

Rhode Island Chronology, 1772–1790

	1772
9–10 June	H.M.S. <i>Gaspee</i> revenue schooner burned off the coast of Warwick
	1773
January, May–June	Witnesses boycott hearings on the burning of the <i>Gaspee</i>
	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. <i>Rose</i> 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 *Trevett v. Weeden*

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