



Media inquiries contact:
Elizabeth Sulock
Public Affairs Associate
401-846-0813 x104
esulock@newporthistorical.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Newport Historical Society Partners with Brown University to Document & Interpret the University's Founding

Newport, RI – (March 6, 2014) – Brown University has awarded the Newport Historical Society a \$10,000 grant to support work to document and interpret the University's founding. The University, originally called the College of Rhode Island, first opened its doors in Warren, Rhode Island in 1765, and has been a central presence in Providence since 1770. However the institution may have its deepest roots in Newport. These earliest days have been the focus of a season of research at the Historical Society; Brown University will now underwrite an exhibit and other interpretive activities in celebration of its 250th anniversary in 2015.

“Some of the documents which record the conversations leading up to the University's establishment, and several drafts of the petition to the General Assembly and the Charter for the new institution, reside in our collections,” explains the Society's Executive Director Ruth Taylor. “These documents reveal that the first of such conversations occurred at the Newport Colony House and at the Newport home of Deputy Governor John Gardner, which is now Citizens Bank.”

While the University was ultimately founded as a Baptist institution, these meetings involved a group of individuals who represent the religious diversity within this community: Baptists, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Jews and Quakers. While a colony-wide geographic diversity was also represented, the majority were men who lived, worked, worshipped and/or were buried in Newport. Homes and gravesites of these Founders are extant; names include William Vernon, Ezra Stiles, William Ellery, William Redwood, Gideon Cornell, James Honeyman, Thomas Robinson, Joseph Wanton and Martin Howard.

Brown's support will allow the Newport Historical Society to work with the University and the Rhode Island Historical Society to create an exhibit, a Newport walking tour and other interpretive materials to highlight and celebrate the impetus for, issues around and progress of the founding of Brown University.

About the Newport Historical Society

Since 1854, the Newport Historical Society has collected and preserved the artifacts, photographs, documents, publications, and genealogical records that relate to the history of Newport County, to make these materials readily available for both research and enjoyment, and to act as a resource center for the education of the public about the history of Newport County, so that knowledge of the past may contribute to a fuller understanding of the present. For more information please visit www.NewportHistory.org.

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