

= Benedict Arnold (governor) =

Benedict Arnold (21 December 1615 ? 19 June 1678) was president and then governor of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations , serving for a total of 11 years in these roles . Coming from Somerset , England , he was born and raised in the town of Ilchester , likely attending school in Limington , nearby . In 1635 , at the age of 19 , he accompanied his parents , siblings and other family members on a voyage from England to New England , where they first settled in Hingham in the Massachusetts Bay Colony . In less than a year they moved to Providence on the Narragansett Bay at the request of Roger Williams . In about 1638 they moved once again , about five miles south to the Pawtuxet River , settling on the north side at a place commonly called Pawtuxet . Here they had serious disputes with their neighbors , particularly Samuel Gorton , and as a result put themselves and their lands under the jurisdiction of Massachusetts , a situation lasting for 16 years .

Learning the native languages at an early age , Arnold became one of the two leading interpreters in the Rhode Island colony , Roger Williams being the other . He was frequently called upon to interpret during negotiations with the natives , but on one occasion was accused by them of misrepresentation .

In 1651 Arnold left Providence and Pawtuxet with his family , settling in Newport where he began his public service which would last continuously until his death . He quickly became a freeman , Commissioner , and Assistant , and in 1657 succeeded Roger Williams as president of the colony , serving for three years . In 1662 he was once again elected President , and during the second year of this term the Royal Charter of 1663 was delivered from England , naming him as the first governor of the colony , and offering broad freedoms and self @-@ determination to the colony .

A bold and decisive leader , Arnold was elected for two additional terms as governor , the last time following the devastation of King Philip 's War . He died on 19 June 1678 while still in office , and was buried in the Arnold Burying Ground , located on Pelham Street in Newport . In his will he left to his wife his " stone built wind mill , " which still stands as an important Newport landmark . His many descendants include General Benedict Arnold , best known for his treason during the American Revolutionary War , and Senator Stephen Arnold Douglas who debated Abraham Lincoln in 1858 , and lost to him during the 1860 presidential election .

= = Early life = =

Born 21 December 1615 in Ilchester , Somerset , England , Benedict Arnold was the second child and oldest son of William Arnold and Christian Peak . Living in the large town of Ilchester , he was familiar with the nearby villages of Northover , from where his grandparents Nicholas and Alice Arnold had come ; Yeovilton , where his Aunt Joane 's husband William Hopkins (ancestor of Rhode Island Governor Stephen Hopkins) was from ; and Limington , after which place he would name one of his properties in New England , calling it " Lemmington Farm . " All four of these localities lie within two miles of each other . Arnold was likely educated at the Free Grammar School associated with the parish church in Limington , slightly more than a mile to the east of Ilchester . This ancient school is where Thomas Wolsey was the curate and schoolmaster from 1500 to 1509 . Wolsey later became the Lord Cardinal and Primate of England .

At the age of 19 , Arnold accompanied his parents and siblings aboard a ship destined for New England . With his parents , siblings , and other relatives and associates , the Arnolds gathered their baggage and supplies in the spring of 1635 and made the trip from Ilchester to Dartmouth on the coast of Devon . In a family record begun by his father , he wrote " Memorandum my father and his family Sett Sayle from Dartmouth in Old England , the first of May , friday & c . Arrived in New England June 24o Ano 1635 . " The name of the ship on which he sailed was not recorded , nor has it been identified since . It is possible that Stukeley Westcott of Yeovil , five miles south of Ilchester , was also on the same ship , bringing his family including his daughter Damaris , aged 15 , the future wife of Arnold .

Upon their arrival in New England , the Arnolds joined a group of settlers from Hingham , Norfolk ,

England , where they established the new town of Hingham in the Massachusetts Bay Colony . William Arnold received title to a house lot here in September 1635 , but the following spring he and several other settlers were persuaded by Roger Williams to join him in establishing a new settlement on the Narragansett Bay , named Providence . In the family record the younger Arnold wrote , " Memm . We came to Providence to Dwell the 20th of April , 1636 @.@ per me Bennedict Arnold . " Arnold received a house lot on what is now North Main Street in Providence , and his father was granted the second lot south of his .

= = Providence and Pawtuxet = =

In 1637 Arnold was one of 13 settlers who signed a compact agreeing to subject themselves to any agreements made by a majority of the masters of families . About 1638 he accompanied his father , his brother @-@ in @-@ law William Carpenter and Robert Cole in a move about five miles south to the Pawtuxet River . The settlement , called Pawtuxet , was still within the jurisdiction of Providence (and later became a part of Cranston , Rhode Island) . On 17 July 1640 Arnold signed an agreement with 38 other Providence residents to form a more compact government " to preserve the peace and insure the prosperity of a growing community . " It did neither , especially after the arrival of Samuel Gorton in Providence , who Roger Williams wrote was " bewitching and bemadding poor Providence . " In one incident , " Upon the attempt to enforce the execution of an award against Francis Weston made by eight men orderly chosen , Gorton , with many of his followers , assailed the representatives of law and order making a tumultuous hubbub . " In a petition that Arnold wrote , dated 17 November 1741 , he with 12 others formally applied to Massachusetts for help , asking the government there to " lend us a neighborlike helping hand . " Massachusetts replied that they could not help unless the complainants fell under their jurisdiction .

Being highly offended by Gorton , who had moved with some of his adherents to Pawtuxet , the Arnolds , Cole , and Carpenter went to Boston , and on 2 September 1642 submitted themselves to the government and jurisdiction of Massachusetts . They were received by the General Court there , and appointed justices of the peace . In doing this , these settlers allowed a foreign jurisdiction into the midst of the Providence government , a condition that would last for 16 years . Gorton , unhappy about being under the jurisdiction of Massachusetts , then moved with his followers another 12 miles further south , settling at a place called Shawomet , beyond the limits of Massachusetts ' jurisdiction .

Having already become proficient in the Narragansett and Wampanoag native languages , and harboring an intense dislike of Gorton , Arnold and his father devised a scheme to undermine their adversary , and to simultaneously obtain extensive lands from the local Indians . Gorton had purchased Shawomet from Miantonomi , the chief sachem of the Narragansett people . Two minor sachems , Ponham and Sacononoco , had some control of the lands at Pawtuxet and Shawomet , and Arnold , acting as interpreter , took these chieftains to Governor Winthrop in Boston , and had them submit themselves and their lands to Massachusetts , and claim that the sale of Shawomet to Gorton was done " under duress . " Now with a claim to Shawomet , Massachusetts directed Gorton and his followers to appear in Boston to answer " complaints " made by the two minor sachems . When Gorton refused , Massachusetts sent a party to Shawomet to arrest Gorton and his neighbors . The ensuing trial had nothing to do with the land claims , but instead focused on the writings and beliefs of Gorton , for which he and others in his group were imprisoned . Ultimately , Gorton was released and went to England where he was given legal title to his lands from the Earl of Warwick , and in his honor the settlement of Shawomet was renamed Warwick .

Besides Roger Williams , Arnold was the only member of the colony who was highly proficient in the Narragansett and Wampanoag tongues , and he was often called upon to interpret during negotiations . In June 1645 he was sent by the General Court of Massachusetts to the Narragansett people to urge them to desist from engaging in a war with the Mohegans . On 28 July of the same year Arnold and two others were sent out to get the hostile tribes to send deputies to Boston to talk and make peace . This attempt failed , and a month later Arnold would not go back again , as he had been charged with mis @-@ representing the reply of the tribes two months earlier , and Roger

Williams went as interpreter in his place .

The issue of the Pawtuxet settlers remaining under the jurisdiction of Massachusetts was a constant irritant to Roger Williams , Gorton , and the other Providence and Warwick settlers . At a meeting of the General Court of Rhode Island held at Warwick on 22 May 1649 it was ordered that letters be sent to Arnold and the other Pawtuxet settlers in reference to their subjecting themselves to the Rhode Island colony . This did not happen , and the Pawtuxet settlers continued under Massachusetts for another nine years . Arnold and his father , while not laying claim to the Shawomet lands , nevertheless had extensive land holdings , and in 1650 Arnold paid a tax of five pounds , the highest in the colony , and his father paid three and a half pounds , the second highest amount .

In June 1650 Roger Williams wrote to Governor Winthrop in Massachusetts saying that Arnold had bought a house and land at Newport , with the intention to move there . While his reasons for moving were not revealed in his own writings , some historians have suggested that it was mercantile interests that compelled the move , while others have suggested political interests , or wanting to get away from the hostile atmosphere of Providence and Pawtuxet were reasons .

= = Newport and politics = =

In 1651 Arnold left troubled Providence and Pawtuxet for the politically enlightened island of Aquidneck , settling in Newport . He recorded in the family record , " Memorandum . We came from Providence with our family to Dwell at Newport in Rhode Island the 19th of November , Thursday in afternoon , & arrived ye same night Ano . Domina 1651 " . With only a few exceptions , men from Newport held the reins of power for the first century of Rhode Island history . When the first English settlers came to Aquidneck Island in 1638 , they organized a quarterly court and English @-@ style jury trial . In 1640 Newport established monthly courts , rights of appeal and trial by jury , whereas in Providence there was no court , no judge , and no jury . Newport was by far the most attractive settlement on the Narragansett Bay , with most of its settlers being educated .

Significant political events were taking place upon Arnold 's arrival in Newport . William Coddington had been successful in removing the island towns of Newport and Portsmouth from the government with the two mainland towns of Providence and Warwick under a commission he obtained earlier in England , and he was appointed as governor for life of the two island towns in 1651 . Providence , feeling that the Patent of 1643 had been abandoned , sent Roger Williams to England , and those on the island opposed to Coddington sent Dr. John Clarke , accompanied by William Dyer , to have Coddington 's charter annulled . Finding success , Williams and Dyer returned to New England , but Clarke remained in England for the next decade , acting as a diplomat to further the colony 's interests . In February 1653 Dyer brought letters revoking Coddington 's commission , with the authority of the government to proceed under the Patent of 1643 , and the status quo of 1647 . John Sanford succeeded Coddington in 1653 , and with the change of administration came the work leading to the reunification of the four towns under one government . In 1653 Arnold became a freeman of Newport , and from that point forward served in some public capacity every year until his death in 1678 . In 1654 he was selected as one of the commissioners from Newport (each of the four towns had six) , and from 1655 to 1656 he was an Assistant . As a member of the Court of Commissioners he was very active , and a member of the most important committees . In 1655 he was appointed by the court with Roger Williams , Samuel Gorton and William Baulston to frame a letter of thanksgiving to the English Lord President of the Council (on colonial affairs) , and to present humble acknowledgments and submission of the colony to His Highness , the Lord Protector , Oliver Cromwell , and the letter of reply from Cromwell was placed in the custody of Arnold . In 1657 , at the age of 41 , Arnold was elected as the President of the colony , succeeding Roger Williams in this capacity .

= = = Terms as president = = =

Arnold became President at a crucial time in Rhode Island 's history . Tremendous political change

was occurring in England , and this resulted in significant changes and opportunities for the little colony of Rhode Island , which was constantly being harassed by its larger , predatory neighbors , primarily Massachusetts and Connecticut . Since the overthrow and execution of England 's King Charles I in 1649 , Oliver Cromwell had been running the country , but his death in 1658 marked the restoration of the monarchy , and Charles II ascended to the throne . Rhode Island was quick to adjust to the new political reality , and on 18 October 1660 the General Court of Commissioners met at Warwick , where two letters were read , one from Dr. Clarke telling of the Restoration , and one from His Majesty , containing the royal declaration and proclamation . Leaders in the colony set aside a special day of proclamation , where the citizens could recognize the new king .

Arnold , was succeeded as President in 1660 by William Brenton , but continued for many years as a Commissioner , as well as an Assistant from 1660 to 1661 . In these roles he headed a committee to draft and send a new commission to Dr. Clarke , giving due credit to the King 's father , Charles I , for the Patent of 1643 , which gave the Rhode Island colony its official existence . Reference was made of " sundry obstructions " stemming from " claims of neighbors about us , " referring to interests that both the Massachusetts Bay Colony and Connecticut Colony had on the Narragansett lands . The document went on to include Dr. Clarke as the agent and attorney for the colony , and used deferential language toward " his most gracious and regall Majesty , Charles the Second , by the Grace of God , the most mighty and potent King of England . " In this commission , the four towns of the Rhode Island colony declared their " unfayned affection " for the new king . This commission to Dr. Clarke , on behalf of the colony , armed the able diplomat with what he needed to fulfill his mission . He wrote a well @-@ crafted letter on behalf of the colony asking for an experiment in liberty where the colony would become " a Republic of Liberty under Law , in which every man is king and no man subject . "

= = = Dealings with the Quakers = = =

A 1658 letter from the United Colonies (Massachusetts , Plymouth , New Haven and Connecticut) announced the arrival in 1657 of the Quakers , calling them notorious heretics , and calling for their speedy removal from the colonies . The United Colonies wanted the Quakers removed from Newport , and used the threat of withholding trade as leverage for their position . While Arnold was no friend of the Quakers , his reply , endorsed by the four Assistants (one from each town) , demonstrated a firm adherence to the Rhode Island doctrine of religious tolerance . He wrote , " Concerning these Quakers (so @-@ called) , which are now among us , we have no law among us , whereby to punish any for only declaring by words , & c . , their mindes and understandings concerning the things and days of God , as to salvation and an eternal condition . " He goes on to say that the Quakers find a " delight to be persecuted by civill [sic] powers , " thus gaining more adherents to their cause . He felt that their doctrines tended to be very absolute , " cutting down and overturning relations and civil government among men ... "

President Arnold promised Massachusetts Governor Simon Bradstreet that at the next session of the General Assembly the Quakers ' " extravagant outgoings " would be considered , and he hoped some action would be taken to prevent the " bad effects of their doctrines and endeavors . " At the March 1658 session of the Assembly , the Rhode Island doctrine of " freedom of different consciences " was reaffirmed , and a letter was sent to the Commissioners stating that if troubles arose from harboring Quakers , the matter would be presented to the supreme authority of England . Following this , no further complaints came from the other colonies .

= = = Terms as governor = = =

In 1662 Arnold was once again elected president of the colony , and in the second year of this term , the result of Clarke 's earlier diplomacy came to fruition with the Royal Charter of 1663 , which historian Thomas Bicknell described as " the grandest instrument of human liberty ever constructed . " Under this instrument Arnold became the first governor of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations , with William Brenton as his Deputy . The earlier governing body , the Court

of Commissioners , was replaced with a legislature of ten Assistants and a House of Deputies , with six from Newport , and four each from Providence , Portsmouth and Warwick . One of the first acts performed by Arnold as governor was to address a letter to Governor Winthrop of Connecticut about running a line between the two colonies as provided by the Charter . In 1664 the King 's Commissioners came to Rhode Island to settle claims of jurisdiction over the Narragansett country , specifically addressing rival claims between the Rhode Island and Connecticut colonies over land at Westerly and the settlement at Wickford . While the commissioners were able to forestall a major confrontation , no substantial changes were made , and the disputes between the two colonies would continue for the next fifty years . The King 's Commissioners also appointed Arnold as a justice of the peace and a magistrate of the " King 's Province " (later Washington County , Rhode Island) .

In the election of 1666 , Arnold retired from office , and was succeeded once again by William Brenton . Nevertheless , he and others were compelled to sit in the Assembly as deputies " as the Court due desire their assistance . " In 1669 Arnold was again chosen as governor , and re-elected in 1670 when the controversy with Connecticut over disputed lands in King 's Province and Westerly became acute . On 11 July of that year Arnold sent a strong letter to Connecticut 's Governor Winthrop informing him of Rhode Island 's determination to appeal to King Charles concerning " invasions and intrusions upon the lands and government of this Colony . " There is no record , however , of this threat being carried through .

During this administration , the Quakers were finding the religious tolerance of Rhode Island to be a fertile ground for their missionaries , and they also found a safe haven from other colonies here . The Quakers not only found success in the spread of their religion , but also became a strong political force as well . Arnold was once again elected governor in 1671 , but in 1672 the governorship went to the Quaker Nicholas Easton , and the Quakers would hold the reins of power for three of the next five years . Arnold had , however , left a positive mark on the colony , and after more than ten years of Arnold leadership in the colony , the disorganization and fragmentary governments of the four towns were united and put in order , with courts established and an organized society put into motion .

= = = Business and land interests = = =

While Arnold 's usefulness had been in great demand for the welfare of the colony , his successful political career was mirrored by equally successful agricultural and mercantile pursuits . While living at Pawtuxet he became agent for arms , ammunition and liquors , and had an establishment on the Warwick side of the river offering Boston goods and provisions in demand at the time . In his book *Simplicities Defense* , Samuel Gorton complained that Arnold constantly traded with the Indians on the Sabbath day and was too liberal in providing them with powder . He further complained that Arnold would not sell items to the Warwick settlers unless they submitted themselves to the jurisdiction of Massachusetts . The Warwick settlers also complained that he furnished the Indians with strong drink and wine , which was forbidden by the Warwick town council .

After leaving the governorship in 1672 , Arnold likely attended to his commercial interests , and he was said to be the wealthiest person in the colony . He had a wharf and warehouse mentioned in his will , and he had commercial interests in the West Indies , evident from a 1674 letter that he wrote to his son @-@ in @-@ law , Roger Goulding , urging him to complete his (Arnold 's) business in the Barbados .

Arnold held several parcels of land in and around Newport , one of which he called his " Lemmington Farm , " which was named after the village of Limington in his native Somerset , England . In 1657 he was one of about a hundred individuals who purchased Conanicut Island , the second largest island in the Narragansett Bay where the town of Jamestown is currently located . He also , with John Greene acquired Goat Island and Coaster 's Harbor Island , which later became the property of the town of Newport .

Sometime after January 1658 he and six others each had a one @-@ seventh interest in a company that bought a large tract of land in the Narragansett country known as the Pettaquamscutt

Purchase , a tract that would later become South Kingstown , Rhode Island . He held this until his death , when the property was bequeathed to his three sons , Benedict , Josiah , and Oliver . He also owned two parcels of land in Newport , one where his wharf and warehouse were located , and the other the site of his mansion house .

= = = King Philip 's War = = =

From 1675 to 1676 , King Philip 's War , " the most disastrous conflict to ever devastate New England , " left the mainland towns of Rhode Island in ruins . This confrontation between many indigenous people and the English settlers was named for Metacomet , sachem of the Wampanoags , who was also called King Philip . Though much more at peace with the Indians than the other colonies , because of geography , the Rhode Island colony took the brunt of damage from this conflict , and the settlements of Warwick and Pawtuxet were totally destroyed , with much of Providence destroyed as well . Several of Arnold 's relatives who lived in these areas fled to Long Island , and his aged father had been moved from Pawtuxet to his brother 's garrison house , but nevertheless did not survive the conflict . In April 1676 it was voted by the Assembly " that in these troublesome times and straits in this Colony , this Assembly desiring to have the advice and concurrence of the most judicious inhabitants , if it may be had for the good of the whole , do desire at their next sitting the company and counsel of Mr. Benedict Arnold ... " and 15 others . Quakers were noted for their pacifism , and the Quaker governor , Walter Clarke , was in office during the conflict . Even though the war had ended , in the election of 1677 the so @-@ called " war party " was successful , and Arnold was voted back into office as governor .

During this term his health began to fail , and though ill , Arnold was still re @-@ elected in May 1678 . He was too ill to leave his house , and his deputy governor , John Cranston , along with two assistants and a recorder , transacted the colony 's business by visiting him at home . His health did not improve , and within a month of his latest election to governor , he was dead .

= = Death and legacy = =

Arnold wrote his will on 24 December 1677 , during his last full term as governor . A codicil to the will was written the following February , and the governor died in June while still in office . On 29 June Samuel Hubbard of Newport wrote a letter to Dr. Edward Stennett of London , saying " Our Governor died the 19th day of June , 1678 , buried 20th day , all this island was invited , many others was [sic] there , judged near a thousand people , brother Hiscox spoke there excellently led forth , I praise God . " In his will Governor Arnold gave to his wife , for life , certain land with mansion house and " stone built wind mill . " While there are romantic legends of early Norse men coming to Newport and building the stone structure that continues to stand in the city , the strongest evidence suggests that the structure was the base of Arnold 's windmill mentioned in his will .

Benedict Arnold , his wife , and many of his family are buried in the Arnold Burying Ground located on Pelham Street in Newport . For many years the cemetery was buried under a garden in the back yard of a residence , but in 1949 a major renovation began whereby all the stones were unearthed , cleaned , and returned to their original positions . While there is no inscription on the slabs covering the graves of the governor and his wife , his grave is marked with a governor 's medallion .

Lieutenant Governor and Rhode Island historian Samuel G. Arnold wrote of him , " That he was no friend of the doctrines , or advocate of the conduct of the followers of Fox [Quakers] is evident from his writings ; but that like Williams , he recognized the distinction between persecution and opposition , between legal force and moral suasion as applied to matters of opinion , is equally apparent . In politics and in theology he was alike the opponent of Coddington and the friend of John Clarke and throughout his long and useful life he displayed talents of a brilliant order which were ever employed for the welfare of his fellow men . "

= = Family and descendants = =

Arnold was married on 17 December 1640 to Damaris , the daughter of Stukeley Westcott and Julianna Marchante . They had nine children : Benedict , Caleb , Josiah , Damaris , William , Penelope , Oliver , Godsgift , and Freelove . All but William grew to adulthood , married , and had children . His son Caleb , a physician , married Abigail Wilbur , who was the daughter of Samuel Wilbur , Jr . , and the granddaughter of both Samuel Wilbore [Sr.] and John Porter , two signers of the compact establishing the town of Portsmouth with Anne Hutchinson .

Notable descendants of Benedict Arnold , through his son Benedict , include his 2nd great @-@ grandson , also named Benedict Arnold , one of the great generals of the American Revolutionary War who was best known for his treason to the American cause when he switched sides to fight with the British . Descendants through his son Caleb Arnold include Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry , American hero of the Great Lakes during the War of 1812 and his younger brother Commodore Matthew C. Perry , who compelled the opening of Japan to the West with the Convention of Kanagawa in 1854 ; and Senator Stephen Arnold Douglas who debated Abraham Lincoln in 1858 before a senate race and later lost to him in the 1860 presidential election . Rhode Island colonial Deputy Governor George Hazard is another descendant . The rodeo champion , western artist and inventor Earl W. Bascom is also a descendant .

= = Ancestry of Benedict and Damaris Arnold = =