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DENISE J. BASTIEN



# Cast Out from the “City upon a Hill”: Antinomian Exiles in Rhode Island, 1638-1650

RAYMOND D. IRWIN

The Antinomian controversy,” David D. Hall writes, “has come into its own.”<sup>1</sup> Volumes have been produced on the subject, including psychoanalyses of Anne Hutchinson, a main protagonist in the drama, treatises on the political origins and repercussions of the event, discussions of the social standings of the participants, and in-depth treatments of the intellectual and theological issues involved.<sup>2</sup> Scholars have examined what the episode suggests about the role of women in seventeenth-century New England and what implications the controversy had for the civil structure in Massachusetts and for Puritanism generally. Most agree that the upheaval was a turning point of some kind, and that after the banishment of the most dangerous radicals to Rhode Island, the Puritan New World experiment would never again be the same.

In early treatments of the controversy, the departure from Massachusetts Bay of those said to have held “many unsound and loose opinions” generally marks the end of the story. Beginning with John Winthrop’s version of 1644 and continuing to the present, chroniclers and historians have for the most part zealously protected the heritage of the Bay Colony as the heritage of America itself.<sup>3</sup> Traditionally, then, Antinomianism has been considered important only insofar as it intersected with the history of Massachusetts; what became of the exiles has been treated as unimportant to the larger history of New England and America.

Commencing with accounts of the controversy from orthodox Congregationalists and continuing in modern historians’ treatments, the home of most of the outcast Antinomians, Rhode Island, has been seen as a chaotic mix of rebels against the Puritan religious and civil establishment.<sup>4</sup> In this view, Anne Hutchinson led a group of radical followers southward from Massachusetts to establish a society based on spiritual freedom and separation of church and state. Eighty-six participants<sup>5</sup> in the religious and political struggle in Massachusetts took up residence in Rhode Island, whose inhabitants, in avoiding the Bay Colony model of church and government formation, were seemingly resigning themselves to atomism, even anarchy. Relatively little is known about the Antinomian exiles; yet this interpretation—as merged with the Baptist tradition—suggests that they blazed a trail for religious freedom in America.

A closer examination of the Antinomian settlers reveals a different picture. Evidence indicates that they established congregations similar to the ones they had left and split into minor factions based mostly on personal ambitions, not spiritual matters. Theological distinctions among these Antinomians were blurred, but most of the settlers appear to have initially stayed close to their Puritan roots. Almost half later found a home in one of the major sects (Quakerism or Anabaptism) that came to dominate Rhode Island or counted

*Sculptural detail from the gravestone of Joseph Farnum (died 1678), Massachusetts. Photo by Allan Ludwig. RIHS Collection (RHi X3 7047).*

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themselves among the followers of the eccentric theologian Samuel Gorton, but nearly a quarter returned to the congregational scheme in the Bay Colony or maintained obvious Puritan connections while in exile.



The Massachusetts Puritan view of Rhode Island as a wasteland of heretics stemmed from the orthodox understanding of Antinomianism and its religious and political implications. Seventeenth-century Congregationalists saw the spiritual and temporal as inseparable: God's chosen were expected to create pure societies, an endeavor that would cement the covenant between God and his people and lessen the risk of divine punishment. Bay Colony authorities argued that God was offended by the existence of those openly holding unorthodox, "untrue" opinions.

During the three years of the Antinomian controversy, Massachusetts was in danger of offending God for another reason as well: the disagreements on which the crisis pivoted—disagreements over how to determine who was saved—were capable of dividing the orthodox community itself, a result that would surely provoke the Lord's anger. John Cotton of the Boston Church, a central player in the drama, interpreted Calvin strictly, arguing that a saint should never look to good works (sanctification) as absolute evidence of his or her election (justification).<sup>6</sup> Cotton went so far as to suggest that relying on behavior for assurance of salvation signified certain damnation; it smacked of popery, of using works to gain God's favor.<sup>7</sup>

In denying works as evidence of salvation, Cotton deviated from standard Puritan practice. Since 1635 or 1636, orthodox ministers had been organizing churches of visible saints, churches whose members were expected to explain why they believed God had chosen them. Petitioners for church admission shared with the congregation the experiences by which the Spirit had revealed the knowledge of their election. Puritans generally "prepared" themselves to receive this information by praying, reading Scripture, studying their pastor's sermons, keeping spiritual diaries, and trying to submit themselves completely to God's will.<sup>8</sup> The human role in this process was limited to humbling the soul and watching for outward signs of God's affection.

Cotton and the slightly more extreme Boston cleric John Wheelwright denied the propriety of "preparation," suggesting that the practice contradicted Protestant authorities. Since God had made his choice of saints before creation, they argued, human activity was completely irrelevant to both salvation and knowledge of election. This divine decision meant that God had loved this select group of humans before they existed; thus their love of the Creator did not influence the Creator to love them. By this reasoning, preparation had no function other than self-delusion. Both Cotton and Wheelwright argued that conversion does not arrive bit by bit, but with the "fullness" of the Holy Spirit.<sup>9</sup>

The consequences of the Cotton-Wheelwright position for Massachusetts Bay were astounding. That the two clerics broke ranks was in itself significant, since orthodox leaders feared any dissent as an assault against the one immutable "Truth." Elders recognized early that Cotton—a highly respected theologian—was an indispensable "Instrument of calming these storms and cooling these hot contentions and paroxysms that have begun to swell and burn in these

poor Churches" and implored him "to bear witness with us against those Opinions which shall appear to be false, and the defenders thereof: for we need, not only your consent with us in the truth, but your seasonable reproof of those that dissent." Massachusetts ministers begged God "to clear up all our judgments in one truth, that we may all think and speak and preach the very same thing," fearing that without agreement the Bay citizenry would become "disheartened and unsettled in their holy course."<sup>10</sup>

Argument intensified in 1637 when Wheelwright appeared to defend the "doctrine of Grace" more fiercely than Cotton. During a communal fast day designed for reconciliation, Wheelwright preached a fiery sermon in which he recognized that his followers would "cause a combustion in the Church and comon wealth." He framed the escalating dispute over assurance of salvation in terms of a biblical conflagration, wherein "there must be a Spirituall burning" to destroy the Antichrist. In doing so, Wheelwright clearly viewed the Massachusetts church-state formulation as secondary to the goal of seeing God "with a direct eye of faith"; being charged with sedition by a worldly power operating under the Covenant of Works meant little to him as he exhorted his followers to "prepare for battell and come out against the enemyes of the Lord."<sup>11</sup>

Wheelwright's sermon was problematic not simply for its use of martial language and imagery but for the issues it raised about the relationship in Puritanism between the Word and the Spirit, Scripture and Revelation. Thomas Shepard had quizzed Cotton about whether the Spirit could work in people's souls independently of anything else, but he received only vague answers. Cotton's colleagues clearly sought to advance the Bible and the Holy Spirit together by arguing that the latter worked through and illuminated the former. But Cotton's elusive rhetoric at times seemed to contradict the orthodox position, favoring the Spirit's effectiveness in an individual sans Scripture or any other kind of preparation. Ultimately Cotton would be able to retain his position and reputation, while Wheelwright and a number of his followers would pay for emphasizing the spiritual side of the equation and opt for banishment to the northern wilderness of Exeter (now New Hampshire) rather than compromise.<sup>12</sup>

Believing that the Cotton-Wheelwright position destroyed a fragile balance between the Spirit and the Word, other ministers worried that the Scriptures would be forsaken and that congregation members would deny the importance of biblical law and authority,<sup>13</sup> relying instead upon delusions of direct knowledge via the Holy Spirit. These fears were confirmed when, under examination by the General Court in November 1637, Cotton's student Anne Hutchinson boldly stated that the truth of her position had been revealed to her "by an immediate revelation." This assertion provided the authorities with the issue they needed to censure and ultimately banish Hutchinson and her followers.<sup>14</sup>

To the Bay Colony's ministry and magistracy, Hutchinson's declaration hinted at the dangerous doctrine of the Familists, an extreme emphasis on the "in-dwelling" Spirit. Puritan theologians—Cotton and Shepard among them—noted that this radical group, which had originated on the Continent, used Scripture in a limited, abusive way, relying mostly upon individual conscience for the "Truth."<sup>15</sup> To men like John Winthrop, the Antinomians seemed prone to the same error, since they too rejected the only "safe and sure way of searching and finding Christ," the Bible.<sup>16</sup>

The Massachusetts authorities decided that the expulsion of these neo-Familists was the only logical course to take. Arguing for banishment, Thomas Welde equated the divisions caused by the Antinomians to the separation of husbands and wives. Winthrop saw a connection between the Hutchinson-Wheelwright party and the biblical cases of Cain, Hagar, and Ishmael, all of whom were separated from their families for the sake of justice and peace. "Such disturbers should be put out from among us," Winthrop argued, "seeing it is one of their tenents, that it is not possible their opinions, and external peace can stand together; and that the difference between them and us is (as they say) as wide as between Heaven and Hell." Winthrop concluded that disturbing the unity was not only seditious but also harmful to such normal functions of society as trade, commerce, and farming—anything that required peaceful intercourse between neighbors.<sup>17</sup>

The swift action of the orthodox party in neutralizing and excising the Antinomians suggests how unsettling their ideas were to the authorities. After passing a law against "strangers" so that the Hutchinson-Wheelwright group could not increase its numbers through migration into the colony, the Winthrop faction successfully disarmed, disfranchised, and finally exiled selected "radicals."<sup>18</sup> To some extent the victorious "conservative" Congregationalists were able to achieve these aims by associating their opponents with discredited groups like the Familists and the violent, anarchic German Anabaptists. By 1640 most of the troublemakers had removed from Massachusetts, some joining Wheelwright and others settling ultimately on Aquidneck, which later became known as Rhode Island. Winthrop and the others who remained behind felt that a major threat had been eliminated and that the entire colony could be "settled again in the truth."<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile, Bay Colony officials were characterizing Rhode Island as a jurisdiction where the exiles were denying established Congregational structures and practices and the Antinomian heresy was taking its chaotic course. From Winthrop's perspective the exiles were "loose and degenerate in their practices (for these Opinions will certainly produce a filthy life by degrees)," negligent about praying and observing the Sabbath "unlesse the Spirit stirre [them] up thereunto," and prone to "frequent and hideous lying." They had rejected a learned ministry on the grounds that the indwelling Spirit provided more knowledge than a university-educated pastor could ever supply, and they had ignored congregational discipline by separating themselves from their churches in Massachusetts with ease. But the dissidents would themselves be constantly plagued with schism, Winthrop warned; as long as each could follow his or her own spirit from meeting to meeting, preacher to preacher, their religious lives were bound to remain unsettled.<sup>20</sup>

No Massachusetts Puritan was likely to deny the spiritual anarchy of Rhode Island, even though most had no firsthand experience with that fledgling colony.<sup>21</sup> All that was generally known was that there was another settlement to the south, called Providence, which was filled with outcasts and headed by the infamous radical Roger Williams. The Antinomian exiles, Winthrop noted in 1644,

went all together out of our jurisdiction and precinct into an Iland, called Read-Iland, (surnamed by some the Iland of errors) and there they live to this day, most of them, but in great strife and contention in the Civill estate and other wise, hatching and multiplying new Opinions, and cannot agree, but are miserably divided into sundry sects and factions."<sup>22</sup>

Just as Winthrop expected,

Mrs. Hutchinson and those of Aquidnay Island broached new heresies every year. Divers of them turned professed anabaptists, and would not wear any arms, and denied all magistracy among Christians, and maintained that there were no churches since those founded by the apostles and evangelists, nor could any be, nor any pastors ordained, nor seals administered.<sup>23</sup>

John Cotton, having long since ironed out the differences with his brethren, continued to be more sympathetic—and even felt partially responsible for the situation of the exiles—but he too believed that the Rhode Island followers of his former pupil Anne Hutchinson had gone too far. They were, he declared, “bent on backsliding into error and delusion.”<sup>24</sup>

This orthodox perception of Rhode Island as the seat of radicalism continued, partly as a result of infamous female exiles whose religious opinions were notorious, especially because these views were more extreme than those of their husbands. Anne Hutchinson’s husband, William, does not appear to have been a strong supporter of the indwelling Spirit, but he joined the exiles to be with his excommunicated wife. He explained his actions to the Boston church in terms of loyalty, saying that “he was more nearly tied to his wife than to the church, he thought her to be a dear saint and servant of god.”<sup>25</sup> Similarly, William Dyer’s own spiritual views were overshadowed by his wife Mary’s bold support for Hutchinson and her later martyrdom for Quaker principles.<sup>26</sup> Robert Harding, far from radical in the eyes of Boston leaders, was married to a woman who, in 1639, “was Excommunicated for speaking evill of Authority both in Church and commonweale” in her defense of Anne Hutchinson.<sup>27</sup> Another “rank familist” and friend of Hutchinson, Jane Hawkins, a midwife whom Winthrop suspected of witchcraft, led her husband, Richard, into banishment.<sup>28</sup> Thus the true radicals, and the ones who got the most attention from Puritan authorities, were often women whose much less extreme husbands became guilty by association with their spouses. More than that, these men were seen as failing to control their wives, and thereby as yielding to the weaker sex, an unacceptable state of affairs in a society where women were thought to be inclined to evil.

The negative image of Rhode Island survived in the historiography. Winthrop’s views were echoed in later years—and in fact were carried into the nineteenth century—by William Hubbard, Josiah Quincy, and John Gorham Palfrey. The widespread seventeenth- and eighteenth-century notion that the Bay Colony represented the stable norm and its southern neighbor the chaotic exception was captured in Cotton Mather’s famous quip that Rhode Island harbored “Colluvies of Antinomians, Familists, Anabaptists, Anti-Sabbatarians, Arminians, Socinians, Quakers, Ranters, everything in the world but Roman Catholics and real Christians.” George Berkeley, the well-known British theologian, made similar observations regarding sectarianism during his 1729 stay in Newport. In the later eighteenth century, Anglican missionaries complained about Rhode Island enthusiasts who created an even less hospitable atmosphere than that of Massachusetts. Seen from the perspective of the Progressive Era about a hundred years later, colonial Rhode Island briefly gained historical favor as a bastion of tolerance and religious freedom, but by the time Perry Miller published *The New England Mind* in 1939, the tide was turning once again, and the mainstream Puritan image of the colony was revitalized at the expense of Rhode Island’s reputation as an early model of church-state separation.<sup>29</sup>





Evidence suggests that the Antinomian controversy involved individuals throughout the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and that those who went to Rhode Island generally maintained ties with the communities from which they had fled. In many cases these people eventually returned to those towns and were re-churched. The largest number of exiles to Rhode Island came from Boston, but the citizenries of Roxbury, Weymouth, Ipswich, and Newbury were also significantly represented in Aquidneck. Antinomian outcasts returned to all of these towns, suggesting an overall unwillingness on the part of the exiles to turn their backs on the Puritan system.

Early in 1639 the Boston church formed a committee to investigate the Antinomian exiles in Rhode Island. In the eyes of pastor John Wilson, Cotton, and the remaining church members, only three of their number—Wheelwright, Hutchinson, and the outspoken William Aspinwall—had been released from membership; those who followed them into banishment were still considered part of the church. In February the congregation chose William Hibbon, Captain Edward Gibbon, and John Oliver "to goe to the Iseland of Aquethnicke to inqyre of the state of matters amongst our brethren there, and to require some satisfactory Aunswer about such things as wee heare to be offensive amongst them."<sup>30</sup> The contingent went armed with letters for the leaders of the Rhode Island group, hoping "to understand their judgements in divers points of religion . . . and to require them to give account to the church of their unwarrantable practice in communicating with excommunicated persons."<sup>31</sup>

By sending representatives to the "wandringe sheepe at the Iland," the Boston church not only demonstrated an abiding interest in bringing the exiles back into the fold but also signaled its belief that radicalism was reversible. After all, the churchmen had seen some Hutchinsonians admit their errors, and they had re-churched a number of Antinomians, even welcoming back some excommunicants who had, for a time, "continued very hard and impenitent."<sup>32</sup> Clearly the church expected some of its erring members to return from Rhode Island.

Recommunication with the Boston church always remained a possibility for the group of exiles that John Wheelwright had led into the northern wilderness before Hutchinson's banishment. Wheelwright's followers remonstrated on his behalf, but they consistently denied holding positions significantly different from those of the other church members. Seeking peace in the churches, they noted that Wheelwright had simply discussed spiritual union with Christ, just as every other minister had. They were quick to emphasize that "if you look at the effects of his doctrine upon the hearers, it hath not stirred up sedition in us."<sup>33</sup> In a very submissive preexile document, the group indicated its desire to reconcile, "to become humble supplicants to your worships." Many of the petitioners had not joined Wheelwright in his migration to Exeter, and this faction was eager to return to the good graces of the Bay Colony. By December 1637 twenty who had remained in Massachusetts fully acknowledged fault in exchange for readmission to the church.<sup>34</sup>

Several who had left Massachusetts to settle in Rhode Island similarly redevoted themselves to the Massachusetts church-state system. John Wilson of the Boston church acknowledged that many "of the Iland" were ready to return, as "some have given satisfaction in part to the church and doe hould them selves as members of the church."<sup>35</sup> Apparently on cordial terms with Massachusetts, William Brenton, an important political figure in early Rhode Island, returned to Boston between 1650 and 1658; Brenton's children went back to Boston permanently

and resumed their places under the government and in the Puritan churches.<sup>36</sup> Other exiles made peace with other Bay Colony churches. Despite his huge land holdings on Aquidneck, William Foster was again living in Rowley by 1661.<sup>37</sup> Enoch Hunt found a temporary home in Newport, but less than two years later he returned to Weymouth, raised his family there, and then went to England, where he died in 1652.<sup>38</sup> Edward Poole also returned from Aquidneck to Weymouth, where he raised his family and died in 1664.<sup>39</sup> John Layton, who had settled in Newport, appeared in Essex county records as early as 1645, and his will was proved at Ipswich in 1694.<sup>40</sup> William Needham, a resident in Newport in 1638, not only returned to Massachusetts by 1648 but upon his death in 1690 left one-third of his estate to the Old South Church.<sup>41</sup> In 1638, the same year in which he was granted land in Portsmouth, John Spencer left for England and then resettled in Salem, where he died a decade after his self-imposed exile; though he acknowledged friendships with a mixture of Congregationalists and future Quakers, his will provided an endowment to the "reuerent instructor in Christ mr Cotton."<sup>42</sup>

Ironically, members of Anne Hutchinson's own family were among those who ultimately chose Massachusetts in preference to Rhode Island. Thomas Savage, an Aquidneck resident for a short time in 1638, thought well enough of the Boston church to allow its representatives to stay at his house on their way to demand satisfaction from his mother-in-law, Mrs. Hutchinson; he himself later returned to the Bay Colony.<sup>43</sup> Edward Hutchinson, a son of the "American Jezebel," removed from Rhode Island to Boston, and though he opposed the Quaker persecutions of the 1650s, he did not join the sect. His children all married into well-respected Puritan families.<sup>44</sup>

Some exiles spent little time in Rhode Island before reintegrating themselves into Puritan communities in Massachusetts or returning to England. Robert Harding fled from Massachusetts in 1638, "yet he kept up his kindness for Boston," married the daughter of a United Colonies commissioner, and returned to England with future Bay Colony governor John Leverett; by 1651 he was a merchant in London.<sup>45</sup> Brothers Stephen, Thomas, and Richard Dummer all came from Hampshire to Massachusetts, removed to Portsmouth temporarily, and found themselves back in England by the late 1640s. The Dummers raised families on both sides of the Atlantic and became connected by marriage with some of the most significant orthodox New England families, including the Sewalls.<sup>46</sup>

William Aspinwall, one of the original settlers of Portsmouth and the secretary of the new colony, similarly rejected Antinomian radicalism, spending barely six months in Rhode Island. By early 1639 he had made his way back to Boston, where Cotton noted that the former Hutchinsonian had become "satisfied of the Righteous and just proceedings of the Church in casting out some of our members and soe refuseth to have any Communion with them in the thinges of God."<sup>47</sup> Early in 1642 Aspinwall had come full circle, making "a very free and full acknowledgement of his error and seducement, and that with much detestation of his sin."<sup>48</sup> This recantation represented a brief pause for Aspinwall, who by 1651 was supporting the Fifth Monarchy movement in England, which advocated government by the letter of the Bible in expectation of the return and temporal rule of King Jesus.<sup>49</sup> Though certainly an extreme case, Aspinwall, like many other Antinomians, was closer on the religious continuum to Bay Colony Puritanism than to Hutchinson's celebrated "spiritism."

*Adam and Eve. Detail of a carving on the headstone of Sarah Swan (died 1767), Rhode Island. Photo by Allan Ludwig, RIHS Collection (RHi X3 7046).*

Contrary to the expectations of the Massachusetts magistracy and ministry, the Antinomian exiles who remained in Aquidneck did organize churches. The Boston church committee reported that at Portsmouth the outcasts wanted to know "what power one church hath over an other church," a somewhat belligerent question, but one that not only suggests the presence of religious communities but also hints at the support of congregational politics as well. John Cotton himself recognized the existence of some church organizations among the exiles, but he denied their "legality," since the Antinomian group had



rejected the covenant of the Boston church wholesale. However, the settlers of Aquidneck felt that their congregations were equal to the ones they had left; under the leadership of Coddington, Dyer, and John Coggeshall, said Wilson, the Antinomians "ha[d] gathered them selves into church fellowship not regardinge the Covenant that they have made with this church" and continued to have "constant fellowship" with excommunicated people "in a church way." Cotton also noted that the Rhode Island church members "doe honor and esteeme of us as Churches of Christ," an indication that the exiles had rejected neither the organization nor the doctrines of the Boston church.<sup>50</sup>

Though a significant proportion of the Antinomian exiles returned to mainstream Puritanism in England or Massachusetts, a larger group remained in Rhode Island, having succumbed, Massachusetts authorities assumed, to the errors that their reclaimed neighbors had renounced. Men like Winthrop fully expected the civil fabric of Aquidneck settlements to unravel as Antinomians moved this way and that, led by their own individual perceptions of the Spirit. Contrary to Bay Colony prognostications, however, something quite different occurred: the outcasts in fact established a true theocracy in Rhode Island, one that went even further than Massachusetts did in regulating society by Scripture. Under the leadership of former Massachusetts magistrate William Coddington, the exiles signed a compact that pledged

in the presence of Jehovah, [to] incorporate ourselves into a Bodie Politick, and as He shall helpe, will submit our persons, lives and estates unto our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and to all those perfect and most absolute laws of His, given us in His holy word of truth, to be guided and judged thereby.<sup>51</sup>

Accompanied by Old Testament citations, this statement sought to outline and establish a Hebrew-style commonwealth and replicate the ancient covenant between God and his chosen people. The subscribers—all outcast from Massachusetts as a result of the Antinomian controversy—submitted to a government in which the civil and the ecclesiastical were truly combined.<sup>52</sup> Coddington was elected chief magistrate with the Mosaic title "Judge," and three "Elders" were chosen to assist him in the administration of justice according to "the Word." Far from a resignation to anarchy, the government erected on Rhode Island actually resembled a biblical state proposed by John Cotton for Massachusetts Bay in 1636.<sup>53</sup> As such, it embraced the Bay Colony's tradition of rule by the saints according to God's word.

In his religious opinions during these years, as in the political system he headed, William Coddington was certainly more compatible with the Massachusetts elite than with Anne Hutchinson. From the beginning, the Boston church had held out hope for his return to the fold, keeping him under admonition indefinitely. In 1639 John Wilson had explained to his congregation that Coddington "was sensible of an Evell" in hearing the preaching of excommunicated persons but was content to practice his own version of Congregationalism in Rhode Island.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, unlike other exiles, he had never rejected the Boston church or its ordinances; later he even expressed regret for his role in the Antinomian controversy.<sup>55</sup>

Coddington and his followers never completely disavowed the goal of establishing an ideal biblical commonwealth, a failure that alienated the Hutchinsonians and created a rift among the outcasts. Having founded their own religious meeting based upon God's grace and the indwelling Spirit, Anne Hutchinson's followers demanded that the local government in Rhode Island be separate

from convictions of faith.<sup>56</sup> Fearing the potential abuse of power under an ecclesiastical regime like the one in Massachusetts, they asked for provisions to override the judge and elders at quarterly meetings. They achieved these safeguards when, with the help of the newly arrived Samuel Gorton and his followers, they removed Coddington from office and established a new government at Portsmouth based largely on English law, a development that was anything but "radical." All subscribers to the new authority pledged allegiance to King Charles and agreed to quarterly courts, trial by jury, and separation of civil and religious matters. Anne Hutchinson's husband, William, was chosen chief magistrate.<sup>57</sup>

Coddington's group responded to this coup by founding Newport on the southern end of the island. This split between Coddington's party and Anne Hutchinson's soon resulted in religious organizations similar to the Boston church at both ends of Aquidneck. Shortly after settling at Newport, Coddington led the establishment of another church, probably under the pastorship of John Clarke; according to reports of the Boston church in March 1639/40, it was "newly constituted" but gathered "in a very disordered way; for they took some excommunicated persons, and others who were members of the church of Boston and not dismissed." In the Boston church's estimation, these shortcomings were not great enough to warrant "Cuttinge them of[f] from us"; rather, any action against the exiled Antinomian church members was postponed. Perpetual hope for reunion counteracted the desire of some Bostonians to have all the Rhode Islanders excommunicated.<sup>58</sup>

With the help of his remaining allies in Portsmouth, Coddington was able to regain control of the entire island in 1640. After the reunification, however, he began operating even more like the magistrate he had been in Massachusetts,<sup>59</sup> shunning the titles "Judge" and "Elder" in favor of "Governor" and "Assistant." His system incorporated a number of Hutchinsonian reforms as well, including quarterly courts and a clear division between church and state. The result of this compromise between theocrats and those in favor of more separation of government and religion was a political system that—with few exceptions—continued to resemble that of the Bay Colony.

This united Antinomian government mimicked not only the structures of Massachusetts but some of its procedures as well. As governor, Coddington acted to preserve order in a way reminiscent of John Winthrop; as long as his power lasted, he would not tolerate challenges to his authority. His penchant for exerting control came out most clearly in his treatment of the radical Samuel Gorton, who arrived on Aquidneck in 1639 and sided with the Hutchinsonians against the Coddington theocracy. The following year, after a severe argument over the legitimacy of Rhode Island's government, Coddington ordered Gorton whipped and banished.<sup>60</sup> In 1646 he wrote to Winthrop that "Gorton and his company . . . are to me as ever they have been: their freedom of the Island is denied."<sup>61</sup> Writing again two years later, Coddington warned Winthrop that Gorton was a potential danger to Massachusetts and other colonies, "a thorne in their and our sides, if the Lord prevent not." In this instance and others, Coddington, himself a victim of the Massachusetts Bay purge of Antinomians, later used authority in the same way that the orthodox magistrates did.<sup>62</sup>

As his ongoing correspondence with Winthrop suggests, Coddington proved himself willing to work with all surrounding governments, even the one from which he had fled. Early in 1648 Coddington and Alexander Partridge of

Newport submitted a petition to the United Colonies of Massachusetts, Plymouth, Connecticut, and New-Haven asking that "wee the Ilandrs of Rhode Iland may be Rescaved into combinacion wth all the United colonyes of New England in a firme and perpetuall League of Friendship and amity." The two claimed to be agents of "the major pt of our Iland," but the United Colonies' commissioners agreed to admit Aquidneck only if a majority of its freemen would vote to submit the island to Plymouth's jurisdiction. Coddington fully believed he could convince the Rhode Island settlers to swear allegiance to the separatist colony, revealing not only his conservative inclinations but also his presumption that the entire colony would willingly unite with an entity that was clearly not "radical." In the end, Coddington was able to garner an assent to the plan only from the residents of Portsmouth, but even this was a remarkable accomplishment in a supposedly "radical" community.<sup>63</sup>

Though gauging the extent of actual radicalism among the exiles is difficult, the presence of future sectarians in Rhode Island presents some clues. The Antinomians who became Baptists, Quakers, and Gortonists made up a significant—but certainly not overwhelming—minority of the outcasts. Only a half-dozen exiles found their way to Anabaptism, the most noted of whom, Dr. John Clarke, wandered a while with Wheelwright and by 1648 became the founder of the First Baptist Church in Newport.<sup>64</sup> John Peckham was both a brother-in-law to Clarke and one of the ten male members in full communion with the Baptist church in 1648; his children followed him into Anabaptism, and one of his sons succeeded to the pastorate of the church in Newport.<sup>65</sup>

All of the Rhode Island Antinomians who became Baptists became Particular Baptists. Their choice revealed that they felt connections to the congregational, orthodox positions they had earlier embraced, especially that of limited atonement. George Allen, though himself the father of six future Quakers, was not extreme, being "a man of good standing among the Puritans, notwithstanding he was an Anabaptist."<sup>66</sup> Robert Lenthall, according to Winthrop,

though of good report in England, coming hither, was found to have drank in some of Mrs. Hutchinson's opinions, as of justification before faith, etc., and opposed the gathering of our churches in such a way of mutual stipulation as was practiced among us . . . [He believed] that only baptism was the door of entrance into the Church, etc. so as the common sort of people did eagerly embrace his opinions, and some labored to get such a church on foot as all baptized ones might communicate in without any further trial of them.<sup>67</sup>

Winthrop claimed that Massachusetts magistrates and elders

convinced [Lenthall] both of his error in judgment, and of his sin in practice to the disturbance of our peace, etc., [and he] did openly and freely retract, with expression of much grief of heart for his offence, and did deliver his retraction in writing, under his hand, in the open court.<sup>68</sup>

Lenthall persisted in his advocacy of antipedobaptist views, however, and removed to Newport, where he preached in John Clarke's church before the congregation turned to Anabaptism. He left for England about 1642.<sup>69</sup>

The followers of eccentric theologian and radical Samuel Gorton account for an equally small proportion of the Antinomian exiles in Rhode Island. Gorton—who had allied with the Hutchinsonians against Coddington's theocracy and later cultivated cordial relations with Quaker missionaries—denied all ministry and sacraments, hated formal doctrines of all kinds, and claimed inner illumination by the Spirit.<sup>70</sup> After his political struggle with Coddington and his

whipping and banishment from Portsmouth, Gorton wandered about New England before settling on the Shawomet Purchase (later Warwick) near Providence. Only five of the Antinomian outcasts helped him establish his refuge. Two of them, Christopher Helme and William Wardall, had first gone to Exeter with Wheelwright, and the former had even returned to Massachusetts for a time before settling in Warwick.<sup>71</sup> Two others, Sampson Shotten and Francis Weston, appear to have had strong connections to both Quakers and Baptists. Shotten had also been with Wheelwright initially, and he eventually came into close contact with the Quaker missions via his wife's daughter; Weston had practiced Anabaptism before embracing Gorton's ideas as early as 1642.<sup>72</sup>

The Quakers were the largest sectarian group arising out of the Rhode Island Antinomians, and the latest to appear in the colony. Although there were three times as many Quakers as Gortonists, they still account for only one-fifth of the eighty-six outcasts. Among those listed in later records of the Society of Friends are prominent merchants, political leaders, and patriarchs of well-known Quaker families. Governors Henry Bull, William Coddington, Jeremy Clarke, and Nicholas Easton appear in birth, marriage, and death records for the Rhode Island Monthly Meeting, along with Thomas Cornell.<sup>73</sup> John Coggeshall, the first "president" of the colony under its 1647 charter, died twenty-five years before the formation of the meeting, yet his death is noted in the records.<sup>74</sup> At least one exile, Ralph Allen, was involved with Quaker communities in both Rhode Island and Sandwich, appearing on the logs of both meetings.<sup>75</sup> A number of others are mentioned only in the birth records;<sup>76</sup> this group includes John Albro and Adam Mott, Jr., the progenitors of huge Quaker families on Aquidneck.<sup>77</sup>

Among the exiles who do not appear on Quaker lists are some whose extensive family ties to the sect suggest that they may have been sympathetic to the society's principles. Jeremiah Gould, an Antinomian who remained in Rhode Island less than two years before returning to England, raised a well-known family of Quakers, including the famous Public Friend Daniel Gould.<sup>78</sup> Samuel Wilbore had English connections to the Quaker Sherman family, and his own family joined the Friends in Rhode Island.<sup>79</sup> Less directly connected to the sect were William Baulston and George Parker, whose daughters married into Quaker families, and John Porter, who was father-in-law to Samuel Wilbore, Jr., and Philip Sherman, both of whom were Friends.<sup>80</sup> At least three of Thomas Waite's children married Quakers, and Robert Carr was also connected to the society by marriage.<sup>81</sup>

John Sanford's sympathy for the society is revealed by his involvement in Quaker social circles and the wording of his will. Four of his children married into Quaker families, and two others had ties to the Quaker communities of Barbados; Sanford's will mentions all of these children, as well as his Quaker friends Richard Borden and Richard Tew. In a statement strongly suggesting Quaker principles, his will asks that Christ "replenish [his wife and children] with his Holy Spirit, so as they may live in the fear of God and unity of the Spirit."<sup>82</sup> Sanford's veiled spiritual status is typical for seventeenth-century Rhode Island; confirmed sectarians were clearly the exception among the Antinomian outcasts.



For those exiled as a result of the Antinomian controversy, Rhode Island was a wilderness in which their unpopular religious views could be publicly expressed. For the authorities in Boston, this group of eighty-six held dangerous opinions concerning religion and the civil state which, if given free reign, would result in schism and anarchy. These views arose primarily from Puritan theology, which depended upon a delicate balance of the Word and Spirit, order and inspiration.<sup>83</sup> The Antinomian emphasis on Spirit and inspiration over the Word and order necessarily threatened orthodox control over the "city upon a hill."

Judging by what this group and its beliefs wrought in Rhode Island, these fears were unfounded. Nearly a quarter of the outcasts returned to the security of Massachusetts or their communities in England. Those who stayed in Rhode Island showed themselves capable of establishing churches in the congregational tradition and forming stable town and colonial governments. The discord that existed was often associated with the political machinations of William Coddington, a future Friend himself, who was likely "convinced" in order to join the "Quaker grandees" who held power in the colony in the later seventeenth century. Prior to his conversion between 1665 and 1672, his decidedly conservative faction was opposed only by a smaller, more spiritually radical group following the lead of Anne Hutchinson. In their denunciations of Rhode Island, Bay Colony magistrates and ministers focused upon and exaggerated the influence of Mrs. Hutchinson, despite the fact that her followers needed the help of a similarly small group led by fellow exile Samuel Gorton to remove Coddington from power. Furthermore, the "radicals" held sway for less than a year before Aquidneck was once again united under Coddington's conservative authority.

For a decade or so after the Antinomian episode, Rhode Island remained strikingly similar to Massachusetts in both government and religion. If the civil state of Aquidneck appeared dangerous and extreme to the Bay Colony elite, it was only because its original political structure was even more theocratic and Bible-based than that of Massachusetts itself. After 1640 government forms and laws in the Bay Colony and Rhode Island were virtually identical. If Rhode Island's religious atmosphere seemed illegitimate to the orthodox ministers to the north, it was only because the churches established in Portsmouth and Newport were not initiated according to these ministers' exact specifications, not because the churches' doctrine overemphasized the Spirit. Such "spiritist" heresies as Quakerism would not flourish in Rhode Island until the 1650s, when the Antinomian predisposition to radicalism would meet with increasing exposure to the ideas and organization of English sectarians. Even then the attraction of radicalism was felt by only a minority of the exiles, who, according to John Winthrop, ought to have avidly embraced the anarchy represented by Quakerism, Anabaptism, and Gortonism. That they did not offers some indication that the Rhode Island reality did not live up to the Bay Colony rhetoric.





Carved portrait on the gravestone of the Reverend Jonathan Pierpont (died 1709), Massachusetts. Detail from a photo by Allan Ludwig. RIHS Collection (RHi X3 7048).

## Notes

1. David D. Hall, ed., *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1968; reprint, Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), ix.
2. For the psychological and social aspects of the controversy, see Emery Battis, *Saints and Sectaries: Anne Hutchinson and the Antinomian Controversy in the Massachusetts Bay Colony* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962); Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, "Feminism, Anne Hutchinson, and the Antinomian Controversy, 1634-1638," *Trinity Journal* 2 (1981): 40-48; Kai T. Erikson, *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: Wiley, 1966); Lyle Koehler, "The Case of the American Jezebels': Anne Hutchinson and Female Agitation during the Years of Antinomian Turmoil, 1636-1640," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 31 (1974): 55-78; Winifred K. Rugg, *Unafraid: A Life of Anne Hutchinson* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1981).

The political issues are reviewed in Charles Francis Adams, *Three Episodes of Massachusetts History* (Boston: Brown, 1892); Sargent Bush, "John Wheelwright's Forgotten Apology: The Last Word in the Antinomian Controversy," *New England Quarterly* 64 (1991): 22-45; Ronald D. Cohen, "Church and State in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts: Another Look at the Antinomian Controversy," *Journal of Church and State* 12 (1970): 475-94; J. F. Cooper, Jr., "Anne Hutchinson and the 'Lay Rebellion' against the Clergy," *New England Quarterly* 61 (1988): 381-97; Thomas Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay*, vol. 1 (Boston, 1764; reprint, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936); and Ann Fairfax Withington and Jack Schwartz, "The Political Trial of Anne Hutchinson," *New England Quarterly* 51 (1978): 226-40.

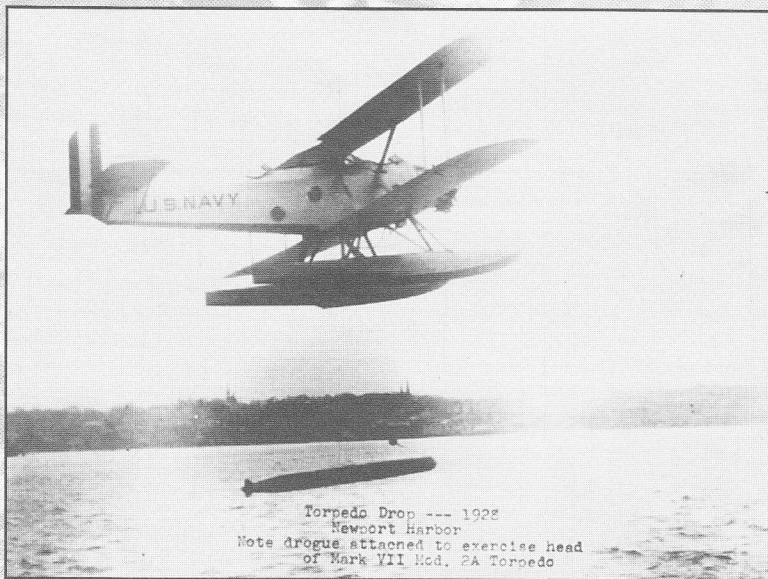
The intellectual and theological problems have been extensively treated. See William G. McLoughlin, "Anne Hutchinson Reconsidered," *Rhode Island History* 49 (1991): 13-26; Sargent Bush, "Revising What We Have Done Amisse': John Cotton and John Wheelwright, 1640," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 45 (1988): 733-50; Patricia Caldwell, "The Antinomian Language Controversy," *Harvard Theological Review* 69 (1976): 345-67; Earl DeLamotte, "John Cotton and the Rhetoric of Grace," *Early American Literature* 21 (1986): 49-74; Stephen Foster, "New England and the Challenge of Heresy, 1630-1660: The Puritan Crisis in Transatlantic Perspective," *William and*

- Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser. 38 (1981): 624-60; Philip F. Gura, *A Glimpse of Zion's Glory: Puritan Radicalism in New England, 1620-1660* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1984); Amy Schrager Lang, *Prophetic Woman: Anne Hutchinson and the Problem of Dissent in the Literature of New England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); David S. Lovejoy, *Religious Enthusiasm in the New World: Heresy to Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985); J. F. Maclear, "Anne Hutchinson and the Mortalist Heresy," *New England Quarterly* 54 (1981): 74-103; J. F. Maclear, "The Heart of New England Rent: The Mystical Element in Early Puritan History," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 42 (1956): 621-52; Perry Miller, "Preparation for Salvation in Seventeenth-Century New England," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 4 (1943): 253-86; James I. Packer, "The Puritan Treatment of Justification by Faith," *Evangelical Quarterly* 24 (1952): 131-43; Jesper Rosenmeier, "New England's Perfection: The Image of Adam and the Image of Christ in the Antinomian Crises, 1634 to 1638," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 27 (1970): 435-59; Stephen Sharot, "The Sacredness of Sin: Antinomianism and Models of Man," *Religion* 13 (1983): 37-54; Leo F. Solt, "Anti-Intellectualism in the Puritan Revolution," *Church History* 25 (1956): 306-16; William K. B. Stoever, "A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven": *Covenant Theology and Antinomianism in Early Massachusetts* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1978); William K. B. Stoever, "Nature, Grace, and John Cotton: The Theological Dimension in the New England Antinomian Controversy," *Church History* 44 (1975): 22-33; Marilyn J. Westerkamp, "Anne Hutchinson, Secularian Mysticism, and the Puritan Order," *Church History* 59 (1990): 482-96.
3. See John Winthrop, *A Short Story of the Rise, reign, and ruine of the Antinomians, Familists, & Libertines in The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History*, ed. David D. Hall (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1968; reprint, Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), 216-30. An effective summary of this position is in Jack Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).
  4. Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Antinomianism in the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, 1636-1638* (Boston: Prince Society, 1894), 11-65; Bruce C. Daniels, *Dissent and Conformity on Narragansett Bay: The Colonial Rhode Island Town* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1983), 3-22, 108-114; William B. Weeden, *Early Rhode Island: A Social History of the People* (New York: Grafton Press, 1910), 45-53; Irving B. Richman, *Rhode Island: A Study in Separatism* (Boston: Riverside, 1905), 28-33; William G. McLoughlin, *Rhode Island: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 3-4, 15, 18-30; Carl Bridenbaugh, *Fat Mutton and Liberty of Conscience: Society in Rhode Island, 1636-1690* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1974), 3-8.
  5. This is based on the list of Antinomian participants in Battis, *Saints and Sectaries*, 300-328.
  6. John Cotton, "A Boston Conference" and "Mr. Cotton's Rejoynder," in Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*.
  7. Cotton, "Mr. Cotton's Rejoynder," 88-89, 109, 112; John Cotton, *Sixteene Questions of Necessary and Serious Consequences*, in Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*.
  8. For preparation and the human role in bringing "union with Christ," see Charles Lloyd Cohen, *God's Caress: The Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 75-110. Also useful is Charles Hambrick-Stowe, "Puritan Spirituality in America," in *Christian Spirituality: Post-Reformation and Modern*, ed. Louis Dupre and Don Saliers (New York: Crossroads, 1989), 338-53.
  9. Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, xvi; Cotton, "Mr. Cotton's Rejoynder," 142; John Wheelwright, "Fast-Day Sermon," in Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 157-58.
  10. "The Elder's Reply," in Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 61-62, 77.
  11. Wheelwright, "Fast-Day Sermon," 157-58, 165.
  12. "Letters between Thomas Shepard and John Cotton," in Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 24-33; "Peter Bulkeley and John Cotton: On Union with Christ," in Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 34-42.
  13. Thus the term *Antinomian*, which literally means "against the law."
  14. "The Examination of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson at the Court at Newtown," in Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 336-37; Morgan, "Case against Anne Hutchinson," 675-97. See also Ola Winslow, *John Eliot* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968), 45; Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, x-xi, 10; Richard D. Pierce, ed., "The Records of the First Church in Boston, 1630-1868," *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, vol. 39 (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1961), 21-22; Nigel Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed: Language and Literature in English Radical Religion, 1640-1660* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 325; Gura, *Glimpse of Zion's Glory*, 262-65; Maclear, "Heart of New England Rent," 628, 630-52.
  15. For the Puritan attacks upon and misperceptions of the "Family of Love" in England, see Alastair Hamilton, *The Family of Love* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1981), 128-41.
  16. "Thomas Shepard and John Cotton," 28, 32; Winthrop, *Short Story*, 229; "The Elder's Reply," 61.
  17. Thomas Welde's preface to Winthrop's *Short Story* in Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 254, 298-99.
  18. Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 9; Dale Miller, Jr., "Protestantism and Politics in Rhode Island, 1636-1657" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1955), 20.
  19. Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, xii-xviii; John Winthrop, *Winthrop's Journal, "History of New England," 1630-1649*, ed. James Kendall Hosmer (New York: Scribner, 1908), 1:264.
  20. Winthrop, *Short Story*, 216, 232-33, 241-42.
  21. Between 1638 and 1644, when Winthrop penned his *Short Story*, the only eye witness accounts of the activities in Rhode Island came from those exiles returning to Massachusetts to recant and from the three-member delegation sent by the Boston church to preach to the outcasts (see below). Both types of reports, of course, were negative.
  22. Winthrop, *Short Story*, 218.
  23. Winthrop, *Journal* 2:39.
  24. Cotton to John Davenport, December 1638, cited in Joseph B. Felt, *The Ecclesiastical History of New England*, 2 vols. (Boston: Congregational Library Association, 1862), 1:401.
  25. "Proceedings of the Boston Church against the Exiles," in Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 391-92. On the general Bay Colony mindset toward Rhode Island, see Mecklin, *The Story of American Dissent*, 79.
  26. Winthrop, *Journal* 1:268-69.

Notes *continued*

27. Pierce, "Records of the First Church in Boston," 25. Philippa Harding died soon afterward, and her widower remarried in Puritan rites and then returned to England.
28. Winthrop, *Journal* 1:266, 268, 2:8.
29. For an overview of the pro-Puritan line regarding Rhode Island, see Weeden, *Early Rhode Island*, 22-23, 80, 204-5, and Lovejoy, *Religious Enthusiasm*, 88. See also William Hubbard, *General History of New England*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Charles C. Little & James Brown, 1848); Josiah Quincy, ed., *The History of the United States of North America, from the Plantation of the British Colonies till Their Assumption of National Independence* (Boston: C. C. Little & J. Brown, 1852); and John Gorham Palfrey, *History of New England*, 5 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1858-90).
30. Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 389; Pierce, ed., "Records," 27.
31. Winthrop, *Journal* 1: 330-31.
32. "Boston Church against the Exiles," 309; Winthrop, *Short Story*, 217.
33. Henry E. Turner, *Settlers of Aquidneck*, 37; Thomas Hutchinson, *A Collection of Original Papers Relative to the History of the Massachusetts Bay Colony* (Boston, 1769), 63.
34. Hutchinson, *Papers* 1: 63; Winthrop, *Journal* 1: 240-41. Wheelwright himself petitioned the General Court and was allowed to return to Massachusetts in 1662 as minister of the Salisbury church; Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 153.
35. "Boston Church against the Exiles," 394.
36. *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* (hereafter *NEHGR*) 67:161; Thomas Savage, *A Genealogical Dictionary of the First Settlers of New England*, 4 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1860-62), 1:242, 3:454.
37. Bridenbaugh, *Fat Mutton*, 133; Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary* 2:191.
38. *NEHGR* 8:348, 357; 5:239; *Vital Records of Weymouth*, 2 vols. (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1910), 1:152.
39. Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary* 3:454-5; *NEHGR* 13:12-13.
40. Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary* 3:44; *NEHGR* 7:83; George Francis Dow, ed., *Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts*, 8 vols. (Salem, Mass.: Essex Institute, 1911-21), 1:79, 127, 139, 218, 247.
41. Needham also appears in Braintree probate records in 1655. See *NEHGR* 22:43; Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary* 3:266.
42. John Russell Bartlett, ed., *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations* (Providence: A. C. Greene, 1856), 1:59; George Francis Dow, ed., *The Probate Records of Essex County, Massachusetts*, 3 vols. (Salem, Mass.: Essex Institute, 1916-20), 1:107-8; Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary* 4:147. Other Antinomian exiles in Rhode Island who returned to Massachusetts were John Marshall (Battis, *Saints and Sectaries*, 325), Richard Serle (Bridenbaugh, *Fat Mutton*, 134; *Genealogies of Rhode Island Families* [Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1983], 1:335; *NEHGR* 50:276), Thomas Stafford (Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary* 4:160; Bridenbaugh, *Fat Mutton*, 134), and Samuel Allen (Battis, *Saints and Sectaries*, 322; Bartlett, *Records of Rhode Island*, 1:92).
43. Winthrop, *Journal* 1:264; Winthrop, *Short Story*, 216-17; "Boston Church against the Exiles," 390; Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary* 4:26.
44. Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary* 2:509.
45. *NEHGR* 37:33; Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary* 2:354.
46. *NEHGR* 35:254-71, 321-31; Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary* 2:79-80.
47. Bartlett, *Records of Rhode Island* 1:53, 64; "Boston Church against the Exiles," 393.
48. Winthrop, *Journal* 2:56.
49. Miller, "Protestantism and Politics," 29; Bartlett, *Records of Rhode Island* 1:66. See also William Aspinwall, *A Brief Description of the Fifth Monarchy or Kingdome, that shortly is to come into the World* (London, 1653).
50. "Boston Church against the Exiles," 393-94.
51. Bartlett, *Records of Rhode Island* 1:52.
52. *Ibid.*; Miller, "Protestantism and Politics," 27-28; Herbert L. Osgood, *The American Colonies in the Seventeenth Century*, 3 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1904-7), 1:341-42.
53. Coddington's use of judges and elders and the powers he claimed as magistrate coincide with John Cotton's *Moses His Judicials*, parts of which were incorpo-
- rated into the Bay Colony's scheme. See Bartlett, *Records of Rhode Island*, and, especially, Cotton's *An Abstract or the Lawes of New England* (London, 1641).
54. "Boston Church against the Exiles," 394.
55. Winthrop, *Journal* 1:297; Miller, "Protestantism and Politics," 44.
56. Beals, *Colonial Rhode Island*, 48.
57. Felt, *Ecclesiastical History* 1:401; Bartlett, *Records of Rhode Island* 1:70; Beals, *Colonial Rhode Island*, 48-49; Brown, *Rhode Island's Tercentenary*, 174; Turner, *Settlers of Aquidneck*, 12; Miller, "Protestantism and Politics," 29-30; Winthrop, *Journal* 1:297; Osgood, *American Colonies* 1:344.
58. "Boston Church against the Exiles," 391-94; Winthrop, *Journal* 1:229, 297, 331. No record exists of the Rhode Island group ever being officially excised from the Boston church.
59. Before leaving Massachusetts, Coddington had served as assistant and colony treasurer. During the Antinomian controversy he was relieved of duties in government, thus becoming, in Dale Miller's words, "a life right magistrate out of office, a ruler with no state to rule, a member of a privileged class without privilege." Coddington had accepted the religious theory that made him a magistrate in Massachusetts, but he could not follow Cotton's cue for reintegration. See Miller, "Protestantism and Politics," 22.
60. Winthrop, *Journal* 2:53n.
61. Coddington to John Winthrop, 11 Nov. 1646, reprinted in Felt, *Ecclesiastical History* 1:608-9.
62. Coddington to John Winthrop, 25 May 1648, reprinted in Felt, *Ecclesiastical History* 2:29-30. See also various upheavals against Coddington in *Rhode Island Records* 1:70-93.
63. Glenn W. LaFantasie, ed., *The Correspondence of Roger Williams*, 2 vols. (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1988), 249 n. 4, 250 n. 4; "Extracts from the minutes of the meeting of Commissioners for the United Colonies of New England," New Plymouth, 7 Sept. 1648, RIHS MSS from the Massachusetts Archives, 1:47-48.
64. A good autobiography is in *Ill Newes from New-England* (London, 1652). See also Thomas W. Bicknell, *Story of Dr. John Clarke* (Providence: author, 1915).
65. *NEHGR* 57:31-33, 94:84.

66. Battis, *Saints and Sectaries*, 322; Bartlett, *Records of Rhode Island* 1:92; *Genealogical Notes of Barnstable Families*, 2 vols. (Barnstable, Mass.: F. B. & F. P. Goss, 1888), 1:262; Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary* 1:30.
67. Winthrop, *Journal* 1:292.
68. *Ibid.*, 293.
69. Ford, *New England's Struggles*, 46; Winthrop, *Journal* 1:292-93. The other two known future Baptists among the exiles were John Thornton (Bridenbaugh, *Fat Mutton*, 134; Battis, *Saints and Sectaries*, 327) and James Rogers (Bridenbaugh, *Fat Mutton*, 140; Battis, *Saints and Sectaries*, 327).
70. Beals, *Colonial Rhode Island*, 48; Olmstead, *History of Religion*, 104; Brown, *Rhode Island's Tercentenary*, 71, 80, 83; Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, 324.
71. Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary* 2:401; *NEHGR* 98:11-25. For Wardall, see Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary* 4:416, and Bartlett, *Records of Rhode Island* 1:131.
72. For Shotten, see Battis, *Saints and Sectaries*, 327, and Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary* 4:89. For Weston, see Joseph B. Felt, "Memoir of Hugh Peters," *NEHGR* 5:231-32, and Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary*, 4:490. The last of the Gortonists among those exiled for Antinomianism was Robert Potter. See Battis, *Saints and Sectaries*, 306; Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary* 3:466-67; *Genealogies of Rhode Island Families* 1:546.
73. James Arnold, ed., *Vital Record of Rhode Island*, 31 vols. (Providence: Narragansett Historical Publishing Co., 1891-1912), 7:12, 97.
74. Also listed in the death records are Antinomians Nicholas Davis, William Freeborn, George Lawton, and Adam Mott. See *ibid.*, 98, 102, 111, 113.
75. *Genealogies of Rhode Island Families* 1:12, 146.
76. Among these are Robert Bennett, John Briggs, Richard Burden, and John Vaughn. See Arnold, *Vital Record* 7:46-7, 80, 146.
77. Albro came to Massachusetts as the servant of William Freeborn, settling in Portsmouth in 1638. See *Genealogies of Rhode Island Families* 1:87; Bartlett, *Records of Rhode Island* 1:72, 2:386, 565; Arnold, *Vital Record* 7:84. Mott had all nine of his children entered in the meeting record. See Arnold, *Vital Record* 7:68.
78. Rebecca Gould Mitchell, *The Goulds of Rhode Island* (Providence: Crawford Greene, 1875), 8-9.
79. Arnold, *Vital Record* 7:39, 129; *NEHGR* 99:175-76, 108-9, 112.
80. *Genealogies of Rhode Island Families* 1:221-2; Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary* 2:332, 3:350, 461; Arnold, *Vital Record* 7:119; Mitchell, *Gould Family*, 38; *NEHGR* 35:243. Most of Thomas Hazard's children appear to have been Quakers. See Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary* 2:395.
81. Arnold, *Vital Record* 7:42, 92; *NEHGR* 73:291-95.
82. *Genealogies of Rhode Island Families* 1:769-70; *NEHGR* 103:212-14. Sanford's will is reprinted in *NEHGR* 104:306. Another Antinomian exile, Robert Field, who removed with his two sons to the Flushing Patent on Long Island, signed a petition in favor of a sheriff banished in 1656 for refusing to persecute Quakers. Field also supported a remonstrance to Peter Stuyvesant against the Friends' ill treatment. His contact with the society appears to have been extensive. See *NEHGR* 85:231; 22:135.
83. See Stoever, "Faire and Easie Way to Heaven," 184-91.



Torpedo Drop --- 1928  
Newport Harbor  
Note drogue attached to exercise head  
of Mark VII Mod. 2A Torpedo

## Gould Island Naval Air Facility and Aerial Torpedo Bombing

RICHARD A. GOULD

Except for a small U.S. Navy facility at its extreme north end, Gould Island, located in the East Passage of Narragansett Bay, stands deserted today. Most of its fifty-six acres are covered by thick brambles and vines, and its buildings, including the Naval Torpedo Station and Testing Facility, are derelict or in a semicollapsed condition. The island is divided by a chain-link fence across its northern tip: the area north of the fence is administered by the U.S. Navy and is closed to visitors; the area south of the fence is administered by the State of Rhode Island as a bird sanctuary and is also closed to the public except by special permit. Gould Island appears moribund today; and yet, prior to and at the start of World War II, it was the site of the U.S. Navy's primary efforts to develop and test aerial torpedoes.

The story of Gould Island Naval Air Facility begins with the navy's acquisition of the island from its private owner, Mrs. Percy D. Houghton of Newport, on 7 August 1918.<sup>1</sup> The recorded price was \$89,000.<sup>2</sup> The navy considered Gould Island a relatively safe site to store torpedo warheads and other explosives and to conduct tests away from the main complex of the Naval Torpedo Station at Goat Island and Coddington Cove. By 1921 the navy had installed a torpedo storehouse and two warhead storehouses, a pier and railroad, and a seaplane hangar of steel-frame and wood construction with a concrete platform and ramp, the latter situated at the west end of the island.<sup>3</sup> It is this aircraft facility that is of special interest here, since it represented the U.S. Navy's first serious interest in the use of aerial torpedoes. The facility included the present concrete apron at the south end of the island along with the west-facing concrete seaplane ramp, sloping to a depth of 3 1/2 feet below mean low water. The first seaplane, a Naval Aircraft Factory PT-1 piloted by Lieutenant (j.g.) Thomas H. Murphy, arrived in 1921 and was flown that year by Lieutenant Murphy in the U.S. Navy's first aerial torpedo test drops.<sup>4</sup>

Lieutenant Murphy commanded the original Air Detail at Gould Island NAF, with two additional pilots, Lieutenant Commander Hugh C. Frazer and Lieutenant (j.g.) Peter Talbot, assigned to the unit in 1921. The initial drop-tests were conducted with Mark VII torpedoes that had been converted from their usual use aboard ships and submarines (in a 1928 photograph showing a Martin T4M-1 floatplane from Gould Island NAF dropping a Mark VII, a small drogue parachute can be seen attached to the forward end of the torpedo to prevent it from nose-diving into the water and burying itself in the bottom of Narragansett Bay).<sup>5</sup> During the 1920s the navy showed a keen interest in aerial torpedo testing and experimented with such new torpedoes as the Mark VIII, its first true aerial torpedo, and with new types of aircraft, such as the Burgess N-9 and the Douglas DT-2. During this period the navy also used a converted fleet oiler, the USS *Patoka*, as a mobile mooring dock for the *Shenandoah*, a German zeppelin taken as a prize in World War I and flown by the navy from the waters around Gould Island.<sup>6</sup>

*A Martin T4M-1 from Gould Island Naval Air Facility test-drops a Mark VII torpedo in 1928. Note the small parachute attached to the torpedo warhead to keep it level as it enters the water. Courtesy of the Naval War College Museum, Newport.*

*Background image: Detail from a 1943 aerial view of Gould Island NAF, looking southwest. Naval Historical Collection, Naval War College, Newport.*

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Despite these efforts, the U.S. Navy was a relative latecomer in experimenting with and carrying out aerial torpedo bombing. The concept of torpedo-carrying aircraft was first proposed to the British Admiralty in 1911 by two Royal Navy pilots, Commander Murray Sueter and Lieutenant Douglas Hyde-Thomson. T. O. M. Sopwith, one of Britain's pioneer aircraft manufacturers, built a special seaplane with a 200-horsepower engine, and in 1913 this plane, piloted by Lieutenant Arthur Longmore, became the first ever to take off successfully carrying a torpedo. Meanwhile, Sueter and Hyde-Thomson designed a torpedo-dropping gear, which was installed on a Short Brothers Folder seaplane. On 28 July 1914, just six days before the start of World War I, the specially equipped plane dropped a 14-inch Whitehead torpedo weighing 810 pounds—the first recorded drop of a live torpedo. At about the same time, an Italian aviator, Alessandro Guidoni, dropped an 825-pound dummy torpedo from a twin-engined Farman monoplane during private demonstration trials.<sup>7</sup>

Honors for the earliest operational use of aerial torpedoes are divided between the Royal Navy and the Imperial German Navy during World War I. In Britain the Short Brothers built a larger, 225-horsepower version of their 1913 floatplane specifically for torpedo attack, and the Royal Navy deployed three of these aircraft (the Short Admiralty Type 184) aboard the HMS *Ben-My-Chree*, a former Isle of Man passenger ship converted to a seaplane carrier in 1915.<sup>8</sup> On 12 and 17 August 1915 the Short seaplanes from this ship carried out the world's first aerial attacks with torpedoes when they attempted to sink Turkish ships in the Dardanelles, but they achieved only mixed success. On 12 August, Flight Commander C. H. K. Edmonds successfully torpedoed a 5,900-ton Turkish steamer from the air, only to discover later that the ship had already been attacked by British submarines and had been beached and abandoned by the Turks. On 17 August, in company with Flight Lieutenant G. B. Dacre, Edmonds attacked and hit a Turkish supply ship, but the vessel remained afloat and was later recovered by the Turks. Meanwhile, still carrying his torpedo, Dacre had engine trouble and made a forced landing in the strait near Galata. Unable to take off with the torpedo but unwilling to abandon it, Lieutenant Dacre taxied down the strait until he encountered a 300-ton Turkish tugboat, which he sank by launching his torpedo from the surface. Thus unencumbered, he was able to take off and return to the *Ben-My-Chree*.<sup>9</sup>

During the war the Imperial German Navy developed a series of torpedo-carrying floatplanes that could operate from shore bases along the North Sea coast. One early effort was a twin-engined Hansa-Brandenburg seaplane (Model GWD) designed by Ernst Heinkel at Flensburg to carry a 400-pound torpedo.<sup>10</sup> Another early effort was the Albatros W5 845, which performed successful torpedo-dropping trials at Flensburg in mid-1916 but was too underpowered for operational use.<sup>11</sup> In November 1916 a Hansa-Brandenburg GWD torpedoed and sank a British ship in the Thames estuary.<sup>12</sup> One notable consequence of these trials and this success was the continued development of the Hansa-Brandenburg design into the W.29 and W.33 single-engined floatplane series, one of the most successful aircraft types of World War I. The Hansa-Brandenburg GWD, however, proved too slow and underpowered for attacks against the main elements of the British fleet, and the Imperial German Navy abandoned its development of aerial torpedo bombing by 1918. The W.29 and W.33 were used instead for general patrol and fighter duties over the North Sea and English Channel, where they achieved virtual air supremacy. After the war

the W.33 was produced and flown in large numbers by the air forces of Denmark, Norway, Finland, and Japan.<sup>13</sup>

More or less simultaneously with the U.S. Navy's efforts at Gould Island NAF, the Japanese Navy set about developing its own aerial torpedo bombing force. Unlike Britain, Germany, and the United States, Japan immediately emphasized the use of conventional wheeled aircraft over floatplanes as torpedo and bombers. The Mitsubishi Company hired a British engineer, Herbert Smith, to design a series of navy aircraft, one of which was the prototype 2MT1, which first flew in 1923. This two-seat, single-engined biplane was quickly placed in production as the Mitsubishi Type 13, also known as the B1M, to serve aboard Japan's rapidly emerging force of aircraft carriers. Aircraft of this type were a key element in the early development of a carrier-based strike force by Japan, to be used in coordinated attacks along with carrier-based fighters and dive-bombers. The Japanese realized that floats on aircraft created penalties of weight and drag that seriously compromised a torpedo bomber's speed and maneuverability, and they opted early for carrier-based aviation. Although superseded by more modern types, Mitsubishi B1Ms participated in attacks from the aircraft carriers *Kaga* and *Hosho* during the Shanghai Incident of January 1932, and they continued in service until 1938.<sup>14</sup> During the interwar years the Japanese also achieved considerable success in developing naval torpedoes in general and aerial torpedoes in particular, their Type 91 aerial torpedo being a case in point.

While the influence of British engineers continued in Japan, especially in the development of torpedo bombers, by the 1930s the Royal Navy was improving its own carrier-borne torpedo-bombing capabilities as well. British aircraft like the Blackburn Ripon, first flown in 1926, were effective in both their floatplane and conventional land plane configurations, but by 1933 the introduction of the Fairey Swordfish biplane also reflected a commitment by the Royal Navy to conduct aerial torpedo attacks from the decks of carriers at sea.



In this context the U.S. Navy's testing and development program at Gould Island NAF was not only slow in getting under way; it was dilatory in arriving at a realistic evaluation of the aerial torpedo as a weapon. Long after the navies of Japan and England had committed themselves to carrier-based torpedo bombing in the 1920s and 1930s and had evolved both the necessary tactics and the torpedo technology, Gould Island NAF continued as the U.S. Navy's primary aerial torpedo testing facility despite the fact that only seaplanes could operate there. In 1923 further tests were conducted with the Douglas DT-2 and Burgess N-9 aircraft; in 1925 a Curtiss CS-1 floatplane was added; and in 1926 a Douglas DT-4 (an advanced version of the DT-2) arrived as well. A Martin T4M-1 was brought to Gould Island NAF in 1928, the same year that the Mark VIII aerial torpedo was introduced as part of an effort initiated by the navy's Bureau of Ordnance (BuOrd) in 1925 to produce a true air-launched torpedo. Command of the Air Detail at Gould Island NAF had been transferred to Lieutenant C. A. Hawkins in 1925 as torpedo test drops continued. The variety of aircraft introduced to Gould Island NAF during this period was indicative of the interest by the navy's Bureau of Aeronautics (BuAer) in developing torpedo-dropping aircraft, but the involvement of two separate navy bureaus, BuOrd





*Aerial view of Gould Island NAF, looking northeast, 9 February 1943. The 1921 hangar (with a star on the roof) stands beside the hangar built in 1942. The original hangar was torn down shortly after this picture was taken. The airplane parked on the west side of the 1942 hangar is a PB5A Catalina. Naval Historical Collections, Naval War College, Newport.*

and BuAer, complicated the operation of the testing program during this crucial period.<sup>15</sup> One indication of the increasing intensity of the drop-testing program at this time was the closing of airspace over Gould Island and its surrounding waters to all civil aircraft by the Navy Department on 12 August 1935.<sup>16</sup>

In 1939 drop-tests began at Gould Island NAF for the Bliss-Leavitt aerial torpedo, later known as the Mark XIII. This turbine-powered torpedo was originally of British design, with an engineering lineage extending back to the beginnings of torpedo development by Robert Whitehead during the late nineteenth century, although the turbine propulsion unit was an American modification.<sup>17</sup> By 1939 the U.S. Navy was in the process of building up an aircraft carrier force along with Britain and Japan. Part of this program involved the construction of an improved carrier-launched torpedo aircraft. In 1934 BuAer called for proposals from several aircraft manufacturers to produce a new design capable of carrying the 2,000-pound Mark XIII. The winner of the competition was the Douglas XTBD-1,

which made its first flight on 15 April 1935 and was accepted by the navy in 1936. This aircraft—the first all-metal, low-wing monoplane adopted by the navy for service aboard aircraft carriers—became the TBD-1 Devastator and was the most modern torpedo bomber in service anywhere at the time of its introduction to the fleet in 1937. On 21 June 1939 the first production TBD-1 was ferried to the Naval Aviation Factory at the Philadelphia Navy Yard, where a pair of floats was installed in place of the landing gear. This modification resulted in the TBD-1A. After a month of flight tests at Anacostia Naval Air Station in Washington, D.C., the new plane was delivered to Gould Island NAF for aerial drop-tests with the Mark XIII.

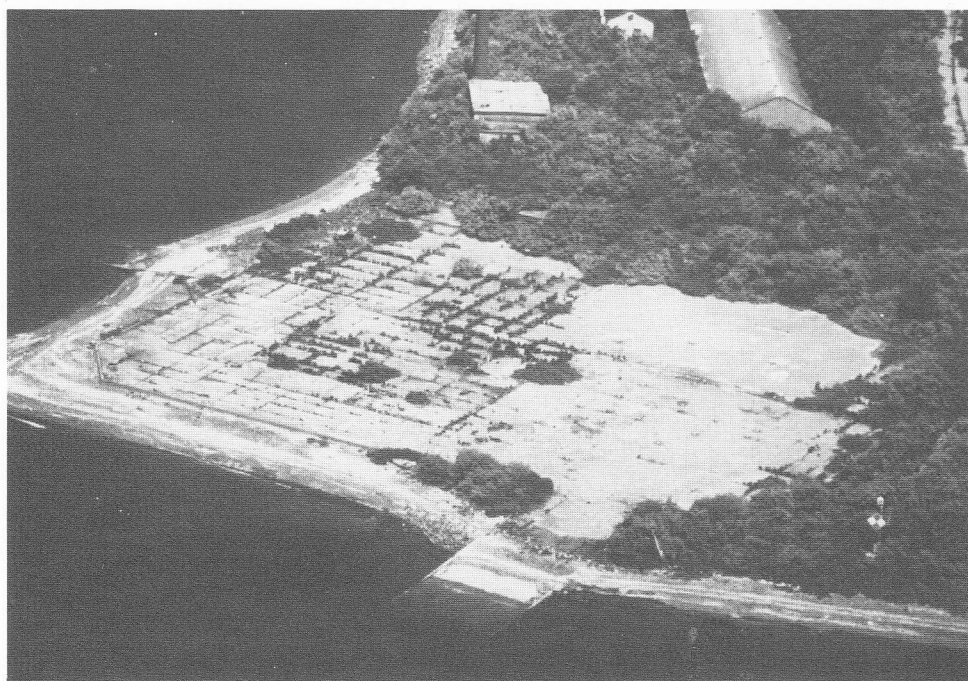
The TBD-1A was about twenty miles per hour slower than the standard TBD-1. Pilots reported that it handled well on the water and was stable in slow flight. To allow for the weight of the torpedo as well as the airplane, the floats on the TBD (manufactured by the EDO Corporation) were the largest ever fitted to a single-engine aircraft.<sup>18</sup> Viewed in the context of progress in aerial torpedo tactics and technology at the time these tests were conducted, the TBD-1A was an anomaly. What the navy did, in effect, was to construct an airplane on floats, a design demonstrably inappropriate for torpedo aircraft; such planes had been abandoned by other nations, notably Japan and Britain, in favor of carrier-launched types. Since carrier-launched aircraft were always faster and more maneuverable than their floatplane counterparts, the navy's drop-test program for the Mark XIII could never be expected to accurately reflect the real conditions under which the torpedo would be used in combat. By 1939 Gould Island NAF was an anachronism as a testing site for aerial torpedoes.

One of the most critical factors in torpedo drop-tests was the delicate combination of speed, height above water, and sea conditions at the moment of the drop. Torpedoes would sometimes drop tail-first into the water, and the impact would damage the rudder and propeller mechanisms and send the torpedoes astray. To counter this tendency, the Royal Navy fitted a wooden drogue behind the propellers for a more level descent and entry. Later, lightly constructed vanes were attached to the rudders to keep the torpedo level during descent; these snapped off easily upon contact with the water. During the 1930s the Royal Navy confronted the problems of aerial torpedo dropping in combat

with increasingly effective solutions. Later it even fitted a gyroscopic mechanism to its torpedoes to control them during their entire aerial descent. But it was the Japanese who perfected the art of reliable and accurate torpedo dropping. Their Type 91 could be dropped successfully from as high as 1,000 feet and at speeds of up to 260 knots. During their successful attack on the British *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* off Malaya on 10 December 1941, many drops were made from 200 feet, with some from as high as 350 to 500 feet.<sup>19</sup> By way of contrast, U.S. Navy torpedo-bomber pilots flying the TBD-1 in 1942 were trained to drop the Mark XIII at a speed of about 80 knots and at an altitude of no more than 80 feet, and only during the daytime, making them vulnerable to anti-aircraft fire and opposing fighters and allowing them little room for error in carrying out their attacks.<sup>20</sup> The Royal Navy's antiquated Swordfish torpedo bombers were even slower, but their pilots were trained to attack at night and did so whenever possible as a way of evading enemy defenses, and their torpedoes were better.<sup>21</sup>

The aerial torpedo testing program at Gould Island NAF continued to lag behind those of Japan and England during the critical years of 1939-1941, with dire consequences. The spectacular success of the night torpedo attack by British Swordfish bombers against Italian capital ships in their base at Taranto in November 1940, along with other successful aerial torpedo attacks at night or dusk against the Italian fleet at Matapan in March 1941<sup>22</sup> and against the German battleship *Bismarck* in May 1941, led to a firm decision by Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto to employ aerial torpedo bombing against the U.S. fleet at Pearl Harbor in December 1941. The depth of water at Taranto was 42 feet or less, which was thought too shallow for effective use of aerial torpedoes, but the British success there convinced Yamamoto that an assault of this kind at Pearl Harbor (whose water depth was 45 feet) could work if the flight crews were specially trained and the torpedoes outfitted with plywood fins to prevent them from going too deep.<sup>23</sup> Any action of this kind was beyond the capabilities of U.S. Navy torpedo bombers at that time.

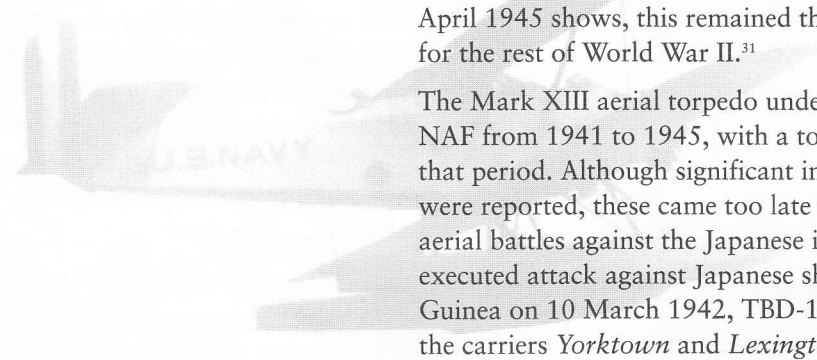
*This photograph of the seaplane ramps and parking area at Gould Island NAF was taken by the author on 15 September 1991. Several support buildings are still standing, but only the foundations of the 1921 and 1942 hangars remain.*



During the summer of 1940 construction began in North Kingstown at what was to become Quonset Naval Air Station, and in October 1940 a scouting squadron of PBV-5A Catalina amphibious flying boats was commissioned for a "Neutrality Patrol." The single wooden hangar built in 1921 at Gould Island NAF was obviously inadequate for the navy's expanded needs at this time, especially with the formation of four new patrol squadrons of PBV-5As at Quonset Point in 1941,<sup>24</sup> but Gould Island NAF served as an auxiliary field for these operations. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, however, the facilities at Gould Island NAF

were expanded as part of the overall wartime buildup in the Narragansett Bay area. At the same time, the aerial torpedo testing program was stepped up to as many as ten flights per day, using both floatplanes and land-based aircraft from Quonset Point.<sup>25</sup>

The wooden 1921 seaplane hangar and west seaplane ramp were retained while construction of a new hangar and a larger, south-facing ramp was begun in 1942. The new hangar was completed by December 1942, along with the new seaplane ramp, expanded aircraft-parking areas, and support facilities like a steam-heating plant and barracks.<sup>26</sup> Aerial photographs of Gould Island NAF taken on 9 February 1943 show both the original 1921 hangar and the new hangar,<sup>27</sup> but another aerial photograph taken on 18 August 1943 shows only the larger 1942 hangar still standing.<sup>28</sup> The PBY-5A patrol bomber and the two J2F Duck single-engined amphibians parked next to the hangar in the latter photograph were probably typical of the types of aircraft operating at Gould Island NAF throughout World War II, though not necessarily always for torpedo-testing purposes. This photograph also shows the new south ramp; 50 feet wide and 350 feet long, with a slope of 6 degrees, and extending to a depth of 10 feet below low-tide level, the ramp could accommodate any type of seaplane operating in 1942.<sup>29</sup> An aerial photograph of "existing improvements" taken on 9 February 1943 shows a pier and two large magazines on the east side of the island, along with other buildings and areas under construction near the air base.<sup>30</sup> A small control tower was added atop the south end of the hangar sometime after August 1943; but otherwise, as an aerial photograph dated 7 April 1945 shows, this remained the basic configuration of Gould Island NAF for the rest of World War II.<sup>31</sup>



The Mark XIII aerial torpedo underwent exhaustive testing at Gould Island NAF from 1941 to 1945, with a total of 4,300 test drops performed during that period. Although significant improvements in the torpedo's performance were reported, these came too late to affect the results of a series of important aerial battles against the Japanese in the Pacific during 1942. During a well-executed attack against Japanese ships based at Lae and Salamaua in New Guinea on 10 March 1942, TBD-1 aircraft of squadrons VT-2 and VT-5 from the carriers *Yorktown* and *Lexington* launched a total of twenty-three Mark XIII torpedoes from altitudes as low as 28 feet but scored only a single hit. Stopgap efforts were made aboard U.S. carriers to improve the Mark XIII's drop performance by adding plywood vanes around the propellers, creating boxlike wooden tail fins that led crews to refer to the result as the "orange crate" torpedo.<sup>32</sup> This expedient gained some success when it was first tried on 1 February 1942 in a raid against shipping at Kwajalein Island, with TBD-1s from the *Yorktown's* squadron VT-6 sinking one armed trawler and hitting (but not sinking) seven other ships. Despite these apparently encouraging results, many other torpedoes were seen to go astray or fail to explode upon contact with their targets. Of the twenty-two modified Mark XIII torpedoes launched during raids by *Yorktown* TBDs against Tulagi Harbor on 4 May 1942, only a single hit was scored.

In the Battle of the Coral Sea on 7 May 1942, initial attacks against the Japanese aircraft carrier *Shoho* by twelve TBDs of VT-2 failed to gain a single hit, but a second group of TBDs from VT-2 and VT-5 had better luck, sinking the *Shoho* with at least seven hits. This was widely regarded as the most perfectly executed aerial torpedo attack by American forces during World War II,<sup>33</sup> and it

was the first sinking of a major Japanese combat ship in the war. Unfortunately this success was not matched by torpedo attacks against the much larger Japanese carrier *Shokaku* by twenty TBDs from VT-2 and VT-5 later in the same engagement; none of their torpedoes hit, or, if they did, they failed to explode. The *Shokaku* was damaged and put out of action for two months by dive-bombers. The Mark XIII's were still performing erratically on the eve of the Battle of Midway, despite the plywood fins and last-minute attempts to improve the firing pins.

The events of Midway are well known and do not need to be described in detail here. Fourteen TBDs from VT-8 aboard the USS *Hornet* and fifteen TBDs from VT-6 aboard the *Enterprise* attacked four Japanese aircraft carriers but failed to score a single hit with their Mark XIII torpedoes. Their attack was followed by twelve TBDs from VT-3 (*Yorktown*), and they too failed to score a hit. Of the forty-one TBDs launched against the Japanese on 4 June 1942, only six returned (and one of these ditched near the *Enterprise*), resulting in a casualty rate of almost 90 percent in an attack that achieved no torpedo hits at all. This engagement ended the career of the TBD-1 as a torpedo bomber, since very few remained in service; in fact, as one commentator points out, "it spelled the death knell of torpedo bombing itself."<sup>34</sup> Although designed as a torpedo bomber to replace the TBD, the TBF/TBM Avenger was more often used as a conventional attack bomber and, like the TBD, had little success with the Mark XIII during repeated attacks against Japanese carriers and other ships during 1942. By the time the improved Mark XIII became available in 1943, most of the decisive carrier battles were over, and dive-bombing had proved more effective. Aerial torpedo testing continued at a rapid pace at Gould Island NAF for the remainder of World War II, but aerial torpedoes failed to produce notable results in actual operation.

Although the torpedo factory and test facility at the north end of Gould Island remained in use until at least 1973 (with the former test pier still in limited use by the navy today), and a degaussing station on the island also continued functioning awhile, Gould Island NAF ceased operations sometime during the 1950s. The navy made less use of seaplanes after World War II, but a series of three aerial photographs of Gould Island taken on 24 September 1953 shows the 1942 seaplane hangar still standing, with the parking area and ramps clear of vegetation.<sup>35</sup>

On 26 October 1991, after obtaining permission to land on the island from the Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife, a team of nine members of the newly formed Rhode Island Aviation Heritage Association (including the author) made a daylong visit to Gould Island NAF. This visit followed detailed aerial photography of the island by association members with their own aircraft. It came as a pleasant surprise to discover that the concrete parking area and ramps remained in generally good condition. The west ramp of 1921 was found to be in virtually the same condition as it appeared in a U.S. Navy photograph dated 11 January 1934.<sup>36</sup> On the south ramp of 1942 it was possible to identify the portion of the ramp and iron mooring bollard shown in a 1939 photograph of the TBD-1A on its beaching gear.<sup>37</sup> Two intact and nearly complete torpedo carts—the same type that appears in early but undated navy photographs of the Mark VIII and XIII torpedoes at the Naval War College Historical Archives—were found on the concrete parking area near the west ramp, and several more were discovered close to the ruins of the former base

fire station near the center of the island. These carts evidently continued in use during and possibly even after World War II. Perhaps most surprising of all was the discovery of the aft section of a torpedo resting on the island's west beach a short distance north of the west ramp. This torpedo—not a turbine-powered Mark XIII but an early, as-yet unidentified model—had modern rope wrapped around it; probably it had been snagged by a fisherman and hauled to shore sometime after Gould Island NAF and the torpedo factory were abandoned. Notes on the torpedo were made and photographs taken for later identification. All structures and items observed and recorded by the RIAHA team were left in place, as found. The association's future plans include mapping the concrete apron and ramps to document the visible remains of the 1921 and 1942 facilities, of which there are still some limited traces, along with such related items as torpedo carts, bollards, and aircraft tie-down rings.

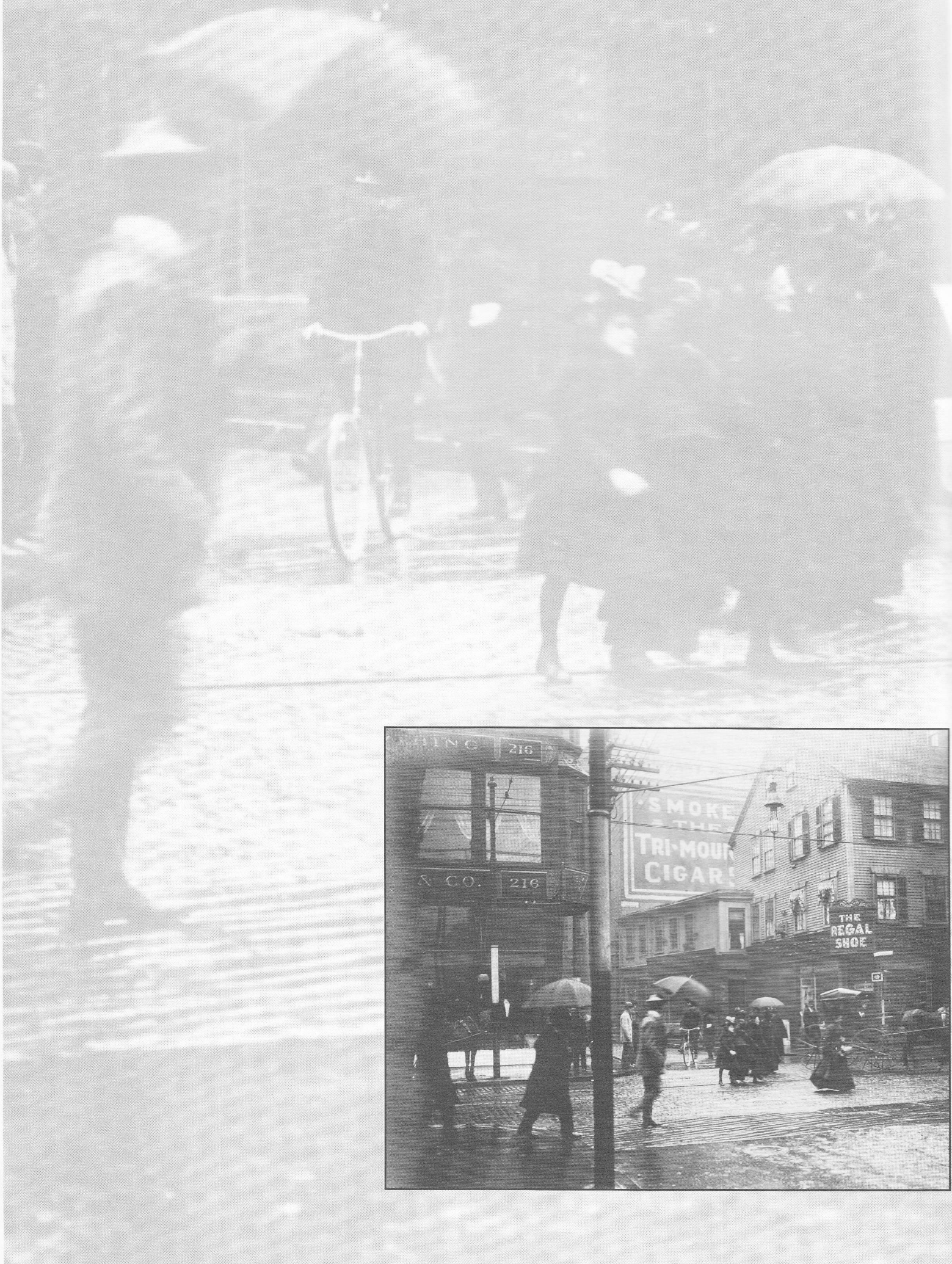


The story of Gould Island NAF from 1921 to 1945 reached its culmination in the erratic fortunes of the U.S. Navy's torpedo-bombing campaign against the Japanese in 1942. The failure of that campaign cannot be attributed to cowardice or incompetence, for the fliers who conducted it performed as skillfully as their training allowed; they were aware of the deficiencies of their weapons and their vulnerability as a result of these deficiencies, and they went ahead anyway. One only needs to read the account by George Gay—the TBD pilot who was the sole survivor of VT-8 after the attack at Midway—or hear him describe his emotions and those of his squadron leader and fellow fliers before and during the battle to appreciate how unprepared our forces were at that time.<sup>38</sup> “You know, Adelaide,” the squadron leader, Lieutenant Commander John C. Waldron, wrote to his wife the evening before the battle, “in this business of torpedo attack, I acknowledge we must have a break.”<sup>39</sup> Waldron believed passionately in the future of aerial torpedo attack as a decisive weapon against the Japanese. Sadly, his airplane was one of the first to be shot down, long before it reached its drop point. There was to be no break, and the future of aerial torpedo bombing by the U.S. Navy substantially ended that day.

If it was not cowardice or incompetence, then what can account for this dramatic failure? There can be no final answer, and the matter remains open to interpretation, but the story of Gould Island NAF offers some clues about institutional factors that may have been responsible. Division of authority and jurisdiction between navy bureaus, isolation and a general unwillingness to learn from what other countries like Britain and Germany had been doing in this field since the early days of World War I, inappropriate and even contradictory test procedures better suited to obsolescent seaplanes under ideal operating conditions than to modern carrier-based aircraft under more realistic conditions—all these emerge as potential factors, and any or all of them might help to account for the tragic failures of 1942. A rigorous testing program at Gould Island NAF eventually produced an improved Mark XIII torpedo. The new torpedo—especially if it had been carried by the TBF/TBM Avenger—might have made a crucial difference during the difficult days between Pearl Harbor and Midway. It might have been the break that Commander Waldron and his fellow pilots needed, but it came too late.

## Notes

1. Presidential Proclamation no. 1472, 7 Aug. 1918; S. Gordon, Navy Department, to Commandant, Second Naval District, 25 Sept. 1918.
2. Works Progress Administration, *Inventory of Federal Archives in the States*, ser. 7, no. 38, Rhode Island (Washington, D.C., 1938), 124.
3. G. A. Duncan, Public Works Officer, Naval Training Station, Newport, to Inspector of Ordnance, Naval Torpedo Station, Newport, 30 June 1921.
4. W. J. Coggeshall and J. E. McCarthy, *The Naval Torpedo Station, Newport, Rhode Island, 1658-1925*, rev. ed. (Newport, 1944), 34. This was not, however, the world's first aerial torpedo drop, as suggested in this pamphlet and in other sources as well.
5. Display, "The Aerial Torpedo," Naval War College Museum, Newport.
6. Photograph of USS *Patoka* and navy airship *Shenandoah*, Narragansett Bay, ca. 1923-25, Naval War College Museum, Newport.
7. Edwyn Gray, *The Devil's Device: Robert Whitehead and the History of the Torpedo* (Annapolis, Md., 1991), 200.
8. R. D. Layman, *Before the Aircraft Carrier: The Development of Aviation Vessels, 1849-1922* (Annapolis, Md., 1989), 43-44.
9. Gray, *The Devil's Device*, 201-2.
10. Holger H. Herwig, "Luxury Fleet": *The Imperial German Navy, 1888-1918* (London, 1987), 213.
11. Alex Imrie, *German Naval Air Service* (London, 1989), fig. 51.
12. Herwig, "Luxury Fleet," 213.
13. The W.33 became the Hansa-Brandenburg I.V.L. A-22 in Finland, where it remained in active service until 1938. A preserved example of one of these airplanes can be seen today at the Finnish Aviation Museum (Suomen Ilmailumuseo) at Helsinki-Vantaa Airport, within walking distance of the main air terminal.
14. Michael J. H. Taylor, *Warplanes of the World, 1918-1939* (New York, 1981), 94.
15. Paul E. Coletta, ed., *United States Navy and Marine Corps Air Bases, Domestic* (Westport, Conn., 1985), 218.
16. Executive Order no. 7138, 12 Aug. 1935, in *Federal Owned Real Estate under the Control of the Navy Department* (Washington, D.C., 1937), 330.
17. Gray, *The Devil's Device*, 156.
18. Al Adcock, *TBD Devastator in Action* (Carrollton, Tex., 1989), 15.
19. Gray, *The Devil's Device*, 203, 219.
20. George Gay, *Sole Survivor* (Naples, Fla., 1980), 125.
21. Charles Lamb, *To War in a Stringbag* (London, 1977), 120-30.
22. S. W. C. Pack, *The Battle of Matapan* (London, 1968), 93-101.
23. John Deane Potter, *Admiral of the Pacific* (London, 1965), 53.
24. William T. Larkins, *U.S. Navy Aircraft, 1921-1944* (New York, 1988), 278. These four newly formed squadrons were VP-91, VP-92, VP-93, and VP-94.
25. General Order 26, Eastern Defense Command, 16 July 1942; Commander Eastern Sea Frontier Letter, serial 1414, 20 July 1942.
26. P. J. Halloran, Officer in Charge of Construction, Public Works Department, U.S. Naval Operating Base, Newport, to Inspector of Ordnance, Naval Torpedo Station, Newport, 15 Dec. 1942.
27. Neg. no. 1447, 9 Feb. 1943, Naval War College Historical Collection Archives, Newport.
28. Neg. no. 445, 18 Aug. 1943, Naval War College Historical Collection Archives, Newport. This photograph also appears in Walter K. Schroder, *Defenses of Narragansett Bay in World War II* (Providence, 1980), 80.
29. D. J. Sullivan to Inspector of Ordnance, Naval Torpedo Station, Newport, 6 Oct. 1942.
30. Neg. no. 1446, 9 Feb. 1943, Naval War College Historical Collection Archives, Newport.
31. Neg. no. Quon. 686, 7 Apr. 1945, Naval War College Historical Collection Archives, Newport.
32. B. R. Jackson and T. E. Doll, *Douglas TBD-1 "Devastator"* (Fallbrook, Calif., 1973), 25-26; Adcock, *TBD Devastator in Action*, 41.
33. Jackson and Doll, *Douglas TBD-1 "Devastator"*, 37.
34. *Ibid.*, 43.
35. Neg. nos. 3563, 3564, and 3565, 24 Sept. 1953, Naval War College Historical Archives, Newport.
36. Neg. No. N.T.S. "C"-34-75, Naval War College Museum, Newport.
37. Photograph by W. E. Scarborough in Adcock, *TBD Devastator in Action*, 15.
38. George Gay, interviewed by Richard A. Gould, Oshkosh, Wis., 31 July 1983.
39. Gay, *Sole Survivor*, 109.



## FROM THE COLLECTIONS Images of Rhode Island: The Photographer's Art

DENISE J. BASTIEN

Numbering more than a quarter of a million images of Rhode Island from 1849 to the present, the photographic collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society are among its most important holdings. Through the lenses of both amateur and professional photographers, we are given the opportunity to see nearly every manner of life, work, leisure activity, social custom, and natural or man-made environment that has existed in the state during that time. Highlighted here are but a few of the Graphics Division's many collections of photographs.

*Avery Lord Collection*  
1920-1940  
1,175 images

*This is the Graphics Division's most comprehensive photographic collection. Working as a commercial and free-lance photographer, Lord recorded many notable events, including Charles Lindbergh's 1927 visit to Rhode Island and the construction of the Mount Hope Bridge. Trained as an aviator, Lord became the first Rhode Islander to produce aerial photographs of the state.*

*Frank Warren Marshall Collection*  
1895-1925  
145 images

Frank Warren Marshall was a photographer and artist for the *Providence Journal* between 1897 and 1923. He was also an instructor in illustration at the Rhode Island School of Design and a charter member of the Providence Art Club. This collection is rich with views of Providence, scenes around Rhode Island, trolleys, yachts, and airplanes.



The Graphics Division of the Rhode Island Historical Society is located at the Society's library. Researchers wishing to view the collections should contact the graphics curator in advance to schedule an appointment. Those interested in obtaining copy prints for research, teaching, exhibition, or publication should direct their inquiries to the assistant graphics curator. The library is at 121 Hope Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02906; telephone, (401) 331-8575; fax, (401) 751-7930.

Denise Bastien is the graphics curator of the Rhode Island Historical Society.



*The Albertype Company Collection*  
1890-1950  
752 Images

*The Albertype Company of Brooklyn, New York, a publisher of viewbooks and postcards, was founded after the Civil War and continued in business until 1952. Represented in this collection are streets and beaches, Providence architecture, Narragansett Pier, and the mansions and Naval Training Station in Newport.*



*Apponaug Print Works Collection*  
1900  
43 images

*Taken by an unrecorded photographer, these photos document the workers (including women and children), machinery, and manufacturing processes at the Apponaug Print Works in Warwick.*



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*Flying from Gould Island Naval Air Facility, this Martin 74M-1 floatplane is shown just after releasing an aerial torpedo in a drop-test over the waters off Newport. Detail from a 1928 photo, courtesy of the Naval War College Museum, Newport.*