The One Hundred and Ninety First Annual Meeting

Of

the Rhode Island Historical Society

Wednesday, November 14, 2012

5:30 P.M.

Aldrich House
110 Benevolent Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02906
## Agenda

| Call to Order and Welcome | Barry G. Hittner, Esq.  
President |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Treasurer’s Report       | James P. Loring, CPA, CFA  
Treasurer |
| Nominating Committee Report &  
Election of Officers and Trustees, 2012-2013 | The Hon. Roger N. Begin  
Nominating Committee Chair |
| 2011-2012: The Year in Review | C. Morgan Grefe, Ph.D.  
Executive Director |
| New Business             | Barry G. Hittner, Esq.  
President |
| Presentation             | *A Very Different War*  
G. Wayne Miller  
American writer and filmmaker |
| Closing Remarks          | Barry G. Hittner, Esq.  
President |

Please join us for a reception following the close of business.
PRESENTATION

A Very Different War

Commentator: G. Wayne Miller, American writer and filmmaker

In the fall of 2011, Miller wrote The War on Terror: Coming Home, a seven-part series about returning veterans of the post-9/11 wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, published in the Providence Journal.

The documentary Coming Home, winner of a 2012 Edward R. Murrow Award, was also nominated for a New England Emmy in the outstanding documentary category by the regional chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. Miller will show excerpts from the film to illustrate his talk.
Nominations for the 2012-2013 Board Term

**Officers Nominated for Term of One Year**

**For President:** Barry G. Hittner, Esq., Counselor at Law

**For First Vice President:** William S. Simmons, Ph. D., Professor of Anthropology, Brown University

**For Second Vice President:** Luther W. Spoehr, Ph. D., Senior Lecturer, Departments of Education and History, Brown University

**For Treasurer:** James P. Loring, CPA, CFA, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer, Senior Vice President, Amica Insurance

**For Secretary:** Sylvia E. Brown, Philanthropy & Donor Advisor, Brown & Fischer

**Trustees Nominated for Initial Term of Three Years**

Anthony A. Calendrelli, President, American Ring Company

Peter Karczmar, M.D., Physician, Coastal Medical

Keith D. Kelly, Senior Vice President, RBS Citizens Bank Corporate Banking Group

Robert G. Padula, CPCU, ARM, Chief Executive Officer, Gencorp Insurance

Marisa Quinn, Vice President of Public Affairs & University Relations, Brown University

**Trustees Nominated for Re-election**

Roger N. Begin, Sales Director, BNY Mellon Private Wealth Management

Robert G. Flanders, Jr., Esq., Partner, Hinckley, Allen and Snyder

Kathryn B. Mandel, CPA, Partner, Mandel & Tracey, LLC

Barbara J. Thornton, A.I.A., Partner, Brewster Thornton Group Architects, LLP
Board of Trustees, Officers, Members and Chairs 2011-2012

Officers and Executive Committee

Barry G. Hittner, Esq.
Counselor at Law
President

Mr. Robert J. Manning
President, Grays Point Investments LLC
President Emeritus

William S. Simmons, Ph.D.
Professor of Anthropology
Brown University
First Vice President

Luther W. Spoehr, Ph.D.
Senior Lecturer, Department of History and Education, Brown University
Second Vice President

James P. Loring, CPA, CFA
Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer Amica Insurance
Treasurer

Ms. Laurie White
President
Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce
Secretary

Other Executive Committee Appointments

William M. Fowler, Jr., Ph.D.
Distinguished Professor of History
Northeastern University

Trustees At Large

The Hon. Roger N. Begin
Sales Director, BNY Mellon Wealth Management

Ms. Sylvia E. Brown
Philanthropy and Donor Advisor
Brown & Fischer

Winifred E. Brownell, Ph.D.
Dean of Arts and Sciences, URI

Nancy K. Cassidy, Esq.
Executive Counsel, Textron, Inc.

The Hon. Robert G. Flanders, Jr.
Partner, Hinckley, Allen & Snyder LLP

William M. Fowler, Jr., Ph.D.
Distinguished Professor of History
Northeastern University

George M. Goodwin, Ph.D.
Independent Historian

Ms. Barbara K. Hart
Vice President Special Assets Washington Trust Company

Ms. Kathryn B. Mandel
Partner, Mandel & Tracy, LLC

Carolyn P. Medina, Esq.
Formerly, Associate, Partridge Snow & Hahn, LLP
Currently, Project Manager, Women’s Development Corporation

Mr. Theodore W. Smalletz
Chief Financial Officer, Gloria Duchin, Inc.

Luther W. Spoehr, Ph.D.
Senior Lecturer, Departments of History and Education, Brown University

Mr. Dennis E. Stark
Former Vice President for Business & Finance, URI

Ms. Barbara J. Thornton, AIA
Partner, Brewster Thornton Group Architects LLP

Mr. Todd D. Turcotte
Vice President, Capital Properties

Trustee Ex-Officio

Mr. Thomas R. Evans
State Librarian, State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantation
Staff Liaison: Morgan Grefe as Executive Director is a liaison for all committees. Other staff contacts are listed by name.

**Annual Fund & Membership Committee**
*George Goodwin (Chair)*  
Kathryn B. Mandel  
Luther Spoehr  
Ted Smalletz  
Barbara Thornton  
Staff Contact: Kathy Clarendon

**Audit Committee**
*Theodore W. Smalletz (Chair)*  
Kathryn B. Mandel  
Lawrence Davidson*  
Staff Contact: Charmyne Goodfellow

**Collections Committee**
*William S. Simmons (Chair)*  
Thomas R. Evans  
William M. Fowler, Jr.  
George M. Goodwin  
Robert D. Galli*  
David W. Gregg*  
Tracey Keough*  
Dale Thompson*  
Stanley Weiss*  
Staff Contact: Kirsten Hammerstrom

**Comprehensive Campaign Committee**
*Roger N. Begin (Co-Chair)*  
*Nancy K. Cassidy (Co-Chair)*  
Staff Contact: Kathy Clarendon

**Education Committee**
*Winifred E. Brownell (Chair)*  
William M. Fowler, Jr.  
George M. Goodwin  
Theodore W. Smalletz  
Luther W. Spoehr  
Staff Contact: Elyssa Tardif

**Executive Committee**
*Barry G. Hittner (Chair)*  
James P. Loring  
Robert J. Manning  
William S. Simmons  
Luther W. Spoehr  
Laurie White  
By appt. William M. Fowler, Jr.

**Facilities Committee**
*Todd Turcotte (Chair)*  
Barbara J. Thornton  
Robert J. Manning  
Lyle Fain*  
Staff Contact: Kirsten Hammerstrom

**Finance Committee**
*James P. Loring (Chair)*  
Barbara K. Hart  
Dennis E. Stark  
Todd Turcotte  
Lyle Fain*  
James M. Nagle*  
Kathryn Spoehr*  
Stephen Williams*  
Staff Contact: Charmyne Goodfellow

**Subcommittee of Finance Committee**
**Investment Committee**  
*James Wing* (Chair)  
James P. Loring (Ex-officio)  
Lydia Schroter* (Investment only)  
Stephen Williams*

**Governance Committee**
*Barry G. Hittner (Chair)*  
Roger N. Begin  
Sylvia E. Brown  
Robert G. Flanders  
William S. Simmons  
Laurie White  
Staff Contact: Morgan Grefe
**Nominating Committee**  
*Roger N. Begin (Chair)*  
Nancy K. Cassidy  
Robert G. Flanders, Jr.  
Barry G. Hittner  
Robert J. Manning  
Carolyn P. Medina  
William S. Simmons  
Staff Contact: Morgan Grefe

**Publications Committee**  
*Luther W. Spoehr (Chair)*  
Theodore W. Smalletz  
James Findlay*  
Robert Allen Greene*  
Reverend Robert Hayman*  
Jane Lancaster*  
J. Stanley Lemons*  
William McKenzie Woodward*  
Staff Contact: Elyssa Tardif

*Indicates non-trustee committee member
# Statement of Financial Position

**June 30th, 2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSETS:</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash and cash Equivalents:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating</td>
<td>633,636</td>
<td>1,077,828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant restricted</td>
<td>160,017</td>
<td>125,064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receivables:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>193,319</td>
<td>26,660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>44,309</td>
<td>41,339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pledges</td>
<td>30,100</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>29,940</td>
<td>20,181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventories</td>
<td>19,450</td>
<td>19,884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepaid Expenses</td>
<td>13,143</td>
<td>10,109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investments, at fair value</td>
<td>9,742,490</td>
<td>10,700,135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property and Equipment, net</td>
<td>2,883,213</td>
<td>2,628,987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>13,749,617</td>
<td>14,695,187</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIABILITIES:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounts payable</td>
<td>167,780</td>
<td>34,861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accrued liabilities:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payroll and payroll taxes</td>
<td>54,501</td>
<td>115,981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>17,500</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Liabilities</strong></td>
<td>239,781</td>
<td>165,842</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NET ASSETS:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>627,666</td>
<td>805,091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Designated</td>
<td>3,617,512</td>
<td>3,762,683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>4,245,178</td>
<td>4,567,774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporarily Restricted</td>
<td>607,779</td>
<td>1,327,659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanently Restricted</td>
<td>8,656,879</td>
<td>8,633,912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total net assets</strong></td>
<td>13,509,836</td>
<td>14,529,345</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| TOTAL       | 13,749,617 | 14,695,187 |
## Statement of Activities
**June 30th, 2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unrestricted - General</th>
<th>Unrestricted - Board Designated</th>
<th>Temporarily Restricted</th>
<th>Permanently Restricted</th>
<th>2012 Total</th>
<th>2011 Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUE:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>285,634</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>22,967</td>
<td>308,601</td>
<td>597,198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>466,051</td>
<td>164,395</td>
<td>205,148</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>835,594</td>
<td>1,732,788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bequest income</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14,084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Public Support</strong></td>
<td>751,685</td>
<td>205,148</td>
<td>22,967</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,144,195</td>
<td>2,344,070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revenue:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program revenues</td>
<td>49,786</td>
<td>19,575</td>
<td>2,970</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>72,331</td>
<td>91,088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership dues</td>
<td>64,657</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>64,657</td>
<td>59,648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-kind contributions</td>
<td>72,357</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>72,357</td>
<td>75,761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions income</td>
<td>68,033</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>68,033</td>
<td>67,872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publications and book sales</td>
<td>8,084</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8,084</td>
<td>13,768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative fees</td>
<td>29,869</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>29,869</td>
<td>25,276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment income, net</td>
<td>138,253</td>
<td>(47,087)</td>
<td>(609,581)</td>
<td>(518,415)</td>
<td>(1,917,633)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental functions income</td>
<td>30,983</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>30,983</td>
<td>21,132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous income</td>
<td>2,747</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,747</td>
<td>2,830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net assets released from restrictions</strong></td>
<td>600,471</td>
<td>(282,054)</td>
<td>(318,417)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(169,354)</td>
<td>2,275,008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenue</strong></td>
<td>1,065,240</td>
<td>(309,566)</td>
<td>(925,028)</td>
<td>(169,354)</td>
<td>2,275,008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special Events</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>68,966</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>68,966</td>
<td>76,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expense</td>
<td>(19,387)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(19,387)</td>
<td>(29,863)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenue and Expense</strong></td>
<td>49,579</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>49,579</td>
<td>46,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total public support and revenue</strong></td>
<td>1,866,504</td>
<td>(145,171)</td>
<td>(719,880)</td>
<td>22,967</td>
<td>1,024,420</td>
<td>4,665,327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expenses:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Services:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library services</td>
<td>420,560</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>420,560</td>
<td>455,219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museum program</td>
<td>292,739</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>292,739</td>
<td>326,003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woonsocket museum</td>
<td>240,967</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>240,967</td>
<td>265,365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education program</td>
<td>381,293</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>381,293</td>
<td>360,172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total program services</strong></td>
<td>1,335,559</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,335,559</td>
<td>1,406,759</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Supporting services:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>170,399</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>170,399</td>
<td>231,104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management and general</td>
<td>537,971</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>537,971</td>
<td>628,711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total supporting services</strong></td>
<td>708,370</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>708,370</td>
<td>859,815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td>2,043,929</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,043,929</td>
<td>2,266,574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHANGE IN NET ASSETS</strong></td>
<td>(177,425)</td>
<td>(145,171)</td>
<td>(719,880)</td>
<td>22,967</td>
<td>(1,019,509)</td>
<td>2,398,753</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RIHS Staff
November-2012

Administration
C. Morgan Grefe, Ph.D., Executive Director
Silvia Rees, Executive Assistant

Building, Grounds & Housekeeping
Ed Desjarlais, Buildings & Grounds
Gage Prentiss, Housekeeper

Collections
Kirsten Hammerstrom, Director of Collections

Development, Public Relations & Membership
Kathy Clarendon, Director of Development
Colleen Callaghan, Development/Campaign Officer
Mary Lou Upham, Development Associate

Education
Elyssa Tardif, Director, Newell D. Goff Center for Education & Public Programs
Barbara Barnes, Tour Services Manager
Dalila Goulart, Education & Visitors Services Manager
Marie Parys, Education Specialist
Nate Burbank, Public Programs Coordinator
Patty Reynolds, Gift Shop Clerk

Finance
Charmyne Goodfellow, Director of Finance
Ann Dionne, Assistant to Director of Finance
Renata Luongo, Assistant in Business Office

Library
Phoebe Bean, Printed Collections Librarian
Katherine Chansky, Special Collections Reference Librarian
Jim DaMico, Special Collections Curator
Jennifer Galpern, Library Receptionist
Peter Griswold, Assistant Technical Services Librarian
J.D. Kay, Digital Imaging Specialist
Liam Kopolow, Library Assistant
Dana Signe Kindstedt Munroe, Registrar
Lee Teverow, Reference Librarian

Museum of Work & Culture
Ray Bacon, Co-Site Director
Anne Conway, Co-Site Director
Darline Amaral, Gift Shop Manager
Irene Blais, Clerical
Gary Boucher, Custodian
Bernard Fontaine, Clerk Receptionist
Liz Maynard, Education Coordinator
Alyce Shulla Sannella, Receptionist/Clerk
Susan Shea, Receptionist/Clerk

Publications
Elizabeth Stevens, Ph.D., Editor, RI History Magazine

Rentals
Renata Luongo, Rental Program Manager

RHODI Project
Timothy Wade, RHODI Project Coordinator
Chelsea Gunn, RHODI Project Field Surveyor
Ryan Petersen, RHODI Project Field Surveyor
Gian Spicuzza, RHODI Project IT Coordinator
Lifetime Members of the RIHS
2011-2012

Mr. Charles & Mrs. Eiko Adams
Mr. William T. Babcock
Arthur A. Bert, M.D. & Ms. Catherine Little Bert
Mrs. Maurice A. Bissonnette
Captain Nicholas Brown
Mrs. Lucy Aldrich Burr
Nancy R. Carriuolo, Ph.D. and Ralf Carriuolo, Ph.D.
Mr. & Mrs. George H. Cicma
Dr. Patrick T. Conley
Ms. Althea Baker Crowley
Mrs. Philip Drinker
Mr. Elisha Dyer, Jr. *
Mr. Donald Farrar
Mr. Chester A. Files, Jr.
Dr. Edwin & Mrs. Angela Fischer
Mrs. Maryanne Tefft Force (deceased)
Dr. George M. Goodwin & Mrs. Betsey S. Goodwin
Mr. Paul & Mrs. Donna Cameron Gricus
Mr. Henry & Ms. Sandra Harris
Ms. Marion O. Harris
Daniel Harrop, III, M.D.
Mrs. Norman F. Herrreshoff
Mr. Peter Lisle
Dr. Eugene Majerowicz
Mr. E. Nicholl Marshall
Mr. Louis H. Maynard
Mrs. A.M. Murray
Mr. Eugene A. Peloquin

Mr. Henry D. Sharpe, Jr. & Mrs. Peggy Boyd Sharpe
Mrs. William Sherman
The Honorable Fernand J. St. Germain
Mr. James F. Twaddell
Ms. Alice Viola
Mr. George H. Waterman, III
Mr. Charles E. Williams
Harrison M. Wright, Ph.D. & Mrs. Josphine Wright
Mr. Eric M. Wunsch
Mr. Louis Yip

* Deceased
I left the National Portrait Gallery wishing that I had taken a picture of the man whose portrait I supported. Most of us in Rhode Island probably know that Senator Jack Reed has long been a supporter of educational and cultural institutions, but perhaps you might not know that Senator Reed is actually on the seventeen-member Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, the body that governs the organization. Kindly, when our Board Chair Barry Hittner let Senator Reed know that I had come on board, he facilitated a series of meetings for me with the directors and curators of many of the programs and museums that make up the Smithsonian. For a few days in Washington, D.C., learning about the new initiatives of our national museums and saw, at every turn, how our state’s history fits perfectly within their new plans. I hope that this is merely the beginning of some very fruitful relationships that may one day lead to putting Lil’ Rhode on the national stage.

While in D.C. I was eager to visit the National Portrait Gallery. Not only was I going to meet with their chief curator, but I had hours to spend exploring their collections and their amazing education centers. Like many of you, I can get lost for hours in museums. And that Wednesday was no exception. About an hour into my ramble through the galleries, I found myself in the nineteenth-century portrait collection—one of my favorite periods in portraiture. As impressive as the dozens of images were, I caught one out of the corner of my eye and made my way down the hall.

Standing in front of me was one of the most striking men I had ever seen. The power he wielded was clear in his eyes, his stance, the set of his mouth. I was smitten with what looked to be the consummate statesman at the start of the century. I was so taken with the image that I didn’t look immediately at the attribution to see what man this was and what master painted him.

I looked to the side of the painting and there was his name: Nelson Aldrich. This man whose stare so absorbed me was none other than the man whose house I work in every day. I looked to the side of the painting and there was his name: Nelson Aldrich. This man whose stare so absorbed me was none other than the man whose house I work in every day. I looked to the side of the painting and there was his name: Nelson Aldrich. This man whose stare so absorbed me was none other than the man whose house I work in every day. I looked to the side of the painting and there was his name: Nelson Aldrich. This man whose stare so absorbed me was none other than the man whose house I work in every day. I looked to the side of the painting and there was his name: Nelson Aldrich. This man whose stare so absorbed me was none other than the man whose house I work in every day. I looked to the side of the painting and there was his name: Nelson Aldrich. 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Olive Hazard Perry
Oil on canvas, attributed to Sanford Mason
United States, Rhode Island, Providence ca. 1830
Museum Collection 1895.7.1

This month’s cover is a portrait of Olive Hazard Perry, the U.S. Navy commander born in South Kingstown, RI in 1785 but best known to his men as the captain of the USS Lake Erie in the War of 1812. The painting is currently on view at the John Brown House Museum as part of the “Rhode Island at War” exhibit on the Museum’s third floor. This portrait, attributed to Sanford Mason, appears to be a copy after the portrait of Perry made by Martin Johnson Heade ca. 1855 after the portrait made around 1814 by John Wesley Jarvis. Perry was a popular subject for portraitists in the New Republic, and the curling smoke adds to the dramatic representation of one of America’s, and Rhode Island’s, early heroes.

He’s practically Byronic in this portrait, romanticized as it is. The original 1814 portrait by Jarvis (owned by the Detroit Institute of Arts) shows a man with a softer, more receding chin, and a hairline to match, though the curling sideburns have been faithfully rendered from version to version. It’s an interesting thing, to see the progression over roughly 20 years, from what was probably a reasonably faithful rendering of one to another. The current copy captures, reified, or improved the portrait, using an image that better lines up the hero’s countenance.

The heroism was real, even if we can wonder about the date of the chin. On September 10, 1813, Perry’s fleet fought a successful battle against a task force of the Royal Navy in the Battle of Lake Erie. It’s a battle about which Perry famously said, “If a victory is to be gained, I will gain it.” In the course of the battle, Perry’s flagship, the USS Lawrence, was so severely disabled in the encounter that the British commander was certain Perry would surrender it. Instead, Perry personally fired a final salvo, and then had his men row him a half-mile to the shore. Perry received the British surrender on the deck of the recaptured Niagara and no effective resistance and surrendered. Although he had won the battle, Perry ultimately lost the war, and the United States, Rhode Island, Providence ca. 1830

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