

**RHODE ISLAND: ITS MAKING AND ITS  
MEANING; A SURVEY OF THE ANNALS  
OF THE COMMONWEALTH FROM ITS  
SETTLEMENT TO THE DEATH OF ROGER  
WILLIAMS, 1636-1683. VOLUME I**

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Rhode Island: Its Making and Its Meaning: A Survey of the Annals of the Commonwealth from Its Settlement to the Death of Roger Williams, 1636-1683. Volume I by Irving Berdine Richman

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**IRVING BERDINE RICHMAN**

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# RHODE ISLAND

## ITS MAKING AND ITS MEANING

A Survey of the Annals of the Commonwealth from its  
Settlement to the Death of Roger Williams

1636-1683

BY

IRVING BERDINE RICHMAN

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

JAMES BRYCE, M.P., D.C.L.

AUTHOR OF "THE AMERICAN COMMONWEALTH"

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VOLUME I

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**FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE AND  
THE RIGHTS OF MAN**

**VOL. 2**



## INTRODUCTION

**R**HODE ISLAND is the smallest by far of all the States of the American Union; it has an area of only 1085 square miles, less than that of the County of Ayr in Scotland. But within this narrow space, and with a population which was until in recent years but slender, Providence grew into a great manufacturing city and Newport became the favorite home of wealth and luxury. Rhode Island has had a singularly interesting and eventful history, all the more interesting because in a tiny community the play of personal forces is best seen and the characters of individual men give color to the strife of principles and parties. Thus some touch of that dramatic quality which belongs to the cities of Greece and Italy recurs in this little republic on Narragansett Bay. Unlike in many ways as were the settlers who went forth from England under the Stuarts to the Greeks of two thousand years earlier, some of the questions which troubled both were the same, and bore fruits not wholly dissimilar. Nor are points of likeness wanting to the history of some of the older cantons of Switzerland.

Mr. Richman, who is favorably known to stu-

dents of history by his book on Appenzell, has essayed in the present volumes to chronicle the fortunes of Rhode Island in its earlier days. The peculiar interest of those days lies in the fact that this colony was in a special sense the offspring and the embodiment of certain distinctive and novel ideas in the sphere of religion and politics. This character it owes to one man. Roger Williams, born just three centuries ago (probably in A.D. 1603), was the founder of Rhode Island in a clearer and ampler sense than any other single man — scarcely excepting William Penn — was the founder of any other American colony; for he gave it a set of principles which, so far as the New World was concerned, were peculiarly his own, and these principles long continued to affect its collective life. The men of Virginia were ordinary Englishmen of the class then dominant in England. The men of Massachusetts and Connecticut were Puritans of the normal seventeenth-century type, earnest and God-fearing, but almost as ready to persecute heretical opinions as they had found the church of Archbishop Laud ready to persecute them. Roger Williams had a new doctrine. In point of doctrine he seems to have been an orthodox Puritan, gifted with a double portion of the dissidence of dissent, although so "lovely in his carriage" that the hostility he roused did not take the form of hatred to himself personally. But he was the first apostle in New England of the theory of absolute freedom for the individual in matters of religion, with the consequent denial of the right of the civil magis-

trate to intermeddle in any wise with such matters. He was not the first discoverer of this great and wholesome principle, for isolated voices had for a century before his time uttered it in more or less explicit terms. But he was so much the most zealous and active exponent of it in America, and Rhode Island was so conspicuously the first colony to apply it in practice, that he and his community deserve to be honored by those who hold that one of the chief services which the United States has rendered to the world consists in the example set there of a complete disjunction of religious worship and belief from the machinery of civil government.

Upon this foundation, and upon the cognate principle of the fullest recognition of the rights of the individual in the civil sphere also, the commonwealth of Rhode Island was built, and thus it became the refuge of those who sought to escape from the grim stringency of the Massachusetts Theocracy. Roger Williams was in a sense before his time; and he may not in some respects have fully appreciated the results of his own principles. But the principles spread and the work told, though in Europe, with its solid mass of institutions inherited from the middle ages, no great progress was made till the spirit of political revolt and the spirit of critical inquiry came in to quicken the march of ideas.

A no less honorable and scarcely less important part of Williams's doctrines was his recognition of the right of the native Indians to their lands. His respect for their rights, his wish to deal fairly and live peaceably with the aborigines are among the