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## Editor's Note

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## Editor's Note

Newport's proximity to the sea and its favorable harbor drove the colonial town's economic fortunes for generations. Following Newport's mercantile decline in the nineteenth century, Newporters were drawn to careers at sea in the U.S. Navy. In this issue, Dr. Evelyn Cherpak relates the narrative of one such Newport native, Charles Hunter, who was living in Newport and on the retired list from the U.S. Navy, when Lincoln's call for volunteers went out in the spring of 1861. Hunter went back into active service and, within a few months, assumed command of USS *Montgomery*, one of the many U.S. Navy vessels charged with enforcing the Union blockade of Southern ports. As Dr. Cherpak vividly relates, his mission of chasing Confederate blockade runners led to some very unpleasant consequences for Hunter. With much recent public attention focused on the land battles of the Civil War, Cherpak's article recounts the story of one Newporter who engaged in the challenges of the Civil War at sea. Evelyn Cherpak is a graduate of Connecticut College who received a Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina. She recently retired as archivist at the Naval War College.

Every historian and genealogist yearns to find the one elusive source that will prove "pure gold" in illuminating a historical period, an incident, or a person's life. Cherry Fletcher Bamberg discovered just such a valuable prize in Newport in the winter of 2015. Her account of finding Ezra Stiles's eighteenth-century "Bills of Mortality for 1765-1777," and her analysis of its usefulness in describing and understanding Newport's pre-Revolutionary war population is our second article of this issue. Ezra Stiles, a Congregational clergyman in Newport who became president of Yale University, was a scientist, bibliophile, and theologian. Stiles's obsession with keeping careful tabulations of death records in Newport has furnished researchers with a bonanza of information. Bamberg reveals that a batch of his recently discovered "Bills of Mortality" are especially valuable as many records of the town of Newport were destroyed or badly damaged during or after the British occupation in 1776-1779. She makes the case that our ability to understand pre-Revolutionary War Newport's diversity of inhabitants would be greatly hampered without the results of Stiles's work. Cherry Fletcher Bamberg, FASG, is a fellow of the American Society of Genealogists, an independent elective organization of fifty living scholars. The editor of *Rhode Island Roots*, the quarterly journal of the Rhode Island Genealogical Society, since 2002, she is the author of numerous books and articles on Rhode Island families.

*Bills of Mortality for Newport*

Year	Month	Age	Name	Sex	Days	Count
1765	Jan	10	Sam <sup>r</sup> Mumford	Child	10	84
		47	Mr. Bailey's Child			80
			Neg. Girl from boy			90
			Boy			40
			Mr. Beer			27
			W <sup>m</sup> Sanford			36
			Capt. Luzzans	Sea		35
			Boy			40
			Ben. Edmund	Dead		79
			Indian (Yaac)			18
			Hannah Gibbon	Pass	55	
			Geo. Laylor	from boy	30	
			a girl			30
			Job Townsend			25
			Mr. Beer (Aunt)			19
			Shunglaton	Daugh	8	
			Neg. Girl	Tuesday	8	
			Man	from boy		1
			W <sup>m</sup> Sinkens	Canon	50	
			Neg. Neg.	Charl <sup>r</sup> Con <sup>r</sup>	50	
			Neg. Man	from boy	22	
			Boy	Hony	8	
			14 W	8 B		
Feb	4		Neg. Boy	M. Hood	6	
			W <sup>m</sup> Vial	Son	8 m	
			Henry Sabin	Conf	65	
			Nat. Birds	by 2 m		
			M <sup>r</sup> Mason	Neg. man		
			Feb. 10	Yaac Chapman	2	
			B <sup>r</sup> W <sup>m</sup> Hamott			
			2	Eliz <sup>a</sup> Borden	Canon	
			2	Yaac Hall	Sea	
			P	Molly Goddard	from boy	
			E	Top	Son	8 m
			2	W <sup>m</sup> Luzzans	Consump	
			25	B <sup>r</sup> Edw <sup>d</sup> East		
			B <sup>r</sup>	Jon. Atwood		
				Sarah Molatto		
			P	Irving	Son	2 m
			P	Capt. Potter	at sea	
				14 W	3 B	
			Mar. 6	Wife	in Langly	
			2	Butk Waterhouse	Consump	
			E	M <sup>r</sup> Springfield	Conf	
			B	W <sup>m</sup> Needons	Girl	
				Molatto	Girl	
			20	B <sup>r</sup> Mary Drea		
				Harty	Daugh	
				Neg. man	M <sup>r</sup> M <sup>r</sup> Dublin	
				Twin Children	at sea days	
			31	2 M <sup>r</sup> Scott	W <sup>m</sup>	
			2	M <sup>r</sup> Whitefield		
			E	M <sup>r</sup> Davis	Inc	
				a Man	at prison	
				Neg. Boy	8 days	
				Tuller	Negro	
			J	S. Hooper	W <sup>m</sup>	

An excerpt of Ezra Stiles's Bills of Mortality, 1765-1776 (SEE PAGE 36).

Elizabeth C. Stevens  
EDITOR