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> Significant Events and Individuals in Rhode Island Politics

Rhode Island Chronology, 1772–1790

1772

9–10 June H.M.S. *Gaspee* revenue schooner burned off the coast of Warwick.

1773

January, May–June Witnesses boycott hearings on the burning of the *Gaspee*.

1774

17 May Providence Town Meeting calls for a continental congress.

15 June Legislature appoints delegates to First Continental Congress.

12 December H.M.S. *Rose* arrives in R.I. to suppress smuggling.

1775

2 March Providence Tea Party burns tea in Market Square.

25 April Legislature votes to raise “Army of Observation” (1,500 men).

7 May Nathanael Greene given command of “Army of Observation.”

May–June Legislature replaces Loyalist governor-elect.

15 June Legislature creates state navy.

26 August Legislature asks First Continental Congress to establish a navy.

1776

4 May Legislature instructs R.I. delegates to Congress to work for a Union
and to fight to preserve liberty.

19 July Legislature ratifies Declaration of Independence.

8 December British occupy Newport.

1778

- 16 February Legislature instructs delegates to Second Continental Congress to sign Articles of Confederation and to submit three proposed amendments.
- 23 June Congress rejects R.I.'s proposed amendments.
- 9 July R.I. delegates to Congress sign Articles of Confederation.
- 29 August Battle of Rhode Island concludes unsuccessful siege of Newport.

1779

- 25 October British evacuate Newport.

1780

- 10 July French fleet and troops arrive in Newport.

1782

- 1 November House of Deputies unanimously rejects Impost of 1781.

1783

- 6 March Legislature admits Roman Catholics to rights of citizenship.

1784

- 1 March R.I. law for the gradual abolition of slavery goes into effect.

1785

- March House of Deputies rejects 1783 Confederation amendment to apportion federal expenses by population.
- 5 March Legislature adopts Impost of 1783 with qualifications.
- 5 March Legislature adopts 1784 grant of temporary power for Congress to regulate commerce.
- 2 November Legislature adopts for a second time 1784 grant of temporary power for Congress to regulate commerce.

1786

- 3 March Congress requests R.I. to revise its 1784 grant of temporary commercial power for Congress.
- 4 March Legislature adopts Impost of 1783.

15 March	Legislature revises previous adoption of 1784 grant of temporary commercial power for Congress.
19 April	Country party wins control of state government in annual state elections.
6 May	Legislature passes paper-money act.
28 June, 1 July	Legislature appoints commissioners to Annapolis Convention.
30 June	Legislature passes first penalty act.
26 August	Legislature passes second penalty act.
13 September	Smithfield Convention of Providence County towns proposes radical state trade system.
26 September	Superior Court decides <i>Trevett v. Weeden</i> .
7 October	Legislature asks town meetings to instruct deputies on draft test act.
1 November	House of Deputies reads instructions on test act indicating freemen overwhelmingly oppose the act.
1787	
1 March	Legislative committee estimates state's debt to be £153,000.
12–17 March	Legislature rejects sending delegates to Constitutional Convention.
17 March	Legislature begins redeeming first part of state debt in quarterly installments.
18 April	Country party landslide in annual state elections.
2–5 May	Legislature rejects sending delegates to Constitutional Convention.
25 May– 17 September	Constitutional Convention meets without R.I. being represented.
11–16 June	Legislature rejects sending delegates to Constitutional Convention.
20–22 August	Legislature fails to obtain a quorum.
15 September	Legislature adopts letter to Congress giving reasons for not sending delegates to Constitutional Convention.
17 September	Newport and Providence deputies protest legislative letter to Congress.
17 September	Governor John Collins sends legislative letter and protest to Congress.

31 October	Legislature prohibits foreign slave trade by R.I. citizens.
3 November	Legislature rejects calling a state convention, but votes to print copies of Constitution for distribution to towns.
1788	
14 February	News of Massachusetts ratification with recommendatory amendments first printed in R.I.
29 February	House of Deputies defeats motion for a state convention, 43–15.
1 March	Legislature passes act submitting Constitution to referendum of freemen in town meetings.
24 March	Freemen in town meetings vote against Constitution, 2,714–238.
2 April	House of Deputies defeats motion for a state convention by a majority of 27.
5 April	Legislature adopts letter to President of Congress explaining referendum results.
16 April	Country party again wins annual state elections.
7–10 May	Legislative session takes no action on the Constitution.
14 June	Motion for a state convention is “not noticed” by House of Deputies.
24 June	News reaches R.I. of New Hampshire’s ratification.
27 June	Providence resolves to celebrate the adoption of the Constitution by nine states and the anniversary of American independence on Fourth of July.
3–4 July	Antifederalist threats of violence and Providence celebration.
5 July	News reaches R.I. of Virginia’s ratification.
29 July	News reaches R.I. of New York’s ratification.
21 August	News reaches R.I. of North Carolina Convention’s adjournment without ratifying the Constitution.
1 November	Legislature begins redeeming second part of state debt in quarterly installments.
1 November	House of Deputies defeats motion for a state convention, 40–14.
1 November	Legislature orders New York Convention’s circular letter and amendments sent to towns for their consideration.
22 November– 29 December	Town meetings consider New York circular letter.

1789

1 January	Legislature reviews instructions from towns on New York circular letter.
1 January	House of Deputies rejects motion for a state convention, 34–12.
4 March	New Constitution goes into effect without R.I. in the Union.
13 March	House of Deputies rejects motion for a state convention, 36–19.
15 April	Country party wins annual state elections.
9 May	Legislature postpones motion for a state convention until its June session.
11 June	House of Deputies rejects motion for a state convention by a majority of 11.
27, 28 August	Providence and Newport petitions to Congress asking exemption from payment of foreign tonnage duties.
September	Entire state debt redeemed or forfeited.
18 September	Legislature asks freemen in town meetings on 19 October to vote on calling a state convention.
19 September	Legislature temporarily suspends tender provision of paper-money act of 1786.
19 September	Legislature approves letter to President and Congress asking for exemption from foreign duties.
19 September	Gov. John Collins sends legislative letter to President and Congress.
2 October	President George Washington transmits amendments to Constitution proposed by Congress to state executives, including Gov. Collins.
15 October	Legislature orders congressional amendments to Constitution printed and sent to towns for their 19 October meetings.
17 October	Legislature repeals tender provision of paper-money act of 1786 and allows real estate and personal property to be used to repay debts.
19 October	Town meetings instruct deputies on calling a state convention.
29 October	House of Deputies defeats motion for a state convention, 39–17.
12 December	News of North Carolina's ratification first printed in R.I.

1790

15–17 January	Legislature considers bills calling a state convention.
16 January	House of Deputies votes to call a state convention, 32–11.

17 January	Gov. John Collins breaks tie vote in House of Magistrates to call a state convention.
17 January	Legislature orders act calling a state convention to be sent to Congress with a request for further commercial indulgences.
2 February	Antifederalist convention held at East Greenwich to influence state convention elections.
8 February	Election of delegates to state convention.
1–6 March	State Convention meets in South Kingstown.
6 March	Convention votes 41–28 to adjourn until May.
6 March	Convention sends proposed bill of rights and amendments to towns for their consideration on 21 April.
6 March	Antifederalist “nocturnal convention” proposes election prox with Daniel Owen as candidate for governor.
18 March	Antifederalist convention substitutes Arthur Fenner for Daniel Owen.
6 April	Federalist convention held at East Greenwich proposes a coalition prox.
21 April	Country party wins annual state election.
21 April–1 May	Town meetings deliberate on R.I.’s proposed bill of rights and amendments.
8 May	Gov. Arthur Fenner, in council, states he will call a special session of legislature if Convention ratifies Constitution.
18 May	U.S. Senate passes bill discriminating against R.I. in commerce.
20 May	Gov. Fenner writes to President George Washington indicating R.I. will soon ratify.
25–29 May	R.I. state Convention meets in Newport.
29 May	R.I. Convention ratifies Constitution, 34–32.
29 May	Convention recommends that the state legislature should adopt congressional amendments.
29 May	Convention President Daniel Owen informs President Washington of R.I.’s ratification.
29 May	News arrives in Providence of R.I. ratification at 11:00 P.M..
1 June	President Washington transmits word to Congress of R.I.’s ratification.

3 June	Gov. Fenner informs Mass. Gov. John Hancock of R.I.'s ratification.
4 June	President Washington congratulates Gov. Fenner on R.I. ratification.
9 June	Convention President Owen sends President Washington official form of ratification.
10 June	Officers at legislative session take oath to Constitution.
11 June	Adoption of 11 of 12 congressional amendments.
12 June	Legislature passes election bill.
12 June	Legislature elects Joseph Stanton, Jr., and Theodore Foster as U.S. Senators.
12 June	Legislature orders Gov. Fenner to issue proclamation notifying all state officers to take oath to Constitution.
14 June	Gov. Fenner issues proclamation on oaths.
14 June	Congress passes act putting federal tariff into effect in R.I.
16 June	President Washington transmits official R.I. form of ratification to Congress.
25 June	R.I. Senators take their seats.
17–19 August	President Washington's entourage visits R.I.
31 August	Towns vote for R.I.'s U.S. Representative.
9 September	Legislature declares Benjamin Bourne elected U.S. Representative.

CITE AS: John P. Kaminski et al., eds., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, Vol. XXIV: Rhode Island [1] (Madison, Wis.: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2011), lxix–lxxiii.