

The Republicans made a great effort to defeat the coalition against them in 1861. They nominated James Y. Smith of Providence for Governor, Simon Henry Greene of Warwick for Lieutenant-Governor, and Sullivan Ballou of Smithfield for attorney-general. The Democrats and Constitutional Unionists renominated Sprague and Burges and nominated Samuel G. Arnold of Middletown for Lieutenant-Governor. The coalition candidates were elected by majorities of from 1,506 to 1,661. The vote for Governor was Sprague, 12,005; Smith, 10,326. William P. Sheffield and George H. Browne, the coalition candidates for Congress, were elected by moderate majorities over Christopher Robinson and William D. Brayton respectively.

The representation of the several towns in the house of representatives was reapportioned at the January session in 1861, the step having become necessary in consequence of the changes of population, as shown by the census of 1860. North Providence, Cranston, Westerly and Fall River each gained a member, Warren, North Kingston and Glocester each lost one, and Tiverton lost two.<sup>1</sup>

---

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE LAST FOUR DECADES.

The part that the state of Rhode Island took in the suppression of the Rebellion of 1861 was alike creditable to her citizens and to her public men then in positions of authority. No half-hearted measures were pursued, but a quick response was made to all demands for troops or money. An active patriotism animated the people, which found vent in the rapid equipment of regiment after regiment, until in the end it was found that the state had sent into the field more than her quota of troops.

A peace convention was held at Washington from February 4 to February 27, at which ex-President John Tyler presided, and twenty-one states represented. The Rhode Island delegates were Samuel Ames, Alexander Duncan, William W. Hoppin, George H. Browne, and Samuel G. Arnold. In the interests of peace a compromise was adopted and presented to Congress, but no action was taken by the national legislature. The northern delegates to this convention willingly voted

<sup>1</sup>Tiverton, which had three members by the apportionment of 1851, owed its third member to a large fraction. When a portion of the town was set off, in 1856, and made the town of Fall River, each town was given one member, and the third one was not apportioned to any town.

for concessions that they were opposed to, because by so doing they desired to avoid the greater evils of disunion and war. They thus illustrated the conservative and fair dealing attitude of mind that animated them, and which was general at the north.

While these efforts at conciliation were in progress many rumors were current of contemplated attempts to seize Washington in the interest of the southern states. Governor William Sprague, in view of the danger of such an attack, offered to President Buchanan the use of the Rhode Island militia to defend the capital, but the President refused to accept this aid. The Rhode Island secretary of state, John R. Bartlett, made substantially the same offer early in January, 1861, in a letter to the secretary of war, but no response was received to this letter. In accordance with a letter of instructions from Governor Sprague, dated January 24, 1861, Major William Goddard, accompanied by Senator Henry B. Anthony, called upon General Scott, then commander-in-chief of the army of the United States, and offered the services of the entire body of the Rhode Island militia "to aid in protecting the constitution and laws," with the assurance that they could be at once sent on to Washington. General Scott evidently would have been glad to avail himself of this offer, but could not do so without being instructed by the President and the secretary of war. As this authority was not forthcoming, the project fell through. This affair, however, illustrated the willing patriotism of the Rhode Island men, and the harmony that prevailed among them on this great question of the preservation of the nation.

With the election of Abraham Lincoln as President, November 7, 1860, the rebellion of the southern states may be said to have begun, as the work of organizing the Confederacy assumed definite shape from that day. One after the other, the southern states passed ordinances of secession, and proceeded to raise and arm troops. All property, arms and munitions of war within their limits, belonging to the United States, were seized and appropriated to the use of the rebels. Jefferson Davis was inaugurated President of the Confederate States of America, February 18, 1861, and three days later General Twiggs of the United States army surrendered 6,000 men and \$1,200,000 worth of property to the state of Texas. The Civil War, however, did not actually begin until after the inauguration of President Lincoln. Notwithstanding the action of the southern states in organizing an independent government, there was a feeling at the north that perhaps after all some way might be found of patching up the difficulty without coming into actual conflict. This idea was rudely dispelled by the attack on Fort Sumter, April 12, by General Beauregard, and its surrender after a gallant resistance by Major Anderson, two days later. This event created wide spread indignation in the north and convinced the northern people that war was inevitable.

The day after the surrender of Fort Sumter, April 15, President Lincoln issued a proclamation calling for 75,000 men to volunteer for three months, in which time it was thought that the rebellion could be stamped out. The President had previously announced his determination to maintain the Union at all hazards. This attitude on his part inspired the people of the north with confidence, while the attack on Fort Sumter proved that energetic and prompt action was necessary if the President was to be sustained. The response to the call of the President for men was immediate and spontaneous in all the northern states, and Rhode Island was in the forefront in equipping and forwarding troops.

On April 16, the day after the President's proclamation, Governor Sprague issued an order for the organization of the First Regiment of Infantry. This was accomplished so promptly that on April 20 the first detachment left Providence under command of Colonel Ambrose E. Burnside, and the second on April 24, under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph S. Pitman. The scenes and incidents of the organization of this regiment are thus graphically described by a local writer:

“The streets of Providence now resounded with the tramp of armed men and the notes of martial music. The vestrys of the churches, halls and private dwellings were filled with women at work upon the outfit of the soldiers. The country towns vied with Providence and Newport in the good work. Twenty-five hundred men volunteered for service in this regiment, and the fifteen hundred not allowed to depart in it felt as if they had met a personal loss. The regiment was selected from this array of volunteers as follows: Six companies from Providence, one from Newport, one from Pawtucket, one from Westerly, and one from Woonsocket.”

Great credit is given Governor Sprague for his course during the early days of the war, not only for the energy he displayed in raising and equipping troops, but also for the great financial assistance he furnished at the same time. Much money was needed, and the state was not in a position to provide it immediately. The firm of A. & W. Sprague at once offered to guarantee the payment of all accounts for equipping the troops, and as the credit of this manufacturing house at that time was unlimited, there was no difficulty under such circumstances in organizing regiments and securing all the necessary supplies.

Governor William Sprague was untiring in his efforts to secure troops, and his zeal and enthusiasm contributed largely to the success that was attained in filling the Rhode Island regiments. He resigned as Governor to take his seat as senator from Rhode Island in the United States Congress, March 3, 1863, and his unexpired term as Governor was completed by William C. Cozzens, who held the office

from March 3 to May. James Y. Smith was then elected and held that office until 1866. Governors Sprague and Smith were consequently the war governors of the state. During Governor Sprague's term the troops went to the front, while during Governor Smith's incumbency recruiting went on to keep the regiments up to their war footing, and the executive had also much to do with regard to questions of accounts, details of administration and the straightening out of various financial tangles.

Rhode Island was subjected to its most trying test of patriotism in the great struggle between the states, during the last two years of the Civil War, when James Y. Smith was Governor. The war was at its height. Call after call for troops followed in rapid succession, and drafts were ordered in most if not all of the loyal states. The demand for men by the government was continuous and imperative, but Rhode Island had had all the experience with a draft its people desired, and its Chief Executive, sharing the general feeling, determined that all calls should be filled by voluntary and not by enforced service. As the calls already made had taken off from her soil the major portion of its real fighting material, who by their bravery and devotion were winning a golden opinion for the state, the task of avoiding a second draft was arduous if not well nigh impossible. Herculean as the labor was, however, it was accomplished at last, but not without the expenditure of large sums of money for bounties, recruiting agents, and other expenses, which were cheerfully voted, for money was as nothing in those days compared with the apprehension of enforced military service.

Political excitement ran high at that time, and these heavy expenditures awakened criticism of and reflection upon the Governor in unfriendly quarters. A legislative committee to investigate reported, to use their own words, "that they do not believe that he (the Governor) has intentionally done anything wrong in the recruiting business, or that he has directly or indirectly profited therefrom," while the popular verdict was rendered at the next annual election when he received a majority in every town and ward in the state, a case rarely if ever paralleled in the annals of the state.

This interesting episode in our history is thus summarized, the day after Governor Smith's death, by the Providence Journal, which was politically opposed to him during his life:

"From 1863 to 1865-6, inclusive, he served the state with ability, fidelity and patriotism as its Chief Magistrate. The period covered by this service was a very trying one, from the fact that it was the most gloomy period in the history of the Civil War. The quota required from this state, under the several calls for troops, amounted during Governor Smith's administration to above thirteen thousand five hundred men. The people of the state were adverse to a draft,

and this whole number of men were secured by voluntary enlistment, but necessarily at a great cost in the way of bounties and services of recruiting agents. In the strife which political excitement engenders, it is not strange that with so many conflicting and adversary interests to reconcile or to contend against, Governor Smith did not altogether escape the shafts of partisan censure and attack, but the sober judgment of the people in reviewing his administration will accord to him an honest and sincere desire to uphold the honor and patriotism of the state."

A branch of the United States Sanitary Commission was established in Providence, October, 1861, and it did good service in collecting and forwarding medicines and supplies. The Providence Ladies' Volunteer Relief Association made and forwarded garments and clothing, and many of the women of the city were actively engaged in the work of this organization, which accomplished a great deal of good. In the spring of 1863 this society became known as the Rhode Island Relief Association, and worked as auxiliary to the Sanitary Commission. Various other associations with similar objects existed in Providence and in every town in the state, and they all performed noble work.

Rhode Island sent into the field during the rebellion 24,042 men, including 10,382 infantry, 4,394 cavalry, 5,642 heavy artillery, 2,977 light artillery, and 645 men for the navy. These figures, however, include re-enlistments, and the actual quota has been given as 23,778. Of these 10,440 enlisted during Governor Sprague's administration, and 13,338 while Governor Smith was in office. The casualties were: 255 killed, 1,265 died of wounds or disease, and 1,249 were wounded. Eight regiments of infantry were enlisted, three for three months, two for nine months, and three for three years; three regiments of cavalry for three years, and one squadron for three months; three regiments of heavy artillery and one regiment of light artillery for three years, two light batteries for three months, and a company of infantry as hospital guards.

The total expenditure of the state of Rhode Island and of the cities and towns on account of the war, amounted to \$6,500,000. Of this amount the United States government refunded \$933,195.45; the cities and towns spent directly, for which they were not reimbursed, \$1,156,589.86; and the state spent directly \$3,610,000, in addition to reimbursing the towns and cities to the amount of \$465,690, thus making the total state expenditure \$4,075,690, exclusive of claims against the United States of \$335,287.74. Considerably more than half of the expenditures of the cities and towns, \$820,768.80 was for bounties.<sup>1</sup>

These facts in regard to the men sent out and the money spent demonstrate that the Rhode Island people manifested a vigorous and self-sacrificing patriotism, which is worthy of all praise and honor. The

<sup>1</sup> *Adjutant-General's Report for 1865*, pp. 8-9.

scandals in regard to the bounty frauds and the financial irregularities in the accounts were due to the crimes or errors of a few men, whose actions, while lamentable, are such an inconsiderable part of the whole record that by contrast the magnificent attitude of the people and the state stand out in clear relief for nobility, honor and self-sacrifice.

The creation of a large military population brought about certain alterations in suffrage conditions, and considerable of the time of the assembly during the war was spent in trying to alter the constitution to suit these changes. An amendment to the constitution giving naturalized soldiers and sailors in Rhode Island commands equal voting rights with the native-born population was passed by the legislature in 1862, and for the second time in 1863. When it was submitted to the popular vote, it failed to receive the necessary three-fifths vote and was rejected. In the following year, the same amendment, coupled with two others—one substituting a poll tax for the registry tax, and the other allowing citizen soldiers in the field to vote—passed the assembly. When submitted to the people, only the last one of the three was accepted, which was accordingly entered as the 4th amendment. The most important matter outside of war measures during the period was the settlement of the boundary agreement with Massachusetts, whereby Pawtucket and East Providence were turned over to the state, and the new town of Fall River was surrendered to Massachusetts.

Immediately succeeding the period of the war there was the attempt made to extend the elective franchise to naturalized citizens of Rhode Island who were excluded by the constitution of 1843. According to this instrument, a citizen of foreign birth, even although he had complied with all the requirements of the United States naturalization laws, could not vote unless he possessed a freehold. Those who desired a change in the Rhode Island constitution to offset this disqualification asserted that "the naturalization laws of the United States are, within the State of Rhode Island, nullified, and the whole political power of the state vested in the native population, while the naturalized citizens, who have renounced all claim to the protection of the country of their origin, and either are, or are entitled to be citizens of the United States, are rendered, unless in exceptional cases, utterly alien to the institutions of their adopted country".<sup>1</sup> In 1867 and 1868 attempts were made to remove these restrictions by framing a new constitution, petitions being headed by Governor Burnside in behalf of naturalized veterans, and by Mayor Doyle for naturalized

<sup>1</sup>C. E. Gorman's *Elective Franchise*, p. 21. The judiciary committee of the U. S. senate had decided that R. I.'s property qualification clause was not in conflict with the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments. (See H. B. Anthony, *Defense of R. I.*, p. 10).

citizens. Although the house did pass these proposals as amendments to the constitution, the senate rejected them and the attempt failed.

During the administration of Seth Padelford, who succeeded Burnside in 1869 and was governor for four years, similar bills were introduced providing for a constitutional convention, but failed of passage. The legislature was not quite ready for such an abrupt move, although it did show its favor to the proposed changes in the form of amendments to the constitution. Thus in 1871, the assembly voted to submit to the people the following amendments: That the property qualification clause should be repealed so far as related to foreign-born citizens, that the registry tax should be repealed and that state appropriation for sectarian purposes should be prohibited.<sup>1</sup> These all failed to receive the necessary three-fifths vote of the people, the third amendment alone obtaining even a majority.

During the last two years of Padelford's administration and that of Governor Henry Howard, who succeeded him in 1873 and 1874, several boundary questions of a local nature were settled. In March, 1871, the large town of Smithfield, which comprised the whole northeastern quarter of Providence county, was divided. A portion was set off to Woonsocket, while the remainder was split up into three towns—Smithfield, North Smithfield and Lincoln. In 1873 a portion of Cranston was annexed to Providence and formed into a public park, now known as Roger Williams Park.<sup>2</sup> In the following year North Providence was divided into three portions, a part being annexed to Providence, another part being joined to Pawtucket, while the third and smallest portion retained the town name. It was also proposed that a portion of the town of Johnston should be annexed to Providence, but the Johnston taxpayers, by a small majority, voted against the scheme.

Governor Howard was succeeded in 1875 by Henry Lippitt, who headed the administration for two years and was followed in 1877 by Charles C. Van Zandt. Attempts to change certain provisions in the constitution during this period were frequent, although generally unsuccessful. In 1873 a motion to introduce a woman's suffrage amendment failed, as did a conditional motion of a similar nature, championed by Amasa M. Eaton in the following year. This same subject, as well as that of the registry tax, was often introduced, but nothing effectual was accomplished. In 1876, after considerable discussion in the assembly, three articles of amendment were passed and submitted to the people in December. They were the repeal of the

<sup>1</sup> *January schedule*, 1871, p. 204.

<sup>2</sup> Another portion of Cranston had previously been annexed to Providence in 1868. The park property had come from the bequest of Betsey Williams, who left the land for the purpose at her death, November 27, 1871. In 1872 the assembly authorized the city to establish a public park.



PROVIDENCE FROM THE SPIRE OF THE FIRST BAPTIST MEETING HOUSE.  
TAKEN BEFORE THE BANIGAN BUILDING WAS ERECTED.



clause in the constitution regarding corporations, the repeal of the registry tax, and the enfranchising of the foreign-born soldiers and sailors on the same terms as native-born citizens. These all failed to receive the necessary three-fifths vote. Governor Lippitt, in referring to the matter said: "Our people are very conservative, and justly so, in their action on any amendments to the constitution, but these amendments had been carefully considered by the legislature, and I think were worthy of a vote of approval. That relating to the registry tax particularly, if it had been adopted, would have enabled the legislature, to provide for a tax in some other form, and thereby remove from our state politics a source of corruption which has increased wonderfully of late years."<sup>1</sup>

The year 1876 was a memorable one in the history of the country as being the centennial of the nation's birth. Rhode Island's share in the great exhibition at Philadelphia was a notable one. Her industries and products were very generally represented, and notwithstanding her small size, only seven other states entered larger applications for space. Especially prominent among exhibits was the great Corliss engine. This great triumph of mechanical skill, which furnished all the power required for Machinery Hall, was one of the most notable features of the exhibition and reflected great credit on the state in which it was invented. The first week in October was known as Rhode Island week, when a reception was held in the state building, and Rhode Islanders from all over the country gathered to renew old ties and form new ones. Both the legislature, through generous appropriation, and the citizens, through their exertions, worked hard to place Rhode Island in an honorable position by the side of other states of a much larger extent.<sup>2</sup> The year 1876 was also productive of a renewed interest in the history of the state covering the centennial celebrations of many important events and causing the publication of historical sketches for many of the towns.

Governor Van Zandt, whose administration began in 1877, was succeeded by Alfred H. Littlefield, 1880-83, Augustus O. Bourn, 1883-85, and George P. Wetmore, 1885-87. In this decade the attempts to alter the constitution were chiefly in regard to the introduction of woman's suffrage, the repeal of the registry tax, the prohibition of liquor, and the extension of the franchise to naturalized citizens who served in the Union army or navy during the Civil War. Only the last two propositions met with favor. Liquor legislation had often been a subject of discussion before the assembly. Although a sort of prohibitory law had been tried for a short period, the state had been under some form of license for practically its whole existence. There had been a grow-

<sup>1</sup> *Governor's Message*, 1877, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Governor's Message*, 1877. See Greene's *Short history of R. I.*, p. 286, for a list of products in which R. I. showed conspicuous excellence.

ing feeling that the license system had not accomplished the best results, and of course absolute lack of any restraint was too dangerous a procedure. As one writer said, "If, then, license is inefficient and freedom unwise, we are forced to the conclusion that prohibition at least deserves a trial commensurate with the importance of the end to be obtained. There has been no such trial in this state as yet, for no great moral or social reform can be effected in a few months or in a few years."<sup>1</sup> With the hope of thus bettering the situation, the legislature, in 1886, voted to submit to the people the following amendment: "The manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors to be used as a beverage shall be prohibited. The general assembly shall



CITY HALL, PROVIDENCE, R. I.

provide by law for carrying this article into effect." In the April election the people sealed their approval of the new system by a vote of 15,113 to 9,230. But the prohibitory method proved far from satisfactory. The violation and defiance of the law were general, and cases were rarely pressed. In January, 1889, the assembly voted that the previous prohibitory amendment should be annulled, and in June the people concurred in their opinion by a vote of 28,315 to 9,956. A special session of the legislature was called in July, when a new license law was passed.

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Stiness, *R. I. legislation against strong drink*, 1882, p 48.

At the same session of March, 1886, that passed the prohibitory amendment, the following amendment was also passed for the second time and offered to the approval of the people: "All soldiers and sailors of foreign birth, citizens of the United States, who served in the army or navy of the United States for this state in the late Civil War, and who were honorably discharged from such service, shall have the right to vote on all questions in all legally organized town, district or ward meetings, upon the same conditions and under and subject to the same restrictions as native born citizens." At the election in April, it was formally approved by the people by a vote of 18,903 to 1,477.

During this decade, from 1877 to 1887, among the acts passed of some importance was that abolishing tribal authority and tribal relations of the Narragansett Indians. This tribe had been undergoing a gradual process of degeneration, and for many years the annual appropriation for the Indian school had proved of no practical benefit. Accordingly, on March 31, 1880, all distinctive legislation connected with them was repealed, and a few months later the state purchased their tribal lands, which were sold at auction.<sup>1</sup>

An important movement, initiated by the harbor commissioners in 1877, was that of improving the harbor facilities in Narragansett Bay and its estuaries. Congress, by 1883, had appropriated \$355,000 for this purpose, and thereafter made such further appropriations as the necessity of the work required. During the process of operations, the channel of the bay, and also of the Providence and Pawtucket rivers, was widened and dredged, Newport harbor was deepened, work on the Block Island breakwater and harbor was begun, and improvements were made in several of the smaller rivers. This aid given to the facilities for navigation was well placed, and resulted in increased commercial enterprise. Other important measures of this same period were the final adjusting of the two boundary questions—the northern line with Massachusetts in March, 1883, and the western line with Connecticut in May, 1887.

At the January session in 1887 a motion was successfully introduced, promising the long sought for extension of the suffrage. Sen-

<sup>1</sup>See *Governor's Message*, 1881, p. 81. See also the four reports of the Commission of the Affairs of the Narragansett Indians, 1880-86. Nearly 20 years after the dissolution of the tribe some of its former members, having been encouraged by the advice of counsel to believe that a demand upon the State might be successfully maintained by attacking the act of 1880, dissolving the tribe and authorizing the sale of its lands, the opinion of the Judges of the Supreme Court of the state was obtained, which opinion, fully considering the relations of the tribe to the state from the first settlement of the colony down to and including the passage of the act, and the provisions thereof, and pronouncing the act constitutional in all its parts, is believed to constitute the final chapter in the history of the once famous Narragansett Tribe of Indians.

ator Bourn of Bristol presented an amendment to the constitution, providing for the substitution of a poll-tax for the registry tax, and the removal of discriminations against naturalized citizens.<sup>1</sup> It again passed both houses at a special November session in 1887, and when submitted to the people on April 4, 1888, it was adopted by a vote of 20,068 to 12,193. A difference of opinion then arose as to the operation of this amendment upon the registry laws mentioned in Chapter VII of the Public Statutes. Upon requisition of the Governor as to the subject, the Supreme Court decided that any provisions in the constitution conflicting with the amendment were annulled and that the present registry law was fully operative.<sup>2</sup> Thus this long retarded act of justice to naturalized citizens, which had been in process of development for nearly three-quarters of a century, was brought to pass. It was perhaps the most important political change since the forming of the new constitution.

The recent growth of the manufacturing towns in the northern part of the state caused many of their inhabitants to desire a change to a city form of government. Accordingly, on March 27, 1885, the assembly submitted to the people of Pawtucket an act of incorporation as a city. On April 1 this was accepted by a vote of 1,450 to 721, and Pawtucket was created as the third city in the state. In like manner, on June 13, 1888, the town of Woonsocket was incorporated by the assembly as a city, which act was accepted by the people of that town on November 6 following. In March, 1888, the District of Narragansett was taken from South Kingstown and given all the powers of a town, except representation in the general assembly.<sup>3</sup>

During the years from 1889 to 1893 the requirements of a majority instead of a plurality vote seemed frequently to defeat the choice of the people in their election of a Governor. In 1887 Governor Wetmore had been defeated for re-election by John W. Davis, the Democratic candidate, who in turn was defeated in 1888 by Royal C. Taft,

<sup>1</sup>The payment of the registry tax had always been a prerequisite to the electoral privileges of the registry class. This feature was not attached to the poll tax, which was independent of the ballot. This, as well as the removal of the real estate discrimination against naturalized citizens, was a distinct enlargement of the electoral privileges of the registry voters; but, on the other hand, the Bourn amendment deprived the registry voters of Newport, of Pawtucket, and of all cities incorporated after its adoption, of the right to vote for members of the city councils.

<sup>2</sup>The text of the amendment is given as Article of Amendment VII in recent editions of the statutes. The new amendment was very similar to the provision on the same subject as drawn up by Dorr in the People's constitution in 1842, although even more liberal. (See Rider's *Book Notes*, v, 56). The opinion of the Supreme Court upon the operation of the amendment is given in the *Governor's Message* for 1889, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup>In March, 1901, the District of Narragansett was incorporated as a town with the same privileges as other towns.

the Republican candidate. In 1889 the popular vote was considerably increased by the enfranchisement of naturalized citizens under the Bourn amendment, and ex-Governor Davis received a large plurality, but he failing to receive a majority over all, the Republican candidate, Herbert W. Ladd, was elected by the grand committee. Ex-Governor Davis again received a plurality over Governor Ladd in 1890, and failing of a majority was elected by the grand committee. In 1891 he received a plurality again, but the Republicans having a majority in grand committee, ex-Governor Ladd was elected Governor. In 1892 D. Russell Brown and William C. T. Wardwell were the candidates respectively of the Republicans and Democrats, and the former was chosen by the people. The next year Governor Brown's opponent was David S. Baker, who was given a small plurality of the popular vote. Owing to a disagreement of the two houses, one of which was controlled by the Republicans and the other by the Democrats, they did not meet in grand committee, and the old state officials held over.<sup>1</sup> This frequent defeat of the popular will showed that some change was needed. Accordingly a constitutional amendment providing for plurality instead of majority elections was passed and submitted to the people in November, 1893. It was approved by a vote of 26,703 to 3,331. Henceforth there was much more simplicity in methods of election, and the aggravation and expense characterizing the majority rule were removed.

In November, 1892, two constitutional amendments, having been passed by both houses, were submitted to the people. One, giving to the general assembly power to provide by general law for the creation and control of corporations was approved, 17,959 to 10,632. The other, providing for biennial instead of annual elections, failed to receive the necessary three-fifths vote. It was thought, however, that the opinion of the people was not fully expressed in regard to this latter amendment. Governor Brown, in recommending a re-submission of the question, said: "Rhode Island and Massachusetts stand alone among the states in their adherence to the antiquated practice of annual elections, a practice which weakens authority and discourages all effort to develop and improve the public service."<sup>2</sup> But the people were not quite yet ready for the change, and when the proposition was again placed before them in September, 1895, they rejected it by a vote of 10,603 to 7,449.

Governor Brown was re-elected in 1894 and was succeeded in the following year by Charles Warren Lippitt, who remained in office for two years. From 1897 to 1899 Elisha Dyer was elected Governor, and

<sup>1</sup> See Augustus S. Miller. *The conspiracy which overthrew constitutional government in R. I. in 1895*, and also the *Remarks* upon this pamphlet by Hon. Edward L. Freeman.

<sup>2</sup> *Governor's Message*, 1895, p. 37.

in 1900 and 1901 William Gregory was chosen to the office. All these officers were Republican candidates. During this period many new conditions and important events required legislative action. When the project for the great World's Fair at Chicago was suggested, the Rhode Island legislature made a primary appropriation of \$10,000 that the state should be properly represented, and subsequently increased this amount to a total of \$60,000. A beautiful state building was erected, and the state itself displayed two comprehensive exhibits—one illustrating educational work and the other menhaden and shellfish industries. There were about one hundred and thirty exhibitors from the state, representing machinery, manufactures of iron and wood, woolen and cotton textiles and jewelry. Scarcely another state in the Union furnished such a varied collection of interesting and important exhibits.<sup>1</sup>

In 1893, the assembly passed an act of considerable importance, which had been under discussion for two years. Under the title of "An act to simplify the duties, equalize the burdens, and increase the efficiency, of the Judiciary of the State," an act was passed altering those chapters of the public laws that related to the judiciary, repealing those measures that were obsolete, and harmonizing conflicting statutes.<sup>2</sup> The most important act of 1894 was the factory inspection law, passed on April 26. This provided for the appointment of two factory inspectors, regulated the employment of child labor, and required better sanitary arrangements in factories. On May 23, 1895, an act was passed for the improvement of state highways. A commission had been appointed in 1892 to inquire into this matter, and upon their report, it was enacted that a state highway commissioner should be appointed whose duty it was to provide for the improvement of highways and to encourage better methods of roadmaking. Provision was also made for the more effective maintenance and repair of highways and bridges.

In February, 1895, Central Falls, then with a population of nearly 16,000, was taken from Lincoln and incorporated as a city. A long act was framed providing for the investing of mayor and council and for the installation of the new form of government. In May of the same year the "city boomers" in Cranston had a similar act passed through the assembly for their town, but when it was submitted to the voters it was defeated by the narrow majority of 24. A like attempt in May, 1897, to incorporate Johnston as a city was defeated by the voters of that town by a majority of 75. In May, 1898, however, by legislative

<sup>1</sup> *Governor's Message*, for 1894, p. 36; J. C. Wyman, *R. I. at the World's Fair* (In *N. E. Mag.* new ser. x, 427).

<sup>2</sup> This act, generally referred to as the Judiciary Act, and its amendment of May 17, 1895, were both published separately from the regular series of numbered chapters of public laws.

act, the more populous portion of Johnston was annexed to Providence.

The most important events of the year 1898 were those connected with the war with Spain. At the very beginning of the struggle, the general assembly, on April 21, 1898, appropriated \$150,000 "to defray such military and naval expenses as may be necessary by reason of the existing conditions between the United States and the Kingdom of Spain." When, on April 23, 1898, President McKinley issued the call for troops, recruiting offices were immediately opened in Providence, Newport, Pawtucket, Woonsocket and Westerly. A regiment was quickly enlisted, known as the First Rhode Island Regiment, United States Volunteer Infantry, and was quartered at the state camping ground at Quonset Point. This regiment, numbering 12 companies of 77 men each, and commanded by Col. Charles W. Abbot, jr., started for Camp Alger, Va., on May 26, with the expectation of being immediately transferred from there to the actual scene of hostilities. This hope, however, was not to be gratified.

On May 25 came the second call for volunteers. By the 22d of the following month, 329 soldiers had been enlisted and departed to join their comrades at Camp Alger. Occasional rumors and false orders kept the men in hourly expectation of going to the front, but such was not to be their fortune. On August 3 the regiment broke camp to march to Thoroughfare Gap, Va. Here they encamped until August 22, when they were transported to Camp Meade, in Middletown, Pa. On November 3 another move was made and the regiment removed to Camp Fornance, Columbia, S. C., where it remained until mustered out of service in March, 1899. On April 1 the regiment reached Providence where it was disbanded, many of its officers and men seeking a further military career in volunteer regiments that were enlisted for service in the Philippines.<sup>1</sup>

The propositions to amend the constitution now submitted to the people comprehended a larger scope than merely the revision of certain clauses. There was an increasing sentiment for a general revision of the constitution. After several motions for a constitutional convention had failed of passage, in May, 1897, Senator Freeman presented a resolution providing for a bi-partisan commission of nine persons, to be appointed by the Governor, to revise the constitution, which passed without division. The resolution was amended in the

<sup>1</sup> In response to the second call for troops on May 25, 1898, Battery A and the Machine Gun Battery both offered to serve as light artillery organizations. They enlisted recruits, went into camp at Quonset Point, but, not being needed in active service, were granted honorable discharges on October 26. The various official documents and letters relating to the Spanish war were gathered by Governor Dyer into a volume entitled *R. I. in the war with Spain*. Brief accounts of R. I.'s relations to the war are in *Prov. Jour. Almanac* for 1899 p. 70, and for 1900, p. 41.

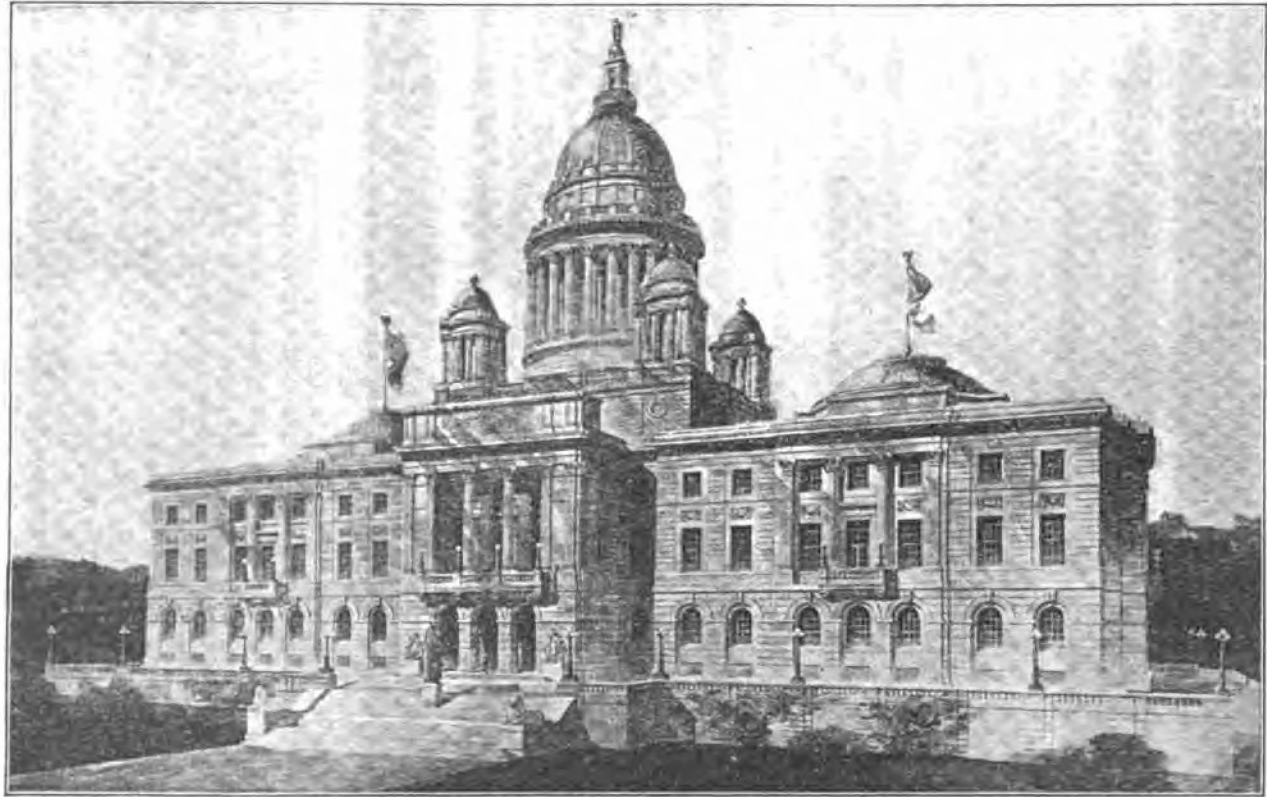
house at the January session, 1897, by striking out the word bi-partisan, and increasing the membership to fifteen, and the senate accepted the resolution as amended. The commission, composed of fifteen leading men of both party affiliations, held frequent hearings, and reported the revised document on February 23, 1898. It was speedily put through both houses, and was also accepted by the succeeding legislature in May. When submitted to the people, however, in November, it failed to receive the necessary three-fifths vote, the vote being, approve, 17,360, and reject, 13,510. With some slight changes it was submitted again on June 20, 1899, and was again rejected by a vote of 4,097 to 12,742. The people had evidently declared their mind to cling to the old method of only voting upon specific amendments to the constitution, at least until some better plan was provided.

The propositions for a constitutional convention had received somewhat of a drawback through the opinion rendered by the Supreme Court in 1883, that the constitution could be amended only in the way provided for by the instrument itself.<sup>1</sup> The only feasible method in order to remove objectionable features in the constitution, was for one legislature to submit to the succeeding legislature specific amendments to separate provisions. At the January session of 1900 a series of amendments were introduced abolishing the May session and therefore Newport as a state capital; increasing the pay of assemblymen to five dollars a day, for not more than sixty days in a year; changing the date of the state election from April to November, extending the time for registration of voters to June 30 of each year; and making several minor provisions for the election of general officers. This motion passed both houses at the January session and again at the following May session. In November, 1900, it was submitted to the people, and was accepted by a vote of 24,351 to 11,959.

In many ways the most important movement inaugurated toward the close of the century was the building of the new marble State House. The old structure on Benefit street, erected in 1760, had proved entirely inadequate for the purpose. For half a century attempts had been made from time to time to secure the necessary

<sup>1</sup>The court had decided that a constitutional convention, "if called, would be confined by the Constitution of the United States to the formation of a constitution for a republican form of government, and our present constitution contains the fundamental provisions, the great ground plan, of such a form of government as it is known throughout the Union. Any changes which are in contemplation are merely changes of superstructure or detail. Our constitution, too, contains in its bill of rights the great historic safeguards of liberty and property, which certainly no convention would venture either materially to alter or to abolish. Any new constitution, therefore, which a convention would form, would be a new constitution only in name; but would be in fact our present constitution amended. It is impossible for us to imagine any alteration, consistent with a republican form of government, which cannot be effected by specific amendment as provided in the constitution." (*R. I. Reports*, xiv, 654).





**RHODE ISLAND STATE HOUSE.**

legislation for the erection of a new capitol. In 1846 a plan had been formulated for a building to cost about half a million dollars, and many times from then until 1873 active effort was made to bring the matter up for discussion. In the latter year a committee had reported elaborately on a site, but then the matter was dropped for many years. In 1890 a committee was finally appointed to consider and report upon the subject. In accordance with the recommendation, a state-house commission consisting of thirteen men was chosen by the assembly with full powers to select a site and build a new capitol. An enabling act, authorizing the assembly to provide for the issue of \$1,500,000 in state-house bonds was passed and in November, 1892, was sealed with the popular approval. Additional issues of bonds to the amount of \$800,000 in April, 1898, and \$700,000 in November, 1900, brought the total up to \$3,000,000. Ground was broken for the building on September 16, 1895, when Governor Lippitt removed the first spadeful of earth, and the corner-stone was laid with impressive Masonic ceremonies on October 15, 1896. The assembly held its first session in the new building in January, 1901. The completion of this beautiful marble palace and the creation of Providence as the sole capital city mark an epoch in Rhode Island's history. For the first two centuries of the state's existence, when the towns were more nearly equal in size, the assembly had been making a circuit of Narragansett Bay in its endeavor to hold legislative sessions. In 1854, the number of capitals was reduced from five to two. Providence and Newport were the two largest towns, and henceforth Rhode Island indulged in the peculiar distinction of having two capitals. But as the manufacturing population in the northern part of the state gradually increased, the business of government centered more in that section and especially in the rapidly growing city of Providence. At the very close of the century, when Providence showed such gains as to have a population nearly five times as large as any other city in the state, the inevitable change came. Newport, the former "metropolis of the colony," was compelled to witness the loss of its cherished "election day" and the removal of its distinction as a state capital. It is the old story of historic sentiment yielding to the march of progress.

*Clarene S. Brigham.*