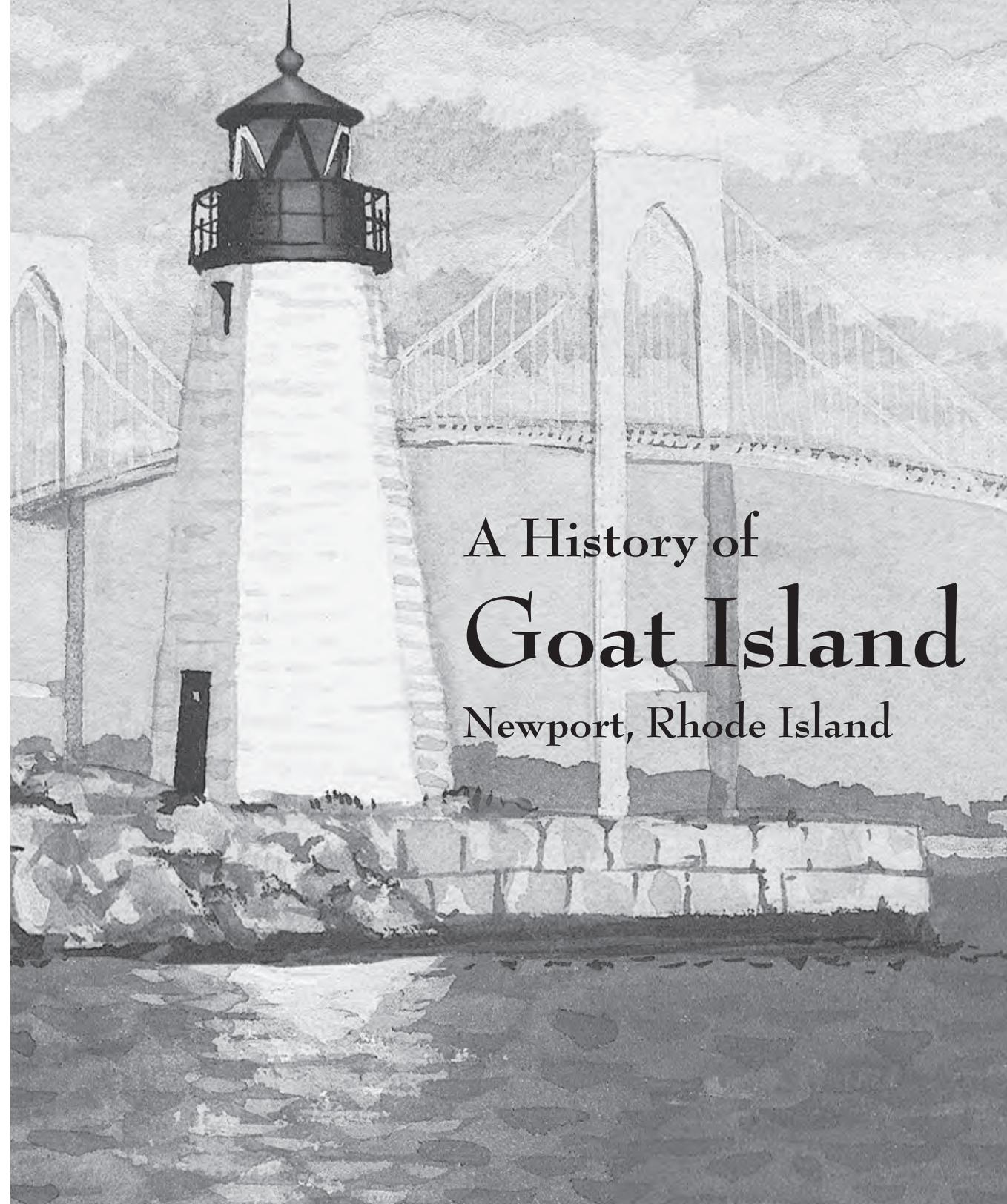




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A History of
Goat Island
Newport, Rhode Island

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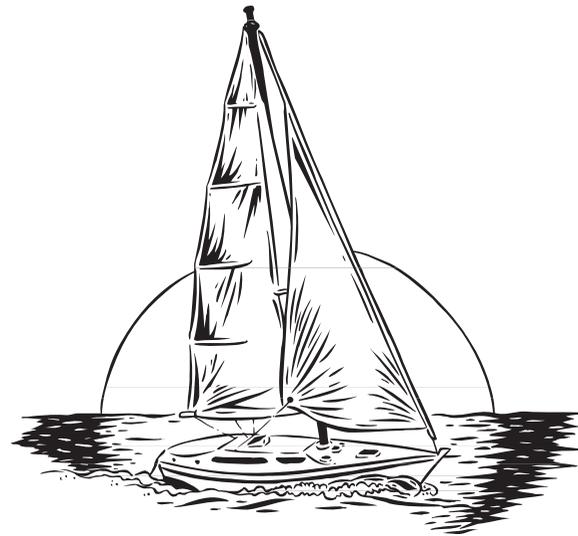
Special Thanks To:

The Redwood Library and Athenaeum, the Newport Historical Society, Naval Historical Collection of the Naval War College, and Leonard J. Panaggio of Newport.

*I*ndians, pirates, Colonial soldiers and the brilliant engineers of the Naval Torpedo Station walked where you now walk. This little island has seen the burning of the British sloop "Liberty", heard what may well have been the first shots of the American Revolution, and watched the Tall Ships and the America's Cup contenders sail past. Its lighthouses have beckoned home the weary mariner. Its shore has provided summertime pleasures for Newport families. It is a tiny island, some 20 acres, yet for 300 years it has played an important role in the history of Rhode Island.

Today, Goat Island is a peaceful haven for residents, boaters and the many visitors who enjoy the Hyatt Regency Newport Hotel. To welcome you, we offer this glimpse into the island's history. Enjoy it, please, along with our warmest wishes for a wonderful stay here on Goat Island.





That was the beginning of the process which led to the Goat Island of today with its hotel, its harbor houses and condo complex on the southern end of the island, its commercial development cluster, and its popular marina. Today, Goat Island is a peaceful haven for residents and boaters, and for the many visitors who enjoy the luxurious Hyatt Regency Hotel and Spa.

Goat Island has indeed come a long way from its turbulent early days, more than 300 years ago. And, in its own small way, the history of the island itself outlines for us the history of America.❖

to say, about being carried into effect. The contractors commenced laying the foundation for the Pier on Monday last. It will stand on the outer end of the Dike; it will be 50 feet square, and in a mean depth of nearly 13 feet at low water, and when completed, the Light-House will be removed to it. The work is under the superintendence of Lieut. G.W. Cullum, of the U.S. Engineers."

*Others who worked on the new lighthouse were Lt. James L. Mason and the project's master mechanic, Alexander McGregor, an able stone mason who had migrated to Newport from Scotland in the early 1800's "with nothing more than a carpetbag slung over his shoulder. He went on to erect some of Newport's **many stone buildings.**"*

Although original plans called for moving the first lighthouse, eventually it was decided to construct a new one—the octagonal one which still stands today—and move the original to Prudence Island. Stone for the new light came from the government quarry at Brenton's Cove.

Keepers Of The Light, Goat Island

Caleb C. Mumford

Henry Oman

Pardon W. Stevens

John Cass

John Heath

Henry Crawford

Capt. Charles Schoeneman

"A new light and fog bell were placed on the opposite end of Goat Island in August 1912. And Schoeneman no doubt watched in the same month the unearthing of a ninety-seven foot whale while the excavation took place for the Torpedo Station's new power house. When a submarine numbered N-4 rammed the breakwater on November 9, 1921, the death knell sounded for this as a personally attended lighthouse. Within the old stone tower an electrically controlled light was placed. Authorities decided to raze the Keeper's dwelling. Thus Capt. Schoeneman, the last Keeper of Goat Island Light, retired."❖

After 300 Years, A Peaceful Haven

After World War II, the Torpedo Plant was phased out, and in 1960 Goat Island was declared surplus land. Four years later, the Newport Redevelopment Agency—then engaged in Thames Street Redevelopment—ob-

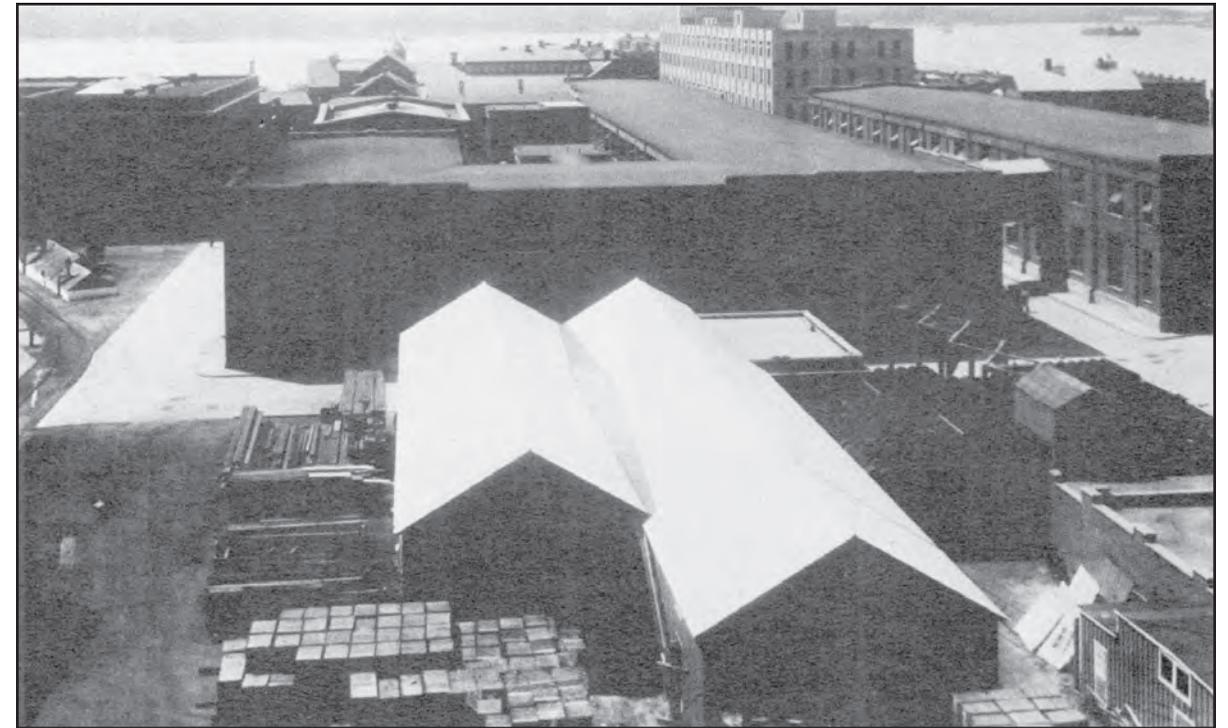
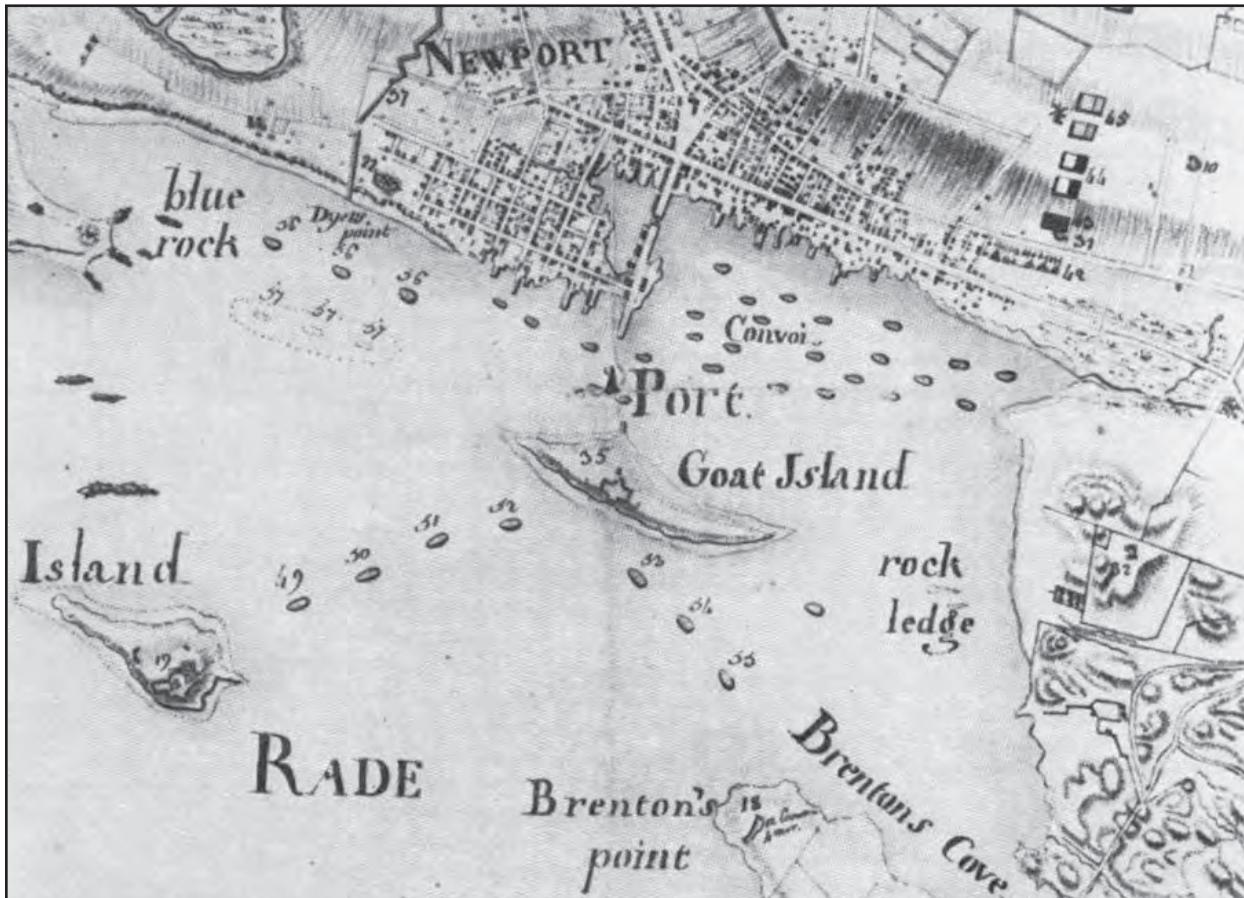
tained local and Federal funding for the purchase of Goat Island. Under Redevelopment auspices, all but four of the Navy buildings were demolished, and the present causeway was constructed to carry traffic and utilities to the island.



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Early records show that Goat Island was home to Narragansett Indians, who called their island Nante Sinunk. Even when the larger Aquidneck Island was purchased, only the grass upon Goat Island and the other, smaller islands, was conveyed in the deed. Ownership of the actual land remained with the natives.**

By the mid 1650's, residents of Portsmouth and Newport had formed a committee to obtain the islands in Newport Harbor. On May 22, 1658, Goat Island, Dutch Island and Coasters Harbor Island were purchased by Benedict Arnold, Jr. and several others. They bought all three islands from Cachanaquoant***, Chief Sachem, for six pounds and ten shillings, or approximately \$12.00.



Nearly every torpedo used by the U.S. Navy during World War I and World War II was developed and manufactured on Goat Island. At the peak of World War II activity, in 1944, more than 13,000 men and women were employed on Goat Island in more than 100 buildings. During that year, they produced 5,656 torpedos.

The island's background of American history and notable wartime activity is dominated by its protective role. Goat Island stood ready to repulse invaders in the Colonial days and played an important part in our country's struggle against aggressors in World Wars I and II. ❖



Prof. Charles E. Munroe
Because of his work at the Torpedo Station, Professor Munroe became the world's leading authority on high explosives.

The Burning Of The Liberty

In 1769, the enmity of Newport residents was aroused by the British armed sloop **Liberty**. The **Liberty** had seized a brig and accused it of evading the Navigation Laws. The seizure was much resented, and the captain and crew of the **Liberty** were requested to come ashore to explain. Only the executive officer remained aboard the **Liberty**.

Taking advantage of the situation, a group seized the **Liberty**, ran her ashore on Gravelly Point, dismantled and scuttled her. Although a reward of One Hundred Pounds was offered by the Revenue Officer at Boston for arrest and conviction of those responsible, no arrests were ever made.

Then, on July 24, a high tide raised **Liberty** and floated her to Goat Island, where she grounded near the burial place of the twenty-six pirates. One week later, during a fierce thunder and lightning storm, the **Liberty** caught fire and burned for several days until entirely consumed. ❖

The Goat Island Lighthouse

The site of the Hyatt Regency Hotel was the same parcel first used for a lighthouse and Keeper's dwelling on Goat Island. As Richard Champlin tells us in his article "Some Guardians of the East Bay", it was New Year's Day, 1824. "Keeper Samuel Watson left his dwelling, walked over to the light tower and set aglow the whale oil lantern. Newporters looked over the harbor with considerable satisfaction."

Barely a decade later, seafarers called for a light on the northern end of Goat Island. The May 27, 1837 **Newport Mercury** explained the proposed construction:

"This long contemplated measure for the improvement of our Harbour, is, we are happy

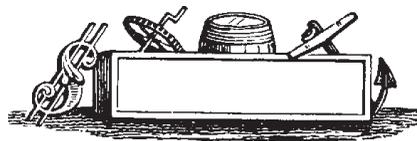
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The history of the **Naval Torpedo Station, 1658 through 1925**, reports that, by 1915, the European War was anticipated. A new factory assembly shop and torpedo warehouse were being readied for occupancy, and extensive preparations were underway to bring the plant up to maximum output. Manufacturing capacity was estimated at 300 torpedos a year, with an equal proportion of storage.

In addition, the Station was to turn out spare parts for stock and issue primer parts. The new facility was dedicated in the Fall of 1915 at a gala ball, for which "no expense was spared to make the ball the event of the season and those who attended remember it as such".

Upon declaration of war, the Torpedo Station workforce numbered about 3,200 civilian employees. Navy personnel numbered about 1,300. Of special note is the increased production of primers achieved in 1918 "as a direct result of hiring women munitions workers, who were credited with out-producing their male counterparts by six to one".

When the war ended, the plant was returned to normal operations in three months with the reduction of a thousand employees and a general reorganization. The development and manufacture of torpedos continued on Goat Island, along with additions and improvements to the facility.



A Fitting Justice For Pirates

An interesting sidelight to Goat Island's history: the largest group of pirates ever executed at one time in the Colonies is buried there. Pirates were both numerous and active in the West Indies and along the American Coast during the early 1700's.

One pirate captain, Charles Harris, had originally been a navigator aboard a Boston-owned ship which was captured by pirates. Shortly after his capture, Harris signed articles as a full-fledged member of the pirate crew. By 1723, he was captain of the pirate sloop **Ranger**, but he made the mistake of engaging in battle with **HMS Greyhound**, a man-of-war captained by Peter Solgard, who had sworn to capture the pirates.

Ranger and another pirate sloop opened fire on the **Greyhound**, which returned shot for shot. The pirates, realizing their error, pulled down their black flags of piracy and fled. The wind dropped, and the pirates resorted to their oars, but Captain Solgard was not to be outdone and ordered his eighty-six sailors to man the **Greyhound's** oars. By 2:30 in the afternoon, the **Greyhound** was close enough to fire on **Ranger**, demolishing the sloop to "a helpless hulk". Harris and his crew surrendered, and the **Greyhound** sailed to Newport with forty-eight pirates aboard.

The trial began on June 11, 1723 and took two days. A number of the pirates were released, including the pirate doctor, several teenage boys and an Indian who had been captured by the pirates while he was fishing off Nantucket. Twenty-six others, including Harris, were found guilty.

According to Snow's **Pirates & Buccaneers of the Atlantic Coast**, "The gibbets were erected...at Gravelly Point, Newport, and then

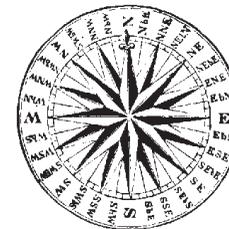
The 1660's brought war with Holland and the British capture of Dutch settlements in America. By 1667, rumor had it that the Dutch fleet was on its way to recover New York. In reaction, the General Assembly of Rhode Island recommended that Newport mount great guns for its protection. Thus began the long period in which Goat Island and its fortifications protected Newport's inner harbor.

On May 1, 1676, Arnold deeded Goat Island and Coasters Harbor Island to the town. By this time, Arnold had become the first Colonial Governor of Rhode Island, under charter from the Crown.

As early as 1700, a fort was located on Goat Island, apparently built upon the recommendation of the Lords of Trade to His Britannic Majesty to the effect that:

"Rhode Island being the most important place on the South West Side of Cape Codd, is so situated as to be a very convenient harbor for shipping and security to that part of the Country in case it were put in a state of defense." (Field, 1896)

continued page 3, col. 2



** There are many possible theories about the name "Goat Island". One possible origin is the island's use as grazing land during Colonial times.

*** Many spelling variations of this name exist.

drop tested for the gruesome occasion. On the morning of July 19, 1723, every person who was able began what was almost a pilgrimage across the open fields to Gravelly Point.... When the pirates arrived at the scaffolding, most of them spoke of their wrongdoings, cautioning the youngsters . . . to avoid the sins which would lead to a pirate's death on the gallows.

"Their Black Flag, with the emblem of death holding the hour glass in one hand and a dart in the other, was fluttering from one corner of the gallows. This was a fitting justice, for many of the forced men had often heard the pirates exclaim:

'This flag is our Old Roger, and we shall live under it and die under it'."

The bodies of Harris and twenty five of his pirate crew were buried on the shore at the North end of Goat Island between high and low water mark.



By 1702, Goat Island was declared the most suitable place for a fortification. According to Greene's History of Rhode Island, Vol. 2, 1701-1790, "The King's fort was inadequate to the defense of the harbor. A new fort, afterwards called Queen Anne's, to mount twelve guns, was ordered to be built. The governor and council were authorized to purchase the battery and stores necessary to complete it. The proceeds of all forfeitures belong to the General Treasury, especially the gold plate and money taken from convicted pirates, were appropriated to this purpose. The fort was built upon Goat Island."

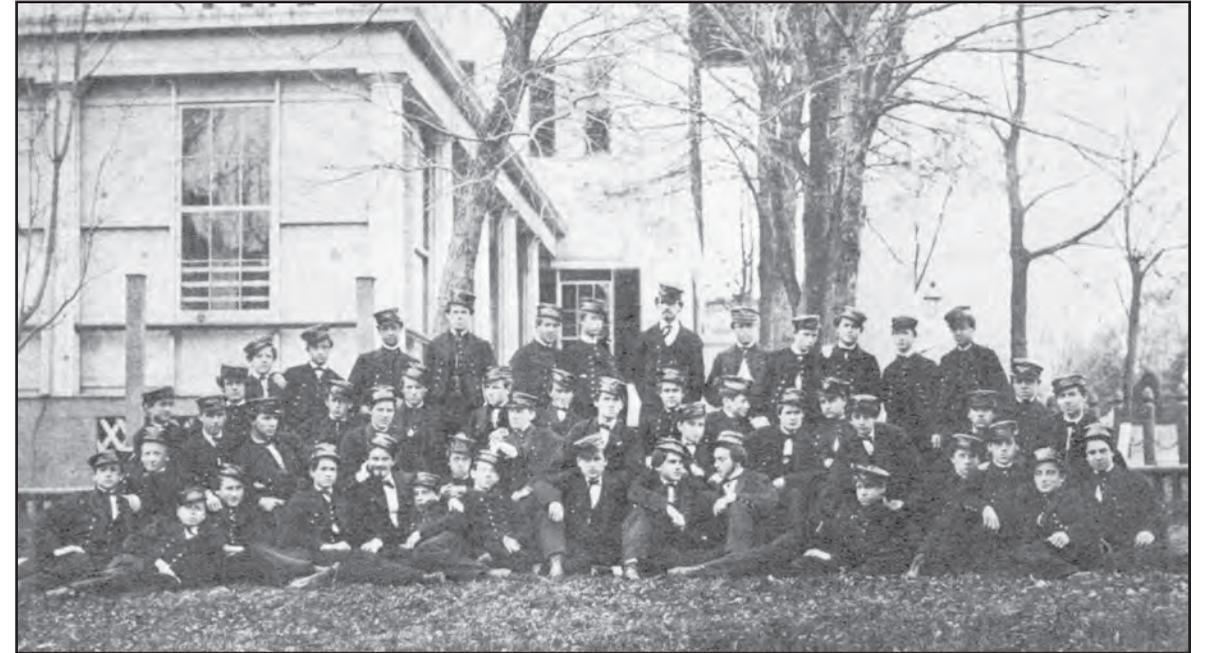
The names of the Goat Island fortifications reflect the events of history:

- Fort Anne** (1702 - 1738)
- Fort George** (1738-1774 & 1777-1779)
- Fort Liberty** (1776-1777 & 1779-1781 [?])
- Fort Washington** (1784-1798)
- Fort Wolcott** (1798-1827)

At the outbreak of the American Revolution, the fort (now named Fort George) was the only fort in the Colony. Although the fort was not permanently garrisoned, a guard was maintained there, well-equipped with fifty guns and a large supply of powder. In 1774, the General Assembly of Rhode Island ordered the guns and powder moved to Providence.

When Rhode Island declared her independence on May 4, 1776, the fort was reconstructed under the name Fort Liberty. It was furnished with twenty-five guns and

Station



From May, 1861, through the Summer of 1865, the United States Naval Academy was stationed in Newport.
Loaned by Leonard J. Panaggio

In 1871, the twenty-four employees of the Torpedo Station produced their first torpedo—the Station's total output for the year. The Station's early torpedos were mines, but great strides were made in the development of "automotive" torpedos using built-in mechanisms to direct their course through the water and seek out a target.

Meanwhile, extensive experiments had demonstrated the value of gun cotton as a high explosive. The Torpedo Station was

ordered to develop its manufacture, and nearby Rose Island was designated as a storage place for gun cotton. Large scale manufacture of gun cotton began on Goat Island in 1884. The next year, the Station was called upon to develop a system of torpedo nets for defense purposes. And in 1886, negotiations were entered into with Herreshoff, leading to the purchase of the **Stiletto**, the first American torpedo boat of the new type.

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The same theme also appears in Rhode Island's call for a Continental Congress in 1774, and in Rhode Island's efforts to create the Continental Navy in 1775, as a reaction against the frigate **Rose**. Finally, Rhode Island was the first to declare its independence from the British crown on May 4, 1776. ❖



A Final Resting Place For Samuel & Wait Carr

On June 9, 1739, Samuel Carr and his daughter Wait of Newport died of small pox. They were buried on Goat Island, and their stone reads:

In memory of Mr. Samuel Carr, died June ye 9th, 1739, in ye 46th year of his age. And Wait, his Daughter, died ye same day. Aged 13 years.

Not human Skill, nor Prayers nor Tears Could Take

From the dark Chambers of the silent Grave. Thus are we of our fondest hopes beguiled, The tenderest Husband and the sweetest Child.

In the Distinguished Day, of both Bereft, The Happiest Wife a mournful Widow left, Do's to their much lov'd memories bestow This stone, sad Monument of tender woe.

The stone was preserved at the Torpedo Station, according to a report written in 1920. ❖

The Torpedo

82 Years Of Service

For about seventy years after the American Revolution, Goat Island was used for military purposes by the Federal Government. In 1869, it became the Naval Torpedo Station under Commander E.O. Matthews, U.S. Navy.

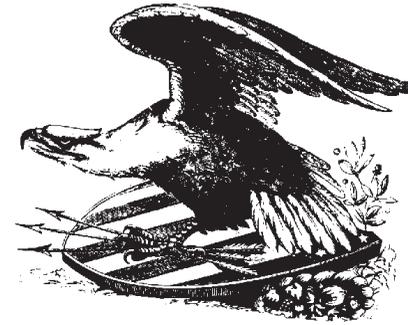
Experiments with torpedos, explosives and electrical equipment were conducted at the station in 1870. The first large factory for the manufacture of torpedos was erected there in 1907, with additional buildings added later, including a blacksmith shop, a coal shed, a coppersmith shop, several cottages and a new storehouse.

Lieutenant George Dewey, later Admiral Dewey, of Spanish-American War fame, was assigned to the Station, probably as commanding officer during the absence of the regularly detailed commanding officer.



Admiral Dewey

Loaned by Leonard J. Panaggio



a garrison of fifty men under the command of Captain Samuel Sweet and two lieutenants, Daniel Vaughan and Ebenezer Adams.

Fort Liberty later fell again into the hands of the British, who renamed it Fort George. The British used the fort's twenty five cannons against Count D'Estaing's French fleet, which had arrived to assist Colonial forces during the campaign for Rhode Island on July 29, 1778.

Finally, in 1779, Fort George was evacuated by the British and reoccupied by American troops, again under the name Fort Liberty. During the evacuation, the British sent fifty-two transports to embark the Newport garrison and provided escape for the forty-six Royalists and their families who chose to follow "the waning fortunes of the Crown". In their hasty departure, the British were unable to move the ship *Flora* and instead scuttled her at the dock at Goat Island. *Flora* remained there during the war and afterwards was raised by the Americans and sent to sea.

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This is a copy of the Articles of Agreement signed between Harris and his ship's company:

1. The captain shall have two full shares, the master a share and one-half, the doctor, mate, gunner, carpenter and boatswain, one and one-quarter share.
2. He that shall be found guilty of striking or taking up any unlawful weapon, either aboard of a prize or aboard the privateer, shall suffer what punishment the captain and majority of the crew shall think fit.
3. He that shall be found guilty of cowardice, in time of any engagement, shall suffer what punishment the captain and majority of the crew shall think fit.
4. If any jewels, gold or silver, is found on board a prize, to the value of a piece of eight, and the finder does not deliver it to the quartermaster, in 24 hours time, he shall suffer what punishment the captain and the majority of the company shall see fit.
5. He that shall be found guilty of gaming, or playing at cards, or defrauding or cheating one another to the value of a royal of plate, shall suffer what punishment the captain and a majority of the company shall see fit.
6. He that shall be guilty of drunkenness in the time of an engagement shall suffer what punishment the captain and a majority of the company shall see fit.
7. He that hath the misfortune to lose any of his limbs, in the time of an engagement, in the company's service, shall have the sum of six hundred pieces of eight, and kept in the company as long as he pleases.
8. Good quarters to be given when craved.
9. He that sees a sail first, shall have the best pistol, or small arm aboard of her.
10. And lastly, no snapping of arms in the hold.

— ❖ —

First Shots Of The American Revolution Fired Here?

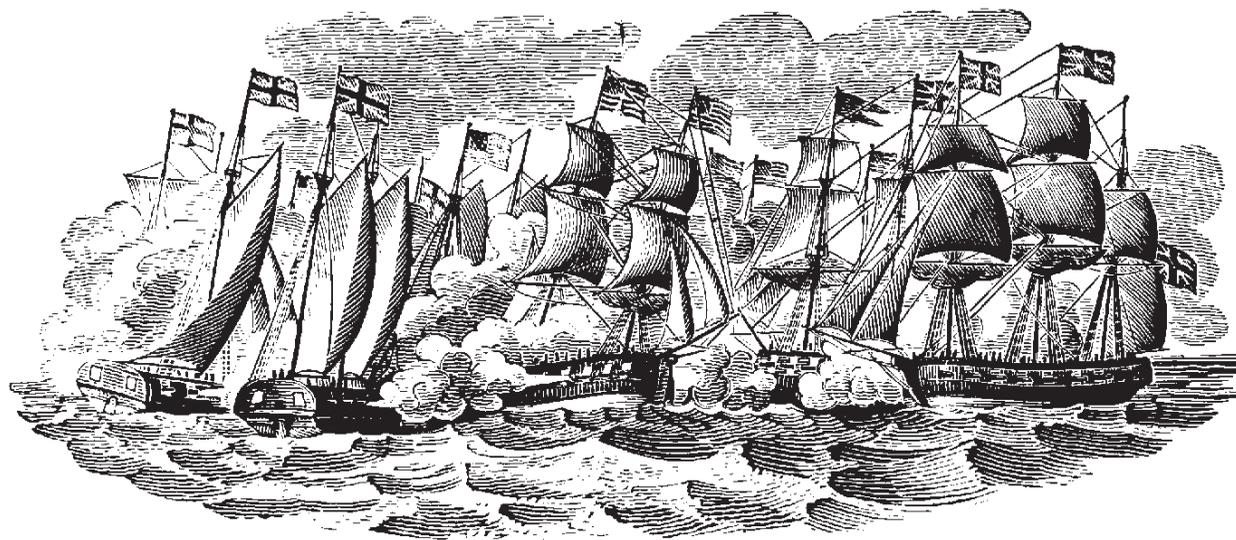
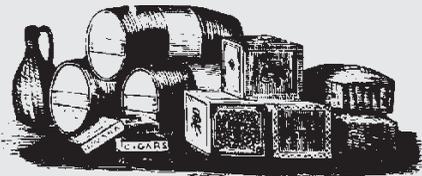
In 1663, the British crown had granted Rhode Island an extremely liberal charter, designed to foster religious freedom in this tiny corner of New England. As historian John Fitzhugh Millar points out, Rhode Islanders took as much advantage of the charter as possible. Consequently, Newport rapidly became a bustling port, richer than Boston, New York or Charleston.

The area's principle industry centered around smuggling molasses from the French, Spanish, Dutch, and Danish islands in the West Indies—all less costly sources than the British West Indies, where the price of molasses was outrageously high.

Molasses was good for making rum. And rum—aside from its other attractions—was good for preserving food. Newport imported enough foreign molasses to keep at least thirty-nine distilleries busy—more distilleries than in all the rest of North America combined. Newport rum was exported all over America. In spite of the British Sugar Act of 1733, customs duties were almost never collected.

Then in 1756, England became involved in the Seven Year War with France and Spain. Rhode Island's trading and rum industries, in an effort to avoid bankruptcy, continued to trade with the French and Spanish West Indies. Understandably, Britain objected and tried to tighten customs regulations. Just as understandably, Rhode Islanders resisted.

continued pg. 6, col. 2



According to the History of Newport, the sailing of the British fleet relieved Rhode Island from the “presence of an enemy who, for three years, had spread desolation and terror over the whole state”.

By 1780, Fort Liberty and other forts of the Narragansett Bay had been turned over to Rochambeau, Commander of French forces assisting the Colonies in Narragansett Bay.

In 1784, the site was renamed Fort Washington, probably the first place to be named after George Washington. Six years later, on May 29, 1790, Fort Washington gave the first salute announcing that Rhode Island had joined the Union of the Thirteen United States by adoption of the Federal Constitution. In 1798, Fort Washington was rechristened Fort Wolcott.

In 1799, the town of Newport turned Goat Island over to the Federal Government for the sum of \$1,500. The town reserved the right to carry away sand, seaweed and gravel and to “serve civil and criminal processes” as granted in the original deed.

In 1827, Fort Wolcott was abandoned in favor of Fort Adams. But during the four years of the Civil War, the United States Naval Academy was located on Goat Island, and the frigate Constitution or “Old Ironsides”, was tied up there as a training ship, along with the frigate Santee.

When the Civil War ended, Goat Island was presided over by Sergeant Morrison of the U.S. Army, who became the island's caretaker. During this period, the island became a popular place for picnicking and swimming. ❖

In 1764, resistance climaxed in the case of the 65-foot, eight cannon British schooner *St. John*, commanded by an overzealous young officer. The *St. John's* arrival in Newport brought the town's molasses trade to a sudden halt. The friction between the *St. John* and Newporters grew quickly, heightened by the supercilious behavior of the ship's officer and by the theft of some pigs and chickens by crew members.

Finally, it was agreed to instruct Daniel Vaughan, the master gunner at Fort George on Goat Island, to fire his 18-pounder cannon at the *St. John*. Officially Vaughan's shots were in response to the *St. John's* refusal to surrender the hog thieves.

Sheriff Benton rowed out to Goat Island to instruct Vaughan. About 100 townspeople rowed after him, either to take part or to watch. Firing began just before sunset, the first shot falling short. The *St. John* hurriedly raised anchor and sails, but not quickly enough. The third shot from Goat Island was a direct hit, and subsequent shots pierced the mainsail and foresail and cut the flag halyards.

Vaughan fired a total of thirteen shots before the *St. John* escaped up the bay to the protection of a British frigate, and the townspeople seemed pleased with the evening's entertainment.

To the British demand for an explanation of the firing, Deputy Governor **Wanton replied**, “The gunner at Fort George was acting by proper authority, and we will answer for it when we think it necessary.”

These shots from Goat Island are considered by many to be the first shots of the American Revolution, eleven years before Lexington and Concord. As Millar notes, “These shots were not an isolated event, but were echoed many times over in Rhode Island with such incidents as the burning of the *Maidstone's* tender in 1765, the burning of the *Liberty* in 1769, and the burning of the *Gaspee* in 1772.”