

**RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL TRACTS, NO.
1. AN INQUIRY CONCERNING THE
ORIGIN OF THE
CLAUSE IN THE LAWS OF RHODE ISLAND
(1719-1783) DISFRANCHISING ROMAN
CATHOLICS, PP. 7-71**

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RHODE ISLAND
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Second Series.

NO. 1.



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PRELIMINARY NOTE.

With this tract the publisher begins the second series of the Rhode Island Historical Tracts. Like the former series, this will comprise twenty tracts, and each tract will be strictly confined to an issue of two hundred and fifty copies. Those who desire copies must signify that desire, or run the chance of obtaining them. The vastly enhanced price now reached by the former series, justifies the expectation that this series will also advance in pecuniary value to the holders of it long before the series is completed.

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SECTION ONE.

It is now something more than a century since a charge of inconsistency, of the most serious character, was brought against the founders of the colony of Rhode Island. This charge was substantially, that having obtained a charter in which every English citizen, whether born in the colony, or resident therein, should be in the free exercise of his religious opinions without constraint; that liberty of conscience should be the law of the land; that a state was planted, in which the citizens pledged obedience only in civil things; that then, immediately these same founders enacted a law whereby Roman Catholics were denied the elective franchise, and denied all the political rights of citizenship. If this charge can be maintained, it is certainly very derogatory to the character of the founders of the colony of Rhode Island. Whether it can, or cannot be maintained, is the purpose of this inquiry. It has been iterated and re-iterated in every form, in books, in pamphlets, and in orations; and so it continues to be even to this time. An examination of the question was made in 1818 by Mr. Samuel Eddy, then Secre-