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## Editor's Note

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## Editor's Note:

In past years, study of Newport's role during the Revolutionary War has been limited mostly to well-known events: the occupation of the town by the British, the subsequent "sojourn" in Newport by the French, and the Battle of Rhode Island. More recently, however, these broad strokes have been supplemented by discoveries and studies related to the details of these events. An archaeological excavation sponsored by the Newport Historical Society at the Great Friends Meeting House revealed artifacts associated with a British—and possibly Hessian—encampment at the site. The Society's 2000 Annual Lecture Series, "Weathering Changes," included an examination of the hurricane in 1778 that disrupted the naval component of the Battle of Rhode Island and altered the course of the war. An article in the most recent issue of *Newport History* revealed the impact of the "Hessian Storm"—a blizzard in late 1778 accompanied by a period of bitterly cold weather—on the American, British, and German troops in and around Newport.

This trend continues with the feature article in this issue, "'A Grand Landscape in Miniature:' Great Rock, Paradise Farm, and the Barkers of Middletown," by James L. Yarnall and Natalie N. Nicholson. The article reveals an elaborate American spy operation orchestrated by Middletown resident, Isaac Barker. From the lofty spine of an outcropping known as Great Rock, Barker used a system of signals to inform American troops across the Sakonnet River in Little Compton of British activities in the area. After the Revolution, Great Rock became a popular, though rugged, destination for people seeking romantic scenery. The vista from its summit was known as "Paradise Lost." Portrayals of the pastures and hills around Great Rock by the artist John La Farge became famous by the end of the nineteenth century, and helped promote the area as a place unspoiled by industrialization.

James L. Yarnall has been Director of the La Farge Catalogue Raisonné Inc., since 1985, and is a Professor of architectural and art history at Salve Regina University. Yarnall received a Ph.D. in art history from the University of Chicago and has worked in various capacities for several museums, including the National Museum of American Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. This is his seventh article for *Newport History*. His co-author, Natalie N. Nicholson, received a B.A. in Library Science from Simmons College in 1932, and worked at Boston Public Library, the library of the Graduate School of Engineering and Applied Science at Harvard University, and the MIT Libraries, where she was director from 1954-1975. She brings her considerable experience to the Newport Historical Society as a member of its Library Committee. She is a Middletown native and the great-great-great granddaughter of Isaac Barker.

Also in this issue, what began as a transcription of an item "From the Collection" of the Newport Historical Society—the occasionally humorous January 25, 1733, issue of the *Rhode-Island Gazette*—ended up revealing the complex and intricate relationship between James Franklin, publisher of the *Gazette*, and his younger brother, Benjamin. Featured in this issue of the short-lived *Rhode-Island Gazette* is a satirical examination of husband and wife relations, written by Benjamin for the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, and reprinted by James in his Newport newspaper. This cooperation is perhaps evidence of a broader mending-of-fences that occurred after the brothers' tense parting of ways in Boston ten years earlier. The transcription also reveals the nature of the newspaper business in the 1730s and the type of news and information considered important and relevant.