

Rathbun-Rathbone-Rathburn
**FAMILY
HISTORIAN**



Dr. Mary Jane Rathbun
1860-1943

Devoted to
the perpetuity of
our common heritage
an honorable
Name.

Letter From the Editor

By the time this reaches you, we will be preparing for our trip to Block Island and the first modern-day national reunion of the Rathbun, Rathbone and Rathburn family of America. More than 100 cousins will be joining us there for the three-day program.

The monument for the graves of John and Margaret Rathbun is being carved and will be in place a week before the reunion. At last count, 210 members had donated \$3,100 to help pay for the marker. The extra money will be used to provide each contributor with a brochure featuring pictures of the monument and a complete list of donors.

Several members who use the Rathbone spelling have asked why John and Margaret's last name is spelled Rathbun on the marker. As explained in Vol. 1, No. 1, John did not use either spelling. He was illiterate and signed only as "JR." The Rathbun spelling, however, was used consistently by his descendants on Block Island — in wills, on tombstones and in the 1725 bible of John and Margaret's youngest son, Samuel.

The early generations in America definitely spelled the name Rathbun, and it is still the most common spelling. The English version, Rathbone, was adopted by several branches of the family in the late 1700s and early 1800s.

Let me emphasize again that neither spelling — nor Rathburn — is right or wrong. We are all the same family, and share the same heritage.

Our membership has now passed the 300 mark, and is still growing. This is wonderful news, but it has also magnified the problem of maintaining our mailing list, and stuffing, sealing, addressing and stamping the nearly 320 magazines we send quarterly to our members and to the nation's leading genealogical libraries.

To solve this problem, we are now using a company which has computerized our membership list and is doing the mailing for us. We feel that the cost will be well worth the additional time it will give me for research and writing.

In this issue, we conclude the saga of Captain John Peck Rathbun, a true "forgotten hero" of the American Revolution. We also have an article about Block Island and our family's role in its history, and the story of Mary Jane Rathbun, a cousin who achieved world renown as a scientist long before the day of the women's movement.

The story of our family's role in the

Revolutionary War has been held until the next issue, in which we will also give a full report, with pictures, of our Block Island reunion and the dedication of our marker to John and Margaret Rathbun.

We are now well into the fifth generation in our genealogical section, and have started working on the sixth. We do need help. The answers to many of our questions lie in county buildings, city halls, libraries, historical societies and graveyards throughout the country. You do not need to be an expert to obtain this information. It is there for the asking, or looking.

Remember, also, to send us any clippings you see in local newspapers about our family — obituaries, marriages, births, honors — *anything* that mentions our name.

And, please, if you haven't yet done so, send us your own family information — births, marriages and deaths right up to the present.

Our magazine can continue its success only with your help.

I look forward to seeing many of you on Block Island.



The Rathbun-Rathbone-Rathburn Family Historian is published quarterly by the Rathbun Family Association at 11308 Popes Head Road, Fairfax, Va. 22030.

Frank H. Rathbun
Editor & Publisher
Robert Rathbun
Research Director
Hazel J. Rathbun
Assistant Editor
Frank H. Rathbun III
Production Manager
Janice A. Rathbun
Business Manager

ISSN 0737-7711

About Those Numbers

Several members have asked us to explain the numbering system we use in showing genealogical descent — the small raised numbers following names in parentheses.

Every line begins with John¹ — our immigrant ancestor. Each following name and number shows the ancestor in each following generation.

Your editor's line, for example, is Frank⁹⁻⁸, Hugo⁷ Charles⁶ Amos⁵⁻⁴ Joshua³ John²⁻¹.

I am Frank⁹, my father was Frank⁸,

his father was Hugo⁷, his father was Charles⁶, his father was Amos⁵, his father was Amos⁴, his father was Joshua³ and his father was John², son of the immigrant, John¹.

This is a standard method of showing genealogical descent, and is easy to follow once the system is understood.

If any of our readers would like to have their line recorded in this system, just send us a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Determined Rathbun Woman Was World-Famous Scientist

Women in 19th century America were expected to marry young and raise a family, while keeping house and cooking for their husbands. Those few who sought careers were severely limited as to educational or employment opportunity.

This is the story of a Rathbun woman who overcame these handicaps and, with only a high school education, became a world-famous researcher, scientist and writer whose accomplishments would fill a book.

Mary Jane Rathbun was born June 11, 1860, in Buffalo, N.Y., the daughter of Charles Howland⁷ Rathbun (Thomas⁶ Aaron⁵ Thomas⁴⁻³ Samuel² John¹). Her father owned stone quarries near Buffalo and was moderately wealthy. Her mother died when Mary Jane was a year old. She was raised by an elderly nurse.

Mary Jane was educated in Buffalo schools, and finished high school in 1878, earning a Gold Medal for excellence in English. College was virtually unheard of for young women at that time, and most were married in their late teens or early 20s.

Mary Jane was an exceedingly plain, very short woman. There were probably no eager young men pounding at her front door. Neither were there many jobs for young women, except as teachers, sales girls, secretaries and nurses.

Mary Jane's older brother, Richard, came to her rescue. He was working for the United States Fish Commission, and she was taken on in 1881 as a volunteer worker at the Commission's station at Woods Hole, Mass.

At Woods Hole, she became involved in a study of crabs, which became her lifetime work, made her world-famous, and eventually gave her the nickname, "Crab Lady."

Mary Jane later became a paid clerk for the Fish Commission, and by 1887 her talents were recognized. She was transferred to Washington, D.C., and became a "copyist" at the National Museum's Division of Marine Invertebrates.



Dr. Mary Jane Rathbun

In this capacity, she spent several years organizing, cataloguing and recording data on thousands of index cards and labels. She wrote in a beautiful Spencerian script that is still a joy to read. In the process of this gigantic task, she became a self-educated expert in marine biology.

In 1891, her first paper was published — 30 pages on an obscure genus of crabs. That paper was the first in a literal flood that was to pour from her

talented mind and nimble fingers over the next half century. By 1937, her last active year, she had published 164 works, and two more were published after her death. Her papers in the Smithsonian Institution today fill 2.7 cubic feet.

During the course of her work, she discovered 1,147 new species and subspecies of crabs, and 63 new crab families. She traveled throughout the world for her research.

She was responsible for identifying the famous Atlantic Blue Crab of the Chesapeake Bay, which has been named in her honor — the *Callinectes Sapidus Rathbun*. *Callinectes* is Greek for "beautiful swimmer," and *Sapidus* means tasty or savory in Latin.

In 1914, she was assistant curator for the Division of Marine Invertebrates at the Smithsonian, and she was recognized as the dean of American carcinologists, the name for experts in crabs and other crustaceans.

Mary Jane was awarded an honorary master's degree in 1916 by the University of Pittsburgh and an honorary doctorate in 1917 by George Washington University.

She was named a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a member of the Biological Society of Washington, the Washington Academy of Sciences, the American Society of Naturalists and the Audubon Society.

But, like many career women today, her wages failed to follow her talents. She was paid \$580 a year in her job as a copyist, and her highest annual salary was \$1,800 in 1913. Fortunately, she had inherited money from her father, and was able to live well despite her low salary.

In 1910, she had hired the late Dr. Waldo L. Schmitt as a temporary assistant, and thought him so talented she asked that he be hired permanently four years later. Smithsonian officials, struggling with a tight budget, turned down her request.

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Rathbun Is Captured Again, Dies at 36 in English Prison

In our last issue, we continued the fascinating career of Captain John Peck Rathbun through his capture by the British at the fall of Charleston, S.C., in May 1780. He was paroled and returned to his wife, Polly, in Rhode Island. With most of the little Continental Navy sunk, captured or bottled up in port, there were no ships available for Navy captains. Rathbun no doubt concluded that his career in the American Navy was over.

Reunited with Polly in South Kingstown, R.I., Rathbun looked about for a new career. He found it quickly. The Kingston Inn, in the village of Little Rest, was offered for sale by Benjamin and Ruth Perry and, on July 10, 1780, Rathbun bought it and another tract of land for "two thousand Spanish silver milled dollars."

The hotel, located on the little village's main street, had been built in 1757. It was a three-story building with living quarters for Rathbun and his wife, a huge triangular chimney with three fireplaces, and a taproom with a hinged partition which was lowered on Sundays when liquor could not legally be sold. It sat on a quarter acre of land, which also had a barn and other outbuildings.

The inn had perhaps a dozen rooms for lodgers and was the most important hotel in the area. It was the stopping place for the stage and mail coaches, the meeting place for the town council, and general assembly point for local residents.

Rathbun packed away his naval uniforms and sea-going accessories and settled down to the life of a gentleman innkeeper. A list of his possessions about that time gives us a vivid picture of him dressed in a black broadcloth suit, high beaver hat, and silver buckles on his knees and shoes.

It must have been difficult for him to make the transition from battleship commander to tavern keeper. After five years of naval service, it was a drastic change to spend his time operating a



This picture of the Kingston Inn was taken in 1896, and probably shows the inn much as it looked when John Peck Rathbun was the proprietor. The building still exists, somewhat altered, although it has not been used as a hotel for many years.

small inn and dispensing ale and rum in a quiet, land-bound village.

His fellow officers, also idled by the lack of warships, were finding their way back to the sea. With no Navy assignments available, they were taking command of privateers to rejoin the battle against England. They had all been formally "exchanged," so their paroles, given at Charleston, were no longer in effect.

In the early spring of 1781 came word that American forces in North Carolina

had surrendered to General Cornwallis, and it was evident that the end of the war for American independence was not yet in sight.

About this time, Rathbun was contacted by Henry Mitchell, a Boston merchant, who offered Rathbun command of a privateer. After hearing the details, Rathbun accepted.

It was no ordinary vessel that tempted Rathbun back to sea. It was a 34-gun brigantine, formerly the British privateer, *Mars*, which had been captured in April

and sold at auction to Mitchell and several associates.

Renamed the *Wexford* in honor of Mitchell's home county in Ireland, she was 86 feet long, 29 feet wide amidships, and had been called the fastest sailing privateer in Europe. She was armed with twenty 12-pound cannons, two six-pounders and 12 four-pound deck guns. She was equipped with special pumps which could be used to fight fires or to spray water on the sails in dry weather, enabling them to hold more wind and thus increase the ship's speed.

In August 1781, the Boston City Council approved a privateer commission for Rathbun, and he began the familiar job of recruiting a crew. Rathbun's reputation as a prize-taking commander simplified his task, and he soon signed up 120 crew members.

For his first lieutenant, Rathbun enlisted his brother-in-law, Samuel Phillips, an experienced officer on both land and sea. Also named a lieutenant was Thomas Bowen, who had earlier served as first mate under Captain Abraham Whipple. Among the crew members were Rathbun's 11-year-old cousin, John Peck, and a young mariner named Peleg Tallman who was later to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Mitchell, meanwhile, had stocked the *Wexford* with 80 barrels of beef and pork and 11,000 pounds of bread. Also loaded aboard were 35 muskets and bayonets, four blunderbusses, 50 pistols, 39 cutlasses, 36 boarding hatchets, 18 pikes, 3,000 pounds of gunpowder, 12,000 musket cartridges, 200 pistol cartridges, and more than 1,500 cannon balls for the ship's guns. The *Wexford* was ready for action.

On August 20, Rathbun said goodbye to Polly and gave the orders to hoist anchor and set sail, bound for the English channel. Rathbun was confident that the *Wexford's* speed could carry him safely into the very front yard of Great Britain.

A week after the *Wexford* set sail, Mitchell had second thoughts about his investment — he had put up nearly half of the money used to buy and outfit the *Wexford*. He wrote to an associate in Philadelphia, asking him to either buy out part of the investment, or insure Mitchell for any loss up to 1,500 pounds sterling.

Encouraging his associate to invest in the cruise, Mitchell commented: "She is commanded by John Peck Rathbun, a man of known courage and conduct."

The cruise tested Rathbun's courage from the start. Ten days out of Boston, the *Wexford* sprung a leak, and he must have been tempted to turn back. It was hazardous enough to sail within sight of the British coast, even with a ship in top condition. He decided to go on, however, and crew members were assigned to work two pumps, day and night, to keep the holds dry.

On Sept. 27, 1781, the *Wexford* approached Cape Clear on the southern coast of Ireland, and extra lookouts were sent aloft to watch for possible prizes — or British warships.

At daybreak September 28, a lookout sighted a sail. Rathbun quickly identified it as a British frigate of considerable strength. Knowing that he could not outfight such an opponent, he ordered all sails spread and tried to outrun the enemy. The leaking hull must have had an effect, however, and the English frigate pulled closer and closer. The chase continued until nightfall, when Rathbun hoped to change course and elude his pursuer under cover of darkness. His plan was foiled when the night proved to be clear and bright.

Shortly after midnight, Rathbun ordered his helmsman to change course sharply, hoping the enemy captain would not follow. The Englishman was alert, however, and continued the chase.

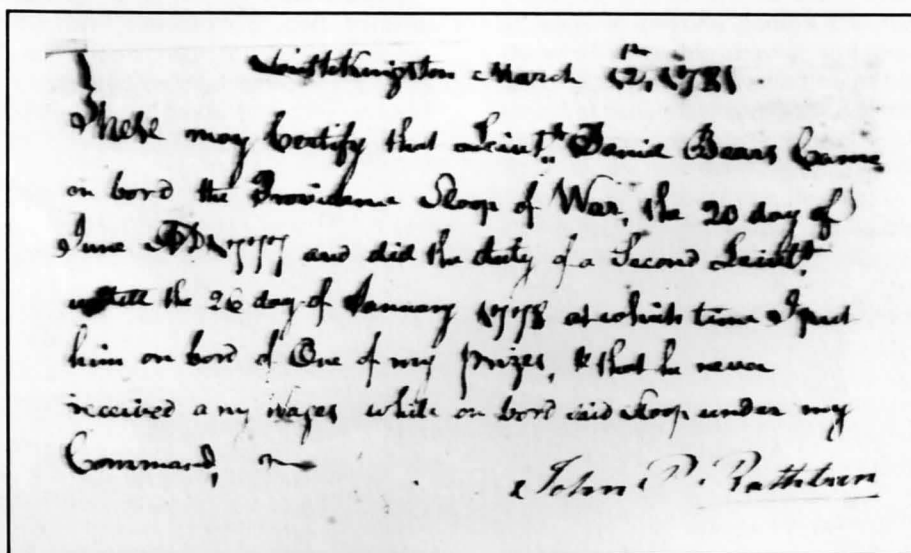
At 5 a.m., the British frigate overtook the Americans and opened fire. Rathbun fired a few rounds in return, but realized the futility of such an uneven fight. He ordered the American flag hauled down, and surrendered his ship.

There is nothing more heartbreaking for a Navy commander than to give up his ship, and we can imagine Rathbun's mood as English marines boarded the *Wexford* and an English officer took command. Rathbun learned that he had surrendered to the 40-gun *Recovery*, commanded by Lord Hervey.

Rathbun, his officers and crew were ordered aboard the *Recovery*, taken to the nearby Cove of Cork, in Ireland, and then marched overland to a prison at Kinsale. There they remained four months, while smallpox and other diseases took the lives of 17 *Wexford* crewmen.

Several of Rathbun's men managed to escape and eventually made their way to France. Among them was Rath-

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South Kingston March 12, 1781.
These may Certify that Lieut. Daniel Bears came on board the Providence Sloop of War, the 20 day of June AD 1777, and did the duty of a Second Lieutt. until the 26 day of January 1778 at which time I put him on board One of my prizes, & that he never received any Wages while on board said Sloop under my Command,
John P. Rathbun

This letter signed by John Peck Rathbun is one of the few known surviving examples of his signature. It is from the pay records of Lt. Daniel Bears in U.S. Treasury Department records. It reads: "South Kingston — March 12, 1781, — These may Certify that Lieut. Daniel Bears came on board the Providence Sloop of War the 20 day of June AD 1777 and did the duty of a Second Lieutt. until the 26 day of January 1778 at which time I put him on board One of my prizes & that he never received any Wages while on board said Sloop under my Command. — (Signed) John P. Rathbun."

John Peck Rathbun

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bun's young cousin, John Peck, who later wrote an account of his service.

Early in February 1782, concerned about the high fatality rate among the prisoners, the British decided to send Rathbun and a number of others to Portsmouth, England, to be confined at Forton Prison. On arrival, however, the prison proved already too crowded to accept all the newcomers. Rathbun and several of his crew members were sent by sea to Plymouth, England, site of the notorious Old Mill Prison. In the harbor at Plymouth, they were transferred to the guard ship *Dunkirk* where Samuel Phillips, "with the assistance of friends," made his escape and boarded a neutral ship for France. It is probable that Rathbun assisted in his brother-in-law's escape, but decided himself to remain with his men.

A few days later, they were taken ashore and hauled before a magistrate who found them guilty of "rebellion on the high seas." He ordered them confined in Old Mill Prison, "to remain at the pleasure of the King."

The prison was located on a point of land which juts into Plymouth Harbor midway between the towns of Plymouth and Plymouth Dock. It had been built many years before, during England's wars with France, and had received its name from several old windmills which had stood there. Three barracks-style, two-story buildings were used to house the prisoners. High stone walls topped

with jagged pieces of broken glass surrounded the buildings.

Rathbun and his remaining officers were housed in the largest building, some 20 by 130 feet, where a second-floor "ward" had been set aside for officers. He found several old acquaintances there. The ranking officer of each colony served as "overseer" for the men from his colony, and Rathbun thus took charge of the Rhode Island group.

Poor food and boredom were the greatest problems for the prisoners. The daily ration was 12 ounces of beef, 12 ounces of coarse bread, and two quarts of broth. It was delivered at 11 a.m. and the prisoners had the choice of eating it then or stretching it out for two or three meals.

The prisoners were allowed into the yard from 10 a.m. until noon and again from 3 until 7 p.m. The rest of the time they were locked up in the barracks, where each man had a hammock, straw mattress and blanket.

To combat boredom, many prisoners whittled spoons and ladles from scrap wood and sold them to Plymouth residents who sometimes came to the prison gates. A few of the more talented men constructed elaborate ship models. Several officers organized and taught classes for the boys and younger men.

Officers fared somewhat better than enlisted men. Sympathetic Plymouth residents brought food and helped them send letters to their families. Letters to or from America took about three months. Rathbun undoubtedly wrote to Polly, but

none of his letters are known to exist. It is likely he wrote to her in much the same vein as the following excerpt from a letter written by Captain John Green of Philadelphia to his wife:

"I am much happier at hearing from you than I can express. I beseech you to keep your spirits and don't give way to misfortune. Consider they might be worse. I am a prisoner but not ill treated. These accidents are what attends wars and seafaring men. I hope for better days and don't despair of seeing them."

To break the monotony of their prison existence, the American officers occasionally pooled their resources to have "parties." One such event was recorded by an officer in his journal:

"A hog was barbecued in the yard, a sight never seen in Mill Prison before. We dined at 2. After dinner a number of very good toasts were drank and the day spent in jollity and mirth."

The next day he wrote:

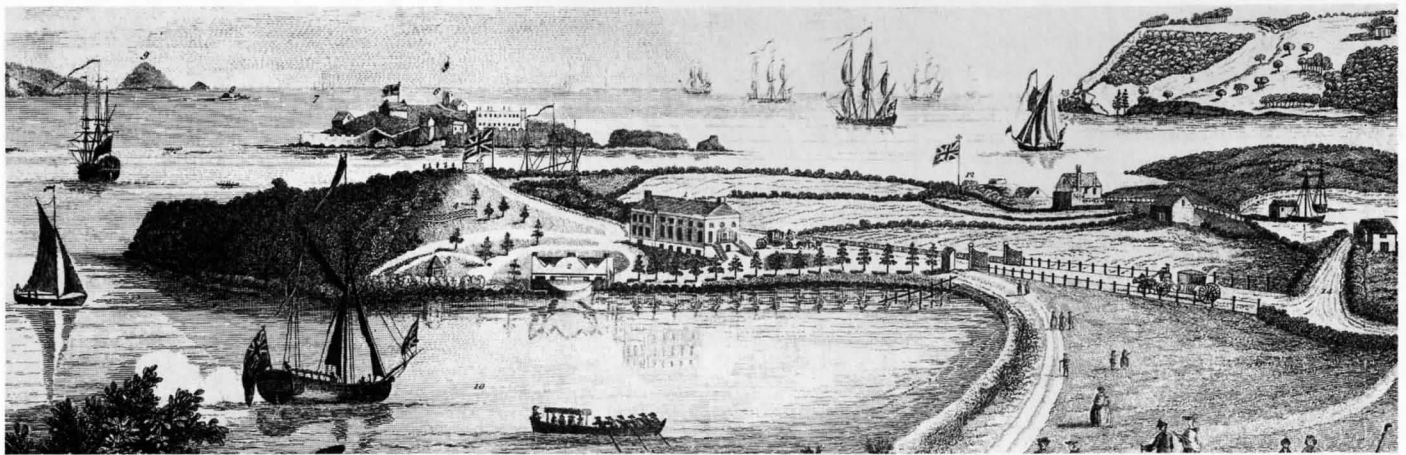
"All hands merry and myself rather groggy. Still keep it up, fiddling and dancing all day in our ward."

On another occasion he wrote:

"Dined with Captains Greene, Rathbun, Henfield, Armitage and a number of other gentlemen. We had a very good dinner and spent the afternoon agreeably."

In April 1782, two months after Rathbun's arrival at Mill Prison, the English Parliament passed a bill to exchange the nearly 1,100 Americans held pris-

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The site of Old Mill Prison is shown in this 19th century engraving. The prison buildings were probably located between the two British flags which can be seen. The prison was

torn down early in the 1800s, and the site now houses a British Navy installation. Captain John Peck Rathbun is buried somewhere on this point of land.

Block Island, Site of Reunion, Has Long, Exciting History

Block Island, home of our ancestors and site of our family reunion this month, has had a long and interesting history.

Located 12 miles off the Rhode Island coast, and only 18 miles from the tip of Long Island, it is but seven miles long and three miles across at its widest points.

For centuries before the white men found it, the island was known as Manisses, or "Isle of the Little God," by the Manissean Indians who lived there.

Its first recorded sighting was in 1524 by Verrazana, an Italian explorer sailing for France, who noted that it was "full of hills, covered with trees, and well peopled." He called it Claudia, but the name did not last.

A Dutch fur trader, Adriaen Block, landed on the island in 1614, giving it the name which has survived until this day.

In 1636, Captain John Oldham, a Boston trader, visited the island and was killed by Indians who had come aboard his boat to look at his goods. When word of the murder reached Massachusetts, Colonel (later Governor) John Endicott was sent to the island with 100 soldiers to punish the Indians. They killed 14 braves, and laid waste to the Indians' wigwams and cornfields. A year later, the island was declared part of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Nothing was done with the island until 1658, when the colony transferred title to Endicott and three associates — Richard Bellingham, another former governor; General Daniel Dennison; and William Hawthorne, ancestor of the famed author, Nathaniel Hawthorne.

These four men, who bought the island for speculation, immediately offered it for sale to anyone who wanted to establish a settlement there.

Dr. John Alcock of Boston saw an opportunity for profit and purchased the island for 400 pounds on July 16, 1660. He then spread the word that he was looking for persons interested in a joint venture to settle the island.

A group of men, including John Rath-



The desolate beauty of Block Island is demonstrated in this drawing by Charles H. Overly. The house, dating some two centuries, has been remodeled over the years. The stone fences are typical of those which line the island's roads. But for the telephone poles and the absence of trees, this is how Block Island would have looked to our ancestors in the 1700s.

bun, met at Dr. Alcock's home on August 17, 1660, and 12 of them agreed to join him in the venture. (See Vol. 1, No. 1).

John Rathbun and Edward Vose, who became partners in a one-sixteenth share of the island, were no doubt brought to the meeting by John Glover, a merchant and land speculator living near them in Dorchester, Mass. Like them, Glover was a native of Lancashire Co., England.

Some of those who attended the meeting at Dr. Alcock's home decided they were not interested — the island was too remote and the cost of settling it seemed too high.

Glover, Rathbun and Vose were interested, however, along with Philip Wharton and Hugh Williams of Boston, and Thomas Faxon, Peter George, Thomas Terry, Richard Ellis, Samuel Deering and Simon Ray, all of Braintree (now Quincy), Mass.

These 11 men and Alcock decided that the island would accommodate 16 families, so four more investors were needed. In the next few months, they enlisted James Sands, Richard Billings, Tormet Rose and Nathaniel Wingley. They also began construction of two small ships to transport them, their possessions and livestock to the island.

Early records are vague, but it appears that some of the group, including John Rathbun, sailed from Braintree early in 1661 with a surveyor to look over the island, lay it out in equal divisions, and plan the settlement. They wanted to decide on the best locations for homes, the choice areas for farming and grazing and the layout of a basic road system.

They were back on the mainland by late summer, and called a meeting for early September 1661 at Wharton's home in Boston. Final plans were made,

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Block Island

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and a drawing was held to determine the site of each investor's land.

Rathbun and Vose pooled their resources to pay 25 pounds for a one-sixteenth share, or a total of 420 acres of land. (The entire island is 6,720 acres.)

The exact date of the first settlement is not known. Tradition says it was in 1661, but it seems more likely to have been in the spring of 1662.

The island's "founding fathers" — and mothers — landed at a cove on the northern tip of the island. The area became known as Cow Cove because of the local Indians' amazement upon seeing cows swimming ashore from the settlers' boats.

Settlers' Rock, listing the names of the first settlers, was erected at the cove in 1911, the supposed 250th anniversary of the landing.

The lower and larger section of the island had been divided into 16 sections and, in the drawing, Rathbun and Vose received the section along the southeast coast, overlooking the Mohegan Bluffs, giving them the most spectacular view on the island.

The smaller, northern section was also divided into 16 sections, and again Rathbun and Vose drew the most scenic spot — a high area known as Clay Head, overlooking the ocean on the eastern side of the island.

A road was cleared down the center of the southern area, making a dividing line between lots on the eastern and western sides of the island. It is still known as Center Road.

Most of the settlers erected their first homes in the southern area, keeping the northern section for grazing cattle and sheep.

John Rathbun's first home was undoubtedly built on the east side of Center Road, probably not far from its present intersection with the Mohegan Trail. It was here that he moved about 1662 with his wife, Margaret, and their oldest children — John, then about seven; Thomas, about five; Sarah, three; and William, a baby of about one year.

Rathbun's partner, Edward Vose, did not settle on the island, and apparently sold his share to Rathbun's brother-in-law, John Acres, who was among the earliest settlers.

Block Island, as these pioneers first saw it, was vastly different from the island today. It was covered with oak, cedar and hickory forests except for open areas in the north, where the Indians grew corn, and scattered clearings in the south.

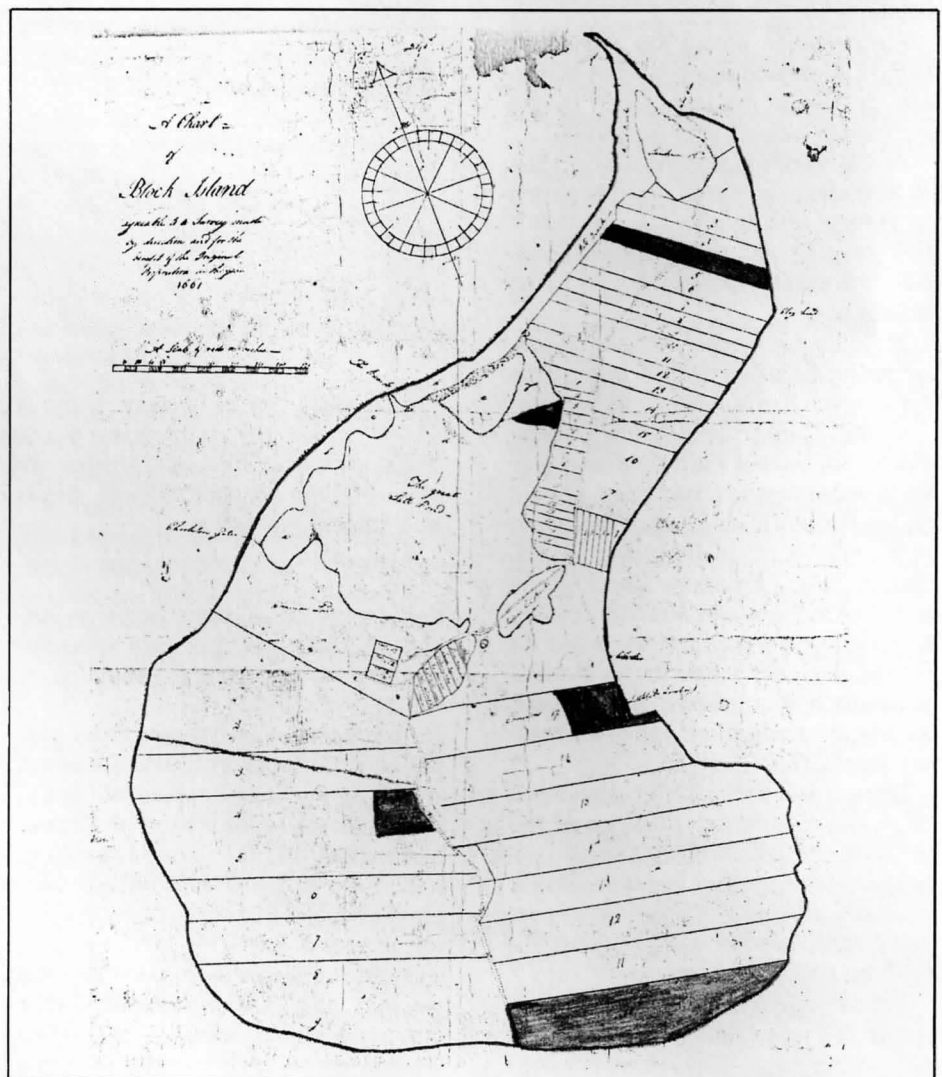
The island was also littered with boulders and rocks, dating to the glacial ages. Over the centuries, these rocks have been collected and used to build stone fences. An estimated 300 miles of them line the island today.

It is likely that the settlers spent much of their time in the early years cutting

trees and clearing their lands of rocks. By 1720, most of the trees were gone. The islanders turned to peat for fuel and passed strict laws in a futile attempt to save the remaining trees.

Food was no problem. The seas around them abounded with tuna, swordfish, codfish and lobster. In the 1,000-acre Great Salt Pond, which divides the northern and southern parts of the island, were smaller fish, oysters, clams and scallops. There was plentiful wild game and fowl.

The settlers had brought with them their cattle, sheep, oxen, horses, pigs



Map of Block Island as drawn by the surveyor who laid out the first land division in 1661. We have shaded John Rathbun's early holdings — his "great lot" overlooking Mohegan Bluffs at lower right, his "Corn Neck" lot near the northern tip of the island, the tract he was given in 1671 to make up for a surveying error on the eastern side of the island, and the approximate site of land he later purchased in the island's center. Also shaded is a triangular piece of land jutting into Great Salt Pond, which was then called Rathbun Point. It has since been eroded away.

and chickens. They immediately planted potatoes, carrots, turnips and cabbage, and sowed fields of corn, barley and beans.

The homes were little more than log huts, but as the years went by, they were enlarged and improved with the ample supply of lumber on the land. The wood also served as fireplace fuel for the cold, bitter winters.

No examples or descriptions of these early homes exist today. They were, however, undoubtedly very similar to the traditional "One Room House" common in Rhode Island at that time. This type of home was built of wood, one story high, with a steep, pitched gable roof, ranging from 14 to 18 feet square. A huge chimney formed one wall, with a deep fireplace for cooking and providing heat in the winter. The entire first floor served as kitchen, living room, dining room and bedroom for the adults. Children slept in the loft overhead.

It was customary to add another square room on the opposite side of the chimney, making two main rooms. Other additions and lean-tos were added to provide pantries, storerooms and extra bedrooms as families grew.

The settlers sheared sheep to make

wool, which they carded and spun to make their own clothing. The sheep also provided meat and mutton tallow for candles. Horses and oxen provided transportation and were used for hauling timber, moving rocks and tilling the fields.

James Sands, a carpenter, built the island's only stone house. He also erected a water-operated grist mill, where his neighbors brought their corn and barley to be ground into meal and flour. Sands' wife, Sarah, was the island's doctor and midwife in those early years.

Most of the other settlers had special skills which made them valuable citizens.

Peter George was an "oatmeal-maker." Tristram Dodge was a Newfoundland fisherman who was given three acres free as an inducement to settle on the island. William Harris, a blacksmith, was given four acres for the same reason. Thomas Terry had a military background and became the island's military leader.

Simon Ray, one of the most educated of the group, was chief magistrate and served as lay preacher, conducting Sunday services in his home, not far from Rathbun's residence.

Rathbun is described in early records as "husbandman" (farmer) or yeoman (land owner), but it is possible he served as the island's first shoemaker — the trade of his father in England. His son, John Rathbun, Jr., had "shoemaker's tools and stool" among his possessions when he died.

The settlers' early relations with the island's Indians were chaotic.

Thomas Terry apparently made a deal with their chiefs, purchasing all the Indians' rights to the island. Terry then took several Indians as slaves, a practice which became common in the early years.

There were an estimated 400 Indians when the first settlers and their families — a total of about 30 persons — moved onto the island.

Predictably, the Indians became resentful as the settlers cleared the land, killed the game and enslaved their people. The trouble came to a head on an unknown date in the 1660s or early 1670s.

The Indians had become more and more hostile, and one day a band of braves armed with guns and fortified by rum gathered on an island located in an inlet at the southern edge of Great Salt Pond. They were shouting, dancing and making threats against the white men.

The settlers gathered their women and children in Sands' stone "garrison house" for safety, leaving some of the older men as guards.

Then, according to tradition, "16 men and a boy" armed themselves and marched to the edge of the pond, led by Thomas Terry. One man, Joseph Kent, carried a drum and beat it loudly as they marched. The beat of the drum apparently terrified the Indians, who outnumbered the settlers probably more than 10 to one. They refused to answer Terry's challenge to cross the water and fight. That crucial moment ended any serious problem with the Indians.

The identities of the "16 men and a boy" are not known, but John Rathbun Sr. was certainly one of the men, and his oldest son, John Jr., then in his middle or late teens, was quite possibly the boy.

In 1942, a marker commemorating the event was erected at the edge of the pond. The little island occupied by the Indians is still known as Fort Island.



This drawing by Charles H. Overly shows the majestic beauty of Mohegan Bluffs on Block Island. This was the southern boundary of John Rathbun's original "great lot" in the island's first land division. Over the years, action of the sea has eroded the cliffs, which once extended hundreds of feet further into the ocean. The cliffs rise 200 feet.

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Block Island

(continued from page 41)

The settlers thereafter made certain there would be no Indian threat. Indians were forbidden to keep guns overnight and were ordered to take them by dusk "to his master's house on whose ground he lives." Sale of rum to the Indians was outlawed, and each white male over 16 was required to "provide himself with a sufficient fire-lock gun and two pounds of powder and four pounds of shot and lead."

A militia was organized, and each man took his turn standing guard at night, excused only when "an easterly wind blows strongly, accompanied by rain or snow."

For the remainder of the century, the islanders were bothered more by the French than the Indians. The island's isolation made it a tempting target, especially since England and France were almost continuously at war during these years.

French troops invaded the island several times, confiscating livestock and abusing the residents. John Rathbun Jr. was tied and whipped by the French on one occasion. (See Vol. 1, No. 1.)

With the threat of Indians, Frenchmen and occasional pirates, the islanders petitioned the Rhode Island Assembly to have troops stationed on the island. In 1711, a quota of 12 soldiers was assigned to the island.

(Although Block Island was originally under the jurisdiction of Massachusetts, the residents voted in 1664 to join Rhode Island and in 1672 voted to name the island New Shoreham — still its legal name.)

Despite all these problems, the Rathbuns and other settlers developed a deep affection for their new home. Rathbun began buying tracts of land throughout the island, apparently planning to give each of his sons a farm so they would remain on the island.

In 1671, as explained in Vol. 1, No. 1, Rathbun decided he had been shorted in the first land division, and a survey proved him right. To make up for the shortage, he was given 60 acres near the island center.

Early land records often pinpoint property boundaries by such landmarks as "large boulder," "white oak," "small walnut tree" and similar references. It is difficult to determine exact locations to-

day, such markers having long since disappeared.

It is apparent, however, that the 60 acres given Rathbun in 1671 were near what is now Dodge Street, near the Old Harbor, and not far from James Sands' home and gristmill. The land had been set aside as "common land" and part of it was held in reserve as a "minister's lot."

Rathbun probably built a home there in the early 1670s and gave, or sold, his home and land along Mohegan Bluffs to his son, Thomas, whose sons later owned it.

In 1679, he deeded the 60 acres near Old Harbor to John Jr. The property included what the senior John Rathbun termed his "mansion house." It was not

Of the 16 original Block Island purchasers, John Rathbun was one of only six who settled and remained on the island. The other five were Peter George, Simon Ray, James Sands, Tormet Rose and Thomas Terry (who left in 1683).

Others who joined the settlement in its early years and remained on the island were John Acres, Rathbun's brother-in-law, and members of the Ball, Briggs, Cahoone, Dickens, Dodge, Harris, Littlefield, Mitchell, Mott, Niles, Raymond and Tosh families.

what we would call a mansion today, but was probably a substantial home for its time.

John Rathbun Sr. purchased other property during the 1670s and 1680s, and by 1690 had built a third home on the west side of the Center Road, probably near the present island airport.

In 1877, when Rev. S. T. Livermore wrote a history of Block Island, the filled-in cellar of the Rathbun home could still be seen, not far from a flowing spring which must have been the family's water supply.

John and Margaret Rathbun deeded the house in 1692 to their youngest son, Samuel. In John's 1702 will, he left Samuel "the table and cubbard which stand now in his house as (they) are lomes (heirlooms) to the house."

John and Margaret apparently moved

from the island to Newport for a period in the 1670s and early 1680s. The birth of their son, Samuel, was recorded there in 1672, and early deeds show him there in 1674. He apparently considered Block Island his home, however, for in 1681 he was elected to represent the island in the colony's general assembly, an office he held for five years.

By the time of John's death in 1702, he had evidently built or purchased another home on the island, as well as one in Newport. His ownership of property and houses was probably the reason he was considered one of Block Island's wealthiest citizens. He willed his widow "the end of the house which I now live in," apparently on Block Island, for he also left her the "income of my house in Newport."

All of John Rathbun's sons played active roles in the island's affairs.

John Jr. was constable in 1686 and 1693. William was surveyor of fences in 1686, constable in 1688 and a juryman in 1692. Joseph was a juryman and town sergeant in 1692, surveyor of fences in 1709, second townsman in 1717, and third townsman and fence viewer in 1718. Samuel was constable in 1695.

Thomas, the most active of the sons, was second townsman in 1692, first townsman in 1700-1702, and the island's deputy to the General Assembly for several years in the early 1700s.

Island records show that John and Margaret deeded farms on the island to each of their sons, and one daughter, Sarah. The other two daughters likely were given land also, but the deeds are not recorded.

John Jr., as noted, received the valuable 60 acres near the Old Harbor. Thomas inherited the original tract along Mohegan Bluff, and Samuel received the home on Center Road. William apparently was given land adjoining the Center Road homestead, while Joseph's land was at the extreme northern point of the southern section of the island, between Great Salt Pond and the Ocean. The area is known as Charleston. Across the pond, a point of land is shown on early maps as Rathbun Point.

By 1700, the island had about 200 inhabitants, including at least 40 Rath-

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Genealogy: The Fifth Generation in America

33. JOSEPH SHEFFIELD⁵ RATHBUN

(Joshua⁴ John³⁻²⁻¹), born Jan. 18, 1780, at Exter, R.I., and married there Feb. 10, 1803, Olive⁶ Rathbun (John⁵⁻⁴⁻³⁻²⁻¹). She died April 18, 1829, and he married (2) Dec. 20, 1829, Penelope Babcock, daughter of Simeon and Mary (Perry) Babcock. She died about 1832, and he married (3) Jan. 1, 1833, Esther (Cranston) Adams, born Sept. 26, 1785, daughter of Samuel and Zilpha (King) Cranston and widow of John Adams. Esther died May 29, 1849, and he married (4) Betsey (Briggs) Woods, born in 1790, daughter of Caleb and Phoebe Moon (Briggs) and widow of Joab Woods. Joseph, who was known by his middle name, Sheffield, lived his entire life on the old Rathbun farm settled by his grandfather about 1726 on Eschoheag Hill in Exeter. He was a justice of the peace for 18 years. He died Sept. 29, 1859, at Exeter. His fourth wife Betsey died Aug. 24, 1874, at Coventry, R.I.

CHILDREN

(All by Olive)

LYMAN, born March 18, 1804; married Sally Northrup.

SENECA S., born April 30, 1805; died unmarried April 7, 1820.

BETSEY, born Feb. 10, 1807; married Newman⁶ Rathbun (Jonathan⁵ John⁴⁻³⁻²⁻¹).

JOHN GARDNER, born Feb. 28, 1810; married (1) Dorcas Tyler; (2) Eunice (James) Albro.

WILLET, born Oct. 11, 1812; married Hannah Matteson.

HENRY DEXTER, born Oct. 9, 1815; married Susan James.

JOSHUA PERRY, born July 3, 1818; married Phoebe Ann Tyler.

SALLY, born July 24, 1821; married (1) Ira Wilcox Sept. 18, 1842; (2) Alfred Enos on July 3, 1870.

PHOEBE, born Sept. 26, 1825; married Sheffield Palmer on May 7, 1843.

34. JOSHUA⁵ RATHBUN (Joshua⁴⁻³

John²⁻¹), born August 11, 1743, at Westery, R.I., and married there Oct. 30, 1766, Sarah Borden, born Dec. 27, 1748, daughter of Abraham and Martha (Bagnal) Borden. He and his wife were both Quakers and lived at Stonington Point, Conn. Joshua was a sea captain and died at sea of yellow fever on Nov. 23, 1773, leaving his wife five months pregnant. The inventory of his estate listed half interest in the Stonington Point wind-operated grist mill owned by his father, and a one-eighth share in the schooner, *Polly*, of which he was captain. His widow, on Dec. 30, 1784, married the Rev. Peter Hoxie, a Quaker minister, by whom she had two children. She died March 29, 1828.

CHILDREN

JOSHUA, born Aug. 22, 1767; married Wait Kilton.

ABRAHAM BORDEN, born Dec. 11, 1769; married (1) Debora Cooke; (2) Waity Thomas; (3) Mary Peckham, and (4) Honor Brown.

ACORS, born Jan. 25, 1772; married Sarah Peckham.

BENJAMIN BAGNAL, born Mar. 17, 1774; married Eliza Smith.

35. ACORS⁵ RATHBUN (Joshua⁴⁻³

John²⁻¹), born May 4, 1751, at Westery, R.I., and married there Nov. 9, 1775; Lydia Robinson, born about 1756, daughter of John and Sarah Robinson. They moved to Stonington, Conn., where Lydia died August 14, 1788. He apparently married twice after her death (dates unknown) — once to Mary Douglas, born March 23, 1765, and again to Mary (Lawton) Gorton, daughter of Joseph Lawton and widow of Grant Gorton. Acors died in 1827 at North Stonington. Nothing more is known of his later wives.

CHILDREN

ROWLAND ROBINSON, born Sept. 1, 1776; married Alice Peckham.

MARY, born Aug. 27, 1778, died in 1783.

JOSHUA, born Oct. 4, 1780; married Elizabeth Hoxie.

DORCAS, born Dec. 29, 1782; married Joshua Bradley Jan. 1, 1801.

LYDIA, born Nov. 29, 1785; married John Weaver Nov. 10, 1803.

36. JOSHUA⁵ RATHBUN (Valentine⁴

Joshua³ John²⁻¹), born June 25, 1746, at Stonington, Conn. He went to sea, became a sea captain and moved to Newport, R.I., where he married in April, 1770, Elizabeth Hall, born in 1747, daughter of Benjamin Hall. She died April 13, 1788, and he married Nov. 13, 1788, Ann Sears, born Jan. 7, 1769, daughter of George and Abigail (Hall) Sears, and a niece of his first wife. Joshua sailed for the Newport merchant firm of Gibbs and Channing (George Gibbs and Walter Channing) for nearly 30 years, sailing to the West Indies and the maritime provinces of Canada as well as to ports along the American seaboard. Newspaper shipping reports show some of his vessels as the schooner *Sally* in the late 1760s; brig *Catherine* in the 1770s; the brig *John* in the late 1780s and early 1790s; the 82-foot, three-masted ship *William* in 1794; the 61-foot sloop *Aurora* in early 1795, and the 67-foot brig *William* in late 1795 and early 1796. During the Revolutionary War, he refused to sign a pledge of allegiance to Great Britain when British troops captured Newport, and was arrested and confined on a prison ship in the harbor. In 1797, aged 51, he retired from the sea and brought a farm near Newport. He became ill a short time later and died September 5, 1799. His second wife, Ann, was living at Newport in 1800, but her death date is not known.

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CHILDREN

(By Elizabeth)

BENJAMIN HALL, born about 1775; married Mary Malbone.

ELIZABETH, born in May, 1778; married Samuel Whitehorn Aug. 24, 1802.

VALENTINE, born Feb. 5, 1780; died Oct. 3, 1780.

ABIGAIL, born Sept. 13, 1781; died March 3, 1796.

(By Ann)

GEORGE SEARS, born Sept. 22, 1789; married Esther Dunn Jones.

ANN, born Aug. 12, 1791; died Sept. 2, 1791.

WILLIAM, born March 8, 1794; died Sept. 6, 1795.

WILLIAM HENRY, born June 4, 1796; married Sarah Center.

ANN, born May 14, 1799; died April 20, 1820.

37. DANIEL⁵ RATHBUN (Valentine⁴ Joshua³ John²⁻¹), born April 11, 1754, at Stonington, Conn., and moved with his parents in 1769 to Pittsfield, Mass. He married there, about 1775, Lucy (Cogswell?), born about 1757, possibly a daughter of Joshua and Lucy (Dow) Cogswell. He served several enlistments in the Revolutionary Army, and after the war settled at nearby Richmond, Mass, and then in Rutland, Vermont, where his wife died about 1791. He married again on Jan. 21, 1792, at Whiting, Addison County, Vermont, Sabra Holman, born May 9, 1771, parentage unknown. They lived at Whiting until 1802, when they moved to Sempronius, Cayuga County, New York. Family tradition says that he was a Baptist minister like his father. He died at Sempronius on March 30, 1806. His widow married, Jan. 22, 1807, Joel Strong, by whom she had two children. Her death date is not known.

CHILDREN

(By Lucy)

ASA, born Feb. 16, 1776; married Johanna Brookins.

DYER, born Oct. 25, 1777; married Mary Lowry.

RUFUS COGSWELL, born about 1779; married (1) Martha Hilliard; (2) Elizabeth L. Mason.

ISAAC, born July 11, 1781; married Lucy Monroe.

LUCY, born about 1788; died unmarried Oct. 13, 1861.

(By Sabra)

VALENTINE WIGHTMAN, born Oct. 12, 1792; married Roxanna Smith.

BRADLEY ROSE, born April 21, 1794; married Achsa Hubbell.

ACHSA, born April 26, 1796; married Luke Kilmore.

CONTENT, born May 28, 1798; died May 22 1813.

NANCY, born Sept. 11, 1799; married Anthony Smith.

JOSHUA, born May 19, 1801; married Penelope Cutler.

KETURAH, born March 26, 1803; married Varnum Potter.

MATILDA, born April 19, 1805; died Jan. 31, 1806.

38. VALENTINE WIGHTMAN⁵ RATHBUN (Valentine⁴ Joshua³ John²⁻¹), born April 26, 1756, at Stonington, Conn., and moved with his parents in 1769 to Pittsfield, Mass. He served in the Army during the early part of the Revolution, and in 1779 was married to Sylvia Lusk, born about 1756, parentage unknown. When his father joined the Shaker Society in 1780, they followed him into the Society, and remained as members after the senior Valentine Rathbun broke away and attacked the Shakers. Sylvia died in 1784 at the Shaker Colony in Hancock, Mass., leaving a four-year-old son who was raised by the Shakers. Valentine died Dec. 30, 1821, in the Shaker Colony at New Lebanon, New York.

CHILD

CALEB, born June 7, 1780; married

39. REUBEN⁵ RATHBUN (Valentine⁴ Joshua³ John²⁻¹), born May 11, 1760, at Stonington, Conn., and moved with his parents in 1769 to Pittsfield, Mass. He served several years in the Revolutionary Army, and in July, 1780, followed his father into the Shaker Society. He remained with the Shakers after his father withdrew, and became one of their top leaders, serving several months in prison in 1784-5 for his activities on their behalf. He became disillusioned in 1799 and left the society to marry, in July of that year, Elizabeth Deming, born about 1764, daughter of John and Sarah (Robbins) Deming. (See Vol. 2, No. 1, Page 12). He moved with his parents to Marcellus, N.Y. about 1801, and died there in 1807 when a falling tree crushed his skull. His widow moved to Junius, Seneca County, N.Y., where she died Sept. 27, 1830.

CHILDREN

SON (Name unknown), born about 1800; no further information.

ELIZABETH, born about 1802; married Dr. Randolph Wells June 17, 1819.

40. SAXTON⁵ RATHBUN (Valentine⁴ Joshua³ John²⁻¹) born July 11, 1762, at Stonington, Conn., and moved with his parents in 1769 to Pittsfield, Mass. He married about 1788, Esther Cook, born either July 21, 1765, or May 19, 1766, probably a daughter of Thomas and Syble (Sabin) Cook. They moved about 1799 to Marcellus, Onondaga County, New York, where she died Dec. 18, 1826, and he on Sept. 23, 1828.

CHILDREN

SARAH, born about 1789; married Samuel Whiting.

HENRY, born about 1791; married Mary (?Malath).

BELA F., born about 1793; married Mary Kenyon.

HIRAM B., born about 1797; married Otse Blakely.

ROXANNA, born Aug. 19, 1800; married Lemuel Farmer Feb. 2, 1823.

SAXON RODNEY, born Sept. 17, 1805; married Maria Lander.

MARY, born Oct. 23, 1808; married Samuel Dalrymple Nov. 16, 1828.

41. JAMES⁵ RATHBUN (Valentine⁴ Joshua³ John²⁻¹), born about 1764 at Stonington, Conn., and moved with his parents in 1769 to Pittsfield, Mass. He served in the Army during the closing years of the Revolution, and married about 1787 Ruth Langworthy, born about 1768, daughter of Andrew and Ruth (Brown) Langworthy. She died shortly after the birth of their only child, and he married second, Feb. 27, 1791, Margaret Ashley, born Oct. 2, 1771, daughter of William and Jane (Butcher) Ashley. They moved about 1799 to Marcellus, New York, where he owned 336 acres and operated a woolen mill at Five Mile Point in an area known as Factory Gulf. He was a captain in 1801 in the Onondaga County Militia, and rose to major in 1805 and lieutenant-colonel in 1806. He resigned in 1809. He died at Marcellus in 1814, leaving his widow with 10 children, the youngest less than a year old. She died Dec. 18, 1843, at Bennington Center, Genessee County, N.Y.

CHILDREN

(By Ruth)

SYLVESTER, born May 27, 1788; married (1) Apama Root; (2) Malinda Brooks.

(By Margaret)

JAMES HARVEY, born about 1791; married (1) Clarinda Pardee; (2) Lucy Pardee.

JONATHAN NILES, born Nov. 26, 1793; married Sarah Dolson.

CHARLOTTE RUTH, born Sept. 23, 1795; married James Conrad Hillebert Feb. 14, 1818.

CLARINDA, born Aug. 14, 1797; married Edmund C. Weston.

SOPHIA, born Oct. 10, 1799; married Peleg Gifford.

FANNY, born Jan. 26, 1802; married William Patten Feb. 6, 1823.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, born Oct. 13, 1804; married Caroline Case.

HARRIET, born Dec. 27, 1806; married Zora Berry.

JANE A., born Sept. 13, 1809; married Leonard Harvey.

MARY, born Sept. 10, 1813; married Benjamin Folson.

42. BENJAMIN⁵ RATHBUN (Valentine⁴ Joshua³ John²⁻¹), born June 5, 1766, at Stonington, Conn., and moved with his parents in 1769 to Pittsfield, Mass. He married there about 1790 Anna Robinson, born about 1770, daughter of William Robinson. They moved about 1801 to Marcellus, N.Y., and by 1820 to Lysander, N.Y. She died there about 1843, and he went to live with his son, Benjamin, in Concord, Erie County, N.Y., where he died Aug. 22, 1859, aged 93.

CHILDREN

MARY, born about 1790; married Valentine Bowen in 1806.

AMY, born Oct. 29, 1792; married Zena Curtiss.

SYLVIA, born May 19, 1796; married (1) Barney B. Coffin Jan. 8, 1815; (2) Lovel Horton Sept. 14, 1818.

BENJAMIN, born May 20, 1802; married Amanda Malvina _____.

WILLIAM R., born June 16, 1804; married Cynthia Gunn.

ELIZABETH, born June 26, 1806; married Ambrose Bryant Kellogg.

REUBEN, born Oct. 1808; married (1) Jane Gifford; (2) Harriet Ann Olcott.

ORSON, born about 1812; was called "demented" in the 1850 census, when he was living with his brother William. No further information.

OTHERS, names unknown.

43. JOHN⁵ RATHBONE (John⁴ Joshua³ John²⁻¹), born Oct. 20, 1751, in Stonington, Conn. He married June 23, 1774, in Hopkinton, R.I., Eunice Wells, born June 6, 1758, daughter of Thomas and Sarah (Thompson) Wells. He was a merchant and trader in Stonington until about 1791, when he moved to New York City and opened a wholesale merchandising business. In the early 1800s, he was a large speculator in Ohio lands, which made him wealthy. Eunice died Jan. 27, 1810, and he married about 1813, Mary Sheffield, born Feb. 24, 1768, daughter of Acors Sheffield. John died March 14, 1843, in New York City, aged 92. His second wife died there in March 1840.

CHILDREN

CONTENT, born June 19, 1775; married Robert Chesebrough on April 1, 1792.

JOHN, born July 12, 1777; died unmarried Aug. 13, 1842, in New York City.

THOMAS WELLS, born Oct. 16, 1779; married (1) Maria Hawkins; (2) Mary Enlow.

EUNICE, born May 22, 1782; married Hezekiah Goddard Jan. 27, 1810.

SALLY, born Oct. 12, 1784; married Joshua Downer Aug. 19, 1823.

CLARISSA HARLOWE, born Nov. 19, 1786; married Theophilus Smith June 6, 1808.

JAMES MANNING, born May 11, 1789; he became a mariner, traveled to the South Seas, and died unmarried in 1811.

ELIZA, born Sept. 13, 1791; married Charles Wetmore on June 1, 1814.

JULIETTE ISABELLE, born Feb. 6, 1794; married Appleton Downer Dec. 14, 1815.

EMMA MARIA, born March 23, 1797; married Dudley Rhodes on March 9, 1816.

MARY ROSALIE, born Sept. 26, 1800; married Samuel Ruggles on May 14, 1822.

(To be continued)

Corrections

Vol. 3, No. 1, Page 10 — Moses⁵ Rathbone (Joshua⁴ Jonathan³ John²⁻¹), died April 19, 1822, not April 28, 1823, as listed by Cooley. The correct date has been supplied by his descendant, Perry T. Rathbone, who also points out that Moses, a Revolutionary War veteran, did not receive a pension. It was granted to his wife, Olive, after his death. Also, Moses' son, Elijah, married Eliza (not Elizabeth) Betts.

Vol. 3, No. 2, Page 32 — Elenora (Harris) Rathbun, who died Jan. 26, 1983, was the widow of George Olney⁹ Rathbun (Raymond⁸ Amy⁷ Olney⁶ Joshua⁵ Anthony⁴ Samuel³ Thomas² John¹). We incorrectly reported his name as Charles Olney Rathbun.

John Peck Rathbun

(continued from page 38)

oner in England. The news reached Mill Prison and was greeted with joy by the estimated 700 Americans there.

In late May, word arrived that three ships to transport the prisoners to America had been hired in London. Word came on June 1 that the ships were on the way to Mill Prison.

Something else also arrived that week at the prison — a virulent and deadly virus. It may have been brought by new prisoners, possibly a final round of an influenza pandemic which had swept the world the previous year.

On June 3, men throughout the prison began to complain of violent pains in their heads, abdomens, backs and limbs. Many broke out with high fevers and racking coughs. By afternoon, 200 of the prisoners were afflicted.

On June 8, the entire prison was put on a "hospital diet" in an effort to halt the disease. Each man received a pound of white bread, half a pint of milk, half a pound of mutton, half a pound of cabbage and a quart of beer daily.

Among those stricken early by the

virus was Captain John Peck Rathbun. A fellow prisoner reported on June 15 that Rathbun was "dangerously ill."

Deaths were becoming a daily occurrence, and the Americans looked desperately toward the sea for arrival of the ships that were to carry them home.

On June 18, the first ship arrived, and general rejoicing spread throughout the prison. Rathbun may not have shared the joy, however, and possibly never knew of the ship's arrival. His condition had become steadily worse, and he may have been delirious or unconscious.

On the morning of June 20, 1782, his suffering came to an end. One of the prisoners wrote in his journal that day:

"Captain John Peck Rathbun died this morning in the prison hospital."

He was 36 years old and had been a prisoner nine months. A few hours after his death, the two other ships arrived to take the Americans home. Rathbun was probably buried the same day.

Christopher Phillips, a brother of Samuel Phillips, packed up Rathbun's few belongings to take home to Polly, knowing he would have the task of telling her she was a widow.

On August 15, the Americans landed in Boston, after a 52-day trip. Phillips hurried to South Kingston, eager to see his family, but dreading his meeting with Polly Rathbun. Phillips never delivered the bad news. He learned that Polly had died in April, two months before her husband, apparently in childbirth or shortly thereafter. The baby had also died.

Immanuel Case, widower of Rathbun's sister, Anne, was executor of Rathbun's estate, which went to his nephews and nieces since Polly had died childless. His personal effects were auctioned, and the Kingston Inn became the property of his sisters' children.

The outstanding services of Captain John Peck Rathbun faded from history for nearly two centuries. Only in recent years has he begun to be recognized as one of the true heroes of the first American Navy.

This series of articles in our Historian is the first comprehensive story ever published on John Peck Rathbun's life.

Mary Jane Rathbun

(continued from page 35)

Mary Jane refused to concede; she made the Smithsonian a unique offer: She would resign her paid position, and continue the same duties on a volunteer basis if Schmitt were made her permanent assistant.

The Smithsonian Institution could not pass up such an offer, and Schmitt was hired on a full-time, permanent basis.

Mary Jane Rathbun went off the payroll in 1914, was named honorary research associate and continued working for the next 23 years without pay.

Mary Jane spent her final years writing what became her crowning achievement — a monumental, four-volume opus entitled "The Crabs of America."

The record-keeping system she inaugurated is still in use by the Smithsonian Institution. It has never been improved upon, and has been adopted by other museums.

Her years at the National Museum,

now known as the Smithsonian, were marked by dedication to her work. Once, when a heavy storm flooded Washington streets and made them impassible by wheeled traffic, she found a small boat and paddled herself to the office. She was probably the only employee who worked that day.

On her 75th birthday in 1935, a party was held in her honor. She was presented with a leather volume of congratulatory letters sent by the world's leading scientists.

Mary Jane was nearly 80 when failing health finally confined her to her home, and kept her from her beloved work. In 1943, she fell and broke her hip, and died on April 14 that year from the resulting complications. She was 83 years old.

In her will, she bequeathed her extensive personal library to the Smithsonian, along with \$10,000 to further the work she had started.

Dr. Waldo Schmitt, who spent 60

years at the Smithsonian and became its head curator of biology, never forgot her act of generosity which made his career possible.

"I shall never forget Miss Rathbun," he wrote some years after her death. "She was a remarkably gifted person. A small, neat woman, no more than four and a half feet in height, with plain, strong features; in conversation a most interesting and engaging personality, with a dry sense of humor, unobtrusively well endowed with the familial traits that had brought success to the men of her family — innate ability, originality of thought, initiative, and enterprise . . . She was a most kindly, charitable person, generous to a fault.

"Words alone do not suffice to express adequately my high regard for Miss Rathbun and her works . . . my gratitude for all that she did for me, and my respect for her as a woman and a scientist."

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buns — John and Margaret, their eight children and some 30 grandchildren. Of 21 voting freemen in 1696, John and his sons accounted for six, nearly one third.

In the late 1720s and early 1730s, two of John's sons — William and Joseph — left Block Island for the mainland, William to Westerly, R.I., and Joseph to Exeter, R.I., taking their children with them.

The children of John Jr. and Thomas, and several of Samuel's also moved to mainland towns in Rhode Island and Connecticut.

Of all the 19 grandsons of John and Margaret, only Samuel Rathbun Jr. remained on the island. He became an active civic leader, serving as town treasurer, town clerk and deputy to the General Assembly before his death in 1780. His son, Walter Rathbun, served as town clerk for nearly 60 years, represented the island in the General Assembly, and was a Revolutionary War leader.

Walter's great-grandson, Thomas, who adopted the Rathbone spelling, was the last representative of our family on the island. He died in 1911, aged 85, after a long career commanding fishing vessels, trading sloops and mail boats between Block Island and the mainland.

Last fall, we warned our members about mailings being sent to Rathbuns throughout the country by Beatrice Bayley of Sterling, Pa., offering a *Rathbun Heritage Book* for \$27.85. It was little more than a list of Rathbun names taken from telephone books, with some general information on genealogy and heraldry. The same kind of mail offer is now being made to Rathbuns, Rathbones and Rathburns by a firm using the name Sharon L. Taylor of Copley, Ohio. For \$26.35, this company is offering *The Amazing Story of the Rathbuns* (or Rathbones or Rathburns) *in America*. Like the Beatrice Bayley book, it is a mass-produced book with no detailed genealogical information on our family.

Some Tips on Researching

The following tips on genealogical research are offered by one of our members, Joseph W. Wiswall of Freehold Township, N.J. His wife, Mary Ann, is a daughter of Oscar Louis⁹ Rathbun (George⁸ Corbet⁷ Gideon⁶ Tibbetts⁵ John⁴ Thomas² John¹). Joe is an experienced genealogist and has published a book on the Wiswall family.

In my early genealogical research, I frequently came across birth, death or marriage dates from a reliable source which were 10 or 11 days before, or after, dates for the same events given by another equally reliable source.

I was never quite sure which date to use. I also noted that many dates were given in the format: "February 12, 1700/01," which I took to mean that the writer wasn't sure of the year. Then I noticed that this was ordinarily done only for January, February or March.

I finally found the answer in an explanatory footnote referring to the Julian, Gregorian and Civil calendars.

Julius Caesar authorized the Julian Calendar in 46 B.C., based on the calculations of Sosigenes, a Greek, who estimated the true year as having 365¼ days. In 730 A.D., the Venerable Bede, an Anglo-Saxon monk, calculated that Sosigenes' year was 11 minutes and 14 seconds too long.

By 1582, the accumulated error amounted to 10 days, and Pope Gregory XIII decreed that the day after Oct. 4, 1582, would be called Oct. 15, 1582, thus dropping 10 days.

The resulting Gregorian Calendar was adopted almost immediately by all Catholic countries, but Protestant England and her colonies did not act until 1752, when it was decreed that the day following Sept. 2, 1752, would be called Sept. 14, 1752 — a loss of 11 days rather than 10 because of the lost time accumulated since Pope Gregory's actions 170 years earlier.

Thus began the system of referring to dates as "O.S." for Old Style, and "N.S." for New Style.

The English then complicated things at the same time by abolishing the Civil Calendar, under which the year "began" on March 25. Under the old Civil Cal-

endar, the day after March 24, 1700, was March 25, 1701. Many genealogists record pre-1752 dates from January 1 through March 25 by both years, Feb. 12, 1700/01, for example.

To sum up: If you have two sources giving the "same" date 10 or 11 days apart, remember Old Style and New Style. If you find a one-year difference for dates in January, February or March, remember the change in the Civil Calendar.

Another problem in genealogical research is that of determining a person's correct first name, or the correct spelling of a family's surname (Rathbun, Rathbone, Rathburn for example).

When dealing with these problems, several things should be considered:

- Until recent generations, most people were illiterate. An exception would be school teachers, or ministers, who, in many small communities, were one and the same. When something had to be written, the minister or teacher often did the writing, and would spell it as it sounded to him.

- Nicknames were frequently used in vital statistics, census returns and land records. For example, Polly and Dolly were common nicknames for Mary, as was Mamie for those with Irish backgrounds. Also, Betsey, Eliza, Beth and Lizzie for Elizabeth; Peggy, Peg, Meg and Maggie for Margaret; Hattie for Harriett or Henrietta; Harry for Henry; Jack for John; Will or Bill for William, and many others. Libraries have books that list and discuss the use of nicknames.

- Abbreviations were much more commonly used years ago than they are today. The associated punctuation marks (periods and apostrophes) were frequently omitted, although the first and last letters of a name were usually included. Thus "Ebe'r" or sometimes "Eber" was an abbreviation for Ebenezer, (although Eber is also a separate name). Margaret might appear as "M'gt," Elizabeth as "Eliz'h," or William as "Wil'm." or "Wllm."

- Occasionally, in older church records, you will find Latin words and abbreviations. This can be tricky. Your local priest, physician or language teacher can be of help.

Births

BORN — March 16, 1983, in Rosedale, Md., Gillian Lea Betzold, daughter of Victor Arthur and Joan Lea (Rathbun) Betzold, their first child. Gillian is also the first grandchild of Joan's parents, Dr. and Mrs. William B.¹¹ Rathbun (Walter¹⁰ Francis⁹ Albert⁸ Stephen⁷ James⁶⁻⁵ Thomas⁴ Ebenezer³ William² John¹).

BORN — Feb. 13, 1983, in Asheville, N.C., Elizabeth Downing Taylor, daughter of Donald and Linda (Rathbun) Taylor. Linda is the daughter of Dr. Lewis S.⁹ Rathbun (Alonzo⁸ Lewis⁷ Ransom⁶ Daniel⁵⁻⁴ Joshua³ John²⁻¹) and Elizabeth (Hunt) Rathbun. The Taylors also have a son, Alexander Standish, five, and a daughter Abigail Elizabeth, three.

BORN — Dec. 4, 1982, in Gardner, Mass., Joseph James Girard Jr., son of Joseph James Girard and Hazel E. (Rathburn) Girard. Mrs. Girard is the daughter of Mrs. Alyce G. (Williams) Rathburn and the late Clarence Harris⁹ Rathburn (Henry⁸ Valentine⁷ John⁶ Tibbets⁵ John⁴⁻³ Thomas² John¹).

People

MARJORIE GIBSON, one of our new members, has sent us a copy of a fascinating hand-written book of more than 100 pages on Rathbun-Haylock family history. It was written in 1960 by Laura (Rathbun) Haylock-Correll, then aged 89. She died three years later. Laura was a daughter of Ferral R.⁷ Rathbun (Baldwin⁶ Erastus⁵ Thomas⁴⁻³ Samuel² John¹). Mrs. Gibson is a great-great-granddaughter of Erastus⁵ Rathbun. In her book, Laura wrote: "Dear children, please keep this book, for in the future years you may turn to these pages for information you can't find elsewhere about the family records."

MRS. HENRY (HELEN) RATHBUN of Warner Robins, Ga., mother of our research director, Robert Rathbun, underwent open-heart surgery on May 17. The operation was a success and she is now recovering.

Our New Members

Carol Atkinson
Panama City, Fla.

Malissie (Rathbun) Bowen
East Greenwich, R.I.

Everett J. Collord
Happy Camp, Calif.

Beverly (Rathbun) Groseclose
Hingham, Mont.

Susan (Rathbun) Halfpenny
Salinas, Calif.

Mrs. Plymouth T. Nelson
Litchfield, Minn.

Dennis Keith Rathbun
Bethesda, Md.

Donald J. Rathbun
Coventry, R.I.

Eugene W. Rathbone
Battle Creek, Mich.

Dr. George E. Rathbun
Princeton, Ill.

Grove A. Rathbun
Eveleth, Minn.

James W. Rathbun
Montgomery, N.Y.

Mildred B. Rathbun
Cranston, R.I.

Robert and Barbara Rathbun
Gildford, Mont.

Robert L. Rathbun
Lake Montezuma, Ariz.

Velma S. Rathbun
Chetek, Wisc.

William Robert Rathbun
Hingham, Mont.

Donna F. Raymond
Coventry, R.I.

Ted L. Tromble
Las Animas, Colo.

Blanche M. Weirum
Cave Junction, Ore.

RALPH ALLEN CANGSON of Garden Grove, Calif., has been elected president of the new South Coast (California) chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution. He is a descendant of at least two early Rathbuns on Block Island — Sarah² (John¹) who married Samuel George, and Wait³ (Samuel² John¹) who married Thomas Dickens.

CHESTER C. CORNELL of Ossian, Iowa, underwent successful heart surgery in April, and experienced a quick recovery. In May, he traveled to Canada for a fishing trip. He is the son of Bessie E.⁸ Rathbun (Bradshaw⁷ Thomas⁶ Walter⁵ Thomas⁴⁻³⁻² John¹) and Welton E. Cornell.

ROSMA (RATHBUN) LIMBECK is an active member of a committee which has gathered material for a new history of Rusk County, Wisc. The book is to be published later this summer. She is a daughter of William Jonathan⁸ Rathbun (Jonathan⁷ Thomas⁶⁻⁵ John⁴ Samuel³ Thomas² John¹).

ERNEST CHARLES RATHBUN of Cranston, R.I., celebrated his 101st birthday on June 19. He is the only surviving child of Charles⁹ Rathbun (Seneca⁷ John⁶ Joseph⁵ Joshua⁴ John³⁻²⁻¹) and Ella Thankful Sweet.

RAYMOND VAN RATHBUN of Holland, Mich., was married June 11, 1983, to Terry Leigh Schreppel of Johnstown, N.Y. They have moved to Oklahoma City, Okla., to serve a one-year internship with Our Lord's Community Church. He is the son of Raymond¹⁰ Rathbun (Louie⁹ John⁸ Rowland⁷ Acors⁶ Joshua⁵⁻⁴⁻³ John²⁻¹) and Margaret (Vander Ploeg) Rathbun.

WE THANK the following members who have sent in family records and other data in recent months — Paul Rathbun, Mrs. Lewis Rathbun, Mrs. Myrtle Rathbun, Mrs. Marjorie Gibson, C.C. Cornell, Mildred B. Rathbun, Walton Rathbun, Robert L. Rathbun, Marjorie Raymond, George E. Rathbun, Hazel Ritchie, Art Burris, Jim Chivers, Mrs. Emmet Rathbun and Helen M. Rathbun. How about seeing your name here next month?