

perhaps a dozen scholars each. It was not uncommon to meet with people who could not write their names.¹ The causes that made the history of Rhode Island so unique in other particulars explain this singular state of affairs.

III. GENERAL VIEW OF NEW ENGLAND, 1780-1830

John Adams, writing to the Abbé de Mably, in 1782, found the key to New England history in four institutions: the towns, churches, schools, and militia. After stating the terms of the law in regard to schools, he said: "All the children of the inhabitants, the rich as well as the poor, have a right to go to these public schools. There are formed the candidates for admission as students into colleges at Cambridge, New Haven, Princeton, and Dartmouth. In these colleges are educated future masters for these schools, future ministers for these congregations, doctors of law and medicine, and magistrates and officers for the government of the country."²

¹ T. B. Stockwell, *Public Education in Rhode Island*, Providence, Rhode Island, p. 11. An article entitled "Common Schools in Rhode Island," *The North American Review*, Vol. LXVII., pp. 240-256, 1848, contains an interesting account of the condition of education in that State from the earliest times.

² *Works of John Adams*, Vol. V., p. 495. Noah Webster, replying to Dr. Priestley in 1800, wrote: "The truth seems to be that in the Eastern States knowledge is more diffused among the laboring people than in any country on the globe. The learning of the people extends to a knowledge of their own tongue, of writing and arithmetic sufficient to keep their own simple accounts; they read not only the Bible and newspapers, but almost all read the best English authors, as the *Spectator*, *Rambler*, and the works of Watts, Doddridge, and many others. If you can find any country in Europe where this is done to the same extent as in New England, I am very ill informed." — HORACE E. SCUDDER, *Noah Webster*, p. 106.