

RECORDS
OF THE
COLONY OF RHODE ISLAND
AND
PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS,
IN
NEW ENGLAND.



PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE LEGISLATURE.
TRANSCRIBED AND EDITED BY

JOHN RUSSELL BARTLETT,
SECRETARY OF STATE.

VOL. I.

1636 TO 1663.

PROVIDENCE, R. I.
A. CRAWFORD GREENE AND BROTHER, STATE PRINTERS.
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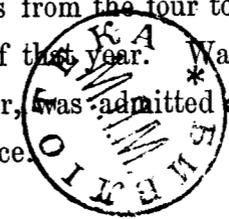
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INTRODUCTION.

THE General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island, at its May session, A. D. 1855, passed a resolution authorising the Secretary of State to transcribe, and cause to be printed, its Colonial Records; in accordance with which resolution this volume has been printed.

The present State of Rhode Island had its origin in four towns, viz. : Providence, Portsmouth, Newport and Warwick. Providence colony was first planted by Roger Williams in the year 1636, Portsmouth by other colonists in 1638, Newport in 1629; but of the precise year when the first settlement was made in Warwick, the records of that town furnish no evidence. It was, however, during the same period. In the year 1643, the first three towns were united under a Charter from Charles the First, obtained by Roger Williams, under the title of the "Incorporation of Providence Plantations in the Narragansett Bay in New England." It was not, however, until the year 1647, that the government was organized under this Charter, at an assembly of delegates or commissioners from the four towns named, which met at Portsmouth in May, of that year. Warwick whose name was not included in the Charter, was admitted at this time, with the same privileges as Providence.



It is proper here to state, in what the Colonial Records of the State consist, and from which the present volume has been compiled.

The earliest book of records in the archives of the State begins with the settlement of Portsmouth on the Island of Rhode Island, in the year 1638. The first portion of ten or twelve years is continuous; the latter quite detached, and extends to the year 1696. This volume contains the transactions on Aquidneck or Rhode Island, embracing the history of the first settlements at Portsmouth and Newport. From 1638 to the present time, the records are complete in various volumes of the colony proceedings. In this volume are also copies of the deeds of lands from the Indians as originally recorded, as well as conveyances from the early settlers to each other; also early lists of the freemen in the Colony. The narrative or journal of proceedings has been printed at length as far as it goes in this volume, as well as the lists of freemen, and the deeds of land from the Indians; but all other land evidences have been omitted.

The records of Portsmouth commenced in this manuscript volume, were continued in the records of the town. From the original volume the records of Portsmouth were made complete down to the organization of the Colonial government in 1647.

A second and very large folio volume of Records commences in 1646, and continues to the year 1669. This embraces the official journals of the "General Assembly," the "General Court," or the "Court of Commissioners," as that legislative body is at different times called. These records are in a tolerable state of preservation. There are however, some mutilations, chiefly near the

edges of the leaves, from constant use for two hundred years. This volume also contains the "Proceedings of the Governor and Council;" the records of the "Court of Trials;" some Indian deeds, and other early land evidences.

A third volume contains the proceedings of the General Assembly from the year 1669 to 1686.

From the year 1686 to 1715, the original journals or "schedules" (as they are usually called), in the archives of the State were quite imperfect. Those of some sessions were wanting entirely, while others were so defaced as to be scarcely legible. To make them complete, a resolution was passed by the General Assembly in the year 1827, directing a committee, appointed for the purpose, consisting of Henry Bowen (then Secretary of State), and Christopher E. Robbins, to collect the manuscript schedules of the General Assembly of the period referred to, preserved by the different towns, and make a copy of the same for the State. This was accordingly done, and a clear and well written volume of five hundred and forty-four pages, folio, in the handwriting of Henry Bowen, Esquire, embracing the "acts and resolves" from 1686 to 1715 now exists among the archives. From the latter period the journals are complete and in excellent condition, in manuscript or in print, to the present time.

In addition to the journals of legislative proceedings, there are among the old records of the State the following, viz. : four volumes of land evidences; an early digest of public laws, entitled, "Bodye of Lawes of the Colonye of Rhode Island from 1663 to 1705," and a volume entitled "The Book of Records, containing the acts and orders by the Governor and Council, both generall

and particular since the 1st May, 1667." The records and documents of the Revolutionary period are complete and in good condition.

The printed "acts and resolves" of the General Assembly in the archives of the State commence in 1758, from which period they are complete to the present time.

In view of the dilapidated condition of the early journals of the proceedings of the General Assembly and other transactions of the first colonists, and the frequent use of the same, which would tend to their entire obliteration, a committee was appointed by the General Assembly at its October session, 1822, consisting of Christopher Ellery Robbins and Henry Bull, Esquires, to examine these records and report the best method of collecting and preserving them. In conformity with their recommendation, Mr. Charles Gyles, of Newport, was employed to transcribe these records, which labor he accomplished under the direction of the committee in a most satisfactory manner. In order to make this copy as complete as possible, the copies of the proceedings of the Colony, preserved in the clerks' offices of different towns were used to fill up any chasms, mutilations or imperfections that might be found to exist in the State's copy. This transcript was carefully collated by the committee having the work in charge, with the originals, and their certificate of its correctness appended. The same volume contains a transcript from the records of the Supreme Judicial Court of the county of Newport, of proceedings of the commissioners under the government of Sir Edmund Andros, in the years 1667 and 1668, which are properly a portion of the Colonial records.

The records of the city of Providence previous to the organiza-

tion of the government in 1647, are very meagre. It is supposed they were kept in greater detail and were destroyed in the year 1676, when the town was burned by the Indians, as those that remain bear the traces of fire and water. To make up for the want of a regular journal of events, such documents as would elucidate the history of the period have been used. These are the Indian deeds connected with Providence, with a variety of other documents of a historical nature, or connected with the purchase of the Indian lands, their transfer from Roger Williams to his associates, the first allotments of lands to the early settlers, &c., &c.

In selecting the materials for this volume, the Indian deeds of each of the four towns, and the town records to the year 1647, have been used. From that period, the official journals of the proceedings of the General Assembly have been followed to the close of the volume.

It is proper to state that many letters and documents of a public character not found in the archives of the State have been discovered elsewhere and inserted in their proper places. In the official records, there are frequent references to documents and letters, written and received, which were not recorded, and which are found on the files. This hiatus has fortunately been filled by a reference to the files of the General Court of Massachusetts, and to the records of that Colony; also to copies of letters and papers in the possession of the Rhode Island Historical Society. Some papers of a public nature connected with our colonial history have also been found in Hazard's State papers (2 vols. 4to., Philadelphia, 1792), and in Hutchinson's History of Massachusetts Bay. The editor is also indebted to John Carter Brown, Esquire, of Providence, for the use of a large and valuable collection of man-