“OLIVE SHAW, 21 YEARS OLD, MY DREAM ON PICKET [DUTY]”:
EXTRAORDINARY CONTEMPORARY MANUSCRIPT NOTEBOOK
FIRSTHAND ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE OF RHODE ISLAND
BY AN UNKNOWN REVOLUTIONARY SOLDIER FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE


Original New Hampshire militiaman’s pocket notebook, containing firsthand accounts of military maneuvers under Captain William Whipple (signer of the Declaration of Independence and commander of New Hampshire’s militia), before and during the Battle of Rhode Island. Also includes lists of expenditures, IOUs of outstanding loans to mates, an inventory of army issue since his induction, multiple payments to the “washerwoman,” musical notations for four army songs and a remembrance of his sweetheart, Olive Shaw. Twenty-four pages, stitched, with full typed transcription.

“Landed on Rhode Island the 9th of August 1778. Landed at Howland’s Ferry at about 5 o’clock in the morning, where we marched up to Butts’ Hill Fort. The enemy left the Fort the day before, a little before sunset, and marched into the Town. In 3 or 4 days we marched down to the Lines, within about 3 miles of the Town, where we laid about 8 or 9 days, then retreated to the upper End of the Island where the Enemy followed. The
fight was on the 29th of August. Made the Grand retreat 30th Instant [of August]."

In the summer and fall of 1777, Continental soldiers were assembled at Fort Barton for an October invasion of Rhode Island. Rhode Island native, Colonel Pardon Gray (mentioned several times in this historic manuscript), acted as Commissary Officer, providing food and supplies to the 1,500 Revolutionary troops gathered at the Fort. Because of several miscalculations, misjudgments and inclement weather, only half-hearted attempts were made that fall to cross Howland’s Ferry into Rhode Island. The following spring, General Washington appointed Major General John Sullivan to take command of Fort Barton and to resume the invasion. He was joined by New Hampshire’s Peabody militia led by Captain William Whipple, and together they formulated a strategic plan, in which the Marquis de Lafayette was to provide naval cover and an additional land force. The Battle of Rhode Island began on August 9th, with the crossing at Howland’s Ferry of 11,000 Continental troops and militia, landing in Rhode Island and forcing the smaller British force to withdraw to the town of Newport. The French navy had blocked Narragansett Bay, rendering the small British naval force ineffectual. Within days, however, British naval reinforcements arrived to engage the French fleet. While the two naval forces were preparing for battle, a hurricane arose and for two days battered both sides. During the following week, all of the French ships were forced to sail to Boston for repairs: “Two French frigates came and one American brig came in the East Side of Rhode [Island]. The Enemy weighed anchor and steered up to Fogland Ferry where [they] set a ship of 20 guns and a schooner and a Galley on fire.” Without a sea attack to assist
them, the Americans began to falter. Continental forces eventually withdrew to Bristol and Tiverton, leaving control of Rhode Island to the British: "Went to Col. Gray’s picket from Howland’s Ferry, October 21st, 1778. Lieutenant Randal was relieved, December 15, 1778."

A few faint stains. Beautiful condition.
DIARY (91)

PAGE 1

Mem² of my Expenses to the New Furnace in Winchester.

Mcdum?? September 20 1777

20  notes for my Horse  0.0.6
    Dito  0.0.6

21  My Breakfast  0.0.6
    Bales & oats for my Horse  0.0.10
    Dinner & Bales for my H²
    Lodging & supper
    & sleeping & 1 gal rum??  0.3.0

22  Breakfast & oats & Rum  0.2.0

PAGE 2

Expenses a Coming Back ??? by Jon² Jenks Jun²
So??? out for winchester the 2 time the 27 of October 1777
Joind Bob Topmans Reg² the 28 of June 1778 at Howland??? Ferry in Tiverton

MISSING PAGE

PAGE 5

Expenses From Pawtuckett to Winchester
Octob² 27:  notes for my horse at  .6
30  Breakfast and notes at Pretises  2.9
    Dinner & hay at Watess  2.
31  Breakfast & notes at Smiths 2.6
    hay & notes at Wards  1.0
    notes at Mayhew's???  0.6
    Supper Lodging & horse keeping Bills???  3.0
    12.3

PAGE 6

If there is no use for horse at Pawtuckett send him up to M² Thurberg

Send Newlands??? Cloths up In the Teams in a barrel??? in ??? Store th??? are heads up???
Expenses Coming From Winchester to Pawtucket

Nov' the 2, Dinner & otus at Goodals 2.0
Lodging and horse keeping at Wards 2.0
3 Breakfast & otus at Smiths 2.0
Dinner & otus at Woods 2.8
otus at --- 0.6
Lodging & horsekeeping 3.0
4 otus at Aldridge's 0.6
 0..12..8

X Ezra Healy 0..11..3
Wm Wight??? 3..6
X Preserved Alger 7.0
X Eleazer Jenks 10.6
X Wm Bagly 3..6
X Constant Martin 1..11..11
X Nabey Walker 3.0
X Lem Palkers??? 6.0
X Sam Healy 1.6
X Mr Thorn 2.0
Esek Jenks on Book 7:17:11
1 Note 1..10..2
Jon Jenks Junr 2.4.3
on Book ---
1 Note 5..2..2

July 12 1778 we had a Doperon come on Foglans???

Sent Jon Jenks a Spelling Book
In Sears Desires I would DD the Copper which is to be left here by John Scott to ~
Reducting?? out 10 the rest @ 8/

My Shirts in the Great Trunk Bitches & stockings in ??? old Coat

[crossed out] Captn Ebez Jenk's To Warning you Company to ??? of 3 times @6/
3rd Butter @ 3/6 0.10.6

Due to you on old account 8/9
DIARY (91) Cont'd
Mem's of the Different Places bin Stazoned In the G??? M°. Service

From Pawtuckett To Providence where I've Staid Three Days

From thare to Grinwich Staid one Night in the mornin' we was ordered to march to Quonset point in North Kingston where we staid a week or more Then order Came for marching to Howland Ferry to join our Rigemane which we did by the way of Grennich From thare across the to Warrin and so We joined our Rig° where we staid about a week then I was ordered under Cap° Whipple with the a guard to march to Fog lane Ferry about 6 miles below where We staid one month or about 5 weeks then from thair to Lowland Ferry and the next day we landed on Rhode Island

Rec° from Cap° Whipple to pay the Washwoman 6/8
Washwoman Bill 5/1
Rem° Due to Cap° Whipple ¼
Rec° from of Leu° West to pay the Washwoman 5/11 18/
Washwoman Bill 5/4
Remain Due to Leu° West 12/8

Drumer Sheerman to G??? To s° Washwoman ¼

Went to Col Grays ????? from Howland Ferry
Octob° the 21 1778

Leut Randal was Relev° Dec' 15 1778

Bad money???

May 20th 1777
April 11 1778

Music with words:
The General Dulkens?? march

A Tune o??? Petingale
DIARY (91) Cont'd

[PAGE 20 & 21]

Memr: of What Bounty I Rec'd in the Nine Months Service Un'd Cap' Wm Whipple /20.0.0

June 12 1 x Blankets
1 x Knapsack
July 8 1 x Coate
1 ??? blue Breeches
1 x Jacket
15 1 x Shirte
1 x D'o
Sept 30 1 x Rifel frock
Octob' 18 1 x P shoos
Dec'm 29 1 x P d'o
1779 Jan 11 X 2 P stockings and
X 1 Wescoat
X 1 Shirte
26 X 1 P stockings

[PAGE 22]

Rec'd of the Pay Maj'r
Aug' 1: 1778 / f3.2.0
Rec'd of D'o 2.4
March 16 By Cash 9.0.0

[PAGE 23]

July 29 the Fleet of Frenchmen Came in to Rhode Island Harbour

30th of July
Two French Friggates came & 1 American Brigg Came in the Est side of Rhode the enemy waid anchor
and Headed??? up to Foglane Ferry where I ??? a ship of 20 gun and a Schooner & ??? Galley on fire

[PAGE 24]

June 15 1 Sug'r f0.4.6
Bread 0.1.0
?? For Making???
my Goat 1.10.0
Milk 0.2.0
1 Sug'r 0.4.6
DIARY (91) Cont'd

Olive Shaw
D??? 21 Years old

My Dream
on Pickett at
Col'o Gray Tiverton

Joseph Benchly C° 13/6
Shubley Kellog'? C° II 2/

Left with Jon's Jenkins Wife Fifty Nine Dollars June 14 1778

Landed on Rhodeis'd the 9 of Aug' 1778 Landed at Howlands Ferry at about 5 oClock in the morning where we march'd up to Buffer??? Hill Forte the enemy left the Forte a little before sunset and march'd in to the Town in 3 or 4 Days we march'd Down to the Lim's??? ?? about 3 miles of the Town where we laid about 8 or 9 Day then relocated to the upper End of the Island where the Enemy Follow'd the fight was on the made the grand retreat the 30 ???

Tho'' Surme D'
June Job ??? ??? ??? 1/
19 to 16 only 2/6

The Town of North Providence

D'' To Stanning??? Century at Pawtucket Bridge one Night to stop the smallpox

Simply by Jon's Jenkins Jun'