Nays
Jerimiah Deavenport	Jonathan Taylor
Gideon Taylor	Nathaniel Dring

Thomas Willbur	Charles Manchester
John Brownell	Benjamin Stoddard
Thomas Brown	Benedict Palmer
Charles Brownell	John Carr
John Pearce the 2d.	John Willbur
Henry Head	John Simmons
William Willbur Jur	Daniel Willbur
Wing Durfy	Thomas Palmer
Aaron Simmons	John Salsbry
Stephen Brownell the 2d	Zarah Simmons
John Bennet	George Brownell the 2d
Seth Shaw	Isaac Peckham
Benjamin Head	James Pearce
George Simmons	Pardon Snell
Israel Shaw	Joseph Pearce
William Hunt	Isaac Willbur Son of John*
William Carr	Joseph Brown
Moses Brown	[Caicus?] Gifford
Brownell Stoddard	Benjamin Head Jur
Peter Shaw	Abner Wood
Nathaniel Pearce	Owen Greenell
Fobes Little Jur	Thomas Baley
Aaron Greenell	Jonathan Brownell
Peleg Wood	Joseph Bennet
Ezra Chase	Thomas Irish
Caleb Simmons	William Willbur
Elkanah Palmer	Gideon Gifford
Fobes Little	Nays Number 57

1. MS, Town Records, 1759–1855, Vol. 2, Town Hall, Little Compton, R.I.

2. The Confederation Congress did not ratify the Constitution. It unanimously resolved to send the Constitution to the state legislatures without approbation, merely asking that the legislatures call conventions to consider ratification (CC:95).

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**MIDDLETOWN**  
**(6–40)**

**Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

At a Town Meeting Held in Middletown March the 24th day AD 1788  
Especially Called by an act of the General Assembly Passed at their

sessions held in Providence Feby. 1788 Entituled an act submitting to the Consideration of the freemen of this State the report of Convention of Delegates for a Constitution for the United States as agreed on in Philadelphia the 17 day of September AD 1787 Oliver Durfee Esqr. Morderator

The following Votes ware passed for & against Said Constitution agreable to the afore Recited act in yeas and nays as followeth

yeas—	John Wood
Nicholas Easton	Weston Clarke
Stephen Peckham	Benjamin Peabody
James Potter	David Barker
Salisbury Stoddard	Peleg Barker
Elisha Barker	John Coggeshall
Isaac Stoddard	Easton Bailey
Nays—	Gideon Brown
Thomas Coggeshall	William Brown
William Peckham	Joseph Weaver
Joshua Barker	Joseph Coggeshall
John Rogers	Matthew Weaver
Elisha Peckham	Daniel Weaver
William Peckham Junr.	William Coggeshall
Peleg Allen	Richard Peckham
Samuel Wyatt	Samuel Cornell
Peleg Peckham	Joshua Peckham
John Gould	Jeremiah Barker
George Irish	Wanton Slocum
Pardon Brown	Samuel Peckham
David Albro	Joseph Peckham
Silas Peckham	John Beavin
Edward Barker Junr.	Edward Easton
Caleb Peabody	Peleg Brown

The Names Contained on this half Sheet is a True List taken from the Original

Witness Elisha Allen Town Clerk

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar. Another version of the minutes is in Town Meetings, 1743–1808, Vol. 1, Town Hall, Middletown, R.I. (Mfm: R.I.).

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**NEWPORT**  
**(1-10)**

**Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

At a Meeting of the Freemen and Freeholders in said Newport by Warrant Agreeably to an act of Assembly passed February Session last past, Entituled an Act submitting to the Consideration of the freemen of this state the Report of the Convention of Delegates for a Constitution for the united states, as agreed on in Philadelphia the 17th. of September AD 1787 by Poll whether the said Constitution for the United states shall be adopted or Negatived. Legally convened this day at 11 oClock in the forenoon at the state House, Also to consider the Petition and Memorial of the representa[t]ives of the People calld Quakers in New England that the Act which makes the Paper Currency of this state a tender at Par in payment of Just Debts—And the Act which makes Void Notes and Book Accounts not settled in two years may be repealed, Or Amended that the sence of the freemen at large may be taken upon the same

Henry Marchant, Esquire chosen Moderator

The Act of Assembly read for calling the Meeting

Upon the Petition of the freemen called Quakers, Voted that the tender Act and the Petition Also for making Void Notes &c be Repealed—(each by a very great Majority)

A list of the Yeas and Nays of the Freemen & Freeholders of the town of Newport taken in open Town Meeting the 24th day of March 1788 Agreeably to an Act of the General Assembly of this state, made and passed at their Sessions in Providence February Session last past upon the Question shall the Constitution as agreed upon by the Convention lately held at Philadelphia and reported by said Convention to the Congress of the United states, and by the Congress transmitted to the several Legislatures be Adopted or Negatived—

Yeas	Edward Murfey
Thomas Webber	Samuel Thurston
Nays	Cordwainer
John Wanton	William Gardiner
Thomas Freebody	Thomas Arnold
Joseph Whipple Tweedy	Nathan Luther
John Rogers	Andrew Freebody
a Son of Thomas*	



I hereby Certify that the foregoing contained is a true Copy of the Proceedings of the freemen and freeholders, and of the Yea, and Nays—then taken Compared with the Original in my Office

Witness Peleg Barker Junr. Town Clerk

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar. Another copy is in the Newport Town Records (Proceedings), Vol. 1, 1779–1816, RNHi (Mfm:R.I.).

**Town Meeting, 24 March 1788 (excerpt)<sup>1</sup>**

. . . Resolved that Henry Goodwin, Isaac Senter, William Channing, Christopher Ellery, Robert Taylor, Thomas Rumreill, Henry Bliss and George Sears, they or the Major Part of them be a Committee to draft instructions for the deputies of this Town, instructing and directing them to use their influence in the General Assembly of this state to Obtain a resolution for Calling a Convention, to Consult, deliberate and decide upon the Proposed Constitution of the United states of America as recommended by the Convention at Philadelphia Septb 17th. 1787 in manner and Agreeable to the recommendation of the said Convention & Congress Also to instruct the Deputies to use their influence for Obtaining a repeal of the tender and limitation Laws, And that said Committee report to the Adjournment of this Meeting.

The Meeting then Adjourned to Fryday next then to Meet at this place at 10 oClock AM

Peleg Barker Junr. Town Clk

1. MS, Newport Town Records (Proceedings), Vol. 1, 1779–1816, RNHi. This resolve appears on the page following the town meeting's vote on the Constitution printed immediately above.

**Commentaries on Newport Town Meeting, 24 March 1788**

*Samuel Vernon to William Vernon*

*Newport, 27 March 1788 (excerpt)<sup>1</sup>*

. . . We had a Town meeting last Tuesday at whi[c]h the Inhabitants have done themselves Honor, only ten miserable insignificant Char[acter]s subscribd their Names to the rejecting of the Constitution the leader T.F.—J.W. & J.W.T<sup>2</sup> [By?] order of Assembly for the Yeas & Nays lay on the Table and was treated with that neglect & contempt which it deserv'd, an almost unanimous vote then took place to repeal the tender law limatation Act and to instruct the Deputys to urge the repeal, also to move for a Convention at the next sitting of Asemy. and committe was accordingly appointed to draw up instru[c]tions, who are

to report to [— —] pray excuse the incorre[c]tness as the Post is just going

I am with respect your Affecte Son. . . .

1. FC, Vernon's Letters, 1778–1802, RNHi. Samuel Vernon (1757–1834) was the son of William Vernon (1719–1806), both of whom were wealthy Newport merchants. During the war, they left Newport when it was occupied by the British and went to Boston. In Boston, Samuel Vernon was in business while his father served as a member of the Continental Navy Board.

2. Thomas Freebody, John Wanton, and Joseph Whipple Tweedy.

*Newport Herald*, 27 March 1788<sup>1</sup>

On Monday last a *very large and respectable number of FREEMEN and FREEHOLDERS of this town* assembled at the State-House pursuant to an Act of the General Assembly, in order to consider of the *proposed Constitution of the United States and the Memorial of the Society of Friends for the repeal of the Tender and Limitation Acts*.—The warrant being read for convening this meeting,

HENRY MARCHANT, Esq. was unanimously elected Moderator.

The business of the day was prefaced with the Acts of Government, which referred to the decision of the people the above important questions.—It was then observed that a discussion of the Constitution would require a great length of time, and that at the close of the poll the house would probably be thin, it was therefore adviseable to take the sense of the meeting first for the repeal of the Tender and Limitation Acts, that the people had generally made up their minds on this question and were ready for a vote—it was accordingly moved, “*that the Representatives of this town be instructed to vote for and use their influence to obtain a repeal of those laws,*” and it passed in the affirmative by an almost unanimous vote, there being but *six* persons in this large meeting for perpetuating these iniquitous acts.

The Constitution was then read, when the Moderator impartially stated the proceedings of the General Assembly upon it since it had been transmitted to them—he also informed the town of the uniform conduct of their Representatives in endeavoring to obtain the appointment of a Convention who might deliberate upon the Constitution agreeably to the resolution of the Hon. Body who formed it and of Congress. The Hon. Moderator had the pleasing satisfaction to find that his conduct as a Representative, and that of his colleagues, met with general approbation.—After this necessary detail, several gentlemen very pertinently entered into an investigation of the *Act of Assembly altering the mode of decision from that recommended by the General Convention and by Congress*.—Whilst they paid all possible respect to the Legislature

who passed this act, the principles on which it was founded was reprobated in the most unqualified terms.—It was said that this deviation from the mode exhibited a determined obstinacy in unfederalism—it implied that the people could not be trusted with a right to delegate a Convention, or that the authors of this act feared an impartial discussion of the Constitution, and therefore referred it to the people in divided bodies, where they would be secluded from all means of information—that under colour of preserving the liberty of the people, it made an unprecedented and direct attack upon their liberties by introducing a mode of taking their opinions hitherto unknown in this government, viz. that of giving their yeas and nays in open town-meeting—that this manner of deciding checked the independency of freemen, and the transmission of a register of their names to the Legislature exposed them to the revenge of disappointed power—that it was trifling with the dignity of the people to refer unto them a question which when decided by them could not be valid nor of any effect—and that the mode of decision deprived us of the opportunity of applying the merits of the Constitution to our particular circumstances, and concurring in propositions for amendment if any parts wanted it—It was therefore moved that a Committee be appointed to draft instructions for the Representatives of this town, instructing them to move in General Assembly for a recommendation of the appointment of a Convention, to consider and decide upon the proposed Constitution in the manner recommended by the General Convention and by Congress—In support of this motion it was observed that the referring the Constitution to the people, placed them in a state of nature, and they were thereby vested not only with powers to decide upon it, but of referring it to a Convention if this mode should appear most eligible—At the same time it was declared, that notwithstanding this motion superseded the necessity of taking the yeas and nays, yet all persons who chose to decide on it themselves were privileged to do it and no obstruction should be given—it was however presumed that no Federalist would poll—The motion accordingly passed in the affirmative by an almost unanimous vote—and a committee were appointed to draw up the instructions to our Representatives for the appointment of a Convention, the repeal of the Tender and Limitation Act—and to make report to that meeting on Friday following.

Proclamation was then ordered to be made by the Moderator, for all freemen and freeholders who inclined to give their yeas or nays, that he was ready to take them; upon closing the poll it appeared there were but ten nays, notwithstanding the meeting was composed of between three and four hundred freemen—there were no yeas—The

Federalists who composed the large majority refusing to give their polls for the reason above-mentioned.

Never were any question submitted to a people, which involved in them more important consequences, and never were a body more deeply impressed with the truth of this consideration; for during the discussion of this business, the most pointed attention, orderly behavior, and calmness in investigation, characterized this meeting.

\*\* The freemen and freeholders will please to remember that this meeting is adjourned to Friday ten o'clock.

1. Reprinted twenty-one times by 7 May: Vt. (1), Mass. (6), Conn. (4), N.Y. (2), N.J. (1), Pa. (5), Va. (2). No newspaper reprinted the sentence announcing the adjourned meeting. The paragraph beginning "Never were any question" was omitted in Vermont and in three of the Massachusetts reprintings. The *Boston Gazette*, 31 March, added a final paragraph: "The Town of Providence have adopted similar Measures," which was reprinted twice in Massachusetts and three times in Connecticut.

The Worcester *Massachusetts Spy*, 3 April, prefaced the reprinting of this item and that of the Providence Town Meeting (from the *United States Chronicle* of 27 March) as follows:

*RHODEISLAND TOWN CONVENTIONS, on the FEDERAL CONSTITUTION.*

Accounts from Rhodeisland inform us, that a great part of the good people of that state, highly disapprove of the mode adopted by their legislature in laying the Federal Constitution before them, and complain of it aloud, as debarring them of the right and privilege enjoyed by the other States. In many towns there were very thin meetings—but the meetings of the large and respectable towns of Newport and Providence were very full; the particulars of the proceedings of these places, we lay before our readers, as extracted from Rhodeisland newspapers, viz.

*From a Newport (Rhodeisland) Newspaper, Of March 24.*

### **Instructions to Newport's General Assembly Deputies 28 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

*The following are the Instructions from the Town of Newport to their Deputies in the General Assembly, on the Subject of the Federal Constitution.*

The Committee to whom was referred to draw Instructions for the Deputies of the town of Newport to use their influence to obtain of the Honorable General Assembly of this State, at their next session, an act to empower the several towns in this State to call Town-Meetings, and appoint Delegates for the purpose of holding a State Convention, to take into consideration the Form of Government proposed for the United States of America, by the General Convention held at Philadelphia, Sept. 17, 1787—which Constitution or Form of Government, was sent to the several Legislatures of the different States, by the Honorable Congress of the United States, on the 28th of September last, recommending that State Conventions should be appointed to decide upon it, agreeable to the request of the General Convention,

Beg leave to report—That after deliberately and maturely considering the *mode* the Legislature of this State hath been pleased to prescribe to their constituents, for judging and determining upon the propriety of adopting the abovementioned Form of Government for the United States—humbly conceive, and are unanimously of opinion,—

1st. That it is unconstitutional, unprecedented, inefficacious, and inconsistent with the act itself:—Unconstitutional, because contrary to the mode pointed out by the General Convention of the nation, as well as that *constituted* by the Honorable Congress of the United States:—Unprecedented, because every other State in the Union has appointed State Conventions to decide upon it:—Inefficacious, because a decision obtained in this way, either for or against the new Form of Government, prevents any legal or prescribed channel through which it might be conveyed to the federal Council of the nation, and therefore nugatory:—Inconsistent, as we humbly conceive, as the act of the Legislature of the State referring this proposed Government to the people of the respective towns for their determination, confesses, that in them (the people) resides all power upon this subject—and then goes on to direct the manner of voting by polls in a way novel and unprecedented; depriving the freemen of their liberty, contrary to law, custom and usage of the State—for if the people alone have a right to frame a new Constitution of Government, what right has the Legislature to restrict them to any particular *mode* or time?

2dly. That this mode of discussing, or rather *confusing* this momentous subject, deprives the citizens of this State of that necessary means of information which the citizens of our sister States have by the one recommended by the General Convention and the Honorable Congress—which mode has been unanimously adopted, by the other States in the Union, without any objection by those most opposed to the Government itself.

3dly. That this way of transacting the business, with submission, we conceive is treating the confederated wisdom of the United States with *additional* disrespect and indignity, by deciding upon a subject so solemn as a System of Government (which cost several months of toilsome investigation, by the first men of character and abilities the world knows) in Town-Meetings, where impatience and disorder more or less prevail, and where it is difficult to speak, more difficult to be heard, and almost impossible to discuss points of far less magnitude as they ought. And at this critical and important period of our national affairs, when a dissolution of the civil compact is threatened, when, instead of widening the difficulties already subsisting between this and our sister States, it ought to be the constant prayer, and unremitted attention of every

individual, and body of men in this State, to harmonise and cement the Union upon which our existence as a State more especially, and that of our nation depends.

4thly. That it is now generally agreed by all denominations of men in this country, that the old Confederation is inefficient in points most essential to support us as a confederated nation.

This being a melancholy truth of experienced demonstration, we cannot but admire the wisdom of the General Convention, as well as of the Congress, in recommending the proposed System of Government to be canvassed in State Conventions.

That as there were unavoidable concessions of State to State in the General Convention, so the mode of State Conventions appeared to them most likely to do ample justice on the one hand to the merits of the new Government as a national compact; and on the other, that the State Delegates, from the various towns, whose local interests might appear at first view to render it necessary that similar concessions might be made by the different members, and if thought best, amendments might be recommended to the Federal Council of the States, as hath been done by a neighbouring State.<sup>2</sup> Whereas, if decided upon by Town-Meetings, it must be either hastily adopted, or totally rejected, without any proposed amendments whatever; which we fear, the latter will not only intirely destroy the small remains of union among the States, but preclude the possibility of establishing a government in any other way, than by that *dernier* resort, which includes the complicated calamities of *civil war, famine, pestilence, tyranny, ignorance, and savage manners*:

Wherefore the Committee submit the following Resolutions, viz. Resolved, That the Deputies of this town be instructed by force of argument, and by an honest appeal to our unalienable, constitutional rights—they endeavour to convince the General Assembly, that the mode of inquiring into the new Constitution, recommended as aforesaid by the General Convention and the Honorable the Congress, and pursued by the other States, is the most just, eligible, satisfactory and safe. And that they use their influence in the General Assembly, that the aforesaid mode, recommended by the Convention and Congress, by a Convention of Delegates, be adopted accordingly.

Your Committee, in pursuance of their appointment do also report the following Resolve to be passed, relative to the Tender and Limitation Laws:

Resolved, That the Deputies aforesaid, be instructed to urge a repeal of the Tender and Limitation Laws, agreeable to the Petition and Me-

morial of the respectable Society of people called Quakers, presented to the Legislature of this State at their session held in February, A. D. 1788.

All which is humbly submitted, by

HENRY BLISS,  
ROBERT TAYLOR,  
CHRISTO. ELLERY,  
THOMAS RUMREIL,

ISAAC SENTER,  
WM. CHANNING,  
HENRY GOODWIN,  
GEORGE SEARS.

*Newport, March 27th, 1788.*

1. Transcribed from the *United States Chronicle*, 10 April. The manuscript of the town meeting minutes including the instructions is located in the Newport Town Records (Proceedings), Vol. 1, 1779–1816, RNHi. There are minor differences in words and many differences in capitalization between the manuscript and the newspaper printing. The manuscript indicates that the town meeting convened at 10:00 a.m. on 28 March with Henry Marchant as moderator. The instructions were preceded by a paragraph stating that “The Report of the Committee appointed last Meeting being read, by Unanimous Vote was received, and the following Instructions concerning the Constitution, as recommended by the Convention at Philadelphia and of this state were Voted.”

2. See “The Rhode Island Reprinting of the Massachusetts Convention’s Amendments and Boston’s Celebration of Massachusetts Ratification,” 7–25 February 1788.

### **New York Daily Advertiser, 7 April 1788<sup>1</sup>**

*Extract of a letter from Newport, dated March 25.*

“Yesterday we had a town meeting here, by order of the General Assembly, to take up the matter of the new Constitution in a new fangled way: they that were for it, were ordered to write their names on a list, and they against it, on another, and make a return to the Assembly next week; but the people here, chose not to proceed in this way, and so did not vote at all; but chose a committee to draw up instructions to their representatives, to endeavor a repeal of the Tender Act, Limitation Act, and to call a Convention in the proper mode.”

1. Reprinted: *Charleston City Gazette*, 30 April.

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### **NEW SHOREHAM (0–32)**

### **Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

Att A Town Meeting held in New shoreham March 24th AD 1788—  
John Sands Esqr Chosen Moderator  
Agreeable to an Act of the General Assembly at their Sessions held  
at Providence in Feb[r]uary AD 1788—

Then the freemen and Freeholders of Said Town taking Under their Consideration the Report of the Convention of Delegates for a Constitution for the United States as Agreed on in Philadelphia the 17 Day of Septembr. AD 1787 and Said Freemen and Freeholders in Open Town meetings gave their voices as Follows (Vizt)

Yeas	Edmond Sheffield
[No names listed]	Daniel Mott
Nays	William Pain
Step[h]en Franklin	Jonathan Mitchell Junr.
Able Franklin	Daniel Dickens
Amos Dickens	Joseph Mitchell
Mark Dodge Junr.	John Rose
Thomas Rose	John Pain
Anthony Littlefield	Sam[u]el Dodge
John Littlefield Junr.	James Dodge
Shadrach Card	Trustrum Dodge
John Gorton	Caleb Littlefield
Lodwick Mott	Walter Rathbun
Thomas Mitchell	Edward Sands
Jeremiah Mitchell	John Sands
Edward Ball	Not as it now [Stands?]
Pelig Pocock	Tredwell Sands
Hezekiah Dodge	Thomas Littlefield

The above and foregoing is a True Copy Duely Examined  
 Witness Walter Rathbun T; Clerk

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar.

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**NORTH KINGSTOWN**  
(2-160)

**Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

Voted William Congdon [Moderator?]

Whereas the Hone. General Assembly [at their?] February Sessions AD. 1788. [called for the?] consideration of the Freemen of [- - -] [- - -] the report of the Convention of Delegates [in Convention?] for the United States of America [held at?] Philadelphia the 17th. day of September [1787 A.D.?] & appointed this Day for all the [Freemen in the?] State to convene in Town Meetings [assembled & to?] Pole whether the said Constitution for [the United States?] shall be adopted or not by taking [the Yeas & ?] Nays &c and in conformity to Said



[resolution?] this Meeting Being first Legally [assembled according?] to Said act of Assembly proseed [to business?] and Chose the Moderator above sd. to [preside?] & have Proseeded by taking Down [the Votes?] of the Freemen of this Town as follows

Yeas.	Isaac Hall
Jabez Reynolds } only	John Northup
Nathan Allen }	Samuel Sweet
	John Cleaveland
Nays	Edmond Arnold
Beriah Brown Esqr.	Benjamin Jefferson
Philip Jenkins	Joshua Davis
John Rathbun	Jeremiah Smith
Judiah Kingsly	Stephen Watson
John Greene	Benjamin Watson
Jeremh Hunt of Sam[uel]*	Francis Reynolds
Benjamin Cole jur	John Mory
Frederick Gardner	William Northup
Benjamin Tanner	James Austin
George Congdon of Joseph*	Matthew Allen
Oliver Carpenter	Daniel Fones
Stephen Northup	Samuel Brenton
Daniel Dawley	John Congdon
⟨Daniel Updike	John Vaughan
John Cozzens	Hezekiah Remington
John Greene jr.	William Wall
John M'Kenzie	Silas Sherman
Silas James	William Spencer
Joseph Pearce of Giles*	Corps Essex
William Congdon	Caleb Watson
George Thomas of Samuel*	Jonathan Kingsley
Thomas Clark	Daniel Vaughan
Peleg Arnold	David Greene jr.
Henry Northup of Joseph*	Ishmael Spink
Jonathan Reynolds	David Greene
James Congdon	Jeremiah Hazard
Job Corey	Joshua Pearce
Nathaniel J. Sherman	John Greene of David*
Benjamin Watson jr.	Anthony Rathbone
Thomas Rathbone	Stephen Congdon
Arthur Aylesworth	Charles Brown jr.
Sylvester Gardner	Samuel Warner

James Sweet	Joseph Case
John Sherman	⟨Giles Pearce
John Brown	Samuel Thomas
Rouse Helme	Christopher Congdon
Ephraim Mitchell jr.	Joshua Wells
Gideon Northup	Richard Phillips
James Updike	Joseph Northup
William Slocum	Samuel Brown⟩
Sylvester Havens	Henry Sherman
Benjamin Reynolds	Ebenezer Herrington
of Jonathan*	John Congdon of Jos.*
Samuel Watson⟩	Gideon Gardner
Daniel Wall	Amos Gardner
Joshua Brown	Phenix Brown
William Remington	Stephen Sherman
Eber Sherman	William Reynolds
William Hall of John*	Benedict Brown
Charles Brown	Jonathan Allen
Perry Kinyon	Caleb Hill
John Brown Jur.	James Hiams
James Rose	George Congdon
Peter Burlingame	Jeremiah Aylesworth
Jabez Chadsey	William Brown
Japhath Bicknell	John Havens
Freeborn Hazard	George Reynolds
William Mory	Joseph Reynolds
Slocum Hall	Benedict Dayton
Job Card	John Hazard
Caleb Hill Jur.	of [Jerh.?, i.e., Jeremiah]*
John Bowles	Beriah Wait
Nicholas Spink	William Hall of Rob*
Nicholas Spencer	John Aliu
Benedict Peckham	Samuel Kinsley
Jabez Chadsey	Saml. Carr
Gideon Hazard	James Northup Jur.
Stukly Hill	Richard Phillips of Wm*
Silvester Pearc	George Thomas of John*
Robert Eldred	Joseph Taylor
Joshua Vaughan	Sawel Kinsly
Stephen Sweet	Langworthy Pearce
Benjn. Reynolds of R.*	Henry Eldred
Stephen Davis	John Reynolds of Robert*

Thomas Weathers	(William Hammond
Peleg Cory	Lodowick Updike
Saml. Dyer	James Northup
James Gardner Jur.	Remington Northup)
Saml. D. Allen	

1. MS, Town Council Records, 1696–1802, Vol. 2, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Wickford (North Kingstown), R.I. The manuscript was severely damaged by fire. The names in angle brackets are not in the part of the manuscript that survives but are taken from Staples, pp. 93–94.

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### NORTH PROVIDENCE

(0–48)

#### Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>

At a Town Meeting held in North Providence in the County of Providence in the State of Rhode Island &c. on the Twenty Fourth Day of March AD 1788—Especially Called and Convened by Order of an Act of the Honble. the General Assembly of said State Passed at February Session AD: 1788—for the Purpose of taking into Consideration the proposed Constitution Recommended by the Honorable the Continantal Congress to the Legislature of this State<sup>2</sup>

Capt. Stephen Jenks is Chosen Moderator of said Meeting

Agreeable to the Act or Order of the said General Assembly the Sence of the Freemen of this Town is Taken as follows.—

Elisha Brown Esqr. Nay	Abner King Nay
Thomas Olney Nay	Joy Ladd Nay
Thomas Olney Junr. Nay	Stephen Brown Nay
Edward Smith Nay	Hezekiah Olney Nay
Nehemiah Smith Nay	Eleazar Whipple Nay
Jesse Smith Nay	Rufus Angell Nay
Solomon Angell Nay	Nicholas Whipple Nay
James Angell Junr. Nay	James Angell Nay
Samuel Olney Nay	Daniel Hopkins Nay
Charles Olney Nay	Esek Smith Nay
Charles Olney Junr. Nay	Peter Randall Nay
Epenctus Olney Nay	Joseph Randall Nay
John Whipple Nay	William Randall Nay
Daniel Whipple Nay	Jeremiah Dexter Nay
Benjamin Whipple Junr. Nay	Esek Esten Nay
Ezra Olney Nay	Jonathan Pike Nay
Caleb Jenks Nay	William Dexter Nay

Stephen Jenks Nay	Peter Pike Nay
Ichabod Jenks Nay	Rufus Tefft Nay
Eleazar Jenks Nay	Abraham Smith Nay
Nathaniel Walker Junr. Nay	Peter Barras Nay
Constant Martin Nay	Comfort Jenks Nay
Abner Salsbery Nay	John Wilkinson Nay
Obel Olney Nay	No. 48
John Pitcher Nay	

Forty Eight for Negativeing

Not One for Adopting—

I Hereby Certify that the above and aforewritten upon this Paper  
Contains a True Copy of the Registry of the aforesaid Meeting

☞ Hope Angell Town C.

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar. This copy, sent to the General Assembly, is dated 28 March by the town clerk. A summary of the proceedings is in the Town Meeting Records, 1765–1808, Recording Office, City Hall, Pawtucket, R.I. Hope Angell, the town clerk, recorded at the end: “And the said Constitution being Read and taken into Consideration agreeable to the Order of the said General Assembly, the Vote passed Unanimous for the latter [i.e., Nays]” (Mfm:R.I.).

2. The Confederation Congress did not recommend the Constitution to the states. Rather it forwarded the Constitution without approbation to the state legislatures, asking them to call conventions to consider ratification (CC:95).

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### PORTSMOUTH (12–60)

#### Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>

Agreeable to an Act of the General Assembly passed at their Session Held in Feby. AD 1788—the Under Written is the Names of the persons who gave their Voices aloud in open Town Meeting of the Freemen of Portsmouth in the County of Newport & State of Rhode Island &c. Held on the 24th Day of the Month calld. March AD 1788 Whether the proposed Constitution as agreed on in Philadelphia should be adopted or Negated the Question being put in yeas & Nays—

Yeas	Andrew Mc. Corrie yea
Alexander Thomas yea	Pardon Sisson yea
Holder Chase yea	Robert Barker yea
Giles Lawton Jur. yea	Henry T Shearman yea
Reuben Taylor yea	Ezbon Barker yea

Tillinghast Almy yea	Job Sisson nay
John Thurston yea	Samuel Hicks nay
Henry Lawton yea	George Brownell Jur. nay
Nays	George Hall nay
Thomas Brownell nay	Joseph Sisson nay
Jonathan Cornell nay	Cook Willcocks nay
David Gifford nay	James Cook nay
Christopher Shearman nay	Christopher Shearman Jur.
Gideon Durfee nay	nay
Elisha Coggeshall nay	Joseph Shearman nay
Clark Cornell nay	Stephen Brownell nay
Richard Sisson nay	Peleg Lawton nay
William Hall nay	Joseph Kirby nay
George Sisson Blacksmith	John Sanford nay
nay	Gideon Shearman nay
Benjamin Hall nay	Caleb Shearman nay
Giles Slocum Jur. nay	Robert Carr nay
Joseph Brownell nay	John Anthony nay
John Tallman nay	Job Cornell nay
Jonathan Freeborn nay	Peleg Manchester nay
Benjamin Brownell nay	Nathan Brownell nay
George Sisson nay	William Burrington Jur. nay
Jonathan Davenport nay	Stephen Slocum nay
Restcome Sanford nay	Peleg Shearman nay
William Lawton nay	William Brightman nay
William Burrington nay	Oliver Brownell nay
Benjamin Fish nay	Samuel Shearman nay
Gideon Dennis nay	Samuel Albro nay
George Lawton nay	Thomas Brownell Jur. nay
Joseph Brownell Jur nay	James Greenman nay
Burrington Anthony nay	Walter Cornell nay
Thomas Shaw nay	Thomas Cory nay
Elijah Cobb nay	George Cook nay

I hereby certify that the above & foregoing is a true Copy of the Names of each and every freeman & freeholder with the yea or nay as they Respectively give their Voices in Town Meeting aforesaid—And also that it is a true Copy of the Original—

Witness

Abram Anthony Junr. Town Clerk

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar. The back of the document is addressed: "To the General Assembly of the State of Rhodeisland to be Held on the 31st day of the Month of March 1788 At East:Greenwich."

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**PROVIDENCE**

(0-1)

**Town Meeting, 24-25 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

At a Town Meeting of the Freemen and Freeholders of the Town of Providence held at the State House<sup>2</sup> in said Town on the Fourth Monday in March A.D. 1788, legally warned and assembled pursuant to an Act of the Honorable the General Assembly passed at [the?] Session held in February last, submitting the Constitution for the United States, transmitted to the Legislature of this State by a Resolution of Congress of the 28th. of September A.D. 1787, to the People, that each Individual [by?] himself by Poll in open Town-Meeting may give his Yea or Nay aloud whether the said Constitution shall be adopted or negatived—

The Honorable Jabez Bowen, Esqr. is chosen Moderator

Adjourned to the Friends Meeting-House. The following Persons appeared and gave their Yea and Nay aloud as follows to wit:

Yea		Nay
		Samuel Sampson Esqr.

Adjourned to Tuesday-next 2 OClock PM. then to meet at the State-House—

Tuesday met pursuant to Adjournment and further adjourned to Wednesday next 2 O'Clock PM. then to meet at this Place.—

Wednesday met pursuant to Adjournment—

Yea		Nay
-----	--	-----

A true Copy      Witness      Daniel Cooke Town-Clerk

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar. The account of this meeting was also recorded in the Providence Town Papers, Vol. 11, no. 4766, RHi, and in Town Meetings, 1783-1804, Vol. 7, City Clerk's Office, City Hall, Providence, R.I. Two summaries of the town meeting and approval of the petition to the Assembly were printed. The first, in the *United States Chronicle*, 27 March, was reprinted seven times by 28 April: Vt. (1), N.H. (1), Mass. (3), Conn. (1), Pa. (1). The second summary appeared in the *Providence Gazette*, 29 March, which was reprinted in three Philadelphia newspapers on 15 and 16 April. Both summaries are in Mfm:R.I.

2. The Old Statehouse on Benefit Street, not the current Statehouse on Smith Hill in Providence.

**Town Meeting, 24-25 March 1788 (excerpts)<sup>1</sup>**

At a Town Meeting of the Freeholders and Freemen of the Town of Providence legally held at the State House in said Town on Monday the 24th. of March A. D. 1788—

The Hoñble Jabez Bowen, Esqr Moderator . . .

Adjourned to the Friends Meeting House

Resolved *Nomine contradicunt*<sup>2</sup> that Messrs David Howell John I Clark Thomas Arnold Theodore Foster and Benjamin Bourne be appointed a Committee to draught a Petition to the Hoñble the General Assembly that a Convention of Delegates may be recommended by the Legislature of this State to be convened agreeable to the concurrent Resolutions of the Convention of the United States & of Congress for considering & deciding on the new Constitution.<sup>3</sup> . . .

Adjourned to Tuesday next 2 O'Clock P.M then to meet at the State-House—

Met pursuant to Adjournment & further adjourn'd till to Morrow 2 O'Clock P.M. then to meet at this Place

1. MS, Providence Town Papers, Vol. 11, no. 4766, RH1.

2. *Nemine contradicente* (Latin: No one dissenting; no one voting in the negative).

3. This paragraph was printed in the *United States Chronicle*, 10 April.

### **Town Meeting: Petition to the General Assembly, 26 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

*At a TOWN-MEETING of the FREEMEN of the Town of PROVIDENCE, legally assembled (by Adjournment) at the State-House, on the 26th Day of March, A. D. 1788.*

Whereas the Committee appointed on the 24th instant, to draught a Petition to the Honorable the General Assembly, that a Convention of Delegates may be recommended by the Legislature, to be called for considering the Constitution for the United States, transmitted by Congress to this State, have this day made their report; which, having had two several readings, Resolved, That the same be received: And it is further resolved unanimously, That a copy thereof be made out and signed by the Clerk, in behalf of this meeting, and delivered to the Deputies of this town to be preferred to the Honorable the General Assembly, to be holden (by adjournment) at East-Greenwich, in the County of Kent, on the last Monday in March instant. A true copy:

Witness,

DANIEL COOKE, T. Clerk.

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*The Petition above referred to, is in the words following, to wit:—*

To the Honorable the GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
of the State of RHODE-ISLAND, &c.

*The PETITION of the FREEMEN of the Town of PROVIDENCE, in Town-Meeting legally assembled (by Adjournment) on the 26th Day of March, A. D. 1788,*

HUMBLY SHEWETH, That your Petitioners being assembled in pursuance of an act passed by the Legislature of this State, at their session

in February last, *submitting to the consideration of the freemen of this State the report of the Convention of Delegates for a Constitution for the United States, as agreed on in Philadelphia the 17th of September, A. D. 1787*—and feeling themselves deeply impressed with the weight and magnitude of the subject, under reference to them, beg leave, with most respectful deference, to lay before the Honorable Legislature the unanimous result of their most calm and deliberate considerations and discussions on this subject.

The formation of a Constitution, or fundamental laws for a State, your Petitioners consider as the most arduous, as well as most important work to which the people can be called: It therefore seems to require not only the exercise of the wisdom and experience of all the people, but that this wisdom and experience should have full scope to display itself to advantage; and that all the Members should severally be put into a situation to profit and be edified by each other.—The most natural and simple idea of the mode of proceeding in this business, among a people resolved into a state of nature, would seem to be, that all the people should be assembled on some spacious plain, to consult on the subject, discuss and adopt a Constitution for themselves. In ancient times, and in small republics, this measure has been taken with success; but in the present case, where is the spot commodious for assembling all the freemen of this State?—And where is the man who could be heard to advantage by such a numerous assembly?—In this method therefore in vain do we seek for the benefit of the wisdom of our friends in other parts of the State, to assist our reason and guide our judgment in this momentous affair.

These observations will yet become more striking when applied to the Federal Union, and the doctrine of *Representation* will force itself on our minds in an instant. Such is the weakness of the human mind in its most improved state, and such the shortness of human life, that it has been found necessary to divide and parcel out the business thereof, into various hands, to the end, that each may avail himself of the skill and experience of all others, in their various occupations, and a mutual dependence on each other become the interest and safety of all.

Your Petitioners apprehend that Representation is a fundamental principle in the existing Constitution of this State.—The laws which operate throughout the State are made by Representatives of the people, and could not be regularly made by an assembly of all the freemen, or acting at home in their several Town-Meetings: In neither of which cases, could the parties to be affected more immediately by such laws have an opportunity to be heard with convenience, and to have their reasons examined and discussed with candour and deliberation.—When



therefore a subject of universal concernment offers itself for the consideration and discussion of the freemen of the State, and which cannot regularly be passed upon by the ordinary Representatives, assembled in their legislative capacity, in orderly pursuance of the existing principle of Representation, other Representatives for the special purpose of deciding thereon, as it would seem to your Petitioners, should be appointed.

It doth not appear to your Petitioners, that either the Federal Convention or Congress have attempted to deprive the freemen of this State of the benefits to be expected from an examination, discussion and decision on the subject now under reference to them, by a State Convention for that special purpose.

The great Federal Convention, held at Philadelphia, resolved that their work should “*be laid before the United States in Congress assembled;*” and the President’s letter adds, that it is “*submitted to the consideration of the United States in Congress assembled;*” by which expressions it was clearly open to amendments by Congress at their pleasure; and we are informed that such amendments were in fact proposed in Congress, but not adopted.<sup>2</sup>

The same great Convention further give their opinion, that after their work shall have passed through the hands of Congress, it should be “*submitted to a Convention of Delegates, chosen in each State by the people thereof, under the recommendation of its Legislature.*”—This submission being in general terms cannot be understood as confining such Convention to adopt or reject it in gross, and as precluding the consideration or proposal of amendments, nor has in fact been so understood by the States of Virginia and Massachusetts; before the Convention of the former it is to be laid by order of their Legislature, for free and full discussion<sup>3</sup>—and the Convention of the latter have actually proposed several amendments.<sup>4</sup>

The whole agency of Congress in this affair seems to have been to lay it before the States as they received it from the Convention. If therefore the freemen of any State are precluded from the benefit of proposing amendments it must be done by their own Legislature, and by no other body of men who have taken measures relative to this work.

From the prevailing opinion throughout this Union, from the acts of Congress, as well as of most of the Legislatures of these States, and particularly from the acts of this State, granting to Congress the power to levy and collect an impost, and to regulate trade, as well as from the actual embarrassments of public affairs, and private distress and ruin of many individuals, your Petitioners presume themselves authorized

to believe, that the old Confederation of the United States is not adequate to all the purposes of the Federal Union.—And whether the proposed new Constitution is the greatest improvement thereon, remains a question to be resolved by this State in common with her sister States in the Union. The most eligible mode of proceeding in this business therefore is the simple point of enquiry.

It occurs to your Petitioners that the mode pointed out by the act under present consideration is inexpedient and improper, because,

1st. In this mode the sea-port towns cannot hear and examine the arguments of their brethren in the country on this subject, nor can they in return be possessed of our views thereof; so that each separate interest will act under an impression of private and local motives only, uninformed of those reasons and arguments which might lead to measures of common utility and public good.

2dly. Not only will much information be denied in this mode, but a full hearing of the cause will be impossible: For other States are interested, and their interests in many cases opposite to ours.—How far it may be proper to sacrifice a State interest to obtain federal protection requires great and deep thought; and how much power ought to be vested in Congress to enable them to vindicate the national honor is not easily determined by those who are best acquainted with the actual circumstances of both the friends and enemies of the United States; yet every individual freeman ought to investigate these great questions in some good degree before he can decide on this Constitution: The time therefore to be spent in this business would prove a great tax on the freemen to be assembled in Town-Meetings, which must be kept open not only three days but three months or more, in proportion as the people at large have more or less information.

3dly. All the letters and papers containing the information aforesaid could not be conveniently copied and dispersed into all the towns in this State, to be read to all the freemen; and in case they should decide without an entire knowledge of the public affairs of the Union there could be no security for a just decision.

4thly. The mode pointed out may exclude many of the freemen from voting at all. Votes are only to be taken by yea and nay. All persons therefore who are not ripe for judging by themselves, and wish to devolve it on a Convention are excluded from a voice; as likewise all others who may be decidedly in favour of certain amendments, and not willing to vote individually by yea or nay. The votes and influence of both these descriptions of citizens will be necessarily excluded: And as those only who vote can bind themselves individually, how are those to be bound who do not vote? They are not represented, nor can they be

bound under that idea by the doings of their neighbours; so that after three-quarters of the State may have individually voted for the new Constitution, a principle is yet to be sought for to bind the other quarter.

5thly. This mode of voting is in other respects indecisive: For the United States in Congress assembled will not receive and count the votes of individuals, nor will they take a certificate thereof from the General Assembly as a warrant to them to bind the State: They can only attend to the voice of a Convention duly authorized to act on the subject, and to bind all the individuals in the State, in virtue of having been appointed their Representatives for this purpose, agreeably to the line pointed out by the Federal Convention. To what purpose then are all the towns to be put to this great expence of time and trouble, to investigate and vote on this important national concernment, when all their doings will be void, and a Convention must be finally had, before Congress can receive any information from the State, whether the new Constitution has been adopted or rejected.

6thly. This method of voting deprives this State of the privilege of proposing amendments, which can be done and agreed to in a Convention only. After having been excluded from a hearing, by the policy of the State, in the formation of the proposed Constitution, would it not be a repetition of injury to the freemen of this State to deny them the privilege of proposing such amendments as they might judge necessary, and of discussing the Constitution in the same mode as adopted by all the other States?—Have they not a right, as composing one member of the Union, to have their voice heard on this subject, before a Constitution shall be adopted by all their sister States, to which they must finally submit?—This argument, in the view of your Petitioners, will gain strength from the suggestion thrown out by some in justification of the present mode, that the people are more enlightened here than elsewhere, and have a greater sense of freedom: If this suggestion is well founded, their voice was more wanted in the Federal Convention, and their remarks and improvements in a State Convention, to be brought forward and ingrafted with the Constitution are more necessary.—Have not the freemen of our sister States a right to claim this service at our hands, and have not the freemen of this State a right to *demand* it?

7thly. The present Congress, a body known and acknowledged by this State, having recommended the calling a Convention for this purpose, and twelve States having complied therewith, your Petitioners cannot avoid expressing their regret, that a mode of deciding on this question so novel, ineffectual, and injurious to the people of this State

should have been substituted in the stead of one recommended by a legal body, and sanctioned by such great authorities; and which in every point of view promises to be the best and only mode of putting an end to this business.

8thly. Your Petitioners will only add, that in all events a Convention will become necessary. This State however sovereign and independent cannot exist without a connexion with her sister States: and if a Convention be not held at a period when the proceedings of this State might have an influence on the Federal Councils, and the doings of other States, one must of necessity be held sooner or later to join in the general American Confederacy, after having lost all opportunity of influencing, or having any direction in the formation of that Confederacy.

Whether on the whole it be adviseable to adopt, reject, or amend, the proposed Constitution your Petitioners beg leave to decline deciding in their individual capacities, for the foregoing reasons, which they have thought necessary to lay before your honorable body in explanation of their conduct on this occasion. And they beg leave to offer the strongest assurance of their sincere love to their country and attachment to the liberties thereof, as well as of their ardent wish for the establishment of an efficient Federal Government, on such principles as may secure to the States their necessary jurisdictions and power, and to individual citizens their just rights and privileges. And to accomplish these great objects in the most regular, safe and satisfactory manner, your Petitioners HUMBLY PRAY, this Honorable General Assembly to recommend the calling a Convention in this State, at such time and place as they in their wisdom may judge most for the public welfare.

And as in duty bound will ever pray, &c.

*Signed by the unanimous order, and in behalf of the Freemen of the Town of Providence, legally warned and assembled in Town-Meeting as aforesaid,*

Per DANIEL COOKE, T. Clerk.

1. Printed: *United States Chronicle*, 10 April. Reprinted in the *Providence Gazette*, 12 April, and *Massachusetts Gazette*, 15 April. The latter did not include the introductory statement by Town Clerk Daniel Cooke. Four manuscript copies of the petition exist. A rough and two smooth copies (one incomplete) are in the Rhode Island Historical Society. Another copy is in the Town Meetings, 1783–1804, Vol. 7, City Clerk's Office, City Hall, Providence, R.I.

2. For the amendments proposed (but not adopted) in the Confederation Congress during the debate over the transmittal of the Constitution to the state legislatures, see CDR, 326–42, or CC:95.

3. The Virginia resolutions calling a state convention submitted the Constitution “to a Convention of the people for their full and free investigation, discussion, and decision” (RCS:Va., 118).

4. See “The Rhode Island Reprinting of the Massachusetts Convention’s Amendments and Boston’s Celebration of Massachusetts Ratification,” 7–25 February 1788 (I, above).

**Providence United States Chronicle, 10 April 1788<sup>1</sup>**

(The unanimity, circumspection, and dispassionate conduct of the Freemen of the town of Providence, respecting the proposed national Constitution, does them the highest honour.—Their Meeting, on the occasion, was the most numerous and respectable known since the establishment of the present limits of the town. There are upwards of 500 Freemen on the town register, most of whom were present when their Committee before mentioned were appointed, and when they made their report. The high importance of the business attracted the attention of all the inhabitants, and their proceedings demonstrated that they possessed that true magnanimity of soul, unbiassed by narrow local considerations, which can take a *FEDERAL and comprehensive view* of their political connexions and duties, as making a part of the great family of United America. The utmost candour and freedom of discussion prevailed, every man having had an opportunity of freely speaking his sentiments, without any undue constraint. But the good sense and discernment of the Freemen led them to perceive the impropriety of determining on the Constitution *individually by yea and nay*.—They therefore *UNANIMOUSLY* agreed to the foregoing Petition, which was preferred to the Honorable the General Assembly, at their session the last week.—It was received and discussed as favourably as could be expected—But on the question, whether a Convention should be called, it was negatived. The arguments however in support of the Petition are well founded; and as it is the opinion professedly of almost every Freeman of the State, that additional and greater powers must be given to the general government, and as it is supposed that *NOT ONE HALF OF THE FREEMEN* have voted against the Constitution, and that those who have not voted are for adopting it as it is, or with the amendments proposed by Massachusetts, or other amendments which probably would be generally agreed to; and as the political reputation of this State, as a member of the American Confederacy, stood fair and unsullied until her unhappy internal divisions, respecting her present paper money, which have occasioned the unfederal appearance of some of her public measures; it is therefore expected, that as soon as the animosity of party spirit is a little more allayed, and when the other States shall have generally agreed to, and shall have organized the government under the proposed new Constitution, that a *General Convention* will undoubtedly be held in this State, in the same manner as in all the other States, for the purpose of determining on the expediency of this State's *still continuing* a member of the grand American Confederacy.)

1. This item follows immediately after the Providence petition to the General Assembly and before the Newport town meeting instructions.

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**RICHMOND**  
(1-68)

**Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

At a Town Meeting Called and held in Richmond in the County of Washington the twenty fourth Day of March AD. 1788—

Joseph Woodmansee Junr. Esqr Moderator—

Upon Consideration of an act of the General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations Pased at their February Sessions AD 1788 Intitled an Act Submiting to the Consideration of the freemen of this State the report of the Convention of Delegates for a Constitution for the United States as agreed on in Philadelphia the Seventeenth of September AD 1788. The Votes of the freemen of this Town being taken agreeable to the Direction of the above recited act the yeas and Nays are as follows. (Viz.)

Thomas Tefft Nay	William Potter nay
Job Hoxsie nay	James James nay
Joseph Woodmansee Jr nay	Peleg Willcox nay
Nicholas Larkin nay	Samuel Clarke nay
John Woodmansee nay	Ebenezer Hall nay
James Shelden nay	John Kinyon nay
Ezekiel Barber nay	George Holloway nay
Edmund Burdick nay	Benedict Kinyon nay
Elijah Hoxsie nay	Rodman Sission nay
John Webb nay	Samuel Kinyon nay
George James nay	Jonathan Boss nay
David Potter nay	Benjamin Barber nay
Benjamin Hoxsie nay	William Shelden nay
Ezekiel Barber Jr nay	James Potter nay
Incom Potter nay	George Webb nay
Daniel Potter nay	William James nay
Augustus Shelden nay	George Webb Junr nay
Thomas James nay	George Moore nay
Peter Boss nay	Edward James nay
Ezekiel James nay	Jonathan Maxson yea
Ebenezer Hall nay	Simeon Clarke Jr. nay

Caleb Barber nay	Tabor Tefft nay
Benjamin Tefft nay	Jarvis Kinyon nay
Samuel Tefft 2d. nay	Wait Rogers nay
Oliver Colegrove nay	Joseph Hoxsie nay
Phillip Kinyon nay	Robert Rogers nay
Gideon Potter nay	Stephen Willcox nay
Silas Moore nay	Samuel Barber nay
Daniel Dye nay	Davis James nay
Benjamin Wilbore nay	Potter Shelden nay
Benjamin Barber Jr. nay	David Barber nay
Caleb Foster nay	Ezekiel Joh[n]son Nay
Benjamin Babcock nay	Clarke Tefft nay
Moses Clarke nay	Benjamin Card nay
Joseph Tefft nay	

The meeting Dissolved.

1. MS, Town Meetings, 1776–1790, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Richmond, R.I.

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**SCITUATE**  
**(0–156)**

**Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

At a Town Meeting Legally Convened and held in the Town of Scituate in the County of Providence & State of Rhode Island &c on the 24th. Day of March AD. 1788.—Agreeably to an Act of the Honbl. Genl. Assembly of said State Submitting to the Consideration of the Freemen of this State the Report of the Convention of Deligates for a Constitution for the United States, as agreed on in Philadelphia, the 17th. of September, AD 1787.—

Peleg Fisk Esqr. Chosen Moderator—

The Proposed Constitution being Read and coolly Deliberated upon by the Freemen & Freeholders of said Town. And the Question being by the Moderator Put to them whither the above sd. Constitution Should be adopted or Negatived.—

The Persons whose Names are herein after mentioned gave their Voices by Yeas & Nays as annexed to their Several names—

Viz—

Honbl. William West Nay	Reuben Hopkins nay
John Harris nay	Wm. Seamans nay
Josiah Colvin nay	Nathan Bates nay

Peleg Fisk nay	John Bennet nay
Oliver Westcot nay	Saml. Wilbur nay
Stepn. Smith nay	Nathl. Medbery nay
John Wight nay	Dean Kimbell nay
Jabez Relph nay	Caleb Westcot nay
John Vaughan nay	Ephm. Edwards nay
Richard Smith nay	Thos. Field nay
Obadiah Walker nay	Saml. Jenckes nay
Benjn. Wight nay	Charles Stone nay
Thos. Weaver nay	Benajh. Bozworth nay
Isaac Hopkins nay	Job Keech nay
Wm. Salisbury 3rd. nay	John Potter Jr. nay
Thos. Henrys nay	Benjn. Tayler nay
Ruben Hopkins Jr. nay	Caleb Potter nay
Eliezer Collins Nay	Christr. Smith nay
Benjn. Horton nay	Levy Seamans nay
John Hill nay	Simeon Wilbur nay
Isaac Medbery nay	Saml. Fenner nay
Emor Olney nay	Joseph Fenner nay
Peleg Peck nay	Danl. Fisk Junr. nay
Ephm. Williams nay	James Fenner nay
Ezekiel Wood nay	Wm. Barnes nay
John Gile nay	Wm. F Potter nay
Pardon Angell nay	Richard Knight nay
Nichs. Thomas nay	Wm. Potter nay
Benjn. Bozworth nay	Benjn. Wood nay
Noah Aldrich nay	Francis Parker nay
Aaron Aldrich nay	John Pearce nay
Thos. Mathewson Jr. nay	Nathan Smith nay
Henry Wheeler nay	Joseph Young nay
Nathl. Lovel nay	Abm. Yeaw nay
Jereh Stone nay	Stepn. Randall nay
Barnet Wood nay	Danl. Seamans nay
Stepn. Young Jr. nay	John West nay
Gideon Cornell nay	Saml. King nay
Wm. Aldrich nay	Simeon Arnold nay
Wm. Salisbury Jr. nay	Stepn. Smith Jr. nay
Charles Walker nay	Samuel Angell nay
John Pratt nay	Saml. Wight nay
Relph King nay	Timothy Hopkins Nay
Abm. Angell nay	Isaac Medbery Jr. nay



Joseph Knight nay	Saml. Franklin nay
Thos. Roberts nay	Jereh. Andrew nay
Danl. Westcot nay	Peleg Fuller nay
David Burlingame nay	Jonathan Remington nay
Jereh. Baker nay	Saml. Tefft nay
James Andrew Jr nay	Wm. Battey nay
Jesse Brown nay	James Blackman nay
Joseph Remington Jr. nay	Wm. Jefferds nay
Moses Fisk nay	Joseph Bennet nay
Gideon Harris nay	Ezra Knight nay
Peleg Westcot nay	Joseph Wight nay
Edward Searles nay	Jona. Tourtellot nay
Stepn. Davis nay	Wm. Colgrove nay
Saml. Potter nay	Stepn. Peckom nay
Moses Potter nay	David Yeaw nay
Hanan Hopkins nay	Hezekiah Wheeler nay
Square Franklin nay	Benajah Knight nay
John Wilbur nay	Charles Hopkins nay
Thos. Parker nay	Peleg Colvin nay
John Phillips nay	David Phillips nay
Abm. Burlingame nay	Asahel Collins nay
Abner Burlingame nay	John Franklin nay
Andw. Angell nay	Israel Phillips nay
Arthur Fenner nay	Elihu Bowen nay
Thos. Harris nay	Aaron Wight Nay
James Aldrich nay	Thos. Mathewson nay
Jona. Smith nay	Charles Harris nay
Aaron Colvin nay	Abner Pratt nay
Stepn. Young nay	Job Wilbur nay
Thos. Mowrey nay	James Franklin nay
John Edwards nay	Elisha Bowen nay
Job Randall nay	Wm. Corey Jr. nay
Jona. Knight nay	Joseph Harris nay
Asa Tourtellot nay	Oliver Harris nay

The foregoing List is a True Copy of the Original as the same was Taken in Open Town Meeting as within mentioned

Witness John Harris Town Clk

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar.

**SMITHFIELD****(2-158)****Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

## Nays Against the New Constitution

John Sayles	Abram Arnold
Samuel Aldrich Jur.	Joseph Killey
Abram Winsor	Jona. Sprague
Stephen Whipple	John Comstock
Benjn. Medbury	Hezekh. Herendeen
Nathan Dexter	Abm. Angell
Oziel Sayles	Esek Angell
Christor. Wilbur	Benoni Pain
Charles Angell	Othniel Mathewson
Jonathan Millerd	Richard Thornton
Jesse Jenkes	Nathel. Mowry
Amos Cass	Danl. Mowry Jur
Gideon Angell	Aholiab Spalding
Richard Harris	Eleazer Mowry
Jonathan Harris	Peter Tefft
Israel Smith	Thomas Shippee
Stephen Aldrich	Joel Cruff
Stephen Eddy	Richard Mowry Jr.
Nathan Medbury	John Hawkins
Edward Medbury	Joshua Aldrich
Augustus Winsor	Charles Sayles
Thomas Newman	John Sayles the 3rd.
Richard Buffum	Saml. Hill Junr.
Israel Harris	Thomas Smith
Joseph Sprague	Stephen Arnold Jr
Philip Mowry	Abel Mowry
Israel Arnold	Joshua Arnold
Jacob Jencks	Robert Staples
Solomon Mowry	George Streeter
David Harris the 3rd.	Ebenezer Staples
William Gulley	Wm. Potter
Silvanus Sayles	John Sayles Jr.
Nathan Aldrich	Nathanl. Arnold
Jonathan Pain	Israel Wilkinson
Danl. Wilbur	James Appleby Jr.
Saml. Aldrich the 4th.	James Tefft

James Appleby	Elisha Smith
Saml. Keech	Nathan Angell
John Appleby	Noah Bartlett
Joseph Aldrich	Israel Aldrich
John Carpenter	Danl. Man
Saml. Aldrich the 5th.	Reuben Phillips
John Ballou	Saml. Man
David Evans Jur.	Job Aldrich
Luke Arnold	Robert Harris
Christr. Gulley	John Goldthwait
Ezekiel Angell Jr.	William Smith
Stephen Arnold	Abram Mathewson
David Evans	Gideon Comstock
Aaron Clarke	Ebener Cass
David Angell	Nicholas Jenks
David Alverson	William Ballou
Jabez Angell	Maturin Ballou
Benja. Brown	Silas Arnold
Benja. Newell	John Man Jur.
Saml. Holms	Oliver Arnold
Darius Sayles	Nathaniel Spalding
Obed Seavour	Esek Sayles
Stukely Sayles	Israel Tefft
Peleg Peck	Benjamin Sayles
John Whipple	Stephen Farnum
Benja. Sheldon	Arthur Latham
Jona. Mowry	Jehu Pain
Reuben Aldrich	Job Mowry Jur.
Stephen Sayles	Jona. Newell
James Smith	Job Mowry
Andrew Waterman	Philip Sweet
Smith Sayles	Bernard Chase
John Winsor	Joshua Smith
Danl. Sayles	Nathaniel Aldrich
Saml. Cruff	Esek Smith
Joab Man	Juni Smith
Stephen Mowry	Benajah Sweet
Robert Latham	Levi Aldrich
Joseph Angell	Moses Ballou
Zenas Winsor	Jona. Angell
Benja. Wing	Isaac Brayton

Stephen Brayton  
Danl. Smith Jur.

Levi Barnes  
Danl. Winsor

The Yeas for the Constitution

Joseph Whipple

William Mowry

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar. A second version (without names listed) in Smithfield Records, Town Meetings, 1771–1816, City Hall, Central Falls, R.I., indicates that 159 persons voted nay (Mfm:R.I.).

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**SOUTH KINGSTOWN**  
(1–125)

**Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

The following are the Names of the Persons who gave their Voices in Town Meeting South kingston March 24th. 1788 Respecting the proposed Constitution for the United States of America with the Yeas & Nays to Each persons Name Annexed, & taken from the Original in the Town Clerks Office

Joseph Hazard Nay  
John Franklin Nay  
Robert Champlin Nay  
Samuel Segar Nay  
Stephen Hazard Nay  
Caleb Tefft Nay  
Samuel Gardner Nay  
Thomas Champlin junr Nay  
John Gardner (Boston Neck)  
Nay  
Ebenezer Tefft Nay  
Simon Ray Mumford Nay  
Samuel J Potter Nay  
John Robinson Nay  
Caleb Chappel Nay  
Robert Hazard Nay  
Timothy Peckham Nay  
Tennant Tefft Nay  
Robert Hazard (of Joseph)  
Nay\*  
Thomas Segar Nay  
Stephen Potter Nay

Jeffry Watson Nay  
William Dyre Nay  
John Watson (of Jefry) Nay\*  
Thomas Robbins Nay  
Isaac Tanner Nay  
Samuel Whaley Nay  
William Barber Nay  
Stephen Champlin Nay  
John Larkin Nay  
William Steadman Nay  
Tennant Tefft junr. Nay  
Gardner Tefft Nay  
Clarke Hopkins Nay  
Benjamin Perry Nay  
James Steadman Nay  
Nathl Mumford Nay  
Christopher Robinson junr.  
Nay  
Benjamin Robinson Nay  
Samuel Whaley junr Nay  
Benjamin Hazard Nay  
Henry Reynolds Nay

Rowland Brown Nay	Edward Lock Nay
John Cross Nay	Peleg Kinyon Nay
James Shearman Nay	Caleb Gardner Nay
Silas Wheeler Nay	Gideon Lillibridge Nay
Christopher Robinson Nay	Peleg Babcock Nay
Joseph Gould Nay	Barber Peckham Nay
George Babcock Nay	John Hopkins Nay
William Perry Nay	Josias Tanner Nay
Henry H. Holland Nay	James Barber Nay
David Babcock Nay	Paris Gardner Nay
Thomas Steadman Jur Nay	Walter Watson Nay
James Tefft Nay	Daniel Steadman Nay
Samuel Babcock Nay	Gideon Greenman Nay
Allen Gardner Nay	Wm. Peckham Nay
Wilkinson Browning Nay	Henry Potter Nay
Gideon Babcock Nay	Benjamin Peckham Nay
Benjamin Potter junr Nay	Jeffry H Browning Nay
Daniel Tefft 3rd Nay	Joseph Perkins Yea
Elisha Watson (of Jeffry) Nay*	David Larkin Nay
Thomas Champlin Nay	William Taylor Nay
Samuel Perry junr Nay	Robert Rodman Nay
Sands Perkins Nay	Freeman Perry Nay
Joseph Carpenter Nay	Thomas Brow[n]ing Nay
Robert Knowles Nay	Jeffry Watson junr Nay
Moses Barber Nay	Thomas Eldred Nay
Nathan Peterson Nay	John Babcock Nay
Gideon Gardner Nay	John P. Peckham Nay
Josephus Peckham Nay	David Shearman Nay
Elisha Watson (of John) Nay*	Francis Tanner Nay
Augustus Babcock Nay	Thomas Hopkins Nay
Ezekiel Watson Nay	Thomas H. Hazard Nay
Isaac Sheldon Nay	Richard Gardner Nay
John Weeden Nay	John Segar Nay
William Rodman Nay	James Card Nay
Joseph Browning Nay	John Champlin Nay
Robert Browning Nay	Christy Potter Nay
Jeremiah Carpenter Nay	Rowse Potter Nay
Joseph Segar Nay	Samuel Hoxsie Nay
	John Greenman Nay
	Wm Willcox Nay

Silas Gardner Nay  
 Elisha R Potter Nay  
 Timothy Peckham  
 (Blacksmith) Nay

John Albro Nay  
 John Congdon Nay  
 Lawrence Pearce Nay  
 Ray Sands Nay

Witness James Helme

Town Clerk

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar. Another version of the minutes of this town meeting is in Town Meetings, 1776-1836, Town Hall, South Kingstown, R.I. (Mfm:R.I.).

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**TIVERTON**  
**(23-92)**

**Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

Att a Meeting of the Freemen & Freeholders of the Town of Tiverton Legually Warned and Held at the Dwelling House of Mr. Nathaniel Briggs on the Fourth Monday of March AD 1788 for the purpose of Taking Under Consideration the Report of the Convention of Delegates for a Constitution for the United states of America as agreed on in Philadelphia the 17th. of September AD 1787 and also to Take under consideration a Petition of the people called Quakers &c.

Voted Gilbert Devol Esqr. Chosen Moderator of said Meeting—then proceeded to take the voice of the said Freemen & Freeholders for & Against said proposed Constitution Individually as here set Down and Distinguishd.

for the Constitution by Yeas

Joseph Durfee yea  
 Peleg Simmons Junr yea  
 John Negus yea  
 Abner Wood yea  
 Peleg Sanford yea  
 William Cory Son of Caleb  
 yea\*  
 Edward Woodman yea  
 Redford Dennis yea  
 Isaac Cook yea  
 Daniel Dwelly yea  
 Gideon Durfee yea  
 Thomas Cook yea

Philip Cory yea  
 Abraham Brown yea  
 Abraham Barker yea  
 Thomas Barker yea  
 Lemuel Baley yea  
 Isaac Brown yea  
 Joseph Barker yea  
 Pardon Gray yea  
 Joseph Seabury yea  
 John Perry yea  
 Lemuel Taber yea

## against the Constitution by Nays

Benjamin Jenks Nay	Isaac Willcox Nay
George Crocker Nay	Mihael Macomber Nay
Paul Mosher Nay	Daniel Brown Nay
John Durfee Nay	David Eddy Nay
Joseph Sarole Nay	Gilbert Manchester Nay
Benjamin Sawdy Junr Nay	Gershom Wodell Junr Nay
Joseph Taber Esqr Nay	Daniel Grinnell Nay
William Wodell Nay	Christopher Wodell Nay
David Round Junr. Nay	John Jenks Nay
Smiton Hart Nay	Aaron Borden Nay
Benjamin Hambly Nay	Obadiah Dennis Nay
Elihu Gifford Nay	Richard Sherman Nay
Ephrajm Davenport 2d Nay	Benjamin Sawdy Nay
John Hicks Nay	Paul Crossman Nay
Jeremiah Cook Nay	Thomas Willcox Nay
Benjamin Chase Nay	Daniel Sherman Nay
Thomas Sisson Nay	Jotham Round Nay
Godfrey King Nay	Eber Crandell Nay
Stephen King Nay	Gamaliel Warren Nay
Stephen Mosher Nay	Israel Brownell Nay
Stephen Hicks Nay	Gideon Grinnell Nay
Zebedee Mosher Nay	Benjamin Borden Nay
William Cory Son Thos Dcd Nay*	Ephrajm Chamberlin Nay
Zuriel Fish Nay	Sampson Sherman Nay
William Willcox Nay	Gideon Almy Nay
William Gifford Nay	Thomas Cory Nay
Isaac Case Nay	Samuel Sanford Nay
Philip Sisson Nay	Prince Durfee Nay
Abner Sherman Nay	James Durfee Nay
Olphree King Nay	Daniel Devol Nay
Abner Crandell Nay	Gershom Wodell Nay
Thomas Cory son of Thos. Nay*	Knoles Negus Nay
John Tripp Nay	Walter Cook Nay
Edward Baley Nay	John Freeman Nay
John Borden Nay	James Tallman Nay
Isaac Jennings Nay	Weaver Osband Nay
Holder Almy Nay	Benjamin Borden Son of Jas. Nay*
Isaac Hart Nay	Philip Manchester Nay
	Wanton Devol Nay

Pardon Cook Nay	Lott Sherman Nay
William Sawdy Nay	Abraham Burrington Nay
Thomas Durfee Esqr Nay	Abner Simmons Nay
Gilbert Devol Nay	Godfrey Perry Nay
Benjamin Howland Nay	Benjamin Hambly Nay
Christopher Manchester Junr	John Stafford Nay
Nay	Constant Hart Nay
Ichabod Simmons Nay	92
Nathaniel Shaw Nay	

Whereas the Petition of the People Called Quakers was Read Respecting the Tender of the paper Money and also Act which makes Notes & Book Accounts void that not Settled within two years from the passing the Same in Consequence of a recommendation from the General Assembly, the Same being Read and a due Consideration thereon had We do conceive that the Injuries will be greatly multiplied and the Same will be contrary to honesty and good Policy in case the Tender is Taken off Said paper Money by violating all Contracts entered into between the State and the Individual Mortgagor which ever ought to be held Sacred

It is voted and resolved by the Freemen & Freeholders aforesaid that our Deputies be and hereby are Instructed Strictly to Adhere to the Emitting Act respecting the paper money and that they by no means violate the Same

And With regard to the Statute of limitations it is voted that our Deputies be and hereby are Instructed to give their votes and use their utmost endeavours to have the Same Repealed &c.

A true Copy Duly Examind

Witness Walter Cook Town Clerk

Tiverton the 28th of March 1788

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar. Another version of the minutes is in Town Meetings, 1754–1798, Town Hall, Tiverton, R.I. (Mfm:R.I.).

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**WARREN**  
(2–41)

**Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

At a Town Meeting in Warren on the forth Munday of March Instant agreeable To an act of the General assembly at There Sessions in February AD 1788—

The Question being Put on the Proposed Constitution Adopt or Negative the Yeas and Nays are as follows Viz—



Gidion Luther Nay	James Bowen Nay
John Kennecutt Jur. Nay	Edward Kennecutt Nay
Wm. Arnold Jur. Nay	Wm. Arnold Nay
Ebenezer Luther Nay	Richard Haile Nay
James Child Nay	Nathan Bardon Nay
Joseph Barton Nay	Benjamin Cole Nay
James Short Nay	John Brown Yea
Isaac Cole Nay	George Sisson Nay
Samuel Fisk Nay	Samuel Luther Nay
Stephen Bowen Nay	Caleb Child Nay
Cromell Child Nay	James Miller Nay
Benjamin Barton Nay	Caleb Child Jur Nay
Edward Gardner 2nd Nay	Jonathan Carr Yea
John Kennecutt Nay	Shubael Kennecutt Nay
Gardner Mason Nay	James Sisson Nay
Jacob Sanders Nay	Benjamin Sanders Nay
Cromell Child 2nd Nay	Jesse Baker Nay
David Barton Nay	Edward Chase Nay
Fredrick Luther Nay	Samuel Mason Nay
James E Bowen Nay	Hezekiah Butterworth Nay
Samuel Bowen Nay	Holden Mason Nay
Smith Bowen Nay	
For Addopting the Constitution	2—
For Negativeing	41
	<hr/>
Majority—	39.
Attest William Barton Town Clk	

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar. Another list of the yeas and nays is in the Town Records, 1746–1811, Vol. 1, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Warren, R.I. (Mfm:R.I.).

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**WARWICK**  
(3–140)

**Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

At a Town meeting held in Warwick in the County of kent &c. on the fourth monday of March AD 1788.

The following is an accurate list of the names of the freemen & freeholders of Said Warwick, that gave their voices for and against adopting of the federal Constitution. And the Column with the Yeas Set over the same w[h]ere the persons who gave their Voices for adopt- ing said Constitution, those of the Nays were of the Contrary opinion

Yeas	Thomas Rice Junr.
Nathaniel Arnold	Nathan Budlong
John Low Esqr.	Thos. Tiffany
Henry Rice Esqr.	Nathan Gorton
Nays	Charles Allen
Benja Arnold Esqr.	Samuel Sweet
Moses Lippitt	Elisha Baker S[on of] Phil*
Peleg Salisbury	James Arnold Junr.
Peter Greene	Daniel Snell
Rufus Barton Junr.	Job Carpenter
James Arnold Esqr.	Caleb Hatheway
Nathan Rice Esqr.	Elisha Baker 3d.
Jonathan Gorton	John Lippitt
Nathan Millerd	Othniel Wightman
Daniel Clapp	Samuel Budlong
James Tripp	Caleb Greene
Stephen Arnold Esqr.	Moses Arnold
Thos. Holden	Daniel Baker
Benoni Price	Joseph Bennet
Wm. Arnold Junr.	George Baker
Caleb Gorton	John Hall
Abraham Chace	Jos. Arnold S[on of] of Jos.*
Thomas Arnold	Benjamin Barton
Mathew Price	Chrisr. Greene
Moses Budlong Jur.	S[on of] of Sam.*
John Levalley	Joseph Brown
Rhodes Budlong	Josephus Rice
Samuel Davis	Dutee Jerauld
Wm. Rice Son Nathn.*	Stukley Wickes
Abraham Lippitt	Philip Wightman
Samuel Millard	Stephen Greene
Wm. Gorton Son Benja.*	Solomon Howard
Anthony Rice	Wilbour Carpenter
James Greene Esqr.	James Arnold 3d.
Othniel Gorton Esqr.	John Budlong
Elisha Brown Esqr.	Joseph Straight
Nehemiah Atwood	Benja Gorton
Edward Stafford	John Levalley Junr.
Joseph Gorton	Ebenezer Greene
S[on of] Nathn*	James Greene the 4th.
Peter Levalley	Wightman Sweet

Samuel Gorton Junr.	Thomas Slocum
James Greene the 5th	John Wells
James Whipple	Anthony Holden
John Allen	William Potter
William Rice	William Levally
Gideon Arnold	Thos. Westcot
William Potter	Benja Levalley
John Arnold Junr.	Benja. Gorton Junr.
Paul Nichols	Stephen Briggs
John Clapp	William Holden
Elisha Carpenter	James Carder
Benja Greene	Job Briggs
S[on of] Caleb*	David Knapp
Rufus Barton	Thos. Stafford
Joseph Briggs	Charles Holden
Thomas Remington	George Arnold
William Warner	William Burk
Jeremiah Westcot	Caleb Westcot
James Carder Junr.	Daniel Scranton
William Havens	Thos. Arnold
John Millard Junr.	S[on of] Benja*
Dutee Arnold	William Waterman
Henry Arnold	David Wightman
Edward Arnold	Thos. Greene Son Fone*
John Lilley	Philip Weaver
Caleb Atwood	Benja Nichols
George Carder	David Arnold
Thomas Stone	Nicholas Arnold
Anthony Arnold	Randal Holden
Henry Remington	Thos. Remington 3d.
Philip Arnold Jur.	Chrisr. Thornton
Wm. Gorton Junr.	Nathan Hatheway
Joseph Gorton	George Arnold Junr.
Jonathan Ellis	

I hereby Certify that the within is a true Copy taken from the original, now on file in my office

Attest James Jerauld Town Clk.

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar. The minutes of this meeting (without the names) are in Town Meetings, 1779-1794, Vol. 3, City Hall, Warwick, R.I. (Mfm:R.I.).

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**WESTERLY**  
**(12-56)**

**Town Meeting, 24 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

A List of the Yeas and Nays of the Freemen and Freeholders in the Town of Westerly in Town meeting Assembled March 24th. 1788—

<p>Yeas</p> <p>George Potter</p> <p>Samuel Bliven</p> <p>Joseph Stillman</p> <p>George Foster</p> <p>Thomas Noyes</p> <p>Simeon Burdick Jur</p> <p>John Stillman</p> <p>George Stillman Jur</p> <p>Benjamin Pendleton</p> <p>Joseph Potter</p> <p>Peleg Saunders</p> <p>Amos Maxson</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Yeas 12</p> <p>Nays</p> <p>Col. Joseph Noyes</p> <p>Isaiah Willcox</p> <p>Ichabod Babcock</p> <p>Amos Pendleton</p> <p>Oliver Dodge</p> <p>Benjamin Barber</p> <p>Nathan Babcock</p> <p>Joseph Crandal</p> <p>Samuel Allen</p> <p>Peleg Berry</p> <p>Jonathan Sisson</p> <p>Jesse Babcock</p> <p>Sumnor Chapman</p> <p>William Greene</p> <p>Sylvester Crumb</p> <p>Ezekiel Gavit Junr</p> <p>Samuel Champlin</p> <p>John Gavit</p>	<p>James Saunders Jur</p> <p>Gideon Frazier</p> <p>David Hall</p> <p>Elias Crandal</p> <p>Stephen Rathbun</p> <p>Jude Taylor</p> <p>Hezekiah Gavit</p> <p>Joseph Babcock</p> <p>Thomas Taylor</p> <p>William R Greene</p> <p>Valentine Willcox</p> <p>Benjamin Peckham</p> <p>Theodaly Hall</p> <p>Joseph Maxson</p> <p>John Bliven</p> <p>William Vincent</p> <p>George Sisson</p> <p>Isaiah Willcox Junr</p> <p>Joseph Willbur</p> <p>Samuel Pendleton</p> <p>Jeremiah Willbur</p> <p>William Hiscox</p> <p>Joseph Lewis</p> <p>Theodaly Bliven</p> <p>Daniel Bliven</p> <p>Joseph Pendleton</p> <p>Edward Saunders</p> <p>Isaac Varse</p> <p>Augustus Saunders</p> <p>Stephen Gavit</p> <p>Christopher Sugar</p> <p>Oliver Lewis</p> <p>Henry Crandal</p>
---	--

Joseph Hiscox  
Elisha Sisson  
Peleg Ross

John Tefft  
James Ross

Nays 56

This may Certify that the above and foregoing is a True Copy of the Yeas and Nays of the Freemen and Freeholders as they gave their V[oioces?] in Open Town Meeting held in Westerly the fourth Monday of March AD 1788

Witness Joseph Crandal Town [Clerk?]

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar. The minutes of this meeting in Town Meetings, 1779-1819, Vol. 4, Town Hall, Westerly, R.I., omit the action by the town on the Constitution (Mfm:R.I.).

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**WEST GREENWICH**  
(2-145)

**Town Meeting, 24 March 1788 (excerpts)<sup>1</sup>**

At a Town Meeting Conveaned and Held at Westgreenwich in the County of Kent at the dwelling House of Joseph Nichols's Innholder on the 24th of March AD 1788 being Especially Called by an act of the General Assembly

Samuel Hopkins Jur Esqr. Moderator . . .

The New purposed Constitution for the united States of America being Submitted to the freemen of this Town either to be adopted or Negetived and the vote being put adopt or not and Recorded by yeas and nays—

James Reynolds nay  
Benjamin Greene nay  
James Convis nay  
Nicholas Whitford nay  
Henry Tanner nay  
Augustus Ellis nay  
Joshua Carr nay  
George Potter nay  
Caleb Hall nay  
Thomas Albro nay  
Alexander Hopkins nay  
Caleb Greene nay  
John Weathers nay  
Elisha Johnson nay  
Wm. Henry Davis nay

William Matteson nay  
Uriah Matteson nay  
David Austin nay  
Nathaniel Pulman nay  
Robert Carr nay  
Job Herenton nay  
Aurther Aylsworth nay  
Joseph Matteson nay  
Simeon Whitford nay  
Jonathan Matteson nay  
William Richmond nay  
Dani[e]l Pearce nay  
Abel Greene nay  
Amos Reynolds nay  
Caleb Bently nay

Ezekiel Matteson nay	William Davis nay
John Strait nay	Joseph Dolliver Jur nay
Pardon Tillinghast yea	Joseph Potter nay
William Ellis nay	David Culver nay
Thomas Nichols nay	Josiah Brown nay
Joseph Weaver nay	Abel Matteson nay
William Nichols nay	Elisha Sweet nay
Samuel Tanner nay	William Spink nay
Rufus Kittle nay	Thomas Hall nay
Thomas Rogers nay	Jonathan Matteson Jur nay
William Spencer nay	Joseph Hopkins Jur nay
Thomas Joslin nay	David Matteson the 3rd nay
Jeremiah Matteson nay	Thomas Callens nay
John Carpenter nay	Benjamin Johnson nay
Ephraim Letson nay	John Johnson nay
John Hopkins nay	Rufus Matteson nay
Pentacost Sweet nay	Jonathan Dean nay
Jacob Lewis nay	John Parker nay
Robert Carpenter nay	Thomas Wait nay
Joseph Niles Jur nay	Edmond Matteson nay
Edward Burleson nay	Charles Carr nay
Joseph Burleson nay	John Hall nay
William Burleson nay	Thomas Willcox nay
Joseph Wood nay	Caleb Matteson nay
John Reynolds nay	Job Matteson nay
Thomas Strait nay	Amos Jakway nay
Thomas Matteson nay	Peleg Sweet nay
David Aylsworth Jur nay	Thomas Whitford nay
Joseph Dolliver nay	Henry Sweet nay
Ruben Whitford nay	John Comstock (of Jon) nay*
Henry olin nay	Robert Hall nay
Benjamin Weaver Jur nay	Adam Richmond nay
Samuel Greene nay	Nathan Straight nay
George Dyre nay	Thomas Colegrove nay
Caleb Bailey nay	Benjamin Gardiner nay
William Sweet nay	Joseph Gardiner nay
Colonel Briggs nay	John Matteson nay
John Sweet nay	Levi Whitford nay
Joseph Draper nay	Nathaniel Niles nay
Rufus Ellis nay	Joseph Bailey nay
Caleb Carr nay	Esek Carr nay

Joseph Case nay	Thomas Young nay
Silas Matteson nay	Josiah Matteson Jur nay
Jeremiah Austin nay	Obediah Matteson nay
Henry olin Jur nay	John Briggs nay
Burton Sweet nay	Elisha Arnold nay
Pardon Tillinghast Jur yea	Jonatha[n] Comstock nay
Thomas Matteson (of urh) <sup>2</sup>	William Sweet Jur nay
nay*	Gideon Wait nay
David Matteson nay	Judiah Judiah <sup>3</sup> nay
James Congdon nay	Daniel Howard nay
Josiah Matteson nay	Lodowick Greene nay
Jesse Sweet nay	David Matteson Jur nay
Thomas Manchester nay	James Weaver nay
Hezekiah Gorton nay	Silas Bailey nay
Rufus Wait nay	John Greene Jur nay
Benjamin Austin nay	Ellis Austin nay
David Hall nay	Jeremiah Stone nay
Samuel Hopkins nay	Hazard Boss nay

Voted and Resolved that Thomas Joslin Esqr be and hereby is appointed To Carry forward to the General Assembly the proceedings of the freemen to this Town Respecting their voices and Sentaments on the New purposed Constitution for the United States

The above and within is A True Copy as appears from the original Minuts in Westgreenwich the 29th of March AD 1788

Witness

Gidn Wait Tn Clk

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar. Another version of the minutes is in the Town Meeting Book, 1773–1811, Vol. 2, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, West Greenwich, R.I. (Mfm:R.I.).

2. In the Town Meeting Book, Vol. 2, "of uriah."

3. Judiah Aylsworth in the Town Meeting Book, Vol. 2.

## Commentaries on the Referendum 26 March–23 April 1788

### Massachusetts Centinel, 26 March 1788<sup>1</sup>

On Monday last the people of Rhode-Island met in town-meetings, to discuss the federal Constitution, agreeably to the resolution of Legislature thereof. We have not heard the result of these meetings—nor are we anxious about it, for, as the 7th article of the Constitution provides that, "*The ratification of the CONVENTIONS of Nine States shall be sufficient for the establishment of this Constitution between the States so ratifying*

*the same,*”—whatever they may do on the subject, even if they *unanimously ratify it*, will in fact be a nullity.

1. Reprinted in whole or in part seven times by 23 April: N.H. (1), Conn. (1), N.Y. (1), N.J. (1), Pa. (2), Va. (1).

### Amendment

#### Providence Gazette, 29 March 1788<sup>1</sup>

MR. CARTER, The following was written for a vote, to have been put into the hands of the moderator on Monday last, by a freeman of this town.—Being casually found, after the writer’s name, which appears to have been prefixed, was scratched out, your giving it a place in your next Gazette may tend to shew, that the minds of all the freemen could not have been taken on said day *by yea or nay only*.

#### AMENDMENT.

— — — Adopts the Fœderal Constitution, with the following alterations or amendments, viz.

*First.* The liberty and freedom of the press shall be preserved inviolate (except the States should be invaded by a foreign enemy, and the safety of the Union require secrecy) being the grand vehicle of knowledge to the people at large.

*Secondly.* Universal liberty of conscience shall be allowed, and no one religious sect or denomination of people shall have any preference; but all and every of them shall be protected in the peaceable enjoyment of their religious tenets.

*Thirdly.* The Senators shall be chosen every second year, by the people at large, in the same manner as the Representatives.

*Fourthly.* No standing armies shall be kept up in time of peace.

*Fifthly.* The militia, when called forth, shall not be marched out of the State to which they belong, except some one of the States shall be actually invaded by a foreign enemy, or extreme necessity require it.

*Sixthly.* No appropriation of money, for the raising and supporting armies, shall be for a longer term than one year.

*Seventhly.* That Congress do not lay direct taxes, until they have first called on the States to assess and pay their proportions, in such manner as the Legislatures of the States may think best;—but in such case, if any State shall refuse or neglect to pay its proportion, pursuant to such requisition, then Congress may assess and levy such State’s proportion, with interest, at six per centum per annum, from the time such requisition was payable.



*Eighthly.* The federal judicial power shall not extend to any actions between citizens of different States, where the matter in dispute doth not amount to the value of one thousand dollars at least.

*Ninthly.* In civil actions, between citizens of different States, every issue of facts arising in actions at common law, shall be tried by a jury, except by consent of parties.

*Tenthly.* No person shall be tried for any crime, by which he may incur an infamous punishment, or loss of life, until first indicted by a Grand Jury.

*Lastly.* That it be explicitly declared, that all powers, not expressly delegated by the aforesaid Constitution, are reserved to the several States; any thing in the abovesaid Constitution, or any clause thereof, to the contrary notwithstanding.

1. Reprinted: Boston *American Herald*, 7 April. Five of the amendments were taken from those proposed by the Massachusetts Convention on 6 February. Amendments 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 in this essay, respectively, were based on amendments 4, 7, 8, 6, and 1 proposed by the Massachusetts Convention. See CC:508 and “The Rhode Island Reprinting of the Massachusetts Convention’s Amendments and Boston’s Celebration of Massachusetts Ratification,” 7–25 February 1788 (I, above).

**Enos Hitchcock to Silas Talbot  
Providence, 31 March 1788 (excerpts)<sup>1</sup>**

I received your favours by the hands of Mesrs. Walker & Snow in due time—since which I have had no direct opportunity to write you.

The present conveyance by Mr. Walker I embrace with pleasure—to entertain you with the hacknied round of politicks would be but a dull business—& yet this is most of *business* that is carried on at retail.

You have long since been made acquainted with the adoption of the Constitution in the Masstts., & its suspension in N. Hampshire till June next when it is expected they [will] adopt it.

As to the logger-headed assembly of this State, they do not chuse to act like other people, & if they should it would excite just astonishment—nothing can exceed their madness.—They ordered at the last session the yeas & nays of all the freemen to be taken on the question *adopt* or *reject* the Constitution—last Monday was the day appointed for the mighty decision in one afternoon of the merits of that frame of government which emp[lo]yed the ablest men four months to form, & the very learned Convention of Masstts. four weeks to investigate—But their design is defeated—the Towns of NPort & Providence declined the measure & preferred a petition to the Assembly for a Convention

to be called—in other places very few of the federalists put in any votes—they set this week again—what will be the result of their meeting it is impossible to form a probable conjecture . . .

Your Friend & Servt.

N.B. The enclosed was sent me with a request to forward.

1. RC, Talbot Collection, G. W. Blunt White Library, Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Conn.

### **Massachusetts Centinel, 2 April 1788<sup>1</sup>**

The federalists of Rhode-Island have, in the affair of the new Constitution, behaved with their usual firmness and patriotism: Those of Newport and Providence, met on the day (*the 24th ult*) appointed by the legislature for discussing the Constitution, in town-meetings; and after a fair and attentive consideration of the business upon which they were met, they almost unanimously agreed that they were not sufficiently informed, to be able to give their *Yea*, or *Nay*, on a question of such importance: And as unanimously united in instructing their deputies to the General Assembly, that a resolution, recommending to the several towns the appointment of a Convention of the State, might be passed by the Assembly, agreeably to the recommendations of Congress, and the General Convention. The freemen in these meetings, were supposed to be near 1000—and but about ten dissenting voices were found amongst them. This measure of the two great towns of Rhode-Island, wholly frustrates the design of the *little* Rulers of that State, in endeavouring to obtain by their little arts, the rejection of a Constitution, because one object of it is to protect THE HONEST AND INDUSTRIOUS CITIZEN FROM THE ARTS OF KNAVES AND PUBLICK ROBBERS.

1. Reprinted seven times by 16 April: N.H. (1), Mass. (3), Conn. (2), Pa. (1).

### **A Freeman**

#### **Newport Herald, 3 April 1788**

The General Assembly of this State at their session held in February last, passed an act, submitting the consideration of the constitution proposed by the General Convention, to the freemen and freeholders of the State.<sup>1</sup>—In the preamble of this act they declare, “that they cannot make any innovations in a constitution which has been agreed upon, and the compact settled between the governors and governed without the express consent of the freemen at large,”—and lay this

restraint upon the people, that this express consent must be given by their own voices individually in town-meetings assembled.

By this act, it is ordained that, on the day fixed for the town-meetings, the freemen and freeholders within this State should “convene in their respective towns in town-meetings assembled to deliberate upon, and determine each individual (who hath a right by law to vote for the choice of general officers) by himself by poll”—“that the voices of the freemen and freeholders shall be taken by yeas and nays, and the Town-Clerk of each town shall register the name of every freeman and freeholder with the yea or nay as he shall respectively give his voice aloud”—and for deliberation and determination one day only is allowed if a fair one, and three days if the weather should be boisterous.

This is the substance of a most extraordinary act on which I propose to animadvert with that freedom which the subject demands, and at the same time with that becoming decency to which the legislative of a State is entitled.—But before I enter upon this business, permit me to mention the steps which led to the act referred to, and to adduce a few instances which may serve to shew the insufficiency of the present confederation for the great purposes of a federal government.

Congress convinced by long and woeful experience of the incompetency of the articles of confederation for the purposes of a federal government, recommended to all the States in the union to appoint Delegates to meet in Convention at Philadelphia on the 17th day of May last, in order to revise, alter and amend the confederation<sup>2</sup>—In pursuance whereof Delegates were chosen by all the States (this State only excepted) and met in Philadelphia.

The confederation wanted so many alterations and amendments, that it was found much more easy to make a new, than to mend the old Constitution,—the Convention therefore embraced the idea of a new system, and, after a long and complete discussion of the subject, reported to Congress the Constitution aforesaid, and Congress agreeably to the recommendation of the Convention unanimously resolved that it be *submitted to Conventions of Delegates to be chosen in each State by the people thereof*.<sup>3</sup>—In every State, this only excepted, Conventions have been accordingly chosen, and the six which have come to a decision have assented to and ratified the Constitution.

From this short statement of facts it clearly appears that not only the Congress,—but the General Convention of the States were fully sensible of the febleness of the present confederation,—and the few Delegates who declined to subscribe their assent to the new system, and the minorities in the State Conventions which have decided on the

question have acknowledged that the old one is inadequate to the great purposes of national order, protection, liberty and happiness.—Indeed it is acknowledged by all but those who are so blind as that they will not see.

To this feebleness and incompetency must we not justly attribute the confusion and disorder which have taken place in several States, that jealousy and suspicion,—that want of unanimity and concord,—that local attachment, and that inattention to national concerns, which have rendered our national character contemptible, and brought these States, which were united by common interest, to the very brink of dissolution:—To this may we not justly charge, the detention of the Western Posts, by the British, and the massacre of the innocent inhabitants on the frontiers of several States by the Indians, which have retarded the sale of our Western territory, the disposal of which would soon be effected under an efficient government, and extinguish at least our domestic debt:—To this feebleness and incompetency may we not also fairly attribute that great and rapid decline of trade and commerce, and those consequential distresses which are deeply felt throughout the United States, and by this State in particular, whose prosperity depends upon her commerce.

In this melancholy situation of the United States in general, and of this in particular, was it not the incumbent duty of the Legislature of this State, to attend with candor and seriousness to a frame of government calculated with the express design,—“to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity,” and which has come recommended to the consideration of the people at large in all the States, fraught with these benevolent and noble ideas, from the first characters, and the highest authority in the union?

Have not all the other States pursued the mode for obtaining the sense of the people on the new Constitution pointed out by the General Convention, and recommended by the Hon. the Congress? And is it not to be lamented that this State have chosen a different mode?—Is not this mode vastly preferable to that prescribed by the Legislature of this State?

Permit me to observe,—that with regard to the great, the important question of forming a federal government, the people of each State may be considered as in a state of nature. In this view, the most natural way of proceeding, if it were practicable, would be, for the people collectively to assemble in some suitable place, and there to deliberate

calmly and fully on the momentous, interesting subject; but is it possible for such deliberation to take place in so large an assembly, as the people of even this small State so collected would compose? Would not the tumult necessarily arising in such a multitude prevent a fair and full discussion, if the human voice could be heard throughout such an extensive and confused a croud? In this case would the assembly, finding it impossible to proceed, divide into small districts and discuss separately a subject which required the united light and wisdom of the whole? Would not common sense (I appeal to the sense of the people) would not common sense dictate the very mode which has been recommended by the General Convention, by the Honorable the Congress, and which has been followed by every State, but this, in the Union?

Besides in a Convention of the people the subject could be handled in the most liberal, extensive manner, objections might be started, and duly weighed, necessary accommodations might be made, and the light which the delegates could afford, be produced, collected to a focus, and thrown upon the question, and the result would be the most rational determination which the aggregate wisdom of the people could possibly form.—

And this brings me to the act the substance of which is quoted in the beginning of this piece,—the act which gave rise to the foregoing observations and on which I am now to animadvert with the decent freedom of a freeman.

In the first place, with all due deference it may be observed, that the declaration of the legislature in the preamble of said act is contradictory to the authority they have assumed in the body of it.—They declare that they the legislature cannot make any innovations, &c. and undertake to prescribe to the people in a matter which, by their own declaration, belongs solely to the people.

But the General Assembly have not only assumed an authority which doth not appertain to that body.

They have, in the second place, by the solemnity of an act, directed a mode of proceeding, altogether unprecedented—unfriendly to the liberty of the people—singular and adverse to the conduct of the other States;—a mode in which little or no light could be obtained, if a sufficient portion of time had been assigned,—a mode which is indecisive, and through which the sentiments of the people, if they could in that way be manifested, cannot be admitted by the United States in Congress assembled.

There never was an instance before of the freemen and freeholders of this State being ordered to determine by *poll*, to give their *yeas* and

nays aloud, and of the Town-Clerks of each town being directed to “register the name of every freeman and freeholder with the Yea and Nay as he shall respectively give his voice aloud.” And therefore the mode prescribed by the act aforesaid is *unprecedented*.

It is unfriendly to the liberty of the people; because it is a check upon the independency of the freemen in giving their voices.

It is singular and adverse to the conduct of the other States.—This is too obvious to need any illustration.—I will add that it is adverse also to the recommendation of the General Convention and of Congress, and venture to make the following remarks—that singularity is not a proof of wisdom, although it may be a mark of pride;—and that in any matter which respects the union, especially in so important a matter as that under consideration, singularity has a tendency to disunite from the other States this State which from its local situation, and other circumstances is the most exposed to danger and distress, and therefore it ought to be cautiously avoided;—and is there not due from this State a decent respect to the recommendations of the General Convention,—of the Hon. Congress and to the example of her sister States?

However suitable assemblies of the people in Town-Meetings in fact are, for town purposes, and for matters of comparatively small moment; yet in an affair of such immense magnitude as that of a system of federal government for millions, and which employed the unremitting attention of some of the wisest men in the union several months, and that of the state of Conventions, who have adopted it, as many weeks, one day in Town-Meetings if a fair one, and three days if the weather should be boisterous, cannot be thought sufficient for deliberation and determination.

Besides in this mode of Town-Meetings, the towns cannot derive any information or assistance from each other; because by the act they are effectually restrained from all communication of sentiments.—And lastly, a determination in the mode prescribed by the act of this State is indecisive, &c.—because it is not agreeable to the mode pointed out by the General Convention and Congress, and pursued by the other States; and no provision is made by said Convention or Congress for the admission of opinions conveyed through the channel of Town-Meetings: and therefore the sense of the people taken in this or any other mode than that recommended and pursued as aforesaid, will be considered as inadmissible, and the mode prescribed by this State will prove, to say no worse, a mere nullity.

1. See “Rhode Island Act Calling a Referendum on the Constitution,” 1 March 1788 (RCS:R.I., 133–35).

2. For the 21 February 1787 congressional resolution calling the Constitutional Convention, see CDR, 187, or CC:1.

3. For the 28 September 1787 congressional resolution transmitting the Constitution to the states, see CDR, 340, or CC:95 (p. 241).

### Newport Herald, 3 April 1788<sup>1</sup>

*Result of the Proceedings in this State on the New Constitution.*

NEWPORT, PROVIDENCE AND WESTERLY, did not poll,<sup>2</sup> but gave instructions to their Deputies in General Assembly, to have the Constitution referred to a Convention, where it could be legally and properly determined.

WARWICK AND GREENWICH, no yeas were given, the Federalists having entered a protest against the alteration of the mode of decision as *illegal and unprecedented*.

BRISTOL AND LITTLE-COMPTON, there was a majority of votes for the New Constitution.

The other towns generally negated the Constitution—their majorities will appear larger, as the Federalists generally declined giving their votes in Town-Meeting upon a question that is resolvable only by a Convention of the people.

It is therefore presumed that the Legislature will consider this act altering the mode of decision as abortive and nugatory—and not offer to the United States and to the world a *partial decision* of the Constitution as being the voice of the people of this State—for it is an indisputable truth that the *nays* returned do not form a majority of the freemen and freeholders of the State.

*Adherence to the Confederation.*

THE STATE OF RHODE-ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS yet remains unrepresented in THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA—any order to the contrary notwithstanding.

On Friday last the Town-Meeting of this town convened, agreeable to their adjournment, to hear the report of their Committee appointed to draft instructions to our Representatives *for the calling of a Convention and repealing of the Tender and Limitation Acts*—the report accordingly was read, and unanimously received.

The public will have a just estimate of the principles of the Antifederalists in this State, by recurring to the principles of our domestic government for two years past—the opposers of the New Constitution being uniform supporters of an iniquitous tender of a depreciated paper-money at par.

1. The first five paragraphs were reprinted in the *United States Chronicle*, 10 April, in the April issue of the nationally circulated *American Museum*, and twenty-four other times in whole or in part by 15 May: N.H. (3), Mass. (8), Conn. (5), N.Y. (3), N.J. (1), Pa. (3), S.C. (1). The sixth paragraph on Rhode Island not being represented in Congress was reprinted seventeen times by 22 April: N.H. (1), Mass. (4), Conn. (5), N.Y. (3), N.J. (1), Pa. (3). The seventh paragraph was reprinted sixteen times by 22 April: N.H. (1), Mass. (2), Conn. (5), N.Y. (4), N.J. (1), Pa. (3). The eighth paragraph was reprinted in the *United States Chronicle*, 10 April, and fifteen other times by 15 May: N.H. (1), Mass. (2), Conn. (5), N.Y. (3), Pa. (3), S.C. (1). Fourteen newspapers printed all eight paragraphs by 22 April: N.H. (1), Mass. (2), Conn. (5), N.Y. (2), Pa. (4).

2. Although most of the freemen in these three towns boycotted the referendum, some did vote: Newport had 1 yeas and 10 nays, Providence 1 nay, and Westerly 12 yeas and 56 nays.

**James Madison to George Nicholas**  
**Orange County, Va., 8 April 1788 (excerpt)<sup>1</sup>**

... [P.S.] I find that Rhode Island has submitted the Constitution to the people to be decided by majority of voices *immediately* given. This mode precludes every result but that of a total adoption or rejection; and as the latter was foreseen, shews a determination there to involve all things in Confusion. The question will be decided precisely by the same majority as have prevailed in every other instance of late; the paper money party being agst. & the other party for the Constitution.

1. RC, Reuben T. Durrett Collection, George Nicholas, Department of Special Collections, University of Chicago Library. For the full letter, see RCS:Va., 707–10. Madison (1751–1836) was a member of the Virginia House of Delegates, 1776–77, 1784–87, 1799–1800; Virginia Council of State, 1778–79; Congress, 1780–83, 1787–88; and the U.S. House of Representatives, 1789–97. He was U.S. Secretary of State, 1801–9, and U.S. President, 1809–17. Madison signed the Constitution; he voted to ratify the Constitution in the Virginia Convention; and he wrote many essays in *The Federalist*. Nicholas (c.1754–1799), a Charlottesville lawyer-planter and a former officer in the Continental Army, was representing Albemarle County in the Virginia House of Delegates and in June 1788 he voted to ratify the Constitution in the Virginia Convention.

**New York Packet, 8 April 1788 (excerpt)<sup>1</sup>**

A Gentleman from the State of Rhode-Island informs us, that the reference of the proposed Constitution to the people at large in that State, originated from a full conviction in the Legislature, that it would be rejected. The minority persuaded of the impossibility of effecting a change, refused to vote in town-meeting, upon the question. Newport, Providence, and two or three more towns being decidedly right, carried the business submitted to them by forming memorials to the General



Assembly, requesting them to appoint a Convention, agreeably to the recommendation of Congress. In other towns the minority protested against the propriety of the proceedings, and withdrew, so that the State at large will appear to be unanimous.<sup>2</sup> The fact however is, that seven-ninths of the people adhere to their paper system, and consequently are opposed to every measure of a general nature. They exhibit an example that will soon be followed by the other States, if the habits of government should be a little more relaxed. All men are alike; circumstances only form the general character.—The policy of Rhode-Island is repugnant to hypocrisy. They blush not at six for one, while seven percent discount is within the vortex, though not so perceptibly of the same disposition. . . .

1. Reprinted in the *Newport Mercury*, 28 April, and six other times by 16 April: N.Y. (1), N.J. (1), Pa. (4). See Mfm:N.Y. for the entire piece.

2. The *New York Journal* on 10 April reported: "It is said, that a great majority of the towns in that state, at this meeting, totally rejected the constitution" (Mfm:R.I.).

### **Maryland Journal, 15 April 1788<sup>1</sup>**

We are informed, by a Gentleman from the State of Rhode-Island, that the Intention of submitting to the Freemen of that State, in their respective Town-Meetings, the Question upon the new Constitution, was to obtain, at all Events, a Negative, the great Majority of the Legislature being decidedly opposed to a Reform in the National Government. They still remain strictly adherent to their Paper Money System, and in discharging of Debts and Contracts at a Discount of Six for One. Seven-Ninths of the People are warmly attached to the Administration, while the Minority are remarkable only for their Property, superior Information, and ardent, though ineffectual Wishes, for the Return of Justice.—The mercantile Towns, being almost unanimously in favour of the Constitution, declined giving their Yeas to the Question; but instructed their Deputies in the Legislature to urge the Appointment of a State Convention, agreeably to the Recommendation of Congress.—In most of the other Towns, the Minorities protested against the Propriety of the Mode, as being antifederal—alleging, that for a small Part of the United States to attempt a Change in the fundamental Principles of the Confederation, in a Mode repugnant to the original Compact, and not authorized by the great Majority of the People, was seditious; and contradictory to the Reasons upon which the Legislature pretended to found their Opposition to the proposed System—That the Power of rejecting implied the Power of adopting; and yet an Adoption, in such

a Mode, would not conclusively determine the Opinion of the State; nor could a Rejection, preclude the Appointment of a Convention—and therefore, to act at all, in the Way proposed, could not produce any beneficial Consequences; but might serve to influence, through Prejudice, a final Decision, which ought to result from the most candid and mature Deliberation.—The Minorities urging, in vain, the Necessity of a State Convention, refused to give their Votes, and retired from the Meetings—So that, upon the whole, the Opinions of the Freemen of that State, are taken upon one Side of the Question only.

The same Informant observes, that Mankind are generally the same, under similar Circumstances; and that the Conduct of Rhode-Island affords an useful Mirror, in which the other States may view the probable future Situation of their own Citizens, whenever their Laws, unassisted by an energetic Federal Control, shall prove too feeble to check the Encroachments of PRIVATE INTEREST, RUDE LICENTIOUSNESS, and UNBRIDLED PASSION!

1. Reprinted: Winchester *Virginia Gazette*, 23 April.

**Edward Carrington to James Madison**  
**New York, 23 April 1788<sup>1</sup>**

I have the pleasure to forward herewith two packets which came by the last French Packet.

The business of the constitution as referred to the Town meetings of Rhode Island, is over without producing any effect. three of the Towns were decidedly for calling on the Legislature to appoint a convention according to the mode prescribed and this it seems from friendly views to the measure.—The remaining Towns have done nothing decisive of their sentiments—a few of them have apparently voted against it, but it is said & I believe with Truth, that the reason votes do not appear in favor, is that the Friends objected so directly against the mode of proceeding, that they would not act at all. in some others there are votes both for & against & at the same time propositions for insisting on the Legislature calling a Convention. upon the whole it is a pretty decided matter that Rhode Island will not be amongst the adopting States by June.

We have no Congress, but it is expected we shall have one in a few days—this a triffling business which I long to see an end of.

1. RC, Madison Papers, DLC. Carrington (1749–1810) served in the Continental Army, 1776–83, as a lieutenant colonel. He served in the Virginia House of Delegates, 1784–86, 1788–90, and in Congress, 1786–88. He was U.S. marshal for Virginia, 1789–95.

## **II—C. The General Assembly Considers the Referendum Results and the Constitution 31 March—1 May 1788**

Following the referendum, the legislature assembled on 31 March. The House of Deputies overwhelmingly defeated another attempt to call a state convention. The General Assembly tabulated the referendum votes and prepared a letter to be sent to Congress explaining Rhode Island's action on the Constitution.

### **Newspaper Reports of General Assembly Proceedings 31 March—5 April 1788**

*Newport Herald, 10 April 1788*<sup>1</sup>

*History of the Proceedings of the sixth Session of the General Assembly of this State, in the second year of our present administration, held at East-Greenwich on the last monday of March last.*

The history of our government for two years past, is the history of a PAPER MONEY SYSTEM, as all our measures have been subservient to it.—We have therefore conceived it our duty, to continue an impartial detail of the progress of this system, not with a view of familiarizing injustice, nor with an intent of immortalizing the patrons of it, but to guard our fellow citizens from artful misrepresentations, and to arouse them from the apathy of past delusions to a sense of our common danger, trusting that we may thereby revive the dormant virtues in this State, and that our deviations from justice and honor may prove a salutary monitor to others.

WEDNESDAY [2 April], A. M. Both Houses were formed and proceeded on the business of the session.

A Committee was appointed to examine and count the votes returned upon the proposed Constitution for the United States; who reported, “that there were 288 Yeas, and 2580 Nays, the whole number being 2868”—from whence it appeared that not one half of the Free-men had voted, there being upwards of 7000 Free Citizens in the State, and therefore it could be no vote,—the report was however received, and a letter was drafted agreeably to order and subscribed by the Governor, transmitting this vote to Congress as the determination of this State upon the Constitution, also stating the reasons for adopting a mode, different from that recommended by the general Convention.—As a palliation of this irregular procedure, it was conceded in this letter

that there was a deficiency in the confederation, and a willingness expressed to grant unto Congress unlimited power for the regulation of commerce, collecting impost, excise, &c.

A motion was made by Mr. Marchant (*of Newport*) “that a Convention of this State be called, agreeably to the recommendation of the general Convention and of Congress, to deliberate upon the proposed Constitution,”—but it was rejected by a majority of 27.

A motion was made from the opposite quarter of the House, by JOHN SAYLES, ESQ. of Smithfield, “*That the House should proceed to appoint a committee of our BEST MEN to frame a Constitution for the United States, and transmit the same to Congress*”—but it was not attended to—the majority felt the keen sting of merited ridicule, by this indiscreet motion of their staunch friend,—they were doubtless never more convinced of the utility of nocturnal Conventions, to organize the proceedings of the ensuing day.<sup>2</sup>

The Committee of the Society of Friends prayed that the consideration of their Memorial for the Repeal of the Tender and Limitation Acts, might be referred to May sessions,—but the sense of the House was for acting on it immediately, as while pending, they said it tended to depreciate the currency. Upon the question for the Repeal of the Tender of Paper Money at par, it was rejected by the usual majority,—the Limitation Act was repealed.

A petition was presented from a maiden lady between 80 and 90 years old praying for a repayment of a sum of money that she loaned to the State 30 years past—but an equivalent in value was refused.

The Bill pending before the House for an equal representation (as it is wrongly called) was moved for discussion, but after much debate it was referred.

An Act passed limiting the payment of the third quarter part of six per cent. state notes to the tenth of May current, when a forfeiture should be incurred if the paper money was not taken by the holders of them.

The Treasurer was ordered to issue executions for delinquent taxes, returnable the 28th April instant.

Saturday [5 April] evening, when the House was very thin, the petition and instructions from Newport and Providence, praying that a Convention might be appointed,<sup>3</sup> and the memorial from the society of Friends for the repeal of the Tender and Limitation Act, were ordered to be thrown off the table.

The Assembly adjourned without day.

*Providence United States Chronicle, 10 April 1788*<sup>4</sup>

The Honorable General Assembly of this State, at their late Session, directed a Letter to be sent to Congress, stating the Measures taken by our Legislature on the Subject of the proposed Federal Constitution—The Substance of which was, That on receiving the Report of the Convention at Philadelphia, at last October Session, they ordered 1000 Copies thereof to be printed and dispersed among the People at large, which was done—That at last February Session a Day was affixed for every Freeholder, in open Town-Meeting, to vote on the Subject, agreeable to the Act submitting the Constitution to the People (which was ordered to be enclosed)—That by the Returns received at the present Session it appeared, that rather more than 2700 had voted against the Constitution, and about 200 for it<sup>(a)</sup>—That the Legislature of this State was deeply impressed with a Sense of the Necessity of further Powers being vested in Congress—the entire Regulation of Trade, with Power to levy and collect an Impost would be agreed to, &c. &c.

In order that Congress might have the fullest Information on this important Subject, it was moved in the Lower-House, that the Petition from Providence, and the Instructions from the Towns of Newport, Westerly, &c. might be enclosed in the aforementioned Letter—but this was negatived by a large Majority.<sup>5</sup>

(a) *At the last General Election 4170 Votes were given in—by which it will appear, that upwards of 1200 Freeholders in this State have not voted on the Subject of the proposed National Constitution.*

*Providence Gazette, 12 April 1788*<sup>6</sup>

The Honourable General Assembly, at their Session last Week, by Adjournment, at East-Greenwich, resumed the Consideration of a Memorial presented by the Society of Friends, at their late Session in this Town, which was referred to the People in Town-Meetings for Instructions.—This Memorial embraced two Objects—a Repeal of the Tender Act (so called) and of the Statute of Limitations to two Years. On reading the Instructions from the several Towns, there appeared a great Weight of Instructions for repealing the latter, which was accordingly done; but the Tender Act could not be shaken.—The principal Object of the Adjournment seems to have been, to receive and count the Yeas and Nays of the People on the new Fœderal Constitution.—These were counted by a Committee, who reported, “that there were 288 Yeas, and 2580 Nays,” the whole Number of Voters amounting only to 2868, less

than Half the Number of Freemen in the State. On this Ground some entertained Doubts whether any decisive Evidence has been given, by such Proceeding, of the Minds of the Freemen in this State on the Subject. The Letter drafted to convey this Information to Congress is said to contain an Offer of unlimited Power to that Honourable Body for regulating Trade, levying Imposts, Excises, &c. After reading this Letter, a Doubt arose whether the General Assembly possessed Authority to make a Tender of Powers to Congress, so essentially diminishing the Privileges of their Constituents, without consulting them on that Subject also.—Several Members discovered an Inclination to adopt some Measures for reducing to a Certainty the Powers which the Freemen of this State were willing to devolve on Congress, but after some ineffectual Motions this Business was waved.—Many Continental Invalids received generous Sums on Account—and the immediate Servants of the Houses of Assembly were paid at the Rate of Six for One.—On first putting the Question for receiving the Petition presented by this Town, the first Shew of Hands was in the Negative; but after some Explanation it was received: Time was allowed to advocate it, but without any Reply from the other Side of the House, it was ordered off the Table, as were similar Petitions from other Parts of the State.—The General-Treasurer was directed to issue Executions for delinquent Taxes, which are to be returned on the 28th Instant.

On Saturday the Assembly adjourned without Day.

1. Reprinted twenty-one times (six excerpts) by 12 May: Vt. (1), N.H. (1), Mass. (9), Conn. (4), N.Y. (3), Pa. (3). The last paragraph was reprinted alone five times by 10 May: N.H. (1), Mass. (1), N.Y. (1), Md. (1), S.C. (1).

2. A reference to the secretive evening caucuses that the members of the Country party regularly held. See “Glossary” (RCS:R.I., 317).

3. For the instructions to the Newport deputies and Providence petition, see RCS:R.I., 182–85, 193–98, respectively.

4. Reprinted fifteen times by 10 May: N.H. (1), Mass. (6), Conn. (1), N.Y. (3), N. J. (1), Pa. (2), S.C. (1). Five newspapers omitted the second paragraph, and the *New Brunswick, N.J.*, *Brunswick Gazette*, 6 May, omitted the internal footnote.

5. See note 3 (above). For William Ellery’s account of the legislature’s actions on Newport’s instructions and Providence’s petition, see his letter to the Commissioners of the Treasury, 4–6 April (Mfm:R.I.).

6. Reprinted in the *Newport Mercury*, 14 April, *Norwich Packet*, 16 April, and *New York Journal* and *New York Packet*, 25 April.

### **Report of Committee Counting Yeas and Nays Upon the New Constitution, 3 April 1788<sup>1</sup>**

Whereas the following List and Report were presented unto this Assembly, to wit:

Newport,	Yeas 1	Nays 10	Exeter,	Yeas 6	Nays 142
Providence,	0	1	Bristol,	26	23
Warwick,	3	140	Tiverton,	23	92
Portsmouth,	12	60	Little-Compton,	63	57
Westerly,	12	56	Warren,	2	41
South-Kingstown,	1	125	Cumberland,	10	113
New-Shoreham,	0	32	Richmond,	1	68
North-Kingstown,	2	160	Hopkinton,	33	95
East-Greenwich,	2	91	Johnston,	2	79
Jamestown,	5	11	Cranston,	0	101
Smithfield,	2	158	Middletown,	6	40
Scituate,	0	156	North-Providence,	0	48
Glocester,	9	228	Barrington,	9	34
Coventry,	0	180	Foster,	0	177
West-Greenwich,	2	145		<u>238</u>	<u>2714</u>
Charlestown,	6	51			

We the Subscribers, being appointed a Committee to examine the Votes given by the Freemen of this State, agreeably to an Act of the General-Assembly passed at last Session, upon the Question whether the new proposed Constitution for the United States, be adopted by this State or not, beg Leave to Report, that we have examined the Yeas and Nays and find the Number of Yeas to be Two Hundred and Thirty-seven and the Number of Nays Two Thousand Seven Hundred and Eight, so that there is a Majority of Two Thousand Four Hundred and Seventy-one Nays.

Thomas Durfee,	} Committee
John Sayles,	
James Sheldon,	
Shearjashub Bourne,	
Gideon Arnold	

Which being duly considered, It is Voted and Resolved, That the said Report be, and the same is hereby accepted, And that his Honor the Deputy Governor (Daniel Owen), Jonathan J. Hazard, Thomas Joslin, and Rowse J. Helme, be appointed a Committee to draft a Letter to the President of Congress, inclosing the aforesaid Returns.

1. MS, Rhode Island Records, 13:465–66, R-Ar. Printed: General Assembly Schedule, March 1788 Session (Evans 21424), 11. A draft of the report is in Reports, 1778–1788, no. 122, R-Ar. The committee incorrectly reported two votes, making the two totals incorrect. For Exeter the committee listed 136 nays instead of 142. (The 136 total was the difference between six yeas and 142 nays.) The committee reported only one yea for Johnston when the correct number was two. Hence, the committee's incorrect totals were 237 yeas and 2,708 nays. The errors are corrected in the table printed here.

**House of Deputies Proceedings, Thursday, 3 April 1788 (excerpt)<sup>1</sup>**

. . . Vote of this House receiving the report of the Comtee upon the Yeas & Nays & appointing a Comtee. to draft a Lre to Presidt of Congress was had . . .

1. MS, House of Deputies Journal, R-Ar.

**House of Magistrates Proceedings, Friday, 4 April 1788 (excerpt)<sup>1</sup>**

. . . No. 10 Vote of the Lower House accepting the Report of the Committee for Counting the Yeas and Nays upon the proposed federal Constitution, and appointing J Hazard T. Joslyn and RJ Helme, Comm to draught a Let to the President of Congress was Read & Concurred— This House added the Hoñble D Owen Esq. to said Committee, & sent down Concurrdd . . .

1. MS, House of Magistrates Journal, R-Ar.

**General Assembly Approves Draft of a Letter to Congress  
5 April 1788<sup>1</sup>**

The Committee appointed to prepare a Letter to the President of Congress respecting the proposed Constitution for the United States, and inclosing the Returns of the Votes of the Freemen of this State thereon, having, agreeably to their Appointment, presented unto this Assembly a Draft of a Letter; and it being duly considered,

It is Voted and Resolved, That the same be approved: That the Secretary make a fair Copy thereof: And that his Excellency the Governor be, and hereby is, requested to sign the said Letters in Behalf of this Assembly and transmit the same to His Excellency the President of Congress.

1. MS, Rhode Island Records, 13:472–73, R-Ar. Printed: General Assembly Schedule, March 1788 Session (Evans 21424), 17. See Mfm:R.I., for the 5 April proceedings of the House of Deputies and House of Magistrates on the letter.

**The Governor of Rhode Island to the President of Congress  
Providence, 5 April 1788<sup>1</sup>**

State of Rhode-Island and Providence-Plantations.

In General Assembly.

April 5th. 1788

Sir, The Report of the Convention assembled in Philadelphia, being transmitted by the Secretary of Congress, was received by us at October Session last; & 1000 Copies thereof were ordered to be printed and



sent into the respective Towns within this State, that the People at large might have a full Opportunity of considering and communing upon so important an Object; which was immediately done.—And at February Session last the Consideration thereof was submitted to the Freemen of this State by the inclosed Act: And, the Returns from each respective Town being delivered in, it appears that the Yeas for adopting the Constitution for the United States were Two Hundred and Thirty seven, and the Nays Two Thousand Seven Hundred and Eight, agreeably to the within Return.

Altho this State hath been singular from her Sister States in the Mode of collecting the Sentiments of the People upon the Constitution, it was not done wth. the least Design to give any Offence to the respectable Body who composed the Convention, or a Disregard to the Recommendation of Congress, but upon pure Republican Principles, founded upon that Basis of all Governments originally deriving from the Body of the People at large.—And altho' the Majority hath been so great against adopting the Constitution, yet the People in general conceive that it may contain some necessary Articles which could well be added and adapted to the present Confederation. They are sensible that the present Powers invested with Congress are incompetent for the great national Government of the Union, and would heartily acquiesce in granting sufficient Authority to that Body to make exercise and enforce Laws throughout the States which would tend to regulate Commerce, impose Duties and Excise, whereby Congress might establish Funds for discharging the public Debt.

We regret that any Dissensions should [be?] in this State, when the Good of the Community is our Wish, and it will ever be our Disposition to endeavor to promote whatever appears to us to be of public Utility, and to harmonize as much as possible.

In Behalf of the General Assembly I have the Honor to be, with every Sentiment of Esteem, Sir Your Excellency's Most humble and Most obedient Servant

1. RC, PCC, Item 64, State Papers of New Hampshire and of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, 1775–88, pp. 603–5, DNA. Endorsed: “April 5. 1788/Gov. Rhodeisland/The conduct of the Assembly/touching the Constitution—/read 2 May 1788—/enclosed—/Act of the State—submitting/the constitution to the people—/Report of Comee. with Yeas & Nays.” Transcripts of the letter and the two other documents are on pp. 182–87 of “Bankson’s Journal” which is labeled “Ratifications of the Constitution, 1786–91.” The Journal—kept by Benjamin Bankson, a clerk of the Confederation Congress—is in RG 11, Ratifications of the Constitution with Copies of Credentials of Delegates to the Constitutional Convention, DNA.

The draft of the letter prepared by the committee appointed for that purpose is in Letters from the Governor, Vol. 4, No. 76, R-Ar. The Assembly’s clerk endorsed the draft

letter: "In the lowr House—April 5 1788 It is Voted & Resolved that a fair Copy of the foregoing letter be made by the Secretary, and his Excellency the Govr. is requested to subscribe the same on behalf of this As[sem]bly & to transmit the same to his Excellency the President of Congress. Voted & passed By ord. R J Helme Clk." Below this endorsement, the secretary of the upper house wrote: "In the Upper House Read the same day & Concurred By ord. Hy Sherburne Dy Secy." Governor Collins' letter was read in Congress on 2 May, at which time Rhode Island was unrepresented in Congress (JCC, XXXIV, 131n).

For two private commentaries on this letter, see Samuel Huntington to Stephen Mix Mitchell, 24 April, and Thomas Tudor Tucker to St. George Tucker, 2 May (both Mfm:R.I.).

### **Antoine de la Forest to Comte de la Luzerne New York, 15 April 1788 (excerpt)<sup>1</sup>**

. . . The State of Rhode Island itself, in spite of its insignificance and the scorn in which the party that has directed affairs there for three years is held, serves to encourage, by its conduct, the obstinacy of the opposition in these states. Its legislature, which steadfastly refused to convene a convention of the people, was no longer able to avoid acknowledging the proposed constitution, and has referred it for consideration by each Town. It well knew that it would be easier to make this plan fail there than in a large assembly where discussion enlightens the mind and where the arguments of *antifederalists* cannot hold out against those of their adversaries; some of these Towns have in effect voted against the new Government. The others have [met?] in order to examine it, have protested against [the] resolution of the legislature, and have demanded the convocation of a convention like the other States. The legislature has rejected this [demand?] and, [in] what is the height of bad faith, informed Congress of the negative vote of the ill-disposed Towns as the decision of the entire State. It is however established that there are almost 7000 votes in [the state?] and that the negative votes amounted to only 2500. *Federalists* can expect nothing more from Rhode [Island], and there is reason to believe that it will yield only to the unanimity of its sister States. . . .

1. RC (Tr), Affaires Étrangères, Correspondence Consulaires, BI 910, New York, ff. 37–38, Archives Nationales, Paris, France. This letter, dispatch number 227, was endorsed as received on 9 June 1788. For a translation of the entire letter, see CC:681. Antoine René Charles Mathurin de la Forest (b. 1756) was French vice consul for the United States stationed in New York City. César-Henri, Comte de la Luzerne (1737–1799), was French Minister of Marine and Colonies, 1787–90.

### **Philadelphia Independent Gazetteer, 1 May 1788**

A correspondent says, that the state of Rhode-Island deserves applause and imitation for her wisdom and virtue in three very important

matters. In the first place by an act of Assembly the state of Rhode-Island declared that all the negroes born there after March, 1784, were absolutely and at once free.<sup>1</sup> The assembly also lately passed an act which laid a heavy fine upon any citizen of the state who should carry negroes from Africa to any part of the world whatever, and which made the vessel engaged in the horrid traffic liable to forfeiture.<sup>2</sup> In this holy and glorious zeal for a persecuted part of the human species (in which she has been considerably followed by the state of Pennsylvania) she deserves the esteem of the whole Christian world, and will draw down upon herself the blessings of Heaven. Secondly, The state of Rhode-Island a long time ago manifested a just indignation against the dangerous society of the Cincinnati, and declared that no members of that society should hold an office in the state.<sup>3</sup> Thirdly, They have submitted the new constitution to all the freemen of the state, who have rejected it by a large majority, and the motion which was made in the assembly for calling a convention, was rejected by a majority of 27. The new constitution therefore is cast out of that state (to use the strong expression of the prophet) AS A MENSTRUOUS CLOTH.<sup>4</sup> In this procedure the house of representatives in Massachusetts Bay seem inclined to support her, and perhaps the people of New-Hampshire. If therefore the friends of liberty and human nature will unite, they may baffle the dark and wicked conspiracy which has been formed to enslave this country, notwithstanding Maryland has adopted the new government, and South Carolina probably will adopt it.

According to the poet,

The wise and active conquer difficulties  
By daring to attempt them, sloth and folly  
Shiver and shrink at sight of toil and hazard,  
And MAKE the impossibility they FEAR.<sup>5</sup>

1. See "An Act authorizing the Manumission of Negroes . . .," General Assembly Schedule, February 1784 Session (Evans 18748), 6–7.

2. The fine was £100 for every person brought in illegally. See "An Act to prevent the Slave-Trade, and to encourage the Abolition of Slavery," General Assembly Schedule, October 1787 Session (Evans 20685), 4–5.

3. On 16 April 1784 the Boston *Independent Chronicle* reported that Rhode Island was about "to disfranchise any and every person who is a member [of the Society of Cincinnati], and render them incapable of holding any post of honour and trust in that government." The rumor spread and was widely believed to be true. George Washington, in writing to Thomas Jefferson on 30 May 1787, refuted it: "The Legislature of Rhode-Island never passed any act whatever on the subject (that ever came to my knowledge)" (W. W. Abbot, ed., *The Papers of George Washington: Confederation Series* [6 vols., Charlottesville, Va., 1992–1997], V, 206–7).

4. The verse from Isaiah 30:22 states "thou shalt cast them away as a menstuous cloth," in reference to graven images.

5. Nicholas Rowe, *The Ambitious Step-mother. A Tragedy* (London, 1701), 5.

**III.**  
**THE DEBATE OVER THE**  
**CONSTITUTION IN RHODE ISLAND**  
**27 March–17 December 1788**

**Introduction**

Following the statewide referendum of 24 March 1788 on the Constitution, the public debate on the Constitution in Rhode Island remained masked by a fierce and bitter political contest over the economy, especially the role of paper money and the payment of the state debt. Not until September 1789 when the state completed a process that redeemed Rhode Island's entire war-time debt with depreciated paper money was the Country party leadership willing to consider calling a state convention to consider the ratification of the Constitution.

*Public Commentaries on the Constitution*

The major newspaper articles originating in Rhode Island between 24 March and 17 December 1788 significantly exceeded those printed earlier. Major Federalist essays outnumbered Antifederalist essays by about five to one. The *Newport Herald* and the *United States Chronicle* were most active in printing original Federalist items. The Federalist essays are: *Newport Herald*, 17 April (a "plough jogger"); "Landholder," *United States Chronicle*, 8 May; "American Philosopher," *Newport Herald*, 29 May; "Paper Money," *Newport Herald*, 12 June; "Tib. Gracchus," *United States Chronicle*, 19 June; "A Rhode-Islander," *Newport Herald*, 10 July; "Solon, junior" (David Howell?), *Providence Gazette*, 12 July; "Phocion" (Theodore Foster), *United States Chronicle*, 17 July; "A Friend to Good Government" and "Observer" both in the *Newport Herald*, 24 July; "Solon, junior" (David Howell?), *Providence Gazette*, 2, 9, 23 August; *Newport Herald*, 7 August; *United States Chronicle*, 7 August; *Newport Herald*, 14 August; "The Recantation," *Newport Herald*, 21 August; "A Freeholder," *United States Chronicle*, 18 September; "A Friend to the Union," *Providence Gazette*, 18 October; "Rhodiensis," *Newport Herald*, 23 October; and *Newport Herald*, 27 November ("A Tête a Tête, or Whispering Dialogue").

The major Antifederalist articles are: *United States Chronicle*, 27 March ("Letter from a Hermit to His Friend"); "A real Federalist," *United States Chronicle*, 27 March; "Lycurgus," *United States Chronicle*, 3 April; and "A Friend to Paper Money," *Newport Herald*, 12 June.

It should be noted that some major original pieces published after 27 March 1788 appear in II, above. These pieces which relate to the

24 March referendum on the Constitution are: “Amendment,” *Providence Gazette*, 29 March (Antifederalist); “A Freeman,” *Newport Herald*, 3 April (Federalist); and *Newport Herald*, 3 April (“Result of the Proceedings in this State on the New Constitution”) (Federalist). This final piece was reprinted in part in the *United States Chronicle*, 10 April.

Rhode Island newspapers continued to report on events in other states related to the Constitution. Newspapers printed reports on the speeches of prominent men; reports of the election of delegates to state conventions and items on state elections that affected the Constitution; proceedings and debates of state conventions; accounts of ratification by state conventions; descriptions of celebrations of ratification; praise of the minorities in some of the ratifying states; and speculation about the impact of ratification on non-ratifying states. They also informed their readers about violence for and against the Constitution, especially the violence in Dobbs County, N.C., and the Fourth of July celebration in Albany, N.Y.; the state of the American economy and politics; the opinions of prominent Americans, such as George Washington and Edmund Randolph, on the Constitution; foreign opinion on the Constitution and the United States; the danger posed by Great Britain if the Constitution was not ratified; Congress and the organization of the new government under the Constitution and the location of the federal capital; and seemingly innumerable squibs about the prospects of ratification in the states, including Rhode Island.

The written debate over the Constitution in Rhode Island consisted, in part, of essays originating in other states, although the number of them decreased after the referendum. In particular, a significant decline in such essays began in the late spring and the summer months since the national debate on ratification was virtually over once eleven states had ratified the Constitution. Editors’ Notes have been written for the two most significant of these out-of-state pieces—Delawarean John Dickinson’s nine “Fabius” essays and a pamphlet by New Yorker John Jay signed “A Citizen of New-York.”

The two Providence newspapers—the *Providence Gazette* and the *United States Chronicle*—were most active in reprinting Federalist items from other states. An asterisk identifies the writings that are provided with Editors’ Notes. The major Federalist writings printed before 17 December 1788 that were reprinted in Rhode Island include: *New Hampshire Spy*, 1 January 1788 (“Political Scraps”) (CC:402); “Hugh Williamson: Speech at Edenton, N.C.,” *New York Daily Advertiser*, 25–27 February (CC:560); “A Real Patriot,” *Pennsylvania Mercury*, 26 February (CC:529–B); \* “The Landholder No. X” (spurious), *Maryland Journal*, 29 February (CC:580); “A. B.” (Francis Hopkinson), *Philadelphia Independent*

*Gazetteer*, 11 March; “Ebenezer Hazard’s Defense” (of Post Office Policies), *New York Journal*, 21 March (CC:Vol. 4, pp. 567–68); \* “Landholder” XII and XIII (Oliver Ellsworth), *Connecticut Courant*, 17, 24 March (CC:622, 641); “James Iredell: Address to the Freemen of Edenton, N.C.,” c. 28–29 March (CC:649); \* “Fabius” I–IX (John Dickinson), *Pennsylvania Mercury*, 12, 15, 17, 19, 22, 24, 26, 29 April, and 1 May (CC:677, 684, 690, 693, 699, 705, 710, 717, 722); “Peter Prejudice: The New Breeches” (John Mifflin?), *Philadelphia Federal Gazette*, 15 April (CC:685); \* “A Citizen of New-York: An Address to the People of the State of New York” (John Jay) (pamphlet), 15 April (CC:683); “An American: To the Members of the Virginia Convention” (Tench Coxe), *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 21, 28 May (RCS:Va., 832–43, 889–94; and CC:751); “James Wilson Oration,” Philadelphia, 4 July, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 9 July (supplement) (CC:799–E); “A Friend of Society and Liberty” (Tench Coxe), *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 23 July (CC:813); Aaron Hall, *An Oration, Delivered at the Request of the Inhabitants of Keene, June 30, 1788 . . .* (pamphlet), 5 August; “A Friend to sound Politics, and Rational Religion,” *Pennsylvania Packet*, 29 September; and “Alfred” II, *Massachusetts Spy*, 16 October (Mfm:Mass. 945).

The major out-of-state Antifederalist writings that appeared before 17 December 1788 that were reprinted in Rhode Island include: “Algernon Sidney” III, *Philadelphia Independent Gazetteer*, 4 March 1788 (Mfm:Pa. 480); “Original Letters,” *Philadelphia Freeman’s Journal*, 5 March (Mfm:Pa. 487 and CC:Vol. 4, p. 555 [brief excerpts]); “Brutus” XV (Melancton Smith?), *New York Journal*, 20 March (CC:632); “Luther Martin: Address No. IV,” *Maryland Journal*, 4 April (CC:662); “Algernon,” *Philadelphia Independent Gazetteer*, 10 April (CC:Vol. 4, pp. 582–83); *Philadelphia Independent Gazetteer*, 5 May (CC:729); “A Freeman,” *Philadelphia Independent Gazetteer*, 13 May (CC:742); and George Clinton’s Last Speech to the New York Convention, *Poughkeepsie Country Journal*, 29 July (RCS:N.Y., 2324).

Rhode Island newspapers continued their interest in amendments to the Constitution that began with the publication of the amendments proposed by Richard Henry Lee and the minority of the Pennsylvania Convention and the amendments recommended by the Massachusetts Convention. (See I, above, for Editors’ Notes for these proposed amendments.) Three Rhode Island newspapers published the amendments that Antifederalist William Paca presented to the Maryland Convention, while one newspaper reprinted the address of the minority of the Maryland Convention which included Paca’s amendments and other amendments presented and considered. (See “Rhode Island Receives News of Maryland Ratification,” 15 May–7 June, below.) All four Rhode Island newspapers reprinted the four recommended amendments of the

South Carolina Convention. (See “Rhode Island Receives News of South Carolina Ratification,” 10–21 June, below.)

Three Rhode Island newspapers reprinted five of the twelve recommended amendments of the New Hampshire Convention. (The omitted seven amendments were almost identical to the amendments recommended by the Massachusetts Convention. See CC:785 for the New Hampshire amendments.) No Rhode Island newspaper reprinted the forty recommended amendments of the Virginia Convention; in fact, only one New England newspaper reprinted these amendments. (See CC:790 for the Virginia amendments.) Three Rhode Island newspapers published the declaration of rights, form of ratification, recommended amendments, and circular letter of the New York Convention. (See RCS:N.Y., 2326–35, 2335–37, or CC:818 A–C.) Lastly, one Rhode Island newspaper reprinted the proposed Declaration of Rights and structural amendments of the North Carolina Convention, which on 2 August refused to ratify the Constitution until amendments were submitted to Congress and to a second general convention. (See “The Reception in Rhode Island of the News of the North Carolina Convention which Refused to Ratify the Constitution,” 31 July–27 December 1788 [below].)

### *Celebrations*

By late May, eight states had ratified the Constitution, with the seventh and eighth states—Maryland and South Carolina—ratifying on 26 April and 23 May, respectively. Rhode Island newspapers reported extensively on the Maryland and South Carolina ratifications, but despite the interest no public celebrations were reported. However, when New Hampshire (21 June), Virginia (25 June), and New York (26 July), became the ninth, tenth, and eleventh states to ratify some Rhode Islanders celebrated. Under the Constitution, the ratification by nine states meant that the Constitution could be implemented among the ratifying states. Because of the importance of New Hampshire’s ratification, the Federalist towns of Newport and Providence commemorated the event. In a well-planned celebration, not without some turmoil, Providence again marked New Hampshire’s ratification on the Fourth of July. Similar festivities occurred in East Greenwich, Little Compton, and Wickford on the Fourth. On 5 July, Providence observed Virginia’s ratification, and at the end of the month Providence and Newport celebrated New York’s ratification, which had been most uncertain. (See below for the groupings of documents on these Rhode Island celebrations.)

### *Private Commentaries on the Constitution*

Thirty-seven letters on the ratification debate in Rhode Island are printed in this section which covers the nine months following the 24

March 1788 referendum on the Constitution. This is about two and a half times that for the six months preceding the referendum. Twenty-one of the thirty-seven are from Newport (10) and Providence (11). The other sixteen letters are from outside Rhode Island. Eight were written from New York City, with most of them coming from delegates to the Confederation Congress. The other letters were written from Boston (2); Biddeford, Maine; Bristol, England; Norwich, Conn.; Philadelphia; Staten Island, N.Y.; and Wethersfield, Conn.

In addition to these thirty-seven letters, there are printed below five extracts of letters from out-of-state newspapers, three of which were written by Rhode Islanders, one from Newport and another from Providence. Two diary entries and one journal entry, all from Providence, also appear below. Virtually all of these forty-five documents have a pronounced Federalist bias. Lastly, in Part II (above), there are four Federalist letters, one each from New York City, Orange County, Va., Newport, and Providence. Excerpted in an out-of-state newspaper is a letter from a Newport Federalist.

Letter writers and diarists praised the Constitution, believing that it would put an end to Rhode Island's radical financial policies and improve the state's economy, especially commerce. They described, praised, and criticized Rhode Island politics and political parties, particularly the paper money policy of the dominant Country party, which was intent on paying the state debt with depreciated paper money. Writers demonstrated how the state's financial policies hurt them; speculated on the prospects for ratification in other states, especially Virginia, New York, and North Carolina; reported on the states that had ratified; described Rhode Island celebrations of other states' ratifications; asserted that Rhode Island would not ratify the Constitution unless forced to do so by events; believed that Rhode Island would eventually ratify despite the strong opposition to the Constitution; feared that Rhode Island would be divided among its neighboring states if it did not ratify the Constitution; and reported on the necessity of Rhode Island's representation in the Confederation Congress, which was planning the organization of the new government under the Constitution, including the location of the federal capital. No letter writer made a substantial and careful analysis of the provisions of the Constitution.

Eight letters written by the prolific William Ellery of Newport are informative regarding the politics of Rhode Island and even of New York and the prospects for ratification. Ellery believed strongly that Rhode Island would not ratify until the state debt was paid with depreciated paper money. He was also keenly interested in the state's representation in the Confederation Congress. Two letters by Alexander



Hamilton, a New York delegate to Congress, written to Jeremiah Olney of Providence, demonstrated how interested Hamilton was in Rhode Island's representation. In particular, Hamilton recommended how the arch Antifederalist Jonathan J. Hazard, one of the state's congressional delegates, should be handled. Olney's responses are also valuable.

Letter writers from outside the state excoriated Rhode Islanders. John Avery, Jr., of Boston described the Country party as "an obstinete, insurgetical and a very ignorant set of Beings." Samuel Hodgdon of Philadelphia declared that Rhode Island "is drowned in sin and Misery" and that its "politicks are as rascally as ever." Caleb Evans of Bristol, England, stated that Rhode Island was "so disgraceful a figure amongst the other sister States." And Joseph Webb of Wethersfield, Connecticut, dismissed Rhode Island as "too trifling a State to *Notice* upon the great scale."

#### *Legislative Sessions*

The Country party, most of whom were Antifederalists, assumed power in May 1786 and remained firmly in control of the legislature, which met four times during this period. The Constitution was not the legislature's major concern, although some sessions acted upon it. Peter Edes, the Federalist printer of the *Newport Herald*, published biased reports on three of the four sessions during this time. The *Herald's* reports appear below, with the exception of the March 1788 session, which appears in II-C (above). For the May session (7–10 May), which took no action on the Constitution, Edes replaced his normal report with a satirical assessment of the legislature's perceived misdeeds (*Newport Herald*, 15 May, Mfm:R.I.).

In the June session (9–14 June) a motion to call a state convention "was not noticed" by the lower house, which adjourned to the last Monday in October. The legislative session of October 1788 (27 October–1 November) took several actions on the Constitution. On 1 November the lower house rejected a motion to call a convention by a vote of 40 to 14, the fourth such rejection since 3 November 1787. The lower house also defeated a motion to rescind the tender provision of the paper money act of May 1786. The legislature then ordered that the New York Convention's circular letter and the Convention's proposed amendments be printed and transmitted to Rhode Island's town clerks. The freemen of the towns were to instruct their deputies to the legislature on whether to appoint delegates to a second general convention that would propose amendments to the Constitution as recommended by the New York circular letter. The letter and amendments were printed in the *Newport Herald* on 7, 14 August, the *United*

*States Chronicle* on 14 August, and the *Providence Gazette* on 16 August. (For the text and publication of the New York Convention's circular letter and the proposed amendments, see RCS:N.Y., 2326–37.)

#### *Town Meetings*

The proceedings of town meetings for twenty-one towns, arranged alphabetically, are printed in this Part as “Town Meetings Called to Consider New York’s Circular Letter,” 22 November–29 December 1788. These proceedings reflect the action that towns took at the request of the legislature on the circular letter’s recommendation that a second general convention be called to consider amendments to the Constitution.

Printed separately are the proceedings of the North Providence town meeting held prior to the legislative session of October 1788 in which the town instructed its deputies to call for a state convention to consider the Constitution.

#### **A real Federalist**

##### **Providence United States Chronicle, 27 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

MR. WHEELER, A Scurrilous Piece, aimed at the government of this State, having appeared in a Connecticut Paper, under the signature of a *Landholder*; and having no doubt that the concealed as well as the open and avowed enemies of the State, will be anxious to have it reprinted here—and will request you to publish it: If that should be the case, I expect (from the impartiality which you have always professed) that these few Lines will follow that publication.—The *Landholder* is a public defaulter<sup>2</sup>—in his hands are large sums of public money, unaccounted for—and which the new Constitution will secure in his pocket—and all his venom pointed at this State, is in consequence of our appearing so decidedly against this system of government, so happily framed to cover the villainies of those harpies, who during the late war rioted upon the spoils of the distressed inhabitants of this devoted country;—but, Sir, fortunately for us, there are still patriots left,—who like a constellation will clear the mists, too long suffered to blind the eyes of the honest yeomanry of our country, and who are now exhibiting their talents for that purpose.—The names of *Richard Henry Lee*, *Elbridge Gerry*, *George Clinton*, *Luther Martin*,<sup>3</sup> &c. &c. will long be revered by their admiring countrymen, for the noble stand they make against the new Constitution.

*Providence, March 26, 1788.*

1. This item was printed in the *United States Chronicle* immediately below the *Chronicle's* reprinting of "Landholder" XII. ("Landholder" XII was originally printed in the *Connecticut Courant* and the *Hartford American Mercury* on 17 March [CC:622]. For more on the reprinting of "Landholder" XII in Rhode Island, see "The Rhode Island Reprinting of the Landholder Essays," 6 December 1787–8 May 1788 [I, above].)

"A real Federalist" was reprinted in the *Hartford American Mercury* on 7 April.

2. "Lycurgus," *United States Chronicle*, 3 April (below), repeated the charge. On 8 May the *Chronicle* printed a piece by "the Author of the *Landholder*" who defended himself against the charges made by "A real Federalist" (below).

3. All four Antifederalists listed published articles or letters opposing the Constitution. For Lee's letter to Governor Edmund Randolph, 16 October 1787, see CC:325; for Gerry's letter to the Massachusetts General Court, 18 October, see CC:227–A; for "Cato" (Clinton?) I–VII, printed between 27 September 1787 and 3 January 1788, see CC:Vols. 1–3 *passim*; and for Martin's *Genuine Information*, I–XII, printed between 28 December 1787 and 8 February 1788, see CC:Vols. 3–4 *passim*.

For the reprinting of the letters by Lee and Gerry in Rhode Island, see "The Rhode Island Reprinting of Richard Henry Lee's Letter to Virginia Governor Edmund Randolph," 16 February 1788, and "The Rhode Island Reprinting of Elbridge Gerry's Letter to the Massachusetts Legislature," 8–10 November 1787 (both I, above). "Cato" and "Genuine Information" were not reprinted in Rhode Island.

### Providence United States Chronicle, 27 March 1788

MR. WHEELER, *By publishing the following Copy of a Letter from a Hermit to his Friend, in your impartial Chronicle, you will oblige some of your Readers.*

DEAR SIR, Yours, which inclosed the form of the new Constitution, proposed by the honorable Convention at Philadelphia, for the future government of the thirteen free and independent States of America, hath at last reached my lonely cottage; and I am surprized to find you, Sir, endeavouring to support it, and cannot account for it any other way than that you expect to be promoted (under it) to a place of profit or honour—which generally governs the principles of men;—for upon a perusal thereof, I find it to be fraught with many errors, and things that may be made use of to the total destruction of the *liberty* of the people; and think it may be very well added to the seven wonders of the world, and so be an eighth.—That a set of men, endowed with great abilities, as those gentlemen who composed the Convention certainly were, should presume to present to the great tribunal of the public such a monster, that far exceeds the description of the wonderful Colossus at Rhodes<sup>1</sup>—for that is said only strided over a river of fifty fathoms wide, and held in its hand a light-house, for the direction of vessels into the harbour—but this monster is not only to stride over a territory of fifty fathoms, but over the thirteen States of America—and instead of holding a light-house in its hand, holds forth to the

people the sword of tyranny, which doubtless the framers thereof meant to have brandished over the heads of the people of these States, as soon as it should be adopted: And if ever it is, and by some unforeseen event should be thrown down, as the famous Colossus was, it would operate very differently to the interests of the people, as that deprived them of the light which directed them, and the destruction of the latter would suffer the people to see and enjoy again that liberty which God and nature has entitled them to;—and upon a further investigation I find, that almost every section of each article, admits of a double construction, and requires an interpreter to explain them; but if it should be rejected by the States, it might not be lost, but would answer to sell to a Jew, or an Infidel, as well as the former; as neither are exempted from holding any office under said Constitution, as nothing but age and residence are required as qualifications. But you say, Sir, that without doubt they will be men of principles who will be appointed to hold the important stations, under the new Constitution; but as the deistical principle is gaining ground very fast in these States, I think, Sir, it would not be safe to trust the very best political men we have among us with such power—when history doth not afford us any instance where the people have entrusted absolute power in their rulers, but what in time they have used it to the enslaving the people: For I conceive, Sir, that a Constitution ought to be so framed, if possible, that the worst of men entrusted with power, could not, agreeable to the Constitution, use it to the destruction of the liberties of the people;—and I think, Sir, there is not a sufficient guard in the Constitution for the preventing those, who may hold offices under the Constitution, from a combination to perpetuate themselves and posterity in office. I agree with you, Sir, that there needed some farther power to have been vested in Congress, under some certain restrictions, for which I conceived the Convention was delegated with power to do, by revising and amending the old, but not by forming a new one.—Neither do I conceive that the free-born sons of America will vest any set of men on earth with power to call them to arms at any time (unless the States should be invaded) at his or their will or pleasure, and order them to any part of the world, where they may be in alliance with any King, Prince, or State, to defend such part of his or their territory as may be invaded; for I see nothing in the Constitution to prevent the President and those in power from calling the militia together, and hiring them out in the same way as the Germans, and other arbitrary Princes, do their inlisted soldiers. Will a people, Sir, who by such violent struggles have just saved themselves from the chains of Britain, peaceably submit to such an arbitrary form of government: No, Sir, I believe they never will;—the dear-bought

privileges of the free-born sons of America, I hope never will be admitted by the benevolent Father of mankind to be trifled away, in such a manner. I observe, Sir, by the proposed Constitution, that the liberty of the press is not secured, that great palladium of freedom—no bill of rights—no power reserved to the State legislatures—a standing army in time of peace—and a trial by jury in civil cases, not secured to the people; and persons indicted under any pretence whatever, are triable only before the Federal Court—as in that case the State becomes a party—so a man in New-Hampshire, indicted for any supposed crime, that he is in no wise guilty of, must be at the expence of appearing before the Federal Court, for trial, and that then may be setting in Georgia; but as a *discrimination* of the whole of the proposed Constitution would far exceed the bounds of a letter, shall conclude with the following remarks:—That there is room to fear, that a majority of those who composed the Convention were deists, or men of little or no religious principles—as they have made no provision for those who refuse to bear arms; especially the society of Friends, or Quakers, so called, a very large and respectable body of people in these States, who have ever refused to war or fight, not only in America, but wherever they are known as a people; believing, as they say, it is not consistent with the gospel dispensation: And I doubt not but what if those worthy gentlemen (as many of those who were the framers of the new Constitution, are) were to have it in their power again, would not only provide for the latter, but make many alterations in said Constitution.—Therefore, I conceive, Sir, it would be better and safer for the people to remit it back again to those gentlemen who were the framers of it, with their objections, in order for a revisal and alteration; or appoint a new Convention, with power to revise this or the former, which they may think may be easiest altered, to suit the conditions of the people, than to adopt it in its present form.—For can I conceive, that such a set of worthy gentlemen as composed the Convention, and framed the Constitution, many of whom not only ventured their fortunes, but their lives, to protect us from British tyranny, which we were so loudly threatened with—I say, Sir, had these men no other motives in protecting us from them, than that of having us to tyrannize over themselves: But I say it, with sorrow, that it appears to have been too much the governing principle. And another part of the Constitution, I observe, Sir, with sorrow—the toleration for the continuance of that inhuman practice of enslaving the poor Africans; a practice that is a disgrace to human nature, much more to a people who have tasted the sweets of liberty. But as the adoption of it I conceive will never operate to my disadvantage, as a cave answers for a place of my habitation, and as the last war

did not rouse me from my lonely cottage, I conclude I shall be left to enjoy it under whatever administration may prevail; and I trust, Sir, the same God, who protected the people of these States from the chains of Britain, will still protect them from the adoption of this Constitution in its present form.

1. One of the seven wonders of the Ancient World.

### **Bread and Beer**

**Providence Gazette, 29 March 1788<sup>1</sup>**

Mr. CARTER, You have been obliged to give your customers such a long *lent*, and diet them so *plaguy hard*, with *new Constitution* and *State Conventions*, that many of them are not only thoroughly *tired*, but very near *starved*;—therefore I think it high time to contrive a little about *eating and drinking*.—Although I have never consulted any of my fellow-customers on this important subject, yet I am much mistaken, from many *infallible appearances*, if it doth not meet with their *hearty* approbation; and should you concur in this sentiment, and judge it necessary that this antient practice, *which grows very fast out of fashion*, should be re-established, and at the same time approve the observations hereunto annexed, as having a tendency to hasten that wished-for event, your publishing them will much oblige your old customer, BREAD AND BEER.

1. This item introduced an essay by the same author entitled “*Brief Observations on the Nature and Use of raising BARLEY*.” The *Massachusetts Gazette*, 11 April, reprinted this item and the essay.

### **Lycurgus**

**Providence United States Chronicle, 3 April 1788**

Mr. WHEELER, *Please to give the following a Place in your impartial Chronicle, and you will oblige a Number of your Readers.*

To the patriotic REPUBLICANS of the State of RHODE-ISLAND, &c.

*Remember, O my Friends! the laws, the rights,  
The gen'rous plan of power, deliver'd down  
From age to age, by your renown'd forefathers,  
So dearly bought, the price of so much blood.—  
O! let them never perish in your hands,  
But piously transmit them to your children.—Addis.<sup>1</sup>*

*Friends and Countrymen*, Be united, be firm, and resolutely persevere in the just, the noble, and righteous cause of humanity, which you have so happily undertaken, and deliver your deserving country from the impending ruin with which it is threatened, and your names shall be

handed down with unsullied praise and glory to the latest ages of posterity; whilst your enemies, the speculators, extortioners, usurers, false friends, and the whole tribe of hypocrites, shall sink unnoticed in the arms of death, "*there let them rest, if rest they there can find.*" This, my countrymen, is a momentous æra, big with the fate of millions yet unborn;—behold the full tide of corruption, scurrility and abuse, comes pouring in from the sons of Molech, Belial and Mammon,<sup>2</sup> who have dipped their pens in gall, and nightly work iniquity—

*"Immortal, unimpair'd, they rear their head,  
And damn alike the living and the dead."*<sup>3</sup>

Observe the Landholder No. 12, in the Chronicle of the 27th instant,<sup>4</sup> the author of that infamous piece has put off his mask, and like one of Milton's devils declares for open war, and says, "*of wiles more unexpert I boast not,*" but "*rather choose, armed with hell-flames and fury, all at once o'er*" liberty's "*high towers to force resistless way;*"<sup>5</sup>—this man surely is in his last agonies—he must soon account for the public money he unjustly holds in his hands, or procure the adoption of the new Constitution; despairing of this, and being apprehensive that justice will soon overtake him, has mistaken his mark, and in a fit of canine madness levelled his blasphemous production at the patriotic majority of this devoted State;—I shall only say to him, what was applied to a character not an hundredth part so infamous:—

*"Be wicked as thou wilt, do all that's base;  
Proclaim thyself the monster of thy race,"*<sup>6</sup>

Now, while I am speaking of the abominations of the ungodly, I cannot forbear mentioning a couple of little paltry rogues, who as panders to the more important ones, have been pushed into public contempt—the first in a piece dated at Cumberland, appeared in the Chronicle of the 20th instant—the latter in the Newport Herald of the same date;—these blotters and profaners of paper, are endeavouring to cast the odium justly due to them and their party, upon the Quakers; and to draw them in to be a party against the present administration: This is an artful finesse, and if they do not extricate themselves from the snare, it may operate to their disadvantage, especially against those who were immediately concerned in drafting and presenting the petition.<sup>7</sup>—I hope and expect the Quakers have more sense and honesty, than to be drawn in as tools in the hands of a party, to serve their wicked purposes.—I am well assured, there are a large majority of that society, who view that petition with a jealous eye, and think it calculated to

serve unrighteous purposes.—The Quakers will most certainly stand or fall with the yeomanry of the State.

Why all this bustle, this mighty exertion to annul the Tender and Limitation Acts?—Answer me, ye speculators, extortioners, usurers, jugglers, and false friends;—answer me, ye whining, canting, office-hunting, aristocratic blockheads—or I will tell the world of your knavery—“*Cease then your guilty rage ye wayward sons.*”<sup>8</sup> Stand firmly upon your guard, my noble friends and countrymen—be not deceived—this is a critical moment—the Limitation-Act is the touchstone of your political existence—repeal this, and your cause is lost, and your country ruined: Every man who has taken the money for his public securities, or private debts, took it with a full assurance, that the General Assembly would support and maintain the laws in favour of it, with an uniform stability; and upon that ground only the money now circulates;—it is true they have hitherto acted uniform and just, but should they repeal or alter any law on which the credit of the money resteth, they would be highly culpable; for it would be the height of injustice after depreciating it by law, to force one part of the community to receive it, whilst they screen the other from it.—If the money has depreciated, it is entirely owing to the opposition it has received from those very men who are now striving to give it a fatal stab, by repealing or altering the Limitation-Act;—this act they very justly look upon as the corner-stone of the temple of freedom, and could they remove it, the structure would totter to its foundation—a repeal of the Tender-Law would soon follow, and then our money and our freedom would perish together, “*and like the baseless fabric of a vision leave not a trace behind.*”<sup>9</sup>

Have we not reason to be alarmed, and surprized to see *ten* members coming from the *two* towns of Newport and Providence, with instructions to use their influence for effecting the ruin of the money;<sup>10</sup>—what, in the name of common sense, do these men mean to trample on the laws and authority, and arrogate to themselves the government of the State?—they already have their emissaries in almost every town, who by their false insinuations are endeavouring to deceive the unsuspecting people into a compliance with their hypocritical petition. Look round and see who advocates this petition—will you not find them to be favourers of arbitrary measures, and opposers of the present administration; and such who have been bought and sold from side to side, with mere *dung*; and those who live on other people’s land, dupes to their haughty land-lords—these, my countrymen, are the expiring struggles of tyranny, villany and oppression; the enemies to freedom, liberty and justice are in their last agonies.—Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith you are made free,<sup>11</sup> for it is written, “*he who continueth to the*



*end shall be saved;*"<sup>12</sup> but, my friends, if you look back you may expect the fate of Lot's wife; though, instead of being a pillar of salt you would be transmuted to a group of servile slaves.<sup>13</sup>

P. S. To inquisitive author-hunters.—

*Having a circuit travell'd round,  
I now declare myself in town;—  
When I came here,—for what,—or how,  
It matters not—to tell you now.*

*Providence, 31st March, 1788.*

1. Joseph Addison, *Cato. A Tragedy* (1713), Act III, scene 5. The words were spoken by Cato himself.

2. According to John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, all three were fallen angels who became powerful demons in hell. Moloch was a violent demon worshiped through human sacrifice, Belial was a smooth-tongued trickster who used reason for evil purposes, and Mammon was representative of the evils of desiring too much wealth.

3. Charles Churchill, *An Epistle to William Hogarth* (London, 1763), 22.

4. See "The Rhode Island Reprinting of the Landholder Essays," 6 December 1787–8 May 1788 (I, above).

5. John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book II, lines 51–2, 60–2.

6. Churchill, *An Epistle*, 1.

7. A reference to "Every honest Man," *United States Chronicle*, 20 March, and an unsigned piece in the *Newport Herald*, 20 March, both of which responded to "Lycurgus," *United States Chronicle*, 13 March. The three essays (all Mfm:R.I.) discuss the Quaker petition to the legislature requesting the repeal of the tender provision of the paper-money act of 1786.

8. Churchill, *An Epistle*, 14.

9. William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act IV, scene 1, lines 151–56.

10. For the Newport instructions to their General Assembly deputies, see RCS:R.I., 184–85. On 24 March the Providence Town Meeting resolved unanimously in favor of repealing the legal tender provision of the paper-money act of 1786.

11. Galatians 5:1. "Stand fast therefore in liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. . . ."

12. Matthew 10:22. "And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."

13. For Lot's wife, who was transformed into a pillar of salt, see Genesis 19:26.

### **Newport Mercury, 7 April 1788<sup>1</sup>**

The state of Rhode-Island is fallen into a disagreeable and very calamitous situation. Great animosities and contentions with each other have arisen. They are divided into parties; and biting and devouring one another. Public injustice is established by a law. They have lost their credit abroad, and are become the subject of ridicule, reproach, and contempt. Their trade and all business are discouraged, and almost ruined. And Newport, the metropolis, is fast going to poverty and inevitable ruin, unless some unforeseen event should take place to prevent it.

1. The *Newport Mercury* for 7 April is not extant. This item has been transcribed from the reprinting in the *Philadelphia Federal Gazette*, 22 April, which introduced it with the following: "A writer in the *Newport (Rhode-Island) Mercury* of the 7th April last, describes the situation of that state in the following terms."

### **Philadelphia Federal Gazette, 8 April 1788**

Every true wellwisher to virtue and his country, says a correspondent, exults in contemplating, the happy effect that may very reasonably be expected to flow from our new federal constitution. This fabric is the work of patriotism and of wisdom: it is founded upon the firm and permanent basis of freedom: and has nought for its aim, but the glory of Columbia and the happiness of her citizens. The spirit of accommodation which pervades every part of it, the adoption of it in three states *unanimously*, in three others by very respectable and decided majorities, and the fair prospect we have of its ratification by six of the remaining states, all conspire to prove its superior excellence. That it has met with violent opposition from a *few* in Pennsylvania is true;<sup>1</sup> but let it be remembered that this state has long been distracted by an accursed spirit of party, and that the apprehension of a coercive and energetic power in the new system appears terrible in the eyes of men who have been accustomed to trample upon the authority of the general government and the laws of their own state; let us also reflect that *two thirds* of the last and present Assemblies and of the Convention of this state have warmly approved of it, and we shall find that even in this state it passed with much less opposition than any important public measure has done for several years past, indeed with less than could have been reasonably expected.

With respect to the fate of the constitution in Rhode Island, continues our correspondent, few, very few I believe, expect that it will be adopted there, until a reformation of their political iniquities shall have previously taken place. Will any man of common sense for a moment suppose that that petty state, which has long been a curse to the union, will be more federal now than heretofore? Or, that a system which must eventually destroy their favorite acts for paper money emissions and legal tenders, a system which would compel them to be honest, can, in the present state of things, have their sanction? No surely: nor can the federal citizens of the other states have a stronger proof of the goodness of their cause than this. I would not here wish to give a moment's uneasiness to the worthy men who form the minority of Rhode Island; on the contrary, I with pleasure anticipate the day when they shall become the majority; let them bear in mind that the great voice of the

people, in their sister states, is with them, “and that, in a free country, the voice of the people must prevail.”<sup>2</sup>

1. For the petition campaign requesting that the legislature reject Pennsylvania’s ratification of the Constitution, see RCS:Pa., 709–25. Over 6,000 people from several Pennsylvania counties signed these petitions.

2. The quotation is from a letter addressed to the patriot minority in both houses of the Irish Parliament by the convention of Ulster Volunteers which met at Dungannon on 15 February 1782. At this convention, the Irish insisted on their constitutional and commercial rights, although they recognized their loyalty and duty to the king. Nevertheless, they were “resolved to be free.” The letter was signed by the chairman of the convention, Colonel William Irvine, who was possibly a kinsman of William Irvine, a Pennsylvania congressman, 1787–88, and a native of Ireland.

### Newport Herald, 17 April 1788

Mr. EDES, *Please to give the following production of a plough jogger a place in your useful paper, and you’ll oblige one of your constant readers.*

Having lately perused the articles of the old confederation, it appeared to me like a forsaken, neglected, and despised friend.

The federalists forsake it as having done nearly all the good it can.

The antifederalists neglect and despise it, although they say hold to it, as its principal foundation is virtue, and the people have not virtue enough to be governed in a right manner by so mild a constitution—that instead of their morals being reformed under it, they corrupt more and more, as I conceive: for where is the faith pledged to supply the continental treasury to enable Congress to keep their faith, both foreign and domestic.

I have been much in favor of the old confederation, and thought it almost a miracle that so good a system of government should be formed at the first; and while I had the honor to be a member of our General Assembly, watched every innovation against it, thinking that there was virtue enough in the people and myself to do well under so mild a constitution; but my experience has taught me another lesson,—I have found my mistake in being against giving Congress more power.

I now begin to see the necessity of a more efficient government, which may be consistent with the liberties of the people; but I fear some people have wrong notions of liberty—That can’t be pure liberty where the government gives the subject liberty to do wrong, to cheat and defraud his neighbor, or a foreigner, and the power to withhold the means of supporting good government. Let us be familiar, it is demonstrable by a family; although the father, or master, may prefer mildness in his family, yet necessity obliges him sometimes to use rigorous measures; and we are told that foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it from him:<sup>1</sup> and

what son is there whom the father chasteneth not?<sup>2</sup> The great Governor of the Universe has given him the power; our depraved natures require it should be so. We are the same creatures in government, and need similar means, tho' in a more extensive manner: we may think when we arrive to manhood we can do without rigorous measures; but if so, what is meant by the sword the magistrate bears, that he don't bear in vain? but is to prove a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well;<sup>3</sup> they are said to be GOD's ministers, and He that has all power no doubt means they should have power, not to do wrong but to administer justice in his fear, consistent with his law: but some may say they are willing they should have power to do us good, but not wrong. If they were perfect as the great Governor you need not be afraid; but whether our fears don't originate as much from our own imperfections I leave you to judge; however, I think every possible check ought to be put upon them that have the supreme power (in our politics) so as not to prevent their doing all the good they can.—But this is a delicate point, it is almost impossible, but that they may abuse their power, if they are bad enough: this shews the necessity of our choosing good men, men that regard the public good more than their own humour, or supporting any party,—Most all agree something is necessary to be done to give energy to our public affairs.—But what that something is we seem unhappily divided about,—and some breathe out threats to those that act their sentiments, and also complain of arbitrary government, while they hold out an arbitrary spirit themselves.—Witness the threats against my privileges and property (though not by men of my own town) the times look dubious (or more the conduct of men) If we unite we may stand; but if we divide we fall: I think it proper either to dissolve the being of a Congress (if so what will be our fate) or give Congress more power; that instead of the states separate having a negative upon Congress, Congress may have a negative upon the respective states: that they as a disinterested body may settle all our concerns upon the large scale.—I think the proposed Constitution needs many checks. Massachusetts have proposed several by way of amendments:<sup>4</sup> but I think there needs more or some others, although I gave my voice in favour of it, choosing rather it should be adopted than rejected: therefore these were my words, of two evils I shall choose the least, therefore put me down yea,—thinking, as I had reason to believe the good of my country was the grand object in the proposed Constitution, and as they appear needful, alterations would be made accordingly.

*Exeter, April 14, 1788.*

1. Proverbs 22:15.
2. Hebrews 12:7.

3. Romans 13:4.

4. See "The Rhode Island Reprinting of the Massachusetts Convention's Amendments and Boston's Celebration of Massachusetts Ratification," 7–25 February (I, above), CC:508, and RCS:Mass., 1468–71.

**William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington  
Newport, 22 April 1788<sup>1</sup>**

It is a long time since I had the pleasure of a line from you.—

What is become of the arrearage of rent due from those who hired our farm with Lathrop.—He it seems has paid the rent he covenanted to pay;—and it is more than time that they had paid for their parts; for a year has elapsed since their parts of rent became due.—Let me request you, Sir, to collect them, and after deducting your meet reward to transmit the ballance to me.—I[f] a safe opportunity should not present for sending it directly from Norwich, you may send it to The Revd. Henry Channing of New London with a request to him to send it to me.—

I suspect you have been too lenient to those men, or that the wheels of justice move slow in your State.—

Astraa hath left this State.—

We are like to have much the same administration this as we had the last year.—Indeed there is no proba[bi]lity that any material alteration will take place until our State debt is paid, and the new Constitution is adopted.

We are in a fair or rather a foul way of discharging that debt: for one half of it will be paid or forfeited according to our system of Finance, by the 10th. day of May next, and the other half will probably be annihilated before the new Constitution is acceded to by a sufficient number of States, an[d] duly organized.<sup>2</sup>—Then our Wise-acres, having completed their business, may be willing to quit their seats.—

What is your State about?—What plan have you formed for extinguishing your State debt?—

I question whether you have such able Financiers as your little Sister Rhoda can boast.—

Who are your Delegates to Congress?<sup>3</sup>—I wish you would introduce me to a correspondence with some of them.

This State at their last February Session ordered two of their Delegates to procede to Congress;<sup>4</sup> but they are not yet gone on, and I suppose will not set out until the election is over.—One of them is the Mr. Arnold who was in Congress part of the last year.—With him and his political sentiments I am not enough acquainted to desire a correspondence; and the other is the famous Jonathan Hazard, a leading

man in the measures which have made us stink in the nostrils of the other States.—*Hic niger est hunc tu Romane caveto.*<sup>5</sup> With him I would not chuse to converse.—

With sentiments of esteem I am, Sir, your most hble servt.

1. RC, Thomas C. Bright Autograph Collection, NRom. Huntington (1736–1800), a Norwich lawyer, served in the Connecticut House of Representatives, 1771–80 (speaker, 1778–79); state Council, 1781–92 (but not 1790); Congress, 1780–84, 1788; and the U.S. House of Representatives, 1789–91. He was mayor of Norwich, 1784–96, and a state Superior Court judge, 1793–97. He frequently corresponded with Ellery.

2. See the “Introduction” for the payment of the state debt (RCS:R.I., xxxii–xxxv).

3. On a separate page, Huntington listed the names of Connecticut’s seven delegates to Congress, using only the last names. They were listed in this order: Joseph Platt Cooke, Stephen Mix Mitchell, John Chester, John Treadwell, Colonel Jeremiah Wadsworth, Pierpont Edwards, and Benjamin Huntington.

4. On 1 March 1788 the legislature directed Peleg Arnold and Jonathan J. Hazard “to proceed immediately to New-York, and take their Seats in Congress.” (See RCS:R.I., 130.)

5. Horace, *Satires*, Book I, satire 4, line 85. “Beware of him, Rome, he’s a blackguard.”

“X. Y.”

**Philadelphia Federal Gazette, 22 April 1788**

*To the Editor of the Federal Gazette.*

Sir, By looking over your papers, I find one of your correspondents, some time ago, was of opinion, that we had little room to expect the adoption of the new constitution by the state of Rhode Island.<sup>1</sup> It is now pretty clear that they have rejected it; and as the friends to paper money and to acts of legal tender, are the prevailing party in that state, I think the best reasons yet given by the wisest politicians, in favour of the new constitution, do not amount to a greater proof of its excellence, than the disapprobation of these people.

Many worthy men in the different states hitherto opposed to the federal government, will now attach themselves to it; they will be ashamed to entertain the same opinions on this subject, with men who for years have been a disgrace to human nature by their fraudulent proceedings—who have shut their ears against the cries of fatherless children and widows—and who established iniquity by a law.

1. See Philadelphia *Federal Gazette*, 8 April (above).

**Brown & Benson to Hewes & Anthony  
Providence, 24 April 1788 (excerpt)<sup>1</sup>**

... We note & approve your observations on the New Constitution & very sincerely accord with you in wishing its speedy adoption as we Conceive that to be the Only expedient to rescue the Country from

the embarrassments into which it is now plung'd as well as to avert greater evils—This State we suppose will Come in to the Federal Temple but their entry will be very ungracious after their stubborn opposition—but we hope the remnant may be yet sav'd—as the Maryland Convention is now in being we are very anxious to hear of their proceedings perhaps you can favour us with some acceptable intelligence—it appears that Govr. Hancock will be reelected in Massachusetts by a very great Majority & that Genl. Lincoln will also be Lieut. Govr. and it is expected that a Decided Majority of the senate will be Compos'd of Federal Men by which the Tranquility of that State & a Confirmation of the New system of federal Government is effectually secur'd<sup>2</sup>—We Cherish the pleasing hope that the establishment of the new Constitution will have the most auspicious influence on our Commercial arrangements—that it will inspire Confidence—restore Credit—promote industry & diffuse a rich Variety of Blessings over this New World—& that it will of Course renew & Confirm our intercourse with Your House an event which is ardently Coveted by—Dear sirs—Your assured Friends. . . .

1. FC, Brown Papers, RPJCB.

2. Benjamin Lincoln, a notable general during the Revolution, led the Massachusetts army that suppressed Shays's Rebellion. He and John Hancock were both elected. For a description of the spring 1788 election in Massachusetts, see RCS:Mass., 1729–32.

### Massachusetts Centinel, 26 April 1788<sup>1</sup>

It is ardently to be wished, writes a correspondent, that the little nest of villains, who inhabit the petty territory of R. I. may not have the grace to accept of the CONSTITUTION—that boon from heaven, offered to an half-ruined country, in order to restore it to a state of happiness and splendour—May they be divided in their councils, and at length scattered, as a people, among the other States, and all political power, which they have forfeited as a State, taken from the sinful hands of those who have uniformly abused it, ever since they have been known as a government; and who are at length become a “*hissing and a by-word among the nations.*”<sup>2</sup>

1. Reprinted: Hartford *American Mercury*, 5 May; *New York Morning Post*, 6 May.

2. Jeremiah 29:18.

### Editors' Note The Rhode Island Reprinting of the Fabius Essays 3 May–2 August 1788

Between 12 April and 1 May the triweekly *Pennsylvania Mercury* published a series of nine essays under the pseudonym “Fabius.” Entitled

“Observations on the Constitution Proposed by the Federal Convention,” the essays were written by Delaware Federalist John Dickinson, a lawyer and signer of the Constitution.

The weekly *Providence Gazette*, one of only three newspapers to reprint all nine essays, did so on 3, 17 May; 14, 28 June; 5, 12, 19, 26 July; and 2 August. The *Gazette* reprinted the series without any comment, except to indicate that the series had been published in the *Pennsylvania Mercury*, which it did for the first four essays. For the last five essays it noted that they had come from Philadelphia.

For a full discussion of the authorship, circulation, and commentaries upon “Fabius,” see CC:677.

### **Philadelphia Independent Gazetteer, 5 May 1788<sup>1</sup>**

A correspondent says, that there is now a fair opportunity of settling the prosperity and happiness of the United States, upon a permanent foundation. The state of Rhode Island is now willing to accede to the five per cent impost, demanded by Congress, and will also give the power of regulating commerce, with whatever shall be thought reasonable for the general interest of the country,<sup>2</sup> provided there is no consolidation of the several states into one national government. If, therefore, the Congress will be content with what was at first demanded, we may be an united and flourishing people; we may pay off, before long, our foreign debt, establish our national credit at home, build a navy, raise and pay troops, whenever they shall be found necessary, for the land service, encourage emigration, promote agriculture, manufactures, arts and sciences, and rival the greatest powers of the globe. Whereas, if a spirit of pride and obstinacy should induce to force down the new constitution upon the people, Rhode Island perhaps will be supported in her opposition to it, by the greater part of the state of Massachusetts, by the people of New-Hampshire, by half of the people of New-York; nor will the people in the back part of the state of Pennsylvania, be very ready to march to dragoon the Rhode Island men into compliance, whom they begin more and more to esteem. It is an eternal truth, which should be indelibly impressed upon our minds, that, “a kingdom divided against itself, cannot stand.”<sup>3</sup>

1. Reprinted: *New York Journal*, 14 May; *Newport Mercury*, 19 May; *United States Chronicle*, 5 June.

2. See “The Governor of Rhode Island to the President of Congress,” 5 April (RCS: R.I., 234–36).

3. Mark 3:24.



**Editors' Note**  
**The Rhode Island General Assembly**  
**Newport, 7–10 May 1788**

The May 1788 session of the legislature took no action on the Constitution. Peter Edes's satirical account of the session printed in the *Newport Herald*, 15 May, under the heading "CHRONICLES" (Mfm:R.I.), provided almost no information on what the legislature actually did.

**Delaware Gazette, 7 May 1788<sup>1</sup>**

WONDERFUL INTELLIGENCE, copied from a St. Kitts Paper—*Rosseau*<sup>2</sup> (Dominico) Feb. 3. By the latest advices from America we learn, that the whole State of Rhode-Island is to be sold to a private citizen of Georgia by private contract; and that Congress have resolved to apply the purchase money to pay off their national debt.

1. Reprinted nine times by 26 June: Mass. (2), N.Y. (2), Pa. (2), Md. (1), Va. (1), S.C. (1). This item was reprinted in the *Pennsylvania Journal*, 14 May, under a dateline of Wilmington, 7 May. Because the Wilmington *Delaware Gazette*, 7 May, is not extant, the item has been transcribed from the *Pennsylvania Packet*, 10 May, the earliest known reprint.

2. Roseau is the port city and capital of Dominica.

**Landholder**

**Providence United States Chronicle, 8 May 1788<sup>1</sup>**

(The following Piece, from the Author of the *Landholder*, of Connecticut, was received, by the Printer hereof, on Friday last, with a Request that it might appear in our next.)

*To the Person who signs himself A REAL FEDERALIST,*  
*in No. 222 of the United States Chronicle.<sup>2</sup>*

The Landholder thanks you for the bold stroke you have aimed at his character. Invention itself could not have planned any thing more to his purpose, than the little publication to which imprudent destiny has led you. The nature of truth and justice are not changed by the villany or virtue of the man who speaks them. Whether the Landholder be an honest man or a rogue, can never engage the public inquiry; but whether his sentiments be just, all will judge for themselves.

By trembling so soon, and fearing to trust the effect of his address on the public mind, even for one week, without an accompanying prejudice, you have given an evidence for its justice which was not expected. Why did you not meet the charge, instead of attempting to prejudice mankind against the author? Why did you attempt to bury a great public question, in the private character of a man you never did, nor ever can know. To the impartial world, this will appear like a low

artifice, to call their attention from a matter in which the misery of thousands, as well as the essence of public justice is involved. Your attack has injured your own cause, and given the Landholder a place in the memory of mankind, which otherwise he would not have had. Writers of his class are best let alone, by the man who wishes to be rid of them; but if you persevere, they will rise on every side, and even your own conscience will become a Landholder, which cannot be conjured out of your way, even by the whole constellation of worthies on whose names you rely. In one idea we allow you to be original—that public defaulters, and those who live on the property of others, are friendly to the new Constitution, is certainly a new sentiment.—In every other part of the continent beside your own, the very naming this Constitution covers them with paleness; and you are the first to suppose that an efficient government is the best protection of rogues.

To ease the curiosity of your friends, the writer will inform you who he is not; and if the intelligence is received with gratitude, in some future paper he may tell you who he is.—He is not a public defaulter—He never received any emolument or reward from the public under any name whatever—He never held an office under the United States, or either of them—HE NEVER ATTEMPTED TO PAY A JUST DEBT IN DEPRECIATED PAPER MONEY, OR ROBBED THE INDUSTRIOUS OF THEIR PROPERTY BY A TENDERY—He never believed that any combination of men could change the nature of justice—He never found an honest man who disapproved the sentiment of the LANDHOLDER.

1. Although the printer of the *United States Chronicle* stated that this essay came from the Connecticut "Landholder," historians have not attributed it to the Connecticut "Landholder" (i.e., Oliver Ellsworth). For "Landholder," see "The Rhode Island Reprinting of the Landholder Essays," 6 December 1787–8 May 1788 (I, above).

2. See "A real Federalist," *United States Chronicle*, 27 March (above).

### Newport Herald, 15 May 1788<sup>1</sup>

#### *A succinct view of affairs.*

The revolving year hath produced no important changes in our administration nor in our police.<sup>2</sup> The *Crusading Errants* still display the destroying standard, "A DEPRECIATED PAPER MONEY," as the ark of our salvation.—No experience of the mischiefs resulting from it, nor any conviction of its injustice, tend to check a "*perseverance*;" for credulity and implicit support of this system are marked out as the high road to preferment, while honor, virtue, and abilities form no criterion of merit.

Loud advocates for the *extremes* of liberty, they can hear no discussion of their measures without irritation; that freedom of speech which elevated America to the station of independence is viewed as treason and

rebellion, and the blood of the freemen seems alone sufficient to satiate revenge.

Apprehensive of a ratification of the NEW CONSTITUTION, men of *tried antifederalism* are advanced to the command of forts and of the militia;<sup>3</sup> whether that they may be prepared to oppose the Union, or *to keep alive popular clamor*, we presume not to determine.

Thus engaged in a civil contest, novel as well as severe, we have become the political phenomenon of the day, and the world stands gazing for the event,—We shall therefore, from duty as well as information, faithfully continue an impartial detail of every interesting occurrence, unbiassed by party and undaunted by the threats of power, trusting that honor, virtue and justice will, ere long, illumine this degraded State.

1. Reprinted seventeen times by 2 July: N.H. (1), Mass. (6), Conn. (3), N.Y. (2), Pa. (4), S.C. (1). The first three paragraphs were also reprinted in the May issue of the widely circulated Philadelphia *American Museum*.

2. “Police” could mean “policy” at this time.

3. A reference to the General Assembly’s appointment of Country party leader Joseph Stanton, Jr., as the major general of the state’s militia and of John Wanton as the new gunner at Fort Washington in Newport Harbor. See General Assembly Schedule, May 1788 Session (Providence, [1789]) (Evans 21425), 9, 11.

### Editors’ Note Rhode Island Receives News of Maryland Ratification 15 May–7 June 1788

The Maryland Convention met in Annapolis on Monday, 21 April, and on 26 April it ratified the Constitution by a vote of 63 to 11, becoming the seventh state to ratify. Following the vote, William Paca—an Antifederalist who voted to ratify—was finally permitted to present amendments to the Constitution. The Convention then voted overwhelmingly to create a Federalist-dominated committee of thirteen to consider amendments.

On Monday, 28 April, the Form of Ratification was signed; the next day, Paca informed the Convention that the committee of thirteen would not make a report. On the same day the Baltimore *Maryland Gazette* and *Maryland Journal* both printed Paca’s amendments (CC:716–A).

Paca and the non-ratifying delegates prepared a lengthy address to the people of Maryland explaining what happened to his amendments. This extraordinary address included Paca’s amendments and other amendments that had been presented and considered. The lengthy address was designed to present the amendments considered by the committee of thirteen to the public so that it could decide on what “alterations” might be proper to make to the Constitution. On 1 May the Annapolis *Maryland Gazette* printed the address (CC:716–B).

These tumultuous events were well reported. Paca's amendments appeared in forty-four newspapers, including three in Rhode Island—the *Newport Herald* and *United States Chronicle*, both on 15 May, and the *Providence Gazette* on 17 May.

The *Providence Gazette*, 17 May, *Newport Mercury*, 19 May, and *United States Chronicle*, 22 May, reprinted an extract of a letter from the *Pennsylvania Packet*, 2 May, that contained the ratification vote and praise for the Maryland minority that was “not like the *restless* spirit which activated the minority of Pennsylvania.”

The Maryland form of ratification was reprinted in the *United States Chronicle*, 29 May, and *Providence Gazette*, 31 May. On 7 June the *Providence Gazette* reprinted the address of the minority. It was only one of seven newspapers outside Maryland and a magazine to do so. Rhode Island's newspapers published these reports without comment, and Maryland's ratification touched off no known celebrations.

#### **Newport Herald, 22 May 1788<sup>1</sup>**

*Extract of a letter from a gentleman at Baltimore to his friend in this town, dated May 6.*

“It is with pleasure I inform you of the adoption of the new Federal Government by this State—I enclose you a paper describing the rejoicing on this happy event. I assure you the procession far exceeded any thing I ever saw before. There is no doubt Virginia and all the southern states will adopt it. No people are looked upon here with so much contempt as the antifederalists, and it is disreputable to be seen in company with any of them. Your state would have been noticed in a very disagreeable way if it had not been for a number of gentlemen present from it, who assured us that the manner in which the consideration of the proposed Constitution had been taken up in Rhode-Island did not determine the uninfluenced opinion of the people, but that the matter had been conducted wholly by the wicked designs of a few, and that it was hoped and believed that the great body of the people would soon be induced to act for themselves, and reject the false insinuations and wicked counsels of their present leaders, and again raise themselves to the place they once stood in, by joining the Federal Government—(Particular notice was taken of those gentlemen here, we supposing them to be of the minority of your State, fleeing from the impositions of a weak and ——<sup>2</sup> administration, to take shelter by a peaceful retreat to the western waters.)[”]

1. Reprinted: *Salem Mercury*, 27 May; Exeter, N.H., *Freeman's Oracle*, 30 May. Both reprints omitted the text in angle brackets. In the same issue of 27 May, the *Salem Mercury*

reprinted (with alterations) the omitted passage as a separate item, which was then reprinted in the *New York Packet*, 6 June; Poughkeepsie *Country Journal*, 10 June; and *Pennsylvania Packet*, 13 June.

2. The *Salem Mercury* replaced the dash with the word “wicked.”

### Newport Herald, 22 May 1788<sup>1</sup>

OF REMARKABLE DAYS. The 12th day of May, *Charlestown surrendered*;<sup>2</sup> on that day the *Convention of South Carolina* was to meet. The 17th of June, *the battle of Bunker’s height* was fought; on that day the Conventions of *New-Hampshire* and *New-York* are to meet. The 4th of July, *the Independence of the United States was declared*; on that day the Convention of *North-Carolina* will convene.<sup>3</sup>

1. Reprinted nine times by 25 June: Conn. (2), N.Y. (1), N.J. (2), Pa. (3), Va. (1).

2. On 12 May 1780 American forces under the command of General Benjamin Lincoln surrendered to the British Army under the command of Sir Henry Clinton.

3. The South Carolina Convention convened on 12 May 1788, the New York Convention on 17 June, the New Hampshire Convention on 18 June, and the first North Carolina Convention on 21 July. The Battle of Bunker Hill took place on 17 June 1775.

### Editors’ Note

#### The Rhode Island Reprinting of “A Citizen of New-York” 22 May–26 June 1788

On 15 April 1788 the publishers of the *New York Packet* advertised for sale a nineteen-page pamphlet written by “A Citizen of New-York” that was entitled *An Address to the People of the State of New-York, on the Subject of the Constitution . . .* (Evans 21175). The author was Federalist John Jay, a New York City lawyer, the Confederation Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and the author of five numbers of *The Federalist*.

“A Citizen of New-York” outlined the defects of the Articles of Confederation and the frequent ineffectiveness of the Confederation government. America was a nation in crisis. The delegates to the Constitutional Convention were praised for adopting a new Constitution that would promote economic growth and prosperity, benefit the United States politically and diplomatically, and improve its status and dignity among other nations. Jay also strenuously opposed the appointment of a new general convention.

The *United States Chronicle* reprinted “A Citizen of New-York” in its entirety in three installments on 22, 29 May and 26 June. It was one of seven newspapers that reprinted the entire pamphlet. When the *Chronicle* reprinted its first installment, it included this preface: “A Publication has lately appeared in New-York, on the Subject of the proposed Federal Constitution—fraught with useful Truths and sound Argument,

and said to be written by a Gentleman, who has been universally acknowledged a Patriot, and Friend to America.—Some Extracts, which we propose to make from it, we have no Doubt will be read with Pleasure, by every *real* Friend to this Country—by those who are *opposed* to the Constitution *from Principle*, as well as those who agree in Sentiment with the worthy Author.”

In the heading to the second installment, the *United States Chronicle* noted that “This Address is said to be written by the Hon. JOHN JAY, Esquire.” The heading to the third installment indicated that the installment was “the Conclusion of the Hon. Mr. JAY’s Address.” The heading also stated that “The Sentiments advanced in this Publication deserve the *serious Attention* of every Friend to the State of Rhode-Island.” The *Chronicle’s* reprinting contains much additional italicization.

For the text of “A Citizen of New-York,” its authorship, circulation, and commentaries upon it, see CC:683.

**Charles Thomson to William Ellery**  
**New York, 26 May 1788<sup>1</sup>**

I have received your favour of the 18 & agreeably to your request transmit you herewith a list of the members now in Congress.

It might have been expected that even the crooked wisdom of your *Know ye Men* would before this have pointed out to them the necessity of altering their conduct, not from a conviction of the iniquity of their past measures but with a view to secure their wicked gains. But it seems, as if they were destined to be ensamples, and to warn the other states against the evils and mischiefs, of pure democracy. I hope the good people of your state will be awakened to a sense of their situation & the contempt w[ith] which they have exposed themselves by suffering themselves to be guided by unprincipled designing men.

I am sorry for your losses. We have encountered together a severe storm. We have been surrounded with dark blackening clouds and have seen them dispelled and followed by a bright sky & clear sunshine. I confess it is enough to try the patience of Job to have passed safely the tempestuous Ocean and be in danger of drowning in a duck puddle.

The sentiment you allude to in the close of your letter was not “That it was a pity that the war had not continued longer” but that too speedy a termination of the war was not to be wished—And that I was more afraid of peace than a continuance of the war.

Sensible of our inexperience in the art of government and of the self sufficiency of those who would probably take the reins I dreaded the mischiefs that might flow from a wanton abuse of power and liberty

too easily acquired. I confess we have escaped better than I expected. I am therefore encouraged to hope for a favourable issue and to conclude with

“forsan et hæc olim meminisse juvabit”<sup>2</sup>

and an assurance of the regard with which I am Sr Your obedt. Servant

1. RC, GLC 04847, The Gilder Lehrman Collection, courtesy of The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, New York. This letter was docketed as received on 6 June. Thomson (1729–1824), a former Philadelphia merchant and Revolutionary leader, was secretary of the Continental and Confederation congresses from 1774 to 1789.

2. Virgil, *The Aeneid*, Book I, line 203. “Perhaps some day it may be pleasant to remember even this.”

**John Avery, Jr., to Nathan Dane**  
**Boston, 27 May 1788 (excerpt)<sup>1</sup>**

. . . I fancy the Time is not far distant that I shall have the Pleasure of congratulating you upon the adoption of the New System by the several States and Rde. Island not excepted—They will come into the measure as soon as they find that the several States have adopted it—The inhabitants of the Towns of Newport & Providence are federal but the influence of the Country party are at present too prevalent and they are an obstinete, insurgetical and a very ignorant set of Beings. . . .

1. RC, Item 388, Hall Park McCullough Collection, University of Vermont Library. Avery (1739–1806), a graduate of Harvard College (1759) and a former Boston distiller and merchant, was a leader of the Sons of Liberty before the Revolution. He was deputy secretary of the Massachusetts Council, 1776–80, and secretary of the Commonwealth, 1780–1806. Dane (1752–1835), a graduate of Harvard College (1778) and a Beverly, Mass., lawyer, was a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, 1782–86, and a state senator, 1793–99. He was a delegate to Congress, 1785–88, and a critic of the Constitution. Dane was also the primary author of the Northwest Ordinance (1787).

**Newport Herald, 29 May 1788<sup>1</sup>**

*Extract from RULES by which a GREAT REPUBLIC may be reduced to a SMALL ONE;—By the AMERICAN PHILOSOPHER.*

RULE X.

When you have succeeded in destroying every idea of the security of property, by establishing a discharge of all just debts, on payment of one sixth or one eighth part of the real value—it is possible, that the citizens who have suffered, finding that they have nothing which they can call their own, may yet comfort themselves by saying, “Though our property is stript from us by injustice, yet we have something left, viz. *Constitutional Liberty both of person and conscience*; the inestimable privileges, FREEDOM OF SPEECH, LIBERTY OF THE PRESS, THE RIGHT OF HABEUS CORPUS AND A TRIAL BY A JURY OF OUR NEIGHBOURS, are too

sacred ever to be invaded:”—In order therefore to annihilate this remaining consolation, talk loudly of the “*scurrility*” of the press;—of the licentiousness of a “*certain class of men*;”—attribute the decay of credit,—the loss of justice, and the embarrassments of government to these causes—then erect a new COURT OF INQUISITION vested with all powers to *apprehend, recognize, or imprison* the subject;—ordain seizures of ships and other property, and execute judgment *without trial by Jury or a due course of Law*, under pretext of public good: let the first example be made of a stranger (as you can find enough of them that dare speak their sentiments) his business may prevent his submitting himself to be apprehended, if so the boasted liberty of the subject will be lost, in the establishment of this precedent;—or if he should be taken, his want of friends mark him out as a proper victim, to be found guilty and hanged *in terrorem*. At the same time declare “that you have, and of right ought to have, full power and authority, by your mere sovereign will and pleasure, to control the persons and consciences of your subjects, in ALL CASES WHATSOEVER,”<sup>2</sup>—This will include *temporal* with *spiritual*, and taken together, must operate wonderfully in checking the *freedom of speech, and the independency of the press*, by convincing them, that they are under a power something like that spoken of in the scriptures, which cannot only *kill their bodies*, but *damn their souls* to all eternity, even by compelling them to *bow down to devils*.

1. Reprinted: Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 12 June.

2. Possibly a variation of the following from the Declaratory Act (1766): “and that the King’s Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons of Great Britain, in Parliament assembled, had, hath, and of right ought to have, full power and authority to make laws and statutes of sufficient force and validity to bind the colonies and people of America, subjects of the Crown of Great Britain, in all cases whatsoever.” This act was passed by Parliament the same day that it repealed the 1765 Stamp Act and was a succinct statement of Parliament’s view of the Empire as unitary and not federal.

### Newport Herald, 29 May 1788<sup>1</sup>

KNOW YE,

That a certain J——N L——B,<sup>2</sup> a placeman, pensioner, and noted antifederalist, in the City of New-York, stimulated by prospects of gain, and a lust of power, hath had the audacity to transmit to his E——y the G——r [i.e., his Excellency the Governor] a large packet of pamphlets against the proposed constitution of the United States, accompanied with an anonymous letter,<sup>3</sup> insidiously calculated to excite jealousies,—to disturb the peace of the union, and subvert the rising fabric of order, justice and liberty.



1. Reprinted with an introduction in the *Massachusetts Centinel*, 7 June (Mfm:R.I.). The *Centinel's* version was reprinted in the *Norwich Packet*, 12 June, and *Pennsylvania Packet*, 21 June.

2. John Lamb, a New York Antifederalist leader, was collector of customs for the Port of New York, 1784–89.

3. In mid-May 1788 the Federal Republican Committee of New York, of which Lamb was chairman, wrote letters to prominent Antifederalists in New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and North and South Carolina calling for cooperation in obtaining amendments to the Constitution before it was ratified by nine states. Enclosed with this letter were copies of a lengthy Antifederalist pamphlet, *An Additional Number of Letters from the Federal Farmer to the Republican*. Neither the letter that Lamb allegedly wrote to Governor John Collins, nor any reply by Collins or any other Rhode Islander has been found. (See CC:750 A–Q for these letters and CC:723 for the pamphlet.)

The charge that Lamb sent Antifederalist pamphlets to Rhode Island was repeated by “A Rhode-Islander,” *Newport Herald*, 12 June (below).

For attacks in 1787 that Lamb sent Antifederalist material into Connecticut, see RCS:Conn., 470–71, 495–96, 509, 514, 520–23; and CC:283 A–E.

### **Newport Herald, 29 May 1788<sup>1</sup>**

A Correspondent observes, that when he reflects that we live in a free and independent land, where the unfettered *press* is ever ready to communicate to the world every production that may have a tendency to render the *mind* equally independent, by exciting it to abandon the obscure cavern of *ignorance*, for that resigned and delightful atmosphere, the *knowledge of our country's good*;—when he thus reflects, and recognizes the numerous evils which this State groans under, for want of an energetic government, which will give to us a *more wise administration*, he is sure that the pens of our most penetrating and ingenious politicians will not be dormant, but continue to blazon in the face of day those characters who are unfriendly to the new Constitution, and those who have bro't this State into its present confusion.—Proceed then, ye virtuous MINORITY, to discountenance every species of fraud and injustice,—the honest heart will revere your names, and posterity will applaud your characters—for notwithstanding that vestal goddess—*Independence*, pervades our land; yet the task belongs to every patriotic soul to maintain that *freedom, peace and happiness*.

1. Reprinted: Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 12 June; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 13 June; *Pennsylvania Mercury*, 14 June; *Virginia Independent Chronicle*, 25 June.

### **Providence United States Chronicle, 29 May 1788<sup>1</sup>**

The Friends of the new Federal Constitution have the greatest Prospect of its speedy Adoption—*Seven States* have agreed to it—The Convention of *South-Carolina* commenced their Session the 12th Instant—Accounts from that State make a large Majority in Favor of the Federal

Cause, although it is expected Attempts will be made to adjourn the Convention till July,<sup>2</sup> to give Time for their General Assembly to meet and make some Alterations in their Instalment Act.<sup>3</sup> Next Monday the Convention of the “Ancient Dominion” of *Virginia* will meet—Accounts from that State make from 14 to 24 Majority in the Convention in Favor of the Constitution.—If *South-Carolina* should adopt it, at their present Meeting (of which there is but little Doubt) *Virginia* will make the *Ninth* State—but it is not probable the new Government will be organized until all the Conventions which have been appointed have met on the Subject.—The 4th of July, the Anniversary of American Independence, is the Day the last Convention appointed (viz. *North-Carolina*) is to meet.—What Pleasure would it give the Friends of Union and Peace could a Convention for Rhode-Island, be appointed to meet on that memorable Day—and when met, by agreeing with all the other States in adopting the Constitution, a second Time dignify the already immortalized Month of JULY!

1. Reprinted in whole or in part nine times by 16 July: N.H. (1), Mass. (4), Pa. (3), Va. (1).

2. See “Rhode Island Receives News of South Carolina Ratification,” 10–21 June 1788 (below).

3. In March 1787 the South Carolina legislature adopted an installment act postponing to March 1790 the final payment of debts that had been contracted before 1 January 1787. Beginning in March 1788, creditors were to receive three annual installments. In February 1788 the state Senate defeated a motion to extend the installment act, and in March the legislature adjourned with the intent, stated David Ramsay, to “meet again in October avowedly to have a further opportunity of screening debtors” (to Benjamin Lincoln, 31 March, Lincoln Papers, MHi). In November 1788 the legislature extended the installment act which primarily favored rich debtors.

### Alexandria Virginia Journal, 5 June 1788<sup>1</sup>

Extract of a letter from a gentleman of good information, in Rhode-Island, of a recent date, to his correspondent in this town.

“Honesty seems to regain its long usurped government by the machinations of our uncommon villainy. We find from the general intentions of the continent to adopt the constitution so much talked of, that our patriots are now encouraged and highly elevated; that all the detestable characters who have so long disgraced our country are likely to fall in as universal contempt, as the world has so equally agreed to their uncommon depravity, where known.”

1. This item first appeared in the no longer extant *Virginia Journal* of 5 June. It has been transcribed from the Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer* of 11 June, the first newspaper known to have reprinted it. It was reprinted five more times by 9 July: N.Y. (1), Pa. (2), Va. (1), S.C. (1).

**The Rhode Island General Assembly  
Newport, 9–14 June 1788**

The legislature again failed to act on calling a state convention to consider the Constitution and then adjourned to the last Monday in October.

**Newport Herald, 19 June 1788 (excerpts)<sup>1</sup>**

*History of the Proceedings of the second Sessions of the Honorable General Assembly of this State, in the third year of our present administration.*

*Published by PETER EDES, without bribe, fee, or expectancy of office.*

The LAST QUARTER part of State Notes consolidated to specie value, and orders upon the Impost for the interest arising thereon, is to be forfeited if the holders of them do not apply within one month from the rising of the Assembly and receive the paper emission at its nominal value. Those who have received the first or second quarter, are indulged in receiving the third and last quarter, provided they apply within the time above prescribed. . . .

On application from the *Delegates of Congress*, a further grant was made in their favor. . . .

A Bill was drafted for consolidating *four per cent.* notes to specie value, and paying them in the paper emission at the nominal value, but was referred to next sessions. . . .

The officers and waiters were paid their fees, at the rate of six for one, without hesitation. . . .

Upon the question of Adjournment a leading member who had been violently opposed against the New Constitution, urged a short adjournment as it was probable we should be called upon in regard to the New Constitution:—To obviate this reason it was moved that a Convention should be now appointed to meet at some distant period, but the motion was not noticed. The adjournment was made *to the last Monday of October next at Providence.*

1. Reprinted in whole or in part nine times by 8 July: Mass. (4), N.Y. (2), N.J. (2), Pa. (1). For the complete text of this item, see Mfm:R.I.

**James Manning to Hezekiah Smith  
Providence, 10 June 1788 (excerpt)<sup>1</sup>**

. . . Our wicked State have rejected the Constitution by the Town Meetings, to wch. the Legislature sent it, instead of complying wt. the recommendation of the General Convention—Our rulers are deliberately wicked: but the People, of some of the Towns, begin to wake up since S. Carolina have adopted the new Constitution,<sup>2</sup> & Massachusetts have so effectually crushed Shayism. . . .

1. RC, Manning Papers, Brown University Archives, John Hay Library, Brown University. Printed: Reuben Aldridge Guild, *Life, Times, and Correspondence of James Manning, and the Early History of Brown University* (Boston, 1864), 409–12. The letter was carried to Smith in Haverhill, Mass., by Asa Messer, a student at the College of Rhode Island (Brown University), who later became its president (1804–26). It was docketed as received on 14 June. Smith (1737–1805), a native of Hempstead, N.Y., and a 1762 graduate of the College of New Jersey (Princeton University), was a Baptist minister in Haverhill from 1766 until his death. In the early 1760s Smith assisted Manning in establishing the College of Rhode Island, from which he received the degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1797.

2. See “Rhode Island Receives News of South Carolina Ratification,” 10–21 June 1788 (immediately below).

### Editors’ Note

#### Rhode Island Receives News of South Carolina Ratification

10–21 June 1788

On 12 May the South Carolina Convention met in Charleston and on the 23rd it ratified the Constitution by a vote of 149 to 73, making South Carolina the eighth state to ratify. Appended to the Form of Ratification were four recommended amendments (CC:753).

News of South Carolina ratification reached Providence by 10 June. On that day the Reverend James Manning wrote that this news might cause some Rhode Islanders to “begin to wake up” (to Hezekiah Smith, immediately above). Two days later, the *Newport Herald* and the *United States Chronicle* reprinted an account from the *Boston Gazette* of 9 June that was headed “*Eighth Federal Pillar reared.*” The *Boston Gazette’s* account included the South Carolina form of ratification, the appended amendments, and the order of march for the upcoming Charleston Federal Procession (27 May) celebrating ratification. (The *Boston Gazette’s* account, except for the order of march, came from the *Charleston Columbian Herald* of 26 May.)

The *Newport Herald*, 12 June, reprinted the *Boston Gazette’s* entire account, although the *United States Chronicle*, 12 June, reprinted only the form of ratification, the appended amendments, and two paragraphs describing the Convention’s proceedings on 24 May. The form and amendments also appeared in the *Providence Gazette*, 14 June, and *Newport Mercury*, 16 June. Neither of these last two newspapers used the *Boston Gazette’s* heading, but both reprinted the material from the same source as the *Boston Gazette*. In its same issue of 14 June the *Providence Gazette* reprinted a report from the *Maryland Journal* of 3 June naming South Carolina as the eighth ratifying state. The *Maryland Journal’s* account was also reprinted in the *United States Chronicle* and *Newport Herald*, both on 19 June.

On 28 and 29 May, respectively, two Charleston newspapers—the *City Gazette* and the *Columbian Herald*—published full descriptions of Charleston’s Federal Procession of 27 May, that were only partially reprinted in Rhode Island newspapers. On 16 June the *Newport Mercury* reprinted an excerpt from the *City Gazette*, while excerpts from the *Columbian Herald* appeared in the *Newport Mercury*, 16 June; *United States Chronicle*, 17 June; and *Providence Gazette*, 21 June.

**A Friend to Paper Money**  
**Newport Herald, 12 June 1788**

MR. EDES, *As a man of candor you will give the following a place in your paper, though it makes not so directly to your interest, as you may wish.*

FRIENDS AND FREEMEN, I am not about to baffle your reason with sophistry, or drown your understandings with a torrent of rhetoric, but in the plain language of honesty to call your attention to the press, lately become the nuisance of society; for two years past that malicious machine of ingratitude, though fostered by the public, has been thundering defamation against her leading characters; half-heads, antifederalists, and patrons of paper have been her common epithets for those justices, judges, and governors, who have so much *distinguished* themselves, in procuring a revolution, which has spread the *fame* of Rhode-Island to distant quarters of the world: who but knows our sad situation before this revolution? we were then pressed by domestic necessities, loaded with taxes, and closely pursued by merciless creditors, threatening us with poverty, and the prison: these *my friends* are not imaginary evils; they really existed, and were prevented, but by the arduous endeavors of citizens, whose names deserve immortality; they, by measures seemingly magical, immediately changed the common order of occurrences, sending the *debtor* after the flying *creditor*, with money in his hands, crying, receive your demands, or “KNOW YE” they are *for ever* forfeited: *how rare a blessing!* to which, GOD knows, many of us owe our very existence; for before this, had our debts been exacted by the rigor of the law, we must have given our goods to the *sheriff*, and our bodies to the *gaol*: since then we are free, shall we suffer the *authors* of our freedom to be defamed, and abused by the press, which has become the hobby of every snarling scribbler? No, veteran freemen, no; rouse to your duty, and assert your rights; protect your benefactors by exterminating the press, that idol of the minority, and *pest* to the *honest* asserters of paper money; this is easily done, and to neglect it will continue us the ridicule of mankind. But perhaps you are intimidated at the terrors painted by your opponents? they declare *your end to be near*,

and therefore you should be silent; but *will* you be silent? like cowards *will* you tremble at distant danger, and yield to inferior enemies, when a vigorous and determined conduct may still secure our power, and protect our declining privileges? they point also to the new *federal constitution*; what then? why forsooth 'twill soon plunge us from power to impotence, and there leave us to eternal contempt; and shall *this* terrify us? shall it shake the reins of government from our hands, and render us the dupes of every buffoon? what if we have forced the creditor to receive *one dollar* in satisfaction for every *six* honestly due to him? had we not a *right* to do it? if not we had the *power*, and that ever did, and ever will supply the place of right, and among the greater part of mankind generally passes for the same. To crown their imaginary terrors they cry out *conscience! conscience! hereafter! hereafter!* hang conscience, and hereafter together; how can they be connected with politics? but if they are, dismiss them; for is not a bird in the hand worth two in the bush?<sup>1</sup> I now, *my friends*, conclude, presuming that the *propriety*, and *necessity* of acting with firmness, banishing the *printer*, and *burning the press* clearly appears to your understandings; hoping that you, as friends to *paper equity*, will make those purposes the objects of your *wisdom*, wherein you may discover all that *dignity* and *patriotism* that for two years past have moved and directed your operations.

1. Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, Part I, Book IV, Chapter iv. Part I first appeared in Spanish in 1605.

### A Rhode-Islander Newport Herald, 12 June 1788<sup>1</sup>

To J——n L——b, Esq.

New-York.

SIR, It must afford a momentary pleasure to a man of your selfish disposition to be advised that your inclosure of *antifederal pamphlets with an anonymous letter*, hath obtained you the highest place in our list of fame; but, Sir, it is a pinnacle that honest men do not covet, nor will a knave look down from it with pleasure.

Satan when he displayed from Mount Pleasant<sup>2</sup> the emoluments arising from the collection of a revenue, doubtless made great promises of support; but the perfidy of that arch fiend is so well known that none but a L——b would have sated him with credulity—as a recompence, he hath given you a name among his worthies here, but suffered you to betray the weakness of your cause, and to sink the wreck of your reputation by proposing Queries in your anonymous letter that were suitable only for the court of a SHAYS.

Be assured, Sir, that the period rapidly approaches when antifederalism shall meet with no applause, when your rolling streams of fees and gifts will suddenly be checked, and the haggard fury of an accusing conscience will lead you to the “*fatal, final, and melancholly end*” of your brother Judas.<sup>3</sup>

1. Reprinted: *Massachusetts Centinel*, 21 June. For an earlier attack on New York Anti-federalist leader John Lamb, see *Newport Herald*, 29 May (above).

2. Mount Pleasant was a farming area northwest of Providence, that today is a residential neighborhood of Providence. “Satan” has not been identified.

3. Judas hanged himself (Matthew 27:3–8).

### Providence United States Chronicle, 12 June 1788<sup>1</sup>

Mr. WHEELER, You are desired to publish the following in your impartial Paper, next Week—and you will oblige a Number of your Customers. Your’s, Z.

June 6, 1788.

*A Letter from a Gentleman in a neighbouring State to his Friend in Providence, dated 8th May, 1788.*

SIR, It has of late been fashionable for every political scribbler to lampoon the Legislature of your State, for refusing to grant to Congress an impost of 5 per cent. for the purpose of raising a REVENUE to be at their disposal<sup>2</sup>—for emitting bills of credit, and making them a tender in payment for money—and for not pursuing the measures prescribed by the Philadelphia Convention, for the adopting the new Constitution, in lieu of the articles of our Federal Union.

Had Congress recommended it to the States to have laid an impost of 5 or 10 per cent. on all foreign importations (some few articles excepted) to have been appropriated to the discharge of the QUOTA of the public debt of those States where the same should be *consumed*—and to have been collected by officers appointed by the several States, I make no doubt every State in the Union would have complied: But *Rhode-Island* it seems must bear the whole blame, although there was not one State adopted it agreeable to the requisition of Congress; nor was there any two States that made similar grants—and I have seen them all.—But by the articles of our Federal Union, the States never obliged themselves to grant to Congress a REVENUE, or any thing more than to pay their several QUOTAS of the public debt. Notwithstanding all the obloquy with which your State has been loaded, by every *dirty scribbler*, I have blessed and thanked you for the patriotism of your State in that affair; and it is a matter of my daily thanksgiving to God, for your *perseverance*—especially after I read this declaration of Congress,

in their printed ADDRESS of the 18th April, 1783, in these words—“By the Confederation Congress have an absolute discretion in determining the quantum of *Revenue* requisite for the national expenditure.—When this is done, nothing remains for the States separately, but the mode of raising. No State can dispute the obligation to pay the sum demanded, without a breach of the Confederation; and when the money comes into the treasury, the appropriation is the exclusive province of the Federal Government: This provision of the Confederation (without which it would be an empty form) comprehends in it the principle in its fullest latitude, which the objection under consideration treats as repugnant to the liberty of the United States, viz. AN INDEFINITE POWER of proscribing the quantity of money to be raised, and of appropriating it when raised. If it be said that the States individually having the collection in their own hands, may refuse a compliance with exorbitant demands—the Confederation will answer, that this is a point *of which they have no constitutional liberty to judge.*”<sup>3</sup>—I always thought, before I was thus *illuminated*, that body which *grants money*, has a *right* not to *grant*—But it so happens the States never promised a REVENUE to Congress, nor is the word once used in the articles of our Federal Union—and after this public declaration of Congress—and after they made a grant of 550,000 dollars to the officers of the army, which saddles the States with an annual interest of £99,000, although obtained by a single vote in Congress, by the indefatigable intrigues and address of the officers, as appears by their own publications, and at the same time *silently* laying the foundation of an HEREDITARY ARISTOCRACY, by the institution of the order of the CINCINNATI, the effects of which we have already felt, and will be as permanent as that *Institution*; I think it much to the honour of your State, that you did refuse to grant the impost, under all the circumstances on which it was requested.—Whether Congress were vested with power by the articles of Confederation to make that grant to the army, I must leave with Civilians to determine—and whether that grant was *honorably* obtained, I submit to the public to make up their own judgment, from a collection of papers unguardedly published by the officers of the army, relative to HALF PAY and COMMUTATION of HALF PAY, which are bound up with the *last official address of his Excellency General WASHINGTON to the Legislatures of the United States*,<sup>4</sup> which every patriot of this country will remember as long as time shall last.

Again—your State is denominated *Rogues-Island*, for emitting bills of credit, and making them a legal tender in payment of money.—This I think a very great oversight in your Legislature, and have in my own mind censured their conduct therein—But in this have you not the



examples of Congress to keep you in countenance?—Did not Congress emit *cart-loads* of bills, and recommend it to the several Legislatures of the States, to make them a legal tender in all payments of money?—and did not Congress in the most public and solemn manner, pledge their faith to the possessors of those bills, that they should receive the same in *specie*, dollar for dollar? I think they did, if my memory doth not betray me—and that but a few months before a resolution of Congress was published, that one hard dollar should discharge a debt of 40 continental dollars<sup>5</sup>—Has your State passed any law similar to this?

Again—your Legislature are much blamed for not appointing Delegates to meet in Convention, to adopt or reject the new Constitution, as it is called.—It was given out, and we were made to believe the Constitution framed by the Convention was to be submitted to the people, either to adopt or reject it.—Whereas the truth is, [the] Convention referred the Constitution back to Congress, but not for Congress to adopt or reject it, or to judge any thing about it—but were by the Convention *directed* to recommend it to the Legislatures of the States, but not for the purpose of adopting or rejecting it—No, by no means—that was a trust too great to be submitted to a *common Assembly*, chosen by the people to transact their *common affairs*.—No—all that the Assemblies had to do in this important matter, was to refer it back to the people—but not for the *people* to adopt or reject it, but to choose Delegates to adopt or reject it *for them*.—This would give the *Officers of the Army*,—the FULL-BLOODED CINCINNATI,—the *honorary Members* of that order,—*whole armies* of Attornies, that are to be fattened up by the ample fees of the *Federal Courts*, who are not to be *pestered* by JURIES,—our *reverend Clergy*, who are to be fed by the fattest of their *flocks*,—and the *present holders* of public securities, who have defrauded the honest soldiers of their just dues, by purchasing them at one-eighth of their real value, and are now ready prepared to purchase the best lands ceded by the crown of England to all the States JOINTLY,<sup>6</sup> which are more than doubly sufficient to discharge the whole Continental debt, without any tax upon the people.—I therefore greatly admire the prudent measures adopted by the Legislature of your State, in order to take the sense of the people, who are to be governed by the Constitution; and in the end I believe it will be found the only measure that could be adopted to settle us all down in peace and harmony—Witness the present state of Philadelphia, which made their *boast* that their State agreed to appoint a Convention in twenty hours after Congress had agreed to adopt the mode *prescribed to them* by the Convention, who have made *null* and *void* the XIIIth article of our Federal Union, which in the *most solemn manner* assures us, “that the articles of our Federal

Union should be *inviolably observed* by every State in the Union, and be perpetual—nor any alteration made in any of them, unless such alteration be agreed upon in CONGRESS of the United States, and afterwards confirmed by the Legislature of *every State*.”<sup>7</sup>—But now it seems a Convention composed of the CINCINNATI and other *honorary Members* of that order, can dissolve the most solemn compacts, and say that nine States adopting the new Constitution, Congress shall proceed and govern accordingly.—This may be all *right* perhaps, but I do not as yet see the equity or righteousness of it.

No man is more desirous that Congress should be fully vested with ample powers for the general interests of the States than myself: But I think matters of so high importance have been too *impetuously* hurried on, before the people understood what form or government they were about to adopt or reject—whether we were to be governed by the CINCINNATI of *America* only, or in conjunction with their brethren of the ORDER of the EAGLE in *France*, in order to render the government *energetic, permanent, and hereditary*—or whether *Commutation and final-settlement securities* must not be *first discharged*, before those who have loaned their monies to the States should request payment.

*I am, &c.*

1. Reprinted: Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 5 July. For a response to this letter, see “Tib. Gracchus,” *United States Chronicle*, 19 June (below).

2. Rhode Island rejected the Impost of 1781 but approved the Impost of 1783.

3. The quotation is not from the Address of 26 April 1783 that accompanied the Impost of 1783 that Congress approved on 18 April. It is from a “Paper No. II” found in the pamphlet entitled *Address and Recommendations to the States, by the United States in Congress assembled* (Philadelphia, 1783) (Evans 18223). This paper, dated 16 December 1782, was the report of a committee of Congress (Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and Thomas FitzSimons) answering a letter dated 30 November 1782 from William Bradford, the speaker of the Rhode Island House of Deputies. In the letter Bradford explained why Rhode Island had rejected the Impost of 1781. (The italics and bold letters were not in the 1783 publication.)

4. The reference is to the June 1783 letter of General George Washington to the executives of the states. The letter was reprinted in the *United States Chronicle* on 15 March 1787 (CC:4). The collection of papers mentioned by the writer is *A Collection of Papers, Relative to Half-Pay and Commutation Thereof, Granted by Congress to the Officers of the Army, Together with A Circular Letter, from His Excellency General Washington, to the Several Legislatures of the United States* (Boston, 1783) (Evans 18256).

5. The reference is to an act of Congress dated 18 March 1780 by which Congress revalued Continental currency at the rate of 40 to 1 of specie.

6. In October 1788 John Cleves Symmes purchased from Congress about 1,000,000 acres in southwest Ohio bordering on the Ohio and Miami Rivers. The site included the present-day city of Cincinnati. Previously in October 1787 the Ohio Company had purchased 1,500,000 acres of land in the Northwest Territory.

7. For the amendment process found in Article XIII of the Articles of Confederation, see CDR, 93. The italics are not in the Articles of Confederation.

**Massachusetts Centinel, 14 June 1788<sup>1</sup>***ADVERTISEMENT EXTRA.*

On the 4th day of July next, will be sold, *for the benefit of the Antifederalists*, the Old ARTICLES of CONFEDERATION. That no one may have cause to plead ignorance of their condition, to have an excuse for *returning* them, the intended purchasers are informed, that they *have been found much the worse for the wear*—and that having been *patched up in a hurry*, to answer a purpose *during the war*, they are defective in every part—However, sold they must be—and as a little encouragement to buyers, the purchaser will have the State of RHODE-ISLAND thrown into the bargain.

UNION & FEDERALISM, Auctioniers.

*June 14, 1788.*

N. B. It was intended to have also given into the bargain the TENDER LAW of Massachusetts—But it died a few nights since—and has left but very few *relics*—worth acceptance.<sup>2</sup>

1. Reprinted in the *Newport Herald*, 26 June, and in eleven other newspapers by 24 November: Mass. (1), Conn. (1), N.Y. (3), N.J. (2), Pa. (1), Md. (1), Va. (1), S.C. (1). Three of these eleven newspapers omitted the last few lines beginning “N. B.”: N.Y. (1), N.J. (2).

2. In early June the Massachusetts legislature refused to extend the tender law (i.e., the law suspending suits for debts) that it had originally adopted in November 1786 and had extended in June and November 1787.

**William Ellery to Ebenezer Hazard**

**Newport, 16 June 1788 (excerpt)<sup>1</sup>**

. . . I find by a list in a Newyork paper that a majority of the delegates to the Convention of that State are antifederalists. I am sorry for it; but I cannot think that they will reject the Constitution when nine States shall have acceded to it which will be the case when Virginia shall have decided upon it—I rather think your Convention under those circumstances will adjourn after they have met rather than give it an absolute rejection.—Our accounts from N. Hampshire are favorable, and I imagine North Carolina ~~would~~ will follow the example of the other Southern States.—This State when it hath got rid of its State debt, which according to the present plan of financiering will very soon be extinguished, will I think change its high tone and reluctantly yield to the new Constitution.—

The General Assembly finished their Session last Saturday.—The Newport Herald will I suppose according to custom give a true account of their proceedings.<sup>2</sup>—I have been so busy in my office that I have

not had time to attend the Assembly;—but I hear that matters have proceeded in the old channel—

I am your obliged friend and humble servant

1. FC, Ellery Letterbook, 1786–1794, RNHi.

2. See *Newport Herald*, 19 June (RCS:R.I., 269).

### **Newport Herald, 19 June 1788<sup>1</sup>**

#### ADVERTISEMENT EXTRAORDINARY.

The Honorable General Assembly of this State having made an unprecedented discrimination, by excluding the NEWPORT HERALD from the publication of their acts—The PUBLISHER of it thinks it his duty to declare,

That if they were unwilling their Acts should be so fully known, as they are by the extensive circulation of this paper, an exclusion of pay will not prevent the publication of them, as the publisher of the Herald will do it *gratis*, from this consideration, that a general information of governmental proceedings, constitutes a grand palladium against encroachments.

If an expectation of checking free disquisitions of PUBLIC MEN OR MEASURES could be the motive—he assures the public that the HERALD will still continue an unshaken supporter of the patrons of liberty, order and justice, and a keen scourge to the sons of anarchy and fraud.

In making these declarations, the publisher of the Herald with sincerity adds, that he feels no pleasure when there is a necessity to *reprehend*—nor is flattered when there is a theme for satire—for it will be his highest pleasure to see the halcyon days return when *praise* shall supplant *censure*;—It is an EPOCH he presages not far distant, for a tyrannical paper system<sup>(a)</sup> laid the basis of American Independence and a fraudulent one pointed out the necessity of a Federal Constitution.

*Thus GOOD cometh out of EVIL.*

(a) *Stamp-Act* [1765].

1. Reprinted: *New York Journal* and *Pennsylvania Packet*, 1 July; *New York Independent Journal*, 2 July; *New Brunswick, N.J., Brunswick Gazette*, 8 July; *New Haven Gazette*, 10 July.

### **Tib. Gracchus**

#### **Providence United States Chronicle, 19 June 1788**

MR. WHEELER, *You are desired to publish the following in your useful Chronicle, and oblige a constant Reader in a neighbouring State.*

I read a letter in your last, said to have been written by a gentleman in a neighbouring State, to his friend in Providence,<sup>1</sup> in which the

writer has undertaken to make an apology for the conduct of the Legislature of Rhode-Island, in not granting the impost—for emitting and making paper bills a tendry—and for rejecting the proposed Constitution. To reconcile those proceedings with *strict justice* or *sound policy*, was an arduous task, incongruous with truth, and contrary to the experience of ages—it was beating a track which the wisest and most penetrating politicians have avoided, and the honest and judicious have declared cannot be trodden with propriety or a good conscience. On a subject so exceedingly embarrassing, we are not surprized to find a writer involved in great and unsurmountable difficulties;—truth being only on one side, the opposition to it should be made with the greatest caution—It requires an adept in sophism, one long practised in the arts of deception, to varnish over untruths in such a manner as to make them pass unsuspected. The letter-writer is but a novice in deception, or unluckily at this time happened to be off his guard—I conclude the latter, because it was a letter of friendship probably not designed for public inspection, for he would by no means be thought to be a “political scribbler,” nor intentionally in a public manner “lampoon” virtue by a “dirty scribble.”

This writer is said to belong to a neighbouring State, and his letter is inserted by particular desire, to “oblige a number of customers:”—Undoubtedly there are many who wish to allay the corroding stings of conscience, who seize with avidity an exotic production in vindication of unrighteousness.—This is the first from abroad which has attempted such a vindication<sup>2</sup>—the sum of which is, a misrepresentation of facts, with a sufficient quantum of doubts respecting the impost—a very weak excuse for emitting paper money, and the tendry act, which he acknowledges a “very great oversight in the Legislature”—and something of the manner in which the proposed Constitution was tried and condemned,—interspersing and concluding the whole with malicious invectives against the brave officers of the late continental army, who, he is pleased to call by that polite epithet “the full-blooded Cincinnati,” injuriously reflecting on Attornies and “the reverend Clergy.” A writer in a dirty cause, for want of argument and truth to support him, must have recourse to invective and scurrility:—This is a natural consequence—and on this idea, and no other, the letter-writer is systematical.

Misery loves company (says the old adage)—many therefore in Rhode-Island State will be greatly obliged that there is one individual in the United States, out of its own limits, who approves of their measures—But it is “matter of daily thanksgiving to God,” to every honest and virtuous man, that there are but few in the universe so abandoned and depraved.

To attempt to point out all the errors which the letter-writer is guilty of, is a task I shall not assume:—There is one misrepresentation so gross which unless corrected may terrify ignorant credulity.—He says, “Congress made a grant of 550,000 dollars to the officers of the army, which saddles the States with an annual income of £99,000.”—I correct this more especially because it is an article which admits of demonstration, and might be performed by every tyro in arithmetic—for £99,000 gives a principal of 5½ millions of dollars, and according to his statement is just ten times too much.

The letter-writer appears to be equally sagacious in politics as he is accurate in computing interest, and were he to employ himself in investigating the rudiments of both, under a good preceptor, he might be more profitably employed than in writing strictures on Congress, or apologizing for the conduct of the Rhode-Island Legislature.

In whatever State, out of Rhode-Island, this fretting leper may reside, there is little danger from his venomous pen.—Americans are more and more enlightened—these times have tried men’s souls,<sup>3</sup> and reason is ascending to the throne where confusion and disorder have reigned.

*June 14th, 1788.*

1. See *United States Chronicle*, 12 June (above).
2. For another article favorable to Rhode Island, see the *Philadelphia Freeman’s Journal*, 21 November 1787 (I, above).
3. Adapted from Thomas Paine, “The American Crisis,” No. I (December 1776).

### **Pittsfield, Mass., Berkshire Chronicle, 19 June 1788**

A gentleman late from Connecticut informs, that the State of Rhode-Island is about to proclaim a fast, and to put on sackcloth, from the greatest even unto the least, on account of the great probability that the New Constitution will soon be adopted by nine States: And that there is very little business done in any part of the State, each one being in great sorrow and heaviness of heart, because his course of villainy and anti-federalism is near to an end.—It is further observed, that the people of that State do now believe in an ancient prophecy, which foretold, that “About the year 1789, the State of Rhode-Island should be sunk in the depths of the sea, on account of its great wickedness and anti-federalism.”—*O! horrible to be told! !*

### **Newport and Providence Celebrate New Hampshire’s Ratification of the Constitution, 24 June–3 July 1788**

On Tuesday morning, 24 June, the “Eastern Post” brought news to the “truly Federal” town of Providence that New Hampshire had become the ninth

state to ratify the Constitution. Under Article VII of the Constitution, ratification by nine state conventions was sufficient to implement the Constitution among the ratifying states. Later on the 24th, several spontaneous celebrations erupted in Providence. “Bells were set a ringing,” cannon were fired, schools were dismissed for the day, and the students from the College of Rhode Island “joined in a solemn Procession.”

News of New Hampshire’s ratification arrived in Newport on the evening of 24 June. The next day Newport Federalists celebrated by ringing bells, beating drums, displaying flags, and firing cannon. The celebration culminated at the end of the day with a bonfire. Both towns hoped that New Hampshire’s ratification would convince Rhode Island’s legislature to call a ratifying convention.

*Susan Lear Journal*

*Providence, 24 June 1788*<sup>1</sup>

Rode around the square<sup>2</sup> with Mrs. Anthony in the Morning. In the Afternoon we went to visit Mrs. Manning.<sup>3</sup> This has been a day of rejoicing as they have received accounts this Morning that New Hampshire has adopted the New Constitution. The whole Town has been rejoicing. We partook of the general joy and have been hugely entertained up at the College by the proof the students gave of their joy. They marched 2 or 3 times around the Green with Drums, Flutes and Violins, each one carrying the different branches of their studies in their hands; some with globes, some with Maps and some with large Folios. The Music was good, in fact, it was<sup>4</sup> the most interesting procession I have seen in a long time.

1. Typescript, Helen E. Keep Papers, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library. Another typescript version is in the Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection (MSS4978) at the Library of Congress. The two versions differ in capitalization and punctuation. See notes 2 and 4 below for significant differences. Lear (c. 1770–1825) was traveling from her home in Philadelphia to Providence and Boston from 6 May to 26 August 1788.

2. The word “square” is omitted in this version but was supplied from the Library of Congress version.

3. Margaret Stites Manning (c. 1740–1815), a native of Elizabethtown, N.J., was the wife of the Reverend James Manning, the president of the College of Rhode Island.

4. “Has been” in the Library of Congress version.

*Providence United States Chronicle, 26 June 1788*<sup>1</sup>

On Tuesday Morning last, the Eastern Post brought the very interesting and important Intelligence, That the State of New-Hampshire had, on the Saturday preceding, ADOPTED the proposed Constitution, whereby the Structure of the national Government was completed, and the Federal Edifice firmly established on NINE GLORIOUS PILLARS.—The Joy of the People burst forth like a Blaze, catching from Breast to

Breast, till it pervaded the whole Town—and it was impossible to restrain the most public Testimonials of their Satisfaction.—All the Bells were set a ringing, and continued the joyful Peal, with but short Intermittions, through the Day.—At Twelve o'Clock a Salute was fired, by the United Train of Artillery, on FEDERAL-HILL, in Honour of the States which had adopted the Constitution—which was several Times repeated in the Course of the Day.—All the Schools were dismissed for the Day, and general Gratulation, diffusing the most sincere Jouisance<sup>2</sup> among all Ranks succeeded. The *wavering*, and several of those who have heretofore *appeared against* the Constitution, now heartily joined in the general Joy;—which soon extended itself to the fair Seat of the Muses on College-Hill, when the Scholars, with their Books under their Arms, unanimously joined in a solemn Procession, and *peripatetically* and philosophically, in Honour of the Day, named the beautiful Green round the College—THE FEDERAL PARADE. The Town of Providence is truly Federal; and as the new Constitution will, in its Operation and Consequences, be more especially beneficial to this State, than to any other in the Confederacy—it is hoped the People thereof will soon be so convinced of it as to call a Convention, agreeable to the Recommendation of Congress, for adding the *Rhode-Island Pillar*—which, though among the smallest, may yet be considered as not the least deserving, when a little more of its seeming Antifederalism shall be rubbed of[f], and its genuine and intrinsic Worth appears.

1. Reprinted in the *Providence Gazette*, 28 June, and in eleven newspapers outside Rhode Island by 16 July: N.H. (1), Mass. (4), Conn. (2), N.Y. (2), Pa. (2). See also "Providence Celebrates the Fourth of July and New Hampshire's Ratification of the Constitution," 26 June–17 July (below).

2. French: Enjoyment or pleasure.

*Newport Herald*, 26 June 1788<sup>1</sup>

#### UNION and FEDERALISM.

TUESDAY evening we received by Post the highly interesting intelligence of the Ratification of *the proposed Constitution for the United States*, by the State of NEW-HAMPSHIRE, which makes NINE STATES, and thereby insures an establishment of that well organized Government.—On WEDNESDAY morning the day was ushered in with the ringing of the Bells;—The shipping were drest in their colours, and from many houses in the town were displayed the stripes of America:—Application being made by a number of gentlemen to his EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR, that permission might be given to fire the Guns at FORT-WASHINGTON and hoist the *Standard* of the State, his Excellency very politely granted the request and ordered the gunner of the Fort accordingly.—



At one o'clock nine 18 pounders were fired from the Fort, and at sun set the same number, as a compliment to the nine States, which was re-echoed by loud huzzas.—It is with pleasure we observed the general joy and unfeigned congratulations of our fellow citizens on this auspicious event.<sup>2</sup>

1. This item was reprinted in whole or in part in the *Providence Gazette*, 28 June, and the *United States Chronicle*, 3 July, and fourteen other times by 21 July: Vt. (1), N.H. (1), Mass. (6), Conn. (4), N.Y. (2). The *Boston Gazette*, 30 June, appended: “At night there were Illuminations.” The *Massachusetts Gazette*, 1 July, appended: “EXULT therefore, ye citizens of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, at the prospect of the rising fabric of Order, Justice and Liberty! Let us once more HARMONISE our political machine, and adopt the *Constitution of the United States*, thereby we shall retrieve our much injured character, restore our expiring commerce, cause justice to flourish in our land, and render permanent the happiness and prosperity of this State.”

2. Another description of these celebrations, based upon “a letter from Newport,” is in Philippe André Joseph de Létombe to Comte de la Luzerne, 26 June (CC:789, p. 197). Stationed in Boston, Létombe was the French consul general for the United States. Luzerne was the French Minister of Marine and Colonies.

*Newport Mercury, 30 June 1788*

Tuesday Evening last arrived here the very important and interesting Intelligence, that the State of New-Hampshire had reared the ninth PILLAR of the new federal Fabric of American Glory.—By this fortunate Event we expect an efficient, just and lasting Government will very soon take Place upon such a Foundation as no other Nation can boast of.—The Prospect of such a desirable Epoch in the History of this Western World rekindled the patriotic Spirits, and reanimated the depressed Souls of the honest Citizens of this distressed Town.—It first burst forth very early in the Morning by the ringing of Bells—Drums beating—Fifes and other Implements of Music playing.—The *Remains* of an oppressed Navigation raised their *Insignas* of Joy, which was returned by the display of the Thirteen Stars wafting from the Tops of several Houses in the Town.—Application was made by the Citizens to his Excellency the Governor to exhibit the *State Testimonials* of Joy upon Fort WASHINGTON.—The Request was politely gratified—The Colours were soon flying and the Cannon roaring in Honor of the Nine States who have so gloriously adopted the new Constitution.—The Scholars of the Academy were liberated from their Exercises to join the joyful Throng—in hailing the auspicious Day!—The American *Saturnalia!*<sup>1</sup>—in which the good Citizens of all Ranks expressed their Effusions of Joy—A Day we hope and trust will be dear in Remembrance to civil Liberty—Patriotism—Justice—Honor and Honesty.—A Day which exhibited, in Newport, more military Spirit, Joy and Conviviality than has

been seen since the Ratification of the Peace with Britain.—The Celebration ended with a Bonfire at the lower end of the Town—the Illumination of the Parade—the Discharge of nine more Cannon—with the repeated Huzzas of the joyous Citizens.

1. The ancient Roman festival honoring Saturn, the god of agriculture. The celebration, usually held for seven days between 17 and 23 December, was marked by visiting friends and gift giving. Social restrictions were relaxed and slaves were treated as equals during this time.

*Massachusetts Centinel*, 2 July 1788<sup>1</sup>

To the towns already mentioned as having celebrated the ratification of the Constitution by New-Hampshire, we with pleasure add Newport and Providence.—In the former, the bells were rung, the shipping, &c. drest in colours, a salute of nine cannon fired, and mutual congratulations marked the general pleasure of the assembled citizens. In the latter the bells were also rung, and several salutes fired from the artillery, on *Federal Hill*—the schools were dismissed, and all was joy—an assembly was made on College Hill, when the scholars with their books under their arms, unanimously joined in a solemn procession, and *paripatetically* and philosophically, in honour of the day, named the beautiful green round the college—*The FEDERAL PARADE*.

1. Reprinted eight times by 24 July: N.H. (1), N.Y. (2), Pa. (2), Md. (1), Va. (2).

*Newport Herald*, 3 July 1788

Nothing can more strongly evince the federalism of this town, than their rejoicings upon the intelligence of the ratification of the Constitution by nine states—there was no influence of party—no arrangement for proceeding—but a spontaneous and universal joy burst from the liberal mind to celebrate the event,—There was a rivalry, but it was a rivalry in exultations,—our press for our last Herald was closed before the day, or it should also have announced the *parade of our fellow citizens, the illuminations, the firings in the evening, and the universal order and harmony that prevailed throughout that auspicious day*.<sup>1</sup>

The town of Providence, ever sanguine in the cause of liberty, propose celebrating the fourth of July, in commemoration of American Independence and the ratification of the New Constitution by nine states.—Invitations are given to His Excellency the Governor and his Council and to the country to join with them—Very great preparations we learn are making for this occasion.<sup>2</sup>

With pleasure we observe, that the NEW CONSTITUTION is thus become the favorite theme of the day; its progress inspires with confidence the friends of liberty and order—and destroys every hope of its enemies.<sup>3</sup>

1. This paragraph was reprinted in whole or in part in the *United States Chronicle*, 10 July, and seven other times by 31 July: Mass. (3), N.Y. (1), Pa. (1), Md. (1), Va. (1).

2. This paragraph was reprinted in the *United States Chronicle*, 10 July, and five other times by 31 July: Mass. (1), N.Y. (1), Pa. (1), Md. (1), Va. (1). For the huge Providence celebration of the Fourth of July, see “Providence Celebrates the Fourth of July and New Hampshire’s Ratification of the Constitution,” 26 June–17 July (below).

3. This paragraph was reprinted in the *Boston Gazette*, 7 July; *Massachusetts Spy*, 10 July; *Pennsylvania Mercury*, 17 July; *Maryland Journal*, 22 July; and Petersburg *Virginia Gazette*, 31 July.

### Newport Herald, 26 June 1788

By authentic information from VIRGINIA, we flatter ourselves that we shall be able in our next to congratulate the public upon the accession of that large and respectable State to this new union, which will make the TENTH STATE.<sup>1</sup>—EXULT therefore *ye citizens of the State of Rhode-Island and Providence-Plantations* at the prospect of the rising fabric of ORDER, JUSTICE, and LIBERTY.—Let us once more HARMONIZE our political machine, and adopt the *Constitution of the United States*, thereby we shall retrieve our much injured character;—restore our expiring commerce,—cause justice to flourish in our land, and render permanent the happiness and prosperity of this State.

1. News of Virginia’s ratification of the Constitution reached Providence on 5 July. See James Brown Diary, 5 July, and the *United States Chronicle*, 10 July, in “Providence Celebrates Virginia’s Ratification of the Constitution,” 5–17 July (RCS:R.I., 314).

### Providence Celebrates the Fourth of July and New Hampshire’s Ratification of the Constitution, 26 June–17 July 1788

On 25 June a meeting of some “respectable Inhabitants” of Providence agreed to combine the celebration of New Hampshire’s ratification with that of the anniversary of American independence. The celebration was to take place on Friday, the Fourth of July. On 27 June a general meeting of the town’s inhabitants, chaired by former Deputy Governor Jabez Bowen, planned an elaborate celebration. Committees were appointed to raise money to defray expenses, to designate the place of celebration, to request the clergy to attend, to purchase articles and supplies, to prepare an invitation to the inhabitants of the town and country, and to invite the officers of the state government. The Reverend Enos Hitchcock, pastor of the First or Benevolent Congregational Church, was asked to deliver an oration at the Baptist Church and the United Company of the Train of Artillery was “requested to usher in the Day with a Discharge of Cannon, and to cause the other necessary Firings on the Occasion.”

On the night of 3 July, Antifederalists (or the Country party), under the leadership of William West, an associate justice of the Superior Court, and Othniel Gorton, the Chief Justice (and former speaker of the House of Deputies), began to organize a large armed force on the outskirts of Providence,

an overwhelmingly Federalist town. (The size of the force was variously estimated at four to five hundred and 1,000 men.) At 11:00 P.M. a committee from Providence was sent to confer with the Antifederalists, who indicated that the celebration would take place peacefully only if the Constitution was not mentioned and if the ratifying states were not saluted. Antifederalists suggested that any mention of the Constitution and the ratifying states would insult both the legislature, which refused to call a ratifying convention, and a very large majority of the state's freemen, who opposed the Constitution. At 7:00 A.M. or 8:00 A.M. on 4 July, committees representing the Antifederalists and the town of Providence conferred and the latter agreed to celebrate only the anniversary of independence. Consequently, Antifederalists, upon the advice of their leaders, did not interfere with the celebration. (William West published his version of the above events in the *United States Chronicle* on 10 July, while a Federalist version appeared in the *Providence Gazette* on 12 July, both below.)

At 11:00 A.M. on 4 July, the Reverends James Manning and Joseph Snow, Jr., offered prayers at the Baptist Meeting House that were followed by the Reverend Enos Hitchcock's oration and a benediction by the Reverend John Stanford. Around 2:00 P.M. a procession formed and moved to the Federal Plain where the crowd was entertained. Between 5,000 and 6,000 people feasted on meat, wine, punch, and other items at a table measuring 900 to 1,000 feet in length. At 6:00 P.M. the people went from the Plain to the "State-House Parade," where they drank thirteen toasts. The celebration closed with a discharge of thirteen cannon from Federal Hill under the orders of Colonel Daniel Tillinghast, commander of the United Company of the Train of Artillery. (Hitchcock's oration was printed at the request of the inhabitants of Providence.)

*Theodore Foster to Dwight Foster*  
*Providence, 26 June 1788 (excerpt)*<sup>1</sup>

Dear Brother

Our Good Friend Doctr Drown<sup>2</sup> being out on a Journey for his Health and intending to take Brookfield in his Tour I cannot omit so favourable an Opportunity of most Sincerely congratulating you on the Complete Raising of the Federal Edifice and to inform you that we are to have a most Grand Parade on the Occasion the 4th Day of July when there is to be a publick Entertainment for a Thousand People—The Country being all invited in a[s] you will see by the Advertisement in this Days Paper<sup>3</sup> which Doctr Drown will Deliver you with this. . . .

1. RC, Dwight Foster Papers, MHi. The letter was endorsed as received on 30 June.

2. Dr. Solomon Drowne, a native of Providence and a graduate of the College of Rhode Island (1773), received his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1781 after having served as a surgeon during the Revolution. He began practicing medicine in Providence in 1783 and the next year he went to Europe to continue his medical studies. Drowne returned to Providence in 1785 and resumed his practice.

3. See *United States Chronicle*, 26 June (immediately below).

*Providence United States Chronicle, 26 June 1788*<sup>1</sup>

Federal Celebration.

At a MEETING of a Number of respectable Inhabitants of the Town of PROVIDENCE, June 25, 1788,

It was *unanimously agreed*, That they would celebrate the Establishment of the NEW CONSTITUTION by Nine States, on FRIDAY, the 4th of July next (being the Anniversary of AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE) on FEDERAL HILL, in Providence; and that there be a GENERAL INVITATION to the Inhabitants of the TOWN and COUNTRY adjacent, to attend on the happy Occasion.

1. Reprinted: *Salem Mercury*, 1 July; *Boston Gazette*, 7 July.

*Providence Gazette, 28 June 1788*<sup>1</sup>

*Providence, June 27, 1788.*

At a general and very respectable Meeting of the Inhabitants of this Town, convened, pursuant to Notice given, in order to collect their Opinions as to the most eligible Mode of commemorating the Anniversary of Independence, and of celebrating the auspicious Event of the Adoption of the federal Constitution by Nine States, *It was Voted*,

1st. That the Hon. JABEZ BOWEN, Esq; be chosen Chairman of this Meeting.

2dly. That the Erection of the Ninth Pillar of the Federal Structure, and the Anniversary of American Independence, be celebrated on Friday next, the Fourth of July; and that an Entertainment be prepared on said Day, for as many of our Fellow-Citizens as will honour it with their Presence.

3dly. That Capt. Paul Allen, Mr. Thomas L. Halsey, Mr. Thomas Jones, Mr. Jeremiah F. Jenkins, and Mr. Robert Newell, be a Committee to procure, by Subscription, the necessary Funds for providing the Supplies, and defraying incidental Expences.

4thly. That the aforesaid Committee, together with Col. Zephaniah Andrews, Col. Daniel Tillinghast, Col. Christopher Olney, Deacon James Green, Joseph Martin, Esq; Col. William Russell, Col. Joseph Nightingale, Mr. George Benson, Mr. John Mason, Mr. Joshua Hacker, Welcome Arnold, Esq; Deacon Barzillai Richmond, Deacon Samuel Nightingale, Col. Levi Hall, Col. John Whipple, Mr. Aaron Mason, Major Charles Keen, David Howell, Esq; and Major James Burrill, be a Committee to superintend and direct the Business of the Day; and that they also designate the Place of Celebration, after agreeing with the Owners of the Soil.

5thly. That the Rev. ENOS HITCHCOCK be requested to deliver an Oration or Discourse suitable to the Occasion, at the Baptist Church, at Half after 10 o'Clock, A. M.<sup>2</sup>

6thly. That the Rev. Clergy be requested to attend at the Entertainment; and that the Chairman, Nicholas Brown, John Jenckes, and Joseph Martin, Esquires, be appointed a Committee to wait on the Clergy with this Request.

7thly. That the Committee for purchasing Supplies, and superintending the Business of the Day, direct what Articles and Supplies shall be procured for the Entertainment.

8thly. That John Brown, Benjamin Bourne, and Theodore Foster, Esquires, be appointed a Committee to prepare an Invitation to the Inhabitants of Town and Country to attend on the Occasion, and partake in the Festivities of the Day, and cause said Invitation to be inserted in the News-Papers.

9thly. That said last mentioned Committee be requested to give particular Invitations to his Excellency the GOVERNOR, his Honour the DEPUTY-GOVERNOR, and the ASSISTANTS, to honour the Day with their Presence.

10thly. That the United Company of the Train of Artillery, commanded by Col. Daniel Tillinghast, be requested to usher in the Day with a Discharge of Cannon, and to cause the other necessary Firings on the Occasion.

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The Subscribers, pursuant to their Appointment, take the Liberty, in this public Manner, to request the Pleasure of the Company of their Fellow-Citizens, in Town and Country, to participate in the Celebration of Friday the Fourth of July, both as the Anniversary of Independence, and in Commemoration of that most happy and auspicious Event, the Establishment of the New Constitution by Nine States.

JOHN BROWN,  
BENJAMIN BOURNE, } *Committee.*  
THEODORE FOSTER, }

\*\* It is expected that Dinner will be served at Two o'Clock.

*Providence, June 27, 1788.*

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We learn that the Celebration which is to take Place on Friday next will be on the Plain, near the Head of Providence Cove, on the Land of Mr. Job Smith.

1. Reprinted: *United States Chronicle*, 3 July; *Massachusetts Gazette*, 4 July; *New York Journal*, 8 July; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 15 July.

2. See below for an excerpt from Hitchcock's oration.

*Providence Gazette, 28 June 1788*

A GRAND BALL.

MR. GRIFFITHS<sup>1</sup> begs Leave to present his most respectful Compliments to the LADIES and GENTLEMEN of Providence, and its Vicinity, and solicits the Honour of their Company at a GRAND BALL, at Hacker's Hall,<sup>2</sup> on the Evening of the Fourth Day of July, Seven o'Clock, to celebrate the ANNIVERSARY of the INDEPENDENCE OF AMERICA, and the ADOPTION OF THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION BY NINE STATES. He flatters himself that their Attendance will be general, to testify their Joy on so auspicious an Event. Good Music will be provided, and the Hall well illuminated.

*Providence, June 27, 1788.*

1. John Griffiths was an itinerant dancing master who published a collection of social dances in Providence in 1788 (Evans 21122).

2. Owned by Joshua Hacker, Hacker's Hall was a popular Revolutionary era entertainment house where many balls and parties were held before its destruction by fire in 1801.

*Providence United States Chronicle, 3 July 1788*<sup>1</sup>

Some Persons, says a Correspondent, have expressed Doubts of the Propriety of publicly celebrating great and important Events, not excepting even those of the Independence of our Country, and the Adoption of the National Constitution.—But should we turn to the Pages of History we shall find the greatest Part of Mankind, in all Countries, and in all Ages of the World, justifying by their Conduct, the Practice of such Celebrations. This was remarkably the Case in the Jewish Nation, every Individual of whom were required, by the Law delivered from Mount Sinai, once a Year at the *Feast of the Passover*, to resort to Jerusalem, in Commemoration of their being *delivered from Slavery* in Egypt. None were excused from attending this great Festival, and those who by Reason of Sickness, or on Account of their having been travelling abroad, and who could not attend the First, were required to attend the Second Passover, on the 14th of the Second Month after the Equinox.

Among the Grecians, we find their public Celebrations almost infinite—They indeed constituted the greatest Part of their Religion.—Those of *Panatheia*, of *Bacchus*, and *Eleusis* were very remarkable, especially the latter, instituted in Honour of Husbandry (the FARMERS' PROFESSION) and in Commemoration of *Ceres*, who taught the Art of Husbandry, particularly the *Cultivation of Corn, and making Bread*.—This Festival was celebrated annually, at Athens, with great Religion

and Purity, but with vast Magnificence and Show, attended by a Procession very numerous, and which generally consisted of Thirty Thousand Persons.

The Romans had also a great Number of stated Festivals, as the Saturnalia, Cerealia, Lupercalia, Liberalia, Neptunalia, &c. and we find among Christians and Mahometans of all Sects, a great Number of Festivals, making Part of the outward or ceremonial Religion of every Country.

The Advantages of such Celebrations are great.—For the People are brought together from different Parts, with a Disposition to be pleased with each other; and their Eating and Drinking together from the same Table, and from the same animal Food, where Friendship and good Humour prevail, is not easily forgotten—and the Recollection, that all met together in Friendship, and that all were pleased and disposed to love and serve each other, on such a particular Occasion, has a Tendency to endear that Occasion to all who were thus present.—The Establishment of any particular Form of Government, is a Matter of Sentiment among a free People, and the Strength of that Government depends upon the good Opinion People in general have of it;—it is therefore good Policy, and a sure Mark of Patriotism and public Virtue, to endeavour as much as possible that all Ranks and Orders of People should be pleased with, and should wish to support it, and nothing has a greater Tendency to this than for the People of all Conditions to assemble together, at certain Times, to join in the Celebration of the Government under which they live.—The Intention of such a Celebration is to conciliate and unite, and by no Means to offend and divide.—The Man therefore deserves to be execrated and detested, by all good Men, who would preposterously and wickedly dare to suggest an Idea, when a public Celebration is set on Foot for the most patriotic and beneficial Purpose, that of uniting all Parties, that it is intended thereby to insult or injure the Feelings of any Part, or Member of the Community, who at first might not have been convinced of the Excellence and Advantages of the Government.

It is with Pleasure we inform the Public, That a large Number of our Brethren from the Country propose to join us To-Morrow in celebrating the Day.

The Committee who were appointed to conduct the Business of the Celebration To-Morrow, we learn, have determined that it shall be on the Plain near the Head of Providence River, on Land of Mr. Job Smith; where it is hoped the Friends to the Union, Peace and Happiness of America within the Vicinity will attend.—An ORATION will be delivered at the Baptist Church, at Half past Eleven o’Clock, by the Rev. ENOS



HITCHCOCK<sup>2</sup>—which will be accompanied with some select Pieces of Music;—from whence the Whole will move in Procession to the Place of Celebration.

Guards will be provided, to prevent any Tumults during the Day or Night.

1. Reprinted with minor changes and deletions by the *Massachusetts Gazette*, 15 July; *New Haven Gazette* and *Pennsylvania Packet*, 24 July; *New York Daily Advertiser*, 29 July. The first paragraph was reprinted in the Exeter, N.H., *Freeman's Oracle*, 18 July.

2. See immediately below.

*Enos Hitchcock Oration*

*Providence, 4 July 1788 (excerpt)*<sup>1</sup>

. . . A revolution can never be considered as complete till government is firmly established—and without this independency would be a curse instead of a blessing—These jointly were the great object of the American revolution—and the sole reason why we have not enjoyed all the emoluments of the latter, is because we have not availed ourselves of the former.—We came into national existence without national ideas, and therefore, could not have those arrangements which more experience is suited to give.

This great and extensive people, pressed together by common danger, and loos[e]ly holden by a confederacy suited only to their present exigency, united their efforts for common safety.—But when freed from the apprehensions of danger, their government lost its energy—their councils were divided—the refractory conduct of some States—the clashing interests of others, and the divided politics of the whole made it utterly impossible to draw forth national resources, and to comply with the just demands of creditors, or even defray the contingent expenditures of government.—The tottering fabric of their union shook from its foundation, and threat[e]ned the very existence of empire.—Feuds and animosities arose in every quarter; and formidable insurrections teemed with all the horrors of civil war—But the liberties of America are the object of divine patronage—a guardian God protects them—This intervening cloud, which spread darkness and distress over our land, was a prelude to a brighter day.

Independence was but a part of the revolution—and as we experienced many difficulties in laying the foundation, it was but natural to look for some in erecting the superstructure.—The blessings of a free government, which many nations have been unable to procure, even after ages of efforts and misery, are granted by divine providence, to the confederating States after a few years struggle.

The boasted wisdom of Greece and Rome were not sufficient to prevent convulsions in the State, nor to effect revolutions by reason or by rhetoric.

Rivers of blood ran down the streets of Rome in defence of the republic, and for the establishment of government—and while her legions triumphed in Italy, Gaul, Spain, Britain, and some parts of Germany,—while the provinces of Asia Minor, together with Armenia, Syria, Mosopotamia and Media, yielded to her superior force—while the most of the inhabitants of Africa obeyed the voice of the Roman senate, there subsisted within her own walls civil wars of the most threat[e]ning and sanguinary nature.

Greece could boast of a Solon, a Lycurgus and other splendid genii, who did honour to human nature, but they cannot boast of a revolution by reasoning, began and completed in so short a period as that which distinguishes the present Era.

It was not till a struggle of more than forty years had distressed and impoverished Holland that she gained her independence, and many more before she attained to a firm government.—England has been a great theatre of civil discord and contention for centuries—In all their variations of the mode of government recourse was had to the sword—and almost the whole of that island has been stained with the blood of contending nations and domestic factions;—and they have found that when a sovereign or a system was agreed upon, their reduction to order was far less rapid than ours.

The road to empire has usually been slow and difficult.—As order progressively arose out of Chaos by the forming hand of the great Architect, so must a well-ordered government be collected and formed from the scattered materials and wild mixture of a chaotic people.

How to rescue these materials from the splendid ruins of government, and give stability to the rising fabric with the greatest rapidity and least difficulty, is a question which hath nonplussed all the philosophers, lawgivers and politicians of the world.—The answer to this question has been reserved to the American States.—After ages of fruitless attempts in other countries, this country affords the first instance of an entire revolution in policy and government, the most important that ever marked the progress of human society, without the effusion of human blood, without force, fraud or surprize.

Having had painful experience of the imbecility of the confederation and its inadequacy to the purposes of government, the same patriotism which glowed in the American breast at the commencement of the revolution,—which animated the patriot in the cabinet, and supported

the brave soldier in the sufferings and dangers of the field, is renewed in a Convention for devising a more perfect scheme of government.

Behold “the majesty of a free people, convened in awful simplicity, to consult their safety and promote their happiness!”—Here again rises to view, from the placid shades of domestic life, the great AMERICAN CINCINNATUS,<sup>2</sup> whose virtues in the field can be equalled only by his wisdom in the senate!—Illustrious Chief—May remotest ages reap the fruit of thy toils, and the happiness of a grateful people crown thy most ardent wishes!

The business devolved on this august body is as difficult as it is new—as important as it is difficult.—To balance the different interests of the States, so that each might give up its proportion of local advantage for the good of the whole,—to frame a model of government that should so accord with the genius of a large, extensive and free people, of different education, manners and employments, that should meet the consenting voice of even of nine among thirteen independent republics;—to effect all this was a task, to which nothing was equal short of that assemblage of wisdom and philanthropy which appeared in convention.

To the disappointment of our enemies and the joy of our friends, their wisdom and candour accomplished the wondrous deed, and we now behold a system of federal government acceded to with a degree of peace and unanimity, all circumstances considered, which has no parallel.—The abilities and political knowledge,—the patient deliberation and constant attention,—the mutual candour and condescension, which were exhibited by those who framed the Federal Constitution—and the similar spirit which actuated the most of those States in which it has been received, do immortal honour to our country, and add lustre to the present age.—Justly may it be said, “The present is an age of philosophy, and America the empire of reason.”<sup>3</sup>

Yes, my fellow-countrymen, this is an Era reserved for the commencement of this western empire! The confederating States exhibit to the world the noble image of a community, which, founded in equality and justice, secures to the individuals every enjoyment which can be derived from human institutions.—The fields and the fruits are their own,—the regulations under which they live are theirs—they are the proprietors and lords of the soil, and jointly constitute the sovereignty of their country.—They are under a government of laws and not of men.

Happy people! whose minds are not awed by the dread of a master, nor dazzled with the peagantry of courts, nor enslaved by superstitious customs and prejudices.

It is not my province to point out the merits or defects of that federal constitution which has employed the ablest pens—I will only offer you the sentiment of an ingenious writer on the subject—“The Constitution defines the powers of Congress; and every power not expressly delegated to that body, remains in the several State legislatures. The sovereignty and the republican form of government of each State is guaranteed by the constitution; and the bounds of jurisdiction between the federal and State governments are marked with precision. In theory, it has all the energy and freedom of the British and Roman governments, without their defects.”<sup>4</sup>—And I may venture to add, that whatever defects appertain to this plan of government, it has this perfection, it prescribes a remedy for them, and contains within itself the means of its own cure—a circumstance which ought to have its weight in the minds of all opposers! . . .

1. On 2 August Hitchcock’s speech was published and sold by Bennett Wheeler of the *United States Chronicle* as a twenty-four page pamphlet entitled *An Oration: Delivered July 4, 1788, at the Request of the Inhabitants of the Town of Providence, in Celebration of the Anniversary of American Independence, and of the Accession of Nine States to the Federal Constitution* (Evans 21145). Advertisements for the pamphlet appeared in the *United States Chronicle* between 31 July and 9 October 1788. Priced at nine pence, copies were also available for sale in Newport and East Greenwich, R.I. The excerpt printed here appears on pages 9–16 of the pamphlet.

2. George Washington.

3. A paraphrase of “In the formation of our constitution, the wisdom of all ages is collected—the legislators of antiquity are consulted—as well as the opinions and interests of the millions, who are concerned. In short, it is an *empire of reason*” (“A Citizen of America” [Noah Webster], *An Examination into the Leading Principles of the Federal Constitution* . . . [Philadelphia, 1787], 6). For a photographic reproduction of Webster’s pamphlet, see Mfm:Pa. 142, p. 714. See also “The Rhode Island Reprinting of Extracts from ‘A Citizen of America,’” 22–29 December 1787 (I, above).

4. “A Citizen of America,” *An Examination*, 54 (Mfm:Pa. 142, p. 762).

#### *Providence Gazette, 5 July 1788*<sup>1</sup>

In Pursuance of the Intention mentioned in our last Paper, Yesterday was celebrated as a Festival in this Town.—At the Moment of Sunrising commenced a Discharge of Thirteen Cannon.—At Eleven o’Clock a very numerous Assembly attended at the Baptist Meeting-House, for the Purpose of religious Exercises, and hearing an Oration delivered by the Rev. Mr. HITCHCOCK.—The Oration was preceded by a Prayer by Dr. MANNING, and followed by another by the Rev. Mr. SNOW.<sup>2</sup>—Some select Pieces of Music were interspersed, and well performed, instrumentally as well as vocally, in the latter of which some female Voices added inimitable Grace; and the Rev. Mr. STANFORD<sup>3</sup> dismissed the Assembly by a very pertinent and solemn Benediction.

The Oration was full of manly Eloquence and Learning—on the late Revolution—the State of public Affairs, and the NEW CONSTITUTION, together with the Ratification thereof by NINE STATES.—The most profound Attention marked at once the Abilities of the Speaker, and the Politeness of the Audience.

About Two o’Clock the Procession was formed, and moved to FEDERAL PLAIN, where the Entertainment was provided.—The Fall of Rain just at that Time detracted somewhat from the intended Regularity of the Procession, but the Rain fortunately ceasing, the People partook of the Repast at a Table upwards of a Thousand Feet in Length, the Whole overspread with a Canopy of Canvass.—Two well-fatted Oxen had been provided for the Occasion, one of which was roasted whole, besides Hams, Wine, Punch, &c. &c.—The Number of People who partook of the Entertainment was not accurately ascertained, but was estimated to be between Five and Six Thousand, many of them from remote Parts of the State, and some from the neighbouring States.—Fortunately no Accident took Place to marr the Festivity of the Day, every Countenance beaming with Heartfelt Joy, which discovered itself also by repeated Huzzas and Acclamations during the Time of drinking the Toasts.

About Six o’Clock the People retired from the Plain to the State-House Parade, and after Thirteen Cheers returned to their several Homes with Decency and Order.<sup>4</sup>

The following Toasts were drank, under a Discharge of Thirteen Cannon, viz.

1. The Congress.
2. Our great and good Ally LOUIS XVI. and the other friendly Powers of Europe.
3. His Excellency GEORGE WASHINGTON, Esq;
4. His Excellency JOHN ADAMS, Esq; late Minister at the Court of London.<sup>5</sup>
5. The brave Officers and Soldiers of the late American Army.
6. The Memory of the Heroes who have fallen in Defence of American liberty.
7. The Memory of General GREENE.<sup>6</sup>
8. Agriculture, Manufactures and Commerce.
9. The virtuous Daughters of America.
10. A speedy Coalition of Parties in Pursuit of the public Good.
11. May the United States enjoy Freedom, under a just and efficient Government.
12. Liberty and Happiness to all Mankind.
13. THE DAY.<sup>7</sup>

The Celebrity of the Day was heightened by the Attendance and Alertness of the United Company of the Train of Artillery, under the Orders of Col. TILLINGHAST, who closed the Celebration by a Discharge of Thirteen Cannon from FEDERAL HILL.

1. Reprinted in toto in the *Newport Herald*, 10 July, and *Pennsylvania Packet*, 21 July, and in part in the *Norwich Packet*, 10 July; *Hartford American Mercury*, 14 July; *New York Packet*, 15 July; and Newburyport, Mass., *Essex Journal*, 16 July. A similar account was printed in the *United States Chronicle* on 10 July (Mfm:R.I.). For differences between the *Chronicle* and the *Herald*, see notes 4 and 7, below.

2. The Reverend Joseph Snow, Jr., was pastor and teacher of Providence's Beneficent Congregational Church, 1744–93, which was also known as "The People's Church," "The New Light Church," and "Father Snow's Church."

3. John Stanford, an English Baptist, emigrated to Virginia in 1786 and went to Rhode Island the next year. He was the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Providence from 1788 to 1789. He became a trustee of the College of Rhode Island in 1788 and was awarded an M.A. by that institution.

4. In the *Chronicle* this paragraph reads: "About 6 o'Clock the People retired from the Plain to the State-House Parade, and after Nine Cheers, in Honour of the Nine States which had adopted the Constitution, returned to their several Homes with Decency and Order."

5. John Adams and his wife Abigail had returned from Europe on 17 June 1788.

6. Major General Nathanael Greene, a native of Rhode Island, was a hero of the Revolutionary War and one of its most successful generals. He died in 1786 in Georgia, where he had moved after the Revolution to occupy a confiscated loyalist plantation given to him by Georgia in thanks for his efforts to liberate the South from British occupation.

7. After this toast the *Chronicle* inserted this paragraph: "A Body of near 200 Volunteers, of the Militia of this Town, who appeared on the Plain in the Morning, under Colonel Whipple, did themselves much Honour."

*Massachusetts Centinel*, 9 July 1788<sup>1</sup>

Of RHODE-ISLAND.

*Extract of a letter from a gentleman in Providence, to his friend in this town, dated the 6th inst.*

"That spirit of villainy, which has been for a long time consigning this State, as a State, over to endless infamy—is not laid. It appeared in all its deformity, a few days since in this town. You must know, that our federalists proposed celebrating the anniversary of our Independence this year, with those marks of festivity, which the prospect of our national affairs would justify. On the evening preceding the 4th, a lawless and numerous banditti, headed by some Justices of *Know Ye* memory<sup>2</sup>—and other infamous characters—arrived in town from the country, and lodged in a wood adjacent to the place designed for the festivity—and by threats and menaces of destruction, attempted to deprive the inhabitants of the great privilege of enjoying themselves in

innocent festivity. They appeared to be in numbers—but notwithstanding this, our Patriots were determined to go on.—The rebels threatened and expostulated—and at last, as the federal party would not accede to any one of their lawless demands, they *requested* that one of the toasts to be given should be altered. As the alteration was not an essential one, the federal party, the friends to peace—gratified them in it.—The rebels then went home—and the festivity went on. We had a fine Oration from the Rev. Mr. *Hitchcock*, a sumptuous entertainment at a table above 900 feet in length, and full—at which 13 federal and patriotick toasts were drank.—In short, we quaffed the full cup of pleasure—and our cannon communicated it to the world.”

1. Reprinted fourteen times by 11 August: Vt. (1), N.H. (1), Mass. (3), Conn. (2), N.Y. (3), Pa. (3), Va. (1).

2. William West and Othniel Gorton. See *United States Chronicle*, 10 July (immediately below), and *Connecticut Gazette*, 11 July (below).

*Providence United States Chronicle, 10 July 1788*<sup>1</sup>

MR. WHEELER, *As various Reports have circulated concerning the Appearance of the Militia of the County of Providence, and others, being assembled, under Arms, on the Morning of the 4th Instant, in and near the Vicinity of the Town of Providence, you are requested to publish the following Account of Facts, for general Information, and you will oblige a Number of your Readers.*

WILLIAM WEST, *One of the Committee.*<sup>2</sup>

On the 24th day of June last the account of New-Hampshire’s adopting the Constitution reached the town of Providence, when a number of the leading men in the town caused the bells to be rang on the occasion, and repaired to Beacon-Hill, where they spent part of the day in joy and festivity expressive of their feelings on this occasion; but not contented with thus solacing themselves in mirth and merriment, they soon concluded to have one general Celebration of the Adoption of the new Constitution, and the Independence of America, on the 4th of July inst. it being the anniversary of American Independence,—which celebration was to be on the Plain to the northward of the bay or cove; here they proposed to have an elegant feast, consisting (among other things) of an Ox roasted whole: To this celebration, or feast, they proposed to give a general invitation to the town and country. Accordingly in the next Saturday’s Gazette and Thursday’s Chronicle was inserted a general Invitation to the town and country to assemble on this occasion;<sup>3</sup> and likewise special Invitations were sent to his Excellency the Governor, the Deputy-Governor, and Assistants, the hon. Superior

Court, the Treasurer, Secretary, and Attorney-General of the State; besides which the inhabitants of the town of Providence were additionally invited by beat of drum, and public outcry through the streets.

The Country at large seeing preparations for so public a celebration of the adoption of the same Constitution which had already received the disapprobation and disgust of at least four-fifths of the individual inhabitants of this State, as well as of the legislative Authority of the State, did thereupon at once perceive, that said Entertainment, in such a public manner, was intended as a public insult upon the legislative authority of the State, as well as the body of the people at large; and that the invitation to the particular officers, as well as the general invitation to the Country, was intended as an aggravation of the insult; and that the celebration of Independence, as part of the occasion of said festival, was counted in said invitation merely for the purpose of alluring the Country to join with the designing few at the social board, and thereby take occasion to represent to the other States, that Town and Country had joined to celebrate the Adoption of said Constitution, and insinuate that the opposition of this State to the Constitution was given up:—On which considerations the Country were roused with indignation and resentment against the artful and designing few, who would thus publicly insult the dignity of the State, and at the same time thus craftily endeavour to allure the unwary ignorantly to assist them in the prosecution of their nefarious schemes,—and were determined if possible to prevent the celebration of the feast on the proposed principles, and to support the dignity of the State:—Whereupon on the night previous to the intended celebration, they assembled in Arms, to the number of about 1000 men, near to the Plain where the Ox was then roasting, and early in the morning of the 4th instant, numbers from all quarters of the country adjacent were collecting, and had not a compromise taken place between the Town and Country, it is reasonably supposed there would not have been less than 3000 men assembled under arms, by 12 o'clock of the same day. About 11 o'clock in the evening of Thursday, the Town sent a Committee to enquire what the Country demanded, whereupon they were informed, that the Country had no objection to the celebration of any occasion, except that of the new Constitution, or its adoption by any of the States; on which it was agreed, that a Committee from each party should meet in the morning, with an endeavour to accommodate matters to the satisfaction of the Country—accordingly the Committees were chosen and met about 7 or 8 o'clock in the morning. The Committee from the Town consisted of Jabez Bowen, David Howell, Welcome Arnold, John I. Clark, and Benjamin Bourne, Esqrs. Col. Zephaniah Andrews and



Mr. John Mason—the Committee from the Country consisted of William West, Esq; Capt. Andrew Waterman, Abraham Mathewson, John Westcott and Peleg Fisk, Esqrs. Col. John Sayles, and Capt. James Aldrich—and upon their conferring together about an hour, it was agreed on the part of the Town, that they would not celebrate the day, on account of the adoption of the new Constitution by nine States, or on account of said Constitution in any respect whatever; that no salutes should be fired, or toasts drank, in honour of said Constitution, or in honour of any State or States which have adopted said Constitution; that they would honour the day by the discharge of 13 cannon, and thirteen only; that the celebration of the day should be in honour of the Independence of America, and that only; and that they would not publish, or cause to be published, any account contrary to said agreement.—In consideration whereof it was agreed on the part of the Country, that the men then under arms should withdraw from the field, and suffer the Town to go on with their feast, according to the aforesaid agreement, in peace and quiet.—Then one Member from each Committee went to the troops under arms, and declared to them the particulars of the aforesaid Agreement, whereupon they retired in pursuance of said Agreement:—A part of them repaired to the parade by the house of Col. Joseph Hoyle, where they celebrated the anniversary of Independence, with joy and festivity; and under a discharge of thirteen rounds of musquetry, the following toasts were drank, viz.—

1. *Confusion to all usurpers and tyrants throughout the thirteen States.*—2. *The old Confederation, with proper amendments.*—3. *May the sons of freedom in America never submit to despotic Government.*—4. *May each State retain their sovereignty in the full extent of republican Governments.*—5. *The Governor and Company of the State of Rhode-Island.*—6. *Long life and happiness to all opposers of tyranny.*—7. *May the people be inspired with firmness and resolution to support the laws and dignity of the State.*—8. *May we have well-regulated militia in lieu of standing armies.*—9. *May agriculture with industry flourish throughout America.*—10. *Success to American arms in every righteous cause.*—11. *May manufactures in every branch be promoted by the landholders.*—12. *Never let the Americans be afraid to assert their just rights.*—13. *May the Merchants and Landholders be convinced their interest depends on the support of each other.*

July 8, 1788.

1. Reprinted in the *Providence Gazette*, 12 July; *Newport Mercury*, 14 July; *Newport Herald*, 17 July; and in six newspapers outside Rhode Island by 3 September: Mass. (2), Conn. (1), Pa. (2), Md. (1). The Boston *Independent Chronical*, 17 July (Mfm:R.I.), briefly summarized this item immediately after reprinting the Federalist response (RCS:R.I., 301–5). See also note 2 (below).

2. The *Newport Herald*, 17 July, reprinting changed the heading to read “*The Justifying Memorial of WILLIAM WEST, One of the Justices of the Superior Court of Judicature, Court of Assize and General Gaol Delivery in and throughout the State of Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations, and ‘ONE OF THE COMMITTEE.’*”

“Setting forth the causes of his unconstitutionally raising a body of armed men and parading them in hostile array before the town of Providence on the 4th of July, A. D. 1788, in order to interrupt the peace, and to subvert the unalienable privileges of freemen.”

All of the out-of-state newspapers, except the one from Connecticut, reprinted the *Newport Herald’s* statement.

3. This invitation was printed in the *Providence Gazette* on 28 June (see above) and reprinted in the *United States Chronicle* on 3 July.

### *Candour*

*Providence United States Chronicle, 10 July 1788<sup>1</sup>*

MR. WHEELER, It having been suggested, that a performance is prepared for your paper, designed to exculpate a number of persons, who appeared in a hostile manner, to interrupt the celebration on the 4th instant—the candid public will no doubt suspend their opinion, respecting the merit of that production, till they see a reply to it.—“*Every man seemeth right in his own way; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him out.*”<sup>2</sup>

1. In the *Chronicle* “Candour” is separated from the previous piece (immediately above) by a hairline.

2. A joining of two verses from Proverbs: “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes; but the Lord pondereth the hearts” (21:2), and “*He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbor cometh and searcheth him*” (18:17).

*Connecticut Gazette, 11 July 1788<sup>1</sup>*

*Extract of a letter from a gentleman in the State of Rhode-Island, to his friend in Stonington, dated July 8, 1788.*

“The New Constitution wears a very favourable aspect—the opposers of it in this State feel beaten;—they are however very bitter. A specimen of their disposition hath been recently exhibited. At Providence, great preparations were made for celebrating the anniversary of the 4th July, and the ratification of the new constitution by nine States. Invitations were particularly given to the chief officers of government, and a general one to the country to attend and join their festive circle.

“On the evening before, the committee for the day were advised that the country were collecting in arms to intercept their rejoicings; accordingly a guard was sent to secure the artillery, the roasted ox, and the tables that were preparing on the hill opposite to the town.

“In the morning a party was discovered from the hill in arms; they proved to be a rabble consisting of 4 or 500 men, some armed with guns, with bayonets upon sticks, &c. under the direction of our famous

whortleberry General West, who now is honoured by being a judge of our superior court:<sup>2</sup> there was also two or three members of assembly that were with him in council. From another part of the country Othniel Gorton, chief justice of the superior court,<sup>3</sup> was attempting to execute a similar insurrection, but without effect. Some persons went to the mob under Gen. West, and asked the reason of their hostile appearance, they replied it was to prevent rejoicings for the ratification of the constitution, and that they meant to take the artillery and the ox that was roasting; they were told they should have neither, as they would defend them. Inhabitants in their egress and regress, were stopped by the mob, and detained until the pretended council should permit them to pass.

“So daring a violation of the subject, and insult upon government, would have justified the extremes of punishment. It was however, thought adviseable by the committee of Providence, to have a conference with the leaders of the mob, and get them to disperse. Accordingly they deputed some of their body to meet them, when they agreed to retire; and the town I believe made an alteration in one of their toasts. (Had Shays proved successful in overturning Old Massachusetts, these judges would have been flattered with his thanks. Impeachments ought to remove them from their seats, and indictments to lead them to the gallows—and had we a good government this would be their end.)”<sup>4</sup>

1. Reprinted ten times by 14 August: Mass. (1), Conn. (2), Pa. (2), Va. (3), S.C. (2).

2. William West was an associate justice of the Superior Court from May 1787 to May 1790.

3. Othniel Gorton was chief justice of the Superior Court from June 1788 to May 1791. Before his election in June 1788, he had been speaker of the House of Deputies.

4. When reprinting this item on 21 July the Litchfield, Conn., *Weekly Monitor* deleted the text in angle brackets.

*Providence Gazette, 12 July 1788*<sup>1</sup>

Mr. CARTER, Your last Gazette announced to the public the manner in which Friday the fourth instant was celebrated in this town.<sup>2</sup>—From a regard to the honour of the State, and to the feelings of some of our fellow-citizens, no mention was made of the appearance of a number of persons under arms from the country, on the morning of that day: But in vain was this friendly purpose to cast the veil of charity and oblivion over that rash and ill-judged attempt. When people will scandalize themselves, it proves that they are past even *shame*, the last of all the virtues.

Whether from the vain-glory of boasting of a supposed victory, or the still more unaccountable vanity of being known to the world as the

leader of a mob, a lengthy publication on that subject has been thought necessary by one of the Judges of the Superior Court of this State!<sup>3</sup> It has therefore now become an indispensable duty to publish those proceedings in their true light, as well for the reputation of the gentlemen who contributed to defray the expence of the feast,<sup>4</sup> as to vindicate that of those gentlemen who went out of town to disperse the rioters.

On certain information, received in the morning of that day, that some disorderly persons, with loaded guns, were lurking in the woods, in the vicinity of the town, a number of gentlemen, about 7 o'clock, went out to treat with their leaders on some terms to disperse them.

On their arrival at Col. Christopher Olney's, they were informed by William West, Esq; one of the Judges of the Superior Court, Capt. Andrew Waterman, and John Sayles, Esq; (both members of the Hon. General Assembly)<sup>5</sup> who appeared to be their principal leaders, that their intention was to prevent any rejoicing on account of the adoption of the New Federal Constitution.

On this occasion the gentlemen from town remarked,—that it gave them pain to think that the repose of society should be interrupted in such a manner, to effect a purpose of that kind—that had any persons dissatisfied in the country seasonably intimated that any demonstrations of joy on that account would be revenged by military execution, their regard for the apprehensions and alarms of the aged and infirm, of the women and children in the town, which would be necessarily excited on such an occasion, and very distressing, would have induced them to have forborne a gratification so trivial, whatever their martial feelings might have suggested to the contrary; but that no intimation of this sort had been made, on the part of any dissatisfied in the country, till the preparations for the festival were completed—that the festival was to be held on the anniversary of Independence, an event in the celebration of which it was presumed all could unite—that none were to be compelled to attend, nor to be molested by any of the transactions of the day—that the festival would be attended on lands which were private property, and by consent of the owners of the soil—that all the monies to be expended were raised by voluntary contribution—and that it seemed a stretch of power alarming to freemen, to attempt in such a rude manner, with guns and bayonets, to surround and disturb persons only eating and drinking, and making merry on their own lands, at their own expence, in the peace of the Governor and Company, and free from even the suspicion of the actual breach of any known law—that if any law had been broken, or should be broken, legal prosecution was open, and the present administration on their side, according to their own account—that the laws would afford

ample remedy for all offences, either against the State or individuals, in this case—that a legal remedy would be more honorary to them than any they could take by violence, as well as more for the credit of the present administration, several of whom were in the insurrection—that the liberty of thus *sitting under our own vines and fig-trees, without any to make us afraid*,<sup>6</sup> was an object for which we had long and obstinately contended, and in that contest the independent corps in the town, as well as the town militia, had borne too conspicuous a part to permit any apprehensions to take place derogatory to their military character, whenever an occasion might present in which it might worthily be put to the proof—that it could not be expected that the ground would be yielded, or the property given up—that it was, however, the wish of all concerned to pacify the minds of the persons under arms, and to disperse them, that the remainder of the day might be otherwise employed—that no punctilio, or affair of etiquette, would induce them to turn the day into a day of blood, in which case even a victory would prove a defeat, and would tend to fix and perpetuate animosity betwixt the parties, which the festival was calculated to eradicate and destroy.—They were then requested to reduce their grievances to precision, on which John Sayles, Esq; said, that if Thirteen Cannon were fired, and Thirteen Toasts drunk, and none of them in honour of the “*Nine States*,” he should be satisfied.

It was then remarked to them, that Thirteen Cannon had actually been fired at sunrising, and that no other number had been ordered on any part of the day—that thirteen toasts had been ordered originally, and a list of them was shewn, which were afterwards drunk and published. In this list an alteration had been previously made (to please 'Squire Sayles) of the Thirteenth Toast, from the “*Nine States*,” to “*The Day*,” the only alteration! and which was conceived to be only an *alteration in words*.

This alteration the gentlemen from the town agreed to observe, with which the other party were satisfied, and declared that they had no objection against the feast's being celebrated in all other respects conformably to the original orders, and pledged themselves that their people under arms should be instantly dispersed, which was accordingly done.

The general alarm beat all over the country, by ill-minded persons, had drawn a considerable concourse of people together; but the number of persons who assembled with hostile purposes was estimated by indifferent persons at about 300, and not more, nearly half of whom were armed with guns, others with clubs, &c. They were drawn together during the darkness of the preceding night. It was noticed, that not a

man left the cover of the woods, to shew himself on the plain, although it was late in the morning before Col. Tillinghast's company of the train, and the militia under Col. Whipple, took their posts on the ground.

Many of the people from the country, after their leaders had failed in carrying off the ox, that night roasting whole on the plain, which it seems was the original purpose (for they were told that it was unnecessary to bring any provisions with them) and had made terms no more to their advantage or honour, left their arms behind them, and joined in partaking of the entertainment.—Some who had cash bought victuals at Mr. Hoyle's tavern, and other places; others returned home in the rain, hungry, tired, and repenting their folly.

Those people in the country who were dissatisfied, seem to have been alarmed by misinformation—some apprehending that the feast was really to fix the New Constitution in this State—while others apprehended that the militia were actually ordered to assemble by lawful authority, and that either the Governor or Deputy-Governor was to take the command of them. Many of those who had guns came without powder, and were told that they would be supplied with stores in town.

On better information, some returned before they arrived in the vicinity of the town, and many of those assembled near the plain appeared chagrined to find, that an affair which in the country had been magnified into a mountain, on a nearer approach appeared to be only an mole-hill; and being glad of the appearance of an excuse for desisting from their rash attempt, on hearing the explanations given to their leaders, readily dispersed.

Two reflections will close these observations. 1. Unhappy indeed are the times into which we are fallen, when armed violence is preferred to the laws of the land, even by those whose duty it is to administer them. 2. Such is the nature of the human mind, that after a habit of sporting with the *properties* of mankind, it rises to such a pitch of depravity as to sport with their *lives*.

JABEZ BOWEN,	}	<i>In behalf of themselves, and others of the Committee.</i>
JOHN I. CLARK,		
WELCOME ARNOLD,		
ZEPHANIAH ANDREWS,		

*Providence, July 11, 1788.*

1. This item was reprinted in the *Newport Mercury*, 14 July; the *Newport Herald* and the *United States Chronicle*, 17 July; and in eleven other newspapers by 10 September: N.H. (1), Mass. (4), Conn. (1), Pa. (3), Md. (1), S.C. (1). The *Massachusetts Centinel*, 16 July, reprinted this item with this prefatory statement:

“The dispute which lately happened at Providence, having occasioned much conversation—we have collected the following particulars respecting it, from the publications

of both parties on the subject. The account by the anti-federalists, is signed by ‘*William West*,’—a Justice of Know Ye memory—and is in substance—‘That having received information, that the town of Providence intended celebrating the ratification of the Constitution by 9 States, the 4th inst.—some people in the country were determined to stop it, deeming it an insult on the dignity of that State—That about 1000 men assembled for this purpose—That a committee of conference was chosen by each party—who met and agreed that there should not be more than 13 cannon fired, and 13 toasts given, and that the celebration of the day should be in honour of the Independence of the United States, and not in honour of any States which have adopted the Constitution, and that the ants then dispersed The account by the federal committee is as follows, viz.”

This statement was reprinted as either a preface or a postscript by three other newspapers: N.H. (1), Pa. (1), S.C. (1).

2. See *Providence Gazette*, 5 July (above).

3. For William West’s account, see *United States Chronicle*, 10 July (above). For another criticism of West, see *Newport Herald*, 17 July (below).

4. “Republican,” writing for the *United States Chronicle* on 7 May 1789, wanted to dispel a rumor that suppliers for the Providence celebration had not been paid. Following inquiries “Republican” discovered that “a considerable sum” was still due, which compelled him to renounce Federalism. He concluded “Alas! Federalism—but of short duration was *thy word*—like the *thunder* from the mouth of thy cannon, that *roared for a moment* but passed off in *fume*” (Mfm: R.I.).

5. Both represented Smithfield in the House of Deputies.

6. Micah 4:4.

#### *Newport Mercury, 14 July 1788*

Mr. BARBER, You are requested to publish the following versification of the story of William West, who lately headed a number of Reformers to prevent unlawful eating, drinking and cannonading, in the great town of Providence.

*It is best to be merry and wise.*<sup>1</sup>

On the twenty-fourth of June as story doth tell,  
 In a certain great town they ding, donged the bell,  
 At Hampshire’s adopting the new Constitution,  
 Which threw all the country in greatest confusion:  
 Not contented with this, they concluded a day  
 To solace in mirth, and then full joy to display,  
 On a plain near the cove a fat ox were to roast,  
 And from nine sounding cannon proclaim their lov’d toast,  
 In the next public papers publish’d wide their intent,  
 And to all the great men gilded billets were sent,  
 And, O doleful! beside, they warn’d by drum,  
 All the rich and the poor, by outcry, to come.  
 When the country at large had this brought to their view,  
 They declar’d it an insult that never wou’d do,  
 The town’s folks with feasting design us to lull,

And suppose we have nothing but sap in our skull,  
 That our birthright (like Esau) we freely will sell,<sup>2</sup>  
 And how charming 'twill sound in the *Herald* to tell,  
 That the peasants and cits did in union combine,  
 The new Constitution to toast in good wine—  
 This maturely consider'd, the country did rouse,  
 And four fifths appear their good cause to espouse,  
 Sure schemes so *nefarious* and insults like those,  
 Must not pass unnotic'd and die in repose;  
 Whereupon in the night next approaching the day,  
 That the ox and its guests were to shine in full sway,  
 A *thousand* arm'd peasants assembled in throng, }  
 To prevent the rejoicing of two things in one,  
 The Independence of all, and Constitution of some. }  
 The town's folks alarm'd at their coming so near,  
 Were thrown into panick and seized with fear,  
 In the shade of the night, a Committee was sent,  
 To search out the meeting and know what it meant:  
 See here our arm'd men said the Chiefs of the wood,  
 And these are not half that wou'd come if they cou'd,  
 By to-morrow at twelve three thousand may come,  
 And who then can *answer*, for what may be done?  
 Then with firmness the Chiefs of the country declar'd,  
 The new Constitution must not be observ'd,  
 Not content to restrain thus, the joy of the day,  
 They directed in future what words they should say,  
 Controuled their pens and restrained the press,  
 And what with the town could the country do less?  
 This contract confirm'd the peasants agree,  
 To march off the field and right merry to be,  
 Part repair'd to a plain and drank their own toast,  
 Without any mar, Independence did boast.  
 Thus ended the bustle of the fourth of July,  
 And what you have read, may be truth, or a lie.

1. Based upon the epigram to proverb xxxiii "Of Myrth wyth wysdome": "Tis good to be mery and wyse: Howe shall soles folowe that adyse." *Two hundred Epigrammes, upon two hundred proverbs, with a thyride hundred newly added and made by John Heywood* (London, 1555).

2. Genesis 25:33.

*Newport Herald*, 17 July 1788<sup>1</sup>

A Correspondent is happy that WILLIAM WEST, ESQ. ONE OF THE JUDGES OF THE SUPREME JUDICIAL COURT in this State, has published



the reasons of his collecting and heading a body of men,<sup>2</sup> some of whom appeared in arms, to prevent the inhabitants of the town of Providence from demonstrating their joy at the ratification of the NINTH PILLAR by the State of New-Hampshire. This Hon. Judge is now before the public.—We tremble for the *gallant General*—the *wise Judge*.—You may, being in a *desperate* situation, take pleasure in leading forth a mob—venture to prohibit other celebrations, and with the sword suspended over the head of a fellow-citizen, threaten him with immediate death, should he feel a *federal flame* glowing within him.—Your *wisdom* may dictate a line of conduct which, in your own *fancied* knowledge, you may deem equally *judicious*, as *brave*; but remember, that, as you have come forth to vindicate your conduct, with those under your command, the whole affair will be unravelled; and, though PRUDENCE, with her fears, may heave a *political* sigh, and think it best to be *quiet*, yet be assured that *strictures* will be passed upon your unprecedented conduct, lash will succeed lash, and your *true* character, stripped of every false covering, will be exhibited to the public, who will either acquit or condemn you.

1. Reprinted eight times by 25 August: Mass. (3), N.Y. (2), Pa. (1), Va. (1), S.C. (1).
2. See *United States Chronicle*, 10 July (above).

*Providence United States Chronicle, 17 July 1788*<sup>1</sup>

MR. WHEELER, A Number of black Inhabitants of Providence, pleased with the Prospect of a Stop being put to the Trade to Africa in our Fellow-Creatures, by the Adoption of the Federal Constitution, met on the 4th Instant, in Celebration of that happy Event—and after Dining on the Product of their own Industry, drank the following Toasts—which you are desired to publish.

1. The Nine States that have adopted the Federal Constitution.
2. May the Natives of Africa enjoy their natural Privileges unmolested.
3. May the Freedom of our unfortunate Countrymen (who are wearing the Chains of Bondage in different Parts of the World) be restored to them.
4. May the Event we this Day celebrate enable our Employers to pay us in hard Cash for our Labour.
5. The Merchants and others who take the Lead in recommending Restoration of Equity and Peace.
6. His Excellency General WASHINGTON.
7. The Humane Society of Philadelphia.<sup>2</sup>
8. Hon. JOHN BROWN, Esq;
9. May Unity prevail throughout all Nations.

1. Reprinted: *Boston Gazette*, 21 July.

2. Possibly "The Society for the Relief of Free Negroes, Unlawfully Kept in Bondage" founded by Quakers in 1775. It was reorganized in 1784 as "The Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully held in Bondage, and for Improving the Condition of the African Race."

### One of the People

**Newport Mercury, 30 June 1788<sup>1</sup>**

MR. BARBER, As nine States have adopted the Constitution proposed by the Convention which met at Philadelphia and was recommended by Congress to the several States, it may not be deemed improper to suggest to his Excellency our Governor the expediency of calling together the General Assembly of this State to deliberate upon a matter so highly interesting and important to the people.—It is not from a desire of dictating, but the fear of delay, owing to the pride of the majority, or distrust of the minority of the members of the Assembly, that induced this public hint—However small and insignificant our State may now appear in the view of her sister States—The Assembly have it yet in their power to give an opportunity to the Citizens to discuss the rectitude, justice and propriety, of the proposed Constitution, in the same manner every other state hath done—when no doubt they will manifest by their decision, that want of information, and not deficiency of judgment, protracted their determination.—If the smallness of the State hath made a delay—the other States large and small have now set the example, and every State in New-England hath ratified the Constitution—If its being exceptionable, and amendments are thought necessary—it makes it adviseable to join our sister States in order to accomplish so desirable a purpose.—If a diffidence in judgment, excited a wish to know that, of the other States prior to a discussion—the adoption of nine States hath given them plenary gratification—indeed upon every just and righteous principle it must appear highly expedient that we delay not in making our Salvation sure, by believing in, and receiving the proffered blessing.—A word to the wise is sufficient, and in a multitude of words their wanteth not sin.<sup>2</sup>

*Newport June, 28 1788.*

1. Reprinted: *Boston Gazette*, 7 July.

2. Proverbs 10:19.

### Massachusetts Centinel, 2 July 1788<sup>1</sup>

We have it from the first authority in *Rhode-Island*, that the Executive of that State will in a short period convene the Legislature thereof, for

the purpose of calling a CONVENTION for considering the proposed Constitution. The weight in the Federal Senate, of Rhode-Island, will be as great as that of the largest State—to preserve the proper *balance of power* in the national government, it will be expedient that Rhode-Island, as well as *Vermont*, should accede to the *new Confederation*.

1. Reprinted in the *United States Chronicle*, 10 July, and twenty more times by 13 September: Vt. (1), N.H. (2), Mass. (2), Conn. (1), N.Y. (5), Pa. (4), Md. (2), Va. (1), S.C. (1), Ga. (1).



## Biographical Gazetteer

The following sketches outline the political careers of the principal Rhode Island leaders who participated in the process of ratifying the U.S. Constitution. Their political positions are indicated (1) on state politics from 1786–1790 (Country or Mercantile party) and (2) on the Constitution from 1787–1790 (Antifederalist or Federalist). Inclusive years suggest periods where consecutive terms in office were *likely*. The exception to this standard is delegates in Congress, where inclusive years reflect only delegates' actual attendance for any portion of the years listed. Deputies and assistants, the state's legislative representatives, served in the House of Deputies and House of Magistrates of the General Assembly, respectively.

ARNOLD, PELEG (1752–1820)  
Country/Antifederalist

Born, Smithfield, R.I. Lawyer. Studied law, admitted to bar, and practiced in Smithfield. Tavern keeper in Smithfield. Deputy, Smithfield, General Assembly, 1777–78, 1782–83. Attended Congress, 1787–88. Moderator, Smithfield Town Meeting, 1787, 1796, 1798, 1801–7, 1809–16. Assistant, General Assembly, 1790–95. Twice-failed candidate for U.S. Congress, 1794, 1796. Chief justice, Superior Court of Judicature, 1796–1809, 1810–12.

BOURNE, BENJAMIN (1755–1808)  
Mercantile/Federalist

Born, Bristol, R.I. Lawyer and merchant. Graduate, Harvard College, 1775. Studied law and developed a prominent practice in Providence. Ensign and quartermaster, R.I. militia, 1776–77. Member, R.I. Council of War, 1780–81. Deputy, Bristol, General Assembly, 1780. Clerk, House of Deputies, 1780–81, 1782–86. Deputy, Providence, General Assembly, 1787–88, 1789–90. Signed minority protest against Rhode Island's refusal to send delegates to Constitutional Convention, 1787. Member, Providence committee that drafted petition to U.S. Congress for duty exemptions, August 1789; carried petition, with Rev. James Manning, to U.S. Congress, September 1789. Voted to ratify Constitution in state Convention, May 1790. Member, U.S. House of Representatives, 1790–96. Judge, U.S. District Court for R.I., 1796–1801; Judge, U.S. Circuit Court for the First Circuit, 1801–2.

BOWEN, JABEZ (1739–1815)  
Mercantile/Federalist

Born, Providence, R.I. Wealthy businessman. Connected by marriage and business to the Browns of Providence. Graduate, Yale College, 1757. Member, Providence Town Council, 1773–75, and justice of the peace, 1771–76. Militia major, then colonel, 1774–77. Justice, Superior Court of Judicature, 1776–78, and chief justice, 1781. Member, R.I. Council of War, 1777–80, 1781–82. Deputy governor, 1778–80, 1781–86. Deputy, Providence, General Assembly, 1788–90. Appointed commissioner to Annapolis Convention, 1786, but did not attend. Voted to ratify Constitution in state Convention, May 1790. U.S. commissioner of loans, 1790–1800. Chancellor, College of Rhode Island (Brown University), 1785–1815. Began Providence Bank along with John Brown, 1791.

BRADFORD, WILLIAM (1729–1808)

Mercantile/Federalist

Born, Plympton, Mass. Physician and lawyer. Practiced medicine in Warren, R.I., and later moved to Bristol, where he abandoned medicine in favor of law. Admitted to the bar, 1767. Deputy, Bristol, General Assembly, 1764–66, 1768–69, 1772–75, 1778–93, 1798–1802 (speaker, 1764–66, 1780–86, 1790–93, 1798–1802). Member, R.I. Committee of Correspondence, 1773. Deputy governor, 1775–78. At the bombardment of Bristol, Bradford went aboard H.M.S. *Rose*, to negotiate a cessation of the attack. Elected to Second Continental Congress, October 1776, but declined to serve. Moved in state Convention to appoint a committee to draft amendments to the Constitution, March 1790. Voted to ratify Constitution in state Convention, May 1790. Member, U.S. Senate, 1793–97 (elected president pro tempore, July 1797); resigned, October 1797.

BROWN, JOHN (1736–1803)

Mercantile/Federalist

Born, Providence, R.I., into prominent commercial family. Brother of Moses and Nicholas Brown. Merchant, landholder, manufacturer, and slave trader. Withdrew from family firm in 1771, but retained interest in some industries and in trade, including slave trade. Leader of party that burned British schooner *Gaspee* in 1772. Government munitions and supplies contractor during Revolution. Along with brothers accrued considerable wealth during the Revolution. Deputy, Providence, General Assembly, 1776–78, 1779–80, 1782–84, 1786–87. Signed minority protest against Rhode Island's refusal to send delegates to Constitutional Convention, 1787. Elected to but did not attend Congress, 1784, 1785. Member, U.S. House of Representatives, 1799–1801. Member, Providence committee that drafted petition to Congress for duty exemptions, August 1789. Tried and acquitted for violating 1794 congressional act prohibiting slave trade from U.S. to foreign places. Instrumental in securing relocation of College of Rhode Island (Brown University) to Providence; laid cornerstone of first building on Providence campus, 1770, and served as college treasurer, 1775–1796. Began Providence Bank along with son-in-law John Francis and Jabez Bowen, 1791.

BROWN, MOSES (1738–1836)

Mercantile/Federalist

Born, Providence, R.I., into prominent commercial family. Brother of John and Nicholas Brown. Merchant, manufacturer, and philanthropist. Apprenticed to his uncle, wealthy Providence merchant Obadiah Brown. Joined brothers in family firm. Deputy, Providence, General Assembly, 1764–72. Fundraiser and political organizer for Stephen Hopkins. Helped secure removal of College of Rhode Island (Brown University) to Providence; contributed land and money to College. Converted to Quakerism (Society of Friends), 1774, and devoted himself to social and educational reform. Fervent opponent of slavery; member of Rhode Island Abolition Society; advocated gradual manumission. Opponent-turned-supporter of Constitution; believed provision that allowed Congress to prohibit the foreign slave trade in 1808 was sound basis for future amendment to end slavery. As textile manufacturer, hired Samuel Slater to improve production based on English designs. Continued philanthropy and promoted civic projects in later years and encouraged establishment of Providence Bank, 1791, and the Providence Friends' School (now called Moses Brown School), 1819.

COLLINS, JOHN (1717–1795)

Country/Federalist

Born, Newport, R.I. Merchant. Member, Newport Committee of Correspondence by 1774. Assistant, General Assembly, 1774–78. Attended Congress, 1778–80, 1782–83.

Signer, Articles of Confederation. Governor, 1786–90. Elected in 1786 with other paper money advocates. Cast tie-breaking vote in House of Magistrates to call state ratifying convention, January 1790; vote ended political career.

COMSTOCK, JOB (c. 1740–1811)

Country/Antifederalist

Farmer. Justice of peace, East Greenwich, 1762–65, 1787–89. Deputy, East Greenwich, General Assembly, 1776–79, 1786–90. Member, R.I. Council of War, 1777–78, 1778–79. Member, Committee appointed under paper-money act of May 1786 (signed legal tender bills of credit). Collector of impost, Kent County, 1787–90. State surveyor for Port of East Greenwich, 1789–90. Voted against ratification in state Convention, May 1790. Declined appointment by President Washington as Surveyor of Port of East Greenwich, 1790. Unsuccessful candidate for U.S. House of Representatives, August 1790. Member, Providence Abolition Society.

EDES, PETER (1756–1840)

Mercantile/Federalist

Born, Boston, Mass. Printer. Supporter of Revolution with father, Benjamin Edes. Worked on father's famous patriot *Boston Gazette*, 1779–84. Began publication of *Newport Herald*, a Federalist weekly, in 1787; hostile towards paper money and Country party. His newspaper reported on all eighteen sessions of General Assembly between March 1787 and January 1790. Regular reprinting of Edes's pieces in other American newspapers contributed to Rhode Island's notorious reputation. Following the demise of the *Herald* in 1791 and a stint as a Boston book printer, Edes published newspapers in Augusta and Bangor, Maine, until 1817.

ELLERY, WILLIAM (1727–1820)

Mercantile/Federalist

Born, Newport, R.I. Lawyer. Graduate, Harvard College, 1747. Received sizeable inheritance upon his father's death, 1764, and left commerce for politics. One of the original incorporators of College of Rhode Island (Brown University), 1764. Leader of opposition to Stamp Act in Newport, 1765. Began practicing law by 1769. Clerk of House of Deputies, 1768–70. Attended Congress, 1776–85. Member, Marine Committee (later Board of Admiralty). Signer, Declaration of Independence and Articles of Confederation. Chief justice, Superior Court of Judicature, 1785–86. Commissioner of Continental Loan Office, 1786–90. U.S. customs collector for Newport, 1790–1820.

FENNER, ARTHUR, JR. (1745–1805)

Country/Antifederalist

Born, Providence, R.I. Merchant. Brother-in-law of Theodore Foster. Member of committee charged to ensure compliance with Continental Association, 1774. Clerk, Court of Common Pleas, Providence County, 1769–89. Lieutenant, then captain, in Continental Army, 1775–77. Gubernatorial candidate on Antifederalist-Federalist coalition prox, 1790. Governor, 1790–1805.

FOSTER, THEODORE (1752–1828)

Mercantile/Federalist

Born, Brookfield, Mass. Lawyer, merchant, and historian. Brother-in-law of Arthur Fenner, Jr. Graduate, College of Rhode Island (Brown University), 1770. Studied law in Providence. Justice of the peace, Providence, 1773–86, 1789–90. Town clerk, Providence,

1775–87. Deputy, Providence, General Assembly, 1776–77, 1778–80, 1781–82. Assistant, General Assembly, 1787–88. Member, Providence committee that drafted petition to U.S. Congress for duty exemptions, August 1789. Appointed state naval officer for the District of Providence, September 1789. Took minutes of March 1790 session of state ratifying Convention. Appointed U.S. naval officer of Providence, June 1790 (declined). Member, U.S. Senate, 1790–1803. Member, Providence Abolition Society. Trustee of Rhode Island College (Brown University), 1794–1822. Collected source material on history of Rhode Island and helped found Rhode Island Historical Society, 1822.

HAZARD, JONATHAN J. (1731–1812)

Country/Antifederalist

Lawyer. Apprenticed to tailor; abandoned apprenticeship to study law. Deputy, Charlestown, General Assembly, 1776, 1778–80, 1781–82, 1783–84, 1786–89. Adjutant/paymaster, Continental Army, 1777–78. Member, R.I. Council of War, 1778–80. Country party leader. Member, Committee appointed under paper-money act of May 1786 (signed legal tender bills of credit). Attended Congress, 1788. Deputy, South Kingstown, General Assembly, 1789–93. Member, South Kingstown, state Convention; voted against ratification, May 1790. Defeated candidate for U.S. Senate, June 1790. Moved to N.Y., 1805.

HITCHCOCK, ENOS (1744–1803)

Mercantile/Federalist

Born, Springfield, Mass. Congregational clergyman. Graduate, Harvard College, 1767. Installed, Second Church, Beverly, Mass., 1771. Chaplain in Continental Army, 1776–83. Resigned Beverly pulpit, 1780. Received call to First Church (also Benevolent Church), Providence, 1780; declined to continue as chaplain. Installed as pastor of Benevolent Church, 1783. Delivered Fourth of July oration to R.I. Society of the Cincinnati, 1786, and to the town of Providence, 1788. First chaplain, R.I. Society of the Cincinnati. Trustee and later fellow of College of Rhode Island (Brown University). Member, Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery.

HOWELL, DAVID (1747–1824)

Mercantile/Federalist

Born, Morristown, N.J. Educator, lawyer, and jurist. Graduate, College of New Jersey (Princeton University), 1766. Studied law, admitted to the bar, and began practicing in Providence, R.I. Tutor, College of Rhode Island, 1766–69; professor of mathematics and natural philosophy, 1769–79; fellow of College, 1773–1824; secretary of College, 1780–1806; professor of law (but did not teach), 1790–1824; and interim president of College, 1791–92. Deputy, Providence, General Assembly, 1779–80. Justice, Court of Common Pleas, Providence County, 1780–82. Attended Congress, 1782–85. Justice, Superior Court of Judicature, 1786–87. State attorney general, 1789–90. First president, Providence Abolition Society, 1789. Appointed boundary commissioner by President Washington under Jay Treaty of 1794. Judge, U.S. District Court for R.I., 1812–1824.

MANNING, JAMES (1738–1791)

Mercantile/Federalist

Born in New Jersey. Baptist clergyman. Graduate, College of New Jersey (Princeton University), 1762. Minister, Baptist church, Warren, R.I., and master of Latin grammar school, 1764. President and professor of languages, College of Rhode Island (Brown University), 1765–91. Helped relocate College from Warren to Providence, 1770. Pastor,



First Baptist Church, Providence, R.I., 1771–91 (America's oldest Baptist congregation). Advocated free schools and gradual emancipation of slaves. Member, Congress, 1786. Chairman, Providence committee that drafted petition to U.S. Congress for duty exemptions, August 1789; carried petition, with Benjamin Bourne, to U.S. Congress, September 1789.

MARCHANT, HENRY (1741–1796)  
Mercantile/Federalist

Born, Edgartown, Martha's Vineyard, Mass. Lawyer, jurist, and gentleman farmer with a large estate in South Kingstown. Studied at College of Philadelphia (University of Pennsylvania), 1756–59; A.M., College of Philadelphia, 1762. Read law under Mass. lawyer and jurist Edmund Trowbridge. Member, Newport Committee of Correspondence, 1773. State attorney general, 1771–77. Attended Congress, 1777–79. Signer, Articles of Confederation. Deputy, Newport, General Assembly, 1784–90. Assisted defense attorney James Mitchell Varnum in *Trevett v. Weeden* (1786). Signed minority protest against Rhode Island's refusal to send delegates to Constitutional Convention, 1787. Member, Newport committee that drafted petition to U.S. Congress for duty exemptions, August 1789; carried petition to U.S. Congress, September 1789. At January 1790 session of General Assembly, introduced bill that called for state ratifying convention. Voted to ratify Constitution in state Convention, May 1790. Judge, U.S. District Court for R.I., 1790–96.

OWEN, DANIEL (c. 1731–1812)  
Country/Antifederalist

Born, Glocester, R.I. Blacksmith. Deputy, Glocester, General Assembly, 1775–76, 1779–80, 1783–84, 1785. Assistant, General Assembly, 1781–83. Deputy governor, 1786–90. As president of state Convention did not vote on ratification, May 1790. Justice, Superior Court of Judicature, 1790–91, and chief justice, 1791–95.

STANTON, JOSEPH, JR. (1739–c. 1822)  
Country/Antifederalist

Born, Charlestown, R.I. Wealthy farmer. Colonel, Continental Army, 1776–77; colonel then general, R.I. militia, Kings (later Washington) County, 1779–91. Deputy, Charlestown, General Assembly, 1768–69, 1770–71, 1776–77, 1778–86, 1788–91, 1795–99 (speaker, 1788–89, 1790, 1795, 1797). Member, R.I. Council of War, 1780–81. Assistant, General Assembly, 1786–88. Voted against ratification of Constitution in state Convention, May 1790. Member, U.S. Senate, 1790–93. Member, U.S. House of Representatives, 1801–7.

VARNUM, JAMES MITCHELL (1748–1789)  
Mercantile/Federalist

Born, Dracut, Mass. Lawyer and soldier. Attended Harvard College. Graduate, College of Rhode Island (Brown University), 1769; M.A., 1772. Studied law and opened practice in East Greenwich, R.I. Initially questioned prudence of independence; persuaded otherwise by political conditions of mid-1770s. Colonel, Kentish Guards (Kent County), 1774. Colonel then brigadier general, Continental Army, 1775–79; brigadier general, R.I. militia, 1776; major general, 1779–88. Attended Congress, 1780–81, 1787. Vice president, R.I. Society of the Cincinnati, 1783–86; president, 1786–89. Defense attorney, *Trevett v. Weeden* (1786), where he expounded the theory of judicial review. Director, Ohio Company, 1787. Appointed one of first judges in the Northwest Territory, 1787; resigned due to ill health. Died, Marietta, Ohio.

WEST, WILLIAM (c. 1733–1814)

Country/Antifederalist

Born, North Kingstown, R.I. Farmer and tavern keeper in Scituate. Colonel, Providence County militia, 1776–79; brigadier general, 1779–80. Member, R.I. Council of War, 1780–81. Deputy governor, 1780–81. Deputy, Scituate, General Assembly, 1761–62, 1771–72, 1773–74, 1776–77, 1779–80, 1784–86. Assistant, General Assembly, 1777–78. Justice, Superior Court of Judicature, 1787–90. Leader of Country party protesters at Providence celebration, 4 July 1788.

## Glossary of Frequently Used Terms

“KNOW YE” MEN. A derisive reference to the debtors who tendered paper money in payment for debts and whose creditors refused to accept payment because the currency had depreciated. The debtor lodged the paper money with a judge. If after ten days the creditor had not yet accepted payment, the judge advertised the lodgment in all four Rhode Island newspapers for three weeks, beginning with the words “To all whom it may concern.—Know ye.” If the creditor failed to collect the lodged money in three months, the payment reverted to the state minus the judge’s fee and any expenses.

LEGAL TENDER. Money, commodities, or land that the government designated could be offered in payment for debts. In some states, if the creditor refused to accept the legal tender in payment, the debt remained but the interest on the debt stopped at the time that payment was refused. Other states made their paper money legal tender, in some cases only when a creditor sued a debtor for payment. Rhode Island made its paper money legal tender but provided that, if creditors refused to accept the payment in paper money, debtors could lodge the paper money with a judge. (See “Know Ye” Men, immediately above.)

NOCTURNAL CONVENTIONS. Secret caucuses held by the Country party. These meetings were described by the Federalist *Newport Herald* on 9 April 1789: “The dignity of the legislature hath been degraded and its power rendered but a name, by meetings of the majority in nocturnal conventions, where public business was privately arranged, and its members illegally engaged to vote in General Assembly, according to the determination of a majority in that convention; hence the advantages of debate and inquiry in the Legislature, hath been rendered abortive, and the solemn oath of office disregarded.” See also “Extract of a letter from a Gentleman in Newport, Rhode-Island, to his friend in this city,” Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 18 May 1787 (Mfm:R.I.).

PAPER MONEY. During times of war and economic depression, the American colonies often issued paper money. The currency was used by the government either as fiat currency to purchase goods and services or it was loaned by the government to farmers and others to tide them over until better times returned. Farms, town lots, and houses served as collateral for the loans. Paper money also supplied a much needed medium of exchange.

During the War for Independence, the Continental Congress and the states often issued paper money that was used as a medium of exchange, which was soon severely depreciated. In March 1780, Congress devalued its Continental currency at a rate of 40 to 1.

After a brief postwar prosperity that lapsed into a severe depression, debtors in every state called for the issuance of paper money to alleviate the situation. Fearing runaway inflation, creditors staunchly opposed the issuance of paper money. In 1785 and 1786 seven states issued paper money. In New York, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, the currency was moderately to greatly successful. In Rhode Island, North Carolina, and Georgia paper money depreciated, permitting the legislatures to pay their state debts and to assist private debtors in paying debts and taxes. See the “Introduction” (RCS:R.I., xxx) for Rhode Island’s paper money act of May 1786.

**PENALTY OR FORCE ACTS.** After the passage of the paper money act of May 1786 (RCS:R.I., xxx–xxx), the Rhode Island legislature passed two acts that provided for the prosecution of anyone refusing to accept the currency at par. The first penalty act, passed at the June 1786 session, provided that anyone convicted of not accepting the currency would be fined £100 for the first offense and the same fine plus disenfranchisement after a second conviction. The second penalty act, passed on 26 August 1786, provided for a special court to try cases without the benefit of a jury or the right to appeal. The convicted party could be fined £6–30 for the first offense and £10–50 for further convictions. The legislature repealed both acts at the December 1786 session.

**PROX.** A printed or written slate of candidates for statewide public office which could be cast as a ballot in the annual elections held on the third Wednesday in April. The voter could delete candidates and add other names before signing the ballot on the reverse side and giving it to the town moderator. The moderator gave the ballots to the town clerk who counted the votes and then sealed them in a packet, which was taken by the newly elected deputies to the May legislative session. On the first Wednesday in May the incumbent governor and assistants joined by the newly elected deputies met together, opened the packets, and counted the votes. The candidates for statewide office with a majority of the votes cast were declared elected.

In turning down the nomination for governor on the Country party prox in March 1790, Deputy Governor Daniel Owen wrote that it had “been customary, in this State, for those more generally conversant in political affairs, as well those belonging to the Legislature as others, to

assemble and agree upon a prox, or nomination-ticket, previous to the annual choice on the third Wednesday of April" ("Daniel Owen to the Freemen of Rhode Island," *Providence Gazette*, 3 April 1790, below). While attending the legislative sessions in East Greenwich in March 1789, the Country party in a nocturnal convention produced a prox for the April statewide elections. The secrecy surrounding this prox was denounced by William Ellery in a letter to Benjamin Huntington on 25 April 1789 (below). A series of five newspaper articles criticized and defended this "Convention prox." See "A Freeman," *Newport Herald*, 9 April 1789 (below); and "A Freeman," *Providence Gazette*, 11 April; *Newport Herald*, 16 April; "A Friend to the Town," *United States Chronicle*, 16 April; and "A Freeman," *Providence Gazette*, 18 April (all four on Mfm:R.I.).

**TEST ACT.** Proposed in the General Assembly in October 1786, the bill would have required every citizen and resident of the state to take an oath supporting the state's paper money. Any citizen who refused to take the oath would be disenfranchised; any lawyer would be debarred; any merchant could not send or receive ships; and any government official would be removed from office. The bill was submitted to the towns for their consideration. Only three of the state's thirty towns endorsed the measure. Consequently, it was not enacted.

"**TO RELIEVE THE DISTRESSED.**" The Country party's platform in the April 1786 elections.

**TOWN MEETINGS.** The thirty Rhode Island towns met as many as nine times a year. They elected deputies (members of the lower house) at the April and August meetings. At some meetings, the deputies to the Assembly were instructed to respond to certain measures recommended either by the legislature or by a number of freemen. For example, at the 15 April 1789 meeting in Cranston, the Assembly deputies were instructed that: "whenever there is any matter fully investigated in Genl. Assembly, where there are no particular instructions [from your?] Constituents, you are to Act the best of your Judgment for the good of the whole, but whenever there is any Instructions [on a?] Particular Occasion from your Constituents you are Strictly to adhere to the same, and use your Influence for the Obtaining of it."

**TREVETT v. WEEDEN (1786).** A case in the Rhode Island Superior Court of Judicature (i.e., Supreme Court) arising in 1786 under the second penalty act. The first penalty act made it unlawful to refuse paper money

at par in payment for goods and services. John Trevett, a Newport cabinetmaker, accused John Weeden, a Newport butcher, of refusing to accept the state's paper currency as payment for goods. Under the provision of the second penalty act, such a case was to be heard in a special court with no jury trial and no right of appeal.

James Mitchell Varnum, the defense lawyer, argued that the Superior Court, using its power of judicial review, should declare the law unconstitutional because it denied the accused a jury trial. The justices, however, ruled that they did not have cognizance in the case. The Assembly ordered the justices to appear before it to explain why they had not ruled in favor of the plaintiff. Four of the five justices were not reappointed in May 1787 for failure to enforce the penalty act.

**Appendix I**  
**Rhode Island Population**  
**1774◆1776◆1782◆1790<sup>1</sup>**

Town	1774 Total	1776 Total	1782 Total	1790 Total	1790 Slaves
Barrington (1770)	601	538	534	683	12
Bristol (1747)	1,209	1,067	1,032	1,406	64
Charlestown (1738)	1,821	1,835	1,523	2,022	12
Coventry (1741)	2,023	2,300	2,107	2,477	5
Cranston (1754)	1,861	1,701	1,594	1,877	10
Cumberland (1747)	1,756	1,686	1,548	1,964	0
East Greenwich (1677)	1,663	1,664	1,609	1,824	13
Exeter (1743)	1,864	1,982	2,058	2,495	37
Foster (1781)	—	—	1,763	2,268	4
Glocester (1731)	2,945	2,832	2,791	4,025	1
Hopkinton (1757)	1,808	1,845	1,735	2,462	7
Jamestown (1678)	563	322	344	507	16
Johnston (1759)	1,031	1,022	996	1,320	3
Little Compton (1747)	1,232	1,302	1,341	1,542	23
Middletown (1743)	881	860	678	840	15
Newport (1639)	9,209	5,299	5,532	6,716	223
New Shoreham (1672)	575	478	478	682	47
North Kingstown (1674)	2,472	2,761	2,328	2,907	96
North Providence (1765)	830	813	698	1,071	5
Portsmouth (1638)	1,512	1,347	1,351	1,560	17
Providence (1636)	4,321	4,355	4,312	6,380	48
Richmond (1747)	1,257	1,204	1,094	1,760	2
Scituate (1731)	3,601	3,289	1,635	2,315	6
Smithfield (1731)	2,888	2,781	2,217	3,171	5
South Kingstown (1723)	2,835	2,779	2,675	4,131	175
Tiverton (1747)	1,956	2,091	1,959	2,453	25
Warren (1747)	979	1,005	905	1,122	22
Warwick (1643)	2,438	2,376	2,112	2,493	35
Westerly (1669)	1,812	1,824	1,744	2,298	10
West Greenwich (1741)	1,764	1,653	1,698	2,054	10
Totals	59,707	55,011	52,391	68,825	948

1. Patrick T. Conley, *An Album of Rhode Island History, 1636–1986* (Norfolk, Va., 1986), 261–62. Slave totals are taken from the U.S. Census of 1790. The dates in parenthesis indicate when the town was first settled or incorporated.

## Appendix II

### The Report of the Constitutional Convention 17 September 1787

#### **The President of the Convention to the President of Congress<sup>1</sup>**

In Convention, September 17, 1787.

SIR, We have now the honor to submit to the consideration of the United States in Congress assembled, that Constitution which has appeared to us the most advisable.

The friends of our country have long seen and desired, that the power of making war, peace and treaties, that of levying money and regulating commerce, and the correspondent executive and judicial authorities should be fully and effectually vested in the general government of the Union: but the impropriety of delegating such extensive trust to one body of men is evident—Hence results the necessity of a different organization.

It is obviously impracticable in the federal government of these States, to secure all rights of independent sovereignty to each, and yet provide for the interest and safety of all—Individuals entering into society, must give up a share of liberty to preserve the rest. The magnitude of the sacrifice must depend as well on situation and circumstance, as on the object to be obtained. It is at all times difficult to draw with precision the line between those rights which must be surrendered, and those which may be reserved; and on the present occasion this difficulty was increased by a difference among the several States as to their situation, extent, habits, and particular interests.

In all our deliberations on this subject we kept steadily in our view, that which appears to us the greatest interest of every true American, the consolidation of our Union, in which is involved our prosperity, felicity, safety, perhaps our national existence. This important consideration, seriously and deeply impressed on our minds, led each State in the Convention to be less rigid on points of inferior magnitude, than might have been otherwise expected; and thus the Constitution, which we now present, is the result of a spirit of amity, and of that mutual deference and concession which the peculiarity of our political situation rendered indispensable.

That it will meet the full and entire approbation of every State is not perhaps to be expected; but each will doubtless consider, that had her interests been alone consulted, the consequences might have been particularly disagreeable or injurious to others; that it is liable to as few



exceptions as could reasonably have been expected, we hope and believe; that it may promote the lasting welfare of that country so dear to us all, and secure her freedom and happiness, is our most ardent wish.

With great respect, We have the honor to be SIR, Your Excellency's most Obedient and humble servants.

George Washington, President.

By unanimous Order of the Convention,

HIS EXCELLENCY

The President of Congress.

1. Broadside, PCC, Item 122, Resolve Book of the Office of Foreign Affairs, 1785–89, tipped in between pages 98–99, DNA. The original letter has been lost. The above is transcribed from the official copy of the Convention Report, printed by John McLean and attested by Charles Thomson.

### **The Constitution of the United States<sup>1</sup>**

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

#### Article. I.

Section. 1. All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.

Section. 2. The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature.

No Person shall be a Representative who shall not have attained to the Age of twenty five Years, and been seven Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State in which he shall be chosen.

Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons. The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after

the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct. The Number of Representatives shall not exceed one for every thirty Thousand, but each State shall have at Least one Representative; and until such enumeration shall be made, the State of New Hampshire shall be entitled to chuse three, Massachusetts eight, Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations one, Connecticut five, New-York six, New Jersey four, Pennsylvania eight, Delaware one, Maryland six, Virginia ten, North Carolina five, South Carolina five, and Georgia three.

When vacancies happen in the Representation from any State, the Executive Authority thereof shall issue Writs of Election to fill such Vacancies.

The House of Representatives shall chuse their Speaker and other Officers; and shall have the sole Power of Impeachment.

Section. 3. The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the Legislature thereof, for six Years; and each Senator shall have one Vote.

Immediately after they shall be assembled in Consequence of the first Election, they shall be divided as equally as may be into three Classes. The Seats of the Senators of the first Class shall be vacated at the Expiration of the second Year, of the second Class at the Expiration of the fourth Year, and of the third Class at the Expiration of the sixth Year, so that one third may be chosen every second Year; and if Vacancies happen by Resignation, or otherwise, during the Recess of the Legislature of any State, the Executive thereof may make temporary Appointments until the next Meeting of the Legislature, which shall then fill such Vacancies.

No Person shall be a Senator who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty Years, and been nine Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State for which he shall be chosen.

The Vice President of the United States shall be President of the Senate, but shall have no Vote, unless they be equally divided.

The Senate shall chuse their other Officers, and also a President pro tempore, in the Absence of the Vice President, or when he shall exercise the Office of President of the United States.

The Senate shall have the sole Power to try all Impeachments. When sitting for that Purpose, they shall be on Oath or Affirmation. When the President of the United States is tried, the Chief Justice shall preside: And no Person shall be convicted without the Concurrence of two thirds of the Members present.

Judgment in Cases of Impeachment shall not extend further than to removal from Office, and disqualification to hold and enjoy any Office of honor, Trust or Profit under the United States: but the Party convicted shall nevertheless be liable and subject to Indictment, Trial, Judgment and Punishment, according to Law.

Section. 4. The Times, Places and Manner of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof; but the Congress may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations, except as to the Places of chusing Senators.

The Congress shall assemble at least once in every Year, and such Meeting shall be on the first Monday in December, unless they shall by Law appoint a different Day.

Section. 5. Each House shall be the Judge of the Elections, Returns and Qualifications of its own Members, and a Majority of each shall constitute a Quorum to do Business; but a smaller Number may adjourn from day to day, and may be authorized to compel the Attendance of absent Members, in such Manner, and under such Penalties as each House may provide.

Each House may determine the Rules of its Proceedings, punish its members for disorderly Behaviour, and, with the Concurrence of two thirds, expel a Member.

Each House shall keep a Journal of its Proceedings, and from time to time publish the same, excepting such Parts as may in their Judgment require Secrecy; and the Yeas and Nays of the Members of either House on any question shall, at the Desire of one fifth of those Present, be entered on the Journal.

Neither House, during the Session of Congress, shall, without the Consent of the other, adjourn for more than three days, nor to any other Place than that in which the two Houses shall be sitting.

Section. 6. The Senators and Representatives shall receive a Compensation for their Services, to be ascertained by Law, and paid out of the Treasury of the United States. They shall in all Cases, except Treason, Felony and Breach of the Peace, be privileged from Arrest during their Attendance at the Session of their respective Houses, and in going to and returning from the same; and for any Speech or Debate in either House, they shall not be questioned in any other Place.

No Senator or Representative shall, during the Time for which he was elected, be appointed to any civil Office under the Authority of the United States which shall have been created, or the Emoluments whereof shall have been encreased during such time; and no Person

holding any Office under the United States, shall be a Member of either House during his Continuance in Office.

Section. 7. All Bills for raising Revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives; but the Senate may propose or concur with Amendments as on other Bills.

Every Bill which shall have passed the House of Representatives and the Senate shall, before it become a Law, be presented to the President of the United States; If he approve he shall sign it, but if not he shall return it, with his Objections to that House in which it shall have originated, who shall enter the Objections at large on their Journal, and proceed to reconsider it. If after such Reconsideration two thirds of that House shall agree to pass the Bill, it shall be sent, together with the Objections, to the other House, by which it shall likewise be reconsidered, and if approved by two thirds of that House, it shall become a Law. But in all such Cases the Votes of both Houses shall be determined by yeas and Nays, and the Names of the Persons voting for and against the Bill shall be entered on the Journal of each House respectively. If any Bill shall not be returned by the President within ten Days (Sundays excepted) after it shall have been presented to him, the Same shall be a Law, in like Manner as if he had signed it, unless the Congress by their Adjournment prevent its Return, in which Case it shall not be a Law.

Every Order, Resolution, or Vote to which the Concurrence of the Senate and House of Representatives may be necessary (except on a question of Adjournment) shall be presented to the President of the United States; and before the Same shall take Effect, shall be approved by him, or being disapproved by him, shall be repassed by two thirds of the Senate and House of Representatives, according to the Rules and Limitations prescribed in the Case of a Bill.

Section. 8. The Congress shall have Power To lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States; but all Duties, Imposts and Excises shall be uniform throughout the United States;

To borrow Money on the credit of the United States;

To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes;

To establish an uniform Rule of Naturalization, and uniform Laws on the subject of Bankruptcies throughout the United States;

To coin Money, regulate the Value thereof, and of foreign Coin, and fix the Standard of Weights and Measures;

To provide for the Punishment of counterfeiting the Securities and current Coin of the United States;

To establish Post Offices and post Roads;

To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries;

To constitute Tribunals inferior to the supreme Court;

To define and punish Piracies and Felonies committed on the high Seas, and Offences against the Law of Nations;

To declare War, grant Letters of Marque and Reprisal, and make Rules concerning Captures on Land and Water;

To raise and support Armies, but no Appropriation of Money to that Use shall be for a longer Term than two Years;

To provide and maintain a Navy;

To make Rules for the Government and Regulation of the land and naval Forces;

To provide for calling forth the Militia to execute the Laws of the Union, suppress Insurrections and repel Invasions;

To provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining, the Militia, and for governing such Part of them as may be employed in the Service of the United States, reserving to the States respectively, the Appointment of the Officers, and the Authority of training the Militia according to the discipline prescribed by Congress;

To exercise exclusive Legislation in all Cases whatsoever, over such District (not exceeding ten Miles square) as may, by Cession of particular States, and the Acceptance of Congress, become the Seat of the Government of the United States, and to exercise like Authority over all Places purchased by the Consent of the Legislature of the State in which the same shall be, for the Erection of Forts, Magazines, Arsenals, dock-Yards, and other needful Buildings;—And

To make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof.

Section. 9. The Migration or Importation of such Persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight, but a Tax or duty may be imposed on such Importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each Person.

The Privilege of the Writ of Habeas Corpus shall not be suspended, unless when in Cases of Rebellion or Invasion the public Safety may require it.

No Bill of Attainder or ex post facto Law shall be passed.

No Capitation, or other direct, Tax shall be laid, unless in Proportion to the Census or Enumeration herein before directed to be taken.

No Tax or Duty shall be laid on Articles exported from any State.

No Preference shall be given by any Regulation of Commerce or Revenue to the Ports of one State over those of another: nor shall Vessels bound to, or from, one State, be obliged to enter, clear, or pay Duties in another.

No Money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law; and a regular Statement and Account of the Receipts and Expenditures of all public Money shall be published from time to time.

No Title of Nobility shall be granted by the United States: And no Person holding any Office of Profit or Trust under them, shall, without the Consent of the Congress, accept of any present, Emolument, Office, or Title, of any kind whatever, from any King, Prince, or foreign State.

Section. 10. No State shall enter into any Treaty, Alliance, or Confederation; grant Letters of Marque and Reprisal; coin Money; emit Bills of Credit; make any Thing but gold and silver Coin a Tender in Payment of Debts; pass any Bill of Attainder, ex post facto Law, or Law impairing the Obligation of Contracts, or grant any Title of Nobility.

No State shall, without the Consent of the Congress, lay any Imposts or Duties on Imports or Exports, except what may be absolutely necessary for executing it's inspection Laws: and the net Produce of all Duties and Imposts, laid by any State on Imports or Exports, shall be for the Use of the Treasury of the United States; and all such Laws shall be subject to the Revision and Controul of the Congress.

No State shall, without the Consent of Congress, lay any Duty of Tonnage, keep Troops, or Ships of War in time of Peace, enter into any Agreement or Compact with another State, or with a foreign Power, or engage in War, unless actually invaded, or in such imminent Danger as will not admit of delay.

## Article. II.

Section. 1. The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America. He shall hold his Office during the Term of four Years, and, together with the Vice President, chosen for the same Term, be elected, as follows

Each State shall appoint, in such Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct, a Number of Electors, equal to the whole Number of Senators and Representatives to which the state may be entitled in the Congress: but no Senator or Representative, or Person holding an Office of Trust or Profit under the United States, shall be appointed an Elector.

The Electors shall meet in their respective States and vote by Ballot for two Persons, of whom one at least shall not be an Inhabitant of the same State with themselves. And they shall make a List of all the Persons voted for, and of the Number of Votes for each; which List they shall sign and certify, and transmit sealed to the Seat of the Government of the United States, directed to the President of the Senate. The President of the Senate shall, in the Presence of the Senate and House of Representatives, open all the Certificates, and the Votes shall then be counted. The Person having the greatest Number of Votes shall be the President, if such Number be a Majority of the whole Number of Electors appointed; and if there be more than one who have such Majority, and have an equal Number of Votes, then the House of Representatives shall immediately chuse by Ballot one of them for President; and if no Person have a Majority, then from the five highest on the List the said House shall in like Manner chuse the President. But in chusing the President, the Votes shall be taken by States, the Representation from each State having one Vote; A quorum for this Purpose shall consist of a Member or Members from two thirds of the States, and a Majority of all the States shall be necessary to a Choice. In every Case, after the Choice of the President, the Person having the greatest Number of Votes of the Electors shall be the Vice President. But if there should remain two or more who have equal Votes, the Senate shall chuse from them by Ballot the Vice President.

The Congress may determine the Time of chusing the Electors, and the Day on which they shall give their Votes; which Day shall be the same throughout the United States.

No Person except a natural born Citizen, or a Citizen of the United States, at the time of the Adoption of this Constitution, shall be eligible to the Office of President; neither shall any Person be eligible to that Office who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty five Years, and been fourteen Years a Resident within the United States.

In Case of the Removal of the President from Office, or of his Death, Resignation, or Inability to discharge the Powers and Duties of the said Office, the Same shall devolve on the Vice President, and the Congress may by Law provide for the Case of Removal, Death, Resignation or Inability, both of the President and Vice President, declaring what Officer shall then act as President, and such Officer shall act accordingly, until the Disability be removed, or a President shall be elected.

The President shall, at stated Times, receive for his Services, a Compensation, which shall neither be encreased nor diminished during the Period for which he shall have been elected, and he shall not receive within that Period any other Emolument from the United States, or any of them.

Before he enter on the Execution of his Office, he shall take the following Oath or Affirmation:—"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my Ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

Section. 2. The President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the Militia of the several States, when called into the actual Service of the United States; he may require the Opinion, in writing, of the principal Officer in each of the executive Departments, upon any Subject relating to the Duties of their respective Offices, and he shall have Power to grant Reprieves and Pardons for Offences against the United States, except in Cases of Impeachment.

He shall have Power, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, to make Treaties, provided two thirds of the Senators present concur; and he shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, Judges of the supreme Court, and all other Officers of the United States, whose Appointments are not herein otherwise provided for, and which shall be established by Law: but the Congress may by Law vest the Appointment of such inferior Officers, as they think proper, in the President alone, in the Courts of Law, or in the Heads of Departments.

The President shall have Power to fill up all Vacancies that may happen during the Recess of the Senate, by granting Commissions which shall expire at the End of their next Session.

Section. 3. He shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient; he may, on extraordinary Occasions, convene both Houses, or either of them, and in Case of Disagreement between them, with Respect to the Time of Adjournment, he may adjourn them to such Time as he shall think proper; he shall receive Ambassadors and other public Ministers; he shall take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed, and shall Commission all the Officers of the United States.

Section. 4. The President, Vice President and all civil Officers of the United States, shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and Conviction of Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors.



## Article III.

Section. 1. The judicial Power of the United States, shall be vested in one supreme Court, and in such inferior Courts as the Congress may from time to time ordain and establish. The Judges, both of the supreme and inferior Courts, shall hold their Offices during good Behaviour, and shall, at stated Times, receive for their Services, a Compensation, which shall not be diminished during their Continuance in Office.

Section. 2. The judicial Power shall extend to all Cases, in Law and Equity, arising under this Constitution, the Laws of the United States, and Treaties made, or which shall be made, under their Authority;—to all Cases affecting Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls;—to all Cases of admiralty and maritime Jurisdiction;—to Controversies to which the United States shall be a Party;—to Controversies between two or more States;—between a State and Citizens of another State;—between Citizens of different States,—between Citizens of the same State claiming Lands under Grants of different States, and between a State, or the Citizens thereof, and foreign States, Citizens or Subjects.

In all Cases affecting Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, and those in which a State shall be Party, the supreme Court shall have original Jurisdiction. In all the other Cases before mentioned, the supreme Court shall have appellate Jurisdiction, both as to Law and Fact, with such Exceptions, and under such Regulations as the Congress shall make.

The Trial of all Crimes, except in Cases of Impeachment, shall be by Jury; and such Trial shall be held in the State where the said Crimes shall have been committed; but when not committed within any State, the Trial shall be at such Place or Places as the Congress may by Law have directed.

Section. 3. Treason against the United States, shall consist only in levying War against them, or in adhering to their Enemies, giving them Aid and Comfort. No Person shall be convicted of Treason unless on the Testimony of two Witnesses to the same overt Act, or on Confession in open Court.

The Congress shall have Power to declare the Punishment of Treason, but no Attainder of Treason shall work Corruption of Blood, or Forfeiture except during the Life of the Person attainted.

## Article. IV.

Section. 1. Full Faith and Credit shall be given in each State to the public Acts, Records, and judicial Proceedings of every other State. And

the Congress may by general Laws prescribe the Manner in which such Acts, Records and Proceedings shall be proved, and the Effect thereof.

Section. 2. The Citizens of each State shall be entitled to all privileges and Immunities of Citizens in the several States.

A Person charged in any State with Treason, Felony, or other Crime, who shall flee from Justice, and be found in another State, shall on Demand of the executive Authority of the State from which he fled, be delivered up, to be removed to the State having Jurisdiction of the Crime.

No Person held to Service or Labour in one State, under the Laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in Consequence of any Law or Regulation therein, be discharged from such Service or Labour, but shall be delivered up on Claim of the Party to whom such Service or Labour may be due.

Section. 3. New States may be admitted by the Congress into this Union; but no new State shall be formed or erected within the Jurisdiction of any other State; nor any State be formed by the Junction of two or more States, or Parts of States, without the Consent of the Legislatures of the States concerned as well as of the Congress.

The Congress shall have Power to dispose of and make all needful Rules and Regulations respecting the Territory or other Property belonging to the United States; and nothing in this Constitution shall be so construed as to Prejudice any Claims of the United States, or of any particular State.

Section. 4. The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government, and shall protect each of them against Invasion; and on Application of the Legislature, or of the Executive (when the Legislature cannot be convened) against domestic Violence.

#### Article. V.

The Congress, whenever two thirds of both Houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose Amendments to this Constitution, or, on the Application of the Legislatures of two thirds of the several States, shall call a Convention for proposing Amendments, which, in either Case, shall be valid to all Intents and Purposes, as Part of this Constitution, when ratified by the Legislatures of three fourths of the several States, or by Conventions in three fourths thereof, as the one or the other Mode of Ratification may be proposed by the Congress; Provided that no Amendment which may be made prior to the Year One thousand

eight hundred and eight shall in any Manner affect the first and fourth Clauses in the Ninth Section of the first Article; and that no State, without its Consent, shall be deprived of it's equal Suffrage in the Senate.

#### Article. VI.

All Debts contracted and Engagements entered into, before the Adoption of this Constitution, shall be as valid against the United States under this Constitution, as under the Confederation.

This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof; and all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land; and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby, any Thing in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the Contrary notwithstanding.

The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial Officers; both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.

#### Article. VII.

The Ratification of the Conventions of nine States, shall be sufficient for the Establishment of this Constitution between the States so ratifying the Same.

The Word, "the," being interlined between the seventh and eighth Lines of the first Page, The Word "Thirty" being partly written on an Erasure in the fifteenth Line of the first Page, The Words "is tried" being interlined between the thirty second and thirty third Lines of the first Page and the Word "the" being interlined between the forty third and forty fourth Lines of the second Page.

done in Convention by the Unanimous Consent of the States present the Seventeenth Day of September in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and Eighty seven and of the Independence of the United States of America the Twelfth In Witness whereof We have hereunto subscribed our Names,

Attest William Jackson Secretary

Go: Washington—Presidt.  
and deputy from Virginia

Delaware	{	Geo: Read Gunning Bedford junr John Dickinson Richard Bassett Jaco: Broom	New Hampshire	{	John Langdon Nicholas Gilman
Maryland	{	James McHenry Dan of St Thos. Jenifer Danl Carroll	Massachusetts	{	Nathaniel Gorham Rufus King
Virginia	{	John Blair— James Madison Jr.	Connecticut	{	Wm: Saml. Johnson Roger Sherman
North Carolina	{	Wm. Blount Richd. Dobbs Spaight. Hu Williamson	New York . . .		Alexander Hamilton
South Carolina	{	J. Rutledge Charles Cotesworth Pinckney Charles Pinckney Pierce Butler	New Jersey	{	Wil: Livingston David Brearley Wm. Paterson Jona: Dayton
Georgia	{	William Few Abr Baldwin	Pennsylvania	{	B Franklin Thomas Mifflin Robt Morris Geo. Clymer Thos. FitzSimons Jared Ingersoll James Wilson Gouv. Morris

1. Engrossed MS, RG 11, DNA.

### **Resolutions of the Convention Recommending the Procedures for Ratification and for the Establishment of Government under the Constitution by the Confederation Congress<sup>1</sup>**

In Convention Monday September 17th. 1787.

Present The States of New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Mr. Hamilton from New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia.

RESOLVED, That the preceeding Constitution be laid before the United States in Congress assembled, and that it is the Opinion of this Convention, that it should afterwards be submitted to a Convention of Delegates, chosen in each State by the People thereof, under the Recommendation of its Legislature, for their Assent and Ratification; and that each Convention assenting to, and ratifying the Same, should give Notice thereof to the United States in Congress assembled.

Resolved, That it is the Opinion of this Convention, that as soon as the Conventions of nine States shall have ratified this Constitution, the United States in Congress assembled should fix a Day on which Electors should be appointed by the States which shall have ratified the same,

and a Day on which the Electors should assemble to vote for the President, and the Time and Place for commencing Proceedings under this Constitution. That after such Publication the Electors should be appointed, and the Senators and Representatives elected: That the Electors should meet on the Day fixed for the Election of the President, and should transmit their Votes certified, signed, sealed and directed, as the Constitution requires, to the Secretary of the United States in Congress assembled, that the Senators and Representatives should convene at the Time and Place assigned; that the Senators should appoint a President of the Senate, for the sole Purpose of receiving, opening and counting the Votes for President; and, that after he shall be chosen, the Congress, together with the President, should, without Delay, proceed to execute this Constitution.

By the Unanimous Order of the Convention

W. Jackson Secretary.

Go: Washington Presidt.

1. Engrossed MS, RG 11, DNA.



















**Rhode Island Freemen Vote on the Constitution  
Referendum Results by Town, 24 March 1788**

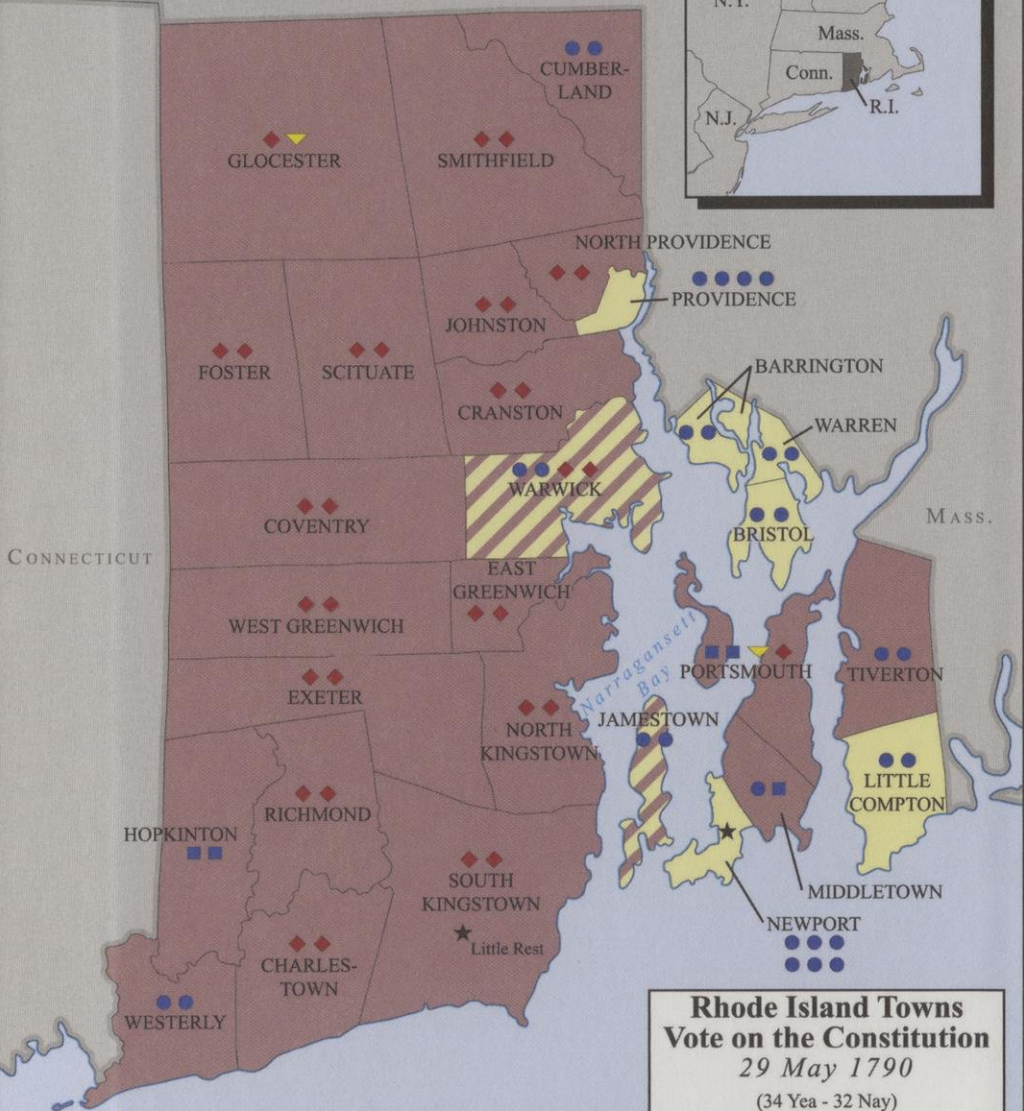
Town	Yeas	Nays
Barrington	9	34
Bristol	26	23
Charlestown	6	51
Coventry	0	180
Cranston	0	101
Cumberland	10	113
East Greenwich	2	91
Exeter	6	142
Foster	0	177
Glocester	9	228
Hopkinton	33	95
Jamestown	5	11
Johnston	2	79
Little Compton	63	57
Middletown	6	40
Newport	1	10
New Shoreham	0	32
North Kingstown	2	160
North Providence	0	48
Portsmouth	12	60
Providence	0	1
Richmond	1	68
Scituate	0	156
Smithfield	2	158
South Kingstown	1	125
Tiverton	23	92
Warren	2	41
Warwick	3	140
Westerly	12	56
West Greenwich	2	145
Total	238	2,714

REFERENDUM: Until 17 January 1790, the Rhode Island legislature repeatedly refused to submit the Constitution to the consideration of a state convention. Instead the legislature provided for a state-wide referendum that was held in town meetings on 24 March 1788. Freemen voted yea or nay on the Constitution and their votes were recorded and sent to the legislature where they were tabulated. Federalists, most obviously in Newport and Providence, boycotted the referendum.



MAP: Red-colored towns generally opposed the Constitution, while cream-colored towns supported it. Warwick and Jamestown were more closely divided. With a sizable majority in the state Convention at the time of the final vote, Antifederalists "allowed" ratification to take place when five of their delegates voted in favor of the Constitution and four did not vote. One Antifederalist delegate was replaced by a Federalist on the day of the vote.

MASSACHUSETTS



CONNECTICUT

MASS.

Narragansett Bay

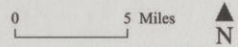
Atlantic Ocean



**Rhode Island Towns  
Vote on the Constitution  
29 May 1790**

(34 Yea - 32 Nay)

- Federalists voting Yea 29
- Antifederalists voting Yea 5
- ◆ Antifederalists voting Nay 32
- ▼ Antifederalists not voting 4
- Antifederalist Towns
- Federalist Towns
- Divided Towns
- ★ Convention Meeting Place



the delegates proposed a bill of rights and other amendments to the Constitution before adjourning to reassemble in Newport on 24 May 1790. Because the first federal Congress threatened Rhode Island with draconian commercial sanctions, Antifederalist leaders manipulated the Convention vote so that the Constitution was ratified on 29 May 1790 by a vote of 34 to 32.

This volume, the first of three Rhode Island volumes, contains the public and private debates over the Constitution from 20 August 1787 through 2 July 1788. Included are approximately 120 newspaper items, 30 letters, 35 accounts of town meetings, 15 newspaper reports of legislative proceedings, and 25 lengthy and informative Editors' Notes detailing (1) important out-of-state events that were reported in Rhode Island and (2) Rhode Island newspaper reprintings of out-of-state essays, speeches, and pamphlets. Also included are the first four of the legislature's numerous refusals to call a state convention to consider the Constitution and the legislature's act calling a statewide referendum on the Constitution. The results of the referendum contain the names of all the freemen who voted in town meetings. The volume ends with a grouping of documents on Providence's celebration of the anniversary of American independence on the Fourth of July 1788 and the ratification of the Constitution by nine states, a sufficient number to implement the Constitution among the ratifying states. This celebration was marred by a mob of armed men—variously estimated between 400 and 1,000 in number—led by two justices of Rhode Island's Superior Court, who threatened to disrupt the festivities violently if Providence's inhabitants celebrated the ratification of the Constitution by New Hampshire—the ninth state. Violence was avoided when Providence's town leaders agreed only to celebrate the anniversary of independence.

The volume also has a three-color map on the endpapers that demonstrates how Antifederalists, despite a sizable majority of delegates, "allowed" ratification to take place. Additional editorial apparatus includes both a general ratification and a Rhode Island chronology, a listing of Rhode Island officeholders, a biographical gazetteer, a glossary of terms peculiar to Rhode Island, population figures for Rhode Island towns, and the text of the U.S. Constitution.

#### THE EDITORS

JOHN P. KAMINSKI and GASPARE J. SALADINO have been editing *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution* since 1970. CHARLES H. SCHOENLEBER joined the staff in 1987. RICHARD LEFFLER served as editor from 1973 to 2009. JONATHAN M. REID and MARGARET R. FLAMINGO have worked with the project for three and two years, respectively. TIMOTHY D. MOORE joined the project in 2010. PATRICK T. CONLEY, the foremost historian of Rhode Island, has read the manuscript and offered valuable and insightful advice on Rhode Island history.



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**WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESS  
MADISON WISCONSIN 53706**

ISBN 978-0-87020-468-5

