

RHODE ISLAND

HISTORY

Rhode Island is the smallest state, but it has a big story. Narragansett people, English colonists, sailors and mill workers all helped build it.

The First Peoples

People have lived in Rhode Island for more than 10,000 years. By the 1600s, the Narragansett were the largest nation here. They lived on the west side of the bay that now has their name. The Wampanoag lived to the east, and the Niantic lived along the south shore. They grew corn, beans and squash. They fished, dug clams and traded with their neighbors.

A Colony of Many Faiths

Roger Williams started Providence in 1636 on land from the Narragansett leaders Canonicus and Miantonomi. Other people who disagreed with the leaders of Massachusetts followed. Anne Hutchinson and her friends helped start Portsmouth in 1638. Newport began the next year. In 1663 the king of England gave the **colony** a **charter**. It let the colonists choose their own leaders and worship as they wished.

King Philip's War

In 1675 the Wampanoag leader Metacom, whom the English called King Philip, went to war against the New England colonies. That December, colonial soldiers attacked a Narragansett fort in the Great Swamp and killed hundreds of people. In March 1676, Narragansett warriors burned most of Providence. The colonists won the war that summer. Many captured Native people were sold as slaves. Other Narragansett joined the Niantic, and the Narragansett Indian Tribe lives in Rhode Island today.

Ships and Revolution

Newport grew into a busy **port**. Its ships carried fish, rum, candles and horses. Some Rhode Island ships also carried enslaved Africans, and enslaved people worked on farms and docks here. A law passed in 1784 began to end slavery in the state. British troops held Newport from 1776 to 1779. General Nathanael Greene of Warwick became one of George Washington's most trusted officers. In 1790 Rhode Island became the 13th state.



Mills and Newcomers

After Samuel Slater's mill opened in 1793, mills spread along the Blackstone and other rivers. The Blackstone Canal opened in 1828 and carried goods between Providence and Worcester, Massachusetts. Providence shops made jewelry, silverware, tools and steam engines. **Immigrants** came from Ireland, Canada, Italy and Portugal to work in the mills and shops.

Sea, Storm and Change

Rich families built huge summer houses in Newport in the late 1800s. The Navy opened a war college there in 1884. In 1938 a hurricane pushed the sea into downtown Providence. During World War II, workers at Quonset Point made the first Quonset huts, round metal buildings that could be put up fast. In 1969 the Newport Bridge opened across part of the bay.

RHODE ISLAND THROUGH TIME

1636	1663	1675	1772	1790	1793	1828	1938	1969
Williams starts Providence	The king grants a charter	King Philip's War begins	The Gaspee is burned	Rhode Island is the 13th state	Slater's mill opens	Blackstone Canal opens	Hurricane floods Providence	Newport Bridge opens

PEOPLE TO KNOW

Canonicus	Narragansett leader. Gave Williams land.
Anne Hutchinson	Helped start Portsmouth in 1638.
Nathanael Greene	Warwick-born general in the Revolution.
Gilbert Stuart	Painted George Washington.
Ida Lewis	Newport lighthouse keeper and rescuer.

WORDS TO KNOW

colony	land ruled from far away
charter	a paper from a ruler that gives rights
port	a town where ships load and unload
immigrant	a person who moves in from another country