

Fall 10-1-1985

Book Review: Rhode Islanders Record the Revolution

Anthony Walker

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.salve.edu/newporthistory>



Part of the [Modern Literature Commons](#), [Public History Commons](#), [Social History Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Walker, Anthony (1985) "Book Review: Rhode Islanders Record the Revolution," *Newport History*. Vol. 58 : Iss. 200 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.salve.edu/newporthistory/vol58/iss200/3>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Salve Regina. It has been accepted for inclusion in Newport History by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Salve Regina. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@salve.edu.

BOOK REVIEW

Rhode Islanders Record the Revolution: The Journals of William Humphrey and Zuriel Waterman, Rhode Island Revolutionary Heritage Series, No. 4, edited and introduced by Nathaniel N. Shipton and David Swain, Rhode Island Publications Society, Providence, 1984. 131 pages, foreword, glossary. \$8.95 plus \$1.50 postage and handling from publisher.

These journals or diaries were kept by two Rhode Islanders who served during the period of the Revolution, Humphrey as a lieutenant in Arnold's force and Waterman as a surgeon aboard various American privateers. The two journals provide a contrast, one describes the life and death struggles of Arnold's men in Canada, the other covers some rather uneventful operations at sea. In the first, Humphrey appears as a tough, young officer of musketmen, serious-minded in a very serious situation, loyal to his seniors and concerned about his men, devoted to the cause of liberty even though describing himself as an "Englishman". In the latter, Waterman impresses the reader as a playboy, adventurer, and dilettante of sorts whose primary goal seemed to involve getting totally drunk, certainly very unlike the sober-minded doctors of today.

Both Shipton and Swain have excelled in arranging and editing the *Journals* to make them readable and understandable. Shipton in his introduction to Humphrey's work makes a few mistakes, recognizable to the historian but misleading to the uninitiated. For example, Humphrey came over to Arnold's force from Dan Hitchcock's regiment, which was raised in Providence County, not from Varnum's regiment as alleged. Total strength of the force did not exceed 1100 men, rather than the 2000 estimated by Shipton, and there were present but ten musket companies not twelve as alleged. Swain's introduction to Waterman's *Journal* includes an interesting biography of the riotous young surgeon as well as an informative overview of privateering through the years. This small book of 131 pages will add historical distinction to the bookcases of those interested in the Rhode Islanders of yesterday.

ANTHONY WALKER