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RHODE
HISTORICAL



ISLAND
SOCIETY

COLLECTIONS

VOL. XXXI

OCTOBER, 1938

No. 4

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The Shepley Library

In June, thanks to a public spirited group of generous Rhode Islanders, the Society was able to purchase the George L. Shepley collection of Rhode Island books and prints.

The Shepley library is the largest and most important collection of books ever obtained by the Society at one time. It contains a large number of rare Rhode Island books, broadsides and prints which fill most of the important gaps in this section of the Society's library.

Most interesting perhaps of the rare books is the *Calendrier Francaise* which was printed on the press that was brought to America on the *Neptune* during the American Revolution. This press was set up on shore at Newport and this French almanac was printed in 1780. There are only two copies of this almanac now known to be in existence. Both are owned by the Society and are imperfect. The one which has been owned by the Rhode Island Historical Society for over twenty years lacks the last four leaves and the one in the Shepley collection lacks the title page. These two books now united constitute a complete copy, the only known copy in existence.

Other interesting items are a perpetual almanac printed as a broadside by James Franklin about 1730, the broadside advertisement of the *North American Calendar* for 1781, Roger Williams' book entitled *Major Butler's Fourth Paper*, the Sotzmann Map of Rhode Island printed in German in 1797, and a collection of twenty pamphlets printed by Gregory Dexter in England before he came to Providence.

The collection contains a large number of manuscripts and pictures which supplement the Society's remarkably extensive collection.

Among the manuscripts are two original letters of Roger Williams in his own handwriting, the original charter of the town of Warwick, a manuscript map of Narragansett Bay made by French officers during the Revolution, and part of the Champlain Papers, the business papers of a Newport merchant. The Champlain papers were divided into three groups. One part was given to the Massachusetts Historical Society, about thirty years ago, and was printed in two volumes as "The Commerce of Rhode Island", another part came to the Rhode Island Historical Society about twenty years ago, and the third was purchased by Colonel Shepley. There are also two hundred Rhode Island Revolutionary Muster Rolls, and two Rhode Island Revolutionary orderly books.

The collection also contains a comprehensive collection of books on Rhode Island history and Rhode Island biography which, while duplicating what the Society already has, will serve a most useful purpose. As the library rules do not allow Rhode Island books to circulate when the Society owns only one copy, these newly acquired volumes of standard works on Rhode Island history will form a duplicate library on this subject which can circulate among our members. For a long time the most obvious need of the Society has been a circulating collection of this type.

Over a hundred genealogies, new to the Society's library, were added to our shelves, and over a hundred badly worn

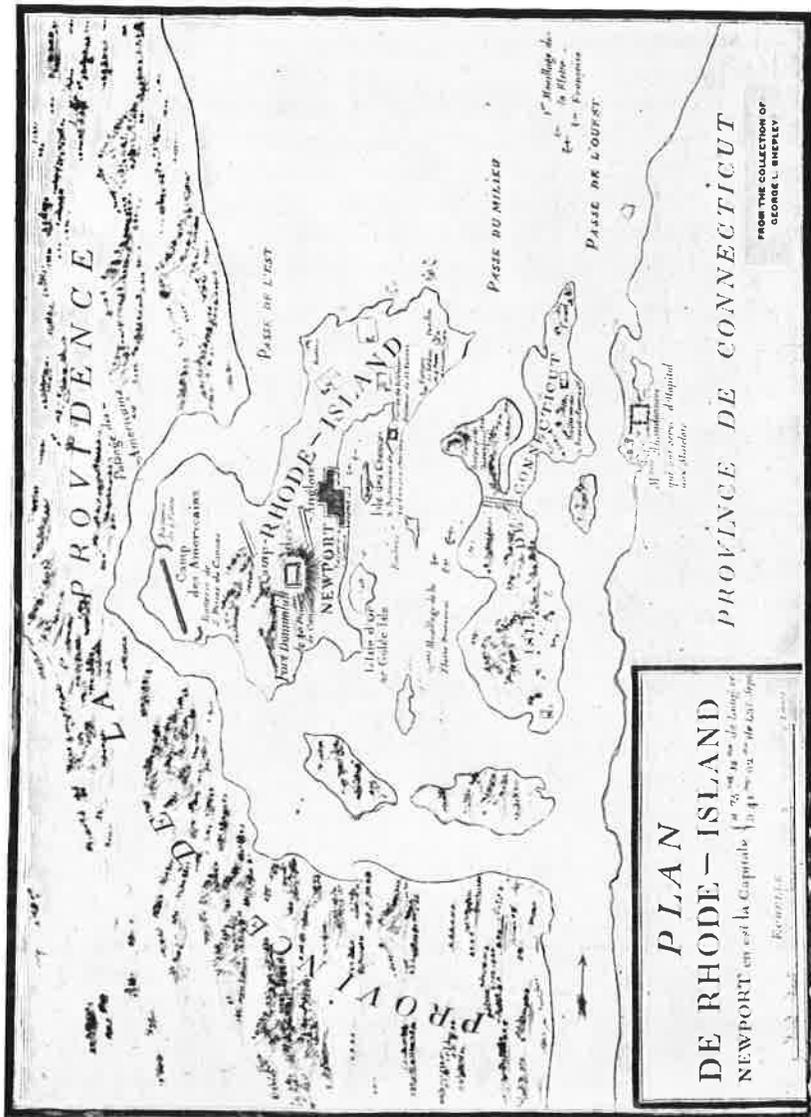


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FRENCH MANUSCRIPT REVOLUTIONARY MAP OF NARRAGANSETT BAY

Now in the Society's Library

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