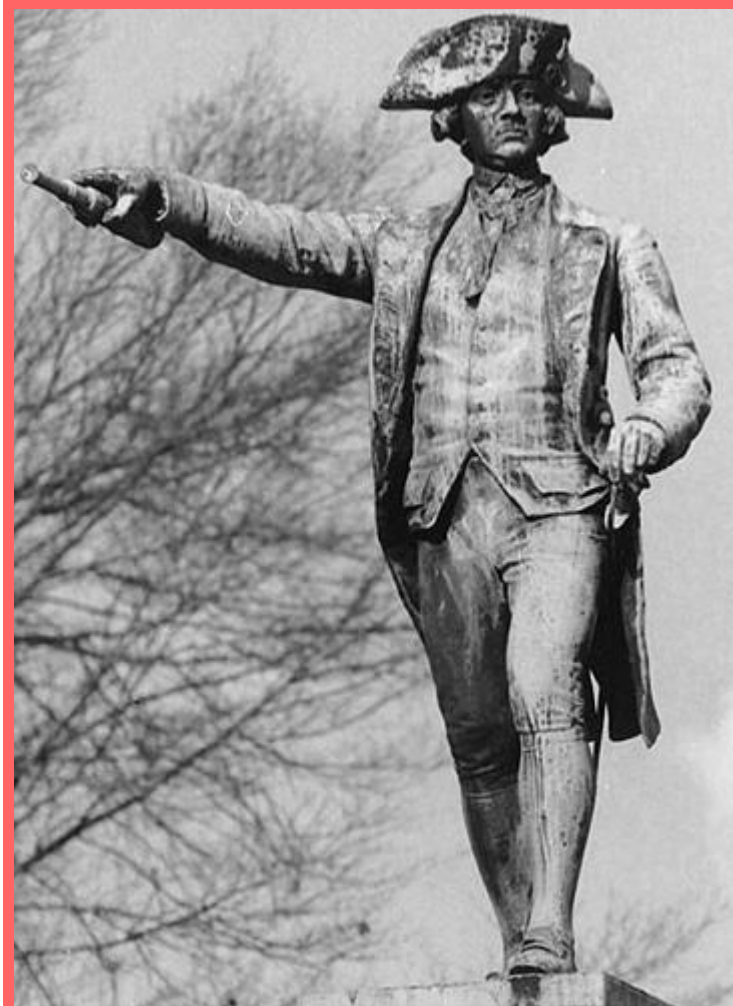


## COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS



**(WHO HAS SINCE 1957 GRACED THE  
CORNER OF BRANCH AND CHARLES)**



**COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS**

**ESEK HOPKINS**

**1758**

June 21, Wednesday: [Esek Hopkins](#) was born in [Providence, Rhode Island](#), son of Esek Hopkins and Desire Hopkins.

**CHANGE IS ETERNITY, STASIS A FIGMENT**

# ESEK HOPKINS

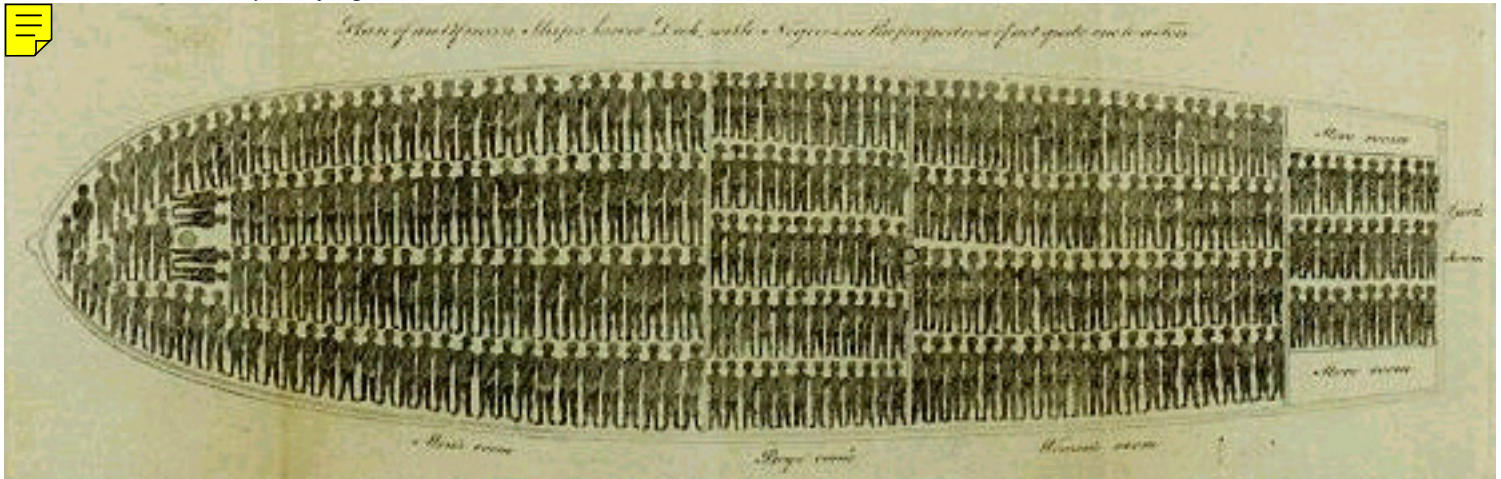
# COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

1764

Summer: Captain [Esek Hopkins](#), who would become the 1st Commodore of the US Navy, on behalf of the firm of [Nicholas Brown](#) and Company of [Providence](#), was fitting out the square-rigged brigantine [Sally](#) at [Newport](#) for a slaving voyage to the Guinea coast of Africa. Enormous profits were being anticipated, for if a big cargo of a couple of hundred healthy young human beings could be delivered from the slave castles on the coast of Africa, where they could be obtained on the cheap in exchange for [Rhode Island](#) rum, to the sugar plantations of the West Indies, the profit for a single voyage might run up toward several hundred thousand pounds.

THE MIDDLE PASSAGE  
TRIANGULAR TRADE

In general, in [Rhode Island](#) harbors alone during this year, it has been estimated by Alexander Boyd Hawes, some 20 vessels were being fitted out for the [international slave trade](#). If an average cargo of [slaves](#) was 109 –as we have estimated on the basis of a number of known cargos– then a total of 2,180 souls were transported during this year in Rhode Island bottoms alone. Examples from this year include the Rhode Island brig *Betsey* carrying a cargo of 120 slaves, the *Friendship* carrying a cargo of 180, the brig *Osprey* carrying 100, and the *Polly* carrying 160.

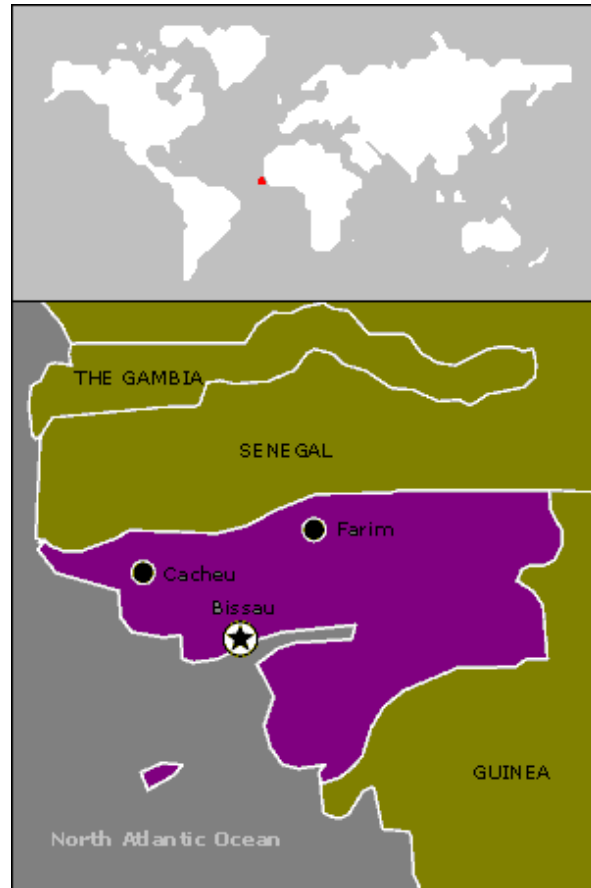




## COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

## ESEK HOPKINS

November 13, Tuesday: The *Sally* having arrived in African waters near Bissau on the Windward Coast of Africa between the Gambia River to the north and Cape Mount to the south, on this day Captain *Esek Hopkins* made contact with a local chieftain, Alkade, and made him an introductory present of three gallons of triple-distilled potent spirits of rum.



THE MIDDLE PASSAGE  
TRIANGULAR TRADE

During the following month negotiations for permission to trade in new slaves would be becoming more intense, with the white Captain going ashore again and again to meet the black king “under the palaver tree.”

Carried 5 kegs 14 flask of rum and paid the king 75 gallons for his customs and received a cow as a present.

**“NARRATIVE HISTORY” IS FABULATION, HISTORY IS CHRONOLOGY**



## ESEK HOPKINS

## COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

1765

August 20, Tuesday: Aboard the [Sally](#) along the African coast had been accumulated a cargo of 196 of whom 9 had been resold and 20 had already died, the ship's cargo standing at 167 souls. Negotiation for slave cargo was concluded by the purchase of an additional woman slave and the release of "1 woman all most dead" to their African interpreter, Anthony. It had taken Captain [Esek Hopkins](#) fully nine months to collect, on behalf of the firm of [Nicholas Brown](#) and Company of [Providence](#), enough captive black Africans along the coast of Guinea in exchange for [Rhode Island](#) triple-distilled spirits of rum, to set his sails to run before the winds over the [Middle Passage](#) for the [slave](#) plantations of the West Indies. The venture still offered prospects of ample profit.

TRIANGULAR TRADE

(In order to hold such a person up for public censure, in 1957 at an otherwise undistinguished traffic intersection we have installed in Providence this statue:





## COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

## ESEK HOPKINS

Also, in order to hold such a person up for public censure, we have named a public high school after him.)

August 28, Wednesday: During the [Middle Passage](#) of the [Sally](#) from the Guinea coast of Africa toward the slave plantations of the West Indies, Captain [Esek Hopkins](#) of [Rhode Island](#) had encountered a considerable amount of illness and disability among the white seamen of his crew. Also, three more members of the cargo had succumbed. He had therefore pressed four of the seemingly compliant male blacks of the cargo into service above decks, and they had seemed to be making themselves helpful with the sails. In the language of the time “he was obliged to permit some of the slaves to come on deck to assist the people.” However, these four men had been merely biding their time, and on this day attempted to set free the other surviving blacks of the cargo. To reassert control the crew needed to fire upon their assets, killing eight outright and wounding a number of others, two of whom would also eventually die during the remainder of the voyage. In addition, some of the blacks leaped overboard in the midst of the ocean and, their heads bobbing in the swell, could not be retrieved. The venture’s opportunities to offer profit to the [Providence](#) firm of [Nicholas Brown](#) and Company were beginning to seem rather marginal.<sup>1</sup>

TRIANGULAR TRADE

During the remainder of the voyage, some additional members of the cargo would perish through refusal to accept nourishment.

Early October: A day after “1 man slave dyed,” the [Sally](#) made landfall in the Leeward Islands, the entrance to the Caribbean. The death toll due to the Middle Passage had reached 88.

October 19, Saturday: The Stamp Act Congress meeting at New-York’s City Hall adopted “A DECLARATION OF RIGHTS AND GRIEVANCES OF THE COLONISTS OF AMERICA.”

READ THE FULL TEXT

Auctioning of the cargo of the [Sally](#) continued. John Lynsey returned and purchased “2 small garles & sick” for his wife for the sum of £9 18s. Caesar Roach factored 11 of the cargo and received a commission of 2½ percent. Hopkins sold “2 prime slaves” for £50 each. Alexander Willock factored 24 of the cargo for a total of £486, and in addition purchased some [tobacco](#) from Captain [Esek Hopkins](#).

1. At the end of the voyage, only 108 of the original 196 would be deliverable to their new slave lives in America. The slaves had been acquired along the coast of Africa for about £5-£10 each or a total of about £1,500 and the survivors were disposed of for about £20 each or a total of about £2,000, a gross profit of about £500, but from such a gross figure must be subtracted all the considerable expenses of the voyage and of crew salaries and of not being able to use the ship for any other purpose for a year. All told, the Browns of [Providence](#) would lose £9,000-£10,000 during this particular sailing venture. [Moses Brown](#) would later point out that overall, their firm’s slave trade with the [Mary](#), the [Wheel of Fortune](#), and the [Sally](#) had resulted in loss rather than in the adding to of the Brown family assets, despite the fact that of the brothers, [John Brown](#) individually would see fit to continue in this trade.

*We need not mention how Disagreeable the Nuse of your Luseing 88 slaves is to us & all your Friends, but your Self Continuing in Helth is so Grate Satisfaction to us that we Remain Cheirful under the Heavy Loss of our Ints.*



## COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

## ESEK HOPKINS

1766

February: The [Sally](#) arrived finally back in its home port in [Rhode Island](#), bringing with it the 4 “likely boys” that the Brown family had requested.<sup>2</sup>

**“NARRATIVE HISTORY” IS FABULATION, HISTORY IS CHRONOLOGY**

### Commodore Esek Hopkins

### “Stack of the Artist of Kouroo” Project

2. [William J. Brown](#) would relate, in his autobiography in 1883, that it had been believed in his family that his grandfather Cudge had been brought over from Africa in one of the Brown negreros. Does that mean that one of these 4 “likely boys” was named Cudge? (The earliest record we have for Cudge was when he got married, in 1768, with Phillis.)

PAGE 1: I am not positive, but believe my grandfather was brought from Africa in the firm’s vessel. He had two or three brothers. One was named Thomas, and the other Sharp or Sharper Brown, and they worked for Moses Brown.

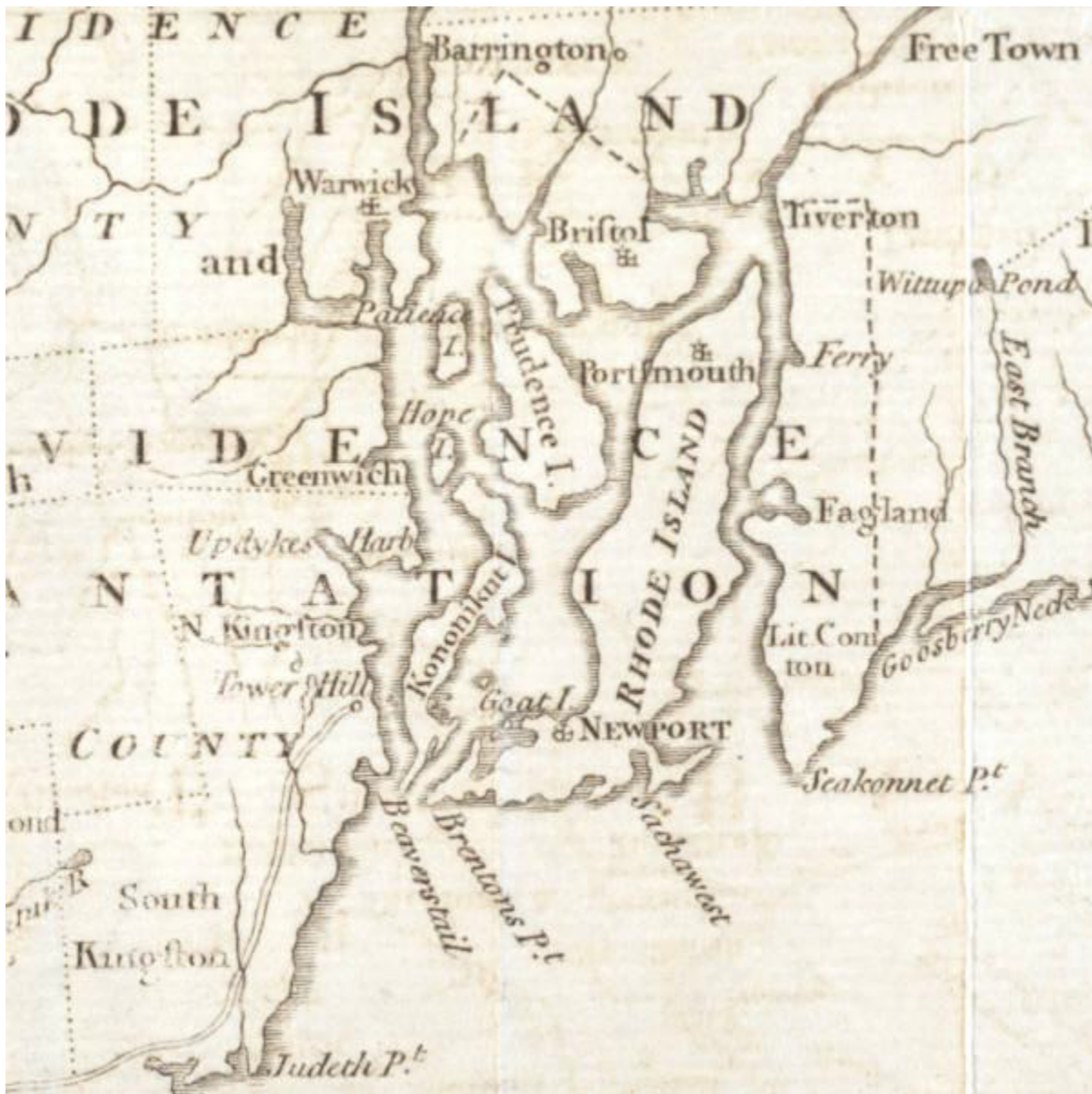
(The records for Obadiah Brown show ownership of four slaves named Cudge, Sharper, Tom, and Benno. If it is accurate that Brown’s grandfather had been one of these 4 “likely boys” brought to [Providence](#) in 1766 in the *Sally*, and if it is accurate that he had “two or three brothers,” then it would seem rather more than likely that these four –Cudge, Tom, Sharper, and Benno– had not only been brought together from Africa on the *Sally*, but were blood relatives.)

# ESEK HOPKINS

# COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

1774

The colony of [Rhode Island](#) at this point had 59,707 (57,707?) residents residing in 29 incorporated municipalities. Sixteen of the native Americans still alive were in [Bristol](#) (by 1785, this group would have dwindled to two survivors).



The census showed that, in [Providence](#), there were 4,321 persons divided into 655 families living in 421 dwellings.





## COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

## ESEK HOPKINS

Of the Brown brothers, only [Friend Moses Brown](#) had divested himself of his slaves. [John Brown](#) owned two, [Nicholas Brown](#) owned two, and Joseph Brown owned four. In their circle of friends and associates, [Stephen Hopkins](#) owned six (the present Quaker conceit that we had been forced to disown Governor Hopkins for merely refusing to free but one slave, who was perhaps a woman in a special situation, clearly per this census data amounts to no more than that, a present Quaker conceit), [Esek Hopkins](#) owned four, Daniel Jenckes owned four, Jabez Bowen owned one (Prince, who would in 1784 cut a deal for his achieving his freedom as of 1787), and the editor of the Providence [Gazette](#), John Carter, owned one or more.

### THE BROWN BROTHERS

During this year Mrs. Ann Smith Hopkins, the Quaker wife of the [Rhode Island](#) Governor Stephen Hopkins who had in the previous year been disowned by the Religious Society of Friends, herself a “birthright Friend,” applied to her Quaker fellows for a routine letter of introduction to be used during her travels in Pennsylvania –a letter stating her to be in good standing in her home worship group– and the Quaker monthly meeting in [Smithfield](#), after duly considering her request, declined to provide this First Lady of Rhode Island with any such routine endorsement.

**CHANGE IS ETERNITY, STASIS A FIGMENT**



## ESEK HOPKINS

## COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

1775

August: A battery of cannon had been erected on Fox Hill to protect the approaches to [Providence, Rhode Island](#) from the British warships in Narragansett Bay. [Esek Hopkins](#) took command of this fortification.

November 5, Sunday: The Continental Congress appointed [Esek Hopkins](#) of [Rhode Island](#) as Commodore of the Continental Navy.



CONTINENTAL CONGRESS



## COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

## ESEK HOPKINS

Late November: Late in the month, the sloop [Katy](#) sailed from [Providence](#) for Philadelphia, transporting a group of seamen who had been enlisted for continental service by Commodore [Esek Hopkins](#).

December 3, Sunday: The sloop [Katy](#) was taken into Continental service and renamed the [USS Providence](#). John Hazard became its captain while Captain Whipple received a larger vessel, the *Columbus*. [Esek Hopkins](#)'s title became "Commander in Chief of the Fleet of the United Colonies."

**“NARRATIVE HISTORY” IS FABULATION, HISTORY IS CHRONOLOGY**



**ESEK HOPKINS**

**COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS**

**1776**

**GO TO MASTER INDEX OF WARFARE**

January 5, Friday: The Continental Congress ordered Commander in Chief of the Fleet of the United Colonies [Esek Hopkins](#) to destroy a fleet that had been created in Chesapeake Bay the previous autumn by the Loyalist Governor Dunmore of Virginia. It further ordered that upon the completion of this task, the American navy was to clear the [Carolina](#) coast and then the [Rhode Island](#) coast of loyalist shipping.

The Constitution of New Hampshire.

**READ THE FULL TEXT**

February 17, Saturday: After a lengthy delay due to ice in the river, *Providence* and her consorts broke their way to the open sea. Deciding that it would be imprudent to cruise along the southern coast, [Esek Hopkins](#) set sail for the Bahamas.



## COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

## ESEK HOPKINS

March 1, Friday: [Esek Hopkins](#)'s fleet arrived at Abaco in the Bahamas and began to prepare for a raid on New Providence, Bahamas to seize some military stores.

[Concord](#) planned for ten days of military duty at Dorchester Heights near [Boston](#) of 145 of its soldiers.

### TABLE OF REVOLUTIONARY CAMPAIGNS<sup>3</sup>

WHEN REQUIRED	MEN	TIME	WHERE EMPLOYED	BOUNTY	AMOUNT
January 20, 1776	36	2 months	Cambridge	£1 <sup>4</sup> / <sub>5</sub>	£63 <sup>4</sup> / <sub>5</sub>



## ESEK HOPKINS

## COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

WHEN REQUIRED	MEN	TIME	WHERE EMPLOYED	BOUNTY	AMOUNT
<p>January 20, 1776. Middlesex was ordered to raise a regiment of 571 men; <a href="#">Concord</a> 26, Bedford 6, Acton 13, Lincoln 8. Concord, however, furnished 36. John Robinson was Colonel; John Buttrick, Lieutenant-Colonel; Samuel McCobb, Major; Joseph Thaxter, Chaplain; Nathan Stow, Quarter-master; Jabez Brown, Adjutant. The Captains' names were, John Ford, Simon Edgel, Josiah Warren, Asahel Wheeler, Benjamin Edgel, Job Shattuck, and John Lamont. Silan Mann was a lieutenant there under Wheeler.</p> <p>A new organization of the militia was made in February, 1776, and Concord, Lexington, Weston, Acton and Lincoln were assigned to the 3d Regiment. Oliver Prescott was then chosen Brigadier-General, Eleazer Brooks, Colonel of this regiment, Francis Faulkner, Lieutenant-Colonel; Nathan Barrett, 1st Major; Samuel Lamson, 2d Major; and Joseph Adams, Surgeon.</p> <p>The following were the officers of the several companies: Company 1, of Concord; Captain George Minott, 1st Lieutenant Edward Wright, 2d Lieutenant Emerson Cogswell. Company 2, of Weston; Captain Jonathan Fiske, 1st Lieutenant Matthew Hobbs, 2d Lieutenant Josiah Severns. Company 3, of Lexington; Captain John Bridge, 1st Lieutenant William Munroe, 2d Lieutenant Ebenezer White. Company 4, of Concord; Captain Thomas Hubbard, 1st Lieutenant Ephraim Wheeler, 2d Lieutenant Amos Hosmer. Company 5, of Acton; Captain Simon Hunt, 1st Lieutenant John Heald, Jr., 2d Lieutenant Benjamin Brabrook. Company 6, of Lincoln; Captain Samuel Farrar, 1st Lieutenant Samuel Hoar, 2d Lieutenant James Parks. Company 7, of Concord; Captain Thomas Barrett, 1st Lieutenant Samuel Heald, 2d Lieutenant Asa Green.</p> <p>Col. James Barrett was appointed to raise men in this county December 2d, 1775; and was muster-master from December 28th, 1776, till his death. Capt. Joseph Hosmer succeeded him in 1780.</p> <p>The Concord Light Infantry was organized soon after, (of which Joseph Hosmer was Captain; Samuel Jones, Lieutenant; and Samuel Hosmer, 2d Lieutenant); and attached to this regiment.</p>					
March 1, 1776	145	10 days	Dorchester Heights		
<p>This [the above] was a detachment of nearly all the militia, to take possession of Dorchester Heights just before the British evacuated Boston. The officers of the 3d Regiment abovementioned were generally there. An attack on <a href="#">Boston</a> was anticipated, and a considerable quantity of lint and bandages was sent from <a href="#">Concord</a> to the hospital.</p>					
April 9, 1776	31	9 months	Near <a href="#">Boston</a>		55 <sup>4</sup> / <sub>5</sub>
<p>This [the above] was an enlisted company for the purpose of fortifying and defending <a href="#">Boston</a> and its vicinity. Officers: — Josiah Whitney, of Harvard, Colonel; Ephraim Jackson, of Newton, Lieutenant-Colonel; John Miller, Major. For the Middlesex Company, — Abishai Brown, Captain; Abraham Andrews, 1st Lieutenant; Silas Proctor, 2d Lieutenant; Jeremiah Williams and, Edward Heywood, all of <a href="#">Concord</a>, were Sergeants. They were stationed at Hull. This company assisted in taking Col. Campbell, about three hundred Highlanders, and several provision ships. They left Concord June 1st, and were discharged December 1st. Thaddeus Blood, Esq., is the only person now living [1835] in Concord who belonged to this company.</p>					

3. [Lemuel Shattuck's 1835 A HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF CONCORD;...](#) Boston: Russell, Odiorne, and Company; Concord MA: [John Stacy](#)  
(On or about November 11, 1837 [Henry Thoreau](#) would indicate a familiarity with the contents of at least pages 2-3 and 6-9 of this historical study.)



## COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

## ESEK HOPKINS

March 2, Saturday: [Esek Hopkins](#)'s fleet seized two sloops, and put a landing party of 200 Marines and 50 sailors aboard them (remember, folks, the Ten Commandments only apply during times of peace and prosperity).

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

## ESEK HOPKINS

## COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

March 3, Sunday: At mid morning, under the cover of the cannons of the *Providence* and the *Wasp*, the American Marines made their 1st amphibious landing, going ashore on the eastern end of New Providence under the command of Captain Nicholas. This painting is by V. Zveg, who obviously knows a whole lot about painting, or about photographic realism, or about playing with action figures or something:



(It remains unclear how two sloops could have put ashore five longboats. Perhaps two longboats are being portrayed while making multiple trips? Whatever.)

The landing was unopposed and the force advanced toward Fort Montagne. The defenders of the fort took them under fire, then spiked their guns and retreated to Fort Nassau.

[GO TO MASTER INDEX OF WARFARE](#)

Meanwhile, on the coast of the continent, a fleet of seven British ships and 200 Redcoats had sailed up the Savannah River with the possible intention of retaking Savannah or simply stealing rice. Lachlan McIntosh ordered the militia to fire upon the British and burn the merchant ships lying in the river. The British escaped with 14 boatloads of rice. The incident would come to be known as the Battle of the Rice Boats.



[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

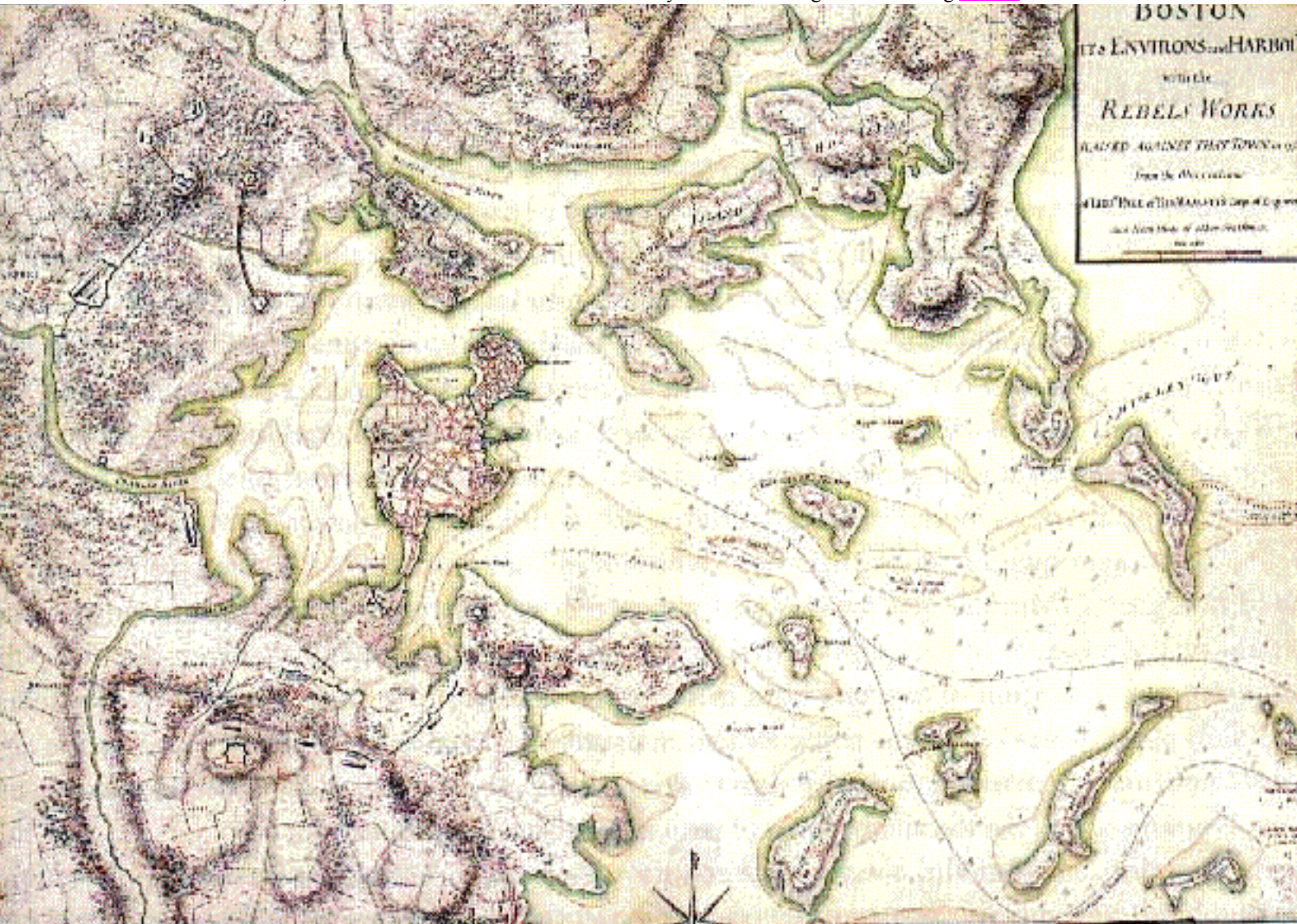
## ESEK HOPKINS

## COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

March 4, Monday: Fort Nassau surrendered and gave the Americans the keys to Fort Montagne. [Esek Hopkins](#) then brought his ships into the harbor to load the captured munitions.

People were trying to kill each other at Yamcrow Bluff in South Carolina.

Amos Baker, a private in the militia company of Captain John Hartwell in the regiment led by Colonel Eleazer Brooks, marched with the unit from Lincoln to fortify Dorchester Heights overlooking [Boston](#).



The Reverend [Asa Dunbar](#) recorded the above in his journal:

*“y<sup>e</sup> militia went to Roxbury.”*



## ESEK HOPKINS

## COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

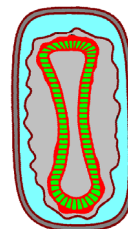
March 17, Sunday: Empress Ekaterina II granted a monopoly to Prince Urusov to operate a theater in Moscow. This was the beginning of the Bolshoi Theater.

A rondo, duet and aria buffa by Luigi Cherubini were performed for the first time, at the Accademia degli Ingegneri, Florence.

Colonial naval forces ended their occupation of the Bahamas. The munitions of Fort Montagne loaded aboard his ships, Commander in Chief of the Fleet of the United Colonies [Esek Hopkins](#) headed back toward New England.



During an outbreak of the [small pox](#), the regular army under General Howe (6,000 British troops) suddenly evacuated [Boston](#). When the revolutionary troops would march in, they would find only 2,719 Bostonians still there. The remainder had either previously fled to them on the mainland during the town's occupation by the





## COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

## ESEK HOPKINS

regular army — or had fled (1,000 loyalists) with the army.



For instance, the [Concord](#) antislavery Tory, Daniel Bliss, who had under threat removed his family from Concord to Boston, on this day evacuated with General Thomas Gage's army to Halifax.



Distinguish between the Reverend Daniel Bliss (1714-1764) of [Concord](#), the father, and his son Daniel Bliss, Junior (1739-1805) the lawyer of [Concord](#) and then of Frederickton, New Brunswick.



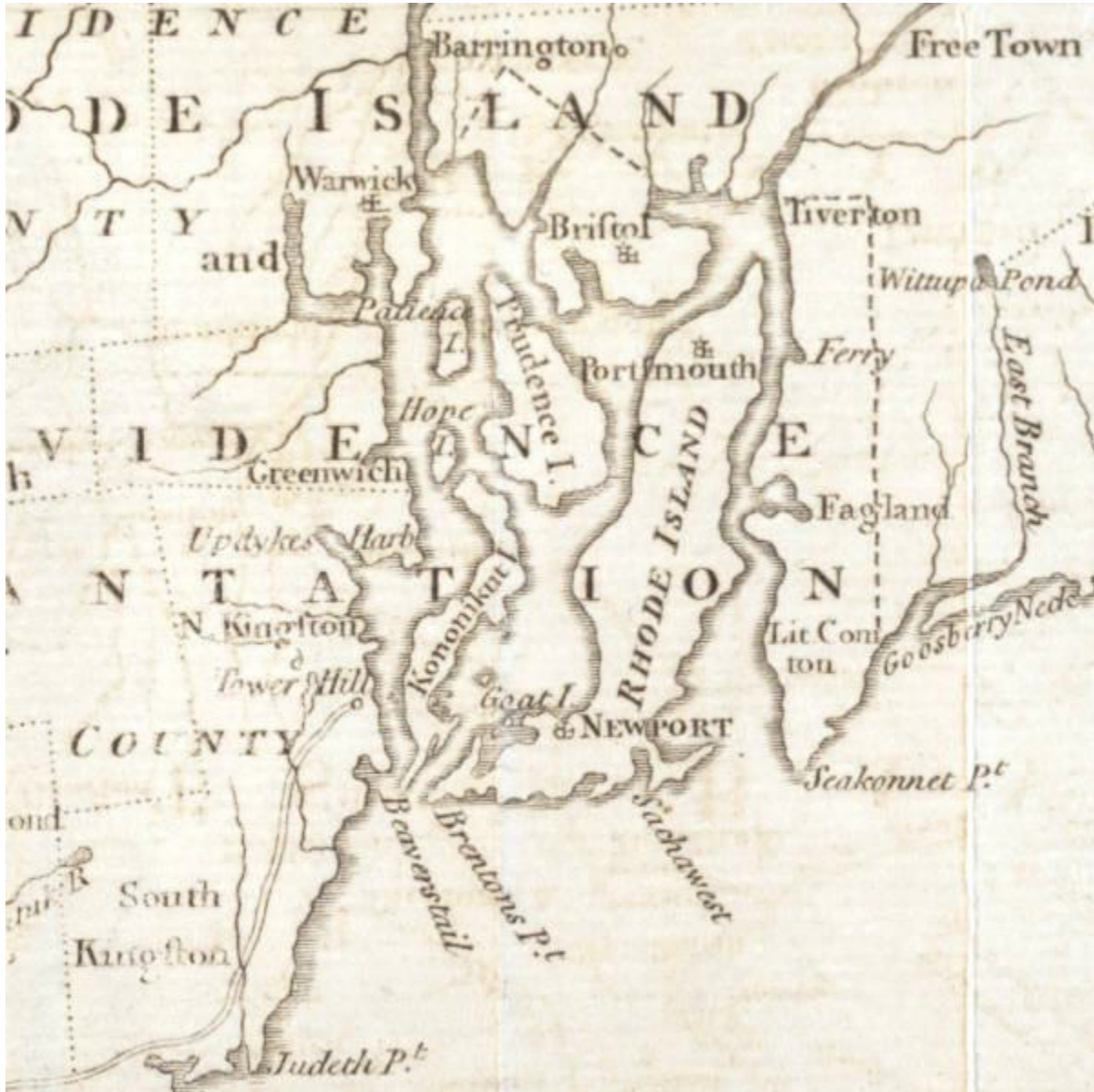
April 4, Thursday: Off [Block Island](#), Commander in Chief of the Fleet of the United Colonies [Esek Hopkins](#)'s ships captured the schooner *Hawk* of the British fleet that had based itself in [Newport](#) harbor.

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

## ESEK HOPKINS

## COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

April 5, Friday: George Washington arrived in [Providence, Rhode Island](#).



Commander in Chief of the Fleet of the United Colonies [Esek Hopkins](#)'s ships took the brig *Bolton*, and then a brigantine and a sloop out of New-York, as prizes.

April 8, Monday: Commander in Chief of the Fleet of the United Colonies [Esek Hopkins](#) brought his prizes to New London, Connecticut.

[Thomas Paine](#) wrote the 2d of his "Forester's Letters."



## COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

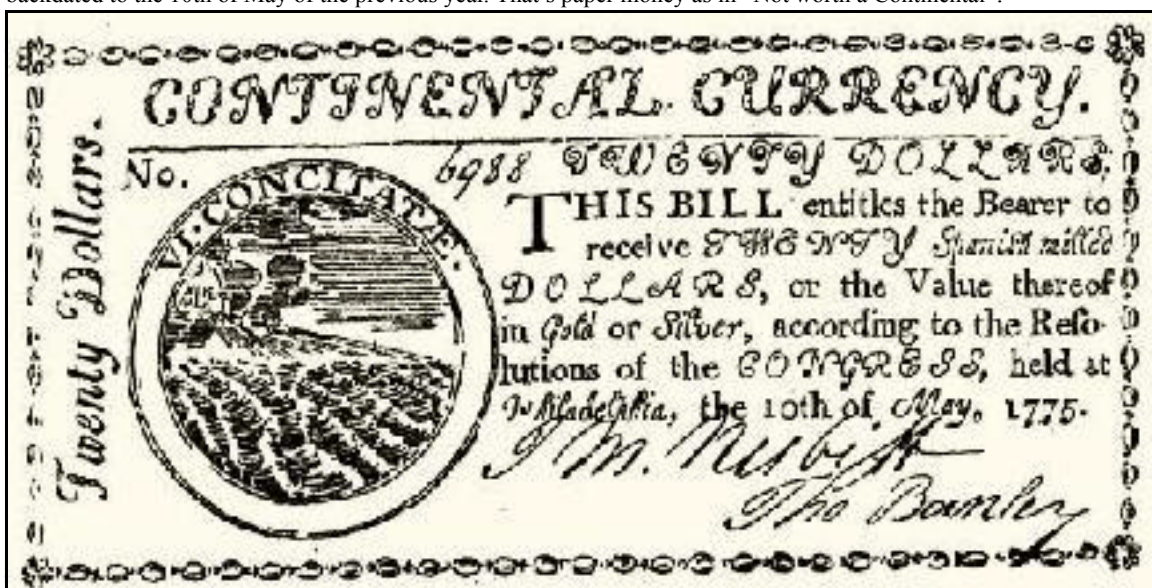
## ESEK HOPKINS

May 10, Sunday: [John Paul Jones](#) assumed command of the [USS Providence](#) with a temporary rank of Captain. Upon its return after a voyage to New-York returning to the Continental Army about 100 soldiers whom George Washington had lent to [Esek Hopkins](#) to help man the American fleet, the *Providence* was hove down at [Providence, Rhode Island](#) for a cleaning of its bottom.

The 2nd Continental Congress delegated John Adams, Richard Henry Lee, and Edward Rutledge to prepare the wording of a resolution, that the North American colonies were severing themselves from British crown rule. Note: this was a resolution, a political act, rather than a declaration; the [Declaration of Independence](#) would be thought of later on, not as a political act but as a mere printed broadside, a piece of street theater, public propaganda (the distinction being suggested here is a distinction between what is internal to government, the decision, and what is external to government, the publicity).<sup>4</sup>

In a later period the document created by the 2nd Continental Congress would be awarded by our nation an almost religious iconic significance. This would be accomplished, in part, by suppressing the fact that in actuality the document had not stood alone. There had in fact been at least ninety such declaration documents, issued at various times by various bodies.<sup>5</sup> It was almost an art form of the period. On the following screen are some of the salient examples which have survived in our memory:

4. This wasn't the only piece of paper issued on this day. On this day also the Continental Congress began to issue paper money that they backdated to the 10th of May of the previous year. That's paper money as in "Not worth a Continental":



**CONTINENTAL CONGRESS**



## ESEK HOPKINS

## COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

October 8, Tuesday: Captain [John Paul Jones](#)'s [USS Providence](#), having relocated from Canso in Nova Scotia to Ile Madame, had taken additional prizes from among the vessels fishing there and had then ridden out a severe storm. Then, after the whaler *Portland* had surrendered to it, on this day the *Providence* sailed back into the Narragansett Bay of [Rhode Island](#). While the vessel was in its home port, Commander in Chief of the Fleet of the United Colonies [Esek Hopkins](#) would appoint Captain Jones as Commander of a larger vessel, the *Alfred*, which would serve as the Commander in Chief's flagship on the forthcoming expedition against the Bahamas (the *Providence* would be captained by Hoysted Hacker).

December 22, Sunday: The American colonies organized a Continental naval fleet under the command of [Esek Hopkins](#).

**CHANGE IS ETERNITY, STASIS A FIGMENT**

Commodore Esek Hopkins

"Stack of the Artist of Kouroo" Project

5. In addition, there is at least one instance in which such a Declaration of Independence document failed of acceptance, in Barnstable, Massachusetts on June 25, 1776. You will interrogate many Barnstable citizens before you find anyone with any awareness of this episode in their town's history.



## COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

## ESEK HOPKINS

1777

February: Under the command of Lieutenant Jonathan Pitcher, the [USS Providence](#) ran the British blockade of the [Narragansett Bay](#). After putting into [New Bedford](#), the vessel cruised to Cape Breton and captured there a transport brig loaded with stores and carrying in addition to its crew two officers and 25 men of the British Army. Under command of Captain J.P. Rathbun, the USS *Providence* then would make two cruises on the coast.

Some sort of crazy influence battle was fought in [Rhode Island](#) over the issue of which was to come first, winning American freedom or making money off the revolutionary fighting. The battle was waged by proxies, and was ostensibly over whether obtaining crews of sailors for the Continental navy's publicly financed warships should have priority over obtaining crews of sailors for privately financed privateering expeditions, but eventually it became clear that attacks on [Esek Hopkins](#)'s loyalty to his nation had been being encouraged by the chauvinistic war profiteer [John Brown](#):

John's attack on Esek Hopkins marks him as a man of calculation and influence, and of overweening pride. With the frigate committee disbanded and his privateers returning a stream of riches, John might have contented himself to count his loot and enjoy the mounting problems confounding his grizzled old shipmaster. Instead he plotted, patiently, until he finally had the pieces in place to sabotage the one man in Rhode Island who had dared to cross him....

As the war progressed, many fortunes were lost in Providence and throughout America, but John only prospered. At the outset of the war he owned or shared interest in more than seventy-five ships, and while many were lost to the enemy -ten were seized in 1777 alone- John more than covered his losses with prize ships and returns from trade. Combined with earnings from the Hope Furnace and from his contracts with Congress, John managed to turn the war into a personal bonanza.

His phenomenal gains are evidenced by his investments. During the course of the war, John and his brother Nicholas banked heavily on securities issued by the states and by the Continental Congress. The prices of these bonds fluctuated wildly, but long experience trading in a variety of foreign currencies had honed their skills in arbitrage, and together the brothers amassed the largest single stake in government debt in Rhode Island. Around the same time, beginning in 1780, John went on a real-estate buying spree, purchasing a large waterfront tract on Aquidneck Island outside Newport and an eight-hundred-acre farm on Prudence Island. On the east shore of Narragansett Bay he obtained a lovely, grassy estate on a promontory near Bristol known by the Indian name Poppasquash, which he renamed Point Pleasant; on the west shore, he bought from the Greene clan five hundred well-watered acres at Namquit point south of Patuxet, overlooking the spit of land that had grounded the Gaspee a decade before. This he dubbed Spring Green Farm, and it alternated with Point Pleasant as a summer retreat for the





**ESEK HOPKINS**

**COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS**

family.

Most of the properties John obtained were bargains. Some of the estates were confiscated from Tory sympathizers -the farm on Prudence Island formerly belonged to Joseph Wanton- and were resold at a discount by the wartime government. And farmland valuations were especially low. But John had had ample cash reserves to skim the cream off the depressed market. There is little question that, by the end of the Revolution, John had emerged as the richest man in Rhode Island.

**CHANGE IS ETERNITY, STASIS A FIGMENT**





## COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

## ESEK HOPKINS

1779

December 2, Thursday: It would be made a matter of record in the property-transaction records of [Providence, Rhode Island](#) that, in regard to a Negro [slave](#) named Juba –recently taken on Board a vesfel of the British enemy of the United States and Brought into the Port of New-London by Captain Sage, the Commander of the Schooner *Experiment*, and Efeek Hopkins, Jr., the Commander of the Schooner *Lively*– unanimous agreement had been obtained among the interested parties, to not simply Sell the person of the faid Juba for whatever he might bring on the open market, but to instead [manumit](#) him and give him his Freedom for Life:

*This Certifies all it may concern that Juba a Negro belonging to an Enemy of the United States was taken on Board a British vesfel & Brought into the Port of New-London by Capt. Sage Commander of the Schooner Experiment and Efeek Hopkins Junr. Commander of the Schooner Lively: and it was unanimously agreed Between the Owners and Agents for the Vesfels to not Sell the said Juba but to give him his Freedom for Life ..... ~Witness  
S. B. Hopkins for Owners of Schooner Experiment and Agent for Schooner Lively.....*

*Paul Allen  
Jsa Waterman  
Wm Wall  
D Lawrence  
Nich. Cooke  
J M Varnum.....*

*The Foregoing is a True Copy Recorded this 1st Day of  
January AD 1780.. Witness Theodore Foster Town Clerk }*

ESEK HOPKINS

Later in the year, [Lafayette](#) persuaded the government of King Louis XVI to send an expeditionary army of 6,000 soldiers to the aid of the insurgent British colonists on the North American continent, to fight under the command of a general named George Washington whom they had defeated during the previous hostilities, the “French and Indian Wars” on that terrain. Both because this general had made himself the enemy of their British enemies, and because the French had previously been able to force him to surrender his army to their superior forces, this American general obviously was in need of such assistance.

“NARRATIVE HISTORY” IS FABULATION, HISTORY IS CHRONOLOGY



## ESEK HOPKINS

## COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

1780

Judge William Potter had manumitted his slaves and was providing a sanctuary for “The Universal Friend” ([Jemimah Wilkinson](#)) and her band of followers at “the Old Abbey” on his estate at Little Rest (the village of [Kingston](#)) about a mile to the north of [South Kingstown, Rhode Island](#). To house his guests he made such large additions to his already large mansion (14 new rooms) that he was obliged to undertake a mortgage he would not be able to maintain. According to a record that has survived, the Judge’s daughter Susannah Potter “died in the arms of The Friend.” Dr. Joshua Babcock of [Westerly](#), a friend of Benjamin Franklin, had become one of her followers. She remained on friendly terms with [Stephen Hopkins](#), former governor of Rhode Island, a cousin. (She was also related to [Esek Hopkins](#), first commodore of the American navy.) She had influence among the [Quakers](#) of Cape Cod. Since she was not an advocate of the Quaker Peace Testimony, she was able to speak at a “Free Quaker” meeting of the disowned Friends, in Philadelphia.



### THE QUAKER PEACE TESTIMONY

Jemimah came to be known not only as “The Universal Friend” but also, inside her band of disciples, as “Beft-Friend.” Upon one occasion in New Milford, Connecticut, she would proclaim a 30-day fast on bread and water — and her disciples would obey. (What are beft-friends for? :-)

**CHANGE IS ETERNITY, STASIS A FIGMENT**



**COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS**

**ESEK HOPKINS**

**1781**

May 16, Wednesday: We find on page 341 of volume 19 of the [Providence, Rhode Island](#) records of title transfers, that our good ol' buddy [Efek Hopkins](#) was on this day up to selling a girl to her own mother, a resident of [Newport](#), "*for and in Confideration of the Sum of One Hundred Good Silver Spanish Milled Dollars to Me in Hand already paid*" (kindly don't ask me to explain how something like this can go down, here or anywhere). Isn't it interesting that the age of this girl isn't specified, nor are we told how it came about that the child



**ESEK HOPKINS**

**COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS**

of a free woman was being treated as a slave?

*Know all Men by these Presents That I Esek Hopkins of North Providence, in the County of Providence in the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, for and in Consideration of the Sum of One Hundred Good Silver Spanish Milled Dollars to Me in Hand already paid by Flora Wanton a Free Negro Woman of Newport in the County of Newport, in the State of Rhode Island & aforesaid, which said Flora Wanton is Mother of a Certain Negro Servant Girl called Peggy, now belonging to Me the said Esek Hopkins, the Receipt of which said Sum of Money I hereby acknowledge. Have Remised Released and Forever Quitclaimed and by these Presents Do remise Release and forever Quitclaim All the Right, Title, Interest Property Claim and Demand whatever which I ever had now have, or can have of, in and to the said Servant Negro Girl called Peggy, to her Mother, the said Flora Wanton, in order that the the [sic] said Peggy may be made Free, and for this Purpose I hereby Bargain and Sell all my said Right and Title to the said Negro Girl to her said Mother the said Flora so that neither I, my Heirs Executors Administrators or any other person claiming from by or under Me, or their or either of them shall have any Claim whatever to the Service of the said Peggy from and After the Date of these Presents but shall and will be therefrom forever barred and excluded by these Presents. And I covenant That That [sic] I will Warrant to the said Flora Wanton to defend against the Lawful Claims of all persons claiming any Right or Title to the Services of said Negro Girl Peggy in Consequence of any Conveyance heretofore made.*

*Witness my Hand and Seal this Sixteenth Day of May A.D. 1781.*

*Signed Sealed and Delivered in Prefence of us*  
*Timothy Bourden.....*  
*Griffith Harris.....* } *Esek Hopkins*

*The Foregoing is a True Copy. Recorded this 16<sup>th</sup> Day of May A.D. 1781* }  
*Witness Theodore Foster Town Clerk -* }

SLAVERY  
MANUMISSION

COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

ESEK HOPKINS



**“NARRATIVE HISTORY” IS FABULATION, HISTORY IS CHRONOLOGY**



## ESEK HOPKINS

## COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

1784

February 25, Wednesday: The General Assembly of [Rhode Island](#) took up [Friend Moses Brown](#)'s bill for the abolition of [slavery](#). Not only would Rhode Island's slaves be gradually [manumitted](#), beginning with all children born



after the 1st of March, but also, no resident of the state might participate in the [international slave trade](#), and every shipowner fitting out his ship for African ports would be required to post bond that slaves would be no part of his ship's cargo.

"An Act authorizing the manumission of negroes, mulattoes, and others, and for the gradual abolition of slavery." Persons born after March, 1784, to be free. Bill framed pursuant to a petition of Quakers. COLONIAL RECORDS, X. 7-8; Arnold, HISTORY OF RHODE ISLAND, II. 503.



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The statute included a provision releasing slavemasters who manumitted slaves born prior to 1784 between 21 and 30 years of age (for a male) or 18 and 30 (for a female) from further obligation to financially support the freed slaves, but only when their town council was confident that the freed slave was healthy enough not to become dependent on town aid.



His brother [John Brown](#) was opposed, pointing out that if white people were not charitable enough to buy these black victims along the coast of Africa, very often the black victims of African wars would simply be offered. One Benson, a veteran of the trade, supplied the assembly with supporting anecdotes. The Middle Passage was portrayed as a rescue.

[Esek Hopkins](#) pointed out that these [Quakers](#) who opposed [slavery](#) were mere hypocrites, who readily participated in the rum industry, the sugar industry, the indigo industry, and other segments of the economy that relied heavily upon slave labor. These self-righteous posturers were as implicated as anybody else.

A more nuanced understanding of this phenomenon has come to us recently from Professor Joanne Pope Melish:



The support provisions of the 1784 emancipation law allowed slave owners to escape any further financial responsibility for slaves under forty years of age whom they [manumitted](#), which threatened to leave too many "old" slaves in their thirties to the support of the towns. A 1785 revision ["An Act repealing Part of the Act respecting the Manumission of Slaves," RI General Assembly, October 1785], reiterated in 1798 ["An Act relative to Slaves, and to their Manumission and Support: part



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of the revision of the Public Laws of the State of Rhode-island and Providence Plantations," RI General Assembly, January 1798], lowered the age of eligibility for unencumbered emancipation to thirty. Apparently some town councils, faced with rising costs for pauper support, refused to allow slave owners to manumit even eligible slaves, leading to the passage of an 1804 act providing for an appeal procedure by slave owners "aggrieved" by recalcitrant councils ["An Act in Amendment of the Act, entitled, 'An Act relative to Slaves, and their Manumission and Support,'" RI General Assembly, March 1804]. In other words, an aging slave population that would not be replenished either by birth into slavery or by importation, which had been outlawed in Rhode Island in 1774, presented an increasing financial liability, and many slave owners sought to manumit their slaves before they would be obligated to support them in their old age. The large number of manumissions may have led the slaves themselves to interpret these provisions as the "General Emancipation" act that Brown describes. Undoubtedly most slaves saw freedom under any circumstances as good news – though not all did, as Brown wryly observes, noting that a few "declared their masters had been eating their flesh and now they were going to stick to them and suck their bones."

At the first federal census in 1790, there were 427 free people of color and 48 slaves living in the city of Providence, a city of about 6,400. By 1810, four years before William Brown was born, the number of free people of color had risen to 865, just about 8.6 percent of the population of about 10,000, and the number of slaves had fallen to 6. Yet there were still 5 slaves in Rhode Island and 1 in the city of Providence in 1840, according to the Fifth Federal Census, and it was only the new state Constitution of November 1842 that finally abolished slavery entirely in Rhode Island.

**CHANGE IS ETERNITY, STASIS A FIGMENT**





COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

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2006

March 15, Wednesday: In [Providence, Rhode Island](#)'s "ProJo," the [Providence Journal](#), Paul Davis's series about the days of [slavery](#) and the [international slave trade](#) continued:

### 1 Boye Slave Dyed: The Terrible Voyage of the Sally

The first ship to leave [Providence](#) for Africa was sent by James Brown in 1735, but only a smattering of ships departed from that port before the Revolutionary War. Providence never became a busy slave center, like [Newport](#) and Bristol.

Newport dominated the state's slave trade for the first 50 years. All trade came to a halt during the seven years the colonies fought for independence from Great Britain. When the war ended, [Rhode Island](#) ships again cleared for Africa. Newport continued to send dozens of ships to Africa, but Providence and [Warren](#), and especially [Bristol](#), became bigger players.

Between 1784 and 1807, 402 ships sailed from Rhode Island for Africa.

Providence, which sent 55 of those ships, accounted for only 14 percent of the state's slave trade.

\* \* \*

Capt. [Esek Hopkins](#) had just cleared the African coast when one of his captives died.

The young girl wasn't the first.

For nine long months, Hopkins had bartered with slave traders on behalf of the Brown brothers of Providence - Nicholas, Joseph, John and Moses. By late August 1765, he had finally purchased enough slaves, 167, so he could leave. Tarrying on the malarial coast -sailors called it the White Man's Grave- Hopkins had already lost 20 slaves and two members of his crew.

On his first -and last- slave trade voyage on the *Sally* in 1765, Capt. Esek Hopkins lost 109 slaves to uprisings and disease. The failed attempt marked a turning point for the Brown family of Providence as [Moses Brown](#) turned his back on the slave trade. Now, on board the 120-ton brig *Sally*, the deaths continued.

"1 boye slave Dyed," Hopkins wrote on Aug. 25. He kept a tally of the slave deaths in his trade book. The young boy was number 22.

The Browns had instructed Hopkins to sell his slaves in the West Indies for "hard cash" or "good bills of exchange."

"Dispatch," they reminded him, "is the life of Business."

Esek Hopkins, 46, had spent years at sea, but, until now, he had never helmed a slave ship.

At 20, he left the family farm in Scituate to board a ship bound for Surinam, a South American port favored by Newport captains and slave dealers. Two older brothers also sailed. John died at sea; Samuel died at Hispaniola, a Caribbean slave and sugar center, now known as Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

Stephen, a third brother, rose through the ranks of colonial



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politics and became governor of Rhode Island.

Esek married in 1741, bought a farm in Providence and also dabbled in civic affairs. But he preferred the sea. Aggressive and outspoken, he worked for more than three decades as a privateer and merchant-adventurer, sometimes for the Browns. During the Seven Years' War between England and France, he captured a French ship loaded with oil and other goods.

But commanding a slave ship required knowledge of African tribal customs and negotiating skills; he possessed neither. He wasn't even the Browns' first choice; many Rhode Island captains were already on the African coast.

Stocked with handcuffs, leg irons, chains and padlocks, the *Sally* was a floating prison.

The women, mostly naked, lived unchained on the quarterdeck. Crew members believed there was little chance they would stage a rebellion.

The males, chained together in pairs, were kept below deck, where they struggled for air in the dark humid hold. Their spaces were so cramped they struggled to sit up.

In good weather, Hopkins and his crew exercised the more than 100 African slaves on deck, and scrubbed their filthy quarters with water and vinegar.

On Aug. 28, just eight days after leaving the coast of Africa, Hopkins freed some of the slaves to help with the chores. Instead, they freed other slaves and turned on what was left of his crew. "...the whole rose upon the People, and endeavored to get Possession of the vessel," the Newport Mercury reported later. Outnumbered, the sailors grabbed some of the weapons aboard the *Sally*: 4 pistols, 7 swivel guns, 13 cutlasses, 2 blunderbusses and a keg of gunpowder. The curved cutlass blades and short-barreled blunderbusses - favored by pirates and highwaymen - were ideal weapons for killing enemies in close quarters. "Destroyed 8 and several more wounded," Hopkins wrote. One slave suffered broken ribs, another a cracked thigh bone. Both later died.

At sea, the *Sally* creaked and rolled as the crew kept careful watch on the remaining males shackled on the decks below.

Above deck, Hopkins revised the death count in his trade book. 32, he wrote.

\* \* \*

Back in Providence, the Browns had high hopes for the *Sally*. Among the city's richest men, they operated under the name Nicholas Brown and Company. They owned all or partial interest in a number of ships; a candle factory at Fox Point; a rope factory, sugar house and chocolate mill and two rum distilleries.

Just before the *Sally* sailed, they invested in an iron foundry on the Pawtuxet River, the Hope Furnace in Scituate. Esek's brother, Stephen, was a partner. To help raise cash for the new foundry and their candle business, the Browns invested in the *Sally* and two non-slave ships that carried horses and other goods to the Caribbean.



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Sending the *Sally* to Africa marked the first time the four brothers, as a group, had ventured into the slave trade.

Their great-great grandfather, [Chad Brown](#), had been an early religious leader of the colony along with founder Roger Williams. The brothers' grandfather, James, a pious [Baptist](#) church elder, was openly critical of Providence's rising merchant class.

Yet, his son, Capt. James Brown, rejected the pulpit for the counting house. He sailed to the West Indies, ran a slaughter house, opened a shop and ran two distilleries. Unlike the earlier Browns, James recorded his children's births in his business ledger, rather than the family Bible.

And in 1735, he sent Providence's first slave ship to Africa.

"Gett Molases if you can" and "leave no debts behind," James wrote to his brother, Obadiah. The market was poor; still, Obadiah traded the Mary's human cargo in the West Indies for coffee, cordage, duck and salt. He brought three slaves, valued at 120 English pounds, back to Providence.

When James died three years later, Obadiah helped raise his brother's sons: Nicholas, Joseph, John and Moses.

In 1759, John and Nicholas joined Obadiah and other merchants in outfitting another slave ship, the *Wheel of Fortune*. It was captured by a French privateer. "Taken" wrote Obadiah in his insurance book.

The sons were not deterred.

[Abraham Redwood](#) was one of the principal contributors to The Redwood Library and Athenaeum when it was opened in 1750. Although he made his fortune from his Caribbean plantations and the slave trade, Redwood was remembered at the time of his death as a philanthropist and benefactor of the poor.

Although the local economy had suffered during the war between France and Britain, the slave trade surged in 1763.

In Virginia, plantation owner Carter Braxton urged the Browns to send him slaves. I understand, he said, there is a "great Traid carried on from Rhode Island to Guinea for Negroes."

The Browns did not act on Braxton's offer. But in the summer of 1754, three of the brothers helped stock the *Sally* with 17,274 gallons of rum, the main currency of the Rhode Island slave trade, 1,800 bunches of onions, 90 pounds of coffee, 40 barrels of flour, 30 boxes of candles, 25 casks of rice, 10 hogsheads of tobacco, 6 barrels of tar, and bread, molasses, beef and pork. The *Sally's* crew included a first and second mate, Hopkins' personal slave and a cooper to make barrels for the molasses the *Sally* would receive in trade for slaves.

The Browns agreed to pay Esek Hopkins 50 pounds a month for the voyage. Although it was slightly less than the wages paid the first and second mates, Hopkins was also promised a fat bonus, or "privilege," including 10 barrels of rum and 10 slaves. Most Rhode Island captains received a bonus of 4 slaves per 104 sold at market.

Because hard money was scarce in Rhode Island, the first and second mates were also offered slaves as commissions.



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For the Browns, the stakes were high. For 50 years, Newport had been the colony's major shipping port. The Browns, along with Gov. Stephen Hopkins and a few other merchants, wanted to make Providence the political and commercial center of Rhode Island. "The Browns knew that the trade posed risks, but they also knew it could result in tremendous profits," says James Campbell, a Brown University professor. "They clearly anticipated a very profitable voyage."

\* \* \*

Hopkins, however, fared poorly in Africa. With the end of the Seven Years' War, transatlantic trade resumed; British and New England ships jammed Africa's slave castles, trade forts and river mouths. "Demand was great and prices were high," Campbell says. "The seller had the upper hand."

Hopkins had no choice but to sail a 100-mile stretch of coast, looking for deals. Worse, he didn't understand local customs, which depended on gifts, tributes and bribes. The trade, which dragged on for months, "involved an exchange of courtesies, gifts and negotiations," says Campbell. "You had to establish your credentials and character before trade actually began."

By mid-December, Hopkins had purchased 23 slaves. But the trading went slowly. Hopkins gave King Fodolgo Talko and his officers two barrels of rum and a keg of snuff. It wasn't enough. The next day, he gave another leader and his men two casks of rum.

On Dec. 23, he met with the king beneath a tree. He gave him 75 gallons of rum and received a cow as a present. The next day trading resumed, and Hopkins offered another 112 gallons of rum. He got one slave.

Later that day, the king demanded more rum, tobacco, iron and sugar for himself, his son and other officials.

Rhode Island captains spent an average of four months on the African coast; it took Hopkins nine.

"Hopkins was inexperienced as a slaver," says Campbell. "You wanted to get in and out as quickly as possible. As long as a slave ship was close to land, there was a danger of insurrection. Moreover, you die when you're on the West African coast. You're being exposed to diseases like malaria and yellow fever. Your slaves and crews start to die."

On June 8, Hopkins logged his most successful day of trading - 12 slaves. That same day, one of his earlier captives hanged herself between the decks of the *Sally*.

\* \* \*

Now, as Hopkins crossed a cruel stretch of ocean called the Middle Passage, death came almost daily.

"3 women Slaves Dyed," Hopkins wrote in his trade book on Oct. 1. The ink had hardly dried when, a day later, he wrote: "3 men Slaves and 2 women Slaves - Dyed."

On Oct. 3, "1 garle Slave Dyed."

The family clock of Adm. Esek Hopkins sits today in an office



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in University Hall at Brown University, which was Rhode Island College at the time. The first building on campus, it was built using slave labor. The clock was presented by his granddaughter Elizabeth Angell in 1855.

In a letter to the Browns, Hopkins blamed the deaths on the failed slave revolt. The survivors were "so dispirited," he wrote, that "some drowned themselves, some starved and others sickened and died."

But the rate at which the Africans died "suggests an epidemic disease," probably smallpox or dysentery, says Campbell.

Amoebic dysentery, carried through fecal-tainted water, was spread by the filthy conditions below slave ship decks. It caused violent diarrhea, dehydration and death. Traders called it the "bloody flux."

The remaining Africans aboard the *Sally* were in a "very sickly and disordered manner," Hopkins wrote to the Browns when he arrived in Antigua. The emaciated slaves, fed a gruel made of rice, fetched poor prices; some sold for as little as 4 to 6 English pounds.

By the time Hopkins returned to Newport, he had lost 109 Africans. For most investors, a 15 percent loss of life was an acceptable risk; Hopkins lost more than half of his human cargo. And, the Browns lost the equivalent of \$10,000 on the voyage, says Campbell. "The debacle represented a turning point for three of the brothers -Nicholas, Joseph and Moses- who thereafter left the trade for good," says Campbell. "It would be nice to say that they quit because of moral qualms, but there isn't much evidence to support that, at least initially. More likely, they simply concluded that [slavery](#) was too risky an investment."

John invested in additional slave voyages -between four and eight more- and became a defender of the trade.

His younger brother, Moses, took another path.

Depressed, unable to sleep, he avoided the family counting house. In 1773 -eight years after the *Sally's* voyage- he freed his six slaves. He was sure his wife's death was the result of his role in the trade.

Joining other [Quakers](#), Moses declared war on New England's slavers.

One of his first targets was his older brother, [John Brown](#).

**"NARRATIVE HISTORY" IS FABULATION, HISTORY IS CHRONOLOGY**

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## ESEK HOPKINS

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2007

March 8, Thursday: Several articles about Governor [Stephen Hopkins](#) appeared in the [Providence, Rhode Island](#) newspaper, the “[ProJo](#).” One illustration, an oil by John Philip Hagen, has a caption saying “Hopkins, despite his accomplishments, lived an unpretentious Quaker lifestyle and never sat for a portrait.”



Yes, this 1999 oil is not based on any record of the actual appearance of Hopkins, the artist having based the painting upon the appearance of descendants. However, the allegation that Hopkins lived according to an unpretentious Quaker lifestyle seems not to be at all an accurate record of this man’s flamboyance and zest.

This newspaper didn’t quite make Governor Hopkins out to be a Friend, but it quoted Brown curator Robert Emlen as saying, “It’s not surprising that Hopkins would not have had a painting of himself done in life ... He was by all accounts a modest person. Later in life, he became a Quaker, so his values would have been ‘to shun vanity and to speak from the heart.’” That cited remark, which the newspaper made no attempt to evaluate, does claim as definite fact that Hopkins’s membership in the [Religious Society of Friends](#) was official and



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documented, but this, of course, is not accurate since in fact we have no historical record whatever of any application by this man to any monthly meeting of the Religious Society of Friends for membership, or of any acceptance of him by the Religious Society of Friends (the only record we have is that this man did get married with a Quaker woman and then did begin to wear Quaker-type clothing, and that the Friends dealt gently with the resultant situation).

Perhaps the reason the 18th-Century Quakers dealt gently with the situation was, that by their own standards they should have disowned the Quaker woman who married him, for “marrying out” was in that period a standard cause of such disownment. Clearly the Providence Quakers didn’t want to disown her if there was a way to stall and wait for the situation to mature. Apparently, the curator Emlen is not aware that local Friends here were sufficiently annoyed by Hopkins’ reluctance to free his slaves that they publicly disassociated themselves from him. (It would not be accurate to say that they read him out of his Meeting’s roster of members. This would be saying too much, for three reasons. The first of the three reasons is that we have no record of his ever either applying or being accepted by any monthly meeting as a member of the Friends. The second of the three reasons is that there simply never was any such thing in that period in this locality as a monthly meeting’s roster of members. I think I can safely say that the lists of names and addresses that we currently take for granted are a phenomenon of our present era, and that they do not extend back into the past. I have never seen a roster of members dating to the 19th Century or earlier, for **any** Quaker meeting. None whatever. The third of the three reasons is, the function of the disownment procedure that they followed in this case was **not** to “read someone out of his Meeting’s roster of members.” It was very different from that. It was a notification to the greater local community, that they should not consider this person to be in fellowship with the Friends, and it was a permission in the Meeting for Business to disregard this person’s objections. This is of importance because, in the case of Stephen Hopkins, uniquely, we **kept his disownment a secret** for about one year after thus disowning him. Keeping it a deep dark secret of course destroyed one of the two purposes that disownment fills!)

In this issue of the [ProJo](#) newspaper, in regard to John Greenwood’s oil-on-bed-ticking painting “Sea Captains Carousing in Surinam” painted between 1752 and 1758 and now in the Saint Louis art museum in Missouri, the caption writer speculated on whether a man seated next to Captain [Esek Hopkins](#), Stephen’s brother, asleep with his head on his hand in the middle of the “raucous party” might be Stephen himself.



However, the article’s author, Journal Staff Writer Katherine Imbrie, points out that Stephen in 1757 spent September in Worcester suing a political enemy for slander, and then was campaigning for election in March 1758 to be governor, and thus wouldn’t have had time to sail to Surinam in South America and return. (This would be presuming that the painting was made in Surinam or that the painter visited Surinam and I do not have such evidence — I think it is quite likely to the contrary that the painting was done right here in New England.)

In the timeframe in question Hopkins was elected to his third one-year term as Governor during his total of



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nine years in that office and was deeply entangled in said lawsuit (the lawsuit was against his archrival, Samuel Ward, who twice unseated Hopkins before Hopkins finally succeeded Ward in 1767). Emlen says that Professor Robert Kenney decided that Stephen Hopkins was not only not a mariner, but not the sleeping drunkard in the painting, and that the drunkard must therefore have been another Hopkins brother, William. That seems to me to be likely.

The newspaper article credits Hopkins for freeing his slaves without indicating when that was supposed to have happened. Hopkins, in his will, did express a **desire** that his slaves, plural, be set free after his death. However, the will made no provisions for the costs of this and the slaves were part of the estate. It was not an easy thing, to grant [manumission](#) to a [slave](#): for one thing, the town needed to consent (because there might be public costs for later care) and we have no record that the town did consent in this case. Since, in a probate proceeding, the settlement of debts comes **first** before the disposition of any remaining assets, the slaves **could not** have been set free unless assets were available to do so. We therefore need to verify, before we draw any conclusions from this provision in this will, that the decedent's estate was large enough, and unencumbered enough, to leave sufficient funds to set these slaves free. I myself suspect that they were **not** set free, simply because there is no record of any manumission documents for them down at the town real-estate office where such manumission documents were stored. There is only one manumission record in that office, and it is a record in which his adopted daughter after his death took **one** man to the town office, Toney, testified that Toney "had been free for a long time" but that his manumission document had been "lost or misplaced," and obtained for him a new "copy." This action, of course, would have been unnecessary, had Hopkins's slaves indeed been freed in accordance with his will, because the office to which the daughter took the man would have possessed a written record of any such previous manumission. Also, except for this one person named "Toney," we don't even know the names of these Hopkins slaves. The conclusion I have to come to is that Hopkins's slaves, plural, with the single except of this one person Toney, **did not ever** become free.

Note well that in a parallel situation, George Washington would express the same sentiment in his will, about freeing the estate's slaves after his death and the death of his wife Martha — and we know, in the case of Washington, that despite this sentiment, these slaves **did not ever** become free (the widow Martha would be dead set against any of them becoming free, and they would merely become the property of her heirs).

The newspaper article says Hopkins had acquired those slaves through marriage, perhaps indicating his first marriage rather than his second; and says that although Hopkins was a merchant he was never involved in the slave trade. It is curious that the article makes that assertion, since nobody has ever suggested that Hopkins ever himself personally went on any of the slaving voyages. Before making such a historical assertion, however, we ought to have investigated whether he might have been a silent partner in some of Captain Esek Hopkins's slaving voyages — since he and Esek were thick as thieves — and I do not have assurance that this has in fact already been investigated.

### Gov. Stephen Hopkins slept here

March 8, 2007

DAVID BRUSSAT

GEORGE WASHINGTON slept in the Stephen Hopkins House. Twice. We know the neat little wine-dark house in Providence where Stephen Hopkins lived, probably even better than we know the history of Hopkins himself. Yesterday was the 300th anniversary of his birth, on March 7, 1707.

The oldest part of the house that sits on the street that now bears his name was built in the same year he was born, although





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he did not move into it until they both were 36 years old. By the time he bought the house from John Field, Hopkins had held several official posts in Scituate, where he was raised. While its representative in the General Assembly, he was elected speaker in 1742. That year he moved to Providence and bought the house at the corner of the Town Street and Bank Lane, now South Main and Hopkins. He added four rooms to Field's two (now the rear el). The house is still becomingly modest by today's standards.

General Washington's first visit was on April 5, 1776. He was on his way to take command of the Continental Army in Boston. Hopkins himself was in Philadelphia, at the Continental Congress. His daughter-in-law served as host. Her family wanted to lend her better china for the occasion. "What's good enough for my father," she is said to have replied, "is good enough for General Washington." Modesty fit the Providence of the era, but Hopkins worked to change all that. He helped to start the Providence Library Company, a precursor to the Providence Athenaeum, and the Providence Gazetteer & Country Journal. In 1764 he was named the first chancellor of Brown University, then called Rhode Island College. He was elected governor nine times between 1755 and 1767. In the colonial politics of the era, he led Providence in the competition with Newport for civic and commercial supremacy.

Only after he left the governor's office did Hopkins begin his famous career as a founder and patriot. In 1772, as chief justice of the Superior Court, Hopkins directed the cover-up of the burning of the H.M.S. Gaspee, America's first major violent act against the crown. The tavern where the conspirators met, led by the town's richest merchant, John Brown, was a block south of the Hopkins house. Everyone knew who was involved, but Hopkins could find no one to indict. The whole town kept the secret from the enemy. (Imagine that today!)

Stephen Hopkins later served in the Continental Congress and signed the Declaration of Independence. In penning his shaky signature, he had to hold his right hand steady with his left. Aged 69 and in poor health, he is said to have declared to his fellow Rhode Island delegate, William Ellery: "My hand trembles but my heart does not."

Hopkins himself hosted General Washington in 1781. Moses Brown wrote: "I sat some time viewing the simple and friendly and pleasant manner in which these two great men met and conversed with each other on various subjects." Stop the presses!

Hopkins died in 1785 and was laid to rest in the North Burial Ground in Providence. This Saturday at 2 p.m., the Rhode Island chapter of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America will hold a procession to the gravesite, led by the [Pawtuxet](#) Rangers, the Newport Artillery and the 2nd Rhode Island Regiment, and a ceremony to commemorate his life. The Hopkins House will be open 1-4 p.m. that day. The Dames run the house as a museum on behalf of its owner, the State of Rhode Island. In 1804, the house, already of obvious historical status, was



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relocated half a block uphill, doubtless to save it from "progress." In 1927, this time to make way for a new Providence County Court House, it was moved even farther up the hill to where it sits today, at the corner of Hopkins and Benefit.

After the move, the house was restored by Norman Isham, the famous Rhode Island architectural historian. I toured the house last Thursday with Kiki Anderson, of the Rhode Island Colonial Dames, who showed me some old Journal clippings about Isham's work. One was about Isham's reaction to interference from the Women's Christian Temperance Union: "Isham Waxes Wroth Over W.C.T.U. 'No Bottles' Edict - Noted Authority on Colonial Architecture Irately Says He is in Mind to Put Some 'Good Old Stuff' in Every Room of Hopkins House."

No doubt Hopkins would be amused. He was portrayed in the 1972 film 1776 as the cranky old drunkard who kept a fractious Continental Congress's nose to the grindstone. This put the local bluenoses out of joint. A column by Journal art critic Bradford F. Swann was headlined "Stephen Hopkins a drunken buffoon? We should say not." Today, the "Good Old Stuff" is not in evidence. No matter. With or without the assistance of spirits, few houses can say, "George Washington slept here twice." Because of that, however, it is one of the few houses that can also say, "I was moved to a new location twice." You could say the house lives up to the exploits of its heroic resident.

### **Happy 300th, Stephen Hopkins**

03/08/2007

By Katherine Imbrie  
Journal Staff Writer

When the Founding Fathers of the country are mentioned, few people think first of Stephen Hopkins of Providence. But Hopkins was one of two signers of the Declaration of Independence from Rhode Island, and he had already had a long career in Colonial government by the time he put his signature to the Declaration at age 69.

The Hopkins signature on the most famous American document is not as bold as that of the better-known John Hancock. Hopkins' shaky hand was due to a medical condition that is now supposed to have been either Parkinson's Disease or another type of palsy. (For this reason, Hopkins earned a bad rap in the 1969 musical and 1972 musical, 1776, in which he was portrayed as a cantankerous drunkard - a characterization not based in fact.) Hopkins' most famous quote acknowledges his disability while at the same time testifying to his strength of purpose in signing the Declaration: "My hand trembles, but my heart does not." He made the statement when his fellow Rhode Island signer, William Ellery of Newport, seemed to look askance at his shakiness while signing.

Hopkins was born in Providence 300 years ago yesterday, and on Saturday he will get his due with a birthday celebration. A free three-hour open house - complete with cider, cookies and ginger



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cake – will be held at his home to mark the occasion, and there will be a ceremonial procession and plaque dedication at his gravesite.

The open house is a good opportunity to see the inside of the 1707 Stephen Hopkins House, normally open four days a week in summer, or by appointment. The little red house, set in its small formal garden overlooking the Financial District, is a beloved landmark of the historic East Side. For Saturday's event, its tiny Colonial rooms will be enlivened by the presence of a costumed actor portraying Hopkins, David Ely.

### **A flawed person**

Ely, who teaches theater at Lincoln School in Providence, has made a sideline of portraying famous historical characters of Rhode Island for a couple of decades, since he began by playing Roger Williams and Samuel Slater in a Rhode Island school program called "Legacy Plays." For the past five years, he's made a specialty of portraying Hopkins for 4th- and 5th-grade Rhode Island school programs about the Revolutionary War, and he also steps into the role on occasions such as Saturday's, for which he's hired by the Rhode Island Chapter of the Colonial Dames of America, the society that operates the historic Hopkins house.

Besides donning his Hopkins costume (which consists of black slip-on shoes, Colonial-style knickers and white hose, and a dark-blue coat and vest), Ely says he gets into the role of the Colonial leader by trying to integrate the good and the bad things he's learned by reading about Hopkins over the years: "He was a flawed person. He had a long-term nasty dispute with his archrival in state politics, Samuel Ward. In governor's races of the time, Ward tended to be backed by the southern landholders in the state, while Hopkins had the backing of the merchant Brown brothers. There was a certain amount of political goings-on, such as an accusation of having paid voters likely to support Ward to stay home."

But on the positive side, says Ely, "Once the two rivals became united in the bigger fight against Britain, they stopped squabbling and even became friends.

Hopkins was always a big supporter of public education – he helped establish the first library and the first college in Rhode Island," Brown.

"He freed his slaves, which he had acquired through marriage, and although he was a merchant, never was involved in the slave trade. He was a highly educated person at a time when not many people were."

For Saturday's event, Ely will not present a performance on Hopkins, but will be in period costume, along with Kim Clark portraying his wife, Sarah.

### **Famously modest**

Besides his house, few artifacts have come down through history



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from Hopkins, who was famously a modest person, according to Brown University curator and senior lecturer in American Civilization Robert Emlen.

"Among the stories I like about Hopkins is that when George Washington came to stay in Providence, he chose to stay in the Hopkinses' very small and modest house, rather than at a more imposing house such as John Brown's. At the time of the visit, Hopkins was away at the Continental Congress, and someone is said to have urged his wife to at least get in some better china dishes in honor of Washington's arrival. But she said no, what was good enough for her husband to dine on was good enough for anyone."

Besides being a nine-times-elected governor of Rhode Island, a state chief justice and a delegate to the Colonial and Continental Congresses, Hopkins was the first chancellor of Brown University, which owns a portrait of him similar to one that hangs in the Rhode Island State House.

Emlen explains that, although the portraits are intended to represent Hopkins, they both are actually 1999 simulations made by Newport artist John Hagen. Hagen worked from a sketch made by John Trumbull in 1793 for his famous group portrait of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, the painting that hangs in the rotunda of the U.S. Capitol.

"By the time Trumbull got to Rhode Island to make his sketches, Hopkins had been dead several years," says Emlen. "But everyone told him that Hopkins' nephew looked exactly like him, so Trumbull painted the nephew as a stand-in for Hopkins."

"Brown (University) had never had a portrait of its first chancellor, so we had Hagen work from the Trumbull sketch. So in fact, the so-called Hopkins portrait is not actually him, but is a 1999 rendering of a 1793 sketch of Hopkins' nephew."

### **"He kept the chair"**

It's not surprising that Hopkins would not have had a painting of himself done in life, says Emlen. "He was by all accounts a modest person. Later in life, he became a Quaker, so his values would have been 'to shun vanity and to speak from the heart.'"

"Hopkins didn't make a public spectacle of himself the way his contemporary Benjamin Franklin did. He didn't need to show off, but he had a good reputation, and from the number of times he was elected and served in public offices, he was trusted and well-respected by the people of Rhode Island."

### **He had a sense of humor, too.**

A historic Spanish leather chair that is the official chair used for public occasions by presidents of Brown University was a gift to the university from a Hopkins descendant, says Emlen.

"The story is that Hopkins, who was a merchant, had a share in a privateer during one of the 18th-century wars with Spain. When the privateer captured a Spanish ship, some of Hopkins' friends got him this chair, telling him that it was one that he 'couldn't



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be unseated from' – a reference to the fact that Hopkins had been in and out of the Rhode Island governorship so often. "So he kept the chair, and his grandson gave it to Brown, which allows us to describe the presidential chair as pirate loot." The 300th Birthday Celebration of Stephen Hopkins will be held Saturday at the Stephen Hopkins House, 15 Hopkins St. at the corner of Benefit Street in Providence. Admission is free. The house will be open from 1 to 4 p.m., with costumed actors portraying Stephen and Sarah Hopkins. Cider, cookies, and ginger cake will be served. At 2 p.m., a commemoration ceremony will be held at the Hopkins gravesite in North Burial Ground, 5 Branch Ave. at the corner of North Main Street. Members of the Newport Artillery Company, the [Pawtuxet](#) Rangers, the Colonial Dames, the Society of Colonial Wars, and the 2nd Rhode Island Regiment will march from the cemetery gates to the gravesite beginning at 1:30 p.m. For more information, call the Colonial Dames, (401) 421-0694.

Although at the last minute I had been disinvented as a speaker at the 300th Birthday Celebration for Governor Stephen Hopkins at his gravesite, since I still had my engraved invitation card, I did attend that ceremony at 2PM as the card stated. Quite frankly, I was expecting to be turned away at the gate in the high iron fence that surrounds this graveyard. What I found, however, when I arrived at big gate, was that the guard accepted my invitation card and allowed me to enter the grounds. However, when I reached the gravesite at the top of the hill just prior to 2PM, what I discovered was that all the speechmaking at the podium had been already completed. (Imagine that: a public event that, instead of beginning ten minutes later than announced, is already over and done with by the time that they had advertised it to begin! –You don't suppose, do you, that they were doing things this way in order to make certain that I would have no opportunity for telling them truths they did not need to hear?) The only thing remaining for me to witness in the ceremony at the gravesite was the ragged volleys of black-powder musket fire by uniformed re-enactors, and the resultant clouds of acrid gunsmoke. I stood there and endured this and then listened as a guy who clearly was not part of the ceremonies stepped forward and volunteered to inform all onlookers that he was proud to be himself personally a descendant of Stephen Hopkins. He added that his ancestor had been a Quaker "although," he added, "I'm not sure what that meant, I don't know much about the Quakers."

Back at Providence Monthly Meeting, later, there was no channel by which I could express any of this to any other Friend — since this was not an approved-by-Ministry-and-Counsel topic on which to report at the monthly meeting for business, and was not an approved-by-Ministry-and-Counsel topic "relating to the life of the community" on which I might be allowed to report during the announcements period after meeting for worship. And, since the "Media Committee" has already informed me (in writing) that no submission would be accepted for publication in the meeting newsletter –if they suspected it to be written by me– there had been no way whatever for me to respond to their war-celebratory front page center entry in the February 2007 issue of our meeting newsletter, "The Provident FRIEND."



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(I think that a lot of this has to do with Friends in our meeting who have been “silently uncomfortable” with the Quaker Peace Testimony, in the same manner in which some of them are known to be “silently uncomfortable” with gay marriage. I suspect that, because this situation has been obtaining for me ever since I helped aged Friend John R. Kellam, a WWII prisoner of conscience, write his autobiography about his years in federal maximum security prison as a Conscientious Objector, <http://www.kouroo.info/RSOF/FriendJohnKellam.pdf>. We had copies printed and bound at Kinko’s, and he had presented one of these bound Kinko’s copies to the library of the Moses Brown School. Almost all the kiddies at this school are now non-Quaker, and I don’t think they want them or their parents to have their noses rubbed in the fact that the Quakers are traitors.)

## CHANGE IS ETERNITY, STASIS A FIGMENT

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“It’s all now you see. Yesterday won’t be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago.”

– Remark by character “Garin Stevens”  
in William Faulkner’s INTRUDER IN THE DUST





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*ARRGH AUTOMATED RESEARCH REPORT*

*GENERATION HOTLINE*



This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, someone has requested that we pull it out of the hat of a pirate who has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (as above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture (this is data mining). To respond to such a request for information we merely push a button.



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Commonly, the first output of the algorithm has obvious deficiencies and we need to go back into the modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and recompile the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

First come first serve. There is no charge.  
Place requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>. Arrgh.