

May 29, 1790

Rhode Island Becomes a State

Rhode Island is the smallest state in the United States. Thousands of tourists vacation in Rhode Island every year, especially in the Narragansett Bay area. Boating, fishing, and other water sports are very popular. There are also multiple islands that are part of the state, many of them located in Narragansett Bay. In addition, Rhode Island is well-known for its production of jewelry. The founder of Rhode Island was Roger Williams, a minister. He wanted to start a colony where people could be free from all religious persecution. With this background of personal liberty, Rhode Island produced many people who had a passion to think and work independently. Rhode Islanders organized the Continental Navy, they helped found the textile industry in America, they started the jewelry industry in America, and they worked in boatbuilding, shipping, and many other areas. This independent, hardworking spirit has carried them through the many ups and downs of the economy of this small state and helped it continue to contribute to the nation. Many famous people are from Rhode Island, including Matthew C. Perry, Raymond M. Hood, Prudence Crandall, Nathanael Greene, David Wilkinson, Gilbert Stuart, and William Ellery.

Look at the map of Rhode Island below. Label the capital of Rhode Island. Locate the cities and towns of Warwick, Cranston, Pawtucket, East Providence, Woonsocket, Newport, Central Falls, Chepachet, Barrington, Bristol, Middletown, Portsmouth, Kingston, Westerly, and Tiverton, and label them on the map. Now label Jerimoth Hill. Also, locate the Providence River, Sakonne River, Seekonk River, Pawtuxet River, Pettaquamscutt River, Potowomut River, Woonasquatucket River, Blackstone River, Chepachet River, Ponaganset River, Wood River, and Pascoag Lake, and label them. Lastly, label the states or bodies of water that border Rhode Island. When you have finished, move on to the timeline of Rhode Island history on the next page and the research prompts that follow.



Timeline of Rhode Island History

1524

1636

1639

1700

1732

1769

1772

1774

1775

1787

1790

1835

1843

1883

1884

1935

1938

1969

1971

1973

1. Residents of Rhode Island organize the Continental Navy
2. The Newport Naval Training Station is established in Newport
3. Newport is founded
4. The section of Interstate Highway 95 in Rhode Island opens
5. The British ship *Liberty* is burned in Newport harbor
6. Rhode Island becomes the thirteenth state in the Union
7. The "Bloodless Revolution" occurs
8. Giovanni da Verrazzano, while sailing for France, sails along the coast of Rhode Island
9. Rhode Island's new state Constitution takes effect
10. Rhode Island's first newspaper begins publication
11. The Cruiser-Destroyer Force of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet leaves Rhode Island
12. The importation of slaves is banned
13. Roger Williams founds Providence
14. Rhode Island's first personal income tax is approved
15. Rhode Island's first railroad begins operations
16. The British ship *Gaspee* is burned near Warwick
17. The Naval War College opens in Newport
18. The slave trade is outlawed
19. A terrible hurricane and tidal wave hit Rhode Island
20. Rhode Island's first library is established

Research Prompt #1

Roger Williams, the founder of Providence, wrote that he wanted it to be a place of shelter and protection for “those distressed for cause of conscience.” This settlement was the first place in the colonies where the government only had control over civil things. It has caused absolute religious freedom to be a continuing point in the political beliefs of Rhode Island. What are your thoughts concerning “absolute religious freedom”? Is it really possible to have “absolute” religious freedom in this day and age or do you think that there is a point where the religious freedom of some could infringe on the religious freedom of others? Who should solve the problem? Write about your thoughts.

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Research Prompt #2

The colony of Rhode Island was very supportive of the Revolutionary War. It was the first colony to call for a continental congress and the first to put a stop to the oath of allegiance that the British crown had demanded of colonial officials. After the revolution began, Rhode Island was one of the colonies that was hit very hard by the British. Do some research and write about the impact of the revolution in Rhode Island. Include in your research information about the Battle of Rhode Island and the performance of the first African American regiment to fight in America.

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Research Prompt #3

The Gilbert Stuart birthplace in North Kingstown is one of the famous colonial buildings in Rhode Island that draws much tourist attention. Research Gilbert Stuart. Write about who he was, what he did, and why he is important in American history.

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Timeline of Rhode Island History

Answer Key

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Newport is founded	1639	
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