

Journal of History of Martha's Vineyard and the Elizabeth Islands



THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

VOL. 38, NO. 1

AUGUST 1996

From Major John Andre by Robert Hatch.



Capt. John Andre, a self portrait.

The American Revolution

Prelude to Grey's Raid: The French Connection

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

Rumrunning: Not a Job For the Faint of Heart

by EDWIN ATHEARN

Documents: A Running Account Of Matters & Things

by HENRY BAYLIES

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AMPLIFICATION

Dr. Thomas N. Cross of Ann Arbor, Michigan, is a careful reader of *A Running Account of Matters & Things*, the journal of Henry Baylies being published in the *Intelligencer*. And no wonder, as so much of it reads like a doctor's report.

But Doctor Cross is not explaining medical language in his recent letter. Instead, he is suggesting the source of the line on page 205 of the May installment that reads "Began dull care & gloom."

He informs us that John Playford in *Musical Companion*, a play performed in 1687 in England, wrote the lines:

"Begone, dull Care! I prithee begone from me!

Begone, dull Care! Thou and I shall never agree."

Obviously, diarist Henry Baylies, an eternal optimist, was remembering those lines by Playford, being the well-read minister he was. The editor misread the first word, which was in a typical Baylies scrawl. Many thanks to Doctor Cross.

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Editor: Arthur R. Railton

Founding Editor: Gale Huntington (1902-1993)

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The Dukes County Historical Society was founded in 1922 to preserve and publish the history of Dukes County for the public benefit. It is a non-profit institution, supported by membership dues, contributions and bequests, which are tax deductible. Its annual meeting is held in August in Edgartown.

The Society operates The Vineyard Museum on its grounds at School and Cooke Street, Edgartown. The Museum includes the Thomas Cooke House, circa 1765, a house museum of Island history, open from mid-June to mid-September. Also on the grounds are the Francis Foster Gallery, the Capt. Francis Pease House and the Gale Huntington Library of History, open all year, as are the Gay Head Light exhibit with its 1854 Fresnel lens and the Carriage Shed containing boats, wagons, an 1854 Button hand-pumper fire engine and many other examples of Vineyard memorabilia, including the gravestones of Nancy Luce's favorite hens, circa 1860.

All buildings are open free to members. Non-members are charged a nominal entrance fee. Research assistance is provided in the Huntington Library.

You are invited to join the Society. You will receive this journal four times a year with your membership.

Rumrunning: Not a Job For the Faint of Heart

by EDWIN ATHEARN

DURING the boom years of the 1920s, the enforcement of the 18th Amendment, which banned the sale of alcoholic beverages, brought to the waters around the Vineyard adventures unknown since the days of piracy. Martha's Vineyard and Noman's Land, being islands with many uninhabited areas easily accessible by boat, played major roles in the illegal business that came to be known as "Rum Row."

The United States Coast Guard was charged with preventing the landing by boat of alcoholic beverages, an impossible assignment. In an attempt to make enforcement easier, the original three-mile limit was extended to 12 miles. But that didn't help. It merely opened up more ocean for the rumrunners to operate in and more water for the Coast Guard to patrol. Supply ships from foreign ports, loaded with alcohol, some of good quality, much of it not, would anchor just outside the limit, where, as legal floating warehouses, they would wait for customers. And the customers came in great numbers, especially on foggy or moonless nights.

Unlike these supply ships, usually called "mother ships," which remained outside the limit, the rumrunners, scurrying back to the mainland with illegal cargo, were law-breakers and subject to chase and seizure by the Coast Guard. They would, on dark nights especially, head out from various ports to pick up their loads, paying for them in cash. In the early years, rumrunners used a variety of makeshift,

EDWIN ATHEARN, a member of the Society, has had many careers: fisherman, laborer, skipper, salesman and, in his latest role, the author of a new book, *Chronicle of an Islander*. This article has been expanded from one of its chapters. Mr. Athearn, born into one of the Island's historic families, now lives in Centerville on Cape Cod.

and often unseaworthy, boats, which not infrequently resulted in disaster.

Some of the most successful rumrunners were commercial fishermen. It's easy to see how they were recruited into the business. They were out there fishing close to the supply ships, doing an honest day's work. As part of the large fishing fleet on the banks, they looked completely innocent. But by the time they returned to port to sell their catches, they were carrying two separate cargoes: one, very visible, was the layers of fresh fish bedded down in chopped ice; the other, at the bottom of the fish hold, hidden from view, was the real cash-crop, liquor. The disguise served them well and it is little wonder that big-city bootleggers sought them out as deliverymen. The money was good and the risk was low, at least so the fishermen were told. Risk mattered little; after all, it was a way of life for them. Hauling liquor was a profit center that made the arduous task of fishing seem like something only a fool would do.

Once a fisherman was recruited, the bootlegger would put his agent, carrying plenty of cash, aboard the boat. He looked and acted just like one of the crew, but after dark he was in charge. Hauling alongside the supply ship, usually in the dark, the fishermen would transfer the bottled cargo, stacking it at the bottom of the fish hold. In a few hours, the transfer was completed. The liquid cargo would be covered with heavy canvas and topped with a layer of chopped ice. In calm weather, the transfer was quick and easy. The fishing boat simply tied alongside the supply ship and the goods were passed over the side. In bad weather, the cargo often had to be transferred by dory, not a pleasant activity twelve miles out in the rough Atlantic.

With the cargo on board (at first, the bottles came packed in wooden boxes, but later it was discovered that it was easier and more convenient to use canvas sacks), the fishermen then returned to the fleet and went fishing like

the others. If they were beyond the 12-mile limit, all was still legal. Their cargo was not yet inside American waters. As the nets were hauled, the precious cargo was covered by layers of codfish and flounder, interlaid with chopped ice, filling the hold to the hatches. If stopped by the Coast Guard as they headed back to port, any inspection through an open hatch revealed nothing but fresh fish and ice. Once in port, the fish would be unloaded in daylight and sold in the normal manner. But the real money-making came at night when the bootlegger's truck arrived.

That was how it was expected to work. And it usually did. But any activity involving the ocean is not totally routine. On April 23, 1927, a fishing schooner loaded with spirits, the *Etta M. Burns*, was sailing back in to New Bedford on a foggy night when the helmsman fell asleep¹ off the Vineyard. By the time the lookout on the bow saw the line of breakers ahead, it was too late. The schooner ran aground. At dawn, a beachcomber reported the stranded vessel to the Gay Head Coast Guard. A cutter from Cuttyhunk went out and offered to haul her off the beach. The conditions were ideal for the rescue, but the skipper was not on board and the crew used his absence as a reason to turn down the offer, explaining that the captain was on shore telephoning the owner. They said the schooner was leaking badly and would sink if refloated.

This explanation made the Coast Guardsmen suspicious so they boarded the vessel. They noticed no evidence that she was taking on water. The deck was dry and the auxiliary pumps seemed not to have been used recently. Opening the hatches disclosed nothing but solid layers of fish. Everything appeared in order. But doubts lingered. The boat didn't seem to be damaged. Why was the rescue offer refused? The next morning, the cutter returned.

By now, the *Burns* was in real trouble. Overnight, the wind had come up and swung her parallel to the beach,

¹For a detailed account of this and many other rumrunning adventures see Everett S. Allen, *The Black Ships*, Little, Brown & Co., Boston, 1965.

broadside to the surf. The waves were now breaking over the deck and she was listing to starboard. The crew was nowhere to be seen. Again, the hatches were opened. Now very suspicious, the Coast Guardsmen went below with pitchforks, tossing the fish up on deck. A few feet down, they struck canvas. Cutting out a section, they discovered the real cargo.

Several sacks labeled "Old Mac Scotch Whisky" were taken as evidence and the schooner was placed under armed guard. By this time, the news had spread around the Island and folks swarmed to the beach. As the wind built up, the pounding surf made any effort to save the vessel impossible. The fish were pitched overboard and the work of unloading the liquor began. A team of horses pulling a low-slung wagon known as a dray was brought in to haul the liquor to away as evidence. With the ice and fish removed from the hold, the waves washed into it, tossing the sacks around and breaking enough bottles to give the whole area a strong aroma of alcohol. Some unbroken bottles were washed overboard and the onlookers combed the beach to salvage them. But Chester Pease, a dedicated Prohibitionist who lived less than a mile away, had other plans. Local legend has it that Chester patrolled the beach each night, breaking every bottle he found.²

Vineyarders who tasted the "Old Mac" claimed it should have been labelled "Firewater." Later, it was reported that the cargo had come, not from Scotland, but from a rusty steamer anchored 30 miles south of Montauk Point, Long Island. She was a floating distillery, complete with bottles, labels and canvas sacks. Belgian alcohol was used as the basic ingredient of what was labelled Scotch Whisky.³

As liquor smuggling became more common, the Coast Guard soon began paying more attention to returning fishermen. The rumrunners countered by building specialized

boats: high-powered, seaworthy speed boats from 40 to 50 feet long. With a very low profile, they were hard to spot, especially at night. A small pilothouse was forward and a dory secured in chocks on the stern. Powered by two converted World War I airplane engines, they were capable of speeds of 35 knots, even when fully loaded. These provided a dependable delivery system, except in the roughest weather.

For those heavy-weather conditions, a series of husky vessels was built. These looked like ordinary fishing draggers from a distance and carried names like *Madam X*, *Hi-Queen*, *Tossup* and *Old Lady*. The man behind the construction of these vessels was Charlie Travers, an expert boatman, known as "king of the inshore fleet." Built at Casey Shipyard, the draggers looked normal enough as they maneuvered among the fishing fleet during daylight. At night, under cover of darkness, they headed out into the Atlantic to pick up a load of bootleg liquor.

Vineyard fisherman Frank Butler was one of the most successful skippers (and known to all, including the Coast Guard, as a rumrunner) of these specialized delivery boats. He skippered both trawlers and speedboats. Among his innovations was a method of shaking off pursuing Coast Guard by laying down a dense cloud of smoke. Dirty, black engine oil would be dripped into the flaming hot exhaust manifolds of the high-powered engines, emitting dense clouds of smoke, making accurate identification and accurate shooting impossible. With their speed, the boats were soon able to get beyond the range of the pursuers.

Another development by the bootleggers was the double-bottom fishing boat. As its name suggests, it had two hulls, identically shaped, with a two or three-foot storage space between them. Secret panels provided access. These boats were from 40 to 60 feet long and wider and deeper than standard draggers. Even fully loaded, they sat deceptively high in the water. In later years, the author owned one of these double-hulled boats, the former rumrunner

²Allen, p.215.

³Joseph Chase Allen, father of Edward, disagreed with the description "firewater." He claimed the liquor was "a rather poor variety of tea."

Junior. A great seaboat, she was.

The most common Coast Guard patrol boats in the mid-1920s were the 75-foot cutters, usually called "six bit-
ters."⁴ Rugged seagoing craft, they were powered with twin gasoline engines and had a one-pounder gun mounted on the forward deck. This firepower was only a mild annoyance to experienced rumrunners. Usually manned by newly-enlisted men, the patrol boats were no match for the salt-water veterans running the liquor ashore. These inexperienced Coast Guardsmen spent much of their sea time in a state of seasickness (when they weren't hauling fishermen's lobster pots for dinner!).

Of course, the Coast Guard did have success stories. One involved the rum boat *Tramp*, taken while being unloaded in port. All hands escaped. The Coast Guard, well aware of her speed, placed her in service as an armed patrol boat. On the night of December 18, 1931, off Cuttyhunk, the crew of the *Tramp* spotted the rumrunner *Nola*, a newer, faster boat, protected by armor plating. She was inbound with a full load for the profitable Christmas market. Included was a deckload of five-gallon cans of pure alcohol. The Coast Guard had been tipped off about her arrival and assigned three vessels, including a former Navy four-stack destroyer, to lie in wait on Vineyard Sound. The *Tramp*, now on the side of the law, took off after the *Nola*, her machine gun blazing. At full throttle, the faster rumrunner began to pull away from her pursuers when some machine-gun rounds hit the cans of alcohol on deck, setting them on fire. At 35 knots, the flames were fanned into an inferno, forcing her to stop. Capt. Frank Butler and his crew (one of them wounded) were rescued and the *Nola*, a mass of flames, went to the bottom. There was considerable irony in the fact that Captain Butler had been skipper of the *Tramp* when she was rumrunning. Now he had been captured by her.⁵

⁴For those too young to remember, two bits was 25 cents, hence six bits was 75.

⁵Allen, pp. 146-7.



U. S. Coast Guard photograph.

Rumrunner Nola, despite armor plating, was sunk by gunfire off Cuttyhunk in 1931.

Many years later, Capt. Tom Tilton of Vineyard Haven, a nephew of Frank Butler, caught the wreckage of the *Nola* in his net while dragging off Cuttyhunk. His dragger had enough power to bring the bow to the surface where it could be identified, but then the cables parted and the wreckage sank to the bottom, taking Captain Tilton's net and trawl doors with it.

This was the same area where the steamer *John Dwight* had sunk, scuttled by hijackers after a fierce battle in which the *Dwight's* crew of eight was killed. It seemed certain that she was in the rumrunning business, but no arrests were ever made, even though the bodies were recovered and showed evidence of violent deaths. That same night, a steam yacht *Flit* came ashore on Noman's and was abandoned by her crew mysteriously. Some think the two events were pure coincidence, according to Annie Wood, who describes them in her book about Noman's Land:

The wrecking of the *Flit*, a steam yacht about 100 feet long, on the shore at Noman's Land in 1923, was one of the strangest incidents that ever took place on the island. She was owned by a New York company, but little was known about her business and it was rumored that she was used as a

supply, or mother ship, for several small boats engaged in rumrunning. It was her duty to sail out about 40 or 50 miles and meet a vessel from some foreign port loaded with contraband. Then, on her return, she was met within a few miles of Noman's Land by several small boats to which the load was transferred.

One night something unusual occurred and to this day [1931] the truth of what actually happened has never been learned. Only the results are known. The *Flit* encountered the steamer *John Dwight* somewhere in Vineyard Sound. It will never be known which was the aggressor and which was the hijacker, but a terrible battle was fought on the steamer and every man belonging to the crew [of the *Dwight*] was killed. One man tried to escape in a small yawl but was killed before he made his getaway. The boat with its murdered occupant drifted ashore near Menemsha and was found by one of the fishermen.

The scene, which took place in the darkness of that night, must have been like a return of the long ago when pirates roamed the Seven Seas. In imagination, we can picture the pursuit, the two vessels brought side by side, and the bloody combat which took place upon the deck of the *John Dwight*. The fierce old pirates were no more blood-thirsty or cruel than were the men who murdered the crew of the modern steamer.

After the men were all killed, the sea valves of the steamer were opened and she filled and sank to the bottom of the Sound. The *Flit* was run over to Noman's Land, driven up onto the beach and abandoned. Her crew escaped in a small boat which had followed her over. It is not known whether any of them were killed or injured.

No one ever returned to claim any of the furnishings or machinery aboard the *Flit* and it is said that the manager who had charge of the island at that time made several thousand dollars from the wreckage. The yacht was well furnished and most of the woodwork of the cabins was mahogany.

Federal officers sent divers down to examine the steamer and attempted to trace the crew of the *Flit*, but nothing could ever be learned concerning them. Several bodies of the murdered men drifted ashore, but none was identified. It may have been simply a strange coincidence that has connected these two ill-fated vessels.⁶

⁶Annie M. Wood, *Noman's Land, Isle of Romance*, Reynolds Printing, New Bedford, Mass., 1931, pp. 79-80.

Bertrand Wood, nephew of author Annie Wood and son of Noman's caretaker Cameron Wood, has detailed some of the rumrunning activities at Noman's while he was living there with his wife and father.⁷ He was a witness to several transfers of liquor and has described visits to Noman's by a man known only as Harry, agent for a Rhode Island rumrunning syndicate. When Harry arrived at the Noman's home of the Woods, he told Bertrand's father he was planning "to land a load of assorted liquor on the island that night" and wanted help in selecting a hiding place. Cameron refused to help so Harry left to seek out a suitable spot by himself, making it clear that lives would be in danger if his activity was divulged.

About midnight, a two-masted schooner anchored just offshore and from it several dories headed to the beach. Shortly, Harry appeared again at the Wood house and ordered Bert's wife to go to the top of Lookout Hill and warn him of any approaching vessels. Bert objected, offering to go instead, but Harry turned him down. He wanted all the men to remain in the house where they could be watched.

The men from the schooner dug a large trench in the beach sand and filled it with bags full of liquor bottles. They worked for about three hours. The treasure was covered with sand and driftwood before they left in the darkness.

The next day the Coast Guard came to Noman's and asked if there had been any strangers on the island in recent days. Caretaker Wood said no, remembering Harry's threats. The Coast Guard left without discovering the hidden liquor. About a month later, during a thick fog, Harry reappeared. He had learned of the Coast Guard's visit and commended Cameron for keeping the secret. During that night, the liquor was dug up, loaded on a high-speed rumrunner and taken away, presumably to Rhode Island.

⁷His mother, Mrs. Cameron Wood, had died a few years before and Bertrand and wife moved to Noman's to live with Cameron.

Similar visits by Harry occurred about once a month after that. His men came ashore and examined the buildings to find hiding places. One load was hidden above the ceiling of the old Butler farmhouse, another time a load of champagne was buried inside the icehouse under blocks of ice and straw. In each of these cases the Coast Guard came, made a search, but left without finding any liquor. The last time Bert Wood saw any liquor brought ashore, Harry was not along. The crew put the liquor in a blind attic above the vegetable cellar, a separate low-slung building. It had so little headroom that a conveyor device with rollers was brought in from the boat so the sacks could be slid to the far corners of the attic.⁸ The Coast Guard did not come to Noman's after this visit, but the men from Rhode Island did, hauling away the liquor in the middle of a dark night.

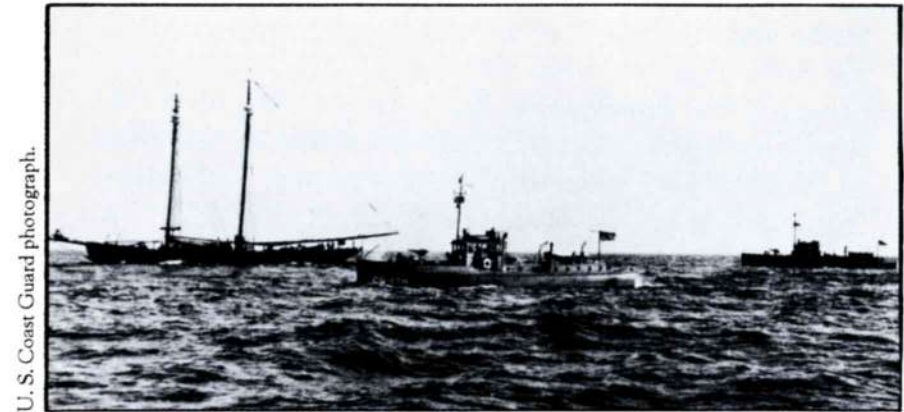
Rumrunning was a violent business and witnesses were often silenced by bullets, as Bertrand Wood wrote in his book about Noman's:

We were extremely lucky that we did not come to bodily harm from the close contact we had with the rumrunners.

The most famous of the rumrunning skippers was Capt. Bill McCoy of New London, Connecticut, who moved from the mainland to a rented room on Gay Head when the government began closing in on him. His vessel in the Rum Row operation, the schooner *Arethusa*, had been a Grand Banks fishing trawler years earlier. He made his move to Gay Head because, as he wrote, "Indians. . . don't ask questions . . . [and] don't talk to strangers."

The *Arethusa* would lie offshore, about 20 miles south of Gay Head, loaded with cases of liquor that Captain McCoy brought up from the Bahamas. It was all good liquor. There was no firewater or bathtub gin in his inventory. Once on station, he would open up for business, both retail and wholesale. Customers were welcomed aboard to

⁸In an oral history tape at the Society, Priscilla Wood tells of finding the conveyor in the attic of the vegetable cellar years later and being puzzled by it.



Coast Guard 75-footers keep an eye on mother ship *Arethusa* beyond 12-mile limit.

buy a drink or a boatload. It was all legal, being outside the 12-mile limit. The supply boats that delivered the goods to shore were breaking the law, but not McCoy. His worry was not the Coast Guard, but hijackers. Carrying such a valuable cargo, the vessel was a vulnerable target. On the foremast spreaders, McCoy maintained an armed watch, two men with rifles, to repel any attack. Rum Row was no place for the faint of heart.

Rough winter weather created problems when transferring the cargo to the speedboats. The swells made it impossible to tie up to the mother vessel. The ingenious McCoy rigged a towing boom that was swung out from the foremast. The boat that was picking up the liquor would come up on the leeward side, tie onto the boom, and be held off the mother ship while the bottled goods were slid down a chute from the *Arethusa*. His operation became so well known along the south shore that a reporter from the New Bedford *Evening Standard*, Earle D. Wilson, decided to go out and see it for himself.

Reporter Wilson hired a fisherman to carry him to the *Arethusa*. Posing as an entrepreneur eager to set up a supply line to the mainland, he was welcomed aboard. He bought a bottle or two to take back as proof he had been there and left, promising to come back for his bulk order

in the dark. His story, which was prominently featured on the front page, was filled with details. The Treasury Department was embarrassed and ordered its agents to do something quick. Agents tracked down McCoy and went to the Gay Head house where he was staying. The Indians there said they had never heard of him. McCoy was upstairs at the time of the visit, but the Treasury men left without a search.

Once the agents left, McCoy hired a Gay Head fisherman to take him out to his schooner where he instructed his captain, a man named Gort, to leave the area and head north. He promised to meet the *Arethusa* southeast of Cape Ann the following week with new instructions. As McCoy was returning to Gay Head, he saw the Coast Guard cutter *Acushnet* heading out. The cutter stopped another fisherman and talked to the men on board. After the cutter left, Captain McCoy pulled over to the fisherman to find out what had happened. Here's how McCoy told the story to Everett Allen:⁹

"What did the cutter want?" I bawled to her master. He was a lean New Englander, salt and dry as a split cod, and he spat over the rail before shouting back; "Wanted to know where Bill McCoy and the *Arethusa* was.

I waited. He spat again. "Told him I never heard of neither of ye," he roared. "Dinged fool!"

They don't breed squealers among those New England fishermen.

After that, Captain McCoy spent most of his time farther south, hauling high-quality liquor out of the Bahamas, where his schooner was registered. Many believe that the captain's reputation still survives in the nation's idiom. Like the goods he sold, anything of the highest quality is still called "The real McCoy!"

In her book about Noman's Land, Mrs. Wood writes of another adventure off the small island. The *Allaha*, a speedboat about 50 feet long, powered by two Liberty air-

⁹Allen, p.36.

plane engines and twin propellers, was hauling liquor from mother ships to the mainland. She could maintain speeds up to 40 miles an hour under good sea conditions. South of Noman's Land, shortly before Christmas in 1926, she was hit by a howling northwester. The skipper headed for the protection of Noman's. The seas were running so high and the pounding was so intense that her seams began to open.

She soon was so waterlogged that steering had to be done by the propellers, hardly precise enough to steer her through the narrow entrance to Noman's manmade harbor. She missed the opening and crashed onto the outside of the seawall. The crew managed to make it to shore. The abandoned craft was washed up on the beach by the waves. Much of her machinery was salvaged by the men living on Noman's, but the hull soon broke into pieces, ending up as firewood.

A first-hand account of what was probably the *Allaha* incident was published in the *Vineyard Gazette* some years later by a woman who signed the article, "M.C.R." She doesn't name the boat or even state the year, but it seems to have been the same *Allaha* wreck that Mrs. Wood described. If so, the date was November 10, 1926. M.C.R., the wife of the caretaker, had just gone over to the tiny island a day or so before. Her account reads like a movie script:

About 1 a.m. there was knock at the kitchen door. I am a light sleeper, so was awakened at once, and realizing that the only humans on that island were asleep in the house, I knew that something had gone wrong. . . I went to the door and there, framed in the glass of the door, were three men's faces, with water dripping from their caps.

One man was carrying on his shoulder a box which turned out to be a case of Scotch whisky in those pinch bottles which were being used so much at the time to make electric lamps, with the bottles filled with colored water. . .

Knowing the men were wet and cold, I invited them in and learned that their boat, a rumrunner, had been wrecked

on the jetty when they tried to make the narrow entrance and they had to jump overboard. . . We always kept a light in the kitchen for just such an emergency and it was that light that led the three men to our door.

I called the rest of the household and we found dry clothing for the men. The helper's wife and I made hot coffee and sandwiches, which were enjoyed by the shipwrecked. . . Everyone slept late that morning. We cooked a good breakfast for all and while we were eating it, one of the men spied a plane coming from the direction of New Bedford. [He told us that] when the rumrunner hadn't shown up on schedule, the owners knew something had gone wrong so sent a plane to find out what had happened. The first stopping place was Noman's Land.

The plane landed on the water on the south side of the island and the three men ran down. . . to tell what had happened. . . The wind was blowing hard and the men on the plane didn't get the message right, but understood that the cargo of liquor was safe on the island. Instead, it had been thrown overboard to lighten the boat which was leaking badly.

. . . later that afternoon a small sailing vessel came. . . to pick up the cargo. . . Instead they picked up the shipwrecked men and took them back to New Bedford. The castaways were very grateful for everything and to show their appreciation left a very handsome present in greenbacks for the farmer's wife and myself. . . Those men never forgot to drop off some little things when they were on their way out to the mother ship to pick up the load. They brought the latest newspapers and fruit which we could not get and would do any errands in the city that we asked them to.

They were not hardened criminals as most people thought, but very polite and kind-hearted and were always a welcome sight for us on Noman's Land.

The woman's husband was filling in for the regular caretaker that winter. In April, the couple left Noman's and returned to their home in Woods Hole. It had been, she wrote,

. . . a wonderful experience, but I would not go back to Noman's for all the gold in Kentucky.

No doubt, many feel the same way about Prohibition.

The American Revolution

Prelude to Grey's Raid: The French Connection

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

FOR the American troops at Valley Forge, it was the best news in months. They were no longer alone. They had an ally; a powerful ally with a powerful navy. Britannia would no longer rule the waves. Dreams of victory and of an independent nation suddenly brightened.

On February 6, 1778, the French and the Americans signed treaties of friendship and commerce. No promise was made by the French to join the battle, but Americans were sure they would.

Communications being what they were, it took time for the news to reach the colony. Three months later, on May 4th, Congress ratified the treaties. The following day, Commander-in-Chief General George Washington announced the news to his troops at Valley Forge, declaring France's young monarch, King Louis XVI, "a powerful friend among the Princes of the Earth."

He called for a celebration. An extra issue of rum was poured, one hundred banquet tables were set up and the amphitheatre "looked elegant" in the freshness of spring. The troops, their spirits lifted by the good news and the extra rum, paraded before the reviewing stand where General Washington and his wife, "the Lady Martha," sat with his staff, which included Quartermaster General Nathanael Greene of Rhode Island (and Mrs. Greene) and the youngest general in the army, Marquis de Lafayette. Washington, his face "a countenance of uncommon delight and complacency," delivered an eloquent tribute to Louis XVI, ending with "Huzza! Huzza! Long live the King of France!"

ARTHUR R. RAILTON is editor of this journal. He is grateful to the staff of the William Clements Library at the University of Michigan for its assistance on this project.

The French Connection could not have come at a better time. The revolution had bogged down. General Washington seemed without a strategy. The English were entrenched in three major ports: Philadelphia, New York and Newport. A leading Revolutionary War historian, John Shy, tells us that "the bankruptcy of the war effort [was] so evident by 1778 . . . [that] fear grew of the collapse of the Revolution itself."¹ But now there was hope. "The alliance changed the war," historian Barbara Tuchman has written, "putting a major power on the side of the rebels and embroiling Britain once more against her major enemy."²

For the first time in three years, General Washington allowed himself to believe victory was possible, that the end of the war was near. After years of uncertainty, of personal doubts of his own ability, of scattered and meaningless battles, Washington saw hope and he saw victory. He now had an ally with a navy able to cut the supply lines to the English bases. Without supplies, those keystones of British power would starve. So certain was Washington that he wrote his brother, quoting the odds of victory at 100 to 1.³

French assistance, now in the open, had begun secretly years before. From the start, France wanted the American rebels to win; not for any great love of America, but for what a defeat would do to England, France's enemy. Her help had started in 1776, when a fictitious trading company, Hortalez & Company, was set up to supply guns, ammunition, uniforms and other war materiel to the rebels, who were to pay in tobacco. It was a covert operation, not unlike those the C.I.A. would set up years later. Its creator was Caron de Beaumarchais, a French playwright, who loved intrigue and perhaps believed in the democratic cause. Working with him on the illicit activity was American Silas Deane, whom Congress had sent to Paris in June 1776, for

¹John Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed*, Ann Arbor Paperbacks, U. of Mich Press, 1990. p. 128.

²Barbara W. Tuchman, *The First Salute*, Alfred A. Knopf, NY., 1988, p. 142.

³Two months after the French treaties were signed, the British Parliament sent a Peace Commission to America to negotiate peace. Washington's odds looked good.

such a purpose.⁴

Despite Washington's optimism, despite its promise, the French Connection did not bring victory. If it had, Martha's Vineyard would not have experienced its greatest trauma, Grey's Raid, the following September.

The story of the dashing of what Washington called "the fairest hopes that ever were conceived" is a litany of missed opportunities, of botched plans and violent weather. It is the story of an August gale, perhaps a hurricane, that saved the Royal Navy from an almost certain defeat. It is a story of a breakdown of the Franco-American alliance that led the Marquis de Lafayette to say 50 years later: "In [Rhode Island] I have experienced more sudden and extreme alternations of hopes and disappointments than during all the vicissitudes of the American Revolution." It is a story of vast armadas sailing through the waters around Martha's Vineyard seeking naval battles that never happened.

When Washington huzzahed the French Connection, stating that "no event was ever received with more heartfelt joy," not all his countrymen agreed. France was a Catholic nation and some colonists saw the alliance as a conspiracy to bring popery to the still-unborn nation, predicting priests would arrive by the hundreds, carrying "crucifixes, books of mass and consecrated wafers."

Disagreeing also were many Loyalists, emotionally unwilling to join France, England's bitter enemy. These Tories, one-third of the population, were still loyal to the Crown, refusing to become active in the rebellion. One Tory newspaper described the Loyalists' position as believing "their country is [being] sold to the French king. . . [bringing] submission to French despotism and Papish superstition should Great Britain give up her colonies."⁵

But these dissenters were a minority. Most Americans were filled with hope as were Washington and his

⁴Deane was to become controversial, being accused of using his position for personal gain. Clearly, a favorite of Benjamin Franklin in Paris, he was sharply criticized by John Adams, who didn't like Franklin. See *The Adams Papers*, L. H. Butterfield, editor, Belknap Press, 1962, v.4, pp. 118-9, for this and other comments about Franklin by Adams.

⁵*Rivington's Gazette*, August 22, 1778.

young friend, General Lafayette, that the French alliance would bring victory. And victory meant independence.

During the previous winter, even patriots had become doubtful of victory. The British appeared stronger than ever. In the northeast, they occupied all the major ports except Boston. The Royal Navy had stopped the flow of coastal shipping and it was just a matter of time before the revolt would collapse. The stream of British ships passing Martha's Vineyard was enough to convince its inhabitants that neutrality was the most prudent course. There were occasional rebel victories, of course. Privateers, both American and French, would capture a provisions ship bound for Newport or New York, bringing cheers to patriots and profits to privateer investors, but to the British such events were only nuisances. To defeat Great Britain would require control of the sea, not sporadic acts of legal piracy. The French Connection offered genuine hope.

Of the British bases, Newport was most vulnerable. On an island too small to provide foodstuffs for the 10,000 troops and civilians living there, it depended on waterborne supplies from England (also some from Long Island, Block Island and even, occasionally, Cape Cod and the Islands). Surrounded by rebels on the mainland, Newport's lifeline was the ocean. Essential to the British effort, its frigates not only protected supply lines, but intercepted French ships bringing supplies to the rebels in Boston.

Once the French alliance was signed, the threat posed by the French navy caused a change in British tactics, according to a Hessian officer at Newport:⁶

Only a few prizes are being taken. I almost believe that the English ships do not cruise and cannot stay at sea because they constantly fear an attack on Rhode Island. I am strengthened in my belief by the fact that many French ships have safely reached Boston.

Was it any wonder then that for most Americans hopes of victory had suddenly brightened?

⁶Bernard A. Uhlendorf, editor, *Confidential Letters and Journals 1776--1784 of Adj. Gen. Major Baummeister*, Rutgers U. Press, N.J., 1957, p. 152.

The French lost no time in joining the fray. Even before Congress had ratified the treaty, a French naval force sailed from Toulon for America, its mission to destroy the British fleet then at Philadelphia at the head of Delaware Bay. After taking that city eight months earlier, the British troops had become comfortably settled, enjoying the hospitality of its Loyalist families (more than half of the Pennsylvanians were Loyalists). James Allen, prominent Philadelphia Loyalist, on May 11th wrote in his diary:

The military have lived a very gay life the whole winter, & many very expensive entertainments given, at most of which I have been.⁷

Among those enjoying that "very gay life" was Capt. John Andre, later to play a role in Grey's Raid (and much later, to be hung as a spy for conspiring with Benedict Arnold to capture West Point). But for now, Andre was living in style in Benjamin Franklin's house.⁸

France's speed in sending help to the Americans soon slowed. Commanding the Toulon fleet was Count d'Estaing, a former army officer who had transferred to the navy at the end of the Seven Years War. He seemed in no hurry to come to the rescue. His crossing of the Atlantic was extremely slow, taking 87 days, about double the normal time. The delay, he explained, was due to unfavorable winds and training exercises he ran to prepare the fleet for battle.

The highest ranked flag officer in the French navy, Charles Henry, Comte d'Estaing, 49 years old, had not been well accepted by the career navy men. They may have felt that one of them should have received this important command, not a former soldier. The mission he had been given

was remarkable for its importance, its vagueness, and the breadth of initiative he was expected to demonstrate in executing it. . . [he had] authority to make any arrangement he deemed appropriate for combined operations with Washing-

⁷Josef and Dorothy Berger, editors, *Diary of America*, Simon and Schuster, N.Y., 1957, p. 118.

⁸Franklin was in Paris, also living in style, as head of the three-man commission to enlist French help. The commission lived in separate buildings on the elegant grounds of the Hotel de Valentinois, overlooking the Seine. Dr. Franklin, as he was called, was thoroughly enjoying himself, becoming a favorite of French society, especially women (see p.297fn, v.2, and pp. 118-119, v.4, *The Adams Papers*).

ton's army.⁹

There may have been good reasons for his slow crossing, but it blasted Washington's hope of surprising the British in Philadelphia. British reconnaissance vessels spotted the French fleet and alerted General William Howe, commander of the British forces in America. Realizing how vulnerable his forces were in Delaware Bay, he ordered all units, army and navy, to evacuate Philadelphia and move to New York. When d'Estaing reached Delaware Bay, Howe's fleet was safely inside New York harbor, near Sandy Hook. This was missed opportunity number one.

When the British left, the Continental Congress moved back into Philadelphia in time to welcome the infant nation's first foreign minister, Conrad Gerard of France, who had crossed the ocean aboard the *Languedoc*, d'Estaing's flagship. Gerard was taken by frigate up the river to Philadelphia where he received an enthusiastic reception.

His arrival re-ignited the flames of anti-Catholicism. Silas Deane, the American agent who had fostered the alliance, had also sailed across the Atlantic with d'Estaing. He came ashore at Philadelphia with Gerard. In a welcoming ceremony traditional for Popes, Deane handed the French minister a clod of American turf. In the fashion of a Pope, Gerard, "applied it to his lips and then crossed himself with most apparent devotion." To anti-Catholics, that was clear proof that priests distributing crucifixes would soon follow.

Their first opportunity now lost, Washington and d'Estaing considered what to do next. The Count's major reason for coming to America was to attack the British fleet. His firepower was greater, his ships were larger and a victory seemed certain. The two men decided (without a face-to-face meeting) that d'Estaing should attack Howe's fleet in New York. The French fleet sailed up to the Hook on July 11th. Anticipating the move, Howe had his warships in battle formation, ready to bombard the French as they entered the harbor. The British army set up cannon on the

⁹John A. Tilley, *The British Navy and the American Revolution*, U. of So.Car. Press, 1987, p. 137.

tip of Sandy Hook to augment Howe's guns.

The French positioned themselves outside the Hook. Plainly visible across the sandy spit, were Howe's ships, cannons ready. Washington sent harbor pilots to guide d'Estaing through the channel. When the pilots learned that the large French men-of-war drew 27 feet of water (the largest English ship drew only 22 feet), they told d'Estaing he could not enter the harbor safely. The entrance was too shallow. The French admiral, seeing the less powerful British fleet just inside the Hook, offered 50,000 crowns (of his own money, it was said) to any pilot who would take his ships inside. Not a pilot accepted the offer. For ten days, his fleet lay at anchor while d'Estaing took his own soundings. "All pilots refused," he wrote, "and [my soundings] demonstrated they were right."

The two European armadas sat there staring each other down, separated by a narrow sandy spit. Then d'Estaing, on July 22nd, abandoned the battle plan and sailed away. It was his second missed opportunity.

A British officer in Newport, after hearing of these events, saw the missed opportunity differently. It was the British who had missed a chance to destroy Washington's Continental army. D'Estaing's presence had made it possible for Washington to move his troops from New Jersey to White Plains without opposition:

The Army under Sir Henry Clinton remains Encamped on the Three Islands [Manhattan, Governor's and Staten] and at Kingsbridge. . . . Mr. Washington had passed the Hudson with his whole Army and taken a position near White Plains. . . .

So extraordinary an event as the present, certainly never before occurred in the History of Britain! An Army of 50,000 men, and a Fleet of near 100 ships and armed vessels, are prevented from acting Offensively by the appearance on the American Coast of a French Squadron of 12 Sail of the line and 4 Frigates, without Troops. . . those [responsible] should answer with their heads.¹⁰

¹⁰*Diary of Capt. Frederick MacKenzie of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1930, entry for July 26, 1778. MacKenzie was incorrect; there were French troops on board, 4000 of them.

Again frustrated, Washington and d'Estaing developed a third plan, by far their most ambitious: French and Americans would launch a joint land-sea attack on Newport. It would be America's first international operation. General John Sullivan, who was in Providence commanding the provincials and militia surrounding Rhode Island, was named over-all commander. Washington sent units from his Continental army, trained at Valley Forge, from White Plains to reinforce Sullivan.¹¹ He asked New England governors to call up additional militia, enough to bring Sullivan's force to 15,000 -- about twice the number of British and Hessians on Rhode Island.

With hopes of French naval and land support, the local militia responded eagerly to a call-up of a month or less. They could easily take that much time off from their farming in August. Optimism was everywhere; hopes of victory were running high. President Ezra Stiles of Yale wrote in his diary:

There is an amazing Spirit for rushing towards Rh. Isld. spread 100 miles around. Militia are all gone thither from beyond New Haven.¹²

Henry Marchant of Providence, member of the Continental Congress, described the coming attack as "so glorious an Occasion."

New Englanders were eager to drive the British out of Rhode Island. Their shore batteries cut off coastal shipping into Narragansett Bay, shipping essential to the colonial economy. With French naval support and 4000 French marines at their side in battle, victory was a certainty.

General Nathanael Greene, a native Rhode Islander on Washington's staff at White Plains, was bouyant in a letter to Gen. John Sullivan, the over-all commander, on July 23rd. This would be Sullivan's chance to make history:

You are the most happy man in the World. What a child of fortune. The expedition going on against Newport I think

¹¹The more seasoned Continentals were divided under the two commands of Generals Lafayette and Greene to provide battle experience to the Provincials and militia.

¹²Howard W. Preston, *The Battle of Rhode Island, August 29th, 1778*, Office of Secretary of State, Providence, R.I., 1928, p. 25.

cannot fail of success. You are the first [American] General that has ever had an opportunity of cooperating with the French . . . I wish you success with all my Soul and intend if possible to come home to put things in a proper train in my department and to take command of part of the Troops under you. I wish most ardently to be with you.¹³

On Rhode Island, the British troops were worried more about food than about an attack. Provision vessels from England had not been getting to Newport on schedule and they were on short rations. MacKenzie, the Welshman on Rhode Island, wrote in his diary June 14th:

We have been greatly neglected of late with respect to the supplies of Provisions for the troops and have been furnished for some time by the Ships of War. If it had not been for the Cargo of the retaken Victualler brought in lately by the *Maidstone* we should now have been in distress for a Supply.

General Robert Pigot, commander on the island, was also greatly concerned about supplies, as he informed General Clinton July 17th:

The troops here have been obliged to eat sour Oatmeal and Rice instead of Bread which I was afraid would create sickness. I hope you will let us have a larger supply of Flour when it may be convenient. Clothes. . . is much wanted, for many of the Men are in Rags. . . [we need] to procure Fire Wood for the Garrison and the Inhabitants against next winter.¹⁴

General Henry Clinton, commander of all British forces in America, was having his own doubts about the supply lines. When the French joined the Americans, he suggested to Lord Germain, the Colonial Minister in London, that it might be prudent to pull out of New York and Long Island, holding only Newport. But, he warned, to supply Rhode Island all winter without New York would be impossible. Fire wood and fresh meat from Long Island were essential to Newport's survival.

The French alliance, although still without a military victory, was forcing England to rethink its position. A Peace

¹³Richard K. Showman, editor, *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, U. of N. Car. Press, Chapel Hill, N.C., 1980, v. II, p. 466. Greene was Washington's Quartermaster General, responsible for the troops being properly supplied. He soon joined the battle as second in command under Sullivan.

¹⁴*Clinton Papers*, William Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Commission had been sent from London to propose a negotiated peace. Congress, buoyed by the French arrival, turned down any proposal except the total removal of all troops and bases. It was a pivotal moment. One major battle success could bring England to her knees.

That battle, Washington felt certain, would take place on Rhode Island. The plan was simple. When d'Estaing arrived, Sullivan's troops would land on the northern end of the island and drive south toward Newport. At the same time, d'Estaing would land his 4000 marines on the west, flanking the retreating British. Shelling by d'Estaing's fleet would bombard the British lines above Newport, preventing reinforcements from the south. Newport would be taken in three days. The odds, Washington wrote his brother, were 100 to 1 in its favor. Newport's surrender would be "the finishing blow to British pretensions of sovereignty over the country. . . The rest of the enemy would disappear from America as fast as their canvas wings would convey them."¹⁵

Washington wasn't the only general who felt that way. When General Nathanael Greene arrived in Providence to take part in the attack, he wrote to his deputy in White Plains:

I am here and as busy as a Bee in a tar barrel, to speak in the sailors stile. . . We intend to give the Enemy a cursed flogging. We are almost in readiness.¹⁶

Leaving Sandy Hook, frustrated over his failure to engage Howe's fleet, d'Estaing sailed south, hoping to fool the British into thinking he was going to attack their bases in the West Indies. Once out of sight, the fleet changed course, heading northeast to Narragansett Bay. But the feint had not fooled the British. General Henry Clinton, writing years later, no doubt self-servingly, indicated that he suspected, even before the Americans had decided on it, that there would be an attack on Rhode Island:

¹⁵James Thomas Flexner, *George Washington in the American Revolution (1775--1783)*, Little, Brown & Co., Boston, 1967, p. 325.

¹⁶Showman, p. 478.

[I] took advantage of Count d'Estaing's remaining in a state of suspense before Sandy Hook to send thither [to R.I.] through the sound five battalions, which should they be fortunate enough to get to General Pigot, would, I flattered myself, enable that general officer to make a respectable stand. . . to gain time until the arrival of Admiral Byron should enable Lord Howe to go to his relief.¹⁷

One week after d'Estaing left Sandy Hook, Clinton ordered another 4000 troops in Flushing, New York, under Major General Charles Grey, to prepare to embark for Rhode Island.¹⁸ He also alerted Major General Tryon on the eastern end of Long Island to have his men ready to move to the defense of Newport. The British had not been fooled. For the American attack to succeed, it would have to begin at once. Any delay would favor the British, giving them time for their reinforcements to arrive.

Unfortunately, there was delay. When d'Estaing's fleet arrived off Point Judith on Narragansett Bay on July 29th, the American Continentals heading for Providence from White Plains were still somewhere in Connecticut on forced march. The French fleet anchored, using the time to replenish a low water supply. (Washington had told Governor Trumbull of Connecticut to send vessels with water from New London as d'Estaing had said he was running low.)

Aware of d'Estaing's eagerness to do battle, Sullivan sent General Lafayette to explain the delay to him. Lafayette did more. He cautioned the Admiral that the rebel militia were untrained volunteers, with no experience in battle. There was, Lafayette told d'Estaing, a world of difference between the French professional soldier and the civilian American. Among the officers the difference was even greater. French officers were, like d'Estaing and Lafayette, men of high social standing, from families long associated with the military. American officers, Lafayette pointed out, were "their social inferiors, being of the merchant, lawyer or

¹⁷William B. Willcox, editor, *Sir Henry Clinton's Narrative of The American Rebellion*, Yale U. Press, New Haven, 1954. Byron, with another armada, was sailing down from Canada to take over Howe's naval command.

¹⁸These were the troops that would later take part in Grey's Raid at Martha's Vineyard.

farmer class." Lafayette was so concerned about this difference that he had written to d'Estaing earlier on the subject. He clearly was not impressed with the troops under him:

The militia. . . will serve at least to make a show, to make a noise and to inspire fear, whilst your Frenchmen are doing the damage. . . You must expect to see some curious figures and mine at the head of them."¹⁹

Lafayette was right; the French were unimpressed. One French officer, watching the Americans coming ashore on Rhode Island wrote:

Hardly had the [French] troops disembarked before the militia. . . horse and foot arrived. I have never seen a more laughable spectacle. All the tailors and apothecaries in the country must have been called out. . . One could recognize them by their round wigs. They were mounted on bad nags and looked like a flock of ducks in cross-belts. The infantry was no better than the cavalry. . . I guessed that these warriors were more anxious to eat up our supplies than to make a close acquaintance with the enemy, and I was not mistaken; they soon disappeared.²⁰

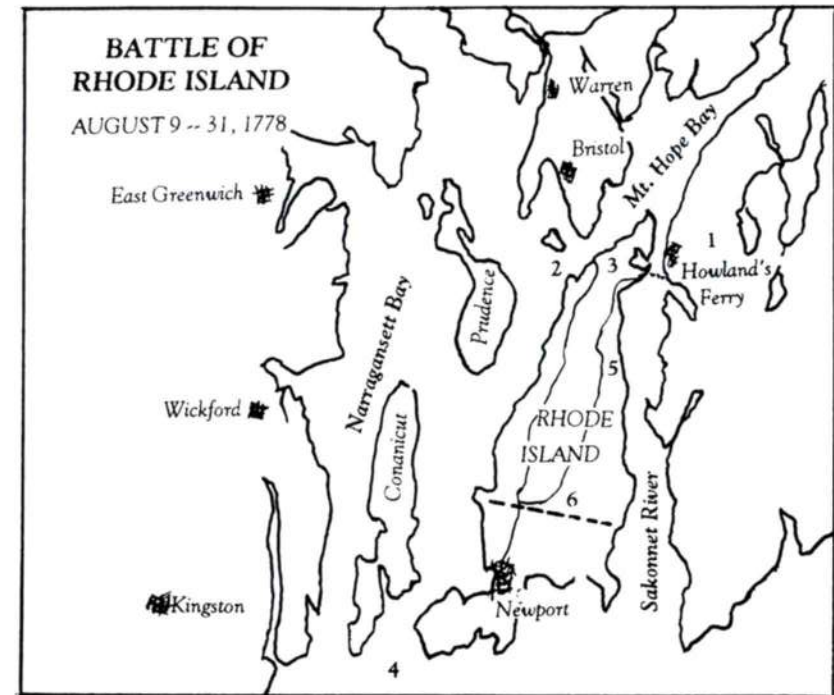
Lafayette's warnings may have increased d'Estaing's concern. They certainly could not have made him eager to take any unnecessary risks and may explain his caution, a caution that was excessive, American critics later charged.

General Washington had given General Sullivan full authority to conduct the battle, the first with his French ally, without additional orders from him:

I wish it had been in my power to spare a larger detachment of Continental troops; but remember I am left very near the enemy, with a force inferior to theirs upon New York and the adjacent Islands. . . I will not undertake at this distance to give orders. I submit every thing to your prudence.

Eager to encourage d'Estaing, Washington urged the Frenchman to forget his earlier frustration at New York; this time, victory was certain:

The disappointments you have experienced [at Sandy Hook] proceed from circumstances, which no human foresight or



1. Americans cross to the island; 2. French troops go ashore; 3. Brief joint action; 4. French sail away; 5. Americans resume attack; 6. Farthest American advance.

activity could control. . . it can scarcely be supposed that Lord Howe will be hardy enough to make any serious attempt [to come to Rhode Island from New York] with his present inferiority of strength.²¹

With d'Estaing's fleet standing ready, clearly visible off Brenton Reef, General Pigot quickly moved his troops into a defensive position. On July 30th, he ordered the burning of some small vessels, *Alarm*, *Spitfire*, *Kingfisher*, to prevent their capture. His troops on the north end of the island began withdrawing to stronger defensive positions around Newport to hold the city until Howe's fleet of 31 vessels and more than 8000 men arrived. When d'Estaing learned Howe had left New York, the French admiral, still waiting at anchor south of the island, became even more anxious to begin the attack. He sent a few warships inside Sakonnet Point to harass the troops on shore. On August 6th, these frigates behaved in a most ungentlemanly fashion,

²¹Washington was wrong. Howe was getting ready to sail to Newport.

¹⁹Preston, p. 19.

²⁰Scheer and Rankin, *Rebels and Redcoats*, World Publ. Co., Cleveland, quoting one of Lafayette's aides after seeing John Hancock's troops.

according to the Welshman, Capt. Frederick MacKenzie:

August 6th: Two [British] Officers of the 54th Regiment who were bathing this morning opposite the French frigates in the Seconnet, had three Cannon shot fired at them. . . . We thought this an Action very inconsistent with French politeness.

When the Continentals that Washington had sent from White Plains finally arrived, Sullivan and d'Estaing agreed to begin the invasion August 10th. The Americans began assembling at Tiverton, close to Howland's Ferry. General Sullivan moved there from Providence to command the attack. On the 8th, d'Estaing sent part of his fleet into the bay past Newport to take positions above Gould Island. Some ships were damaged by British shore batteries. A Hessian in Newport recorded the event:

August 8: At four o'clock in the afternoon the French Admiral Comte d'Estaing, who has lain already ten days. . . . outside the harbor, appeared and with eleven ships stormed into the harbor under a heavy thunder of cannon. [British fire damaged the French vessels which went] to the other side, where. . . . for forty-eight hours, day and night, [they were] repairing their damaged ships.²²

Seeing that the British defenders had pulled back, Sullivan on August 9th, one day before the agreed-upon invasion date, sent his troops onto the island, crossing at Howland's Ferry. He sent word to d'Estaing to land his marines. The French admiral, who had put many marines ashore while repairing his vessels, was upset that Sullivan had started the invasion a day early with no advance warning. Hurriedly, he recalled his men and landed them on the west shore of Rhode Island. It was foggy and neither force could see the other. Shortly after noon, with the French and Americans organizing to attack Newport, the fog lifted. Lord Howe's fleet, after a forced sail from New York, was visible off Point Judith, 25 miles to the south. Welshman MacKenzie reported the news in his diary:

August 9: Lord Howe's Fleet arrives at 1 p.m., 35 sail, large

²²Johann Conrad Dohla, *A Hessian Diary of the American Revolution*, U. of Okla. Press, Norman, Okla., 1990. (Original edition editor, 1913, Baron von Waldenfels.)

and small. French have 12 ships of Line and 4 frigates and are in possession of the harbor. British are outside. Both fleets anchored.

By this time, many French marines were ashore on Rhode Island preparing to do battle. When a lookout on d'Estaing's flagship spotted the British fleet in the distance, d'Estaing, more eager to fight the British navy than her ground troops, ordered all the marines back to their vessels. Washington's long-awaited joint operation had ended just as it was beginning.

In the morning, marines back aboard ship, d'Estaing, under a clear sky and a favorable wind, headed out to battle Howe, leaving three frigates and a galley to assist Sullivan (sending word that he would return when the naval battle was over). MacKenzie was observing from Newport:

August 10: French weighed anchor, began firing as they sailed out, no less than 2500 cannon shot, not a drop of blood, or a single English cannon damaged. 1 1/4 hours of firing. Sailed towards the British fleet, which had started to retire. French chased the British away to the SSW as darkness fell.

A major naval battle between two great European fleets was taking shape. It must have provided the inhabitants along the shore with a grand spectacle as the scores of men-of-war began jockeying for favorable battle positions.

On land, Generals Greene and Lafayette, with troops numbering upwards of 10,000 ready to attack, were astonished to see the French sail away. They awaited orders from Sullivan. Furious at d'Estaing, Sullivan ordered the advance on Newport to begin at dawn as planned. That night a powerful northeaster moved in, pounding the island with torrential rain and strong winds. By morning, the winds were so strong that Sullivan was forced to call off the attack. For two days, the storm raged, soaking the unprotected troops. General Sullivan wrote:

. . . to See the wretched soldiers Lying with their useless arms under the fences almost under water would Command pity from the most Savage Breast.²³

²³Preston, p. 27.

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²³Preston, p. 27.

Soldiers on both sides commanded pity. It was no ordinary storm. The famous Paul Revere, commanding a Boston artillery unit, wrote to his wife Rachel two days later:

We have had the most severe N. East Storm I ever knew, but thank Heaven, after 48 hours, it is over. . . the Enemy dare not show their heads. We have had about fifty who have deserted to us; Hessians and others. . . The French fleet are not returned, but I just heard they were off Point Judith.²⁴

During those two stormy days, Sullivan could do nothing but wait, unsure of his next move. The fields were soaked, deploying men and artillery was not easy. There was no word from d'Estaing, who must have had even greater problems. The ocean had been tossed into a fury. Although he knew he would get no immediate help from the French, Sullivan ordered the attack to resume Sunday night. General Greene wrote to his wife that Sunday morning:

The French fleet has not returned. We are within two miles of Newport, and are to begin our approaches to-night.²⁵

The British were digging in for the American attack: "Half a Gill of Rum, extra, is issued to each man employed on the working parties," MacKenzie wrote. British desertions continued as the troops considered an American victory inevitable. General Pigot sent word to Clinton on August 16th:

I am sorry to acquaint your Excellency that about Thirty Men have deserted, most provincials and Germans and a Second Lieut. of the Hessians is missing.²⁶

There was attrition among the Americans as well. Not from desertions, but for many in the militia, their enlistment periods had expired. They were free to return home. There was no way to stop them legally, except by calling on their patriotism.²⁷ They had served the time they had been called up for. Their initial enthusiasm, once so high, had been greatly diminished by the storm and the departure of

²⁴Esther Forbes, *Paul Revere and the World He Lived In*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1942, p. 329. What he heard was incorrect; d'Estaing had not returned.

²⁵Showman, p. 480.

²⁶Clinton Papers, v. 41.

²⁷There is some evidence that those trying to cross to the mainland by ferry were stopped and ordered back to their units.

the French. Sullivan sent hurried calls to the New England governors for replacements. "The number on the ground," he wrote to Governor Greene of Rhode Island, "is but little more than half the number we expected."

Despite dwindling troop strength, Sullivan was still optimistic, at least in his messages to Washington. Perhaps he was still counting on d'Estaing's return, as promised. Washington's letter to General Greene August 21st suggests that fact:

Your operations have been greatly retarded by the late violent storm, but as it is now over, I trust things will go on prosperously, and that you will be rejoined by Count D'Estaing who has been kept out so long by it. Indeed, from General Sullivan's Letter of the 17th, I flatter myself you will have made a compleat reduction of the Enemy's force before this reaches you.²⁸

British troops, especially the Hessians, continued to desert to the American lines. They saw themselves trapped with no place to go now that the British fleet, like the French, had disappeared. How would they get off the island when the rebels stormed into Newport? The deserters gave General Sullivan confidence:

Desertions [by the enemy] are very frequent & I find the Soldiers have Lost all Confidence in their officers & almost Look upon themselves as prisoners. I have done everything in my power to provoke the Enemy to action but in vain. I find we must drive them from their Hives by the force of our fire.²⁹

Again the weather was not cooperating. Driving them from their hives was not going to be simple. The heavy fog had returned and the troops waited, wondering when they would get orders to attack. One American soldier, Jeremiah Greenman, a poor speller, described the situation:

August 17: Thick wraining.

August 18: Thick fogey wether. . . holding ourselves in readiness for an atack, very fogey.³⁰

²⁸Showman, p. 486.

²⁹Preston, pp. 30-31.

³⁰Robert C. Bray and Paul E. Bushnell, editors, *Journal of Jeremiah Greenman*, No. Illinois U. Press, DeKalb, Illinois, 1978, p. 127.

On the morning of August 19th, the American artillery began firing blindly into the mist, hoping to hit their targets. By 10 a.m., 300 cannon had been fired. The bombardment continued through the next day. It was the day the call-up period of many more Massachusetts militia expired. Sullivan pleaded with them to stay to complete the "business they are so nobly engaged in . . . and this island [is] again restored to the domination of the United States." Few minds were changed.³¹

Despite the initial enthusiasm, the response of local militia had been disappointing. Sullivan had expected 3000 from Rhode Island, only 1228 came; Massachusetts promised 3000, but sent only 1386; Connecticut said it would send 1500, but actually sent only 412. Total troop strength on August 16th was 10,835 officers and men, including Washington's Continentals.³²

After two days, the fog cleared, revealing, as if by a miracle, the French fleet, anchored to the south. Greenman, the poor spelling militiaman, recorded the happy sight:

August 20, a Number of Sail seen off. sed to be the french fleet. the enemy and our people keep [up] a continual fire of Cannon. the french fleet it prov'd to be wich came to off the Southward the Island ware thay keep very still. we expect them in very soon. .

August 21--23 Holding our Selves in readiness . . .

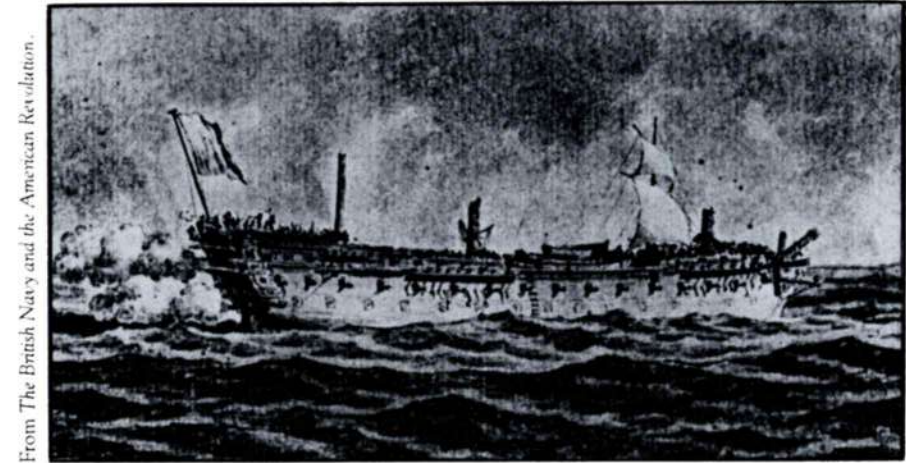
With d'Estaing back, Welsh Captain MacKenzie in Newport had something more to worry about:

August 20. French fleet returned. 16 ships lined up offshore. Concern of an invasion by the French.

MacKenzie need not have worried. The storm, so violent on shore, had been much more destructive at sea. Both fleets, the English and the French, had been severely damaged and neither commander thought of anything except keeping their vessels afloat. The great naval battle d'Estaing had crossed the Atlantic to win, had not material-

³¹Call-up periods for militia were very brief. Rhode Island militia, on August 17th, were called up "to do duty for twenty days and to march with three days provisions ready dressed." Preston, p. 30.

³²Preston, p. 30.



From *The British Navy and the American Revolution*.

Count d'Estaing's flagship, *Languedoc*, lost her three masts and rudder in the storm.

ized. His flagship, *Languedoc*, had been totally dismantled, her rudder lost. She was "dead in the water," towed in by another vessel. Several other ships had been damaged enough to put the entire fleet out of action. The British ships had also suffered damage, although less than the French. Howe had sailed back to New York for repairs. The violent storm had defeated both fleets. Another opportunity lost.

Anchored off Beaver Tail Light at the entrance to Narragansett Bay, d'Estaing sent an officer ashore to inform Sullivan that he had returned as promised, but that he could not take part in the battle for Newport. He was taking his entire fleet to Boston for repairs. Sullivan was furious and sent his two top generals, Greene and Lafayette, to the *Languedoc* to persuade d'Estaing to have the repairs done locally. Everything could be repaired in Providence as well as or better than in Boston. If d'Estaing insists on going to Boston, Sullivan argued, he should put his 4000 troops ashore to reinforce the Americans, whose militia were going home, partly out of disgust with the French. The French marines would make victory a sure thing.

The two generals presented Sullivan's points. D'Estaing seemed persuaded, but said he would have to discuss it with his captains, requesting that the arguments be

put in writing. General Greene spent the afternoon aboard the *Languedoc* summarizing Sullivan's position, ending with a plea to keep alive this first French-American operation. The future relationship of their two countries was in the balance:

. . . safe asylum [can be provided] up in Providence River above Conancut Point. . . . the interest of the two Nations is highly concerned in the success of the present expedition. . . the first instance of cooperation of forces. . . If there has appeared any little indiscretions on our part, . . the greatness of your Excellency's mind will pass them over as too trifling to be brought in competition with our great and natural interest. . . with the assistance of the French Fleet and French forces, we can get possession of Newport in two Days.³³

The generals reported to Sullivan that d'Estaing's orders from the French King were, if damaged, to sail to the safety of Boston for repairs. Boston was well known to French supply vessels and privateers. Also, it was clear that d'Estaing was worried about reports that a British fleet under Admiral Byron, who was coming to replace Howe, was sailing down from Canada. D'Estaing knew Lord Howe would be arriving from New York as soon as his vessels were repaired and he didn't want to be caught in the Providence River when these two fleets converged. The security of Boston harbor was much more inviting.

Greene and Lafayette went back to Tiverton feeling certain that d'Estaing would not stay. That night, August 22nd, Greene wrote to Charles Pettit, his deputy at White Plains:

The Devil has got into the fleet. They are about to desert us, and go round to Boston. The [Newport] Garrison would be all our own in a few days if the fleet and French forces would but only cooperate with us, but alas they will not. They have got a little shattered in the late storm and apprehension of a junction of Byron's and Howe's fleets may prove their ruin. . our expedition is now at an end; like all the former attempts it will terminate with disgrace, because unsuccessful. Never was I in a more perplexing situation.³⁴

³³Showman, pp. 480-82.

³⁴Showman, p. 491.

The following day, without informing Sullivan, d'Estaing set sail for Boston, ending all hope of French assistance. Washington's glorious dream had vanished. Deputy Governor Bowen of Rhode Island, serving on Sullivan's staff, relayed the bad news to Governor Greene:

I have the mortification to inform you that the Count de Esting [sic] sailed Yesterday Morning. . . You cannot realize the Consternation the Army is thrown into by this movement. . . the Enemy will heave in a Reinforcement . . . in Three or Four days and we will be obliged to leave the Island.

There was indeed consternation. Rev. Manasseh Cutler, serving in the army, wrote: "Our most sanguine hopes were cropped in the bud." The commander of the Second Rhode Island Continentals, Col. Israel Angell, noted the departure in his diary: ". . . they left us in a most Rascally manner and what will be the Event God only knows." Nine American generals signed a strong protest which was delivered to d'Estaing as he sailed into Boston harbor. It was a powerful indictment:

. . . the taking of dismayed Ships out of port to carry them to another port. . . is unwarranted by precedent and unsupported by reason. . . the honor of the French nation must be injur'd by their fleet abandoning their allies upon an Island in the midst of an Expedition agreed to by the Count himself. . . the order received from the King . . . for his fleet to retire to Boston cannot without doing injustice to that wise and good Monarch be Supposed to Extend to the removal of the whole fleet in the midst of an Expedition on account of an Injury that happened to two or three of his ships. . . no possible reason can be assigned for the Count d'Estaing's taking with him the Land forces he has on board and which might be of great advantage in the Expedition and of no possible use to him in Boston. [Signers included Sullivan, Greene and Hancock; General Lafayette was not one of the nine.]

D'Estaing did not reply, explaining later with appropriate dignity, "this paper imposed on [me] the painful but necessary law of profound silence." General Sullivan continued berating the French in his General Orders to the troops, stating he hoped "the event will prove America able to pro-

cure with her own arms that which her allies refuse to assist her in obtaining." Sullivan also wrote d'Estaing a biting letter, a copy of which the French Admiral forwarded to General Greene, adding a few personal thoughts about Sullivan and his eagerness for newspaper headlines:

... [Sullivan began] as you saw in his letter, by scolding me unjustly, and finishing by telling me in confidence that he has rivals whom he supposes his enemies. . . the obstinacy which General Sullivan exhibits in national imputations and the abuse of his place in filling incessantly the public papers. . . might at length create ill blood between the individuals of two nations who are and ought to be united.³⁵

Lafayette, like d'Estaing, was shocked by Sullivan's attack on his beloved France. "My native land is dearer to me than America," he said patriotically. Gen. Nathanael Greene, whose troops were fighting alongside Lafayette's, was asked by Washington to try to heal the wounds.³⁶ In his General Orders to the troops, Greene explained that d'Estaing had gone to Boston on orders of the King. Washington, who valued the French Connection more than anyone, attempted to soothe Lafayette by emphasizing the risk that comes with a free government:

Everybody. . . will acknowledge the advantages which we have derived from the French fleet, and the zeal of the commander of it; but, in a free and republican government, you cannot restrain the voice of the multitude. . . Let me beseech you, my good Sir, to afford a healing hand to the wound that unintentionally has been made. . . that the honor, glory, and mutual interest of the two nations may be promoted and cemented in the firmest manner.³⁷

On September 2nd, while the French ships were being repaired in Boston, Washington wrote to d'Estaing, promising assistance and urging him to return to the battle:

The importance of the fleet under your command to the common cause. . . would not permit me but to be deeply affected with the information of the disappointment and injuries

³⁵Showman, pp. 530-31.

³⁶Greene was perhaps Washington's most trusted aide, being his Quartermaster General. There were rumors that Washington saw him as his successor. (Flexner, p. 368.)

³⁷Jared Sparks, editor, *The Writings of George Washington*, Little, Brown & Co., Boston, 1855, v. VI, p. 49.



British Navy and the American Revolution.

The French fleet, except for disabled *Languedoc* and *Protecteur*, is inside Boston harbor. The two dismasted ships are being jury-rigged so they can sail through channel.

you sustained in the late unfortunate storm. . . my countrymen will exert themselves to give you every aid. . . that you may. . . renew your efforts against the common enemy.³⁸

As soon as d'Estaing had left Rhode Island aboard his jury-rigged flagship, Sullivan met with his general officers. What should they do now? General Lafayette was negative:

I do not approve of continuing the siege. The time of the militia is out, and they will not longer sacrifice their private interest to the common cause. A retreat is the wisest step.

Greene was more confident. He proposed a flanking attack from Satchusest Beach by "300 of the best troops in the Army [commanded by] a good officer." Once a beachhead was established, the main body of troops would follow and "get upon the high ground on the back of [Newport] and there form in good order." The plan, while approved by a few of the generals, was turned down by Sullivan because not enough seasoned troops were available.³⁹ Discouraged, General Greene wrote to Washington:

This disagreeable event has. . . ruined all our operations. It struck such a panic among the Militia and Volunteers that they began to desert by shoals.⁴⁰ The [French] fleet no sooner set sail than they began to be alarm'd for their safety. . . We had a very respectable force as to numbers, between Eight and nine thousand rank and file upon the ground. . .

³⁸Sparks, p. 51.

³⁹Showman, p. 492.

⁴⁰The shoal reference seems to suggest that troops, who had to have a pass to cross by ferry, were wading to the mainland across the shoals when their officers refused to issue passes.

but we could not make up the necessary number that was thought sufficient to warrant the attempt, which was 5000 including the Continental and State Troops. This body was to consist of men that had been in actual service before, not less than nine months. However, the men were not to be had . . . Our strength is now reduced from 9000 to between 4 and 5000. All our heavy cannon on garrison Carriages, heavy and superfluous Stores of every kind are removed to the main.⁴¹

On August 26th, several of Howe's fast frigates arrived from New York, hoping to catch d'Estaing before he was inside Boston harbor. They put ashore a number of troops to reinforce Pigot's forces before continuing after the French. With these added troops, the British counter-attacked, attempting to drive the Americans off the island. Cannon were brought up from Newport. Before noon, two of Howe's warships from New York sailed into the Bay to add to the firepower. From seven in the morning until four in the afternoon, on that hot August day, the battle raged. The Americans held their lines under the fierce bombardment. Sullivan, declaring victory, wrote to Governor Greene:

The Enemy having at Length wearied themselves with vain Efforts, retired to a Chain of Hills about a mile in our Front. . . The Army having been without Rest or food Last night & without any food to Day and in Constant action through most of the day it was not thought advisable to attack the Enemy . . . victory on our side was Compleat but our Loss considerable.

One Hessian soldier, while overestimating the American strength, seemed to agree with General Sullivan. He sounded weary "with vain Efforts" in the letter he wrote home a week later. And, like soldiers throughout history, he was unhappy with the food:

Since July 29th, on which day the French fleet first appeared here. . . and 25,000 rebels moved against the Island, we have believed nothing more certain than that we should be captured. . . it is so sorry looking around us, as far as fresh vegetables and meat are concerned. . . we shall hardly have anything here in a fortnight, since we are now having to live on

⁴¹Quartermaster General Greene is reassuring the Commander in Chief that the most valuable armaments were safe from capture.

nothing but salt meat, dried peas and rice. In the last engagement here we Hessians lost 105 men in killed, wounded, and prisoners."⁴²

One modern-day student of military logistics has noted that British supplies were especially short that summer; the Hessian soldier had a right to complain:

The results of the logistics debacle of 1778 were various. . . it brought some unrest among the [British] troops. The shortage of flour made it necessary to issue rice in place of flour two days a week as early as the summer of 1778.⁴³

Sullivan reported his losses in the fierce battle at 211 killed, wounded and missing. General Pigot gave the British losses as 260. The *Providence Gazette*, on September 12th, reported a much higher number of British losses:

By an officer who arrived on Wednesday in a Flag of Truce from Newport . . . acknowledged that they lost 1023 men killed, wounded and taken.⁴⁴

That night, Sullivan decided to withdraw his forces to the mainland. During the lull in the battle Sunday, the Americans busily set up lines as though readying to counter-attack the following day, but "at dark the tents were struck and the troops and remaining baggage began to pass over the ferry" on flat-bottomed boats waiting there. By Monday night, all troops were safely on the mainland.

Sullivan reported to Congress, "not a man was left behind, nor the smallest article lost." Nonetheless, it must have been a disappointing ride to the mainland for troops who had crossed to the island three weeks earlier, filled with expectations of victory. Among the most disappointed certainly was General Sullivan who returned to Providence to re-establish his command post. He, no doubt, had expected to be setting it up in Newport, not back in Providence.

General Greene described his feelings to another general:

⁴²Ray W. Pettengill, translator, *Letters from America, 1776--1779*, Kennikat Press, Port Washington, N.Y., 1964, p. 169.

⁴³R. Arthur Bowler, *Logistics and the Failure of the British Army in America, 1775--1783*, Princeton U. Press, N.J., 1975, p. 121.

⁴⁴Quoted in Preston, p. 43. A photocopy of Preston's work is available at the Society for anyone who would like full details on this relatively unknown R.I. battle.

The disappointment is very great and our mortification not less so. To lose such a prize that seemed so much in our power is truly vexatious.⁴⁵

The Americans "considered themselves fortunate to have escaped. . . The French alliance no longer brought cheer. . . some were even suspicious of the courage of the new allies. . . [now] the British held the island of Rhode Island in stronger force than ever."⁴⁶

Washington's favorite Frenchman, General Lafayette, had not participated in the battle. But it wasn't by his choice. When the British counterattacked on August 28th, General Sullivan sent Lafayette to Boston to plead with d'Estaing to march his marines overland to join the battle. Lafayette covered the 70 miles on horseback in seven hours, arriving in Boston just as d'Estaing was sailing into the harbor. The two Frenchmen met the next day. D'Estaing refused to send his troops, but offered to return to Rhode Island and join the fighting as a colonel. It was a gallant, but useless gesture. The Americans needed many troops not one colonel. Besides, it was too late.

Discouraged by d'Estaing's refusal, Lafayette headed back to rejoin his troops. He arrived exhausted after covering the 70 miles in 6 1/2 hours. His haste was unnecessary. The fighting was over. When he arrived, his men were in retreat. It was a great disappointment. He wrote Washington:

That there has been an action fought where I could have been, and where I was not, is a thing which will seem as extraordinary to you, as it seems to myself.⁴⁷

Fortunately, the weather, which had been so cruel to Sullivan earlier, had saved the Americans from disaster. The main element of Clinton's fleet, carrying General Grey and his 4500 troops from New York, was delayed by unfavorable winds, arriving at Rhode Island the day after Sullivan's troops had left the island. Had Clinton arrived earlier, the

⁴⁵Showman, letter to General Heath, p. 495.

⁴⁶Preston, p. 47.

⁴⁷Sparks, p. 50fn. One account states that Lafayette was so disgusted he returned immediately to Boston (Veditz and James, *The History of North America*, v. VI, George Barrie and Sons, Phil. 1904). He did not.

orderly retreat might not have been so orderly. Clinton explained to London how the delay had spoiled his plans:

Upon [learning that the French fleet had left Rhode Island], I judged it advisable to sail thither immediately, in order to raise the siege and avail myself of whatever advantages the now exposed situation of the rebels might offer. But our passage having been unluckily retarded by calm and contrary winds, and time being consequently given for alarming Sullivan by the beacons along the coast, we had the mortification on our arrival there to find that [the rebels] had quitted the island the night before.⁴⁸

The delay, Clinton wrote, saved the Americans from disaster. Had he arrived while Sullivan's forces were on the island, in Clinton's mind at least, Sullivan's army would have been captured by the coordinated action of Grey and Pigot's troops and Clinton's fleet. Washington's army would have suffered what might have been a fatal blow.

Although Sullivan didn't credit "beacons along the coast" with warning him, he did, with surprising suddenness, withdraw after declaring victory. It is likely he had been informed of Clinton's approach. The timeliness of the retreat earned him high praise from Congress, grateful that those 9000 men and their weapons had not been lost. Congress also thanked Lafayette for his extraordinary (although fruitless) trip to Boston. Generous with its praise, it also resolved "that his Excellency Count d'Estaing hath behaved as a brave and wise officer. . . the officers and men under his command have rendered every benefit to these states . . . entitled to the regards of the friends of America."

Congress was still courting d'Estaing and the French, whose assistance was essential to victory. Washington, although desolated by the successive failures, still supported d'Estaing. His loyalty may have stemmed from the realization that some responsibility rested with him. Neither he nor anybody around him was experienced in international affairs, in the give and take required for smooth relations. The few Americans with such experience were in Paris, not with Washington in White Plains, and doing little except

⁴⁸Willcox, p. 102.

attend banquets and soirees. These men were members of a commission sent by Congress to persuade the French (and other nations) to join the Americans. Initially, the three principals on the commission were Benjamin Franklin, Silas Deane and Arthur Lee.

Deane had been recalled in November 1777 to answer charges of misconduct. In his place, Congress appointed John Adams, who had just retired from that body. Arriving in Paris in April 1778, Adams, a no-nonsense, humorless man, discovered that there were no records being kept, something he blamed on Franklin, the senior member. Fortunately, Adams was a systematic person and with his arrival in Paris, we have in *The Adams Papers* a detailed description of what the French government knew about the events in America. Amazingly, the commission seemed unaware of the d'Estaing's misfortunes and the split that his caution was causing. Of course, some of the reason was the slowness of communications, but Congress appears not to have kept its commission informed. At least from the Adams account, it appears that the d'Estaing failures were of no concern in Paris at the time.⁴⁹

Washington might also be criticized for selecting General Sullivan to lead the joint operation. The New Hampshire general was no diplomat:

Sullivan, the son of indentured servants from Ireland, . . . used his mouth incautiously, giving orders to d'Estaing -- he of the French nobility, tender skin, and a higher military rank than Sullivan's. . . French unease about their American colleagues was not lessened by the discovery that their own chart of Narragansett Bay was better than Sullivan's.⁵⁰

James Thomas Flexner, the leading biographer of Washington, describes the incompatibility of the two men:

From the first, d'Estaing and Sullivan had got on badly. The French courtier admiral had complained that the shortset,

⁴⁹Adams first learned of d'Estaing's arrival at Sandy Hook from a London newspaper. There's only one substantive mention of d'Estaing in *The Adams Papers*: December 15, 1779, Adams wrote that he urged the Kings of France and Spain to send "20 or 30 more Battle Ships" to d'Estaing so he might "take all the British Forces and Possessions in America." This was more than a year after the battle of Rhode Island, which went unmentioned.

⁵⁰Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, Oxford U. Press, N.Y., 1982, p. 431fn.

ruddy, rough Irish-American frontiersman "has shown towards me the manner of a commander to his servant; he styles himself my general. . . I was forced to show an austere firmness to make the allies understand that while their troops were good for a defensive, they had no qualities necessary for attack."⁵¹

The Americans, enjoying the role of frontiersmen devoid of social graces, accused the French of being "thin, polite, and always dancing." General Lafayette took umbrage at Sullivan's General Orders to the troops. And with reason. As the split between the two nations widened, he told Washington he felt "more upon a warlike footing in the American lines than when I come near the British lines at Newport."⁵²

In Washington's defense it must be said that he was, no doubt, weary of the parade of European military "experts" Congress kept sending him. These men, each claiming to be a military strategist more experienced than Washington, were usually given high commissions, some even became generals. There were a few who served him well, but others were con artists, more talk than action. At staff meetings, Washington felt uncomfortable with the "foreign jabbering" that went on. The Marquis de Lafayette was an exception. There was almost a father-son relationship between the Commander-in-Chief and the 20-year-old Marquis, of whom he wrote: "I do devoutly wish that we had not a single foreign officer among us except the Marquis de Lafayette."⁵³ Sensing the need for an intermediary (not simply an interpreter) between d'Estaing and Sullivan, he sent General Lafayette to Rhode Island to serve under Sullivan, passing over several older Americans, surely not a popular move.⁵⁴

Perhaps such political in-fighting was inevitable, an accepted part of any such operation. It also existed among the British, many of whose officers were not pleased with how their commanders had responded to the French. As we have already seen, when Washington escaped to White

⁵¹Flexner, p. 326.

⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 327.

⁵³*Ibid.*

⁵⁴Washington also sent another favorite, Gen. Nathanael Greene, a R.I. native.

Plains, Captain MacKenzie, commented bitterly:

So extraordinary an event as the present, certainly never before occurred in the History of Britain! . . . those [responsible] should answer with their heads.

Later, in September, when d'Estaing was able to sail his crippled fleet to Boston without resistance, British Lt. Col. Francis Downman, stationed in New York, wrote in his diary:

Sept. 10: Lord Howe and his fleet are returned to New York. Monsieur d'Estaing has escaped him & got safe into Boston. O Shame! Shame! upon us; what the devil are we about?

In the safety of Boston harbor, d'Estaing leisurely set about the repairing of his vessels. His long stay there was interrupted by protests as Bostonians, enthusiastic patriots, accused him of letting them down on Rhode Island. The abuse went both ways. The French sailors were unimpressed with the American military and were not reluctant to make their opinions known. One Hessian officer, a prisoner of war in Cambridge, wrote home:

About seven weeks ago the French fleet came to Boston. . . . French and Americans do not like each other . . . the French officers often express themselves to us on this point.⁵⁵

Bostonians made no secret of their views, sometimes becoming violent, as in one famous incident. As is often the case, the details are blurred. One contemporaneous account gives this description, based on a report by a Tory:

While he was in Boston a squabble happened between the American and French Sailors, for the former accusing the latter of Cowardice in quitting Rhode Island, etc. Thirty French men and 8 Americans lost their lives in the quarrel. Many of the French troops and Sailors are sick in the hospitals chiefly with the Flux.⁵⁶

Stories about such confrontations were widely circulated by the press and became part of the conventional wisdom. One history published in 1795 in Philadelphia re-

⁵⁵Pettengill, p. 145. Letter from a Brunswick, Germany, officer. In this time of civilized warfare, officers taken prisoner were not kept in stockades, but were placed on "parole" and could socialize, as these did, with the enemy!

⁵⁶Clinton Papers, v. 42:39.

peated the above account and added:

A much more violent affray happened about the same time between the American and French seamen in the city and port of Charlestown. The quarrel began there, as at Boston, on shore, and at night, and ended in the most desperate hostilities. A pitched battle was fought with cannon and small arms; the French firing from their ships, whither they had been hastily driven, and the Americans from the adjacent shore and wharfs. Several were killed and a much great number wounded.⁵⁷

It is not easy to know what the facts were. Today's accepted version is less violent, placing the confrontation at a bakery d'Estaing had set up on shore to supply bread to his men. Bostonians, their food in short supply, stormed the place, demanding bread. The French tried to prevent looting. A French officer was killed. (Some reports inaccurately identified the slain officer as d'Estaing's son.)

Tory politics and anti-Catholicism may have played a part in the violence. James Warren, Plymouth representative (Whig) in the Massachusetts legislature, wrote to Samuel Adams of the Continental Congress:

We have a foolish Spirit prevailing with rancour against the French for leaving Rhode Island. I call it a foolish one because in my Opinion, if the Conduct of the French has been bad, Common discretion would dictate silence to us, and that the only thing was to make the best of it at present. . . . but we have always been plagued more with the Folly of the Whigs than the wickedness of the Tories.⁵⁸

The violence troubled General Washington, who was determined to keep the split from becoming a national issue, apparently even to the extent of censorship. Reporting to Congress on September 4, he wrote:

Congress may rely that I will use every means in my power to conciliate any differences that may have arisen in consequence of Count d'Estaing's going to Boston, and to prevent a publication of the protest upon the occasion.⁵⁹

⁵⁷George Athan Billias, editor, *The History of the British Empire, from the Year 1765 to the End of 1783*, v. I, Gregg Press, Boston, 1972, pp. 407--08. (Photographic reprint of a work originally published in Philadelphia in 1795.)

⁵⁸Warren-Adams Letters, Mass. Hist. Society, 1925, v. II, p. 46.

⁵⁹Washington's Writings, Ferdinand Andrews, Boston, 1838, v. VI, p. 52.

Although many Bostonians condemned the French, not all held d'Estaing in low regard. He was feted, as might be expected, by the city's high society. After all, he was the ranking flag officer in the French navy, the navy that held the key, many thought, to victory. Furthermore, he was a French Count! On September 24th, shortly after the bakery riot, a soiree was held for d'Estaing, perhaps only one of many during his long stay in Boston. A company named Bowdoin & Reed delivered "6 loaves of Sugar, Wth. 68 lb. for the entertainment of Count De Estaing." It isn't known who hosted the entertainment, but the bill for the sugar was sent to the Board of War on October 25th.⁶⁰

Two months after arriving in Boston, on November 4th, d'Estaing and his fleet sailed out of Boston for Martinique without notifying General Washington. It was a breach of military orders (and possibly civilian etiquette). Washington probably was not disturbed, by now he had given up his support for d'Estaing.⁶¹ The French departure seemed to be of greater concern to the British than to the Americans. Clinton initially feared the French were heading to Canada to retake it from the British. Then when d'Estaing was observed sailing south, Clinton worried about the British West Indies. So great was the concern that the House of Lords voted on (and almost passed) a bill giving independence to the Americans so that Clinton's ships and men would be free to sail to the West Indies to defend British islands.⁶²

Although d'Estaing later returned to join the Americans in the struggle for the South, he never came back to New England, a place he clearly preferred to forget. (His efforts in the South were not much more successful.) Despite all the anticipatory huzzas, the French Connection had accomplished little.

So ended the series of operations in which Howe and

⁶⁰ Amelia Forbes Emerson, *Early History of Naushon Island*, privately printed, Boston, 1935, p. 294. The Bowdoin in the company's name was James Bowdoin, owner of Naushon.

⁶¹ In 1781, Washington told Marshal Rochambeau that d'Estaing was wrong about the depth of water at Sandy Hook and he could have made it into the harbor (Flexner, p. 429).

⁶² Burke Davis, *George Washington and the American Revolution*, Random House, N.Y., 1975, p. 274.

d'Estaing were the leading protagonists. As so often happens, no great battle was fought, there was no great dramatic event, and yet vital decisions depended on the decisions of the two commanders.⁶³

When Henry Clinton's fleet of 72 vessels with Major General Charles Grey and his 4500 soldiers on board arrived at Newport September 1st, the stage was set for Grey's Raid on Martha's Vineyard ten days later. Clinton, his ships filled with seasoned fighters eager to storm ashore, had arrived too late to fight Sullivan at Newport. Seeking another mission, on September 2nd, he sent this directive to General Grey, commander of the fighting troops:

As the R. [Rebel] army opposite us is chiefly composed of militia I will take it for granted that they will retire to their farms soon . . . Bedford tho' an object of great Consequence is not to be attempted at this time, while the Rebels remain in Force at or near Howland's Ferry. N. [New] London is therefore in my opinion the object of the moment. . . I would not however advise you to stay there above 48 hours, great numbers such as they are, may be assembled in that time.⁶⁴

At sunset that day, the armada headed for the privateering port of New London. Once again, plans went awry. When Clinton's flagship arrived off New London on the 3rd, the transports carrying Grey's soldiers were far behind. Clinton sent a vessel inside the harbor to reconnoiter. It reported there were not enough targets to warrant a landing, especially with a reduced force. Clinton explained his decision:

I thought a partial landing might be attended with more hazard than the few vessels and stores. . . there could compen-

⁶³ Capt. W.M. James, *The British Navy in Adversity*, Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1926, p. 108. In September 1779, d'Estaing returned to support American troops in an unsuccessful attempt to recapture Savannah, Ga. In the battle, d'Estaing was wounded and returned to France. He was guillotined as a Loyalist in the French Revolution. His life was filled with misfortune, mostly beyond his control. It would be a gross injustice to leave the impression that the French were of little value to the American cause. In 1781, the French navy defeated the British fleet off Yorktown, Va., and it was the 7000 French troops, joining with 9000 Americans, that won the victory over the British at Yorktown, ending the war. Count d'Estaing, sadly, was back in France at this triumphant moment.

⁶⁴ Clinton was worried that, given time, Washington would be able to move troops to New London, jeopardizing the raid.

sate. I therefore directed. . . Grey to proceed without loss of time to the eastward and I returned to New York.⁶⁵

Captain John Andre, aide to General Grey, detailed the events, describing them differently. It was the sounding of alarm by the citizens that had made a landing too risky:

September 3d We passed Fisher's Island and stood for New London. . . Sir Henry Clinton and General Grey came on board the *Galatea*, to . . . obtain a nearer view of the place. Alarm guns were fired ashore. It was Sir Henry Clinton's intention. . . to have landed the Troops and proceeded immediately to destroy what shipping or stores were to be found . . . [but] it was thought more advisable, after having spread an alarm here, to proceed to New Bedford in Buzzard's Bay. General Grey returned on board the *Carisfort* and Sir Henry Clinton sailed this evening in the *Galatea* for New York.

September 4th The Rebels appeared to be at work on the beach. At five in the afternoon, the Fleet sailed away. . . and at sunset bore away for the Eastward.

When Clinton sailed to New York, Maj. Gen. Charles Grey took command (Captain Fanshaw, naval commander, continued to be responsible for the operation of the vessels). Following Clinton's directive, Grey proceeded east to New Bedford and Fairhaven to attack the privateers. His orders to the troops were clear: only privateers and materials devoted to privateering were to be destroyed. Plundering of other property was forbidden.⁶⁶

The assault on New Bedford was launched Saturday, September 5th, at 6 p.m. As we will learn, General Grey's orders against plundering of property not involved in privateering were ignored. After two days of destruction at New Bedford and Fairhaven, the fleet moved to Holmes Hole, bringing the Island its only military involvement in war.

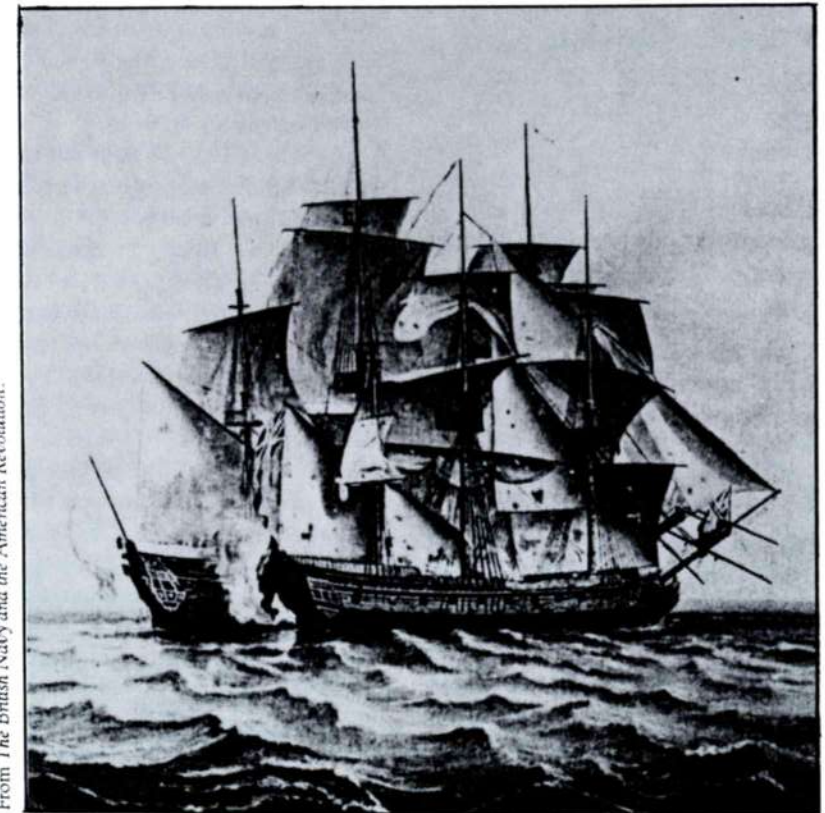
The concluding installment of this series will detail the three episodes that make up what has come to be known as "Grey's Raid": first, the very destructive assault on New Bedford and Fairhaven; second, a quick raid with slight de-

⁶⁵Willcox, p. 103.

⁶⁶On the way to New Bedford, Grey met up with Howe's fleet returning from its fruitless chase of d'Estaing to Boston. Howe agreed to wait off Block Island to be ready to help if Grey ran into problems.

struction of property at Falmouth; and third, the raid on Martha's Vineyard that had some destruction of property in Holmes Hole and Edgartown, but the primary purpose of which was the collection of livestock to be used as provisions for the short-rationed men in His Majesty's army and navy.

(To be concluded)



From *The British Navy and the American Revolution*.

British 50-gun ship *Iris* and French ship *Cesar* exchange broadsides before the violent northeaster forced the fleets to separate and sail into port for repairs.

Documents

A Running Account
of
Matters & Things

by HENRY BAYLIES

Life doesn't get any simpler for Rev. Henry Baylies (1822-1893). A Methodist minister who had to give up preaching because of a throat ailment, he is now principal of the newly-opened high school in Edgartown. He had for one term served as headmaster of the Dukes County Academy in West Tisbury, but it had to be closed due to declining enrollment, partly caused by the opening of the Edgartown school.

His happiest experience in a long time comes when he, with a few friends, sails to the Camp Ground (in what is now Oak Bluffs) to set up their tents for the upcoming August camp meeting. The sail and the beauty of the Grounds lift his spirits greatly.

Harriette, his wife, continues to be seriously ill. She is his second wife and they have been married only nine months. His first wife died a year after their marriage. Both are only in their mid-twenties.

Henry is considering resigning his position at the high school, a post he has held for only one term. Health is the reason, both his and Harriette's. He has been unable to devote himself totally to his work because of her constant need for care. He seems convinced they must move to a place with a less "bracing" climate than the Vineyard.

Sat., Aug. 10, 1850. After sundry preparations, at 9 1/2 AM, with S. L. Pease, took boat for Camp Ground. Bros. Titus, K. Smith and C. H. Shute went about the same time in another boat & arrived just before us.¹ The landing was with some difficulty effected as the waves ran rather high. After an unavailing effort, we succeeded in anchoring our boat at a distance from shore. We let her fall inshore so that a boy with us swam ashore with lines. I threw over my tent frame & the boy took it ashore without wetting the other things. I took an oar (having first pulled up my pants & sent ashore my boots, socks, watch & purse) & leaped. Where I struck, the water was near my middle & to help the matter a wave dashed up under my coat just as I struck. However, we finally -- all ashore -- proceeded to the ground & erected our Tents. Mine was small so I succeeded in prosecuting my purpose some time before the others. I think I never saw the ground present a more cheering, delightful appearance than on Sat. Many of the tents were already covered. Our business through, we started our return a little after 6 PM. Had a fine run as far as the harbor light when the wind immediately shifted to the opposite point of the compass so that instead of having the wind directly fair we had it directly ahead. Such are often the changes of

¹Henry's companion, S. L. Pease, was an Edgartown storekeeper; Charles Titus was the Methodist minister; Kilborn Smith and Charles H. Shute were also merchants. We know little about Smith. Shute's son, Richard, after service in the Civil War, became the town's major photographer. The Society has many of his glass negatives.

fortune. As we had but one oar & the tide was making out of the harbor, we were as long getting from the light-house to Norton's wharf² as from East Chop to the light. I however enjoyed the cruise very much.

I have seldom of late spent a day in such close communion with God. All the way up my mind was exercised with holy emotions & aspirations. Before I left in the morning, dearest Wife was in rather a melancholly [sic] mood -- her nervous system having been considerably excited by recollections of affairs at her home. Especially are her organs of Hope diseased -- her headache is (appears to be) at the place of these organs. I prayed with her when I left & gained from her a promise she would read at the first return of these desponding feelings the "Promises."³

When I returned in the eve, about 9, she met me saying she had been quite well during the day & very happy -- she had given up all her friends and affairs to God. She knows I had been praying for her & she had been praying for me. All was as she said.

Sabbath, Aug. 11, 1850. I had come to my feelings considerably on Sabbath morn & was quite well satisfied that I was pretty tired. Dear Harriette was not feeling at all well -- had some diarrhea & vomiting. I however dressed & went to church, having first procured some morphine for H. Bro. Titus preached the best discourse I have

²Maps of the period don't show a Norton's wharf, but it was probably near Cottage St.

³On the Promises is the title of a book that Henry referred to earlier (Nov. 1995, p.110). It is apparently a source of strength in time of stress.

listened to from him: systematic, practical, thorough, pointed, & attractive.

On returning home at noon found dearest H. still quite unwell. I attended upon her pretty sharply till 2 PM when she felt quite comfortable. I went to church. On returning, I found her very sick. She had vomitted frequently & severely, had raised, as once or twice before, considerable blood, withal was rather delirious. Soon procured more Morphine which checked the sickness (vomitting). She was however very sick all the evening, in great distress at the pit of her stomach & her bowels. Used injection,⁴ applied mustard poultices & draughts, apparently to little purpose. She passed the night more comfortably than I expected. I lay down with her. She was very happy in her mind all day & evening -- ready to go home if called for by her Father.

She talked with me very freely about her dying & she expressed her wish as on several other occasions to be buried in this place besides my little brothers & sisters.⁵ She wished to [be] buried at my left hand so as to lie nearest my heart. She expressed a wish that should she die I should be married again at the expiration of a year, provided I could find one I should love.

This seems to be serious advice to a young man of not quite 28 years & yet living with his second wife. I am

⁴He often writes of treating Harriette "by injection." Does any reader know what he would be injecting and would it have been intravenous?

⁵Henry had five siblings, all of whom died before they were six months old. Their gravestones are aligned in the Edgartown cemetery, a sad memorial to infant mortality of the period.

aware that my temperament & social qualities are such that it would be an almost infinite self-denial [sic] to remain in a single state. I want somebody to love & to love as I can only love a wife, yet I am almost inclined to the resolution that I will never be married again should my dearest Hattie be taken from me. Yet I will not so resolve. I will say the will of the Lord be done. If He sees best to reduce me to widowhood again & then shall call me to another happy union with some now unknown one it will be my duty to obey. I believe my marriage with Harriette as well as with Hannah was directed by Him who leadeth his children often by a way they had not known. Perhaps Hattie may be preserved to me many years. The Lord only knows.

Monday, Aug. 12. 12 M, dearest wife appears now to be asleep. She has been very quiet while I have been writing the four preceding pages. She has been very much distressed all the morning -- vomiting very severely & frequently. Poor girl, she is a great sufferer & has suffered most keenly, physically & mentally, ever since my acquaintance with her.

We have now been married 9 months & 4 days & yet she has not seen a well day during all that time. When we were married, she expected from her father at least 300.00 dollars at once & more occasionally & yet she has not received a single dollar. I wrote her mother at the time of H's miscarriage when we despaired of her life & yet not a word did we receive in return ~~with~~ [crossed out]. I wrote again a week ago mentioning our va-

cation & the probability of us visiting them soon. In reply to this I⁶ rec'd on Friday a letter stating that Father is away & may be gone a month -- that Addie has been away a fortnight & that Mother & Sewall must be away a part of this week at least, but not one word of where they all are or are going, only a request we should defer our visit till they "are situated a little more favourably," etc. What all this means we are exceedingly puzzled to divine. Such & so many difficulties are only an index to a thousand others of which this is not the place for a record.

Dear girl, she needs the grace of St. Paul to fight her way through successfully. None of things move me. I did not marry Harriette for her money or a hope or expectation of occurring any by her. I married her because I love her. These persecutions which she has suffered at home (especially from Addie, of late)⁷ are all persecutions "for righteousness' sake" & will be rewarded to her with the peaceable fruits of righteousness. "All things work together for good to those that love the Lord."

I expect, if Harriet lives not long hence, to see the tables turning -- if she dies she lives a pure life & will have fellowship with angels & the redeemed & will enjoy the right to all Heaven's rich blessing & -- I believe it -- will wear the Martyr's crown. Persecution for righteousness' sake is the cause of all her sufferings, mental & physical. Had she remained in the

⁶Above "I" Henry wrote "she," meaning that the letter, although in response to his, was addressed to Harriette.

⁷Addie is Harriette's sister; Sewall, her brother.

church, this would have been avoided but because she chose to suffer with the people of God called "Methodists" this thing has come upon her. There are allowances (if allowances are to be made for Sin) for her family. Her father is a strong Churchman & a very worldly man & was exceedingly disappointed & exasperated because Hattie refused to marry Lieut. Webster on account of his Infidelity, he being a man of independent fortune. Addie was enraged because Hattie abandoned the circles of gay society in which they had mutually associated & found herself with the despised & (to her) despicable Methodists. Her mother however, nor Sewall, as far as I can learn, ever joined in these persecutions yet there was evidently a little if not considerable coldness.

It is true her father consented to my visiting his house & marrying H. & yet I have reason to believe it was not with a very rejoicing heart. However, he & all the family, have always treated me, to my face, with the utmost respect & I have reason to think Father & Mother esteem me very highly & this very esteem I suspect is not lessening the spirit of persecution in the heart of Sister & perhaps of jealousy in Sewall. What shall the end of these things be? Let no eye but mine read these pages.⁸

The School Committee met on Saturday evening & called for me to meet with them but I was away. They have called me this morning to meet with it, but the health of Harriette forbids it at present. I find myself in a

⁸Somehow, we believe Henry would be pleased to know his diary is being read.

straight [sic] betwixt two, whether to remain or depart. I have not yet heard from Newark & am in great perplexity what to do. The Lord grant me wisdom to guide my steps aright.⁹

Tuesday, Aug. 13. Dearest Hattie still remains very sick. Frequent, severe vomiting, cramps, great distress in stomach & bowels & death-like languor. She is a great sufferer & how it will result the eye that never slumbereth or sleepeth only can see.

This forenoon wrote a note to the Sup., School Committee tendering my resignation of the Principalship of the High School on account of the health of my wife & my own.¹⁰ I am advised to this course by Dr. Ruggles & Dr. Pierce because of the excessively sensitive nervous system of my wife which is torn & shattered by the bracing atmosphere of the Island. My own nervous system is likewise seriously affected by these bracing breezes. Even my Parents advise me to this Course although before they have endeavoured to detain us here. Thus the question whether I shall keep this school longer & whether we shall remain on the Island is settled & settled. I think according to the will of God. Where I shall go I know not, but there is one who knoweth. Amen.

Obtained my Tuition money¹¹ this

⁹In a previous installment we learned that Henry had written to Newark, N.J., seeking a teaching position.

¹⁰He has been principal for less than three months, after being headmaster at Dukes County Academy for less than a year. It's obvious he is not happy in this role, preferring to get back into the ministry

¹¹It isn't clear if this "tuition money" is in addition to the wages of \$40 paid by the town (see table in *Intelligencer*, May 1996).

PM. Mr. Davis [David Davis of the School Committee] kindly accommodated me with the money without an "order." I paid Dr. Pierce's Bill for visits, advice & medicine from June 9 to Aug. 12: \$22.89. This the first bill for the like services I ever had presented. True, I did pay Dr. Ruggles little more than \$4 for visits, advice & medicine when he attended on Hattie, coming from H. Hole to W. Tisbury, but that merely paid his horse hire.

Well, this escape from Dr.'s bills I should consider my fortune & would not complain now were not the charges, in my opinion, exorbitant [sic]. A charge of six visits in one day when passing by the door I think as exorbitant charges. Three on another day & four on another, etc.¹²

Likewise paid Mrs. Connelly for nursing H., \$5.50 -- also pd. \$1.00 for Sarsaparella & \$1.00 to Capt. C. Pease for horse keeping [?] some time ago. Money on account of Hattie my dear wife is paid out as freely as I would give a cup of water to a disciple & yet I do not like to throw it away on any man's exorbitancy.

Wednesday, Aug. 14. "Sickness & Sorrow, Pain & Death," what a fraternity of happiness destroyers! How often does one or another of these dash from the human lip the cup brimfull of joy, just about to be drunk of amid the smiles & cheers of the social, the domestic circle! These all poison the fountains of earthly bliss & scatter all along the river banks of earthly existence the unseemly fragments of wrecked hopes once

¹²Complaining about medical costs! What else is new? The more things change . . .

freighted with the loveliest treasures of the heart's anticipation's.

But thanks be to God. This vale of tears before the Christian Pilgrims expands into the broad plains of Heaven, lit up with the eternal sunshine of God's love & beneficence. This river of human existence upon which he is borne, flowing through the Jordan of death, cleanses all of disappointments & sorrows behind & merges into the "river of his pleasures" close by the throne of God. Happy change for the Christian! He leaves a world and all, whose scenes, Sickness, Sorrow, Pain & Death, erase his pleasures, blast his hopes, ruin his plans, for that realm of bliss when "Sickness & sorrow, pain & death, are felt & feared no more."

Aye! Happy the Christian now if he remembers that this life is the discipline of sorrow to prepare him for that better life. He is happy for "all things work together for good to them that love the Lord." Bless the Lord, Oh, my Soul.

My dear Harriette is still very sick. She began to feel more comfortable about 8 PM yesterday & wished some water. I procured & gave it her, then she became very much distressed in her stomach -- probably the water was too cold for it. I soon administered Brandy & Cholormine [?] which relieved the distress. Miss H. R. Fisher watched with her. Was obliged to repeat the Brandy & Cholormine during the night.

This morning she was very much distressed at her stomach & exceedingly nervous & excitable. I again administered the Brandy & Cholormine. This again relieved her.

(To be continued)

A List of Special Persons

It takes a whole lot of help to run the Dukes County Historical Society -- many, many more workers than we can afford to hire. That is why the men and women listed below are very special to us. They are the volunteers who give us their time and talents without compensation, doing the things that are essential to the operation of this community resource. Without them, our services would decline; with them, we are able to provide members and the public with one of the best small libraries and museums in the state.

We all owe these volunteers our special thanks.

Buildings & Grounds

Bill Bailey
Nancy Cabot
Robert Conway
Bob Hagerly
Tom Hale
John Lambie
Helen Meleney
John Toteanu

Fresnel Lens Caretakers

Joan LeLacheur
Sarah Saltonstall
Elizabeth Talbot

Herb Garden

Elizabeth Chapin
Barbara Rowe

Gate House & Cooke House

Clara Burke
Terry Burke
Nancy Morris Douglas
Rosemary Gatti
Maggie Gibbons
Caroline Haskell
Peg Kelley
Nancy Kingsley
Hugh Knipmeyer
Ruth Miller
Wes Mott
Joan Murphy
Carol Ramsay
Matthew Rolfe
Barbara Rowe
Tom Thatcher

Library & Genealogy

Judy Alden
Ed Ambrose
Nancy Ambrose
Norma Hagen
Rick Hagen
Marian Halperin
Hap Hamel
Lillian Hammond
Mary Ellen Hill
Kay Mayhew
Janice Patterson
Peter Van Tassel
David Welch
Bea Welch

Lighthouse Keepers

East Chop Association
Karl Heglund
Gilliam Heglund
Ellie Ketchum
Joan LeLacheur
David Lewis & family
David Maddox
Paul Manning
William Marks
Ashley Medowski
Tim Rush
Eric Schoepf
Richard Skidmore
Elizabeth Talbot
Curatorial Assistants
Peg Knowles
Mim Richardson

Mailings

Anne Bacon
Terry Burke
Rosemary Jung
Priscilla Summers
Jan Van Riper

Oral History Center

Carlo D'Antonio
Alice Hall
Francie Irvine
June Manning
Rae Montor
Brendan O'Neill
Lora Pfingst
D. J. Young

Pease House & Museum Shop

Marian Halperin
Margaret Harvey
Margie Hiser

Publications

Candice Hogan
Arthur Railton
Marge Railton
Anthony Van Riper

Registrar of Accessions

Dorothea Looney
Signs

Tom Hodgson

Special Events

Anne Bacon
Judy Bruguere
Nancy Morris Douglas
Marcella Provost

CHRONOLOGY

1. July 29: French fleet arrives off Brenton's Reef.
2. Aug 2: French frigates fire shells at battering English officers.
3. Aug 3: Washington's Continental soldiers arrive from White Plains.
Aug 8: Americans prepare to invade Rhode Island; d'Estaing sails into harbor. British withdraw from the north end of the island.
4. Aug 9: As British withdraw, Americans cross at Howland's Ferry, one day earlier than planned. Sullivan calls for French troops. Angry, d'Estaing complies.
5. Aug 9: British fleet arrives from N.Y., surprising both Americans and French.
6. Aug 10: d'Estaing recalls his troops from island; sails south to attack Howe.
7. Aug 11: Sullivan, upset by French departure, orders attack on Newport at dawn, the 12th.
8. Aug 12-13: Violent storm causes the cessation of fighting on land and sea.
Aug 15: American attack on Newport resumes.
8. Aug 21: Damaged French fleet returns. Lafayette & Greene meet d'Estaing.
8. Aug 22: French fleet sails to Boston for repairs.
- Aug 23: British reinforcements arrive from N.Y.
9. Aug 28: Lafayette rides to Boston to urge d'Estaing to send troops. He refuses.
Aug 29: Intense battle on Rhode Island.
Aug 30: Lafayette returns discouraged.
- Aug 31: Americans withdraw to mainland.
10. Sept. 1: Clinton & Grey arrive from N.Y.
11. Sept. 2: British fleet sails to New London.
11. Sept. 3: Clinton goes to N.Y. Grey takes over.
12. Sept: 5-8: Grey raids New Bedford, Fair Haven.
13. Sept. 8: Grey sails for Martha's Vineyard.

PRELUDE TO GREY'S RAID: JULY TO SEPTEMBER 1778

(For additional details see map, page 29.)

