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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	81	Sam ^r Mumford	M	70	84
	Jan	47	Mr. Bailey's Child	M	80	80
			Neg. Girl from boy	F	90	90
			Boy	M	100	100
		85	Mr. Dean	M	110	110
12	B	69	W ^m Sanford	M	120	120
		40	Capt. Luzzans	M	130	130
		25	Rob. D.	M	140	140
		25	Ben. Edmund	M	150	150
		22	Indian (Jaac)	M	160	160
		55	Hannah Gibbon	F	170	170
22		30	Geo. Laylor	M	180	180
		8	a girl	F	190	190
		65	Job Townsend	M	200	200
25			Mr. Dean (Aunt)	F	210	210
		8	Shunglaton	M	220	220
		8	Neg. Girl Tuesday	F	230	230
			Boy	M	240	240
		50	W ^m Sinkins	M	250	250
30		50	Neg. Neg. Charles	M	260	260
		22	Neg. Man from boy	M	270	270
		8	Boy Henry	M	280	280
			14 W. 8 B.		290	290
Feb	4	6	Neg. Boy M. Howard	M	300	300
		8 m	W. Child	M	310	310
		65	Henry Sabins	M	320	320
		2 m	Nat. Child	M	330	330
			M. Mason Neg. Man	M	340	340
			Feb. 10. Jaac Chapman	M	350	350
			B. M ^r Hamott	M	360	360
			2. Eliza Borden	F	370	370
			2. Jaac Hall	M	380	380
			P. Molly Goddard	F	390	390
			E. Child	M	400	400
			2. W ^m Luzzans	M	410	410
			25. B. Edw. East	M	420	420
			B. Jos. Atwood	M	430	430
			Sarah Molatto	F	440	440
			P. Irving	M	450	450
			P. Capt. Potter	M	460	460
			14 W. 3 B.		470	470
			Mar. 6. Wife J ^r Langly	F	480	480
			2. Ruth Waterhouse	F	490	490
			E. M ^r Springfield	M	500	500
			B. W ^m Needons	M	510	510
			Molatto Girl	F	520	520
			20. B. Mary Deane	F	530	530
			Harty Daugh	M	540	540
			Neg. man M ^r M ^r Dublin	M	550	550
			Twin Children	M	560	560
			2. M ^r Scott	M	570	570
			2. M ^r Whitefield	M	580	580
			E. M ^r Davis	M	590	590
			a Man at Prison	M	600	600
			Neg. Boy	M	610	610
			Fuller Negro	M	620	620
			J. Schofield	M	630	630

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

Elizabeth C. Stevens
EDITOR