

= John Clarke (Baptist minister) =

John Clarke (October 1609 ? 20 April 1676) was a physician , Baptist minister , co @-@ founder of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations , author of its influential charter , and a leading advocate of religious freedom in the Americas .

Born in Westhorpe , Suffolk , England , Clarke received an extensive education , including a master 's degree in England , followed by medical training in Leiden , Holland . He arrived in Boston in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1637 during the Antinomian Controversy , and decided to go to Rhode Island with many exiles from the conflict . As an original founder of Newport , Rhode Island , he established the second Baptist Church in America there . Because Baptists were considered heretics , and banned from Massachusetts , Clarke wanted to make inroads there , and spent time in the Boston jail after making a mission trip to the town of Lynn . Following his poor treatment in prison , he went to England where he published a book on the persecutions of the Baptists in Massachusetts , and on his theological beliefs . Since the fledgling Rhode Island colony needed an agent in England , Clarke remained there for over a decade , handling the colony 's interests .

All of the other New England colonies were hostile to Rhode Island , and both Massachusetts and Connecticut had made incursions into Rhode Island territory . After the restoration of the monarchy in England in 1660 , it was imperative that Rhode Island receive a royal charter to protect its territorial integrity . It was Clarke 's role to obtain such a document , and he saw this as an opportunity to include religious freedoms never seen before in any constitutional charter . After writing ten petitions and letters to King Charles II , and negotiating for months with Connecticut over territorial boundaries , Clarke drafted the Rhode Island Royal Charter and presented it to the king ; it was approved with the king 's seal on 8 July 1663 . This charter , granting unprecedented freedom and religious liberty to Rhode Islanders , remained in effect for 180 years , making it the longest @-@ lasting constitutional charter in history .

Following his success at procuring a charter , Clarke returned to Rhode Island where he became very active in civil affairs , and continued to pastor his church in Newport until his death in 1676 . He left an extensive will , setting up the first educational trust in America . He was an avid proponent of soul @-@ liberty that was included in the Rhode Island charter , and later in the United States Constitution .

= = Early life = =

John Clarke was born at Westhorpe in the county of Suffolk , England and baptized there on 8 October 1609 , the son of Thomas Clarke and Rose Kerrich (or Kerridge) . He was one of seven children , six of whom left England and settled in New England . Other than the parish records of his baptism , and those of his siblings , no definitive record has been found concerning his life in England .

That Clarke was highly educated is apparent from the fact that he arrived in New England at the age of 28 qualified as both a physician and a Baptist minister . A book that he wrote and published in 1652 , his masterful authorship of the Rhode Island Royal Charter of 1663 , and his will mentioning his Hebrew and Greek books and a Concordance and Lexicon that he wrote himself all point to many years of study .

The difficulty with tracing Clarke 's existence in England stems largely from his very common name . Rhode Island historical authority G. Andrews Moriarty wrote that Clarke was probably the one of his name who attended St Catharine 's College , Cambridge , but he may also have received a bachelor 's degree from Brasenose College , Oxford in 1628 , and a masters from there in 1632 . Another clue to his education comes from a catalog of students from Leiden University in Holland , one of Europe 's primary medical schools at the time . The school 's ledger of graduates includes , in Latin , " Johannes Clarcq , Anglus , 17 July 1635 @-@ 273 " (translated as John Clark , England , date as given) . That Clarke earned a master 's degree is apparent from the concordance that he wrote , where the authorship is given as " John Clarke , Master of Arts " .

= = Antinomian Controversy = =

Clarke arrived in Boston in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in November 1637 . When he arrived , the colony was in the midst of a major theological and political crisis , usually referred to as the Antinomian Controversy . Members of the Boston Church could sense a difference in the preaching between the church 's original pastor , John Wilson , and that of their second pastor , John Cotton . Anne Hutchinson , a theologically astute midwife who had the ear of many of the colony 's women , became outspoken during gatherings , or conventicles , held at her house . She strongly supported Cotton 's " covenant of grace " ideas , and condemned the " covenant of works " theology of Wilson and most of the other ministers in the colony .

The Reverend John Wheelwright had arrived in the colony in May 1636 , aligning himself with the free grace advocates who adhered to Cotton 's doctrines , which included most of the members of the Boston Church . The controversy became much more political when , in the same month , the young aristocrat , Henry Vane , was elected as the governor of the colony . Vane was a free grace advocate and a strong supporter of Hutchinson , but also had his own unorthodox ideas about theology that were considered radical . By late 1636 the theological schism had become great enough that the General Court called for a day of fasting to help ease the colony 's difficulties . Wheelwright had been invited as a guest preacher to the Boston church on the fast @-@ day in January 1637 , and though his sermon was encouraging to his free grace allies , it was considered inflammatory by most of the colony 's ministers .

When the General Court met in March 1637 , Wheelwright was called upon to answer for his sermon . In a close vote , he was judged guilty of " contempt & sedition " for having increased bitterness within the colony . The vote did not pass without a fight , however , and Wheelwright 's friends protested formally . Most members of the Boston church , favoring Wheelwright in the conflict , drafted a petition justifying Wheelwright 's sermon , and 60 people signed this remonstrance protesting the conviction .

Henry Vane returned to England that summer , and at the November 1637 court , Wheelwright , who would admit no wrongdoing , was banished from the colony and ordered to be gone within 14 days . Then Anne Hutchinson faced trial for " traducing " (slandering) the ministers , and was sentenced to banishment following a church trial the following March . The authorities feared an insurrection , and within a week of her sentencing the constables were sent from door to door throughout the colony 's towns to disarm those who signed the Wheelwright petition . Within ten days of being served , these individuals were ordered to deliver " all such guns , pistols , swords , powder , shot , & match as they shall be owners of , or have in their custody , upon paine of ten pound [s] for every default " . A great number of those who signed the petition , faced with losing their protection and in some cases livelihood , recanted under the pressure , and " acknowledged their error " in signing the petition . Those who refused to recant suffered hardships and many decided to leave the colony . While there was a man named John Clarke who signed the Wheelwright petition , it was not the subject John Clarke , who had arrived in Boston after the petition had circulated . Clarke wrote of the circumstances of his arrival in his 1652 book , Ill Newes from New England .

= = Rhode Island = =

Several of those affected by the events of the Antinomian Controversy went north with John Wheelwright in November 1637 to found the town of Exeter in what would become New Hampshire . A larger group , uncertain where to go , contacted Roger Williams , who suggested they purchase land from the natives along the Narraganset Bay , near his settlement in Providence . John Clarke apparently did both , based on what he wrote in his book : " By reason of the suffocating heat of the summer before [1637] , I went to the North to be somewhat cooler , but the winter following [1637 @-@ 8] proved so cold , that we were forced in the spring to make towards the South . "

On 7 March 1638 , just as Anne Hutchinson 's church trial was getting underway , a group of men , including John Clarke , gathered at the Boston home of William Coddington and drafted a compact

for a new government . It is probable that Clarke wrote the document , based on its religious sentiment . Altogether , 23 individuals signed the instrument which was intended to form a " Bodie Politick " based on Christian principles , and Coddington was chosen as the leader of the group . Roger Williams suggested two places that the exiles could settle : Sowams (later Barrington , Rhode Island) , and Aquidneck Island , both locations being on or in the Narraganset Bay . Williams was uncertain about English claims to these lands , so Clarke led a delegation of three men to Plymouth where he was informed that Sowams was not only in use , but was considered so desirable that they called it the garden of the entire colony . However , the island was not claimed by the colony , and this suited Clarke whose desire for the exiles was to " get clear of all , and be ourselves " .

Aquidneck Island was in the territory of the Narragansett people , and Williams let it be known that it was not money that would make the island available ; it was instead the love these people had for both Williams and Henry Vane . However , Williams suggested that the exiles give the natives a gratuity in the form of tools , coats and wampum . On 24 March 1638 Williams drew up the deed granting Aquidneck Island to the settlers . The deed was signed " at Narragansett " (likely Providence) by the sachems Canonicus and Miantonomi , with Williams and Randall Holden being the witnesses . The names of many of the exiles were included on the deed ; Coddington 's name appeared first because he was responsible for the gratuity .

Clarke joined William and Anne Hutchinson and many others in building the new settlement of Pocasset on Aquidneck Island . Within a year of the founding of this settlement , however , there was dissension among the leaders , and Clarke joined Coddington , with several other inhabitants , in moving to the south end of the island , establishing the town of Newport . The Hutchinsons remained in Pocasset , soon renamed Portsmouth , and William Hutchinson became its new ruling magistrate or judge . On 2 January 1639 Clarke and three others were appointed to survey the new lands that would become Newport , and on 5 June they were appointed to proportion the land among the inhabitants .

In 1640 the two towns of Portsmouth and Newport united , and the title of the ruling magistrate was changed from Judge to Governor , with Coddington elected to that position . Roger Williams wanted royal recognition for these settlements , and protection against encroachments from their often hostile neighbors of Massachusetts , Plymouth , and Connecticut . In 1643 he went to England to obtain a patent bringing all four towns (Newport , Portsmouth , Providence , and Warwick) under one government , and being successful , the document was brought from England and read to representatives of the four towns in 1644 . Coddington was opposed to the Williams patent , because his island towns had grown and prospered much more than the mainland towns of Providence and Warwick . He managed to keep the two island towns from joining with Providence and Warwick until 1647 when representatives of the four towns ultimately met and adopted the patent . Well before this unification , on 13 March 1644 , the name of the island was changed from Aquidneck Island to Rhode Island , and subsequently the name of the colony became the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations .

Clarke had some legal training , and Baptist historian Albert Henry Newman argued that Clarke was the principal author of the first complete code of laws that was enacted by the fledgling colony in 1647 . Rhode Island historian and Lieutenant Governor Samuel G. Arnold extolled the virtues of this code , calling it broad in scope , vigorous , original , and bold . In his 1859 history of Rhode Island , Arnold wrote that the legal code of 1647 presented a model of legislation which had not , to that time , been surpassed .

= = Founding of the Newport church = =

In 1638 , Roger Williams established a Baptist church in Providence , now known as the First Baptist Church in America . The next Baptist congregation was created by John Clarke on Aquidneck Island , and likely had its beginnings when Clarke arrived on the island in 1638 . Massachusetts Governor John Winthrop wrote that from 1640 to 1641 there were " professed Anabaptists " on the island . Thomas Lechford , a Boston lawyer , wrote that there was a church on

the island in 1640 , of which Clarke was the elder or pastor , but he understood that the church had been dissolved . Nevertheless , Clarke conducted public worship in Newport from the time of his arrival up until 1644 , when a church at Newport was founded . A much later pastor of the Newport church , the Reverend John Callender , stated in his 1738 " Century Sermon " that " It is said that in 1644 , Mr. John Clarke and some others formed a church on the scheme and principles of the Baptists . "

A long @-@ standing contention has existed as to whether Roger Williams or John Clarke established the first Baptist church in America . Though Williams preceded Clarke in becoming a baptized minister , he also vacillated in his convictions , leaving his church altogether . It wasn 't until the last half of the seventeenth century that his Providence church had any form of visible ministry . The only organized and functioning Baptist ministry in all of New England by 1650 was the Newport church under the leadership of Clarke and his elders . The church remains active in its ministry as a Particular (or Calvinist) Baptist Church , and carries the name of United Baptist Church , John Clarke Memorial in honor of its founder .

The religious beliefs held in the early Newport church were little different than those of the Puritans , other than the fact that the Baptists rejected infant baptism , insisting that a person not be baptized until they understood its spiritual significance . Like the Puritans , the Baptists rejected inspirational preaching of the Holy Spirit , as found later among the Quakers , and accepted predestination . Nevertheless , the Puritans labelled the Baptists , and most other nonorthodox sects , as Anabaptists , though incorrectly . Because the Puritans considered a second baptism as being a form of rebellion , they associated the Baptists with the dreaded sect of Anabaptists that rioted in Münster , Germany in the 1530s . In practice , Clarke 's church had no similarity to the early Anabaptists , and instead was similar to churches of the General Baptists in England . It offered preaching from multiple sources , allowed an open discussion of doctrine , did not ordain pastors , and did not follow a rigid creed .

An associate of Clarke in the early Newport church was Robert Lenthal , a Puritan turned Baptist , who arrived in New England in 1637 , and is considered the first public school teacher in America . Lenthal had been called as the minister in Weymouth , Massachusetts , but he opposed infant baptism , so was too unorthodox for the Bay colony . Shortly after Clarke and Coddington left Pocasset to found Newport , Lenthal arrived there to act as minister or co @-@ teacher . He was very helpful to Clarke and the Newport settlement , but returned to England after just a few years . However , when Clarke later went to England , he was re @-@ associated with Lenthal and with a minister named Hanserd Knollys , both of whom had become Particular Baptists in London . Another important member of the early Newport church was Mark Lucar , who became an elder with whom Clarke shared pastoral duties . Lucar had become a Baptist while in England , and arrived in Newport sometime between 1641 and 1644 . He believed in total immersion for baptisms , and Clarke subsequently embraced this practice within the Newport church .

= = Baptist activism = =

= = Visit to Seekonk = = =

In 1649 Clarke went to Seekonk (then in Plymouth Colony but later in Rehoboth , Massachusetts) to help organize a Baptist church there . Roger Williams confirmed this in a letter to Governor Winthrop when he wrote , " At Seekonk , a great many have lately concurred with Mr. John Clarke , and our Providence men , about the point of a new baptism and the manner by dipping ; and Mr. John Clarke hath been there lately , and Mr. Lucar , and hath dipped them . I believe their practice comes nearer to the first practice of our great Founder , Christ Jesus , than other practices of religion do . " Several members of the Seekonk church had quarreled with their minister , Samuel Newman , and broke off from the main church largely over the issue of infant baptism . Hearing of this division , Clarke and Lucar went to welcome the dissidents , and baptize them by immersion . One of the Seekonk men was Obadiah Holmes , with a disposition opposite to Clarke 's , and

considered a " pugnacious man [and] a hot @-@ tempered fault @-@ finder " by Clarke biographer Sydney James .

When the Massachusetts clergymen and magistrates learned of the Seekonk baptisms , they were furious . In their eyes , these baptisms invalidated the earlier baptisms given to these parishioners as children , and thus invalidated the ministers who performed them . The Massachusetts magistrates then wrote to their counterparts in Plymouth accusing them of doing nothing about the practices . Pressured to act , the Seekonk church excommunicated Holmes , and following court action against him , he was compelled to move to Newport in 1650 or 1651 , with a few other dissidents . He subsequently became an elder of the Newport church .

= = = Imprisonment = = =

In July 1651 , William Witter , a blind and elderly man with Baptist sentiments , was living in Lynn , Massachusetts , but wanted to connect with his Baptist faith . Since he was too infirm to travel to Newport , Clarke , accompanied by Obadiah Holmes and John Crandall , visited him at his home . Following the uproar earlier in Plymouth , it is highly likely that the men 's mission was intended to provoke confrontation . The party arrived on 19 July , a Saturday evening , and held a religious service the next day . Those present included family and visitors and " four or five strangers that came in unexpected " . During the service two constables appeared with a warrant signed by local magistrate Robert Bridge , calling for the arrest of Clarke and his two associates . Though no baptisms had been performed , the wording of the warrant suggested that this was the reason for the men 's arrest . Following their arrest , the men were forced to attend a Puritan religious service . Because this was done against their will , they refused to remove their hats in church ; at the end of the service Clarke stood and explained to the congregation why they refused to remove their hats . The men were detained that evening , then brought before the local magistrates the following day .

After being arraigned , the men were free to return to Witter 's before being taken to Boston . While there , Clarke conducted a service and Holmes baptized three people . On 22 July , the prisoners were taken to Boston and held until their trial on 31 July . On the morning of the trial they were brought before Governor John Endicott for questioning , and were accused of being Anabaptists . Clarke replied that he was neither an Anabaptist , nor a Pedobaptist (one favoring infant baptism) , nor a Catabaptist (one opposing infant baptism) . The governor said that the three men " deserved death , and he would not have such trash brought into his jurisdiction . "

During the trial , the court was represented by Governor Endicott , Deputy Governor Thomas Dudley , and magistrates Richard Bellingham , William Hibbins , and Increase Nowell . The Reverend John Cotton weighed in with denunciation for the prisoners , and the Reverend John Wilson struck Holmes while he was supposedly in the protection of the court . Charges made against the men were (1) holding an unauthorized religious meeting , (2) disrupting an authorized meeting (wearing their hats) , (3) administering sacraments illegally , (4) maintaining that the Massachusetts churches were not true churches , and (5) maintaining that infant baptism was false baptism . The men were sentenced without any accuser or witness speaking out against them . The outcome of the trial was that Holmes was fined £ 30 , Clarke was fined £ 20 , and Crandall £ 5 . Holmes had been given the heaviest fine because of his excommunication in Seekonk , and for administering the baptisms in Lynn . When Clarke protested their heavy fines , Governor Endicott replied that Clarke " was worthy to be hanged . " In court Endicott told Clarke that his beliefs would not stand up to those of the Puritan ministers . Being insulted by this , Clarke wrote a letter to the court from prison the following day , accepting the implied challenge to have a debate with the Puritan ministers on religious beliefs and practices . In this letter he wrote that " [I] do desire you would appoint the time when , and the person with whom " the points could be publicly disputed . The challenge was initially accepted , but without his knowledge , Clarke 's fine was paid by some friends , and he was released from jail . After departing the area , Clarke was then accused by the Puritan elders of defaulting on the challenge . Clarke nevertheless made two more attempts to debate the Puritan clergy , but the case was dropped by the court . Though the debate never took place , Clarke had drafted four points of discussion that detailed his beliefs and position .

Friends raised the money to pay the fines for Clarke and Crandall , but without their consent and contrary to their wishes . As soon as Holmes discovered what was happening , he was able to forbid the payment of his fine , as a matter of conscience , though friends attempted to pay for him as well . As a result , on 5 September 1651 Holmes was taken to the town 's whipping post , and given 30 lashes with a three @-@ corded whip . While Holmes told the magistrates , " You have struck me as with roses " , and he claimed to have felt no pain during the incident , for many days afterwards he could only sleep by resting on his knees and elbows . Much later , Rhode Island 's Governor Joseph Jenckes wrote , " Those who have seen the scars on Mr. Holmes ' back (which the old man was wont to call the marks of the Lord Jesus) , have expressed a wonder that he should live . "

= = = Aftermath = = =

Following the men 's arrest and ill treatment , Sir Richard Saltonstall wrote from England to Reverends Cotton and Wilson of the Boston church , rebuking them by writing , " These rigid wayes have lay 'd you very lowe in the hearts of the saynts . " Shortly after the incident , Roger Williams wrote a letter to Governor Endicott , making an earnest plea for toleration in matters of conscience and religion , but the request was unheeded . However , Williams did not let the matter rest , and used Clarke and Holmes as the subjects of his book *The Bloody Tenent Yet More Bloody* (1652) . In the copy of this book that Williams gave to Clarke , he penned the following note in the front , " For his honoured and beloved Mr. John Clarke , an eminent witnes of Christ Jesus ag 'st ye bloodie Doctrine of persecution , & c . "

One positive outcome of the ordeal endured by these men was the conversion and baptism of some of the witnesses . One such witness was Henry Dunster , the first president of Harvard College . Dunster 's conversion in faith resulted in his removal as president in 1654 , but helped inspire the creation of the First Baptist Church of Boston . Some scholars have argued that Clarke 's mission trip was planned to provoke the Massachusetts officials in order to support the cause of Rhode Island in England . Shortly after Clarke arrived in England , he published a book and used it as leverage in obtaining a charter for the Rhode Island colony .

= = Time in England = =

William Coddington was unhappy with the colonial patent that Roger Williams had obtained in 1643 , and was resistant to the consolidated government of the four Rhode Island towns that ultimately came about in 1647 as a result of the patent . He wanted colonial independence for the two island towns of Newport and Portsmouth , and decided to go to England to present his case to the Colonial Commissioners in London . On 3 April 1651 , the Council of State of England gave Coddington the commission of a separate government for the island of Aquidneck and for the smaller neighboring island of Conanicut (later Jamestown , Rhode Island) , with him as governor for life .

= = = Repeal of Coddington Commission = = =

Criticism of Coddington arose as soon as he returned to Rhode Island with his commission . In September 1651 , William Arnold summed up the feelings of many of the Providence settlers when he wrote , " Whereas Mr. Coddington have gotten a charter of Road lland and Conimacuke lland [Conanicut Island] to himself , he have thereby broken the force of their charter that went under the name of Providence , because he have gotten away the greater part of that colonie . " Clarke voiced his opposition to Coddington 's rule of the island , and on 15 October 1651 he was commissioned as the island 's agent to England . The following month he and William Dyer were sent to England to get the Coddington commission revoked . Simultaneously , the mainland towns of Providence and Warwick sent Roger Williams on a similar errand , and the three men sailed for England in November 1651 , just a few months after Clarke had been released from prison . Because of recent hostilities between the English and the Dutch , the men did not meet with the Council of State on New England until April 1652 . In October 1652 , with the help of Henry Vane , Coddington 's

commission for the island government was revoked . William Dyer was the messenger who returned to Rhode Island the following February , bringing the news of the return of the colony to the Williams Patent of 1643 , but Clarke remained in England with his wife .

= = = Ill Newes from New England = = =

Very soon after arriving in England , Clarke published a book entitled Ill Newes from New England : or a Narrative of New England 's Persecution ... (1652) . The book begins with a letter to the English Parliament and Council of State , conveying an earnest plea for liberty of conscience and religious toleration . This is followed by another letter , addressed to the Puritan leaders in Massachusetts . The largest part of the book is primarily devoted to Clarke 's beliefs on conducting a church , and why he thought the Massachusetts churches were proceeding in the wrong direction . Even though less than half of the book concerns the persecution that Clarke and his companions experienced at the hands of the Massachusetts authorities , he nevertheless hoped to use the incident as leverage in gaining religious freedoms for the Rhode Island colony . He wrote " it is not the will of the Lord that any one should have dominion over another man 's conscience [Conscience] is such a sparkling beam from the Father of lights and spirits that it cannot be lorded over , commanded , or forced , either by men , devils , or angels . "

The book ultimately had the desired effect . The Massachusetts authorities became so alarmed over the contents of Ill Newes , that they had a rebuttal written by Thomas Cobbet , the minister of the Lynn church . This work , titled The Civil Magistrates Power in Matters of Religion Modestly Debated (1653) , defended the use of force to maintain the " correct " church in the Massachusetts colony . While this response was well written , it did more to confirm the persecutions of Clarke 's party than to defend the Massachusetts position . Ultimately , the book helped Rhode Island secure significant religious liberties , prompting one Baptist historian to describe Clarke as " the Baptist drum major for freedom in seventeenth century America . "

= = = Rhode Island agent = = =

Though Clarke was officially Rhode Island 's agent in England , he received little , if any , compensation for this work . However , he remained active in his religious commitment , and joined a Particular Baptist church under the pastorship of William Kiffin . One of his means of support was preaching at this church , which he called his " cheefe place for proffitt and preference " , possibly because this arrangement offered him room and board . Other ways that Clarke was able to find support was by offering legal services and practicing medicine in London .

Most of Clarke 's time in England was during the Interregnum when there was no monarch . King Charles I had been executed in 1649 , and his successor , Charles II , did not assume the throne until 1660 . During the intervening period , rule of the country was largely under Parliament or Oliver Cromwell as the Lord Protector . Cromwell wrote a letter to Rhode Island in 1655 , mostly concerning difficulties with France , but he also confirmed the continued validity of Rhode Island 's 1643 patent . While Clarke 's primary purpose in England was to secure a strengthened charter for the Rhode Island colony , one ensuring religious liberties , the relative chaos of England at the time did not offer an opportunity for doing so . Nevertheless , Clarke did assist the colony in 1656 by sending four barrels of powder and eight barrels of shot and bullets , and in 1657 he handled a letter from the colony requesting assistance with legal proceedings against William Harris .

With little diplomatic work to do , Clarke remained religiously active , and likely became a Fifth Monarchist ; he was also likely the John Clarke who signed a manifesto in London about the imminent return of Christ . He may have been the John Clarke who signed a document in 1657 asking Cromwell to avoid assuming the title of king , and was likely the one of his name arrested in 1658 for opposing Cromwell 's rule .

An important acquaintance of Clarke 's in London was Richard Baily , who provided Clarke with legal expertise , helped him draft petitions to the king , and may have even helped him write Rhode Island 's charter . When Clarke eventually returned to Newport , Baily sailed with him , later

providing additional legal counsel , and writing Clarke 's extensive will . Upon Clarke 's death , Bailly was the recipient of his books , concordance , and lexicon .

= = = Negotiating a charter = = =

In 1660 , Charles II ascended to the throne of England , and within two years the Act of Uniformity was passed , requiring unified religious observances centered on the Anglican Church . The new king harbored prejudices against the Presbyterians , Independents , and Baptists , increasing Clarke 's difficulty in crafting a charter that included religious freedoms . Clarke 's commission as the agent for Rhode Island was renewed on 18 October 1660 , and from 1661 to 1662 he filed at least ten petitions or letters addressed to the king . Being deferential and begging the king 's indulgence , Clarke offered him complete loyalty on behalf of the Rhode Island colony . He then requested of the king his sympathy and support to guarantee freedom of conscience in the pursuit of religious worship .

In a petition received by the crown on 5 February 1661 , Clarke penned a particularly eloquent proposal , with certain words emboldened within the document . Clarke 's earnest request was " ... TO HOLD FORTH A LIVELY EXPERIMENT THAT A MOST FLOURISHING CIVILL STATE MAY STAND ... AND BEST BE MAINTAYNED ... WITH A FULL LIBERTIE IN RELIGIOUS CONCERNMENTS " . These words , which became emblematic of Rhode Island 's struggle for religious freedom , were soon included in the charter itself , and then much later chiseled on the frieze of the Rhode Island State House . One of the later petitions dealt heavily with the boundary issues between the Rhode Island and Connecticut colonies . After forwarding so many sincere petitions covering the issues of the utmost importance to Rhode Island , Clarke had to wait nearly a year for any action on them .

An unforeseen emergency occurred in the spring of 1662 when the governor of the Connecticut Colony , John Winthrop , Jr . , was given an audience with the king ahead of Clarke , and got a new charter approved for his colony . While Winthrop was on good terms with many Rhode Islanders , he also had a stake in the Atherton Company , which undermined the sovereignty of Rhode Island by buying large tracts of land of the natives west of the Narraganset Bay , where Rhode Island claimed the territory . Clarke regarded Winthrop 's conduct as treacherous , and the Connecticut governor did his utmost to keep Rhode Island in the dark about his intentions by sailing to England from New Amsterdam instead of the usual route from Boston . Furthermore , Winthrop avoided Clarke while in England , and was able to get his charter approved in May 1662 .

Recognizing conflict between Connecticut and Rhode Island , the Earl of Clarendon , representing the king , summoned Winthrop and Clarke in July 1662 to settle the boundary dispute between the two colonies . Both colonies claimed the territory between the Pawcatuck River to the west and the Narragansett Bay to the east . Following months of negotiations involving lawyers and arbitrators on both sides , the boundary line between the two colonies was set as the Pawcatuck River , favoring Rhode Island in the dispute . Those who had settled on Atherton Company lands were allowed to choose whether to be governed by Connecticut or Rhode Island . Once the agreement was reached , Winthrop returned to New England while Clarke made his final push for Rhode Island 's charter .

Following all the furor over the land boundaries , none of the other provisions of the proposed charter aroused any debate . Many of the provisions of Rhode Island 's charter were like those in Connecticut 's , except Connecticut wanted a government similar to that of Massachusetts , while Rhode Island wanted the same self @-@ government of the freemen that had been granted earlier in the 1643 patent . However , the Rhode Island charter went much further in its guarantees of religious freedom .

= = Rhode Island 's Royal Charter = =

Once the boundary issue between Rhode Island and Connecticut was resolved , the long @-@ awaited charter , drafted by Clarke , was given the king 's seal on 8 July 1663 . The document was remarkable in that it not only offered corporate powers beyond what most English bureaucrats

thought prudent , but offered a degree of religious freedom without precedent . The provisions of this charter were so far @-@ reaching that not only would Rhode Island proceed as an autonomous entity , but the document would remain in effect for 180 years .

In this charter , colonial boundaries were outlined , provisions for a military and for prosecuting war were effected , fishing privileges were secured , and a means of appeal to England was detailed . The charter guaranteed the rights of Rhode Island residents to travel freely within the other colonies , which rights had been curtailed due to religious reasons in the past . The new charter also forbade the other New England colonies from making war against the Indians within Rhode Island , without its permission , and also directed that disputes with other colonies would be appealed to the crown . It also outlined provisions for colonial representation , specifying a colonial governor , deputy governor , and ten assistants (called magistrates because of their judicial role) . In addition , the number of deputies allotted to each town was specified .

Of paramount importance to Clarke was the charter 's explicit guarantee of religious freedom . It excused Rhode Islanders from conformity with the Anglican Church " because some of the people ... cannot , in their private Opinions , conform to the publique exercise of religion ... " It also took some of the language from the Declaration of Breda :

" that no person within the said colony , at any time hereafter shall be any wise molested [harassed] , punished , disquieted , or called in question , for any differences in opinion in matters of religion , and do not actually disturb the civil peace of our said colony ; but that all and every person and persons may , from time to time , and at all times hereafter , freely and fully have and enjoy his and their own judgments and consciences , in matters of religious concernments , throughout the tract of land hereafter mentioned , they behaving themselves peaceable and quietly ... "

Once he had the cherished document in hand , it was imperative for Clarke to get it sent to Rhode Island . However , he had received very little remuneration for his diplomatic efforts and did not have the funds to immediately sail back to New England . He therefore entrusted the charter to Captain George Baxter , who carried it to Rhode Island . On 24 November 1663 Rhode Island 's General Court of Commissioners convened at Newport for the last time under the parliamentary patent of 1643 . The inhabitants and legislators had gathered to receive the result of Clarke 's decade @-@ long labors . The magnitude and solemnity of the occasion was captured in the colonial records :

At a very great meeting and assembly of the freemen of the colony of Providence Plantation , at Newport , in Rhode Island , in New England , November the 24th , 1663 . The abovesayed Assembly being legally called and orderly mett for the sollome reception of his Majestyes gracious letter pattent unto them sent , and having in order thereto chosen the President , Benedict Arnold , Moderator of the Assembly , [it was] Voted : That the box in which the King 's gracious letters were enclosed be opened , and the letters with the broad seale thereto affixed be taken forth and read by Captayne George Baxter in the audience and view of all the people ; which was accordingly done , and the sayd letters with his Majesty 's Royall Stampe , and the broad seal , with much becoming gravity held up on hygh , and presented to the perfect view of the people , and then returned into the box and locked up by the Governor , in order to the safe keeping of it .

The following day it was voted that words of humble thanks be delivered to the King and also to the Earl of Clarendon , and that a £ 100 gratuity be given to Clarke . The charter stood the test of time , and it wasn 't until 1843 , 180 years after its creation , that the charter was finally replaced , and only for the one reason that the apportionment of representatives for the several towns " could no longer be rendered as just in operation and could only be remedied by alteration of the organic law . " When the document was ultimately retired , it was the longest surviving constitutional charter in the world . It was so far @-@ reaching that even the American Revolutionary War did not change its position , since both the revolution and the charter rested on the same foundation ? the inherent right of self @-@ government .

= = Later life = =

With the royal charter ready to travel to New England , Clarke had to begin gathering funds to get himself back as well . Only a week after the king put his seal on the charter , Clarke made an

indenture with Richard Deane of London , mortgaging his Newport properties to raise money . Even this didn 't ensure his immediate departure from England , and it wasn 't until the following spring that he was able to make the voyage back to Rhode Island . He and his wife sailed aboard The Sisters of London , carrying their belongings and a shipment of armaments for the colony .

Despite the magnanimous provisions of Rhode Island 's charter , it did not definitively settle the land disputes with Connecticut , which would continue for more than half a century . Nor did it settle the issue with the Atherton Company , occupying two large tracts of land within Rhode Island 's " Narragansett country " . Fortuitous for the Rhode Island colony , however , was the arrival in 1664 of a group of royal commissioners . Samuel Gorton had told the crown that in 1644 the Narragansett people had submitted themselves to England 's king . Once the newly arrived commissioners verified this , they declared all of the Narragansett territory (what is now Washington County and a part of Kent County , Rhode Island , including the Atherton tracts) , to be Kings Province . One of the commissioners was Samuel Maverick , a good friend of Rhode Island 's recent governor William Brenton , who abhorred the Atherton Company . Clarke was one of three men allowed to present Rhode Island 's views on the land disputes , and the commissioners ultimately took a strong stance in favor of Rhode Island . Eventually , the Atherton Company lost its Narragansett property , and the Kings Province became a part of the Rhode Island colony .

= = = Civil roles = = =

Following his great usefulness in England , Clarke became further involved in the affairs of the Rhode Island colony upon his return . He served for six years , from 1664 to 1671 , as a Deputy from Newport in the General Assembly , and then served as the Deputy Governor under Governor Benedict Arnold for two of the three years between 1669 and 1672 . With his legal background , he was appointed in October 1666 to make a digest of Rhode Island laws . In June 1670 and again in March 1672 he was chosen as an agent to go back to England on behalf of the colony . His selection in 1672 was to make an appeal to the king because of incursions that the Connecticut Colony was making into the territory of Rhode Island , but the plan to send him was abandoned .

From 1675 to 1676 , Rhode Island became embroiled in King Philip 's War , considered " the most disastrous conflict to ever devastate New England , " and leaving the mainland towns of the colony in ruins . This confrontation between many indigenous people and the English settlers was named for Metacomet , sachem of the Wampanoags , who had been given the English name of King Philip . Though Rhode Island was much more at peace with the Indians than the other colonies , because of geography , it took the brunt of damage from the conflict , and the settlements of Warwick and Pawtuxet were totally destroyed , with much of Providence ruined as well . Because of the very high esteem Clarke held within the colony , he was one of 16 colonial leaders whose counsel was sought in a 4 April 1676 General Assembly resolution . Two weeks later , while the war was still raging , Clarke was dead .

= = = Church divisions = = =

While Clarke became very active in the affairs of the colony upon his return from England , he also resumed his leadership role in the Newport church . One major schism occurred in the church while he was in England , and another several years after his return . The first of these concerned the " laying on of hands " . This practice was considered to be one of Christ 's six principles as advocated in the biblical verse Hebrews 6 : 2 , and the ritual was welcomed in the Newport Baptist Church . However , some members of the church wanted the practice to be mandatory , while others did not want additional restrictions placed on the parishioners . This disagreement prompted William Vaughan to break away from the church in 1656 and form his own " Six Principle " Baptist Church in Newport , sometimes called the Second Baptist Church of Newport .

The second major division in the church occurred over the day of worship , when Sabbatarians within the congregation wanted to worship on Saturday . The practice was largely tolerated , with some parishioners attending one service , some attending another , and some attending both . The

elder Obadiah Holmes , however , was hostile to the practice , and was rebuked by Clarke in 1667 over his harshness towards the Sabbatarians . Holmes subsequently withdrew from preaching at the Newport church , but resumed his pastoral duties there in 1671 . When he continued to be critical of the Sabbatarians , they finally left to form their own church in December 1671 . Additional dissension occurred in the church , centered on the family of Giles Slocum . When Slocum 's wife , Joan , denied that Christ was alive , she was excommunicated in 1673 . Following this , her husband , their children , and their children 's spouses all left the church , and became Quakers .

= = Death and legacy = =

With the help of Richard Baily , Clarke drafted his will on 20 April 1676 , then died in Newport the same day . He was buried in his family plot in Newport , as directed in his will , beside his two wives , Elizabeth and Jane , who predeceased him .

In his will he set up a trust to be used " for the relief of the poor or bringing up of children unto learning from time to time forever . " Still in use , this trust is generally considered to be the oldest educational trust fund in the United States . Ironically , the trust undermined some of the principles that Clarke cherished , particularly the separation between church and state . While the trust was used to support ministries of the church , it enmeshed the town counsel and the church in many legal entanglements . Eventually the trust was used to pay , at least in part , the salary of a paid minister ? something that Clarke thought to be highly inappropriate .

Clarke believed that secular government should peacefully coexist with religion , and he became a seminal figure in applying the separation of church and state . Historian Thomas Bicknell , one of Clarke 's most ardent supporters , wrote that at the time of the Puritan settlement of New England that " nowhere on the face of the earth and among civilized men , did civil and soul @-@ liberty exist . Its first clear , full , deliberate , organized and permanent establishment in the world can now be distinctly traced to the Colony of Rhode Island , on the island of Aquidneck , in the Narragansett Bay , under the leadership and inspiration of Dr. John Clarke , the true Founder " . Historian Louis Asher wrote , " It hardly seems arguable that Dr. Clarke was the first one to bring democracy to the New World by means of Rhode Island . " Bicknell also asserted that Clarke was the " recognized founder and father of the Aquidneck Plantations , the author of the Compact of Portsmouth and leading spirit in the organization and administration of the island towns . Historian Edward Peterson wrote that Clarke was a man " whose moral character has never been surpassed , and his piety never been questioned . " Asher made this final assessment of Clarke : " As a man , Clarke lived for others . Like many men of the past , he was selfless and uncomplaining . Despite his sectarian religious views , he gave more for his fellow man than he received . "

The First Baptist Church of Newport , a grammar school , and a merchant Liberty ship , the SS John Clarke , are named for Clarke . The science building at the University of Rhode Island was dedicated in his honor in 1963 . A plaque on the wall of the Newport Historical Society reads :

Erected by the Newport Medical Society
December , 1885
To
John Clarke , Physician
1609 @-@ 1676
Founder of Newport
And of the Civil Polity of Rhode Island

= = Ancestry and family = =

John Clarke was the fifth of seven known children born to Thomas and Rose Clarke , all born or baptized at Westhorpe , Suffolk , England . Margaret was the oldest child , born about 1601 , and next was Carew , baptized 17 February 1602 / 3 , followed by Thomas , baptized 31 March 1605 . Mary was next , baptized 26 July 1607 , then the subject John was baptized 8 October 1609 , William was born next , and the youngest , Joseph , was baptized on 16 December 1618 . Margaret

married Nicholas Wyeth and lived in Cambridge , Massachusetts . Mary married John Peckham , and came to Newport , Rhode Island with her husband and four brothers , Carew , Thomas , John , and Joseph .

John Clarke was married three times , his first wife being Elizabeth Harris , the daughter of John Harris who was lord of the manor of Westlingworth in Bedfordshire . This was the wife who was with him while he was an agent in England , and she died in Newport a few years before Clarke . Following her death he was married on 1 February 1671 to Jane , the widow of Nicholas Fletcher , but she died the following year on 19 April 1672 . Clarke had a daughter with Jane , born 14 February 1672 and dying on 18 May 1673 .

Clarke 's third wife was Sarah , the widow of Nicholas Davis , with whom Clarke had had a long association . Davis , like Clarke , had been an early settler of Aquidneck Island in 1639 , but became a merchant and moved to Hyannis in the Plymouth Colony . Davis had many business dealings in Massachusetts , but when he became a Quaker , he was imprisoned and banished from there in 1659 , and later lived in Newport . He transported Quaker founder George Fox from Long Island to Newport in 1672 , during Fox 's visit to the American colonies . Soon thereafter Davis drowned , and within a year and a half his widow married Clarke . Sarah survived Clarke , and died sometime about 1692 . She had children who were remembered in her husband 's will .

Other than the daughter with his second wife , Clarke had no known children , and left no descendants .