

Appendix B

The following text was prepared by Ralph C. Weiss. All maps shown are in the collections of the William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan.

Maps of the Battle of Rhode Island, by Ralph C. Weiss

There are at least three dozen maps that show information concerning the Battle for Rhode Island. The Middletown Historical Society Research Team was able to obtain a number of maps, sketches and charts to identify the 1778 battlefield in Middletown from the William L Clements Library at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Only 12 maps identify the Middletown fortifications or shed significant detail surrounding the events that took place in August of 1778. All maps shown in this presentation are the courtesy of William L Clements Library.

The “Plan of the Town and Environs of Newport Rhode Island” (Figure 1) signed by the British chief engineer Abraham D’Aubant, provides a graphic illustration of the Middletown battlefield. Dated 1779, this map shows the British fortifications in the first and second line of defense to the north and east of Newport. The map is signed but it is extremely doubtful that it was drawn by D’Aubant. When looking at the upper right-hand quadrant of this map, the 1778 Edward Fage map of the same area (Figure 3) should be reviewed.

This map provides information concerning the British defenses and the American forces’ covered works that may have been in place at the time of the Siege in August 1778. However, after studying Figure 3, even this information is in doubt. There are two folio sheets that must be put together to provide the picture of the battlefield in Middletown as it developed from August 8th to August 25th. The two sheets are fitted together one over-the-top of the other with the legend sheet on the bottom.



Figure 1 Map drawn in 1779 by British commanding engineer Abraham D'Aubant, depicting the works built August 8 – 29th for the Siege and proposed defenses yet to be built.²⁵⁴

When put together the map measures 41 $\frac{3}{4}$ by 50 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches and is drawn to scale of 1 inch to 500 feet. All soundings are in fathoms. This is a highly accurate, detailed, finished colored topographical map. The shoreline coloring is not traditional blue but a very light green. This is the obvious giveaway that these pieces belong together. The upper half shows the area of Valley Road, Easton's Pond upper and lower, and all the land, to the west, including Newport Harbor and Goat Island (Figure 1).

In March 1777, D'Aubant sent a report to Gen. Howe in New York which describes the work undertaken from December 8, 1776 to March 31, 1777. It includes an activity report that describes the project plans being developed for the fortifications. In the correspondence, he gives a picture of the engineering department activity in Newport. This map shows the disposition of British and Hessian troops for the defense of Newport. D'Aubant laid out this plan in a written document in August 1777 and received direction from Gen. Clinton to proceed. On November 21, 1777, he sent a letter to New York concerning the fortifications. This letter was approved by General Pigot. He made the endorsement and gave directions of things that he wanted accomplished. In the endorsement the first fortification of the outer defense line to the northwest of Newport he describes the area as being "Sheffield to Tomini." This is the only time this description is ever used on any of the British maps examined. It may be that this part of the outer line was moved further south to provide a defensive line between the North Battery and Tomini(sic) Hill. The chain of fortifications that compose the outer line were to be manned by a total of 840 men.²⁵⁵ This map exhibits the defenses prior to August 8, 1778. It also shows the French fleet as they entered the harbor and engaged the British batteries and the works that were

²⁵⁴ D'Aubant, 1779. William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

²⁵⁵ Adams, Randolph G., British Headquarters Maps and Sketches, The William L. Clements Library, 1928, page 127 through 133.

raised that day until the Siege was lifted on August 29th. It includes the proposed work to be accomplished in 1779 for the defense Newport and the rebel batteries that were erected along with the number of canon or armament and the date on which these fortifications started firing. This is an extremely comprehensive map and is the key to the Siege of Newport and the Middletown battlefield. This is the only map that shows the location of the British headquarters on Spring Street at the head or east end of what appears to be Green Street The information contained in the legend is so important that it has been enlarged and displayed here (Figure 2).

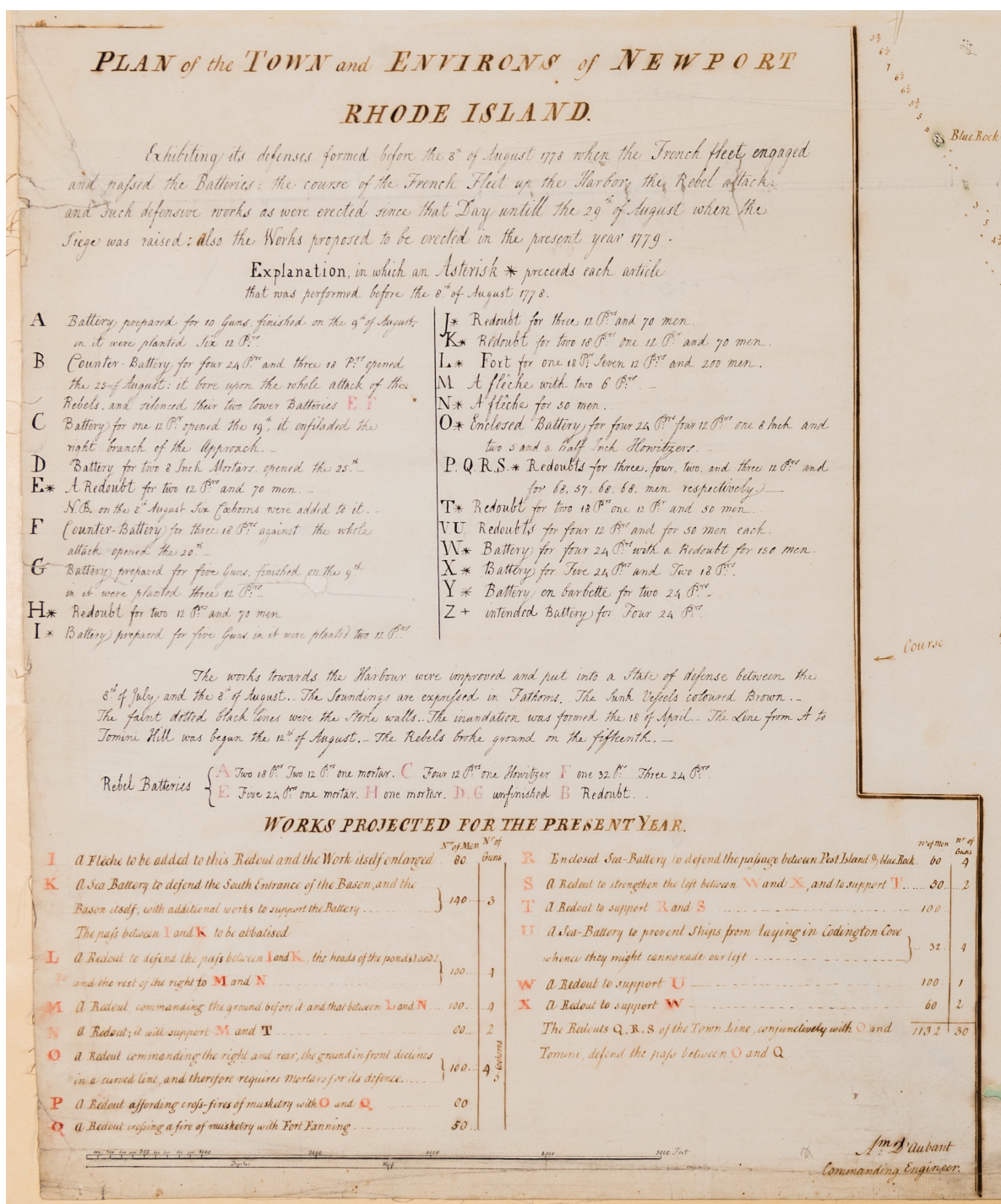


Figure 2 The legend for the 1779 D'Aubant map (Figure 1). Listing both completed and proposed defenses.²⁵⁶

The “Plan of the Works Which Form the Exterior Line of Defence, for the Town of Newport in Rhode Island...” (Figure 3) is signed by Edward Fage, November 1778, and is drawn to the scale of 1 inch to 500 feet. All soundings are in fathoms, and it shows the outer line (first line) of defense that the British used during the siege of Newport. This finished, colored, topographical map shows a very small part of the northeast corner of the inner line (second line of defense) that was set up. It shows the American covered trench works that came down the west side of Honeyman Hill across what is today Aquidneck Avenue and down to the southwest and across Green End Avenue. The map is 26 by 17 ½ inches and shows topographical detail of the defensive works, batteries, bastions and entrenchments. This map is unique because it shows the the dates when the defenses were changed and even though the map is dated November 8, 1778. There is a plan named, “Plan of and Entrenchment with Redoubts, ordered by Maj. Gen. Pigot to be thrown up, for the Defense of the Town of Newport, begun the September Quarter, No.16,” that was probably never accomplished based on the information contained on this map. It shows fortifications built from August to October 1778, which makes it more important than the map shown in Figure 1.



Figure 3 Map of the British and American works used during the Siege and drawn by Fage in November 1778. Defenses like Fort Fanning, that were in the process of being built when the map was drawn are also included. ²⁵⁷

The “Plan of Rhode Island surveyed and drawn by Edward Fage in the years 1777 78 and 79” (Figure 4) is a map of the entire island of Rhode Island (Aquidneck Island), and is drawn to scale of 1 inch to 2000 feet. This map was made on two sheets of paper and its title is in a note on the lower right-hand corner of the main sheet. The larger piece measures 21 $\frac{1}{4}$ by 37 $\frac{1}{2}$ ”, and is attached at the lower left side (west) to another sheet that measures 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ by 23 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches. The map is a finished, colored, topographical map showing Rhode Island and part of Conanicut Island, along with soundings and distances. There is a large amount of detail on this map. It shows clearly the Rebel trench works coming down the west side of Honeyman Hill. Most importantly it shows which houses were destroyed throughout the island during the British occupation. It also shows where ships were scuttled in the harbor, distances between various points, major fortifications, soundings, and a list of all the major landholders throughout the island. The information was important because the British knew they were going to have to house their troops. This map was certainly used by D’Aubant to draw up the defenses for Newport. It is the only map found thus far that shows the Headley House just southwest of Turkey Hill.

²⁵⁷ Fage, *Plan of the works*, 1778. William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.



Figure 4 The full "Plan of Rhode-Island" surveyed and drawn by Fage in 1777, 1778 and 1779.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁸ Fage, *Plan of Rhode Island*, 1779. William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

“Plan of the Town of Newport in the adjacent Country with a Project for its Defense”

(Figure 5), is a finished colored topographical map of the town and the surrounding country side for approximately two miles. This map has a border, a title block and is the third most significant map of the Middletown battlefield. Edward Fage, who was an artillery officer, was primarily interested in the distance for artillery fire. Hence all of his drawings include distances. The scale of the map is 1 inch equals 1000 feet and measures 10 ½ by 20 inches. There is no legend or index that corresponds to the survey for the angles for point A through L. Points M through P no doubt anticipate landing points for a possible amphibious invasion.



Figure 5 The map by Edward Fage displaying the plans for Newport's defenses.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁹ Fage, Edward, *Plan of the Town of Newport And the Adjacent Country, With a Project for Its Defence*, 1777. William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

The below, incomplete, map (Figure 6) is by Edward Fage according to the Clements Library catalog. It is a colored topographical map drawn to scale of 1 inch to 2000 feet. It also has a scale for feet, yards, and miles in the lower left corner. The soundings are important because the French flag ship drew 34 feet of water which made her passage extremely vulnerable. The map is significant as it shows the French fleet arriving in Newport and penetrating the west passage, which is titled “Narragansett passage.” It shows the first rate ship of the line entering Newport harbor and firing on the British positions on Goat Island.

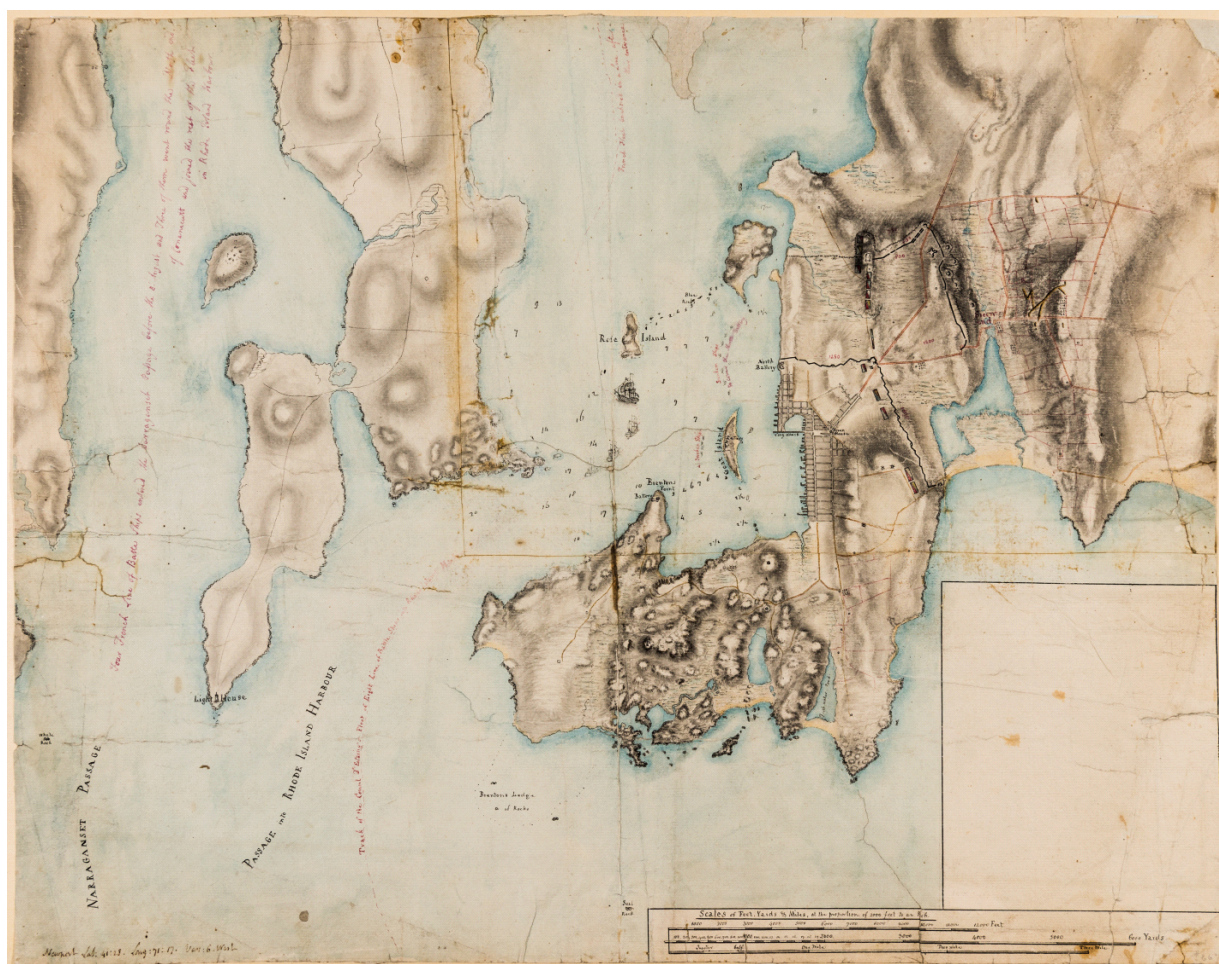


Figure 6 The unfinished map of lower Narragansett Bay, attributed to Fage.²⁶⁰

²⁶⁰ Fage, Edward, *Newport County, Ca.*, 1779. William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

“A Chart of The Harbour of Rhode Island and Narragansett Bay....” (Figure 7), was printed by J.F.W. Des Barres in 1778. It shows the disposition of the British fleet and approximately where the various British ships were sunk when the French fleet entered the Narragansett Bay, Newport Harbor and the Sakonnet River. This is a beautiful map that has at least seven different states. While the map is highly accurate and is based on a survey made by Blaskowitz, who reported to Samuel Holland, there are a few things that are misplaced. The covered trench works shown in Middletown have no explanation and are not properly placed. Des Barres had returned to England in 1774 and convinced the British government to give him access to all the information coming in from the colonies so he could print maps. The information for this map came through the Colonial Office. Therefore, he had no firsthand knowledge of exactly where the covered works were dug or where the ships were sunk from the written description of the events that he was receiving. This map of Narragansett Bay is of such high accuracy that it was a standard for the next 75 years. Map makers use others surveys for information and incorporate it into their work. Even today the USGS survey maps still show a British unit marked on the north end of the island with no explanation.



Figure 7 Chart of the Harbor of Rhode Island and Narragansett Bay printed by J.F.W. Des Barres in 1778.²⁶¹

²⁶¹ Des Barres, Joseph F.W.. *A Chart of the harbor of Rhode Island and Narraganset Bay surveyed in pursuance of directions from the Lords of Trade to his majesty's surveyor general for the northern district of North America:*

The Charles Frederick William Mielatez map titled “MAP of the MILITARY OPERATIONS in 1777 – 78, Rhode Island” (Figure 8) was published as Plate II in Major General George W. Cullum’s book, *Historical Sketches of the Fortifications in Defense of Narragansett Bay*, Washington, 1884. This map was copied from a map in the collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston, Massachusetts and it was actually drawn by J. Denison. It was drawn to a scale of 1 inch equals 1 miles and has a black and white border. The original, which has discolored with age, shows the various units of the opposing forces. There is a legend in the lower left corner. Another original of this map exists in the Rhode Island Secretary of State Office in Providence, Rhode Island. Therefore, there are two known original maps by J. Denison showing the retreat of the American forces from the Siege of Newport from August 24 through August 31, 1778. Edward Field stated a third copy may have been sent to the State of Connecticut, however, a search was made some years ago and it was determined that there were no records of such a map.

This map shows the disposition of the American troops at the north end of the island, and it shows them leaving the island and taking up positions on the Tiverton Heights. It also shows the French fleet as it departs Newport Harbor. This shows clearly that without naval support and the support of the French army, which was to attack from the west, the battle was lost. If this battle had been won in August 1778, there would have been no Yorktown and a great number of American and British lives would have been saved. It would have been the second major British Army defeat in North America, the first being at the Battle of Saratoga in 1777. The sentiment

Published at the request of the right honourable Lord Viscount Howe / by J.F.W. Des Barres esq. London: J.F.W. Des Barres, 1776. William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

in England would not have allowed the American Revolution to continue. Most American historians concede this fact.

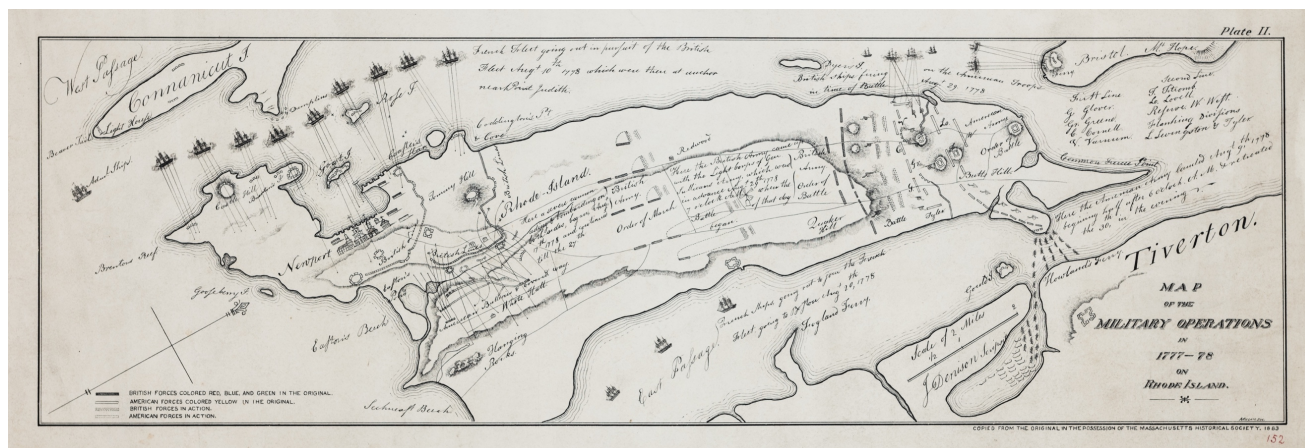


Figure 8 The map of the battlefield of the Siege and Battle of Rhode Island.²⁶²

The “Plan of the Position of His Majesty’s Troops at Rhode Island, after the defeat of the Rebels the 29th of August 1778” (Figure 9) may have been drawn by a Hessian soldier. It is a colored map (done in red, blue and black) showing the disposition of British ships and military units throughout the island. This map has stylized trees casting their shadow in the east-west direction. The map is drawn to scale of 1 inch equals approximately 1 mile. It measures 11 ½ by 18 ½ inches. There is an unusual compass rose showing west as the direction arrow. This map is not entirely accurate. It does show some of the fortifications in their correct position but they are not correctly drawn. Further still, several landmarks are labeled with alternative names or spellings. Coaster Harbor Island is called Smallpox Island²⁶³, Tomini Hill is called Domini

²⁶² Mielatz, Charles Frederick William. Map of the military operations in 1777-78 on Rhode Island. 1883. William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

²⁶³ In the 18th and 19th centuries this island was used to contain outbreaks of small pox and other epidemics. A portion of a small pox cemetery still remains on the island today. Due to this use Coasters Harbor Island was frequently referred to in past centuries as “Pest Island” or “Small Pox Island.”

The Newport Harbor map draft (Figure 10) has no title or border. It was surveyed by Charles Blaskowitz with a 17-man survey party in late October 1774. Ezra Stiles, the Congregational minister and prominent Newport resident, referenced it on October 25, 1774, in his diary. One of the interesting things about this map is as a survey map it would have typically been destroyed. The map shows a penciled-in fort on Goat Island and this configuration of the outer walls lasted well into the 19th century. The North Battery which was built by the British when they occupied Newport is not shown. However, the fields of fire for such a fortification are clearly penciled in to protect Rose Island and to provide a clear field of fire to the Newport Harbor entrance, clearly missing the fort on Goat Island. The North Battery was the west end of the British inner line during the Siege of Newport. drawn on a plane table and the grid used can clearly be seen. The map measures 17 by 15 inches and although there is no scale shown, it appears to be made to the scale of 1 inch equals 500 feet. The inshore measurements of the water depth are given in feet whereas further out it is given in fathoms.

The Newport Harbor draft map (Figure 10) was the basis for the one commonly seen today titled, “A Plan of the town of Newport in Rhode Island” surveyed by Charles Blaskowitz and engraved and published by William Faden, September 15, 1777 (Figure 11).²⁶⁵ In this map, the main survey line used is just north of Spring Street. The final version (Figure 11) has numbers on it that correspond to a list containing the street names. Trinity Church is listed as well as the first Congregational Church and their locations are shown. The list of the street names is not provided on the earlier draft version (Figure 10).

²⁶⁵ It was also the basis for “A Plan of the Town of Newport” published by F.B. W. Des Barres in 1776.

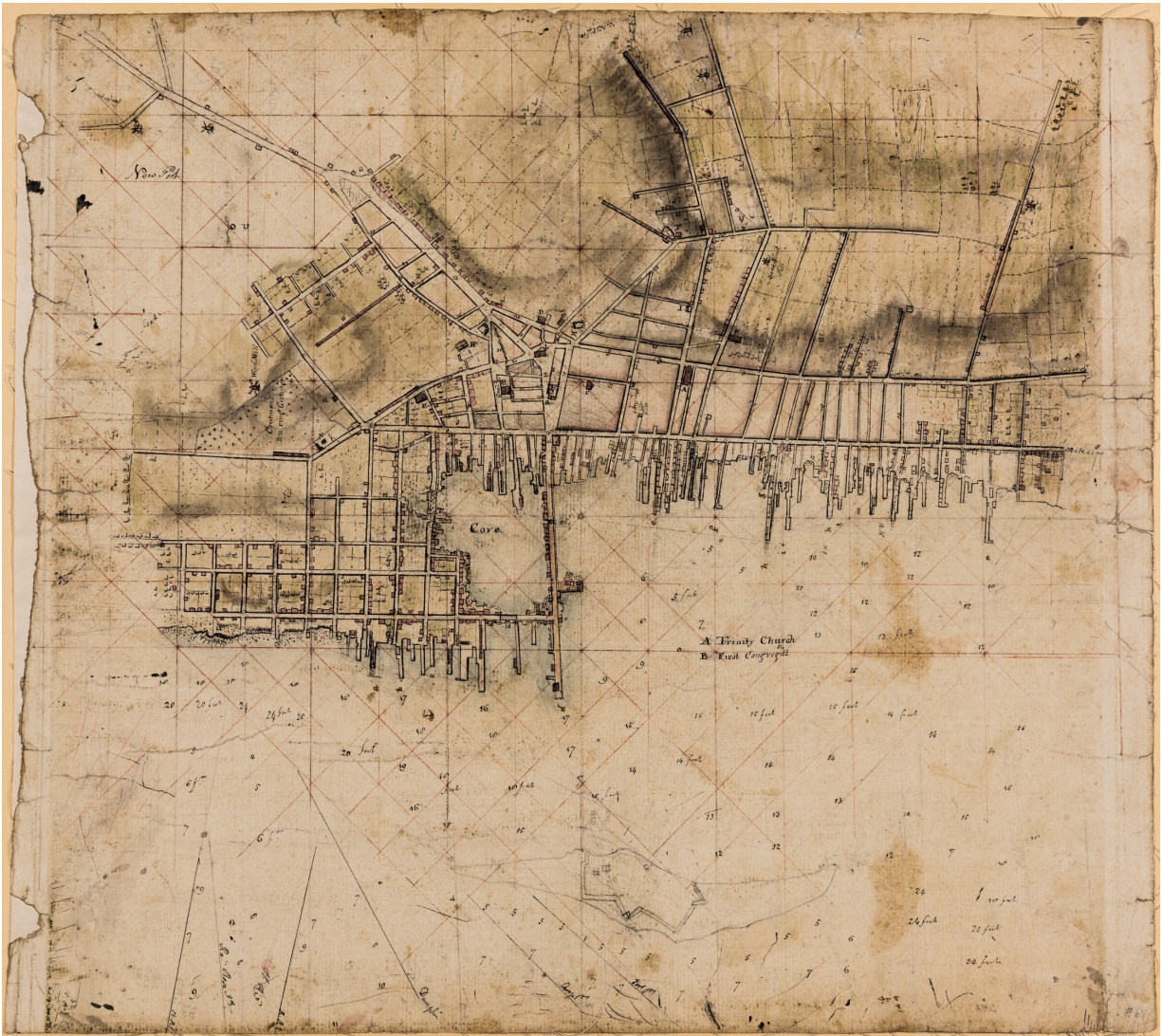


Figure 10 The draft map of Newport Harbor surveyed by Blaskowitz in 1774.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁶ Blaskowitz, Charles, *Untitled map of Newport Harbor*. Newport, RI, 1774. William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.



Figure 11 The final version of the Newport Harbor map surveyed by Blaskowitz (1774), and engraved and published by William Faden in 1777.²⁶⁷

The French map, "Plan De La Ville, Rade, et Environs de Newport..." (Figure 12) of 1780 shows the 35 fortifications of the French army, the 13 rebuilt British fortifications, the six British forts left in ruin, the seven campsites of the French army, and the nine major ships of the

²⁶⁷ Blaskowitz, Charles, and William Faden. *A Plan of the Town of Newport In Rhode Island*. (London: Willm. Faden, Charing Cross), 1777. William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

line of the French Navy. It also shows the positions of the sunken British ships used to protect the North Battery in 1778. The map is a finished colored topographical map drawn to scale of 1 inch to 100 toise.²⁶⁸ The actual dimensions of the map are unknown.

²⁶⁸ 1 Toise = 6 old French feet or 6.4 English feet.

