Editor's Note

Ronald M. Potvin
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This issue of Newport History traces the lives and work of Newporters whose influence still ripples throughout the world. Jan M. Copes writes about the "fighting Perrys," especially Oliver Hazard Perry, the "Hero of Lake Erie," and Matthew C. Perry, who began negotiations with Japan that ultimately opened that country to trade with the western world. Also, Parnel Desautel and Philip Dickinson examine the skill and creativity of John Goddard, credited by many furniture historians as being the foremost cabinetmaker in colonial America, and for refining the "Newport style" of furniture, which influences American decorative arts to this day.

Jan M. Copes is the Assistant Editor of The American Neptune, a quarterly journal of maritime history published by the Peabody Essex Museum of Salem, Massachusetts. She holds degrees in history from the University of Texas at Austin and Cleveland State University in Cleveland, Ohio, where she is a lecturer in the history department. Copes presented her article on February 9, 1993, as part of the Newport Historical Society's tenth annual Winter Series, "Newport & the Navy." Copes embellishes the stories of the well known Perrys with anecdotes and research that shed light on the entire family.

Parnel Desautel and Philip Dickinson met in 1977 and have since formed a creative relationship involving Dickinson's photography and writing skills and Desautel's knowledge and craftsmanship of eighteenth century furniture. Parnel Desautel learned cabinetmaking in a traditional apprenticeship to his father. He was just thirteen years old when he completed his first John Goddard reproduction, a tallcase clock with a shell carved in the door. Desautel received a B.A. in philosophy from St. John's Seminary in Montreal in 1956, and from 1970 to 1974 taught woodworking and furniture construction at the Rhode Island School of Design. Desautel now makes furniture in the style of John Goddard in his shop in western Rhode Island. His knowledge of Goddard is derived from his early apprenticeship, examination of known Goddard pieces, books, and perhaps most of all, from making furniture with his own hands. Philip Dickinson graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1969 with a B.A. in writing. Dickinson moved to Newport in 1976 and now works as a writer and photographer and teaches photography at St. George's School in Middletown. He also has the sometimes difficult task of capturing Desautel's deep knowledge of eighteenth century furniture both on film and in words.

Finally, "From the Collection" returns with this issue of Newport History. The Society's librarian examines the Coddington Commission of 1651 and its relationship to a turbulent period in English history.

The Publications Committee welcomes two new members: Hugh D. Auchincloss, Jr., and A. Curtis LaFrance. These new members bring their individual talents and skills to the Committee and their contributions will add to the quality of our publication.