



*Sea Captains Carousing in Surinam* by John Greenwood, 1755

Courtesy The St. Louis Museum of Art

### **Sea Captains Carousing in Surinam**

by Robert W. Kenny\*

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In 1948 the City Art Museum of St. Louis purchased the painting *Sea Captains Carousing in Surinam*. Removal of that canvas from Rhode Island to the Midwest was a source of regret to some and perhaps relief to other citizens, for artist John Greenwood had captured for posterity a memorable bacchanalia of Rhode Islanders who — by the long arm of coincidence — found themselves in port in the Dutch colony of Surinam sometime during the late 1750s. Most participants in that gala would later hold prominent positions in the civil and military history of His Majesty's colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations and during the American Revolution. Identification of the revelers is part of the tradition of the Jenckeses, a family distinguished in the life of Rhode Island for generations. Until its sale to the City Art Museum, that picture had always been in the possession of John Jenckes' descendents, who sold it with great reluctance. Aside from its value as a work of art, associational interest makes *Sea Captain Carousing in Surinam* a provocative study. It is the purpose of this paper to examine if it were possible or probable that all or some Newport and Providence merchants and mariners, traditionally identified, could have been in Surinam at the time Greenwood depicted them in such Hogarthian attitudes.

John Greenwood was born in Boston on December 7, 1727. His father Samuel was a prosperous merchant and his uncle Isaac a professor at Harvard. In 1742 John was apprenticed to Thomas Johnston, engraver, printer, designer of grave stones, and painter of fire buckets, ships, and portraits. Greenwood did an engraving of Yale College and about 1747 his first mezzotint — the first by an American artist. His subject was a servant, Anne Arnold, more familiarly known as Jersey Nanny. That print is now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Its publication line reads: "Printed by J. Turner for J. Buck and sold by him

at the Spectacles in Queen Street. Boston." Its advertisement appeared in the *Boston Gazette* on December 20, 1748. More important is the notation *Greenwood ad vivum pinxit et Jecit*. Beneath the portrait are the lines:

*Nature her various Skill displays  
In thousand Shapes, a thousand ways;  
Tho' one Form differs from another,  
She's still of all the common Mother;  
Then, Ladies, let not pride resist her,  
But own that Nanny is your Sister.*

Their author, if indeed he was Greenwood, anticipated by more than a century Mr. Kipling's remark that "the Colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady are sisters under the skin."

Turning to portraiture, Greenwood painted prominent merchants, ship captains, clergymen, and family groups. Alan Burroughs maintained that Greenwood was not particularly skillful but believed him the most popular portrait painter between Smibert and Copley. He painted his subjects against ornate backgrounds which suggested their affluence. His son wrote: "His company was sought. His fame was not confined to his own town, but extended all over America."

In 1752, when he was twenty-five, Greenwood left Boston for Surinam where he carried on his profession with considerable success. The Dictionary of National Biography account — prepared from papers of Doctor Isaac J. Greenwood — states that while in Surinam he painted 113 portraits and was paid 8,025 guilders. In May 1758 Greenwood left for Amsterdam to perfect his skill in mezzotinting. In Holland he moved in artistic circles, did a number of portraits, and studied under Elgersma. After a sojourn in Paris, he moved to London in 1764. There he was well received, invited by artists to their annual dinner at the Turks Head, and in that year exhibited two pictures — View of Boston, N.E. and Portrait of a Gentleman. Although he did rather well by his painting he eventually became an art auctioneer. At the request of the Earl of Bute he journeyed in 1771 to Holland and France buying both collections and individual paintings. A portrait of Greenwood done by W. Pether shows, symbolically, an artist's palette with brushes and an auctioneer's hammer. He died in Margate in 1792.

The crucial years of Greenwood's life in so far as we are concerned were 1752-1758 — the period of his residence in Surinam. Investigation of the lives of those allegedly portrayed in Greenwood's picture is to ascertain if they were, possibly or probably, in the area during the time of his residence. From the realism of the picture it is possible that the event might well have been deeply etched in his brain. Were those depicted actually there on the big night, or did Greenwood fill in the picture with faces of Rhode Island worthies he had met from time to time during his six years in the Dutch colony? The balance of this paper will consist of some convincing evidence and some plausible conjectures.

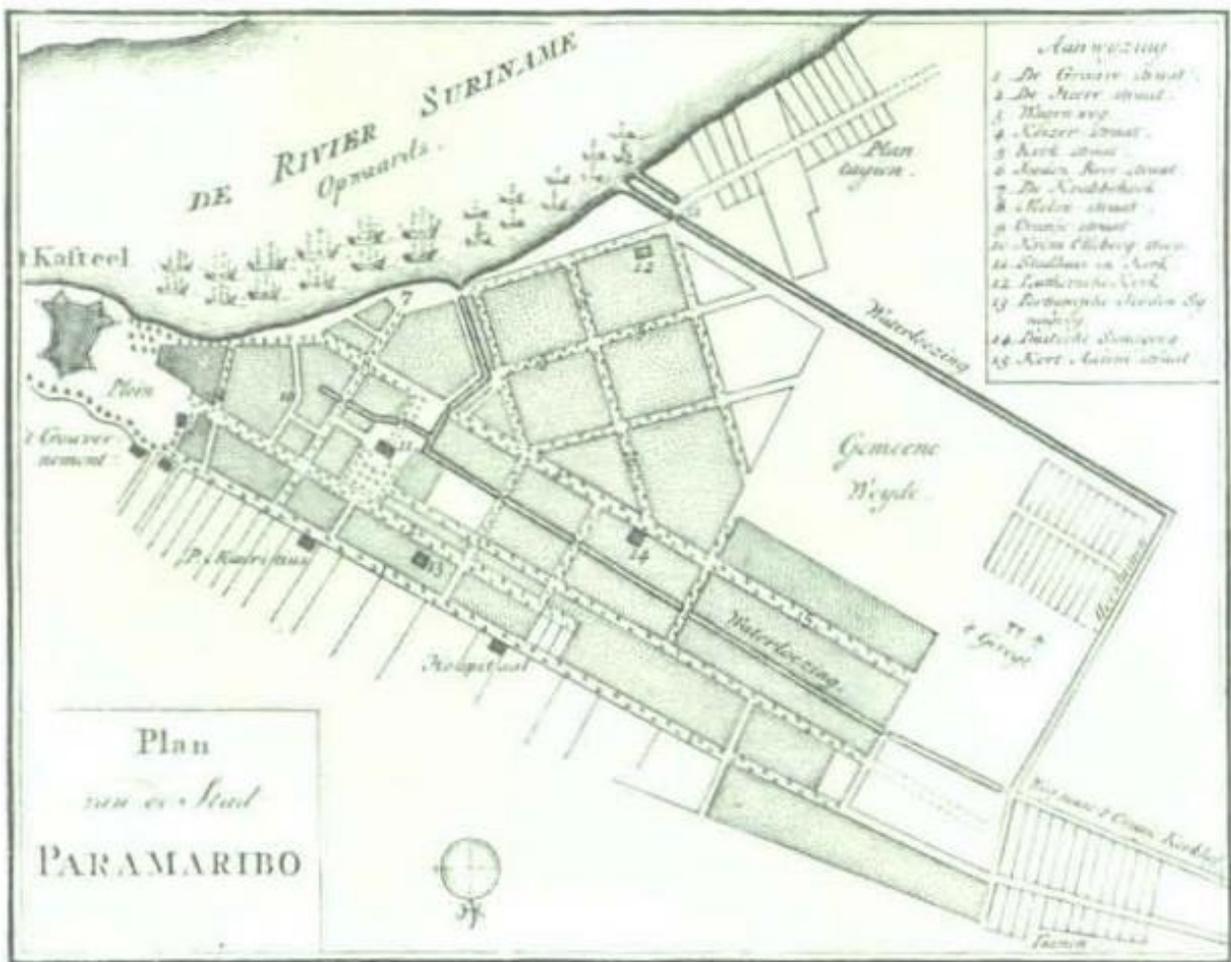
What would have brought these Rhode Islanders to this Dutch port in 1752-1758? Trade. Rhode Island towns, principally Newport and Providence, had for years carried on a thriving trade, legal and illegal, with English, French, Spanish, and Dutch colonies in the West Indies and the ports of northern South America. As early as 1707 Governor Crowe of the Barbados complained to the Board of Trade in London: "It would be some help to this Island if the Trade between New England and Surinam were obstructed, for if I be rightly informed, great quantities of Rum, Sugar and molasses go in return for horses, flower and other Provisions." [2]

It will be recalled that from May 1756 until February 1763 Great Britain and France were intermittently at war in Europe, North America, on the high seas, and in the West Indies — the struggle known in America as the French and Indian War and in Europe as the Seven Year's War. Although war was not declared until 1756 hostile acts were committed on the high seas and in the West Indies as early as 1751. French West Indian colonies were not self-sustaining; they produced sugar, coffee, and indigo for export and imported staple goods from the mother country. Two years before war was declared a British blockade

was disrupting this intercourse between France and her colonies. If the blockade was effective colonists would suffer for food, and it would make refitting of French naval vessels and privateers impossible in their West Indian ports. North American English colonies — Rhode Island chief among them — took advantage of the situation and sold staple provisions, lumber, and horses to the islands, taking in return at very advantageous rates sugar and molasses.

Once war was declared, trading with the French was illegal for English colonials, and penalties were severe. However, trading continued with the neutral Dutch. Richard Pares indicates how ingenious colonial traders exploited Dutch neutrality —

The restriction could not be complete without control of all exports from the King's dominions to neutral as well as enemy countries. This was particularly necessary to the West Indies, for the North Americans had long established a trade with the French through the Dutch and Danish islands. The legal right of the government to prevent it was doubtful. To restrain trade with the enemy was one thing, but to interfere with English property which was not demonstrably designed for his ports was another.[3]



Courtesy John Carter Brown Library

A 1769 plan of the city of Paramaribo, the major port of destination for Rhode Island goods, shows two elements which underscore the importance of this city as a center of trade for the Dutch — the ships in the harbor and the fort on the far left. Inset from "Landkaart van de Volksplantingen Suriname en Bebbice" in Isaac Tirion, Nieuwe en Beknopte Hand-Atlas, Amsterdam, 1769.

In an attempt to plug this loophole the Board of Trade in London on October 6, 1756 ordered colonial governors to lay an embargo on all colonial ships with cargoes of provisions unless they were consigned to another British colony. Rhode Island, which Pares refers to as "the Home of all Abuses," paid little or no attention to these orders. Lord Loudon, British commander in America, wrote to William Pitt that Rhode Island traders were "a lawless set of smugglers, who continually supply the enemy with what provisions they want, and bring their goods in barter for them." Despite penalties the highly profitable trade flourished in the late 1750s [5]

An ingenious device for carrying on this trade with a semblance of legality was by means of flags of truce. Rhode Island and Pennsylvania were most active in this subterfuge. The owner of a flag of truce vessel undertook, under oath, to transport French prisoners of war, generally seamen, to a French port in the West Indies there to be exchanged for British prisoners. Port Louis, Guadeloupe in the Leeward Islands was much used. This soon became a racket, for despite a law forbidding carrying merchandise on these exchange voyages, flags of truce vessels sometimes left Rhode Island with as few as two or three prisoners, but with substantial cargoes which were sold at premium prices. Admiral Knowles of the Royal Navy wrote: "The Northern Colonies used to buy French Prisoners at a great Price of one another for a Pretence to go to the French Islands that he had at length been obliged to threaten the French Government that he would send to England all French Prisoners if they delivered any English to Northern Flags of Truce." [5]

On one occasion Governor Hopkins refused a flag of truce license to a ship owner who had gone to Boston to buy French prisoners, there being none available at the time in either Providence or Newport. According to Governor Shirley of Massachusetts, no great friend of Rhode Island, over sixty flags of truce, laden with cargo, sailed from Rhode Island ports in the sixteen months previous to 1758. Governor Clinton of New York sold Spanish and French prisoners at so many pistoles per head. The business had gotten so out of hand that in 1759 Governor Hopkins at the strong urging of William Pitt refused to grant any more flags of truce.

It has been noted that Rhode Island's trade with Surinam was of long standing — a nuisance to the British as early as 1707. That Surinam, a Dutch port and neutral, had great advantages for colonial merchants was made even more clear during the French and Indian War. In 1755 Daniel Jenckes, who may have been at the Surinam carousal, was one of a committee of five appointed by the Rhode Island Assembly to draft a bill prohibiting export of food or war materials to any French port in North America. One sentence in the bill is significant: "Provisions shall be landed within his Majesty's dominions and nowhere else unless at Surranam, Esquebo, or Berberties." [6]

The Dutch government had opened trade with English merchants in 1704. The agreement stipulated that part of each cargo was draft horses for use on the sugar plantations. Rhode Island's Narragansett country raised sturdy work animals and they, with the somewhat inferior Rhode Island tobacco, lumber, and provisions were staples of trade used in obtaining cargoes of molasses and sugar at the Dutch port. Once the war started, the Dutch transshipped Yankee provisions to the French islands. This highly profitable trade was threatened by the British "Rule of 1756" which held that a neutral power could not in war time legally engage in a trade forbidden in peace. Normally the Dutch did not trade with French West Indian islands, and their vessels were thus subject to capture by the Royal Navy. The chance for handsome profits kept the trade flourishing. Under pressure from Governor Shirley and Lord Loudon, however, the Rhode Island Assembly in January 1757 forbade "exportation from any port or place within this colony to any Dutch or neutral port." [7] This is one of the laws Pares probably had in mind when he stated that "Rhode Island passed laws which would have had excellent results had they been enforced and obeyed."

SHIPPING HORSES wanted.



NICHOLAS BROWN,  
and COMPANY,  
Want to buy immedi-  
ately, a few likely SURINAM HORSES.

*Nicholas Brown and Company advertized in the Providence Gazette January 7, 1764 for horses to trade with the Dutch colony of Surinam on the northeast coast of South America. Rhode islanders had been trading horses and other goods with the Dutch since 1704. Probably the horses shipped were Narragansett Pacers, a breed specialy raised in Narragansett's country.*

Trading with the enemy using flags of truce, and trading with a neutral nation, the Dutch, for transshipping provisions to the French have been noted. Our Rhode Island ancestors had still another device to turn an honest pound during wartime; Privateering.

A privateer is an armed vessel, owned and manned by private persons, commissioned by the government, authorizing the owners to use it against hostile nations, particularly in the capture of merchant shipping. The commissions, called letters of marque, were issued by the Admiralty or by colonial governors when authorized by the Admiralty. Privateering was very popular with Rhode Island merchants and mariners. In the War of the Spanish Succession, 1701-1713, Captain William Wanton of Portsmouth, first Rhode Island privateer, was commissioned on June 25, 1702 to operate against the French in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. He returned to Newport in September with three captured ships. one of them a French privateer, and all loaded with fish. During King George's War (1739-1748) the governor of the colony was authorized by the king to issue "letters of Marque and Reprisal to any of our loving subjects." The governor, in turn, authorized the captain "to set forth in a hostile manner the said vessel under his command and therewith by force of arms to apprehend, seize and take the ships. vessels and goods belonging to Spain or France and bring them into a Court of Admiralty for condemnation." Nearly 180 privateers were commissioned in Rhode Island between 1702 and the outbreak of revolution. Some distinguished colonial families engaged in this lucrative but dangerous enterprise: Browns, Malbones, Ellerys, Updikes, Ayraults, Jenckeses, and Hopkinses. Fortunes were made and lost. Richard Partridge, a Quaker, the colony's agent in London, reported to the King in 1757 "that it is well known that the Colony afors'd is extremely obnoxious to the French and much an object of their Resentm't on account of the great Mischief done to their Trade during the last War by Rhd Privateers of which they fitted out more than any other of the Northern Colonys." [9] It is a fair assumption that privateers preying on French shipping in the West Indies would frequently put into Surinam, a neutral port during 1754-1758.

Given the political situation at the time there is good reason to believe that Rhode Island mariners engaged in privateering, flags of truce, or trading with a neutral nation, would make frequent use of the Dutch port. It should be noted that obtaining a cargo at Surinam could be a time-consuming business. There were no warehouses where a return cargo could be readily obtained. A captain or supercargo frequently had to search out a planter, supply him with wood for barrels and wait for delivery of sugar and molasses at the port. This makes quite probable that our shipmasters could all be in port for some time awaiting cargoes. What evidence is there that those lusty souls limned by Greenwood were there?

It is believed that John Jenckes purchased Sea Captains Carousing in Surinam; certainly until its sale to the City Art Museum it was never out of the possession of his direct descendents. For most of two centuries the picture hung in the Jenckes homestead on Smithfield Road, North Providence, where Jenckes' descendents live at this time. From 1819 until 1858 the painting was in the Brookline, Massachusetts home of Mary Jenckes Wild (Mrs. Charles Wild). While there it underwent an unfortunate restoration by a local sign and carriage painter. On June 6, 1878 Edward A. Wild, brother-in-law of Mrs. Wild, put in writing the family tradition about the personages represented in Greenwood's painting. Wild's now "The Old Jenckes Picture" is the starting point of this enquiry. [10]

The painting measures approximately 38x75 inches. In this relatively small area are twenty-two figures, only ten of whom have been identified. John Jenckes is shown in the right background holding a candle to light the way for Greenwood who is steadying himself at the doorway as he vomits. In the right foreground Nicholas Power of Providence is giving a dancing lesson to young Godfrey Malbone of Newport. Seated at a round table, in varying degrees of consciousness, are seven men. At the left of the table is a man drinking from a raised bowl observed by a gentleman holding a long pipe in his right hand. Neither of these worthies has been identified. Moving clockwise the next figure, dressed in gray, wearing a Quaker type hat is Captain Nicholas Cooke of Newport. A long stemmed pipe is faintly seen in his left hand. He is chatting with Captain Esek Hopkins, a famous privateersman who holds a wine glass in his left hand and is ignoring the sleeping figure on his left said to be his brother Stephen Hopkins. To the left of Stephen

Hopkins sits a blue-coated sleeper thought to be Joseph Wanton of Newport who is about to be bathed in punch, while at the same time Captain Ambrose Page of Providence vomits into the sleeper's pocket. Two figures, by tradition Dutchmen, may be noted. One seated on a chest, lower right, seems to be nursing a leg, hurt perhaps in the evening's gait. A second Dutch-man, dressed in gray, holding a bottle and glass is standing behind the sleeping Wanton. A tradition in the family holds that the gentleman at the table with his back to the viewer is Daniel Jenckes, father of John. With nine Rhode Island revelers conjecturally identified, let us examine what is known of their whereabouts in the 1750s to see if they could possibly have been in Surinam at the time of the party.

It seems probable that the party occurred after the declaration of war in 1756 rather than earlier. Trade then was riskier but profits were also greater. The oldest celebrant at the party would have been Daniel Jenckes, about 56 in 1758 senior partner of the firm of Daniel Jenckes and Son who had traded with Surinam and the West Indies for many years. Daniel Jenckes was for some years a justice of the Court of Common Pleas; in 1764 one of the original trustees of Rhode Island College, now Brown University; and a generous contributor to the building in 1775 of the First Baptist Meeting House, oldest Baptist church in North America. He represented Providence in the General Assembly from 1743 until 1757. Significantly, perhaps, he did not stand for election that year but was elected in 1758 and served continuously until 1771. In 1755 he was on an Assembly committee to pay the Rhode Island troops sent to Cape Breton. and he also helped draft a bill prohibiting shipment of provisions any French port in North America, the bill previously mentioned, which specifically permitted trading with Surinam. In 1757 Daniel Jenckes and Son billed the Assembly for 8 pounds, 50 shillings for boarding French prisoners of war, and 50 pounds "for Carrying an Old Frenchman to Antigua and home again in the sloop *Kinnicut*," a flag of truce.[11] Whether the Frenchman was so old and militarily useless that French officials in Antigua would not swap him for an able-bodied Englishman, or whether Daniel Jenckes and Son wanted to hold him to make legal another voyage will never be known. The receipt for payment of these bills was signed by John Jenckes who probably was on the voyage. The Assembly records also show that Daniel Jenckes in 1757 was on a committee to examine all flag of truce ships leaving Rhode Island to assure that no cargo beyond that necessary to feed prisoners and crews was carried. This might seem to be setting the fox to guard the chickens. Noting that Daniel Jenckes was not a member of the Assembly from May 1757 until the following year, there is a possibility that he could have voyaged to the West Indies and Surinam and been back in time for reelection in May 1758. It seems fairly certain that John Jenckes was in Surinam; his father could possibly also have been.

The gentleman on the far side of the table wearing a tricorne hat and blue coat with red facing is said to be Esek Hopkins, first commander-in-chief of the Continental Navy, one of Rhode Island's famous Revolutionary figures. Born in Scituate, then part of Providence, on April 26, 1718, Esek would have been about 40 when Greenwood painted the picture. One of nine children, four of whom "followed the sea." he shipped as a "raw hand" on his brother William's vessel to Surinam in 1738. He soon got a command of his own and with his brothers Stephen and William was associated for many years with Providence and Newport merchants who desired shares in ships commanded by him. At one lime in the 1760s the Hopkins family owned or shared ownership of sixteen vessels.[12] In 1741 he married Desire Burroughs. daughter of a merchant and sea captain, and lived in Newport for about ten years. In 1752 he moved to Providence and soon was on a committee to "have care of the school house and appoint a teacher for said house." With him on this committee was Nicholas Cooke, also a Surinam partygoer. On the declaration of war in 1756, Newport and Providence merchants hastened to fit out vessels as privateers. The brigantine *Providence* — owned by Nicholas and John Brown, Nicholas Bowen, Ambrose Page, and Esek Hopkins — made three successful voyages during 1756-58 with Hopkins as the master. In January 1756 *Providence* captured its first prize which Hopkins gallantly renamed *Desire* in honor of his wife. The business and litigation of *Providence's* captures was handled by John Brown, then only twenty years old. It is interesting that *Desire's* first voyage under her Providence owners was to Surinam.[13] The hunting ground of these privateers was in the Caribbean and the West Indies and it is entirely possible that on one or more of these voyages Esek Hopkins could have put in at Surinam for provisions and possibly a cargo to bring back to Rhode Island.[14]

On Esek's left in the Greenwood picture, according to Jenckes family tradition, sleeps head in hand, Stephen Hopkins. Stephen was born on March 7, 1707, the only one of five sons of William and Ruth Hopkins who did not "follow the sea." In his early years a farmer and surveyor, he was active in town affairs, representing Scituate in the General Assembly from 1732 until 1742. In 1736 he was elected a justice of the Court of Common Pleas. In 1740 he joined Esek in his business ventures and two years later moved to Providence where he lived in a modest house on South Main Street (the home stands today re-moved to a nearby location). Hopkins was elected governor of the colony in 1755 and 1756. His successor William Greene died in office and in March 1758 Hopkins was elected to fill Greene's unexpired term and continued in office until May 1762. He attended the Albany Convention in 1754, became friendly with Benjamin Franklin, and returned to Rhode Island an enthusiastic supporter of Franklin's plan for a colonial union. Hopkins was the first chancellor of Rhode Island College and a signer of the Declaration of Independence.[15]

One of his successful ventures with Esek was a partnership in the privateer *Reprisal* which made several profitable forays against French shipping during 1745-1746. In the 1750s Hopkins carried on an acrimonious political feud with Samuel Wald, a former Governor who looked after Newport interests in the General Assembly as Hopkins looked after those of Providence and the northern towns of the state. Out of this ill feeling came a slander suit. Hopkins sued Wald and the case was heard in Worcester in September 1757. Hopkins lost, but the trial clearly shows that he was in Rhode Island or Massachusetts at least until September 1757. As he was elected Governor in March 1758 this allows only five months for him to have voyaged to Surinam and back. As a candidate for office in all probability he would have stayed in Rhode Island soliciting support. It appears that the Jenckes tradition identifying Stephen Hopkins as one of the revelers is wrong. It does seem, however, that brother William Hopkins, a mariner and privateersman could have been in Surinam at this time. It is conjecture but it seems more probable than that Stephen Hopkins was there.

The gentleman in Quaker gray holding a long stemmed pipe and chatting with Esek Hopkins is said to be Nicholas Cooke, born in Providence on February 3, 1717 and died there 1782. Early in life he went to sea, was an able captain, and usually a part owner of vessels he commanded. Later he came ashore, established a rope manufactory and did ship repairs. He also operated a distillery and was a considerable landowner in Massachusetts and Connecticut as well as in Rhode Island. Cooke was Deputy Governor in 1768, 1769, and again in 1775. After Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775 the Rhode Island Assembly authorized the raising of an 'Army of Observation' for defense of the colony, Governor Joseph Wanton, himself perhaps a member of the Surinam party, refused to sign the act and was suspended from office by the Assembly. Nicholas Cooke was elected to fill his place in November 1775, held office for three years and voluntarily retired to private life. As Governor on May 4, 1776 he signed the renunciation of allegiance to George III voted that day by the General Assembly exactly two months before the Continental Congress declared our independence from Great Britain. Cooke was a trustee of Rhode Island College from 1766 until his death.[16]

Maritime Papers in the Rhode Island Archives show Nicholas Cooke part owner on two occasions of vessels named *Providence*. Only the sloop of that name concerns us, bonded on November 1, 1757 with Nicholas Cooke and Ambrose Page as owners and "to proceed hence to Port Louise on Hispaniola in the West Indies, as a Flag of Truce with a number of Prisoners. Subjects of the French King who have been brought into this country since the Commencement of the Present War with France, and from thence to bring such and so many British Subjects as are Prisoners in the said Port Louis as he carried with him, if there to be had in Exchange for the Prisoners whom he carried in the said Sloop."

As Daniel Jenckes and son John were carrying prisoners in *Kinnicut*, so too were Nicholas Cooke and Ambrose Page in *Providence*. Cooke billed the colony "for Board of French Prisoners (on Ship) £64:5:16 and Carrying Frenchmen to West Indies £100:10," and further noted. "They want admitted to land the Frenchmen at Barbadoes, was obliged to pay his passage to Antigua." This added four pounds to the bill. Thus, there is evidence that a vessel owned by Cooke and Page was in the vicinity of Surinam and may

well have stopped there to pick up cargo for the voyage home, despite the fact that this was forbidden in the bond.

Shown by Greenwood vomiting into the pocket of sleeping Joseph Wanton, Ambrose Page was a prominent and well-to-do Providence merchant, ship owner, shipmaster, and incidentally brother-in-law of John Jenckes. He died on December 29, 1791 aged 68. This date was found on the inside cover of *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity* by Robert Barclay, printed by James Franklin in Newport in 1729. This rare book, a defense of the Quakers, was used rather than the Bible as a repository for vital statistics of the Page family. It would appear that Ambrose Page was born in 1723 and would have been about 35 years of age at the time of the Surinam party. Like many a young Rhode Islander he turned to the sea during the 1750s as master of the sloop *Sarah*, brig *Greyhound*, and sloop *George*, all of Providence.[17] In November 1757, as noted, he was a partner of Nicholas Cooke and others in ownership of the *Providence* bonded to proceed with prisoners to Hispaniola. What is more probable than that such a vessel, after discharging French prisoners, and possibly taking aboard an equal number of Englishmen would then proceed to Surinam for a return cargo of sugar and molasses for Providence? Cooke and Page both had a substantial financial interest in this voyage; it adds to the likelihood of their presence in Surinam on that boisterous evening. Page was later owner or part owner of half a dozen privateers during the Revolution. After the war he appears mostly to have been in the coastal trade.

On the right side of his painting Greenwood shows a gentleman in a light blue coat giving a dancing lesson to a teenage boy. Traditionally the teenager has been identified as Godfrey Malbone of Newport and his instructor as Nicholas Power of Providence. I believe it is Malbone who is the instructor and Power the pupil. Both families were prominent as ship owners and merchants in the West Indies trade. The Malbone family came from Virginia to Newport sometime after 1700. Colonel Malbone, as the elder Godfrey was called, became a merchant and ship owner trading chiefly in sugar, rum, molasses, and slaves. For a time he was prosperous, had a fine town house on Thames Street and also a country seat at Tammany Hill a few miles outside Newport. During the Spanish War, 1739-1748, better known as the War of Jenkins' Ear, Colonel Malbone, with partners, frequently Browns and Wantons, had seven privateers in action. On the whole these were prosperous ventures, but Malbone took his losses too. On December 24, 1745 two new privateers, chiefly owned by Malbone, each mounting twenty-four guns and each manned by 200 men left Newport, encountered a hurricane, and neither was heard from again. Over 400 lives were lost and 200 Newport women were widowed.[18]

Colonel Malbone had three sons — only Godfrey Junior concerns us. He had been educated at Queens College, Oxford. Malbone Papers in the Newport Historical Society contain a letter from Edward Scott in Newport to Godfrey Malbone Junior in London telling of the loss of the two ships in the great gale of December 1745 and of his father's precarious financial condition. Young Godfrey is told to discontinue his law studies at the Inns of Court and return immediately to Newport. Return he did, and entered the family business. A vessel was named after him the *Young Godfrey*, and in 1756 he was part owner of the privateer *Othello* whose bond he signed August 26, 1756. The Maritime Papers indicate that he and his father also owned the privateer *Maggott* licensed in November 1758. In that year Malbone would have been thirty-four; this could well have been the age of the gentleman dancing master in the blue coat. The privateering activity of the Malbone family makes it entirely possible that Godfrey Malbone could have been on a family vessel preying on French shipping and later in Surinam awaiting cargo. That the Malbones had an interest in the area is certain, for in August 1759 Godfrey applied for a flag of truce to Cayenne to try and collect from "a Mr. Metijen who at the outbreaking of the War had in his hands their absolute property of about twenty thousand livres which they have not been able to collect." Cayenne is very close to Surinam.

If the dancing master is indeed Godfrey Malbone Jr. it is quite possible that his young pupil could have been Nicholas Power of Providence. The Power family came from Massachusetts Bay colony in 1639. By tradition the eldest son in each generation was named Nicholas. The first Nicholas, follower of political and religious radical Samuel Gorton, was tried for heresy and sedition in Boston in 1643 but dismissed

with an admonition. In Providence he purchased a lot on the southeast corner of what is now Power and South Main Streets. Merchant and at one time town constable and surveyor of highways, he died in 1657. The second Nicholas was killed in the Great Swamp Fight of King Philip's War fought in West Kingston on December 19, 1675. The third Nicholas was a merchant and holder of several town offices. The fourth Nicholas, birth date unknown, rum distiller and merchant, died in Surinam on February 27, 1744. By his wife Anne Tillinghast he had a son, born April 5, 1742, the fifth Nicholas, who like his forebears was a merchant, distiller, and rope maker. At the time of the Surinam party he would have been about sixteen; the young man being instructed in dancing could well have been that age. In another ten years this Nicholas Power, in partnership with John and Nicholas Brown, and commanding one of their vessels, was in the Surinam trade. Life was not all dancing for Nicholas Power, however. In 1774 he directed the lottery which raised £2,000 to help build the Meeting House for the First Baptist Society, and in 1775 he was charged to prepare six field pieces for defense of the colony. Finally in 1781 he "manumitted and set free his negro man, Prince." [19]

It is traditionally believed that the somnolent gentleman in the blue coat seated next to Stephen Hopkins, unconscious of the indignities he is undergoing, is Joseph Wanton of Newport. The Wanton family, originally from Boston, played a distinguished role in the political and commercial life of Rhode Island in the eighteenth century. No less than four Wantons, including Joseph, were Governors. The family enterprises included shipbuilding, merchandising and, when times permitted, privateering. Joseph Wanton, son of Governor Joseph Wanton, was born on August 15, 1705 and would have been about fifty-three at the time of the party. This age is consistent with the figure portrayed by Greenwood. John Russell Bartlett, historian of the Wantons, described Joseph as an opulent merchant. Opulence in Newport derived from maritime trade and Wantons dealt extensively in fish, meat, lumber, horses, and spermaceti candles, trading to various West Indian ports, bringing home the usual sugar and molasses.

With the outbreak of the French and Indian War the Wantons were active in privateering. Between 1756 and 1758 Joseph Wanton Jr., Joseph's son, was licensed as part owner of three privateers: the brig *Defiance*, the snow *Africa*, and the brigantine *Scorpion*. Metcalf Bowler and Robert Goddard were part owners of the *Defiance*. Joseph Wanton Jr. would have been only twenty-eight in 1758 so obviously he could not be the middle-aged sleeper in Greenwood's painting. Whether his father was there is entirely speculation. Trade was brisk and he might very well have been there looking after family interests. Joseph was first elected governor in 1769 and continued in office for six years. During this time he was also one of a court of admiralty to inquire into the burning of the revenue cutter *Gaspee*. In a sense he was forced to carry water on both shoulders: he had some sympathy for the patriot cause but as Governor he was sworn to uphold the laws. When the colony voted to raise an Army of Observation, Wanton refused to sign the bill authorizing this, was suspended in June 1775 and deposed on October 31, 1775. Wanton's sons, Joseph Jr. and William, were loyalists who left Newport on the departure of the British in October 1779, and their property was confiscated. The ex-governor was not molested by either the British or the natives. He died in 1780. [20]

The sketches of the partygoers, although incomplete, do indicate that all of them were energetic traders, voyaging continuously between Rhode Island and West Indian islands and Surinam, that during early years of the French and Indian War their flag of truce voyages and privateering enterprises make abundantly clear that they could well have, by the long arm of coincidence, been all at Surinam to be made posthumously famous by the brush of Greenwood.

I am conscious that I have not absolute proof but I am reminded at this point of Thoreau's laconic entry in his *Journal* on November 11, 1830: "Some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when you find a trout in the milk."

**Notes:**

\*Professor emeritus of English, Brown University. Mr. Kenny made his first of several contributions to our pages forty-five years ago — "Rhode Island Gazette of 1732." *Rhode Island Historical Society Collections* 25:4 (October 1932) 97-107.

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4. George L. Beer, *British Colonial Policy 1754-1765* (New York: Macmillan, 1907) 83.
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6. John Russell Bartlett. ed., *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations*. 10v. (Providence. 1856-1865) 5: 425.
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20. Bartlett. *History of the Wanton Family of Newport, Rhode Island* (Providence, 1878). R.I. Historical Tracts 1st ser.. no. 3 Peterson, 208.